

The Irish Catholic

BREDA O'BRIEN

Politicians cannot pick and choose Church teaching Page 7



MATERNITY HOSPITAL

A field day for nun-bashing Page 35



MARY KENNY

Kindness: Christian virtue or health advice? Page 5



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Call to scrap school admission law stopping schools being truly Catholic

Chai Brady

As parishes transfer more schools to non-religious patrons, the law must be changed to allow remaining schools to be unapologetically Catholic.

Bishop Tom Deenihan told *The Irish Catholic* there is a need for the Government to remove a controversial law on school admissions that risks preventing Catholic schools from catering for the needs of those who want an authentic faith-based education.

Bishop Deenihan of the hierarchy's Council for Education said that in a 'post-divestment' context, where an increasing number of schools begin to divest and no longer have a Catholic ethos, current legislation preventing schools prioritising Catholic children will cause "a difficulty".

"Our position is that if parental choice is the determinant - and I think it has to be - then parents who wish for a Catholic education have to be accommodated," Bishop Deenihan told *The Irish Catholic*.

"It's more of a question of how we can ensure that those who wish for a Catholic education can be prioritised in relation to the remaining Catholic schools," he said.

» Continued on Page 2

'I love your outfit, Holy Father...'



Pope Francis greets Mattia Villardita, 27, from northern Italy, dressed as Spider-Man, during his general audience in the San Damaso Courtyard of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican. Photo: CNS.

CHAI BRADY

Vocations push: Breathing fresh life to recruit workers for the vineyard PAGE 15



GREEN CHURCH

Encouraging the cure for environmental destruction this summer PAGE 34.



DAVID QUINN

What will we do if there are aliens? PAGE 13



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Inside this week

Books

The legacy of the enigmatic Parnell

Pages 36-37



Fr Vincent Sherlock

Reflecting on first penance

Page 40



Divestment dilemma

The need to keep Catholic schools Catholic

Pages 18-19



Managing Editor: Michael Kelly, editor@irishcatholic.ie

Northern Correspondent: Martin O'Brien, martin@irishcatholic.ie

Multimedia Journalists: Chai Brady, chai@irishcatholic.ie

Ruadhán Jones, ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Jason Osborne, jason@irishcatholic.ie

Newsroom: news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026

Books Editor: Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie

Advertising: advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874094

Accounts: accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874020

Magnificat: magnificat@irishcatholic.ie

Shop: shop@irishcatholic.ie

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RSE SUPPORT PERSON

The Catholic Education Partnership (CEP) is seeking to appoint a **Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Support Person**, on a two-year fixed contract basis.

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

6,577 abortions in Ireland last year, Govt report shows

Ruadhán Jones

The Department of Health's annual report on abortion statistics shows that of the 6,577 abortions carried out in 2020, just 122 were carried out in situations where the life of the child or mother was in danger.

A further 194 women travelled to the UK to for an abortion in 2020, which brings the figure to 6,771 abortions.

More abortions took place in 2020 as a proportion of live births than in 2019 – 12.3% of pregnancies ended in abor-

tion in 2020, compared with 10.96% in 2019.

In 2020, 20 procedures were carried out due to a risk to life or health; five due to a risk to life or health in an emergency situation; 97 due to a "fatal foetal anomaly"; and 6455 in early pregnancy, meaning before 12 weeks pregnancy have elapsed.

According to a release from the Department of Health, the HSE has also submitted a report on reviews carried out in 2019 – this report has also been laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Of two applications for review made to the Execu-

tive in 2020, one was found to have met the requirements for a lawful "termination of pregnancy". The release gives no information on the other review.

The June 29 report, which covers the period from January 1 2020 until 31 December 2020, is the second since the introduction of the *Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018*.

The figures are similar to 2019, when 6,666 pregnancies were aborted.

In 2020, Dublin was the most frequently listed "county of residence" by those who

aborted their pregnancy, with 2,414 notifications received. Cork (645) and Limerick (278) were the second and third highest.

Meanwhile, Leitrim was cited the least (28), while Northern Ireland (36) and locations outside of Ireland (8) made up 44 of the locations cited.

For the second year in a row, the highest number of terminations carried out were in January (707 notifications), along with March (655) and April (638). The month with fewest notifications was December (319).

'The Rock that preserved for us the Mass'



Fr Sean Maguire celebrates Mass at Kildough Mass Rock, Co. Cavan, as part of Aid to the Church in Need's Mass Rock Campaign.

Priests must be 'more supportive' says Bishop Nulty, as he announces appointments

Staff reporter

Priests must become more comfortable "pulpit sharing" and "less consumed by our individual parishes", said Bishop Denis Nulty June 28.

Announcing the appointment of priests for the diocese of Kildare and Leighlin, Bishop Nulty emphasised that "every one of our 78 priests in parish ministry or available for parish ministry is involved in the diocesan changes in this exceptional pandemic time".

"We need to be much more supportive and cooperative with our neighbouring parishes," Bishop Nulty continued. "We need to facilitate time off for colleagues... and become less consumed by our individual parishes."

The following appointments, will take effect from August 20 next, the diocese announced: Mgr. John McDonald PP The Curragh is to become PE CC The Curragh; Fr PJ Somers CC The Curragh is to become PP The Curragh; Fr John Brickley PP Kilcock is to become PP Staplestown & Cooleragh; and Fr George Augustine CC Kilcock to become PP Kilcock.

Meanwhile, Fr Liam Lawton is to become Adm. Edenderry for one year while continuing his diocesan duties and living in Graiguecullen; Fr Shem Furlong, Knockbeg College is to become CC Bagenalstown; and Fr Petru Medves CC Bagenalstown is to become CC Abbeyleix, Ballinakill & Raheen.

Call to scrap school admission law stopping schools being truly Catholic

» **Continued from Page 1**

The *Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018* ended the use of religion as a criteria in school admissions in almost all cases. This means Catholic primary schools can no longer give preferential treatment to Catholic children when it comes to school admissions when the school is over-subscribed. However, other minority

religion schools are allowed to continue to discriminate in favour of children of their own faith.

The bishop said: "I think critically there has to be some sort of commitment to parents that in a post-divesting context, they will still be able to avail of a Catholic education if that is what they wish for."

"The bishops are saying that we are in favour of

divesting because plurality of patronage helps all schools be true to their own patronage.

"I think if Educate Together are forced to take Catholics, or if the Muslim schools have to take Catholics, or the Catholic school has to take kids who don't want a Catholic education, then there's a knock-on effect in terms of ethos," he said.

Aliens ‘no problem’ for Catholic belief but they may not need salvation

Ruadhán Jones

A recently published de-classified US intelligence report revealed that dozens of mysterious unidentified flying object (UFO) sightings could not be explained and did not rule out the possibility of alien spacecraft.

So if there is alien life, could this be a difficulty for Catholics? Not so says Fr Brendan Purcell, an Irish professor of philosophy in Notre Dame, Australia. Medieval theologians and philosophers played around with the idea that there could be other beings elsewhere, but while Catholics have no problem of belief about alien life, its existence is improbable and unlikely.

Fr Purcell believes God might have drawn the line with his troublesome creation on earth. “From God’s perspective, He has enough trouble with us as it is. We fit in very neatly into a whole ‘great chain of being’, it used to be called,” Fr Purcell explained. “In other words, God is pure Spirit, angels are spiritual beings but they’re limited because they are created. We are spiritual and material and all other living

beings are only material. You’ve got a very neat sequence going up, so if you need another example of spiritual-physical life somewhere else, honestly I don’t think it’s likely.”

But would the Church need to convert aliens if discovered? Dr Gaven Kerr of St Patrick’s College, Maynooth believes so. “Christ as the saviour of all from sin would need to be preached to such non-human rational beings” if they were discovered. “From the point of view of salvation”, the lecturer in philosophy speculated, “Christ’s salvific work is for the eradication of all sin”. This means, Dr Kerr argued, that “all rational natures are redeemed through his salvific work”, including potential alien life.

Fr Purcell disagrees. “We don’t know the nature of the “other beings”, who may not have fallen and so wouldn’t require a saviour. “They could be like the first Adam and Eve before the fall,” he continued. “It’s the mystery of salvation, there could be other created beings and so on, but they wouldn’t by any means necessarily have fallen so therefore they wouldn’t need a drama and salvation.”

Teenage social media celebrity defends pro-life position

Chai Brady

A Spanish social media ‘influencer’ who has millions of followers has expressed his pro-life position in several videos, saying “abortion is interrupting a life”.

Naim Darrechi (19), who has 26 million followers on TikTok, said that “When a woman is pregnant, if she doesn’t take anything, if she doesn’t abort, the natural cycle is going to make a life emerge”.

“To those who are in favour of abortion because they say that ‘the foetus does not suffer. It is a thing... that does not suffer’. It’s not a question of whether it suffers or not. The question is that a life is being taken away. A life that society has disregarded,” he said.

“I’m sure [I will receive] some negative comments for thinking what I think, but no one is going to tell me that an abortion isn’t taking a life.”

His comments were made in a series of videos about the issue, which have received millions of views.

In one of the videos, he said: “I can enter your house, turn on the gas and take your life without you suffering. I’m going to get 30 years for murder, and when someone has an abortion, which is the same thing, not only is it free but we pay for it out of our taxes.”

Asked whether he would have a baby if his girlfriend became pregnant, Mr Darrechi said: “I would be a dad without hesitation. You give me a child and I’ll fall in love with it.”



Naim Darrechi



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Bishop Cullinan criticises 'blindness' of EU parliament over abortion vote

Ruadhán Jones

The European Parliament's (EP) decision to adopt a resolution that denies the right to conscientious objection has "very serious consequences" for us all, Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan warned.

The EP voted June 24 to adopt the Matic Report, a resolution which also calls for abortion to be declared a human right, by 378 votes in favour and 255 against and 42 abstentions.

The text — drafted by Predrag Fred Matic, a Croatian Socialist MEP — is also critical of the "conscience clause", which allows doctors to deny abortion access if they don't believe in it. Withholding abortions "on grounds of religion or conscience," the text says, "endangers women's lives and rights".

Commenting on the vote, the bishop of Waterford and Lismore criticised the denial of the right to conscientious objection in Europe and in Ireland.

While people talk about freedom and

diversity, freedom today means "you are free to accept one view and dare anyone object or express a diverse opinion", Bishop Cullinan said.

"The fundamental right to conscientious objection derives from one's freedom of conscience. The decision of the EU parliament has very serious consequences not only for the unborn but for us all."

The bishop added that it is "utterly sad" that while "we try to save human lives in these pandemic times, other human lives are not

only ignored but dismissed as worthless".

"What blindness!" Bishop Cullinan continued. "The view of the majority of the EU parliament betrays a one-sided perspective on abortion and does not take full account of the life situations of all the persons concerned and the pain and suffering involved."

"The unborn child has an independent life created in the image of God and therefore has the human right to life."

All 13 Irish MEPs voted in favour of the resolution.

Dublin archbishop appoints key lieutenant

Chai Brady

Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell has tapped Fr Gareth Byrne to take over the key position overseeing the day-to-day running of diocesan administration.

As Moderator of the Curia, Fr Byrne will be a key adviser to Dr Farrell and supervise diocesan offices and agencies on behalf of the archbishop.

He replaced Msgr Paul Callan, a close friend of Arch-

bishop Dermot Martin who has worked in various jobs in the Dublin diocesan headquarters for many years.

Fr Byrne is best known for his work in the area of faith formation and religious education. He was the lead author of the national directory for catechetics in Ireland *Share the Good News*. He is currently director of the Mater Dei Institute for Catholic Education at Dublin City University.

The Irish Catholic under-

stands that Msgr Callan will remain in place until August to allow a smooth transition.

Meanwhile, the newly-constituted Dublin Council of Priests is due to meet today (Thursday). It is made up of clerics elected by the priests of the diocese as well as other priests appointed by Archbishop Farrell. It advises on a range of issues and gives direction on pastoral initiatives within the country's largest diocese.

'Small victory' hailed as Newstalk complaint upheld

Staff reporter

The Irish Catholic tv and radio critic has welcomed a decision by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) to uphold a complaint against Newstalk over a lack of objectivity and impartiality in dealing with the pro-life point of view.

Brendan O'Regan had complained that an item on the station on December 10 had treated a pro-life spokesperson with hostility while others expressing the pro-choice point of view were not treated in this fashion.

Mr O'Regan complained that the number of interviewees and the time allocated to

each was weighted against pro-life views on the topic.

A decision by the BAI stated that the complaints committee: "concluded that content on Newstalk Breakfast and The Hard Shoulder infringed rule 4.22 of the Code of Fairness, Objectivity and Impartiality in News and Current Affairs".

Mr O'Regan told *The Irish Catholic*: "I just want media to be fair and am glad for this small victory, though the decision made upheld the complaint only in relation to presenters being partisan, while unfortunately accepting the systemic bias in the way programmes are set up, in this case one pro-lifer grilled and three pro-choicers affirmed".

Have your say SYNOD SOAPBOX

The Church in Ireland is moving towards holding a national synod in the next five years. It is part of the vision of Pope Francis of laypeople, religious, priests and bishops working together to discern where God is leading the Church and charting a future vision for Irish Catholicism.

As part of the process, *The Irish Catholic* wants to give a space for readers to share hopes and dreams for the future of the Church and what they would like to see as part of the synod process. The 'synod soapbox' will appear regularly in the paper as a space for dialogue and discernment.

If you would like to be part of the conversation, please send a submission of no more than 300 words to editor@irishcatholic.ie

The Irish Catholic

Giving 100% at school



Pictured are Paddy Ryan (left) and Liam Ryan 6th Class pupils at Doon CBS Primary School who recorded full school attendance during their years at primary school.

NEWS IN BRIEF

July sacraments 'off' - Tánaiste

Tánaiste Leo Varadkar has confirmed that First Holy Communion and Confirmation ceremonies scheduled in the Republic for July should not now go ahead. This is despite the fact that the same ceremonies have been

taking place north of the border for months.

Announcing plans to delay the opening of indoor hospitality until at least July 19, Mr Varadkar told a news conference on Tuesday that "indoor sacraments planned for July are off".

It will come as a shock to many parishes that had been planning to hold small socially-distanced Masses for Confirmation and Holy Communion starting on July 5.

Kindness: Christian virtue or health advice?

I'm fascinated by the way that old ideas often return wearing new livery. The latest health advice against Covid-19, and other ailments is – ventilation. That is, a dose of fresh air which Florence Nightingale was advocating back in the 1850s, and which every convent school practiced, before the era of the (less healthy) air conditioner.

And the human behavioural advice now enjoying a new vogue is – kindness. 'Be kind' is a rallying-cry from the trendsetters. 'Kindness', once a normal Christian virtue under the aegis of 'charity', has reappeared wearing a more scientific hat.

Happiness

The psychologists and health boffins are now saying that kindness produces 'happiness' hormones like serotonin and oxytocin. The Harvard Business School is teaching that being kind is recommended for health – it reduces stress and blood pressure, and may save you from depression.

Kindness was sometimes to be tempered by prudence, or even discipline"

The pharmaceutical scientist Dr David R. Hamilton writes books showing that kindness impacts the brain, the heart and the immune system, and it can increase your lifespan.



Mary Kenny

I think we always knew that being kind makes us feel better, although it wasn't recommended for such narcissistic reasons: it was advanced as a Christian virtue, as in "do unto others as you would have them do unto you". Compassion was the necessary accompaniment of kindness.

Christian virtue under the aegis of 'charity', has reappeared wearing a more scientific hat"

But kindness was sometimes to be tempered by prudence, or even discipline. A line was drawn between kindness and indulgence. It wasn't considered kind to spoil a child, because it would cause her to grow up self-centred and peevish. My mother, always kind in practice, cited Shakespeare's words in Hamlet that "I must be cruel, only to be kind". Sometimes you had to take tough measures to achieve a greater goal. Parents sent their children away to austere boarding schools because they believed, in the long run, that it was for the child's benefit.

Kindness has always been extolled, although there was also a distinction between 'being kind' and 'being soft'. Be kind, yes, but being soft means being taken for a mug.

Perhaps the perfect Christian would allow herself to be made a fool of, for kindness' sake. I encountered a woman who didn't complain about being burgled, saying she concluded that the burglar's need was greater than hers. This seemed heroically altruistic. And yet, supposing her attitude served to encourage a young offender, who went on to career of crime which harmed many other people? Would that have been a kindness?

Perhaps the perfect Christian would allow herself to be made a fool of, for kindness' sake"

The American 'Random Acts of Kindness' movement, which sprung up a few years ago, was a generous idea about performing spontaneously kind acts for strangers; it's interesting to see the boffins now flagging up kindness as a health measure. Old wine in new wineskins!



A sister helps a resident drink from a bowl at a nursing home in Caracas, Venezuela. Pope Francis has asked people to celebrate the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly on July 25 with small acts of kindness. Photo: CNS.

More hostile for Catholic writers today

It's 40 years since the death of the Tralee-born writer Alice Curtayne, and to mark the anniversary the Kerry Writers' Museum recently sponsored an on-line talk, presented by her grandson Niall Rynne.

Alice Curtayne, born in 1901 and died in 1981, was a renowned Catholic writer of the mid-twentieth century. Some of her best-known books are currently being reissued by an American publisher, Cluny Media. Her 1939 novel *House of Cards*, which I reviewed in the pages of *The Irish Catholic*, was republished last year: a

riveting insight into a young Irishwoman's working life in England and then in Italy in the 1930s.

Her *Catherine of Siena* – a very popular biography when first published in 1929 – will be reissued by Cluny next year. She also did biographies of St Brigid, St Oliver Plunkett, and Francis Ledwidge, among many other works on Irish history, faith and culture.

As Niall Rynne illustrated, she travelled on successful speaking tours of the United States in the 1950s and was much honoured there. She married the writer Stephen

Rynne in her late 30s, and they had four children, living on a farm in Prosperous, Co. Kildare.

Alice Curtayne is an attractive character and well deserves the American publisher's revival of her books. Yet she was also fortunate in her timing: the work of a Catholic writer was welcomed during her lifetime, and that helped to amplify her voice. A Catholic writer today finds a more hostile reception.

See www.kerrywriters-museum.com for playback details of this interesting talk.

● Sadly, one of the social trends emerging from the lockdown, in England and Wales, is yet another rise in the number of abortions, which have increased to their highest point ever recorded. The greatest increase is among women over 30, rather than associated with teenage pregnancies. The reasons given are the uncertainties of life under lockdown.

The birth control pioneer Marie Stopes claimed that abortion would be reduced to virtually nil once reliable contraception was available to all women – women could control their fertility by preventative, not destructive, measures. I wonder what she would say to the inexorable increase in terminations?

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Historic moment as GB Capuchin's become delegation of Irish Province

Ruadhán Jones

A decline in numbers of the order in Great Britain and Ireland, and a desire to pool resources to promote vocations, prompted the "historic" decision.

There are just 25 Capuchin's left in Great Britain, no longer enough for it to be considered an independent province. There are 65 Irish Capuchin's left – their average age is 78.

Irish provincial Bro. Seán Kelly OFM Cap., sees the transition, which

has been 10 years in the making, as an opportunity to witness the universal call to holiness across national territories.

"To help smaller provinces survive and to function well, it's about amalgamating them with slightly larger ones," Bro Kelly said. "As we're close neighbours, it seemed appropriate, inevitable even, that we would merge with Great Britain."

"It is a great occasion to remember that we Capuchins, before we call ourselves English, Irish, Scottish or whatever national identity we have

our origin from, are simply first and foremost, brothers in the Gospel and followers of St Francis."

The merger had been proposed in 2013, and it was only after a "long period of discernment" that the "historic" merger was proclaimed, June 19, by General Minister of the Capuchins, Bro. Roberto Genuin.

The Irish provincial hopes that the merger will be an opportunity for growth together.

"Nothing much will change on the ground", Bro. Kelly continued, "only that we'll become more unified in

relation to our vocation promotions and our formation of postulants, which has been done in unity in the past.

"It can only help to pool our resources for vocation promotions. But also, as the general minister said on Saturday, we are witness to the rest of Europe of the way forward."

In October 2021, a meeting will be held in Poland for all the provincials of the order to discuss the future of the Capuchin's in Europe, Bro. Kelly explained.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Carmelites to leave Knocklyon parish

With "heavy hearts", the Carmelites in Ireland informed the parish of their intention to return the care of the parish to the Archdiocese of Dublin from the January 30, 2022.

Irish Provincial Fr Michael Troy O. Carm. said the decision came as the order faced issues with "the absence of vocations to our way of life".

"This fact has led to the serious issue in our ability to maintain all our communities and ministries in Ireland," Fr Troy said in a letter to the parish.

The parish council has started a petition encouraging the order to reconsider their decision.

Bishop proposes sale of maternity hospital site

It is "unfair and unreasonable" to ask the Sisters of Charity to gift the proposed site for the national maternity hospital to the state, Bishop Kevin Doran said.

In a homily June 27, the bishop of Elphin suggested that it would be better "to sell the site to the state at the market value".

The proceeds could be used "to support the care of women in crisis pregnancy, to support hospice care for children with life-limiting conditions, or to support pastoral care for women who have lost babies during pregnancy".

Call for extra priests in 'ambitious' Croagh Patrick pilgrimage project

Chai Brady

Pilgrims have been welcomed back to Croagh Patrick this year with an "ambitious project" which aims to extend access to the sacraments for the pilgrimage from Wednesday to Saturday this month, July 1-31.

The annual Reek Sunday pilgrimage was cancelled last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to this, the administrator of Westport Fr Charlie McDonnell said: "Each year, while all of the spiritual benefits of the Croagh Patrick pilgrimage have been available to pilgrims from June to September, up to now the Sacraments have only been available on Reek Sunday."

"This year, due to ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, it

would be impossible to facilitate the pilgrimage on one day only so I am arranging to greatly extend provision of the Sacraments for pilgrims throughout the month of July," he said.

"Reek Pilgrimage 2021 is an exciting and ambitious project to undertake and will require great generosity on the part of lay volunteers and priests alike."

Archbishop Michael Neary will celebrate Mass at 6.30pm on the eve of Reek Sunday, July 24 in Saint Mary's Church, Westport.

Fr McDonnell appealed to priests across the country to become involved as this year they will need three times as many priests. Those interested can contact Fr McDonnell at frchaz@me.com.

Sadness as Sisters of Mercy retreat centre ends public ministry

Ruadhán Jones

The Galilee Spirituality Centre, Co. Roscommon, announced June 25 that it would be ending its public ministry this month, as a shrinking congregation meant it was no longer viable.

The three remaining RSM sisters will continue to live at the centre and minister to the local community for the next three years, Sr Olive Flanagan RSM of Galilee told *The Irish Catholic*.

"It's a stressful time," Sr Olive said, adding

that the order deemed the centre no longer viable as "our governance structures within the congregations are changing, we're reducing in numbers and ageing".

"We're very sad about it," Sr Olive added. "Everything has happened so quickly too, we've had no time to have closure on anything. We will do later, but that has added to the pain of it."

The local, "tight-knit community" are happy the sisters are staying, Sr Olive said, asking for people's prayers as they go forward.

Take a bow, Dame Joan



Dame Joan Walshe of Slane Road, Navan is pictured at her investiture ceremony, June 27, when she was received into the Pontifical Order of Pope St Sylvester at St Mary's Church. Also pictured are her husband Padraig, Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan and Fr Declan Hurley Adm. Navan.



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Breda O'Brian

The View



Politicians cannot pick and choose Church teachings and then expect to be considered good Catholics

Amidst the ongoing controversy about whether US President Joe Biden should be excommunicated for his stance on abortion, important points are being missed. There needs to be sustained teaching on the nature of the Eucharist before people will understand excommunication. (This is not to suggest a moratorium on excommunication until all Catholics understand Church teaching, just a call for sustained teaching on the Eucharist.)

In 2019, Pew Research found that just one-third of US Catholics say they believe that "the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus."

Even among regular Mass goers, only 63% of US Catholics accept transubstantiation. While 43% of US Catholics believe that it is the official teaching of the Church that the bread and wine are symbolic. Even when they know the Church's teaching, one in five Catholics (22%) reject transubstantiation.

Ireland position

We can presume that the position is no better in Ireland. Like the old joke about the Kerryman giving directions, you would not start from here to try to give a rationale for denying President Biden the Eucharist until he shows evidence of sincere repentance for his support for increased access to legalised abortion.

In order to understand excommunication, it is necessary to understand worthy and unworthy reception of the sacrament. None of us is worthy or deserving to receive our Lord. We are all equally undeserving, crying out with the centurion for healing - "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."

Perhaps a better distinction might be between respectful and disrespectful reception of the sacrament, an idea which is described by the term eucharistic coherence - in other words, that there should be a unity between the kind of life you are leading and the reception of the Eucharist.

Anyone in mortal sin should not receive the Eucharist. Nor should the Eucharist ever be received casually. If

someone has missed Mass for months not due to Covid-19 restrictions but because of indifference or laziness, he or she should not just present themselves at the altar to receive, but instead, go first to Confession.

If a person is out of communion with the Church on basic teachings, whether it be the right to life, or the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, or the obligation to see Christ in the poor and to act on that insight, it is not respectful to receive the sacrament.

Excommunication is meant to be a kind of medicine, a natural consequence of taking particular stances, which encourages the person to reflect and be reconciled with the Church.

Some people believe that it wrong to single out abortion as a cause for public excommunication. For example, in *Amoris Laetitia*, drawing on earlier writings by Pope emeritus Benedict in *Deus Caritas Est*, it says: "When those who receive [the Eucharist] turn a blind eye to the poor and suffering, or consent to various forms of division, contempt and inequality, the Eucharist is received unworthily." (186).

“In order to understand excommunication, it is necessary to understand worthy and unworthy reception of the sacrament”

The right to life, however, is foundational. Without a right to life, no other rights can be exercised. President Biden represents many within the Church who believe themselves to be good Catholics while in flagrant breach of basic teachings. Yet it could be argued that William Barr, President Trump's attorney general, was in flagrant breach of Church teaching when he facilitated a slew of federal capital punishments taking place in the last days of Trump's administration.

In September 2020, Mr Barr received the *Christifideles Laici* Award from the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast Association. The award recognises a mem-

ber of the laity whose work "exemplifies" the teaching of the Catholic Church.

Death penalty

Three successive Popes have questioned the death penalty, with Pope St John Paul II reserving it for situations in which there was no other way to protect society from further violence - which in the modern world, effectively outlawed it completely. In 1999, on a trip to the US, John Paul called "for a consensus to end the death penalty, which is both cruel and unnecessary". Pope Francis built on that foundation in 2018.

Yet William Barr actively participated in facilitating 13 federal executions, some using drugs which anti-death penalty advocates say replicate the experience of drowning as the lungs fill with fluid. It gave President Trump the dubious distinction of being the American president who has executed the most prisoners for 130 years.

If the US bishops choose to excommunicate President Biden, they should excommunicate William Barr at the same time. They will thereby show that they respect all human life and that the decision to excommunicate is not partisan. They will also send a powerful message that those in public life cannot pick and choose among the Church's central teachings and expect to be Catholics in good standing.



Reek Pilgrimage 2021

ANNUAL NATIONAL PILGRIMAGE TO CROAGH PATRICK

July 1st to July 31st

Mass on the Summit, Wednesday to Friday at 12 noon.

Mass on Saturday at 10am.
(weather permitting)

Confessions before and after Mass, 11 to 11:45 am and 12:45 to 1:15 pm.

Please scan the QR code below for further details and updates

For 2021 only, Reek Sunday has been extended to incorporate the whole month of July, each week from Wednesday to Saturday, in order to facilitate those who wish to fulfil the Reek Sunday obligations.



*"In His hand are the depths of the earth,
the heights of the mountains are His also."*

Psalm 95:4

Image: Seánie Gavin - Cloudcam Ireland

Families must be informed and supported, not pushed towards having an abortion



We need action to stop parents being pushed to abort children like Baby Christopher, writes **Vicky Wall**

In 2018, I was one of a group of parents who knew, from personal experience, that safeguards were needed to prevent abortion being pushed after a diagnosis of a life-limiting condition for baby.

When I was pregnant with my baby girl, Liadán, she was diagnosed with Trisomy 18, the same condition that doctors mistakenly believed was the prognosis for Baby Christopher Kiely whose parents won a High Court action last week against the National Maternity Hospital.

I was told Liadán was “incompatible with life”, in the same way that Christopher’s parents were told he had a “fatal foetal abnormality”. Neither of those descriptions are medical terms.

In my distress, I asked the doctor what we could do, meaning what could we do to help her. To my horror, he told me that I could ‘pop’ over to England – obviously to have an abortion.

“It is not true to say that all preborn babies with Trisomy 18 have ‘no chance’ of survival”

Why was abortion the very first option offered to me – a distraught and terrified mum whose world had just been shattered? I wasn’t offered any information about the condition, such as a factual booklet or a website which might have helped me connect with other parents who had been in this situation. Instead I was told I could ‘pop’ off and end my daughter’s life.

That moment came flooding back to me this week when I read what Rebecca Price and Patrick Kiely were told about their unborn son, Christopher, as they were being advised to have an abortion. When the couple said that they weren’t afraid to take care of a sick baby, they were told their baby “wasn’t viable”.

In a statement, they said that they only considered the advice of their



doctor to abort their child because they were told Christopher had no chance of survival. It turned out the diagnosis was wrong, but at that stage, the baby’s life had been ended.

Trisomy

It is not true to say that all preborn babies with Trisomy 18 have ‘no chance’ of survival. Research published in *Pediatrics* showed that children who live until birth with Trisomy 18 have an average lifespan of 14 days, and that 10% live for more than a year.

Recently, an important editorial in the *Journal of the American*

Medical Association concluded that “survival [for babies with Trisomy] is not as rare as once thought”, and acknowledged the role that parents networking on social media had played in bringing doctors to a better understanding of the value of the lives of our Trisomy babies, and the support needed by parents.

This is the information that should be shared with parents, instead of attaching a meaningless label to a child and pushing parents towards abortion. One study, published in the *American Journal of Medical Genetics* showed that a shocking 61% of parents reported feeling pressure to

“Abortion must not be presented as the first and best option, and parents must be told that support groups and networks exist for families in their situation”

abort their baby after a diagnosis of a chromosomal disorder.

During the abortion referendum, we families who had been through negative experiences after receiving a poor diagnosis, sought to raise our fears that families would be pressured or pushed into abortion if safeguards were not put in place. We were ignored.

“The deeply disturbing case of Baby Christopher, aborted after a misdiagnosis, lays bare shocking truths about families pushed towards abortion in Irish maternity hospitals”

Now, our worst fears have been realised. Baby Christopher’s family say they never raised the issue of abortion, and that they were advised to have an abortion. We don’t know how many other families have been affected in the same way.

Both Simon Harris and then Ste-

phen Donnelly seem to be dragging their heels on an inquiry into the abortion of Baby Christopher. The media seem largely uninterested in examining whether the culture and mindset in maternity hospitals was a contributing factor.

Incorrect information

In the light of what the High Court action has now revealed, this culture must end immediately. Families must be informed and supported, not pushed towards abortion and given incorrect information, distorted by personal opinion. Abortion must not be presented as the first and best option, and parents must be told that support groups and networks exist for families in their situation.

The deeply disturbing case of Baby Christopher, aborted after a misdiagnosis, lays bare shocking truths about families pushed towards abortion in Irish maternity hospitals. We were told it would never happen, but it did, within three months of the new abortion regime. Now we need to make sure it never happens again.

Vicky Wall works with Every Life Counts which offers support and information to families where baby has been diagnosed with a life-limiting condition. www.everylifecounts.ie



Rebecca Price and Patrick Kiely, parents of Christopher outside the High Court.

Fast shifting Church-State relations calls for 'urgent' theology education

Chai Brady

There are an "awful lot" of people who lack religious literacy in Ireland, which has led to an "urgency" to equip people with a better understanding of theology, according to the Director of the Loyola Institute in Trinity College Dublin.

Even for practising Catholics, Dr Michael Kirwan SJ said, many have not received much formation since school.

"At a time when the relationship between the Church and the State, the Church and society is shifting enormously – a lot of changes very quickly – people are a bit bewildered," Dr Kirwan told *The Irish Catholic*.

"We've been involved in a couple of projects around the notion of religious literacy. There are an awful lot of people who are ignorant or illiterate about religion, Christianity, Catholicism, some of those people happen to be in the Church and just really don't have a great depth of formation."

Dr Kirwan said that even secular people need to know about what religion is and how it works, saying: "A recent example, regarding this controversy around the National Maternity Hospital – which I can see is very complex – is when one commentator said that we need a hospital that is independent of Church influence, and she said we need to be secular and we need to be pluralist."

"Those are two different terms. Somebody who is secular, or secularist, says there should be no input from religion, somebody who is pluralist is wanting to say 'well all the different voices should be represented'. On a basic level, does Ireland want to be a secular country, does it want to be a pluralist country? Those are not the same thing."

"If you were to do the full time MPhil it is quite a commitment because it's one year and it involves teaching on two evenings a week and it involves writing a dissertation"

"That's an example for me of somebody who doesn't really have a grasp of what the issues are and words are being bandied around."

There is currently a crisis in politics "across the board", Dr Kirwan said, in the UK, the US and in Europe.

"The lack of trust in politicians, the low level of participation, the resurgence of popularism and fascism and so on, it's just interesting to see people talk about the Church being in crisis and Christianity being in crisis but the secular political order is in crisis as well – and maybe there is a connection."

"I keep coming back to the phrase from Juergen Habermas, he is the big thinker on secularism and secularity and yet he speaks of an awareness of what is missing, he's not coming from a religious perspective but he is recognising that something, a piece of the jigsaw, is not there anymore, and it's actually quite a vital piece of the jigsaw."



Some of the MPhil class of 2018/19 celebrate at their graduation (left-right) Dr Con Casey, Founding Director Loyola Institute, Anne Potter, Edith O'Nuallain, Leslie Flores, Eoin Walshe, Loyola Institute's Dr Fáinche Ryan and Paul Mc Manus.

"This is his point, can societies in the long run, survive without something like religious commitment, religious values and so on?"

Courses

There are a variety of courses on Christian theology that require different levels of commitment depending on how much time an individual can devote to study, namely the Loyola Institute's Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma and MPhil in Christian Theology.

The MPhil consists of six modules plus a dissertation – which is 15-20,000 words – within the space of one year, the diploma is six modules without the dissertation and the certificate is three modules without the dissertation.

"If you were to do the full time MPhil it is quite a commitment because it's one year and it involves teaching on two evenings a week and it involves writing a dissertation so it's a really challenging programme and what we've tried to do is introduce other programmes that might be pathways to that, so the certificate and the diploma are less full in terms of workload," said Dr Kirwan.

"It might be the case that somebody may not be sure that they want to do an MPhil, they may not feel they are up to it, or they may not have the time, so therefore something like the certificate is a way into doing post-graduate study. You would be getting some of the same courses but not all of them while also getting the same kind of teaching."



Dr Michael Kirwan SJ
Director Loyola Institute.

Dr Kirwan explains that for a long time those who studied theology were training for the priesthood or were working in religious education, but nowadays there are a lot of people who are interested in their faith and have not felt they had the chance to study it in more depth.

The courses can also assist those who are in jobs related to theology; helping them towards a better understanding of the Faith. This could be a parish or diocesan worker, or a teacher.

"The third group are people who might want to do further studies, and might want to go on and do a PhD and that's certainly been very true in the last couple of years. A fair number of students who have completed the MPhil have started PhD programmes with us and that's terrific. They go on and might get a job in the academy later, or again it's people who just want to follow this as far as it will go. There is quite a range of students with different motivations."

"There is currently a crisis in politics 'across the board', Dr Kirwan said, in the UK, the US and in Europe"

While having a degree is a necessity to enter into the programmes, it does not have to be in theology. Other degrees, such as in the humanities, are also considered. It is taken on a case-by-case basis. Life experience and formation is also taken into account.

There are also several scholarship programmes, largely funded by religious orders who Dr Kirwan said have been "very, very generous".

"Very often of course the orders would have had money available for training their own men to be priests but that's not where we are at the moment because the people aren't there. We're recognising that the Church can't survive without some people taking an interest in the Faith in a structured way, and therefore making this education available to people. It does make a difference to quite a few of our students who wouldn't be able to take these programmes on unless the sponsorship was there so it's great that we're able to offer that."



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"Studying at Trinity, with its world renowned reputation for scholarship, intellectual rigour, and the opportunity to tap into the rich spiritual and theological traditions of Christian theology has provided me with possibilities to grow intellectually as a reflective thinker, engaging with questions of faith in a critical, reasoned way."

Shannon Campbell, Student,
MPhil in Christian Theology 20-21



Paul Corcoran, 2019-20 MPhil Graduate Christian Theology;
now enrolled in Loyola Institute as PhD research student

"Much of my research in the last year has put the Irish poetic tradition in conversation with theology. Patrick Kavanagh has been the primary focus of my attention, but in many ways, Seamus Heaney is cut from the same cloth. The work of both great Irish poets moves effortlessly from the ephemeral to the eternal. Their work, influenced to varying degrees by their Catholic upbringing, can operate in tandem with traditional theological perspectives to say something new about what it means to be a person of faith today."

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For further details of MPhil, Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma in Christian Theology and how to apply: www.tcd.ie/loyola-institute Email: Loyola@tcd.ie Phone +353 (0) 1 8964790 Closing date 31st July 2021

Omagh First Communion



Friends Luke, Connor, Ben and Seamus hang around after their Confirmation service at Sacred Heart Church, Omagh.



A proud Master McCrory with some of his newly Confirmed St Conon's pupils at the Sacred Heart Church, Omagh on Tuesday evening. Photos: Jason McCartan.



Zuzama Banas with parents Grzegorz and Izabela and sponsor Grazyna.



Aoibhin Dolan with parents Sean, Sinead and godmother Jackie Mallon.



Ben Donaghy joined by parents Stephen and Julie and sponsor Paul Devlin.



Seamus Franey with parents Michael and Sorcha and godfather Aaron.



A proud day for St Conon's and the Mehan family as twins Clare and Connor make their Confirmation.



Niall Gormley with parents Cathal and Regina and godfather Michael.



Maeve Corry celebrated her special day with parents Martina and Robert and godmother, Geraldine McNabb.



Sarah Devlin, sister Anna and parents Michael and Theresa.

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Killyclogher First Communion



Gaelscoil Na gCrann pupils who made their First Holy Communion in St Mary's Church, Killyclogher pictured with celebrant, Fr Roland Colhoun.
Photos: Jason McCartan



Oisín Jordan and family.



Sara Devlin with little sister Caitlín, parents Stephen and Kerry-Lee and grandparents Niall and Fiona Devlin.



Cobhlaith Sally with parents Brian and Marian, grandparents Ignatius and Teresa Sally and Cath and Paddy McMahon.



Oisín Corrigan and his devoted sister Shannon.



Conlagh and the McCrumlish family.



Lotti and the McCrory family.



Cú Uladh and the Nugent family.



A proud day for the Tracey family as Róisín makes her First Holy Communion.



Ultán MacRuairí with dad Gerard and mum Mairead.



Jack Gallagher pulls some moves on his special day, pictured with mum Fiona, dad Brendan and brother Eoghan.

Converting the aliens



People use night vision goggles to look at the night sky during an Unidentified Flying Object (UFO) tour in the desert outside Sedona, Arizona. Photo: CNS.



Jesus instructed his followers to teach all nations, but what about the rest of the Universe, asks David Quinn

The United States released a report at the weekend which didn't attract anything like the attention I thought it would. Maybe because Covid-19 is still dominating the news, and here in Ireland we decided to have another spasm of rage about Church and State prompted by the latest twists and turns in the National Maternity Hospital row.

The report was produced by the office of the Director of National Intelligence and concerns the topic of 'Unidentified Flying Objects', UFOs to you and me.

UFOs are a long-time favourite of science-fiction writing and movies, dating back over 100 years to the likes of HG Wells and his *War of the Worlds*, which was about a Martian invasion of Earth and has been adapted for cinema, TV and radio several times.

Kooks

For almost as long, UFOs have been associated with kooks and cranks who imagine they

have seen one in real life, or that they have actually been abducted by aliens. Another theory is that the US government is hiding the bodies of aliens or the wreckage of crashed spaceships.

“The report doesn't use the term 'UFO' for those sightings. The new term is 'Unidentified Aerial Phenomenon' or 'UAP'”

In any case, the new report says that since 2004, the US Navy has reviewed 144 sightings of UFOs and in the vast majority of cases, cannot tell us what they are.

The report doesn't use the term 'UFO' for those sightings. The new term is 'Unidentified Aerial Phenomenon' or 'UAP'.

Some of the sightings have been caught on video by US Navy pilots and can be found online. Just type in the words 'US Navy UFO footage' on YouTube and you will find them. The footage was originally given to *The New York Times* in 2017, and not to some kooky website.

Many of the objects observed by pilots fly in ways that are beyond known US technology. Could other foreign powers be responsible for them, like the Chinese or Russians? If so, they are far more technologically advanced than previously suspected.

As an article in *National Geographic* explains, some of the UAPs “lack flight control surfaces that would allow for high-speed manoeuvres, such as wings or a tail. The objects also had no visible exhaust, even when seen in infrared.”

The US report doesn't really attempt to guess what pilots are seeing. They don't rule alien activity in or out, for example.

Strange

Even typing that sentence seems strange. Maybe it is why the report hasn't received wider coverage. Although it comes from an official US agency, there is footage available, and it has received some coverage in mainstream news outlets, a lot of journalists and commentators might still be scared of being dismissed as kooks or cranks if they seem to take it seriously.

The Universe is unimaginably vast. Because of the speed need and the nature of physics, many scientists think it is impossible to cross any meaningful part of space in

a short amount of time, that is, within a few years, never mind days or months.

The nearest star system to ours is Alpha Centauri, which is 25 trillion miles away. To put that in perspective, the closest Mars gets to Earth is 'only' 34 million miles.

This is why, in science fiction movies, you often see crews being put in suspended animation because they might take decades to reach their destination.

So, even if there is intelligent life out there, we don't know how it could cross the vastness of space to reach us. The technology needed is almost literally unimaginable at this stage.

“UFOs are a long-time favourite of science-fiction writing and movies”

But let's say aliens do exist, and they have reached Earth, and one day, they reveal themselves to us, what then?

Well, a lot would depend on their disposition. Would they be friendly or hostile?

If we could communicate with them, we would want to learn about them and from them, and vice versa.

“Let's say aliens do exist, and they have reached Earth, and one day, they reveal themselves to us, what then?”

Would there be religious implications? For example, would they have a religion of their own? Would they want to convert us to that religion?

Beliefs

Would they have some other set of beliefs and values they might want to convert us to for our benefit, as they might see it?

Would we seek to convert them? Many people would see it is absurd that (say) Christian missionaries would try to do this, although it is not really anymore 'absurd' when you think about it than the missionary efforts of the past when Christian and non-Christian societies first encountered each other. Jesuit missionaries, for example, sought to convert China and Japan.

Old debates might revive about whether these newly encountered beings had souls. And even if they did, would they need saving?

But let's say, for the sake of the argument, that the world had become completely secular by the time we encountered aliens, and suppose we felt we had a superior idea of equality compared with this new alien race, what would we do then?

Would a Richard Boyd-Barrett seek to convert these beings to socialism? If so, that would simply be another type of missionary endeavour.

The fact is, as long as different peoples have been meeting each other, we have been seeking to influence one another in multiple ways. New ideas meet, for example, and they can cross-fertilise each other, or else one becomes dominant and the other dies out.

If we were to encounter an alien race, it would be no different. But at least it would have one certain benefit; it would give us something other than Covid-19 to talk about.

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Dealing with begrudgers

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



Local begrudgery is a problem that is not confined to Ireland. Today's three readings tell how Ezekiel, St Paul and Jesus had to face it. So, if you feel that you are being under appreciated, that you are being undervalued, then you are in very good company. Negative tendencies to be a knocker must be replaced by positive efforts to appreciate others. And express your appreciation. Don't wait for the funeral

“Jesus’ hometown, Nazareth, was never even mentioned in the Old Testament”

for the eulogy. Send me the flowers while I can smell them.

Jesus' hometown, Nazareth, was never even mentioned in the Old Testament. Herod the Great undertook a massive building project in nearby Sepphoris and Nazareth became a migrant workers' town. What a surprising choice as the hometown of the Messiah! And who would have anticipated that the Son of God would serve his time at a carpenter's bench? Why be surprised then if God wants to set up home in my unworthy life? God does have a sense of humour.

Fault

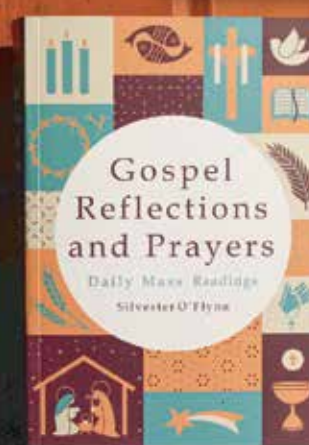
St Paul's insight in the second reading is profound. There were people in Corinth finding fault with his preaching. Three times he pleaded with the Lord: "Lord, take away my problem." But God answered,

"Sorry, Paul, but you will have to live with this one. However, my grace is enough for you; my power is at its best in weakness." What an extraordinary insight, that God's power might be seen more in our weakness than in our talents. Paul took it as a les-

son that God saw the need to puncture his pride. My weakness makes me more humble; and then there is more space for God's grace to operate. God may not remove the problem, but will grant the power to cope, even to grow stronger through it.

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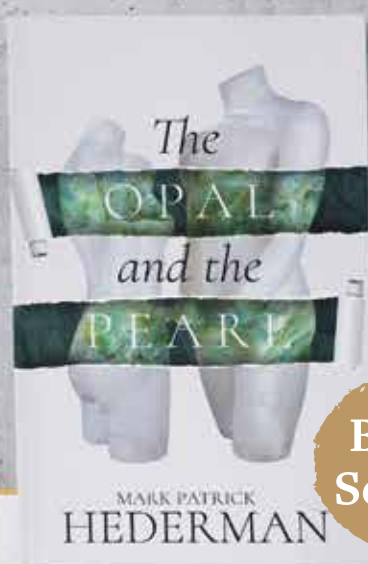
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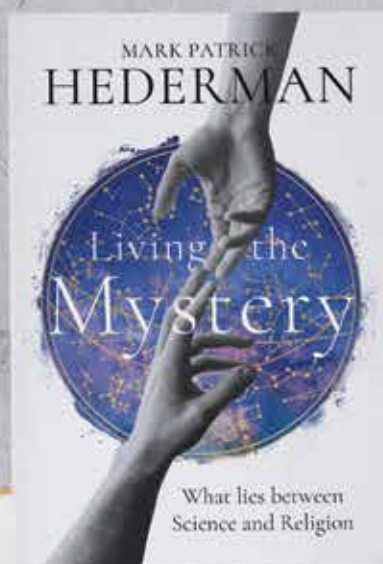


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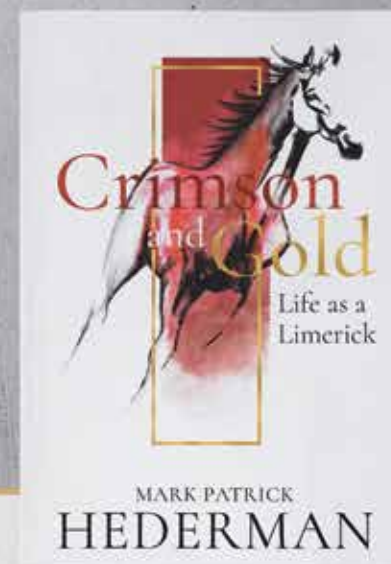
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Arguing religion is alive and well in our world, Hederman disagrees secularisation has taken over and contends that most individuals are religious and can't help being religious.

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Where is God to be found in the Ireland of today? Hederman examines this question and explores how we can hone in on the most precious aspects of our faith and cancel the surrounding noise.

'Tough have to get going as salvation is an essential service' – new vocations director



A vocation to priesthood is a call to be more, bring more and give more, Fr Séamus McEntee of Dublin Diocese tells Chai Brady

“There's change in the air,” according to the new director of vocations in the archdiocese of Dublin, and coming out of a pandemic, which has been a time to reassess life's purpose for many people, young men need to be given every opportunity to discern their calling.

There are a host of new possibilities for lay involvement, such as the role of catechist, parish pastoral worker and permanent deacon, which has further emphasised the importance of the unique ministry of priests, according to Fr Séamus McEntee.

Continue

Fr McEntee will continue in his roles as a chaplain in DCU as well as the national chaplain and Dublin diocesan chaplain for St Joseph's Young Priests Society. A man with several hats on, he is certainly an example of the qualities sought after in those discerning a priestly vocation, as he says, it's a fulfilling but challenging life. Fr Bill O'Shaughnessy will be joining him as the new assistant vocations director.

“It's not a numbers game, whether it's one or whether it's 10 or whether it's 100, they have to be good, well-rounded”

“The pandemic has been a positive time for men to reflect on their calling, their role, where they want to go and what gives them meaning and purpose in life,” Fr McEntee told *The Irish Catholic*.

“I'm seven years ordained since June 3, and I can honestly say it's a life worthwhile and a life that's different. If it's a call from God, God would always call us to more, to give a little bit more and to be more in society and in the world.”

His own vocation journey has taken many directions. Fr McEntee has degrees in business and was a



Fr Séamus McEntee (right) and Fr Bill O'Shaughnessy

car salesman for 10 years. There was a time he was looking into joining the Jesuit community and was with the Missionary of Charity Fathers for 5-6 years in India and Mexico, but both did not work out.

“I've an awful lot of life experience to bring to my role as a vocations director for the archdiocese of Dublin,” he explains.

“Some men are going to be older, who might be more interested, they have a bit of life experience. Some may be more educated and they are then considering what they are doing is not for them and want to try something different, they have more gifts and talents to give.”

Strong leadership

Fr McEntee praised Archbishop Dermot Farrell, the relatively new archbishop of Dublin, for his “strong leadership”, adding “I think that will add a great source of stability and freshness and newness to our diocese and our way of thinking, behaving, acting and growing as Christians in the community in Dublin”.

Dioceses across Ireland are facing several crises coming out of the pandemic, which has been almost all-consuming, a huge drop in finances being one of the obvious impacts. The decline in vocations to the priesthood however, has been a longstanding conundrum.

Currently there is one person en route to become a priest in the Archdiocese of Dublin, which Fr McEntee says is “probably the lowest it has ever been”.

Numbers

He said: “It's not a numbers game, whether it's one or whether it's 10 or whether it's 100, they have to be good, well-rounded, wholesome men who want to give their life to God.”

“A man today in priesthood has to be a man who is multi-gifted or multi-talented or be able to adjust, or be able to take on more, because more and more is going to be expected or asked of priests as well. The challenge is there.”

While it is certainly challenging, he said those interested “have to be able to take care of themselves as well, with the supports of the fraternity of priests and the diocese as well. We give all of those supports”.

Over the past two years in particular they have seen an increased interest in vocations, with Fr McEntee saying he has been accompanying a number of men during the past few years who are discerning.

“I would be very hopeful that next year we will have a number of men entering what's called a propaedeutic year [the beginning of the formation journey],” he said.

Fr McEntee is also on the Council for Vocations of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference which has been trialling online ‘Come and See’ events during the pandemic, which are aimed at giving people an idea of what a vocation to the priesthood means.

“Munster had a virtual ‘Come and See’ and they had 35 or more men from different parts of Ireland and many of them were from the Munster province. So, there is an appetite out there we will be looking at, hopefully when things start to open up a little bit, we will be having more physical ‘Come and Sees,’” he said.

“A man today in priesthood has to be a man who is multi-gifted or multi-talented or be able to adjust, or be able to take on more”

“We're going to have an event before Christmas, maybe in St Paul's on Arran Quay, a small prayer event, a Holy Hour or something like that, and we will be inviting men from the archdiocese of Dublin to come together physically.”

“For me, and the team, it's a new start, a new beginning and I'm very much looking forward to getting

stuck in as it were, into promoting vocations and finding new ways, maybe looking at setting up a Facebook page or tweaking and updating our websites and trying the social media avenue perhaps a bit more and just getting the word out and getting things in motion, getting the awareness out there, putting vocations to priesthood on the radar, even if it is a tiny blip for men.”

Aware

The vocations office of the archdiocese want to make men aware, whether that's through parishes, families or social media, “that the Church is alive and active and going forward and moving forward, we're not closing down, in fact the opposite”.

“It's when the going gets tough, we get tougher, the tough get going, we want to send that out there, that we are serious about what we do, because salvation is serious and salvation is essential. It's an essential service,” said Fr McEntee.

“We really want to help men discern God's purpose for them in their lives and for them ultimately to find happiness and to be happy and to bring that love and mercy that they have encountered in their own lives, through having that foundational relationship with Jesus, to others and help transform the world.”

Fr McEntee added that if there is anyone thinking they have a vocation to be a priest or is interested in finding out more about being a priest in the archdiocese, they can contact him or Fr O'Shaughnessy at vocations@dublindiocese.ie or they can visit the website: dublindiocese.ie/vocations

“The pandemic has been a positive time for men to reflect on their calling, their role, where they want to go and what gives them meaning and purpose in life”



We are a people of the incarnation and reaching out to tangible things is important to us, writes **Canon Benedict Fee**

Three statues; two big, one small; one is in Rome, two in Ireland; one north of the border, one south of the border.

The first is found on the right-hand side of St Peter's Basilica in Rome. Scholars say it was crafted by Arnolfo di Cambio (1245-1302). But this is disputed with some claiming it may be as old as the 5th Century. It is of course a majestic bronze statue of St Peter but what makes it most noticeable is its right foot. The countless pilgrims to St Peter's down through the centuries in touching the foot of the statue have eroded and polished the foot so that it no longer looks bronze but rather bright as brass with a warmth and a softness, making it almost fleshy to the touch.

St Oliver Plunkett

The second statue is found far from the marble of Rome, here in Ireland at the town of The Bridge; Drogheda, Co. Louth. The 19th century neo-gothic spire of St Peter's Parish Church pierces the sky over the banks of the Boyne. Since 1921 St Peter's Drogheda is also the national shrine of the martyred Archbishop of Armagh, St Oliver Plunkett. Inside the West door as pilgrims progress to venerate the relic of the martyr's head they pass on the left-hand wall of St Peter's a miniature copy of the St Peter's statue of Rome. It came to St Peter's in 1907 and it seems only right to have this statue here, for St Oliver spent 22 years of his life, as student, priest and professor in the eternal city and no doubt would have touched on occasion the foot of St Peter's statue.

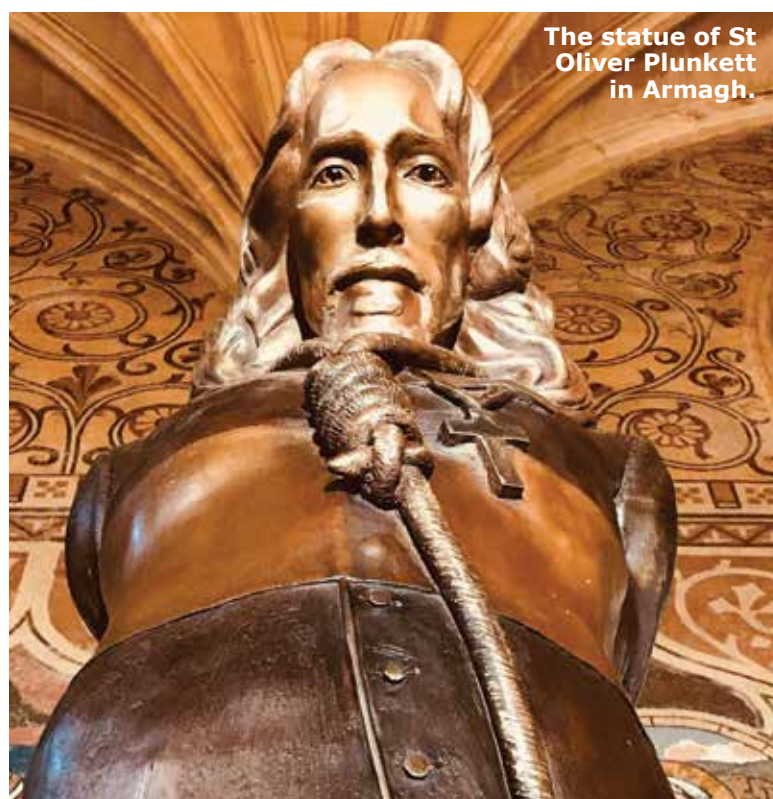
“It is said that seeing is believing but perhaps it could even be said that touching is believing more”

The foot of this little statue in St Peter's is now also as bright as brass, polished by the countless pilgrims who for exactly a century this year have honoured the relic of St Oliver here in the parish church of Drogheda.

Lastly, two years ago on July 9, 2019 to honour the 350th Anniversary of the appointment of St Oliver Plunkett to the See of Armagh, Archbishop Eamon Martin unveiled in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh a bronze statue of his martyred predecessor. It is seven foot tall standing on a four foot plinth. It is the work of Dublin-born (now New York-based) sculptor,



The foot of the statue of St Oliver Plunkett.



The statue of St Oliver Plunkett in Armagh.

Dony MacManus. The statue captures the moment when Oliver's right foot, almost clawed to the ground, tatters on the edge of his execution, at Tyburn on July 1st 1681.

Hearts

The people of Armagh have taken the statue to their hearts, touching the foot as they come and go to Sunday and weekday Masses. No doubt this right foot in time too will lose its brown bronze hue and begin to shine bright as brass and feel warm and soft to the touch.

Isn't it a strange thing, so much touching; it is said that seeing is believing but perhaps it could even be said that touching is believing

more. We are a people of the incarnation, we are of flesh, we are a people of the touch.

In touching a statue of a saint it's almost as though people want to touch something of the divine.

The statue of St Oliver Plunkett is also the focus of prayer and reflection for all who suffer for the faith in our world today. People like the modern martyr, Fr Ragheed Ghanni, who again like St Oliver studied in Rome while a resident in the Irish College. No doubt he too touched the foot of St Peter and indeed because he worked on the island of Lough Derg during his holidays from Rome, both as student and postgraduate priest, he may have touched the foot



The statue of St Peter at the Vatican.

of little St Peter in Drogheda too. He was gunned down in Iraq on Holy Trinity Sunday a mere 14 years ago.

Perhaps sometime in the future a statue will be raised to this young priest. People will perhaps touch its right foot praying the Lord to give them the faith of St Peter, and St Oliver and Fr Ragheed too. May they all pray for us.

Of course we are now in a *Noli me tangere*, (Don't touch me) time when for the good of each other we have

to be careful about the gift of touch. But there will come a day hopefully when we will be able to touch again with faith and hope those whom we love and touch again what we love. Please God soon.

i Canon Benedict Fee is parish priest of Clonoe, Co. Tyrone and editor of *Not Force Nor Might The Gift of the Martyr*, a book of reflections and prayers on and about the statue of St Oliver in Armagh Cathedral.

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Being realistic about delivering school divestment



Conversations hinge on local discussions and agreement if Catholic schools are to divest patronage, Bishop Tom Deenihan tells Chai Brady

School divestment has come to the fore of discussions in Ireland once again, as it does every few years, but perhaps one of the differences this time is that the bishops in a statement after their summer meeting indicated a willingness to “move as quickly as possible” on the issue.

Everyone agrees with the principle that there should be fewer Catholic schools. In fact, it was the Church that first mooted the idea which led then-education minister Ruairi Quinn to establish the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector in 2011.

Parishes were acutely aware that while demand for Catholic education remains extremely high, the shifting landscape meant that the Church could not – and should not – remain the default provider of education for all pupils in the Republic.

An increase in religious diversity and more people identifying as non-religious meant that there should be greater pluralism and the Church suggested the idea of transferring the patronage of existing Catholic schools – divestment – where there is a sufficient demand and, crucially, where the desire of Catholic parents for a Catholic education for their children can still be met locally.

Identified

In 2016, 78.3% of the population identified as Catholic – numbering approximately 3.7 million people – compared to 84.2% in 2011, according to CSO (Central Statistics Office) figures. However, as the Church knows acutely, possibly a third or even a quarter of that number are Massgoers.

Divestment has undoubtedly been slow. Since 2012 just 12 Catholic primary schools transferred to a multid denominational ethos. Overall, about 88% of primary

schools have a Catholic ethos. The majority of these schools are under the patronage of the bishop in the diocese they are located.

Bishop Tom Deenihan of the Diocese of Meath, who is a member of the Council for Education and the Commission for Catholic Education and Formation, said the main barrier to divestment so far has been “local agreement”.

“I think you can’t look at the school in isolation, you have to look at the plurality of provision within an area”

Or perhaps, more to the point: a lack of local agreement. Bishop Deenihan knows the landscape more than most having been involved in negotiations on the issue for over a decade. At a national level, everyone agrees that there should be fewer Catholic schools. But when it comes to communities across the country, people are reluctant to give up their own local school.

According to Bishop Deenihan: “There will be people in a school who may wish for divesting and

there will be people in a school who would not want divestment. I think a significant issue is how do we get agreement locally in relation to what school we’re going to divest when there’s plurality.

“Divesting isn’t going to happen in a place where there is only one school, it’s going to happen in a place where there’s two or three Catholic schools. You are not going to have all the people who want an Educate Together school living in the same area,” he says.

For that reason, Bishop Deenihan insists that a decision to divest Catholic patronage will never be a “unanimous decision” among local communities.

Isolation

He said: “I think you can’t look at the school in isolation, you have to look at the plurality of provision within an area and then there may very well have to be a sort of a timeframe so that those who are in the school will be able to continue and those new students coming in will have a different type of thing so it will be a gradual process. It can’t be done overnight.”

The obvious solution, Bishop Deenihan says, is that students already enrolled in a Catholic school would work their way

through until graduation, however for new enrolments it would be made “very clear that they won’t be availing of a Catholic education and after a period of time the school will no longer be Catholic”.

“Bishop Deenihan insists that a decision to divest Catholic patronage will never be a ‘unanimous decision’ among local communities”

However, he said the experience so far is that despite the fact that “everyone says they are in favour of divesting, it has been reported, and the former archbishop of Dublin has commented on this widely, that when a particular place is identified, the situation changes”.

All politics is local, the adage goes – and so it proves with divestment. Even politicians who are vocal on the issue on the national stage shift gears when they get to their local constituencies and hear concerns on the ground.

It’s a frustration that Bishop Deenihan says is real. “Even politicians who are looking for divestment will campaign locally that the school shouldn’t be divested”.

However, he does think that the ground is opening up for a more mature conversation. “I think we are moving beyond that but at the same time there are difficult discussions to be held locally and what we are saying is that this is not the bishop’s decision, there has

“Divesting isn’t going to happen in a place where there is only one school, it’s going to happen in a place where there’s two or three Catholic schools”



“Parental choice is paramount, and that choice must be given full expression in any reconfiguration process”

to be consultation with parents and with teachers and the wider community.”

There must be a process whereby people are consulted and feel part of the decision, he continued, saying that “there has to be a willingness to accommodate those who do not wish for a Catholic education. It is not reasonable that people who do not wish to go to a Catholic school should be forced to go to a Catholic school”.

“The bishops said that one of the great strengths of faith-based primary schools has been their rootedness in local communities”

His comments very much echoed the statement of the summer 2021 general meeting of the Irish bishops’ conference on divestment. The bishops, as patrons of Catholic schools, said they are committed to “proactively engaging with the Department of Education in relation to reconfiguration of patronage”.

They said they are supportive of “an educational landscape which reflects the reality of the increasingly diverse society in our country”. The statement added that a true plurality of patronage across the country should ensure parental choice whilst “enabling patrons to be true to their own ethos and characteristic spirit”.

“Parents are the first and primary educators of their children. It follows

that the State should be responsive to the rights of parents to have their philosophical and religious beliefs supported during their children’s education.”

The bishops said that one of the great strengths of faith-based primary schools has been their rootedness in local communities and as patrons they are conscious that “any move to divest must involve a meaningful engagement at local level, supported by the Department of Education, with parents, teachers and the wider parish communities served by existing Catholic schools”.

The statement continues: “Parental choice is paramount, and that choice must be given full expression in any reconfiguration process. Within any new provision, parents who choose it should have access to an appropriate number of schools under Catholic patronage, which are enabled and supported in their Catholic ethos.”

“Bishops would like to move as quickly as possible to a situation in which the State supports parents with the provision of schools whose ethos genuinely reflects what they want for their children. Going forward, bishops wish to have a fruitful dialogue about the best way of ensuring that our school system reflects a diversity of provision.”

Flourish

One of the reasons the divestment conversation has come to prominence again is due to a Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme called Flour-

ish, developed by the Council for Catechetics of the Irish bishops’ conference with the support of the Catholic Primary School Management Association. It was introduced in April of this year.

“There is a realisation that many parents who have children in a Catholic school do so because it is either just the local school or standards are high”

Flourish has sparked criticism in some quarters with a number of Catholic primary schools publicly opting out of using the resource due to pressure from parents.

Despite the fact that it is a programme precisely for Catholic schools, some have objected to lines as simple as “puberty is a gift from God” and that the “Church’s teaching in relation to marriage between a man and a woman cannot be omitted”.

Bishop Deenihan said that it is not the Catholic Church who determines the curriculum, but the Minister for Education and Skills who is advised by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). While RSE is part of the curriculum set out by the NCCA, Flourish is a set of resources for teachers to use in Catholic schools

alongside the curriculum established by the NCCA.

“I read through the Flourish programme and it seems very reasonable, for example in 5th and 6th class there’s the whole issue of adolescence, there’s the issue of being able to say no, there’s the issue of internet safety,” he said.

“I think it’s important that if people are against some of the resources, they would actually say what they find objectionable but it’s important to bear in mind that the Catholic Church is not setting up an independent curriculum.”

Post-divestment

Focusing on a ‘post-divestment’ context, where an increasing number of schools begin to divest and no longer have a Catholic ethos, with the sacraments no longer being facilitated during school hours, parents who want a Catholic education in particular must be afforded the opportunity to have their child educated in a Catholic school, according to Bishop Deenihan.

At the same time, there is a realisation that many parents who have children in a Catholic school do so because it is either just the local school or standards are high. This presents a challenge in terms of preserving the ethos.

“Very often, people don’t necessarily pick a school because of the Catholic ethos, they may pick it because of the proximity or where friends go and things like that. Our position is that if parental choice is the determinant, and I think it has to be, then parents who wish for a Catholic education have to be accommodated to,” the bishop said.

“It’s more of a question of how we can ensure that those who wish for a Catholic education can be prioritised in relation to the remaining Catholic schools,” he said.

Currently, the *Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018* ended the use of religion as a criteria in school admissions in almost all cases. This means Catholic primary schools can no longer give preferential treatment to Catholic children when it comes to school admissions when the school is over-subscribed. However, other minority religion schools are allowed to continue to discriminate in favour of children of their own faith.

“Very often, people don’t necessarily pick a school because of the Catholic ethos, they may pick it because of the proximity or where friends go and things like that”

As more schools divest patronage in the coming years, Bishop Deenihan said the admissions policy should be reversed to cater for parents opting for a Catholic education. “I think critically there has to be some sort of commitment to parents that in a post-divesting context, they will still be able to avail of a Catholic education if that is what they wish for.

“What do you do in relation to admission policies? How do you ensure that people who live near the divested school and want the Catholic education will actually be able to send their kids to say, St Patrick’s School which remains under the Catholic patronage? With admissions legislation and all that, there is a difficulty,” Bishop Deenihan explained.

Contribute

The hope is that divestment can contribute to a thriving Catholic sector that is self-confident precisely because parents have self-consciously opted-in. In short, that the Catholic schools that remain can be authentically Catholic.

“The bishops are saying that we are in favour of divesting because plurality of patronage helps all schools be true to their own patronage and I think if Educate Together are forced to take Catholics, or if the Muslim schools have to take Roman Catholics, or the Catholic school has to take kids who don’t want a Catholic education, then there’s a knock-on effect in terms of ethos.

“We’re saying, parental choice is the determinant but we need to be able to give a Catholic education to those who wish for a Catholic education. In terms of a Catholic education, sacraments are hugely important.

“There are conversations happening with the department. I think we are anxious to proceed further along that road very quickly. I think the bishops have publicly stated their position and I think that brings with it a level of commitment and a level of clarity and I hope that will help the conversations continue. I think by the bishops coming out in this particular point in time, it gives clarity and commitment to their position,” he said.

Out&About

Smiles abound in Skibbereen



CORK: Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross meets the Daly and Whooley families after Mass at the Sacred Heart Church of the Skibbereen and Rath and the islands parish, with Fr Evin O'Brien CC, June 19.



CARLOW: Killeslin NS' 1st class students get out to enjoy their end-of-year teddy bears' picnic, June 11.



MAYO: John Murphy and Terry O'Brien celebrate the first anniversary of the opening of the new Divine Mercy shop and information centre in Knock, June 11. After lifting of Covid restrictions, it is now fully operational to promote devotion to the Divine Mercy, and all pilgrims to Knock are welcome to visit.



LOUTH: The Drogheda Augustinian friars welcomed four local people into the order as full members: Phil Conyngham, Michael Griffin, Ide Lenihan and John McGovern. Pictured are Drogheda prior Fr Colm O'Mahony (left), Provincial Fr John Hennebry OSA (second from right), with two of the new lay members Ms Phil Conyngham and Mr Michael Griffin, June 20.

IN SHORT

Bishop Nulty welcomes Pope's Grandparent's day address

The chair of the bishops' council for marriage and the family hailed the "unsung heroes" of the pandemic – grandparents and elders, including our older priests and religious.

Bishop Denis Nulty encouraged parishes "in every diocese across the country" to celebrate those "who have given lives of dedicated service to their families and communities" in his June 22 statement.

He hoped parishes will "ensure that their local nursing care home is included in this annual celebration".

"There have been so many unsung heroes and heroines during the pandemic – grandparents and elders, including our older priests and religious – all who are to be applauded for how they have coped with the challenges and uncertainty brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic," Bishop Nulty said.

The World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly will be celebrated for the first time this year on Sunday 25 July, which is the Sunday closest to the Feast of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne – parents of Mary and Grandparents of Jesus – which is celebrated July 26.

Western bishops offer blessings to retiring CI bishop

After Bishop Patrick Rooke, Church of Ireland bishop of Tuam, Killala and Achonry, announced his retirement, the Western bishops all extended blessings to a "true pastor" and friend.

Archbishop of Tuam Michael Neary offered his blessings June 20, the day Bishop Rooke announced his retirement, calling him "a true pastor to his people", and "a strong, but gentle leader".

He also praised his ecumenical efforts, saying: "Throughout his tenure... Bishop Patrick has always made time for,

welcomed, and supported wholeheartedly everything that would allow the faithful from our respective congregations to come together to pray."

Bishop Brendan Kelly of Galway, Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe and Bishop John Fleming of Killala, all joined in wishing Bishop Rooke "a happy and peaceful retirement".

"His social outreach to those on the margins of society is recognised by all the Christian churches in this area," said Bishop Fleming. "His presence among us will be greatly missed."

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



FERMANAGH: Members of the Kilmore Youth Ministry Pastoral Council and Bishop Martin Hayes of Kilmore diocese climbed Cuilcagh Mountain (Stairway to Heaven) in June.



DUBLIN: Students from Carysfort NS, Blackrock, are pictured with Fr Peter O'Connor in front of an exhibition containing pictures of their school's Confirmation and Communion classes of 2021. The pictures are displayed on the church gates of St John the Baptist Church, Blackrock.



CAVAN: Francis Keaney (right) of Kilmore Youth Pastoral Council presents Conor Ruxton with his JPIL award in Shercock, along with Fr Rafal Siwek, June 20.



DUBLIN: Pictured celebrating Our Lady's Hospice & Care Services' Sunflower Day 'Together we Remember' campaign is broadcaster and writer Maia Dunphy with five-year-olds Ella Chambers, left, and Evie Kavanagh both from Tallaght at Our Lady's Hospice and Care Services, Harold's Cross, June 17. Photo: Mark Stedman



CORK: Sr Stanislaus Kent PBVM (front) is pictured on the occasion of her 100th birthday. Also included are Canon Tom Browne (Youghal), Sr Grace (Presentation sisters Provincial), Sr Thaddeus, Sr Carmel, Sr Mary John, Sr Placida and Sr Margaret Mary. Photo: John Walshe



MEATH: Fr Tony Draper is pictured in Navan during his Golden Jubilee Celebration with Fr John Byrne and Fr Séamus Heaney, June 20. Since retirement from All Hallows College, Fr Tony has been living in Navan.



CORK: Catherine Crowley, Dunmanway and John Murphy, Drinagh, are pictured after celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage at St Patrick's Church, Dunmanway, June 4. Photo: Tom Hayes

Events

● In the current Covid-19 crisis, it is clear that most (and perhaps all) Church events, other than some Masses, are suspended. Consequently, we are withholding the popular Events Listing column until normal activities can resume in our parishes. However, please do email us if you know of any parish event planned and we will publish details.

World Report

IN BRIEF

Bishops praise Biden for committing vaccines to needy

● The president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops and the chairman of the USCCB's Committee on International Justice and Peace praised President Joe Biden June 23 for his commitment to provide 500 million Covid-19 vaccines to lower-income countries.

This was recently matched by the G-7 nations, bringing the total of vaccines to 1 billion.

"As world leaders work together to help bring an end to this pandemic, we are grateful for President Biden's leadership to aid the poor and vulnerable around the world who remain most at-risk," said Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, USCCB president, and Bishop David Malloy of Rockford, Illinois.

Priest ordained in diocese after decade without vocations

● On June 20, Bishop César Franco of the Diocese of Segovia, Spain, ordained Álvaro Marín Molinera to the priesthood - almost 11 years after the last priest was ordained for the small diocese.

Family, friends and a broad representation of the priests and deacons of the province also attended the ordination ceremony in the cathedral.

Fr Marín, 27, was ordained a deacon in October 2020, and received formation at the University of Ávila and the Pontifical University of Salamanca.

The last ordination of diocesan priests in the diocese was on July 4, 2010. Bishop Franco also ordained a young Claretian religious to the priesthood on June 5.

Marian statue untouched by car bombing at army base

● A statue of the Virgin Mary was unharmed by an attack carried out against the 30th Brigade of Colombia's National Army June 16.

A car bomb exploded at the military base in Cúcuta, injuring 36 people.

The Diocese for the Military of Colombia said on social media that the intact image serves to "maintain the faith among the soldiers", and that there's a feeling of "a miracle".

The military diocese pointed out that the "Virgin of Protection", which remained intact after the explosions, "was handmade by the soldiers who are stationed with the Land Operations Battalion No. 9, right where the truck with explosives was".

Kidnappers free Catholic priest and four others in Mali

● Kidnappers freed a Catholic priest and four other people last Wednesday in the West African nation of Mali.

Gunmen released Fr Léon Douyon on June 23, 72 hours after seizing him, reported the French public radio service RFI.

The five kidnap victims were dropped off at the roadside between Bankass

and Bandiagara, within the Diocese of Mopti.

All five are said to be in good health, reported ACI Africa.

Major Abass Dembélé, the governor of the Mopti region, central Mali, said that the five were freed after the kidnappers' vehicle broke down not far from Mali's border with Burkina Faso.

Pro-democracy Hong Kong paper announces closure

● Hong Kong's pro-democracy newspaper *Apple Daily* will print its final edition "no later than Saturday", bosses confirmed June 23, after police froze accounts and arrested staff using a new national security law.

Apple Daily has shown support for the city's pro-democracy movement and has criticised China's authoritarian leaders.

Ucanews.com, citing an *Agence France-Presse* article, reports Chinese authorities have made no secret of their desire to see the newspaper silenced and have used a sweeping new national security law to bring about its demise.

Apple Daily's Catholic owner, Jimmy Lai, is in jail and was among the first to be charged under the law.

European Parliament backs 'extreme' abortion report despite protests

The European Parliament voted Thursday in favour of a report describing abortion as "essential healthcare" and seeking to redefine conscientious objection as a "denial of medical care".

Members of the European Parliament, the EU's law-making body, voted on June 24 by 378 votes in favour, 255 against and 42 abstentions, to adopt the text, known as the Matic Report, at a plenary session in Brussels, Belgium.

The report also declares that violations of "sexual and reproductive health and rights" are "a form of violence against women and girls".

Parliamentarians had earlier rejected two attempts to block the controversial report.

An alternative motion for a resolution by the EPP Group in the European Parliament failed, with 288 votes in favour and 373 against, reported the German weekly *Die Tagespost*.

Another motion for a resolution by the ECR Group, together with members of Hungary's Fidesz party, gained 267 votes in favour, but 402 against.

Catholic leaders and pro-life groups had urged the European Parliament to reject the report, presented by the Croatian politician Predrag Fred Matic and debated on June 23, the day before the vote.

Speaking in the debate, Mr Matic said: "Tomorrow is a great day for Europe and



Pope Francis and Martin Schulz, former president of the European Parliament, arrive at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, in this file photo, November 25, 2014. Photo: CNS.

the entire progressive world. Tomorrow we decide on positioning Europe as a community that chooses to live in the 21st or the 17th century. Don't let history remember us as the latter ones."

Radical

The Parliamentary Network for Critical Issues (PNCI), based in Washington, DC, described the report as "extreme" and "radical".

The Secretariat of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) expressed alarm at the text, saying that

that it was "ethically untenable" to classify abortion as an "essential" health service.

The Matic Report, officially known as the *Report on the situation of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU, in the frame of women's health*, was adopted by the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality on May 11.

An accompanying "explanatory statement" claimed that the report "comes at a crucial moment in the EU, with backlash and regression in women's rights gaining

momentum and contributing to the erosion of acquired rights and endangering the health of women".

Two Members of the European Parliament, Margarita de la Pisa Carrión and Jadwiga Wisniewska, set out a "minority position", arguing that the report had "no legal or formal rigor".

"It goes beyond its remit in addressing issues such as health, sexual education, and reproduction, as well as abortion and education, which are legislative powers belonging to the member states," they wrote.

Christian legal group denounces 'targeted smear campaign'

A Christian legal group said last Wednesday that its inclusion in a report claiming that "religious extremists" are seeking "to roll back human rights in sexuality and reproduction" is part of a "targeted smear campaign".

ADF International was responding to a report issued by the European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (EPF) ahead of a major European Parliament vote on abortion.

The EPF report, *Tip of the Iceberg: Religious Extremist Funders against Human Rights for Sexuality and Reproductive Health in Europe 2009-2018*,

lists ADF International as one of more than 50 "anti-gender actors operating in Europe".

Adina Portaru, who serves as senior counsel, Europe, for ADF International, said: "ADF International is a human rights organisation that protects the fundamental freedoms and promotes the inherent dignity of all people."

"We defend persecuted religious minorities across the globe and support the right to life. Our 'Vanishing Girls' campaign in southeast Asia, for example, defends girls against sex-based discrimination."

"All our work for clients is pro bono. We receive funds from private donors who believe in our vision."

She continued: "While we support open debate and discussion on the topics related to our work, the EPF has sought to shut down conversations about human rights through a targeted smear campaign."

On its website, the EPF says that its donors include the International Planned Parenthood Foundation (IPPF), the George Soros-founded Open Society Foundations, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Nike Foundation, and the UNFPA.

Investigation after Catholic churches burn on British Columbia tribal lands

Two Catholic churches in the same region of British Columbia burned down in suspicious circumstances early Monday morning.

"On behalf of the diocese of Nelson, I am very saddened by the recent fires that destroyed two Catholic churches - Sacred Heart Mis-

sion at Penticton Indian Band and St Gregory Mission at Osoyoos Indian Band - and for the hurt that it has caused," Bishop Gregory Bittman of Nelson said June 23.

"For many years, our priests have been welcomed to minister in these mission churches and it is our hope

that this ministry will continue," he said.

The churches, located in the southern Okanagan region of British Columbia, served some indigenous First Nations families, but there are concerns the fires could have been targeted attacks.

Investigators are considering whether arson caused the attacks. Possible motives could include someone angry at the Catholic Church after the discovery of the undocumented graves of 215 indigenous children at the grounds of a former Catholic-run residential school.



Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Rescue in the dark



Rescuers help a migrant child to disembark from a Spanish coast guard vessel in the port of Arguineguin, on the island of Gran Canaria, Spain, June 27, 2021. Photo: CNS.

Cardinal keeps limits on private Masses in St Peter's, allows some exceptions

Reaffirming the principles that led the Vatican to severely limit private celebrations of Mass in St Peter's Basilica in the early morning, Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, the new archpriest of the basilica, said exceptions would be made for "groups with particular and legitimate needs".

In addition, requests by priests to celebrate alone, without a congregation, "may also be discerned from time to time, without prejudice to the principle that everything should take place in an atmosphere of recollection and decorum and with vigilance, so that what is exceptional does not

become ordinary, distorting the intentions and the sense of the magisterium", the cardinal wrote in a note released by the Vatican press office June 22.

Letter

A letter dated March 12 and initialled by Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, substitute secretary for general affairs in the Vatican Secretariat of State, had said that beginning March 22, "individual celebrations (of the Mass) are suppressed", and priests wanting to celebrate in the basilica in the early morning would be invited to join a concelebrated liturgy.

Archbishop Peña's letter also severely limited celebrations of the Mass according to the "extraordinary form", sometimes referred to as the Tridentine rite, by saying priests who wanted to use the rite could do so only in the Clementine Chapel in the grotto under the basilica at 7, 7:30, 8 and 9am. Because concelebration is not foreseen by the rite, that meant that only four priests could celebrate the old Mass each day in the basilica.

Cardinal Gambetti's note, however, said that "everything possible must be done to fulfil the wishes of the

Faithful and priests as foreseen by the motu proprio *Summorum Pontificum*", Pope Benedict XVI's 2007 document allowing wider celebration of the old rite.

The restrictions instituted by the Secretariat of State were in line with the Code of Canon Law, which says priests "are completely free to celebrate the Eucharist individually, however, but not while a concelebration is taking place in the same church or oratory". Multiple individual Masses were being celebrated simultaneously at different altars throughout the basilica.

Archdiocese of Berlin suspends work of commission on sexual abuse

The archdiocese of Berlin announced that it was temporarily suspending the work of its expert commission established to follow up on a legal report about sexual abuse in the archdiocese since 1946.

The archdiocese said June 22 that the commission is recommending that findings from the legal firm Redeker Sellner Dahs be reworked or that another legal firm be commissioned to investigate the abuse.

In a statement later that day, lawyers Sabine Wildfeuer and Peter-Andreas Brand of Redeker Sellner Dahs said they learned about the suspension of the archdiocesan Sexual Abuse Expert Commission through the media.

"No one has spoken to us about this, neither from the archdiocesan staff nor from the expert commission," the letter said.

"Our mandate for a legal opinion has been fulfilled completely and properly.

The report states in detail by whom and in what way cases of sexual abuse were covered up in the area of the archdiocese and whether and to what extent the applicable Church and ecclesiastical criminal law regulations were observed."

In January, when the lawyers' report was first presented, about two-thirds of it was not made available to the media or the public, on the orders of Archbishop Heiner Koch of Berlin.

Vatican roundup

Vatican issues new regulations on public contracts

● The Vatican's Secretariat for the Economy issued last Tuesday a set of regulations related to new norms for awarding public contracts unveiled by Pope Francis last year.

The regulations are contained in a decree signed by Fr Juan Antonio Guerrero Alves, SJ, the Pontifical Delegate and prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy.

The decree, consisting of 49 articles, concerns the Pope's apostolic letter, "Norms on transparency, control and competition in the procedures for awarding public contracts of the Holy See and Vatican City State", dated May 19, 2020.

The apostolic letter, issued *motu proprio* ("on his own impulse"), outlined new procedures for awarding public contracts that aim to increase oversight and accountability, and ensure the Vatican and Holy See work only with vetted financial partners.

The decree says that the new regulations "apply to all purchases of services, supplies, and works".

It states that "economic operators" under investigation for crimes are excluded "from participation in procedures for direct awarding of contracts and being registered in the list of authorised vendors".

It rules that "subcontracting may be permitted to the maximum extent of 30% of the contract value".

Vatican official urges end to violence in Mexico

● During a trip to Mexico, the Vatican secretary of state called on Mexicans to overcome divisions and the violence afflicting the country – something he said he prayed for at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin also said he shared those sentiments with President Andrés Manuel López Obrador during a breakfast meeting June 21.

"There, I could pray especially for peace and reconciliation in the world and in particular here in Mexico, so that with the help of God and the protection of the Morenita (Our Lady of Guadalupe) they can overcome the

culture of division and violence and can install the true culture of fraternity and solidarity," Cardinal Parolin said in Mexico City, prior to a reception at the nunciature and after a meeting with the president.

The comments wrapped up a five-day visit to Mexico, where Cardinal Parolin celebrated the episcopal ordination of the new apostolic nuncio to Papua New Guinea, Mexican Archbishop Fermín Sosa Rodríguez, and celebrated Mass at the Guadalupe basilica.

No details on the visit with President López Obrador were released by either side.

Oblate priest named secretary of child protection commission

● Pope Francis has named Oblate Fr Andrew Small secretary *pro tempore* of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.

Fr Small, 53, had served two terms as national director for the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States, and his successor there was named in April.

The Vatican June 22 announced Fr Small's appointment to the commission, which Pope Francis established in 2014.

The body of experts, with input from survivors, is meant to make proposals and spearhead initiatives to improve safeguarding norms and procedures throughout the Church.

Its work is separate from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's investigation and canonical prosecution of clerics accused of abuse.

Fr Small, who was born in Liverpool, England, but worked in the United States for many years and holds US citizenship, succeeds Msgr Robert Oliver, a priest of the archdiocese of Boston.

The commission is headed by Boston Cardinal Sean O'Malley, who is working with the Council of Cardinals to create a new structure, which includes establishing it as a new office within the Holy See.



LetterfromRome



John L. Allen Jr

In response to a burgeoning controversy last week over the Vatican's novel protest of a draft anti-homophobia law in Italy, Italian Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Secretary of State, said June 24 the goal of the move wasn't to interfere with Italy's internal politics but rather to head off a potential problem.

Instead of waiting until the measure, known here as the "Zan bill" for the openly gay legislator who introduced it, was formally adopted, Parolin said the idea was to signal potential glitches so they can be solved before creating diplomatic, legal and even constitutional headaches, mostly related to religious freedom.

“Virtually every media outlet in the country had carried some exercise in what the Italians cheerfully call *dietrologia*”

So far. So good. The problem is that from a communications point of view, the Vatican didn't practice what Parolin was preaching, i.e., getting ahead of a potential problem. It was always written in the stars that their *note verbale*, or diplomatic communique, on the draft law would go public and make waves, yet Parolin used the same interview to insist the note was “certainly not to be published” and seemed to suggest he was surprised when it leaked.

In the immortal ESPN catchphrase, “Come on, man!”

Parolin's fantasy

The note, which was delivered to Italy's ambassador to the Vatican, Pietro Sebastiani, in mid-June, was then dutifully transmitted by Sebastiani to his superiors at the Italian Foreign Ministry, better known by locals as the *Farnesina* for the building in which the ministry is located. (It's called that because the palace once belonged to Pope Paul III, whose given name was Alessandro Farnese.)

All in, some 5,000 people work for Italy's foreign ministry, and many either have journalists as friends or are actually related to someone who works in the media. The idea that you could present an historically unprecedented, bombshell protest invoking the 1929 Lateran Pacts to the *Farnesina* without it passing to some Italian news outlet, and in fairly short order, was always a fantasy.

Either that portion of Parolin's interview was disingenuous, or he was serious about being surprised to

On anti-homophobia row, Vatican PR once again defuses bomb after it goes off



Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, speaks during a ceremony at City Hall in Mexico City June 21, 2021. Photo: CNS.

see the note in the press – and frankly, it's hard to know which would be the more alarming prospect.

When the news of the note broke early Tuesday morning in the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, calls to Vatican communications personnel to try to confirm it were fruitless, and it seemed clear they were caught off guard. Parolin's interview represented the Vatican's first official comment, and it came more than 48 hours into the arc of the story.

By that point, the spin cycle was already in high gear. Virtually every media outlet in the country had carried some exercise in what the Italians cheerfully call *dietrologia*, meaning the study of what lies behind things. Some of it cantered on whether Pope Francis actually supported the note, or even knew about it; Sant'Egidio founder Andrea Riccardi, for instance, told one Italian outlet that he believes the note came from “Italian circles in the Secretariat of State” and, hence, not the pontiff.

Leaked

Others were more interested in trying to identify who leaked the document and why, often pointing to conservatives in the Secretariat of State or in Italian politics, especially the right-wing populist Lega party

that's been opposed to the Zan bill from the beginning.

How bad did things get? At one point the Vatican felt compelled to roll out the head of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See (APSA), in effect its central bank, to respond to criticism about not paying its Italian taxes ... from, of all people, a rapper. (The rapper in question, Fedez, once recorded a number titled “Beautiful Disaster”, which seems an apt summary of this week on the Vatican beat too.)

“Others were more interested in trying to identify who leaked the document and why”

In the meantime, pressure built on Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi to issue a reaction, which he finally did Wednesday afternoon in a Q&A session with the Italian Senate. Despite the fact Draghi is a product of Jesuit formation and a serious Catholic, he gave the Vatican a bit of a verbal tongue-lashing, reminding everyone that Italy “is a secular state, not a confessional state”, and that its parliament must be free to do its work without outside interference.

All this might just be amusing – okay, okay, it is sort of amusing anyway – were it not for the fact that when a bomb like this goes off, it's really not the Parolins of the world left to pick up the pieces. It's bishops, even outside Italy, with no clue what's going on suddenly fielding phone calls from reporters seeking comment; it's pastors, fielding angry questions from parishioners; and it's ordinary lay Catholics, facing puzzled looks and consternation from co-workers, friends and family.

Consequences

In other words, the consequences of a Vatican PR failure fall disproportionately on people with no role in creating it. The tragedy is, all this could have been avoided.

How? Well, the best move would have been for the Vatican to make the note public the day it was presented to Sebastiani. Parolin could have given his interview then, with the following talking points:

We're all for efforts to protect anyone from discrimination, including the LGBTQ+ community.

We respect the sovereign right of the Italian parliament to decide the law of the land for its people, and it's not our role to try to dictate anything.

At the same time, we also know the Italian government and parliament are committed to upholding the guarantees of religious freedom contained in the Lateran Pacts and in the country's own constitution.

This is an effort to work constructively with parliament and the government to ensure that whatever law is adopted doesn't create new problems and achieves its desired effect.

That might not have satisfied everyone, but it certainly would have been preferable to the cacophony the Vatican's silence actually created.

“In other words, the consequences of a Vatican PR failure fall disproportionately on people with no role in creating it”

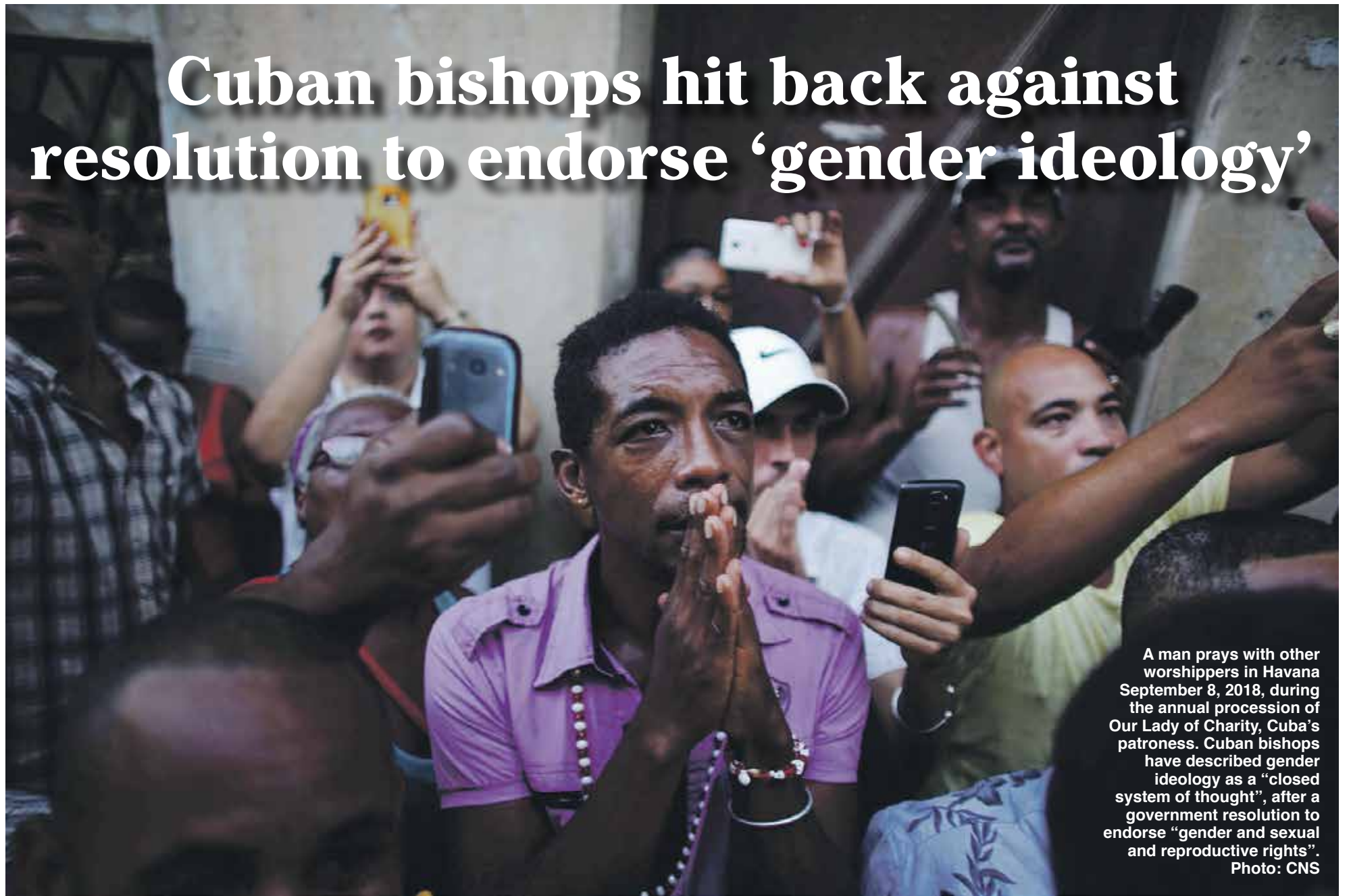
If the decision was that the Vatican couldn't be the one to make the note public, at least the communications team could have been given a heads-up and been prepared to frame the story properly once it broke.

In the end, Parolin may well be right that it will prove better that these issues are aired now, and possibly resolved, rather than waiting to fight it out in bilateral commissions and court cases after the fact.

Now if the Vatican could just master the same lesson, not so much in what it says, but rather how (and when) it says it.

“The problem is that from a communications point of view, the Vatican didn't practice what Parolin was preaching”

Cuban bishops hit back against resolution to endorse 'gender ideology'



A man prays with other worshippers in Havana September 8, 2018, during the annual procession of Our Lady of Charity, Cuba's patroness. Cuban bishops have described gender ideology as a "closed system of thought", after a government resolution to endorse "gender and sexual and reproductive rights". Photo: CNS



Elise Ann Allen

While the Vatican is embroiled in its own battle against gender politics in Italy, the Cuban bishops are facing a similar dilemma, and have issued a statement criticising a resolution that would make so-called "gender ideology" part of school curricula.

The bishops argue that the resolution is unscientific in that it denies basic biological differences between men and women, and also takes from parents the ability to educate their own children in the sensitive matters of sexuality.

Drafted by the state National Centre for Sex Education (CENESEX), the new Resolution 16/2021, which is being put forward by the Ministry of Education is entitled, "Program of Internal Education in Sexuality with a gender approach and sexual and reproductive rights in the National Educational System".

In article four, the resolution establishes the need to "strengthen, from a holistic and positive vision of sexuality, the process of comprehen-

sive sexual education with a focus on gender and sexual and reproductive rights in educational institutions and modalities".

In a message released for Father's Day, published after the Cuban bishops' plenary assembly in Havana last week, they said gender ideology, while claiming to be scientific, is "a closed system of thought".

"It holds that the differences between men and women, appreciable in their anatomy, psychology, and genetics, among other things, do not correspond to the constitutive nature of the human person, but are merely cultural and conventional constructions, made according to roles and stereotypes that each society has assigned to the sexes," the bishops said.

“The bishops’ resistance to the resolution comes after their public opposition to ‘equal marriage’ in the drafting of Cuba’s new constitution in 2019”

"From this view, it is taught that a human being, even from their earliest age, could choose their sexual identity, regardless of the biological sex with which they were born," they said, and called for "a broad and participatory debate" of the resolution, "where everyone had the opportunity to be adequately informed and express their views on the matter".

The bishops' resistance to the resolution comes after their public opposition to "equal marriage" in the drafting of Cuba's new constitution in 2019. This reference was eventually removed by Cuban parliament.

A national Family Code

However, the issue is being taken up again in a new national Family Code, which is being drafted by a special commission and is expected to be presented to Cuba's national legislature, the National Assembly of People's Power, in July. It will then be submitted to parliament and a referendum held.

A large portion of the Cuban LGBT community is opposed to the new code, arguing that the issue of "equal marriage" should not be put to a vote, but must be guaranteed.

In their message on Resolution 16/2021, the bishops said incorporating ideological teachings on gender into school curricula would "distance us from our history and cultural tradition".

Quoting Pope Francis's 2016 exhortation on the family *Amoris Laetitia*, the bishops said gender ideology "denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family".

"This ideology leads to educational programs and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference

between male and female," the text says, adding, "It is a source of concern that some ideologies of this sort, which seek to respond to what are at times understandable aspirations, manage to assert themselves as absolute and unquestionable, even dictating how children should be raised".

In the text, Pope Francis stresses the need to distinguish between biological sex and cultural gender roles without completely separating the two, saying, "Let us not fall into the sin of trying to replace the Creator. We are creatures, and not omnipotent...At the same time, we are called to protect our humanity, and this means, in the first place, accepting it and respecting it as it was created".

In this perspective, the Cuban bishops said it was both "necessary and indispensable" that parents maintain the right to educate their own children, and that their input is considered in all forms of collaboration with teachers, school authorities, and drafting educational policy.

They also insisted that sex education ought to be done with the guidance of parents, "as it is their responsibility", and they asked parents to "fulfil their duty, without waiting for others to replace them in what is their obligation".

The bishops asked that the resolution "be reconsidered", on grounds that it does not sufficiently recognise the right of parents in sexual education, and also "for the serious consequences in the formation of children, adolescents, and young people, by making official the advance of 'gen-

der ideology,' so sensitive in the formation of personality".

"We believe that new generations should not be exposed to a conception of sexuality not validated by science", they said, noting that under the new resolution, many people involved in the educational process, including parents and teachers, would be subjected to ideologies "that contradict their deepest convictions".

“Respect, mutual listening, and social friendship will always prevail over all forms of intolerance and violence”

"It is up to all of us, but above all you parents, to promote and bear witness to the beauty and joy of marriage created and loved by God", they said, and urged Catholics not to be discouraged when "at times, everything around us seems to go against the family institution".

"Let's not lose our strength when we have to swim against the current. Let us teach young married couples to work together and take care of their families," they said, asking that in Cuba, "respect, mutual listening, and social friendship will always prevail over all forms of intolerance and violence".

i Elise Ann Allen, senior correspondent for *Cruxnow.com*

Letters

Letter of the week

Pro-life people must fight North's two-child policy

Dear Editor, Being from the Republic, I read with astonishment that there is a policy in the North, as well as the rest of the UK, that disallows poorer families to receive child benefit for a third or subsequent child. I would certainly not call myself a bleeding-heart socialist but children should never be put in the firing line when it comes to saving money and encouraging people to return to work. This sort of punitive policy is most certainly disproportionately affecting the larger Catholic families in the North – as they generally have more children than the rest of the UK, as the article states [IC 17/06/2021].

Pro-life Catholics as well as women's groups across our two islands should be fighting this tooth and nail. When it came to abortion there was no end of debate and campaigning but for some reason children who are already born don't get the same amount of public outcry despite this horrendous policy.

Pro-life groups and people should look to this as their next big campaign as it is surely turning poorer women to abortion clinics. Not all of us are in the comfortable situation to financially support a newborn baby, particularly if a woman is abandoned by the father of her child. Abortion has been pushed on Northern Ireland even

though it should have been a devolved issue, despite this horrific situation, everything should be done to support families and children rather than point them towards an abortion clinic.

The Church has always said married couples should be open to new life, but it seems the government in Westminster wants to make this as difficult as possible for families who are struggling financially and want to adhere to Church teaching. Being Catholic and holding true to the Faith in this day and age seems to be getting harder and harder.

*Yours etc.,
Barry Walsh
Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin*

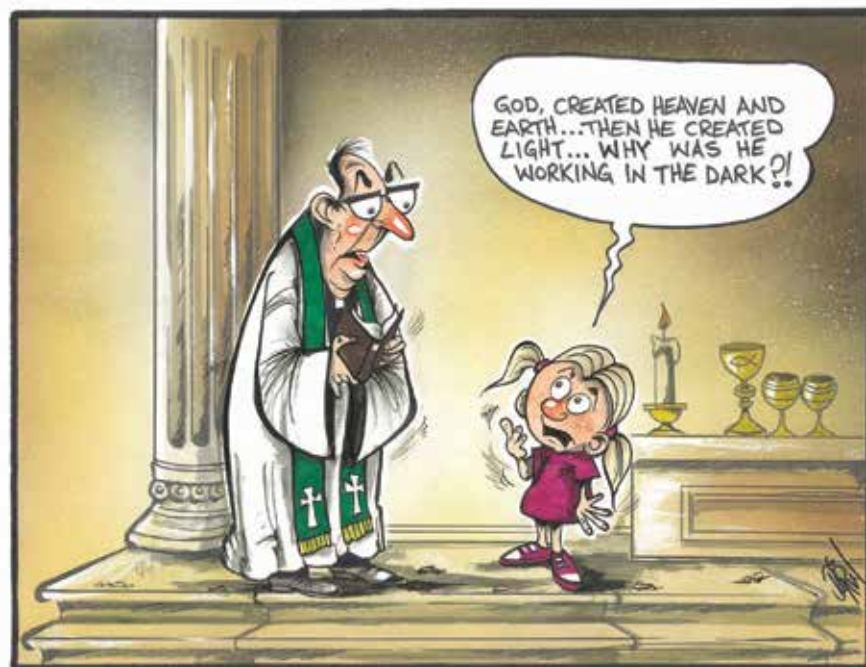
Thanking the boys with the flower arrangements

Dear Editor, I have just received *The Irish Catholic* for June 17 and just want to say well done to the boys in Limerick who proudly posed with their flower arrangements on your front page [IC 17/06/2021].

Of all the photos in the newspaper, I can truly say to Ryan, Padog and Paddy you gave me a good laugh so No. 1 to your picture boys. I hope you do well with all your future arrangements.

Keep up the good work and thank you for putting a smile on my face.

*Yours etc.,
Marie Doran
Raheny, Dublin 5*



An event to be celebrated

Dear Editor, Over the airwaves recently many of us listened to the voice of a young college girl pleading for her, as she saw it, 'civil right', to bodily autonomy. "My body is my own to do with as I choose... to manage my own pregnancy when it happens" was her demand. Something which might not have occurred to her in her deliberations is the inevitable consequences of introducing a new citizen to the nation – who will avail of the services, pay taxes, and hopefully contribute to the wellbeing of society. A pregnancy is the concern of a society, not a personal thing. It is an event to be celebrated by the community.

*Yours etc.,
B. Roberts
Rathmines, Dublin 6*

Ingratitude is the deepest hurt

Dear Editor, Well done indeed to former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern in remembering Ireland's debt to religious [IC 13/05/2021]. How easily we forget. Ingratitude is the deepest hurt of all. Keep up the very good work.

*Yours etc.,
Maureen Bows
Inishannon, Co. Cork*

Can all pro-life groups work under the Life Institute?

Dear Editor, Would it be possible if all pro-life groups worked under the Life Institute umbrella? People might be confused if they encounter multiple pro-life groups.

*Yours etc.,
Colm O'Connor
Goatstown, Dublin 14*

Finding a peace the world can't give us

Dear Editor, There is so much fear and confusion in Ireland among Catholics about getting vaccinated against the Covid virus. This does not come from God. Jesus tells us so many times "Do not be afraid". I sincerely believe that our bishops have been given to us by God. They are his apostles here on earth and if they are encouraging us to get vaccinated then we should trust them. They are our spiritual fathers. We should not listen to all the noise and confusion created

in this media driven society. I would urge people to read about St Thérèse and her concept of spiritual childhood. Jesus told St Faustina that one single act of obedience gives him greater glory than long prayers and mortifications. Let us trust these men given to us by God, filled with the Holy Spirit. We will then find a peace the world cannot give us.

*God bless,
Fiona Kiely,
Bartlemy, Co. Cork*

facebook community
Each week we publish a selection of comments from *The Irish Catholic* Facebook page

NI Catholics honoured in Queen's birthday list

So delighted to see Maureen Devine recognised for her many years of volunteering with the Irish Pilgrimage Trust, bringing opportunities to so many young people and volunteers. Thank you Maureen and congrats Maureen Devine MBE. – **Brendan Collins**

What do you think? Join in the conversation on *The Irish Catholic* Facebook page

The surrogacy issue is certainly not simple

Dear Editor, David Quinn's article on surrogacy [IC 17/06/2021] was interesting and informative. I knew there were ethical issues surrounding it but had not looked into the issue myself but now I am appalled by how one-sided a story I've heard so far in the other papers and media I have seen.

The mother and baby homes are a great example, the Government and the Church saw it as an ethical way to deal with a difficult situation, yet in hindsight, it was the opposite – at least in the way those institutions were allowed to operate.

Now we are looking to allow something that is banned in many other EU countries. Do we really want to stop children knowing who their biological parents are? Do we want a situation in which women's wombs are being used as incubators for other people's children? Who knows what the final legislation will say – as it is still apparently in the works – but as we have seen in other countries, legislation, once introduced, can be easily amended. The surrogacy issue is certainly not simple. We may yet again have horror stories of women having their children taken from them at birth against their will, except this time it will be by Irish parents and a mother whose womb has been bought for nine months.

*Yours etc.,
Brid Buckley
Limerick City, Limerick*

Dr McAleese view on infant Baptism 'odd'

Dear Editor, Mary Kenny compares Mary McAleese's opposition to infant Baptism to that of Baptists, Pentecostals and Plymouth Brethren [IC 17/06/2021].

The comparison is inappropriate. The groups mentioned by Mary Kenny all base their opposition on their interpretation of the New Testament. We may think their views on the subject wrong, indeed as Catholics we are obliged to do so, but they take a theological position just as we do.

Dr McAleese objects to infant Baptism on the basis of her interpretation of human rights law; she opposes the Church's teaching on the ordination of women on the same basis. Her position is purely secular rather than religious.

It is odd that a cradle Catholic such as Dr McAleese should see in infant Baptism an offence against human rights rather than the conferring of sacramental grace.

*Yours etc.,
C.D.C. Armstrong
Donegall Road, Belfast*

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Around the world



▲ **VATICAN:** US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is accompanied by a tour guide, right, and Patrick D. Connell, charge d'affaires of the US Embassy to the Holy See, as he visits the Sistine Chapel ahead of his meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican June 28. Photos: CNS.

◀ **PHILIPPINES:** Nuns wait in line to view the urn of former Philippine President Benigno Aquino III during a public viewing at the Church of Gesu at Jesuit-run Ateneo de Manila University in Quezon City, June 25.



HONG KONG: A supporter uses a flashlight from her phone outside the headquarters of the *Apple Daily* newspaper in Hong Kong, June 23.



CANADA: Protesters with arms interlocked block the entrance to a homeless encampment at Trinity Bellwoods Park in Toronto, June 22.



BOLIVIA: Indigenous people attend an ancestral ceremony to welcome the Aymara New Year in Tiwanaku, Bolivia, June 21.



MACEDONIA: The super moon, known as the "Strawberry full moon", and the last super moon of 2021, is pictured behind a cross over Skopje, North Macedonia, June 25.

Joy – a sign of God



“There is only one true sadness, not being a saint!” French novelist, philosopher, essayist, Leon Bloy ends his novel *The Woman Who Was Poor* with that much-quoted line. Here is a less known quote from Leon Bloy which helps us understand why there is such a sadness in not being saint. “Joy is a sure sign of the life of God in the soul.”

“Scripture tells us that God is the author of all that is good and that all good things come from God”

Joy is not just a sure sign of the life of God in the soul, it is a sign of the life of God – period. Joy constitutes the inner life of God. God is joy. This is not something we easily believe. For lots of reasons we find it hard to think of God as happy, as joyful, as pleased, and (as Julian of Norwich says) as relaxed and smiling. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, for all of our differences, have this in common. In our popular conception, we all conceive of God as male, as celibate, and as generally displeased and disappointed with us. We struggle to think that God is happy with our lives and, even more important, that God is happy, joyful, relaxed,



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

and smiling.

Yet, how could it be otherwise? Scripture tells us that God is the author of all that is good and that all good things come from God. Now, is there a greater goodness in this world than joy, happiness, laughter, and the life-giving grace of a benevolent smile? Clearly not. These constitute the very life of heaven and are what makes life on earth worth living. Surely then they take their origins inside of God. This means that God is joyful, is joy.

Pure experience of love

If this is true, and it is, then we should not conceive of God as a disappointed lover, an angry spouse, or a wounded parent, frowning in the face of our inadequacies and betrayals. Rather, God might be imagined as a smiling grandmother or grandfather,

delighting in our lives and energy, at ease with our littleness, forgiving our weaknesses, and forever gently trying to coax us towards something higher.

A growing body of literature today suggests that the purest experience of love and joy on this earth is not what is experienced between lovers, spouses, or even parents and their children. In these relationships, there is inevitably (and understandably) enough tension and self-seeking to colour both its purity and its joy. This is generally less true in the relationship of grandparents to their grandchildren. That relationship, more free of tension and self-seeking, is often the purest experience of love and joy on this earth. There, delight flows more freely, more purely, more graciously, and mirrors more purely

what is inside of God, namely joy and delight.

God is love, scripture tells us; but God is also joy. God is the gracious, benevolent smile of a grandparent looking with pride and delight at a grandchild.

“We tend to have an unhelpful, superficial notion of what constitutes both joy and happiness”

However, how does this all square with suffering, with the paschal mystery, with a suffering Christ who through blood and anguish pays the price of our sin? Where was God's joy on Good Friday as Jesus cried out in agony on the cross? As well, if God is joy, how do we account for the many times in our lives when, living honestly inside of our faith and our commitments, we do not feel joyful, happy, laughter, when we struggle to smile?

Joy and pain are not incompatible. Neither are happiness and sadness. Rather, they are frequently felt together. We can be in great pain and still be happy, just as we can be pain-free, experiencing pleasure, and be unhappy. Joy and happiness are predicated on something that abides through pain, namely,

meaning; but this needs to be understood. We tend to have an unhelpful, superficial notion of what constitutes both joy and happiness. For us, they are incompatible with pain, suffering, and sadness. I wonder how Jesus would have answered on Good Friday as he hung on the cross if someone had asked him, “Are you happy up there?” I suspect he would have said something to this effect: “If you're picturing happiness in the way you imagine it, then no! I'm not happy! Today, of all days, particularly so! But what I'm experiencing today amidst the agony is meaning, a meaning so deep that it contains a joy and a happiness that abide through the agony. Inside of the pain, there is a profound joy and happiness in giving myself over to this. Unhappiness and joylessness, as you conceive of them, come and go; meaning abides throughout those feelings.”

Knowing this still does not make it easy for us to accept that God is joy and that joy is a sure sign of the life of God in the soul. However, knowing it is an important start, one we can build on.

There is a deep sadness in not being a saint. Why? Because our distance from saintliness is also our distance from God and our distance from God is also our distance from joy.

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, July 1, 2021

Personal Profile

At the cutting edge of modern evangelism

Page 34



Looking after our eyes



An old adage has it that the eyes are the window to the soul. Regardless of how much truth there is to that, there's probably some sense in the intuition that they're one of the more vulnerable parts of our body.

My eyes have been labouring under the harsh triple-threat of sun, screen and hay-fever induced agitation in recent weeks. It's often not until a body part complains that we give it the care and attention it should have been receiving all along, and I realised that there were many ways in which I haven't been looking after my eyes as I should.

The pandemic has rapidly accelerated the integration of screens



Between the glare of summer sun and screen, our eyes may be taking a beating these days, writes Jason Osborne

into our daily lives, if they weren't a part of them already, with work and socialising both conducted through laptops and tv screens in many cases. The past couple of weeks have also seen Dublin bathed in sunlight – something you won't find me complaining about!

The combination of the new-found dependence on screens, bright sunlight and the aforemen-

tioned agitation that often accompanies hay fever has made me particularly conscious of the stress my eyes are under of late, and it prompted me to look into how I might care for them better in the future.

Sifting fact from fiction

Before getting into how we care for our eyes, it might be worth sift-

ing out a couple of common myths and misconceptions about eyes and eyesight.

- Reading in dark or dim light will not damage your eyes. It's surely more difficult to see in than brighter light, so you may earn yourself a headache, but you won't cause yourself any harm.

- Watching too much TV or sitting very closely to it won't cause any damage to your eyes either – but it may make your eyes tired and result in a headache.

- Using your eyes “too much” will not “wear them out”, the health of your eyes having nothing to do with how much you use them.

- Eating carrots may well have a positive effect on your eye health.

Carrots are a source of vitamin A, which is important for the eyes. Poor nutrition has been linked to diseases such as age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

Screen use

Contrary to my uneducated fears, I discovered that there is no solid link between screen use and damage to eye health. In fact, because you can alter the size, brightness and contrast of the display on a screen, it can be easier and more comfortable for some to look at a screen than at paper.

However, most of us find looking at a screen for long spells tir-

» Continued on Page 33

Family News

AND EVENTS

MAINTAINING HEALTHY LIFESTYLE MAY REDUCE COVID RISK – HIQA

A healthy weight, regular exercise, receiving enough vitamin D, moderating alcohol consumption and not smoking all have positive effects on health and may reduce the risk of poor Covid-19 outcomes, the Health Information & Quality Authority (HIQA) has said.

They examined 46 studies which focused on modifiable health related risk factors and found mixed results were reported. Drug interventions (vaccines excluded) and non-drug interventions were considered.

HIQA said that there was a lack of high-quality evidence to suggest that any of the examined interventions were effective at reducing the risk of Covid-19, adding that there was insufficient evidence on whether ivermectin or bamlanivimab can be used safely to prevent or reduce the severity of a Covid-19 case.

As a result, the health watchdog advised that such drugs should not be used outside of regulated clinical trials.

270 IRISH CANDIDATES APPLY TO JOIN ESA

There are 270 applications from Irish candidates among more than 22,500 people who applied to become the European Space Agency's (ESA) next astronauts.

During the last call the ESA put out for astronauts in 2008, the number of applicants who finalised their online application form was 8,413.

Between four and six astronauts will join the ESA workforce as permanent staff members, coupled with a reserve of up to 20 people who will not immediately be hired by the agency, but will remain with their current employers until a flight opportunity is identified for them.

ESA director general Josef Aschbacher said, "My first reaction is it is: 'Stunning.'

"This is probably historic – having so many applications, for at the end, a handful of jobs."

"I think it also shows that space is very high on the agenda of young people, it is a dream job – being an astronaut – and this is the best proof of what we have seen," he added.

REPORT FINDS TRUST IN MEDIA INCREASED OVER PAST YEAR

Trust in the news media has increased over the past year, according to the annual *Reuters Digital News Report*.

The report is sponsored by the Broadcast Authority of Ireland with analysis from researchers at Dublin City University, and it found that in general, the level of public trust in the news increased over the past year, while in Ireland, 53% of consumers expressed positive levels of trust in news media.

This compares with 37% for the UK, 37% for North America and 45% for the EU.

According to the report, RTE is the most trusted news source for Irish consumers, with 78% of respondents saying they trusted the service.

The authors of the report said the high level of trust is because of the central role the broadcaster has played during the pandemic.



We are now nearly 15 months into a pandemic that has claimed the lives of nearly four million people globally and resulted in about 5,000 deaths in Ireland. However, we are now at a juncture where the vaccination programme is well under way and hospitalised cases of Covid are at their lowest in nine months. At present, over three million vaccine doses have been administered with about a third of the population now fully immunised. Despite this, concern has arisen regarding the impact of the recently identified 'delta strain' of the virus which has the potential to threaten the planned unwinding of restrictions this summer.

“After two doses of the Pfizer vaccine, there is 88% protection against developing symptomatic Covid though with AstraZeneca this figure is 60%”

But are these concerns warranted? The delta strain emerging from India is now one of the four main coronavirus variants globally. Unfortunately, it is estimated to be about 50% more transmissible than the UK Kent or "alpha variant" which resulted in the second wave of infections earlier in the year. It is also estimated to have a twofold greater risk of hospitalisation. In the UK, there has been a rapid rise in this new variant where it now accounts for the vast majority of cases, as it now does in some other EU countries including Portugal. In Northern Ireland too, it is estimated to comprise about 50% of

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



infections. While most cases of Covid are now affecting younger age groups this also increases the potential for spread to older adults, many of whom are not fully vaccinated.

So what protection does vaccination offer against this new variant? After two doses of the Pfizer vaccine, there is 88% protection against developing symptomatic Covid though with AstraZeneca this figure is 60%. However, a more important figure is the protection against hospitalisation due to Covid, which for both vaccines is very reassuring at about 94%. Despite this, many adults have only received one jab of either vaccine including about 70% of adults aged between 60-69. Studies suggest that one dose offers only about 35% protection against symptomatic Covid, though with Pfizer still preventing hospitalisation in 94% compared to 71% with AstraZeneca. This means that a significant proportion of adults still waiting on their second jab are at risk of symptomatic Covid and/or more severe disease. In fact, only about a third of eligible adults are estimated to be fully vaccinated. While the delta variant still accounts for a small proportion of Irish cases, there has been a number of outbreaks and it could yet become the dominant strain. Pfizer and Moderna's mRNA

vaccines are more effective at inducing neutralising antibodies than the adenovirus-vectored vaccines from AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson. There is also the phenomenon of 'antivector immunity' where antibodies produced against the viral vector used to deliver the main vaccine component may reduce the effect of a second or booster dose. This is important as already plans are being made for booster vaccines to be given next year. One option to get around this is consider using a different booster vaccine or 'heterologous vaccination'. A study this year showed a much greater antibody response when Pfizer was administered post AstraZeneca than when using two jabs of the latter. Mixing other vaccines has also been done successfully in the past.



What about using antigen testing in the fight against Covid? There is no question that PCR testing for Covid is the most sensitive at identifying the virus. However, it also picks up very low levels of viral RNA in a person at the early or later stages of the disease who may not necessarily be infectious.

But how reliable is a negative antigen test in ruling out a person who is infectious? A HSE study on rapid antigen testing using nasal swabs found that it was positive in 80% of people who were strongly positive on PCR. So while it may identify the majority of those who are infectious, it

could still miss up to one in five. However, depending on the test used, the 'pick up' rate and proportion of false positives is variable. Concerns have also arisen regarding the accuracy with self-testing and lack of standardisation. Despite this, antigen testing is quick with the results within as little as 15 minutes and can be used as a screen in those with no symptoms or contact with Covid. Negative results indicate a low risk of being infectious and therefore should have a role as an adjunct to PCR testing, particularly with gatherings of people in lower risk situations.

“Fortunately, in the event of current vaccines being less efficacious as a result of new variants, new mRNA ones can be adapted within months to ensure ongoing protection”

But how long will immunity last? For those who have been infected with Covid, evidence suggests that there is good immunity for at least nine months. With vaccination, the immune response is expected to decline in a significant proportion by one year. For this reason, the government has already done deals to ensure supply of booster vaccines in 2022. Fortunately, in the event of current vaccines being less efficacious as a result of new variants, new mRNA ones can be adapted within months to ensure ongoing protection.

i Dr Kevin McCarroll is a Consultant Physician in Geriatric Medicine, St James's Hospital, Dublin.

» Continued from Page 31



ing, and many find wearing glasses to be helpful when using a computer or some other screen. Individual cases may need the advice of an optometrist.

“Focusing on a screen tends to make us blink less than usual”

Some ways to look after your eyes when using a screen include:

- Applying the 20-20-20 rule, which means that every 20 minutes of screen time, you should look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds in order to give your eye muscles a rest.

- Blinking regularly limits the dryness and discomfort many of us feel when looking at a screen. Focusing on a screen tends to make us blink less than usual.

- Try to position your computer screen so that it's between 15-30 inches from your eyes, the top of the screen is level with or just below your eyes, the screen is tilted away from you at a 10 to 20 degree angle, and finally, so that there are no reflections on the screen, such as from a window.

- Adjust font size to an easily readable one.

Sunlight and ultraviolet light

This is where we have to be most careful in terms of the potential for long-term damage to our eye health. If you spend much time outdoors in the sunshine, or on a sunbed pre-Covid, you need to ensure your eyes are protected against harmful ultraviolet (UV) light. Exposure to UV light has been implicated in certain conditions such as cataracts and AMD.

If you're going to spend a lot of time outdoors in the sunshine, as is the prevailing advice at the moment, it is important to ensure that you

wear good quality, dark sunglasses with for the best protection. The CE mark or the British Standard (BS EN ISO 12312-1:2013) should be sought, which is the manufacturer's assurance that the sunglasses have been made in compliance with safety standards. A lower level of protection is also afforded by a hat with a brim or a sun visor.

Sunbeds have been in the firing line for some time now, with evidence linking them to an increased risk of skin cancer. They can also produce extremely high levels of UV light, which can cause damage to the outer and internal structures of the eye and eyelids.

If you are going to use them, however, make sure your eyes are protected with tanning goggles that should fit well, and be in good condition. Just closing your eyes doesn't provide enough protection to rest easily.

Hay fever

If, like me, you suffer with hay fever, you know that its symptoms aren't limited to your nose. It can result in itchy eyes and difficulty breathing, too, among other things. The itchy eyes are often a result of an allergic reaction set off by the pollen grains,

the conjunctiva (the transparent membrane covering the white of the eye) becoming inflamed, causing watery, red and itchy eyes. The whites of the eyes may swell up too, accompanied by a feeling of grittiness.

“Wear sunglasses when outdoors, wraparounds offering the best protection for your eyes from pollen”

To manage these symptoms, you should:

- Stay indoors: It's the best way to avoid a high pollen count, particularly in the early evening and mid-morning when the level of pollen is at its highest. Try to keep doors and windows closed, if you can.

- Wear sunglasses when outdoors, wraparounds offering the best protection for your eyes from pollen.

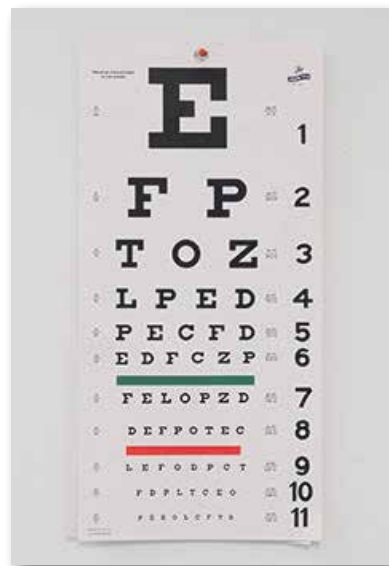
- Wear glasses rather than contact lenses when the pollen count is high.

- On days with high levels of pollen, change your clothes and have a shower, if possible – you may have pollen in your hair, on your clothes and skin.

- As well as this, bathing your eyes regularly in cold water can help to relieve symptoms.

- Finally, applying a small amount of petroleum jelly to your nostrils can help to trap pollen – which limits an adverse reaction to it.

Hopefully these few tips can limit the discomfort your eyes give you this summer, while maximising their health.



Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



In early summer, the Irish countryside takes on the qualities of Eden – except without the serpents. Lush green foliage bursts forth, unrestrained, all around us. As midsummer's warmth seeps into the soil, ferns and tall grasses sway, while wildflowers glimmer in the hedgerows. The songs of busy birds, the buzzing of bees, and the rustling of leaves in the breeze, are all that can be heard in our rural valley. Occasionally, the sun even appears, and we find ourselves sweltering sufficiently to welcome the cool shade of the towering trees, which groan heavily under the fresh, green canopy, through which the sun softly dances. At this time of year, it's easy to understand the classification of Ireland's woodlands as temperate rainforest.

A notable feature of the garden of Eden was that it was inhabited by the innocent. It is fitting therefore, that this Irish Eden, as it emerges in June, the most innocent amongst us are released into it, when the schools break up for summer. Over the past few years – and especially to keep the kids happy during lockdown – we've been busy setting up our garden with rope swings from the trees, a trampoline, a treehouse, two playhouses, swings and slides, a bike track and a climbing net. Despite these many diversions, the kids spend most of their outdoor time in the wild undergrowth just near our home, where they enter into their own domain, and soon become lost in the construction of secret dens and camps.

With school now out for

summer, the prospect of nine long weeks of easy time lies ahead for the kids. Thanks to Covid, we have no overseas holidays planned this summer. Instead, we will spend time in Ireland, exploring where we can, when we can. Instead of foreign climes, we can dream of lolling in the hammock reading, wandering to our local beach or going further afield, perhaps up the west coast of Ireland. We will discover anew all that old Ireland has to offer us.

The summer is a time of contemplation too. As they rise through the ranks of primary school, the kids are coming to terms with the fact that secondary school is just around the corner now. The application forms will be going in soon. It's wonderful to see them grow, but I also must fear for the Edenic quality of innocence which they still possess. A small rural primary school is a very different world to a large secondary school.

In asking around about the local secondary schools, some tell stories of drugs, cyber-bullying and all the other usual, terrible serpents that wait in the long grass for children as they enter into the transitions of their teenage years. Yet I know the best antidote against such dangers must be administered well in advance. That prophylactic medicine is the love we give them now – when they are smaller children. It is growing up with the support of a strong and close family. It is our deep bonds with them, and the magical memories of a beautiful childhood, full of long, happy, sun-dappled summers.



At the cutting edge of modern evangelism

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

Emmet Thompson's connection with St Eugene's Cathedral and the nearby Long Tower parish in Derry go all the way back to his childhood. It's a connection he has maintained through his work as pastoral co-ordinator for the two parishes, a role that was of great importance over lockdown, as Mr Thompson was heavily involved in online outreach.

“Although his faith remains important him today, Mr Thompson admits there was a period when he drifted away from the faith”

“I grew up in the parish of St Eugene's Cathedral, so I came from a faith-filled house,” Mr Thompson tells *The Irish Catholic*. “My faith has always been important to me, I was a regular Mass goer here at St Eugene's Cathedral. It's quite funny, at Christmas time – my dad was originally from the Long Tower parish so we were – always taken there at Christmas time. I live in close proximity to the two churches.”

Although his faith remains important him today, Mr Thompson admits there was a period when he drifted away from the Faith. When asked what brought him back, he pauses to think for a moment before responding.

“I don't know,” he begins. “I think it was probably the foundations that my parents lay many years ago and then just seeing that and becoming prob-



Emmet Thompson (back centre) is pictured with the Derry Diocese Pope John Paul II Award team, along with His Excellency Archbishop Jude Okolo, Papal Nuncio to Ireland and Bishop Donal McKeown, Bishop of Derry.

ably a bit more mature as well and recognising that spiritual fulfilment – longing for that was quite important to me as well. I actually thought then, I must start going back.

“I think as well – you've struck a chord there – I went to St Therese novena. I had dropped it for a while and one year I went to St Therese novena and Martina Purdy gave a talk on that week. It was a very good week, there was a buzz – I can't remember exactly, it was several years ago, but Martina Purdy and it was just something about that week.”

Mr Thompson is married now, with twin girls of his own, and is deeply invested in his faith both at home and at work.

“My kids are two, going on three,” he says. “I run the children's liturgy in the cathedral, it hasn't been taking place since Covid. I have been taking my children more, recently, now that they're that bit older and they understand more, I take my kids to Mass.

We run faith camps during the summer, though not during Covid, it's part of my role. There's 450 kids attend over three weeks, it's a faith-based camp in the parish. It's trying to help young people in the parish grow in their faith and build that sense of community.”

Having worked as a teacher at a local post-primary school, Mr Thompson took on the role of pastoral co-ordinator six years ago. In his daily role, he is responsible for a variety of activities and programmes in both parishes. He organises sacramental preparation, looks after the digital side of things, and manages catechesis programmes for both youth and adult formation. Unsurprisingly, the pandemic has meant the whole lot had to shift online quickly.

“Our following exploded,” Mr Thompson says. “We had the webcam in for quite some time, we did a lot of pushing on Facebook. Both parishes, we were in and around 15-20,000 followers, whereas we're in and around

40,000 now. It's growing a lot, a lot of things have gone online. We did our catechesis, especially during Lent and we did a book club. And then people all over the UK and Ireland joining in for that. We had over 50 people, from Cork, Devon and Cornwall. It's been extremely beneficial for the parish, during that time.

“When lockdown happened we made sure we had a full programme, which we've continued. We have Mass three times a day, we added on the angelus and rosary, and then adoration and night prayer Monday to Friday. We've continued that even since the end of lockdown. There's a lot of people tuning in online, but not only that, there's a lot of parishioners coming out for the angelus and rosary at 12. The model has changed slightly for the adult formation and prayer life, which has been extremely positive since it happened.”

For Mr Thompson, it's great to be on “the cutting edge” of modern evan-

gelisation. Reaching out online has been one of his primary roles since he started, and he's very grateful for the forward-thinking help he has had from the local priests.

“I think it really brought the parish together, because there were several people who volunteered to translate into the multiple languages”

“The administrator of the Cathedral, Fr Paul Farren and Fr Aidan Mullen of St Columba's, Long Tower – they've been very forward thinking for the digital evangelisation, even before [lockdown]. Our role in chaplaincy, we've YouTube channels and we do chaplaincy videos weekly as no one was allowed into primary schools. What we actually did was, we had a weekly vlog for catechesis for the sacramental classes. Then we would publicise that, both myself and my colleague. It's been really, really beneficial. We've been getting a lot of positive feedback from the schools throughout the year.”

Always keen to innovate, Mr Thompson has been working on another project to raise interest in the Faith. He and the administration at St Eugene's Cathedral have recently completed a multi-language, self-guided tour of the cathedral.

“I had an idea then that we should do a self-guided audio tour. I made contact with the gentleman who does it and we decided then that we'd have the audio tour. I was also in contact with Visit Derry, because they say there's lots of people come and they want to see a Catholic cathedral, but there's no tour. We decided we'd do that and translate it into six different languages. I think it really brought the parish together, because there were several people who volunteered to translate into the multiple languages.”

Living Laudato Si'

Jane Mellett



Encouraging the cure for environmental destruction this summer

“To restore nature, we must first restore ourselves”, words from Pope Francis speaking at an event to mark

the beginning of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. This global initiative is an effort to protect and restore the vast ecosystems of our planet. Biodiversity loss is at critical levels due to human activity. Through pollution, the destruction of forests, habitats and the continuous use of fossil fuels, we have pushed the world's ecosystems to the brink.

In *Laudato Si' – On Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis notes that “Although we are often not aware of it, we depend on these larger systems for our own existence. We need only recall how ecosystems interact in dispersing carbon dioxide, purifying water, controlling illnesses and epidemics, forming

soil, breaking down waste, and in many other ways which we overlook or simply do not know about.” (*Laudato Si'*, 140)

Laudato Si' also reminds us that these ecological crises we face, are at the heart of it, a deep spiritual crisis because we have forgotten who we are and where we come from. We have forgotten that “Through him all things were made” (John 1:13) and the very first commandment we were given was to protect God's creation (Gen 2:15). We have become so disconnected from nature that we appear deaf to the facts even when scientists tell us that we are now living in an age of the 6th mass extinction of life on this planet due to human activity. Perhaps Covid-19 has helped us to realise that humans cannot be healthy on a planet that is not healthy.

Pope Francis notes that “Contemplation is the antidote against misuse of our common home”.

The cure is quite simple: reconnect with God's creation, rekindle a child-like sense of awe and wonder where our relationship with the natural world is concerned. It is out of this that everything else will flow. Author Richard Louv says: “We cannot protect something we do not love; we cannot love what we do not know, and we cannot know what we do not see. And touch. And hear.” So as the summer months have arrived, the evenings are longer, there is a buzz about the place as people enjoy the outdoors and plan holidays, this is a wonderful opportunity to encourage the cure for environmental destruction: spending time in nature and encouraging our families to do the same. This is the starting point of the deep eco-conversion we are being called into.

“The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, mountains everything is, as it were, a caress of God” (*Laudato Si'* 84).

Jane Mellett is the *Laudato Si'* Officer with Trócaire



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Hospital row is a field day for Church bashers

On Tuesday of last week the sad story of the healthy baby aborted in Holles Street Hospital was the main story on RTÉ News at Nine, a welcome acknowledgement of a high profile casualty of repealing of the Eighth Amendment.

Next morning on **Newstalk Breakfast** presenter Ciara Kelly mentioned it first in her review of the newspapers, but curiously it was absent from RTÉ Radio One's 'It Says in the Papers' on **Morning Ireland**. On the Wednesday it was also a big story when the couple involved settled their case, but once again it was absent from the 8.10am 'It Says in the Papers' on the Thursday, though mentioned on the 7.10am version. I didn't come across much discussion of it in the current affairs shows, even though it was closely related to the ongoing controversy about the new National Maternity Hospital (NMH). Last Friday's **Drivetime** (RTÉ Radio One) had the parents' solicitor describing the couple's "harrowing cruel journey", the ongoing lack of apology from the hospital, or the consultants involved. Yet there was reference to a report that sought to ensure "safe legal terminations".

That NMH issue has given huge opportunities to Catholic Church bashers (hate-speech merchants?) and they have reacted with gusto. The nar-



Campaigners outside the Dáil on Saturday.

rative driven by the media has been that a Catholic maternity hospital would cause suffering for women. Now, apart from the crass ingratitude for the years of excellent health-care (of the type that doesn't involve terminating babies), there was no mention of the babies that will suffer when abortions (the opposite of maternity) are done in the new maternity hospital. On a more positive note Jimmy Sheehan (co-founder of the Blackrock Clinic) was interviewed on **The Last Word** (Today FM, Thursday) and he was critical of and upset at the "cheap shots" of politicians against the nuns despite their "extraordinary contribution" to healthcare.

Newstalk Breakfast made a brave move by questioning the value of Pride Month with journalist Larissa Nolan. She suggested that Pride was too long at a full month, was subject to too much "corporatisation". But other angles weren't explored – e.g. how the demand for acceptance has become more of a brow-beating every June, with the odd spectacle of rich corporations jumping on the Pride 'brandwagon', State institutions supporting Pride, busses and Garda cars sporting the rainbow colours and a Bród stamp (with accompanying t-shirt!) from An Post (why?).

Euthanasia, or assisted suicide, is another of the hot button issues of the moment,

and with the euphemistically named 'Dying With Dignity' Bill going through the Oireachtas at the moment (and getting a lot more media attention than the *Foetal Pain Relief Bill*), it certainly could be described as a matter of public controversy and current public debate, which puts a particular onus on broadcast media to be fair, impartial and objective. One day after reading out two 'apologies' about presenter bias, **Newstalk** featured a hugely skewed treatment of the issue last Friday on **Lunchtime Live**. They will no doubt maintain that it was fair to have interviews with two high profile pro-euthanasia campaigners, Gino Kenny TD, sponsor of the bill

PICK OF THE WEEK

DEFENDING LIFE

EWTN Saturday (night) July 3, 12.30am

A powerful app that uses striking video is taking the world on a remarkable journey through the development of a baby in the womb.

SERVICE

RTÉ One Sunday July 4, 11am

Bishop Denis Nulty, Fr Paddy Byrne and Canon Patrick Harvey lead the Embrace FARM ecumenical service of remembrance and support for families affected by farm accidents.

SCANNAL

RTÉ One Tuesday July 6, 7pm

Scannal looks back to June 2001 where young innocent school girls attending Holy Cross Primary School in North Belfast were targeted during loyalist picketing.

and Michael Nugent of Atheist Ireland, with no-one to put the case for the other side. This was followed by several callers and texters supporting them, along with one text suggesting that this was an effort to "legalise murder", not representative of the rational opposition to this bill from large sections of the medical profession especially in the hospice movement. Later on the show returned to the issue with a caller who used to be in favour, still believed in people having the choice, but had concerns about unintended consequences e.g. pressure on people to make the choice.

Not unrelated, on **Liveline** (RTÉ Radio One, Wednesday) stand-in presenter Katie Hanon had a moving interview with Gerry Simpson, brother

of pop star Dermot 'Spyder' Simpson whose career was unfortunately cut short by a road accident that left him in a coma. The care given to him by his family was truly inspirational and Gerry stressed how important God, prayer and faith was to them during these challenging times. They rose to the challenge, big time and with big hearts. I was particularly touched by how convinced they were that Dermot was aware of his family, despite the coma – they so much valued his smile when they told him jokes. I'm sure many listeners got a smile from that.

boregan@hotmail.com,
[@boreganmedia](https://www.boreganmedia.com)



Film

A selection of new releases

Fatima was originally scheduled for last August. Its release was delayed for almost a year because of Covid. The virus gives it a strangely appropriate backdrop. It's like a metaphor for the horrors of World War I. The war underpins Marco Pontecorvo's uplifting evocation of the beatific visions of three Portuguese children in 1917.

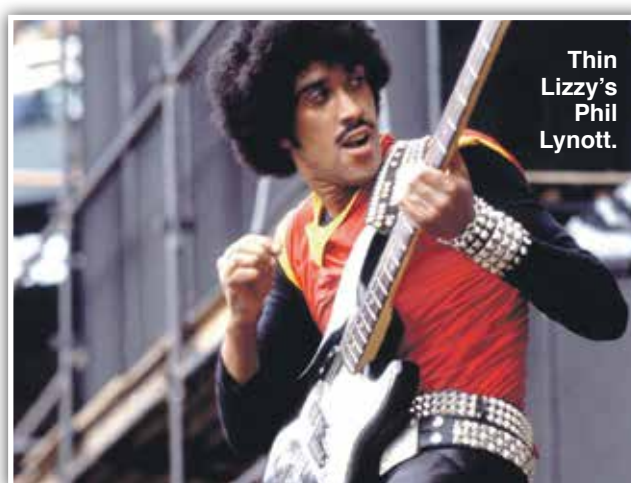
Both the secular and religious factions of their village are sceptical at first. So are their parents. Pontecorvo handles the children's determination to convince the masses of the validity of their claims with quiet authority.

As Lucia, Stephanie Gil betrays a maturity well

beyond her years. Pontecorvo uses the expressiveness of her features to great effect. We never catch her acting.

The apparitions of Our Lady are also subdued. There are no bombastic Cecil B. DeMille special effects here. 'The lady of the rosary' (Joana Ribeiro) is presented naturalistically rather than as a vision from the clouds. Such naturalism doesn't compromise her divinity. It jibes well with the gritty realism of the piece as a whole.

Fatima is an audio-visual delight laden with nuanced touches, its authenticity copperfastened by the Portuguese location and the sense that most of the performers seem to be actual people



Thin Lizzy's Phil Lynott.

rather than film stars.

In *The Father*, Oscar-winning Anthony Hopkins plays a stubborn octogenarian on the verge of dementia. He's

traumatised by the news that his daughter (Olivia Colman) is moving to Paris. The relationship between reality and his confused inner

world become increasingly tenuous as he struggles to come to grips with his condition. The film is like a corollary to *Still Alice*, which also won an Oscar for its main star (Julianne Moore).

Thin Lizzy was playing pool in a bar in Howth one night in the 1980s when I ran out of coins for the table. When I went up to the counter to ask for some, who was sitting there but Phil Lynott. He was on his own and looking the worse for wear. I asked him if he could oblige me with some change.

'There you go, sunshine,' he said as he gave me the coins. He refused my own money. Then he said, 'Would you like a pint?' I said no. I was too immersed in my game.

It seemed no time at all

after this that I heard of his death. I couldn't believe I'd turned down a pint with a rock legend for a stupid game of pool. The things we do on the spur of the moment. I sometimes wonder what he was 'on' that night.

Phil Lynott: Songs for While I'm Away is a documentary about the Thin Lizzy frontman who went from being a poor black boy in Crumlin to the dizzy heights of fame before checking out from drug addiction at 36. The official cause of death was given as pneumonia but it was really drug and alcohol abuse that did him in. What a tragedy for someone blessed with such an electrifying talent.



Aubrey Malone

BookReviews

Peter Costello



A lost poem by Roger Casement



Peter Costello

Research in Victorian newspapers and journals occupies much of my time away from these pages. The other day searching through the 1891 volume of WT Stead's influential *Review of Reviews*, I came across an item which it seemed to me would be of great interest to many of our readers, a "lost poem" by no less a person than Roger Casement.

The editor of the journal, the notorious Stead himself, wrote:

"I publish with much pleasure the following verses which have been sent me from the Congo Free State in response to Mr Harrison's appeal for the restoration of the Elgin Marbles to Greece. It is a remarkable instance of the large range of the *Review* and of the interest which many of our expatriated countrymen take in the problems of the old world which they have left behind:—

Give back the Elgin marbles; let them lie
Un sullied, pure, beneath an Attic sky.
The smoky fingers of our northern clime,
More ruin work than all the ancient time.
How oft the roar of the Piraen sea,
Through column'd hall and dusky temple stealing,
Hath struck these marble ears, that now must flee
The whirling hum of London, noonward reeling.
Ah! let them hear again the sounds that float
Around Athene's shrine on morning's breeze,—
The lowing ox, the bell of climbing goat,
And drowsy drone of

Give back the marbles;
let them vigil keep
Where Art still lies, o'er
Pheidias' tomb, asleep.

Roger Casement.
Lukunga Valley, Cataract Region of the Lower Congo."

Though the place from which Casement, then working for the company developing the Congo Free State (virtually the private estate of King Leopold of the Belgians), wrote sounds to a modern ear like the remotest quarter of the "Dark Continent", it is actually a quarter of Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 1891 it was only a decade old. Today with a population of some 15 million people, it is by far the most populous urbanised area in Africa.

Remote

But from what was in 1891 still a remote place Casement was contributing not to an Irish cause, as some might have expected, but another injustice of a cultural kind, one which still engages the friends of Greece in controversy with the British Museum, where the shattered relics of the Parthenon frieze are now lodged.

The poem serves to remind us that Casement was a man of generous spirit who abhorred all instances of corruption and injustice that he encountered. Irish freedom was not his only cause. All aspects of personal freedom moved him. Perhaps if we could see him clear of patriotic fame we might see Casement as a human being with fears and secret passions of his own. The Elgin Marbles, in the minds of many, remain

The legacy of the enigmatic Parnell

Parnell and his times
ed. by Joep Leerssen
(Cambridge University Press, £30.00)

Felix M. Larkin

It is often difficult to find an appropriate print outlet for a scholarly paper prepared for a particular occasion or otherwise in a very specific context. The fruits of much research and reflection are thereby lost.

A volume like this is, therefore, greatly to be welcomed. It salvages and brings together a selection of such papers by some of those who have held the Parnell Fellowship at Magdalene College, Cambridge. Insofar as the papers are linked thematically – and it is, at best, a tenuous link – it is by the sense that Parnell changed Ireland.

“This provided solid foundations for the literature of Ireland that emerged after Parnell”

Parnell's legacy was a revolution on two fronts: in the words of Clair Wills in this volume, “political revolution and the revolution of the word”. The seventeen papers that comprise the chapters of this volume are, accordingly, divided into two sections – one focused on the political and social, and the other on the literary.

Joep Leerssen describes Parnell in his introduction to

the volume as “the last great [Irish] parliamentary statesman, successor to Grattan and O’Connell”. He notes that “charisma seems an important key to understanding the appeal of Parnell and the fact that this appeal continued even after his passing”.

Leadership

His introduction is a meditation on the nature of charismatic leadership as defined by Max Weber and exemplified by Parnell. The impact of Parnell's charisma, during his lifetime and afterwards, justifies the conceit implicit in this volume that the period from the late 1870s to the early years of the new independent Irish state were “his times” – that is, of his making.

The nature of Parnell's influence on later Irish politicians of all shades of nationalist opinion is outlined by Roy Foster in a chapter entitled “Parnell to Pearse”. He points out (as does Declan Kiberd in another chapter) that even PH Pearse was prepared to consider adding Parnell to his “four evangelists” of Irish republicanism – Tone, Davis, Lalor and Mitchell.

Moreover, he argues that the Irish Free State that emerged in 1922 approximated in constitutional status to the kind of Dominion Home Rule sought by Parnell – and that the new Dominion was “characterised by the social results of the subsidised revolution in land ownership which Parnell had brought into being [and] by the kind of Westminster-inspired political structures which he had mastered”.

Parnell's impact – or, more precisely, the impact of Parnell's fall – on modern Irish literature is perhaps more generally recognised than his political legacy. Both Foster and Wills remind us in their chapters of Yeats' claim that “the modern literature of Ireland ... began when Parnell fell from power in 1891”.

There was a shift in Irish nationalism away from politics and towards the cultural arena. Wills, indeed, remarks that “Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* neatly dramatizes the argument Yeats made ... as the young Dedalus turns away from the melancholy politics of his Parnellite father ('Poor Parnell! He cried loudly. My dead king!') to devote himself to an art fitted for 'the uncreated conscience' of his race”.

“Parnell's legacy was a revolution on two fronts: in the words of Clair Wills in this volume, ‘political revolution and the revolution of the word’”

In a chapter on Irish anthologies, Leerssen shows that there were other influences at work as well in shaping the Irish Literary Revival. He writes that “nineteenth-century Irish culture was deeply engrossed in acts of translation”, rescuing “Gaelic literature and Gaelic

culture from the wreck of the Gaelic language and giving it a new lease on life in an English-speaking social setting”.

This provided solid foundations for the literature of Ireland that emerged after Parnell. Joyce satirised the Gaelic element in that literature in *Finnegans Wake* as “the twittering of bards in the twitterlitter between Druidia and the Deepsleep dreams”,

The Black and Tans: naming names

The Black & Tans 1920-1921: A Complete Alphabetical, Short History and Genealogical Guide

by Jim Herlihy
(Four Courts Press, €50/£45.00, also in paperback)

Peter Costello

Back in 1971 the Rev. Professor Edward Norman remarked in his controversial *History of Modern Ireland* that journalist Richard Bennett's sensational 1959 book on the Black and Tans, the only one that then existed, read like a novel.

So indeed it did, not that I suspect that many people now know the book. Historians have now taken over this territory. Yet mysteries still surround

the force and its activities. We have to remember that given the post-war unemployment, and the willingness to do anything that the government would pay for, men were easily recruited.

This book gives a meticulous roll call of their name as recorded; who they were, where they came from and where they later went to remains unexamined. A friend of a friend that I used to meet in other years in the National Library or in the Kilkenny Centre was engaged on a great task of assembling the names of those officers involved in intelligence work in Ireland; this great work never came to completion.

It used to be said that the well-blooded ex-Tans were packed off to the Palestine Mandate where the British employed them as police men where

they were able to indulge themselves in indiscriminate killings of Arabs and Jews.

(They could not, I think, have been employed in the Treaty Port of Shanghai, as I understand on the authority of a footnote in Dr Conrad Arensberg's *Irish Countryman* (1936), the British police for that enclave were all recruited from one favoured Catholic townland in Clare.)

So this is a valuable book, exemplary work by Jim Herlihy, who has done so much work on the policing of Ireland a century ago. But for others this is only the beginning: what became of the Tans and where they came from will occupy some researchers for years to come. Let us hope they fare better than my acquaintance in the National Library.

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.



Parnell in the heyday of his power

quoted in a chapter by Edna Longley on Yeats and Joyce – the twin peaks of the Irish Literary Revival.

Chapter

Raymond Gillespie contributes a chapter on religion in Ireland in 1891, based on his analysis of census data. He is particularly concerned with the “disjuncture between confessional allegiance and belief”. Parnell’s

religious affiliation serves as an example of this disjuncture: though baptised in the Church of Ireland and a member of both the select vestry of Rathdrum parish – which included his Avondale estate – and the synod of the diocese of Glendalough, it appears that his views tended towards those of the Plymouth Brethren, whose presence in county Wicklow dated back to the 1830s.

Notwithstanding this window that Gillespie opens into Parnell’s inner convictions – and indeed his soul – and despite Parnell’s extraordinary legacy to the people of Ireland, he remains something of an enigma (to borrow the title of a biography of him by Paul Bew, published in 2011). To his contemporaries, the enigma was surely part of his charisma.



The Black and Tans in action in 1920's Ireland

An Irish explorer who defied nature at its fiercest

An Unsung Hero: Tom Crean – Antarctic Survivor

by Michael Smith
(Gill Books, €19.99 / £12.50)

J. Anthony Gaughan

Tom Crean was a hero of the legendary Polar expeditions of the early decades of the twentieth century. The explorer faced nature in all its raw energy in a way later travellers never did.

Crean was born on a small farm near Anascaul in Co. Kerry on 25 February 1877. Before his 16th birthday he enlisted in the Royal Navy. He served in various capacities and on a number of ships before his assignment in 1901 to HMS Ringarooma, a torpedo ship which was deployed around Australia and New Zealand.

Tom volunteered to join Captain Robert F Scott’s British Antarctic Expedition of 1901-4 when the *Discovery* put in at Port Chalmers in New Zealand to take on provisions. He impressed Scott during that first voyage and on return to port was awarded the Polar Medal, was made a petty officer and was assigned to the HMS *Bulwark*. He travelled to the Antarctic a second time aboard the *Terra Nova* with the ill-fated British Antarctic Expedition of 1910-13, working as a member of the support parties preparing supply depots for the polar team. In January 1912 he was on the last supporting party for Scott and his four colleagues as they set out for the last trek to reach the South Pole and so was the last to see them alive. Tom was one of the search party that discovered the bodies of Scott’s party in November 1912.

On their return trek to the base camp Lt Edward Evans (later Admiral Lord Mountbatten), one of Tom’s colleagues, took ill and could go no further. Tom went in search of help, travelling for eighteen hours in blizzard conditions. For this heroic feat he was awarded the Albert Medal.

Volunteered

Once more in June 1913 he volunteered to travel to the Antarctic, this time with Sir Ernest Shackleton. He was appointed second mate on the *Endurance* during the trans-Antarctic expedition of 1914-16. Alongside Shackleton he was one of the crew of



Tom Crean equipped to face the hazards of the South Pole.

the longboat, the *James Caird*, that sailed from Elephant Island to South Georgia for assistance when the *Endurance* was trapped, crushed and sunk by ice. It was an epic seventeen-day journey of eight hundred miles. Despite the hardship he endured on this voyage and on the gruelling hike that followed to reach South Georgia, he insisted on returning to Elephant Island with the ship that eventually rescued the remaining crew of the *Endurance*.

“Tom was one of the search party that discovered the bodies of Scott’s party in November 1912”

Back in England in November 1916, Tom was attached to the HMS *Colleen*, a patrol ship in Cove, in March 1917. He later served on board HMS *Inflexible*, HMS *Fox* and HMS *Hecla*. He took part in a number of voyages to northern Russia, when the allies were assisting the White Russians in their attempts to block the Bolshevik take-over of Russia.

Following an accident he was invalided out of the navy in March 1920. Apart from his Albert and Polar medals he was awarded the Naval Long Service, the Good Conduct and War Service Medals. Nor was he forgotten by his former comrades. Evans

dedicated his book *South with Scott* (1921) to him and they ensured that the Crean Glacier on South Georgia and Mount Crean were named in his honour.

Retired

Tom had married Eileen Herlihy in September 1917, and when he retired they set up a public house in Anascaul which they later named the ‘South Pole Inn’. His eldest brother, Cornelius, who was a sergeant in the RIC was killed by the IRA in an ambush at Ballinspittal, Co. Cork, in April 1920.

During the revolutionary years Ireland and especially Cos. Cork and Kerry were dangerous places even for retired members of the crown forces. Hence Tom maintained a low profile, seldom referring to his previous naval career. He died from a neglected attack of appendicitis on July 27, 1938, still, as always, wearing a scapular.

In the decades that followed Tom Crean was largely forgotten, in Ireland at least, despite the fact that he spent more time in the Antarctic than Scott or Shackleton who had been lionised by the British public.

In the 1980s, however, this all changed and he has been elevated to the status of a modern Irish icon. His story has now been very much sung in the press, radio, television, films and not least in this splendid biography.

“Before his 16th birthday he enlisted in the Royal Navy”

Leisure time

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or call 01 679 3188



www.hospicefoundation.ie

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— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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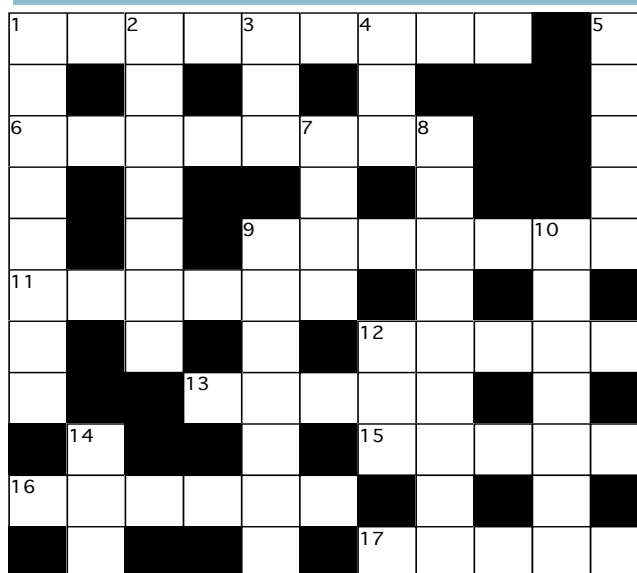
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One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

Crossword Junior

Gordius 389



Across

- 1 A fan (9)
6 Curls you might see in someone's hair (8)
9 He has the same parents as you (7)
11 Sounds (6)
12 Use it to make bread (5)
13 Nasty to others; hard-hearted (5)
15 Filthy (5)
16 Person you go to if you are sick (6)
17 It is red on a holly bush (5)

Down

- 1 You'll find these fish packed tightly into a tin (8)
2 Bird that lives near the South

Pole (7)

- 3 Black liquid you put in an engine (3)
4 People sometimes call an infant a Tiny ____ (3)
5 Someone who punches in a ring (5)
7 We listen with these (4)
8 Some people have a _____ dish for television (9)
9 You sleep here in the house (7)
10 Imaginary line around the Earth's "tummy" (7)
12 Gave food to (3)
14 The female of this animal is called a vixen (3)

SOLUTIONS, JUNE 24

GORDIUS NO. 513

Across — 1 Job hunting 6 Able 10 Crust 11 Israelite 12 Objects 15 Caddy 17 Abba 18 Rule 19 Rough 21 Seabird 23 Visit 24 Spar 25 Adit 26 Diver 28 Hampers 33 New Mexico 34 Reach 35 Eddy 36 Salamander

Down — 1 Jack 2 Bluebells 3 Untie 4 Twist 5 Nero 7 Blind 8 Everywhere 9 Red card 13 Cube 14 Sabbath 16 Providence 20 Upper hand 21 Starlet 22 Ream 27 Vowed 29 Aroma 30 Parka 31 Rita 32 Thor

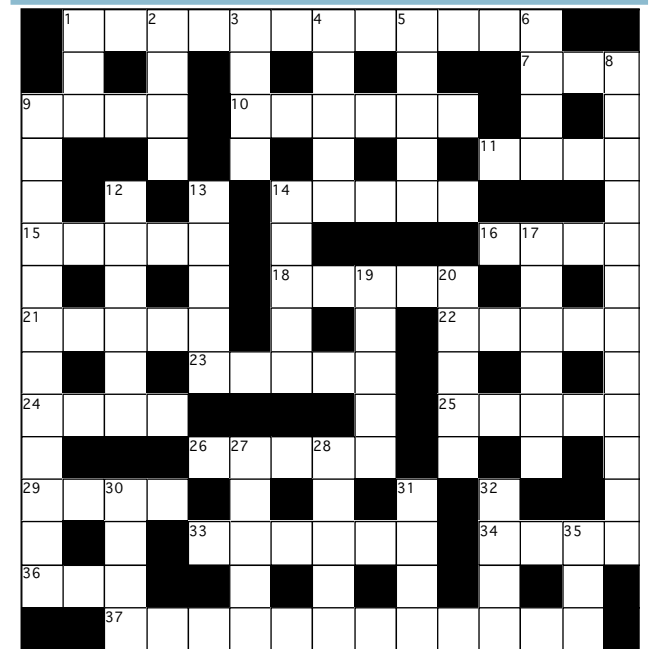
CHILDREN'S No. 388

Across — 1 Salad cream 7 Address 8 Get 9 Smaller 11 Write 12 Streams 15 Code 17 Nappy 18 Ancient 19 Sheep

Down — 1 Shadow 2 Ladybird 3 Dresses 4 Restaurants 5 Angel 6 Stir 10 Elm 13 Apple 14 Shy 15 Crab 16 Exit

Crossword

Gordius 514



Across

- 1 The forerunner to the EU was a place for all but the aristocracy can buy things, it seems! (6,6)
7 Concealed (3)
9 The edge of a cup or bowl (4)
10 & 9d Formal assurance that one has no medical problems (1,5,4,2,6)
11 Gone, without the necessary permission (1,1,1,1)
14 Togetherness, cohesion (5)
15 Unfettered (5)
16 Article of Roman dress (4)
18 Latin American dance (5)
21 A palisade, or a handler of stolen goods (5)
22 & 26a How could a gator barge into this historic Swedish film star? (5,5)
23 The language of ancient Rome (5)
24 Dines (4)
25 Ruth's mother-in-law in the Bible (5)
26 See 22 across
29 Gentlewoman (4)
33 Local Christian community (6)
34 Kiln where oats are redistributed (4)
36 Meaty son of Noah (3)

37 Joseph Ratzinger's papal name (4,8)

Down

- 1 Mongrel (3)
2 Silent performance (4)
3 Asian country, capital Muscat (4)
4 City in northern Italy associated with the fashion industry (5)
5 Respond to a stimulus (5)
6 Melt (4)
8 The type of Covid that is associated with India (5,7)
9 See 10 across
12 This stinging insect ensures the throne is relocated (6)
13 Precious stone (5)
14 Disconcert or overturn (5)
17 Spotted cat of the Americas (6)
19 Fruit that makes a bloke depart (5)
20 Extreme pain (5)
27 Lessen, ease off (5)
28 A woman on her wedding day (5)
30 Landfill Site (4)
31 Old-fashioned way of writing "you" (4)
32 Asian desert (4)
35 Take a seat (3)

Sudoku Corner

389

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 388

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

Last week's Hard 388

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

Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock



Celebrating in changed times

RECENTLY I VISITED the three schools of our parish to celebrate first penance with the boys and girls preparing for First Holy Communion. It is noteworthy that the number of children involved between the three schools is fourteen. I say this, as a slight aside, because when we hear of numbers, restrictions and NPHET advice, I sometimes think the reality of life in rural parishes is not factored in. I do not say this as a criticism but rather an observation. We had planned to have First Holy Communion in June but felt it necessary, rather than better, to postpone it due to media coverage around gatherings for First Holy Communion etc. Again, I think when numbers are discussed, the determining factor is located in large city parishes with hundreds of children, rather than a parish like this. I digress!

Special

Back to first penance. There was something very special about it to be honest. It was lovely to meet the children in the school classroom and to talk with them in the presence of their friends and to chat with them about the cer-



tainty that is the Lord's forgiveness. I asked one child in third class what was his favourite possession and he told me it was most likely his bicycle. I took a pencil case from his desk and asked him to imagine it was his bicycle. I distracted him and took the pencil case and hid it. I asked him how he felt, and he said he felt sad and annoyed that his "bicycle" had been taken. I chatted with him about this and then told him that if I decided to bring it back and say sorry, would he forgive me

and be happy again. He said that he would so the return was made, and the apology given. He smiled!

Better

"Now", I said "isn't that better? It is good to say sorry, to seek forgiveness and to know that you did the right thing." A boy in the first penance group – a real character, looked at me and said "He could just have dialled 911" – I said he could but that by the time the Police would have crossed the Brooklyn Bridge in New York, I'd

be long gone out of Magheraboy! Everyone laughed and I said to him "911 is the number for the American Police – here you dial 999 or 112" – "Oh", he said "I did not know about 112". It struck me how much the children are influenced by television. It was all good humoured.

Later, when my young friend and I had celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation and as he was about to leave the room, I said "911" and he looked back at me and with a perfect American accent, replied "What is your emergency?" We both laughed and I could not help but think that was the appropriate response to forgiveness – a sense of wellbeing and happiness, no room for fear and always being yourself. He was himself to the end.

What is your emergency? Maybe we don't need one – we just need to be open, encouraging and willing to share a moment. We need to return the pencil case – the bicycle, say sorry and know in the depths of our hearts that it is never, ever too late to do the right thing.

Nine-One-One!

All the king's horses

● Humpty Dumpty had a great fall and, we are told, putting him together again – even with the help of the king's horses and men – would not be possible. There is a sadness in the old nursery rhyme and a reality too. I sometimes think there is a bit of the Humpty Dumpty at work in our church, not least in the lingering shadow of Covid and the even more lingering shadows of the worst of our past. It strikes me mending and rebuilding needs to take place but maybe we are looking in the wrong place – perhaps it is not the king's horses or the king's men we need but the everyday man and woman of every parish, every church area, every townland to carefully gather, stitch together and rebuild what all too easily could fall shattered to the floor.



KENYA'S SLUM CHILDREN DESPERATELY NEED YOUR HELP

The Holy Ghost (Spiritan) Fathers are helping afflicted children and their families in the slums of Migombani, Mombasa, Kenya.

Fr Peter Ndegwa CSSp writes to The Little Way Association: "Children as young as 13 are used as drug-runners and even younger children (girls and boys) become addicts. There is a culture of violence and sexual exploitation. Crime begins with petty theft escalating to major acts of stealing and violence."

Fr Ndegwa lists multiple problems caused by this culture in the slums. He adds: "Covid has only made things worse. A key way to alleviate this crisis is to offer beans, maize and oil to vulnerable families, especially those led by single mothers with small children. If families have food, they are less likely to resort to crime."

The Little Way Association wants to send the Spiritans sufficient funds initially to help 600 households and 400 children of drug-affected families through a six-month programme.

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

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€..... **CHAPELS IN THE MISSIONS**

€..... **MASS OFFERINGS**
(Please state no. of Masses _____)

€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

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Address

To donate online go to
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**DONATIONS FOR THE
MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT
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EXPENSES.**



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Can you help us?

Every cent that you send to our Hungry, Sick and Deprived fund goes to help people such as the drug-damaged families of Mombasa. **Please be generous towards these endangered children and their struggling parents.**



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You can help repair a mission chapel

The Little Way Association has a long history of providing humble places of worship for far-flung parishes in mission countries. Nature can take its toll on these simple buildings, and we receive requests from priests for help with repairs. We humbly ask that you allocate some of your kind giving to our chapels fund. By ensuring that these small but dignified churches are in good repair, you help to make possible the offering of Holy Mass in needy Catholic communities.

You and your intentions are remembered in a daily Mass offered in the Missions for all our friends and benefactors.

IC/07/01