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Dublin diocese receives €10 million Covid-19 pandemic insurance payout

Ruadhán Jones

The country's largest diocese has received an almost €10 million payout from insurance companies to cover money lost due to Covid-19 church closures when collections could not be taken up.

The Archdiocese of Dublin's financial reports for 2021 show that it received €9.4 million as compensation for losses under the business interruption clause of its insurance policy.

Most of the money received relates to losses suffered in 2020 when Government restrictions were particularly draconian on parishes and includes an interim amount for 2021, which amounts to 20% of the settlement for 2020.

This opens up the possibility of further claims for the diocese and other dioceses that have similar insurance policies.

The 'Parishes of the Diocese of Dublin' report recently filed with authorities showed a surplus of just more than €3 million for 189 of its 197 parishes – the report excludes eight parishes run by religious orders. This is compared to a deficit of €4.3 million in 2020.

The parishes' total income for 2021 was €31.3 million, an increase of almost €4 million on 2020, while the expenditure amounted to €28.1 million, down €1.2 million.

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Going forward in time...



Principal of St Eithne's Primary School Mr McDowell, teacher Mrs Concannon and some of the children from her class receive a time capsule from members of the Ballymagroarty Hazelbank Community Partnership. The capsule was created as part of an intergenerational project organised by BHCP between children from Mrs Concannon's Primary 5 class and some of the older members of St Eithne's community, November 3.

Stormont stalemate opens way for paramilitaries - bishop

Chai Brady

The failure to form an Executive in the North and a lack of political leadership is leaving space for paramilitaries, Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry has warned.

He said any decision regarding another Stormont election, set to take place after Christmas, must be taken with a focus on the "common good".

"I think we have to challenge all our political leaders in Westminster and Belfast to share that particular purpose... there's a danger that politics becomes just a game for parties who are squabbling with one another and jostling for position. Our job is to say 'you're being paid to look after everybody'," he said.

The bishop added that "our job is saying politics is important, prove that politics works otherwise you leave space for paramilitaries. Focus not just on macro politics but focus on delivering for people on the ground so that we will get through this winter."

"We've got to have the short, medium and longterm welfare of people in mind and not just long-term dreams of a united Ireland or a united Kingdom..."

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Realise climate responsibility and engage with COP27
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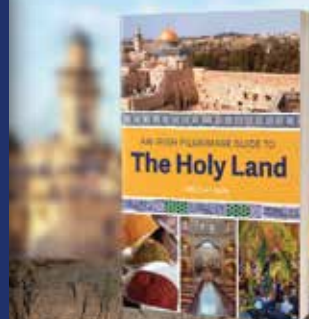
JONATHAN VAN MAREN

A pro-life movement with huge potential
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**Keep noses
and ears to the
ground to notice
symptoms**

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Dublin diocese receives €10 million Covid-19 insurance payout

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The surplus includes the €3.7 million compensation received under the business interruption clause of the parishes' insurance policies.

The common fund received €3.3 million and the Share fund – which helps needy parishes – received €2.4 million. Both funds, which are based on the proceeds of the first and second collection respectively, saw marginal surpluses in 2021 of €2.7 million and €2.1 million respectively.

The clerical fund, which mainly supports elderly priests and priests suffering from illness, fielded a deficit of €1.1 million in 2021. Unlike 2020, the net movement was also a deficit of €734,000.

Collections remained significantly down on pre-pandemic levels, the report shows.

The diocese admits that while there had been hope collections could return to pre-pandemic levels in 2022, "this has proven to be too optimistic".

"It is anticipated that the closure of the churches will have a longer impact and may

take some time for the collections to return to pre-pandemic levels," the report says.

In an effort to combat the decreasing donations the diocese have so far invested €259,000 to install tap-and-go devices in 124 of the 197 parishes.

Over the coming months, the tap-and-go devices will continue to be installed in the remaining parishes, although the installation of Wi-Fi devices has slowed the process.

Meanwhile, priest stipends have returned to pre-pandemic levels as of the third quarter of 2022, having been reduced by 25% in an effort to combat the sharp downturn in collections.

The report, covering the financial statements of the combined parishes, the clerical fund, the common fund and the share fund, was one of two submitted to the Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA), covering the period up to December 31, 2021, and released November 4. The other was the 'Charities of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin' annual financial report.

See page 12

How can there still be people who don't 'get' abuse crisis?

Church history is always one of ups and downs, peaks and troughs. The last 2,000 years have been witness to some of the greatest people in human history doing great things in the name of Christianity. The same period has also witnessed immense human wickedness from people who profess to be followers of the Carpenter of Nazareth. As one spiritual writer aptly put it, the story of Catholicism is the story of Christ – God hung between two thieves.

When historians in a century from now or a century after that come to write the history of the Church in the late-20th and early 21st Century, the issue of clerical sexual abuse and the dramatic loss of confidence and trust in Church leadership will loom large.

It's not that there haven't been scandals in the Church in the past, anyone who knows anything about ecclesiastical history knows that this is not true. The history of the papacy alone is one of saints and scoundrels (considerably more saints, thankfully). But, until the mid-19th Century most Irish Catholics likely didn't even know unprompted the name of the Pope. Now, with a 24-hour news cycle every action of the Pope is reported and parsed.

However, the nature – and pace – of media now means that a story of scandal circles the globe within minutes.

Cover-up

Clerical sexual abuse – and the criminal cover-up of it in nearly every corner of the Church – is a juggernaut that wreaks havoc everywhere. Obviously, first and foremost in the lives of the victims and their families and communities.

As well as the abuse itself, there is the added spiritual abuse. For some 20 years now I have interviewed



French Cardinal Jean-Pierre Ricard who has now said he is withdrawing from public life after admitting abuse. Photo: CNS

people who have suffered the most appalling abuse at the hands of priests and religious. Almost to a person, their biggest remaining pain is the fact that the abuse took their faith from them and often destroyed the faith of their families and friends as well.

Dealing

It's also trying for the many Catholics in the pews who go on loving the Church, despite everything. And, Church leaders at a global level seem unwilling or incapable of dealing decisively with the issue of abuse and the accountability that must be there for those who have failed children and mis-governed the Church by covering up for abusers.

I can't have been alone in being angry this week when French cardinal Jean-Pierre Ricard confessed to abusing a 14-year-old girl, 35 years ago.

He is one of 11 French bishops or former bishops, including Michel Santier, a former bishop in Creteil, near Paris, who are the focus of abuse investigations.

Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

Decades after the abuse of the child – which happened when the cleric was 43 – he allowed his name to go forward for nomination as a bishop. In 2006, knowing everything that we know about abuse in the Church, he even accepted nomination as a cardinal.

It gets worse – he also accepted nomination to the Vatican's powerful Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith which has responsibility for punishing crimes of sexual abuse – all while knowing that he himself is a sexual abuser.

“Are abusers like Cardinal Ricard worthy of forgiveness?”

It's not at all clear why Cardinal Ricard has now admitted his crime – at the risk of sounding cynical, I would guess that the truth is he was about to be exposed. Time and again we have seen that men like Cardinal Ricard – who clearly love their career more than the Faithful – cling on until they are about to be exposed, regardless of the dire consequences for his victim and the wider Christian community.

Are abusers like Cardinal Ricard worthy of forgiveness? Of course they are, but we must never confuse forgiveness with justice – one can sincerely forgive such men while insisting that they wear sackcloth for the rest of their lives and live on bread and water. It's certainly more palatable and Christian than being promoted sideways as happened so often in the past

in the Church. He must also be dealt with by the police and judicial system and face the full consequences of the crime he has admitted to. Cardinal Ricard and his ilk are a scandal to the Faithful. They are a disgrace to the many bishops and religious superiors around the world in countries like Ireland who have moved heaven and earth to ensure some of the most impressive safeguarding standards in the world with the help of an army of volunteers in parishes.

Pope Francis on his way back from Bahrain this week refused to be drawn on the French situation except to say on abuse: “there are people in the Church who still don't get it.”

Presumably, he'll be looking to the College of Cardinals in the first instance.

Warned

It's 11 years since Benedict XVI warned Irish bishops that the failures of Church leaders on the issue of abuse “have obscured the light of the Gospel to a degree that not even centuries of persecution succeeded in doing”.

It's a damning judgement that should be in the mind of every person charged with governing the Church and it is something that we should all think about when we lament the decline in faith and trust in the Church.

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Theologian says Kerry bishop should correct 'harmful' statement

Chai Brady

An Irish theologian has called on Bishop Ray Browne to publicly correct an "egregiously wrong" statement the prelate made about a controversial homily in Listowel, Co. Kerry.

Dr Tom Finegan of Mary Immaculate College in Thurles claimed that the bishop's assertion that the controversial views expressed by Fr Seán Sheehy "do not represent the Christian position" is incorrect.

Retired priest Fr Sheehy continues to defend what he said regarding sin, homosexuality, abortion and transgenderism during Mass in St Mary's Church.

Dr Finegan said the priest's message was "essentially true" and that "Bishop Browne is wrong – egregiously wrong – when he bluntly asserts that Fr Sheehy's statements 'do not represent the Christian position'."

"Because his [Bishop Browne's] assertion encourages presumption and discourages conformity to Christ, it is harmful to the eternal spiritual welfare of all who hear it. As a bishop he should publicly correct his remark for the sake of those with ears to hear."

However, Fr Thomas Grenham SPS, a lecturer in chaplaincy studies and practical theology in Dublin City University said the comments made by Fr Sheehy were "hurtful and unwarranted".

Fr Grenham told *The Irish Catholic*: "these comments are not Christian. They are full of angry vengeance and biased personal judgement and which are not about an unconditional loving and merciful God of every person."

Fr Paddy Byrne PP of Abbey-leix in Co. Laois also criticised the comments, saying the pulpit "must never be a place where others are alienated".

"I think he [Fr Sheehy] has done a lot of harm, a lot of damage, there's lots and lots of folk who've spoken to me about feeling hurt and I as a priest carry a sense of absolute concern about what happened," he said.

"I just think that in the joy of my ministry it's always been about listening, learning, loving and meeting people where they're at. It's a mighty challenge to try and build a congregation at the moment. The numbers in our pews are depleting, and it's not necessarily about just a populist mes-

sage that makes everyone feel well, but the ultimate desire when we gather is that we will be stronger in the Lord."

In the homily in question, Fr Sheehy said: "You rarely hear about sin but it's rampant. We see it for example in the legislation. We see it in the promotion of abortion, we see it and in the example of this lunatic approach of transgenderism and in promotion of sex between two men and two women. That is sinful. That is mortal sin."

Following backlash from some parishioners, a number of whom left during the Mass, the bishop issued a statement saying: "I am aware of the deep upset and hurt caused by the contents of the homilies in question delivered over the weekend. I apologise to all who were offended. The views expressed do not represent the Christian position. The homily at a regular weekend parish Mass is not appropriate for such issues to be spoken of in such terms."

When asked for further clarification a spokesperson for the Diocese of Kerry said it would be issuing no further statements on the issue.

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Organisers of youth letter invited to synodal meeting

Jason Osborne

Organisers of a letter from over 500 young Catholics challenging the synod on a perceived desire among young people for liberal reform have been invited to a meeting with the synodal steering committee, *The Irish Catholic* newspaper understands.

The letter, which went viral online after being picked up by Catholic news agencies internationally, was due to be discussed by the bishops during their autumn meeting.

The meeting between the synodal steering committee and the letter's organisers is likely at the request of the bishops' conference.

Reports from synodal meetings across Ireland have lamented the lack of young people in attendance and the difficulty in reaching out to them.

The letter in question raised concerns regarding calls arising in the diocesan synodal reports for changing Church teaching on human sexuality, marriage and women priests in particular.

"As young faithful Catholics we fully accept and joyfully embrace Church teaching and practice, and do not wish for Church teaching to be changed or reformulated," the letter reads.

Over 500 young, committed Catholics signed the letter in the space of a week before it was sent to the Irish bishops.

A royal chuckle...



Pope Francis shares a laugh with Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa during a meeting in the VIP hall of the Sakhr air base November 3, during his recent visit to Bahrain. Photo: CNS/Yara Nardi, Reuters



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Co. Tyrone church crowned 'Church of the Year'

Jason Osborne

St Macartan's Church in Augher, Co. Tyrone, has scooped the top prize in the UK's 'Church of the Year' competition for 2022.

St Macartan's, also known as The Forth Chapel, is located in the Clogher Valley, dates from 1838 – 1846 and was once the cathedral of the diocese of Clogher.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Parish Priest Fr Noel McGahan described the church as a "hidden treasure" adorning Ireland's landscape.

"It's a great thing. We're very pleased, as it's a wonderful achievement. It's giving great recognition

of the fact that the people of that generation back in the 1830s built such a fine church, a fine house for the glory of God," Fr McGahan said.

"Nothing but the very best for God's house. I think it's a great reflection on the people of the past and their faith and their generosity, that they have left us with such a fine monument. Of course, the church as a building is a reminder to us of God's living presence among us."

The competition's judges were wowed by the building's stained glass windows from the Harry Clarke studios in Dublin, which St Macartan's is currently celebrating the centenary of.

"We are so fortunate that this year is the centenary of the stained glass windows from the Harry Clarke studios in Dublin that were installed in the church in 1922," Fr McGahan said.

Recently restored, the windows feature native of the area, Archbishop John Hughes, who would become the first bishop of New York and go on to help establish Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York.

Meanwhile, Co. Cork's own Honan Chapel also won big when it was awarded the John Betjeman award for restoration of places of worship in Ireland by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings November 4.



St Macartan depicted in stained glass. Photo: St Macartan's, Facebook.

Concerns raised over proposed hate crime law reform

Staff reporter

Plans to reform hate crime laws have sparked widespread opposition, with more than 3,600 submissions from the public, elected representatives, political parties and academics received by Government.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Laois-Offaly Independent Carol Nolan TD said that there are "serious concerns" around

the laws.

"In particular I am worried about the impact that such regressive legislation will have on the capacity of organisations and institutions, including the various Churches, to continue operating in a space where their counter-cultural message won't be weaponised against them," Ms Nolan told this paper.

The Bill, which has passed through Dáil Éireann, will add gender, including gen-

der expression and identity, and disability to a list of "protected characteristics".

A person who seeks to "incite hatred" against a person or group with one of these characteristics could be guilty of an offence carrying up to five years in prison.

"Nothing in our recent political and cultural history suggests to me that the counter-cultural message of the Church on everything from pro-life issues to gender issues, will be given the

benefit of the doubt or protected as legitimate freedom of speech," Ms Nolan said.

The Bill states that in any proceedings for an offence under this section, a defence can be based upon a "rea-

sonable and genuine contribution to literary, artistic, political, scientific, religious or academic discourse". However, it is not made clear what a "reasonable and genuine contribution" is.

The law is setting up an "open season" on the Church, Ms Nolan said, and will "practically institutionalise the relentless attack mode that we have seen so much of in recent years".

Charity delivers 680 tenancies under 'housing first' model

Chai Brady

Housing charity the Peter McVerry Trust had 680 active 'housing first' tenancies across 14 local authorities by the end of last year.

The charity published its annual report on Tuesday and announced it worked with more than 10,000 people in 2021, an increase of almost 30% on the previous year.

The charity, which is now active in 28 local authority areas, said the year was marked by the ongoing expansion of housing first, the response to Covid-19 and the increase in its own housing delivery and tenant support services.

Pat Doyle, CEO of Peter McVerry Trust said:

"Last year marked 10 years of Peter McVerry Trust delivering the housing first model in Ireland, an approach that provides housing and intensive wraparound supports to people experiencing homelessness.

"Our efforts to grow housing first go hand in hand with our social housing delivery programme and we delivered almost 200 new social homes in 2021, our best year so far," he said.

"Delivering high quality housing and providing people with the key to their own home and the supports to sustain their tenancies is an incredibly important part of our work and an area that is the number one priority for the coming years."

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Treasurer of Stella Maris Board of Management Maurice Fennessy cuts the ribbon as the independent Catholic school celebrates its official opening. Students, staff and parents gathered to mark the occasion at its premises in Assumpta House, Windmill Street, Limerick City.

No human being is a 'spare'

While the Catholic Church in Ireland faces a weekly battering – sometimes through mismanagement and misjudgement by the Church's own leadership – in Britain, the monarchy is the object of obloquy, sometimes driven by a similar motivation to destroy the institution.

“They are aware that a Netflix series is going to be produced for profit and therefore will take dramatic licence with the stories of living people”

As the latest series of *The Crown* dropped yesterday (Wednesday), those defending the monarchy repeatedly accused the makers, and especially the writer Peter Morgan, of producing lies, calumny and “tosh”. Mr Morgan has indeed admitted that he would like to see the end of the royals, and it may be suggested that he is doing a fair job of undermining their reputations. Younger people in Britain are less likely to be monarchists, and after watching *The Crown*, that trend may well increase.

But the royal family



Mary Kenny

– perhaps like the Church in Ireland – also faces an enemy within. They are aware that a Netflix series is going to be produced for profit and therefore will take dramatic licence with the stories of living people. The family are, it's suggested, more anxious about Prince Harry's autobiography, *Spare*, which is due on January 10, and likely to air every grievance the prince has unearthed from his sessions with his therapists – and at the instigation of his wife.

After Queen Elizabeth died, it was reported that Harry tried to amend the manuscript of his book – written in conjunction with an experienced ghostwriter, J.R. Moehinger – but his publishers were having none of it. They had paid 20 million bucks for this product – so it has to be impactful.

Nasty concept

None of us has yet read the book, so we obviously cannot judge it: but I do judge the title, which is awful. *Spare* is a nasty concept, coined by the American heiress Consuelo Vanderbilt who claimed the aristocracy required “an heir and a spare” as a form of succession. (She was forced by her draconian mother into an unhappy marriage with the ninth Duke of Marlborough

– she brought the money, he came with Blenheim Palace: considering the materialism of the arrangements, perhaps her cynicism is predictable.)

But whatever hereditary traditions prevail, no human being should be described as a ‘spare’, and neither should they so describe themselves.

“But younger children, Adler found, benefit from their family position in different ways”

It is true that the first-born in any family has advantages that subsequent siblings do not – it's been established that parents take more photographs of their first child than any of their other offspring. But younger children have other advantages – parents are often less exacting with them. There is some evidence, too, that the youngest child is often the mother's favourite.

Many years ago, back in old Vienna, the psychologist Alfred Adler did some interesting research on birth order and how it affects



Prince William of Wales and Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, follow the casket of Queen Elizabeth II as it travels on the State Gun Carriage during her funeral in London on September 19. Photo: CNS

personality and character. He did suggest that first-borns showed more leadership – responsibility is often thrust on them. Some cultures, such as Confucianism, place great emphasis on the position of the elder brother.

Benefit

But younger children, Adler found, benefit from their family position in different ways.

Harry's title sends a mean-spirited message – perhaps that's what he intends.

“Mr Morgan has indeed admitted that he would like to see the end of the royals, and it may be suggested that he is doing a fair job of undermining their reputations”

● I encountered two very nice, sensible, mainstream American voters last week, both long-time adherents of the Democratic party and kinsmen of the Kennedy dynasty. Both men said that American politics were now so divisive and so sulfuric it was difficult for many people to know who to vote for.

They deplored the way the Trumpistas had taken over the Republican party; but they were also appalled at the way in which the Democratic party, under Joe Biden, had become so left-wing and had embraced so uncritically ‘identity politics’ (including the farther reaches of the transgender movement). Mr Biden had, they felt, lost his grip. There must be many US voters who are similarly in despair about the extremes and divisiveness that now characterise American politics.

Eyes averted to abortion

There's a new Hollywood movie entitled *Call Jane*, which is about a Chicago woman seeking an abortion in 1968 – for urgent medical reasons. She finds it difficult to obtain, until she contacts the ‘Jane’, network, headed by Sigourney Weaver. Even critics who consider this a compelling story have described the film as ‘tub-thumping’ for abortion rights.

Wouldn't it be interesting if Hollywood were to make a movie about the life of Dr Bernard Nathanson, who performed up to 75,000 abortions before becoming nauseated by his trade – and writing a forensic account of his professional life, *Aborting America*? Dr Nathanson, who died in 2011 aged 84, describes in clear and lucid prose how he would be requested to carry

abortions at eight months' pregnancy – well before 1968, by the way – until he became converted to the pro-life cause because of the situations he witnessed. Bernard Nathanson's own story is riveting, but, no, Hollywood is not going to look through the other side of this lens any time soon.

JOE WALSH TOURS

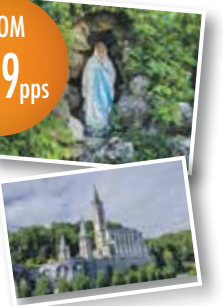


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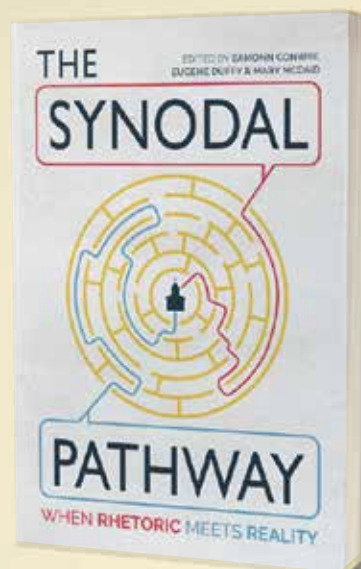
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Embattled Lord Mayor confirms crib but no animals

Ruadhán Jones

The embattled Lord Mayor of Dublin has insisted that it was always her intention to keep the traditional nativity scene outside Mansion House, minus the animals.

Addressing her fellow councillors on Monday, Mayor Caroline Conroy said she wanted to deal with "one misunderstanding" that had arisen through "erroneous" reporting in the media.

"There will be a crib at the Mansion House this Christmas. The only difference is that there will not be live animals in the crib," the Green Party councillor told Dublin City Council on November 7.

In a statement to this paper, the Lord Mayor's press office said "it doesn't mark a change of tack. The Lord Mayor has

always said the crib will be in place, there will just be no live animals this year".

However, in previous interviews Cllr Conroy made no reference to the crib, saying only that plans were in place for a "winter wonderland".

In her speech to the council, Ms Conroy said that alongside the crib there will be a Christmas sleigh, a post box, children's choirs and dance groups.

She said another Lord Mayor can bring the farm animals back but she wants to try something different. It is not a culture war, she said, but an attempt to do things better.

What is "exciting is that there will be more than just a crib" this year, Mayor Conroy said.

Earlier she had rejected an emergency motion calling for

the reversal of her decision on the live animal crib that Fine Gael had wanted tabled for the meeting.

The live crib was an annual Christmas fixture at the venue since 1995, when it was first introduced by the Irish Farmers' Association.

The decision to stop this year's crib had been supported by some colleagues of Lord Mayor Conroy on the council, but other councillors have strongly opposed it.

Fine Gael Councillor James Geoghegan said it was unfortunate the Lord Mayor attacked the reporting of the plan and attacked Fine Gael for raising the matter.

He said the public reaction to the plan to remove the live animals from the crib is what had driven the controversy and not anything else.

Prayers for answers as Creeslough months mind held

Chai Brady

Parish Priest Fr John Joe Duffy has said the reality of the Creeslough tragedy is becoming more apparent as the "numbness and shock" begins to ease, following the first month's mind.

A month on from the devastating explosion which killed 10 people in the small Donegal community, Fr Duffy said he experienced comfort from counselling and encouraged others to do the same.

Speaking to the BBC's *Good Morning Ulster* programme on Tuesday morning he said: "Numbness and shock is beginning to ease and it's becoming all the more apparent the reality of what we have faced and are facing. It's very important to have professional

counselling, but also there is other types of counselling as well.

"People are meeting through sport, through the youth group here in the community and meeting in various ways here in the church. It has to be a joined-up approach going forward and healing in different ways and different mediums," said Fr Duffy.

An Garda has opened more than 500 lines of enquiry into the October 7 explosion at an Applegreen petrol station.

"We all hope there will be a conclusion to the investigation that may give some answers as to how or why this happened. If there is something that can be learned from that to prevent anything like this ever happening again in this community or any other community that is the great desire," he said.

Good and faithful servants...



Ballycastle Parish, Co. Kilkenny recently held a celebration of awarding the Benemerenti medal from Pope Francis to Mrs Mary Egan (left), a long-time promoter of *The Irish Catholic*, in honour of her service to the Church. She joins another recent recipient in the parish Mrs Gerardine Walsh.

Niamh Uí Bhriain
The View



Ireland needs to see some sense on transgenderism

A shift in the right direction is taking place on an international level when it comes to transgenderism and children.

In Britain, and in states like Florida in the US, experts and policymakers are now putting the protection of children first - and reversing the trend to provide children with so-called 'gender-affirming care'; a treatment path which has caused growing numbers of young people to say they were rushed into changing sex with devastating effects.

The Florida Medical Board recently voted to ban puberty-blockers, hormone therapy or surgeries for all children or young people under 18, and some 15 other states are expected to follow suit or are already enacting similar legislation.

Guidelines drawn up by self-regulating bodies, which were heavily influenced by transgender activists, explicitly state that such counselling should 'never be mandatory'"

Key to the decision by the board was an investigation by Florida's Agency of Health Care Administration which was critical of the approach described as 'gender-affirming care'.

To understand the significance of the shift, it is important to know what gender-affirming care actually means - and what harm it has wreaked on some of the young people who now say they were harmed by the approach. The fundamental approach is to affirm the person's identity, so that if a young girl says she is a boy, not to query that claim or to require that counselling or psychiatric evaluation takes place prior to moving on with medical treatment.

Guidelines drawn up by self-regulating bodies, which were heavily influenced by transgender activists, explic-



A person holds a 'trans' banner. Photo: CNS

itly state that such counselling should "never be mandatory" - even before prescribing irreversible medication or surgery - and that medical professionals must be 'gender affirming', or unquestioning, in their approach.

Some activists went as far as to say that a therapist who sought to talk through the issues with a child who wanted to change sex might be guilty of 'conversion therapy'.

That is obviously an unsafe and deeply problematic approach, especially when many children presenting as transgender have other mental health difficulties or conditions. In this country, Dr Paul Moran recently told the *Irish Independent* that 90% of the cases of children presenting with gender issues involve people with autism.

Yet, the guidelines which were, until recently, driving policy internationally not only seemed to throw caution to the wind but also sought to disregard the opinion and insights of those who tend to know vulnerable people best: their families.

Healthcare professionals are being advised to 'challenge' parents who might feel hesitant about their children being placed on puberty blocker, hormone therapies and eventually undergoing traumatic, life-changing surgeries such as the removal of their sexual organs. Even worse, the guidelines recommended prescribing hormone treatment for children without the knowledge of their parents - if a healthcare professional felt a parent's involvement might be 'harmful or unnecessary'.

Guidelines from WPATH coyly described irreversible surgeries as 'gender-affirming healthcare' - while double mastectomies were simply described as 'chest masculinisation surgery' - and children were to be told that their sex was 'assigned to them at birth'.

Little wonder that Florida's Agency of Health Care Administration found that 'gender-affirming care' was "experimental and investigational" - and that "available medical literature provides insufficient evidence that sex reassignment through medical intervention is a safe and effective treatment for gender dysphoria".

Low quality

Their analysis was also critical of what it described as "low or very low quality" studies which had been used by transgender activists to claim that gender-affirming approaches prevented suicide.

"Studies presenting the benefits to mental health, including those claiming that the services prevent suicide, are either low or very low quality and rely on unreliable methods such as surveys and retrospective analyses, both of which are cross-sectional and highly biased. Rather, the available evidence demonstrates that these treatments cause irreversible physical changes and side effects that can affect long-term health," the report found.

It is by now well-documented that there has been a huge spike in children presenting as transgender, with social contagion considered to be a significant reason for the rise.

All children deserve the best medical care when presenting with mental health or other difficulties - but simply affirming a desire to undergo something as radical as a change of sex without question is entirely the wrong approach to take.

The new advice in Britain comes after much controversy around the Tavistock Clinic whose model of care was found to be 'unsafe' by an independent investigation led by Dr Hillary Cass"

Now, the number of 'de-transitioners' - people who revert back to the sex with which they were born - is growing, and their often-heartbreaking testimonies tell of children who later say they were rushed into therapies and that other factors, including mental health difficulties, were not given due consideration.

In Florida, evidence was given by Chloe Cole, who said she began transitioning at 12 and received a double mastectomy at 15. Then, she said, a year later aged just 16 she regretted her transition.

"All the talk about mental health, self-perception, pronouns and ideology leads me to the question, why is a mental health epidemic not being addressed with mental health

treatment to get at the root causes for why female adolescents like me want to reject their bodies?" she asked.

Dr Michael Laidlaw, an endocrinologist in Rockland, California, said that research found 50% to 90% of children whose gender identity isn't consistent with their assigned sex at birth grow out of the condition by adulthood. That chimes with the new guidelines being prepared for the National Health Service (NHS) in Britain which advises that, for many children, the feeling that they are in the wrong body is just a phase.

The new advice in Britain comes after much contro-

versy around the Tavistock Clinic whose model of care was found to be "unsafe" by an independent investigation led by Dr Hillary Cass. Doctors are now being told that children should not be encouraged to change their names and pronouns. Other countries - including Sweden and Finland - are realising the harmful effects of 'gender-affirming' care and changing to an approach which will actually explore a child or young person by examining the dysphoria in a holistic way. The same should happen in Ireland. It is the very least we should do to protect vulnerable children.

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Govt 'relabelling' funds and failing to meet climate targets

Chai Brady

Overseas development charity Trócaire has said the Taoiseach is "relabelling" old funding aimed at easing the impact of climate change on poorer countries at the UN climate change conference, COP27 in Egypt.

Taoiseach Micheál Martin announced to the conference on Tuesday that Ireland will contribute €10 million to the Global Shield initiative for 2023, "to protect the most vulnerable from climate loss and damage". He also spoke of the doubling of finance to at least €225 million a year by 2025 to support "the world's most vulnerable people".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* from the confer-

ence in Sharm el-Sheikh, Trócaire's Head of Policy Siobhan Curran said the €225 million commitment was made at COP26 and has not been met.

Commitment

"We're still only at €83.3 million, this was a commitment that was supposed to be met by 2020, each delay is causing a cumulative short fall," she said.

"So it's important that Ireland scales up its climate finance and delivers it. I think also it would be important that any new announcements that are made by An Taoiseach are additional money, so we understand that the €10m that's been committed now to the Global Shield is not additional – this is relabelling

an existing climate finance as 'loss and damage' finance which would be problematic from our perspective."

Ms Curran welcomed the inclusion of the issue of loss and damage funding on the COP27 agenda, saying it represents a "small step forward" towards delivering climate

"It's important because we're now in the era of loss and damage and we're working with effected communities who are experiencing profound losses and they need to be supported in responding to this," she said. Ms Curran gave examples of the floods that killed more than 1,700 people in Pakistan and the millions of people experiencing "crisis levels of hunger" in the Horn of Africa.

Churches must find practical solutions to energy crisis, says priest

Ruadhán Jones

Churches must find practical solutions to the energy crisis, says Fr Peter O'Reilly, who questioned the ethics of heating large, inefficient churches.

Churches can keep their energy costs down and tackle fossil fuel use by using parish halls or centres instead of churches "created for numbers that no longer exist and impossible to heat", the parish priest of Artane, Dublin, told *The Irish Catholic*.

"Is it ethical to heat huge spaces and use huge amounts of fossil fuels to heat something that's not heated properly anyway," Fr O'Reilly said. "You're kind of making it worse by pumping out huge amounts of Co2,

when it's not heating properly anyway."

The Church must find practical solutions to "keep parishes going", said Fr O'Reilly as prices spike due to the energy crisis.

He has created an oratory in the back of his church, which he said has almost halved his heating bill.

"We're not heating a big church, the back is much easier, it has a great system and smaller rooms," the Artane-based priest said.

The change has also enabled a "much more intimate sense of the liturgy" in a "snug and small" space.

Fr O'Reilly added the parish is lucky to have a centre they can use and encouraged other parishes to consider similar solutions.

Injustice

"It's a matter of huge injustice that the poorest people in the world are being forced to pay for a crisis that's not of their making. We have more cumulative emissions and we have more capacity to pay, so this COP will be a great opportunity to address this," she said, adding that, "what's also important is that after the COP accountability is demanded of our leaders and our governments and that commitments are implemented".

John Hume's portrait unveiled in Westminster



The portrait of John Hume. Photo: Colin Davidson, Twitter

Jason Osborne

An official portrait of the late Nobel Peace Prize winner and former SDLP leader John Hume was unveiled in Westminster on Monday.

Commissioned by the Speaker's advisory committee on works of art, the portrait was painted by Co. Down-based artist Colin Davidson.

It was based on drawings he'd done during sittings with Mr Hume in 2016.

"John Hume was a personal hero, so it was

a privilege and pleasure to revisit my drawings made in 2016 to paint this new portrait for Westminster," Mr Davidson tweeted to mark the occasion.

The portrait was unveiled in Portcullis House November 7 by Mr Hume's son, John.

Mr Hume played a key role in the peace talks which lead to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, and was later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts, alongside then-leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, David Trimble.

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Carol Glatz

Pope Francis promised reporters traveling with him to the Gulf nation of Bahrain that his November 3-6 visit would be an “interesting trip.”

Thanking the more than 65 reporters, photographers and television-camera operators on the plane with him from Rome, the Pope added that he hoped the trip would include “good news”.

However, he said, the chronic knee pain he has been suffering was a lot worse than usual, so instead of following his customary practice of going up and down each aisle to greet reporters, he asked that everyone come up to him, as he took a seat in front of the reporters’ section of the plane.

The Pope’s schedule for the four-day trip was limited to just a few events a day, mostly in Awali, but with a brief visit to Manama, the capital.

He is the first pope to visit the archipelago nation in the Persian Gulf, and the highlights of his visit were expected to be meeting the small, predominantly expatriate Christian community and promoting the importance of interreligious dialogue.

The Pope arrived November 3 at the Sakhir air base after a nearly five-hour flight from Rome. It was his 39th international trip and the 58th country he has visited in nearly 10 years as Pope.

While journalists exited the plane using stairs as usual, the Pope entered the airport through a jetway where girls tossed flower petals as he passed in his wheelchair. Once he arrived in the airport VIP meeting room, he was greeted by King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, who is the country’s prime minister and the king’s eldest son.

After the Pope and king also greeted Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of Egypt’s Al-Azhar mosque and university, the papal motorcade left for Sakhir Palace for the official welcome ceremony, an exchange of gifts with the king and the Pope’s first speech of the trip at a meeting with government and civic leaders.

Pope calls for full religious freedom and end of death penalty

Commitments to protect tolerance and religious freedom need to be put into practice constantly so that these rights may be fully experienced, Pope Francis said.



Going down the jetway after arriving at Sakhir air base in Bahrain, Pope Francis is greeted by young women tossing flower petals. He gave each of them a medal commemorating his visit. Photo: CNS photo/Vatican Media

This is important “so that religious freedom will be complete and not limited to freedom of worship; that equal dignity and equal opportunities will be concretely recognised for each group and every individual; that no forms of discrimination exist; and that fundamental human rights are not violated but promoted,” he said November 3, addressing King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, other government authorities and diplomats serving in Bahrain.

“People need to offer and embrace every opportunity for ‘encounter between civilisations, religions and cultures’”

On the first day of his trip, he focused on addressing local authorities and diplomats, touching on both national and global concerns, and how everyone, especially governing leaders, must respond in ways that serve the common good.

“I am here,” he said, “as a sower of peace”.

He came to this Muslim-majority nation, whose residents are predominantly foreign workers from many parts of the world, to nurture a firmer commitment to human fraternity and peaceful coexistence.

People need to offer and embrace every opportunity for “encounter between civilisations, religions and cultures,” he said. “Let us work together” to serve “togetherness and hope”.

The Pope praised the many conferences and initiatives the Kingdom of Bahrain promotes for bringing people together on the themes of respect, tolerance and religious freedom.

The nation’s constitution forbids discrimination “on the basis of sex, origin, language, religion or creed,” and it upholds the freedom of conscience and worship, he said.

And yet, these principles and promises must be put into practice constantly so that these freedoms are “complete” and human rights are protected, the Pope said. The most important of these is the right to life for everyone, “including those being punished, whose lives should not be taken”.

According to the UK-based Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, “Bahrain’s use of torture and the death penalty have drastically escalated (600%) since the Arab Spring protests in 2011, despite the government’s promises of human rights reform”.

More than 50 people have been sentenced to death since 2011; almost all of them were convicted of terrorism charges, and all of them alleged torture, a 2021 BIRD report said. Another 26 men are currently on death row, with some alleging their convictions were based on false confessions after torture. Half of them are connected to political opposition.

In his address, the Pope also put the spotlight on the need to protect workers from unemployment and “dehumanising” work, which has been another concern by human rights groups. Human Rights Watch has flagged the abuses inherent in the country’s work visa sponsorship system, which gives employers excessive power over their foreign employees.

In his formal greeting to the Pope, the king said they

were confident the visit would “leave a great moral and spiritual imprint in the souls of those who love you in the Gulf region and in the Arab world”.

The king praised the Pope’s impact and his “tangible faith, which we share, in the role of dialogue and communication” among people of faith, “united by the monotheistic message and spreading the word of truth and the will to reform”.

Religious leaders urged to build community, unity, peace

A true love for the divine Creator means acting on behalf of his children who are neglected by the powerful: the poor, the unborn, the elderly, the infirm and migrants, Pope Francis told representatives of different religious faiths and international leaders.

If believers do not listen to and take the side of the voiceless, who will, he asked.

“It is our duty to encourage and assist our human family – interdependent yet at the same time disconnected – to sail the sea together,” he said November 4, closing the two-day Bahrain Forum for Dialogue: East and West for Human Coexistence, sponsored by Bahrain’s King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

The Pope arrived in a compact white Fiat with Vatican City plates, flanked by royal guards on horseback. Two helicopters flew overhead: one carrying the flag of the Holy See, the other with the flag of Bahrain. The Pope was then invited to pour water from a metal pitcher onto the base of a large palm tree.

In his address, the Pope said the world is faced with a choice: it can continue to foment conflict and simplistic

divisions, impose “despotic, imperialist, nationalist and populist visions,” and close its ears to the ordinary people and the poor. Or people can make an effort to understand each other and cooperate for the good of everyone.

“Conflicts and evil in the world are all rooted in people rejecting God and their brothers and sisters, Pope Francis said to international Islamic scholars and experts”

The more than 1,000 participants at the forum included: Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of Egypt’s Al-Azhar mosque and university; top representatives of the Muslim Council of Elders, an international group of Islamic scholars and experts; Iraqi Cardinal Louis Sako, patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church; Lebanese Cardinal Bechara Rai, Maronite patriarch; Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople; Rabbi David Rosen, international director of interreligious affairs at the American Jewish Committee; as well as representatives of the Hindu faith, the government of Saudi Arabia, and leaders promoting education, human rights and peace.

Pope to Muslim scholars: Source of evil is rejecting God and one’s neighbour

Conflicts and evil in the world are all rooted in people rejecting God and their brothers and sisters, Pope Francis said to



Thousands of people from more than 100 countries join Pope Francis for Mass November 5, in Bahrain National Stadium in Awali. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media



Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar mosque and university, attend a meeting with the members of the Muslim Council of Elders at the courtyard of the Sakhr Palace in Awali, November 4. Photo: CNS/Yara Nardi, Reuters

international Islamic scholars and experts.

"Dear friends, brothers in Abraham and believers in the one God: Social, international, economic and individual evils, as well as the dramatic environmental crisis of our time on which we have reflected here today, ultimately derive from estrangement from God and our neighbour," he said November 4 during a meeting with members of the Muslim Council of Elders.

"Ours, then, is a unique and inescapable duty: to help humanity to rediscover the forgotten sources of life, to lead men and women to drink from the wellsprings of ancient wisdom, and to bring the faithful closer to worship of the God of heaven and closer to our brothers and sisters for whom he created the earth," the Pope said.

A few dozen imams, scholars, leaders and representatives of the Vatican gathered in a courtyard at the mosque of the Sakhr Palace for the meeting, which began with a Muslim boy reciting a few verses from the Quran, followed by a Christian girl reading from the Book of Genesis.

Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar mosque and university and chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders, was among the speakers. He said interfaith dialogue is key to confronting today's crises, "especially the vast chasm between rich and poor and its continuing expan-

sion, and this accompanying imbalance of man and nature".

Our Lady of Arabia Cathedral

Pope Francis' final stop November 4 was an ecumenical meeting and a prayer for peace at the new Our Lady of Arabia Cathedral, the largest cathedral in the Persian Gulf region.

Bahrain is home to an estimated 90,000 Catholics who hail mainly from the Philippines, India and Sri Lanka. South Americans, Europeans and Arabs from the Levant region account for the rest of the country's Christian population.

Many local Christians and Catholics were in attendance as well Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and other dignitaries.

The patriarch kissed the Pope's pectoral cross and the Pope kissed the patriarch's encolpion, his pectoral medalion, which signifies his dignity as a bishop, and the assembly applauded. The Pope was wearing a cross given to him by the patriarch from a previous encounter.

The Pope said in his speech that the Christian journey of communion must be marked by "unity in diversity and witness of life".

"Dear friends, let us ask ourselves how we are advancing on this journey," he said, asking whether they see ecumenism as a burden "or as the

heartfelt desire of Jesus that all be 'one'?"

King Al Khalifa donated the land for the new cathedral, which was built in response to the Gulf region's increasing Catholic population, now estimated at 2.5 million. The cathedral seats 2,300 worshippers and serves the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia, which includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and, formally, Saudi Arabia.

Fr Saji Thomas, cathedral project leader and parish priest, told reporters in December that the cathedral was "a model of religious harmony, a sign of the tolerance of the kingdom of Bahrain and a great example of peaceful coexistence to the world".

Pope: Jesus gives people the power to love 'even enemies'

Bahrain's National Stadium became an oasis of multiple cultures, languages, nationalities and backstories, all united by their Catholic faith and to celebrate Mass with Pope Francis.

"This very land is a living image of coexistence in diversity, and indeed an image of our world, increasingly marked by the constant migration of peoples and by a pluralism of ideas, customs and traditions," the Pope said in his homily November 5.

Thousands of people from all over the world who live and work in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar,



Pope Francis poses with Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar mosque and university, at Sakhr Palace in Awali, November 4. Photo: CNS/Yara Nardi, Reuters

Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf countries came by bus or car to the huge stadium in Awali for the Mass.

Bahrain's National Communication Centre said people from 111 countries were present for the Mass. A Muslim-majority nation, Bahrain has a population of around 1.5 million people, about half of whom are foreign workers from all over the world.

About 9% are Christian and others come from the Hindu,

Buddhist and Jewish faiths. The Church estimates there are about 80,000 Catholics in Bahrain and a total of 2.5 million Catholics throughout the Gulf region.

'Chauvinism kills human progress'

Aboard the papal flight from Bahrain at the end of the trip, the Pope told reporters that a society that does not give women the same rights and opportunities as men will become impoverished.

"Women are a gift," he said. After God made man, he didn't create "a lapdog for him to play with. No, he created two who are equal, a man and a woman." "All the rights of women stem from this equality," he said, and a society that is not able to make room for women "does not move forward."

"The fight for rights for women is an ongoing battle because, in some places, women have achieved rights equal to men"

The aim of the trip, he said, was to experience moments of encounter and dialogue, with Muslims, Christians and Catholics.

The Pope was then asked about the protests in Iran, which were sparked by young women and men fighting for more freedoms and reforms in the Shiite-led country, and whether he supported their efforts of demanding fundamental human rights. He said, "The fight for rights for women is an ongoing battle because, in some places, women have achieved rights equal to men" and, elsewhere, they lag behind.



Pope Francis receives the offertory gifts during Mass November 5, in Bahrain National Stadium in Awali. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media



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Dublin diocese's finances still struggling after Covid



Dublin diocese's financial report shows it's struggling to make up for Covid-driven income cuts, writes Ruadhán Jones

As Ireland's largest diocese, Dublin's financial reports always make for important reading in gauging the Church's financial health. This year's two reports submitted to the Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA), covering the period up to December 31, 2021, were released November 4 and make for mixed reading.

The major positive for the diocese is the €9.4 million it received as compensation for losses as a result of Covid-19 under the business interruption clause of its insurance policy.

“The parishes' total income for 2021 was €31.3 million, an increase of almost €4 million on 2020, while the expenditure amounted to €28.1 million, down €1.2 million”

The majority of the claim relates to losses suffered in 2020 and includes an interim amount for 2021, which is 20% of the settlement for 2020. This opens up the possibility of further claims for the diocese and any others that may have similar contracts.

The 'Parishes of the Diocese of Dublin' report, covering the financial statements of the combined parishes, the clerical fund, the common fund and the share fund, reported a surplus of just more than €3 million for the 189 parishes. This is compared to a deficit of €4.3 million in 2020.

The parishes' total income for 2021 was €31.3 million, an increase of almost €4 million on 2020, while the expenditure amounted to €28.1 million, down €1.2 million.

The surplus includes the €3.7

million compensation received under the business interruption clause of the parish insurance policies.

The common fund received €3.3 million and the share fund received €2.4 million. Both funds, which are based on the proceeds of the first and second collection respectively, saw marginal surpluses in 2021 of €2.7 million and €2.1 million respectively.

However, the collections continued to be significantly down on pre-pandemic levels. Despite an increase of 4% year-on-year, the common fund, which supported the income of 416 priests, is down 49% on 2019 levels.

The share fund

Meanwhile, the share fund, which finances central support services for parishes and provides financial assistance to low-income parishes, is down 61% since 2019.

The clerical fund, which mainly supports elderly priests and priests suffering from illness, fielded a deficit of €1.1 million in 2021. Unlike 2020, the net movement was also a deficit of €734,000. No contribution was received from the common fund in 2021 due to “the sharp decline in the first collection caused by the Covid-19 pandemic”.

The diocese admits in the report that while there had been hope collections could return to pre-pandemic levels in 2022, “this has proven to be too optimistic”.

“It is anticipated that the closure of the churches will have a longer impact and may take some time for the collections to return to pre-pandemic levels,” the report says.

The 'Charities of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin' annual financial report shows that the diocese faced a “significant decrease in income” of €2.255 million to €5.173 million.

Contributions from diocesan related charities, from the share fund and from donations and legacies all dropped in 2020, offset partially by an increase in investment.

The diocese still managed to come out with a small surplus as total expenditure also decreased significantly, down €10.597 million to €2.990 million – in 2020, expenditure was €13.587 million.

“In an effort to combat the steep downturn in income from collections, the diocese has so far installed tap-and-go devices in 124 of the 197 parishes”

This can be attributed to the once-off cost in 2020 relating to voluntary redundancy, while expenditure on charitable activities declined to roughly €6 million, down from €11 million in 2020. The report suggests this is attributable again to the once-off payment relating to voluntary redundancy.

Overall, the diocese reported an increase in the net movement in funds of €14 million, largely due to the €12 million received as part of the third tranche in the sales contract with the GAA. The final

tranche of the sale was to have been paid in October of this year.

Priest stipends are now back to pre-pandemic levels as of the third quarter of 2022, after being reduced by 25% as the diocese attempted to make up for lost income during the pandemic.

In an effort to combat the steep downturn in income from collections, the diocese has so far installed tap-and-go devices in 124 of the 197 parishes. These enable donations to be given by card.

The diocese incurred costs of €259,000 during the year for the lease of these devices in parishes and the associated roll out costs. The process of installing the devices took longer than expected as Wi-Fi had to be installed in most parishes to ensure the device would work, the report shows.

Over the coming months, the tap-and-go devices will continue to be installed in the remaining parishes.

Lay pastoral ministry

The pastoral services fund for the support of the lay pastoral ministry of 11 parish pastoral workers fielded a deficit of €444,000 in the net movement of funds. This marked an improvement on the almost €1 million on 2020.

The net movement of funds also improved for the building fund, with a small surplus of €45,000 compared with a deficit of €996,000 in 2020.

The last two years have seen a number of cost-cutting measures from Dublin diocese. In 2020, 40 of their 80 staff took voluntary redundancy. In 2021, the archdio-

cese closed its Catholic Diocese of Dublin (CDD) Pension Plan following a review.

The scheme became “unaffordable” and a “net liability” for the diocese because of the current and expected future costs of funding the deficit in the defined benefit scheme.

According to the report, only a small number of diocesan employees participated in the CDD pension plan. Alternative arrangements have been put in place and the diocese donated €2.5 million to the plan before it wound up “to strengthen the position of the pension fund”.

“It was disrupted by Covid-19 restrictions and will take a further two years to be completed”

In 2021, the trustees appointed an accountancy firm as independent internal auditors to the diocese for a three-year internal audit programme focusing on the key risks to Dublin and its parishes.

The first phase has been completed and the second has begun. It was disrupted by Covid-19 restrictions and will take a further two years to be completed.

The risk register for the diocese and parishes has been updated to take into account the potential risk of global pandemics, with the updated risk register forming the structured plan for the 2022 internal audit work.



Merchants Quay Ireland

A Merchants Quay Ireland Christmas – through the eyes of Brother Pat

“When I look at Merchants Quay Ireland today, the work that the friars began, it’s still about seeing the face of Jesus in the people who you meet every day – reaching out to the people who are marginalised because of homelessness and addiction. That’s what St. Francis did.”

Today Brother Pat Lynch volunteers as a member of the board of Merchants Quay Ireland (MQI), but his involvement started in the early 1970’s with a summer placement. He shares his recollections of the beginning of MQI and the ethos of St. Francis that still governs the work of the charity today:

“It all started when Brother Sebastian Tighe and Brother Salvador Kenny had the tea-rooms at the friary. It was just tea, sandwiches and shelter from the weather, a place to come inside and dry your clothes. I was here for four years on a summer placement, and it was all voluntary work. Br. Sebastian and Br. Salvador had great wisdom, they knew how to handle people very well and had a great way with the people who came for help.”

In those times, clients would have been mostly involved with alcohol, but since the 1980’s drug addiction has become more commonly problematic for people – and far less understood.

“There’s a great understanding nowadays, that alcoholism is a disease. Drug addiction is similar and if we could recognise it as such too, then perhaps

“There’s a great understanding nowadays, that alcoholism is a disease. Drug addiction is similar and if we could recognise it as such too, then perhaps we’d have more compassion towards those who suffer and struggle with it”

we’d have more compassion towards those who suffer and struggle with it. Like we do for other people who are battling chronic and terminal illnesses.”

The legacy of a hot Sunday dinner

The tea-rooms eventually moved to MQI’s Riverbank crisis drop-in centre, just next door to Adam and Eve’s church on Dublin’s quays. Every new beginning still starts with a kind word and a listening ear over a cup of tea. Far from being the end of the road, MQI offers the start of a new one. The journey of recovery begins here for many people, with the basic comforts of a hot shower, the dignity of new underwear and a nourishing meal. Brother

Pat remembers well how the tradition of a hot Sunday dinner for MQI clients began in the tea-rooms with an anonymous act of kindness.

“One day there was a lady who came into Brother Sebastian and she was wondering why they didn’t have a proper dinner on a Sunday, because there was such a large number of people. From that day on, she said that she would be contributing chickens for a Sunday roast dinner. So, rather than just tea and sandwiches there were chickens to feed 50 or 60 people who came in and had a proper roast dinner on a Sunday. When she passed away, she’d made sure the chickens would continue to be delivered. They were brought in on a Saturday evening, just as she had wanted. It was the first legacy gift to help MQI continue reaching out to people who are marginalized.”

Spirituality at work

The Franciscan ethos that governs Merchants Quay Ireland is evident in the welcome that greets every client. Brother Pat describes the spirituality he sees in each warm smile, every kind gesture, every hug.

“It’s all about hope. God is present in a very special way in everything, in all of nature and in all of creation and in all people. When we smile at some-



Brother Pat Lynch



MQI’s Riverbank crisis drop-in centre

“When we smile at somebody or we greet somebody, recognise somebody on the doorstep and just don’t walk over them – we follow in the footsteps of St Francis – who himself followed the footsteps of Jesus”

body or we greet somebody, recognise somebody on the doorstep and just don’t walk over them – we follow in the footsteps of St Francis – who himself followed the footsteps of Jesus.

“Jesus was homeless, born in a stable. The Gospel refers to the fact that Jesus says that he had nowhere to lay his head. The rabbits have holes, the foxes have dens and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. So, He is homeless, He is crucified, He is spat upon, He is mocked. In many ways that happens to people in our society today. Those who are living on our streets, they’re excluded.”

There’s a bittersweet festive feeling in MQI’s Riverbank crisis drop-in centre. The dining

area is decorated with hand-written messages from MQI supporters for clients to read. Carols play softly in the background. The Christmas tree is adorned with twinkling lights and garlands. Staff wear Santa hats to brighten the atmosphere. Even so, they empathise with the trauma and loneliness that lie beneath the smiles on clients’ faces. There is always sadness around Christmas for people who have nowhere to go. For such reasons as addiction, mental ill-health, violence or abuse – whatever issues are in the family, many don’t have the choice to go back home.

Christmas dinners and care packages are given out at Riverbank during December. Help is needed through all seasons and all weathers, as well as at

Christmas. You can read more in your enclosed insert about the work of Merchants Quay Ireland, and how you can help this Christmas and every day.

“Christmas is a time for all of us to become aware of those in need,” says Brother Pat. “People who are homeless and suffering from addiction need our help. That would motivate me to see Christmas as a time of giving to help people who are marginalised in society.”

Keep our most forgotten close to your heart this winter. To donate please call 01-5240139, visit www.mqi.ie or return the donation form included in your enclosed insert pack. Thank you.



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Homeless & Drugs Services

If you would like to make a Christmas gift to help Ireland’s homeless and hungry this winter, just ring MQI on 01 524 0139, visit www.mqi.ie, or return the donation form included in the attached insert to Merchants Quay Ireland, FREEPOST F3736, PO Box 11958, Dublin 8.

Stormont stalemate gives space for paramilitaries



Political turmoil is robbing people of hope, writes Chai Brady

Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry diocese has warned there is a danger that politics “becomes a game for parties who are squabbling” as the North continues to lack an executive six months after elections.

“A new election is yet to be announced but is unlikely to result in a different outcome”

After Sinn Féin won the majority of seats in the North – giving them the opportunity to elect a first minister – the DUP have scuppered moves to form an executive, allegedly based on issues with the Brexit NI protocol.

A new election is yet to be announced but is unlikely to result in a different outcome.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Bishop McKeown said the whole purpose of politics is to enable society to work together, which was the purpose of the Good Friday Agreement.

Regarding new elections, he said: “I think any decisions about elections have to be taken in the context of what would be good for the common good. We have to constantly point to that, not what would be good for individual political parties, not how can people up the ante and put pressure on somebody else.

“I think we have to challenge all our political leaders in Westminster and Belfast to share that particular purpose. How they do that is up to them. But there’s a danger that politics becomes just a game for parties who are squabbling with one another and jostling for position. Our job is to say ‘you’re being paid to look after everybody,’” he insisted.

Under the sphere of nationalism versus unionism in the North, the bishop said political parties can be “so focused on their own political agendas”.

“They may say that having



A demonstrator throws a Molotov cocktail at riot police during violent protests in Belfast on April 8, 2021.

an election now, not having an election now, or complaining about this or arguing about that will help to move forward their macro agenda but I think at a time of enormous uncertainty for everyone, financial and so on, I think our call is to say ‘you are public servants you are here to look after us, not use us to look after you,’” he said.

“Obviously that applies to our local politicians, and what Westminster has to ensure is that whatever they do serves our needs here rather than serves London-based needs.”

Rejection

Due to the rejection of the protocol by unionist parties and the fact Sinn Féin is now the majority party, there have been people inciting fear and anger among loyalist communities. Bishop McKeown said it is important to look beyond incidents of violence.

“I think in Northern Ireland we’ve learned to look not just at who’s involved in trouble perhaps in the streets but who’s benefitting from trouble on the streets,” he said.

“The paramilitary threat has always been used in some cases as a political weapon so I’ve no idea about how loyalist communities feel but certainly there are those who were encouraging loyalist communities to feel anger. Again, there are those in the loyalist communities who benefit from that anger so you don’t just look at who’s involved in things, you look at who’s benefitting from what’s happening and I think the Church has a job of having that prophetic questioning of the strong, and not

just criticism of the working class communities.”

Based on the uncertainty, Bishop McKeown was asked about possible violence towards the Catholic community. He said dialogue is key and has shown to be the “only way forward in Northern Ireland”.

The 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), which takes place next year, is an opportunity for the agreement to be looked at again – particularly the religious language used.

“He added this is not to say nationalism is not concerned about current problems but has a different vision”

Bishop McKeown said the GFA was “based on the assumption that everybody was a Catholic or a Protestant and divisions in society are still defined as being sectarian when it was absolutely nothing ever to do with religion... it was about internal relationships in Northern Ireland, east-west relationships and north-south relationships. But there is that sort of overtone of that somehow the Catholics and Protestants had a similar problem”.

“It was born of a situation that was resolved 25 years ago. The question is really how do we actually have honest conversations about that and find ways forward,” he added.

Politicians can fight their political battles, Bishop McK-

Keown said, but with “big problems” in the North they must look after people “particularly those at the bottom of the ladder”.

This is complicated as there is not a shared commitment across the political spectrum for the future welfare of Northern Ireland, with Bishop McKeown saying: “I suppose Northern Ireland is faced with that sort of consistent problem that unionism is desperate to insist that Northern Ireland can work as an entity within the UK. Republicanism, nationalism is not terribly worried if Northern Ireland doesn’t work within the UK because their whole point is Northern Ireland could never work long term.”

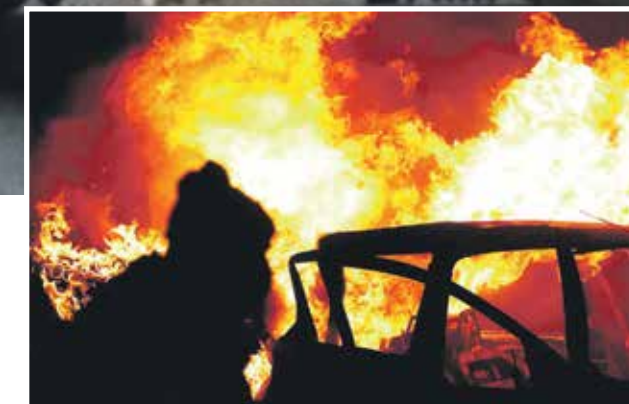
He added this is not to say nationalism is not concerned about current problems but has a different vision.

Joint authority

The idea previously put forward of a ‘joint authority’ between Dublin and London if an executive could not be formed, which would be an alternative from direct rule from Westminster, was unlikely to happen, according to the bishop.

He said: “I would very much doubt that a Conservative government is going to go down that route particularly one which has espoused Brexit and an increasing emphasis on British nationalism, in that sense I don’t see that as being a key thing.

“On the other hand they do face the problem that the largest party in Northern Ireland is not a unionist party. So the British government does have a major local reality to



Flames engulf vehicles as riot police clash with protesters in Belfast on April 7, 2021. Photos: CNS/Jason Cairnduff, Reuters

deal with.”

Bishop McKeown said “our job is saying politics is important, prove that politics works otherwise you leave space for paramilitaries”.

“The prophet Jeremiah was very strong in saying ‘I have plans for a future full of hope’”

“But don’t focus just on macro politics, focus on delivering for people on the ground so that we will get through this winter, we’ve got to have the short, medium and long term welfare of people in mind and not just long term dreams of a united Ireland or a United Kingdom of whatever,” he said.

In September the Northern bishops released a statement on the economic crisis and the need to protect the most vulnerable due to soaring costs.

They said: “For the poorest in our society, this is an emergency, not a crisis. We call on everyone, from public representatives to parishioners in our parishes, to come together in a spirit of solidarity and active concern for those who are in need among us at this time.”

Asked about the effect of this statement, Bishop McK-

Keown said: “I think there was a recognition even among some journalists that in some ways the Catholic Northern bishops’ statement was quite a radical one, more radical than some of the politicians were in terms of poverty and structural poverty and all of that. I think our job is to have that prophetic voice, saying ‘Hold on, look after people, offer a dream, offer hope for the future don’t promise conflict’.

“The prophet Jeremiah was very strong in saying ‘I have plans for a future full of hope’. I think our job is to enable people to have hope for the future at a time when there’s an enormous amount of negativity about climate, about finances, about war, how can we give people encouragement to believe, ‘yes we can face all these problems - we can deal with them’.

He added: “In a world where there’s an awful lot of antagonistic politics, Britain, some European countries, Latin America, USA, how can we ensure that we give people courage to believe that it’s not a cultural war? It’s not by smashing the enemy that we build a future, it’s about finding a shared future which involves everybody.”

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Ireland must play its part in combatting global warming, even though anything we do will make no discernible difference because our population is so tiny, writes **David Quinn**

The autumn has been exceptionally mild so far and we had a warm summer. Parts of Europe had extreme weather events, including droughts. China has experienced a prolonged drought. There is no doubt that the planet is warming, and we are partly responsible.

In a warmer world, Ireland might not be a bad place to live, despite increased flooding. We are very unlikely to experience extreme heat for prolonged periods, compared with say, southern Europe, or droughts like other parts of the world, never mind regions where water is already scarce. In fact, our growing season may become longer with the warmer weather.

But Ireland has to play its part in combatting global warming, even though anything we do will make no discernible difference because our population is so tiny in world terms. Nonetheless, it is important to set a moral example.

Point of view

From a purely Christian point of view, it is important that we treat nature responsibly, both for its own sake and because it is God's creation. Pope Francis is an environmentalist Pope, and Pope Benedict also strongly emphasised proper stewardship of creation.

This week and next, a huge climate summit is taking place in Egypt, namely COP27, (which is short for the 27th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.)

It is drawing thousands of activists and world leaders to discuss how climate change must be tackled and to commit countries to meeting certain strict targets so to limit the extent of global warming.



Tourists walk at the beach during a low tide in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, where world leaders are meeting for the United Nations climate summit. Photo: CNS

Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, will be attending.

Those targets mean curtailing certain economic activities, limiting, and eventually eliminating, the use of fossil fuels and making huge changes to how we live our lives.

Ireland is committed to halving carbon emissions by 2030, that is in eight years-time. This is even stricter than the overall EU target. We will almost certainly fail to meet the goal.

“Christianity has always been devoted to helping the poor and also to looking after nature”

The plan will involve massive expenditures on renewable energy, one million of us buying electric cars, hundreds of thousands of us retrofitting our homes and installing heat pumps, a big cull of the beef herd, flying and driving less often, and eating less meat, and preferably none at all.

The cost of the change will run into tens of billions of euro and must be achieved while the population is growing rapidly and there is a pressing

need to build far more houses and apartments, which will obviously emit carbon.

State

It is not only the State (meaning ultimately the tax-payer) that will fund the enormous cost of this change-over, but so must individual households out of their post-tax income. Electric cars, heat pumps and retrofitting your home do not come cheap.

The fact that the planet is warming places us on the horns of a dilemma. Yes, we must do something about it, but at the same time we cannot impose huge economic burdens on ordinary people and expect too much of them.

Fossil fuels have been absolutely indispensable in driving economic growth for the past 200 years and thereby lifting countless numbers of people out of poverty.

Christianity has always been devoted to helping the poor and also to looking after nature. You might think those goals are not in conflict, but it's not true. Fossil fuel use has been instrumental in reducing poverty, which is a good thing, but at the same time, the planet has been harmed, which is obviously a bad thing. How do we reconcile lifting

people out of poverty through economic growth, while at the same time ensuring that same economic growth does not cause more global warming? There is no easy answer.

Some will say that the solution is a full transition to renewable energy, and in theory that is true, but it is going to take a long time – decades – for the world to get there. In the meantime, developing countries in particular are going to need to continue using fossil fuels to escape from poverty.

Expanding

Recently, a number of African countries committed to expanding their oil and coal production, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Ghana and South Africa. Coal is the worst carbon emitter of the main fossil fuels in use, and oil is next. Gas is least harmful.

Europe is currently looking to Africa as a source of gas and as an alternative to Russia.

But why would African countries want to use more fossil fuels when they know the planet is warming and they might be worst affected? The answer is that they place a higher priority on getting people out of poverty.

They also tell the West that

we have no right to lecture them on the matter when we have been the chief user of fossil fuels for two centuries and we used those fuels to develop our economies while harming the planet. They want plenty of financial assistance from us in helping to make the transition to renewable energy and to cope with the effects of climate change.

“Europe is currently looking to Africa as a source of gas and as an alternative to Russia”

But this will cost trillions over the long-term. That money could go towards developing good health systems in those same countries. Which goal should have the higher priority? This is all about trade-offs to a large extent.

The debate about climate change and what we should do reminds me a lot of the debate about Covid-19, and our response to that.

Covid-19 was all too real, but questions about just how many people might die of the disease were also very real. We had models predicting vast

numbers of deaths, and others predicting a much smaller total. The media tended to highlight worst-case scenarios all the time. It is the same with climate-change scenarios. The worst scenarios get all the attention.

Response

Then there is the question of the right response. Was it proportionate to the threat? With regard to Covid-19, for example, we kept schools closed longer than anywhere else in Europe, and public worship was also banned for longer. Was this justified?

Likewise, what kind of actions are justified in fighting global warming? It is a hard question to answer when we don't know exactly how bad it might get. If our response over-shoots, then economic growth will be needlessly harmed and hundreds of millions of people will remain in poverty who might otherwise have been lifted out of it. If we under-shoot, then global warming will become worse than it otherwise might have been.

There are no easy answers here. The whole situation is extremely complex. This should be acknowledged. No particular approach is automatically better or more moral than another. The Church could provide a useful service in showing this is by no means a black or white issue. Yes, we must tackle global warming, but it has to be done in a way that does not harm our pursuit of other good and worthy goals.

“From a purely Christian point of view, it is important that we treat nature responsibly”

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Jonathon Van Maren poses with his book *Patriots: The Untold Story of Ireland's Pro-Life Movement* during pro-life group the Life Institute's 'Renewal Tour'.



Don't allow pro-life men to be shut out of discussions on abortion, **Chai Brady** hears

The "myth" that abortion is an inevitability and is here to stay must be tackled in Ireland, a prominent pro-life activist has warned, particularly as a third of people voted against legalising abortion.

The 2018 referendum was a difficult loss for pro-life activists but Canadian Jonathon Van Maren, who wrote a book about the Irish pro-life movement, believes while change is hard won it can be achieved.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Mr Van Maren said: "It would have seemed cruel to say in late 2018 'look you still have a third of the country', after a loss as devastating as the 8th Amendment, but after people have gotten up and dusted themselves off I think it is important to recap: What do we still have and what do we need to regain?"

"I think that is really important because the temptation is to buy into the myth of inevitability, to buy into this idea that Ireland is their's now," he said.

He argued that some proponents of legalised abortion now say that the people have spoken regarding the abortion referendum in an attempt to shut pro-life voices down, whereas if they had lost the referendum "you probably would have already had another one by now".

"Their standard is to keep on putting the question to the voters over and over and over again until they get the 'right' result," he said, adding that pro-lifers should take a look at the "sheer tenacity" of the abortion movement and how they sought opportunities and kept rebuilding, as it could be something to learn from.

Late last month Mr Van Maren was part of the Life Institute's 'Renewal Tour' which involved pro-life events in Dublin, Cork, Letterkenny and Castlebar.

Complimentary

He was extremely complimentary of the pro-life movement in Ireland over the last several decades. His book, *Patriots: The Untold Story of Ireland's Pro-Life Movement*, focuses on the history and uniqueness of Irish pro-lifers.

The inspiration for the book began with a visit to Dublin to join in the canvassing to retain the 8th Amendment.

He said: "We joined the 'Vote No Roadshow'. We knew Irish pro-lifers for years through conferences. The international pro-life movement is big, but not that big, you kind of know who the main players are, and I was impressed."

"The fact that the Irish pro-life movement had boots on the ground and were doing more pro-life stuff in a country where abortion was already illegal than most pro-life groups did in countries where abortion had been legal for

“The inspiration for the book began with a visit to Dublin to join in the canvassing to retain the 8th Amendment”

years, was really impressive to me. That kind of pro-life commitment is pretty extraordinary," he said.

"Second was the story of how the 8th Amendment essentially was due to the foresight of a bunch of pro-lifers who looked around the world, saw what was happening and launched a pre-emptive strike. The Irish pro-life movement is the only pro-life movement in the world that was created not in response to the legalisation of abortion but based on an awareness that if meaningful steps weren't taken this was going to happen."

“He describes Roe vs Wade as a wake-up call to Irish pro-lifers to launch the campaign to enshrine the 8th Amendment in the Constitution”

"Afterwards I watched the media in Canada, the US, the UK and Ireland, all saying the story of the 8th Amendment was a story of a handful of plucky progressives and feminists who hammered away for years until they were finally successful. That's just nonsense, the real story of the 8th Amendment was how tens of thousands of people put boots on the ground for 35

years and saved a quarter of a million lives and somebody should tell that story," he added.

Roe vs Wade

The US removed the constitutional right to abortion across the country in June this year, a decision celebrated by pro-life groups around the world. The law was brought in after the Roe vs Wade case almost 50 years ago. Since it was overturned by the US Supreme Court it is now up to individual states to legislate on abortion – which could lead to more restrictions or even outright bans.

For Mr Van Maren, the history of abortion in Ireland is inextricably intertwined with Roe vs Wade, because when Roe vs Wade was ruled on in 1973 he said Irish pro-lifers noticed they justified the 'right to abortion' with terms like 'right to privacy'.

"This is based on the idea of a living constitution and the right to privacy of course was based on the Griswold vs Connecticut case legalising contraception a few years before that," he said.

"Then on December 29 in the same year, the Irish Supreme Court ruled in favour of Mary McGee in a contraception case also using very similar language. They realised that if these sort of fictitious rights, created out of thin air, could be used by the American Supreme Court to invent a right to abortion then the

judiciary in Ireland could do the same thing and likely, based on what was happening around the world, would do that at some point."

For this reason he describes Roe vs Wade as a wake-up call to Irish pro-lifers to launch the campaign to enshrine the 8th Amendment in the Constitution.

Due to Roe vs Wade being overturned and the Eight Amendment abolished around the same time, Mr Van Maren says that just as the birth of Roe vs Wade was a "wake-up call to the Irish I think that the death of Roe vs Wade is a reminder to the Irish that the myth of inevitability really is dead".

"Abortion activists around the world were panicked when Roe vs Wade fell because they were asking themselves the question 'if Roe vs Wade can fall what else might be possible?' And I think that's a very pleasant question for pro-lifers to contemplate," he said.

Comparing the third of Irish people who voted against abortion in any circumstance to the situation in the US, Mr Van Maren said even most pro-life states in the US still carve out exceptions.

"If we're even talking about American style abortion restrictions, and you've already got a third in Ireland that doesn't need convincing, to add to that third I think is very, very possible and I think it's been proven around the world to be possible," he said.

"In 1992 in Poland when communism fell, 47% of the population believed that abortion should be legal just for fiscal reasons – if somebody felt like they couldn't afford a child, didn't want the fiscal strain. In 2016 when they did the same poll that number had dropped to 14%. This proves to us that just because people have changed their mind once, doesn't mean they can't change their mind back. In the US we've very much seen this to be the case where actually women of child-bearing age are more likely to be pro-life than men of the same age."

Irish people were persuaded to vote 'Yes' because they wanted to protect women like Savita Halappanavar

Mr Van Maren accused the 'Yes' campaign of lying "so much" during the campaign to rid the Constitution of the 8th Amendment, that it has subsequently become one of the "greatest weapons" in the pro-life movement's arsenal as "all the horrifying things the pro-life movement predicted actually did in fact come true".

One of the reasons he believes pro-life billboards around Ireland, which were organised by the Life Institute and say things such as, '21,000 abortions', are "brilliant" is because most people want abortion to be out of sight, out of mind.

Persuaded

He said Irish people were persuaded to vote 'Yes' because they wanted to protect women like Savita Halappanavar.

"Essentially our empathy for women was exploited and we were told this was the only answer to that whereas the vast majority of 'Yes' voters were not in support of that legislation but just believed the 8th had to go.

"Starting with a third I think a consensus can be rebuilt, and I guess one of the reasons I'm so confident about that is I work on a national educational pro-life organisation in Canada. We go door to door and we're out in the streets every day and we see people change their minds every day.

"It does take brutally hard work, in that you're doing doorsteps, you're talking to people individually, but the pro-life movement's argument is very simple: human beings have human rights, human rights begin when the human being begins. Science tells us when a new unique, living, whole human being begins. What the pro-life movement is asking for is science-based legislation which we've been told by our moral and intellectual superiors is exactly what we should want. I guess seeing so many people change their mind in one of the most secular countries in



Leaflets seen at one of the legs of the Life Institute's pro-life 'Renewal Tour'.

the Western world – Canada – if it's possible here it's certainly possible in Ireland," he said.

Contrast

For this to happen there's a need to constantly contrast what was said by politicians during the campaign to legalise abortion and what subsequently happened.

"It's taking abortion out of the realm of the abstract and explaining what it is and what it does because all of the data indicates that middle Ireland was persuaded to vote against the 8th Amendment in protection of women..." he said.

"Of course, looking at the grotesque celebrations at Dublin Castle, there are people who rejoiced in abortion for what it was. Most people didn't vote for abortion for those reasons and so the pro-life movement always talks about how we have these three main groups of people, you have the hard edge that's pro-life, you don't need to convince them at all. Then you've got the hard edge that's pro-abortion, you're never going to convince them no matter how long you spend talking to them. But then you have what you call the mushy middle.

"It's people who support abortion with some restrictions – are OK with it in this circumstance and have never really thought it through – who need to have it explained to them that there are medically ethical responses to women in crisis pregnancy. That group of people absolutely can be persuaded."

It is often argued that abortion is not a discussion men should be given a voice or involved in at all as they do not have to biologically deal with crisis pregnancies.

Mr Van Maren said men have a vital part to play in creating solutions to crisis pregnancies.

"To take that argument from somebody who means it sincerely rather

than somebody who is just trying to get pro-life men to shut up – I do think that one of the reasons abortion has been seen as so necessary by so many women is because men have not been all that great since the sexual revolution," he said.

There's a built-in assumption that they would have to do it by themselves

"A combination of transactional sex, porn addiction, essentially engaging in a sexual marketplace without any commitment, has led a lot of women to say 'you know what, you're the one giving me this problem, screw off and let me do what I need to do to protect myself', he said.

"Where I think that is actually an inversion of reality is that when abortion becomes legal it also becomes an expectation, so what actually ends up happening is abortion enables men to be worse than they already are in the context of the sexual revolution. This isn't taking a shot at men, this is taking a shot at the men who have embraced the sexual revolution as their birth right, which is a very large number in today's very pornified society."

However Mr Van Maren said a number of women and girls he has spoken to while doing pro-life outreach say abortion needs to be legal because they couldn't raise a child by themselves.

"There's a built-in assumption that they would have to do it by themselves. There's a built-in assumption that the guy that they had sex with isn't going to stick around and help take care of the child," he stated.

"My estimate, this is anecdotal, but its based on thousands of conversations, is that between 70-80% of abortions would not happen if every single man who fathered a

child stepped up and promised to do everything in their power to be there for the child and that child's mother...My argument in response would be that the role of men in the pro-life movement is to actually speak for those who believe that men are a huge part of the problem and as such we must be a huge part of the solution."

Religion and atheism

The religious argument against abortion is a good one, Mr Van Maren believes, but he would argue that when it comes to the issue specifically "it's so obviously wrong that regardless of your religious tradition you can find arguments against abortion".

"The Catholic Church and most Christian Churches have said that abortion is wrong, [in most cases] so do the Buddhists, so do the Hindus, the Muslims are opposed to 98% of all abortions, same thing with the Orthodox Jews," he said, "So to say that religious people are against abortion is just to say that religious people recognise this

fundamental wrong being perpetrated against a human being with intrinsic value.

What actually ends up happening is abortion enables men to be worse than they already are in the context of the sexual revolution

"I would also point out that one of the reasons America has become steadily more pro-life, or at least held the line at just over 50% while also becoming more irreligious – and if you look at the crowds celebrating outside the Supreme Court after Roe vs Wade fell, you had atheists and representatives of the LGBT community – is because science has given us so many more insights into the pre-born child in the womb that in many ways the arguments advanced in the 50s, 60s, 70s by abortion activists have just fallen apart under the clinical eye of science.

"The idea of a clump of cells is now so fundamentally ridiculous that only the most dedicated ideologue still makes it," he added, saying science is on the side of the pro-life movement.

Looking to then future, he said there is something exhilarating for young people who are counter revolutionaries in a new era.

"I think that there's an opportunity for young people who want to defend the good, the true and the beautiful, to recognise in face-to-face conversations every single person you talk to who changes their mind is another hairline crack in the new Ireland that they've [people who advocate for abortion] built," he said.

"They've built it on blood, and they've built it on lies and it can be retaken. There are many times in which we do not speak for the majority, but we do speak for what is good, what's true and what's beautiful and we fundamentally speak for what was best in the civilisation that was. I find that to be an enormous privilege as well as a responsibility."



It is often argued that abortion is not a discussion men should be given a voice or involved in at all as they do not have to biologically deal with crisis pregnancies

Catholicism's glaring fault line exposed in Kerry priest debacle



Church in Ireland offers partial Gospel for failing faith, writes
Dr Tom Finegan

Often when Church problems are discussed we hear about declining numbers, shaky finances, and lessening influence. Yet the problems in Irish Catholicism run deeper than any of these. The recent controversy involving Bishop of Kerry Ray Browne's public rebuke of Fr Sean Sheehy reveals just how deep – and exposes a glaring fault line within contemporary Irish Catholicism.

Entangled in the controversy are a number of issues, some known and perhaps some others publicly unknown. The focus here is on Bishop Browne's assertion that the "views expressed" by Fr Sheehy "do not represent the Christian position".

“These truths have been taught by Jesus, the New Testament, and, for 20 centuries, the Church Jesus founded and gave his Spirit to”

Here in abbreviated form is what Fr Sheehy stated: (a) heterosexual promiscuity is sinful (b) abortion is sinful; (c) “the approach” to transgenderism is sinful; (d) homosexual sex is sinful; (e) if we don't listen to God then there's no hope for sinners (“those people”); (f) we have a responsibility to seek out those who are lost and to promote awareness of the destructiveness of sin, including how it leads us to hell; (g) saints are saints because they repented and sought forgiveness; (h) God has come to call sinners but those who ignore his call will not be saved since salvation requires free co-operation with God; (i) all of this has been communicated by God and is not Fr Sheehy's own personal opinion; (j) we will find out the truth when we die; (k) we need to communicate God's forgiveness and the fact the God loves us and wants us to have eternal life; (l) eternal life can only be lived in God and through his grace.

To this Bishop Browne responded via written statement on the Kerry diocese's website, “The views expressed do not represent the Christian position.”

Bishop Browne went on to say, “The Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is a Gospel of love and ever proclaims the dignity of every human person. It calls on us all to ever have total respect for one another.” This statement of

Bishop Browne's is Gospel based and essentially true. His first assertion requires more attention, however.

So was Fr Sheehy wrong in what he said? One can often quibble with the precision of spoken statements, of course. I am minded, for example, to look for greater nuance and qualification regards the delivery of propositions (d) and (e), as well as to amend (e)'s mention of “those people” to “us sinners”. I also think proposition (c) is too vague to communicate anything stable about a multifaceted issue.

Still, with the possible exception of (c), we can certainly say the following about the essence of what Fr Sheehy asserts: he speaks the truth. Not only does he speak the truth, he communicates truths that are essential to the salvific mission of the Church and that concern the very basis of Jesus' instruction to the apostles (see Mt. 28:19-20).

These truths have been taught by Jesus, the New Testament, and, for 20 centuries, the Church Jesus founded and gave his Spirit to. It is often overlooked how the Church's teaching on the killing of innocents, sex, and marriage is traceable right back to very direct teaching communicated by Jesus, teaching he contextualised in terms of salvation, heaven and hell.

Fr Sheehy's statements provided a sound summary of the full Gospel even if, understandably, the summary was incomplete and lopsided (he omits how sin includes unbelief and is not just a matter of sex, for example).

So Bishop Browne is wrong – egregiously wrong – when he bluntly asserts that Fr Sheehy's statements “do not represent the Christian position”. Because his assertion encourages presumption and discourages conformity to Christ, it is harmful to the eternal spiritual welfare of all who hear it. As a bishop he should publicly correct his remark for the sake of those with ears to hear.

Gospel truth

In fairness to Bishop Browne he wanted to assert a Gospel truth: the love of God for every person and the moral requirement to respect every person. The problem is viewing this truth as the full Gospel or as incompatible with the essence of what Fr Sheehy stated. And herein is a fault line which destabilises our ability to preach the Gospel so that sinners may be brought to salvation. Simply put, most of us



don't think that it's possible to compassionately love someone and at the same time acknowledge them as a sinner and call them towards repentance and faith in Christ. We think either/or, not both/and; much less if/then. John 8:1-11 is lost on us.

“To rationalise our actions to ourselves we might say that what we object to is not the content of what was said, but the ‘tone’ or ‘how it was said’”

Why is this? In part, our eagerness to be an inclusive Church makes us focus so much on our inclusivity that we lose sight of the reality we wish people to be included in. That reality is God, and for us sinners to share in God's blessed life we have to exclude sinfulness and unbelief from our own lives. We are all equal in that regard. In so far as our minds, hearts and actions are not joined to God we cannot have life in him. We've been told this repeatedly by someone who knows exactly what he is talking about.

Inclusion is an offer. As an offer it is neither sufficient for, nor a pledge of, salvation. Basking in the warm feeling of “being inclusive” can even

work to place barriers in the way of persons' real incorporation into Christ, as happens when they are encouraged to think that “God loves you” means “you love God”. An inclusivity overconcerned with the social aspects of making people feel included can work to prevent them from actually, really being included in the Body of Christ.

There is another way in which concern for inclusion makes us reticent to speak of sin and hell and to work for the conversion of hearts and minds. We desperately want to be included. We want to be liked by others and not to offend. In practice, we want our inclusion in respectable society more than we want the salvation of the world. We don't want criticism, or to be skipped when the invites are sent, or to know we're being whispered about, or to be left out of the WhatsApp group. We've a burning desire for social comfort and status.

Courage

So when one of us has the courage to preach the full Gospel we blush, or shuffle away, or even publicly disown them. To rationalise our actions to ourselves we might say that what we object to is not the content of what was said, but the “tone” or “how it was said”. Perhaps the tone was a bit off. But some things aren't easy to say, especially when they're rarely said. There's just no way of formulating

challenging truths so that no one will be offended. Read the Gospels. If a life-saving truth never gets communicated then the reticence is not about tone, but about whether the truth is true.

And that's the fundamental problem in Irish Catholicism. Our reticence about preaching and living by the full Gospel is nothing other than a lack of faith in the full Gospel. Being willing to affirm just a partial Gospel only makes sense on that basis. Since the Gospel is about Jesus, a partial belief in the Gospel equates to a partial faith in his teachings, actions, and divine significance. Our fundamental problem is not a matter of declining numbers, finances, and influence – it's a matter of declining faith. We won't suffer embarrassment, never mind a bullet, on behalf of Jesus Christ because we don't really believe him, all of him. We believe him only insofar as it allows us to be thought well of by sinners and unbelievers, whom we fail to love as Jesus loves. So we deny the reality of sin and hell, which makes a nonsense of Jesus' teachings and saving actions, and which moves us all further away from salvation.

A partial gospel for a declining faith. A self-affirming gospel for creatures of comfort. That is the de facto position of the Church in Ireland. Saints in heaven, pray for us.

Out&About

'Let the children come to me...'



WATERFORD: Children, parents and clergy are pictured with Bishop of Waterford and Lismore Alphonsus Cullinan at an All Saints party held in Sacred Heart parish centre on October 31. The party was organised by the Latin Mass community.



SLIGO: Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey joins the diocesan youth committee's camino to Court Abbey, Knocknashee, on October 30.



OFFALY: Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan awards students of St Brendan's Community School, Birr, with their JPPII awards, along with chaplain Kate Liffey.

IN SHORT

Padre Pio relics to visit Down and Connor

The Diocese of Down and Connor will bring the relics of St Padre Pio to the diocese from November 6-11 to mark 20 years since he was declared a saint.

Pope St John Paul II canonised Padre Pio in 2002, drawing crowds of an estimated 300,000 to St Peter's Square in one of the largest ceremonies in history.

The relics will be brought to St Peter's Cathedral in Belfast, All Saints' Church in Ballymena and St Patrick's Church, Downpatrick from November 6-11. The relics are being brought by the Saint Pio Foundation.

It will also be possible to join remotely online through the web-streaming of the

various services.

Further information and details about the schedule is available at www.downandconnor.org/padrepio

Bishop Noel Treanor said: "St Padre Pio is recognised by the Church as a model of faith and inspiration. He has helped so many people, and there is a profound devotion to St Padre Pio across the diocese and Ireland with many seeking his intercession in time of need."

Pioneering Irish priest dies age 103

Fr William Treacy, a pioneering priest who worked on interfaith relations with a groundbreaking TV programme, has died in the US age 103.

Born in Co. Laois, Fr Treacy may be best known for his 14 years on Challenge, the ecumenical TV programme that began in 1960, drawing thousands of viewers when it aired Sunday evenings in Seattle.

The show brought together Fr Treacy, Rabbi Raphael Levine of Temple De Hirsch Sinai and a rotation of Protestant ministers for interfaith dialogue on issues of the day.

In 1966, Rabbi Levine and Fr Treacy purchased a 300-acre Skagit Valley farm to serve as an interfaith centre known as Camp Brotherhood.

Bishop McKeown hopes for WYD Church renewal

Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown has expressed hope that World Youth Day 2023

in Portugal will help set the stage for Church renewal in Ireland.

Bishop McKeown, chairman of the Irish bishops' Commission for Worship, Pastoral Renewal and Faith Development, recently visited Portugal to meet the organising committee.

"I hope that this will be an important stage on the journey of renewal in the Irish Church," Bishop McKeown told *The Net*.

"Mary arose and went with haste" (Lk 1:39) is the Bible quote chosen by Pope Francis as the motto of World Youth Day 2023.

"Derry Diocese hopes to bring a substantial group of over 18s to celebrate the universality of Christ's message, and to imitate Our Lady in responding immediately to the Angel Gabriel's message," the bishop of Derry said.



ALEXANDRIA: Pope Tawadros II received Srs Philomena and Gabriella from the diocese of Ireland, accompanied by Prof. Fr Neil Xavier O'Donoghue, Director of Liturgical Programs at St Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth Ireland, November 1.



CORK: Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles Kathleen McGarvey, Agnes Haverty, Anne McCormack and Maria Lee are pictured with birthday girl Sr Martha Aherne.



DERRY: Fr Patrick Desmond OP, and Fr Damian Polly OP lead the parish mission in Banagher Parish, October 28.



BELFAST: Parishioners of St John's Parish Falls Road gave thanks for the bounty of nature with a harvest thanksgiving altar.



CORK: A large crowd turned out for the reopening of the church of the Kinsale Carmelite Friary following renovations. Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin celebrated Mass in the church, October 27.



DUBLIN: Irish Spiritans from Kenya Fr Dominic Gathurithu, Fr Steve Mukami and Fr John Wambu visit the Misesan Cara offices and meet the team.



LOUTH: Fr Mark O'Hagan blesses the food parcels for St Patrick's Parish soup kitchen.

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



BELFAST: Students gathered in the Catholic chaplaincy of Queen's University Belfast for pumpkin carving, fun and games ahead of Halloween.



DERRY: Students of St Eithne's Primary School were unrecognisable as they dressed up for Halloween.



WATERFORD: Bishop Denis Nulty congratulates Church of Ireland Bishop Adrian Wilkinson following his installation as Bishop of Ossory, Cashel and Ferns in Christ Church Cathedral.



ROME: Ambassador Designate Frances Collins is pictured with Fr Hugh Clifford as she joined management and staff of Seamount College Kinvara to mark 100 years since the school's founding, November 1.

ANTRIM

An Advent retreat to prepare hearts for Christmas takes place on the four Sundays of Advent, beginning November 27 from 1-8pm in the Belfast Jesuit Centre, Donegall St. To register contact belfastjesuitcentre@gmail.com

ARMAGH

The annual Mass in Lislea Community Centre, to remember all the dead and especially those who have died in the community over the past year will take place on Thursday, November 10, at 8pm.

Fr Emmanuel Fasakin will host a monthly gathering to help people reflect on different aspects of their faith. The evenings will include a period of exposition in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament and some reflection on different themes. Venue – St Vincent de Paul Centre, Chapel Lane from 7.30-8.30pm. Next meeting, Thursday November 24 on 'Three persons in one God'.

CARLOW

Graigecullen-Killeslin's annual bereavement Mass takes place Friday November 25 at 7.30pm. Candles for all parishioners who died in the past year will be lit at Mass each Sunday and will be presented to the families at the bereavement Mass.

CORK

Youth 2000's Munster retreat takes place Friday November 18-Sunday 20 in Coláiste Chríost Rí, Cork City.

Medjugorje prayer meeting every Wednesday at 8pm in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in Holy Trinity Church, Fr Matthew Quay, Cork city.

DERRY

On the first Saturday of each month, after 11am Mass in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, there is adoration and rosary, ending with Divine Mercy and Benediction at 3pm. On Thursdays, there is a Holy Hour for the unborn and for expectant mothers in Our Lady's Chapel, within St Joseph's Church building, Galliagh, starting at 7pm

DONEGAL

God's Mercy in the Gospel of John, a silent retreat,

takes place in the Divine Mercy Centre, Letterkenney, November 25-27. To book or for more information contact 074 916 9934 or dvmletterkenney@gmail.com.

DUBLIN

Newman University church is hosting a remembrance prayer service Friday, November 18, at 7pm. The evening of prayer, reflection, and song will honour the faithful departed and provide a space to recognise that in grief there can also be tremendous hope.

GALWAY

A weekly gathering for young adults (16-35 years) takes place on Wednesdays at 7.30pm in the Cathedral. An opportunity for adoration, silence, prayer, music, Scripture and reflection, followed by refreshments. Contact youth@galwaycathedral.ie for more information.

KERRY

Interested in learning new music for Advent and Christmas? There will be a workshop for all musicians and singers on Thursday, November 10, 2022, in the John Paul II Pastoral Centre, Killarney at 7.30pm. Cost is €15. Contact tomaskenny@dioceseofkerry.ie.

KILDARE

Ashgrove Residents Association are holding a Candle of Light Ceremony on Friday, November 11, at 6.30pm in the Cabin Area. This ceremony is for the residents who passed away over the years, and for the families who live in the estate. Fr John Fitzpatrick will be in attendance.

KILKENNY

A coffee morning and cake sale will take place in aid of Cois Nore and Carlow-Kilkenny home-care team on Thursday, November 10, in St John's Day Centre from 11am. Come along, have a cuppa and a bun and help local cancer charities in memory of Fr Lorcan Moran.

LAOIS

Christmas Fair in Ballyfin in aid of Mary's Meals will be held in Ballyfin Com-

munity Centre Sunday, December 4, from 11am to 3pm.

LOUTH

Mass for the African Community takes place in St Nicholas' Church the third Sunday of each month at 2pm.

MAYO

Catholic Men's road trip retreat takes place November 18-20, walking/cycling from Knock, Co. Mayo to Rosslough, Co. Donegal. Cost €80, for men aged 16 and up only. Daily Mass, food and accommodation included. Text 083 389 1105 for more details.

SLIGO

A Youth 2000 prayer meeting for 16-35 year olds takes place the first Monday of every month in the side chapel of St Anne's Church at 8pm. Adoration followed by chat.

TIPPERARY

A one-day healing and renewal retreat for couples November 12 in Gleconmeragh house. Costs €100 per couple, includes a three-course dinner. Registration begins at 9am, Mass at 10am, finishes 6pm. Booking essential, contact 052 613 3181 or info@holefamilymission.ie.

TYRONE

Omagh Charismatic Prayer Group meet in the Pastoral Centre on Thursday evenings with Rosary at 7.40pm, followed by prayer meeting at 8pm.

WATERFORD

Renewal Workshop for RE teachers on how to use Christian meditation and/or Lectio Divina in the classroom takes place Saturday, November 12 10am-1pm in the Sacred Heart Convent, Cedar Lodge, Newtown Rd. Visit waterfordandlismore.ie/education to register.

WEXFORD

Wexford General Hospital Service of Remembrance takes place at Clonard Church on Friday November 11 at 7pm.



World Report

IN BRIEF

Bishop Barron outraged by cemetery desecration

● Bishop Robert Barron of Winona-Rochester expressed outrage November 2 over the desecration of several graves and the columbarium at the diocese's Calvary Cemetery in Rochester "with hateful and obscene graffiti" on Halloween night.

He assured his prayers for families "of those whose final resting places were so dishonoured".

The diocese "will cooperate with police in assuring that those responsible are brought to justice", he added in a statement issued on All Souls' Day.

"Cemetery staff is working diligently to repair the damage and restore the grounds," Bishop Barron said, and he pledged to bless and reconsecrate "this sacred space" once the staff's task "is completed".

Ghana striker named for Caritas volunteer

● As Ghana's national soccer team, the Black Stars, joins other national teams for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, some Ghanaian citizens have been talking about Iñaki Williams, who was named after a Catholic priest.

His parents, Ghanaians Felix Williams and Maria (Mary) Arthuer, crossed the Sahara and, when they got to Morocco, jumped the

border fence to Melilla, one of two Spanish cities in North Africa.

The *Guardian* reported that, on the advice of a lawyer, they said they were from Liberia to apply for political asylum.

A Caritas volunteer, then-Deacon Iñaki Mardones, was instrumental in helping them when they arrived in Bilbao, Spain.

Spanish bishop flouts prayer ban

● The bishop of Orihuela-Alicante, Spain, José Ignacio Munilla, joined the 40 Days for Life campaign November 2 in front of an abortion facility to pray for an end to abortion.

His actions were significant because Spain passed a law in April that can construe praying in front of an abortion clinic as a form of harassment punishable by fines.

Munilla shared a photograph on Twitter showing himself with other volunteers from 40 Days for Life.

"On this day of #TodosLosFielesDifuntos (All the Faithful Departed) I participated in the 40 Days for Life campaign, praying before an abortion center in Alicante," the prelate wrote.

Arabs must 'hold firm' to faith in European homes

● Bishop Saad Sirop Hanna, the apostolic visitor for Chaldean Catholics in Europe, said he understands the concerns of Arab Christians now sheltering in Europe. He warns that their rich spiritual heritage of the Eastern churches and that of their Chaldean and Assyrian traditions are "in danger", and these must be preserved and fostered in their adopted

home countries.

"I want to tell my people here in Sweden and Chaldeans everywhere to hold firm to our faith and traditions as Chaldeans. We have to be proud of our traditions.

"We have to contribute to the Catholic faith and be witnesses of our faith in our society," Bishop Hanna told *CNS* by phone.

Groups claim to represent Church on US election issues

● Ahead of the November 8 midterm elections, Arizona's Catholic bishops alerted voters to "unapproved political efforts" they said are being carried out by a number of organisations and publications claiming to represent the Catholic Church on a variety of issues on the ballot.

In a joint statement released October 31 by the Arizona Catholic Conference in Phoenix, the prelates said these entities are "calling themselves 'catholic'" but they "do not represent the Catholic Church".

They "cover various ends of the political spectrum and often engage in partisan political endeavours," the statement added.

French cardinal confesses to sexual abuse of girl

French Cardinal Jean-Pierre Ricard, former head of the French bishops' conference, admitted to abusing a 14-year-old girl 35 years ago.

The revelation came in a letter from Cardinal Ricard read by Archbishop Eric de Moulins-Beaufort of Reims, president of the bishops' conference, during a news conference on abuse November 7, during the French bishops' general assembly.

The cardinal said the "reprehensible" action occurred when he was a priest, and he said his behaviour "has necessarily caused serious and lasting consequences for this person."

He said he asked the woman for forgiveness and asked for forgiveness from her family. He also said he was going on retreat to pray.

"This is a difficult process. But what comes first is the suffering experienced by the victims and the recognition of the acts committed," he said.

"Finally, I ask forgiveness to those whom I have hurt and who will live this news as a real test," he said.

The cardinal did not provide additional details.

He is a member of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Vatican office charged with investigating clerics accused of abuse.

Archbishop Moulins-Beaufort said the cardinal was among 11 bishops or former bishops who are being



Pope Francis greets Archbishop Éric de Moulins-Beaufort of Reims, president of the French bishops' conference, during a meeting at the Vatican December 13, 2021. Photo: *CNS/Vatican Media*

or have been investigated by Church or judicial authorities for abuse.

Four days earlier, the archbishop had rearranged the bishops' schedule to deal with abuse and urged his fellow bishops to have as their first concern "the victims, those who spoke out two years ago and more recently, and those, perhaps, who have not yet made themselves known."

The archbishop was referring to the case of retired Bishop Michel Santier of Créteil. When the Vatican announced in 2021 that the bishop was retiring, the

bishop had said it was for health reasons. No one contradicted him publicly until mid-October, when the Diocese of Créteil confirmed he had been credibly accused of sexual misconduct and disciplined by the Vatican.

The bishops, who were meeting in Lourdes, acknowledged the sense of betrayal felt by people in the Diocese of Créteil, the archbishop said, as well as "the anger, shame, discouragement and weariness of the most committed faithful, deacons, priests, seminarians." Those feelings, he said, are "reaching a new

level, no doubt unbearable for some."

"All of us are shaken, personally and in our apostolic authority in the service of the Lord Jesus and the people of God, by suffering a collective criticism for a matter that most of us have had nothing to do with," he said.

The Vatican did not immediately say what, if any, disciplinary measures would be taken against 78-year-old Cardinal Ricard, who retired in 2019 as archbishop of Bordeaux.

No wheat, no hosts for Cuban Catholics

The economic crisis in Cuba continues to impact the population, this time affecting Catholics specifically because the lack of wheat flour has meant that no more Communion hosts can be made.

The St. Teresa Discalced Carmelite Monastery in Havana announced the news Wednesday.

"We inform all the dioceses that there are no longer hosts for sale. We have been working with the little flour that was left and what was in reserve has already run out," the nuns reported in a statement

shared by the Catholic publication *Vida Cristiana*.

"We hope and trust in the Lord that we can resume work soon, and once we have enough to distribute to all the dioceses, we will notify you," they added.

The Catholic Church stipulates in the *Redemptionis Sacramentum* instruction that the host can only be made with wheat.

"It follows therefore that bread made from another substance, even if it is grain, or if it is mixed with another substance different from wheat to such an extent that it

would not commonly be considered wheat bread, does not constitute valid matter for confecting the Sacrifice and the Eucharistic Sacrament," the instruction states.

In addition, the instruction says: "It is a grave abuse to introduce other substances, such as fruit or sugar or honey, into the bread for confecting the Eucharist."

At the end of August, the Cuban Ministry of Domestic Trade acknowledged that in recent months "the difficulties for importing wheat" have worsened.

Include women in seminary formation, says abuse expert

One of the church's leading experts on safeguarding and clerical sexual abuse has said the exclusion of women from seminary formation needs to change.

Jesuit Fr Hans Zollner spoke to more than 200 people at a 'Stolen Lives' webinar organised by the Root and Branch

lay reform movement in Britain in conjunction with Survivor Voices and Scottish Laity Network.

The priest, a member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, said that in the period between 1965 and 1982, the majority of

victims of clerical abuse were male adolescents.

However, the numbers changed when female altar servers were introduced, and as boarding schools run by priests and male religious began to admit girls.

"In the formation setting,

the presence of women as counsellors, as teachers, and formators is necessary to bring about in males training for the priesthood or religious life a much more mature and realistic image and experience of this mysterious human being that is called a woman."



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Life as a retired pope...



Official artist to the popes Natlia Tsarkova's painting of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in his life after resignation is displayed in her studio in Rome. Photo: Daniel Ibanez/CNA.

'Our people are languishing in misery' – Congolese bishop

A Catholic bishop in Congo warned of a loss of government control over parts of the country, three months ahead of a projected visit by Pope Francis.

"Our people are languishing in misery, while those managing the republic swim in abundance, showing indifference toward the martyred population," said Bishop Placide Lubamba Ndjibu of Kasongo.

"We call on the government to restore sovereign power over this part of our national territory and ensure peace and security for its population – while swiftly providing humanitarian assistance to victims and allowing

displaced people to return."

The bishop circulated the appeal as Kenyan troops were deployed November 2 as part of an East African regional force in eastern Congo, in a fresh bid to end violence by rival militia groups.

The bishop said people needing lasting solutions for disputes over gold mining in eastern Congo. He added that violence among rival armed groups had intensified, disrupting living conditions, agricultural supplies and basic services.

"All of this is sowing a climate of terror and desolation, accompanied by deaths, rapes, school closures, the destruction of food reserves

and looting of livestock," Bishop Ndjibu said.

"As a church, it is our responsibility to side with the victims and say with the prophet Habakkuk, 'How long, Lord, must I cry out for help?'"

Pope Francis told African students in a November 1 webinar he hoped to visit Congo and neighboring South Sudan in February, after postponing a planned July 2-7 visit because of health problems.

However, fears of insecurity have grown across the mineral-rich Congo, where troops from a 14,000-strong UN-backed multilateral stabilisation mission, deployed

since 1999, have come under attack for failing to provide protection against more than 120 armed groups, some linked to the Islamic State group.

The UN-backed Radio Okapi said dozens were killed in October 2 militia clashes in Maniema, one of the Congo's 26 provinces, while the Pope deplored an October 20 attack at Maboya by members of the Uganda-based Allied Democratic Forces. Those attacks left a Catholic nun and medical doctor, Sister Sylvie Kavuke Vakatsuraki, among seven dead.

Church must 'feel pain' of persecuted Native Americans

The Catholic Church is working to promote healing and rebuild trust with Native American communities in response to revelations about mistreatment of students in church-run boarding schools, a priest working on Native American issues for the US bishops told an Archdiocese of Seattle gathering.

"This is heart stuff, not head stuff," Fr Michael Carson, assistant director of Native American Affairs at the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, said during an October 23 programme.

"It's connection. Feeling the pain, the abuse, the suffering. ... Do not be afraid to let the pain and frustration into your heart," said Fr Carson, a priest of the Diocese of San Jose, California, and a descendant of the Choctaw tribe in Louisiana.

The priest was invited to speak by the Seattle Archdiocese's Native American Advisory Board in partnership with the archdiocese's Multicultural Ministries team.

Kiara Raven, an advisory board mem-

ber, said Fr Carson was able to speak about "the Catholic Church's history in relation to Natives without causing deep guilt to non-Natives or Catholics".

In his presentation, Fr Carson explained the history of residential boarding schools for Native Americans. He also detailed the US bishops' recommendations on how to promote healing with Native people through listening sessions, relationship-building, archival research and cooperation with investigative bodies.

Vatican roundup

Saints were revolutionaries living the beatitudes, says Pope

● The saints were not "starched", picture-perfect conformists, Pope Francis said; they were "countercultural and revolutionary".

The multitude of men and women honoured on the feast of All Saints lived according to the Eight Beatitudes, which made them decidedly out of place in the world, Pope Francis said November 1 before reciting the Angelus prayer.

With thousands of people gathered in St Peter's Square, including runners who had participated in the 10k All Saints' Day race, Pope Francis also encouraged people not only to visit the burial sites of their loved ones the following day, the feast of All Souls, but to go to Mass and pray for them as well.

Talking about saints and the day's Gospel reading of the beatitudes, Pope Francis focused particularly on "Blessed are the peacemakers".

Everyone says they want peace, he said, but often what they mean is they want "to be left in peace".

But, if one reads the beatitudes in the Gospel, he said, they will see that Jesus does not say, "Blessed are those who are at peace", but blessed are "those who make peace, the constructors, the peacemakers".

Pope's November prayer intention 'for children who suffer'

● During the month of November, Pope Francis is asking people to pray for children who are suffering because of poverty, war and exploitation.

"Let us pray for children who are suffering, especially for those who are homeless, orphans and victims of war. May they be guaranteed access to education, and may they have the opportunity to experience family affection," the Pope said in a video released October 31.

In the video message released by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, the Pope explained his November prayer intention: "For children who suffer."

"An abandoned child is our fault," the Pope said in the message.

"Each marginalised child, abandoned by his or her family, without schooling, without health care, is a cry! A cry that rises up to God and shames the system that we adults have built," he insisted.

Pope Francis noted that there are millions of boys and girls around the world living "in conditions very similar to slavery".

They have a right to an education and "to feel the love of a family so they know that God does not forget them".

Vatican accepts German archbishop's resignation

● Pope Francis accepted the resignation of a German archbishop on Tuesday, November 1.

Archbishop Ludwig Schick of Bamberg had been in charge of the Bavarian Archdiocese since 2002.

Archbishop Schick recently came under pressure for the handling of sexual abuse cases in his diocese.

The archbishop of the diocese in Southern Germany said in a statement published November 1 that he had conveyed this request "to the Pope verbally and in writing during a private audience in April of this year, explaining it thus: I have fulfilled and completed my duties in the archdiocese."

Archbishop Schick said the Pope had asked him to remain in office. "After presenting my reasons again, he then granted my request at the end of September," Schick said.

The 73-year-old archbishop Schick was archbishop of Bamberg for 20 years. Bishops are requested under canon law to offer their resignations to the Holy Father upon turning 75 years old.

"After careful consideration and prayer, as well as many conversations with my spiritual director, I came to the conclusion in the first quarter of this year to ask the Pope to release me from my duties," Schick said.



Letter from Brazil



Eduardo Campos Lima

After the fiercest presidential campaign in Brazil's history, former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva managed to beat his rival Jair Bolsonaro on October 30 with a narrow margin of only two million votes.

As soon as the South American country's electoral authority proclaimed Lula's victory, several world leaders called him or congratulated him on social media, including President Joe Biden.

“Since the 2018 campaign, Bolsonaro has alleged that there are security flaws in the voting machines used in Brazil since the 1990s”

But more than one day after the election, Bolsonaro had not yet publicly acknowledged his defeat. All over the nation, groups of his supporters have been blocking roads and asking for a military coup to correct what they saw as “a voting fraud” – although there is no evidence of voting irregularities.

The protests are a signal that the political polarisation in the country – intensified since the 2018 presidential campaign, when Bolsonaro was elected – may not end with the conclusion of the electoral process. Although the Church is aware of the great obstacles ahead, it has been calling for Brazilians to leave their differences aside and work together from now on.

On October 31, the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) issued a statement in which it called the people to reconcile and seek “the common good”.

“The conclusion of the 2022 elections summons us, even more, to reconciliation, essential to the new cycle that is opening. Now, everyone, without distinction, needs to accompany, demand and supervise those who have achieved success at the polls. The exercise of citizenship does not end with the end of the electoral process,” the declaration said.

The letter congratulates the elected politicians and the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) for its “zeal during the whole democratic process”.

Headed by Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who has been playing a fundamental role over the past few years in restraining Bolsonaro's perceived attacks on Brazilian institutions, the TSE expended great effort to secure that the election would

Church hopes for reconciliation of Brazilians after Lula's election



A supporter of Brazil's former President and presidential candidate Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva reacts as he celebrates the election's results proclaiming Lula the winner in Sao Paulo, Brazil, October 30. Photo: CNS photo/Amanda Perobelli, Reuters

“The letter congratulates the elected politicians and the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) for its ‘zeal during the whole democratic process’”

not be disturbed by the politically charged atmosphere.

Since the 2018 campaign, Bolsonaro has alleged that there are security flaws in the voting machines used in Brazil since the 1990s. Over the past months, he has claimed several times that he enjoyed great popular support and that he would only accept an electoral outcome that benefitted him, saying his defeat would be a clear sign of fraud.

Conspiracy

Those ideas have become popular among his most adamant supporters, who saw a conspiracy from world leaders, a section of the business leadership in Brazil, the media and the judiciary to elect Lula.

Shortly before the second round of the presidential vote, Bolsonaro's campaign tried to put in doubt the legitimacy of the process.

One of the arguments presented by his supporters was that radio stations all over the country – but especially in the Northeast, where Lula was born and where he has a great

political hegemony – refused to play Bolsonaro's campaign ads.

His campaign failed to provide any evidence of fraud and Moraes closed the case, enraging many of Bolsonaro's voters.

On election day, reports coming from different locations in the Northeast said federal highway police officers were stopping cars and buses taking electors to vote in order to inspect them. Such inspections were causing delays and risked keeping the voters from the polls before they closed.

Videos showing policemen keeping people waiting on the road apparently for no reason flooded social media and many of Lula's supporters began to ask for an extension of voting hours. In the afternoon, Moraes told reporters that he had met with the federal police director and ordered that all such inspections should immediately cease.

Now, among Lula's voters, there is an atmosphere of insecurity, as many of them fear that Bolsonaro can still impede the president-elect

to take office in January.

Bishop Adriano Ciocca Vasino of the Prelature of São Félix, in Mato Grosso State, said the way for pacification is open, despite so much animosity.

“I think that most of Bolsonaro's electors are not fanatic and after the dust settles a dialogue will be possible,” he told *Crux*.

Vasino's prelature is a region where Brazil's political divide is plainly seen.

Located in the Amazon, it has been economically dominated by agribusiness – which heavily supports Bolsonaro – for decades.

Poor peasants

At the same time, there is a great number of poor peasants and Indigenous peoples in the area who support Lula.

The prelate said that even the Church has suffered violence during the campaign, with people insulting a pro-Lula priest on social media.

“Despite all that, Catholics need now to establish dialogues with both sides of the political spectrum – dialogues that are calm and gentle and are not a contraposition of party slogans,” he said.

Archbishop Roque Paloschi of Porto Velho, in Rondônia State, said that many families have been divided over politics – and now it is about time to reconcile.

“But it depends on the good disposition of everyone, including the president. We have to avoid unnecessary arguments and work for soli-

arity and peace,” he told *Crux*.

Paloschi said that several roads have been blocked by pro-Bolsonaro demonstrators in Rondônia. Truck drivers have been leading such protests in almost every state of the country. Videos on social media show that local and federal policemen have often been showing support to the protesters.

“The archbishop said Brazilians should seek ‘humility’ and remember the prayer attributed to St Francis: ‘Lord, make me an instrument of your peace’”

“But I believe that the order will prevail, and that people will be calmer and accept the election's outcome. Catholics have to be wise and careful, avoiding aggressiveness and revenge,” he said.

The archbishop said Brazilians should seek “humility” and remember the prayer attributed to St Francis: “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.”

“Even if we are attacked, we should not show the same attitude of our aggressor. Jesus never responded to his critics. The only reaction he had was to ask his attacker why he attacked him,” he said.

Nigerian bishop addresses the evils of Islamist extremism at interfaith summit



Zelda Caldwell

Before a gathering of religious leaders in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority country, a Catholic bishop from Nigeria gave an account of how his country had become a "cauldron of violence" at the hands of Islamist extremists.

Addressing the G20 Religion Forum in Bali on November 3 in advance of the Group of 20's meeting later this month, Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah testified to the violence committed against both Christians and Muslims caught in intra-sectarian warfare.

“According to a report by the nongovernmental organisation Open Doors, 4,650 Christians were killed in Nigeria in 2021- that’s more than the number killed in all of the other countries in the world combined”

“Every day, news of abductions, armed robberies, kidnappings for ransom, murders, and assassinations of our innocent citizens persists. Our sacred spaces have become killing grounds,” the bishop said. Hundreds of worshippers have been murdered in mosques and churches across the country.

According to a report by the nongovernmental organisation Open Doors, 4,650 Christians were killed in Nigeria in 2021- that’s more than the number killed in all of the other countries in the world combined.

The G20 Religion Forum was hosted by Indonesia’s Nahdlatul Ulama political party, which, according to its press release, represents 120 million “moderate” Muslims, or about 40% of the country’s 231 million Muslims.

The conference was



A man cries during a funeral Mass in the parish hall of St Francis Xavier Church in Owo, Nigeria, June 17, 2022. The Mass was for 40 victims killed in a June 5 attack by gunmen during Mass at the church. Photo: CNS photo/Temilade Adelaja, Reuters

convened to “prevent the weaponisation of identity” and “curtail the spread of communal hatred”, according to its stated goals.

Bishop Kukah, the bishop of the Diocese of Sokoto in the northwest region of Nigeria, where Muslims are in the majority, commended the group for “taking the historic step to address these issues directly”, he said.

Acts of violence

In his address, he shared details of some of the recent acts of violence committed by Muslim extremists in his diocese, including the kidnappings of fellow priests and the case of Deborah Samuel, a Christian student who on May 13 was accused of blasphemy and brutally murdered by a mob of Muslim students.

Bishop Kukah explained that Muslim elites see secular laws as a threat to Islam and, therefore, disregard them. Nigeria’s constitution includes protections of the freedom of religion and prohibits federal

or state governments from adopting any religion as a state religion.

“In northern Nigeria, Muslim elites have tended to see the institutions of the modern state as an alien imposition that attempts to displace their own religion, with Western education as a foreign enemy to Islam. They thus consider the present constitution and secular laws as fundamentally subordinate to Islam, and in practice ignore the written laws of the land as they see fit,” the bishop said.

“In conclusion, he called on governments to end religious discrimination and defend their countries’ constitutions”

He urged the world’s religious leaders to work together to oppose those who commit violence out of “grand delusions” that their

religion requires it of them.

“This cancer of the weaponisation of religion threatens us all. History shows us that empires and emperors have had their day. The world will always be full of men and women with grand delusions about how they have been divinely sent to create a new world at the cost of human blood,” he said.

Collaboration

The Nigerian bishop pressed the religious leaders to “work in collaboration with civil society to “ensure a fairer world for all.”

In conclusion, he called on governments to end religious discrimination and defend their countries’ constitutions.

Religious leaders, he said, should also avoid “the manipulation of identities” and instead “encourage areas of integration through education, common citizenship, intermarriages, and other platforms of social cohesion anticipated and enshrined in our

constitutions,” Bishop Kukah said.

The G20 Religious Forum also featured the testimony of the Chaldean Catholic archbishop of Erbil, Iraq, Bashar Matti Warda. In his address, Warda painted a pessimistic picture of Iraq given the majority-Muslim country’s long history of violence.

“There is hope, he said, but only through forgiveness and the renunciation of violence”

“Throughout the Islamic world, the reality of structured violence, persecution, and marginalisation against the minorities remains, century after century,” archbishop Warda said.

“To raise this matter in Western or global audiences is to invite a charge of ‘Islamophobia,’ mainly from social critics speaking theoretically from places far

removed from any threat or actual experience. But for we Iraqi Christians this is not an abstract matter,” he said.

Archbishop Warda continued: “There is a crisis of violence in Islam and for the sake of humanity, including the followers of Islam themselves, it must be addressed openly and honestly.”

There is hope, he said, but only through forgiveness and the renunciation of violence.

Missionary role

“Ours then is now a missionary role, to give daily witness to the teachings of Christ, to provide a living example to our neighbours of a path to a world of forgiveness, of humility, of love, of peace. Lest there be any confusion here I am not speaking of conversion. Rather, I am speaking of the fundamental truth of forgiveness and a renunciation of violence which we Christians of Iraq can share and do so from a position of historically unique moral clarity.

“We forgive those who murdered us, who tortured us, who raped us, who sought to destroy everything about us. We forgive them. In the name of Christ, we forgive them,” the archbishop of Erbil said.

“The world will always be full of men and women with grand delusions about how they have been divinely sent to create a new world at the cost of human blood”

Letters

Letter of the week

Reasons for ditching Mansion House crib dubious

Dear Editor, As Christians around the world start thinking about setting up nativity scenes for Christmas, the ox and the donkey regular fixtures around the manger are latter-day inventions nowhere to be seen in the gospels.

The Vatican itself has included animals in the nativity scenes it sets up each year in St Peter's Square. But that tradition is gone in Dublin. After more than 25 years running, the crib is no more, having been an annual seasonal attraction outside the Mansion House, the Lord Mayor's Dawson Street residence.

Since 1995, donkeys, goats and

sheep have sat alongside figures of Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus each December outside the Mansion House, attracting a large crowd of admirers. The crib is a joint initiative between Dublin City Council (DCC) and the Irish Farmers Association (IFA).

The life-size stable has been home to a sheep, a donkey and a goat cared for by the Irish Farmer's Association and Dublin Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. However, Dublin's Lord Mayor and Green Party Councillor Caroline Conroy proposed to the city council's protocol committee that she wanted to introduce a more "inclusive" win-

ter wonderland-style experience that would include choirs, sleighs and post boxes at the Mansion House instead of a crib with live animals.

Former president, Mary McAleese has asked Dublin's Lord Mayor Caroline Conroy to reconsider her decision not to abandon the annual live animal Christmas crib at the Mansion House. However, one is not persuaded by the Lord Mayor's reasons advanced for ditching the live crib and even less enchanted by the proposed winter wonderland display.

Yours etc.,
Gerry Coughlan
Dublin 24

'Repealers' guilty of 21,000 deaths

Dear Editor, Post 8th repeal, we now have more than 21,000 dead. Repeal abortion killed Irish unborn babies in the last three years – a 70% increase, as pro-lifers warned. None will live in our families, schools, parishes, sports.

Repealers who attacked the protective 8th are responsible for this killing. How exactly is this slaughter "progressive"? The simplistic "trust women, choice, Savita" anti-8th line sold to voters, rings very hollow now, as abortion deaths mount. Repealer TDs, celeb advocates, need to explain the bloody mounting death toll of healthy Irish unborn children, which they led Ireland into. So far, their silence is deafening. They now seek to silence pro-life opposition to their repeal abortion slaughter.

Yours etc.,
Oliver Maher
Dublin 6W



Forcing pro-life groups to unify

Dear Editor, The facts of our Government's discrimination against the Catholics, most recently in the matter of heating the churches, are well presented by Michael Kelly [*The Irish Catholic* – October 20, 2022], but his conclusion seems to me weak.

We are in denial if we continue to say that Government discrimination against the Catholics is not intentional. Also, in discuss-

ing this and related matters we tend to allow an easy distinction between institution and people, which I think is unhelpful.

There are a few implications which the victims themselves have to consider here. One, the national broadcaster has been cheerleading this prejudice, and pro-life people feel this very strongly.

It seems to me obvious that the leaders of pro-life

groups should cease giving media interviews or making appearances of any kind until there is change.

Second, there should be a united leadership in the pro-life campaign. The keeping in operation of multiple pro-life offices has got in the way of what should be the real priority, which is, a single, elected voice to speak for the movement.

We have to address the

blatant disrespect for members of what used to be the majority faith, and we appear to be facilitating this disrespect ourselves.

I believe that ordinary people should withhold their subscriptions and revisit their direct debits and force the pro-life groups to consult their bases with a view to unity.

Yours etc.,
Gerald O'Carroll
Ballylongford, Co. Kerry

What is our culture anyway?

Dear Editor, With the latest Sinn Féin press conference accusing the DUP of "gross political negligence" for refusing to share power, etc, we see Mary Lou McDonald speaking the English language fluently, but struggling with the bits of Irish Gaelic thrown in as a token gesture to those who equate the Irish language with the pursuit of a united Ireland.

Irish Gaelic is a language – a language which could just as much be embraced by Protestants as it has by a

minority of nationalists who are using it as a political battering ram. Michele O'Neill says her bit, again in fluent English. She doesn't on this occasion even attempt to speak Irish Gaelic, but she speaks so quickly and accented that I imagine anybody living outside of Northern Ireland, or even Belfast, might find her difficult to understand, God love her! Protestants have nothing to fear from this political circus. What is our culture anyway? We've become a nation of zombies staring

at a bloody screen for hours every day – everyone existing in their unique algorithm-manufactured cyber world. In hundreds of years' time will we be harking back to a time when our culture consisted of practically everyone watching a bloody screen all day long? You never know, these days may in time be seen as our cultural zenith, God help us!

Yours etc.,
Louis Shawcross
Hillsborough, Co. Down

facebook community

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

Fr Niall Coll appointed Bishop of Ossory

Congratulations and every blessing in your new role in the Church. You will be clothed in many prayers for the journey ahead. – **Claire Stanton Cleary**

Congratulations Fr Niall. May you be blessed in your new appointment in Ossory. – **Brendan Gallagher**

Congratulations to Fr Niall he will make a nice Bishop! I wish him well! – **Vinny Connaughton**

Congratulations Fr Niall well deserved and good luck in your new appointment. – **Angela Donegan**

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

Presumed universal salvation needs urgent addressing

Dear Editor, Your editorial [*The Irish Catholic* – October 27, 2022] about the large scale lapsation in our contemporary Church is of critical importance. Many of our younger generation "couldn't care less... after years of being raised in a good Catholic home... [having] also attended Catholic schools where the emphasis in religion class has all been on a God of love and experiencing the merciful face of Christ".

So what has gone wrong?

There is I believe a hippopotamus in the "room" of our Church that has produced a warped sense of the true Christian message – and that is the presumption of (near) universal salvation. This presumption permeates the modern Church. It is often seen at funerals: the deceased person is assumed to be in heaven regardless of the quality of their Christian life, at least in terms of its external appearances. If one can be saved automatically then there is no need to believe in Jesus and live a committed Christian life; somebody who "couldn't care less" can assume that they'll reach eternal life with God too.

This widespread presumption of (near) universal salvation has only come about in the last 60 years or so. It has little basis in the New Testament. Jesus says enter eternal life through the "narrow gate" and "hard road" (Matt 7:13-14). St Paul speaks about working out one's salvation in "fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). Judgement between those who find salvation and those who don't is a principal theme throughout the Bible.

The distortion produced in the Church by presumed universal salvation needs to be urgently addressed.

Yours etc.,
Fr Morty O'Shea SOLT
Rye, New York, USA

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.

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, November 10, 2022

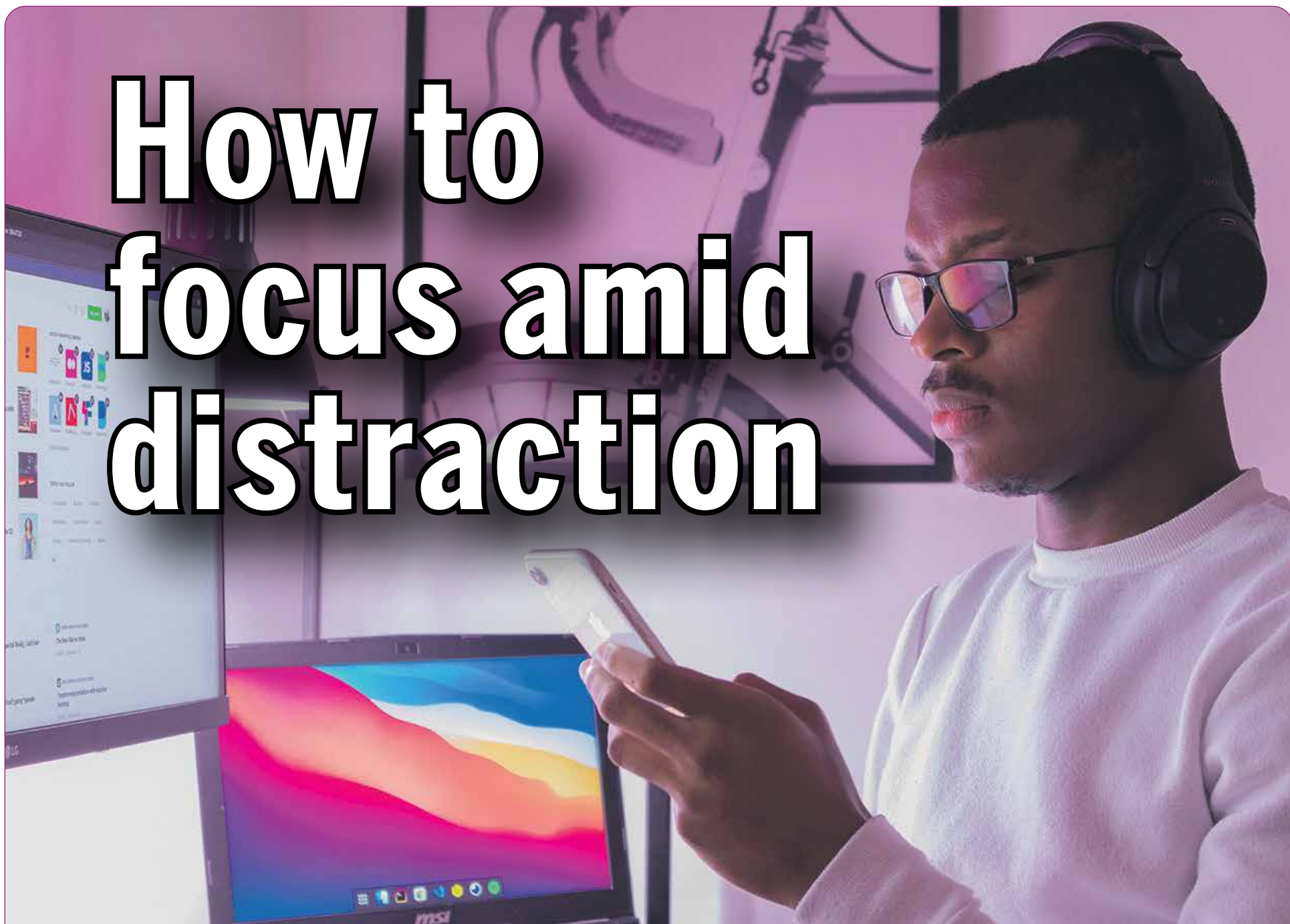
Personal Profile

The privilege of serving people

Page 32



How to focus amid distraction



We live in a world awash with distraction. Living in mega-cities (by historical standards) as we do, we're surrounded by more stimulus every day than your average person was exposed to in a year. A constant flood of noise, people, traffic, bright lights and flashy signs, activities, demonstrations and more.

If our wider environment is full of distraction, our immediate environments are even more so. Big TVs dominate most living rooms and many are left on in the background, endlessly pouring forth noise to those within earshot. The development



There are more distractions than ever before and so we must develop our concentration if we're to thrive, writes Jason Osborne

of laptops and tablets enabled screens to move into every room in the house, while smartphones enabled a screen and internet access to accompany your person at all times.

Why do I paint this bleak picture? To set a scene that most of us, if not all of us, are increasingly

aware of. That is, that it's increasingly difficult to get through our work and personal tasks without interruption by these various intruders into what should be time set apart for what needs doing. Someone might argue that these distractions can constitute a pleasant break from the daily

slog, but it goes a little further than that in my experience. There are some days my phone is a near constant buzz as I try to write, and that's far from helpful.

People have always had to deal with distraction, but I'm contending that what many of us deal with today is distraction on steroids, as the saying goes. Especially if your work involves computers or smartphones, that access to the internet gives you a world's-worth of distraction to contend with at every moment of your workday.

The faculty most useful for us in getting to grips with this challenge is one you don't hear too much about these days, at least in

my experience – concentration. The ability to concentrate is vital when it comes to cutting through the distractions that threaten to overwhelm whatever you have at hand, so it's worth knowing how to cultivate your ability to concentrate.

Change your physical space

As boring as it sounds, the first step you should take towards honing your concentration is eliminating those big, obvious physical distractions. Just as with developing any skill, you have to start small and work your way

» Continued on Page 31

Family News



AND EVENTS

NEW POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS ASTEROID DISCOVERED

An international team of astronomers announced the discovery of a large asteroid whose orbit crosses that of Earth, creating a small chance far in the future of a catastrophic collision.

The 1.5km-wide asteroid, named 2022 AP7, was discovered in an area in which it's notoriously difficult to spot objects due to the glare from the Sun, AFP reported.

It was found along with two other near-Earth asteroids using a high-tech instrument on the Victor M Blanco telescope in Chile that was originally developed to study dark matter.

"2022 AP7 crosses Earth's orbit, which makes it a potentially hazardous asteroid, but it currently does not now or anytime in the future have a trajectory that will have it collide with the Earth," said lead author of the findings, astronomer Scott Sheppard of the Carnegie Institution for Science.

The potential threat comes from the fact that like any orbiting object, its trajectory will be slowly modified due to myriad gravitational forces, notably by planets. Forecasts are therefore difficult on the very long term.

'PERMACRISIS' WORD OF THE YEAR FOR 2022

Collins Dictionary has named "permacrisis" as its word of the year after a period which has seen people live through war, inflation, climate change and political instability.

The word, defined as "an extended period of instability and insecurity", is one of the several terms on the 2022 list which has seen increasing usage due to the ongoing crises in the UK and across the world.

The dictionary said it chose the word as it "sums up quite succinctly just how truly awful 2022 has been for so many people".

Six words on Collins' list of ten words of the year are new to CollinsDictionary.com, including "permacrisis", despite being first noted in academic contexts from the 1970s.

STUDY FINDS RHINO HORNS HAVE SHRUNK OVER PAST CENTURY

Rhinoceros horns across all species have gradually shrunk over the past century and hunting may be the likely cause, scientists believe.

The findings, published in the journal *People And Nature*, are based on an analysis of photos of the creatures from the past 140 years.

The experts from the University of Cambridge said rhino horns are seen as a financial investment, hence the animals are often trophy hunted.

The horns are also used in traditional medicines in China and Vietnam.

The researchers believe that shooting rhinos with the longest horns means that only smaller-horned survivors remain.

These rhinos are now passing on their smaller traits to future generations.

Oscar Wilson, formerly a researcher in the University of Cambridge's Department of Zoology, said: "We were really excited that we could find evidence from photographs that rhino horns have become shorter over time".

Keep noses and ears to the ground and notice symptoms



Ear, nose and throat complaints can be a source of much discomfort and are frequent, accounting for a significant proportion of GP visits.

One of the most common symptoms is a sore throat that in the majority of cases is caused by viral infections and doesn't generally require treatment with antibiotics. Gargling with salty water or aspirin can be soothing as well as using lozenges.

If very uncomfortable, local anaesthetic sprays can help but their effect is short-lived. If your sore throat is not improving within a few days or you have swollen nodes in your neck or ongoing fever then you may have a streptococcal infection and should go on a course of antibiotics.

Acid reflux from the stomach can also cause a sore throat, a sensation of something sticking, a cough and also hoarseness. It can persist for days to weeks and often occurs in the absence of any symptoms of heartburn.

Irritation

In particular, gastric acid can reflux into the gullet at night when lying flat and cause significant irritation to the throat and vocal cords. If symptoms are due to reflux they usually resolve within a few weeks of taking regular antacids with meals and medications that suppress gastric acid secretion.

Hoarseness is commonly caused by viral laryngitis which often happens in conjunction with a cold or sore throat but also other factors like excessive vocal use and drinks that are acidic or high in alcohol content. Resting your voice, avoiding vocal cord irritants including cigarette smoke and using humidified air or inhaling steam can help.

However, hoarseness persist-

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



ing for more than three weeks may need further investigations with a laryngoscopy (camera test) to visualise the vocal cords especially if you smoke or take alcohol in excess. Hoarseness secondary to voice misuse or overuse is not uncommon in teachers, lecturers and singers and can be helped with vocal training.

Some steroid nasal sprays are available without prescription and are very effective at relieving nasal congestion though work best when used regularly"

Up to 20% of the population suffer with hay fever and tend to get a relapse of symptoms in the spring and summer due to increasing levels of airborne pollen or spores.

In Ireland, the most common allergen is grass pollen and spores that come from fungi or mould. The usual symptoms are a runny or blocked nose, sneezing and also watery eyes. To prevent flare ups, you should consider avoiding grassy areas or cutting grass and where possible going outdoors when the pollen count is high. You should

also keep windows shut and avoid fresh flowers and pets in the house.

Over the counter tablets such as antihistamines can help with sneezing itching and watery eyes but may not be as effective for a runny nose which responds better to nasal decongestants. Some steroid nasal sprays are available without prescription and are very effective at relieving nasal congestion though work best when used regularly.

If your sinuses are congested you may also have facial pain around your nose or forehead and as well as taking the above treatments may require a course of antibiotics.

With nasal congestion from a cold, the Eustachian tube can also get blocked and cause fluid to accumulate in the middle ear causing hearing loss. This is



also problematic when flying as failure to equalise pressure between your ear and nasal passage on airplane ascent or descent can cause the eardrum to be stretched outwards or inwards, which can be very painful and occasionally result in it perforating.

Taking decongestants in advance can help prevent this as well as yawning and other manoeuvres (like blowing out with your nose pinched and mouth closed).

Wax in the ear canal shouldn't be overlooked as a cause of hearing loss. Ear drops can be used to help dissolve it but often it will have to be

removed with ear syringing which your GP can do. Removal by microscopic suction at an ENT outpatient clinic is sometimes required when wax is deeply impacted.

Vertigo or the sensation of things spinning around is often due to an ear problem. It can occur with an acute viral infection of the inner ear and is often associated with nausea. It usually settles down after a few days and medications can be given that are effective for symptoms. Intermittent vertigo that happens when moving your head or changing posture can sometimes be treated with special physical manoeuvres of the head that can correct middle ear dysfunction.

However, low volume background noise can help mask tinnitus and you should avoid loud noises and stress which may make it feel worse"

Tinnitus or a ringing/buzzing in the ear is usually associated with hearing impairment and damage to the inner ear but can also occur with irritation from impacted wax or infection and occasionally other medical conditions.

Unfortunately, in the absence of a reversible cause treatment is limited. However, low volume background noise can help mask tinnitus and you should avoid loud noises and stress which may make it feel worse. Reducing alcohol and caffeine intake may also help.

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

» Continued from Page 29



up. In this case, “starting small” involves cutting out those distractions that are easy to deal with, so that you can devote your energies to dealing with those things that aren’t as black and white as moving the TV out of your home office.

“Do whatever it takes to create an environment that’s conducive not to working, necessarily, but to not being distracted”

If your job allows, perhaps disconnect your phone from the internet as you work, or leave it out of reach – in another room, for example – turn off the radio, or close the blinds so that the people out in the street don’t keep catching your eye. Do whatever it takes to create an environment that’s conducive not to working, necessarily, but to not being distracted.

Digital hygiene

Unfortunately, the physical space is only one half of the equation these days. Just as many of us occupy the digital space a considerable amount of the time. For many of us in the western world, disconnecting from the internet isn’t an option at work – indeed, our work depends on an internet connection.

So how are you supposed to get any work done while notifications bombard you and algorithms suggest tantalising search options to you? By cleaning up your digital act! Make

use of your phones settings – as your phone is what’s most likely to be impinging upon your attention throughout the day – and switch off notifications for the social media and messaging apps you might have installed.

Some devices have a “focus” mode, which limits the amount you’re able to do on a device for a set period of time. For example, Apple devices allow you to block messages, internet access and whatever else you feel needs blocking for whatever amount of time you set. Features like these make it much easier to avoid unnecessary distraction and focus on the task you have at hand.

Don’t multitask

If possible, avoid or limit multitasking. This is a common piece of advice doled out to those looking to improve their ability to concentrate, and for good reason. While attempting to handle multiple jobs at the same time sure feels good and productive, the reality is that it divides our attention and makes us less productive.

Over time, that intimidating list of tasks that you’re trying to tackle all at once will instead dominate you and leave you with a sense of burnout. Focus on one task at a time, and only move on to the next when you’ve completed the one you’re working on. At the outset, it might seem like it’ll take forever, but it’s a more certain way to get through your work than tackling them all at once.

Related to this, it’s a good idea not to try and listen to music or a podcast, talk on the phone or do

“Avoiding screens for an hour before getting to sleep, exercising earlier in the day, drinking enough fluids and, funnily enough, meditative prayer are all good ways to induce restful sleep later on that night”

anything else that seems like a good idea while trying to concentrate. The unpleasant answer is sometimes the right one, and unfortunately, there’s nothing for concentration like silence.

Sleep more

Another reason you might have difficulty concentrating is because you’re not getting enough sleep, or sleep of a high enough quality. This can be a sneaky inhibitor of concentration, because to many it’s not clear where their lack of focus is coming from.

Avoiding screens for an hour before getting to sleep, exercising earlier in the day, drinking enough fluids and, funnily enough, meditative prayer are all good ways to induce restful sleep later on that night.

Take breaks

In the hyper-productive culture that we live in and prize, sometimes the notion of taking a mini-break is anathema. However, they can sometimes be just what you need if you’re stuck in a rut of distraction.

Get up and talk to those in your office or at home, go for a short walk, read a couple of pages of a book to slow your racing, distractable mind and your ability to concentrate will thank you. This tip works for me without fail.



The privilege of serving people

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

When Eric Cooney was young, he had a sense of a vocation to the priesthood. However, he recognised that celibacy would have proved difficult for him and put it aside. But when the possibility of becoming a permanent deacon arose, he took the chance and says he feels blessed in his ministry.

“He became involved in his parish first with St Vincent de Paul in 1976 and two years later started the parish folk choir”

It's ten years since Deacon Cooney was one of the first men in Dublin diocese to be ordained to the permanent diaconate. Reflecting on when he first had a sense of vocation, he says the initial inkling came when he was much younger.

“Certainly I felt I'd like to be a priest,” says Deacon Cooney, who ministers in Monkstown parish. “But I never went as far as considering seminary because I realised I'd be lonely, celibacy would have been an issue for me. Married life was the root.”

He became involved in his par-



Deacon Eric Cooney.

ish first with St Vincent de Paul in 1976 and two years later started the parish folk choir. It wasn't until a couples' dinner in 2005 that the possibility of the diaconate was put before him.

“We had Msgr Seamus Conway over, who was a common link for all of us, having been the curate here in Monkstown 40 years ago and he had married a number of us,” Deacon Cooney explains. “Just during the conversation about priesthood, somebody said to me do you ever think you'd be a priest if they allowed priests be married.”

“I said I couldn't see that happening in my lifetime and then Seamus said to me would I ever consider being a permanent deacon. And I didn't know too much about it – I had heard of it, I said, but that's not

in Ireland. He said well I think the bishops are looking at it, and are hoping to introduce it. Seamus probably sowed the seed in my mind and in my heart. From that day I started to pray quite frequently about it.”

Prayer

It was after three years of prayer and reading that Fr Martin Clarke, then Deacon Cooney's parish priest, came to him and said the archbishop was launching the permanent diaconate. “He's asking priests to recommend any men that they felt would be suitable and I know you're interested in it,” Fr Clarke said to Deacon Cooney. “Would you like to go forward?”

His answer was a definite yes and in December 2008, Eric Cooney and 15 other men began their propaedeutic year. He was part of the first group

from Dublin diocese and by the end of the year, a number had dropped out.

“[T]he Church was constantly evaluating,” he tells me. “In terms of the propaedeutic year, you had to do a psychological assessment, Garda clearance, academic assessment, various different interviews with people to assess your human skills – and obviously spiritual direction. It was more involved than I thought it was going to be. The first year was quite intensive.”

“Now that he is semi-retired, with no children left at home to care for, he is more available to the parish”

But it was a proud and emotional day when he and his fellow ordinands were ordained in 2012. Since that day, Deacon Cooney's ministry has grown gradually. As with most deacons, he was working full-time when he first started. Now that he is semi-retired, with no children left at home to care for, he is more available to the parish.

“As a result of being more available I have a full ministry. There is only one priest in our parish and I get on really well with him. Whenever there's a funeral, I'm involved in the altar and I usually do all the burials in the cemetery or in the crematorium. I do the majority of the baptisms.

“A great privilege for me has been weddings, I've done about 15 or 16 in the last 10 years. I know there are some deacons who have never done a single wedding. I really feel I've been very blessed.”

One piece of advice his formators constantly doled out to Deacon Cooney and his fellow deacons was:

“It's not what a deacon can do, it's who a deacon is.” It was a truism that Deacon Cooney took some time to fully understand.

“I was always thinking, when this day of ordination comes, what will I be able to do,” he remembers. “A lot of questions that would come up were like, could a deacon do this, can a deacon do that. But now I realise that it's not maybe the functional roles that a deacon might do that are most important.

“I find now people just approach me. They see I'm a deacon. They might approach me on the street, saying, Eric I've seen you on the altar and I'd like to ask you about your diaconate. Or sometimes they would ask me a question about their faith or what does the Church teach on this or that.”

Blessing

“I've realised you're more available to people. They probably feel a little bit less threatened. Perhaps approaching the parish priest to ask a question might be a big hurdle for them... they seem to find it easier to come and ask me about something.”

With ten years under his belt, Deacon Cooney is looking forward to many more, saying the ministry has been “a blessing” and very fulfilling.

“It is a great privilege to be involved with people, so I feel I am very lucky,” he says. “And when I look at other men at a similar age to myself who have suddenly retired, you know there's only so much golf you can play. Life becomes somewhat empty. Whereas I'm constantly busy, I'm constantly trying to write a homily or prepare for a Baptism – there's always something to be done.”

Do you know someone who we should profile? Send an email to ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Living Laudato Si'

Jane Mellett



Realise climate responsibility and engage with Egypt COP27

Another United Nations Climate Conference is upon us. COP27 will take place in Egypt from November 6-18 as global leaders gather to discuss where we stand as a global community in relation to climate change.

The outlook is bleak to those who are paying attention: last week the World Meteorological Organisation confirmed global levels of the worst global heating gases – carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and methane – all hit record highs in 2021. Another UN report told us that there is now “no credible path to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees”, and there has been “woefully inadequate progress” from countries this year. We are far from hitting the targets that have been set by the Paris Climate Agreement.

There was one glimmer of hope this week as the International Energy Agency's annual report predicted that CO2 from fossil fuels could peak by 2025, much sooner than expected. This is due to a rapid increase in the use of renewable energy because of the global energy crisis and the uncertainty of fossil

fuel supplies due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It is tragic that it takes such levels of destruction and death before we are moved to act.

So as world leaders gather in the exclusive Sharm El Sheikh resort what can we do in relation to COP27 as families and as parish communities? Certainly we need to pray for global leaders, for those who take part in these intense negotiations every year; pray that those who hold the most power also realise the human responsibility that goes with it.

Last year, in preparation for COP26, the Diocese of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora's Laudato Si' group held a wonderful prayer service in Galway cathedral where every parish in the diocese was represented. We gathered, reflected, prayed and pledged commitments for our own daily lives as well as for our communities. Mount Merrion parish in Dublin held a similar service. These events are signs of a greater awareness emerging and of hope. It would be wonderful to see more of this happening around the country during these COP weeks.



Five tips to get you through COP27:

Ask your parish council to include a prayer of the faithful for our common home every week of the year, particularly during COP27. Or even better, host a prayer service during COP27.

Watch the new Laudato Si' movie, *The Letter – A Message for our Earth* available on YouTube Originals for free. Eight million people have watched it in just one month!

Organise a screening of *The Letter* where you are – for family and friends, for your parish community, for local secondary schools. All you need is at <https://theletterfilm.org/>

After the screening, pledge to make one small lifestyle change to help care more deeply for creation, as a community group talk about what is possible where you are.

Stay informed – follow the coverage of COP27 as best you can – for the decisions made at these UN climate talks affect everyone one of us living on this planet.

For support you can email jane.mellett@trocaire.org

Jane Mellett is the Laudato Si' Officer with Trócaire

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Does Sinn Féin want people with different views exiled?

I'm conflicted about the Kerry priest controversy. Certainly much of the media coverage was ill-informed and unnecessarily confrontational.

The basics of what Fr Seán Sheehy said at those Masses in Listowell was orthodox Catholic teaching, which is by far the main thing, but the message could have been delivered in a more appealing, compassionate, sensitive way. Even when teaching the truth, context is relevant, as is care with where you place your emphasis. Further, the fact that some, even Massgoers, seemed surprised that the Church teaches that sex is for marriage only and that marriage is for one man and one woman only is a puzzle.

Shocking

On **The Hard Shoulder** (Newstalk, Tuesday) Sinn Féin Cllr Cathal Foley found it "shocking" that Fr Sheehy said such things in public. Then having stressed that all are equal, he said that people with "these views" were "not welcome in our State". So, a rejection of the c. 38% that voted against same-sex marriage and the 33% who wanted to retain the Eighth Amendment – are they to be exiled? Such percentages would be hugely significant if that was Sinn Féin's vote. He referred to the apology of Bishop Ray Browne, whose statement said that Fr Sheehy's views "do not



Tánaiste Leo Varadkar quoted Pope Francis when the Pontiff said that if a gay person sincerely seeks God, "who am I to judge?". Photo: CNS

represent the Christian position". I would have been happier if he had just criticised the tone, context or emphasis of the comments. Stand-in presenter Anton Savage reminded us that the bishop didn't say that same-sex relationships were fine.

Next day, Fr Sheehy took to the airwaves. On the **News at One** (RTÉ Radio One, Wednesday) the interview with Bryan Dobson was hard to listen to – after an ok start neither of them acquitted themselves very well. Fr Sheehy was standing by his comments as it was the teaching of Scripture and the Church. He outlined how he

was expanding on themes in that Sunday's scripture readings. On one of the controversial issues Mr Dobson suggested that it was a "perfectly legal thing to do" but Fr Sheehy rightly pointed out that morality and legality were not always the same. When the priest tried to do a comparison with the USA, Dobson said "maybe stick to Ireland 2022", but later he too used an American example! He was too quick with the cheap shot – "this is not a homily, this is an interview". I thought Mr Dobson was too much in grilling mode, but Fr Sheehy was too defensive and abrasive.

Finally, and belatedly Mr Dobson made some sense – "maybe it's sometimes how the message is delivered".

Out of hand

Immediately afterwards Fr Sheehy was also on **Liveline** (RTÉ Radio One) but this got out of hand and eventually he hung up on Joe Duffy, accusing him of having the discussion "stacked...typical media". It was the most depressing programme I heard all week, characterised by people laughing at each other's viewpoints, or at each other, personal insults, interruptions galore, misunderstandings about

PICK OF THE WEEK

FILM: THE SECRET OF KELLS

Film 4, Saturday November 12, 12.50pm

(2009) Oscar-nominated animation about an Irish boy, a monastery, an abbot and a special book.

MOTHER CABRINI

EWTN Sunday November 13, 9pm

An EWTN original movie on the life of St Frances Xavier Cabrini, who founded the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and established missions around the world.

THE LEAP OF FAITH

RTÉ Radio One, Friday November 18, 10.05pm

Topical religious affairs with Siobhán Garrigan.

theology and the teaching of the Church, people talking at cross purposes, assumptions and uncharitable judgements. The programme didn't reflect well on either Fr Sheehy or Joe Duffy. A pair of them in it! If tone was a problem with Fr Sheehy's pronouncements (including personal attacks on Joe), it was worse for Joe, with his 'how dare you!' mantra – as host he's the one who sets the tone. Some would regard it as 'good radio', but I disagree. It was terrible radio.

None of the interviews I heard were particularly good, but if you're going to listen back to any of them, try Fr Sheehy's interview with Anton Savage on **The Hard Shoulder** (Newstalk, Wednesday). It was the better than the others as the presenter stayed cool and the guest got a chance to express himself more calmly

and reflectively. Fr Sheehy, when questioned as to why, in this sermon, he wasn't mentioning other issues and problems of society, such as poverty, domestic violence or gangland killings, made the crucial distinction that the stuff he was critical of was being promoted in legislation and in the culture.

It was an interesting theological discussion, but along with the other items showed a lack of religious literacy in media circles – for example a failure to get the difference between judging an action and judging a person, or to see that promoting the love and compassion of God is not inconsistent with drawing attention to those sins that draw us away from that love.

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Film

Aubrey Malone



Women at the helm in films

Maybe we'll look back on 2022 as the year of women in films. A documentary on Mother Teresa was recently released, as was one about Lyra McKee, the investigative journalist who was murdered by dissident republicans on Holy Thursday in 2019. Also a documentary on the poet and novelist Doireann Ní Ghriofa and the film version of Emma Donoghue's gothic novel *The Wonder*.

The year began with the high-profile libel case of Amber Heard and Johnny Depp. Heard lost. That made women cynical about the advisability of accusing a major star of spousal abuse. My father, a solicitor, used to say: "The longest purse wins."

Was that the case here? The #MeToo movement believed so.

Now, God help us, we hear the 'Wagatha Christie' nonsense between Coleen Rooney and Rebekah Vardy is to be made into a TV film. As if we haven't had an overdose of that 'Twitterati' phenomenon already.

Documentaries

2022 also had documentaries on Sinead O'Connor and Patricia Highsmith, both excellently directed by women, Kathryn Ferguson and Eva Vitija respectively.

Emily Bronte got centre stage in *Emily*. It earned plaudits from critics for its mov-



Kristen Stewart as Princess Diana in 2021 film *Spencer*.

ing treatment of the reclusive author. We had Pablo Larrain's excellent biopic of Princess Diana, *Spencer*, to coincide with the 25th anniversary

of her death. Kristen Stewart excelled here.

Jessica Chastain came of age as Tammy Faye. Mrs Harris went to Paris.

An *Cailín Ciúin* set the world alight without appearing to even try. Few people were untouched by this heartbreaking tale. It put the Irish film industry on the map all over the world.

Jane Campion became only the third woman in history to earn a Best Director Oscar, winning for *The Power of the Dog* in February.

Viral

Another woman who captured my attention during the year was Daisy Edgar-Jones. Ever

since *Normal People* went viral, people wondered what Paul Mescal would do next. We forgot about Ms Jones. She proved she wasn't a one trick pony with her spellbinding performance in *Where the Crawdads Sing*.

That was also directed by a woman, Olivia Newman. So was *Emily* (Frances O'Connor) and two other films I praised recently, *It Is In Us All* (Antonia Campbell-Hughes) and *Mr Malcolm's List* (Emma Holly Jones).

The Mother Teresa documentary, *No Greater Love*, isn't to be confused with Michael Whyte's 2010 film about the Discalced Order of Carmelite Nuns in Notting Hill's Church of

the Holy Trinity. It was filmed in five different continents and features unprecedented access to institutional archives. It's part of the Fathom Events series, a collection of films dealing with the lives of Catholic saints.

The Lyra McKee documentary, *Lyra*, is still on release. It serves warning that the Good Friday Agreement wasn't the fairy tale ending to violence in the North that some believed. Once again the director is a woman, Alison Millar.

The Doireann Ní Ghriofa documentary, *Clouded Rev-eries*, is also directed by a woman, Ciara Nic Chormaic. The industry is clearly going in the right direction.

Purgatory: therapy of divine love

Purgation is a process of purification. Purgatory is not specifically mentioned in the Bible but the doctrine of purgatory is a beautiful development which holds in unity two ideas which might seem to be contradictory. Firstly, the doctrine of God's holiness reminds us of God's unique otherness, glory and blinding light, far beyond anything we could ever merit. The other doctrine is of God's loving mercy. The all-holy God whom we could never deserve is also the God of mercy who allows us a process of purification, namely purgatory.

Many of us grew up with a Catechism which told us that purgatory is a place or state of punishment, where some souls suffer for a time before they go to heaven. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, published in 1994, under the watchful eye of Cardinal Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI, paints a very different picture. "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven" (Catechism 1030). The old Catechism spoke of punishment and suffering. The new Catechism speaks of assured salvation and a therapy of purification.

Preparing for the Beatific Vision

St John gives us this beautiful, uplifting insight into our future. "My dear people, we are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is, that when it is revealed, we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is. Surely everyone who entertains this hope must purify self, must try to be as pure as Christ" (1 John 3:2-3).

So, what has to be purified? Any way of thinking or behaving contrary to love of God or love of other people. Hands up anyone who thinks you are 100% perfect in charity!

Great spiritual directors down the ages have listed seven deadly roots which produce sins: pride (glorification of me), covetousness, lust, envy, anger, gluttony and sloth (laziness). These poisonous roots produce thoughts and behaviour that are contrary to the light of Christ. They are like

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



cataracts, a sort of fog that gradually grows over the lens of the eye. Nowadays a cataract can be removed in a brief surgery. A lady who had cataracts removed from both eyes told me, "I had forgotten what colour was like". A person who has allowed sinful behaviour to develop has lost the colourful memory of God's love and human dignity.

A gradual therapy

Sometimes an unexpected happening, a moment of grace, can be a sudden eye-opener resulting in a conversion of life. But more often than not, the purification of mind and heart is a gradual process. Dante described purgatory as climbing up step by step, beginning with the eradication of pride, until the soul is ravished in love. As one gradually ascends towards God, the cataracts of selfishness, lust, anger, injustice etc. are cleansed from the eye of the soul. The journey to God is completed when the soul is completely cleansed. One of the beatitudes of God's kingdom states, "Blessed are the pure spirit in for they shall see God". A person is then like a mirror, receiving and returning a perfect reflection of God. As we heard from St John, "we shall see him as he really is". This is called the beatific vision.

"I shall be filled when I awake with the sight of your glory, O Lord" (Responsorial Psalm).

Suffering in Purgatory

Is there suffering in purgatory? Yes, but not physical pain or burning in fire. Psychotherapy or physiotherapy cause a stab of pain when the injured part is touched, but this is a step towards healing. "The truth will set you free." The therapy of God's love confronts one with the painful truth of how one falls short of perfection. It is the pain you feel when you recognise how much you have hurt others, or when you realise how much God loves you and how poorly you have loved in return. That's the pain of love which is beautiful because it only comes in the vision of divine love. It's like the reaction of St Peter to the miraculous



A bronze coin titled 'Dante before the Mountain of Purgatory [reverse], late 15th century'. Photo: CNS/Samuel H. Kress Collection via National Gallery of Art.

catch of fish: "Leave me Lord, for I am a sinful man".

"There is no joy, save that in paradise, to be compared with the joy of the souls in purgatory.

"As the rust of sin is more consumed, the soul is more and more open to God's love.

"Just as a covered object left out in the sun cannot be penetrated by the sun's rays, in the same way, as the covering of the soul is removed, the soul opens itself fully to the rays of the sun.

"That is why the soul seeks to cast off any and all impediments, so that it can be lifted up to God: and such impediments are the cause of the suffering of the souls in purgatory" (St Catherine of Genoa).

Prayer with the souls in Purgatory

O God, you are my God, for you I long; for you my soul is thirsting.

My body pines for you like a dry, weary land without water.

The happiness of Purification

Next question: are the souls in purgatory happy? Yes, intensely happy. As the Catechism says, they are assured of salvation, coming ever closer to the clear vision of God's glory which "no eye has seen, no ear has heard, even beyond our imagination" (St Paul). Not for one moment would they return to this lesser level of life. Would the butterfly return to its former existence as a slimy grub?

Can we help them

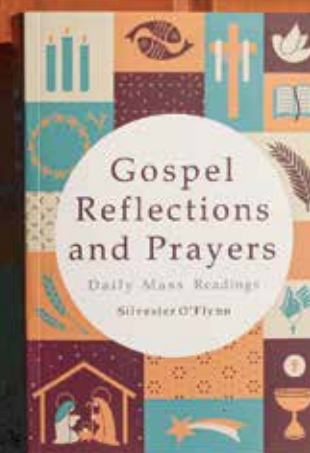
Many people pray for the most forgotten souls in purgatory. But there are no forgotten souls. Has Jesus forgotten them, or Mary? Listen carefully to

the prayers at Mass: the entire Church remembers in prayer all who have passed from this life. "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they

may be loosed from their sins." Prayers are more authentic when they are backed up by acts of charity, kindness, compassion and forgiveness.

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Blessed Stanley Rother, left, a young priest from Oklahoma, served impoverished indigenous people in Guatemala. In 1981, he was the first American citizen to be martyred. Photo: CNS

Can anything good come from Okarche Oklahoma?

It is not enough merely to have saints; we need saints for our times! An insightful comment from Simone Weil. The saints of old have much to offer; but we look at their goodness, faith, and selflessness and find it easier to admire them than to imitate them. Their lives and their circumstances seem so removed from our own that we easily distance ourselves from them.

So, I would like to propose a saint for our times, Stanley Rother (1935-1981), an Oklahoma farm boy who became a missionary with the poor in Atitlan, Guatemala, and eventually died a martyr. His life and his struggles (save perhaps for his extraordinary courage at the end) are something to which we can easily relate.

“He spent the first years of his priesthood mostly doing manual work”

Who is Stanley Rother? He was a priest from Oklahoma who was shot to death in Guatemala in 1981. He has been beatified as a martyr and is soon to become the first male born in the United States to be canonised. Here, in brief, is his story.

Stanley Rother was born to a farming family in Okarche, Oklahoma, the oldest of four children. He grew up helping work the family farm and for the rest of his life and ministry he remained forever the farmer more than the scholar.



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

Growing up and working with his family, he was more at home tilling the soil, fixing engines, and digging wells than he was reading Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. This would serve him well in his work with the poor as a missionary, though it served him less well when he first set out to study for the priesthood.

Struggle

His initial years in the seminary were a struggle. Trying to study philosophy (in Latin) as a preparation for his theological studies proved a bit too much for him. After a couple of years, the seminary staff advised him to leave, telling him that he lacked the academic abilities to study for the priesthood. Returning to the farm, he sought the advice of his bishop and was eventually sent to Mount St Mary's Seminary in Maryland. While he didn't exactly

thrive there academically, he thrived there in other ways, ways that impressed the seminary staff enough that they recommended him for ordination.

Manual work

Back in his own diocese, he spent the first years of his priesthood mostly doing manual work, redoing an abandoned property that the diocese had inherited and turning it into a functioning renewal centre. Then, in 1978, he was invited to join a diocesan mission team that had begun a mission in Guatemala. Everything in his background and personality now served to make him ideal for this type of work and, ironically, he, who once struggled to learn Latin, was now able to learn the difficult language of the people he worked with (Tz'utujil) and become one of the people who helped develop its written alpha-

bet, vocabulary, and grammar. He ministered to the people sacramentally, but he also reached out to them personally, helping them farm, finding resources to help them, and occasionally giving them money out of his own pocket. Eventually he became their trusted friend and leader.

“Everything in his background and personality now served to make him ideal for this type of work”

However, not everything was that idyllic. The political situation in the country was radically deteriorating, violence was everywhere, and anyone perceived to be in opposition to the government faced the possibility of intimidation, disappearance, torture, and death. Stanley tried to remain apolitical, but simply working with the poor was seen as being political. As well, at a point, a number of his own catechists were tortured and killed and, not surprisingly, he found himself on a death list and was hustled out of

the country for his own safety. For three months, back with his family in Oklahoma, he agonised about whether to return to Guatemala, knowing that it meant almost certain death. The decision was especially difficult because, while clearly he felt called to return to Guatemala, he worried about what his death there would mean to his elderly parents.

He made the decision to return to Guatemala, fired by Jesus' saying that the shepherd doesn't run when the sheep are in danger. Four months later, he was shot to death in the missionary compound within which he lived, fighting to the end with his attackers not to be taken alive and made “to disappear”.

Martyr

Instantly, he was recognised as a martyr and when his body was flown back to Oklahoma for burial, the community in Atitlan kept his heart and turned the room in which he was martyred into a chapel.

A number of books have been written about him and I highly recommend two of them. For a substantial biographical account, read Maria Ruiz Scaperlanda, *The Shepherd Who Didn't Run*. For a hagiographical tribute to him read Henri Nouwen, *Love in a Fearful Land*.

We have patron saints for every cause and occasion. For whom or for what might Stanley Rother be considered a patron saint? For all of us ordinary people of whom circumstance at times asks for an exceptional courage.

“Who is Stanley Rother? He was a priest from Oklahoma who was shot to death in Guatemala in 1981”

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Thanking God for nature

Nature praising God: Towards a theology of the natural world
by Dermot A. Lane
(Messenger Publications, €14.95/£12.99)

Christopher Moriarty

The word 'nature' in the title of this remarkable book refers to the universe with one important exception. The exception is humanity and the two are generally posed as being in opposition to each other.

A somewhat narrower contrast is placed between the innocent section of the human population and the rather smaller numbers of industrialists and others whose machinations and failure to appreciate nature are leading towards the horrors to be expected as a result of global warming.

The book is the work of a very distinguished theologian, who has also served long years as a pastor in a Dublin suburban parish, the subtitle refers in particular to the concept of the world of nature praising God in parallel with human worship.

Powers

The difference between the two is that we know of the powers of humanity to communicate thoughts, create works of art and architecture and make use of liturgies – among many other accomplishments. This brings the question of how nature worships and the most plausible answer, until very recent years, is that it does so simply by being there. The idea of the possibility of consciousness, even down

to the level of the quantum, does allow even for this to be questioned.

The broad aim of *Nature praising God* is to show the way in which care for nature and the consequent urgent need for taking steps both to maintain current levels of biodiversity worldwide and to avert the dangers threatened by global warming have an essential concomitant in Christian faith in particular, with a parallel in many other religions. These are concepts fully acceptable to the majority of reflective human beings.

Examples

The fact that there are examples in nature of a counter-view is largely – and rightly – ignored. The geological record tells that the current loss of biodiversity is the sixth such phase since the creation of life. Might nature, this time, be using humanity to effect it? Not all that many thousand years ago nature, by means of the ice age, destroyed every living thing in what is now Ireland and over a very much greater geographical area.

The author combines his own views, together with those of a number of fellow-theologians, to say nothing of many beautiful quotations from the Bible and with ancient writings such as St Francis of Assisi's exquisite *Canticle of Creation* and such inspirational modern works as *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis.

All in all a book which sparkles with delightful thoughts inspired both by nature and by humanity.

Vatican Council Memories

by Bishop Michael Smith
(Veritas Publications, €19.99/£21.99)

J. Anthony Gaughan

This is a fascinating inside account of the Second Vatican Council, arguably one of the most important events in the history of the Church in recent times.

In 1959, soon after his election, Pope John XXIII announced his intention to convene an Ecumenical Council. In convening it he expressed his conviction that the Church needed updating (*aggiornamento*) in order to connect with 20th-Century-people in an increasingly secularised world.

In particular he considered that some of the Church's disciplines and practices needed to be presented in ways that would make them more relevant and intelligible. The Council began its deliberations in St Peter's Basilica on October 11, 1962. And, contrary to general belief, Pope John, as is noted by Michael Smith, took a very active interest in its proceedings.

Between 1959 and 1962 in complete secrecy intensive preparations were made for the Council. There was a world-wide process of consultation. The bishops across the world, Catholic Universities and faculties of theology and the departments of the Roman Curia were asked to list any issues they considered should be discussed. Ten Preparatory Commissions were then created to draft the topics to be discussed by the Council.

Experts

The first group to be rounded up of those who were to take part in the Council were the *periti*, the experts. Their role was to assist the bishops and other speakers at the Council in preparing their presentations.

Across the entire duration of the Council there were over 400 of these. Drawn mainly from the Catholic academies and universities of continental Europe, some of them were later to become household names: Karol Wojtyła, (Pope St John Paul II), Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) and theologians such as Karl Rahner SJ, Yves Congar OP, Henri de Lubac SJ and John Courtney Murray SJ.

There were a number of Irish *periti* at the Council: Cardinal Michael Browne OP, Patrick Francis Cremin, Professor of Canon Law at St Patrick's College, Maynooth, and Alexander Kerrigan, a scripture scholar attached to the Franciscan Institute of Higher Studies in Rome.

Arthur Ryan and Cathal B.

Daly (later Cardinal) of Queen's University, Belfast were added to the list of experts at the beginning of the final session of the Council.

Although not a *peritus*, Joe Dunn of the Catholic Communications Centre, was appointed a consultant on the commission overseeing the implementation of the Decree on the Media. Frank Duff, co-founder of the Legion of Mary, also attended the Council and was given a standing ovation when he addressed it.

Steps were also taken to prepare those who would act as secretaries to the Council. Some 41 clerical students were recruited from universities and colleges in Rome and they attended a course in Latin shorthand.

Engaged

In the event, just 12 of these, among them Michael Smith, were subsequently engaged in the Council. It was an onerous commitment. While the Council was in session the Council Fathers attended two meetings each day. The secretaries recorded the various addresses and their summaries had to be ready to be read before the meetings on the following day.

All the bishops of the world as well as the superiors of male religious orders – in all almost 2,500 – were entitled to be 'Council Fathers' and as such had a right to speak and to vote. Speeches were limited to ten minutes and were to be presented in Latin.

“Between 1959 and 1962 in complete secrecy intensive preparations were made for the Council”

Health issues and repressive communist regimes prevented a number of bishops from attending. These heroic bishops, some of whom had for decades suffered persecution, house-arrest, imprisonment and even torture, were not forgotten at the Council.

Michael Smith provides a meticulous account of the presentations, debates, and voting on all the important issues, including those on ecumenism and religious freedom, which came before the Council. He was particularly impressed by a number of the contributors, such as Cardinal Leo Jozef Suenens of Brussels and the scripture scholar and later Cardinal, Augustin Bea SJ.

Mainly because of a lack of preparation, the initial contribution of the Irish bishops was insignificant and disappointing. However, at later



sessions there were important interventions by William Philbin, William Conway and Cornelius Lucey. And also Arthur Ryan and Cathal B. Daly, both of Queen's University, Belfast, featured in the last session of the Council.

In a postscript Smith assigns most credit for the success of the Council to Archbishop Pericle Felici, Secretary General of the Council; and professor Gérard Philips and his fellow theologians and Scripture scholars at the Catholic University in Louvain.

He includes in his narrative interesting back-stories on dissidents, such as Hans Küng and mavericks, such as the later notorious Malachy Martin SJ. Just as the first Vatican Council ended in a schism, so did the second. Archbishop Marcel

Lefebvre, superior general of the Holy Spirit Congregation, and his supporters sought to have the document on the 'Church in the Modern World' rejected. When this did not happen, Lefebvre withdrew and set up his own community.

Reactions

One aspect that is passed over was the reactions of the world's press. The officials in the Vatican, used to dealing with the conditions in Italy of Communists against Christian Democrats, were overwhelmed in a way by the international press interest. Journalists had legitimate questions and concerns, but it has to be admitted officials did not handle these well.

Bishop Smith's riveting collection of Vatican memo-



Experiencing God's creation through nature.

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

The course of Vatican II, as seen by an Irish priest from the inside



The opening session of the Second Vatican Council.

ries is an immensely important and timely publication. Like the 16 key documents published by the Council, it clearly shows that the Council Fathers successfully achieved their aim: namely to modernise the Church, while ensuring that it remained aligned with the teaching of Christ, and not the spirit of the age.

He points out the relative lack of contributions from the English speaking world, including Ireland; though reporters from those countries would not make you think that. In conclusion he writes:

"The many bishops present at the Council from South America also had a limited impact, though towards the latter part of the

Council they became better organised," he writes in his final pages.

“He points out the relative lack of contributions from the English speaking world, including Ireland”

"Often one cardinal or bishop would speak in the name of the bishops from their own country or frequently in the name of the bishops drawn from several South American countries. Overall, however, the input of South America bishops and experts was minimal and disappointing.

"The bishops from Asia were better organised. While

many of the bishops in some of these countries were from Europe, including from Ireland it was normally one of the native bishops that spoke in the name of all. The bishops in India were especially well organised.

"The growth in the Church in both Africa and Asia since the Council has been striking. It also encouraged the Church in South America, in the face of many challenges, to rekindle its mission."

With a South American Pope now installed in Rome, here is a hint that a pope from Asia or Africa might soon be a fact as well. And in the future decades Councils might be held in Manila, or Durban, or indeed, Buenos Aires. In this way the work of Vatican II continues.

Maps and how they make us think about the World



Prisoners arriving at a Russian labour camp in the 19th century.

Peter Costello

Pondering President Putin's remarks on Russia's role in history, I have come to think that some of Putin's seemingly strange views might possibly be explained by the maps he used as a schoolboy.

Like so many educated people around the world, his picture of the world has been seriously distorted by the types of school atlases which were once used in schools in many countries, East and West.

Projection

These nearly always used a Mercator Projection. Most of the maps in atlases of, say, the British Empire used this projection, which has one major but highly distorting characteristic. The countries along either side of the equator are shown in their correct proportions. But as one moves north or south, countries are shown increasingly larger than they really are, due to the technical distortion of the system.

“Most of the maps in atlases of, say, the British Empire used this projection, which has one major but highly distorting characteristic”

Hence the nations with empires about the time of the Great War found that the British Empire, of Canada, India and Australia were enlarged to show a greater size than they had

in reality. Quite simply the maps were deceptive.

The same, of course, was true for Russia. The young Putin, born in 1952, looking through his atlas at School No. 193 at Baskov Lane, Leningrad, was able to see a huge Russia territory dominated by Moscow reaching from Poland across the Urals to the far distant Vladivostok. He gained the impression, which both the Tsars and later the USSR wanted their people to have, that Russia was a great nation, and on maps could be seen to be larger than the USA, and therefore the greatest nation in the world. He was quite simply deceived.

Bleak regions

Russians on the European side of the Urals never regarded the bleak regions of Asia as part of the "real Russia". Siberia was not for them. From Tsarist days on the region was suitable only for exiling and punishing writers, anarchists, nihilists, heretics such as the Doukhobors, savage tribes with strange beliefs, and untameable Muslims with a yen to murder Christians. A specific republic was created in a distant region as a "home" for Russian Jews, the first "proper" Jewish state in the modern world - few went there.

Siberia became in the popular imagination, a sort of realm of extended prison camps, later named by the long imprisoned writer Solzhenitsyn "the Gulag Archipelago".

The Empire looked good in the school atlases, but was in reality for many "a place or state of punishment".

The empires of the earth, the British, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French and German, all these have vanished. Only two empires remain of those that existed about 1900, the Chinese and the Russian. Their wide claims to humane benevolence today are as specious as were those of those other empire builders.

Introduction

The Mercator problem was solved by the introduction in more sophisticated quarters of Azimuthally Equidistant projections. But these are for real geographers. Maps in newspapers, magazines and the electronic media are universally very poor today.

“Siberia became in the popular imagination, a sort of realm of extended prison camps”

So be warned. As much care has to be taken in using a map as in reading a book. We have to ask why was this map made, who made it, and what is it trying to tell us, and what is it concealing?

All around the world military interests affect what is shown. In Siberia in the 1950s, a giant city, devoted to the secret manufacture of plutonium for advanced atom bombs, was not marked on any map, even its existence unadmitted until the 1990s. Maps, like books and Russian presidents, often wish not to inform but to mislead the world.

Leisure time

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— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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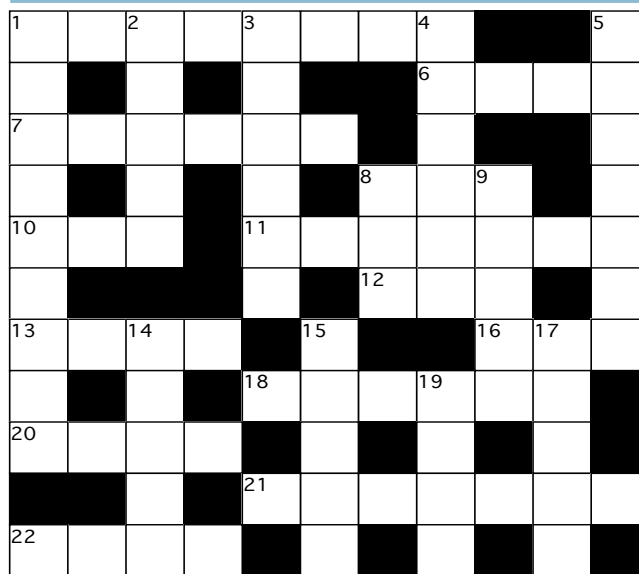
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Crossword Junior

Children's 458



Across

- 1 Put them on your feet when you go scuba diving (8)
6 Comfort or convenience (4)
7 You might see it blast off into space (6)
8 Him for a boy, ___ for a girl (3)
10 Dried grass (3)
11 Person in charge of a class (7)
12 A pig lives here (3)
13 Encourage (4)
16 The fifth month of the year (3)
18 Astounded (6)
20 There is an actor called ___ McGregor (4)
21 You'll get the 'gift of the gab' if you kiss the ___ Stone (7)

Down

- 1 A place to live for a family that works on the land (9)
2 Making you feel like scratching (5)
3 More than enough (6)
4 Pick, choose (6)
5 Completely wreck (7)
8 Owns, possesses (3)
9 Words usually do this in a poem (5)
14 Jack stole from him at the top of the beanstalk (5)
15 You show enjoyment when you have one on your face (5)
17 Found the total of some numbers (5)
19 Nought (4)

SOLUTIONS, NOVEMBER 3

GORDIUS NO. 583

Across — 1 Homing pigeon 7 Arm 9 Fret 10 Sister -in-law 11 Peru 14 Brine 15 Trawl 16 Port 18 Newel 21 Aloof 22 Alibi 23 Foyer 24 Dead 25 Cling 26 Kiwis 29 Oval 33 Asylum 34 Daft 36 Don 37 Three-wheeler

Down — 1 Her 2 Mate 3 Nose 4 Poser 5 Green 6 Nave 8 Mountain goat 9 Faith and good works 12 Pagoda 13 Cliff 14 Bunny 17 Origin 20 Latch 27 Issue 30 Aunt 31 Smee 32 Edel 35 Far

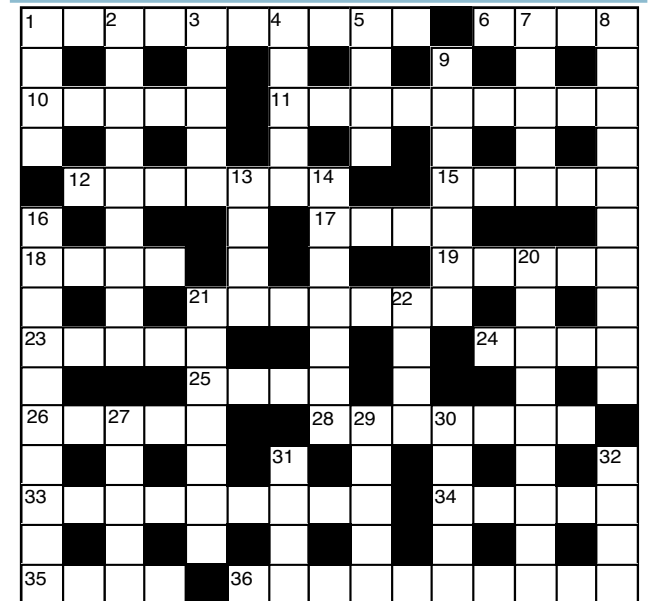
CHILDREN'S No. 457

Across — 1 Great Wall 6 Oops 8 Plum 10 Eerie 11 Tart 12 Ignored 14 Tames 15 Limps 17 Ran 18 Ten 19 Dormant

Down — 1 Ghost story 2 Experiments 3 Wading 4 Lap 5 Almond 7 Set 9 Learns 12 Island 13 Number 16 Knot

Crossword

Gordius 584



Across

- 1 Theatrical work involving music and dance as well as the spoken word (5,5)
6 Grew older (4)
10 Christian name of Scottish football legend Dalglish or surname of former Taoiseach Enda (5)
11 Holy place in a church or temple or asylum sought within a church (9)
12 Headgear made from a broken cat flap? (4,3)
15 One on horseback (5)
17 Ms Hayworth, perhaps (4)
18 How one refers to where one lives (4)
19 & 34a Tourist area in Northern Spain whose name means 'Green Coast' (5,5)
21 Place where nuns live (7)
23 Mottled horse (5)
24 An oak or sycamore, perhaps (4)
25 Seaweed that is part of Japanese cuisine (4)
26 Freshwater fish (5)
28 Long, protracted (7)
33 How one possibly cleans out an embassy (9)

Down

- 34 See 19 across
35 Ride a board on the waves (4)
36 People being transported (10)
1 & 13d Beautiful resort area in the Italian region of Lombardy (4,4)
2 Well-mannered chap (9)
3 Lovers' rendezvous (5)
4 Italian food that comes in various shapes (5)
5 Ice-skating venue (4)
7 Part of the body that secretes (5)
8 One whose mind is elsewhere (10)
9 Draw something to you (7)
13 See 1 down
14 Win out, despite difficulty (7)
16 Oriental alternative to cutlery (10)
20 Additional tariff (9)
21 Map line connecting places of equal altitude (7)
22 In grammar, a naming word (4)
27 Proprietor (5)
29 Large water jugs (5)
30 Donated by former Ireland goalie Shay? (5)
31 Epic story (4)
32 These insects make honey (4)

Sudoku Corner

458

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 457

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

Last week's Hard 457

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

Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



Is there creeping secularism in death rituals?

DURING THIS MONTH of November, we will have memorial Masses in many parishes across Ireland. In my experience these can be very moving occasions as the name of each person who died during the last year is called out and a family member comes forward to light a candle in memory of a parent, a sibling, or a close friend. This annual memorial Mass and the cemetery Mass or blessing of the graves during the summer are now the best attended religious events in our parish calendar, surpassing Christmas and Easter.

While I completely understand the appeal of these sacred occasions and the need for us to prepare and celebrate them to the best of our liturgical ability, I have a nagging unease about how these occasions are evolving. I'm not really sure that I can fully articulate what my unease is but I will attempt to do so and I hope I don't offend anyone in the process.

Memorial

When we celebrate funerals, memorial and cemetery Masses the Catholic tradition allows us to do three things; celebrate



the life or lives of the deceased, pray for the consolation of the bereaved but primarily it calls us to pray for the repose of the soul of those who have died. Praying for the dead also calls for some reflection on our belief about life after death. The unease I spoke of earlier stems from a trend I observe, even within my own ministry, to focus very much on remembering and celebrating the life of the deceased, consoling the bereaved, but to say very little about life after death. Is it too much to say that there is a creeping secularism about how we ritualise the death of our loved ones? I sometimes feel that I am overly conscious that many of the people who attend funerals, memorial and cemetery gather-

ings are not as convinced of our traditional views and beliefs about death and eternal life as previous generations were.

Sensitivity

Does my somewhat misplaced sensitivity tempt me to shy away from speaking with conviction about the Christian hope which is central to our understanding of death not being the end?

Before his own departure Christ said to his disciples: "I am going to prepare a place for you." He wanted them, and all of us, to know that, after he had left us, he would do all that he could to make it possible for us to follow and to be with him again.

It is difficult for us to have any adequate idea of what that life, which lies ahead of us after we die, is going to be like. That I suppose is the nub of the challenge of any priest or preacher

to somehow get across that truth at a funeral, a cemetery ritual or a Remembrance Mass in November. Recently, I came across the following little anecdote which I have found helpful.

A sick man turned to his doctor as he was preparing to leave the examination room. "Doctor, I am afraid to die. Tell me what lies on the other side." Very quietly, the doctor said, "I don't know."

"You don't know? You, a Christian man, do not know what is on the other side?"

The doctor was holding the handle of the door; on the other side came a sound of scratching and whining, and as he opened the door, his golden retriever sprang into the room and leaped on him with an eager show of gladness.

Turning to the patient, the doctor said, "Did you notice my dog? He's never been in this

room before. He didn't know what was inside. He knew nothing except that his master was here, and when the door opened, he sprang in without fear. I know little of what is on the other side of death, but I do know one thing. I know my Master is there and that is enough."

For the dying...

"May your spirit feel the surge of true delight when the veil of the visible is raised, and you glimpse again the living faces of departed family and friends. May there be some beautiful surprise waiting for you inside death, something you never knew or felt, which with one simple touch, absolves you of all loneliness and loss, as you quicken within the embrace for which your soul was eternally made." – John O'Donohue

Hedging his bets

A man was on his dying bed and the priest was preparing him for his final departure. It was time for the renewal of the Baptismal promises and so the priest began by asking him; "Do you renounce Satan?"

"What do you mean father, look, I'm dying, and this is no time for me to be making enemies!"



LITTLE WAY PAKISTAN FLOODS APPEAL

Flood-hit victims urgently need our help

Bishop Khalid Remat, of the Apostolic Vicariate of Quetta, is urgently asking for our help for 3,600 of those in great need as a result of the very heavy monsoon rains. He writes to The Little Way Association: "Those whose homes were damaged or destroyed need above all food and clean water. Polluted water is likely to cause, especially to children and pregnant women, pneumonia, diarrhoea, dengue fever, on top of the malnutrition they are enduring.

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"Our Lord does not look so much as the greatness of our actions, but at the love at which we do them."

~ St Therese

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