

The Irish Catholic

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Call for GAA clubs to help parishes return to Mass

Chai Brady and Aron Hegarty

Wexford GAA stalwart Tony Dempsey has called on Gaelic clubs to team up with local parishes to ensure a safe return to public Masses. It comes as the Church this week published guidelines for Masses to be open to a congregation from June 29.

Mr Dempsey – a former Wexford hurling manager and member of the Dáil – told *The Irish Catholic* that people are anxious to get back to liturgies. “The sooner there is a safe return to Mass the better,” he said.

“We have to seriously consider the psychological and spiritual consequences of people not being able to go to Mass for so long,” he said.

He said that “there is a very good relationship between the local parish and [GAA] club. I think it would be great for the GAA to get involved and give their time and expertise in terms of stewarding and things like that,” he said.

“The clubs have a lot to offer and they will have no

problem in stepping up to help the parishes,” he added.

Mr Dempsey said that there are many prominent young GAA stars who are regular Massgoers and would have “no problem” in getting involved.

Challenge

Meanwhile, Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown has called for parishes to embrace the challenge of rebuilding the faith community as public Masses are set to get underway.

He said that most opportunities to celebrate identity “have vanished” or being forced to be “lived in virtual form”.

“We face the challenge of building and rebuilding our Church...we want to be able to get back to gathering our parish congregations around the table of the Lord,” he said.

Dr McKeown said the “major need” is for parishioners to look after church buildings and make them “the safest places in town”.

Archbishop Eamon Martin

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Hope burns eternally

Henry Hutcheon lights a candle in St Columba's Church in Long Tower parish in Co. Derry on the day he was due to receive First Holy Communion, which was delayed due to Covid-19, over the weekend.

DAVID QUINN

Return to Mass strikes the right balance PAGE 16



DON'T MISS A BEAT

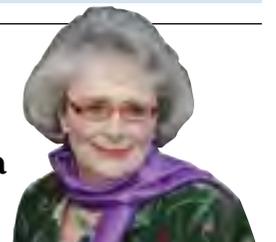
Keeping smart about your heart

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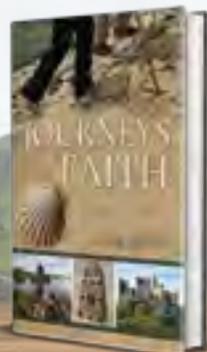


MARY KENNY

There are better ways to remove a statue PAGE 5



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Rethinking First Holy Communion

One of the great hurts that parishioners share with me over a cup of tea when I speak at missions and novena (remember when we used to be able to do things like that?) is the disappointment that their adult children don't bring their own children up in the faith. Grandparents often feel marooned with conflicting emotions. On the one hand, they dearly love their children and their grandchildren. On the other hand, they wonder where they may have gone wrong in the transmission of the faith.

They have borne the heat of the day. "Why don't they believe us?" a woman said to me late last year. It has stuck with me as a question.

It's an issue that causes concern and debate in parishes all across the country. This year, due to the coronavirus pandemic, we were unable to celebrate First Holy Communion in our parishes. It was a hugely important day missing from our calendar this year. And yet, a priest told me recently that he wasn't too bothered as he finds it one of the most dispiriting days of the year.

Problem

How, you might ask, could such a joy-filled day be so dispiriting for a priest? The problem is that he has become tired of witnessing what he believes is little more than a day out for many families. He has built his

life around the Eucharist – the source and summit of the Christian life – and yet, for so many families it is little more than something to be ticked off the list.

He told me he often feels under pressure to rush the ceremony so that people can get on with the rest of the day. A couple of years ago he told me that one little girl only made it to the Mass at the Our Father because the hair appointment her parents had arranged for her ran over.

“Perhaps...we have elevated the actual day of First Holy Communion to such an extent that what is happening on the day has been obscured and seen as a one-off event”

On another occasion in a previous parish he recalls a man approaching him after to say that his son “didn't get any” because by the time that family arrived, the Mass was over because they got delayed calling around to the neighbours' houses collecting cards (and money).

The priest painted a gloomy picture for me, and I have heard similar experiences from clerics in

recent years.

In many parts of the country, First Holy Communion day remains a beautiful and vital day in the life of the parishes. Parents work hard with priests and parents to ensure that it is an uplifting faith-filled event and the sacrament is kept at the centre of all the celebrations. But in too many places First Holy Communion day is a symptom of something that is broken in the transmission of the Faith. The day itself has often become more important than the milestone in the Faith life of the child.

One way to remedy this might be to abandon the tradition of First Holy Communion days *per se*. Why, for example, couldn't various classes be invited to be present at a particular Mass on a Sunday and

receive the Eucharist for the first time with the rest of the congregation? Perhaps a particular school could be allocated a Mass, but it would be part of the regular Sunday Mass. After this, the family could gather with loved ones for a meal to celebrate.

Perhaps, in trying to underline the importance of the reception of the sacrament, we have elevated the actual day of First Holy Communion to such an extent that what is happening on the day has been obscured and seen as a one-off event.

Children receiving the Eucharist at a regular Sunday Mass could be a powerful impetus to helping them understand that in being present regularly at Mass they are part of the Body of Christ.

GAA clubs can help with return to public Masses

» Continued on Page 1

also used a weekend homily to make a plea for volunteers: “I also call on the younger members of our parishes to step forward in helping us manage the transition back to full parish life and celebration of the sacraments.

“We will need volunteers to assist with cleaning, stewarding, reading, ministering the Eucharist and other roles and responsibilities which some of our older members may be unable to fulfil at this time,” he said.

Group hopes to build evangeliser team

Staff reporter

A new evangelisation project that will aim to help parishes with adult faith formation is appealing for committed catechists to get involved.

Faith on Fire plans to gather and support a team of people already experienced in faith development, whether in a school, parish or other context.

According to Petra Conroy, the new initiative's director and founder, “The team of catechists we're gathering now will be available to work in partnership with Catholic parishes around Ireland, offering them a flexible and affordable way of providing lively and engaging adult faith development in their parish community. “We've had to delay slightly because of lockdown but we're eager to push ahead if possible: our pilot in parishes will now begin early

in 2021,” she said.

While she said the coordinating team is mainly lay, the new organisation has received support and encouragement from priests and bishops around Ireland. Those helping to launch Faith on Fire include Anna Healy, a teacher who has taught religion at second level for over 30 years, now also involved in adult faith formation, Catriona Curran, a mum of six and former teacher, experienced in both youth ministry and parish evangelisation, Rosemary Swords, a facilitator and evangeliser with a strong vision for parish renewal.

Those interested in being considered for the Faith on Fire catechist panel are invited to get in touch via Facebook at 'Faith on Fire Ireland' or by email: faithonfireireland@gmail.com. The deadline for applications to join the catechist panel is July 17, 2020.



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Hierarchy publish checklist for safe return to all Sacraments

Chai Brady

The hierarchy has published a checklist for parishes to assist the faithful in their preparations to ensure that the return to public worship “happens in a safe and measured way”.

With the restrictions set to lift on June 29, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference said the preparations would only be successful if there is “generous support” from volunteers.

“We hope that the return of communal worship will give new heart to our priests

and parishes and that, in spite of the inevitable limitations to our celebrations, we may all be confirmed in Faith and in our ministry,” they said this week.

Guidelines

The guidelines include parishes establishing a ‘Covid-19 Support Team’ to organise preparations. The securing of signage, cleaning/sanitising materials and other “items necessary for protection” are called for.

The bishops ask that consideration be made for the

number of people that can safely be accommodated in each church and how it will be managed and communicated to parishioners. It must also be clearly indicated where people can sit and whether stewards are needed to assist people entering and exiting the church and direct people to their seats.

Particularly regarding receiving Communion, it asks whether parishes have supplied markings to help people maintain physical distancing. This physical distancing must also be applied outside the

church and the needs of people with disabilities are asked to be taken into account.

Churches should be “as safe as any enclosed space”, the documents states, and highlights the need to empty Holy Water fonts, to have hand sanitisers at entrances and exits, not to share misalettes and asks what mechanism has been put in place for taking church collections.

The dispensation from the Sunday and Holy Day will be extended, with Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of the Archdiocese of Dublin, speaking on RTÉ Radio 1 this week,

encouraging people to attend Mass during the week.

The guidelines state: “In the interests of physical distancing, parishes may wish, for the time being, to limit music ministry to a single cantor and a single instrumentalist.

Supervision

“Altar servers should assist only when all physical distancing/hygiene considerations have been taken into account, and with careful supervision.

“At this time, the optional exchange of the Sign of Peace

can be omitted, or offered in a manner which avoids any physical contact.

“For the time being, it is recommended that Communion should not be given under both kinds, and should be received in the hand.

“Priests and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should visibly sanitise their hands both before and after the distribution of Communion. Priests and ministers should wear a face-covering while distributing Communion.”

Racecourse Mass called off as churches to re-open

Staff reporter

The organisers of an open-air Mass set for the feast of Corpus Christi have decided to call the event off after the Government announced a speedier than expected return to public Masses.

Marian Pilgrimages – who have been offering virtual pilgrim experiences since the

lockdown began – had planned the event for Leopardstown Racecourse on Sunday, June 14. Massgoers were to remain in their cars and the event was to be streamed on a large screen.

However, following the Government's announcement on Friday and the bishops' publishing of new guidelines it was decided to call it off.

Niall Glynn of Marian Pil-

grimages told *The Irish Catholic* he was “delighted that public Masses will be returning sooner than expected.

“We had planned the event because we knew how much people were longing to get back to Mass – now that is happening sooner than anyone expected, so we have decided not to go ahead with the open-air Mass,” he said.



Fionan from Holy Family Primary School in Co. Derry celebrated Monday's feast day of St Columba with other pupils across the diocese.

Social workers call for action for nursing home residents

Staff reporter

A body that represents social workers has called on the Government to enact legislation that would allow social workers to legally investigate private nursing homes without an invitation.

The Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW) wrote to the Nursing Home Expert Panel and the Special Oireachtas Committee on the Covid-19 Response this week.

Amanda Casey, IASW member and Head Medical Social Worker said that “social workers remain deeply concerned that available expertise on how best to

ensure residents are safe, protected and supported has not yet been taken into account”.

“Covid-19 has introduced new and painful social distancing at times when people require a high degree of connection and emotional support.

“Residents, who in the past may have had regular contact with family and friends who provided not only social connection but also could speak out to ensure people's needs and human rights were acted on, no longer have this comfort and protection due to public health measures.

“Many people have died, and will continue to die, without the loving comfort

and presence of their family,” she said.

The IASW are calling for the appointment of an expert on adult safeguarding and social work to the Nursing Home Expert Panel and that the expert panel and Special Oireachtas Committee lack of safeguarding measures to protect nursing home residents from abuse or neglect during the period when public health measures cocooning residents were introduced.

They also ask that the expert panel examine the end of life support and care received by deceased residents and their families and for the full enactment of the Adult Safeguarding Bill, 2017.

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'Gentle pastor' Derry auxiliary bishop dies

Staff reporter

The Bishop of Derry diocese has extended condolences after the death of Bishop Francis Lagan, who served as an auxiliary bishop of the diocese from 1988-2010, saying he was a "gentle pastor" and "caring brother priest".

Bishop Lagan died early on Monday morning. He was born in Maghera and was ordained a priest in 1960 in Maynooth. Bishop Donal McKeown said: "Bishop Lagan had a keen insight into the reality of people's lives and he never failed to bring his extensive pastoral experience to bear on discussions at the Bishops' Conference table.

"As a teacher in Derry and Carndonagh, he nurtured young people in the faith and encouraged them to make the most of their gifts and educational opportunities; this remained his message to the thousands of young people on whom he conferred the sacrament of Confirmation over many years.

"Bishop Lagan was a strong advocate for peace and reconciliation, having witnessed first-hand the terrible violence and heart-break endured by people during the Troubles. He also understood the joys and struggles of his brother priests who often had to minister in the midst of great challenge, grief and community unrest," Bishop McKeown added.

Portlaoise church re-emerges into the Light



Bishop Denis Nulty of the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin was joined by other clergy to celebrate Mass in the Church of the Assumption in the Heath which has reopened in Portlaoise parish, Co. Laois.

Racism must be overcome, says Bishop Leahy

Ruadhán Jones

Ireland is "not exempt from racism" and we must work to overcome all forms of hatred, said Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick.

In his homily last weekend, Bishop Leahy described Trinity Sunday as being about the "celebration of diversity in unity and unity in diversity".

"It's a call to us all to appreciate, in a new way, how we are called to live the diversity of difference in love – and how only love transforms," he said. "Hatred, racism, sectarianism of any type, destroys

the fabric of any community."

"The events of this past week have prompted us all to examine the personal judgements we make in our hearts and the social arrangements around us whose injustice we perhaps neglect to notice."

Bishop Leahy added that we have "been far from exempt of racism here in Ireland and it is a menace that lurks in society today".

"We must all do our part to watch out for it and overcome it, in whatever form it arises. There is always more we can all do and it starts with the Golden Rule – love your neighbour as yourself."

Bishop Leahy noted the large gatherings in Irish cities on Saturday and their "references to direct provision centres as a form of racism".

"It remains a hidden and troubling aspect of our society and one we must address. We are surely capable of a greater welcome in this country of ours.

Collaboration

"We will have to work on this together in a collaborative approach involving Government, local communities and listening to those in direct provision centres." Bishop Leahy also urged

the public, as restrictions are being eased, not to think we have beaten the Coronavirus.

He said that resumption of Masses post June 29th can only happen with this in mind.

"From a Church perspective, we all welcome that we are able to resume from June 29 public celebration of the Mass and other sacraments. How we've missed our public celebrations, but we will need to prepare carefully, ensuring our places of worship reflect the good advice given by public health guidelines," he added.

Mixed outlook from homeless charities to April figures

Aron Hegarty

Two of Ireland's charities tackling homelessness share differing views on their forecast of homelessness in the aftermath of Covid-19.

Statistics from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government show a reduction in the number of people in homelessness for April with 9,335 – a decrease of 572 from March.

On one hand, the Peter McVerry Trust says it is optimistic about this number dropping further in the coming months. "We are seeing some small silver lining coming from Covid-19," says Pat Doyle, CEO of Peter McVerry Trust. And that is a lot of tourist rentals are coming back to us through HAP, long-term leases or purchases.

"If we can keep that up and continue to grow construction delivery, and continue to deliver on the housing first targets we'd be hopeful that numbers might decrease further over the summer months."

On the other hand, however, Depaul fear there may be a surge in homelessness following the pandemic.

"We must approach this good news with a degree of caution as there is a distinct possibility of more people becoming homeless post Covid-19," says Dermot Murphy, Director of Services and Development at Depaul.

"Vital measures that have been put in place during this pandemic, such as rent freezes, must remain for a longer period of time if we are to prevent any post-Covid surge in homelessness.

"Efforts must continue to provide adequate housing solutions, protect those currently in homeless accommodations and prevent any further rise in homelessness as a result of Covid-19."

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On the destruction of (secular) statues...

There used to be an equestrian statue of William of Orange on Dublin's College Green.

It was 'alternately daubed, mutilated and garlanded with orange lilies', according to Christine Casey's brilliant architectural study of Dublin. It survived several explosions, but finally succumbed to dynamite in 1929. King Billy's effigy, like that of the Bristol slave-trader Edward Colston, was a marked monument.

Similarly with Admiral Nelson, atop the Pillar in O'Connell Street. As we know, the IRA blew him off his plinth in 1966. There had been discussions for decades about replacing Nelson with a more appropriate figure, since the Doric column, erected in 1808, had architectural merit and was a much-loved hub for Dubliners.

Orderly removal

In 1947, a particularly ugly statue of Queen Victoria was removed from the front entrance of Leinster House, and exported to Sydney, Australia, which volunteered to take it.

But Victoria's statue was removed in a calm and orderly way, and in full view of the public who were allowed to



Mary Kenny



The torn-down statue of Edward Colston.

applaud, or, in some cases, dissent, from the procedure. Surely that's a better way of displacing a statue which no longer seems acceptable, or relevant, to the people among whom it is placed?

In Hungary and Romania, after the fall of Communism, they opened instructive parks in which to display old statues of Stalin, Lenin and the rest of the infamous galere.

Admittedly, pulling down a statue dramatically, or blowing it up, is probably more exciting to its opponents. It makes a

bigger splash – as did the statue of Colston into the waters of the Bristol docks.

Pity

It was a pity that Dublin Corporation didn't take action in the 1930s, when it was suggested that Horatio Nelson be replaced atop the Pillar. The trouble was, there was no agreement on who should replace him. St Patrick would have been the most suitable candidate, since he was acceptable to all Irish people. Bristol city, too, had been

urged to remove Colston for the past 20 years, but dithered.

Destroying statues prompts an uneasy link with the iconoclasm of the Cromwellites, or the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, who ritually destroyed religious statues, as well as churches. There is something shocking and offensive about it, as well as culturally vandalising.

Secular statues or effigies have been attacked in Dublin in recent times – Luke Kelly in Sherriff Street has been repeatedly vandalised. And the effigy of Seán Russell, the IRA veteran who was in negotiation with the Nazis when he died, has also been attacked.

Perhaps keeping a controversial figure in a discreet place is also a solution. The last statue to a British royal in the Irish Republic is enfolded within the foliage of Leinster House's grounds: behind the rich growth of plants, Prince Albert still stands. Occasionally, there's a call to pull him down, but somehow, I don't anticipate an enraged Dublin crowd storming the back lawns of the Oireachtas to remove a German prince who founded the first organisation for the study of Celtic languages...

Open doors are an invitation to all

It will be great to be able to enter a church again, when they open properly. Following Mass online has been rewarding in its own way and also offered a variety of different locations. And it seems to have stimulated churches to advertise themselves, either in print or online, which I think they should continue to do.

A chance mention on Twitter drew my attention to St Brendan's Cathedral, Loughrea, last Sunday, and it was grand to be able to 'visit' and participate, virtually. The diocese of Clonfert goes back to St Brendan the Navigator himself. The cathedral has some very famous stained-glass windows by the artist Harry Clarke, although these were not visible via the webcam – although maybe they should be?

I had a cup of coffee last weekend, in the *al fresco* area of a cafeteria, with three friends. After nearly 12 weeks of lockdown, we all agreed it did us all a power of good just to meet and chat over a coffee. Such a simple thing, that we had heretofore taken for granted. I hope I can keep to my post-lockdown resolution of appreciating all those simple things that have been withheld from us during this time.

ADVERTORIAL

Pope Francis: 'What am I leaving behind?'

Pope stresses importance of reflecting on your 'final farewell'



Photo: Jeffrey Bruns / Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license.

Everyone would do well to reflect on their "final farewell" from earthly life said Pope Francis during a morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae. "It will do us good," he added.

"What am I leaving behind?"

When Pope Francis asked this at the Mass, many may have been wondering about the impact their own lives will have. Perhaps you are too. One thing you can leave behind is a life changing gift to your preferred charity in your Will. This ensures your legacy lives on, while supporting the charity you care for and

helping save lives long into the future.

And it's clear many people do already generously give to causes close to their hearts. The Irish Catholic's own research shows 97% of readers regularly donate to charity.

However, with so many different charities carrying out so much good work, choosing one to support is certainly not an easy decision to make.

"Poverty in the world is a scandal. In a world where there is so much wealth, so many resources to feed everyone, it is unfathomable that there are so many hungry children, that there are so many children without an education, so many poor persons." – Pope Francis.

One charity fighting poverty is Ireland's own Concern Worldwide. In fact they state their mission is to: End extreme poverty – whatever it takes.

Concern was founded in 1968 by John and Kay O'Loughlin-Kennedy – in response to the famine in the breakaway province of Biafra in Nigeria.

On Friday 6th September 1968 the MV Columcille set sail from Dublin to Sao Tome – a Portuguese island off the coast of Nigeria. The 600 tonne ship was full of vital supplies of powdered food, medicines and other life sav-

ing items for the people suffering the horrific famine in Biafra. This single shipment was only the start of an aid mission which became one flight every day over the next 11 months.

Since then Concern has helped transform lives in 48 of the world's poorest countries, including:

- Rwanda, 1994: Concern was one of the first Irish charities to respond to the Rwandan Genocide.
- Haiti, 2010: Within 1 year of the earthquake, Concern had helped over 1,000,000 people in the country.
- Syria, 2013 – present: Concern's emergency programmes meet the urgent needs of people displaced by war.
- 2020: As the COVID-19 outbreak continues to spread globally, our teams are mobilising to support the most vulnerable.

As you can see, no matter what the crisis, Concern always helps those in the most desperate need no matter how hard they are to reach. Last year they responded to 102 different emergencies. And helped an incredible 27.4 million people around the world.

Fiona from Co. Louth has left a gift for Concern in her Will. Here she explains why: "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."

If you join Fiona and leave a gift to Concern, your legacy can help end hunger, for good. And will help people like Nala*.



Nala before and a few months after receiving therapeutic food sachets.

Photo Before: Jennifer Nolan / Concern Worldwide. Photo After: Mohamed Abdiwahab / Concern Worldwide.

Nala lived with her mother and two brothers in a camp for displaced people in Mogadishu, Somalia. Her mother was pregnant with Nala when she and her sons fled their village which was attacked. Even in the safety of the camp, Nala's mother struggled to find food for herself and her children. So Nala never gained weight properly.

At nine months old she was barely bigger than a newborn. Fortunately this was when the family came to a Concern supported nutrition centre. Nala was diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition and

fading fast. She was immediately given therapeutic food sachets. As you can see after a few months of receiving help, Nala was thriving.

“Charity is at the heart of the Church, it is the reason for its action, the soul of its mission.” – Pope Francis

It's people like you, leaving Concern a gift in their Will, who have helped save Nala.

To discover how a gift in your Will can help end hunger, please request your complimentary copy of 'A World Without Hunger' – Concern's legacy booklet.

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“I am proud to know that even when I am gone, by including Concern in my Will, my support will continue to help save lives.” – Colm O'Byrne, Co. Galway.

* Name changed for security reasons.



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ENDING EXTREME POVERTY WHATEVER IT TAKES

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Rebuilding communities is biggest Church challenge, says bishop

Aron Hegarty

The Bishop of Derry says the biggest challenge facing the Church in the immediate aftermath of Covid-19 will be "rebuilding" its communities.

In his homily on Trinity Sunday, Bishop Donal McKeown said the Faithful's sense of belonging has either "vanished" or is being "lived in virtual form" during the pandemic.

He remained hopeful that "community is possible" once again, but believing trust must be regained through safe practices.

"We want to be able to get back to gathering our parish congregations around the Table of the Lord," said Bishop McKeown.

"But, as churches, we have to balance two values. On the one hand, there is the right to practice your faith that is a core value at the heart of most societies. But there are also the responsibilities that come with rights.

"Our challenge is to show that our churches are able to be as safe as any other place where people gather.

Good practice

"If we show we can't be trusted to have consistently good practice, who can blame others for not taking us seriously?"

"If we can't be seen to deal appropriately with the small numbers that are currently allowed to attend funerals, who will trust us with larger numbers for other services and sacraments?"

The Bishop concluded that there will be a "major need" for parishioners to look after church buildings and make them "the safest places in town" when they are allowed to reopen.

SVP lose €2 million through charity shop closures

Ruadhán Jones

Almost a hundred St Vincent de Paul (SVP) charity shops reopened this week, after 12 weeks of closure led to losses estimated up to a quarter of their yearly take.

"Our shops are essential [to SVP's service]," said Dermot McGilloway, SVP national retail development manager, speaking to *The Irish Catholic*.

"There is a fundraising element to it – SVP shops contributed €8 million last year," he continued. "We've been closed now for 12 weeks, you're talking about three months trading. If you

take a quarter of our annual income, that's several million we're going to be down.

"Even when we open, it's going to be on a part-time basis. Shops won't start trading until 10.30am, in line with Government regulations, and will close early. It's been such a traumatic few months for volunteers and managers that some shops simply won't return."

Mr McGilloway added that, while the economic losses were hard, it was the "intangible element" of community service that made the closures especially difficult.

"As well as a fundraising element, our shops are a gateway to SVP and provide a recreational hub as well," he said. "For an awful lot of people, it's not about coming in and spending money, it's about reaching out to other people and reengaging with the community.

Success

"Whilst we judge success of our shops up to point on economic contributions, there's an intangible element which you can't put a price on and that's where we're really suffering."

Mr McGilloway expected there to

be a "hunger" for charity shops now that they reopened.

"I do expect people to have a hunger for good brands at low prices," he said, "but it's really that community engagement, which the country has been denied for the last 12 weeks, that people are really crying out for.

"When customers come in, it's grand if people want to come in for an hour to chat to volunteers or have a browse.

"All we're doing is taking the resources of the local community and we're putting them at the disposal of that community," he said.

Holy water of life

Fr Thomas McHugh takes part in the Blessing of Graves in Tullysaran and Knockaconey, Co. Armagh.



The bread of the Eucharist for the life of the world

"The bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world."

Today is the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. Sadly, our churches are still closed but the good news is that they will soon be open again. Have you shared in the Mass streamed on television or radio? Are you looking forward to returning? Did you miss receiving the Lord in Holy Communion? Did this enforced absence make you ask yourself what the Eucharist really means to you?

Today's Gospel is taken from John, Chapter 6 which is all about bread, three kinds of bread in fact. With the first bread Jesus fed a multitude through the miraculous multiplication of five loaves and

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



two fish.

The following day he exhorted the people to consider the miracle of the loaves as a sign to believe in him as the bread to satisfy the hungers of the spirit: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never hunger; whoever believes in me will never thirst."

To believe in Jesus means a commitment to follow his ideals and teaching...as the way, the truth

and the life. People who knew Jesus from childhood found it hard to make this commitment.

After bread for the body and the bread of Faith, Jesus raised their minds to the third bread. He spoke in the future tense as this bread had not yet been given: "The bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world." It is no surprise that the people were deeply puzzled by this. So, Jesus rephrased his promise in six further statements. Seven statements. Seven is always the divine number in John's Gospel. People were still puzzled but Jesus explained that they would understand this future bread in the light of the resurrection: "What if you should see the son of man

ascend to where he was before." It is the Risen Lord whom we meet in the Eucharist.

On the night before he died, at the Last Supper, he gave the blessed bread to the disciples, saying: "This is my body, given up for you." And giving them the cup of wine, he said, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood poured out for you."

Banquet

For some 30 years the son of god was on Earth in a human body of flesh and blood. Now he is embodied in the consecrated bread and wine. Prepare yourself for returning to the banquet of the Eucharist by pondering on the words of Jesus.

● I am the living bread which has

come down from heaven.

● The bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world.

● Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him/her.

● For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

● Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in them.

● As the living Father sent me and I draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me.

"The blessing-cup that we bless is a communion with the blood of Christ, and the bread that we break is a communion with the body of Christ" (1 Cor.10:16).

Nuala O'Loan

The View



Parliament must listen to the people

Last week, the NI Assembly voted to reject the imposition, in Northern Ireland, of abortion legislation by the British government, which extends to all non-fatal disabilities including Down syndrome.

What the British government should do now is repeal the law which was forced through parliament last year using an emergency procedure designed to deal with things like terrorism. Then it should allow the NI Assembly to deal with this matter. This was not a matter for the British government, it was always a matter for the NI Assembly. That Assembly has been sitting now for over five months, and it has indicated its views on what is being done at Westminster by the vote on June 2. It rejects it.

The legislation which the British government has introduced was drafted in secrecy – there was no discussion with Northern Ireland MLAs, MPs or peers. Nobody knew what was in the regulations. I and others asked the NIO minister for a meeting to find out what was going on, before the regulations were tabled, and eventually had a telephone meeting on March 19, six days before they were introduced in parliament. At that stage we still didn't know what was in the new law. We had also been unable to get information on how the people of Northern Ireland had responded to the NIO consultation about the detail of the new law.

Consultation

At that meeting on March 19, we were again refused access to the regulations. The NIO minister, his private secretary and a member of staff of the NIO all had the regulations in front of them, but refused to share them, even during the meeting, which made it difficult to have a coherent conversation. The minister did tell us that during the NIO consultation the majority of people had said that they did not want these regulations, but, he said, this was not what the consultation was about.

In the course of the meeting we learned that abortion would be available on demand up to 12 weeks, and up to



24 weeks if termination presents less of a risk to the health of the mother than the continuation of the pregnancy. In assessing this there is no requirement that the mother has a specific mental health or physical condition, and the minister said, it would be a matter to be decided by the mother and her doctor who can take into account the "wider social context". This means that we have abortion effectively on demand up to 24 weeks for any reason, so that if the baby is a little girl and the parents would prefer a little boy, they can abort the little girl.

Finally, we were told, abortion would be available to birth if the baby has "a severe foetal impairment or a fatal foetal abnormality". When asked whether there was a definition of "severe foetal impairment" or fatal foetal abnormality the minister said that there was not. He declined to answer when drawn about whether Down syndrome, a club foot or a cleft palate constituted severe foetal impairment, saying that the doctor and mother would have to consider the level of disability which would be present. He said that the wording was clear and it applied to severe cases.

Normally when law is being made there is consultation, impact assessment, consideration of the draft legislation, the opportunity to amend the new law – none of this has happened. None of this can happen. These regulations, which none of our elected representatives had seen, are a package. Parliament is being asked to approve them in the coming weeks. It has a stark choice – either

it approves the regulations as a whole or it rejects them.

We now know, because the British government has finally disclosed the fact, that 79% of respondents to the NIO consultation rejected the government's proposals for the new laws. I have had no explanation as to why this fact was not made known, why the wording of the new law was not made available for discussion and consideration or why we were not allowed to see it until it was laid in Parliament.

“The minister is wrong. He does not have to get these regulations through parliament”

Now the Northern Ireland Assembly has voted to reject the imposition of the new law.

They had two votes and altogether 75 of our 90 MLAs rejected the provisions for abortion to birth in cases of non-fatal disabilities including Down syndrome.

The NI Attorney General, the chief legal adviser to the NI Executive has advised that in producing these regulations the NIO minister has gone beyond the powers available him. The NIO minister could only make any law which the NI Assembly could make. The NI Assembly can only make laws which are compliant with the NI Act and European law obligations, among which are the obligation not to discriminate on grounds of disability or in the protection of rights of

conscience.

The NIO minister has produced regulations which discriminate against unborn babies on the grounds of disability, since babies without a disability are protected from abortion from 24 weeks of gestation, but babies with a disability can be aborted up to birth.

Discrimination

The new law also discriminates against medical practitioners and others who have a genuine conscientious objection to being involved in abortion, as protection is available only to those who actually participate in the act of abortion. This means that nurse managers who have to organise theatre staffing rotas or pharmacists, for example, are not protected. As Lord Mackay, a former Lord Chancellor of Britain said in parliament last year:

“It is not necessary or right to force people to do things that they hold to be wrong.”

These new laws have been the subject of serious and significant criticism by MPs and peers from NI and other parts of the UK, by a Parliamentary Select Committee, and by a large number of people including eminent QCs and Church leaders in Northern Ireland. The Assembly has voted to reject them. Tens of thousands of our people have marched, protested, written to the British prime minister saying they do not want these laws.

Despite all this the British government is determined to force them upon the people of Northern Ireland against their will. Last week in parliament the NIO minister said he had to do this because the law required regulations to be passed. The law does

require regulations. It specifies limited grounds upon which abortion should be introduced. It does not require abortion on demand. It does not require abortion to birth when a baby has a foetal abnormality. Yet that is what the NIO minister has legislated for.

The minister is wrong. He does not have to get these regulations through Parliament. 79% of the people rejected these laws when they were proposed in the NIO Consultation. The NI Assembly voted to reject them last week.

It is time for Parliament to listen with respect to the NI Assembly, to NI's politicians sitting in Westminster, to our Church leaders across the community, and to all the people who have called for the rejection of these regulations.

ASSOCIATION OF LEADERS OF MISSIONARIES AND RELIGIOUS OF IRELAND (AMRI) WISHES TO RECRUIT A SECRETARY GENERAL

The Role

Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI) is currently recruiting a Secretary General on a fixed term period of three years. The Secretary General will be responsible for coordinating the day to day operation of AMRI in an effective and efficient manner contributing significantly to the success and good standing of AMRI.

JOB DETAILS

Contract Type: Fixed-Term for a Period of 3 years

Location: Dublin

Hours of Work: 9.00am – 5.00pm, Monday to Friday (and as required)

Essential attributes

Personal

- Strong commitment to the mission and vision of AMRI
- Personable, honest and ethical
- Effective communicator in all aspects and has the ability to represent AMRI as required
- Flexible whilst having a good sense of boundaries
- Cares that AMRI is a good place to work

Experience

Can demonstrate experience of:

- Strong leadership qualities with ability to build and motivate a team
- Strong organisational skills
- Having the ability to be decisive, whilst at the same time demonstrating empathy
- Awareness of the cultural, social and religious situation in Ireland
- Strategic plan implementation
- Working well within a corporate governance structure

Desirable Attributes

- Preferably membership of or a familiarity with one of the member organisations of AMRI
- Knowledge of the history and the journey of CORI/IMU discussions
- Experience of working with a membership organisation.



To apply for this position, please send a cover letter along with your CV to president@amri.ie

Closing date for applications is 26th June 2020.

Bishop promotes Accord amid domestic violence calls increase

Staff reporter

Highlighting the increase in domestic violence calls reported by An Garda Síochána over the last year, the bishop of Kildare and Leighlin has pointed people to Accord's counselling service.

Posting on social media, Bishop Denis Nulty said Accord counsellors are trained to help those suffering from domestic violence.

He said there has been a "25% increase reported in incidences of domestic violence over the past year", adding that Accord "counsellors are all trained to deal with domestic violence".

"Contact today their Covid-19 Relationship Support Lines operated by the three Accord companies".

Gardai launched a crackdown on domestic violence in April. This was done due to concerns it would increase during lockdown.

Since April 1, gardaí made 8,229 contacts with, or attempts to contact, victims of domestic abuse as part of the operation. Between May 13-27, there were 107 prosecutions in relation to domestic violence incidents.

Phase two of the operation concentrates on arrests and prosecutions in relation to breaches of court orders.

More northern schools abandon transfer tests

Chai Brady

An increasing number of Catholic grammar schools in the North are abandoning controversial transfer tests to select pupils for 2021. It comes after Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin pleaded for the tests to be set aside.

The 11-plus exams were formally abolished in 2008. However, some schools that wanted to continue to select children based on academic criteria set up their own process in defiance of the hierarchy's opposition to such a process.

There are several schools that will now not use transfer tests including Abbey Christian Brothers' Grammar School, Our Lady's Grammar School, Sacred Heart Grammar School, and St Colman's College which are all in Newry, and St Louis Grammar School, in Kilkeel, all in Co. Down.

Tests

Mount Lourdes Grammar and St Michael's College in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh and Loreto Grammar School and the Christian Brothers' Grammar School in Omagh, Co. Tyrone also announced they would not be using transfer tests.

Archbishop Eamon – a former school principal – wrote last month to 165 schools warning that children are under enough pressure due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Anxiety

Archbishop Eamon said he was aware of "anxiety" building over the tests.

"I appeal to the whole educational community in the Archdiocese of Armagh to support a suspension of the use of academic selection for entrance to post-primary schools in September 2021," he said.

"I urge the Boards of Governors of our Grammar Schools to publish admis-

sions criteria which do not rely upon the use of transfer tests carried out under such uncertain and challenging circumstances."

No desire

He added that he has "no desire to simply re-open the arguments for, and against, the transfer tests" and that he

made the call "from my heart on behalf of the current Primary 6 children, their families and all our school communities".

At the time the 11-plus was abolished, members of the hierarchy were sharply critical of Catholic schools that wished to retain academic selection.

Cool way to celebrate summer in Dublin!



Violetta Cosines with her son, Marcus (4), enjoy an ice cream on Grafton Street in Dublin as the city emerged from lockdown under the National Transport Authority's 'Easing Like Sunday Mornings' campaign. Photo: Leon Farrell/Photocall Ireland

Time to 'rediscover ourselves as Church' says archbishop

Despite the coronavirus pandemic coming at a time "of weakness unparalleled" in the Church's recent history, the "challenge has been met" according to Archbishop Michael Neary.

"Parishes organised Masses on webcam and radio. Many priests and bishops took to ministry via online and digital media with flair and creativity. A tired Church, wearied by relentless change, found new strength in a context of general human emergency. And now, like so many other organisations, it faces a slow, tentative return to something like normality," Archbishop Neary said.

Resources

The archbishop said that there is only one question worth asking despite dwindling numbers, sparse resources and that "vocations are down to a trickle" and that is: "Do you believe?"

Regarding the new framework published by Ireland hierarchy this week to prepare the faithful to return to worship, Archbishop Neary said that the "enormous changes we had already experienced in terms of culture and belief will be visible symbolically... in the awkward arrangements we will have to make within our churches for safety".

Veritas reopens Abbey street shop

Religious publisher and retailer Veritas has reopened its Dublin shop after it was forced to close due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Veritas announced their shop based on Abbey Street in Dublin City Centre reopened on Monday, June 8 in a notice on their website.

Veritas thanked all their customers for their support.

Phase 2 of the easing of Covid-19 restrictions in Ireland allowed bookshops to reopen

Composer dedicates new religious song to Covid-19 victims

Aron Hegarty

Dublin-based composer Bernard Sexton has written a new religious song of comfort for the victims of Covid-19.

The song entitled 'God Will Wipe Away All Tears' is based on sacred texts from the Bible, sung by a virtual choir and an MP3 file and sheet music has been made free to download.

"The initial idea was that the song would remind those who are suffering or who are bereaved of the central Christian message of salvation," Mr Sexton of Clontarf told *The Irish Catholic*.

"However, I felt something more uplifting and hopeful would be more comforting and reworked my original idea.

"I'm hoping that the song will be used in parishes throughout Ireland and may also be useful for memorial

Many Irish Faithful may already be familiar with Mr Sexton's music with his songs *Though We are Many* featuring at the International Eucharistic Congress in 2012 and *The Last Supper* during the Papal visit in 2018.

"Some of my most profound moments of Faith have musical associations," says the St Anthony parishioner.

"My own Faith experience has convinced me of the power of music.

"People often ask me where the music I write comes from or how I compose music? I don't have any rational explanation for it, but I do sense that there is divine hand guiding me when I am composing sacred music."

i The virtual choir video performance of the song can be found on YouTube [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itzivk7ra0c1>]

Monsignor Jim Cassin dies

Staff reporter

The death has occurred of prominent educationalist Msgr Jim Cassin. He was a priest of the Diocese of Ossory and served for many years as the Church's national secretary for education.

He died in a hospital in Kilkenny on Friday and was laid to rest following a private requiem Mass on Tuesday.

He was a regular feature at educational events and a key adviser to the hierarchy on educational policy and discussions with the Government on issues as diverse as

needs and the process of divesting some schools from a Catholic patronage to other bodies.

The death notice said his death is "deeply regretted and sadly missed by his brother Paddy, cousins, relatives, his many friends, Bishop [Dermot] Farrell and his brother

Gospel Reflections and Prayers



Silvester O'Flynn writes of the joy of spreading the Good News and how his book can spark inspiration.

Sometimes I am asked, as a Capuchin Franciscan, why do I wear sandals and no socks even when the weather is cold. I have a stock answer. The Bible says "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of one who brings good news." For many years I have set out to bring the Good News to people. So, according to the Bible I must have beautiful feet. Why then should I ever hide them!

“They passed on a method of personalizing the gospel stories by urging us to tell the story in our own words.”

I make no claim to be a learned scholar, but I have always been attracted to the Bible. It began in national school where we had two teachers, my mother and father as it so happened. They passed on a method of personalizing the gospel stories by urging us to tell the story in our own words. The first time I got a present of a book token, guess what I bought ... a bible. I love reading anything that broadens my understanding of it.

I see myself as a go-between the scholars and

the ordinary folk, so I try to use only words that anybody can understand. I keep certain people in mind and ask myself could he/she understand what I have just written. If I think it wasn't clear enough it is dumped in the waste bin beside me.

I believe that scripture is a living word. It is God's word speaking to us today. I like what Jesus said to the people at Nazareth after he had read a sacred text. He put away the scroll and told the people, "This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen". In his last talk with the apostles, Jesus promised them the light of the Holy Spirit. "I still have many things to say to you but they would be too much for you now. But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you to the complete truth" (John 16:12-13).

When people gather together to reflect on the gospel, it fascinates me how they are moved in different ways. I reminds me of a poem by the American writer, E. E. Cummings, about four sisters, Maggie, Milly, Molly and May who went down to the sea to play one day. Each one had a totally different experience. "For whatever we lose (like a you or a me), it's always ourselves that we find in the sea." That is exactly how the sacred word can touch a person in a very personal way. God enables us to see life



“God enables us to see life with fresh eyes, challenging, inspiring, consoling, questioning, shaping or directing.”

with fresh eyes, challenging, inspiring, consoling, questioning, shaping or directing.

When Pope Francis was a young priest he took the advice of an experienced preacher that every homily should have an idea, a sentiment and an image.

One person needs good substance...an idea.

Another person is touched in the heart by a sentiment. Another one's imagination is fed by a picture or a story. The living word touches different people in personal ways.

Writing can be a solitary occupation for long hours. Doubts creep in. Will anybody read this? Am I wasting my time? After

publication it is such a relief when some kind readers let you know how the writing touched them. Here are some of the reactions to the first edition of this book, known initially as Homily Hints and Prayers.

“I am more than fifty years a priest and this is the book I've been waiting for.”
-Missionary Priest

“Your book takes the burden off my shoulders preparing for our weekly meeting.”
-Leader of a Parish Prayer Group

“He excels in pithy but thoughtful soundbites.”
-Intercom Review

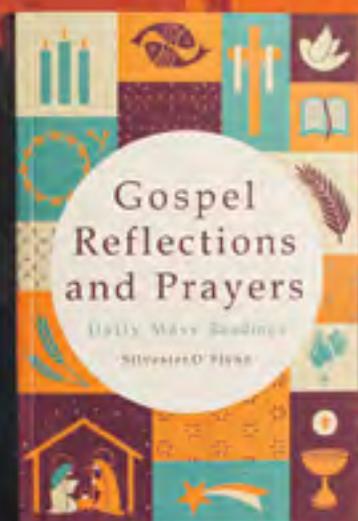
“We use your book for our prayer together every morning”.
-Husband and Wife, Both Retired

“The seed is the Word of God and the rich soil represents those people with a generous and noble heart who have heard the word and take it to themselves and yield a rich harvest through their perseverance” (Luke 8: 11,15).

Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit may you have the beautiful feet of one who brings the Good News.

Seeking inspiration for your parish prayer group?

Looking for a way to strengthen your family's spiritual life?



Let Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap be your guide through the Daily Mass Readings with *Gospel Reflections and Prayers*. The weekly liturgy is food for the soul, providing optimism and hope. Through two short reflections on each day's Gospel, followed by intercessory prayers you can deepen understanding of the scripture and focus intentions through all three liturgical cycles.

Gospel Reflections and Prayers is a revised edition of Homily Hints and Prayers (2018)

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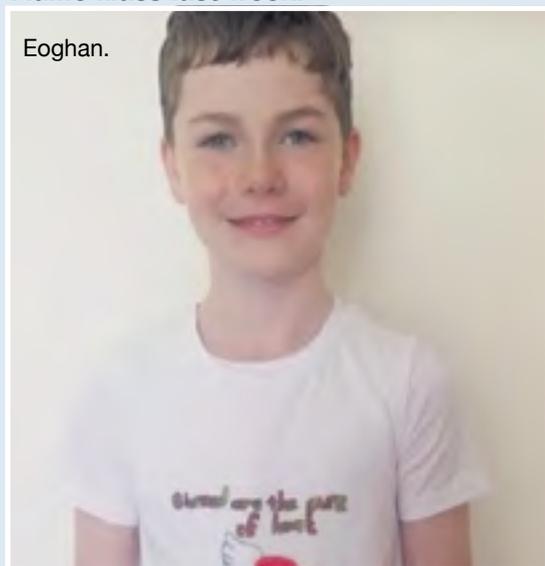


Kayla wears her 'Fan the flames' design.

Year 7 pupils from St Theresa's Primary School in Glebe in the Diocese of Derry show off their t-shirts for the Fan the Flame Mass last week.



Aimee.



Eoghan.



Fionn and Cayce busy at work designing their t-shirts.



ARMAGH: Special prayers were made on Pentecost Sunday for children whose Confirmations were postponed until later this year due to Covid-19 in St Patrick's Cathedral Armagh. The children prepared pictures that featured during the Mass.

Edited by Chai Brady
chai@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



MAYO: Fr Richard Gibbons PP and Rector of Knock Shrine takes part in praying the Rosary in the Apparition Chapel with Pope Francis and shrines around the world at the same time to implore Our Lady's intercession and protection during the current coronavirus crisis. The event was streamed live from locations around the world on the eve of Pentecost.



ARMAGH: Some of the pictures prepared by children whose Confirmations were postponed due to Covid-19 which featured during Mass on Pentecost Sunday in Armagh parish.



DERRY: A T-shirt created by Emily in Year 7 from St John's Primary School for the Fan the Flame Mass that took place last week.



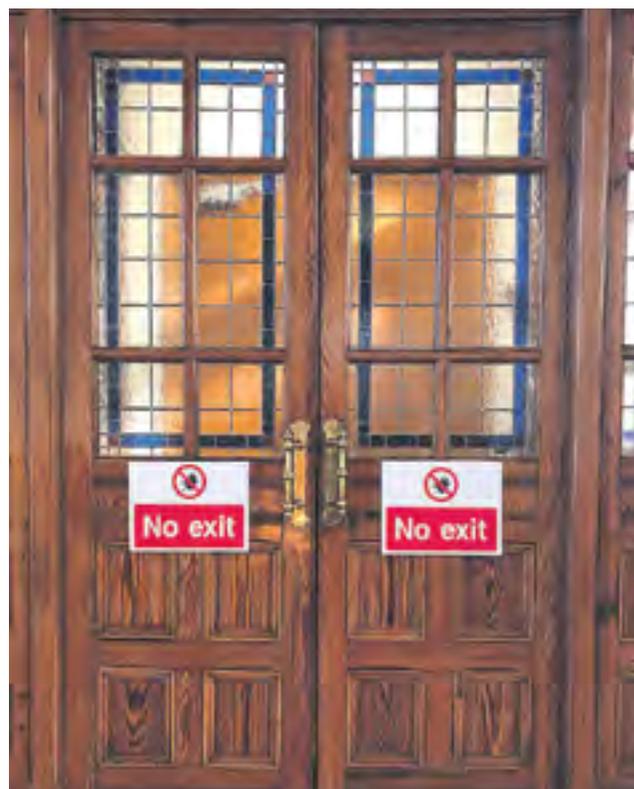
DUBLIN: Parishioners from Ballyroan parish volunteer to collect Trócaire boxes.



CORK: Children from the Parish of Doneraile in the Diocese of Cloyne helped to decorate the church with their pictures for Pentecost.



DUBLIN: The Peter McVerry Trust thanked Keogh's for their delivery of crisps and popcorn from Keogh's Farm that came along with a letter to thank the homelessness service for their work on the front line during the current pandemic.



FERMANAGH: A one-way system will be in operation in Holy Cross Church in Lisnaskea in order to avoid people coming into close contact while exiting and entering the church to prevent the spread of the coronavirus in preparation for the full opening of Church life when deemed safe.

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.

Liturgy lessons from lockdown that will endure



As parishes begin to re-open for public Masses the virtual space is here to stay, writes **Michael Kelly**

While Cardinal John Henry Newman's vision of a Catholic university in Dublin ultimately floundered, the church he built in the city centre remains a jewel in Ireland's ecclesiastical map.

Consecrated in 1856, it has remained an important place of worship in the capital ever since. Like other churches the parish faced a massive challenge as lockdown began in March. For the past four years, the church has been stewarded by the University of Notre Dame which uses the site on St Stephen's Green as a base for the Notre Dame-Newman Centre for Faith and Reason.

As coronavirus restrictions took hold, the decision was quickly made to migrate public worship to social media according to Steve Warner, Associate Director of the centre.

Almost three months on, he told *The Irish Catholic* that "when all of this started, my hope was that we'd come out of this on the other end with something to show for it".

Volunteers

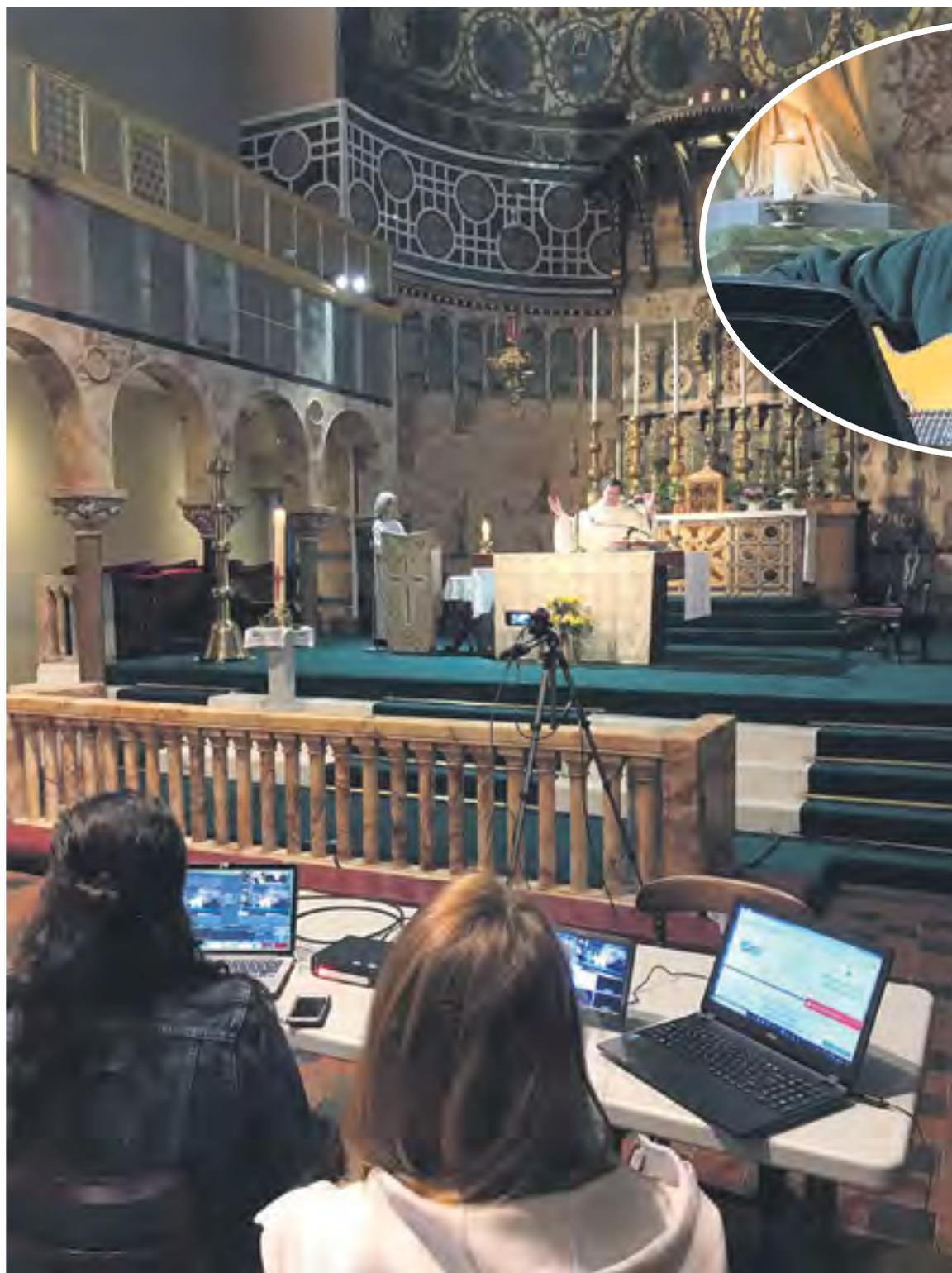
Broadcasting liturgies and other events had not been something that the centre had given serious thought to before the pandemic.

"We had already started broadcasting out weekly Taizé [on a Tuesday evening]," says Katherine Dunn one of the House of Brigid volunteers who ministers at the church.

"It was only Facebook live, and somewhat of an afterthought – but because we had started that it was helpful when all of this happened because we knew the basic things and could build on that," she adds.

The centre also started from a good place because it already had a Facebook page with a substantial number of followers both in Ireland and the US.

"There are many people who are associated with the University of Notre Dame who are keenly interested in what we're doing over



here and follow us quite closely, so we were getting comments and views on our liturgies from all over the US as well as Ireland," says Steve.

Like many parishes moving online has been a steep learning curve for University Church. For Maddie Loftin, another volunteer at the House of Brigid, these are lessons that will remain. "It has been a transition," she says, "but one that will be part of the future".

Steve says that the few dozen people who had been watching Taizé before the lockdown meant that there was already a familiarity with the church as a virtual place of worship.

Katherine says that the virtual congregation is made up of people who used to worship at the church

as well as others who attended events there before lockdown. "We see an increase because we can see that people are sharing the broadcasts and sending one another the links," she says.

“Steve believes that the huge numbers of people who have been tuning in to watch online Masses ‘underlines the spiritual hunger of people’”

While there is overwhelming joy at the prospect of public Masses returning at the end of the month,

the reality is that some people – particularly those who are older or vulnerable – will continue to avoid public gatherings for quite some time.

This is part of the reason why University Church is determined that the virtual reach will continue.

"Once we're back to whatever normal is going to be, we're still going to have this request to have things offered on the internet for people who can't travel for any number of reasons," Steve says.

Maddie agrees adding "there's an impetus there for us to push ourselves to continue using the equipment now that we have built it up".

Steve believes that the huge numbers of people who have been tuning in to watch online Masses

Guitarist Steve Warner plays sacred music while, left, Katherine Dunn and Maddie Loftin are at the controls while Fr Bill Dailey CSC celebrates Mass and Michele Warner looks on.

"underlines the spiritual hunger of people".

In recent years, University Church has become particularly known as a centre for good preaching and quality music. Steve says that he gets huge reaction to the homilies of the resident priest Fr Bill Dailey CSC as well as to the music – his own speciality. But, was he concerned that with lockdown restrictions and the unavailability of musicians and choir members that this would suffer? "I wasn't afraid at all about pairing down musically so long as it had noble integrity to it and I think that we've been able to do that, so we planned on a repertoire that embraced the sparseness".

“There has been a fair share of trial and error in getting the technical side of the broadcasting right”

Fr Bill like other priests has also had to get used to preaching to an empty church. "It's obviously tougher to engage with people," he says. "But the feedback I have been getting is hugely positive from people, so I think we're still communicating the message virtually," he adds.

Katherine says that there has been a fair share of trial and error in getting the technical side of the broadcasting right, but she is adamant that parishes should stick with it when lockdown eases. "It's totally worth it," she says. "It is an added dimension to the liturgy and it means that we can continue to reach people we can't reach physically".

i What has been your parish's experience of liturgy under lockdown? Email news@irishcatholic.ie

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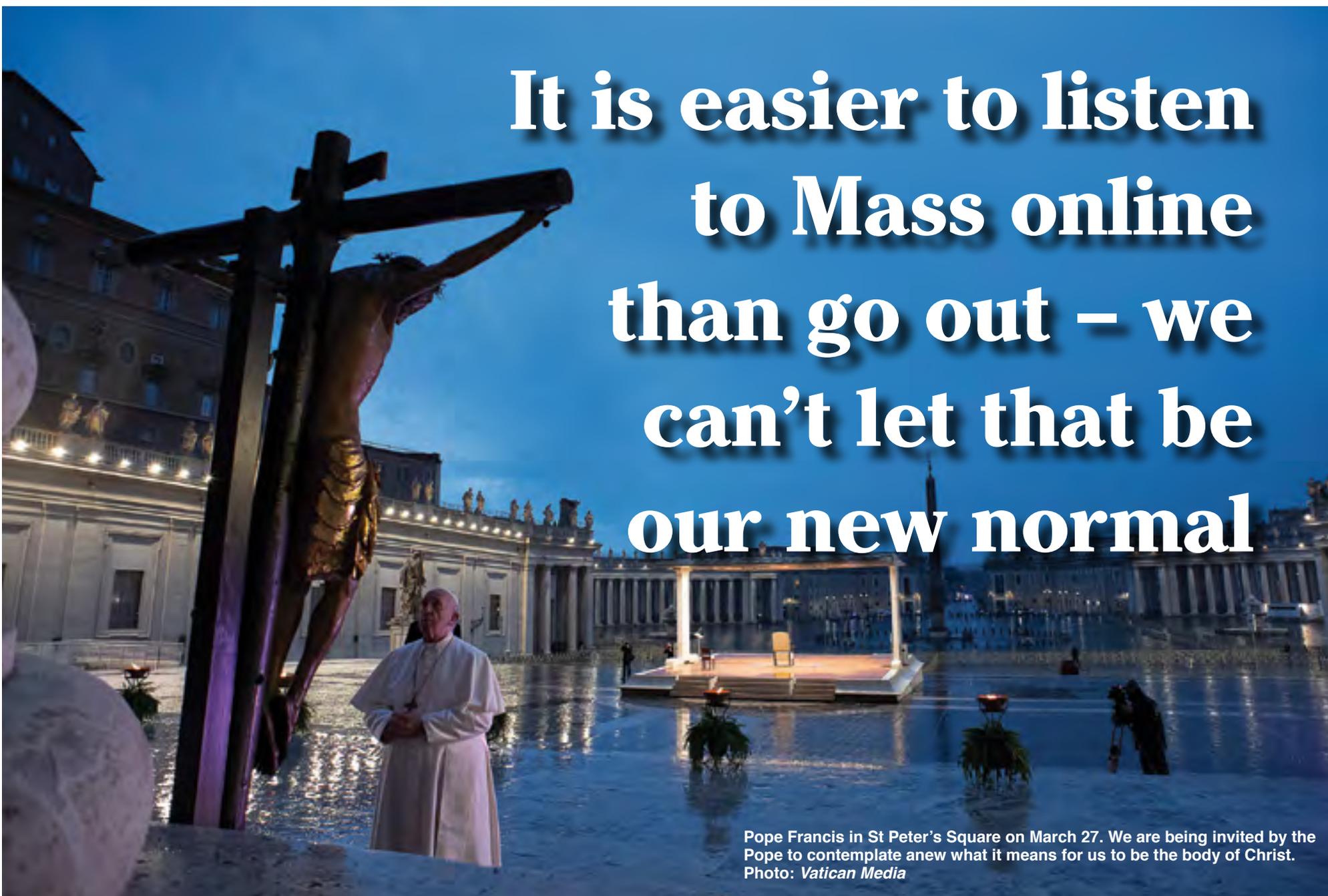


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It is easier to listen to Mass online than go out – we can't let that be our new normal



Pope Francis in St Peter's Square on March 27. We are being invited by the Pope to contemplate anew what it means for us to be the body of Christ. Photo: Vatican Media



As parishes we will have to invest a lot of energy in community building as we emerge from this time of social isolation and cannot take it for granted that people will simply return writes **Bairbre Cahill**

You've probably heard the story of the hungry caterpillar; well I'm currently feeling like the rather anxious caterpillar. We are on a phased journey back into society. We are emerging gradually from our cocoons. I delight at the prospect of getting back to walking the Derryveagh mountains. I long for the chance to swim in the sea. I want to meet up with those I have missed so much. The

prospect of a cup of tea or a wee glass of wine and a chat, even sitting at a sensible two metres social distance in the garden is wonderful.

But I know I am not alone when I wonder how we will relax with these gradually evolving freedoms, sources of joy and yet needing our ongoing vigilance. I suspect this is why I found myself thinking a lot about Pentecost as the feast approached last weekend. I identify with

the friends of Jesus, safely cocooned in the upper room. They must have wondered how they would ever venture out again. It is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost which empowers and liberates them.

Now, I'm not suggesting that Pentecost Sunday transforms us and allow us to run free, without a care in the world. What I am suggesting is that over these weeks we would do well to pray for the gifts of the Spirit. Living through a pandemic creates anxiety – that's natural – but we cannot allow that anxiety to dominate and so we need the courage to move out into the world again. While it is not good to spend too much time watching the news or reading articles about Covid-19 online it is essential that we have a realistic understanding of the situation, that we are not being driven by rumours, half-baked stories and hysteria. The threat is very real but there are clear steps we can take to minimise the risk of catching or

passing on coronavirus. So all those gifts, of wisdom, right judgement and reverence come to the fore.

I've been doing a tour of parishes lately. I've been to Glenstal and Clonard, to the Augustinians and Redemptorists in Limerick. I've popped into the cathedral in Letterkenny and St Mel's in Longford as well as my own parish here in Letterkenny's Irish Martyrs - all on the laptop of course. I deeply appreciate the availability of Mass online and yet, I am concerned. It strikes me that in partaking of Mass in this way we are becoming, yet again, an utterly passive laity. I know there is not much we can do about it for now but it concerns me. Yes, it is good to be able to 'hear' Mass, there is certainly a sense of connection but we need so much more.

And indeed in order to do that, we need to take time to listen. What has people's experience been during this time? What have we learned? Online and in conversations we hear over and over again,

people saying that we cannot simply return to what we previously thought of as normal. We need the future to be different, better, more human. If that is to happen then we need to take the time to reflect. What have we discovered in the quiet simplicity of our socially isolated lives? What do we desire to do differently? What values have been brought into focus?

“What resources are we providing for families to enable them to grow in faith together?”

For society in general and for the Church it cannot simply be 'business as usual'. We do not know how long this is going to impact on our lives but sitting at Mass, wearing masks and at a two metre distance from others will not be business as usual. So we need to take this opportunity

to think about who we are and who we are called to be, what community means in this context and what it is to be a Christian in a world where, at the moment the most powerful Gospel images are coming to us in the guise of doctors, nurses and other health staff, front-line workers and volunteers.

Communities

I find myself thinking about the Basic Christian Communities which developed in Latin America. At the core of these communities was the willingness of people to reflect together on the Word of God, to view the scriptures through the lens of their daily experience and their lives through the lens of the Gospel. These were simple, ordinary people living their lives in challenging circumstance but it was this interaction of faith and life which gave them vision and courage and the desire to transform society. It takes courage to enter into the intimacy of faith sharing, to break open the word of

“We do not know how long this is going to impact on our lives but sitting at Mass, wearing masks and at a two metre distance from others will not be business as usual”



Capuchin Franciscan Bro. Andrew Corriente hands out food to those in need in Washington DC, during the coronavirus pandemic. Christians are called by God to take part in the Church's mission in the world to help those impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Photo: CNS/ Tyler Orsburn

God with others. There is an openness and vulnerability involved but a richness too. It can truly be an encounter with Christ which can transform our lives and how we live out our faith.

Surely that is what is being asked of us by this whole situation, to be open to encounter Christ and each other in a new and life giving way. Going forward, how do we want to live? Answers are not easy to come by. We need to develop contemplative discerning hearts. There may be a security in 'getting back to normal' but maybe we need the courage to find something better than that. Yes, we are blessed that Mass is available to us online but perhaps this shared reflection, the development of small groups committed to praying and sharing together is what we also need at this time. Our parishes have in so many ways and for many years become service providers allowing us to simply be consumers of these services. We have paid lip service to the importance of adult faith development. So then, rather than being simply passive recipients where can we come to, bringing our meagre offerings, our five loaves and two fish and allow them to be transformed into bread to nourish others?

Do we believe that the family is the domestic Church, the place where faith takes root? If that is the case, then what are we doing in this time to nurture that? What resources are we providing for families to enable them to grow in faith together?

First Holy Communions have been postponed all over the country. Even come September it is highly unlikely

that we will be able to have – as in many larger towns – over a hundred families plus friends and relations gathered together for the celebration of First Communion. So, how could we do it differently then? Is this the time to invite families to pick any of the Sunday Masses over a six week period and to celebrate a smaller, simpler First Holy Communion for a small group of children, their families and the parish community? This was a recommendation by the Irish Bishops some years ago but has not been widely taken up. Is this an opportunity to embrace a new way of doing things? Is it an opportunity to recognise First Holy Communion as a celebration of faith in family life, enabling parents and guardians to take ownership of their vital role as the first teachers of faith? Change is nerve wracking but resistance to change can be resistance to life itself.

“Online and in conversations we hear over and over again, people saying that we cannot simply return to what we previously thought of as normal”

We deeply need the gifts of the Spirit, not just as individuals but as families, as society and as the people of God. We could so easily be like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, plodding

into an unknown future with heads down, embroiled in a sense of anxiety and loss, wanting everything to be the way we had once expected it to be. Or we could take the time to look around us, we could risk that intimacy of faith sharing, we could allow ourselves to encounter Jesus in the goodness and generosity of others and respond to the invitation to be the bread of life for each other, broken and shared. Now wouldn't that be a future rich in the fruits of the Holy Spirit?

Eucharist

And what of the Church in the midst of this? Yes, we want to get back to celebrating the Eucharist together but our vision needs to be deeper, wider, more than this. This pandemic has provoked an existential crisis on a global level. What is the pastoral response to the trauma of this? Firstly I would have to ask, are we open to being evangelised by the Gospel goodness of so many all around us, of every creed and none? What have we learned about humanity? When you listen to a teenage boy saying that he hasn't seen his mum since the beginning of lockdown because she is a nurse and is staying away from the family home in order to keep them safe we are witnessing the stuff of holiness – in the actions of the mother and the loving understanding of her son. When you hear of people who have retired but return to work in order to be of service – holiness. When you look at the sports clubs and community groups delivering support to those who are vulnerable within the community – holiness. When

volunteers work together to manufacture visors, sew masks and scrubs – holiness. This is what Pope Francis has in mind when he speaks of the universal call to holiness and yet we still reserve the idea of holiness for that which is more conventionally sacramental. When will we embrace a wider vision if not now? When will we nurture discerning hearts so that people can comfortably speak of their daily lives as a place of God's presence and action, a place of revelation?

Pope Francis has asked repeatedly for the Church to be a field hospital, "I see clearly," the Pope says, "that the thing the Church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it

needs nearness, proximity. I see the Church as a field hospital after battle...Heal the wounds, heal the wounds... And you have to start from the ground up." How do we begin to heal those wounds? We need first to listen, to create space for people to share their experience.

There is the trauma of all those who have been bereaved during this time, when our usual Irish ways have been set aside. We have not been able to gather at a wake, to hold each other in our grief, to gather to pray for the departed and the broken hearted. We cannot go back in time. We cannot retrofit those supports but going forward we need to explore how we nurture and support all whose grief has been made more complex by this pandemic.

Schools

There is a pervasive sense of loss. Children moving from primary to secondary school this year have lost out on those final months of preparation, fun and a process of closure to ease their transition. Leaving Cert students are living with ongoing stress about their exams and what the future will bring. Grandparents are living with the loneliness of missing grandchildren and in many cases the loss of those first few wonderful weeks with a newborn, something they are very aware they will never recapture. Many people have experienced a sense of being unmoored – disconnected from their normal routines and what gives structure and meaning to their lives. Within that many have found a freedom and greater sense of balance which they may now not want to relinquish. Big emotions are being corralled and contained but at some point will need to be spoken of – anxiety, fear, frustration. What is our pastoral response? It is

here, at the heart of people's lives that God is powerfully and profoundly present and so as Church we need to listen to what is emerging, we need the capacity to be with people, to acknowledge the woundedness we all experience.

“I wonder how we will relax with these gradually evolving freedoms, sources of joy”

There is a very real sense in which we are being invited into the paschal mystery – cross, tomb and resurrection. We cannot simply jump to resurrection without contemplating and reflecting upon the cross and tomb experiences. God, in the resurrection, is doing something radically new. What is God doing now? How are we, as Church, being called to newness of life, to resurrection?

Pope Francis in his writings has consistently asked us to reflect upon the type of society we are building, upon the exclusion of so many. He has invited us back to that radical commitment to God's *anawim* – the poor and the vulnerable. In *Laudato Si'* we are challenged to consider our relationship with creation and the damage being done by exploitation. It strikes me that so much of what Pope Francis has written about is brought into focus by this pandemic. We are being invited by our Pope and by our circumstances to contemplate anew what it means for us to be Church, to be the body of Christ. A caterpillar has no intention of emerging from the cocoon still a caterpillar. Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit let us be open to transformation.



We are witnessing the stuff of holiness in this pandemic. Volunteers organise donated food next to a photograph of Pope Francis at the parish of San Ramon Nonato in Madrid on June 2. Photo: CNS/ Susana Vera, Reuters



The lockdown has caused huge damage and it's simplistic to look at it only in terms of lives saved writes **David Quinn**

Public worship in Ireland is now due to return on June 29, not July 20, as originally planned. It's still one of the latest dates in Europe even though our outbreak was not as severe as in countries such as France, Italy or Spain. It is a big, and sensible step in the right direction all the same.

Here in Ireland we spend too much time comparing ourselves with Britain and America, probably because they are English-speaking countries and our connection with them is so strong. We believe Covid-19 has caused carnage in both of those countries whereas we have managed things extremely well.

In fact, at the time of writing this article, Ireland had experienced 345 Covid-related deaths per million people compared with 337 in the US. In other words, the outbreak has been worse so far, although it hit America later than here. In Ireland, almost two-thirds of deaths were in care homes, where the situation was appalling.

In the US, New York was by far the worst hit city. Many other big cities in America have barely been hit by comparison.

The picture is worse in Britain where there have been 609 deaths per million at the time of writing. But the situation varies greatly by region. Northern Ireland, for example, has had roughly the same rate of death as the rest of Ireland. Population density has a lot to do with how badly a place will be hit.

“Several hundred thousand students have suffered lost educational opportunities”

For the record, other countries with small populations have done far better than Ireland. Austria has had 76 deaths per million. Denmark has had 101 deaths per million. Ireland has not done as well as either the Government or the media would have us believe.

Bigger countries like France, Italy and Spain have had, respectively, 434, 560 and 580 deaths per million that we know of. Those countries entered lockdown on March 17, March 9 and March 15 respectively. Ireland entered lockdown on March 28, although we went into semi-lockdown in mid-March.

Return to Mass strikes the right balance between safety and normal life



Online Masses were widely watched, but a poor substitute for gathering together. Photo: CNS

When you went into lockdown is relevant to when you start coming out. It indicates when the virus in a given country became sufficiently bad to warrant the measure. We can see that Italy went into lockdown about three weeks before us, and France and Spain less than a fortnight before us.

Normality

But they have been returning to some semblance of normality well before us. We won't be back to public Masses, with limits on numbers and various other safety measures, until 13 weeks after lockdown was imposed.

In Italy, the gap was 10 weeks, in France 11 weeks, and in Spain about 10 weeks. That isn't much of a difference, but remember, July 20 was the original return date, much later than those countries.

The July 20 date became increasingly indefensible as time went on. It is why the Government has generally speeded up the easing out of lockdown for all sectors. The slowness of the

original timetable was no longer justified in view of how low Covid-transmission has become in the general community and after looking at what other European countries are doing.

This is all a matter of proportionality. The lockdown was saving lives, but it has almost certainly cost lives as well. For example, an unknown number of people have delayed cancer treatment. People with chest pains and other life-threatening conditions were not seeing their GPs or going into hospital.

Many face financial ruin, especially in the hospitality sector. Increased poverty is always associated with decreased life expectancy.

Others were trapped in situations of domestic violence. We can expect to see an increase in divorce. Several hundred thousand students have suffered lost educational opportunities.

In other words, it is extremely simplistic to look at this only in terms of lives saved by the lockdown. The lockdown has caused huge damage as well.

Notably, the Association of Catholic Priests (how many priests attacked those of us who questioned the slow pace of restoring public worship. That includes this writer and this newspaper.

They attacked us for asking why Church leaders were not pressing for an earlier return, unlike practically every other sector in society. What they left out was the fact that everywhere else in Europe Church leaders were pressing for exactly that, and succeeding.

Masses

Was Pope Francis being heedless of the common good in supporting a return to public Masses in Italy on May 18? Were the French bishops being reckless in seeking a return on June 1, or the Austrian bishops on May 15? And so on.

In fact, outside perhaps of Britain, it is hard to think of any groups of priests apart from the ACP, and that included basically every hierarchy in Europe, who did not seek an earlier date than originally scheduled.

If you make 100% safety your goal, you would never return, and certainly you would have to cease public Masses again during every flu season which can kill hundreds of Irish people. Some probably pick up the flu at Mass.

“It is extremely simplistic to look at this only in terms of lives saved by the lockdown”

Dr Tony Holohan told me at one of the press briefings that he knew of no cases of any customer acquiring Covid-19 as a result of shopping for food during the whole of the lockdown. This gives an indication of how small the risk is of becoming infected with Covid-19 at Mass, so long as numbers attending are limited and everyone socially distances and uses hand sanitiser before entering church.

A June 29 return date to Mass is proportionate. It strikes the right balance between safety and normal life. Kudos to all those who have made this possible, including the bishops who worked behind the scenes.

“We won't be back to public Masses, with limits on numbers and various other safety measures, until 13 weeks after lockdown was imposed”



The Irish Spirit

June 11th, 2020
Issue No. 5

'The Art of Faith'

A journey through art with
Sr Maureen's selection of Irish Art.

Also discover Galway's churches
via Urban Sketching.

AN ARTICLE FROM EMMA TOBIN

Religious Art: An Expression of Awe

EXCLUSIVE EXCERPT

Let Nothing Trouble You

A reflection on St Teresa of Avila

....and much more!

Religious Art: An Expression of Awe

Written by **Emma Tobin**

When I started thinking about art, I asked myself what makes art valuable? What separates a child's drawing of God as a smiley face in the sky from the Pieta, from Rembrandt's paintings, from The Book of Kells, the Ardagh Chalice? What separates hand-woven St Brigid's crosses from beautiful gold and silver filigree crosses? The answer is nothing. These things are the same.

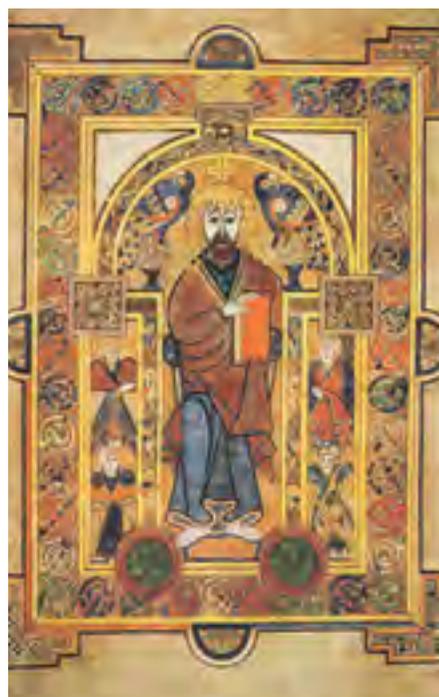
Granted, gold has more value than riverside reeds. Granted, the liquid stone lines of the Pieta inspire awe. Granted, Rembrandt's paintings are a demonstration of consummate skill and painstaking years of practice. A child's drawing expresses something equally noteworthy, however. If you leave a child alone with the means to make art, they will. There is something about being human that drives us to create. For thousands of years, human beings have expressed their devotion and their awe through the creation of breathtaking sculptures, architectural marvels, jewellery and paintings and pottery and poetry. Art is, after all, very often an expression of awe. And one gasp is as good as another.

“Art is an expression of feeling, of devotion, of passion. One could argue that religion itself is a recognition of the artistry inherent in life.”

People make art about the things that matter most to them. Art is an expression of feeling, of devotion, of passion. One could argue that religion itself is a recognition of the artistry inherent in life. Christians believe that what exists was created, that the seeds of everything that is were set down by knowing hands, shaped towards a certain manner of being. Life itself is, therefore, a work of art. This idea resonates through almost every facet of Christian belief. Jesus was an artist, a carpenter. The most pivotal story in the Christian tradition is about an act of creation. Many of the miracles that Jesus performed were acts of transmutation; turning water to wine. This is art, taking a blank canvas and turning it into something that can reach right into the human soul and tug. Taking words and placing them just so, and those words can paint landscapes in the empty air.



The Creation of Adam, Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo, 1508-1512



Book of Kells, Folio 32v, Christ Enthroned.
© Abbey of Kells / Public domain

Art, whether it is the work of a child with half a box of crayons, or the work of a master on a marble block, is and should be about intention. Religious art is an act of devotion. We are taught that faith is not something you can touch, or see, or smell, but just as prayer is an attempt to capture faith, for a moment, with a thought or a word, religious art snatches at the stuff of devotion and tries to give it shape.

Archaeologists can sift through the hidden heaps of centuries and tell us how we lived, but only historical art can tell us

“Like any great work done by human hands, churches are built on great love and great suffering. They are places to celebrate the most profound joy and the most wretched grief.”

why we lived. Some of the greatest pieces of religious art that we possess today can be seen a mile away by their steeples, stretching into the air. The largest are the work of thousands of hands over decades, floors full of small dark rivers of eroded stone where a million feet have passed, creaking and cracking benches where a million bodies have rested. In centuries past these buildings have been places of sanctuary, and the greedy have scented their power and shoved feet through the door. Like any great work done by human hands, churches are built on great love and great suffering. They are places to celebrate the most profound joy and the most wretched grief.

A church is just a building, of course. Just as a statue is an oddly shaped piece of stone, and a painting is just a load of colours daubed together. None of these things matter without people. None of these things can matter more than people. It remains true that we can create as many beautiful pieces of religious art as we want, but the kind of 'art' that faith calls us to create is the kind that starts in the streets, in our homes, out in

the world. A church is not the only place to go and practice faith. It isn't enough to stare into the magnificent stained-glass windows, the soaring arches and stone edifices of our churches. In Ireland we have a long and storied history of incredibly gifted artists, from poets to builders to painters to iconographers. This history is precious, but we should never forget that a church would mean the same thing if we made it out of sticks and stones and rebuilt it after every storm. It is a place to pray, to listen to the words passed down through generations. These words are a call to action, a call to humbleness and compassion, a call to value life fiercely, especially the lives of those most oppressed in our world.

At its heart that is what religion is; a sense of awe at the beauty of life in all its forms. Great works of art remind us that nothing beautiful or worthwhile can be achieved without sacrifice and sweat and tears, but they are also a reminder that the beauty we create in the world will echo down the centuries, and never be forgotten.

A Dwelling Place Within

Exclusive Excerpt from *Let Nothing Trouble You*
by Eugene McCaffrey OCD

Life is a journey, and in the end it is the journey itself that matters. The greatest journey of all is the journey within. It is not one of many steps but of deep longing. Not knowing how close the treasure is, we seek it far away. Yet it is only a heartbeat away; the world within is more real and more beautiful than anything we can see without.

Teresa's Interior Castle is a priceless guide in this great adventure of the soul's inner pilgrimage to God. It is the last of her major works, written five years before she died. It was started, appropriately, on Trinity Sunday and completed six months later. It was written against the background of what was undoubtedly the most difficult period of her life: she herself was forbidden to leave her convent and her life's work was in danger of collapse. Yet, incredibly, despite all the hostility and bitter opposition, she wrote what is now regarded as a literary and spiritual masterpiece.

*Love cannot possibly be content
with remaining always the same.*

Light and Darkness

Teresa is very conscious of the darker reality, the negative side of the Christian experience. To be transformed by the light of Christ involves a struggle with contrary and opposing forces: the enemy within. She acknowledges the difficulties, obstacles and hindrances, coming from what she calls 'snakes and vipers and poisonous creatures'. With such graphic images she acknowledges the inner forces pulling against the soul.

The battle is all too real; the emerging light struggles with the inner darkness. Teresa has great sympathy for those setting out on

the inner journey. She is all too aware of the struggle between the first stirrings of an awakened love and the welter of attractions arising from a self-indulgent past. This is a time for planting seeds – seeds that in their own time and place will flower and bear fruit. There is a beginning of a relationship with God, however tenuous, and an awareness of a deeper hunger and thirst which, up until now, has hardly been noticed. God is working quietly in hidden and unexpected ways; a deeper providence and design is taking place.

*The Lord does not look so much
at the greatness of our deeds
as at the love with which we do them.*

*We have heaven within ourselves,
since the Lord of Heaven is there.*

A Little White Butterfly

Essentially, this experience is an invitation to intimacy and personal friendship with God. Nothing is more real than God's love poured into the heart by the Holy Spirit. It is like the experience of 'falling in love' – being caught up in an embrace of divine friendship. Horizons expand, friendship deepens, and the soul is being transformed into an unshakable love: love of God and love of neighbour.

Teresa is renowned for her use of graphic images. One of the most famous of all her images, certainly one of the loveliest, is that of the silkworm and the butterfly. The soul reborn in Christ resembles the caterpillar transformed into something that could never have been imagined: a white butterfly – free, beautiful, yet fragile. Teresa needed this image. The image of the castle was not creative enough for her. It did not allow



The Ecstasy of St Teresa, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Bernini, 1646.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

the sense of freedom and growth that she wanted to speak about. The soul has been liberated, has shaken off the bonds and is no longer earthbound.

The best place to find God is within yourself.

Finding God at the Centre

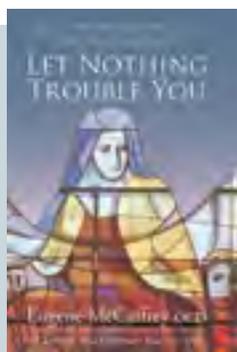
For Teresa the innermost and deepest centre of the soul, the 'second heaven', is God's own dwelling place, an abode of peace. But it is not a surface peace, a state of bliss or of unruffled calm. Love explodes in a surge of spiritual energy and unselfish service. For Teresa, her duty as foundress was far from finished; there was still bitter opposition to her work, her health was in decline, she had many more roads to travel, other convents to found, and endless administrative burdens. She was a pilgrim in the service of the Beloved, she was a fool for Christ. It is little wonder she speaks of Martha and Mary. They need each other, together they express the fullness of Christian life: love in service, flowing from the hands of Martha and the heart of Mary. Love cannot show itself apart from deeds of love.

But at the heart of the castle, Teresa discovered something she could never have imagined, not even in her wildest dreams. What was revealed was not just the presence of Christ but an encounter with the living God revealed in the very heart of the mystery of the Trinity.

The culmination of the great journey inwards was for Teresa an entry into the triune nature of God: oneness hidden in the heart of the Trinity. What she once accepted by faith she now understood by inner sight.

Journey's End

Teresa has shared with us not only a journey but a dream: God's dream for us. There is a call, an invitation; the only limitation is the horizon of our own vision. God's dream for us is greater than anything we can imagine for ourselves. We are the castle, it is real and it is within. We are called to grow, to explore the wonders hidden in our own heart. The Beloved is waiting to be our guide and companion. All we have to do is want to want him, to take the first step, and to follow the well-marked path through the darkness and into the light.



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Exclusive Excerpt from *An Urban Sketcher's Galway*
by Róisín Curé

ST NICHOLAS' CHURCH, CHURCH LANE

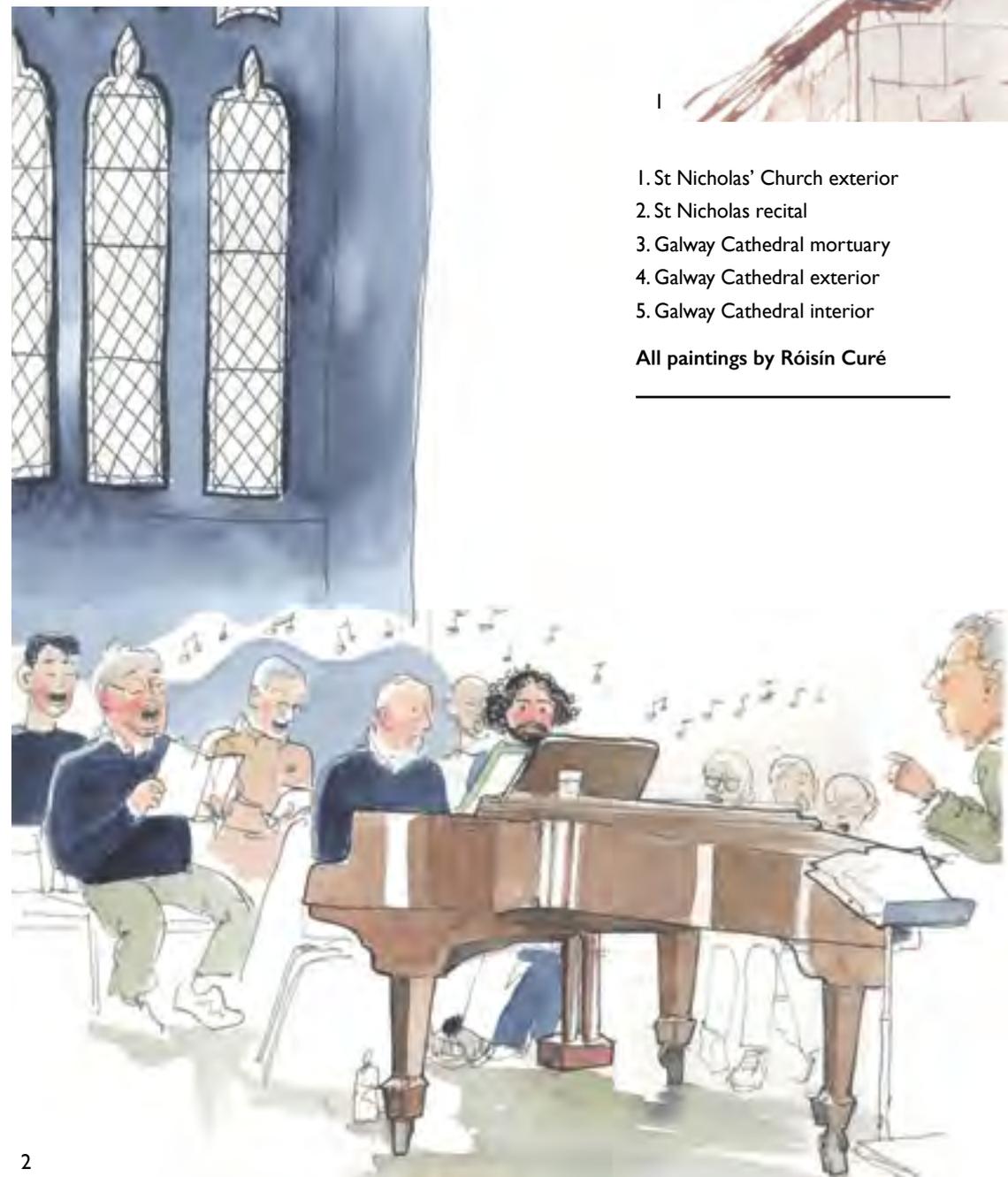
A sign outside St Nicholas' Church proudly declares it to be the oldest church in Ireland still in daily use. The first part of it was built in the 13th Century. I have received amazing hospitality in St Nicholas', and my groups of sketchers and I have been warmly welcomed there over the last three years. This is invaluable to me: we can't sketch in the rain, the church is full of amazing subjects to draw, and there aren't too many public buildings in Galway that can fit more than a handful of sketchers. The church is beautiful inside and out, with a copper-clad steeple and four clocks around the base and rows of wonderful gargoyles.

There are guided tours of St Nicholas' all day long, given by private tour guides. They are always very interesting and informative. Unfortunately, I have forgotten most of what I've overheard about the church, so I recommend you take one of those guided tours yourself.

The church is lined with two rows of arches, which although beautiful are very hard to sketch, because the beauty is in the perfectly symmetrical arcs meeting at a point. Heaven knows how the craftsmen did it so perfectly back in medieval times.

An arch on the left of the church leads to the organ, where recitals are regularly held. I sketched the choir practicing under the guidance of Mark Dooley. I haven't done much by way of thanks for the welcome I've always had in the church, so I was pleased to hear that one of the caretakers of the church, Anne, has the picture on her hymnal.

"Everyone knows which hymnal is mine," she said, "thanks to the sketch on the front."



1. St Nicholas' Church exterior
2. St Nicholas recital
3. Galway Cathedral mortuary
4. Galway Cathedral exterior
5. Galway Cathedral interior

All paintings by Róisín Curé

An Urban Sketcher's Galway



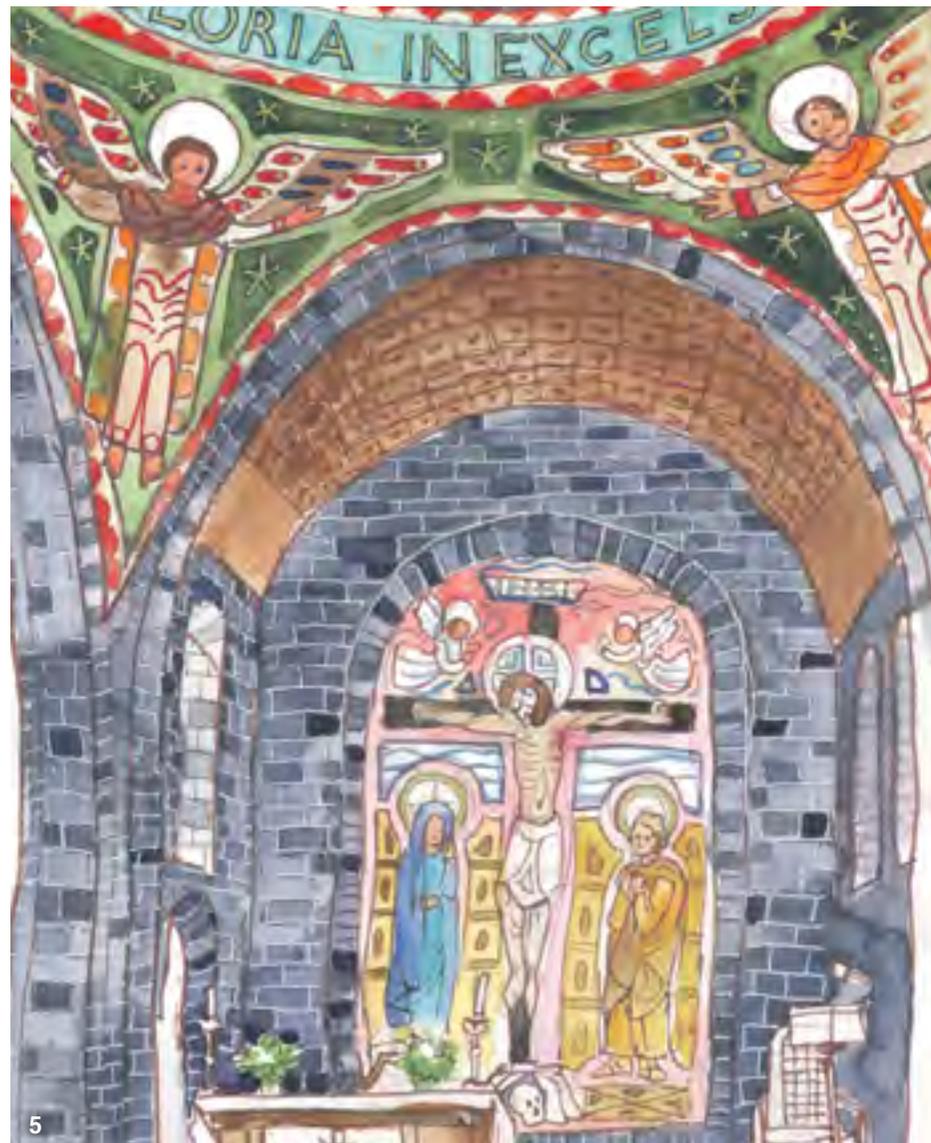
“The building of Galway Cathedral was funded in part by levies on the people of Galway and in part by Irish emigrants in Boston, many of whom were of Galway descent.”

GALWAY CATHEDRAL

Galway Cathedral, or the Church of Our Lady Ascended into Heaven and St Nicholas to give it its full title, was completed in 1965 on the site of the old Galway Jail. It's opposite the University. Brendan McGowan of Galway City Museum told me about an unfortunate man who had been wrongly executed there.

In 1882 a Connemara man was murdered in Galway near the border with Mayo, along with four members of his family. His cousin Maolra Seoighe (Myles Joyce in English), was among those arrested for the murder. The trial was conducted in English, which Seoighe didn't understand. He was sentenced to hang along with two other accused, but protested his innocence to the very end. Two days before he was hanged one of the self-described eye-witnesses to the murders (who had turned queen's evidence due to a feud with that branch of the Seoighe family, and was apparently paid to do so) admitted Seoighe hadn't been anywhere near the scene of the crime, as it turned out, and so couldn't have known who did it.

The Lord Lieutenant, Earl Spencer, was given all this new evidence, but was not minded to grant a reprieve. All the accused were hanged two days later. It didn't end there: less than two years later the real murderer made a sworn statement that he had lied at the original trial in Dublin, and that he was himself guilty of the crime. The British authorities still wouldn't budge.



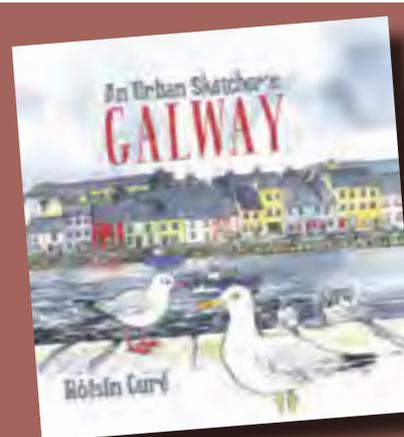
This miscarriage of justice became known as the Maamtrasna Affair, and had far-reaching political consequences.

Maolra Seoighe's ghost was said to haunt Galway Jail, appearing in the precincts of the prison immediately after his execution. It was kept quiet at first, being thought of as a delusion or a prank, but then two soldiers on guard in the prison said they were followed by a "tall, mystic figure" that, they said, touched them. The matron and the warders of the prison had had enough, and asked for a transfer. I wonder did the ghost of Maolra Seoighe fade away with the demolition of the jail? Or is it only now, with an official pardon issued in 2018 by President Michael D. Higgins, that his spirit can rest?

The building of Galway Cathedral was funded in part by levies on the people of Galway and in part by Irish emigrants in Boston, many of whom were of Galway descent. There is a mosaic of JFK in the mortuary chapel halfway up the left hand side of the church. I found it rather bizarre, and I'm told it was controversial at the time, but that it was a sort of thank-you for the financial contribution made by the Irish emigrants.

"You can't over-emphasise how delighted some elements of Irish society were that a Catholic had taken the highest office of American political life," Brendan McGowan told me.

Pádraig Pearse is on the other side of the wall, with a figure of Christ in the middle. The design is in keeping with a certain art style of the 1950s and 1960s, which can be seen in religious buildings all over the country from that period.



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Sister Maureen's Selection of Irish Art

Maureen selects a number of artists and their creations and places them before us for our consideration. She gives us some significant information about the artist and takes us on a guided tour of the painting or sculpture as she sees it. She never preaches or bullies us, never suggests that there is only one way to respond to artistic excellence, but prompts us to see for ourselves and make the work of art our own by absorbing it into our sensibilities and storing it away in our hearts.



Nursing Sisters, Beaumont home by Patrick Leonard HRHA (1918-2005)

NURSING SISTERS, BEAUMONT HOME by Patrick Leonard HRHA (1918-2005)

Artists live in the same world as the rest of us, but they see that world differently. We might look at the sky and think that it is going to be a fine day or it is going to rain. The artist looks at the same sky and marvels at the changing shapes of the clouds. Patrick Leonard saw beauty in a bus queue! His paintings were inspired by everyday events. He sketched the people and the things around him, in a train, at the beach, wherever he was, at home or abroad, or even sick in hospital. These sketches were later used as starting points for finished oils. He painted because he loved to paint, not to be acclaimed by others, and so remained true to himself. He did receive acclaim when he was chosen to represent Ireland at the Olympic Games Exhibition in Helsinki in 1952, with an oil painting entitled Tennis Players.

His painting career began when he attended the Metropolitan School of Art and came under the tutelage of Sean Keating and Maurice MacGonigal in 1936. A painting of his was accepted by the RHA as early as 1941. The following year he was offered an honorary membership.

Between 1953 and 1982 he taught art in different schools and colleges around Dublin, ending up in the Mercy College in

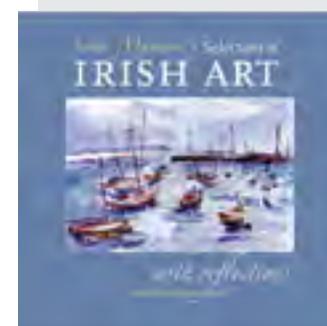
Coolock, where he spent many happy years. Unfortunately his work of painting and teaching were often interrupted by bouts of illness, but he never stopped sketching. Numerous trips to the Beaumont Home to visit his mother there, gave him the opportunity to study nurses in their daily lives and to appreciate their dedication to the difficult tasks of nursing. When he chose to depict them in paint he eschewed the glamorous image and showed us their life in the raw. The three nurses here, escaping from the relentless round of dispensing drugs, dealing with recalcitrant patients, constantly on the go with bed pans and bed making, are women with sore feet and weary legs – solid, caring, reliable women. The artist poses them with feet apart, folded arms and bent backs, relaxing in the hospital garden, with the wind blowing through their headgears. Their place in the composition might appear to be accidental; a closer look reveals an interesting arrangement.

Two standing figures are placed at the golden section, while the third figure, stooping to admire the pink roses, leads the eye across the canvas, cutting the curve of the flowerbed and linking the two sides of the painting. To add sparkle and emphasis the

white uniforms are set against the silver-grey of the path and the dark bushes in the background.

All of us needs to give ourselves ritual rest, to be still, relax, listen and pray, to let the gentle wind of the spirit of God blow over us and through us, so that we may be open to that same Spirit.

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SILVER LIGHT, CLIFFS OF MOHER, CO. CLARE

by Maurice C. Wilks

RUA ARHA (1910-1984)

Northern Ireland produced many notable painters during the 1930s and 1940s. One distinctive group excelled in landscape painting. While remaining distinctive in style they often used similar subject matter, were alike in the exactitude of their observation, and in the way they handled paint. Our present artist, Maurice Wilks, was one of these. Other familiar names were Humbert Craig, Frank McKelvey, Frank Egginton, Norman McCaig and Charles McAuley.

Born in Belfast in 1911, the son of a linen designer, Wilks received his education at Malone Public Elementary School. In the evenings he attended classes in drawing and painting at the Belfast School of Art. The family was of modest means, but a Dunville scholarship enabled young Maurice to pursue his artistic training full time. He studied every aspect of art, and painted some fine portraits. After college when he went to live in Cushendun, landscape painting took precedence over other forms. He painted around the Belfast docks, in the glens of Antrim, in Donegal, Kerry, and Connemara. When he was only nineteen he exhibited for the first time at the Royal Hibernian Academy. He loved to paint, he never sought acclaim or renown and he gave and continues to give, by his paintings, great pleasure to a great many people. They are still sought by collectors.

They evoke the moods of the Irish countryside, the mountains and valleys, boglands and meadows and the all pervasive ocean. He went out at dawn and at dusk equipped with his



Silver Light, Cliffs of Moher, Co. Clare by Maurice C. Wilks RUA ARHA (1910-1984)

painting gear, to capture variations of light, muted overcast moments, or magical colour combinations, which resulted in his beautifully crafted, romantic, landscape paintings. In the late 1970s after an absence of nearly thirty years, he returned to the Dublin scene and set up a summer studio in Sutton, Co Dublin. He died in his home in Belfast in 1984. This peaceful painting of the Cliffs of Moher one of the wonders of the Clare coast in the West of Ireland was commissioned in 1980 when the artist was there on a holiday with his wife. Wilks chose a day when the pearly-clouded sky cast streaks of light on the calm waters and bathed the receding cliffs in a hazy mist. He painted the

nearest cliff in sharp focus, with bright colours and strong textured strokes, but he uses muted colours and diminished definition to suggest the cliffs as they move away into the distance. All is calm here, but this part of the west coast can be whipped into a frenzy of dark and treacherous angry waves. Nature's moods are many.

We are part of the natural world and our moods too can vary like the wind and the sea. Waves of anger, lust or envy can rise up suddenly and threaten to engulf us. Willpower alone is, sometimes, not sufficient to stop the sudden surge. We need God's help. It is good to feel that need. In my weakness you are strong, O Lord, in my troubles you are peace.

LITTLE HARBOUR, DUN LAOGHAIRE by Kathleen Bridle RUA (1857-1989)



Picture: Little Harbour, Dun Laoghaire by Kathleen Bridle RUA (1857-1989)

The first thing that strikes me about this painting is its liveliness and freshness. It is achieved by the bold blobs of paint applied with short brush strokes, wet into wet, and the bobbing boats with the vertical thrust of their masts lurching in all directions against the horizontal lines of the hills. The contrast of complementary colours contributes to the lively effect. The painter, Kathleen Bridle, daughter of an Irish coastguard officer; was born in Kent, England, in 1897, trained in Dublin and lived for most of her long life in Enniskillen in Northern Ireland. She chose to come to Dublin in her late teens to attend the Metropolitan School of Art there.

Kathleen made great strides in oil painting under Sean Keating. Her drawing tutor was James (Jimmy) Golden, and George Atkinson introduced her to watercolour painting. She was in her element, having never wanted to do anything else but draw and paint and so her memories of Dublin were happy ones. It was here that she revelled in the freedom to develop her talents. She won two silver medals and a scholarship, which enabled her to pursue her studies in London at the Royal College of Art. In the city, she temporarily shared accommodation with Norah McGuinness. Money was always a problem but a further scholarship gave her another year of

study. She returned to Dublin to join the stained glass studios of Harry Clarke. Her stay there was brief, because she found the art of stained glass too confining for her liking.

A former teacher and friend, John Hunter, encouraged her to apply for the post of art teacher at the Enniskillen Technical School in Co Fermanagh. She got the job and travelled to the town one wet wintry night in January 1926. Her first impressions were disastrous. "I thought it was a dreadful place", she told TP Flanagan in an interview many years later. However she worked hard, teaching part time in as many as five different schools until she found full time employment in the Collegiate School in Enniskillen at the age of 58! As her reputation as a teacher grew she shaped the careers of many young aspiring artists, two of whom became important painters – William Scott and Terence P. Flanagan. She took her teaching seriously and never appeared tired or bored by her students. In her hands watercolour became an exciting medium. Somehow she managed time for her own painting, exhibited widely and travelled extensively.

She was elected a full member of the RUA Academy in 1948 and continued to paint into her nineties. Her final years were lonely, following the death of her sister, who had come to live with her. She died in 1989.

All her life Kathleen shared her love of painting unselfishly with others and in this sharing she found happiness and fulfilment. Saint Paul exhorts us to show our love by being helpful to one another.

Woefully Arrayed

John Skelton (1460–1529)

From the book *The Outlaw Christ* by John F. Deane

John Skelton is a shadowy figure hovering at the door of English literature. Little is known about him apart from what his poems tell. He was clearly learned and a reader, quoting in his work from an impressive list of classical authors and mythic tales. He was of his time, secular, intelligent, rhetorical, and much of his writing aimed at getting him preferment at court. Perhaps another link with earlier literature is his awareness of the use of a persona, similar to the way 'The Dream of the Rood' uses the 'person'

of the cross to speak. His language was also very much the daily language of the people and his rhyming skill made many of his verses hugely popular. But he is one of the first early-modern poets to touch seriously on questions of faith. His work is predictable and not very polished, but one poem stands out. In 'Woefully Arrayed' there is heard a personal honesty and commitment and a genuine pleading to his Christ. In this poem it is Christ who speaks.

Woefully Arrayed

Woefully arrayed,
My blood, man,
For thee ran,
It may not be nay'd;
My body blue and wan,
Woefully arrayed.
Behold me, I pray thee, with thy whole
reason,
And be not so hard-hearted, and for this
encheason, (reason)
Sith I for thy soul sake was slain in good
season, (since)
Beguiled and betrayed by Judas' false
treason:
Unkindly entreated,
With sharp cord sore fretted,
The Jewés me threatéd:
They mowéd, they grinned, they scornéd me,
(mouthed)
Condemnéd me to death, as thou may'st
see,
Woefully arrayed.
Thus naked am I nailéd, O man, for thy sake!
I love thee, then love me; why sleepest thou?
awake!
Remember my tender heart-root for thee
brake,
With painés my veinés constrained to crake:
(crack)
Thus tuggéd to and fro,
Thus wrappéd all in woe,
Whereas never man was so,
Entreated thus in most cruel wise,
Was like a lamb offered in sacrifice,
Woefully arrayed.
Of sharp thorn I have worn a crown on my
head,
So painéd, so strainéd, so ruefull, so read,
Thus bobbéd, thus robbéd, thus for thy love
dead, (beaten)

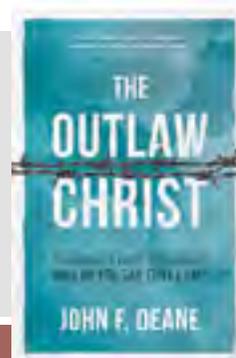
Unfeigné I deigné my blood for to shed:
My feet and handés sore
The sturdy nailés bore:
What might I suffer more
Than I have done, O man, for thee?
Come when thou list, welcome to me,
Woefully arrayed.
Of record thy good Lord I have been and
shall be:
I am thine, thou art mine, my brother I call
thee.
Thee love I entirely – see what is befall'n
me!
Sore beating, sore threatening, to make thee,
man, all free:
Why art thou unkind?
Why hast not me in mind?
Come yet and thou shalt find
Mine endless mercie and grace –
See how a spear my heart did race,
(wound)
Woefully arrayed.
Dear brother, no other thing I of thee desire
But give me thine heart free to reward mine
hire:
I wrought thee, I bought thee from eternal
fire:
I pray thee array thee toward my high
empire
Above the orient,
Whereof I am regent,
Lord God omnipotent,
With me to reign in endless wealth:
Remember, man, thy soul's health.
Woefully arrayed,
My blood, man,
For thee ran,
It may not be nay'd;
My body blue and wan,
Woefully arrayed.



Photo by Fiore Bagatello / Cathopic

There is that personal touch, new and fresh and moving, 'I love thee, then love me'; here already is George Herbert. This, in the context of the drama of the poem, is a teacher's exquisite point, a Skelton move, a preacher's trick. Yet its very immediacy and simplicity give it honour and truth. In the rhyming power, in the swift onward movement of the verse, here is Hopkins already. In the deep sorrow and genuine urgings of the poem, R.S. Thomas can already

be heard. The Christ of this poem is pleading with humankind for love, insisting that he himself is a great lover, willing to climb on the cross, to wear that crown of thorns, to die for the sake of love. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, this awareness of the love of Christ was rare; the emphasis was more on human sin and divine punishment. With John Skelton, and with this real personal calling to the Christ, the dark door out of the forge has begun to open.



The Outlaw Christ
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Letter from America



John L. Allen Jr

The late US Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan once famously said that everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts.

A Catholic equivalent might be that everyone is entitled to disagree with their bishop, but not to pretend he is not the bishop.

Some years ago, whilst on a speaking tour of the US during the presidential election, I happened to be at lunch with a bishop in one battleground state.

Just after ordering food, the bishop got a phone call from a local reporter seeking comment on news that one of the candidates, a Democrat with a pro-choice voting record, would be appearing the next day at the city's major Catholic university.

Completely blindsided, the bishop quickly ended the call. He then shook his head in exasperation and asked: "How the Hell is this the first time I'm hearing about it?" This was a great question then, and it remains a great question today.

Rebuke

All this comes to mind in light of a controversy that erupted this week when Archbishop Wilton Gregory of Washington issued a stinging rebuke of a visit by President Donald Trump to the city's Saint John Paul II National Shrine, calling it "baffling and reprehensible" that a Catholic facility would allow itself to be "egregiously misused and manipulated".

The Archbishop's objection was that less than a day before, police had used tear gas to clear away protestors outraged by the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, so that President Trump could walk across the street from the White House to the Episcopal Church of St John in order to be photographed holding a Bible.

The heart of the story pivots on Archbishop Gregory's assertion that a Catholic venue should not lend itself to such a photo-op versus critics, who charged it was Archbishop Gregory who politicised things by rebuking the President in a moment of national crisis.

However, there is a critically important footnote that has nothing to do with whether Archbishop Gregory, President Trump or any of the commentators were right on the substance of the dispute.

It has been widely reported that Archbishop Gregory was not informed of the visit until late Tuesday night of last week,



Demonstrators protest near the White House in Washington DC over the death of George Floyd. Photo: Evan Vucci/AP

Making peace with the Catholic pool lifeguard

when the White House issued a statement announcing it.

No one associated with the Shrine, including its owners the Knights of Columbus, apparently gave Archbishop Gregory a heads-up.

This seems to defy belief that officials at the shrine were not contacted prior to the announcement to discuss the logistical details. A statement from the shrine indicated that President Trump's visit was originally envisioned as an opportunity to sign an executive order on religious freedom, suggesting it had been in the works for a while.

There had to be some gap of time, however small, in which Archbishop Gregory could have been alerted.

Although the shrine does not need Archbishop Gregory's permission to host President Trump or anyone else, the Knights

of Columbus – the world's largest Catholic fraternal organisation – are not under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Washington.

There is a big difference, however, between asking permission and showing respect.

If you are a political advocacy organisation or a for-profit corporation, fine, do whatever you perceive to be in your self-interest.

If you are Catholic, however, then seeking the opinion of your local bishop, and being willing to make reasonable compromises in order to accommodate it, is just part of the deal.

To put the point differently, being part of the family matters at least as much as being right.

When Notre Dame decided to award an honorary doctorate to then President Barack Obama in 2009, for example, then-Bishop John D'Arcy of the Diocese of Fort

Wayne-South Bend was caught off guard, which became an important part of the subtext in what happened next.

“There are more than 5,000 Catholic bishops in the world, and the law of averages suggests they are not all going to be role models of enlightenment”

Of the dozens of American bishops who publicly objected to President Obama's invitation, causing lasting heartache and anger on all sides, several said privately they were doing it less on the merits than out of solidarity with Bishop D'Arcy.

Had Notre Dame reached out to Bishop D'Arcy, or had the Knights

reached out to Archbishop Gregory, things might have played out differently.

Perhaps they could have found a way to package those events so that the concerns of both the sponsor and the bishop were satisfied, and conflict avoided.

There are more than 5,000 Catholic bishops in the world, and the law of averages suggests they are not all going to be role models of enlightenment.

In those cases, an institution not dependent on that bishop is well within its' rights to press ahead.

Still, you never know until you try, and no matter what happens, you will get points for having made the effort.

A legendary scholar at one of Rome's pontifical universities, often called upon by religious orders to help them negotiate their relationships with the hierarchy, said he would always counsel them at least to notify the local bishop of what they were up to, and ideally to find a way to win his blessing.

"If you're gonna swim in the Catholic pool," he would say, "sooner or later you have to make your peace with the lifeguard."

“If you are Catholic, then seeking the opinion of your local bishop, and being willing to make reasonable compromises in order to accommodate it, is just part of the deal”

World Report

IN BRIEF

Indian priest and director to release new film

● A priest and film director in India is to release a new film of someone living with HIV and their family. *Michael's Coffee House*, by Fr Anil Philip, will soon be released in Indian cinemas.

Fr Philip, a member of the Congregation of Mary Immaculate (CMI), based his first film, *Madhuram EE Jeevitham* ('This Life is Sweet'), on CMI founder St Chavara Kuriakos Elias.

The film won the Outstanding Achievement Award at the 34th International Kolkata Cultural Film Festival.

"I celebrate holy Mass and recite my prayers early in the morning," he said. "On movie sets often, many actors and crew members ask me for spiritual advice."

South Arabia vicar named north apostolic administrator

● Msgr Paul Hinder, the vicar of southern Arabia, has been appointed apostolic administrator of the northern Arabia following the death of Msgr Camillo Ballin in April.

The Archbishop has been entrusted with safeguarding and preserving the links between the Christians of Arabia during the Covid-19 pandemic.

His priorities are the conclusion of the cathedral of Bahrain "by the end of the year" and to aid migrant communities in the Gulf regions.

"We must stay close," said Msgr Hinder of the Christian community, "and make our presence felt as a Church."

African bishops ask multinationals to make Covid-19 contributions

● Bishops in Africa have called on large multinational companies to do their part to help the debt-ridden continent during the coronavirus pandemic.

In a SECAM (Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) statement, they called on businesses to "join in the efforts" in providing care for vulnerable people.

"Africa is a major supplier of raw materials to industrialised countries," read their statement.

"Therefore, we call upon large companies which exploit these raw materials to make significant contributions to the host countries to enable them provide basic social services such as hospitals, schools, adequate and affordable housing."

Flippino clergy oppose new anti-terrorist bill

● Catholic clergy have launched a campaign to oppose a controversial new anti-terrorism bill in The Philippines.

Under the bill passed by congress last week, which is pending final approval from President Rodrigo Duterte, authorities would be empowered to jail suspected terrorists without trial or an arrest warrant.

Several Church leaders say the bill could "be abused by those who wish to dominate the people, canceling the opposition and also suppressing legitimate dissent".

Fr Daniel Pilario, a priest and theologian from Manila, says the framework also "increases the probability of serious impunity for misconduct by state forces".

Faith helps Bangladesh Catholic doctor beat Covid-19

● A Catholic doctor in Bangladesh who battled successfully against Covid-19 has credited his strong faith in God and unwavering hope for his recovery.

Dr Edward Pallab Rozario, 47, head of health programmes at Caritas Bangladesh, caught the virus in late April.

Despite testing positive at the time, following 14 days of isolation in May he later came back negative.

"At a time of any massive crisis, we must have complete faith and hope in God so that we can overcome it," Dr Rozario said.

"The crisis has brought us closer to God, and I strongly believe God will help us overcome this and humanity will start all over again."

Church warns immigration law will 'drastically' affect migrants

Bishops in Britain have insisted that a proposed new immigration bill will "drastically alter opportunities" for migrants to "build their lives and contribute to society".

In a joint statement sent to opposition party leaders at Westminster, bishops from Scotland and England and Wales encouraged the British government to consider amendments to the Immigration Bill currently before parliament.

"The Church is working to raise awareness of the settlement scheme and help those who are at risk of losing their status," said Bishop William Nolan, Scotland's lead bishop for migrants and refugees.

"Around 60% of Europeans living in the UK are Catholics. However, no scheme will reach all European citizens in the UK.

"Even if a small proportion do not make an application by the June 2021 deadline, this could leave thousands of people without legal status.

"We encourage amendments to the bill that will create a meaningful safety-net including options to extend the deadline."



Bishop William Nolan.

The bishops' statement called for a time limit on detention, together with "a significant permanent reduction in the use of detention will allow us to properly protect people's health and human dignity".

"The UK remains the only European [entity] without a time limit on detention," said Bishop Paul McAleenan, England and Wales' lead bishop for migrants and refugees.

"This has devastating consequences for the well-being of vulnerable individuals who find themselves detained.

"It also has a significant impact on families who are separated with no indication

of when they might be reunited."

Threshold

In addition, the bishops also proposed that the minimum income threshold for family visas should be reduced.

"The minimum income threshold for family visas unjustly separates tens of thousands of couples, parents and children.

"This separation not only has serious implications on family life, but also has a direct impact on the development and well-being of children who are isolated from their parents in another country."

Lastly, their statement also called for changes to the clergy visa system.

"Most Catholic dioceses previously used Tier 5 Religious Worker visas for priests to come on essential supply placements, allowing Catholics to continue attending Mass, the new Tier 2 visas have more than doubled the costs incurred by parishes arranging supply cover.

"Seminaries that conduct formation in English are not necessarily recognised by the Home Office as meeting the English language requirement under the Tier 2 route, meaning that many priests who have been educated to post-graduate level in English are nevertheless required to take a language test with extra logistical and cost implications."

The statement concluded: "We strongly urge the government to accept amendments addressing these important issues and hope that MPs from all parties will take this opportunity to help create a more just and humane immigration system."

'Hong Kong will be another Tiananmen' warns cardinal

A Church leader in Hong Kong has urged people to continue resisting Communist repression from China after thousands defied the city administration's ban on remembering the Tiananmen Square victims.

Some churches in the region marked the June 4 anniversary with Masses and prayers in memory of the young people who were crushed in the 1989 student-led pro-democracy movement.

Cardinal Joseph Zen, former bishop of Hong Kong, said the massacre should inspire others "to pick up the flags" that fell in Beijing.

"Hong Kong will be another Tiananmen," wrote Cardinal Zen in

his blog. He wrote that the annual commemoration and prayer is "not only to mourn the deceased or comfort their loved ones", but also "to remind ourselves that we should pick up the flags left by the martyrs...and carry on their mission".

Permission

Authorities refused permission to hold the usual Tiananmen memorial in the city-state; the only place in China where the anniversary was allowed. Police had claimed it could increase the risk of coronavirus infection and pose a significant threat to public health.

However, tens of thousands defied

the ban to stage a candlelit vigil after knocking down barricades around Victoria Park.

Lee Cheuk-yan, chairman of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, said police denying them permission was "politically motivated" and a threat to Hong Kong's freedom of assembly.

Lina Chan, executive secretary of the Justice and Peace Commission of Hong Kong, adds that the pandemic has been used to "restrict" freedom of assembly and that the situation "will become even worse" once the new national security law is enacted.

Catholic shrine in England enjoys biggest pilgrimage season

The Catholic National Shrine of Our Lady in Walsingham, England has experienced the "biggest pilgrimage season" in its history, according to the shrine's rector.

The shrine, established by the noblewoman Richeldis de Faverches after she experienced a series of Marian apparitions in 1061, was forced to close and cancel pil-

grimages due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Despite this, Msgr John Armitage said that people from 135 countries had taken part virtually in a 24-hour livestream programme and he had been inundated with letters of gratitude.

"We've probably had the biggest pilgrimage season so far because we've had thou-

sands upon thousands of people every day joining us for our programme," says Msgr Armitage.

Lockdown

"There are those who have been in lockdown, like the rest of the world. They're grateful that it's given them a spiritual framework during this time.

"But much more important," he continues, "it's given a spiritual framework for those who've been in lockdown for years. The elderly, the disabled, those who are never going to come out again.

"And I don't say we forgot them, but what's happened is that we've discovered a way to connect."



Edited by Aron Hegarty
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In the shadow of greatness



President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump pose outside the St John Paul II National Shrine in Washington DC on the 41st anniversary of the Pope's 1979 historic visit to Poland. Photo: CNS

China makes churches preach patriotism in order to reopen

Catholics in China are concerned about a directive from the country's Communist government asking priests to "preach on patriotism" as a condition for reopening liturgical services.

The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) and the Chinese Catholic educational administration committee of Zhejiang province jointly issued a notice on the resumption of activities.

"Religious places that meet the conditions of epidemic prevention will resume services," it said while adding the patriotism requirement.

Fr Liu of Hebei said that the requirement to teach patriotism is "wrong".

"As members of the universal Catholic Church," he said, "we cannot accept and glorify what Communists

consider patriotic education."

Jacob Chung, a Wenzhou parishioner, said the government's move "has seriously interfered in the internal affairs of religion".

One other parishioner said the Chinese government was forcing religious leaders to add patriotism and sinicization as part of religious teaching.

Amid the ongoing trade war with other countries and an economic slowdown, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) "is afraid of a counter-revolution. So they want people to hold on to patriotism."

He added that the CCP wants to "suppress and transform" the Church.

Religious activities have been gradually resuming in China since June 2 in Sichuan province, Shaanxi and Shanghai after the Joint Conference of National Religious Organisations held

a video conference on May 30 about plans to reopen religious places.

The notice asked churches to avoid non-essential religious activities, reduce the number of participants and shorten religious liturgies.

In some provinces such as Sichuan, Christians were asked to seek authorities' permission to resume religious classes.

Philip, a Shanghai parishioner, said that local churches plan to reopen on June 13.

The Shanghai Diocese has issued a circular limiting the number of people attending services and outlining preventive measures against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr Paul Fang from Wenzhou Diocese in Zhejiang province said parishioners have been looking forward to the resumption of Masses.

Churches in Indonesia set to resume Masses

The archdioceses of Jakarta and Samarinda have reopened their churches after local authorities began to ease social restrictions imposed to combat the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Religious activities may resume starting," said Jakarta governor Anies Baswedan in a live-streamed press conference last week.

"All churches can be reopened but only for regular

activities...all places of worship must obey health protocols."

The easing of restrictions in East Kalimantan province, which covers Samarinda Archdiocese, included the reopening of places of worship on condition that people continue to wear face masks and maintain social distancing.

"Parishes may resume public Sunday Masses," Arch-

bishop Yustinus Harjosusanto of Samarinda said in a letter.

"Eucharistic celebrations can be held only at parish churches. To keep Massgoers' hands clean, parishes must provide hand sanitiser and churches must also be disinfected prior to a Mass."

Archbishop Harjosusanto called on parish pastoral councils to report on their preparations before holding their first Mass.

"For parishes based in municipalities and districts," he continued, "the report should be sent to mayors and district chiefs. For other parishes, their report should be sent to sub-district heads."

According to the archdiocese's vicar general, Fr Moses Komela Avan, nine of its 26 parishes, including St Mary of Perpetual Help Cathedral in Samarinda, are ready to resume Sunday Masses.

Vatican Santa Marta Paediatric Dispensary reopens

● The Vatican's Santa Marta Paediatric Dispensary has reopened after being forced to shut down for more than two and a half months due to the Covid-19 crisis.

Despite the pandemic still being present at large, the Dispensary in the heart of the Vatican re-started its services for needy children and pregnant women last week.

"In a few days everything will be back to normal as before," said volunteers at the Dispensary.

One of them, Valentina Giacometti, said: "The Dispensary must necessarily offer a sign of presence," adding they are close to those who are currently experiencing the greatest economic and social difficulties.

New mothers from all over the world come to Santa Marta Paediatric Dispensary, which is part of the activities of the Office of Papal Charities, the Holy See's department charged with exercising charity to the poor in the name of the Pope.

In the past few months under lockdown, the Dispensary has been providing assistance by phone.

From now on though, access to the services will be regulated in keeping with health protocols, especially physical distancing.

Vatican museums offer free entry to medical workers

● The Vatican Museums are offering free entry to medical workers in appreciation for their work on the frontline of Italy's Covid-19 outbreak.

Doctors, nurses and all other staff members of the country's public and private health facilities will have free entry to the museums on June 8-13.

The announcement came as Italy opened its regional borders, allowing doctors throughout the country to visit Rome.

The Vatican is also offering free entry to the Pontifical Villas and gardens at Castel

Gandolfo, which reopened for weekend visits on June 6. All visitors to the Vatican Museums will be required to make online reservations in order to limit the number of people in the museums and stagger entrance times.

Group visits are capped at a maximum of 10 people and visitors will only be admitted with face mask and a temperature check.

Visitors will be able to see the newly-restored frescoes in the Raphael Rooms' Hall of Constantine, which were unveiled to the public when the museum opened its doors on June 1.

Pope enacts new law for awarding public contracts

● The Holy Father has released an Apostolic Letter creating legislation to govern the awarding of public contracts of the Holy See and Vatican City State.

The Apostolic Letter, released last week, shall follow the principles of transparency, centralised control, and competition to reduce the risk of corruption.

The new regulations, according to Pope Francis, are aimed at "fostering transparency, control and competition in the procedures for the awarding of public contracts stipulated on behalf of the Holy See and Vatican City State".

"The diligence of a good family father," wrote the Pope, "is the general principal and of the utmost respect, on the basis of which all administrators are required to perform their functions."

"Good management of public goods," he adds, requires "faithful and honest administration."

The text, composed of 86 articles, will serve as a single reference point for awarding public contracts to external entities and is in conformity with the United Nations Convention Against Corruption.

The legislation extends to all entities of the Holy See, which up to now lacked their own laws governing contracts and public works.

Letters

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

Letter of the week

The Church's beautiful teachings on sex

Dear Editor, I would like to commend Maria Steen on an excellent article [IC 28/05/2020] on why we should not outsource the moral formation of our children. As a corollary to that article, I thought it might be opportune to succinctly summarise the Church's beautiful theology of the body.

This theology teaches that the sexual act between a man and a woman is the highest form of interpersonal relationship and as

such should mirror the essence of our creator, in whose image we are made.

God in himself is characterised by an indivisible unity, and in his activity by the begetting of the Son by the Father, and the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son.

For humans to realise their dignity and fulfil their destiny, the sex act should be between a man and a woman, sacramentally married and open to new life. Anything else short

changes the call to greatness in the heart of the person.

For those of us who find this ideal difficult to live up to, we can take consolation in St Thomas Aquinas' *dictum* that sexual sins are the sins God finds it easiest to forgive. Or, as St Paul puts it, all have fallen short of the glory of God because all have sinned.

Yours etc.,

Colm Fitzpatrick,
Castleknock, Co. Dublin.

Toxic clericalism has emerged once more

Dear Editor, As we reach 10 weeks without any public Masses it seems clear that no member of Government or public official think there is any value to the Holy Mass beyond the fellowship felt by gathering together and this must be forsaken for the sake of public health. Apparently, they do not believe in the Grace of the Sacraments. Our bishops seem to fall into two categories, those who might share the opinion of the secular authorities and those who do not feel they can contradict or criticise these colleagues.

While a few priests soldier on doing what they can the old toxic clericalism has emerged from the likes of the ACP where priests are scolding the laity who dare desire the sacraments and priests who try to accommodate the laity are publicly criticised. It would seem that talk about Vatican II and the laity really only counts when it synchronises with the ACP opinion. When this is over, I hope the laity gravitate to the priests, and parishes (and collection baskets) who did not forget their vocation.

Yours etc.,

Liam Ó Foghlú,
Kilcornan, Co. Limerick.



Time to 'shout out' and cherish all life

Dear Editor, I agree with Sean and Monica Hassett's call [IC 28/05/2020] for the right to life to be respected and restored and it's time for the silence on this issue to end. It is shocking to think that it is two years since abortion was legalised here with the prediction that it would result in up to 10,000 babies being killed annually to begin with, and few voices are being raised in protest at what is hap-

pening in our country. Could we not have a 'Year for Life' with suitable reparation for the taking of these innocent lives? If not, we are allowing ourselves to be complicit in this great tragedy. It's certainly time to shout out that we will be silent no more as we strive to cherish all lives.

Yours etc.,

Mary Stewart,
Ardeskin, Co. Donegal.

Chaplains must ensure virus victims are getting Last Rites

Dear Editor, Perhaps the most distressing feature of Covid-19 is the fact that virus victims are dying alone in hospital wards with apparently only frontline medical and nursing personnel suitably protected with PPE in attendance.

It is not clear whether priest chaplains are regarded as frontline hospital staff and are being provided

with personal protective equipment to enable them safely to minister to the spiritual needs of the dying. Belief in supernatural life after death is a core belief of Catholics. Consequently, being anointed and receiving the last rites of the Church during one's final illness is the wish of most Catholics and the desire of the family of a dying person who has

a strong belief in an eternal afterlife. Yet this is often not possible if priest chaplains are not being issued with PPE and being permitted to enter Covid-19 wards.

It would be hugely reassuring if priest chaplains in hospital could confirm that they have access to PPE and attend upon request all patients, including those stricken with the virus. It

would be dreadful if the legacy of this pandemic was to be the loss in hospitals of awareness and importance of the spiritual dimension of death which for a Christian believer in an afterlife is all important. Let's hope that does not happen.

Yours etc.,

Ann Kehoe,
Castleknock,
Co. Dublin.

Documenting coronavirus's cost to families

Dear Editor, Two years ago, I wrote imploring both State and Church to commemorate the centenary of the worldwide 50,000,000 Spanish flu deaths. Little happened and a major opportunity to learn the lessons of history was lost.

Today as I reflect upon the fact that, in the first wave of that pandemic, three of my father's siblings died of Spanish Flu. I have a clearer first hand appreciation of how my grandparents must have felt and what was going on

around them especially as my own son was hospitalised this time round. Back then, caught up in their personal tragedy, like bereaved families all around them, they did not have the luxury of recording how quickly it all happened and how they felt. Of the few reminders we have of the impact on our family are the memorial cards for the children. Despite exhaustive enquiries we have not found where the children were buried.

With all of this in mind we have

decided to record the impact of the present fast-moving coronavirus on our family, including children and grandchildren. I hope that other parents and grandparents will do likewise and so ensure that this time round lessons are not forgotten.

Please God as Church and State this time round we will remember them!

Yours etc.,

Alan Whelan,
Killarney, Co. Kerry.

facebook community

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

Archbishop asks churches to 'adhere strictly' to health guidelines after breach

Our churches are big. Our daily Mass attendances are low. Thanks to our poor forefathers, we have facilities for Mass and the Sacraments. – **James O'Connor**

It is all about care and safety, God is always with us, now and wherever we are. We wait for him in peace and patience at this dangerous time, it will pass. – **Matt Hilda McClogan**

People gathering near beaches and parks in large numbers. Would that count? I didn't see any social distancing there. – **Rosemol Thomas**

39 people attended Mass and RTÉ wagged their disapproving finger, so the church authorities buckled. Hundreds went to the beach at Sandycove and not a word said, sure people need to get out and socialise. Double standard? – **Martin Gillick**

Reading some of these comments it appears there is very little Christianity towards our bishops and priests who are trying to protect their congregations from this dreadful virus. – **Kathleen Smith**

Well said archbishop, thank you. – **Ann O'Loughlin**

The Church is trying to keep you safe. It's a big sacrifice to close churches but is an effort to keep people safe. Please don't condemn the priests for trying to protect people. – **Adrian Farrelly**

Baroness O'Loan criticises ACP over 'offensive' statement

Typical of the clergy wanting to keep the sacraments the exclusive of the few male...called to serve God's community not their own interest...wonder why people are leaving the Church? – **Feidhlim Ó Seasnáin**

They follow the true message of Jesus. – **Noel Watson**

Where is a canon lawyer when we need one! Absolutely ridiculous – 'our' churches are big enough to alternate Mass attendance. – **Aoibheann Douglas**

Well done to Baroness O'Loan. The ACP do not represent Catholicism. – **Peter Killeen**

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



▲ **IVORY COAST:** A student wears a protective mask in a classroom in Abidjan. A parish in the country is selling cloth face masks to raise money to provide food and other necessities to retired bishops and priests.
◀ **HONG KONG:** Protesters take part in a candlelight vigil in Victoria Park to remember those who died in the 1989 military crackdown on a pro-democracy movement in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Photos: CNS



NETHERLANDS: A demonstrator wearing a protective mask takes part in a protest in Rotterdam following the death of George Floyd.



RUSSIA: Orthodox Christians pray in the chapel of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow as the country relaxes its Covid-19 restrictions.



SPAIN: A volunteer in a protective face shield holds a clipboard as men organise donated food at the parish of San Ramon Nonato in Madrid.



TANZANIA: Elizabeth Mach, a Maryknoll lay missionary, poses with children at the Jipe Moyo Center in Musoma. The facility cares for children who have been living on the street or have been abused.



Vision of the Sermon (Jacob Wrestling with the Angel) by Paul Gauguin. Photo: © Scottish National Gallery

A quite magnificent defeat

Where's the fairness in life? Why are some people so undeservedly blessed in this world while others are seemingly cursed? Why are craftiness, self-serving ambition, taking advantage of others, and dishonesty so frequently rewarded? This has no quick answer.

In his book *The Magnificent Defeat*, the renowned novelist and preacher, Frederick Buechner, takes up this question by focusing on the biblical character, Jacob. He, as we know, twice cheated his brother, Esau. Catching him hungry and vulnerable, Jacob buys his birthright from him for a meal. More seriously, he poses as Esau, tricks their father and steals the blessing and the inheritance that was Esau's by right.

Everything about this seems wrong and calls for retribution, yet Jacob's life seemingly teaches the opposite. In contrast to his cheated brother, Jacob lives a very richly-blessed life and is favoured by God and by others. What's the lesson? Are God and life really on the side of those who do this type of thing?

Spiritual

Buechner builds his answer by moving from the pragmatic and the short-range to the spiritual and the long-range.



Fr Rolheiser

First, from a pragmatic point of view, the story of Jacob teaches its own lesson, namely, that as a matter of fact in this life people like Jacob, who are intelligent, crafty, and ambitious often do end up being rewarded in ways that people like Esau, who are slower on the draw, don't.

While clearly this isn't the moral teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, other parts of scripture, including some teachings of Jesus, do challenge us to be intelligent, to work hard, and indeed at times to be crafty.

God doesn't necessarily help those who help themselves, but God and life seem to reward those who use their talents. But there's a fine moral line here and Buechner draws it out brilliantly.

He asks: when someone who

does what Jacob did and it brings him riches in this life, where is the moral consequence? The answer comes to Jacob years later. He is alone one night when a stranger leaps upon him and the two of them end up wrestling silently with each other throughout the entire night. Just as dawn is breaking and it seems Jacob might win, everything is suddenly reversed. With an infinitely superior strength that he seems to have deliberately held back until now, the stranger touches Jacob's thigh and renders him helpless.

Something deeply transformative happens to Jacob in that experience of helplessness. Now that he knows that he is finally defeated, he no longer wants to be free of the stranger's grasp; instead he clings fiercely to his

former foe like a drowning man. Why?

Here's Buechner's explanation: "The darkness had faded just enough so that for the first time he can dimly see his opponent's face. And what he sees is something more terrible than the face of death – the face of love. It is vast and strong, half-ruined with suffering and fierce with joy, the face a man flees down all the darkness of his days until at last he cries out, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me!'. Not a blessing that he can have now by the strength of his cunning or the force of his will, but a blessing that he can have only as a gift."

“It will undoubtedly take the defeat of our own strength (and a permanent limp) before we realise what we are fighting against”

There's an entire spirituality here. The blessing for which we are forever wrestling can only come to us as gift, not as something we can snatch through our own talent, cunning and strength. By his wit and cunning, Jacob became a rich, admired man in this world. But in struggling for all those riches he was wrestling with a

force he unconsciously perceived as someone or something to be overcome.

Eventually, after many years of struggle, he had an awakening. Light dawned, through a crippling defeat. And in the light of that defeat he finally saw that what he had been struggling with for all that time was not someone or something to be overcome, but the very love he was wrestling for in all his efforts to achieve and get ahead.

For many of us, this will also be the real awakening in our lives, waking up to the fact that in our ambition and in all the schemes we concoct to get ahead, we are not wrestling with a someone or something to be overcome by our strength and wit; we are wrestling with community, love, and with God. And it will undoubtedly take the defeat of our own strength (and a permanent limp) before we realise what we are fighting against.

Then we will give up trying to win and instead cling like a drowning man to this face of love, begging for its blessing, a blessing that we can have only as a gift.

Believing that our blessing lies in winning, we strive to wrestle our lives away from others until one day, if we are lucky enough to be defeated, we begin to beg others to hang on to us.

“When someone who does what Jacob did and it brings him riches in this life, where is the moral consequence? The answer comes to Jacob years later...”

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, June 11, 2020

Personal Profile

Surviving Nazi bombing led to priesthood, says clergyman

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Keeping smart about your heart

Many people are not seeing their family doctor as regularly as normal due to Covid-19. Most general practitioners are offering consultation via telephone or over the internet and people who are on regular medication are continuing to prescribe this. There have been some reports of people experiencing chest pains possibly related to heart issues not attending hospital emergency departments due to fears about coronavirus. The advice from the experts is clear: if one is experiencing symptoms then the hospital is the place to be.

What can be frightening for people is that heart problems



We can do a lot to maintain a healthy heart writes Chai Brady

often creep up on patients and there are often no symptoms. High blood pressure – or hypertension – is often called the “silent killer”. Most of the time, it has no obvious symptoms to indicate that something is wrong. Many people with high blood pressure don’t even know they have it. Often the signs and symptoms are misunderstood. High blood pressure develops

slowly over time and can be related to many causes. High blood pressure cannot be cured. But it can be managed effectively through lifestyle changes and, when needed, medication. By increasing exercise and making simple changes one can substantially reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Dr Kevin McCarroll, a consultant geriatrician at St James’ Hospital

in Dublin warns that a key starting point is knowing what exactly one’s blood pressure is. “Measurement of blood pressure, as we all know, is a fundamental part of the routine clinical examination – and for good reason.

“This is because high blood pressure or hypertension is for the most part a silent condition which, over time, may have far-reaching health consequences,” according to Dr McCarroll.

He says that “to some extent, an elevated blood pressure may be considered a normal part of ageing.

“While below 40, hypertension is uncommon, by middle age prevalence increases to up to

50% and further rises to approximately 75% in those over 65.

“The importance of getting your blood pressure checked is emphasised by the fact that in up to half of cases hypertension is undiagnosed. The reasons underlying hypertension are complex and not fully understood but involve changes in resistance to blood flow in our arteries,” he says.

Dr McCarroll says that the effects of high blood pressure are manifold. “It significantly accelerates atherosclerosis or hardening of the arteries, a process whereby they become internally coated with plaque and narrowed.

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Family News



AND EVENTS

GETTING SUPPORT FOR LOSS AND GRIEF

An eight-week online support group will begin later this month to assist people dealing with loss. Coping with the loss of someone or something is challenging. Grieving can be associated with the death of a loved one—which is often the cause of the most intense type of grief—but any loss can cause grief. In response to HSE's suggestions to engage in social distancing to limit the spreading of Covid-19, the organiser, Open Doors Counselling Services, is moving to online meetings. They can use either videoconferencing or if the group agrees they can meet outdoors. The group is run by a qualified counsellor and costs €70. Those interested are asked to make contact for more details before deciding to purchase a ticket. Contact details: Monika 0857542579 or monika.hubczuk@gmail.com. Their website is: www.opendoorscounselling.com/

KIDNEY TRANSPLANTS COSTS LESS THAN ALTERNATIVES

New research led by Queen's University Belfast has found that kidney transplantation is the optimum treatment for people with chronic kidney disease, improving both their quality of life and long-term survival, whilst also costing less than alternative treatments. The research, conducted in partnership with nephrologists from the National University of Ireland Galway, University Hospitals Birmingham and The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, has been published in the journal PLOS ONE. Based on the study findings, the researchers conclude that transplantation is not only life changing for patients with chronic kidney disease, improving both quality of life and long-term survival, but is also beneficial for wider society as it is associated with lower costs than dialysis. Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a long-term condition that affects over 10% of the global population and is predicted to become the fifth leading cause of death in the world by 2040.

LOCKDOWN INCREASES OBESITY IN KIDS

Lockdowns implemented due to the coronavirus have negatively impacted diet, sleep and physical activity among children with obesity across the world, according to University at Buffalo research. The study examined 41 overweight children throughout March and April in Verona, Italy. Compared to behaviours recorded a year prior, the children ate an additional meal per day; slept an extra half hour per day; added nearly five hours per day in front of phone, computer and television screens; and dramatically increased their consumption of red meat, sugary drinks and junk foods. Physical activity, on the other hand, decreased by more than two hours per week, and the amount of vegetables consumed remained unchanged. "The tragic Covid-19 pandemic has collateral effects extending beyond direct viral infection," says Myles Faith, PhD, UB childhood obesity expert and co-author on the study. "Children and teens struggling with obesity are placed in an unfortunate position of isolation that appears to create an unfavourable environment for maintaining healthy lifestyle behaviours."

What does 'peace' really mean?

There's a chant that people seeking radical change have used for decades: it was used in the black civil rights movement in the US in the 1960s, and we've heard it a lot from the protesters in the past weeks. The chant is: "No justice, no peace."

The statement being made by the chant is being read by some people as a threat – a threat that until justice is delivered, the protestors will not allow there to be peace.

“The Catechism quotes St Augustine and defines peace as ‘the tranquillity of order’, which sounds quite a lot like the thin concept”

I think this reading rests on a mistake: a philosophical mistake. The mistake arises because of confusion about the meaning of the word peace.

That word is often understood just to mean something like ‘the absence of war’, ‘the absence of violence’, or ‘the presence of a certain amount of social order’. I am not going to argue that these uses of ‘peace’ are wrong: it's useful to have a word that denotes these things. I'll call this ‘thin peace’.

But there is a different concept of peace that I want to discuss here: it's the concept of peace that's used in the philosophy and moral theology of the Catholic tradition, and also, I think, the one being appealed to by protestors chanting for racial equality.

This concept of peace is a ‘thick’ concept – a term used by philosophers to mark out concepts that involve both description and evaluation in terms of good and bad. The



Everyday philosophy Ben Conroy

virtue of ‘honesty’ is an example of a thick concept: when you call someone honest, you are in one sense just describing them (‘she's likely to tell the truth even when it's difficult or costly’). But you're also saying something positive about them: ‘she's really honest’ is a compliment, not an insult or a purely neutral description.

I could call a society ‘peaceful’ in the thin sense without necessarily saying that the society was good. It could be peaceful but repressive, peaceful but miserable, peaceful but bland.

“There is so much similarity between the radical rallying cry and a favourite phrase of Pope St. Paul VI: ‘If you want peace, work for justice.’”

Peace in the thick sense though, is a moral concept. Certain ways that the Catholic tradition describes it don't make this immediately obvious. The Catechism quotes St Augustine and defines peace as ‘the tranquillity of order’, which sounds quite a lot like the thin concept. But if you read the surrounding passage in the Catechism you'll see the following.

“Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men,

respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity... Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity.”

The ‘order’ being referred to means something like ‘the good and proper functioning of a system’. A peaceful society is one in which things are working harmoniously towards the goal that the society is pursuing. In the Catholic tradition, that goal is the common good: which consists in the people of the society living flourishing lives: the joint enjoyment of everyone in the society of goods like friendship, conversation, and family and religious life. This is the point of thin peace and order: it's only good insofar as it contributes to thick peace.



Dr Martin Luther King

Once you're working with this concept of peace, ‘No justice, no peace’ is not a threat – it's just a definition. If some

group in a society is being systematically discriminated against or excluded from the scope of justice, we might have a peaceful society in the thin sense, but not in the thick, Catholic one. It's no accident that there is so much similarity between the radical rallying cry and a favourite phrase of Pope St Paul VI: “If you want peace, work for justice.” Or the words of Dr Martin Luther King: “True peace is not merely the absence of tension; is the presence of justice.”

“I could call a society ‘peaceful’ in the thin sense without necessarily saying that the society was good”

I've written before in this column about Ursula Le Guin's fantasy short story *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas* in which a city is magically preserved in utopian stability by means of a spell which relies on the imprisonment and torture of one innocent child. This society is peaceful in the thin sense: but is absolutely not peaceful not in the thick one, no matter how calm or stable it was.

A critic might say that this is too wide a definition of peace. If we take it as true, there has never really been a fully peaceful society. But societies have been and can be more or less peaceful in different ways. And if you accept it, the thick concept shows the folly of attempting to oppose justice and peace or prioritise one over the other. True peace cannot be achieved without justice being done. Any proposed solution to civil unrest should recognise that fact.

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Know where you stand by measuring your blood pressure.

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120 – 129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130 – 139	or	80 – 89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

"This can cause damage to the arteries anywhere in the body including in the heart, kidneys, eyes, legs and brain, and can lead to coronary artery disease, kidney impairment, visual problems and poor circulation," he says.

Hypertension is also a major risk factor for stroke and puts strain on the heart which can lead to impaired heart muscle function and heart failure.

“What can be frightening for people is that heart problems often creep up on patients and there are often no symptoms”

In the past, high blood pressure was often not diagnosed until later in life, by which time it may have caused organ damage, or was only picked up incidentally. According to Dr McCarroll, "diagnosis and treatment of hypertension even later in life will substantially reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and events".

A doctor or nurse will be able to check if one has high blood pressure and it is recommended that this is checked each time one visits the GP, or at least once every six months.

Blood pressure is measured by a standard test, which is painless and only takes a few minutes. The doctor or nurse will put a cuff around the arm above the elbow; air is pumped into the cuff and the measurement is read as the air is let out. Two numbers measure the level of blood pressure.

The higher (systolic) number represents the pressure when the heart is beating. The lower (diastolic) number represents the pressure when the heart is resting between beats.

Blood pressure varies due to age, emotion and activity and one raised reading does not mean one has high blood pressure.

Factors

There are a number of factors that usually combine to cause the condition, including:

- Smoking;
- Not eating enough fresh fruit and vegetables;
- Drinking too much alcohol;
- Taking too much salt in the diet;
- Being overweight;
- Family history of the condition;
- Ageing;
- Stress'

If high blood pressure is diagnosed, a doctor may first recommend some

lifestyle changes, which may be enough to treat it, such as:

- Stopping smoking;
- Losing weight – and keeping the weight off;
- Drinking less alcohol;
- Cutting down on salt;
- Eating more fruit and vegetables;
- Reducing fat in your diet;

Doctors say that it is important to exercise regularly and recommend a brisk walk for at least 30 minutes most days of the week.

Sometimes medication, usually taken long-term, is prescribed to treat the condition. This helps to prevent the risk of heart attack or stroke and it is important to take this medication once prescribed.

Cholesterol

Another issue that affects heart health is high levels of cholesterol. Cholesterol is a fatty substance which is essential for a healthy nervous system, good digestion and the production of hormones. The body produces cholesterol and we also get it from our diet, but too much cholesterol in your blood can be dangerous as it builds up on the walls of the blood vessels and leads to narrowing or hardening of the arteries.

There are two main forms of cholesterol:

- LDL cholesterol (low density lipoprotein) - known as 'bad' cholesterol. This attaches to the wall of the arteries and causes narrowing, which may contribute to angina, heart attack or stroke;
- HDL cholesterol (high density lipoproteins) - known as 'good' cholesterol. This cholesterol collects extra, unwanted cholesterol and carries it to the liver where it can be broken down;



As with hypertension, there are no symptoms to indicate if one has high cholesterol, but a simple blood test at your doctor's surgery will show your overall level of cholesterol.

Depending on the results of this test, the doctor may arrange for a further test that will breakdown the HDL (good) cholesterol from the LDL (bad) and it may be necessary to fast before this test. Patients should check with their doctor. One raised reading does not mean you have high cholesterol, as levels may vary from day to day.

Many factors contribute to high cholesterol. These include:

- Not taking enough regular exercise;
- Too much fat in the diet;
- Being overweight;
- Family history of the condition;

A doctor may also prescribe drug treatment to reduce high cholesterol.

“Hypertension is also a major risk factor for stroke and puts strain on the heart which can lead to impaired heart muscle function”

Dr McCarroll warns that when it comes to blood pressure "if other risk factors including high cholesterol, diabetes or smoking are present, there is a 'snowball effect' whereby the risk increases exponentially.

"This is why a diagnosis of hypertension should always prompt a complete assessment for other vascular risk factors," he says

He insists that "while there are no natural cut-offs for blood pressure, there are well defined treatment targets and even a small drop in blood pressure can significantly reduce the risk of stroke and heart disease. If you have diabetes, heart disease or end organ damage then a tighter control of your blood pressure will be recommended".

Dr McCarroll says that if cases of mild hypertension, paying attention to the above factors may remove the need to go on anti-hypertensive medication. "However, in practice at some stage during the course of your hypertension you are likely to require medical treatment," he says.

Several medications are available to choose from and which one is used will depend on how high the blood pressure is, the presence of other conditions like diabetes or kidney/heart disease and the potential for side effects. Treatments are very effective and usually well tolerated.

"High blood pressure is common and rarely gives rise to any symptoms. However, it is a 'silent killer' and needs to be checked and monitored closely," he says.

Faith — IN THE — family



Bairbre Cahill

The hippocampus, deep within our brain, gathers and organises short term memories, laying down the synaptic pathways for long term memories. Every time we recall a memory we travel down that synaptic pathway and the more we do so, the stronger and more lasting the memory becomes. Memories have the capacity to shape attitudes and behaviour. Life experience does not just wash off us like dust in the rain. Rather, through the action of memory, experience is layered within us, shaping who we are.

Over these months we have shared the profound and challenging experience of living through a pandemic. For many, that experience has devastated their world. None of us remain untouched. What has your experience been? What will you remember of this time? What have you learned about yourself, your strengths and your vulnerabilities? What about your family, parish, community and nation? What have you learned about prayer, faith and your relationship with God? And what of the society we live in, locally and globally? What have you seen and heard, read about and thought about? What has challenged you, frightened you, given you hope?

On Pentecost Sunday our own bishop, Bishop Alan McGuckian, spoke of how many have begun to glimpse a new way for our lives, that the way it always was is never as good as the way God wants it to be into the future. Surely it is the case that the future will only be better if we remember, reflect and learn from our experience. That can seem like a daunting task whether for ourselves and our families or for a parish, diocese or community. Remembering may seem demanding, and easily set aside once we are busy about other things. But maybe the way forward has already been given to us.

Pope Francis recently invited us to engage in a year of reflection and action on *Laudato Si'*. This encyclical, published five years ago is about our relationship with God, with each other and with creation, which Pope Francis refers to in the title as *Our Common Home*. Urging us to build a future which is good for the earth and all her people Pope Francis invites us to learn about listening, accompaniment and sacrifice.

Our recent experience has taught us much about these and so it seems to me that remembering and reflecting in the light of *Laudato Si'* could guide us into a new future. We have spent these months listening to reports of heartbreak and heroism. We have heard of the devastation caused by poverty and inequality layered on top of pandemic. We have listened to each other, stories of simple joys, loneliness, frustrations, new discoveries. What does our listening tell us for the future we want to build?



We have accompanied each other in a way that speaks of love, respect and solidarity. We may have struggled with frustrations at those who have seemed to disregard such things. It has demanded sacrifices – small ones and ones too enormous to fit into words. We have reassessed what is essential in life and learned something of simplicity. Remembering urges to consider what sort of future we want. Will we cast simplicity aside again?

Have you ever been more aware of birdsong? In remembering that, have we the potential to live more environmentally aware lives? *Laudato Si'* urges us to listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, to stand with all those who are oppressed and discriminated against. Pope Francis invites us to solidarity – and these months have given us a real experience of that. In so many ways this encyclical echo and calls forth our experience of these past months.

There are resources available also. SaltandlightTV.org offers a wonderful *Laudato Si'* based documentary series "Creation". The Global Catholic Climate Movement offers resources and invites us to pray with a global community. Perhaps this *Laudato Si'* Year announced by Pope Francis is just what we need to guide us forward. If we fail to remember nothing will change. The choice – and the future – is ours.

Surviving Nazi bombing led to priesthood, says clergyman

Personal Profile



Aron Hegarty

Apriest from Northern Ireland says a lucky escape from a Nazi German bombing in 1941 propelled him on his faith journey into priesthood.

Canon Sean Rogan from Belfast, who resides in Carryduff, Co. Down, narrowly avoided being bombed during the Second World War and was evacuated with his family.

The retired 81-year-old clergyman told *The Irish Catholic* how this harrowing event set him on a pathway to being in God's service.

"Our house was right beside a huge flax-spinning mill which took a direct hit during the Nazi Germany raid on April 15, 1941," Fr Rogan explains.

"My mother went upstairs and took myself and my sister out of bed right before the mill was bombed and completely destroyed. Part of the mill came down through the roof of the house, where we had been just a few minutes before.

“Since the Covid-19 outbreak, Fr Rogan has rekindled his love for music and taken to social media on Saturday nights”

"We were then evacuated down to Killough, Co. Down the next day and there I was reared.



Canon Sean Rogan plays the piano at his home in Carryduff, Co. Down. Photo: Diocese of Down and Connor.

"I remember saying to a group of Germans one time that I thanked the German pilot or bomber who dropped the bombs there," he jokes. "The reason for that was because I probably would never have been a priest had I remained in Belfast because it was a middle district and I would not have had the opportunities that I got from being in Co. Down.

"Perhaps it was fortuitous or coincidental or maybe even providential? The Lord does some strange things in some strange ways."

Music

Fr Rogan says clergymen in his adopted parish of Killough encouraged him to join the priesthood, practice his gift of music and share it with others.

"What motivated me then to be a priest was the clergy in my parish, the old Canon in Killough and the De

La Salle Brothers at St Patrick's Grammar School in Downpatrick," he says.

"They inspired me and I wanted to do service for and be of service to others, which is why I use whatever talents I have to sing and play the piano, so that it might give people some help and joy.

"I started music in 1946 when I was 7 years old," adds Fr Rogan.

"I call myself a 'piano player' rather than a pianist because when I was at grammar school, there were different dance bands that I used to play just for amusement on Saturday nights and things like that."

Fr Rogan entered religious life at the age of 17 and was ordained a priest at St Peter's College in Co. Wexford on June 3, 1962 and has been involved in many parishes over that period of time.

He worked as a curate in Downpatrick in the 1970s before being

sent to St Luke's in Twinbrook, Belfast where he built a parish in a very deprived and troubled area.

The Canon also served as a parish priest in Coleraine, Lisburn, Kilcoo and Killyleagh until his retirement.

The Troubles

"Some of them (parishes) were in Belfast and one of the worst times I had was during The Troubles at St Luke's, one of my parishioners there was Bobby Sands, who was the first of the hunger strikers and I officiated at his funeral.

"There were killings, bombings and shootings; it was a terrible time, but thanks be to God that things are much better now."

Since the Covid-19 outbreak, Fr Rogan has rekindled his love for music and taken to social media on Saturday nights in an effort to boost morale during difficult times.

"What prompted me? While we were in this lockdown it suddenly struck me that our own parishioners are confined to their homes could use a wee bit of entertainment.

“My mother went upstairs and took myself and my sister out of bed right before the mill was bombed and completely destroyed”

"So I decided one Saturday night to use the web cam in the church and I play the piano for over an hour doing different songs, for example, 'La Paloma' - a tango piece in honour of Pope Francis who loves tango music, 'The Mountains of Mourne' and so on.

"The response I got was very good," he adds, "parishioners told me that when I played swing, tango and jazz they danced at home and they began to ring up and say 'could you do another one?'."

"So about three weeks ago, I did and this time - which I didn't realise at the time - it was on Facebook and got about 3,000 hits.

"I did another one on Saturday two weeks ago," continues Fr Rogan, "because people kept asking me to and it went very well. I got a good response once again and I thought it was the best of the three I have done so far.

"I said I was doing this as a tribute to all the NHS workers in all the hospitals, hospices and nursing homes to credit, praise and honour them for their heroism.

"I also asked to pray for those who are ill at this time and those who have died during the pandemic and their families who are mourning them as well."

Strategies to tackle housework as a family

One of the things myself and my wife are finding really difficult to stay on top of is the housework. With the family at home all the time it is a never ending merry go round of cooking and cleaning and we are both feeling overwhelmed by it all.

It's hard not to feel burdened by many aspects of the Covid-19 pandemic and having a house that feels more chaotic than calm can add to your stress. Keeping on top of it all, for all of us, is difficult. Try to let go of having your house sparkling clean (sure who is visiting anyway!) but having some more order might be just one less thing to fret about.

Remember that your family is a team, sit down all together and allocate various jobs to each family member, if it helps create a wall chart as to who has to do what job on what day. The better your plan is the more efficient you will all be. A lot of research shows that women still take on the majority of the household chores,

everyone is juggling and working hard, so try to make sure the load is spread fairly. For everyone in the house to adopt a 'clean and go' method, piling up dishes in the sink is the last thing you want to have to deal with at the end of the day. Use your time smartly where you can, rather than having to find hours to do a big clean, try your best to clean little and often. Sorry to add to your online shopping list, but a cordless vacuum is an investment you won't regret.

When it comes to bathrooms, clean the shower while you are in it, and just pick one bathroom to clean every other day, have surface wipes in every room, when you brush your teeth take an extra two minutes to quickly wipe down the bathroom surfaces.

One of the ways to be more efficient is to actually give yourself less time, when it comes

to housework there is always more to do if there is time there you will end up filling it so keep it short. Set a time limit and prioritise what needs to be done. Once a week

with your spouse, spend an hour cleaning together, you will be amazed how much you will get done as a team. Each evening, when the kids are down set your clock work with your spouse together to do a 15 minute clean, you will be again you will be pleasantly surprised what the two of you can get done in such a short space of time knowing a little relaxation is just a few minutes away, it's always much easier to deal with the mess in the evening than to wake up to it the next day and one small change that makes a big difference is to never leave a room empty handed. So work together, plan well and don't aim for perfection and you should find things become much more manageable.



Wendy Grace

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Unsung heroes help with some feel-good

In these strange and wearying times, I tend to welcome feel-good programmes, perhaps too uncritically, and if they manage deeper meaning as well, it's a bonus.

Unsung Heroes (RTÉ1) on Wednesday night of last week was conductor David Brophy's third outing with special focus choirs – previously there was the High Hopes Choir (for people touched by homelessness), the Choir of Ages (for older people) and now it was a choir for carers.

Appropriately these 'unsung heroes' are now getting their chance to sing, and not only is the singing giving them a well-deserved boost, but now they are socialising with other groups away from the usual meetings to do with the needs of those loved ones they care for. As Brophy said at one stage, their stories are difficult but necessary to listen to.

Significantly most of the carers were women, and many of them were looking after their mothers. "We're lucky to have her," said one woman of her own mother who was in need of care.

Those parents looking after their children with disabilities had a particular challenging task – there were some parents who were caring for two and even three children who had challenging needs. This was filmed pre-Covid and I'd say things must



David Brophy led the *Unsung Heroes*.

have become tougher during lockdown.

At one stage Brophy threw in a dig at the HSE and also said he was "ashamed to be Irish" because of the way carers were treated. I may at times be ashamed of our Government, or of aspects of our culture, but never of being Irish, which is such a complex identity, and one with so much goodness.

I liked most of the music choices – *Something Inside So Strong* seemed particularly apt, and Aslan's *Crazy World*, hit the mark as well (boosted by a surprise appearance by the band at one of the practices).

I was less enthused by John Lennon's *Imagine* – "imagine there's no heaven" – talk about taking away a source of hope! Uplifting, and enjoyable as these shows are, they are becoming a tad formulaic – I was reminded as well of the Dementia Choir pro-

gramme on BBC. But I'll be happy if they make more of them.

Other unsung heroes of mine are those scientists who are also people of religious faith, who despite prejudices and distortions keep the flag flying for a harmony or complementarity between science and religion. One of the foremost is Prof. David Wilkinson, astrophysicist and theologian.

He gave a fascinating interview to Audrey Carville on last weekend's **Sunday Sequence** (BBC Radio Ulster) on the occasion of the discovery of the forming of a new planet, where scientists could uniquely observe the process.

Prof. Wilkinson found this recent development "very exciting" and more generally saw "a reflection of God's faithfulness in simple, elegant, beautiful laws of physics". He spoke about the way God creates and saw the

complexity and diversity of the universe as showing the "extravagance...of a creator God".

Intelligent life

As regards other life in the universe, he made a crucial distinction between life (which could be just bacteria and microbes) and intelligent life. He reminded us that the early Church fathers speculated about the existence of other worlds and found this a "theological stimulus" rather than a problem.

As regards intelligent life he thought we were alone in our galaxy, but with billions of other galaxies out there who knows? In fact he thought it might be the nature of the universe that we'll never know.

He pointed out that a message from us to the nearest other galaxy would take a few million light years, and any reply would take as long

PICK OF THE WEEK

NEW! DEFENDING LIFE

EWTN Saturday (night), June 13, 12.30am and Monday, June 15, 10.30pm

Many who support the effort to protect children in the womb are atheists. See how the Faith community can work productively with them.

FORGOTTEN HERITAGE: EUROPE AND HER SAINTS

EWTN, Monday, June 15, 8.30am and 9.30pm

Exploring how St Thomas More defended the role of conscience and how the state should not violate it.

SELMA

BBC2, Friday, June 19, 11.20pm

(2014) Film chronicling the three-month period in 1965 which saw Dr Martin Luther King Jr lead a march from Selma to Montgomery in a bid to secure equal voting rights.



Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers.

– "not an interesting conversation!"

The conversation on last Friday's **Leap of Faith** (RTÉ Radio 1) were certainly interesting. Michael Comyn spoke with Fr James Martin SJ and Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers of the US Episcopal Church

about the current upheaval in the USA following the awful killing of George Floyd.

Both were very critical, as I would be, of President Trump's ill-judged and awkward gesture with the Bible outside that Episcopal Church and provided useful insights into the polarisation in the USA, but for diversity I would have liked to hear from a contributor who had a different perspective, and someone who would question why, as black (and all other) lives matter, such risks were taken during the protests, there and at home considering the ongoing presence of the life-threatening virus.

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Pat O'Kelly

Music

Great Irish houses will always welcome back finest musicians

Had all gone according to plan, I intended being in the National Botanic Gardens this evening (Thursday, June 11) listening to music by Webern, Mendelssohn and Shostakovich played by the visiting Novus Quartet – a group of young Koreans creating a favourable impression wherever they perform.

The Quartet's visit was scheduled as part of the 2020 Great Music in Irish Houses Festival, which should be celebrating its golden jubilee. But to quote an old adage, "man proposes, but God disposes". Hopefully Novus can be re-engaged for 2021.

The festival began in 1970 following a casual meeting between young TCD graduate David Laing and the Hon

Desmond Guinness. Laing suggested Castletown House in Celbridge, where Guinness was then living, as the venue for a concert.

Guinness went one further with "why not a festival and let us bring Carton [near Maynooth, Co. Kildare] into the picture". As popular parlance goes, 'the rest is history'. The first festival ran from June 7-14, 1970 with Laing as artistic director.

In time a number of other stately homes, north and south of the border, joined the prestigious venue list among them Russborough and Killruddery in Co. Wicklow, Headford and Slane Castle in Co. Down and Stormont Castle, close to Belfast.

David Laing continued as artistic director until 1982 when Judith Woodworth, then based in London, followed him. Judith remained at the helm for 18 years by which time she had become CEO of the National Concert Hall. Her successor was Hugh Tinney with the artistically astute Ciara Higgins following him in 2007.

Notes

While I had been reviewing festival performances for the *Evening Press* from the mid 1970s, Judith Woodworth suggested I take a more active role and wrote programme notes for the festival concerts.

This modest involvement began in 1983 and has continued ever since. I was

halfway through the 2020 events when word came of the festival's cancellation due to prevailing circumstances. However, as the BBC's *Masquerade* question master says when the two-minute signal sounds: "I've started, so I'll finish."

While I have many great memories of the festival, one particular performance sticks in my mind – that of Korean violinist Kyung Wha-Chung and Polish pianist Krystian Zimerman playing the *César Franck Sonata* in Russborough.

I dug out my review: "[This] was one of those rare occasions where artistic temperament communicated itself through gripping directness. The romantic



Kyung Wha-Chung.

heart of this sonata beat with tempestuous and passionate urgency. It was magnificent

on all counts." [*Evening Press*, June 21, 1982]

Virtuoso pianist Vladimir Ashkenazy came to Killruddery House the following June. Raining heavily, the glass roof in the orangery leaked with raindrops landing on player and piano. Besides, an ambassadorial spouse, in the front row, beat time with her right foot!

The unperturbed Ashkenazy valiantly carried on without allowing either distraction to deter him from returning to the festival some time later.

But, for the moment, let us look forward to next year's event, which by then will have changed its name to the Dublin International Chamber Music Festival.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Of faith and poetry: a different aspect of Christ in every poet's encounter

The Outlaw Christ: The response in poetry to the question 'Who do you say that I am?'

by John F. Deane
(Columba Books, €16.99)

Gabriel Fitzmaurice

The *Outlaw Christ*, developed from a series of talks and lectures delivered by John F. Deane while he was the Teilhard de Chardin Fellow in Catholic Studies at Loyola University, Chicago in 2016, follows philosophers, poets and poetry from the 8th Century through the metaphysical poets, Emily Dickinson and Gerard Manley Hopkins to poets of our own day including David Gascoyne, Patrick Kavanagh and Pádraig J. Daly.

Deane informs us in his Foreword that his study has been Christ; his living has been love and poetry. In these essays the poet-prophet contends that the whole of creation is God's work of art which appeals to the imagination rather than mere reason or intellect where faith precedes belief systems and may well travel on after belief systems are lost.

In *The Dream of the Rood*, written perhaps in the 8th Century in England, in Anglo-Saxon, Deane finds that the outlaw Christ "instead of being brought forcefully to his death, is...hastening to it, eager and prepared, ready for the battle to win humanity back to God".

In his reading of Phineas Fletcher



John F. Deane and, above, the cover of his new book.

(1582-1650), Deane laments that Fletcher's emphasis on love, rather than on a God of vengeful watchfulness, did not remain among Christians down through the centuries. Amen say I! Like John Donne (1572-1631), Deane spends his life both in his poetry and in his prose works preaching a sermon to himself. Like Donne, he seeks to satisfy the whole man.

Sermons

These essays are sermons directed to himself as much as they are directed to his readers and, like George Herbert (1593-1633), he has them published that they might do good "to any dejected poor soul". In Herbert he perceives "the personal response to the personal Christ [that] has not been sufficiently taken up by later writers".

His Christ is a Christ who seeks "mercy and not sacrifice" whose poetry is a direct and gentle insistence on love, not fear.

In his essay on Thomas Traherne (1637-1674), he quotes the poet: "Nature teacheth nothing but the truth" and he concludes that by an awareness of nature man comes to knowledge of God.

Reading Simone Weil (1909-1943) he discovers that putting Christ at the centre of her thinking, she makes him the exemplar of the need for suffering and the destruction of the ego, her theology standing and falling at the end of the medieval world focusing too much on the crucifixion and setting aside the resurrection.

In David Gascoyne (1916-2001), he encounters the "Christ of Revolution and Poetry", a most telling

phrase, Deane informs us, "filled with a vibrant immediacy and a small suggestion of hope in the development of the arts".

“ John F. Deane delivers close readings, sermons in the best sense”

In Teilhard de Chardin he encounters the mystical and cosmic Christ. Teilhard writes: "Something has gone wrong and so something, in the area of faith and religion must be supplied without delay on this planet."

The neo-humanisms of the 20th Century, Teilhard believes, de-humanise us "under their uninspired skies, yet on the other hand the still-living forms of theism –

starting with the Christian – tend to under-humanise us in the rarefied atmosphere of too lofty skies.

"These religions are still systematically closed to the wide horizons and great winds of Cosmogonesis, and can no longer be said to feel with the Earth – an Earth whose internal frictions they can still lubricate like soothing oil, but whose driving energies they cannot animate as they should."

Illa Delio, a Franciscan Sister of Washington DC, offers the following: "Evolution suggests the universal is moving to a state of wholeness; it is moving forward so we must see change as integral to evolution, and therefore to the Creator." Reading her, Deane concludes that the new Christianity is to be a daring adventure requiring a new language and a new poetry and this he finds in contemporary poets like Pádraig J. Daly and James Harpur who give a heartening lift to those who try to pursue the Christ through their daily lives.

In *The Outlaw Christ*, John F. Deane delivers close readings, sermons in the best sense, on poetry's search for the true Christ, within or without the official Church. He has chosen well from the canon and his book is as timely and it is welcome.

1 *Gabriel Fitzmaurice is a Kerry-based poet of international repute, whose latest publications are A Farewell to Poetry: Selected Poems and translation (Currach Press) and for children Really Rotten Rhymes (Mercier Press).*

Brilliant legacy of scholar priest: Thomas Finan,



Thomas Finan, Collected Writings

ed. D. Vincent Twomey
(Columba Books, €34.99)

Fran O'Rourke

Reading this delightful collection, the word that repeatedly came to mind was the Latin for 'wisdom', *sapientia*, in its original meaning of 'sweet knowledge', knowledge to be savoured.

As the editor Vincent Twomey notes, Thomas Finan's primary draw was towards the sublime or mystical, his primal instinct was poetic. The 1st-century author Longinus defined the sublime as "a certain elevation and distinction in the writing", a quality which derives not so much from style as the interior intensity of great thought and strong emotion.

This volume is sublime in thought, emotion and style. A gentle enthusiasm fills its pages, indicating that its author was dealing with affairs not only of the intellect but also of the heart.

Prof. Thomas Finan (1931-2012) was a priest of the Diocese of Killala.

He was Professor of Classics in Maynooth from 1959 to his retirement in 1996. A survey of the contents of this volume indicates the vast range of his expertise. Part I deals with academic topics, ranging impressively from Antiquity through to the Renaissance, with sections on St Augustine, Early Irish Christian Literature and Dante.

“ The volume is completed with insightful review essays on art and literature...”

Part II, 'Occasional Essays', consists for the most part of what are entitled 'Controversial Essays', among which are Fr Finan's studied reflections on catechetics, mortal sin, the future of Maynooth and the new liturgy.

The section on Antiquity includes perceptive studies on Homer, Greek tragedy, and Gilgamesh. The author deals in two essays with the relationship between Greek thought and Christianity. He expounds in detail the parallels between Socrates ("best,

wisest and most just of all the men of his time") and Christ. Not only Greek philosophy, but also Greek tragedy foreshadowed Christ's passion, the tragedies of Sophocles leading to Gethsemane and Golgotha.

Finan's earliest passion was St Augustine (354-430). The four essays included convey a deep learning that is imbued with a passion to match that of the African bishop. He later became fascinated with St Thomas More (1478-1535). Four essays on More and three on his contemporary Erasmus are included.

Readers interested in Irish culture will be delighted by the essay 'Hiberno-Latin Christian Literature'. Written Irish literature began with St Patrick, who himself became – *avant la lettre* – more Irish than the Irish themselves. Of his British opponents he remarked: "To them it is annoying and unbecoming that we should be the Irish!"

In an essay entitled 'The Burning of the Books', written in 1972 in response to the introduction of the vernacular into the liturgy, Fr Finan turns his linguistic skills to good use;

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.



Jesus and the scorpion, from Stanley Spencer's series Christ in the Wilderness.

Christian humanist

An insight from Thomas Finan

"The Christian knows that God has become man, and has assumed the limitations of man's own existence in time and the world. Time and eternity, this life and the next, do not merely co-exist. Eternity has been inserted into time. The next life has been ingrafted in this.

"The next life begins by grace in this world. Death is not a break in continuity. It is a raising up to glory, a transfiguration of the life that is already in the Christian. But that life must be cultivated here. For time is the anvil on which the Christian forges his eternity. Death is the point of intersection of the two worlds.

"But as such it is only the supreme among a lifelong succession of crucial points. For at every moment the Christian lives and acts in two worlds. Every moment incarnates a value in eternity."

he was not impressed: "There is too high an incidence of flattening out, levelling down, summarising paraphrase rather than translation...and sometimes just bad writing by any standards."

It would be interesting to know how he would judge recent revisions of the English translation.

The volume is completed with insightful review essays on art and literature, two meditative homilies, and an evocative recollection of the author's schooldays, published here

for the first time.

The editor of the volume Vincent Twomey writes: "Thomas Finan was a humanist, more precisely a Christian humanist." This volume is a worthy monument not only to his personal legacy, but a valuable compendium of that entire tradition.

Readers will find it sublime in thought, emotion and style.

i Fran O'Rourke, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at University College Dublin, is completing a book on James Joyce, Aristotle, and Aquinas.



Fr Thomas Finan.

Lockdown literature • Chapter 4

Normal people, hidden lives: 'living faithfully' in provincial England

In this series some of our literary collaborators will be giving suggestions for lockdown reading, books of all kinds to amuse and raise our spirits. This week, Felix M. Larkin writes of that 'study of provincial life' which deals with normal people and their hidden lives, George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72).

At a public lecture in Dublin in February, held under the auspices of *Studies* magazine, I heard Chris Patten, the former British Conservative MP and last Governor of Hong Kong, describe *Middlemarch* as "the greatest English novel".

That was not the first time that I heard it so described, but I had never found time to read it. I decided that I should use the period of seclusion required by the Covid-19 regulations to finally read this much admired work.

What constitutes a 'great' novel? For me, greatness in literature is a function of its ability still to speak to us despite being the product of a different era and/or a different culture. By that standard, *Middlemarch* – first published in 1871-72 – is certainly 'great'.

It is a novel about ordinary people – one is tempted to say 'normal people', making a genuflection to one of our currently popular novels and television adaptations. The characters live "faithfully a hidden life", to quote from the famous final sentence of the novel.

This focus on the ordinary is something that resonates with us today: there are no heroes, just people whose lives are spent "in channels which had no great name on the earth".

There is, however, a villain – one whose villainy is familiar to us. Mr Bulstrode is a dodgy banker, with a dark secret of past malfeasance. He tries to compensate for his past with a stridently evangelical Christianity, leading one of the locals in the town of Middlemarch to say of him after he is eventually exposed: "What's more against a man's stomach than a man coming and making himself bad company with his religion, and giving out as the Ten Commandments are not good enough for him, and all the while he's worse than half the men at the tread-mill?" This could well be said of some of the evangelical zealots in Trump's entourage.

“It is long and moves at a stately pace, and the language is very formal – though beautiful”

At the core of the novel are certain 'love problems' – marriages and courtships – which are every bit as tortured as Connell and Marianne's affair in *Normal People*. Unlike *Normal People*, there are no sex scenes in *Middlemarch* – but a definite frisson is evident when Dorothy and Ladislaw overcome their reticence and admit their love for one another at the end of the novel.

One of the problematic marriages involves a young doctor, Lydgate, who has wonderful plans for a new hospital in Middlemarch and is, at one point, concerned with "preparing a new ward in case of the cholera coming to us". This adds a contemporary dimension to the novel, with the threat of Covid-19 hanging over us.

There was a cholera epidemic in Britain in 1831-32 – and *Middlemarch* is set over a period of years ending in 1832.

And how could a curmudgeonly old bachelor like me not respond sympathetically to Mr Brooke's pronouncement on marriage: "I never loved any one well enough to put myself into a noose for them. It is a noose, you know."

It has been many years since I last read a Victorian novel, and I will confess that I found *Middlemarch* challenging. It is long and moves at a stately pace, and the language is very formal – though beautiful.

I am happy to acknowledge it as 'great' and am glad to have read it, but I have not changed my view that the greatest English novel – pace Chris Patten – is Dickens' *Bleak House*.



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




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Merchants Quay Ireland reaches out with kindness to people living on our streets, sleeping in doorways, suffering and alone. Your legacy, of any amount, can enfold the most vulnerable and lonely in wrap-around supports. You may wish to keep the details confidential. But we want to give you this little wooden keepsake, made by a client, for you. This is your heart for the homeless and those on the road to recovery.

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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



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 or phone 01 881 5917

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5					
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Leisure time

Please pray for the beatification of

Little Nellie of Holy God

“May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls proposing Nellie as their model”

– Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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When you remember Trócaire in your Will, you bring hope to people living in the world's poorest places

Trócaire

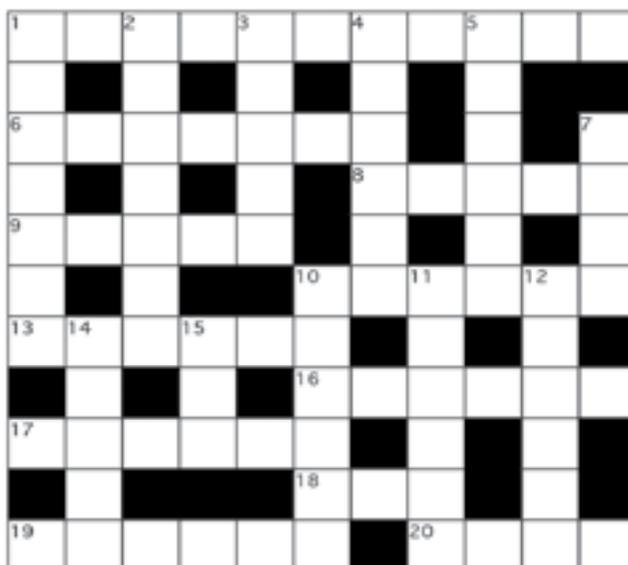
It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call Grace Kelly on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives.

Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

Crossword Junior

Gordius 336



Across

- 1 The American president before Donald Trump (6,5)
- 6 Pills (7)
- 8 Tip with the fingers; feel (5)
- 9 The backs of the feet (5)
- 10 The son of the king and queen (6)
- 13 Save from danger (6)
- 16 Type of insect (6)
- 17 A spider makes one (6)
- 18 Large piece of wood for the fire (3)
- 19 You boil water in it (6)
- 20 Coin that can be spent in many countries in Europe (4)

Down

- 1 Person who cuts and sells meat (7)

- 2 They take things that don't belong to them (7)

- 3 Board game involving pawns and bishops (5)
- 4 You might find a pearl in one (6)
- 5 Season which follows summer (6)
- 7 You wear it on your foot (4)
- 10 Small stone (6)
- 11 Animated film with a woolly mammoth and a sabre-toothed tiger (3,3)
- 12 Green or blue, perhaps (6)
- 14 Run away to get married (5)
- 15 Creature that goes 'Moo'

SOLUTIONS, JUNE 4

GORDIUS No. 458

Across – 1 Sow 3 Roman candle 8 Acorns 9 Virginia Woolf
10 Basks 11 Robot 13 Lucid 15 Bone dry 16 Refusal 20 Egret
22 Straw 23 Hoped 24 Pavlovas 25 Abbess 26 Bell foundry
27 Day

Down – 1 Soap bubbles 2 Woodsman 3 Rings 4 Advance 5 Anger
6 Danube 7 Era 12 The Lord is my Shepherd 13 Large 14 Dwelt
18 Crimson 19 Gravel 23 Hobby 24 Pub

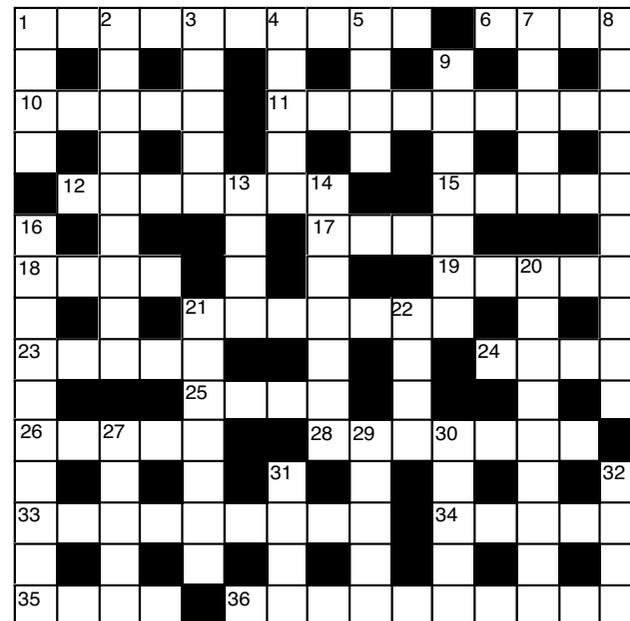
CHILDREN'S No. 335

Across – 1 Question 6 Oak 7 Ice-skating 9 Reed 11 Triangle
13 Less 15 Yesterday 18 Near 19 Cupboard 20 Joy 21 Steered

Down – 1 Quietly 2 Eyelids 3 Token 4 Out 5 Cage 6 One 8 Ireland
10 Destroys 12 Garbage 14 Eye 16 Erupt 17 Table

Crossword

Gordius 459



Across

- 1 The art of astronomical travel, or wherein you practise it? (10)
- 6 Beat with a whip (4)
- 10 With perfect timing, where the snooker chalk goes (2,3)
- 11 Perfume (9)
- 12 Accidentally came to ground in a strange arc in front of the outhouse (7)
- 15 Italian city that is shrouded in mystery (5)
- 17 Muse about these flightless birds (4)
- 18 A single thing - right? - will leave 15 across in turmoil (4)
- 19 The capital city of Ghana (5)
- 21 Identifying it as a target in bowls, Father and the cardinal get the bird (7)
- 23 Sudden thrust (5)
- 24 Give out and get your time back (4)
- 25 Blessed overheads! (4)
- 26 Volley of shots (5)
- 28 One who, more than likely, invested in a pyramid scheme! (7)
- 33 The balloon goes up with this price spiral (9)
- 34 Region in Spain famous for wine (5)
- 35 Flow copiously (4)
- 36 Sanctified commands are the making of a priest (4,6)

Down

- 1 Wintry precipitation (4)
- 2 The CIA cordon off this instrument (9)
- 3 Strangely enough, they're odds! (5)
- 4 Type of firearm (5)
- 5 Terror (4)
- 7 Just the ship to negotiate the turbulent Nile, right? (5)
- 8 Is it a political organization or a hooley on part of the golf course? (5,5)
- 9 Worry, having witnessed the cutter (7)
- 13 Ditch this for a comical reaction (2-2)
- 14 & 16 Doing the print run yourself may produce a bulged, pinkish spot (7,10)
- 20 Having only a fleeting part to play, one arrived with an alternative Spanish cheer (5,4)
- 21 The Christian God developed from Jove? Hah! (7)
- 22 The largest continent (4)
- 27 Elevators (5)
- 29 Extremes of humidity can be useful! (5)
- 30 Less common (5)
- 31 Behold, I'd get in at the Venetian beach (4)
- 32 Yes, in Germany cardinals have created a Spielberg movie (4)

Sudoku Corner

336

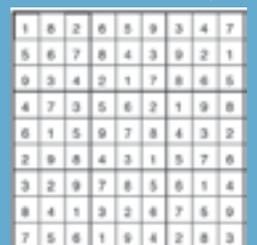
Easy



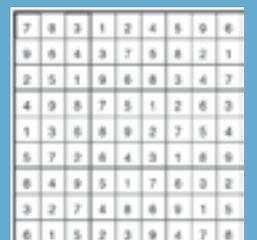
Hard



Last week's Easy 335



Last week's Hard 335





Notebook

Fr. Conor McDonough

Corpus Christi is a wonderful time to show unity

For some Irish Catholics, it's hard to think of Corpus Christi, the feast we celebrate this weekend, without getting nostalgic about the beauty of past celebrations, and even becoming resentful about the almost total absence of Eucharistic processions in the life of the Church today.

I never experienced Corpus Christi processions when I was growing up.

For me Eucharistic worship was always associated with the relative privacy of Church buildings, rather than the public spaces of towns and villages, where all eyes could see and all knees bend.

But from its foundation, until recently, the feast of Corpus Christi, at least in Catholic countries, did indeed have this public, corporate character. It was an opportunity to express a key point of Eucharistic doctrine: the Eucharist unites people. You might not like your neighbour, this neighbourhood might dislike that neighbourhood, but on Corpus Christi, all rivals might find a deeper unity in Christ.

Right from the beginning the link between Eucharist and unity was clear to the Church. Apart



from St Paul's powerful teaching in 1 Corinthians, we have the evidence too of the oldest surviving Eucharistic prayer, from a 1st-Century document called the *Didache*. There we find the celebrant praying over

the bread on the altar, about to become the Body of Christ: "Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills [i.e. as wheat], and was gathered together and became one, so let your Church be gathered

together from the ends of the earth into your Kingdom."

“It is at such a time that we need to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to peace and harmony within the Church”

And when St Ignatius of Antioch was being brought to Rome in chains early in the second century, his constant insistence in the letters he wrote to various Churches was that their Eucharistic celebrations be expressions of unity: "Take heed, then, to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to [show forth] the

unity of his blood; one altar; as there is one bishop, along with the presbyters and deacons."

In 21st-Century Ireland, we can no longer express Eucharistic unity by means of dramatic public processions, for the reason that a great many of our neighbours simply are not one with us in faith. But it is crucial that we don't allow our disappointment at post-Catholic Ireland to lead us to snipe at each other, to snipe at our priests and bishops, and to stir up disunity in the community of believers.

We may be smaller, our celebrations may be more private, but it is precisely at such a time that we need to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to peace and harmony within the Church, in everything we do and say.

Loving the Eucharist means loving unity.

Well that's one way of making your point!

One of the ways we visibly express the peace that comes to us from the altar is by offering to one another the sign of peace. We don't know when this sign will be restored to the liturgy, but it's worth noting that there was a slightly different way of expressing

this peace in the Middle Ages.

Typically, it involved the priest and congregation, one by one, kissing a round object called a *pax*, made of metal or ivory. As historian Eamon Duffy explains in his *Stripping of the Altars*, the *pax* was

often presented to people on the basis of social rank, which could sometimes cause tensions.

One Sunday in an Essex parish in 1522, a certain John Browne declared himself worthy of being given the *pax* first, and threatened the

sacristan with violence if he wasn't awarded this honour the following week.

Next Sunday he was still No.2 so, after devoutly kissing the *pax* he – rather less devoutly – broke the *pax* over the sacristan's head. Not exactly the spirit of Eucharistic unity...



Bishop Jaya Rao Polimera and members of Eluru Diocese, Andhra Pradesh, India, distribute aid packages to the poor.



YOUR GIFT WILL HELP PROVIDE FOOD FOR THE POOR AND MARGINALISED

Your gift can make a life-and-death difference for desperately poor families and for sick and needy people who are struggling in the midst of the present covid crisis. The Little Way Association has received many urgent appeals from Bishops, priests, sisters and missionaries asking for help for those in their care. Bishop Jaya Rao Polimera of Eluru, India, writes: "Hundreds of poor people lack food and other basic necessities because of the lockdown and urgently need assistance."

Families are battling against hunger

Heidi Caluori of Arco in Sao Paulo, Brazil, writes: "The people from the slums are the hardest hit by the virus. Not being able to work anymore means people do not receive a salary and have no money to buy food. Families are battling against hunger. We want to continue to distribute food to the people in the surrounding slums. We need your donations!" Sr Eileen Quirke of the Presentation Sisters in Quito, Ecuador, asks for help with: "...Basic Food Kits, and Home Medical Attention (initial visits, necessary examinations, followed by the prescribed medication) for elderly people who are isolating for the last two months in our poor villages."

Every cent that you send for our "hungry, sick and deprived" fund will go intact to those who look after the very poor

Mass is offered daily for all our supporters' intentions. Thank you so much for your prayers and your continued practical support.



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