

# The Irish Catholic

**BREDA O'BRIEN**

HSE very late to vaccinate religious  
Page 7



**ST VALENTINE'S DAY**

Blind dates on cards for young Catholics  
Page 3



**MARY KENNY**

A Lenten challenge...  
Page 5



Thursday, February 11, 2021

€2.50 (Stg £2.20)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

@IrishCathNews

www.irishcatholic.com

## Easter ban 'difficult to justify' – bishop

### Parishes in North may open for Mass early next month

Chai Brady

Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan has said that it would be "difficult to justify" Catholics not being allowed to gather for Mass for Holy Week and Easter saying "Our churches are probably safer than shopping malls and supermarkets - there is less movement and more social distance."

"I think that it would be difficult to justify closing churches for Easter and quite unpopular," he said as Covid-19 rates continue to fall and the vaccine is rolled-out.

Meanwhile, north of the border Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown has expressed optimism that there could be a return to public Masses early next month.

"I think we're all keen to get the churches open for public worship as soon as at all possible," Bishop McKeown told *The Irish Catholic*.

"March 8 marks the beginning of an ease down of the government-imposed restrictions, I think we'll have to be pushing as well to ensure that our churches are open for public prayer [the Mass] and not just for private prayer," Bishop McKeown said.

» Continued on Page 2

## Thumbs up for Our Lady of Lourdes



The Dominicans at St Mary's, Cork, move a statue of Our Lady in preparation for the installation of a new shrine to Our Lady of Lourdes, February 4, 2021. The installation takes place February 11.

## Moral theologian argues for vaccination

Jason Osborne

Distinguished moral theologian, Fr Vincent Twomey, has argued in favour of taking the Covid-19 vaccine, while warning that it shouldn't be compelled by either governments or companies.

Writing for the Iona Institute, Fr Twomey said that allowing oneself to be vaccinated, under certain conditions, constituted "a duty to the common good", saying that this applies in particular to adults with regard to those "in one's immediate proximity", who may be particularly vulnerable, such as family members with underlying conditions or aged relatives.

Fr Twomey suggested that the moral duty to take a safe vaccine applies to "the common good of society as a whole", when no one in your immediate proximity is in particular danger of the virus.

He wrote that the three Covid-19 vaccines on offer in the EU and the UK can be considered morally "licit" in the judgement of most theologians and bishops. He added

» Continued on Page 4

DAVID QUINN

Archbishop Farrell must challenge anti-Catholicism  
PAGE 12



UNPROCESSED GRIEF

Life without the rituals of death  
PAGE 14



JANE MELLETT

Preparing for Lent: caring for garden of God's world  
PAGE 34



## 33 Days for St Joseph

The Irish Dominicans are inviting you to join us online as we make a collective consecration to St Joseph.



8PM DAILY

From 15th February to 19th March

All are Welcome!

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

For more information see page 13.



## Inside this week

### Romance during restrictions

Difficult but certainly not impossible **Pages 31&33**



### Aubrey Malone

Love, loss, tragedy and dramatic intrigue

**Page 35**



### Mother and baby homes

Voices crying out in the wilderness

**Pages 16-17**



**Managing Editor:** Michael Kelly, editor@irishcatholic.ie

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

**Multimedia Journalists:** Chai Brady, chai@irishcatholic.ie

Ruadhán Jones, ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Jason Osborne, jason@irishcatholic.ie

**Newsroom:** news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026

**Books Editor:** Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie

**Advertising:** advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874094

**Accounts:** accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874020

**Magnificat:** magnificat@irishcatholic.ie

**Shop:** shop@irishcatholic.ie

**Managing Director:** Garry O'Sullivan

Annual Subscription Rates: Ireland €165. Airmail €250. Six months €85.  
ISSN 1393 - 6832 - Published by The Irish Catholic,  
Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford,  
Dublin 18, D18 K277.  
Printed by Webprint, Cork.

## Place an Advert

Phone 01 687 4094 or advertising@irishcatholic.ie



Photo: Abbie Traylor-Smith / Concern Worldwide

Adukual\* (18) and her seven-month-old baby, Elizabeth\* live in South Sudan, a country torn by years of conflict.

Like millions of others, every day they depend on Concern Worldwide to survive the devastating effects of war, poverty and hunger.

Concern is able to help thanks to the support of people like you, who have left us a gift in their Will. Will you consider doing the same?

For more information, please request your free copy of Concern's legacy booklet. Contact Siobhan on 01 4178020, email [siobhan.oconnor@concern.net](mailto:siobhan.oconnor@concern.net) or visit [www.concern.net/bequest](http://www.concern.net/bequest) - finding out more does not, of course, oblige you to leave a gift.

**Why not do it right now before you turn the page?**

Concern Worldwide, a company limited by guarantee,  
Registered Company Number: 39647, Registered  
Revenue Number: CHY 5745, Registered Charity  
Number: 20009090, Registered in Ireland, Registered  
address is 52-55 Lower Camden St, Dublin 2

\*Names changed to protect identities.

**ENDING  
EXTREME POVERTY  
WHATEVER  
IT TAKES**



**Michael Kelly's Editor's Comment will return next week**

# A touch of kindness

**W**e will be commencing Lent next Wednesday. Because the churches are closed you may not be able to receive the blessed ashes, although some parishes will have sachets of ashes available for collection. With or without the ashes, you can still observe Lent. During Lent we are encouraged to give up and to take on. Giving up means denying oneself something we like. Taking on means acts of kindness and generosity.

## Jesus and the Leper

The Gospel for this Sunday (Mark 1:40-45), the story of Jesus healing a leper, can be taken as an inspiration to works of kindness.

**“As the leper brought his petition to Jesus, we are moved to bring our needs too”**

The leper pleaded on his knees, “If you want to, you can cure me.” Jesus replied, “Of course I want to!” He stretched out his hand and touched the leper. In this touch he was acting against all religious and medical protocol. Did Jesus catch the leprosy? No, but the leper caught cleanliness. He was cured.

Who are the outcasts today? Who are the victims of social prejudice? Who are cast out by the limitations of my charity? The leper I must face is within myself – my prejudices, hardness of heart, and areas of unforgiving.

## St Francis and the leper

An encounter with a leper proved to be a turning

## The Sunday Gospel

**Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.**



point in the conversion of St Francis of Assisi. Francis had begun to take God seriously and was giving a lot of time to prayer but he was not clear about what to do with his life. Still clad in fine clothes he was riding his horse when he encountered a leper on the road. He spurred his horse to avoid any possible contact. Then suddenly he recognised that his prayer was hypocritical if he did not act as Jesus did. He turned back, got off his horse, gave the leper what money he had and then embraced him. By so doing he was also embracing the spiritual leprosy of the social prejudice within himself. It was a turning point in his life. In his *Testament* he wrote that it was the Lord who led him to the leper. And this is how he described the inner conversion he felt: “What before seemed bitter was changed into sweetness of soul and body.”

**“We pray for all who work in caring for the sick and elderly”**

Lent can be a time to face up to our own inner leprosy, those faults that eat away at my inner soul.

## Your own leper

Don't say that there is no leper on your road of life. There is that one leper whom the Lord wants you

to touch. Come off your high horse and go back on your road of memory. Get in touch with those negative areas where you need healing...being judgemental, gossip, a sharp tongue, lack of sensitivity, selfishness, violent, hurtful and so on. Accept your responsibility for your own feelings, prejudices, hurts, addiction and blind spots. Accept ownership of your life story and bring this leprosy to Jesus to be cured. “If you want to, you can cure me.” The Lord will not only bring you inner cleansing but will inspire you to a life of kindness as in this story.

## A touch of kindness

A dishevelled man in a nursing home had a nervous habit of swivelling his head and spit, spit, spit. It was upsetting a burly man who hurled abusive names at him. But a sensitive lady took pity on him, sat beside him and asked his name. No answer except spit, spit, spit. Gently she asked again. This time he repeated the hurtful name the bully had given him. “But what is your real name?” Spit, spit, spit.

“Patrick”, he answered. “Do they call you ‘Pat’?” No spit this time, “Yes”. She sat beside him at the next meal.

The following morning, he appeared in a clean shirt, his hair groomed.

The nervous twitch had gone and the spitting had ceased. “If you want to, you can cure me.” Kindness can work miracles.

This Lent, the restrictions of social distancing will prevent our physical outreach to others, but we can touch lonely lives by a phone call or a written note. Who knows what your contact will mean to a lonely person.

## Prayers

As the leper brought his petition to Jesus, we are moved to bring our needs too.

**“Lent can be a time to face up to our own inner leprosy, those faults that eat away at my inner soul”**

Jesus felt compassion for the leper who was a social outcast. May his Church on earth show a special concern for the outcasts of today.

We pray for all who work in caring for the sick and elderly. May their hearts be full of compassion and their gentle hands bring God's healing to the sick and handicapped.

May we overcome all fears and inhibitions which block us from reaching out in kindness to others.

We ask you, Lord, to bless and reward all who have been kind to us.

God of mercy and compassion, look kindly upon us as we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, Amen.

*Extract from Silvester O'Flynn, Gospel Reflections and Prayers, Columba Books.*

## Bishops hopeful of return to Mass as parishes in North may open next month

» Continued from Page 1

In the Republic, Bishop Deenihan described the current restrictions as “understandable and necessary” saying they “enjoy public support” in the context of the number of cases.

Noting that public worship was not permitted last Easter, Bishop Deenihan said that “Priests and parishioners are now quite concerned that we will not be allowed to celebrate the Easter ceremonies this year either.

“As numbers decline and as vaccines are rolled out, particularly amongst those who are most vulnerable, that would be difficult to justify,” he said.

“As we move forward, I think that it is very important that churches are open for Holy Week and Easter,” Bishop Deenihan said.

“Our churches are probably safer than shopping malls and supermarkets - there is less movement and more social distance. I think that it would be difficult to justify closing churches for Easter and

quite unpopular,” he said. Easter Sunday falls on April 4 this year.

Bishop McKeown said it will be a huge challenge to “relaunch” the Church post-pandemic.

“There will be occasions to gather people, and if we want to gather people we have to invite them and they have to want to come to the churches. So, it will be a challenge for us so I'm encouraging all our parishes to be planning for a range of scenarios at this stage,” he said.

See page 10.



# Gianna Care centre break-in a painful blow

Jason Osborne

A Gianna Care employee described her "shock" and "surprise" upon entering their Dublin office to find it had been ransacked during the night.

Marta Nakonieczna said the non-profit, which helps women experiencing an unplanned pregnancy, now finds its work "much more difficult" as a result of the break-in.

## Nuisance

"Yeah, definitely it's a nuisance, I mean, we have to wait for the new windows. We were going to have two clients coming, which we had to cancel because of all

the police work and the men coming to look at the window. It's a pain to have clients in in the middle of this, so it's obviously going to disturb our operation," she said.

**“Their average number of contacts per month, in recent months, has been between 40-50”**

Gianna Care has experienced a break-in before, but this comes at a particularly bad time, in the midst of a pandemic.

"Everything is disrupted already, so something like

this just adds to the difficulty," Ms Nakonieczna said.

## Strength

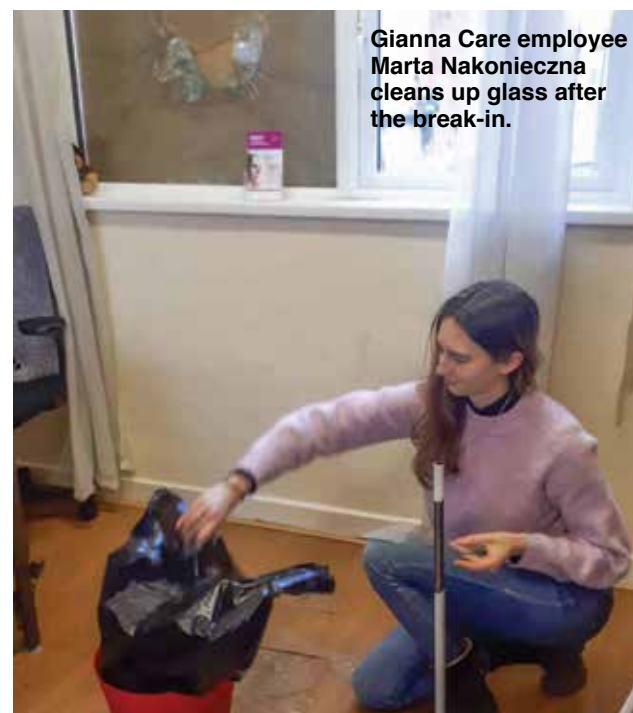
"We're told it will take at least a week for the windows to be repaired or replaced, so our usual work is going to be affected, at least a little bit, until then. When you have clients in, you don't want them to be sitting in a chilly office," she said.

Despite the unexpected difficulty, Gianna Care goes from strength to strength, with Ms Nakonieczna saying that their average number of contacts per month, in recent months, has been between 40-50. These are

women getting in touch with the organisation for a variety of reasons.

She attributed their success to their supporters, saying that without their volunteers and donors, none of their work would be possible.

"We've already received a lot of support and commiserations about the break-in this morning, so we're very lucky to have so much support," Ms Nakonieczna said.



Gianna Care employee Marta Nakonieczna cleans up glass after the break-in.

# Blind dates on the cards for young Catholics

Staff reporter

The Youth 2000 Valentine's Ball is an entrenched tradition for many young Catholics around Ireland, but due to the pandemic, many will be tuning in to the Youth 2000 version of *Blind Date* this year.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Youth 2000's Emma Maloney explained that the pandemic made their usual fundraising ball impossible this year, so they decided on another course to "lift people's spirits".

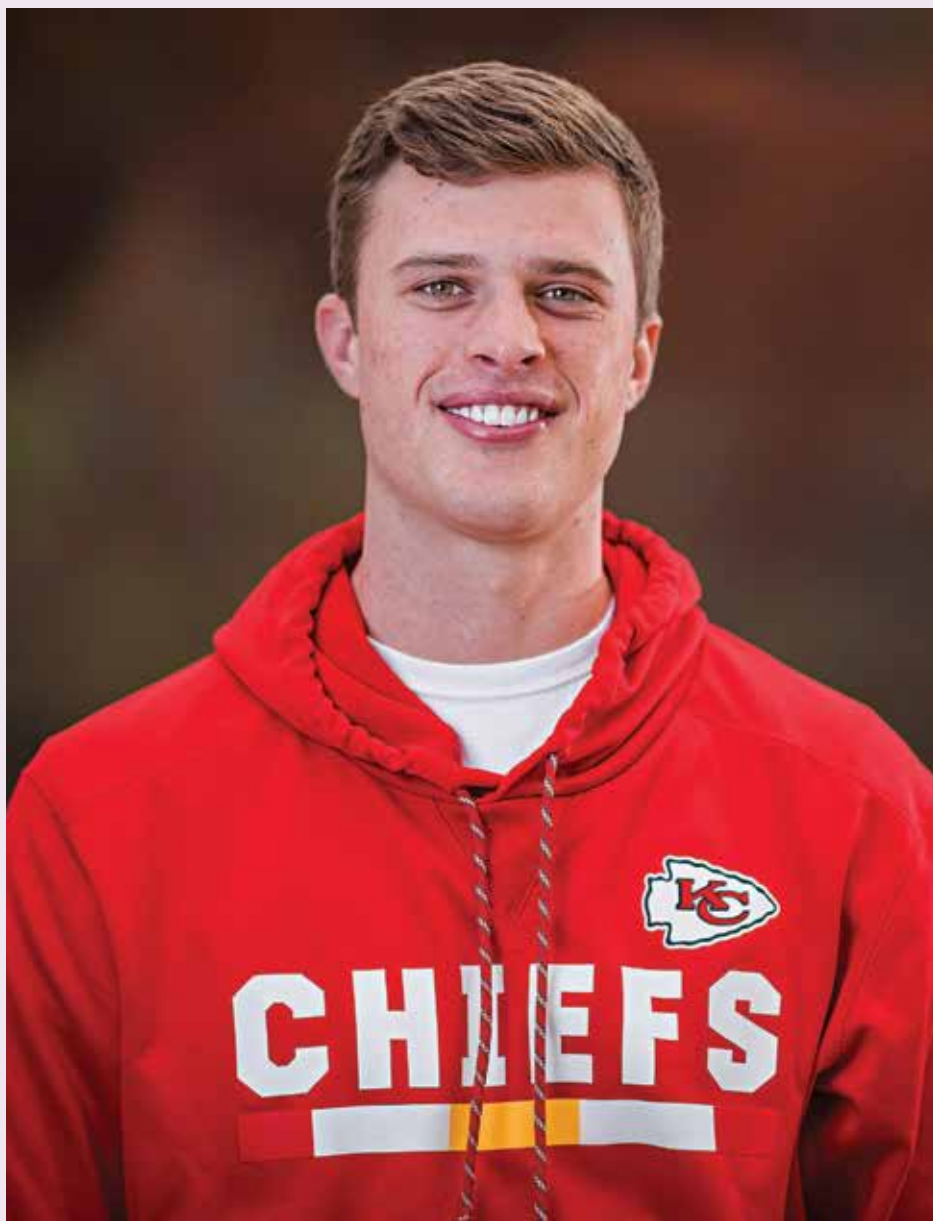
"We have contacted some of our volunteers, our single volunteers, who we think would be good contestants. It works like the TV show, *Blind Date*, where first of all we'll have a girl, and then she

has to pick between three guys," she said, continuing, "She'll ask them questions, and then the one with the best answers will have the opportunity, when the pandemic is over, to go for a tea or a coffee if they both want to. It's really just for a bit of fun."

"Valentine's Day can be a very lonely time, and now especially during the pandemic. You can't even meet up with your friends, so you know, you can watch this with your friends when you're not together, so it's going to be good craic," she said.

The event takes after the usual Valentine's Ball in being strictly over-18s, with tickets available on Eventbrite.ie, and is scheduled to take place this Sunday at 7:30pm.

## Kansas City Chief has no doubt about who's in charge



NFL star Harrison Butker initially thought the Faith wasn't for him, saying during an interview with EWTN, "it pushed me away. I was like...ah this is just, this is just not me. It doesn't go with the world". However, it ended up attracting him to it, in his own words, "because it was so different from the world".

A regular attendee of the Traditional Latin Mass (TLM), the 25-year-old kicker for the Kansas City Chiefs also serves at the altar frequently.

"It's opened my eyes to the tradition of the Faith. You know, with Saint Augustine, with Thomas Aquinas, with all of these great saints...They were saying the same Latin prayers. It's just very beautiful, you know? I feel very united," he said during the same interview.

## Conference on Prayer

Sat Feb 27<sup>th</sup> 3pm - 9pm

Why do we pray?

How should we pray?

Difficulties in praying?

Key Note Speaker:  
Spiritual writer and poet,  
Fr. Paul Murray, OP

Fr Paul will speak on: *The Silence of Mother Teresa: A Lesson in Spiritual Practice*

Fr Paul had the privilege of being, on occasion, a close confidant of Mother Teresa.



LIVE ON-LINE FROM

ST MARY'S  
POPE'S QUAY • CORK

Admission free.

To book in please email:

dominicanscork@gmail.com



# Prioritise vaccination of priests as essential workers, says senator

Ruadhán Jones

Senator Ronán Mullen has said it is “critical” priests “should be prioritised as essential workers” for vaccination by Government, especially for their work ministering to the grieving.

Commenting on priests’ work in caring for the grieving, Senator Ronán Mullen told *The Irish Catholic* that it is critical priest’s health is prioritised.

“It is critical that their health would be protected, many of them are in the frontline,” Mr Mullen said. “These are tremendously difficult times psychologically, emotionally and spiritually for so many people. You have families devastated at the circumstance of their loved ones dying, not being able to see them off or say goodbye to them properly.

“It makes the work of a priest all the more important, because where priests are presiding at funerals, they are bringing comfort into the situation and bringing meaning into the

situation of people’s suffering,” Mr Mullen continued.

Acknowledging that a number of priests have to self-isolate due to age or underlying conditions, Mr Mullen maintained that many are still “putting themselves in harm’s way” to minister to the grieving.

“Many I would think are carrying on and ministering in this very difficult situation,” Mr Mullen said. “It needs to be recognised that this isn’t just a service to a section of the community – even if it was, their health would still matter

– but this is a service that the great majority of people in our society are depending on and are grateful for at this time.”

Meanwhile, a report from Queen’s University Belfast (QUB) has highlighted the difficulties clergy face in providing care to the grieving.

Funerals and pastoral care to the grieving is the “hardest thing by far” that priests have to do during the pandemic, according to a priest quoted in the report ‘Something Other Than a Building’.

## Praise for Bessborough sisters

Jason Osborne

A number of women have spoken to *The Irish Catholic* about their positive experiences of the sisters in charge of Bessborough house, saying they were always treated with “dignity and respect”.

Describing herself as “eternally grateful” to the sisters, one of the women, Mary (not her real name), said, “They spent their time protecting us. They protected me and they respected me. I never felt judged by the nuns.”

Another woman, speaking

on behalf of her mother, both of whom wished to remain anonymous out of fear of a potential backlash, said her mother established an “affectionate” relationship with the sisters, writing to them long after she left.

“They were very welcoming and they made me feel at home straight away,” a third woman, Patricia (not her real name), said.

“I felt quite comfortable from the very beginning, even though I had all this inner turmoil, how everything was going to turn out and all that. They certainly made

me feel at home there.”

The biased or one-sided portrayal of the homes in the media has frustrated these women, with Mary acknowledging that while the home was a different place prior to her time there, it’s inaccurate to portray the sisters in a solely negative light.

The woman speaking on behalf of her mother said the subsequent treatment of the religious “totally upset her [her mother]”, because she has “such love for the nuns who were there when she was there”.

See pages 16-17.

## Moral theologian argues for vaccination

» Continued from Page 1

that it’s licit on the “important” condition that “one continues to protest against the use of such cells from aborted children... by making one’s serious moral reservations known to those administering it”.

Fr Twomey acknowledged that those who have “committed his or her life to the pro-life movement” could, in conscience, refuse the vaccine, and that conscientious objection must be protected by law, if necessary. On the topic of compulsion to take the vaccine by governments, Fr Twomey argued that, on the part of governments, that “would amount to undue intervention by the State in matters that are funda-

mentally the responsibility of free persons – in a word a form of soft totalitarianism introduced under the pretext of a pandemic.”

He added that the State could, however, advise those who refuse to be vaccinated for whatever reason to abide by the preventative measures, such as wearing masks and observing social distancing. Companies refusing service to those who go unvaccinated, Fr Twomey argued, cannot impose such restrictions as they would amount to an excessive response to the pandemic. He again cautioned that the State may presume to continue to ask those who go unvaccinated abide by current restrictions.

## Anger as NI Health minister reveals 1,100 abortions in 2020

Ruadhán Jones

The director of Precious Life called the leaders of the North Assembly “hypocrites” after the Minister for Health revealed that 1091 abortions took place in 2020 following the introduction of legal abortion on 31 March 2020.

Bernadette Smyth, Director of Precious Life, told *The Irish Catholic* that she is

“angry” at the government’s “hypocrisy” in a statement.

“Since March 2020 our government has been speaking about protecting and saving our most vulnerable, yet according to the latest figures 1,000 babies lives have been lost to abortion,” she said.

She continued, saying, “at a time when necessary and life-saving care such as cancer treatments and screenings for breast

cancer are being postponed to preserve hospital equipment, beds and staff, it is all the more outrageous that abortion has been made a priority for women in Northern Ireland”.

Ms Smyth said that Precious Life will continue to campaign to repeal Section 9 of ‘The Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019’, which introduced abortion to Northern Ireland.

## Celebrating consecrated life



Bishop Fintan Gavin, Bishop of Cork and Ross, is pictured with the Poor Clares and the Cork Dominican novices following a celebration of Evening Prayer at the Poor Clare Monastery, College Road, Cork, in honour of World day for Consecrated Life, February 2.

### JOURNEY TO EASTER

### WITH THE MAGNIFICAT LENTEN COMPANION



Along with daily reflections, each booklet includes:

Engaging Essays

Lenten Penance Service

The Stations of the Cross

Church Rules Regarding Fasting  
and More

Price: €5.00

(Plus €2.00 for P&P)

Limited quantities  
available, so don't delay  
in placing your order.

01 6874024 • www.irishcatholic.com/shop

Block 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road,  
Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277.



# A Lenten challenge...

**I**n the times we are living through, it's hard to know how to practice Lenten abstinence, since most of us have already forsworn the daily pleasures or self-indulgences which were once the subjects of Lenten penitence.

## Weight

Scolded about the perils of increasing our weight, we're diligently fasting two, three or four days a week. So, no chocolates, sweets or cake. We've quit cigarettes years ago, driven



**Mary Kenny**

by both health warnings – and stigma. For imbibers, the pubs have shut their doors – so no socialising alcohol.

In times gone by, Irish dance-halls were shut during Lent. All places of music and dance are now closed anyway. The cinema and the theatre are gone, too.

We could turn down the central heating and

'offer it up': although the eye-watering sums appearing on energy bills have some of us doing that that anyway.

## Mass

During Lent, some attended daily Mass: not possible, in a real sense, though accessible online. There are no devotions in real life either.

I don't see that there is anything I can do, now, for Lenten practice – that isn't part of my lockdown life anyway.

So, I've devised a positive, and I hope, uplifting Lenten routine: I will regularly contemplate the lives of the saints, as portrayed in paintings.

**“During Lent, some attended daily Mass: not possible, in a real sense, though accessible online”**

I have before me a book called *Saints in Art*, which offers over 370 pages of beautifully reproduced paintings of saints' lives, and their stories.

## Contemplation

The first contemplation will be Caravaggio's St Catherine of Alexandria, painted in 1599 – rich in the sombre colours

It gives me no pleasure to report that the Church of England has come under some fierce criticisms in recent times. The former Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, has bitterly accused his church for failing to stand by clerics who are accused of abuse or being associated with an abuser on the principle of 'innocent until proved guilty' – but of assuming guilt at the slightest suggestion, and being slow to reinstate clergy even when someone's name cleared.

The C of E is reckoned to have lost 200,000 worshippers over the past five years – and 20% of Anglicans will not return to church practice after lockdown finishes.

In last weekend's London edition of *The Sunday Times*, the popular columnist Rod Liddle lacerated the present Cantuar, Justin Welby. “For almost

the entire population our established church has become a complete irrelevance,” he wrote, “a pitiable institution forever cringing before the most fashionable progressive causes and presided over by a man of such sodden vapidness that I feel an urge to wring him out and hang him up to dry every time I see him.” He accused Dr Welby of being obsessed with becoming ever “more liberal, more diverse, more right-on” even as the pews empty.

This is a hard-hitting critique, and perhaps over the top. But I do think it is dangerous for the head of a church to be perceived as ‘cringing’ before ‘fashionable progressive causes’. Leadership may possess the virtue of humility, and acknowledge past errors, but it must show fortitude, vision and confidence in the message it is there to impart.

associated with the artist, and depicting her symbols. Catherine was persecuted by the Roman authorities for her Christian faith: she defended Jesus Christ against 50 of the emperor's philosophers and

orators. She was condemned to be broken on a wheel – thus her symbol – but was eventually executed. In these days of persecuted Christians, Catherine is a fitting Lenten saint.



**Saint Catherine of Alexandria (c. 1598) by the Italian Baroque master Caravaggio.**

## Zooming into the past

One of the few benefits of lockdown has been the increase in meetings, conferences, conversations and cultural soirées via Zoom. Last week, on February 3, the Central Catholic Library in Dublin organised a fascinating talk about the Loreto sisters caught up in Spain during the Spanish Civil War – given by the UCD historian Dr Benjamin Hazard (and arranged by Edel Purcell of the CCL.)

The plight of nuns during the 1936-1939 civil war in Spain is a subject which has been overlooked by women historians. Nuns suffered badly during this conflict – over 3,400 clergy and religious were murdered – and many nuns were also raped. But because the Church was seen as being aligned with General Franco, their stories have seldom been told.

Dr Hazard, a young historian, has translated many of the letters written by Loreto sisters, in Spanish, during this period – the order having given him access to their archives – and he gave an insightful talk about the nuns' everyday lives. The British consulate, headed by a Highland Scots Catholic, gave shelter to the nuns and eventually the Loreto sisters escaped the conflict. Other nuns were not so fortunate.

Ben Hazard's talk has been put up on-line by the English Catholic History Association and can be accessed here: <https://echa.org.uk/2020/10/04/spanish-civil-war-letters-by-loreto-sisters-1936-38-by-dr-benjamin-hazard/>

In our lonely lockdown lives, Zoom has certainly given us a window on rewarding conversations.

## Can't talk to each other?



**Talk to Accord**

**Support Line**  
**01 5313331**

**Counselling**  
**[www.accord.ie](http://www.accord.ie)**

Supported by

**TUSLA**

An Ghníomhaireacht um Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

**ACCORD**  
CATHOLIC MARRIAGE CARE SERVICE CIC  
CARING FOR MARRIAGE BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS



# Limerick community feel ‘betrayed’ by Green party, says priest

Ruadhán Jones

The community of Moyross feel “betrayed” by the Green party’s act of “bad faith” over the proposed construction of a new road, says Moyross PP Fr Pat Hogan.

The priest’s comments come as pressure mounts on Green Party leader Eamon Ryan over his failure to progress a link road between Coonagh and Knockalisheen at Moyross, Limerick.

Fr Hogan said that Moyross needs the road – which has been planned for more than 12 years – in order to attract serious development in the area.

“Moyross needs people educated and in jobs, that’s what’s needed to regenerate the area,” Fr Hogan told *The Irish Catholic*. “And Eamon Ryan is actually cutting the legs from underneath us.”

Fr Hogan said that the project was agreed upon by all parties under the programme for Government, calling the decision not to sign it off “a serious act of betrayal”.

“Eamonn Ryan and the Green Party signed on the programme for Government in June, 76% of his party voted in favour of the programme for Government,” Fr Hogan explained. “In October, it all arrived at his desk and he has refused to sign it.”

“This is a serious act of betrayal by the Government, it reneges on the programme for Government and it was agreed on,” Fr Hogan continued. “At best you can say it was bad faith.”

Fr Hogan said that, in blocking the construction, the Greens are “betraying their whole cause”.

“If you look up their website, they believe in social democracy, democracy of the grassroots,” he said. “This is not democracy of the grassroots, this is being dictated from on high.”

“The Green party are doing themselves no favours and they’re doing no favours here and they’re actually betraying their whole cause.”

## Businessman Declan Ganley’s challenge to Mass ban adjourned

A challenge by businessman Declan Ganley over Covid-19 Level 5 restrictions on religious services has been adjourned at the High Court to mid-month, according to *The Irish Independent*.

The Co Galway based businessman, a practising Catholic, claims that as a result of the restrictions, he cannot leave his

home to attend Mass in breach of the State’s guarantee of the free practice of religion in Article 44 of the Constitution.

Last November, he sought leave to bring judicial review proceedings against the Minister for Health, with Ireland and the Attorney General as notice parties.

The sides have since agreed the action

can be dealt with via a “telescoped” hearing in which the leave application and full case are heard together.

On February 9, the State indicated they will seek to defend their case. The case has been adjourned for a further two weeks and will be up for mention again February 23.

## Independent Catholic school hopes to teach ‘beauty, truth and goodness’

Ruadhán Jones

The Mater Dei Academy, a new independent Catholic secondary school in Cork, hopes to form faith-filled Catholics through their Classical education model.

The school is a lay led initiative, facilitated by the Dominican community in Cork, which opened in September 2020.

Co-founder Padraig Cantillon told *The Irish Catholic* the school is “proud” of their “unique” curriculum and ethos. The school’s curriculum is based on St John Henry Newman’s ideas of classical education and the example of schools in France and the US.

“We spent almost a year writing a curriculum that

would be classically based, inspired very much by the thinking of people like John Henry Newman about what classical education is and what its value is” Mr Cantillon said.

Mr Cantillon explained that the Junior cycle will take place across four years and is based on international exam standards such as the Teastas Euopach sa Gaelige and the GCSE’s. The final two years will be directed towards the leaving certificate.

“We’re hoping that the students will come away with the three Catholic fundamentals, of appreciation for beauty, truth and goodness,” Mr Cantillon said. “We want to create deep-thinking, fully formed young men and women.”

## Following in the footsteps of St Francis



Fr Bernardino Maria CFR pets Molly, the neighbourhood goat for whom the Limerick Franciscans have built a small shelter, February 7.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Catholic college group event attracts 27,000 people from across the world

FOCUS, a Catholic collegiate outreach, held their SEEK21 event last week bringing together more than 27,000 people from 20 countries and six continents to “encounter Christ and share the Gospel”.

The event ran from February 4-7 this year and was the largest event to-date for FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students).

College students, missionaries, FOCUS alumni, parishioners, young adults, benefactors, clergy, religious and many others gathered in Catholic centres, parishes, living rooms, outdoor tents and wherever they could safely congregate to journey together during SEEK21 and “ask the big questions about joy, peace, hope and salvation”, according to organisers. Designed to be experienced in community, SEEK21 discussions and activities among small groups of family members and friends provided opportunities for people to grow in faith and encounter Christ in a deeper way, both personally and in community.

More than 3,000 small groups and more than 12,000 students, chaplains and campus ministers participated on campuses with FOCUS missionaries.



## Breda O'Brien

### The View



# Out of sight out of mind as HSE late to vaccinate religious

**I**t was reported last week that the HSE is to begin vaccinations in religious orders' congregated settings. The pandemic has taken a terrible toll on nursing homes in general, as pointed out by *The Irish Catholic* since very early in the first lockdown. However, news about religious orders' nursing homes and other settings has been slower to emerge into the mainstream. The Jesuits, Augustinians and Spiritans have all had great losses, while the Holy Rosary Sisters in Newbridge have recently lost six members within two weeks.

### Communities

Each of those men and women would have lived as members of communities akin to families, often for decades on end. While some of those who have died were elderly, even when in the case of underlying conditions Covid-19 can shorten a person's life and deprive them of additional time.

Just like everyone else, funerals of people in religious life are now small affairs. In the past, the funerals of those in religious life were an opportunity to express thanks in a public, communal way for the good done during a life. This was particularly true for those who had been involved with communities, such as teachers, nurses, and social workers.

**“Some orders do not have dedicated nursing home facilities, while others have centralised care settings”**

The HSE has said that religious orders did not come to its attention because they are private organisations and sometimes not registered with it as nursing homes. It is true that provision for elderly members of congregations varies widely. Some orders do not have dedicated nursing home facilities, while others have centralised care



settings. Still others attempt to keep older members within their communities.

Given that religious in Ireland are an ageing group anyway, it seems very late for the HSE to be becoming aware of them. Is it a case of out of sight, out of mind? Could it be a case of eaten bread is soon forgotten? Some of the women's congregations were formidable managers of well-known hospitals.

### Unedifying calls

Just a couple of years ago, there were unedifying calls for the Irish Sisters of Charity to have no role in the new National Maternity Hospital. The rhetoric against the sisters became very bitter indeed. (This writer believed that it was impossible for the Sisters of Charity to cooperate with a facility that would be performing abortions, which is an entirely different point. St Vincent's benefited for years from the unsparing dedication of the sisters and it was appalling to see them being vilified.)

Not only did religious like the Irish Sisters of Charity and the Sisters of Mercy run efficient, clean hospitals, they were also involved in selfless nursing in previous pandemics.

For example, Mother Mary Aikenhead was called on to help when cholera hit Dublin. An old prison, Grangegorman, was pressed

into service as an emergency hospital. Conditions were dreadful. Irish writer, L.M. Reid describes how in the middle of 1832, as the cholera epidemic was at its worst six hundred patients were admitted in five days. Nurses were impossible to come by. The Sisters of Charity in Stanhope Street and Gardiner

Street responded to the call, even though between 50 and 80 patients were dying every day. Only one sister caught the disease and even she recovered. The nuns washed themselves and their habits thoroughly every day when they returned to the convent to prevent the spread of infection. By the time the

**“It is possible for both those statements to be true but in our current world, we seem to be only able to deal with one aspect of the truth at one time”**

cholera epidemic burnt out, there were 50,769 deaths.

### Cholera

The Sisters of Mercy staffed a cholera hospital at the same time at the Townsend Street Depot hospital. The sisters nursed in shifts from 8am to 8pm for seven months. When the Mater Hospital was set up, they battled through successive waves of typhus, scarlet fever, and other epidemics. Sisters of Mercy ended up volunteering in the Crimean war, where they initially met with a frosty reception from Florence Nightingale but ended up influencing her style of nursing. She was particularly influenced by an Irish Sister of Mercy who had been based in England, Mother Clare Moore.

The contribution of religious orders to Ireland is

immeasurable. It is also true that some religious orders fell far short of Christian standards in their actions in mother and baby homes and in industrial schools. It is possible for both those statements to be true but in our current world, we seem to be only able to deal with one aspect of the truth at one time.

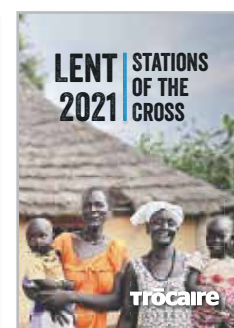
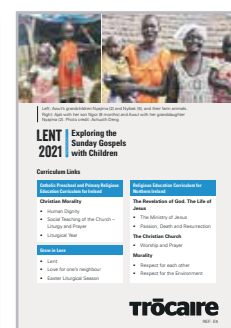
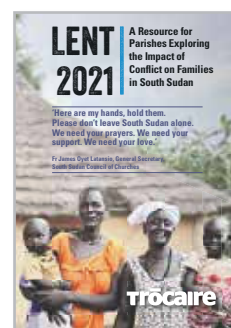
### Tragedy

It will be a tragedy if, for religious orders, the words of Mark Anthony in *Julius Caesar*, prove to be true: “The evil that men do lives after them; The good is oft interred with their bones.”

And yet, I think a time of more balance will come and that the good done by religious orders will eventually be recognised. May that time come soon.

## TRÓCAIRE LENT PARISH RESOURCES 2021

Available in English and *as Gaeilge* on the Trócaire website  
[www.trocaire.org](http://www.trocaire.org)



For more information on our parish resources, parish workshops and parish Lent webinars, please contact [colm.hogan@trocaire.org](mailto:colm.hogan@trocaire.org)

**Trócaire**



# Call for 'calm not confrontation' after PSNI row

Chai Brady

At a "tense time" in the North, Bishop Donal McKeown has called for everyone in "leadership positions to ask for calm rather than confrontation" after a man was arrested at a memorial for the victims of the Ormeau Road massacre in Belfast – a loyalist attack the arrested man was seriously injured in.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Bishop McKeown said: "The PSNI are run by the policing board who have a large number of political representatives on it. It's important that political representatives ensure that the PSNI is correctly managed.

"I think there's work to be done and I think the Police Service of Northern Ireland is aware of the work that has to be done and I hope that all of us in leadership positions can encourage calm so that solutions can be found," Dr McKeown said.

His comments come after Mark Sykes, who was wounded during the massacre, was arrested last week during an outdoor commemoration.

Five people, including a 15-year-old boy, were murdered and several others injured in February 1992 when loyalist paramilitaries opened fire at the Sean

Graham bookmakers.

Belfast-based priest Fr Eugene O'Neil, administrator of St Patrick's parish in the city described what happened as "a very unfortunate, insensitive call by people who perhaps didn't know the context of what they were doing".

"To me Northern Ireland is a place where you have to step carefully because nearly every street corner or every block there has been a terrible murder," Fr O'Neill said.

"One has to be awfully careful of saying anything or intervening and just be very sensitive to people's pain and the echoes of memory on every street corner on both sides of the great divide between us and that is just how you operate.

"I would be interested to see whatever internal inquiry shows forth about this but I suspect it was an unfortunate piece of policing - the wrong call, which then escalated because people's great sensitivities were not perhaps understood, that's what I'm thinking probably is the reality of it."

The Police Ombudsman is investigating the incident and two officers have been disciplined with one being suspended and the other reassigned to other duties.

## Beauty in the wild



The Holy Family Mission take some time to explore all that is found in the wilderness, February 3, 2021.

## We live in extraordinary times...

Don't miss the latest in Catholic news from Ireland and abroad.

Subscribe to *The Irish Catholic* today.

Featuring news and analyses that represent your voice on the national stage, regular contributors who provide commentary on hot button issues and local voices highlighting the ongoing work of parishes and communities throughout the country.

Special Offer for New Subscribers

3 MONTH SUBSCRIPTION

€45

For more information, please call on 01 687 4028

The Irish Catholic

## 2,700 healthcare professionals sign open letter opposing euthanasia

Ruadhán Jones

More than 2,700 healthcare professionals have signed an open letter stating that they are "gravely concerned" about the attempt to introduce assisted suicide in Ireland.

Opponents of the bill, including the majority of geriatricians, argue that it stigmatises the elderly, sick and disabled.

The letter came as submissions close for the second stage of the Dying with Dignity Bill introduced by TD Gino Kenny.

One of the open letter's signatories, geriatrician and consultant physician Dr Kevin McCarroll, told *The Irish Catholic* said that the bill results from a prejudice against the elderly

and disabled.

"There is an endemic prejudice about older people and unfortunately that leads into Euthanasia becoming an option," he said.

Dr McCarroll argued that a lack of understanding of palliative care and a "simplistic understanding of dignity" are at the heart of the bill.

"Ultimately, there is a lack of understanding of what can be done in modern medicine in order to palliate them," he said. "The real aim should be living with dignity and optimising their care. Some of these people talk about pressure on resources – there shouldn't be pressure on resources, there should be good quality care."

## Dublin archbishop calls for 'spiritual, moral conversion' after string of knife crimes

Staff reporter

Recently appointed Archbishop Dermot Farrell has condemned a spate of knife crime in the capital as "inhuman" in a homily delivered over the weekend.

### Dangerous road

Speaking at Mass in the Church of the Holy Spirit in Ballymun, Archbishop Farrell said a person who carries a knife is "travelling down a dangerous road full of risks".

"Sooner or later, it will be used in a malicious way which puts yourself and others in the way of serious injury or death. This is not the way to construct a world that is safe – safe for ourselves, safe for each other, safe for our children, and safe for the vulnerable

– be they old or young, friend or stranger," he said.

"Knife crime and violence, which is self-destructive, must always be condemned. Let us not forget that our Lord knew first-hand what violence could do—and never succumbed to it himself."

He added that there is a spiritual issue, in which there is a "loss of empathy towards other human beings".

### Empathy

"The truth of who we are – and of what we are – is at stake. Genuine empathy is the entry point into the commandment to love your neighbour and to live in peace. If the problem of violence in our country is to be overcome, we need a spiritual and moral conversion."



# Growing Persecution of Christian in Africa



Conn McNally

**C**atholicism is growing extremely rapidly in Africa. Despite this fact the Church faces new challenges on the continent. It has become clear that Africa will be the largest battleground in Christian persecution over the next decade. In many ways Africa is already the largest battleground. It is estimated that more Christians are killed for their faith in Nigeria than in another country in the world. What is even more disturbing is that the persecution is spreading. Unfortunately, like in the Middle East, it is Islamists that are at the forefront of persecuted Christians in Africa. This persecution had previously been limited to countries like Niger, where Muslims are a clear majority, and countries like Nigeria, where the population is split pretty much evenly between Muslims and Christians. The targeting of Christians by Islamists is now spreading to countries where Christians make up a clear majority.

## Several civil wars

One of these countries is the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). DRC has gone through a lot of suffering for well over a century. Since gaining independence from Belgium in 1960, DRC has been struck with several civil wars focused on the country's rich natural resources. In fact, the bloodiest conflict of the 21<sup>st</sup> century took place in DRC. This was the Second Congo War, with somewhere between 3-5 million people dying. The war ended in 2003. Smaller scale conflicts have continued in DRC right to the present day. One of the reasons why conflict has been so intractable in DRC is the combination of weak governmental structures and the presence of conflict in neighbouring countries. Frequently defeated combatants in the civil wars in one of DRC's many neighbouring countries, such as Rwanda, take refuge in DRC. These armed groups end up fighting amongst themselves and against Congolese groups and government.

Given the chaotic state of the country, it is very difficult to attain accurate demographic information on DRC. Despite this, it is clear the vast majority of the people are Christians, with most of the population being Catholics. DRC is not one of the countries that comes to mind when thinking of Christian persecu-

tion, but deadly Christian persecution is taking place in DRC. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) is an Islamist group from Uganda. The ADF has been carrying out an insurgency in Uganda to establish an Islamic state there. Like DRC, most of Uganda's population are not Muslim but Christians. For this reason, the ADF have not enjoyed much support and have not exactly been very successful in establishing an Islamic state in Uganda. Many ADF fighters have been forced into neighbouring DRC. Here they have become involved in fighting with other groups and have carried out massacres against the local Christian population in DRC. The most infamous of these was the Beni massacre in 2016, killing at least 64 people.

**“The local Church has committed itself to caring for these refugees by providing food, shelter, and medicine”**

The spread of Islamist insurgencies into Christian majority countries in Africa is not limited to DRC and Uganda. In recent months Mozambique has seen a drastic escalation of Islamist violence in the north of the country. Mozambique is majority Christian, with a Muslim minority present in the north of the country. Since 2017, Mozambique's most northerly province of Cabo Delgado has been witness to an insurgency by the Islamic State in Central

Africa (ISCA). This insurgency had been for the most part ignored by international media.

From the start of the insurgency in 2017 until November 2020 a total of 2,000 people were killed in terrorist attacks and atrocities. In November 2020, ISCA beheaded 50 people on a football pitch in the village of Muatide in Cabo Delgado. This brutal attack hammered home to many the seriousness of the insurgency in northern Mozambique. This has led to hundreds of thousands of people fleeing the conflict area for their lives. Bishop Luiz Fernando Lisboa of the Diocese of Pemba explains the depth of the crisis: “Over half a million displaced people need everything! They need food, clothes, medicine, pots, they need attention, a place to live, everything. It is a war that has brought much suffering to all of us.” The local Church has committed itself to caring for these refugees by providing food, shelter, and medi-



Refugees fleeing violence in Mozambique, 2020. (Credit: Aid to the Church in Need)

**“As we fast approach Lent, ACN invites you all to join in witness to the plight of persecuted Christians around the world and to keep them in your prayers”**

cine. In order to help the mission of the local Church, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) has pledged €100,000 in aid to Mozambique to provide humanitarian relief to the refugees.

## Church's efforts

The Church's efforts to help the refugees in Mozambique has become even more difficult, as the Church has become a target for Islamists. For example, the most important mission site of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Diocese of Pemba was recently attacked. Thankfully because of the imminent danger the site was abandoned very shortly before the attack, so no one was killed. The entire mission was destroyed. According to Bishop Luiz Fernando Lisboa of the Diocese of Pemba, the attack “totally destroyed, the church, the priests' house, the sisters' house, the community radio, the outpatient clinic”. This sort of attack, even at the best of times, would be a major blow to the local Church, but given the refugee crisis in Mozambique it is even more devastating.

Attacks against church buildings are becoming more common throughout Africa. ACN is at the forefront in the rebuilding of these church buildings, so the local Church can continue to minister the sacraments and providing charitable relief to the local population. There are many examples of these projects, such as the city of Zinder in Niger. Many people across the world were shocked and horrified by the deadly attack on the offices of Charlie Hebdo in January 2015. *What is less known is that there were widespread attacks on Christians and churches throughout the world at the same time in reaction to the satirical cartoons.* The violence was particularly bad in the West African country of Niger. Niger is a majority Muslim country, with Christians making up less than 1% of the population. In the capital Niamey, 12 of the 14 churches were looted and burned down in January 2015. Two convents of religious sisters were also attacked. In the second city of Zinder, the local Catholic parish was also attacked on 16th January 2015. The church had previously been

attacked, desecrated, and set on fire in 2012. The 2015 attack was even more destructive. *All the buildings belonging to the local parish were looted and destroyed.* These buildings included the presbytery, the school, the convent for religious sisters, and of course the parish church itself. By God's providence no one was killed during the attack. In the wake of the attack, 200 people, including the priest and religious sisters, were forced to flee to the capital Niamey. Catholics in Niger are a very small minority. The local parish's ability to pay for the reconstruction of the parish church and other buildings is very limited. For this reason, ACN has committed to providing funds to help build a new church. The old church is going to be kept as a memorial to what happened. As we fast approach Lent, ACN invites you all to join in witness to the plight of persecuted Christians around the world and to keep them in your prayers.

Conn McNally is a member of staff at Aid to the Church in Need Ireland.

If you want to learn more about ACN's work or help persecuted Christians please visit [www.acnireland.org](http://www.acnireland.org) or ring (01) 837 7516





## Our faith is not virtual and is not something to be moved online, writes Bishop Tom Deenihan

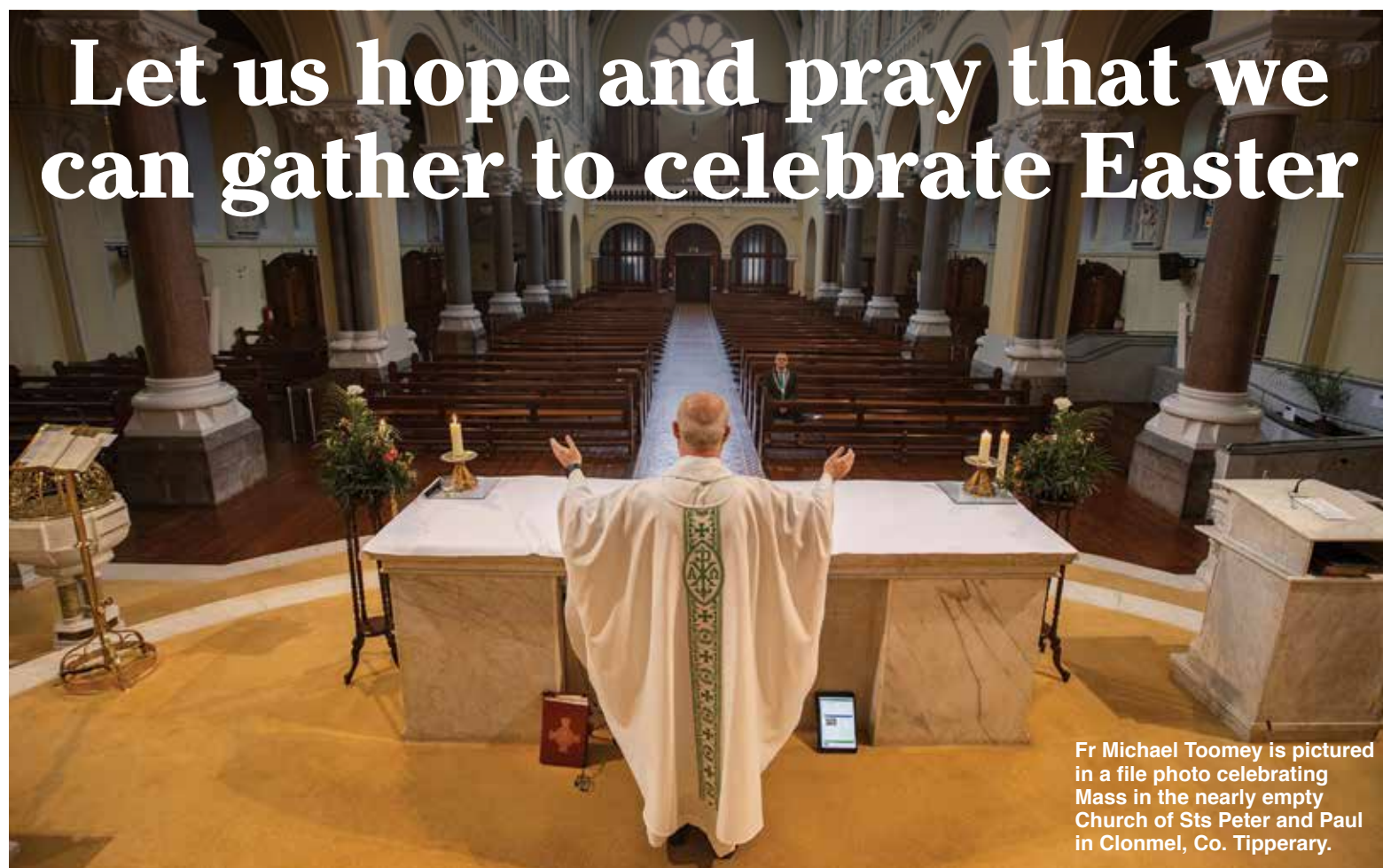
**T**he current restrictions on public worship are both understandable and necessary and also enjoy public support. The escalation of Covid-19 during the past few months has been a source of fear and huge concern. However, I must also admit that I am a little uncomfortable with the general principal of a government, any government in any country, stating that worship cannot be in public and must move online. That is a significant step. The former Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin, said that such restrictions can be warranted but they should only be in place for the shortest period of time. I agree with that. The Church is sacramental and sacramental is not virtual. While many parishes have responded magnificently to the current pandemic and the current restrictions, people genuinely miss not being able to gather in church, to pray together, to receive the sacraments and to worship as a community. Christianity and Catholicism are not individualistic pursuits, we are a community of believers who pray together.

**“Faith is important at this time and has been a source of comfort and strength for so many”**

I have spoken to local politicians who are supportive of the role of the Church, public worship and faith communities. Indeed, those public representatives have told me that they have received many representations from constituents in relation to public worship. I also have sympathy for those in Government as there is, no doubt, a fear that if one allows one sector to reopen, others will put more pressure on and feel aggrieved. However, prayer and worship is something different and the bishops have suspended the obligation, mindful that there are those who cannot and should not risk attending. Politicians are also mindful of the fact that our churches are safe. While there have been outbreaks linked to funerals and gatherings in cemeteries and wake-houses, I believe that what has happened in our churches has been safe, well sanitised and well stewarded.

### Forward

As we move forward, I think that it is very important that churches are open for Holy Week and Easter. It is



Fr Michael Toomey is pictured in a file photo celebrating Mass in the nearly empty Church of Sts Peter and Paul in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary.

important to note that public worship was suspended on March 12 last and did not resume until June 30. It was suspended again in early October and resumed in the first half of December. Public worship was suspended again on December 26 and still remains so. By next month, churches will have been closed for public worship for eight of the previous twelve months. There was no public worship in our churches last Easter. Ceremonies were broadcast on RTÉ from the cathedral in Mullingar. Certainly, my postbag during the following days illustrated the pain that people felt in not being able to attend church at Easter. Priests and parishioners are now quite concerned that we will not be allowed to celebrate the Easter ceremonies this year either. As numbers decline and as vaccines are rolled out, particularly amongst those who are most vulnerable, that would be difficult to justify.

I do not subscribe to the view that it is only older people who attend Mass. This view may well be why some people mistakenly feel that churches should not be allowed to open. However, the majority of people who write to me are younger and, in many cases, have young families. In fact, I have forwarded some of that correspondence to local Dáil Deputies. However, the fact that the bishops have suspended the obligation means that those who are vulnerable and those who are fearful need not attend. Our churches are probably safer than shopping malls and supermarkets - there is less movement and more social distance! I think that it would be difficult to justify closing churches for Easter and quite unpopular.

Easter, the celebration of the resurrection of Christ and the con-

quering of death is the reason for our faith. I think that all Christians and even those who do not share our faith are looking forward to Easter this year, not just because it is the end of winter and a season of new life, but because I think it is almost a metaphor for what we have come through during the past 12 months. People need a sense of joy, of hope, of resurrection and of celebration. People need a spiritual if not religious sensibility. Easter is about the conquering of death and new life in Christ. The families and friends of the 3,700 who have died of Covid-19 so far, and we have all known coronavirus victims now, need that sense of resurrection and hope that Easter offers.

### Comfort

Faith is important at this time and has been a source of comfort and strength for so many. Any parish will tell you that there has been an increase in the number of candles that are being burnt in churches. That tells you something. I have seen people of all age groups coming into the Cathedral in Mullingar, kneeling for a prayer, lighting a candle, going to the statue of St Anthony or the *Pietà*. People need the 'consolation of faith'. Older people too, particularly the daily Massgoers, miss the routine, they miss daily Communion and they miss the contact with other parishioners. While the churches were open for Mass, that may have been no more than a socially distant wave but it was some human contact. Now, that constituency sees no one. We are social beings and isolation is never good, psychologically or spiritually.

Priests too have found the lockdowns hard. I think that priests

in particular define themselves by what they do. Catholic priests define themselves in terms of the sacraments and the celebration of Mass. That has been taken from them. In addition, many priests are over 70 and found the concept of 'cocooning' hard. Priests from neighbouring parishes covered and responded heroically and generously to their own and neighbouring parishes. Many people were struck by the generosity of priests who visited nursing homes and hospitals to minister to those who were dying. Priests insisted on giving those who died of Covid-19 proper funerals and affording them what we would call the dignity of a Christian burial. Priests kept offering the sacraments of marriage and Baptism when restrictions allowed and put themselves at risk. I think that this pandemic has, in some cases, brought people closer to their priests and created a greater appreciation for what priests do. Many priests have told me of parishioners dropping a contribution into the sacristy mindful that there are no Sunday collections. That is, in itself, a sign of appreciation and acknowledgement.

**“I think that it is very important that churches are open for Holy Week and Easter”**

Covid-19 has been particularly hard on retired communities of sisters and priests. This week, stories are emerging of large numbers of deaths of missionary priests in their own retirement homes since Christmas. The same is true of religious

sisters. I have been at the funerals of five sisters from different congregations who died of coronavirus in this diocese, including one this week, in addition to other funerals of religious which took place in severe restrictions. Shocking stories are emerging of communities of sisters and priests that have been struck with multiple deaths within days. Like any family, those deaths create an impact and leave a void. Like many families too, I have felt it particularly hard that their passing and their contribution was not marked as we would like it to be. It is the same for every family. I remember the funeral of one sister who made a huge contribution to healthcare both in terms of tutoring and nursing in a college and in several hospitals during more than 60 years of profession. There were just four others sisters present. It should not be like that. That has an impact on everyone. May they rest in peace. Both Church and society must mark those deaths when this passes.

### Priests

It is also worth mentioning that priests willingly moved to online platforms when it was not possible to have a physical congregation. However, that is a temporary arrangement! It is worth noting that Pope Francis turned off the live-streaming of his Mass from the Domus Sanctae Marthae each morning when public Mass resumed in Italy. Our faith is not virtual and is not something to be 'moved online'. I have heard of people surfing the internet for the 'fastest' Mass! That sense of parish, of community and belonging is important too. That is why it is so important that our churches are open for Easter to celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ. I think this Easter that sense of resurrection will be needed and embraced by all of us as we continue to make progress in our mortal combat with Covid. Let us hope and pray that we can gather to celebrate Easter and worship together.

**“Easter, the celebration of the resurrection of Christ and the conquering of death is the reason for our faith”**



# Pope Francis: Climate change 'causing immense hardship for the most vulnerable among us'



Korea.net / Korean Culture and Information Service / CC BY-SA / www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0

Extreme weather causing widespread droughts and floods, destroying crops and food supplies in world's most vulnerable countries.

**T**he Pope expressed concern over the increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather phenomena and the desertification of the soil. With climate change related hunger and malnutrition increasing, Pope Francis warned, "We have caused a climate emergency that gravely threatens nature and life itself, including our own."

The Pope made his comments as part of a written appeal for the 'World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation'.

**Worldwide, droughts and floods have more than doubled since the early 1990's with Africa particularly badly affected.**

An increase in droughts – combined with ongoing conflict and unemployment – means dry spells have an increasingly destructive impact on people living in already vulnerable communities. Such as those in Niger, Western Africa where 80% of the population relies on agriculture for their livelihoods.

This year droughts and floods have already caused a 12% drop in cereal production in Niger compared with the already poor yields of 2018/19. 2.7 million people are now projected to be in severe acute food insecurity – urgently needing food if they are to survive.

**“Listen to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor, who suffer most because of the unbalanced ecology.”**

**– Pope Francis**

Since 1968 Irish charity Concern Worldwide has worked around the world helping alleviate hunger caused by natural or man-made disasters. Over this period climate change has become one of the key drivers of hunger.

In 2019 alone, Concern helped 28.6m people in 24 of the world's poorest

countries – including Niger.

Concern doesn't just provide emergency food to those affected by hunger. The charity continues to work alongside communities so they are able to feed themselves long into the future.

*People's lives are transformed when they are equipped and empowered to do it for themselves. This is how real progress is made.*

One of Concern's most vital funding sources – on which it absolutely depends – is gifts in the Wills of its supporters. These gifts ensure Concern will always be there for people in need of a helping hand.

## What Concern's help looks like

In Niger life is a *constant* struggle for survival. A struggle which becomes almost impossible during the annual 'hunger gap'.

*Causing untold suffering, the annual hunger gap is a desperate period.* Food from the last harvest has run out and it will be months until more is available.

During this time, normal life grinds to a halt. Children leave education to help with agricultural chores at home. Adults travel anywhere they can to find work to earn even the smallest amount to support their families.

Every day becomes a terrifying battle to find food.

The hunger gap used to last 3 months, ending when the harvest was ready. But *climate change has made this terrible problem much worse*, with infrequent rainfall and rising temperatures drastically reducing crops.

As a result this torturous period now lasts 5 months from April to September, with people spending almost half their year struggling to stay alive.

And Covid-19 has further exacerbated an already dreadful situation. Restricted movement and border closures are impacting supplies to local markets, pushing prices up. Now even those who manage to work can't buy food because it's too expensive. Seeds for next season's crops are also being affected by these shortages. This means the pandemic's

deadly effects will be felt next year too.

**Vulnerable families, who already have little to eat, are in grave danger.**

But thanks to gifts in Wills, Concern is able to immediately support families in desperate need and equip them to support themselves long into the future.

For families affected by climate change in countries like Niger, one of the ways this is achieved is by providing communities with drought-resistant seeds, *proven to yield more food ... the tools needed to farm their land ... and training to adopt climate-smart techniques.* For example, crop rotation and composting to keep the soil in the best condition. And methods to capture and keep as much rain as possible.

Thanks to generous people leaving Concern a gift in their Wills, families can now grow their own food in their own vegetable gardens. The food they're growing now will feed them this year. **The knowledge and skills they gain will make sure they have enough food to eat every year from now on.**

Chawada Aboubacar is a mother of five. Thanks to her own hard work and support from Concern, she now has a thriving kitchen garden of her own. Her family own a small piece of land where they grow the grain, millet. When it runs out between harvests, it used to be a struggle to provide the food they needed to survive.

But Chawada now grows tomatoes, onions, cabbage and carrots in her kitchen garden. This garden will provide nutritious food for her family this year and for years to come. Keeping her children safe from hunger so they can thrive.

*"We will start eating cabbage, carrot and lettuce in one month and then the onion in about six weeks. This garden helps me and my family. It makes me happy."*

– Chawada Aboubacar

Having enough food prevents life threatening malnutrition, meaning Chawada and her children have the opportunity to live long and happy lives. What's more, any surplus food from

the kitchen garden can be sold, giving the family money to buy other nutritious food and essential items.

Best of all, a regular, dependable source of food means Chawada's children don't have to work on the

Your gift ensures your legacy lives on, supporting Concern to help people like Chawada and her family long into the future.

Many who do leave a gift in their Will have been so affected by the suffering of



With Concern worker Mounkaila's help, Chawada can now grow food to help her family survive.

land and can go back to school. Getting the education essential for a brighter future for them.

By passing on the skills she has gained to her children, Chawada is ensuring they will be self-sufficient in the future; able to provide for both their own families and the wider community – helping to pull everyone out of poverty.

## Be part of a world without hunger

**“What would induce anyone ... only to be remembered for their inability to take action when it was so urgent and necessary to do so?”**

**– Pope Francis**

As you've just seen, gifts in Wills transform lives both immediately and long into the future.

Won't you help Concern fight poverty and hunger – to end it in some of the world's poorest communities – by leaving a life changing gift in your Will?

the world's poorest, most vulnerable families, they have chosen to make a lasting commitment: to be part of a world without hunger.

***"I have two children and if they were in need, I would hope that somebody, somewhere would reach out to help them. With my legacy, I will be that person for somebody's loved ones – you could be too."*** – Fiona, Co. Louth

To discover more about how leaving a gift in your Will transforms and saves lives, please request your complimentary copy of 'Be Part of a World Without Hunger', Concern's legacy booklet.

Inside you'll see how legacies left by people like you are helping the world's poorest people. Both today and for years to come.

The booklet also answers many of the common questions people have about leaving a gift in their Will. And explains how to start the process.

Of course requesting your free booklet does not oblige you to leave a gift, or do anything else.

***"Moments of kindness shine in the darkness and give so much comfort – that's the final gift I intend to leave to the world."***

– James, Co. Wicklow

To receive your free, no obligation booklet – in complete confidence – please contact Concern's Legacy Manager, Siobhán O'Connor. Call **01 417 8020**, email **siobhan.oconnor@concern.net**, or visit **www.concern.net/bequest**



**CONCERN**  
worldwide

**ENDING EXTREME POVERTY  
WHATEVER IT TAKES**



# Archbishop Farrell should challenge current mood of anti-Catholicism

New Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell taking time for some quiet prayer before his installation ceremony in St Mary's Pro-Cathedral. Photo: John Mc Elroy



Dublin's new shepherd must continue to acknowledge the negative side of the Church's recent legacy, while reminding us of the great good the Church has done and still does, writes **David Quinn**

Ireland is one of the most anti-Catholic countries in the Western world.

The often authoritarian behaviour of the Church in the past, in addition to the scandals and the legacy of institutional abuse have made Ireland a cold house for Catholics – at least for those who actually follow Church teaching.

There are now many people in Ireland who see the Church only in a negative light and priests and religious are regularly demonised, in particular, it would seem, nuns.

## HerStory project

On St Brigid's Day, as part of the feminist HerStory project, an image was projected on to the wall of Sean Ross Abbey in Co. Tipperary of a young sister sweeping the skeletal bodies of babies under the rug. Sean Ross Abbey was one of the country's mother and baby homes and many infants died therein.

The image invited us to think the nuns had deliberately killed these babies and then hidden the bodies, even though death certificates exist explaining the causes of death, which was often diphtheria.

The fact that such an image could be shown, at taxpayers' expense, and with no public backlash, shows the extent to which nuns have been demonised and how the good that countless religious sisters have performed, and still perform, is forgotten.

Reducing the Church simply to its crime and misdeeds in this way is anti-Catholic for the same reason it would be anti-British to reduce British history to its crime and misdeeds.

This is by way of describing the atmosphere that any bishop must now operate in, including the newly-installed archbishop of Dublin, Dermot Farrell.

**“One way to do so is by telling the stories of individual Catholic heroes, past and present”**

He will face many challenges, and one of them is continuing to acknowledge the negative side of the Church's recent legacy in Ireland, while also reminding us of the great good the Church has done, and still does.

In fact, Church leaders regularly express sorrow and regret for the terrible things that happened at the hands of some in the Church. It is now expected. It is one of the first things any new bishop must do, and continue to do, and it must be done.

But it is absolutely crucial that the positive side of our story is also told. That means reminding ourselves of what that looks like

and learning to tell it well. This is where we look to our leaders because if they do not show us how to tell our story, then who will?

One way to do so is by telling the stories of individual Catholic heroes, past and present. For example, we learnt again from the recent mother and baby homes report of the deeply Christian approach that Frank Duff, founder of the Legion of Mary, adopted towards unmarried mother and their children.

## Legion volunteers

He, along with Legion volunteers, endeavoured to keep unmarried mothers and their children together in the Regina Coeli hostel. No-one else was doing this for a very long time. Anyone was free to do so, including the anti-clerics of the time, the Noel Browne-left, for example.

There must be Legion volunteers, now in their old age, who worked with these women and children. Archbishop Farrell should try and find them, and give them their due credit.

Up and down the country, including in Dublin archdiocese, there is an army of Catholics who continue to do great good work, even now, during this pandemic.

Who are the chaplains still going into the hospitals? St Vincent de Paul Society volunteers continue their work. In my parish, the local branch was left a bequest and

used it to buy laptop computers for students having to do classes and projects at home and wouldn't be able to do so without a computer.

Crosscare, like the 'Vinnies' carries on doing which it does best; meeting the needs of the poor.

A couple of years ago, I contacted a nun with a view to her giving a talk on a new book she had written. She couldn't do it, she told me, because she and a group of (officially) retired Irish nuns were off to South Sudan, one of the remotest and dangerous places on the planet, to teach the next generation of teachers and nurses there. Most of us are not fit to untie the sandals of women like that.

**“Actress and producer, Ruth Hayes, has just produced a programme about Nano Nagle, who founded the Presentation Sisters 200 years ago and whose legacy lasts to this day”**

Around the world to this day, the Catholic Church runs more than 5,000 hospitals and 16,000 health clinics, mainly in the developing world. It operates tens of thousands of schools educating tens of millions of pupils who might otherwise receive no education at all. The Catholic Church is a leading educator of girls where

the education of girls can still be frowned on.

In Nigeria, the terrorist organisation, Boko Haram, targeted school-girls for exactly this reason. Irish nuns founded many of the first schools for girls in that country.

Actress and producer, Ruth Hayes, has just produced a programme about Nano Nagle, who founded the Presentation Sisters 200 years ago and whose legacy lasts to this day. The programme, a podcast, is called 'Finding Nano - The life and legacy of Nano Nagle'.

Perhaps the HerStory project might like to project an image of Nano Nagle on to the wall of a major building sometime? She is one of the most important Irish women in history, as were the founders of other Irish female congregations, women who proved, long before the rise of modern feminism, that women could found and run giant multi-national organisations, in this case teaching and nursing orders.

## Christian motivation

There is no excuse for neglecting their stories, but if they won't be told by society in general, and if the State has no interest in them, then we must tell those stories ourselves and explain the deep, Christian motivation behind them.

This, I think, is one of the many tasks awaiting the new archbishop of Dublin; to remind us of the heroic stories of countless Catholics, including those no-one has yet heard of, and act as counter-balance to the present widespread anti-Catholicism.



# 33 Days for St Joseph

In response to Pope Francis declaring the Year of St Joseph, the Irish Dominicans are inviting you to join us online as we make a collective consecration to St Joseph, while also asking his intercession for vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life.

**8PM DAILY**

33 Days Beginning  
**15th February**

To the Feast of St Joseph  
**19th March**

**Join us as we:**

- \* Pray the Holy Father's Prayer for the Year of St Joseph
- \* Recite the Daily Reading in Preparation for the Consecration to St. Joseph
- \* Invoke the Prayer for Vocations

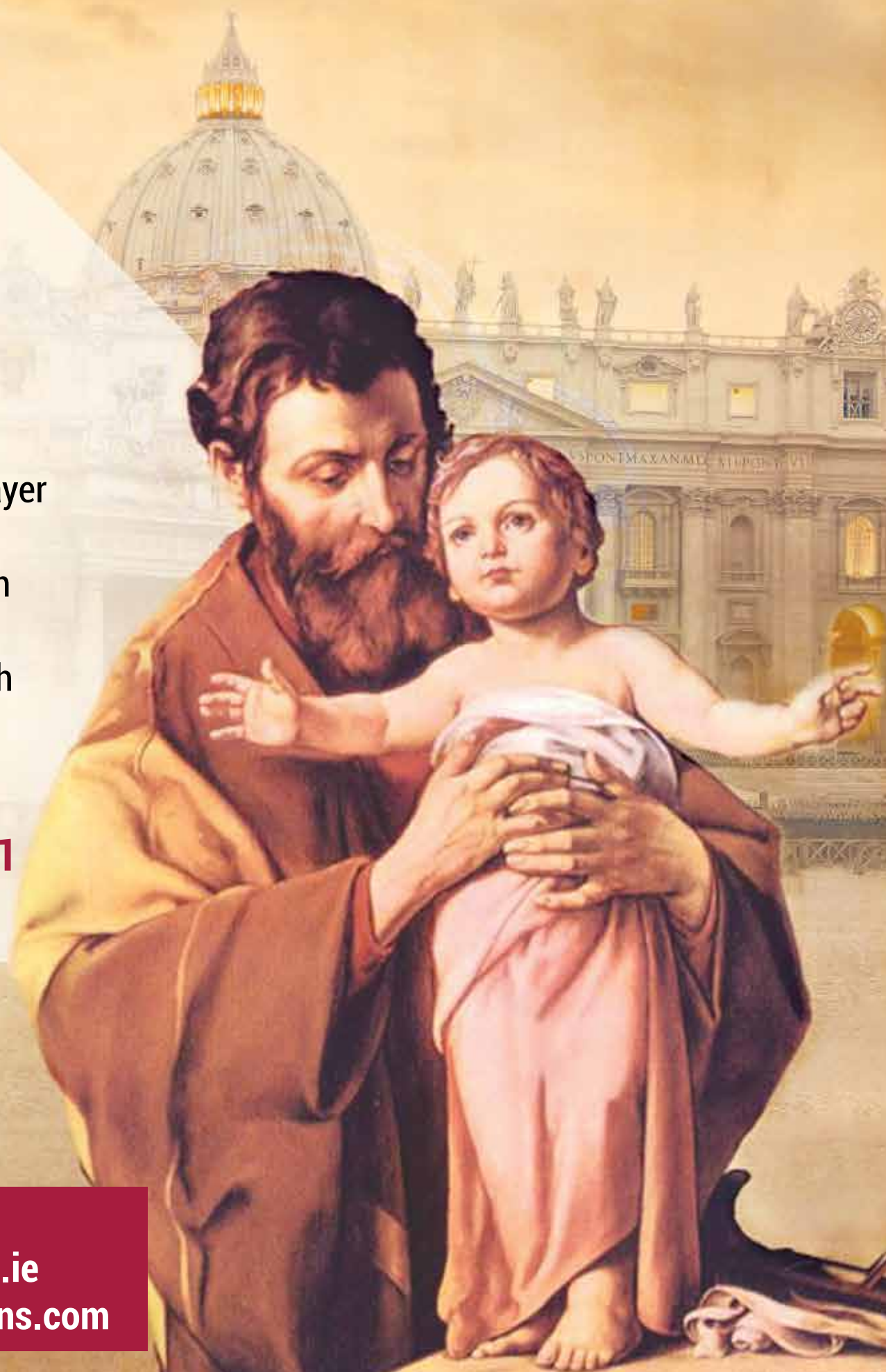
**Zoom ID: 986 4005 1501**

**Passcode: 122013**

**All are Welcome!**

All prayers and readings  
will be displayed on screen.  
For more information contact:

Fr Colm Mannion OP  
[colm.mannion@dominicans.ie](mailto:colm.mannion@dominicans.ie)  
[www.irishdominicanvocations.com](http://www.irishdominicanvocations.com)





# A epidemic of unprocessed grief?



Many are struggling to process their grief without the rituals of death, writes **Ruadhán Jones**

**T**he funeral is a ubiquitous ritual in Irish society, envisioned in popular culture as a social gathering and a celebration of the deceased's life. But under the conditions of a pandemic, we have come to recognise its primary importance as the final rite of passage both for the dead and the grieving.

## First stage

During the first stage of this pandemic, the primary rituals associated with grieving were cut off when funerals and visits to graveyards were banned. The Government – and wider society – belatedly recognised the deleterious effect this had on the mental and physical health of mourners and have since allowed funerals, albeit with stringent restrictions.

But as a new report from Queens University Belfast (QUB) that covers different aspects of Christian ministry under lockdown finds, funerals and pastoral care for the grieving remain the “hardest thing by far” that priests have to do during the pandemic. One minister quoted in the report said he had “buried a dog with more emotion”, while a Catholic bishop described the experience of a priest in his diocese.

**“There’s a real spiritual, pastoral and emotional reaction in not being able to provide the type of care priests and ministers think is necessary”**

“One priest told me that he got a call that someone had died at half seven in the morning from Covid-19 and he was burying him that afternoon at half past four,” the bishop told the report. “It was all very rushed and I can imagine the effect that is having on those who were bereaved. And even though he preached at the graveside and did as much of the service as he possibly could do at the graveside, they’ll probably in a year or two look back and say: ‘The priest didn’t do much for us and the Church wasn’t there for us when we needed them.



Why did we have to rush things so much?”

Dr Gladys Ganiel, researcher in QUB and author of the study ‘Something Other Than A Building’, tells *The Irish Catholic* that Covid-19 has made a difficult job even harder for Christian ministers.

“Ministry in any Christian denomination is already a difficult job because all Christian denominations have seen drops in vocations, so resources are stretched quite thin,” Dr Ganiel explains. “And then the pandemic has created more pastoral needs – the death rate for one thing, so funerals, and then there’s grieving families and then there are all the mental health issues associated with lockdown.

“There’s a real spiritual, pastoral and emotional reaction in not being able to provide the type of care priests and ministers think is necessary. In some ways, there’s no way around that if you’re going to do things safely. It’s been a struggle for people,” Dr Ganiel concludes.

## Redemptorist

Fr Noel Kehoe, a Redemptorist based in Dundalk and one of the contributors to the report, officiated at nine funerals in seven days recently. Death and grief are on his mind. Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, he explains that the pandemic has brought home to him the importance of the funeral, and the rituals associated with it, in helping people process grief.

“Those natural expressions of sympathising for example, of neighbours and friends, the gathering with the family over the three days and I suppose being physically pre-

sent to the family at the funeral as a mark of respect – that was our natural default position on how we did funerals and how we showed support to people,” Fr Kehoe says.

**“I suppose where it has affected people most from a ministry point of view has been around funerals and how do we do grief and death during this time”**

“At the beginning when there was a lot of panic, there were Covid funerals, many families were advised not to have to a funeral but to go straight to the graveyard, we’ll have a funeral when this is all over. But I would have a very strong sense that for those families who would have liked to have a funeral but didn’t, or chose not to or were advised not to, even the minimalist funeral liturgy that we can do at the moment is still really important to families to help fulfil this set of rites for the person who has died.”

Fr Kehoe continues, pointing out that it’s not just funeral which was important, but the complete set of rituals and care which he and his fellow priests usually offer.

“The first thing is, we are not meeting people face-to-face for normal pastoral care,” Fr Kehoe explains. “I suppose where it has affected people most from a ministry point of view has been around funerals and how do we do grief and death during this time.”

“This has changed how we would have done it, you know: over three



days, you would have sat with the family, we would have talked stories out just being that presence with the family, going down to pray with them as the remains came in and then the night before through a vigil, the morning of the funeral. All of those things that were, you know, just how we did funerals, but it was also very supportive for the family.”

## Covid-19 restrictions

Explaining how he has adjusted his ministry to the Covid-19 restrictions, Fr Kehoe says that he still makes contact with the families.

“I go, I PP up and I still mark those moments of prayer when the remains come home, the vigil, the morning before it comes to the Church,” Fr Kehoe says. “As opposed to sitting for a few hours with a family, I do a lot of it over email and get the information and the sharing of the stories that way. So at least in the funeral homily, something of the person, something of the grieving persons experience is being reflected back to them.”

But Fr Kehoe recognises that, despite all he the work does, there is still more which remains unaddressed. Many people during the pandemic have to live with unprocessed grief.

**“For me the single biggest issue going on pastorally at the moment is how this has impacted on people around the area of grief and loss”**

“I think there is a lot of grief that is out there that is not being addressed and it’s very difficult for it to be addressed during a time of huge restrictions. At the moment, even family or relations, can’t visit the house. For me the single biggest issue going on pastorally at the moment is how this has impacted on people around the area of grief and loss.”





## Exploring the Word of God through Prayer

**A series of online Scripture Reflections at 8pm each Tuesday night**

Knock Shrine will show a series of online night prayer with reflections on Scripture. Students from St Louis Community School Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo will deliver this series of talks inspired by Scripture.



Young people will take their favourite passage of Scripture, something that speaks to them and reflect on it through video, providing their own written narrative and imagery.

**You can join us online for this new series at [www.knockshrine.ie/watch-live](http://www.knockshrine.ie/watch-live) every Tuesday at 8pm**

## 'Awaiting a New Dawn'

**A series of online Vigils this February**

Join us online each Friday evening during the month of February as we come together virtually for a period of extended prayer and reflection.



A vigil is a powerful way for people to come together in community prayer.

The first days of Spring will soon be upon us, a welcome lengthening of days and the arrival of new growth in nature. We will come

together online from our own homes to support each other, prayer for one another and keep hope alive in our hearts that we will soon overcome these very challenging times.

The first Vigil will take place on Friday 5 February.

**Join us live online from 7pm for Rosary, Mass and Holy Hour. See [www.knockshrine.ie/watch-live](http://www.knockshrine.ie/watch-live) or our Facebook page.**



KNOCK SHRINE, KNOCK, CLAREMORRIS, CO. MAYO, F12 Y226  
t: +353 (0) 94 93 88100 e: [info@knockshrine.ie](mailto:info@knockshrine.ie)

## LIVING CHRISTIAN FAITH Lenten Conversations



Knock Shrine are launching a new online series to engage you each Thursday at 8.30pm during Lent.

- + What nurtures our faith and what challenges it today?
- + Where do we find hope and joy in our lives?
- + How can our faith build mental strength, wellbeing and resilience?
- + How has the Covid pandemic impacted upon our faith?

These are just some of the questions that will be explored over the 6 weeks of Lent during a new series of online discussions on the topic of 'Living Christian Faith'. As part of Faith Renewal at Knock Shrine, this will open a conversation on contemporary issues of faith and church life.

Chaired by **Fr Eamonn Conway DD**, Priest in Tuam diocese and Professor of Theology at Mary Immaculate College, the conversations will explore a different theme each week and guest speakers will discuss some of the important questions we all face in living out our faith.



### Feb. 18: 'Living Christian Faith in the Family'

St John Paul spoke about how the future of humanity passes by way of the family. **Patrick and Linda Treacy**, who have four children and run a centre for domestic spirituality called *Integritas* from their home, will speak about the joys and challenges of living Christian Faith as a family today.

### Feb. 25: 'Living Christian Faith as Young Adults'

A number of young Irish adults, for whom Christian Faith is of great importance, will discuss the strength it gives them and how we can better communicate the joy of the Gospel today.

### Mar. 4: 'Living Christian Faith in the Classroom as Young Teachers'

Three recently qualified primary teachers explain how their religious faith is important to them and how it influences their work as teachers in the classroom.

### Mar. 11: 'Living Christian Faith in Public Life'

**Baroness Nuala O'Loan and Senator Ronan Mullen** discuss their own faith, how it informs their public service and the challenges people of faith encounter in the public sphere today.

### Mar. 18: 'Proclaiming Christian Faith as a priest or religious today'

**Sr Ursula Lawler**, who lectures in Christian Ethics at Mary Immaculate College, returned missionary and editor of the *Africa Magazine*, **Fr Sean Deegan SPS**, Ballyhaunis Parish Priest, **Fr Stephen Farragher** and **Fr Eamonn Conway** will discuss living priesthood and religious life today in conversation with young Irish Catholic journalist **Jason Osbourne**.

### Mar. 25: 'Studying Christian Faith'

**Dr Máire Campbell** is assistant Principal of a primary school in North Dublin. **Judith King** is an internationally recognised psychotherapist and **Margaret Naughton** is a busy hospital chaplain. Yet they have all found time to fulfil their passion of doing a PhD in theological studies. They share with us how their theological studies enriches their faith and their work.

Join us at [www.knockshrine.ie/watch-live](http://www.knockshrine.ie/watch-live) or on Facebook@knockshrine



# Voices crying out in the wilderness



An image of a nun concealing a skeleton is projected onto Sean Ross Abbey, south of Roscrea in County Tipperary, on St Brigid's Day for The Herstory Light Show. Some women are frustrated with the one-sided portrayal of the homes in the media. Photo: Niall Carson/ PA Images



While mother and baby homes were a product of a cruel and unforgiving culture towards unmarried mothers, some women found compassion and kindness, writes **Jason Osborne**

**T**he final report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes cast further light on the disturbing treatment of many women and children in institutions throughout the 20th Century. The commission said that the bottom line was that women should not have been in the homes in the first place. It said that: "Responsibility for

that harsh treatment rests mainly with the fathers of their children and their own immediate families.

"It was supported by, contributed to, and condoned by, the institutions of the State and the Churches," the report said.

In a finding that some former residents have found unpalatable, the report said starkly that "it must be acknowledged that the institutions under investigation provided a refuge - a harsh refuge in some cases - when the families provided no refuge at all".

## Kindness

A number of women who spoke to this newspaper spoke of the "kindness" and "respect" they found from the sisters during their time in Bessborough home in Co. Cork run by the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

The report covered the period from the 1920s to the 1990s and was critical of aspects of the running of Bessborough for large parts of that period. The three women who spoke to *The Irish Catholic* spent time in the home in the period from the 1960s to the 1980s.

A woman whose mother was a resident in the home said: "not all its history was good. Before my mother's time, I think it was a different place, with different attitudes, but also different people. You know,

personalities can make a huge difference". She spoke on behalf of her mother who spent a number of months in Bessborough in the 1960s. Both wished to remain anonymous out of fear of a potential backlash for speaking out favourably of the sisters she encountered during her time there.

## "Mary entered Bessborough following a pregnancy during her first relationship"

Speaking of her mother, she said, "Her experience was really very good."

"Her entire time there she would have felt that she was always treated with dignity and respect, and that she felt she wasn't being singled out for special treatment. Everybody there would have been given the same respect as she was given. She never saw anything contrary to that."

Both this woman, and her mother through her, expressed the notion that because the coverage of the homes has been overwhelmingly negative, the good that was done in them is often overlooked, saying that a "full account of the truth" was only possible if positive experiences such as her mother had were heard, too.

Given a house name upon entering Bessborough, her mother understood that this was done out of care for her anonymity. "Her experience was that the anonymity of the girls and the women was paramount. They were trying to protect her anonymity, so they would always have been called their house name," she said.

This was intended to safeguard their reputation from wider society, though some former residents have said they felt this stripped them of their identity. For all intents and purposes, life 'within the walls' had its own communal effect, with this woman describing the working conditions her mother experienced. "In a community, in those communities, everybody does their part to make it work together. So while she was assigned duties, the nuns worked alongside the women. It was a communal thing," she said.

## Communal

She continued, "It wasn't that the nuns were sitting with their feet up on a stool while the rest were slaves. Everyone worked alongside each other. She said for the most part, in her experience [her mother], the nuns worked much harder than the girls because they knew what they were doing, whereas the girls wouldn't always. It was more like communal living."

Her mother established an "affectionate" relationship with the sisters, writing to some of them for a long time after she'd left the home.

## "For all intents and purposes, life 'within the walls' had its own communal effect, with this woman describing the working conditions her mother experienced"

This personal relationship with the sisters was experienced by other women too, with Mary (not her real name) being another recipient of their kindness, this time during the 1980s. Speaking of the vilification of all religious in the wake of the reports throughout the years, Mary said, "It wasn't like that. It just wasn't like that. I am eternally grateful to the nuns. I'm eternally grateful to them." As with the woman who'd experienced Bessborough during the 1960s, Mary acknowledged that things hadn't always been as she experienced them. However, she was keen to defend the sisters whose care she experienced first-hand.

"They spent their time protecting us. They protected me and they respected me. I never felt judged by the nuns. I used to go and when you'd have a bad day you'd have a chat with them or whatever," she said.

Mary entered Bessborough following a pregnancy during her first relationship. She had just started work at the time, and described the

## "Her mother established an 'affectionate' relationship with the nuns, writing to some of them for a long time after she'd left the home"





The women found the sisters, in their experience, to be kind, compassionate, and hardworking. Photo: CNS

“overriding” shame she experienced as a result of her situation.

“I went in, I went to Bessborough as I was in Cork at the time, called around to the nuns and I asked them, I said, ‘Look, you know, I’m going to need a place,’ and they said, ‘Fine, you just come whenever you want. We always have a place for you’. So one day I couldn’t hide it any more.

“The accommodation was lovely. There were kind of cubicles that we had. Very comfortable wardrobe, dressing table, a bed, it was fine. I would’ve come from a nice, respectable family, I suppose. There was every kind of situation in there. Every kind of age group, situation – everything. We all were given a name,” she said.

**“When I went back and told the nun who was the nurse there, she was just so horrified”**

Corroborating the other woman and her mother’s explanation of the premium put on anonymity, Mary explained the culture of shame and gossip that she found so overwhelming.

“At one point a local girl from my hometown came in and I saw her coming in and I said to the nuns, ‘I’ve got to get out of here’,” she continued, “So they sent me to a family to stay with in Cork for a few weeks, but this girl left and actually went home and spread the news that I was there and that was a million times more destructive to me than anything.

“It was the gossips and the people who are now judging [the nuns] were the ones who looked down on us. My mother and father were just devastated and they’re very traditional and very Catholic. They wanted to protect me as well because I would have been looked at as a ‘fallen woman’, so to speak” she said.

The one place Mary, and many of the other girls at the time, didn’t

**“The women were also quick to defend the sisters’ treatment of children in the home, with all three describing the ‘care’ with which the babies were tended to”**

experience this sense of shame was “within the walls” of the home. She described another experience she had that contrasted her treatment by wider society with the reception she received at Bessborough.

“I had to go into the hospital in Cork...The way I was treated there by a gynaecologist was just shocking, it was probably one of the most awful episodes of my entire life. I was treated like a piece of dirt,” she said.

“When I went back and told the nun who was the nurse there, she was just so horrified. I mean, they treated us with such respect. I never felt the shame inside the walls of the convent. Like, some of the girls used to go out shopping in Cork – we were free to come and go. I didn’t want to go because there was so much less charity, if you like, on the outside of the walls than there was on the inside,” she said.

### Belonging

Another woman, Patricia (not her real name), shared the same sense of belonging that she encountered at Bessborough. She stayed there during the 1970s.

“They were very welcoming and they made me feel at home straight away,” she said, continuing, “I felt quite comfortable from the very beginning, even though I had all this inner turmoil, how everything was going to turn out and all that. They certainly made me feel at home there,” she said.

Patricia described the rules in Bessborough as “clear” and “reasonable”, saying that there was a division of time between work, meals, free activity and silence. While there was Sunday Mass and Confession on offer to the women, she said there

was “no rule or pressure” to attend during her time there.

She also said that the majority of women were grateful to have found somewhere where no one gave them “stupid grins” or “disapproving looks” on account of their situations. As such, she says that any inner turmoil she experienced while there was a result of “personal” worries or troubles, which had their source outside the home.

**“At one point a local girl from my hometown came in and I saw her coming in and I said to the nuns, ‘I’ve got to get out of here’”**

“I had my worries naturally enough, I had my own worries and I would have confided in a friend, my inner worries I guess and what I was going to do with myself. I wouldn’t have opened up in great conversations with the sisters, so it’s nothing like that. It was more like a business arrangement. But they were so kind to me and as far as I was concerned, it was like home away from home,” Patricia explained.

“I can’t say that I ever felt uncomfortable there at any period, if I was uncomfortable, it was because of my own predicament.

“I was sad leaving the place to be honest. I suppose I was sheltered to some extent for five months, and then going back into the outer world, it was a bit scary,” she said.

While her time there was reasonable, Patricia is quick to acknowledge that she’s also aware that Bessbor-

ough was not always the place she experienced.

“The home was there from 1922, so when some of the things that some people have said have happened to them, God only knows when it happened. It could have been the 60s. It could have been any number of decades. Things would have been fairly strict going back further from 1922 to the 1960s anyway,” she said.

In all, Patricia said she enjoyed her time there and remains “forever grateful” to the sisters there, relying on the final entry to the Bessborough chapter in the most recent report, which states:

“One who was born in 1961 said that she never met her birth mother but her half-siblings told her that her mother had told them that the nuns in Bessborough treated her very well, and that ‘it was not at all like the portrayal of Mother and Baby Homes in the media.’”

### Defend

The women were also quick to defend the sisters’ treatment of children in the home, with all three describing the “care” with which the babies were tended to.

Speaking on behalf of her mother, the woman explained the way the babies’ deaths were handled by the 1960s, saying, “The funeral was a proper Catholic funeral. Now the cemetery was on the grounds at Bessborough house and very obviously marked. It was an obvious, small, but obvious, graveyard. They were given all the proper, respectful prayers. It was exactly like anybody else. It wasn’t that they were thrown in the ground.”

She explains that the secrecy around the burial of the babies was to do

with protecting the anonymity of the mother, rather than a disregard for the babies. She insists that the women attended the funerals, unless they were otherwise unable to.

**“I had to go into the hospital in Cork...The way I was treated there by a gynaecologist was just shocking, it was probably one of the most awful episodes of my entire life”**

“The other thing was that all of the mothers while she was there were encouraged to keep their babies. The thing that the nuns emphasised was that the best place for the baby was with the mother, and if there was any way they could keep the baby, that was the best option,” she said on the topic of adoption.

Mary related a story in an effort to communicate the care the sisters had for each of the women and their babies, saying, “Just to give you another idea; the day I was giving my baby up, the parents were late, and I turned around to Sr Anthony who worked in the nursery and I said, ‘Sister, this is a sign, maybe I’m supposed to keep her’. So when it came to taking the baby from me, she was in bits, they had to send in someone from the kitchen, you know, because the nuns were just crying.”

### Relationship

Mary was unable to keep her baby, but now enjoys a “great relationship” with both her and the baby’s father.

Patricia was able to keep her baby, and explained that while it was a real challenge to do so at the time, it was a decision she’s “never regretted”.

Each of the women is frustrated with what they perceive as a biased or one-sided portrayal of the homes in the media, with Mary defending the Bessborough she experienced against today’s commentary on it.

“I know that in the 40s and 50s maybe, it was a lot different. But, the nuns didn’t come out into society and drag us in there. We went there and said, ‘I’ve nowhere to go’, and they said, ‘Come in’. That’s the way society was. Now, as to why society was like that, that’s a whole other issue. We can go back about that, and yes, to the Church’s role, everybody’s role. We all have responsibility. But the target is just shocking,” she said.

She is disappointed by the reaction to the latest findings as she believes they indicate a similarity to the society that produced the homes, just in a different way.

“It’s because of the society we’ve become. As I said, we’ve gone from one of guilt and shame, to entitlement and blame. We have to blame somebody. We have this sense of ‘It’s somebody else’s fault.’”

The woman, speaking on behalf of her mother, echoed the sentiment, saying of her mother’s reaction, “It totally upset her. It really did, because she has such love for the nuns who were there when she was there.

“Everyone’s being tarred with the same brush, but that’s never the [whole] truth,” she said.



Archbishop of Cashel and Emly  
Kieran O'Reilly SMA.



# Change and challenges ahead to future-proof Cashel and Emly



## Role of youth, women and inter-diocesan relations are some of the focuses of the future, writes Chai Brady

Changes are coming in the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly and although some of them may be “painful” there will be discussion and dialogue, with everyone facing it together as a Church community.

Following a statement in January about the process of ‘reimagining what the Church in Cashel and Emly could become’, Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly SMA told *The Irish Catholic* about the results of the more than three-year diocesan listening process and in which direction they are leading.

The archdiocese has been working towards addressing the needs of the Church in the coming cen-

tury and are following the synodal approach laid out by Pope Francis in which he speaks about communion, participation and mission.

“We’re walking together. I think that has to be the kind of approach that we take because the challenges are many and various, we have the realities of the world right now. We’re just going to have to face so many different challenges together but all the time I think myself, with a missionary background, it is to undertake the mission that was given to us by the Lord, to make the Lord known,” said Archbishop O'Reilly.

### Concerns

One of the concerns facing the Church in Ireland is the huge decline in priestly vocations and an aging demographic of priests. Asked about how this will be addressed he said: “You’re all the time trying to address those realities pastorally on the ground, there’ll be new pastoral initiatives, there’ll be new pastoral directors, there’ll be a lot more collaboration and cooperation across dioceses and across parishes. There will be a reimagining, a reconfiguring.

“Pope Francis has constantly asked us to be imaginative and to be creative and I would say that will be at all levels of the Church in Ireland. We’re beginning a real journey of discovery of what it means to be in communion with each other and to be able to participate for the purpose of mission. We’re at the start of a great journey that I think is a new awakening. First of all the spirit always speaks to us through the facts and the facts are an aging population of priests,

fewer vocations and yet the call all the time is to go with the Gospel so we have to address the realities on the ground and then move on from there as the spirit leads us.”

**“There has been a lot of discussion about the closure of some churches to take account of the fact that just about a third of Irish people regularly attend Mass”**

What will happen from there is dialogue with local communities, with Archbishop O'Reilly saying the Church in Ireland has a “very strange identity”. “You can’t go to any parish in Ireland where there’s not a monastic ruin, we’ve been through many cycles in Ireland, we’ve lived through so many realities of the Church, we have a great wealth of experience to draw on, we must never forget how well-rooted, especially in the rural areas, the local Church and the local community is and in any move really no matter what you have to take into account the mind and the thought of the people, you have to bring them with you as well to understand how best they can be witnesses to the Gospel in their own communities,” Dr O'Reilly said.

“The buildings will have to be maintained and looked after but people are great for doing that anyway but there has to be a deeper call for each person to live full their own Baptism and to live it in a

communion context with a leadership that we give them the encouragement to be fully themselves as Christians in our world. Buildings are always going to be important but they’re not the be all and the end all of course.”

There has been a lot of discussion about the closure of some churches to take account of the fact that just about a third of Irish people regularly attend Mass. Speaking to this reality, Dr O'Reilly said: “With regard to closures and that, you would always hope that would never happen. But as you saw in Dublin there, one big church was taken down then another one more adapted to the needs of the people was used – so things are always changing in the light of local needs and the local people’s understanding of things and I think that’s the way forward really.”

### Deep engagement

In a pastoral letter to his diocese published at the end of January, the archbishop spoke of creating a Church which “truly listens to, and respects, womanhood; a Church which promotes a full and deep engagement with the voices of women”. The role of women has been a source of debate in Church circles, particularly around whether women can become deacons and even join the priesthood.

Asked about the future of role of women in any new initiatives, Archbishop O'Reilly said: “I would say they’re part of councils and committees and groups now, they can be chairs of different councils and different groups inside the diocese, women can be and are chairs of them.

“They are deeply involved, I’d say, in all activities in relation to the organisation of the Church, whether it is finance or whether it is safeguarding, so many different aspects. I’m very dependent myself on a wonderful team of women either in the diocesan office or in the pastoral context, of women who are engaged with schools, safeguarding, I mean the ground-work is already being well-laid now for their fuller engagement... however that will be, but again it will be walking together, listening, hearing what it’s about, there has to be that sense of openness to how the spirit is going to speak to us.”

**“In April 2020 Pope Francis announced the members of a new commission who will study the possibility of women deacons in Church”**

While the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly don’t have the permanent diaconate, which didn’t come up in the listening process, it has always been in the plan of the Church. Archbishop O'Reilly explains that one of the issues surrounding the permanent diaconate was that initially there was a number of candidates that came forward but currently there is very few even showing an interest. He adds: “Even so it varies from diocese to diocese and it demands a level of support from the people, from the



priests, that this would work. It's an open question always because it's part of the Church's ministry."

In April 2020 Pope Francis announced the members of a new commission who will study the possibility of women deacons in the Church. It is expected their work will begin this year. "At the Roman level they have had a number of meetings, he [Pope Francis] has asked them to come together again. The Church is in a walking discernment about that aspect of ministry and sure of course we will see how that emerges, I would hope that it will bring about positive results but we will wait and see," said Dr O'Reilly.

**“That world is passed, we live in a different reality now and the Spirit speaks to us in the reality that we’re in”**

The commission isn't the only thing that has been delayed due to Covid-19, the pandemic has also slowed down planning for the archdiocese's future and due to restrictions around physical gatherings the process of publishing the diocesan pastoral plan has been substantially delayed. However, Dr O'Reilly said it is "very obvious" that the future is going to be led by laity.

Change will inevitably be painful when it means moving from something that hasn't rearranged itself for over a century, according to Archbishop O'Reilly, he said: "There will be challenges and it may be painful, but we have to face that as a community, we face it together and I think that's the key, walking together to see where we can go and I mean sometimes it will move quicker than others, sometimes it may be slow, but all the time I think if we hold before the vision of what we're about as a missionary group in our dioceses, in our parishes, then the Spirit will be with us."

"There will always be people who will want to hold onto the past, there will always be people who will say, 'but sure it was perfect in the 1950s', which it wasn't anyway. That world is passed, we live in a different reality now and the Spirit speaks to us in the reality that we're in."

### Vast change

Reflecting on the period just over a year ago, when Covid was something that was a distant phenomenon and was thought to be less threatening than the world now understands, the archbishop points to the vast change that happened in a short time span. In relation to the Church in Ireland he said: "You have to be aware that the old kind of certainties are no longer there and we have to be able to see and address and reflect, but I say together, that's the most important thing in the future, whether it's a synod in a diocese or a synod in a country or a bishops' synod, that has to be the understanding now."

There is a whole section on youth in plans being drafted by Cashel and Emly. Archbishop O'Reilly said that one of the dif-



Pope Francis during last week's general audience in the Vatican.

ficulties has been defining young people, whether it is children, late teenagers, people in their early 20s or a bit older. "You know yourself people in their late teens want nothing to do with early teenagers because it's just they're in a different kind of mindset so it's going to be very challenging," he said.

**“In the Cashel province, in which there are seven dioceses, Dr O'Reilly said that one of the benefits of the Covid situation is that they work much more closely together now than prior to the pandemic”**

"Probably you would have to engage a youth worker in the diocese, we already have a youth forum here and they have been engaging in the different kinds of possibilities of gathering young people but then we have very good projects happening in neighbouring diocese as well and I think there's a far better spirit of trying to collaborate and work with other projects already in place, we have to share our resources more on an

inter-diocesan level, we have to be much more aware of what's happening over the road, just because there's a small stream that divides a diocese doesn't mean that we can't be engaged."

### Seven dioceses

In the Cashel province, in which there are seven dioceses, Dr O'Reilly said that one of the benefits of the Covid situation is that they work much more closely together now than prior to the pandemic. "We meet on Zoom now we discuss a number of things, pastoral areas, funerals, Baptism, how we're dealing with that and common kind of approaches. I'm here in the middle of about seven or eight dioceses around me, so none of us is an island in ourself so we have to be able to link in," he explained.

"These divisions go back to the 12th Century. We have to be far more flexible in the way we work together. Now one of the things that has helped that tremendously is the internet because there's websites and diocesan websites and youth sites, there's a tremendous amount of material out there."

In a December interview with this paper the Papal Nuncio Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo said that the process of amalgamating dioceses has already begun and that it will be "slow and steady – to avoid hurts, shocks, and surprises".

However, Archbishop O'Reilly poured cold water on the amal-

gamation process happening in the province of Munster any time soon but accepted it is "a possibility down the road".

**“The diocese of Cashel and Emly, Emly was integrated into this diocese in the 17th Century so that's long forgotten in the memory of people, people only know it as Cashel and Emly now”**

"It has always been discussed because some dioceses are quite small, the only diocese that has ever been linked in with another I think in the last 50 or 60 years is the Diocese of Ross in Cork," he says.

"That was a big challenge and you know that happened but a lot of people in that part of the country were – and still are, but I suppose as time goes on there's fewer – unhappy with the way that happened."

"So in any kind of movement like that there has to be careful involvement of people. The diocese of Cashel and Emly, Emly was integrated into this diocese in the 17th Century so that's long forgotten in the memory of people, people only know it as Cashel and Emly now. It's

important that if anything like that is going to happen it has to be done with a proper understanding of the history and the background and the local needs etc...

In Munster he said: "We're already working very close together. It's a very big province in a way, you also have to have, as a bishop, a certain proximity to your people. There's no sense in having a bishop of 300 parishes and they never see him so there's kind of a balance. I think right now we have the balance here in Munster because you've got the big city diocese like Waterford, Cork, Limerick, they're very important and then you've got the hinterland, the rural areas, which are very strongly church oriented, so I would say right now there wouldn't be any move in the Munster area for talk about amalgamating but then you don't know sure, a discussion could come. Again I say a lot of that can be overcome by the reality of working together and collaborating, it's not always necessary to make a big structural change because if it means that you're taking up more energy and you're taking it away from the work of mission and that's not the best really sometimes."

The future may be long and arduous at times as Cashel and Emly set out on an uncertain path, but a Pope Francis-led vision of synodality and involvement at all levels of the Church is set to be the name of the game as the archdiocese prepares to publish its plans.



# The Pope who shaped the modern world



Pope St John Paul II meets with then US president Ronald Reagan in Fairbanks, Alaska in May 1984.



## Cold war novel *Conclave* is a reminder JPII's significance for the Church and the world, writes Ruadhán Jones

**C**onclave, the new fictional account of the election of Pope St John Paul II, opens in the recent past – 27 April, 2014 to be exact. It's a significant day for the Catholic Church. On that day, Pope Francis celebrated the canonisation Mass for two former Popes – Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II.

Author Tom Davis, a former American army general, diplomat,

professor and businessman, deliberately opened with that sequence to reassure any Catholic readers that whatever this book is, it is not a hatchet job.

"Whether you believe the doctrinaire process involving the Holy Spirit or whether you believe a degree of more secular political intrigue that goes on in such a process, it turns out fine," Davis says. "You got a fellow elected as Pope who people respect. At his canonisation you had people holding up signs *Sancto Sabito* – 'Sainthood now'.

"Whichever way you want to interpret it, it still turned out for the benefit of the Church and in John Paul II's reign, in my view, to the benefit of the world in a global context."

The novel centres on a fictional effort by the Americans and the Soviets to influence the papal election following Pope John Paul I's death. Due to the best efforts of two fictional American agents,

Carter Caldwell and Katherine O'Connor, as well as a number of real cardinals, nuns and agents from both sides, the Americans are eventually victorious in promoting the election of Karol Wojtyła, later Pope John Paul II.

**“Mr Davis illustrates the influence of the Pope with an anecdote from a former aide to President Ronald Reagan”**

When I ask him if there's any chance that his account is true, he chuckles and says, “absolutely not”. While many real figures are central to his story, the idea itself was the result of a conversation with Davis' Washington superior back in the early 80s.

“I was sitting there one day when a close-aid and secretary of State, Hague, walked by and

invited me to join him for lunch in the executive dining room,” Davis explains. “I'm thinking as we go, what am I going to talk to this guy about? The first thing that popped into my head was that I had seen on the news that John Paul II was back out making public appearances after having been shot the year before.

“So I commented on this to this fellow. He leaned conspiratorially across the table and said, ‘Well, as you know, his entire election as Pope was orchestrated by Zbigniew Brzezinski. It was a Polish thing.’ Brzezinski had been then-President Carter's national security adviser.

“Years later, I became friendly with Brzezinski's sons and I shared with both of them that little story and both of them got a big chuckle and said of course it's not true, how would you possibly do that? I decided well, that had been in my head for 37 years, I think I could make a story of that.”

## John Paul II

However, though the central ‘hook’ is more fantasy than fact, Davis, with a background as a lecturer and army general, invests the book with a great deal of factual, historical interest. St John Paul II's election was remarkable in many different ways: he was the first non-Italian Pope in nearly 500 years; his was the second papal election in 1978, following the sudden death of Pope John Paul I; and it came at a time when his home country of Poland was behind the Iron Curtain. His legacy both for the Church and the world continues to this day.

**“That message about poverty, income was obviously one message that JPII was conveying to President Reagan.”**

“Just think about it,” Mr Davis says. “13 years after John Paul II is elected the Soviet Union collapses. I think one of the things that stimulated that collapse was that he got people to think about another way of life and a more open way of life.

“One of the thoughts in the book that you see is that, with John Paul II, who's Polish, who comes from the European Warsaw

**“Pope John Paul's election indicated a change of ‘policy’, if it could be called that, by the Catholic Church with regard to the Soviet Union”**





Tom Davis – US army general, historian, businessman and now author of *Conclave*

Pact zone, after he becomes Pope one of the first things he does is go to Poland and hold an outdoor Mass with 3 million people – the population of Poland is 30 million – that's an amazing thing, that he can rally to get that many people to an outdoor Mass, at a time when the Polish economy is under great stress – inflation is rampant, you're beginning to see the start of the Labour movement up in Gdansk.

**“I know for a devout Catholic is the idea that they summon the Holy Spirit, sing the litany of the saints, seeking guidance”**

“What you see is a fellow who interacts because of who he is – a native Pole who has interacted with the communist regime effectively all his life, who I think eventually does have a major impact on history as it goes forward.”

### Influence

Mr Davis illustrates the influence of the Pope with an anecdote from a former aide to President Ronald Reagan. This aide worked as the notetaker for Reagan's meetings with various world leaders. But for the meeting with the Pope, he was sent from the room – Pope John Paul II insisted on complete privacy.

“The only hint I ever got,” the aide told Mr Davis, “was after one of the meetings I was passing through the West Wing and President Reagan called me over and asked me ‘What are we doing

about poverty in Latin America’. Well sir, I don't really know, that's not my area but I'll guess probably not a lot. The president said, ‘Well go find out what we're doing. The Pope is all over me about this.’”

“That of course would be quite consistent with JP II's outlook,” Mr Davis says. “That message about poverty, income was obviously one message that JP II was conveying to President Reagan.”

### Cold War

Pope John Paul's election indicated a change of ‘policy’, if it could be called that, by the Catholic Church with regard to the Soviet Union. This historical background is perhaps the most fascinating element in the novel, introducing a swathe of real figures who were the big players in the Church at the time.

“There were 111 cardinals who were the voting electorate for both conclaves,” Mr Davis explains. “I went through and looked at the backgrounds of all of them and they're all fascinating people and I was reminded of something that I did recall from days gone by that Cardinal Koenig who I give a major role to in the book had always been used by Pope Paul [VI] as essentially his emissary to the Eastern Block.”

“In fact the, Pope Paul VI had used Koenig as an intermediary to get Cardinal [József] Mindszenty who had been held in the American embassy in Budapest for 15 years after the failed Hungarian revolt in 1956 because the Soviets had accused him of having instigated it and supporting it. It was Koenig who did the intermediary work with the Eastern block to get him

**“Whether you believe the doctrinaire process involving the Holy Spirit or whether you believe a degree of more secular political intrigue that goes on in such a process, it turns out fine”**

released and removed back into the Western World.

“There was an interaction that would go on in that way, but there was never any area in particular that the Church would try to engage with the tension that was going on between the East and the West and to the extent that it did, it was somewhat limited.”

That is, until Pope John Paul II was elected. It is not true though, nor does Mr Davis claim, that it was not opposed on the ground. The aforementioned Cardinal Mindszenty is of particular interest here, for he was an outspoken critic both of fascist and communist regimes in Hungary.

### Conclave

Mr Davis, at the start of the interview, explains that he isn't a Catholic. The initial idea for the story came through a chance encounter; this seed took root in already fertile soil, however, as Davis already had an interest in the Catholic Church.

Raised in a Baptist community in Kentucky, his first real contact with Catholicism came through a visit to Rome and the Vatican itself. Mr Davis remembers being impressed by the architecture and the general aura of the city.

“I remember the driver pulling up and saying, ‘This is the Vatican and this is the main Church in the Roman Catholic Church,’” Mr Davis says. “And I just remember looking up at this huge building thinking my goodness, this must be an awfully important religion. Because Oak Grove Baptist Church would comfortably sit in the porch at the front entrance.”

**“Mr Davis was at pains to ensure that the book would be respectful of Catholic beliefs, while also defending the possibility that political influence can play a role in papal elections”**

Not long after, Pope Pius XII died and Mr Davis was fascinated by the process which followed in the election of Pope John XXIII. His election was the first to be widely televised. “I remember turning on the news back in the US and the cardinals all arriving and they had on the red robes and all the accoutrements that go with the Catholic religion and leaders. I was just really fascinated by it.”

Next followed the debates among the evangelical community around the 1960 American election, when John F. Kennedy became only the second Catholic to run for the presidency. And finally, while teaching at

West Point, the US military academy, one of the courses was on comparative political systems – one of which was the Vatican's election system.

“That was my first exposure to what happens in a conclave, which is something fascinating because it happens in the Western world however its almost totally opaque, what's going on,” he explains. “As a friend told me years and year ago, I think we know more about how they elect the general secretary of the Soviet Union then how they elect the Pope.”

“It is something that happens in the Western world which has a democratic flavour but which is highly secretive. So looking into the actual workings insofar as one can do that, I found it a fascinating leadership selection process which I think has been highly effective for the Church.”

He also notes that, back in the 1980s, two-thirds of cadets in West Point, the American Sandhurst effectively, were Catholic.

“Looking back on it I think you can see a lot of similarities between the military and the Catholic Church,” he says. “There's ritual, there's a hierarchy – the priest, monsignor, bishop archbishop, cardinal. the military has sergeants, lieutenants, generals – the rules and regulations are quite specific in many ways. The military tends to be an attractive place for Catholics – I don't know if that's still the case or not.”

### Accuracy

Mr Davis was at pains to ensure that the book would be respectful of Catholic beliefs, while also defending the possibility that political influence can play a role in papal elections.

“I know for a devout Catholic is the idea that they summon the Holy Spirit, sing the litany of the saints, seeking guidance,” he says. “If that's your belief, then I wanted to be respectful of that. If on the other hand you accept that there is a degree of political process to this – as we know from some historical examples such as 1903 when the Archduke of Hungary sent a message into the Conclave about who he found acceptable and unacceptable – if you believe that is also a possibility, that is also mentioned by the book.”

In order to ensure that he was doing justice to the Church, Mr Davis sought the advice of a devout Catholic friend. He read the draft for him, to point out where he could any factual mistakes Mr Davis made regarding the process.

“To my great delight, he told me that he learned more than he had ever known about how a conclave works,” Mr Davis

said. “But the second reason I wanted him to read it was to make sure that the book was being respectful to the Church within the boundaries that I had a fictional account – he gave me a thumbs up on it.”

### Faith

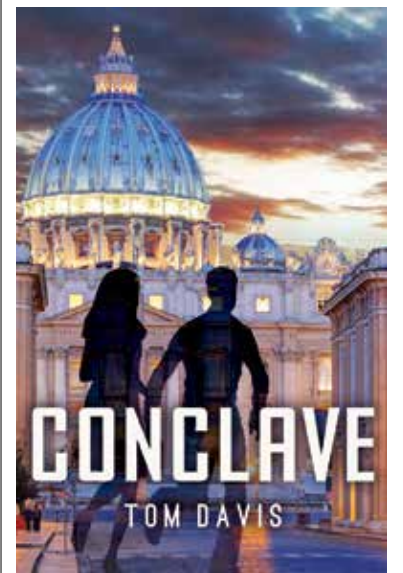
When I ask Mr Davis about his own faith life, he is quite candid with me, explaining that while still a Christian and a theist, he has become disappointed with his own church.

“In all candour, I've been somewhat disappointed in the United States about some of the perspectives taken and the positions offered in the places where my roots are in the Southern Baptist evangelical movement. I've been very disappointed with the insertion they have made into the American political spectrum. Because of that, I've somewhat stepped back from the active religious dimension.”

However, one of the effects of this novel has been to reinvigorate his interest in the Catholic Faith.

**“I think we know more about how they elect the general secretary of the Soviet Union then how they elect the Pope”**

I've a cousin who was a Methodist and is now a Catholic – she and I have been in discussions, my wife and I have been in discussions as well. We've a Catholic church just down the street from us in Seattle and maybe we want to go and approach that. One of the things from the book is that you may get a convert out of it!”



*Conclave* was published by CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform and is available in bookstores worldwide and online.



# Out&About

## Making a meal of it



**LOUTH:** The Augustinian Priory Drogheda keep their spirits up with a home-cooked meal while their cook is away.



**KILDARE:** Junior infant students Emma and Lauryn from Scoil Mhuire Allenwood prepare cards for Catholic Schools week, January 25-29.

## IN SHORT

### Archbishop Eamon Martin welcomes Pope Francis' message highlighting voice of persecuted minorities

Archbishop Eamon Martin, chairman of the Council for Communications of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, "warmly welcomed" this year's "uplifting" World Communications Day message by Pope Francis.

In a statement released January 25, Archbishop Martin said he "warmly welcomes Pope Francis' 2021 World Communications Day message, which emphasises the importance of highlighting the voices of persecuted minorities and truth in reporting".

"In this time where social distancing has become the norm, we have found new ways to connect, to stay close to our loved ones and to share information and news," the archbishop continued. "During these challenging times it is more important than ever that our digital communication is authentic, compassionate and serves to build up rather than knock down or destroy."

"I strongly encourage everyone to read this year's uplifting Communications Day message, which calls on us to 'Come and See' for ourselves, which Pope Francis says should 'serve as an inspiration for all communication that strives to be clear and honest, in the press, on the internet, in the Church's daily preaching and in political or social communi-

cation," Archbishop Martin concluded.

### UNHCR warns asylum under attack at Europe's borders

Alarmed at the increasing frequency of expulsions and pushbacks of refugees and asylum-seekers at Europe's land and sea borders, UNHCR – the UN Refugee Agency – is calling for states to investigate and halt these practices.

"UNHCR has received a continuous stream of reports of some European states restricting access to asylum, returning people after they have reached territory or territorial waters, and using violence against them at borders," said UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Gillian Triggs.

"The pushbacks are carried out in a violent and apparently systematic way. Boats carrying refugees are being towed back. People are being rounded-up after they land and then pushed back to sea. Many have reported violence and abuse by state forces."

People arriving by land are also being informally detained and forcibly returned to neighbouring countries without any consideration of their international protection needs.

"Respecting human lives and refugee rights is not a choice, it's a legal and moral obligation. While countries have the legitimate right to manage their borders in accordance with international law, they must also respect human rights. Pushbacks are simply illegal," said Triggs.



Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in  
advance of publication



**CORK:** Fr Philip Mulryne OP of St Mary’s Dominican Priory, spends time in prayer in St Mary’s Church.



**KILDARE:** Students from Killina National School, show off their prayer boxes, which they made for Catholic Schools week, January 25-29.



**KILDARE:** Students from Killina National School, show off their prayer boxes, which they made for Catholic Schools week, January 25-29.



**KILDARE:** Students from Killina National School, show off their prayer boxes, which they made for Catholic Schools week, January 25-29.

Events

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





# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Poland must support mothers of disabled, children - bishop

● After a ban on aborting disabled children came into force, Poland's Catholic Church urged "all possible help" for pregnant women and single mothers.

"It isn't enough just to implement the law – those governing today, as well as the Church and other groups have a supreme duty to care for parents, women and their disabled children, so none are left alone and unsupported," said Bishop Wieslaw Smigiel, chairman of the bishops' family commission.

"We must take great care not to lose sight of what's truly important in the fervour of political struggle – not prohibitions and punishments, but concern for life from conception to natural death," he told Poland's Catholic Information Agency, KAI, January 28, a day after the ban took effect.

### Archbishop welcomes Biden orders on environmental protection

● Presidential executive orders related to environmental protection and climate change have gained the support of Archbishop Paul Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the US bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

President Joe Biden's actions "resonate deeply with an integral ecology that listens to the 'least of these,'" as expressed in Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, on *Care for*

*Our Common Home*, the archbishop said in a February 3 statement released by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

He added that Biden's steps to restore regulations governing automobile emission standards, hazardous air pollutants and the integrity of the Environmental Policy Act, all of which the USCCB previously supported, "speak of a commitment to restoring public health and the common home".

### Hong Kong Catholic lawyer nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

● A Catholic lawyer who helped found the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong has been nominated to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

Martin Lee Chu-ming, 82, founded Hong Kong's Democratic Party in 1994.

Lee has been demonstrating for universal suffrage in Hong Kong for nearly 40 years.

He was founding chairman in 1990 of Hong Kong's first pro-democracy party, the United Democrats of Hong Kong, and led the party's successor, the Democratic Party, while serving in the territory's legislature for more than two decades, *UCA News* reported.

Norwegian Conservative Party members Mathilde Tybring-Gjedde and Peter Frolic nominated Lee for the prize, calling the lawyer "a source of inspiration for the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong and advocates for freedom around the world".

### Russian Catholic urges bishops to speak out on mass arrests

● A prominent Russian Catholic urged his nation's bishops to condemn the mass arrest and beating of protesters.

Opposition leader Alexei Navalny was jailed February 2 for three-and-a-half years for violating probation while receiving treatment abroad for a near-fatal August nerve agent attack, widely blamed on state security agents.

At least 1,400 demonstrators were detained February 2 bringing to more than 10,000 the number arrested in two weeks of protests.

"Although the Church's moral voice is desperately needed and Catholics are demanding it be raised in the public sphere, our priests and bishops seem to have conveniently concluded it's less risky if they just keep totally silent," said Victor Khroul, a Catholic professor at Moscow's HSE University and prominent religious writer and editor.

## Australian 'conversion therapy' ban has dangerous flaws say religious leaders

A proposed ban on "conversion therapy" for sexual orientation or gender identity in Australia's Victoria state is far too broad and could target normal prayer and conversations between children and parents, Catholic bishops and Muslim leaders warned this week.

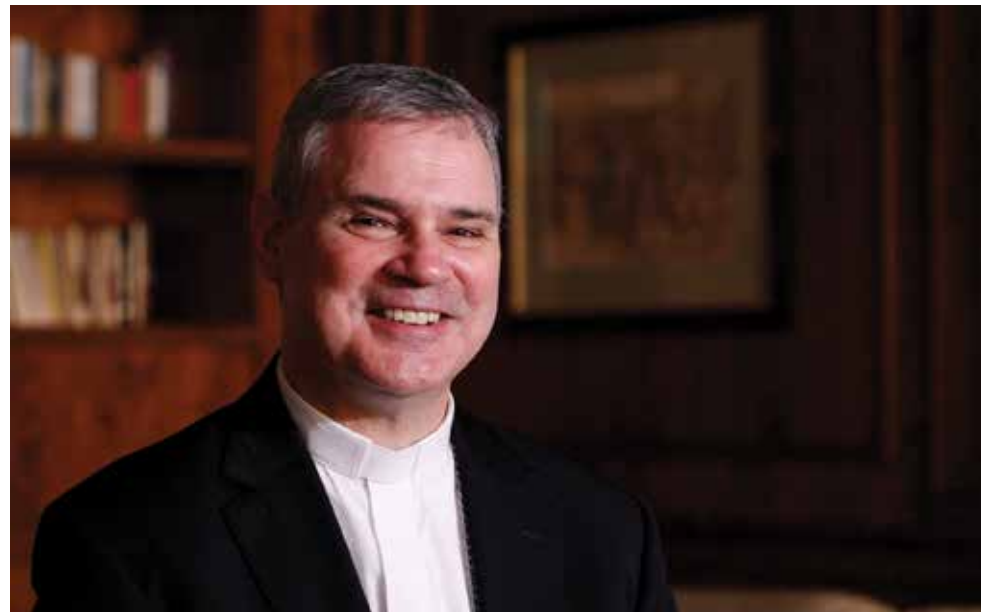
"Unfortunately, this bill doesn't just ban outdated and insidious practices of coercion and harm, which we firmly reject," said the February 1 letter. "The bill also criminalises conversation between children and parents, interferes with sound professional advice, and silences ministers of religion from providing personal attention for individuals freely seeking pastoral care for complex personal situations."

### The letter

The letter to Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews was signed by Archbishop Peter Comensoli of Melbourne, the other Catholic bishops of the dioceses and eparchies of Victoria state, and Mohamed Mohideen, president of the Islamic Council of Victoria. It appeared in several newspaper advertisements.

"At present the bill appears to target people of faith in an unprecedented way, puts limits on ordinary conversations in families, and legislates for what prayer is legal and what prayer is not," the joint Catholic-Muslim letter continued.

"Various amendments can be made to rescue the bill from taking Victoria into strange new territory, in which



Archbishop Peter Comensoli of Melbourne, Australia, is pictured during an interview in Rome June 27, 2019. The archbishop said coercive practices are "an affront to human dignity", but proposed legislation to ban conversion therapy in the Australian state of Victoria goes too far. Photo:CNS

prayerful advice and guidance, freely sought by one adult from another, is criminalised."

The Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill bars any therapy that attempts to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, the Australian *Associated Press* reports. The proposal includes in its definition of conversion therapy "carrying out a religious practice including but not limited to, a prayer-based practice, a deliverance practice or an exorcism".

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission will investigate

alleged conversion practices. The bill is expected to become law after passage in the upper house of the state parliament, the Labour Party-controlled Victorian Legislative Council.

### Penalties

Those who put others through conversion practices would face criminal penalties for injury, up to 10 years in jail. Someone who sends a person out of state to avoid the laws would face criminal sanctions and a fine of up to \$7,700.

The Catholic-Muslim letter said the bill uses vague definitions, "ill-conceived concepts of faith and conversation," and

"scientifically and medically flawed approaches".

"It places arbitrary limitations on parents, families and people of faith," the statement continued. "People change for all kinds of reasons, and should feel free to do so, whether it be on matters of personal identity, gender, sexuality, family association, or religion. Contrary to its intent, this bill obstructs people's freedom by limiting, restricting and removing options for their good, thereby creating undesirable possibilities of harm."

## Biden makes abortion part of family planning program

President Joe Biden's decision to rescind a regulation governing the Title X family planning programme that was enforced by the Trump administration "will force abortion" to be part of the programme and "may be unlawful," said the chairman of the US bishops' pro-life committee.

"We have long supported efforts to ensure that the provision and promotion of abortion is kept physically and financially out of the pre-pregnancy family planning services provided through the Title X programme," said Archbishop

Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, chairman of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

"Abortion takes the life of an already-conceived and growing child, and most Americans agree that abortion should not be used as a method of family planning or as a 'back up' for failed family planning," he said in a statement January 29.

Started in 1970, the Title X Family Planning Program is a federal grant programme for low-income patients to receive family planning and reproductive

health services. It funds services including contraception, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, and breast and cervical cancer screenings.

In February 2019, the Trump administration implemented the "Protect Life Rule" that enforces the Title X rule banning taxpayer funds from being used to promote or provide abortion as family planning. On February 24, 2020, The 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the rule that Biden is revoking.

### Synodal Way' procedures give impression of 'authoritarian despotism'

A German Catholic bishop said last Wednesday that he detected an "authoritarian despotism" in the procedures of the country's controversial "Synodal Way".

In an open letter issued February 3, Bishop Rudolf Voderholzer of Regensburg criticised the format of an

online conference of the Synodal Way.

He also challenged the Synodal Way's executive committee to show greater transparency by, for example, making the minutes of meetings available to all participants.

"Perhaps in this way, one

could dispel the impression of authoritarian despotism that has at times arisen," he wrote.

"Such an approach would be a basic prerequisite for a trusting and successful further progression of the urgently needed renewal of the Church in our country."

The "Synodal Way" is a process bringing together German lay people and bishops to discuss four major topics: the way power is exercised in the Church; sexual morality; the priesthood; and the role of women.





Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

## Happy New Year, Vietnam!



A woman wearing a protective mask sells Lunar New Year decorations in Hanoi, Vietnam, February 3. Vietnamese dioceses have called off some planned ceremonies for Tet, the Lunar New Year, February 6-16, with discovery of the spread of new Covid-19 variant. Photo:CNS

## Priest says thousands of refugees in Tigray deported amidst conflict

In the midst of the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region, thousands of Eritrean refugees who fled oppression and authoritarianism have been deported back to their home country, said an Eritrean Catholic priest.

Fr Mussie Zerai, a priest of the Archdiocese of Asmara, Eritrea, who works with migrants, said the refugees were in Schimelba and Hitsats camps, which hosted about 20,000 refugees. He said about 10,000 of them were deported to Eritrea.

The refugees are part of the 96,000 who were hosted in four camps in Tigray. The Eritreans had fled political persecution, compulsory

military service and war back home.

"About 5,000 managed to escape and reach the Mai-Aini refugee camp, which now houses over 20,000; 5,000 people are missing," Fr Zerai told *Catholic News Service*.

"What happened in the refugee camps in Tigray is a cruel violation of the Geneva Convention of 1951," which relates to the status of a refugee, the priest said. "We know there have been violence and killings."

Fr Zerai, chairman of Habeshia, a humanitarian organisation that advocates for migrants and refugees' rights, said it was not clear what happened to those who

were deported. Some news reports indicate the refugees are being held in prisons.

"We know that they are considered deserters and therefore await their arrest and a period of 'correction and re-education,' according to the regime's modalities. The use of violence and torture often abounds, especially for those who had been staff of the regime's army," said the priest.

"After the punishment period is over, if they survive, they will be forced to return to military service and national service," he added.

Fr Zerai said the government of Ethiopia, which was supposed to guarantee safety in the

camps, bore the greatest responsibility for the latest development in the settlements. He called for an immediate investigation into attacks, rape of women, killing of children and the deportations.

"The UN must investigate every aspect of this horrible fratricidal war," he said.

Fighting in Tigray, a semi-autonomous region in northern Ethiopia, started November 4 after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali sent the federal army to fight the Tigray People's Liberation Front, which ruled the semi-autonomous region.

## Myanmar cardinal appeals for no bloodshed, return to democracy

Cardinal Charles Maung Bo of Yangon has appealed to the people of Myanmar – including the army, which staged a coup February 1 – to remain calm and to work for open lines of communication so democracy can prevail.

"When, in 2015, a peaceful transition to the elected government was effected by the army, that won the admiration of the world. Today, the world tries to understand what went wrong in the following years. Was there a lack of dialogue between the elected civilian authorities and the Tatmadaw?" he

asked, using the official term for Myanmar's armed forces.

He said the world was shocked and angry when it heard the military in Myanmar staged a coup and detained top political leaders, including Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint.

"You all promised peace and genuine democracy," Cardinal Bo said, addressing himself to the military. "Democracy was the streak of hope for solving the problems of this once rich country. This time millions voted

for democracy. Our people believe in peaceful transfer of power."

Noting that the military is once again promising democracy, he said that "Myanmar people are tired of empty promises," and the military would have to back its words with actions to regain people's trust. He suggested that they begin by freeing elected opposition leaders, writers, activists and young people. "They are not prisoners of war; they are prisoners of a democratic process. You promise democracy; start with releasing them."

## Vatican roundup

### Pope Francis adds feast of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus to Church calendar

● Pope Francis has added the memorial of Sts Mary, Martha, and Lazarus to the General Roman Calendar, giving the siblings the combined feast day of July 29.

A decree from the Congregation for Divine Worship said on 2 February that Pope Francis had included the three saints in the General Roman Calendar "considering the important evangelical witness they offered in welcoming the Lord Jesus into their home, in listening to him attentively, in believing that he is the resurrection and the life".

The Pope's decree said that "in the household of Bethany the Lord Jesus experienced the family spirit and friendship of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, and for this reason, the Gospel of John states that he loved them".

The July 29 feast day of Sts Martha, Mary, and Lazarus will now appear in the Church's calendars and liturgical texts as an obligatory memorial, which means it has to be observed.

Pope Francis also added three other saints and Doctors of the Church as optional memorials: St Hildegard of Bingen will be commemorated on September 17, St Gregory of Narek on February 27, and St John of Ávila on May 10.

### 'No criminal misconduct' in mysterious Vatican transfers to Australia

● The Australian Federal Police said on Wednesday 3 February that it had found no evidence of criminal misconduct in its investigation into money transfers from the Vatican to Australia.

Australian authorities have been investigating the suspicious payments, equivalent to about \$7.4 million, for several months.

The federal police (AFP) said in a statement on February 3 that "no criminal misconduct has been identified to date".

"If the AFP receives additional information from Australian or international partners it will be reviewed accordingly," it said.

Austrac, in the last

months of 2020, alleged that over the last six years vast sums of money amounting to €1.4 billion had been sent from the Vatican to Australia, totalling some 47,000 individual transfers.

Working with the Vatican's Supervisory and Financial Information Authority (ASIF), Austrac found that there were only 362 transfers from the Vatican to Australia between 2014 and 2020, amounting to \$7.4 million.

On January 13, Austrac said that it had vastly overestimated the Vatican transfers, attributing the miscalculation to a "computer coding error".

### World must realise common humanity or fall apart, Pope says

● The world must begin to realise its shared humanity in order to live peacefully, otherwise it risks falling apart in endless conflicts, Pope Francis said.

"Today, there is no time for indifference," the Pope said February 4 at a virtual event commemorating the first International Day of Human Fraternity.

"We cannot wash our hands of it, with distance, with disregard, with contempt. Either we are brothers and sisters or everything falls apart. It is the frontier, the frontier on which we have to build; it is the challenge of our century, it is the challenge of our time," he said.

The Pope was among several world and religious leaders who took part in the February 4 virtual event, which was hosted in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, by Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the crown prince. Among those taking part in the online global meeting were Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of al-Azhar University, and António Guterres, secretary-general of the United Nations. The date chosen for the event marks the day in 2019 that Pope Francis and Sheikh el-Tayeb signed a document on promoting dialogue and "human fraternity".





# Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

## Pope's move for women's rights anything but a token gesture

In what's being hailed as a demonstration that Pope Francis is in earnest about empowering women within ecclesiastical structures, last Friday, for the first time ever, the pontiff named a woman as the Promoter of Justice for the Appeals Court of the Vatican City State.

In effect, the Promoter of Justice functions like a District Attorney in the United States, making the case for a criminal charge in front of the justices of the Vatican tribunal whenever a conviction comes up for appeal.

### Summaria

Francis tapped Catia Summaria for the role, which runs for five years. Ms Summaria, who hails from Bari in the southern Italian region of Puglia, previously served as a substitute Procurator General for the Appeals Court of Rome and has a long history of involvement in labour law issues. (That's especially important, since one of the functions of the appeals court is to hear cases arising from the Vatican's labour office.)

The move is consistent with new rules for the Vatican legal system decreed by Pope Francis last year, which gives preference to university professors and veteran jurists in appointing judges and magistrates, on the theory that they already have their own careers and incomes, meaning they're not Vatican lifers, and thus ought to be more independent.

**“St. John Paul II abolished the requirement that the president of the Court of Appeals also be the dean of the Rota, and that its judges also be Rota judges, in 1987”**

Francis has also named Sister Nathalie Becquart as one of two under-secretaries for the Synod of Bishops, which is also a first, but it may well be that Ms Summaria's new role is the more challenging one.

It's certainly not mere tokenism, as the Vatican's criminal justice system is becoming progressively more significant in the Pope Francis era. Whether Ms Summaria, who'll turn 74 in March, ends up regarding it as an honour or a headache, however, remains to be seen.

Historically, the Vatican's Court of Appeals was a fairly sleepy outfit, handling only a few cases a year and with most of its judges doing double duty on the Roman Rota, the Vati-



Pope Francis greets a participant in the general chapter of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master during an audience at the Vatican in this file photo. Photo: CNS

can's main ecclesiastical court, the majority of whose work is processing annulment cases. St John Paul II abolished the requirement that the president of the Court of Appeals also be the dean of the Rota, and that its judges also be Rota judges, in 1987.

In recent years, the Vatican's criminal courts have become more active, including high-profile prosecutions for financial offenses. Immediately, Ms Summaria will inherit an appeal filed by former Vatican bank president Angelo Caloia over his recent conviction in a fraud scheme involving selling bank properties at below-market rates and skimming the balance off the top.

### Vatican court

Mr Caloia is the most senior Vatican official ever to be convicted of a crime in a Vatican court, so his appeal and that of former Vatican bank lawyer Gabriele Liuzzo will be closely watched.

It's also possible that, sooner or later, appeals of convictions arising from the controversial \$200 million London land deal which, so far, has cost five Vatican employees their jobs and, indirectly, may have played a role in the downfall of Italian Cardinal Angelo Becciu, will end up in Ms Summaria's lap.

The Court of Appeals is likely to be even busier in light of a new law

governing the awarding of Vatican contracts issued by Pope Francis last June, intended to centralise the procurement process and thereby achieve economies of scale, as well as to inject transparency and objectivity into the process. As part of that new system, the pontiff assigned responsibility for adjudicating disputes to the tribunal of the Vatican City State with the possibility of appeal to the Court of Appeals.

**“Yet virtually all the crimes for which these laity and junior clergy have been convicted had to be reviewed and approved by the higher-ups”**

Given that there are hundreds of potential contractors out there who may be affected by the new system as it takes shape, the possibilities for disputes seem enormous and the resulting workload for the two courts may be correspondingly greater.

The most significant headache facing Ms Summaria and her colleagues in the Vatican legal system, however, may be – indeed, almost

certainly is – as much political as a matter a strict jurisprudence.

To date, all the high-profile Vatican criminal trials have featured either laity as the principal defendants – including Mr Caloia and Mr Liuzzo in the Vatican bank case; Giuseppe Profiti, former president of Bambino Gesù, the papally-sponsored paediatric hospital in Rome, accused of illicitly using funds to remodel the apartment of Italian Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone; and Francesca Chaouqui, convicted in the original Vatileaks case – or minor clergy, such as Monsignor Lucio Angel Vallejo Balda, also convicted as part of the Vatileaks investigation.

### Culpability

So far, no bishop has yet been indicted or convicted of any criminal offense, leading some to suspect a calculated design to offer up laity or low-ranking clergy as the fall guys while insulating more senior figures from culpability. The Profiti case is considered emblematic, in that direct beneficiary of the manoeuvre for which he was convicted, Cardinal Bertone, wasn't even called as a witness, let alone named in the indictment.

Yet virtually all the crimes for which these laity and junior clergy have been convicted had to be reviewed and approved by the higher-ups. In most systems,

if a crime occurs on an executive's watch, that executive is considered responsible, either by virtue of direct complicity or at least due to negligent oversight.

### Prosecution

At some stage, if the reforms instituted by Pope Francis are to be deemed truly credible, there will have to be a prosecution of a senior figure in the ecclesiastical power structure. When and if that happens, it will be extraordinarily sensitive, placing massive pressure on the lawyers and judges involved to get it right.

To be sure, Ms Summaria is hardly the first person to be appointed to a Vatican position which, in retrospect, ends up seeming an impossible gig, or at least one you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy.

She is, however, one of the few women ever given such an assignment, and perhaps that's the ultimate sign of seriousness about women's empowerment Pope Francis could deliver – offering a woman not simply the same rank and privileges as the men in the system, but the same potential frustration and heartache too.

**i** John L. Allen Jr is Editor of *CruxNow.com*



# In a few minutes on Sunday, Pope delivers a mini-social encyclical



Francis leads the midday recitation of the Angelus January 17, from the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican. Photo: CNS



Inés San Martín

Once again praying from the window of the Apostolic Palace overlooking St Peter's Square, despite rain and the coronavirus pandemic, Pope Francis on Sunday ticked off many of his core social concerns: Peace, life, migration, and the fight against modern-day slavery, all in a matter of minutes.

## Peace and democracy for Myanmar

Francis said he was following with "concern" the unravelling situation in Myanmar, a country "I carry in my heart with much affection" since his visit in 2017. The country's generals overthrew an elected government February, triggering street protests in a country where the military has a history of using violence to quell threats to its power.

Cardinal Charles Maung Bo of Myanmar has called on the military to release the country's elected officials, including Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, "at the earliest" moment possible.

The military accuses Suu Kyi's government of not investigating allegations of voter fraud in the November 2020 elections that her National League for Democracy won in a landslide. Observers say the military may have feared that Suu Kyi would use her supermajority in parliament to change the country's constitution, which the army crafted to reserve several powers to itself.

In his February 3 message, Cardinal Bo called the coup "unexpected" and "shocking", and said that he was praying "for an end forever to the periodic darkness that envelops our dear nation".

On Sunday Francis implicitly backed the cardinal, praying for those "who have the responsibility in the country to place themselves, sincerely, at the disposal of the common good, promoting social justice and national stability for a harmonious democratic coexistence".

## Unaccompanied migrant children

Migration is never far from Pope Francis's mind, and he often sneaks references into his speeches and prayers. Sunday was no exception, focusing on the thousands of children who flee their countries looking for better opportunities or escaping war, violence and hunger.

"I would like to make an appeal in favour of unaccompanied migrant minors," Francis said. "There are so many."

## One in four of those enslaved today, including by forced marriages, are children

He mentioned having been informed about the "dramatic situation" of minors in the "Balkan route", but didn't give specifics. Reports speak of hundreds of minors stranded on the border between Bosnia and Croatia, living in makeshift camps with freezing temperatures and no access to water or electricity. An estimated 200 people a day make it to the border, most departing from Turkey and Greece, after fleeing northern Africa, Iraq or Syria. They have to go through Bulgaria, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia Herze-

**"The goal is to work for an economy that does not favour, not even indirectly, these ignoble trafficking, that is, an economy that never makes men and women a commodity, an object"**

govina, and Croatia before reaching Italy or Austria through Slovenia.

It's a long and strenuous journey, crossing mountains and snow-covered forests, with virtually no facilities for migrants. Many of the children of the migrant crisis were born along the "Balkan Route", which, for many families, began several years ago.

Few families are successful in reaching the increasingly inhospitable central Europe, with most being stopped by Croatian police and searched, allegedly often robbed and then pushed back into Bosnia, where they spend months stranded. In December, a fire destroyed a migrant camp in Bosnia, making a dire situation even worse for over 2,000 people who lost all of what little they had.

## Italy's Day for Life

Celebrated under the theme of "Freedom and Life", the Italian bishops conference promoted a day of prayer for life Sunday, and the Pope urged society to "be helped to heal from all attacks on life, so that it is protected at every stage".

He also referred to an Italian "demographic winter".

"In Italy, births have dropped and the future is in danger," Francis warned. "Let's take this concern and try to make sure that this demographic winter ends and a new spring of boys and girls blossoms."

Italy's fertility rate – the average number of children per woman – is one of the lowest in the world, with 1.3 live births per woman as of 2020. For a generation to exactly replace itself, 2.1 live births are needed.

Pope Francis has referred to the demographic winter in Italy and Europe several times, including during his visit to Bulgaria, in 2019, when he said this winter "has descended like an ice curtain on a large part of Europe, the consequence of a diminished confidence in the future".

## Day of prayer against human trafficking

Pope Francis highlighted the February 8 World Day of Prayer against Trafficking, one of the world's largest illegal industries, that according to the International Labour Organization affects over 40 million people worldwide who are forced to work in slave-like conditions, being bought and sold as property or forced into prostitution.

One in four of those enslaved today, including by forced marriages, are children.

The day of prayer is marked on the feast of St Josephine Bakhita, considered a patron saint for trafficking victims. Born in 1868 in Darfur, Sudan, she was kidnapped at the age of nine and sold into slavery, first in her country and later in Italy. She died in 1947 and was declared a saint by Pope St John Paul II in 2000.

This year's day of prayer will take place under the motto of "Economy without Trafficking in Persons", and will be held online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and it will bring together all the realities of the world that are committed against trafficking in persons.

"The goal is to work for an economy that does not favour, not even indirectly, these ignoble traffick-

ing, that is, an economy that never makes men and women a commodity, an object," Francis said Sunday. "[An economy at the] service to men and women, but not one that uses them as goods."

**"Migration is never far from Pope Francis's mind, and he often sneaks references into his speeches and prayers"**

The World Day is coordinated by Talitha Kum, the network of consecrated life against trafficking in persons of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), in partnership with the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Vatican's Dicastery for Service to Integral Human Development, Caritas Internationalis, the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations, the Focolare Movement and many other organisations involved at the local level.

A message from Pope Francis will be broadcast during 8-hour live marathon, that will be available through YouTube and with simultaneous translations into five languages, including English and Spanish.

Pope Francis established the World Day of Prayer against Human Trafficking in 2015, but modern-day slavery has been a concern of his since he was archbishop of Buenos Aires.

**Inés San Martín**, Rome Bureau Chief for Cruxnow.com



# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Worthwhile if Irish exorcists wrote about their ministry

**Dear Editor,** In recent times there has been an increase of interest in the ministry of exorcism in the Church. Jason Osborne's article, *'Evil One exploiting Covid-19 to bring about fear says famed Dublin exorcist'* [IC 28/01/2021], quoting veteran exorcist Fr Pat Collins, prompts this letter.

Is this a clear demonstration of "demonic obsession" where the demon, apparently strikes "the mind of an individual" or perhaps in this case, "the collective mind" of society at large. Could it possibly be something psychological in nature? Fr Collins states: "I think that there's a possibil-

ity that the Evil One is exploiting the current situation to bring people into fear and anxiety."

During lockdown I have spent a little extra time exploring the ministry of exorcism as a ministry of healing, noting that it is a prayer of the Church. My main sources were YouTube talks and interviews. These were given by two Vatican trained exorcists, namely Fr Vincent Lampert, diocesan exorcist for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and Fr Garry Thomas, diocesan exorcist for the Diocese of San Jose, California.

Nevertheless, wouldn't it be worthwhile, if our own Irish diocesan exor-

cists, duly appointed by their bishop, share something of their ministry with us readers of *The Irish Catholic*. I'd be interested in how Irish diocesan exorcists work collaboratively with health care professionals and prayer teams in their ministry of exorcism in order to come to a true discernment of cases. Wouldn't it be illuminative if our Irish diocesan exorcists write something simple, but substantial enough, to enlighten us on our way?

*Yours etc.,  
Fr John Denvir SMA  
Wilton, Co. Cork*

## Context needed on mother and baby homes

**Dear Editor,** One of the objections I have regarding the many statements on the mother and baby homes issue is the absence of context. Ireland in the 20s, 30s and 40s right up to the year 1960, was a broken economy. Civil war, primitive farming methods and the decimation of the famine left a terrible mark on the nation. While this does not excuse callous behaviour, it can harden people. "Hard times create hard people" is a saying.

Shoeless children on the street were a common sight in those decades, not to mind appalling living conditions. Life outside the institutions was often little better than inside and being a nun was not a privilege but a thankless labour. A little balance please when judging the past from these moneyed years.

*Yours etc.,  
Cecil Roberts  
Rathmines, Dublin*



## Lockdowns leading to 'severe' issues with alcohol

**Dear Editor,** Reading Mary Kenny's piece about alcohol in relation to the lockdown was sobering – pardon the pun [IC 28/01/2020]. Her writing was made more poignant because she was speaking from her own personal experience of quitting alcohol and of alcohol addiction in her family. There has been quite a bit of research done on how restrictions have led to people drinking more and particularly for those who already have a problem. This is leading to more domestic abuse – of partners and children. I recently read about several cases published by the Child Care Law Reporting Project which high-

lighted the growing impact of alcohol abuse on children. They were harrowing to say the least. Parents lose the ability to parent their children when they are consistently abusing alcohol.

The pandemic and the subsequent restrictions are causing people to lose hope and turn to whatever comforts them it seems, unfortunately a lot of the things that comfort us are bad if not taken in moderation. Alcohol is most certainly being overused as a medication by many to get through this – in some ways you can't really blame people – but this will lead to severe problems for individuals and for society and something must be

done. Mrs Kenny mentioned that people don't have the ability to do many of the things that might help them reduce their alcohol intake and their cravings – unfortunately I believe we will not know how many people will be devastated by the effects of lockdown after lockdown and the draconian restrictions we face until many years from now. Regarding alcohol specifically, I will pray for Mrs Kenny and her family member who is struggling, as well as anyone who feels enslaved by alcohol.

*Yours etc.,  
Tim Dempsey  
Ballyfermot, Co. Dublin*

## Restrictions on funerals are necessary

**Dear Editor,** I refer to your editorial regarding numbers attending funerals [IC 28/01/2021]. I was at a family member's funeral before Christmas where limited numbers were allowed but not as limited as now. Unfortunately, a number of people contracted Covid-19 at funerals over Christmas. I know of at least two cases where this happened (not from the funeral that I attended). I think the Government has no choice but to do this in a policy where restrictions are in place in other areas of life. I think the risk of infection is where the cruelty lies. It seems to be the only way that all countries are able to deal with this pandemic; until some better way is discovered, I see no other choice.

I wholeheartedly agree with the article about elite sport being played it should not be allowed when other gatherings are banned. I do not agree with the comparison with supermarkets. Especially now people go around a supermarket and do their shopping without lingering. Contact of 15 minutes is needed to pick up the infection. I never see anyone interacting in the supermarket, contact with staff is minimal too. The restrictions are hard in all areas of life, but we can just bear with them while looking forward with hope to them coming to an end.

*Yours etc.,  
Marian Lindsay  
Artane, Dublin*

## Despite restrictions we have little to complain about

**Dear Editor,** one of the saddest aspects of social media discourse in this pandemic has been seeing comments, sometimes with very little attempt at good manners or understanding, berating priests and bishops for obeying guidelines and laws that are temporary and are in place to reduce opportunities to transmit Covid-19. In Ireland we are very fortunate to know that the sacrifice of Mass continues to be offered daily behind our church doors and that these doors will open to congregants when the level of disease has diminished. There are Catholics in other parts of the world who have little or no opportunity to attend Mass, who face persecution, prison, and see no end in sight to their trials. Indeed this is the situation our ancestors found themselves in during Penal times. When viewed this way we have little to complain of and much to be thankful for.

*Yours etc.,  
Susanna Braswell  
Wicklow town, Wicklow*

## facebook community

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

### Archbishop warns Dáil euthanasia push sends message some lives don't matter

It's time the Church got vocal about what's happening in our country. Please continue to speak up for what is right. – **Sheila Kelly**

Exactly. It will encourage more abuse. – **Caroline Hendron**

We badly need our Church leaders to stand up for us without fear or favour. Enough is enough. – **Mary Carroll**

Anyone supporting euthanasia or assisted suicide is a turkey voting for Christmas. – **Julia Anne Lombard**

He's right. If you look at other countries where it has been introduced, such as the Netherlands, it has quickly become abused by some of society's most vulnerable people. – **Thomas O'Mahony**

Well said! Thank God someone is speaking out against this deplorable legislation. – **Cliodhna Donnelly**

Thank you Archbishop Farrell for speaking out. It appears fear of suffering is driving the call for euthanasia without thinking through the long-term consequences of such a law on society or how it would radically change the ethos of medical practice. Are we to ignore the good holistic care offered by palliative and hospice care ensuring a peaceful, pain-free, natural dignified death instead of a cold, calculated and premature ending of a life. – **Mary Fallon**

When we lose the sense of the sanctity of human life in the womb, our young people with a future, then unfortunately killing the elderly who have lived a life is an acceptable action. This should be opposed. – **Edward Duffin**

Agree with our archbishop. We need to get the message to our politicians that we don't want euthanasia in our country. – **Mary C Kelly**

### 'Evil One' exploiting Covid-19 to bring about fear says famed Dublin exorcist

Especially when we are denied Mass, and the children are unable to make their Holy Communion, Confirmation, Confession. For those who would say that there is online, please may I respectfully ask that they respect those who wish to go to Mass, to receive the Sacraments and Communion. – **Aniharg Adain**

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

## Letters to the Editor

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

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

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



# Around the world



▲ **USA:** People in Brighton Beach, N.Y., make a giant snow ball during a winter storm. Photos: CNS

◀ **FLORIDA:** Fans in Tampa, react during the first quarter of Super Bowl LV between the Kansas City Chiefs and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on February 7, amid the coronavirus pandemic.



**GERMANY:** Homeless people from Romania and Bulgaria are pictured under a bridge in Berlin, February 4, during the Covid-19 pandemic.



**ITALY:** People pray inside the Cathedral of St Agatha in Catania, Italy, February 2. It was the last day it was open before closing during what would usually be the annual feast of St Agatha procession.



**MEXICO:** A woman wearing a face mask sits at the empty food area of a market in Tlacolula de Matamoros, during the coronavirus pandemic.



**VATICAN:** Pope Francis is pictured with diplomats accredited to the Holy See during an audience in the Hall of Blessings at the Vatican, February 8.





# The triumph of good over evil

A colleague once challenged Pierre Teilhard de Chardin with this question. You believe that good will ultimately triumph over evil; well, what if we blow up the world with an atomic bomb, what happens to goodness then? Teilhard answered this way. If we blow up the world with an atomic bomb, that would be a two-million-year setback; but goodness will triumph over evil, not because I wish it, but because God promised it and, in the resurrection, God showed that God has the power to deliver on that promise. He is right. Except for the resurrection, we have no guarantees about anything. Lies, injustice, and violence may well triumph in the end. That is certainly how it looked the day Jesus died.

**“At the end of the day, which is not exactly like the end of the day in a Hollywood movie, God raises truth and love from their grave and gives them the final word”**

Jesus was a great moral teacher and his teachings, if followed, would transform the world. Simply put, if we all lived the Sermon on the Mount, our world would be loving, peaceful, and just; but self-interest is often resistant to moral



**Fr Rolheiser**

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

teaching. From the Gospels, we see that it was not Jesus' teaching that swayed the powers of evil and ultimately revealed the power of God. Not that. The triumph of goodness and the final power of God were revealed instead through his death, by a grain of wheat falling in the ground and dying and so bearing lots of fruit. Jesus won victory over the powers of the world in a way that seems antithetical to all power. He did not overpower anyone with some intellectually superior muscle or by some worldly persuasion. No, he revealed God's superior power simply by holding fast to truth and love even as lies, hatred, and self-serving power were crucifying him. The powers of the world put him to death, but he trusted that somehow God would vindicate him, that God would have the last word. God did. God raised him

from the dead as a testimony that he was right and the powers of the world were wrong, and that truth and love will always have the last word.

## Lesson

That is the lesson. We too must trust that God will give truth and love the last word, irrespective of what things look like in the world. God's judgment on the powers of this world does not play out like a Hollywood film where the bad guys get shot in the end by a morally superior muscle and we get to enjoy a catharsis. It works this way: everyone gets judged by the Sermon on the Mount, albeit self-interest generally rejects that judgment and seems to get away with it. However, there is a second judgment that everyone will submit to, the resurrection. At the end of the day, which is not

exactly like the end of the day in a Hollywood movie, God raises truth and love from their grave and gives them the final word. Ultimately, the powers of the world will all submit to that definitive judgment.

## Guarantees

Without the resurrection, there are no guarantees for anything. That is why St Paul says that if Jesus was not resurrected then we are the most deluded of all people. He is right. The belief that the forces of untruth, self-interest, injustice, and violence will eventually convert and give up their worldly dominance can sometimes look like a possibility on a given night when the world news looks better. However, as happened with Jesus, there is no guarantee that these powers will not eventually turn and crucify most everything that is honest, loving, just, and peaceful in our world. The history of Jesus and the history of the world testify to the fact that we cannot put our trust in worldly powers even when for a time they can look trustworthy. The powers of self-interest and violence crucified Jesus. They were doing it long before and have continued doing it

long after. These powers will not be vanquished by some superior moral violence, but by living the Sermon on the Mount and trusting that God will roll back the stone from any tomb in which they bury us.

**“St Paul says that if Jesus was not resurrected then we are the most deluded of all people”**

Many people, perhaps most people, believe there is a moral arc to reality, that reality is bent towards goodness over evil, love over hate, truth over lies, and justice over injustice, and they point to history to show that, while evil may triumph for a while, eventually reality rectifies itself and goodness wins out in the end, always. Some call this the law of karma. There is a lot of truth in that belief, not just because history seems to bear it out, but because when God made the universe, God made a love-oriented universe and so God wrote the Sermon on the Mount both into the human heart and into the very DNA of the universe itself. Physical creation knows how to heal itself, so too does moral creation. Thus, good should always triumph over evil – but, but, given human freedom, there are no guarantees – except for the promise given us in the resurrection.

**“We too must trust that God will give truth and love the last word, irrespective of what things look like in the world”**



# Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, February 11, 2021

## Personal Profile

A life on the missions

Page 34



# Romance during restrictions



**L**ast year's St Valentine's Day probably would have been a little more ostentatious if we'd known the kind of year we were in for. Perhaps we'd have made an effort to go on a trip we'd always wanted to, somewhere suitably romantic like Paris or Rome.

Maybe we'd have booked a table at a restaurant that always eluded us during the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Or maybe we'd have gone to a big event, like a concert or a show of some kind, experiencing a crowd for one of the last times in who knows how long?

The major lesson to be learned from all of this is never



**Restrictions may make romance more difficult, but it's certainly not impossible, writes Jason Osborne**

to take anything, or more importantly, anyone, for granted. Those fortunate enough to find themselves in the embrace of a good, safe relationship, whether it be a marriage or otherwise, should take the lessons of the last year and apply them to this year's celebration of St Valentine's Day, if making a fuss of it is your thing.

### Activities

Doing things together is a key part of any relationship, and as any book proclaiming the Church's teachings on relationships and sexuality will tell you, wholesome activities and occasions are necessary injections into the daily life of a relationship that allow both of

you to come to know and love each other afresh.

Our ability to travel together, even attend Mass together has been taken from us, but that's no excuse for failing to grow in love of one another. Husbands and wives, engaged couples and boyfriends and girlfriends ought to make a special effort for each other this year, insofar as they are able.

For those who live apart, options are limited at the moment, but that doesn't mean there's nothing to be done. Video calls are a poor substitute for the physical presence of a loved one, but some fun can be had all the same.

### Love at a distance

As mentioned above, for those who are physically separated from their fiancé/e, boyfriend or girlfriend during this time, video calls over Zoom, Skype, Messenger or whatever service you prefer, can provide for an enjoyable evening. As this form of interaction is already a concession, everything must be done to ensure the occasion is as romantic as possible. Light a candle, listen to some music, avail of the plethora of streaming services the internet has to offer, or play some of the innovative video call games that were

» Continued on Page 33





## AND EVENTS

### ALCOHOL DEATHS HIT RECORD HIGH DURING PANDEMIC

The *BBC* reported that deaths caused by alcohol hit a record high during the first nine months of 2020, according to provisional figures from England and Wales. Between January and September, 5,460 deaths were registered with this cause of death, which is up 16% on the same months in 2019. It is the biggest number recorded since records began in 2001. The high rates stretched the period of the first lockdown, and afterwards as well. The peak was 12.8 deaths per 100,000 people in the first three months of 2020 and remained at this level through to September, which is higher than any other period on record. Similar to past years, rates of male alcohol-specific deaths were twice those seen for women. Experts say the coronavirus pandemic will have had little effect on how the data was gathered and recorded.

### TRAFFIC NOISE IMPAIRS SONGBIRDS' ABILITIES

A test of songbirds' problem solving skills has revealed how traffic noise impairs the birds' abilities. Zebra finches were set a "battery of foraging tasks" in the presence or absence of noise. Scientists found that the sound of passing cars diminished the birds' ability to find food. The results were published in the journal *Proceedings B*, and they suggested that noise pollution has "previously unconsidered consequences for wildlife". Lead researcher, Professor Christopher Templeton from Pacific University in Oregon, US, said "Just hearing a car drive by is enough to really affect their performance". The study was carried out in a behavioural laboratory with zebra finches. The researchers set the birds the tasks both in a quiet setting and while a recording of road traffic was played. "They're almost twice as likely to do [the foraging tasks] correctly if they don't hear traffic noise," Professor Templeton explained.

### SET TIMES OF THE DAY BETTER FOR EXERCISE

A new study suggests that it is better for, at least some people, to work out at certain times of day. The study, published in the *Physiological Reports* journal, looked at men at high risk for Type 2 diabetes and found that those who completed afternoon workouts upped their metabolic health far more than those who performed the same exercise earlier in the day. The abstract of the study suggests that the finding is related to the fact that metabolism and the circadian rhythm are tightly interconnected. Research into the circadian rhythm has also shown that disrupting our normal, 24-hour circadian patterns can have a negative impact on our health. Cited as evidence for this are many people who work overnight shifts, whose sleep patterns are less regular. Such people tend to be at a higher risk of metabolic problems such as obesity and Type 2 diabetes.

# Breaking down Ireland's vaccine options



The year of 2021 has already been marked by more than 100,000 new Covid cases and tragically over 1000 deaths, just at a time when we looked forward in hope after the arrival of new vaccines. The emergence of new viral strains which are up to 70% more transmissible coupled with increased social contact and travel over the Christmas period even catapulted Ireland albeit briefly into having the worst Covid figures globally. The number of new infections is so high that even with lockdown the decline to pre-Christmas levels will take months.

**“More than 200,000 doses have been administered in Ireland to health care workers and nursing home residents though most as of yet have only received their first dose”**

About 70% of infections are now due to the UK or B117 variant which has a slightly altered spike protein making it easier to latch onto and infect cells which accounts for the greater transmissibility. South African and Brazilian strains have accumulated mutations conferring similar properties.

All focus must now be on the roll out of vaccines which has unfortunately been thwarted by shortage of supply. More than 200,000 doses have been administered in Ireland to health care workers and nursing home residents though most as of yet have only received their first dose. Even in the

## Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



UK, authorities have given permission for the second dose of both the AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccine to be given up to 8-9 weeks later than initially indicated due to limited supplies.

### Highest vaccination rate

However, data from Israel, which has the highest vaccination rate in the world, showed that 42% of their 834 critically ill patients had already received one dose of the Pfizer vaccine. Reassuringly, this figure was only 2% for those who had got their second jab and the proportion over 60 with severe illness is also now decreasing there. Based on lab studies, the Pfizer vaccine appears to have high efficacy against both the African and UK strains and animal studies suggest it reduces viral transmission too.

The Irish Government has set high hopes on the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine which has been called a "game changer". This is because it can be stored at fridge temperatures for up to 6 months making it ideal for GP distribution. Indeed, it's now been given to older adults in the UK and we are due our first supplies.

However, German authorities have advised

against its use in the over 65s. So are these concerns warranted? The main issue arises from the small sample size in the trial. In fact, based on published data, only 660 participants aged over 65 got the vaccine in which only two Covid cases were reported. Based on this, it's simply not possible to say what the efficacy is in older adults. Indeed, it's may not be as effective, though 100% of over 65's produced antibodies after the second dose and nobody in the trial developed severe Covid or were hospitalised. The overall efficacy was initially reported at about 62-70%. However, a report in *The Lancet* last week based on further analysis found 76%



protection from day 22 after the first dose that remained for up to 12 weeks, meaning a 3 month delay for the second jab is feasible. Data also suggest it may reduce viral transmission by about 67%.

At least two other vaccines using similar viral vector technology are effective. The preliminary results of a single shot vaccine by Johnson and Johnson showed an overall efficacy of 66% at preventing moderate to severe Covid after 28 days. However, when looking specifically at severe cases it was 85% effective. The trial included 43,783 people with a third aged over 60 and the vaccine can be kept at fridge temperatures. Many

months after its approval by Russia, the interim results of the Sputnik V vaccine were also published in *The Lancet*. Based on data from over 20,000 participants, it was 91% effective at preventing symptomatic Covid with protection also observed in the over 60s.

**“The EU and our Government must now make trojan efforts to secure agreements to deliver on vaccine supplies”**

Finally, another promising vaccine called Novavax is based on a new technique which uses the actual coronavirus spike protein. Early results from a trial of over 15,000 (27% were aged over 65) revealed an efficacy of 96% dropping to 89% for the UK variant. Approval is likely in the coming months and the EU is in negotiations to place orders. It can also be stored in a standard fridge and so is ideal for GP's. The Moderna mRNA vaccine which has also arrived in Ireland matches Pfizer's 95% efficacy and based on lab studies is probably also effective against the UK strain.

The EU and our Government must now make trojan efforts to secure agreements to deliver on vaccine supplies. Covid is a global problem and mutations around the world threaten the efficacy of our vaccines not least in poorer countries where access is also vital.

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



» Continued from Page 31



developed during the first lockdown – even go as far as cooking the same meal and enjoying the same drink if that's possible. Doing whatever is necessary to set the same scene as your other half goes some way towards cutting the distance between you.

### Conversation

One of the advantages of long-distance relationships, whether the other person is abroad or living locally and just off-limits to you because of the restrictions, is that it affords you the opportunity to have the conversations that might otherwise slip by, caught up as we are in the distraction of the other person.

## “If you're sharing a moment with someone over video call this Valentine's Day, consider entering into those conversations that are so often neglected today”

Spectacle and glamour are largely off-limits to us this St Valentine's Day, but love isn't. The Church understands true love to be that which points towards and leads to God, and the way this manifests itself in relationships is in marriage and the procreation and education of children.

If you're sharing a moment with someone over video call this Valentine's Day, consider entering into those conversations that are so often neglected today. It might not be the most obviously romantic date, but it's certainly one of the most loving things you can do.

This is particularly important for couples who are at the dating or engagement stage of their relationship. If you haven't considered them so far, some topics to consider are:

- Hopes and expectations for the relationship/marriage
- Our likes, dislikes and our interests

- View of the Faith and role of religion in the relationship
- The role God plays in our lives
- Children and parenthood

They are but a selection of things to bring up in conversation, but they are topics that often fall by the wayside these days, caught up as we are in more exciting, sensate aspects of the relationship.

It may not be the most riveting relationship plan you've ever heard of, or make for the most appealing Valentine's Day schedule, but it's necessary if we're ever to find ourselves in the sort of relationship that we long for. Assigning books that ask probing questions or stimulate thought about these topics and reading them together is a good way to go about this introspective exercise.

### Date night

For married couples, I hear the stresses of everyday life often get in the way of romance, or at least threaten to. This Valentine's Day, why not be intentional about setting aside some quality time for one another? What starts on Valentine's Day could even be institutionalised, with weekly date nights being taken up.

It might seem fanciful, but it's incredibly important to be direct about setting this time apart for one another, no matter how busy you find yourselves. My spiritual director remarked one day that we have to learn to see the distinction

between things that are urgent but not important, and things that are important but not urgent.

Too often, spouses place tending to each other in the latter category, going months and months without making real, quality time for one another – because it's not urgent.

### Date night ideas

Restricted as we are, an exciting or enjoyable date night naturally requires a bit of creativity, innovation and humour, but there are many options. You may have tired these activities out at this stage, but the important thing is to do them out of love of the other – and then it'll be a love “ever new” as St Augustine said. Some activities include:

- A wine tasting night or a cocktail night
- Preparing a special meal together
- A movie and popcorn night
- A spa day
- Browsing old pictures together

The last suggestion works incredibly well – particularly if you manage to come across pictures from before your time together. My fiancée and I have done this on a couple of occasions and not only does it provide a laugh, it inspires plenty of conversation.

### Buying one another a targeted gift

You may or may not have done your share of online shopping since lockdown descended last March, and while gifts are not a substitute for love, they can certainly be a lovely and simple expression of it, particularly if thought has gone into it.

A rule of thumb for selecting a lasting gift is to choose something you know they won't only be happy with, but something they need – whether that's a new pair of earphones or a nice, warm coat with which to face the Irish winter. Flowers always work, too.

These are but a few suggestions with which to woo a loved one this Valentine's Day, but if implemented regularly, there's no reason these dark days can't be just as romantic as the days of old.



# Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



Parents often protect their children from worry, through the simple expedient of not telling them about worrying things. There's certainly no need to worry small children about crimes such as murder, for example. Yet we do tell them about dangers of traffic, as the worrying knowledge that cars can hurt or kill you encourages them to be careful near roads.

When someone a child cares about is seriously sick, we often choose not to worry them unduly. Yet, on the other hand, I feel that older children have a right to know when those they love are unwell, and in need of their love and prayers.

The other day, we found out that a very close and much-loved older relative had contracted coronavirus while in hospital. My initial reaction was anger at the Government's failure to protect medically vulnerable long-stay hospital patients by adding them to the vaccination priority list. Older people in hospital are easily as vulnerable as those in nursing homes. After all, over 800 people contracted coronavirus in hospital in the past month alone.

My instinct on hearing the news was to go to the kids and say, “you won't believe what's happened...” I stopped myself, as I knew they were already worried, and I also thought of the many times they'd heard how dangerous the coronavirus can be for older people. I resolved to speak to my wife to decide what to do.

She was initially against telling them, saying that it would only worry them unnecessarily.

I wasn't so sure. I remembered being 10 and 11 myself when my grandparents died, first my grandmother and then my grandfather the following year. I appreciated being told that they were sick and being brought to see them in hospital regularly. I appreciated being told when they were at risk of dying too, as it meant that I could make the most of the time I had with them. I still remember seeing my grandfather early in the evening of the night he died. I'm glad that I was there, and not being sheltered from the reality of death. Being told made me feel grown up, and trusted. I felt that the older two kids were

now old enough to understand. Above all, I simply felt they had a right to know when someone they love is unwell, or is facing a challenging illness. I felt it would be wrong to deceive them.

We agreed that we might tell the older two, after the picture was clearer as to the



initial course of the illness, so that we could give them the facts and, hopefully, reassure them that it looked to be a mild case. After a few days, we spoke to the doctor and it was clear that it looked to be a reasonably mild case so far. There was of course the risk of it suddenly deteriorating, as coronavirus can do for an unlucky minority of patients, yet all was well for now. Hearing this, I resolved to tell the older children when I could.

The next day, when the smaller two were with the childminder, I called the older kids into my room and told them the news. They were initially shocked, and looked at me in disbelief. My son buried his head in the duvet. For a moment, I wondered if I'd made a mistake. But I was quickly able to make light of it and tell them that it was going ok so far. I told them the tests were promising, and that the symptoms cleared after one day. They laughed at the thought of her saying: “I don't know what all this talk of coronavirus is about, I feel absolutely great!”

They said they would say “even more prayers” for her. For we are not out of the woods yet, as the critical and most risky phase of the illness approaches. I asked my son if he was worried now, and if he was glad I'd told him. He smiled and said he was not worried at all but that “I'd have been really cross if I found out afterwards!” I was relieved, and I saw clearly that it would have been a betrayal to keep them in the dark.



# A life on the missions

## Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

**T**he Philippines has one of the largest Catholic populations in the world – a country of more than 100 million people, of which 80% are Catholic and 90% are Christian. This is the legacy of missionaries from the 1500s down to today – missionaries such as Fr Donal Bennett of Omagh, who spent forty years ministering to the Filipino population.

Fr Bennett grew up, as many other Irish men and women in the 1940s and 1950s, within a Catholic culture. He attended Mass regularly, sung in the Church choir and joined the Legion of Mary. He attended Catholic primary and secondary schools, although he was a late graduate, having dropped out to work with his father.

**“The Columban fathers were there, who planned the diocese and even the incoming bishop was a Columban called Harry Burns”**

Then by the age of 20, he and a friend decided to hitchhike their way across England, heading south and crossing over into France. They spent time at Lourdes, where they had a great time, he says, dancing and taking part in all the local ceremonies.

“The following November I had this inclination or thought that

I should be a priest,” Fr Bennett tells *The Irish Catholic*. “When I mentioned this to my parents they said, ok, ok. Then I applied into the Columban fathers central house in Dalgan Park, Navan and was told that they’d accept me alright but I’d need a grammar school certificate of some kind.”

So Fr Bennett returned to school for a year and received his GCSE. He entered Dalgan Park in 1954 and in December 1960, he was ordained to the priesthood. A year later, he went to the Philippines.

“The Columban fathers had been given a civil province called Zambale which we later got turned into a prelature and into a full-blooded diocese,” Fr Bennett says. “The Columban fathers were there, who planned the diocese and even the incoming bishop was a Columban

called Harry Burns. I was given time to learn the language which is called Filipino or Tagalog. I was assigned to various parishes over the next 30-40 years, all of which was quite an experience.”

### Welcoming

Fr Bennett found the Filipino people to be very welcoming: “They had to go through an awful lot under the Spanish, the Americans, the Japanese and then the Americans again. Through it all, there were all kinds of mix-ups in religions and churches and so on. We were given this particular diocese because it was very much in need of renewing and bringing local Filipino vocations which was one of the jobs I was assigned to in my early years. Thank God that down through the years, by 2000, there were enough priests

and local clergy to take over – mission accomplished as far as we were concerned.”

Fr Bennett worked in the Philippines in a time of great turmoil following the imposition of martial law in the 1970s. Much of his work, he says, was focused on “promoting basic human rights, justice and Christianity”. They achieved this through building Christian communities and churches, particularly in poor communities and slums.

“In most cases that was not too hard, people were ready and willing to participate in the running of their own parish and their own church,” Fr Bennett explains. “A lot of that was through the area of basic Christian communities. Then the youth angle of that, in many parishes I had a very strong youth organisation who

definitely got into the spirit of the thing. Many of them had no work, they were aged say 16-24, that sort of thing.

“The whole lot of it was a choice to be able to work with, through and in all these little groups of churches and Bible studies and Bible enactments. What I mean by that is putting the teachings of the Bible into their every day life. It’s hard to gauge the success of something like that, but I think the Lord was happy enough with what we were doing!”

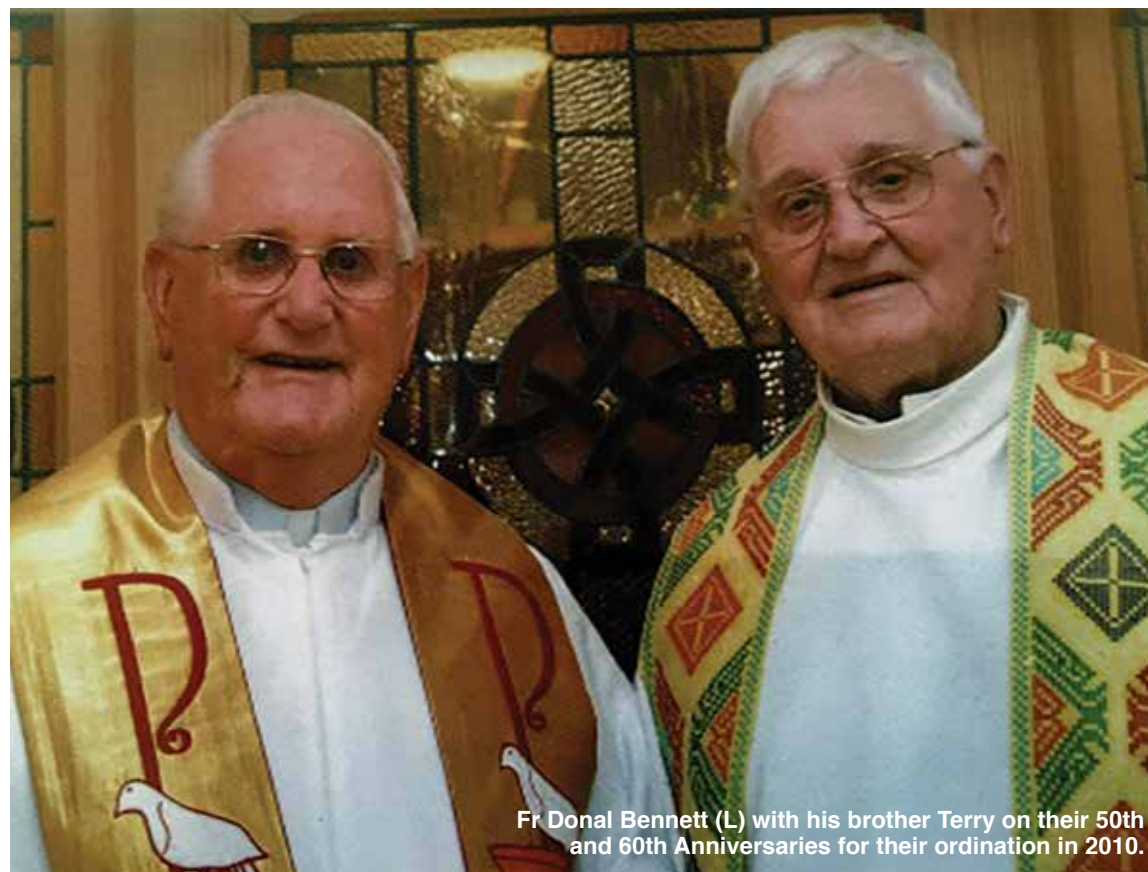
### Missionary home

The Omagh priest returned to his home town in the year 2000 to find Ireland and his local community much changed. He took a year’s sabbatical working in the missionary home at Dalgan Park. “I was no spring chicken myself,” he jokes. “I was assigned as the director of that nursing home, which was sometimes difficult, but mostly a rewarding or happy job to have.”

After that, he was assigned to work with migrant Filipinos in Northern Ireland, which he also found to be rewarding work: “They still call me and ask me for various things you know,” Fr Bennett says. “A lot of the migrants, most of whom are nurses, departed for England or Scotland in order to get a better wage. But my experience with the Filipinos here in Northern Ireland was rewarding also, they were happy that there was somebody taking an interest in them.”

Fr Bennett believes that Ireland is mission territory and hopes that parishes and diocese will be open to inviting priests from Poland, the Philippines and Latin America to help revitalise the Irish Church.

“The Elphin diocese have definitely brought in foreign priests to their diocese and then there are some in Derry diocese,” Fr Bennett says. “I can’t comment on other dioceses and whether they are acknowledging the fact – and it is a sad, sad fact – that Ireland is now a mission territory. There are countries like Poland and the Philippines, African countries as well, who would be willing to be asked to come in and help with the situation which is pretty dire at the moment.”



Fr Donal Bennett (L) with his brother Terry on their 50th and 60th Anniversaries for their ordination in 2010.

## Living Laudato Si'

Jane Mellet



## Preparing for lent and caring for garden of God's world

**O**ur New Year resolutions this year may simply have been to get through lockdown as best we can.

And that's ok! Pope Francis does give us a nudge however, in the address he gave on the World Day of Peace, January 1. He asks us to focus on one thing, to create a Culture of Care in 2021. Pope Francis reminds us that God the Creator is the source of our vocation to care and that this is also a call to protect the earth, our common home, and its capacity to support life. Pope Francis reminds us of the trust God has placed in humanity “to till and to keep” the garden of the world, making us guardians of all creation (Gen 2:15). He talks about the need for us to care through solidarity with others, care for the common good, care by showing compassion, reconciling with

one another and being peacemakers. While these may seem lofty ideals, we know that we start at home with our families, cultivating kindness and compassion.



On February 17 Lent begins! Given the continuing Covid-19 restrictions how can we create a culture of care for our common home? Lent is a time where we examine our relationships with God, with our sisters and brothers and with Creation. It is a time to repent for the damage we have caused to our world and to look forward for ways to live more gently on the earth. We can focus on three areas this Lent, in our families and faith communities.

The first is the call to care through eco-conversion, quite literally a change of heart where our relationship with nature is concerned. During Lent we can all spend more time in nature, reconnecting with the wonder of God's creation.

Ask your parish if your parish newsletter could share quotes from *Laudato Si'* each week so that families can reflect as they walk.

We also cultivate a culture of care through awareness. This Lent find out more about Trócaire's Lenten Campaign for 2021 which focuses on justice and peace in South Sudan ([www.trocaire.org](http://www.trocaire.org)). Think about how your family and parish can create a culture of care by learning more about the conflict in South Sudan and how the church is working in solidarity with people there to bring about peace. Our online resources have lots of activities for children too!

Finally, we can cultivate a culture of care through our actions, looking around our homes and seeing how we can make small changes to care more deeply for the Earth.

These are just some ways as family and as parish we can answer Pope Francis' call to create a culture of care for our common home this Lent. “Truly, much can be done!”

Jane Mellett is the Laudato Si' Officer with Trócaire



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## It's a bit of a cliché to say that youth are the future of the Church but it doesn't make it any less true

Last Saturday I had a look at **Life on the Rock**, the youth-oriented show of US Catholic network EWTN. Though full of good material I felt it wouldn't appeal that much to young Catholics, except for the most committed. The style is a bit stiff and there needs to be more young voices as well as co-presenter Bro. John. The central interview was really good, with Peter Range, Director of the Office for Life and Justice in the Diocese of Toledo. His contribution was well measured as he suggested ways for right and left to find some common ground in the polarised political landscape of post-election USA. A range of issues was important but the right to life was 'foundational'. Apart from the abortion issue he was strong on a human dignity approach to immigration – as Catholics in the USA, he said, we have all been immigrants. He referenced a time when he saw the awful poverty in Ecuador, visiting a school built on a dump, where, to quote Gandhi, people were so hungry that God could only appear as bread.

### Youthful

Another face of a youthful Church in Ireland was to be found on last Sunday's televised **Mass** (RTÉ One). The



Frs Mark Mary and Anthony Mary from Life on the Rock

fine contemporary liturgical music was provided by gifted young musicians and singers under the direction of composer Ian Callanan. Much of it was from Callanan's Mass of St Catherine. I liked the particularly apt opening hymn 'All Are Welcome', the Kyrie, the wonderful version of the Serenity Prayer and the uplifting recessional 'Go Out'. The Mass was celebrated with reverence by Fr Eamonn Bourke, chaplain to the students of UCD.

On the latest episode of **All Walks of Life** (RTÉ One Friday) Mary McAleese inter-

viewed young athlete Ciara Mageean in the beautiful scenery of a pilgrim walk in the Ards peninsula in Co. Down. Mageean was enthusiastic about the Catholic Faith of her upbringing, where the influence of parents, grandparents and her local parish community was obviously strong. She has had tough times with injury and dreads the possible cancellation of the Olympics, already delayed by a year due to Covid. Mrs McAleese raised the question of Mageean's brother being gay, and referenced what she regarded as the 'diffi-

cult attitude to gays' in the Church. This experience made Mageean question the Church and she had come to something of an à la carte approach – 'I choose what I want to take from it'. She had been invited to a Vatican conference on sport and religion but that also had been postponed or cancelled. McAleese couldn't resist – advising Mageean not to tell them her views on gay rights or she'd be 'uninvited' like she herself was.

'I'd like to talk to them about it', said Mageean. She said the Church relied on her to baptise her future children and bring them up in the Faith, and she wanted to do just that, unlike many of her peers. She thought the Church should 'listen to their own folks'. On this issue, especially as it relates to young people, I feel the Church needs to



Iain Armitage in Young Sheldon

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### SONGS OF PRAISE

**BBC One Sunday 14 February 1.15pm**

Love and Lent: marking both the start of Lent and Valentine's Day.

#### IN CONCERT

**EWTN Monday 15 February 6am**

Holocaust Symphony No. 3: World-renowned pianist and composer Richard Nanes performs a powerful meditation of the Holocaust. Martin Bookspan delivers a commentary.

#### RETREAT: REFLECTIONS FROM A MONASTERY

**BBC 4 Monday 15 February 10.30pm**

Series going in search of inner peace in three Benedictine monasteries in Britain. Monday – Downside; Tuesday – Pluscarden; Wednesday – Belmont.

find ways of expressing and explaining its teaching in a contemporary way – even after that it may still be found challenging.

### Baptist

**Young Sheldon** (RTÉ One, Friday) also turned its attention to youth and religion – this time in a Baptist context. Sheldon, a young atheist, doesn't want to go to Summer Bible Camp (his sister Missy is quite OK with it), but his very religious Baptist mother Mary insists. He gets a sudden interest in Bible Trivia when a rival prodigy seems to know more than him. There ensues fierce competition for prizes like a Psalm verse bookmark and a Noah's Ark rain poncho, as the almost ever cheer-

ful Pastor Jeff tries to rustle up some Bible enthusiasm. Missy wonders about God, hell and 'monkey heaven' while Sheldon insists on his atheism, being a champion of science and buying into the unnecessary notion of a conflict between religion and science. The show is endearing, moving and funny, but its take on religious faith is often jaundiced. It could do with a character who is religious and rational, and more nuance would help, though young Sheldon himself isn't much blessed with that particular quality.

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

# Film

Aubrey Malone



## Love, loss, tragedy and dramatic intrigue

I was so taken with *Wildlife* (Netflix) I bought the book after seeing it. It's written by Richard Ford, an author I wasn't familiar with. It's so beautifully written I went on a trawl for everything else by him afterwards. I urge you to check him out. He writes like Hemingway. I can think of no higher praise.

The film is equally fine. Telling the story of a man who inexplicably leaves his wife as forest fires rage over 1950s Montana it boasts bravura performances from Jake Gyllenhaal and Carey Mulligan as the hapless pair. Paul Dano's direction is muted and eccentric. Its effect is doubled as a result.

This will blow you away with its restraint and evoca-

tiveness, especially the final frame. It's really a film about lostness – the vacuum at the core of the American Dream – but told in such an unusual way (from the perspective of the couple's teenage son) it becomes much more than that.

### Remind

I'm sure the last thing you want at the moment is a film that reminds you of the horrible year we've just been through with Covid-19 but if you have the stomach for it you might like to rent out *Songbird* (VOD). It's set in 2024 and explores the manner in which a handful of people have to navigate the crises of a pandemic, including lockdowns, martial law, crime and disease.



Carey Mulligan and Jake Gyllenhaal in *Wildlife*.

When a man sounds too good to be true he usually is. Michael Ealy in *The Perfect Guy* (Netflix) is anything but that. After seeing him go bal-

listic one night on a flimsy pretext his girlfriend (Sanaa Latham) calls a halt on their relationship. By now the psychopathic Ealy has become

obsessed with her. When she takes up with a man she'd been seeing before him he blows another gasket, going on a mission of destruction.

The film uses every cliché in the book to tell its tale of stalking, jealousy and murder. It's hackneyed in the extreme but the tension is well controlled especially when Latham finds the gumption to turn the tables on her conniving ex-lover.

### Finding love

Films about finding love in later life are usually more interesting than teenybopper romances. So it proves in *I Got Life* (Amazon), a French *divertissement*. Quirky 50-year-old Agnes Jaoui feels 'l'amour' has passed her by.

Then she re-connects with a man she used to date as a young woman. At first he says he's uninterested in re-kindling their relationship but then things change.

I won't tell you what happens in the closing scenes. Suffice to say this is a feel-good film with a big heart directed with aplomb by Blandine Lenoir and featuring a 'Shirley Valentine' style performance from Jaoui.

*Pieces of a Woman* (Netflix) deals with a theme all too rarely seen on our screens – the trauma a woman experiences after losing a child at birth. Here Vanessa Kirby's problems are increased by a domineering mother and having to face her midwife in court.





# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## A woman pioneer in the study of Irish history

**Mary Hayden: Irish historian and feminist, 1862-1942**

by Joyce Padbury  
(Arlen House, €25).

Felix M. Larkin

**T**he older among us may remember the textbook *A short history of the Irish people from the earliest times to 1920*, by Mary Hayden and George A. Moonan. First published in 1921, it moulded the ideas of a generation and was still in use in the 1960s. One of the authors, Mary Hayden, is the subject of this fine biography by Joyce Padbury.

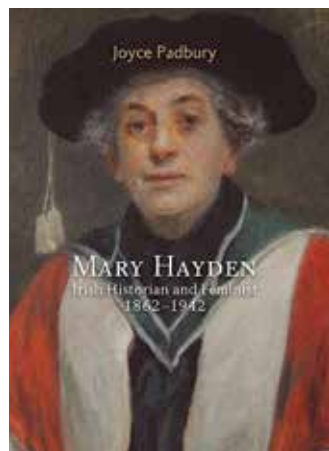
Born in 1862, Prof. Hayden was one of the foundation staff of University College Dublin (UCD) after its reconstitution as a college of the new National University of Ireland (NUI) under the *Irish Universities Act (1908)*. Appointed professor of modern Irish history in UCD in 1911, she held that post until 1938 when she retired aged 76. She served on the governing body of UCD for 27 years, and was a member of the senate of the NUI from 1908 to 1924.

Prof. Hayden had graduated with a BA from the old Royal University – the antecedent of the NUI – in 1885, only the second year in which women were eligible to be awarded degrees from that institution. She went on to earn a MA in 1887. She taught at various women's colleges in Dublin that prepared students for the Royal University examinations before she joined the staff of UCD, but she did not approve of separate education for men and women at third level – seeing it “as a denial of equal facilities and equal opportunity”, to quote Ms Padbury. She was one of a number of women scholars who campaigned for the inclusion of women on equal terms with men in university education; this was not conceded until the 1908 legislation.

### Professorship

In the years of her professorship, history had a less prestigious ranking among the established disciplines than it has today. As Ms Padbury notes, it was regarded “as a division of literature, as art rather than science”. The professionalisation of the subject only began in Ireland with the launch of the journal *Irish Historical Studies* in 1938, the year in which Prof. Hayden retired. That journal was the initiative of two young historians: R. Dudley Edwards, who had been Prof. Hayden's student and succeeded her in the chair of Modern Irish History in UCD, and T.W. Moody of Trinity College.

The aforementioned textbook jointly authored by Prof. Hayden and Mr Moonan – Prof. Hayden's



most notable work; she wrote most of it – would accordingly not be regarded as meeting today's standard of historical scholarship. It is written (as both acknowledged) “from a frankly national standpoint”, and idealises the Irish past. Joe Lee has dismissed it as “vintage cowboy and Indian stuff”, but Ms Padbury argues that it does “not exhibit strong anti-British animosity” and instead presents English policy in Ireland “as ill-judged or ill-informed rather than deliberately malevolent”.

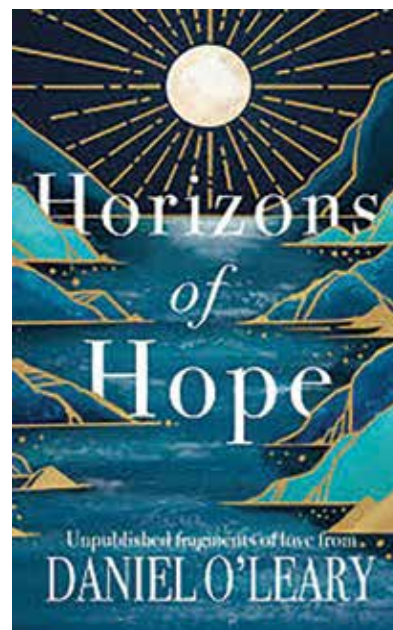
### Nationalist

Prof. Hayden was a moderate nationalist in politics, a ‘Home Ruler’ up to the 1918 general election and later a supporter of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty. Feminism was, however, more important to her than nationalism – and Ms Padbury faithfully records her involvement in women's suffrage campaigns in the early twentieth century. This complemented her advocacy of equality in education for women. In 1937 she played a significant role in opposing Éamon de Valera's new constitution, certain provisions of which were perceived to threaten women's status in society and in the workplace. Those provisions were greatly influenced by Catholic social teaching at that time – Ms Padbury refers to a letter addressed to Mr de Valera by Fr John Charles McQuaid CSSp., then president of Blackrock College, in which he writes of “the law and fact of nature that women's natural place is in the home”. This was anathema to Prof. Hayden. She was, nevertheless, an observant Catholic throughout her life – though Ms Padbury suggests that her religion was “more a matter of commitment than of strong conviction”.

This biography is handsomely produced by Arlen House, a publishing house which serves the cause of women's studies in Ireland so well. The cover of the book features the portrait of Mary Hayden by Lily Williams that hangs in the UCD School of History – no longer located in the splendid building in Earlsfort Terrace that Prof. Hayden knew, but in the

## ‘Every age an age of love...’

The last hope filled messages of Daniel O’Leary



**Horizons of Hope: Unpublished Fragments of love**  
by Daniel O’Leary  
(Columba Books, €19.99/£17.99)

Peter Costello

**T**he cosmos as revealed by modern science is one of the subjects that theologians avoid if they can. That vast expanse of time and change is just too difficult to fit into a religious scheme whose cultural horizons seem, for most people, to begin 7,000 years ago.

The late Fr Daniel O’Leary was not one of those. His last days were

devoted to coming to terms with his own mortality and the meaning of God's love. He wrote about it in *Dancing with Death*. That book was a most moving narrative which was widely reviewed and admired.

### Posthumous

Here in this posthumous book, Margaret Siberry, his *anam cara*, who was close to the man and his thinking, has selected from materials left on his laptop, other papers and uncollected articles from *The Tablet*, a sort of philosophical testament.

“The themes of these last writings are placed in perspective by his opening words - which is not always the case with books”

Fr O’Leary was able to find in those vast eras of time not silence; the silence which Pascal admitted quite terrified him. For him, they were not silent – but spoke volumes. He thought mankind benefited from discoveries in cosmology and science and had come to develop “a truly incarnational faith”. There are echoes here surely of Fr Teilhard de Chardin SJ in *La Messe sur la monde*, and *La Coeur de le la matière*, but expressed with a kind of clarity that Jesuit philosopher did not always reach.

Fr O’Leary found a consolation and a foundation for his faith in a



Daniel O’Leary at home in his last days

deep inner conviction of being loved by God. What Fr de Chardin found in the seemingly empty wastes of Central Asia, Fr O’Leary found himself in the endless depths of cosmic space.

### Crisis

The earth – due to mankind's own action – is facing a crisis which some simply refuse to see: their imaginations are bound only by the immediate future – of the rest they have no

## The drowning Ark



### No More Time

by Greg Delanty  
(Louisiana State University Press,  
\$17.95/£16.50/€19.99; order  
from [www.eurospangroup.com](http://www.eurospangroup.com))

Peter Costello

“Merritt Island, Florida, was flooded in order to eradicate mosquitoes around the Kennedy Space Centre, destroying this sparrow's only nesting ground.”

The sparrow in question is the Dusky seaside sparrow. But this observation which introduces one of Greg Delanty's poems sums it all up: as ‘mankind’ stands on the brink of conquering cosmic space, down here the effort to do so extinguished a small rare, indeed unique bird.

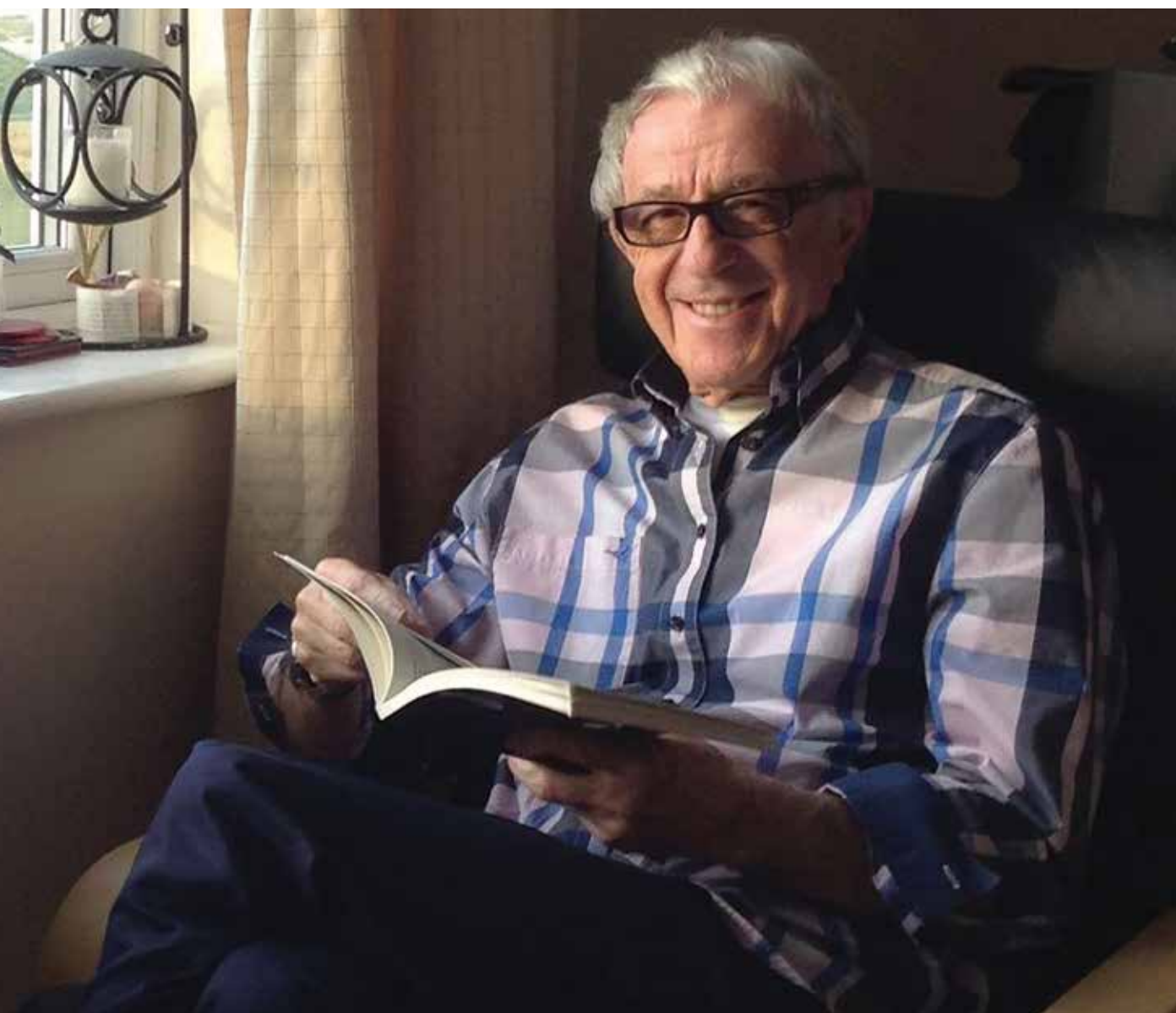
Still, as we are told elsewhere, no sparrow falls to earth without being noticed. In this new volume of poems Mr Delanty assembles a call over of what has been lost or soon to go. It used to be save the whale, or love a dolphin. But in fact, it is far lowlier creatures around which the future revolves, or more likely no longer revolves because they are gone.

Greg Delanty is a Cork-born poet, who has taught in Vermont since the mid-1980s in between going on protest, always wearing a tie – try it he says, and see the effect on the police. Today he is poet in residence at St Michael's College, a small foundation of the Edmundite Fathers.

This is his most recent poetry collection and it is a memorable one. It



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.



notion – yet they live behind a barrier of fear, refusing to see their share in creating where we are.

Daniel O'Leary, however, provides others with a refreshing vision. But reading his meditated and considered words may persuade many to adopt a more charitable and hopeful view. Those who have read his last complete book, and were moved by it, should obtain and read this book, which is a sort of essential companion – a closing of the circle as it were.

is entirely devoted to disappearing creatures. Parts one and two 'A Field Guide to People' consist of a sequence of sonnets. In contrast to the strict formality of these, a different sequence, 'Breaking News' separating them, shows his versatility in a series of free form poems, which explore other aspects of the crisis we face. It is a book all poetry lovers should read, and everyone else know about. He is, in a way, a nature poet in the continuing tradition of the Irish monks of Early Christian Ireland.

### Moved

I was deeply moved by all the pieces, which built together as one poet's response to what he sees, comes to know, and fears to think about.

Back in 2014, he thought it was a matter of "so little time". Now there is "no more time". How many warnings do we want? I have been haunted of late days by a passage in Jeremiah 2:16: "And I brought you into the land of Carmel, to

### Last writings

The themes of these last writings are placed in perspective by his opening words – which is not always the case with books. Knowing that "we are living through momentous and divisive moments in the growth Christianity", he starts by saying: "When the planets have all been charted and occupied, the mysteries of God unveiled; when the wisdom of the wise has left no more questions and when all the exploring, discovering,

inventing and dreaming are completed, when the maps of life are spread out across the fields of eternal evolution, and the full story of a trillion years of creation is spoken out for the first time, it will be finally clear that all growing is God's growing, that all healing is God's healing that every age was an age of love."

From there this book will lead its readers into many new places, but the thought "that every age was an age of love" always lies behind his explorations.



Poet Greg Delanty refreshes his Irish roots

eat the fruit thereof, and the best things thereof: and when ye entered in, you defiled my land, and made my inheritance an abomination".

(An afterthought: teachers of all kinds should note this book would make an

ideal book for school or college projects, combining as it does knowledge about what is endangered and what needs to be done to save each of these individual creatures. And also supports poetry by getting young people to read it.)

## The World of Books

By the books editor

# Ena Sharples and cronies in Coronation Street: God's word on 'the Street'

Some weeks ago there was a certain amount of fuss both in Britain and in Ireland about the 60th anniversary of *Coronation Street*, which first went out on television on December 9, 1960.

Bear in mind that the first broadcasts from Monrosey only came a year later. So until our own first soap *Tolka Row* came along in 1964, Irish viewers (then mainly in the Dublin region) focused on 'The Street'. Though my family had a 40ft pole at the end of the garden that gave better reception than our neighbours had, we often had to see the foreign television through a mini blizzard.

*Coronation Street* was slow to ignite, but now dominates British viewing (such as it is) with 6.8 million viewers, in a way that *Eastenders* has not managed to dislodge.

### Gritty

The show in those first monochrome days was a less gritty version than it now is. It owed a great deal to the 'kitchen sink' dramas of the previous decade and the world of Alan Sillitoe, John Braine, and others, but especially playwright Shelagh Delaney's *Salford*.

At the centre of many early stories, were Ena Sharples (played by Violet Carson), caretaker of the Glad Tidings mission hall, and her two friends; who passed their free time tearing apart their neighbours over milk stouts in the back snug of the *Rover's Return*.

However, what interests me here, is the fact that it was almost the only television drama to have a religious accent in a sort of way central to the theme. From time to time the locals were shown belting out a hymn or two with Ena at the harmonium in the hall.

Critics often said the show was archaic, and did not reflect life in the actual 1960s but was a cast back to earlier period. I suspect it did not, however, reflect swinging London.

This makes the Glad Tidings mission hall of interest. Was religion in the shape of Bible Christianity a strong force in working class life or not? It must have had some place, or else viewers would not have reacted so well to Ena Sharples.

### Mission hall

Religion as a serious – yet casual – fact of British life has died. The mission hall was demolished in 1968 – a significant year indeed – to make way for the new community centre. On TV, priests and clergy now became either a joke or sinister individuals out to bend people's lives. The Beatles would claim to be greater than Jesus – and so they were for TV. Some serious research is needed on whether religion on TV shows like *Coronation Street* was or was not a reflection of actuality.

**“Some serious research is needed on whether religion on tv shows like *Coronation Street* was or was not a reflection of actuality”**

The Glad Tidings mission hall, spreading 'the Word' on the Street, had originally been a true to life reflection of the British way. But, by the 1960s that was nearly dead. However, what it meant for popular television was that religion as a casual everyday matter in British television programmes died too.



Ena Sharples and her cronies



# Classifieds

The deadline for advertising in the classifieds is 10.30am, the Friday before publication. Contact the Classified Team on 01 687 4094 or email [advertising@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:advertising@irishcatholic.ie)

**By remembering World Missions Ireland in your Will you are leaving a gift of hope for all God's children**

World Missions Ireland is the Church's official charity for overseas mission  
Please help your Church to survive & flourish

To learn how, call Eimear on 01 497 2035 or email [eimear@wmi.ie](mailto:eimear@wmi.ie)

**WORLD MISSIONS IRELAND**

**Keep your Magnificat Safe with Beautiful Covers**

|                                    |                    |                     |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| LEATHER €25<br>(Black, Brown, Red) | SEMI LEATHER €9.50 | CLEAR PLASTIC €4.50 |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|

+ €4.50 P&P Leather Covers  
+ €2 P&P for Others

01 6874024 | [www.irishcatholic.com/shop](http://www.irishcatholic.com/shop)  
Block 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18 D18 K277

*Remembering*  
**MEMORIAM CARDS  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT  
CARDS & NOTELETS  
BOOKMARKS**

Samples / Information  
**KENNEDY PRINTERS**  
BANTRY, CO. CORK, IRELAND  
Tel. 027 50102  
[www.kennedyprinters.ie](http://www.kennedyprinters.ie)  
email: [info@kennedyprinters.ie](mailto:info@kennedyprinters.ie)

**Hoping...**  
*to be in a relationship?*

**Seeking...**  
*someone who shares your faith?*

**Finding...**  
*it difficult to meet the right person?*

Then call Heavenly Partners on 01 568 6568  
[www.heavenlypartners.ie](http://www.heavenlypartners.ie)  
**heavenlypartners**

**BÓTHAR**

**PLEASE REMEMBER BÓTHAR IN YOUR WILL.** €1,800 will allow us to give an Irish, in-calf, dairy heifer to a struggling family in Rwanda, completely transforming their lives. Your gift will live on for generations. Phone the office on 061 414142 or [info@bothar.ie](mailto:info@bothar.ie)

**Who will pass on the flame of faith?**

For over 130 years, *The Irish Catholic* has been a voice of hope and inspiration for Catholics in Ireland. Help up pass on the flame of faith, by remembering us in your Will.

Phone 01 6874028 in strictest confidence  
**The Irish Catholic**

Inspired by the vision and passion of Sr. Stan, many people are choosing to leave a loving gift in their will to support people who are homeless to find safety and a place they can call home.

To join in Sr. Stan's vision please contact [eve.kerton@focusireland.ie](mailto:eve.kerton@focusireland.ie) or phone 1850 204 205

**FOCUS Ireland**

**GOAL**

**Please remember GOAL in your Will**

42 years on we continue to deliver lifesaving support to the most vulnerable people in our world. Leaving a gift in your Will is priceless.

Contact Courtenay on 01 2809779 or via email at [cpollard@goal.ie](mailto:cpollard@goal.ie)

Registered Charity No. 20010980; CHY 6271

**SERVICES**

**ALL UNWANTED** home waste removed. Cookers, fridges, beds, suites, wardrobes, carpets etc. Removed and disposed of in a proper manner. No job too small or big. Contact Tommy, 087 6406015.

**GLASNEVIN CEMETERY**

**PLOT AVAILABLE** in Glasnevin Cemetery, St Patrick's 8ft x 4ft bordering section path. If interested, please reply to Box Number 5062.

## The Irish Catholic PREPAID CLASSIFIED AD COUPON

STATE UNDER WHICH HEADING YOUR AD IS TO APPEAR:

Minimum charge of €24.60 (inc. VAT) for 5 lines (25 words). Extra lines €4.92 each.

|                                |
|--------------------------------|
| No. of insertions: _____ weeks |
| Miracle Prayer €40             |

Please print your advertisement in the coupon, placing ONE word in each space. Below, please print your name and address. Do you require a Box Number? YES ☐ NO ☐ (Please tick ✓) Box Number €6 extra.

|   |  |  |  |  |        |
|---|--|--|--|--|--------|
| 1 |  |  |  |  |        |
| 2 |  |  |  |  |        |
| 3 |  |  |  |  | €24.60 |
| 4 |  |  |  |  |        |
| 5 |  |  |  |  |        |
| 6 |  |  |  |  | €29.52 |
| 7 |  |  |  |  | €34.44 |

Name and contact detail form MUST be filled out

Name .....

Address .....

Landline ..... Mobile .....

I enclose Cheque/PO: €.....I wish to pay by Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Laser ☐  
My Visa/Mastercard/Lasercard number is:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

Expiry Date: .....Signature .....







## Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock



# What will I give up for Lent?

**NOW THERE IS A** question. If Lent is about self-sacrifice, deprivation and slowing things down, then we have had the longest 40 days ever, in the wilderness that is called Covid. So much of what we enjoy, take for granted and rely on for normality in life has been taken away and personal sacrifice seems to be, quite literally, the order of the day. As we face towards the week ahead, Ash Wednesday and Lent, it is difficult to recall a time when our hearts have been heavier, our spirits more crushed and our faith more challenged.

## Shrove Tuesday

And yet, that is where we are. In the coming days we will throw the mix on the pan, add some fillings and flavour and share a Shrove Tuesday meal – as long as we are in a “bubble”, otherwise it will be a solo journey. The tradition around this, as I understand it, was the clearing out of the kitchen presses so that the Lenten Fast could begin. It was something around the last taste of sweetness for a while and preparing for a few weeks of soul searching and sacrifice that would lead to Holy Week, the unfolding



of its story and to the empty tomb of Easter and, of course the cracking open of the Easter eggs and the restocking of the kitchen cabinets. There was a pattern and a rhythm there, that sounded out the journey of faith and called out to us to try our best.

The big temptation for us all this year is to say, “I’ve had enough” and to turn our backs on the days and weeks that we

call Lent. Thinking of that word, Lent, it reminds us that the days are lengthening and that brighter times are ahead. Could it also be a reminder to us that the world and the life we lead are “lent” to us, given to us “on loan” and that we need to be careful and respectful in the way we approach them? If we have been lucky enough to escape the impacts of Covid, might this

be a time to express thanks for that? If, sadly, we have been impacted or maybe lost a loved one to this dreaded illness, might this be a time to remember the difference they made in our lives and to honour their memory through some form of reflection, self-awareness and in a lasting thanksgiving for the difference they made in our lives?

## Offer

Has Lent this year something to offer us? Chances are, it has. It reminds us of the sufferings of Christ, of the temptations he experienced in the wilderness and that there can be at times much darkness around us. Into this darkness, come thoughts, doubts and pressures not of our making or choosing. In this darkness too, seeking to banish it – to conquer it, is Christ. It is with him and because of him we can and will come through this.

So, back to the question, what to give up for Lent 2021? Maybe grumbling, irritability, cynicism, apathy, despair, anger, hostility, negativity are among the things we might consider giving up. There is room too for taking up during Lent – kindness, encouragement, peacefulness, graciousness, patience, spirituality, awareness, tenderness, selflessness.... ah, there is so much we could take up

that could make a real difference, lengthen our days, and shorten the Lent!

We will not be gathering this year but maybe that gives us a chance to hear again the words of the gospel we read on Ash Wednesday: “Go to your private room, close the door and pray to your Father who is in that secret place and your Father, who sees all that is done in secret, will reward you.”

Enjoy the pancakes! Live the Lent and look forward to brighter days.

## Asking Alexa!

I asked Alexa: “Tell me a joke”, this is what I got!

“What did the coffee say to the cream?”

“It is really hard for me to espresso myself, but I love you a latte!”

“Everyone smiles in the same language” – smile!



One of the Sisters of Charity and grateful patients at St Vincent Health Centre, north-eastern India.



## YOUR GIFT CAN HELP BRING MEDICINE TO SOME OF INDIA'S POOREST PEOPLE

### Children under the age of five are dying from malnutrition and vitamin deficiency

The pandemic is stretching the already-limited resources of missionaries working with the poor. The Sisters of Charity of St Vincent De Paul write to The Little Way Association from north-eastern India: “Covid means that people are completely depending on the St Vincent Health Centre which we established in 2015 in Darenchigre. Patients are suffering from anaemia, jaundice, typhoid, diarrhoea, malnutrition, calcium and iron deficiency, and many children below the age of five are dying. We are unable to provide better medical care and treatment due to the lack of finance and the other issues like lack of medical equipment and oxygen supply monitors in emergency situations.”

### “Please can you help us?”

The sisters work in one of India's poorest regions, where the people scrape a living from subsistence-agriculture. The health centre was intended just to provide first aid but people from 20 villages have come to use it as their principal medical facility. The sisters urgently ask for funds for vitamins, diagnostic equipment and treatment for those suffering from various dietary deficiencies. The sisters conclude their letter: “We earnestly ask you to participate in this humble effort to offer our medical support to the people in need. With a prayer that God will bless all your endeavours and bring to fruition all your charitable works.”

**Your donation to the Little Way Association's fund for the sick, hungry and deprived will go, without deduction, to help hard-pressed establishments such as the St Vincent Health Centre.**



“Do not fear. If you are faithful in pleasing Jesus in little things, He will be obliged to help you in the greater things.”

- St Therese

### MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS

The Little Way Association regularly receives appeals from bishops and religious superiors on the Missions for Mass stipends and intentions for their poor priests. Such payments help them to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Also, the poor and deprived people, whom the clergy serve so faithfully, often turn to their priests for assistance. Thus, your stipends for the missions can benefit priests and people, and your intentions are faithfully honoured at Holy Mass.

**We like to send a minimum of €5 or more for each Mass**

### HELP FEED THE HUNGRY

Please spare a thought for the thousands who die each year of hunger and disease in mission lands. Your donation will be forwarded to a missionary without deduction.

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION**  
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR  
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:  
€..... **HUNGRY, SICK AND DEPRIVED**  
€..... **NEEDS OF MISSIONARIES**  
€..... **MASS OFFERINGS**  
(Please state no. of Masses \_\_\_\_\_)  
€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

To donate online go to  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

**DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.**