

# The Irish Catholic

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## Irish bishops in talks with LGBT Catholics

EXCLUSIVE

Michael Kelly

A number of Irish bishops have engaged in a listening process with gay and lesbian Catholics as part of the synodal process, *The Irish Catholic* can reveal. It follows commitments from the organisers of the Irish synod – which aims to hear from diverse voices about the future direction of the Church – that what they describe as “hot button” issues would not be off the agenda.

The Vatican this week issued a letter from Pope Francis urging LGBT Catholics not to feel alienated or rejected by the Church, but continue to grow their relationship with God.

*The Irish Catholic* understands that a number of bishops have been engaging with LGBT individuals and groups in their own dioceses and have pledged to bring back the concerns in full to the bishops' conference in Maynooth to form part of the consultation findings that will eventually be sent to Rome.

One bishop who preferred not to be named told this newspaper that his outreach “is motivated by a consciousness that there are LGBT Catholics in our parishes and Church communities. We're kidding ourselves if we don't acknowledge this”.

He added: “The reality is that many of these people do feel marginalised in the Church, many of them do feel that some of the language that is used [by the Church] is less than helpful,” he said.

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From the hands of babes...



Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin is pictured with Fraya and Marie Murray and diocesan director for vocations Fr. Cian O'Sullivan at the launch of a diocesan prayer card to encourage vocations to the priesthood, May 7. Photo: Colm Loughheed. See page 6

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# When it comes to Catholic schools, the Alliance Party is far from moderate

**A**t a superficial level, the main takeaways from the assembly elections are:

- that a nationalist is now in-line to be the First Minister in a polity created to ensure a permanent unionist government;
- the SDLP received a terrible drubbing and that party is now on life support;
- the main winner is the 'centre ground' as manifested by the success of the Alliance Party which more than doubled its representation in the legislative chamber.

At a deeper level, largely (conveniently?) missed by mainstream media, is the impressive performance of Aontú in their first assembly elections. The pro-life party is a relative newcomer and can be pleased with polling more than 16,000 votes, even though it only stood candidates in 12 of the region's 18 assembly constituencies. A strong showing in places like West Belfast, Foyle and East Derry means that the party is well-placed to pick up some council seats. When one looks at the result in the context of a surge of nationalist support to Sinn Féin to secure the post of First Minister, it is even more impressive.

## Leader

A good day out for Aontú – party leader Peadar Tóibín and the candidates and party workers should all be very proud.

The focus on the Alliance Party has been relentlessly

positive – and it has been an impressive performance. The party has styled itself as centre-ground and moderate, and this has been lapped up as signalling some sort of 'new Northern Ireland' where the politics of green and orange don't matter and everyone will one day flock from extremes to a comfortable middle ground. But just how moderate is the Alliance Party and what might be in store?

**“A good day out for Aontú – party leader Peadar Tóibín and the candidates and party workers should all be very proud”**

Well, for starters – the Alliance Party is far from moderate when it comes to the rights of parents to choose a Catholic education for their children. During his time as Higher Education Minister the party's deputy leader Stephen Farry embarked on what could only be described as a crusade to close St Mary's University College in West Belfast which has educated generations of teachers for the Catholic sector. He threatened to remove

## Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



vital funding from the college which would in all likelihood have forced it to close. He was only thwarted in his ambition after the Executive collectively blocked the proposal.

The Alliance Party, as one might expect, are also enthusiastic supporters of integrated education. No harm in that, of course – parents who want to choose that form of education for their children should be facilitated to so do. But, Alliance have consistently stated their opposition to parental choice in education – integrated schools, they believe, should be prioritised. In fact, not long before the elections they championed a piece of legislation in the Assembly that now commits the Department for Education to spend more money on integrated schools than on either Catholic or so-called maintained (effectively state-controlled Protestant) schools. Catholic schools don't ask for special treatment, but nor do they expect to be excluded so that

other forms of education are given special treatment.

## Division

No-one, not even in the Alliance Party, believes that Catholic schools are the root cause of division in the North. But, Catholic schools have become an easy target – particularly because they have guarded their independence and often questioned the status quo on education.

On issues like abortion, Alliance in fairness views the issue as one of personal conscience. That being said, many of their representatives are amongst the most radical on that issue and others to do with gender.

We may be in for a bumpy ride – so be wary of the term moderate for a party that is, at least on some things, quite extreme.

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# Irish bishops in talks with LGBT Catholics

» Continued from Page 1

Another bishop told *The Irish Catholic* that it was something that the hierarchy is struggling with as a whole “And individual bishops have taken the lead to focus on hearing from people in their own dioceses about the issues that affect LGBT Catholics.

“Very often it is also parents and other family members that we are speaking to – people who love the Church and love their Faith and love their LGBT children.

“Some people feel rejected, or feel that members of their families are rejected – that feeling is real,” he said.

It is understood that at least some LGBT Catholics expressed reluctance when approached, questioning whether or not the process would go anywhere. However, *The Irish Catholic*

understands that they were satisfied when assured that their views would be taken seriously and fed back to the wider synodal process without editing or filtering.

The outreach comes as a letter was released by the Vatican this week from Pope Francis insisting that he wants LGBT Catholics to know that God is a father who “does not disown any of his children.”

The Pope was replying to a series of questions. Among them was: “What do you say to an LGBT Catholic who has experienced rejection from the Church?”

In his response, the Pope insisted: “I would have them recognise it not as the ‘rejection of the Church,’ but instead ‘of people in the Church’.

“The Church is mother and calls together all of her children”. A Church that is “selective,” or makes some

pretext about who is “pure,” he said, “is not the Holy Mother Church, but rather a sect.”

Asked what the most important thing LGBT people should know about God,

Pope Francis responded, “God is Father and he does not disown any of his children. And ‘the style’ of God is ‘closeness, mercy and tenderness.’ Along this path you will find God.”

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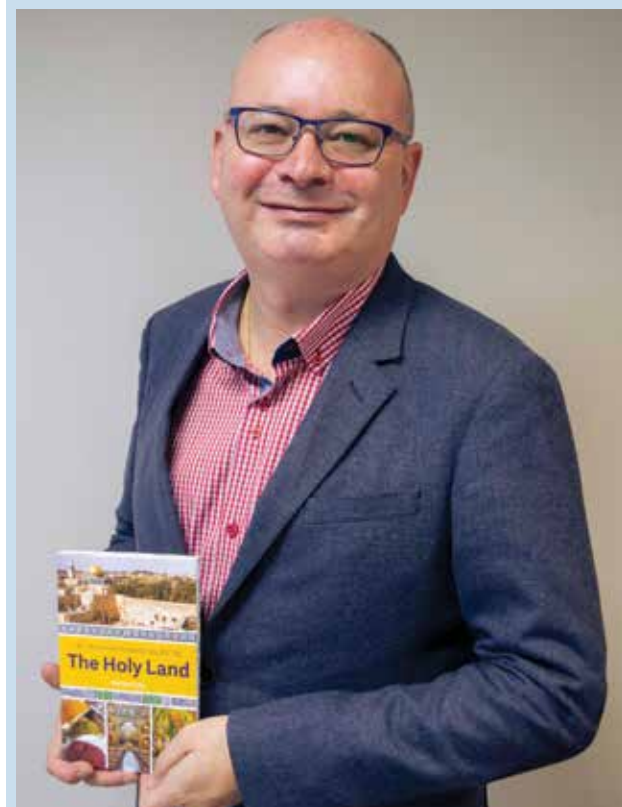


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# 'No doubt' SDLP's abortion position turned away voters, says Baroness O'Loan

Ruadhán Jones

Baroness Nuala O'Loan has said there is "no doubt" that many committed nationalist voters didn't vote for the SDLP because of their position on abortion.

Writing in this paper, Baroness O'Loan said the SDLP "can no longer be accurately described as a pro-life party" given the way its representatives voted on abortion-related bills in the North's assembly.

## Example

She also cited the example of SDLP assembly member Sinead McLaughlin who, two weeks before the election, said: "I'm sick of going round doors and listening to this never ending 'what's

your position and what's not your position around abortion'. Like, you know, seriously [it's] 2022, go and get a life."

**“People have had enough, they want candidates who have the courage to stand up on these important issues”**

"There can be no doubt that many committed nationalist SDLP voters did not vote for the party after these events," Baroness O'Loan said. "The SDLP can no longer be accurately described as a pro-life party."

She added that "Pro-life issues like the protection of unborn children do matter to many voters across the community".

Meanwhile, Tracey Harkin of the Iona Institute NI said it is obvious that voters have had enough of the "groupthink" of candidates regarding issues like abortion and religious education.

## Voters

"The SDLP have alienated so many voters, not just on the abortion issue, but also in the groupthink on issues like integrated education," Ms Harkin said.

"On the integrated education issue, there is total consensus other than from the DUP regarding what it would mean for faith-based schools."

Ms Harkin added that pro-life voters are "sick of the cowardice" shown by politicians in their position on abortion.

"A real groupthink set in, and voters are sick of the lack of intelligence and cowardice politicians showed," she said.

"SDLP candidates would claim to be pro-life, but they have a platform, they could have spoken against the party leadership on these issues."

Pointing to the success of pro-life party Aontú, Ms Harkin said that "I think people have had enough, they want candidates who have the courage to stand up on these important issues".

# Election sees Aontú build base for future

Jason Osborne

Aontú candidates have praised their party's performance in the Northern Ireland Assembly election, saying that there's a "good, solid base" to work with going forward.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, East Derry candidate Gemma Brolly said that the party "dived in at the deep end" and that the public supported their efforts.

"Our performance has illustrated that we're not going anywhere, that we're here to stay, regardless of the effort to stamp us out, if you like, we're not going anywhere," Ms Brolly said.

Ms Brolly said that the prospect of a first nationalist First Minister meant it'd be difficult to overcome Sinn Féin this time around, but that voters will see Aontú's commitment to their principles in time.

"When people get past that euphoria, I think real life might start to set in again."

Aontú councillor for Ballyarnett on Derry City and Strabane District Council Emmet Doyle said at the moment, "for us, I do think it's about widening the base". He added that their commitment to the pro-life cause was to their strength in this election.

## Supported

"I think that's where a lot of the former SDLP vote came from. It's people who have always supported the party, but then so also on the basis of their stance on the right to life."

"There's no doubt that that's a spring to our bow, something that we won't compromise on. I think it's refreshing for voters to see that there's a political party out there that won't compromise on its core principles, because so many of the ones we do have, have done exactly that," he said.

# Madonna takes to Twitter seeking papal audience



Madonna. Photo: Ronald Woan, Wikimedia.

## Staff reporter

Tweeting May 4, pop music superstar Madonna asked Pope Francis if they could meet and discuss "important matters".

The famous singer took to Twitter to ask the Pope for an audience, writing:

"Hello @Pontifex Francis —I'm a good Catholic. I Swear! I mean I don't

Swear! It's been a few decades since my last confession. Would it be possible to meet up one day to discuss some important matters? I've been excommunicated 3 times. It doesn't seem fair. Sincerely Madonna"

Madonna has been the centre of Catholic controversy in the past, such as when she simulated a crucifixion during her Confessions tour in 2006.

Madonna's request has already garnered responses from a number of priests seeking to put her in touch with a priest in her area.

"I don't know if the Pope himself can meet with you, but I can find you a priest near where you are to help you. Just DM me if you need help or have questions," Fr Matthew Schneider LC tweeted.



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- Aristotle

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# Educationalist refutes non-religious teachers' study

Jason Osborne

A study that purported to show that non-religious teachers are hiding their beliefs out of fear it could affect their job prospects in schools with a religious ethos has been condemned as providing "no basis for advocating change to policy or to law" by a Catholic educationalist.

Leading theologian and professor at Mary Immaculate College, Fr Eamonn Conway told *The Irish Catholic* newspaper that the study's sample size was both too small and not rep-

resentative.

"The first problem was the size of the sample, that there were so few respondents that any results would be unreliable and findings would be unreliable, as is the case in regard to this research," Prof. Conway said, with only 15 teachers consulted across the island of Ireland.

"The second problem was the manner in which respondents were selected. The method used is called colloquially 'snowballing', whereby you find one respondent, and having shared his or her views, then he or she refers on to another respondent, very likely who will

have similar views."

Prof. Conway described the study as an "unreliable" way of trying to find out public opinion, and that it was more akin to a petition than an academic study.

The study "certainly does not provide the basis for advocating change to policy or to law," Prof. Conway said, adding that "we do have to take seriously the fact that people, both people of faith and people of no faith, find it difficult to be themselves in the school context".

"That is in nobody's interests, least of all that of the pupils because actually, teachers

teach who they are," he said.

Prof. Conway said that contrary to the study's findings, he is "increasingly" meeting people who find it difficult to express their faith in the workplace.

"I'm meeting people both in schools and in colleges, even in Catholic colleges, who find that it is difficult to express their faith or their religious identity and who feel it is time to stop being apologetic, without being in any way offensive, that nonetheless it's time to stop being apologetic about their faith and their religious practice."

## A deacon for Derry



Deacon Michael McCaul (centre, left) is pictured with his family after being ordained to the diaconate by Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown (centre, right) last weekend.

## Listen to God above 'screaming' voices of media, says Bishop Cullinan

Ruadhán Jones

Speaking on Vocations Sunday, Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan warned that "screaming" voices in the media can draw us away from God.

Bishop Cullinan, chairman of the council for vocations in the Irish bishops' conference, said that "the only voice that really matters, is the voice of God" in his homily during Mass for vocations Sunday, May 8.

"Every day there are many

voices which claim our attention, screaming at us from all kinds of electronic devices and media outlets," Dr Cullinan said.

"Voices which can draw us away from good, from beauty, from what is true.

"But the only voice that really matters, is the voice of God, the voice of the Lord Jesus who whispers to us, who tell us I am the way. I know your deepest longings."

The bishop of Waterford and Lismore also referenced

emails he received from a bishop in Western Ukraine, Bishop Komar, who has "in the midst of dreadful suffering and chaos seen the things that really last".

"As we pray for the people of Ukraine and my brother bishop there and all of his priests, who are staying with their people, all the priests in our own country who have been with their people in this pandemic, let us pray also that we will stay with the Lord," Bishop Cullinan concluded.

## Study debunks claims for EAS legalisation

Staff reporter

A recent peer-reviewed study has debunked claims that legalising euthanasia or assisted suicide (EAS) leads to fewer non-assisted suicides.

Director of the UK's Anscombe Bioethics Centre David Jones said that their study, *Euthanasia, Assisted Suicide, and Suicide Rates in Europe*, has shown that current European data reveals a "consistent association" with increased suicide rates relative to countries without euthanasia or assisted suicide.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper,

Prof. Jones said that the study's main finding is that "in relation to suicide prevention, there's no benefit or evidence of any benefits of introducing euthanasia or assisted suicide".

"There's an argument people have put forward that [legalising] euthanasia or assisted suicide could be beneficial for people who might otherwise attempt suicide, but that's not what we actually found. In fact, we found sometimes the opposite, that suicide rates either they stay the same or sometimes they went up," Prof. Jones said.

See page 18.

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## FREE ADMISSION



# Michelle O'Neill and her teenage pregnancy

I wouldn't have voted for Sinn Féin in the Stormont elections and in general I am not an admirer of the party as it is presently constituted. It has changed a lot since my Galwegian maternal grandmother, Mary Conroy, joined it in the early days, soon after 1905 – supportive of its agenda of Irish cultural patriotism, abstinence from alcohol, wholesome outdoor pursuits and high moral thinking reflecting the ideals of the Catholic Faith.

However, on a personal level, the northern Sinn Féin leader Michelle O'Neill must be said to be a positive role model in one respect: she has shown that to be an unmarried mother at the age of 16 is not necessarily a calamity for a young woman. Ms O'Neill had her baby, sat her GCSE exams, and later married her daughter's father, Paddy O'Neill (though they



Mary Kenny

separated after 20 years of marriage).

She has said that "everybody around me was very supportive". Her form teacher at St Patrick's Academy in Dungannon – a Catholic grammar school – was especially kind and helpful as Michelle sat her exams. Michelle's mother Kathleen quit work to help look after baby Saoirse, who is now 28 and recently married herself. And Michelle was thus able to go on to do her A levels.

Few parents would think it is actually desirable for a teenager of 16 to be pregnant out of wedlock, or even, perhaps within it. But the view that it is absolutely disastrous, and that

a young girl's life is 'ruined' by pregnancy and early motherhood has been disproved by Michelle O'Neill's subsequent career success.

Interestingly, the deputy leader of the British Labour Party, Angela Rayner, had a similar experience – she had her first child at 16 (and is now a grandmother at 42). Her middle son was born at 23 weeks' pregnancy.

Although Michelle O'Neill and Angela Rayner have sided with abortion rights, nevertheless, by their living example, they have demonstrated that a schoolgirl can continue a pregnancy and go on to further education – and get to the top in their political field, too.

## Revising Roe vs Wade

The American Supreme Court's probable revision of Roe versus Wade has been lamentably badly reported in the mainstream media, it seems to me. As soon as the report was leaked, there was a wave of angry reaction to any revision: and misinformation too.

It was widely claimed that Roe v Wade had "legalised abortion" in the United States. But abortion was practiced in several States before 1973, as anyone who has read Dr Bernard Nathanson's arresting book *Aborting America* knows. He describes abortions in New York, in the 1960s, at eight months' pregnancy: he became sickened by the practice.

Roe v Wade didn't 'legalise' abortion – it interpreted the US Constitution as guaranteeing a right to privacy, implying a federal right to the termination of pregnancy. Incidentally, the judges who delivered Roe v Wade were seven white men with an average age of 66.

This was judge-imposed law, which the British senior jurist Lord Sumption has long criticised as invalid: laws



A child takes part in a pro-life demonstration in Dallas in the US. Photo: CNS

should be passed by elected legislatures, not imposed by judges.

Returning law to the individual states may make for an uneven outcome, with some states having more restrictive laws and some more permissive ones. But perspective is needed: American law, in general, has been more liberal than most European law. For example, Mississippi, regarded as 'restrictive' is likely to set abortion limits at 15 weeks – that's later than most European legislation normally allows. Roe originally endorsed abortion up to 26 weeks' pregnancy, way

beyond what most countries consider acceptable.

Reversing Roe v Wade, if it happens, will steer the question towards a more democratic process: though pro-life advocates are aware that does not mean the end of abortion in America – even if rates have been falling.

Roe v Wade brought huge, world-wide publicity to the abortion issue. A dialogue that had previously been over contraception switched to a debate about abortion. Henceforth, other forms of fertility control were almost erased, and "choice" became code for one kind of choice only.

● An Oxford neuroscientist, Prof. Russell Foster, has recommended that – according to our body-clock – a spousal row in the morning can be perfectly healthy and normal. But couples should try to avoid quarrelling at night-time – adversarial conversations before bedtime are bad for stress hormones, and have a worse impact on relationships than morning arguments. I'm amused by these brand-new scientific research findings that produce discoveries which were long embedded in ancient wisdom. One of my mother's words of advice for a happy marriage was "Never let the sun go down on your anger", which was just a biblical version of "don't argue at night"!

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# European Parliament backs 'hostile' report on religious persecution

**Jason Osborne**

The European Parliament May 3 adopted a report on the persecution of religious minorities that has been denounced as "openly hostile towards religion" by human rights experts.

## Second-class rights

The report, *Persecution of minorities on the grounds of belief or religion*, was criticised by the Catholic Church, with the Com-

mission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) saying that the report treats the rights to freedom of religion, thought, conscience and life as "second-class rights".

Comece General Secretary Fr Manuel Enrique Barrios Prieto said May 3 that any attempt to undermine these rights through "abusive interpretations that unduly restrict their legitimate scope or to subject them to newly created and non-consensual 'so-called human rights,' includ-

ing abortion, constitute a serious violation of the international law that discredits the European Union before the international community and before millions of European citizens".

## Millions of religious

Fr Prieto added that the report will not be of any help "for millions of religious believers who are victims of persecution because of their faith", particularly vulnerable women and girls, "as their situation will

be obscured and rendered invisible by prioritising other political interests".

Christian legal group ADF International said that the original draft of the report mentioned the extent of the anti-Christian persecution around the world, but that the EP's Committee on Foreign Affairs made significant changes to the text.

"The persecution of Christians in the Middle East and Africa was omitted and all but one reference to Christians was deleted. The

report does include multiple references emphasizing protections for atheist, secular or humanist belief minorities," ADF International said.

ADF International criticised the report's tendency to paint the victims of religious persecution as aggressors, noting that the report condemns religions for their stance on marriage and the protection of life from conception until natural death, "which goes far beyond the scope of the report".

## EU govts should recognise unique role of churches, Irish inter-faith report says

**Ruadhán Jones**

An Irish inter-faith gathering has said EU governments should recognise the unique role churches and faith communities play in maintaining "the soul of Europe".

The comments come in a report submitted to the Conference on the Future of Europe,

based on a meeting between Irish churches and faith communities in Dublin City University.

## Participant

The 43-page report said that in the view of participants, which included Bishops Noel Treanor and Brendan Leahy, "churches, faith communities and inter-faith fora should play an increasingly

significant role in dialogue on public issues".

They called on public authorities in the EU to recognise the "pre-political" values that underpin democracy and highlighted the "valuable role" churches and faith communities play in generating and preserving these values.

"It is more necessary than ever for all European citizens to reflect

on our deepest values," the report says. "The 'soul of Europe' is to be discovered in action, in the dialogical relationship between high-level values and practical politics."

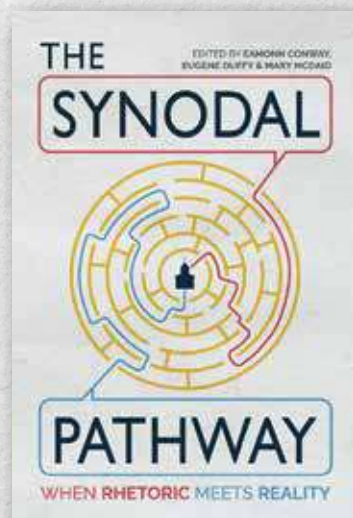
The report calls on public authorities to "engage with religious communities on the assumption that all sides want to strengthen the common good".

The report points out areas where churches and faith communities have a particular ability to aid public authorities, including housing and migration.

The Conference on the Future of Europe is an initiative launched by the European Union to help shape the medium-term future of the EU and is due to conclude mid-2022.

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## Everyone can help promote vocations to priesthood, says Bishop Gavin

**Staff reporter**

Bishop Fintan Gavin said that everyone can help promote vocations to the priesthood, as the diocese of Cork and Ross launched a fresh appeal for people to consider becoming priests.

Bishop Gavin launched a diocesan prayer card for vocations at St Joseph's Church, Glanmire, Co. Cork on Saturday May 7.

Speaking at the launch, the bishop of Cork and Ross said "we need to create a culture of encouragement and support for those con-

sidering a vocation to the priesthood in the diocese. Our prayer card and the knowledge that so many are praying for vocations will help to do this".

The cards are published by the Diocese of Cork and Ross in bookmark format and thousands of them

have been made available at churches across the diocese to mark Vocations Sunday.

The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Gavin, with Diocesan Director of Vocations Fr Cian O'Sullivan CC Ballincollig and Fr John Newman PP Glanmire concelebrating.

## Doon First Holy Communion



The boys from Doon CBS and the girls from Mercy Sister Convent NS who received their First Holy Communion on Saturday May 7 in St Patrick's Parish Church, Doon, are pictured with Fr Jim O'Connor, Shane Ryan, teacher, Fr Jimmy Donnelly PP and Elizabeth Doherty, teacher.



## Nuala O'Loan

### The View



# Committed nationalists left SDLP over abortion issue

Things are changing in Northern Ireland. Saturday's election results, in which Sinn Féin retained its 27 seats to become the largest party in the Assembly, and the Alliance Party more than doubled their seats from eight to 17, mark a significant moment in our history. However, it remains to be seen how significant that change really will be. Will Stormont be able, finally, to agree the changes required to give the North a functional health service, improved infrastructure, efficient and effective education services to name but a few of the areas where drastic positive change is required?

As always, things are not simple. The turnout in 2022 was 1.1% lower than in 2017 - 63.6% in 2022, compared with 64.78% in 2017.

The number of registered voters has increased dramatically - almost 120,000 extra voters have registered since 2017. This year there were 873,787 valid votes, some 70,000 up on the last election.

In 2022 the combined unionist first preference vote (DUP, UUP and TUV) was 346,180 and they have a combined 35 seats. The combined nationalist first preference vote (SF and SDLP) was 328,625. They, too, have 35 seats. Two further independent MLAs will probably designate as unionists, bringing that total to 37. It is not anticipated that any other independent will designate as nationalist.

There have been three major changes:

The Alliance Party with 116,681 votes - up 43,964 votes since 2017 - now has 17 seats. However, despite its considerable achievement, Alliance still has only some 13.5% of the first preference vote.

### Two seats

The DUP are only two seats behind Sinn Féin. Their number of first preference votes reduced by 41,000. The TUV on the other hand increased its first preference vote share from 20,523 to 65,788 - an increase of 45,265. This would appear to explain where many of the DUP voters and possibly even some UUP voters went. Yet Jim Allister of the TUV continues to be that party's only assembly member.

The SDLP had a disastrous election, going from 12 seats to eight and achieving nearly 18,000 fewer first preference votes than previously.

Many SDLP candidates, working their ways around the



Michelle O'Neill will be Sinn Féin's candidate for the post of First Minister.

doors were told that people would not be voting for them because of the SDLP's failure to uphold the traditional SDLP pro-life stance. Both SDLP MPs in Westminster, Colum Eastwood and Claire Hanna, voted for the new abortion regime in Northern Ireland in 2020. That legislation permits the abortion of babies up to birth if they have a disability such as Down's Syndrome, a cleft palate or a club foot, as well as permitting abortion up to 24 weeks where the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the mental or physical health of the pregnant mother.

**“There can be no doubt that many committed nationalist SDLP voters did not vote for the party after these events”**

In 2020 the Severe Foetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill was introduced by the DUP in the Assembly. It sought to remove access to abortion up to birth in case of severe foetal impairment. That bill was lost by two votes. Four of the 12 SDLP members did not vote for that Bill.

Finally, in March 2022 the Assembly voted to establish exclusion zones outside clinics providing abortion services, so that people would not be permitted to “influence a person seeking an abortion whether directly or indirectly.” To offer assistance to a pregnant woman in those circumstances is now a criminal offence. Only 13 of 6,412 submissions to the consultation on the proposal supported it. No SDLP assembly member voted against the Bill.

Two weeks before the election SDLP assembly member Sinead McLaughlin said “I’m sick of going round doors and listening to this never ending ‘what’s your position and what’s not your position around abortion.’ Like, you know, seriously [it’s] 2022, go and get a life.”

### No doubt

There can be no doubt that many committed nationalist SDLP voters did not vote for the party after these events. The SDLP can no longer be accurately described as a pro-life party. The DUP, however, is strongly pro-life. Pro-life issues like the protection of unborn children do matter to many voters across the community.

So, what will our future be? Current indications are that the DUP may go into government if the problems which they perceive around the NI Brexit Protocol, and in particular the issue of Northern Ireland continuing to be subject to EU free movement of goods law and the establishment of a border through the Irish Sea between Britain and Northern Ireland, can be resolved. That will be difficult.

In Northern Ireland, government is led by a First Minister - most recently Paul Givan of the DUP, and a deputy First Minister - most recently Michelle O'Neill of Sinn Féin. Ms O'Neill will become First Minister if an Executive is formed and the DUP will have to nominate for the deputy First Minister role. But, if the DUP does not nominate to the Executive of the Assembly within six months, then the British government have to call yet another election.

Will the DUP consider its options and decide to work to consolidate its vote again during those six months, to give unionists an opportunity to regain the office of First Minister, without ever serving under a Sinn Féin First Minister?

intends to bring about a united Ireland within five years. It is not within their gift, however.

**“It seems that there is a vital ongoing need for work for peace in Northern Ireland”**

Article 3 of the Irish Constitution says that “it is the firm will of the Irish Nation, in harmony and friendship, to unite all the people who share the territory of the island of Ireland in all the diversity of their identities and traditions, recognising that a united Ireland shall be brought about only by peaceful means with the consent of the majority of the people, democratically expressed in both jurisdictions in the island.”

The Good Friday Agreement says that the people of the island of Ireland may exercise their right of self-determination based on consent, freely

and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland subject to the principle of consent.

The results of this election show that Northern Ireland is still very divided.

The security situation continues to be a problem - statistics for the last 11 months show that in Northern Ireland there was one security related death, five bombing incidents, 21 shooting incidents, 36 paramilitary style assaults, 123 people were arrested under the Terrorism Act and 18 people were subsequently charged.

It seems that there is a vital ongoing need for work for peace in Northern Ireland. As we approach the 25th year since the Good Friday agreement, surely there must be some hope of progress which does not deny the rights of the unborn child, of those bereaved and traumatised by our Troubles, and of all our people who are unable to access proper public services.

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# A hospital deal that leaves no-one happy



The current deal between the State and St Vincent's for the National Maternity Hospital pleases no-one, writes **Ruadhán Jones**

**T**he Religious Sisters of Charity acted with the best of intentions when they offered a site worth €200 million for free to facilitate a new maternity hospital.

However, from the word go this deal proved controversial, with concerns about ownership and ethos. Follow-

ing the legalisation of abortion in 2018, this opposition grew, with the Government and the RSC on one side saying that all maternity care – as defined by the new law – will be available.

On the other were the opposition parties and the press, who saw at every step in the increasingly complex legal arrangement an attempt to sneak Catholic ethos in the back door. Now, a *Sunday Independent* poll suggests that two-thirds of Irish people are unhappy with the arrangement – 45% said they believed there would be religious influence in the medical services provided.

## Canon law

In part, this appears to be the result of the order's naivety regarding Canon law. They have no power to gift, lease or sell such a valuable piece of land without their local bishop's and the Vatican's approval. Ultimately this blew back in their face, allowing the media to spin it that the Vatican wants to 'impose' its ethos on a secular hospital.

As it is, the sisters have bent over backwards to accede to the demands, often relayed with hostility and no little anti-Catholic sentiment.

In doing so, they have given more than many Catholics would have wished.

The order has declared they will be in no way involved in the hospital, transferring their shares to the self-declared secular charity St Vincent's Holdings CLG. Abortion, IVF treatment and similar forms of maternity service that go against the Church's teaching will be provided on St Vincent's campus.

And yet this is not enough. The order's supposedly secretive dealings with the Vatican and the HSE are still cited as evidence of the Church's attempt to exert its 'oppressive' control over Irish healthcare.

The deal, it has to be said, is not at all clear. Legalistic definitions like "clinically appropriate" and "legally permissible" care, a phrase included in the constitution for the NMH, are seen as being open to interpretation. Also, the fact the State will not technically own the land or building of its own hospital is equally not ideal.

Nor is the possibility – and, in my view, the likelihood – that procedures that violate the morality of the Church will take place on the back of



An artist's impression of the national maternity hospital on St Vincent's campus.

a Vatican-approved deal. The issue is, there doesn't seem to be a way out.

## Gifting of the land

Had the Vatican barred the gifting of the land to stop medical procedures like abortion and IVF taking place, the likelihood is this would all have blown over. The Government would have had to look elsewhere, the sisters would have been left in peace. But that didn't happen.

The next option would

seem to be for St Vincent's to simply sell the land to the Government – but that won't happen, as St Vincent's fear it would lead to interference with the workings of the hospital already on site.

The Government could deploy a compulsory purchase order, but that shouldn't happen. To do so would violate the right to freedom of religion, a right recognised both at an Irish and an international level. The final option would be for either the

St Vincent's Holding Group or the Irish Government to back out of the deal.

But that seems unlikely to happen at this point, given that this would require a new site to be sought and purchased – and leave both parties with egg on their faces. It's a mess, a deal that suits no one and could have been avoided at several points along the way.

# We should take heart from reports from the US



It may take time, but Ireland's abortion law is not settled and the pendulum will swing again, writes **Killian Foley-Walsh**

**L**ike many who campaigned for the retention of Ireland's life-saving Eighth Amendment, the triumphal scenes that followed its repeal by a two-to-one margin nearly four years ago broke my heart. I looked on with dismay as ordinary people whooped and hollered at the creation of a new right to kill other people – their own flesh and blood – and I got angry when politicians who have since been turfed out by the electorate mocked the pro-life minority with talk of

the pain that the loss must have caused us.

The pain of having failed to protect our most vulnerable is definitely real, and many of us spent a long time wondering what more we could have done to convince more voters that abortion does actually kill. But that pain pales into insignificance compared to that of the 20,000 Irish children extinguished since the referendum without even the mercy of anesthetic, or that of the many mothers and fathers who so mortally regret the irreversible decisions they made.

## Anniversary

As Ireland approaches the gloomy and regrettable anniversary of May 25, though, burdened with desperate politicians falling over themselves and each other to liberalise the law and grow our abortion rate and industry even more, we should take hope from the United States. There, where the abortion question has purported to be settled for 49 years, their Supreme Court is reportedly poised to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and the 'right' to abortion that it sets out, which will allow individual states to change their existing laws to outlaw abortion if they see fit.

In short, where Ireland removed a constitutional ban on abortion permitting

legislation allowing abortion in 2018, the United States is about to remove a constitutional guarantee of access to abortion which will permit local bans.

**“It feels optimistic to believe that they will fail and Irish law will get better for the unborn before it gets worse”**

This should serve as a rallying call for anybody who labours under the misapprehension that Ireland's abortion law has been settled once and for all. Aside from the fact that if that principle ever ought to have been applied, it ought to have been applied in 1983, developments in the US go to show that public and expert opinions change. Whether based on advancements in medical knowledge, or horror at the brutal, discriminatory nature of the abortion industry and the 63.5 million American lives it has taken, or any other reason, minds and personal morals change, and the law changes with them.

It's particularly important to appreciate this in Ireland



where the few legal chances still afforded to the unborn are under constant attack. The three-day waiting period that gives some mothers the room they need to really think out their decision, the 12 week limit that prevents abortions up to birth, and the legality of the occurrence of prayerful gatherings in specific public areas are just some of the meagre rights under fire from a small but relentless handful of gobby fanatics in Leinster House, using the so-called abortion review to break the promises they made to the

people in 2018.

It feels optimistic to believe that they will fail and Irish law will get better for the unborn before it gets worse. As much as anything else, coups like this are easier in America's dynamic democracy, where debate is open and continuous, and where the system can change beyond recognition in the space of a few short months or years based on the side of the bed the people wake up on one quadrennial November Tuesday. By contrast, the non-Newtonian Irish system

runs like treacle, where every incremental change requires drawn-out hand-to-hand combat with the comfortable forces of our landed civil service.

## Developments

Notwithstanding the years of graft ahead of us, though, developments in Washington have renewed my hope that Ireland's pendulum will eventually swing back as it seems to be beginning to elsewhere, and it will bring the long moral arc of the universe with it.



# Accord Newbridge celebrates 50 years supporting marriage



Fr Denis Harrington, Ms Kay Dunne, Francis Monahan, Bishop Denis Nulty, Mary Johnston, Anne Halpin and Fr Joe McDermott are pictured at the gathering, May 6.



Newest Accord Newbridge members Kay Dunne (left) and Anne Halpin (centre) with Bishop Denis Nulty.

### Ruadhán Jones

Current and former members of Accord Newbridge gathered to celebrate 50 years supporting marriages and relationships in the parish and wider area.

Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin and President of Accord Catholic marriage care Denis Nulty celebrated Mass to mark the event, May 6.

Bishop Nulty congratulated the members “on their commit-

ment, dedication and their valuable and important contribution to the quality of relationships and family life”.

Accord Newbridge was established in 1972 when then-Bishop Lennon of Kildare and Leighlin requested Fr Denis Harrington, Newbridge Parish, to set up an Accord centre in Newbridge.

Fr Harrington, the centre’s first priest director in 1972, and the current priest director Fr Joe McDermott were both present at the gathering.



Fr Denis Harrington, the first priest director of Accord, with Bishop Denis Nulty, president of Accord.



Former priest director of Accord Newbridge Fr Denis Harrington, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty and current priest director of Accord Newbridge Fr Joe McDermott.



Accord members take a trip down memory lane, looking at old photos.



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# God matters, humans matter... But does theology matter?



Christian theology is an exploration of what it means to be human, and to live humanly in this world, writes **Dr Fáinche Ryan**

**‘T**op MP resigns for watching pornography in the Commons’ was a newspaper headline late last month. Comments around the culture of sexism in the British parliament. On Irish radio a commentator stated that of course the MP had to resign; it was wrong to watch pornography in a public place. When asked if it was okay to access pornography in private, she responded – “yes, I suppose so, it’s legal.” As I heard this I wondered, does legal make right?

## View

This is a view any good student of theology would query. Does law, whether state law or ecclesial law make things ‘right’ or ‘true’? The study of theology is an invitation into developing what we might term a ‘subtle, flexible’ way of thinking truly, and thus acting rightly, in a complex world. The world we inhabit is enmeshed in what theologians have termed the interlocking complexity of evil, and which Church tradition has tried to explain in the language of ‘original sin’.

Theology, Christian theology, is an exploration of what it means to be human, and to live humanly in this world at once “charged with the grandeur of God” (Gerard Manley Hopkins), and yet tainted by violence and evil – in theological language, sin. It is within this world that the theologian is tasked to take a ‘God’s eye’ view of the world, and to consider questions of human flourishing, from within a story of crucifixion and resurrection. The task of theology is to interrogate practices of human living, from the perspective of the Creator God, and to suggest the best Christian response in every new today. As former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams notes, theology “can offer resources for an ethic and for an anthropology with some ability to liberate us from the manifestly self-destructive spirals of human interaction”. Any good reading of 2000 years of the Christian



The *Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo which forms part of the Sistine Chapel’s ceiling.

tradition will show how laws, regulations, traditions, are continuously evolving: “The Church is continually changing and adapting... This is how the Church actually is: never static, but continually responding to a changing cultural context.” (Archbishop Dermot Farrell)

**“The Loyola Institute was set up in a university and is a sign of belief that theology is not just for the seminarian or the religious education teacher”**

That God matters, most Christians agree. But that theology matters is debated. Focusing on the Catholic Christian tradition it is clear that for centuries theology has been regarded as a necessary requirement for priestly ordination, in Ireland taught only in our seminaries. In the aftermath of Vatican II (1962-1965) changes occurred – St Patrick’s College, Maynooth invited students other than seminarians to study theology, and the Mater Dei Institute of Education (1966-2016) was set up for the training and formation for teachers of religion. In time other institutions included the study of theology in their various degrees. The Loyola Institute has been part of Trinity College Dublin since 2012

because eight religious congregations believed that yes, theology does matter – the Augustinians, Carmelites, Columbans, Jesuits, Loreto Sisters, Marists, Oblates, and Society of African Missions all believed that God still matters, God remains important in the world of the 21st Century. The postmodern post-truth world is not a post God world – but it matters greatly how God is spoken of. That we might speak well of God, pray well to God, live well in accordance with the love God has for us, is why theology matters.

The Loyola Institute was set up in a university and is a sign of belief that theology is not just for the seminarian or the religious education teacher. It is important that there be a wider cohort of people who are theologically literate. That theology matters is an argument that needs to be made both intra-ecclesial, in the Church, and extra-ecclesial, outside the Church, for society at large.

## Theology

Teaching theology in the university, albeit to a small number of students, has been an education. Comments such as “this is fascinating”, “I never knew theology was so relevant”, “but I thought the Church taught...” are a constant reminder of why it is important that theology is taught; while comments such as “gosh, my faith is really being shaken by this” is perhaps why Church leadership has not

generally engaged in theological formation. However, following in the footsteps of someone such as St Thomas Aquinas, we see how in his *Summa theologiae* he advocates that in the study of theology we must ask questions, we must listen respectfully to other views and engage seriously with them. Aquinas paid the most careful attention to Sacred Scripture, then to St Augustine and other early writers, to Islamic thinkers and to the new translations of the Aristotelian texts around at his time. He was interdisciplinary before the term was invented!

Theologians today must do the same: engage with developments in science, in knowledge, in technology, with respect and intelligence, seeking the best way to be in this world.

**“The first learning for the theologian is to recognise that we can never get God ‘right’, in the sense of fitting God into any of our categories”**

The theologian Julian of Norwich was a great Trinitarian theologian. She helps us to speak well of God. Her work brings us deeper into the mystery of the God of Jesus Christ. She speaks of God as mother, while fully aware that to limit God-speak

to ‘mother’ is as damaging as limiting the God prayed to in the Our Father to ‘father’. God is God. God is Trinitarian. God is mystery. To speak of this mystery, and to pray to this mystery, Julian teaches that it is necessary to use the tool of human language, always aware that to speak of God as father, or mother, or rock, or to use any other of the rich symbols we find in Sacred Scripture is only to stretch toward God. The first learning for the theologian is to recognise that we can never get God ‘right’, in the sense of fitting God into any of our categories. Words crack to breaking point when it comes to God-speak, but that we continue to strain to speak of God is important. This deepened knowledge of language about God can help to tackle the sexism in our Church, and in our society.

## Influence society

That theologians are part of the conversation in seeking to interpret, and influence society, is an argument that will be made at the Festival of Theology marking 10 years of the Loyola Institute in Trinity College Dublin. The Festival will open at 6pm on Thursday May 19 with a public lecture by the inaugural Director, Prof. Cornelius Casey, entitled ‘Theology in a Conversation about Hope’. Further details see [www.tcd.ie/loyola-institute/](http://www.tcd.ie/loyola-institute/)



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# Catholic ethos in hospitals is something to be proud of

No organisation in history has made a more systematic or bigger contribution to healthcare worldwide than the Catholic Church, writes **David Quinn**

**I**n the row about the future of the National Maternity Hospital (NMH), Catholic healthcare has been unfairly demonised. The spectre has been raised that the Church will somehow exercise influence over the new NMH if and when it is relocated from its current location at Holles Street in Dublin to the St Vincent's hospital site in south Dublin.

Dire warnings have been issued about 'religious interference'. In particular, the public have been invited to be wary of the influence of nuns who are presented almost as the enemy of good healthcare for women.

When people think of Catholic healthcare now, they are quite likely to conjure up images of mother and baby homes, Magdalene laundries and dying women being denied potentially life-saving abortions.

But the truth of the matter is that no organisation in history has made a more systematic or bigger contribution to healthcare worldwide than the Catholic Church, and especially the female religious orders.

The number of lives saved by Catholic hospitals down the centuries is literally incalculable, and some of the worst critics of the Church today might well be alive because a nun nursed one of their ancestors back to health.

**“In many societies, the sick were looked after by their families, using traditional medicine”**

People imagine that hospitals are something that arise naturally over the course of history and once a society develops to a certain point, you will find them there. This is not true. To a large extent, hospitals as we know them are a Christian invention.

While it is true that hospitals were founded in ancient India, that the sick were occasionally cared for at certain Greek temples, and the Romans had hospitals for injured soldiers, very little was being done in a truly systematic way until the Emperor Constantine formally recognised Christianity in the fourth century.

Once he did this, Catholic religious orders set about caring for the sick and dying in a largescale way, often led by the Benedictines.



Children at a protest in Dublin about the proposed new National Maternity Hospital (NMH). Photo: CNS

They were putting the teachings of Christ into practice. As the *Encyclopedia Britannica* puts it: “Until [Christianity was recognised] disease had isolated the sufferer from the community. The Christian tradition emphasised the close relationship of the sufferer to the members of the community, upon whom rested the obligation for care. Illness thus became a matter for the Christian church.”

This practice continued on through the early centuries, into the Middle Ages and beyond. When Christianity began to spread in a major way beyond Europe and the Middle East from the 16th century on, hospitals followed.

## First hospitals

For instance, the first hospitals in the sense we know them today were founded in India, an ancient civilisation, in the 18th century (by Protestants). It was the same in China in the 19th century when Catholic and Protestant missionaries began to arrive in large numbers.

It is striking that the first hospital in Wuhan (the city where Covid-19 was discovered) was founded by a Franciscan in the late 19th century even though the city was hundreds of years old at this stage.

In many societies, the sick were looked after by their families, using traditional medicine.

The critics of Catholic healthcare seem totally unaware that Western healthcare systems are built on Christian foundations. They seem equally unaware that healthcare systems as we know them today arose from a Christian vision and the obligation Christ placed on his followers to look after the sick and dying.

## Supply

Religious orders were instrumental in the foundation of hospitals because they had a ready-made supply of members who dedicated their lives to caring for the sick and had taken vows of poverty, chastity and obedience meaning they were not interested in making money, had no family of their own to care for, and were obedient to the task in front of them. Such a supply of people is not easy to replace.

To this day, Catholic organisations are running more than 5,000 hospitals and 16,000 health clinics worldwide, mainly in developing countries. These look after millions of people each year who would often have nowhere else to turn and could not afford to pay for healthcare without the Church's vision of caring for the poor (something mainly taken over by the State in Western countries).

We are all painfully aware of the scandals that took place in Catholic institutions, but these can no more be permitted to obliterate the positive legacy of Catholic healthcare than scandals in the medical profession, which are many, should be allowed to destroy the reputation of all doctors.

In the 20th century, many doctors were enthusiastic participants in forced eugenics programmes, some took part in abhorrent medical experiments, and the mental hospitals were rife with abuses and scandals.

**“The Christian tradition emphasised the close relationship of the sufferer to the members of the community, upon whom rested the obligation for care”**

Aside from the scandals, one reason Catholic healthcare has developed a bad reputation in some quarters is because of its attitude towards 'reproductive health'. The Church is, of course, opposed to abortion, elective sterilisation

(meaning there is no medical reason for it), IVF and so-called 'gender confirmation' surgery.

## No explanation

The Church's reason for opposing abortion needs no further explanation here. It is against IVF partly because the process creates 'surplus' embryos which often end up being destroyed.

In addition, the Church believes that there must be a good medical reason for operating on healthy body parts. This explains why it is against removing the wombs of women who say they are men.

Needless to say, it is also against assisted suicide.

Put together, this ethos means that a Catholic hospital will never deliberately end the life of a patient (whether the unborn or the very sick and dying), and will not perform procedures that have no proper medical justification.

On the other hand, a hospital that is pro-choice will perform abortions, will carry out assisted suicide (if and when they become legal here), and will also remove or disable healthy body parts for no good medical reason. It is not immediately clear why any of this is morally superior to the Catholic vision of healthcare. Quite the contrary.

And yet we are living through a time when Catholic healthcare is being mercilessly and unfairly demonised. Yes, terrible things happened in some Catholic institutions, but at the same time the Catholic contribution to healthcare has been huge and overwhelmingly positive for the most part. It is time this was acknowledged.

**“The number of lives saved by Catholic hospitals down the centuries is literally incalculable”**



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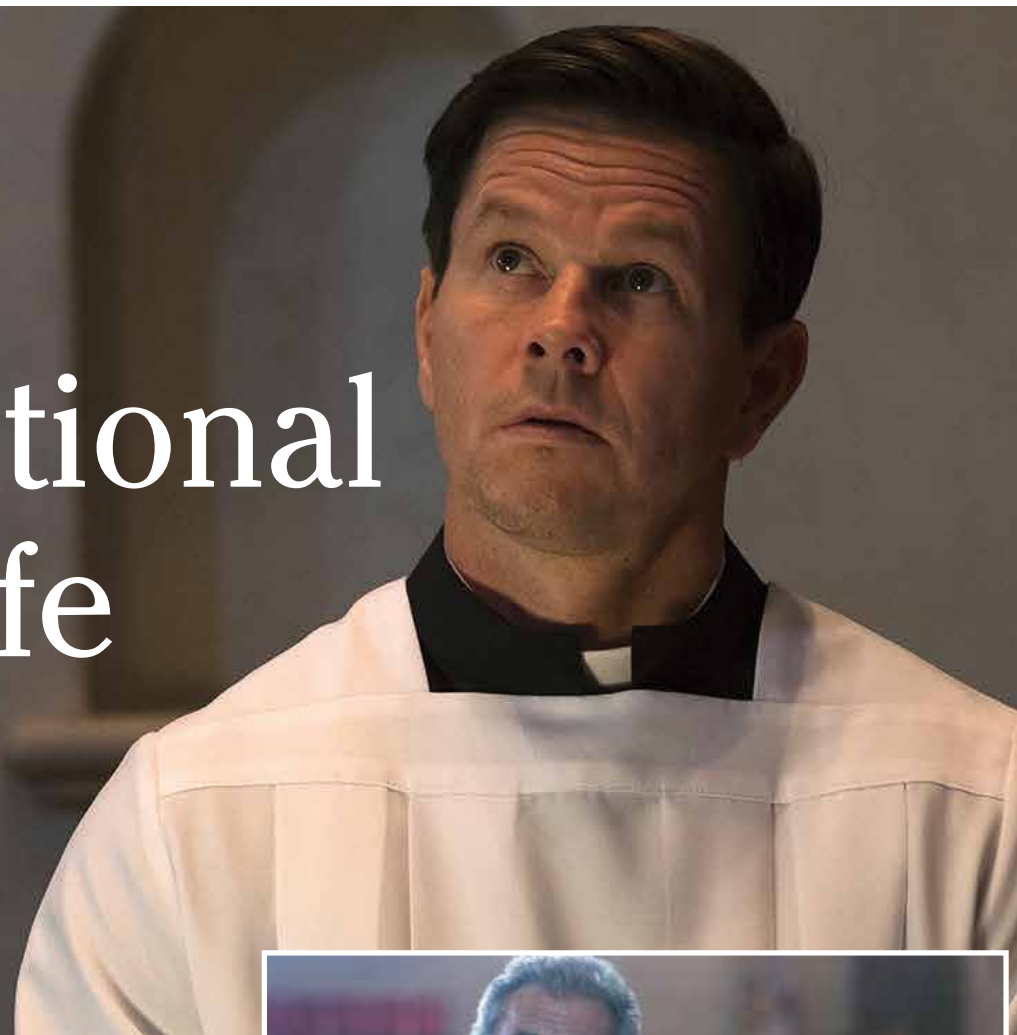
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# Father Stu – an unconventional Hollywood life

Mark Wahlberg stars as Stuart Long, the amateur-boxer turned priest, in Columbia Pictures' *Father Stu*, released in cinemas across Ireland May 13. Photos: © 2022 CTMG, Inc.



Mark Wahlberg's heartfelt faith-drama has a genuine Catholic spirit, writes **Ruadhán Jones**

**H**ollywood loves a redemption story, the down-and-out who scales great heights from nowhere. Think *Rocky*; think *Cool Runnings*; and now, think *Father Stu* (2022, dir. Rosalind Ross).

But while the life of a wannabe amateur boxer who goes to Hollywood seems ready to follow typical lines, it breaks off and becomes something else – a conversion story and a vocation story. It is a conventional Hollywood biopic, but about an unconventional Hollywood life.

**“I knew very little about Fr Stu before watching the film and am loath to give away too much in this review”**

Inflected throughout with a hearty good humour, *Father Stu* avoids the obvious pitfalls of a faith-drama, the saccharine sentimentality that substitutes for true faith. Instead, with Mark Wahlberg's distinctive motor-mouth charm, we get a strong sense of a life lived fully before being consummated in the love of God. It balances Fr Stu's liveliness and his faithfulness.

The passion-project of American actor and Catholic Mark Wahlberg, *Father Stu* is “based on a true

story”, that of Fr Stuart Long. When an injury ends his amateur boxing career, Stuart (played by Mark Wahlberg) moves to Los Angeles dreaming of stardom.

While scraping by as a supermarket clerk, he meets Carmen (Teresa Ruiz), a Catholic Sunday school teacher who seems immune to his bad-boy charm. Determined to win her over, he starts going to Mass and agrees to be initiated into the Church.

But surviving a terrible motorcycle accident leaves him wondering if he can use his second chance to help others find their way, leading to the surprising realisation that he is meant to be a Catholic priest. Despite a devastating health crisis and the scepticism of Church officials and his estranged parents (Mel Gibson and Jacki Weaver), ‘Stu’ pursues his vocation with courage and compassion, inspiring not only those closest to him but countless others along the way.

I knew very little about Fr Stu before watching the film and am loath to give away too much in this review. While dressed up somewhat for Hollywood, it is still a film that twists unexpectedly by remaining true to facts of Fr Stu's life.

And he led an eventful one. Perhaps surprisingly, that can make it difficult to bring a story to life on screen. The art of the biopic is to sift for the story that can be contained in two hours, and in Fr Stu's case it's

complicated by the presence of God in his life.

The first hour focuses on Long's life before conversion, beginning as his amateur boxing career ends. Career is perhaps a glamorous name for it – unable to attract any sponsorship and suffering from infections after each bout, it takes a degree of blindness on Long's part to have kept at it.

But he is a dreamer, who goes about his life in the expectation that the good times are just around the corner. He doesn't settle for anything less than the biggest and the best, and so out of job, he cooks up the idea of heading to Hollywood.

## Dream

As Long flits from dream to dream, the film rushes through this time, barely leaving a chance to catch your breath. From Montana to Hollywood and from movie studios to a parish church, he is like a child with a short attention span.

But God, like a fisherman with a catch, was gently twitching the thread to reel Long in. First through his chaste love of Carmen and then a motorcycle accident that nearly kills him, God draws Long's attention to his undreamt desire to be a priest – and on this, Long's attention is finally concentrated.

By virtue of *Father Stu*'s jam-packed proceedings, my eyes were glued to the screen. While it doesn't always allow for subtle characterisations aside from Fr Stu, this is only a minor drawback in what is an action-film meets a faith-story. Don't go in expecting a meditative film (though it is surprisingly so) – go for fun, for enjoyment and for a reflection of genuine Catholic sentiment.

There are elements that will no doubt challenge those used to a gentler approach to faith films. It is rated as suitable for 15s and over in Ireland and, while never gratuitous, it doesn't



Mel Gibson plays Bill Long, the estranged father of Fr Stu in Columbia Pictures' *Father Stu*.

avoid the adult themes of addiction, violence and sexuality which characterise Fr Stuart's early life.

Nor does it hold back on his earthy style of ministry. He is determined to prove Church authorities wrong, as they fear his dissolute life is not the material of the priest. But the filmmakers contrast Wahlberg's true vocation to a more uptight, apparently ideal seminarian who, it turns out, is not called but forced into the priesthood by family circumstance.

**“It was Wahlberg who discovered the project in the unlikely setting of a dinner with two priests from his parish”**

And then, just when you think Fr Stu has made it, there comes another twist that adds an extra layer of depth to a well-told tale. Before becoming a priest, Stuart Long must reconcile with his estranged father – and only then can he become a priest.

The acting and direction across the board are of a high standard and no doubt the casting choices add a degree of personal resonance to the performances. Both Mark Wahlberg and Mel Gibson are men whose pasts are

somewhat scarred by misdemeanours – but both are men who have sought and believe in redemption.

It was Wahlberg who discovered the project in the unlikely setting of a dinner with two priests from his parish. “Father Ed keeps talking about this movie he wants to make with me,” Wahlberg said in an interview. “I’m thinking, you do your job and I’ll do mine. I wasn’t there to find the next script.”

But the story stuck with him – the Montana-born-and-raised former boxer was abrasive, hot-tempered and rough around the edges. He was brutally honest with everyone, delivering good news and bad with the same dispassionate directness. He seemed an unlikely candidate to provide the guidance and comfort of a priest under any circumstances.

“The more I heard about Stu, the more convinced I was that I had to get this movie made,” Wahlberg says. “I asked Ed to tell me the story again from the beginning, and from that point on it was my mission to produce the film.”

It took six years to come to fruition, but it was well worth the wait.

*Father Stu, produced by Columbia Pictures, is released in Irish cinemas Friday, May 13.*



# Mark Wahlberg – ‘I prayed for Fr Stu’s intercession’

Hollywood star **Mark Wahlberg** opens up on the story behind the priest’s biopic

## What surprised you the most about Stu’s journey to priesthood?

Mark Wahlberg: To say that Stu was rough around the edges is putting it mildly. He was beyond abrasive. People might use other ways and words to describe him, but even in the seminary, he challenged everything about it. His acceptance of his disease and his infirmity, the way his spirituality started to soar as his physicality started to deteriorate... the way those things brought him closer to God and made his mission that much clearer... I find it so inspiring. And for me, as an actor, you want those kinds of challenges.

You want to be able to find the kind of role that could define you, and I’ve always looked for roles that have some sort of personal connection for me, and this one obviously was not only personal to me, but also everything that Stu did in his life is challenging to me. I find him so inspiring in the courage that he had and the conviction that he had, his redemption story, my redemption story, and my commitment to continuing to grow and to be better.

This is a lifelong journey. My past has always been with me, and that’s not something that I shy away from because everybody has a past and everybody’s made mistakes, and I want to encourage people not to give up on themselves or others and to encourage people to be the best versions of themselves.

## Though Stuart became a man of God, his story is filled with colour and language you don’t often see in faith-based stories. Why was it important to keep these elements?

MW: Because it’s real. It’s how people talk. You know, people have had lots of difficulties and challenges. Stu was such a character. All the best stories – whether we put them in the movie or not – were the things that I was touched by, such as how he dealt with somebody who thought they were entitled because they were giving more money or contributing more to the church than somebody else, but in reality were giving from a very different place.

## Do you think his background was one of the reasons why he connected so deeply with everyday people?

MW: Absolutely. That was the advantage that he had. Many other people who were groomed to be



Mark Wahlberg stars as the eponymous hero of *Father Stu*.

in the seminary grew up protected and sheltered. Stu had so much real-life experience that he was able to articulate that. People understood that his authenticity came from that real-life experience. They knew that he was genuine, that he was an old soul, and that’s something that I also shared because I have so much real-life experience to be able to draw from in the characters that I play.

I think that’s why my performances in these movies that I’ve made in the past have resonated with people, and hopefully that’s why this one will resonate even more, because they know that I am trying to utilise all those things that I’ve been through in identifying with who Stu was and what he went through. I believe there were

so many similarities there that it will be that much more believable and honest in his depiction.

## Stu survives through something so traumatic and then is diagnosed with something awful. Was that one of the things that surprised you about his life, that he had to deal with two major crises?

MW: It surprised me but it also helped me to understand a little bit better how to approach these things. People often ask why these terrible things happen – Covid, disease, cancer,

mortality, all of these things. The way he handled it, the way he approached it, embraced it.

This was an opportunity for him to find his purpose, to atone for the mistakes that he made, to really embrace what was happening to him, to help other people deal with those same things that are ultimately inevitable. Even if you lived to 110 or 115 years old, life is short, you know. You can experience love and joy and happiness in things that you don’t ever want to end, and yet still have this hope and this opportunity.

That gives me hope and motivation and inspiration, and hopefully that will be the thing that people take away from this. That’s why it’s so important for people to experience this movie; because everybody is dealing with it in one form or another. And for us to encourage people, to say that it’s okay, that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and there is comfort and peace and ultimate joy and love again that doesn’t go away.

## It took several years for this story to come to life. How did it feel to finally see it on screen?

MW: The great thing is that I’ve always prayed for Stu’s intercession every step of the way. Should I push as hard as I can to get this movie made? Is this what I’m supposed to be doing? Is this what he would want? All those things. So he was still there to kinda remind me what I was doing and what

this moment was really about.

After seeing the movie for the first time, obviously, I was very emotional. I had been dealing with my own stuff and trying to really separate it, but you know, it was happening in real time as we were making the movie. So it was all very emotional.

## What is Fr Stu’s legacy?

MW: You know, we talked about Fr Stu’s legacy having accomplished his dream and touching so many people. And now, here it is, all these years later and it’s now going to continue with this movie and other ways that people tell his story... there’s a memoir coming out. People will continue to learn about Fr Stu. And hopefully his message will continue to grow because he was unwavering in what he committed to doing. So here we are, talking about Stu, and he’s got a smile on his face.

And he knows it’s not about him. It really isn’t. It’s about his work and his commitment and dedication and service to God. I know that’s what he wanted to do and that’s where he found his purpose. And so originally, you know, at one point the title of the movie was Stu, and I said it can’t be Stu.

It has to be Fr Stu. His legacy is defined by him becoming a priest and what he did in those four short years of being a priest that impacted so many people. He was in his community and in his congregation and in his parish in Montana and now his work hopefully will be seen all across the world.



Mark Wahlberg attends the *Father Stu* photo call at The London West Hollywood Hotel in West Hollywood, California, April 1, 2022. The film is released in Ireland Friday, May 13. Photo: CNS





# Mapping the way for Ukrainian refugees who fear for the future

Irish charity GOAL is working towards long term solutions as the damage done to Ukraine will echo far into the future, writes **Chai**

**R**ussia's invasion of Ukraine has continued far longer than many analysts expected, the war is in its third month and currently there is no end in sight.

Irish charity GOAL has been planning ahead, trying to anticipate issues before they arise. The charity is currently the only Irish aid agency registered to operate in Ukraine.

GOAL's Dr Georgina Jordan, Head of Emergency Response, spoke to *The Irish Catholic* from Lviv in western Ukraine – a city close to the Polish border. There are now more than three million Ukrainian refugees in Poland which has led to a huge response there, with Dr Jordan saying they are in discussion with some of their charity partners and local government authorities regarding what the situation will look like in a year's time.

She said: "People have been incredibly generous, the Irish public as usual have stood up, but the point is that we're all human, if this goes on for another year, people's attention will go elsewhere so this is one of my big concerns."

"All these millions of women in Poland, the benefits they get from the Polish government under the EU pro-



Grandmother Irina brought her daughter Svitlana, daughter in law Vira and granddaughters Alina and Maryna to safety in Poland from eastern Ukraine

tection mechanism – they're good given that they are refugees and they get healthcare – but they're not really enough to live off so this is what we need to be looking at and thinking about both in Poland and here in the west where I am because there is 200,000 IDPs [internally displaced persons] in Lviv."

**“People have been incredibly generous, the Irish public as usual have stood up”**

GOAL are also working closely with local government, helping support their structures, with Dr Jordan saying: "We're in later stages of negotiations with the Lviv city council because they are the people who are man-

aging this and we want to support existing systems or structures, and we've taken that stance from the outset because this is a developed country with educated people, so we're supporting local partners and we're now talking to a few people about where we would be best placed to fill a gap."

The Minister for Overseas Development Aid and the Diaspora, Colm Brophy, announced at the end of April an award of €2 million to four Irish-based international NGOs in support of their work on the ground in Ukraine, Poland and Moldova responding to the needs of those affected by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. GOAL received €500,000.

## Dedicated

The award was made from a dedicated civil society fund of €2 million put in place to enable Irish-based international NGOs to deliver humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries.

GOAL has teams regularly coming in and out of Ukraine. It's become clear that people who had the means to flee the war have already gone. They may have already had property abroad or went to live with friends or family.

"So basically the people who are left are the most vulnerable and that's probably one of the most worrying things about the entire situation," Dr Jordan explains,



IDP centre staff in Yavoriv, Ukraine in conversation with David Burns from GOAL. Photo: Allen Kiely

adding that they are continuing to provide life-saving aid to partners on the ground who are able to bring it east – where the fighting is heaviest and the humanitarian situation is dire.

**“It's become clear that people who had the means to flee the war have already gone”**

Speaking about the security situation in Lviv compared to the east, Dr Jordan says she is not concerned for her safety being there, adding: "The sirens are uncomfortable, they wake me up probably twice a night and

I'd have to run down to the basement, I'm sleeping in a tracksuit. The hotel could be hit but it's highly unlikely, the targets around Lviv have been military but these things do go wrong sometimes."

"I do think the situation in the east is very alarming and will remain so. Our priority now is to get immediate items in where we can, we want to do cash transfers so people have something in their bank accounts where the market is functioning. We're working with local partners to do market assessments to see where cash is feasible and if cash is not feasible, we're still sending in things, food items, non-food items, hygiene

kits, they are so needed in some areas. Here [Lviv] cash transfers would probably work for IDPs because the market is functioning here. So it's really area specific and then again in Poland it's a different approach," she says.

## Meetings

Before reaching Lviv, Dr Jordan was in Warsaw in meetings with local and international partners discussing the best actions to take that will be useful and impactful on the lives of refugees.

"Even if things stopped tomorrow, people just can't go home. People have started to return home to Kyiv but not everybody. It's needs to be a thoughtful approach



Refugees fleeing Ukraine.





Children playing at the Challenging Hope Centre, where some children have shown signs of post-traumatic stress.



Antin, from Lutsk, shows photos of his city being bombed. Photo: Allen Kiely

and that's why I'm meeting with a range of international and local actors in Warsaw, who are linked into the local authorities, saying 'can we put some thought into this now before we have to do it?' she says.

"GOAL was obviously brought to the table because we have humanitarian expertise, early recovery, livelihood, all of those things from all over the world, and different actors would have different parts of the puzzle. This will need to be worked out with the Polish authorities and the authorities here, what the market can support might be very different than it is in other parts of the world where you normally have emergency responses."

### Start up

"It's not like we're in South Sudan or Somalia where we just start up a livelihood programme, this is a developed country, how can we give them something they can do to get some income, get some shelter and some food, access to education," she says.

The need for this response is exacerbated due to the demands placed on Poland's housing sector, with a lack of housing on the market for rent.

**“Even if things stopped tomorrow, people just can't go home”**

Asked about some of her main concerns for the security of civilians in Ukraine, Dr Jordan emphasises the need to have a 'deconfliction mechanism', which would mean the coordinates of places such as hospitals are identified and not targeted.

There have been a myriad of reports of Russian bombs striking hospitals, theatres and more, which have led to a large number of civilian deaths.

Dr Jordan says: "The coordinates are shared so that no warring party will hit hospitals for example. Now I spent many years in northern Syria, deconfliction did not work in north-west Syria but I know they've been talking about it here but then again, the jury is out on that one."

GOAL aid delivery in Poland.



"In Syria, when I would get reports on the hits on the hospitals, it would say Russian/GOS [Government of Syria] warplanes. Nobody would know who it was unless you were standing under it and you knew about aeroplanes basically."

"I wouldn't like to say it was the Russians because I have no proof of that whatsoever but I would say the bigger thing is that if deconfliction can be applied here properly and it worked that would be great."

### Protection

She also mentions there are a lot of protection concerns they are working on, such as helping children with disabilities access the services they require and protecting women and children against trafficking at borders and beyond.

There is still much to be done to support those fleeing Ukraine and the people still trapped there, GOAL are tackling problems as they arise and working to foresee and address future crises.



Irina and her son, from Kyiv, had to leave with only one small bag on February 26 after the shelling of her suburb.



Katya (12) left Kyiv with her mother Nadia and grandfather. They're at an IDP centre in Yavoriv, Ukraine. Her brother and father stayed to be part of the reserve army. Photo: Allen Kiely



A desperate humanitarian crisis is growing in Ukraine as millions attempt to escape the conflict. GOAL has deployed emergency staff to the region to respond.

**GOALies are on the ground, working to help those worst affected by this emergency, but we urgently need your help.**

PLEASE, DONATE ONLINE AT [WWW.GOAL.IE](http://WWW.GOAL.IE) TODAY OR SEND DONATIONS TO:

**FREEPOST**  
Ukraine Emergency Appeal  
GOAL, Licence DN6084, PO Box 19, Dun Laoghaire, Co.Dublin



# Recent study undermines pro-EAS argument



There's no evidence that introducing euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide reduces incidences of suicide UK bioethicist David Jones tells **Jason Osborne**

A recent peer-reviewed study from the UK's Anscombe Bioethics Centre has debunked claims that legalising euthanasia or assisted suicide (EAS) leads to fewer non-assisted suicides.

Prof. David Jones, Director of the Anscombe Bioethics Centre, with this study has shown that current European data reveals a "consistent association" with increased suicide rates relative to countries without euthanasia or assisted suicide.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Prof. Jones said that the "key finding" of the study is that "in relation to suicide prevention, there's no benefit or evidence of any benefits of introducing euthanasia or assisted suicide".

**“Proportionately, I think of all of the countries that I looked at, there was a greater impact on women's suicide rates than on men's”**

"There's an argument people have put forward that [legalising] euthanasia or assisted suicide could be beneficial for people who might otherwise attempt suicide," Prof. Jones said, continuing, "but that's not what we actually found. In fact, we found sometimes the opposite, that suicide rates either they stay the same or sometimes they went up."

Euthanasia is the killing of a patient by their physician, generally at the patient's request, whereas assisted suicide describes the enabling of a patient to end their own life by prescribing them and supplying them with lethal drugs.

Advocates for the legalisation of both practices have argued that introducing them into medicine would reduce suicide rates, as people who would otherwise commit suicide will appreciate a greater



Demonstrators protest euthanasia in front of the parliament in Lisbon, Portugal, May 29, 2018. Photo CNS.

sense of control over their lives.

Using data from the OECD, which collects comparable health data from different countries including suicide rates per 100,000 people, as well as official euthanasia and assisted suicide figures from Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, Prof. Jones found in every case that the number of self-initiated deaths went up after introducing euthanasia or assisted suicide.

## Non-assisted suicide

The study also found that in some countries non-assisted suicide had gone down and, in other countries, they had gone up, but compared to neighbours that had not introduced euthanasia or assisted suicide the rate of non-assisted suicide never went down, staying the same or increasing.

"There's both a lesson and a challenge here. I mean, the lesson is legalising assisted suicide will not help in regards to people who are committing suicide, it will not help.

"The challenge is, well, what else should we do to help? How should we address this problem?....Why does someone who has [terminal] cancer commit suicide? In one way, you think they're going to die anyway, so why is it that people, even with terminal illness, are ending

their lives, and it's because they don't see living with their disease, they don't see the last phase of their life as something that they can find hope or meaning in," Prof. Jones said.

It's important to emphasise "that they can still find ways of interacting positively with their family and with society and so on," Prof. Jones said, and that the issue is about more than hospice care.

Asked about which demographics the legalisation of euthanasia and associated suicide most affect, Prof. Jones says it seems to be women.

"Proportionately, they affect women more, it seems. I think that may be because generally women have a lower suicide rate than men. Men generally have a higher suicide rate. Proportionately, I think of all of the countries that I looked at, there was a greater impact on women's

suicide rates than on men's," he said.

"It doesn't seem so much to affect young people. I think for young people it seems very distant from them, shall we say. I don't know,

that's speculative, but I didn't see an impact on young people. It was more people between middle aged and older people; you might say, 'younger, older people'. There tended to be more of an impact there."

One of the implications of these findings, Dr Jones says, is that it's clear suicide is not a problem for young people only, as it can sometimes be portrayed.

"The first thing to say is that it's important to realise that suicide is not just a problem – we think of it as a problem for young people, and it's very shocking when a young person dies by suicide – but suicide is also a real problem for older people, for isolated people, for people



Professor David Jones, Director of the Anscombe Bioethics Centre.

**“One of the implications of these findings, Dr Jones said, is that it's clear suicide is not a problem for young people only, as it can sometimes be portrayed”**

with illness.

"It's not a problem which will be solved by an assisted dying law or assisted suicide law. It's a problem that we need to think of, not in relation to helping them die more quickly, but in terms of how people can be given hope to live well when they're older and when they get sick. That's a challenge," Prof. Jones said.

**“It can be because of social isolation or it can be because they don't feel supported or sometimes because they feel that they're a burden, or they've been made to feel that they're a burden”**

When it comes to wanting to die well, Prof. Jones said, "people talk about palliative care and hospice care, and I completely agree that these are really important, but the issue of suicide is something which comes a bit earlier than that.

"It comes where people are making decisions about their life and maybe they've just got a diagnosis. They're looking ahead and they don't see hope in this final phase of their life. It can be because of social isolation or it can be because they don't feel supported or sometimes because they feel that they're a burden, or they've been made to feel that they're a burden. It's these kind of questions which we really need to address."



# Promote culture of encounter, Pope tells Belfast students

**Ruadhán Jones**

Pope Francis received in audience a group of students from the Catholic Chaplaincy at Queen's University in Belfast, encouraging them to cultivate the culture of encounter in their academic community.

Pope Francis encouraged the students to contribute "to building up Ireland's noble traditions of hospitality, reconciliation, fidelity to the Gospel and steadfastness in the pursuit of holiness".

"If we truly believe in Jesus, we must do what Jesus does: encounter others, encounter our neighbours, in order to share with them the saving truth of the Gospel,"

Pope Francis wrote in his prepared remarks.

"The Christian faith is fundamentally about an encounter with Jesus Christ."

He noted that building a culture of encounter in the service of God's kingdom is "personally demanding", but at the same time exciting, as "it allows us to weave a web of relationships which can make our lives together 'a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage'."

The students from QUB visited Rome as the Catholic chaplaincy marks its 50th anniversary at its iconic site in the heart of the Belfast college's campus.



The Catholic Chaplaincy at QUB are pictured with Pope Francis in the Apostolic Palace.



Marcella Walsh leads members of the QUB choir in song during their audience with the Pope.



The students got to meet the Pope individually, and he shared a laugh with them.



The Catholic Chaplaincy at QUB are pictured with Irish ambassador Derek Hannon at a reception at the Irish embassy in Rome.



Catholic chaplain from QUB Dominic McGrattan meets Pope Francis.



Students from the Catholic chaplaincy at QUB are pictured in St Peter's Square.



Pastoral manager Shannon Campbell meets Pope Francis.



# Irish troops mark Holy Week in the Middle East



## Staff reporter

**M**embers of the Irish Defence Forces stationed in Lebanon as part of a United Nations UNIFIL peacekeeping mission, led by their

chaplain Fr Piotr Delimat CF, joined with members of the Polish Armed Forces and their chaplain Fr Włodzimierz Skoczen - also participating in the mission - in a Way of the Cross Ceremony to mark Good Friday.





# Out&About

## Receiving Jesus joyfully



**KERRY:** Pictured are children from Rathmore Parish who received their First Holy Communion in St Joseph's Church in Rathmore, April 30. Photo: Seamus Healy.



**LIMERICK:** Recent Bene Merenti medal recipient Gerry Higgins is pictured with family members after the presentation of the medal at Holy Rosary Church, Ennis Road, May 1. Front Row: Gerry Higgins, Fr Des McAuliffe PP, Mary Alice Higgins, Gerry's wife and Gerald. Back Row: Declan, Eanna-Iseult, Isbeal, and Eadaoin. Sunday May 1 was also Gerry's 89 birthday.



**DUBLIN:** Chaplain to the Parish of the Travelling People Fr Paul O'Driscoll is pictured with members of the community at the RTE studio, where they celebrated Mass.

### IN SHORT

#### 1916 leaders a grain that produced 'great harvest' – Bishop Nash

The leaders of the 1916 rising were the grain that produced "a great harvest", Bishop Ger Nash said at the state commemoration service in Arbour Hill, May 4.

"Easter in Ireland is forever imbued with the memory of 1916," Bishop Nash said in his homily for the Annual 1916 Commemoration Requiem Mass at the Church of the Sacred Heart, the church for the Defence Forces and the site of burial of the executed leaders of 1916.

The Bishop of Ferns drew attention to the witness of priests who ministered to the sol-

diers and leaders.

"I name but one as representative of those attending priests and that is Fr Aloysius Travers, Capuchin, who has left testament that the leaders went to their deaths confident in the promise of their faith and the knowledge that they were dying for the glory of God and the honour of Ireland," Dr Nash said.

He continued, saying: "In the words of today's Gospel, they were the grain of wheat which produced a great harvest. Their place in history has in ways removed them from the ranks of ordinary people.

"And so, we gather here 106 years later to acknowledge their sacrifice, and, in the faith we share with them, to celebrate the Eucharist for the repose of their souls."

#### Trócaire artwork to portray 'irresponsible' big business

A group of Trócaire volunteers are going to create a unique textile to raise awareness of the irresponsible actions of some big businesses.

"Art can be a powerful tool" for positive social change, said Trócaire's advocacy and campaigns officer in Northern Ireland Jeanie Smith, launching the charity's 'Threads for Corporate Justice' project.

The project is aimed at supporting the development agency's Business and Human Rights campaign which calls for stronger corporate regulation to hold companies to account for human rights violations and envi-

ronmental harms.

Art "can shine a light on injustice or help us imagine a better world", said Ms Smith in a statement. "This exciting project aims to do just that"

Trócaire is part of a global campaign which calls for stronger corporate regulation. This includes urging Ireland and the UK to introduce a new law to hold Irish/UK companies to account for harming people and the planet, a step in ending corporate abuse.

The textile will be launched at a public event in Belfast in October and will tour around Ireland to encourage action to help ensure people and the planet are prioritised over profit.





**DUBLIN:** St Mary's Baldoye have announced Mace Baldoye as sponsor for their annual Sports Day which took place in Suttonians Rugby Club last Friday. Students and staff are pictured in front of Mace in Baldoye.



**DUBLIN:** Ceire Ferl Del Poso and Hannah Kaye Ricablanca of St Mary's Secondary School Baldoye are pictured with their Best Presentation Award, which they won in this year's Fingal Student Enterprise Programme Awards Final. They won for their mini company Totes4You.



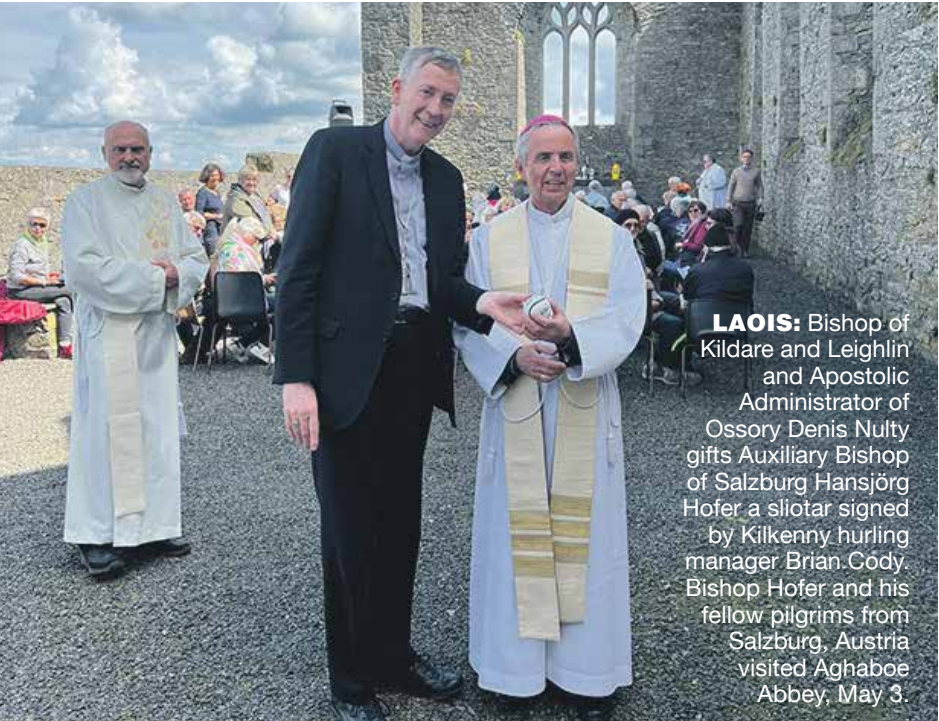
**DUBLIN:** St Mary's Baldoye won an award for the best social media posts in the Bank of Ireland sponsored regional Money Smarts Challenge final. Pictured are (back row): Mahnoor Khalfan, Margherita Satta Abbie Fitzpatrick and Alannah Larkin; (front row) Sophie King, Julia Palomares Rodriguez and Sveva Cutuli.



**DONEGAL:** Fr Pat Ward is pictured with the 15 children who made their First Holy Communion in the parish of Kincasslagh, April 30.



**MAYO:** The NET Ministries Ireland Mission and Letterkenny teams joined Fr Sean Crowley of Cork and young people in climbing Croagh Patrick recently.



**LAOIS:** Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin and Apostolic Administrator of Ossory Denis Nulty gifts Auxiliary Bishop of Salzburg Hansjörg Hofer a sliotar signed by Kilkenny hurling manager Brian Cody. Bishop Hofer and his fellow pilgrims from Salzburg, Austria visited Aghaboe Abbey, May 3.



**AUSTRIA:** Representatives from a number of Irish organisations attended the meeting of the European Council for Catholic Education in Vienna. Pictured are (from left) Bishop Wilhelm Krautwaschi, Dr Marie Griffin CEP Chair, Mr Paul Meany Director CEP, Archbishop Angelo Vincenzo Zani, Prof. Cora O'Farrell Director of the Mater Dei institute DCU, Cardinal Christoph Schonborn and Fr Paul Connell.



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



**ANTRIM:** A thanksgiving supper was held recently for the stewards of the Parish of Antrim for their dedication and service during the pandemic in St Comgalls and St Joseph's churches in Antrim town.



**KERRY:** Fifth and sixth class students of Knockanes NS were delighted to welcome Bro. Leopold, Bro. Aldin, Bro. Hawkins and Bro. Steven of the Franciscan Friary. They explored the meaning of a saint and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit through activities and chatting.



**LIMERICK:** Pupils from Scoil Iosagain CBS Primary School, Sexton St, who received the Sacrament of Confirmation recently in St Michael's Church, Denmark St. Fr Leo Mc Donald administered the Sacrament. The students are pictured with Denis Barry, School Principal and teachers, Eoin Crowley and Timmy Ryan.

## ANTRIM

Trócaire will be hosting a special Spring Gala Concert at Clonard Monastery, Belfast at 7.30pm, May 20, with performances from Margaret Keys, The Priests and St Dominic's Girls' School Choir. Tickets are free of charge but donations gratefully received on the night, with all donations matched by the UK government in support of the 2022 Lent Appeal. To reserve tickets, visit [www.eventbrite.co.uk](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk) and search 'Clonard Concert Belfast' or email [infoni@trocaire.org](mailto:infoni@trocaire.org).

## CAVAN

Legion of Mary Meetings continue on Tuesdays at 8pm in Cavan Cathedral along with Eucharistic Adoration at St Clare's Chapel 11am to 7pm daily.

## CLARE

Killaloe Diocese to Knock takes place May 22 led by Bishop Fintan Monahan. A bus will be organised by Noel O'Shea 087 2550155. Any questions Contact - Claire 065 6828638.

## CORK

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

## DERRY

The Little Way Novena in St Eugene's Cathedral – May 7 to May 15. The theme is "Remember that nothing is small in the eyes of God. Do all that you do with love". Monday to Friday (May 9 to 13) Novena Masses at 6.30am and 10am each morning and an evening service with a guest speaker at 7.30pm. Saturday, May 14, 10am Mass for the deceased. The Novena will close on Sunday, May 15 at 3pm.

## DOWN

Dromore Diocesan pilgrimage to Knock in conjunction with Armagh Archdiocese and the Knights of St Columbanus takes place on Sunday May 29. Coach travel and evening meal on return in Sligo, cost approx £32 (tbc). Please contact the parish office to book places.

## GALWAY

The Rosary will be recited at the Grotto behind Renmore

Church for the month of May at 7pm.

## KERRY

Rosary each evening for the month of May at 7pm at Tullig Grotto.

## KILDARE

Legion of Mary Kilcock welcomes new members. It meets in the parish office on Thursday evenings at 7.15pm. For more information, contact either John Tighe at 086 1568960 or Conor Hayes 086 3852781.

## KILKENNY

Our Lady of Fatima Novena in the Black Abbey Friday May 13 to Saturday May 21. Two sessions daily at 10am and 7pm and one on Sunday May 15 at 3pm. All welcome.

## LEITRIM

Annual Padre Pio Healing Mass in St Patrick's Church, Ballinamore, on Wednesday May 25 at 7pm. Celebrant: Fr Bryan Shortall OFM Cap. from Dublin and Manager of Irish Centre for Padre Pio, Pastor to St Francis's Church and Parish Dublin.

## LIMERICK

The Queen of the May concert will take place at St Joseph's Church, O'Connell Avenue on May 12 at 8pm. Tickets are available at the door and St Joseph's sacristy and are €15.

## DUBLIN

Meetings of Pure in Heart take place every Thursday at 7.00pm in 23 Merrion Square. Adoration, talks and social events. For Catholics 18-35.

## LONGFORD

Diocesan assembly will take place in St Mel's College on Saturday May 14 from 9am to 4pm.

## LOUTH

During the month of May, the rosary will be prayed daily at 4pm at Ladywell Shrine, Dundalk and at 7pm at Our Lady's Grotto, Blackrock, Co. Louth.

## MAYO

There will be a Rosary for Ireland and for peace in Belmullet Church at 7pm every evening for the month of May.

## MEATH

Rosary at the Grotto in the Chapel yard in Johnstown at 7pm every Sunday for the month of May.

## MONAGHAN

At 8pm each day in May the rosary will be prayed at St Pio's Grotto (Bully's Acre), junction of Cloughvalley and Donaghmoyne rd, Carrickmacross.

## OFFALY

St Mary's Church, Cloghan: During the month of May, the rosary will be recited on the five Sundays of May – 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29 at 7pm.

## ROSCOMMON

Rosary will be recited in St Coman's Cemetery at 4pm every Sunday during the month of May and at Our Lady's Grotto, Sacred Heart Church grounds on at 8pm every Wednesday in May.

## TIPPERARY

Two-hour vigil May 13 in the Tipperary Cathedral commencing with Rosary at 6.30 pm followed by Mass at 7pm and holy hour from 7.30–8.30pm led by Fr James Purcell. All are welcome to come and pray.

## TYRONE

There will be Devotions in Sacred Heart Church, Omagh at 6pm during May, beginning May 1 and continuing on May 15 and 29.

## WICKLOW

The Annual Blessing of the Graves Cemetery Mass at Burgage is scheduled for May 15 at 3pm.

## WESTMEATH

Mullingar Pioneer Mass and Novena to Matt Talbot will take place May 20 in St Paul's Church at 7pm. Anyone wishing to be presented with a pin please leave name and number into the cathedral shop.

## WEXFORD

St Aidan's Parish Golf Classic May 20 Enniscorthy Golf Club. Entry Fee: Teams of 4 - €140. Prizes. Tee Box Sponsorship €25. Contact the Parish Office on 053 92 35777 or email your team details to [saintaidanscathedral@gmail.com](mailto:saintaidanscathedral@gmail.com).





# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Swiss Guard recruits encouraged to 'grow as Christians'

● Pope Francis on Friday encouraged 36 new recruits of the Pontifical Swiss Guard to "grow as Christians" during their service in Rome.

The Pope, who currently uses a wheelchair due to a knee condition, met with the new candidates for the world's smallest but oldest standing army on May 6, the day of their swearing-in ceremony.

He said: "Dear Swiss Guards, I encourage you to always place the proper emphasis on formation. The efforts devoted to it are indispensable for acquiring adequate skills and professional competence."

### Catholic News Service to close US operation

● Catholic News Service, the news agency of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, will end domestic operations at the end of the year. The US bishops' conference characterised the changes and office closures as a "significant realignment".

"Catholic News Service offices in New York and Washington will be closed at the end of the year, as

will the USCCB Publishing Office," the US bishops' conference said in a May 4 statement sent to CNA. "These changes, although painful, will allow the remaining functions — including the Catholic News Service Rome Bureau and the Office of Public Affairs — a more sustainable foundation upon which to do their work."

### Japan's PM tells Vatican of China concerns

● Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida met with Pope Francis May 4 and told Vatican officials of his deep concern about China's actions in the South China Sea and the human rights situation in Hong Kong and Xinjiang.

According to a statement from the Japanese Embassy to the Holy See on May 4, Mr Kishida had "a fruitful exchange of views" with Pope Francis, "addressing issues such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, East Asia, North Korea."

### Pope uses wheelchair in public for first time since surgery

● Pope Francis used a wheelchair during a public meeting May 5, the first time he has done so publicly since leaving the hospital after colon surgery in July 2021.

The 85-year-old Pope has had difficulty walking due to a painful torn ligament in his knee.

He was pushed in a

wheelchair onto the stage of the Vatican's Paul VI Hall on May 5, at the start of a meeting with participants in the plenary meeting of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG).

During his recent public appearances, he has apologised for being unable to stand and walk to greet participants.

### Jesuits suspend Chilean priest pending abuse investigation

● The Society of Jesus has suspended a prominent Chilean priest as it investigates accusations with a "sexual connotation," according to the Jesuits.

In a statement May 3, the Jesuit province in Chile said, "a complaint was received April 29 from an adult woman against Jesuit Father Felipe Berrios for acts of sexual connotation. Such events would have occurred when the complainant was a minor."

The accusations against Fr Berrios shocked Chile, where the Jesuit has become a voice for the poor and excluded, including many migrants suffering discrimination.

Fr Berrios lived in a migrant camp in the northern Chilean city of Antofagasta since 2015, after returning from missionary work in Africa with Jesuit Refugee Service.

## Cardinal Pell highlights Becciu's 'incomplete' account at Vatican trial

Cardinal George Pell said Friday that the recent testimony of Cardinal Angelo Becciu at the Vatican finance trial "was somewhat incomplete".

He drew particular attention to a lack of evidence regarding payments of more than \$1.6 million made to Neustar Australia, an information services firm, in 2017 and 2018.

Cardinal Becciu, who was the second-ranking official in the Secretariat of State from 2011 to 2018, was questioned May 5 about investments during a hearing in the Vatican trial. The cardinal has been charged with embezzlement, abuse of office, and witness tampering.

In a May 6 statement, Cardinal Pell said Cardinal Becciu had given "a spirited defence of his blameless subordinate role in the Vatican finances" during his testimony.

As prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy, Cardinal Pell led an effort called for by Pope Francis to bring order and accountability to the Vatican's finances, which have long lacked centralised procedures, controls, and oversight.

Cardinal Pell clashed in that role with Cardinal Becciu, who as sostituto of the Secretariat of State served effectively as the Pope's chief of staff. Cardinal Becciu at one point acted to cancel a contract Cardinal Pell had made for an external audit of Vatican finances.

Reflecting on Cardinal Becciu's statement at the trial,



Pope Francis greets Australian Cardinal George Pell after celebrating Easter Mass in St Peter's Square at the Vatican, April 17. Photo: CNS

Cardinal Pell said he wanted to focus "on Cardinal Becciu's final remarks on the AUD 2.3 million [\$1.6m] paid to Neustar for the internet domain '.catholic' on 4/9/2015. Was the payment from the Council for Social Communications or from the Secretariat of State? The introduction of this claim only deepens the mystery."

### Statement

Cardinal Pell added that Cardinal Becciu's statement to the court differed from what he had told him in December 2020, "that the destination of the funds from the Secretariat of State to Australia was none of my business, but was known to the Holy Father".

It is undisputed, Cardinal Pell said, that the Pontifical Coun-

cil for Social Communications made large payments to Neustar Australia and a domain name registry "for the reservation of the title 'Catholic' in 2012, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018."

"Doubts, of course, are removed by facts, by evidence, not assertions. Unfortunately, I do not have information on payments to Neustar Australia in 2015 beyond USD 150,000 the Council for Social Communications paid as a deposit. It was not my usual practice to sign off on payments from the Secretariat of State," Cardinal Pell wrote.

He stated: "My interest is focused on four payments with a value of AUD 2.3 million made by the Secretariat of State in 2017 and 2018 to Neustar Australia."

He said two of these, with a value of \$874,000, "were authorised by Monsignor Becciu on 17/5/2017 and 6/6/2018."

"Obviously," Cardinal Pell wrote, "these are different payments from those of 11/9/2015 which I allegedly authorised. What was the purpose? Where did the money go after Neustar?"

At the time those payments were sent, Pell was being investigated and was then on trial for sex abuse in Australia. The coincidence has led to suggestions that the funds were related to Cardinal Pell's trial in some way. Cardinal Pell was convicted, but was subsequently acquitted by a unanimous judgement of the High Court of Australia.

## Word on Fire issues statement on allegations

Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, founded by Los Angeles Auxiliary Bishop Robert Barron, issued a brief statement May 2 saying it had fired an employee possibly over an incident involving some unwelcome advances.

"The accusations against this employee surrounded events in the employee's personal life, not the Word on Fire workplace, and did not involve any other Word on Fire employees," said the statement on the organisation's website.

The statement was issued after accusations of unwelcome sexual advances involving the employee surfaced in a sub-stack — an email newsletter platform — and

were widely discussed on Twitter.

Word on Fire did not name the employee or go into much detail about the incidents. It said that after hearing about "accusations against this employee," he was put on leave pending an investigation by a third party and he was subsequently "terminated".

"As with any investigation of this sort, the process took time and required strict confidentiality in order to protect the reputations of those involved, to respect their right to privacy, and to ensure a fair and objective investigation," the statement said.

"Word on Fire did not ignore or bury

any accusations; rather, it took swift and decisive action to ensure that an independent investigation moved forward without interference."

The newsletter detailing the accusation called to task the ministry because of Bishop Barron's efforts, via the book "Letter to a Suffering Church," to combat abuse in the Church.

"Ultimately, Word on Fire and Bishop Barron have been leading voices for accountability in the Church. The organisation has zero tolerance for abuse or harassment of any kind," the organisation's statement said.

## Catholic priest in Nigeria released 40 days after abduction

A Catholic diocese in Nigeria has announced "with joy" the release of a priest held captive for 40 days.

The Diocese of Zaria in Kaduna State, northern Nigeria, said that Fr Felix Zakari Fidson was released on May 3, reported ACI Africa.

Diocesan chancellor Fr Patrick Adikwu Odeh said: "With hearts filled with joy, we announce the return of our brother, the Rev. Fr Felix Zakari Fidson, who was abducted shortly after he left his residence at St Ann's Zango Tama II on his way to the diocesan headquar-

ters on Thursday, March 24, 2022."

The abduction of Fr Zakari, pastor of St Ann's, Zango/Taman Parish, was immediately followed by an appeal for prayers for his release.

In a statement on May 4, Fr Odeh expressed gratitude

to Catholics who had prayed unceasingly for Fr Zakari's release.

"We want to thank all who offered prayers for the quick release of our dear brother. We pray God to hasten the release of those who are still in the hands of their abductors," he said.





Edited by Jason Osborne  
jason@irishcatholic.ie

## A guarded greeting



Pope Francis meets with new members of the Swiss Guard ahead of their swearing-in ceremony at the Vatican May 6.  
Photo: CNS.

# Archbishop says Russia's intention to eliminate Ukrainian people

The head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church said Russia's reasons for attacking Ukraine are nothing more than an excuse to justify its ultimate goal of wiping out the country and its people.

Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kyiv-Halych said that although Russian President Vladimir Putin has said "demilitarisation and denazification" are the primary reasons for invading Ukraine, Russian military tactics are following "a genocide manual" in which "the entire people must be eliminated".

Archbishop Shevchuk made his remarks in a video call to the plenary meeting of the Pontifical Council for

Promoting Christian Unity, of which he is a member, and he spoke about the war's impact on ecumenical dialogue, according to a statement released May 6 by his office.

Russia's invasion and ongoing war on Ukraine, now entering its 70th day, has caused a "humanitarian catastrophe" with millions forced to flee the country or be displaced internally, he said.

Furthermore, mass graves discovered in cities liberated from Russian occupation have now become "places of prayer for everyone: Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants, Jews and Muslims".

Archbishop Shevchuk

said Russian troops are also responsible for "raping men, women and children" and have destroyed "nearly 100 churches, monasteries and religious buildings".

Nevertheless, amid the tragedy of war, religious groups in Ukraine are "united like never before," he said.

"Just on the eve of the Russian attack, when we had already received news and foreign ambassadors were leaving the city of Kyiv, in a night session, the council (of churches and religions) made an appeal to the Russian president to stop," he recalled.

"We proposed ourselves as the mediators; if the diplomats, the politicians were

not able to avoid the armed conflict, we wanted to be the mediators of peace, men and women of the Church."

The Ukrainian archbishop also denounced the stance taken by Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, whose justifications of the war pose "a great danger not only for the Russian Orthodox Church, but for Christianity in the modern world".

Communities of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine, he added, feel "neglected and forgotten," considering that "most of the churches destroyed are their own".

## Australia's Catholic bishops elect new leader

Australia's Catholic bishops have elected Archbishop Timothy Costelloe as their new leader.

Archbishop Costelloe, a priest of the Salesians of Don Bosco, is the first member of a religious order to serve as president of Australia's bishops' conference.

The 68-year-old archbishop of Perth, Western Australia, succeeds Archbishop Mark Coleridge, who was president of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference for two two-year terms.

Archbishop Coleridge, the archbishop of Brisbane, was unable to run for a third term because he will turn 75, the usual retirement age for bishops, in September 2023.

Archbishop Costelloe, who was born in Melbourne in 1954, noted that Archbishop Coleridge led the conference at a difficult time for the Catholic Church in Australia.

"It was Archbishop Coleridge who guided our response beyond the Royal Commission, represented the Church in

Australia at the global summit on sexual abuse, and steered the bishops through a pandemic and a host of other challenges," he said.

"Archbishop Coleridge has been a calm and considered leader locally and in the global Church and will be a trusted adviser for me in this new role."

Archbishop Coleridge said: "It's been a great privilege to serve the bishops' conference as president through a turbulent time, which has made the role more intense and demanding than I expected."

## Vatican roundup

### Swiss Guards launch fundraiser to renovate Vatican barracks

● The Holy See penned a deal May 4 with the "Foundation for the Renovation of the Barracks of the Pontifical Swiss Guards in the Vatican".

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin and Jean-Pierre Roth and Stephan Kuhn, president and vice president, respectively, of the Foundation.

Mr Denis Knobel, the Swiss Ambassador to the Holy See, and Colonel Christoph Graf, Commander of the Swiss Guards, were on hand for the signing ceremony.

According to a press release from the Swiss Guards, the agreement covers the renovation project in the fundraising and planning phases. A second agreement will be signed at a later time to govern the construction phase.

The Foundation agreed to carry out a fundraising campaign to cover the budgeted costs of the renovation project, which is estimated to amount to 45 million Swiss Franc (CHF), currently €46.4 million.

The Vatican will cover the costs of temporary housing for the Guards during the construction phase, estimated at 5 million Swiss Franc (or €5.16 million).

The Holy See will also submit the Foundation's renovation plan to the relevant Vatican commissions and UNESCO.

### Pope permitted spending \$1m to free nun kidnapped in Mali

● At the Vatican's finance trial May 5, Cardinal Angelo Becciu said that Pope Francis had allowed spending up to €1 million (\$1.05 million) toward the liberation of a missionary abducted in Mali.

Sister Gloria Cecilia Narváez Argoti was kidnapped in February 2017 and held until her October 9, 2021 release.

Cardinal Becciu, who was the second-ranking official in the Secretariat of State from 2011 to 2018, was questioned May 5 about investments during a hearing in the Vatican trial. The cardinal has been charged with embezzlement, abuse

of office, and witness tampering.

In his testimony he discussed his dealings with Cecilia Marogna, a self-described "security consultant" accused of misappropriating Secretariat of State funds.

The 40-year-old from Sardinia is also a defendant in the trial. She has been charged with embezzlement for allegedly receiving hundreds of thousands of euros from the Secretariat in connection with Cardinal Becciu, and then reportedly spending the money on luxury goods and vacations — which she denies.

### Four foundations merged into new Vatican hospitality body

● Pope Francis issued a decree May 5 merging four foundations into a new Vatican institution dedicated to hospitality.

The document, known as a chirograph, united the foundations under a new body known as the Domus Vaticanæ. The Pope said that he was taking the step "considering the new situation that has matured over time".

The May 5 decree merged the Domus Sanctæ Marthæ, Domus Romana Sacerdotalis, Domus Internationalis Paulus VI, and Casa San Benedetto foundations into the new institution, which the Pope established as a public canonical juridic person based in the Vatican City State.

The text said that the new body would pursue the hospitality goals of the merged foundations in line with the provisions of the apostolic constitution *Universi Dominici gregis*, "which reserves the building of the Domus Sanctæ Marthæ, during the conclave for the election of the Supreme Pontiff, for the exclusive use of the cardinal electors".





# Letter from Rome



Cindy Wooden

**T**he leaders of religious orders around the world are taking very seriously not only preparations for the Synod of Bishops assembly in 2023, but the whole idea of making the Church more 'synodal' - a place where everyone is called to prayer, discernment and responsibility for the Church and its mission.

More than 500 leaders of women's congregations met in Rome in early May for the plenary assembly of the International Union of Superiors General and focused on the contributions they can bring to the synodal process, particularly given their "vulnerability" with declining numbers in most places and their lack of power and status.

**“The ‘vulnerability’ of religious orders also means their members are used to change or transformation, something which the synodal process also envisions”**

“There's a huge amount of energy in religious life, both from the men and the women, and a tremendous investment in the synodal process,” said Sr Gemma Simmonds, a member of the Congregation of Jesus, who is one of four religious charged with synthesising contributions from hundreds of religious communities for a joint contribution to the Synod of Bishops from both the women's and men's international unions of superiors.

“Some of the responses point out that of course, synodality is part and parcel of religious life,” said Sr Simmonds, director of the Religious Life Institute at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology in Cambridge, England. For instance, she said, the Rule of St Benedict allows an abbot or abbess and his or her council to make decisions on unimportant matters, but requires them to consult the whole community, including the youngest monks or nuns, on anything important.

They also model for the whole Church a life animated by personal and communal prayer; living and working in a group of people of different ages and from different cultural backgrounds; constant collaboration with bishops, priests and laypeople in carrying out their mission; outreach to the poor and those on the margins of society; and, increasingly, joint projects with other religious congregations that may have vastly different charisms.

## Women's religious orders invest in synod process



Superiors of women's religious orders meet for the plenary assembly of the International Union of Superior Generals in Rome May 3, 2022. More than 500 superiors were in attendance, with more than 100 participating online. Photos: CNS

The “vulnerability” of religious orders also means their members are used to change or transformation, something which the synodal process also envisions.

Jessie Rogers, dean of the faculty of theology at St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland, told the sisters that adapting their mission and structures in light of modern challenges requires wisdom and fidelity - not rigidity - and the same virtues are needed in moving toward a more synodal Church.

### Traditions

“You are nourished by the traditions which have shaped you, by your founding charisms, and by your own personal stories in which you have come to know God,” Dr Rogers told the sisters. “That history gives you a firm place to stand; it has shaped your understanding of God and how God works.”

“Such knowledge is key to being able to recognise God's footprints. The God you have come to know is the God who will take the story further. But this God cannot be limited to what you know already,” she said, adding that believers cannot “trap the future in the cage of the past.”

And, particularly relevant to religious orders and the Church as a whole is a recognition that

“not everything in the past can be brought out as a treasure,” she said. “Freedom requires the courage to face the darkness in our past, individually and collectively. For what do we need to give and receive forgiveness? What must we relinquish?”

**“This is a grotesque injustice that should not be tolerated among the people of God”**

“We can remain rooted in the life-giving dimensions of the past without trying to justify those parts of it that are broken and harmful or that no longer serve us well,” she said.

While Sr Simmonds could not share details of the synod input from the women's and men's communities because the report has not been completed, she said “everything” resonated with her and her experience or observations of religious life, including reports by women of doing the heavy lifting in a variety of pastoral projects or even fundraising and then being “airbrushed out of the picture” when success is reported.

Sisters also reported problems with bishops deciding to close schools, hospitals or other institutions without consulting the sisters

who had operated them for decades, and even bishops or priests using “access to the sacraments” to force sisters into accepting their decisions.

“This is a grotesque injustice that should not be tolerated among the people of God,” she said.

But while the submissions to the synod were honest, they did not focus exclusively on problems, Sr Simmonds said.

“What also came across is the appreciation of how powerful it is when religious do collaborative work with laypeople, with clergy, with bishops,” she said. “It is there

over and over again, the evidence that this works; it's good. It's good for the people. It's good for the mission. It's good for the Church. What's not to like?”

The responses make clear that charisms given by God to the founders of religious orders and shared with their members for decades or centuries can remain alive and active in the Church by sharing them with others, she said. Through the religious and the laity who share their spirituality, “Benedict and Francis and Mary Ward and Louise de Marillac are still alive in the world.”



Sr Gemma Simmonds.



# Cardinal Becciu returns to testify at Vatican trial



Junno Arocho Esteves

**T**aking the stand for a second time at his Vatican trial, Cardinal Angelo Becciu spent more than two hours reading a statement in which he claimed accusations of financial impropriety were an attempt to stain his reputation.

At the trial May 5, Cardinal Becciu said he felt “immense pain” when Pope Francis forced him to resign in 2020.

“I was thrown on the front page of newspapers, almost like a monster,” he said. “Many believers around the world have been troubled in their faith” by the accusations against him.

**“Cardinal Becciu told the court, ‘There was never any objection’ to the property deal from Pope Francis and Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state”**

Cardinal Becciu said claims that he embezzled an estimated €100,000 and gave them to Spes, a Caritas organisation run by his brother, Tonino Becciu, in his home Diocese of Ozieri, Italy, was “the mother of all my misfortune”.

“None, not one of my relatives enriched themselves with that money,” he said, adding that his brother, who served as president of Spes from 2005 to 2016, is an associate of the organisation and “earned money only as a religion teacher”.

As for his involvement in the Vatican Secretariat of State’s investment in a London property development project that incurred millions of dollars in debt, the cardinal said accusations that he misused Vatican funds were “unfounded”.

At the time of the investment, then-Archbishop Becciu served as “sostituto,” the No. 3 position in the secretariat.

Cardinal Becciu told the court, “There was never any objection” to the property deal from Pope Francis and Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state. “In fact,” he said, “they were happy when it went well,” initially producing nearly €10 million in annual returns.

Referring to Msgr Alberto Perlasca, the prosecutor’s chief witness and former head of the Vatican Secretariat of State’s administrative office, Cardinal Becciu said he was an “irritable and cantankerous” subordinate who hoped “to become an apostolic nuncio”.

The cardinal testified that Msgr Perlasca asked for his help after Pope



Cardinal Angelo Becciu speaks with journalists during a news conference in Rome in this September 25, 2020, file photo. Photo: CNS.

Francis removed him from the Secretariat of State and appointed him substitute promoter of justice at the Apostolic Signature in 2019.

Believing that he was removed due to his involvement in the failed investment in the London property, Msgr Perlasca’s demeanor changed, and he would act “very strange and temperamental” as well as ask “many questions about me and my activities,” Cardinal Becciu claimed.

## Vatican court

The cardinal also testified about his dealings with Cecilia Marogna, an Italian political analyst he allegedly hired, but whom the Vatican court has accused of embezzling money through a humanitarian organisation she ran in Slovenia.

According to several documents sent anonymously in 2020 to the Italian news program, *Le Iene*, the Vatican Secretariat of State sent five payments totalling an estimated €500,000 to Ms Marogna’s organisation.

While the money allegedly sent by the Secretariat of State was meant to help fund the release of Catholic hostages, *Le Iene* reported that the money was instead used for pur-

chases at several high-priced fashion boutiques, including Prada, Louis Vuitton and Moncler.

**“Ms Marogna, he said, was consulted about securing Sr Gloria’s release, and she organised a meeting with Cardinal Becciu and a British security firm”**

According to a January 2021 report by the Associated Press, prosecutors said text messages were sent by Cardinal Becciu authorising thousands of euros to Ms Marogna’s organisation to secure the release of Sr Gloria Cecilia Narvaez, a Colombian nun kidnapped by jihadist militants in Mali, despite the fact the cardinal was no longer working at the Secretariat of State at the time.

In another text message, Cardinal Becciu said the Pope was aware of the situation and wanted things to be kept “in great secrecy,” AP reported.

Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether the payments sent to Ms Marogna in 2018 and 2019 had any effect on the nun’s release from captivity in 2021.

## Dignity

Cardinal Becciu told the court he was offended by reports of a romantic affair between him and Ms Marogna, calling them “insulting claims of the lowest nature that were also injurious to my priestly dignity”.

Ms Marogna, he said, was consulted about securing Sr Gloria’s release, and she organised a meeting with Cardinal Becciu and a British security firm.

Cardinal Becciu told the court he met with the Pope and told him the firm recommended securing an estimated €1 million, “half for the operation of creating a contact network and the other half for (Sister Gloria’s) release.”

“He approved it. I must say that every step of this operation was in agreement with the Holy Father,” the cardinal said.

Lastly, Cardinal Becciu complained about public accusations that he allegedly sent hundreds of thousands of euros to accusers of

Australian Cardinal George Pell, who was convicted but subsequently exonerated for sexual abuse.

**“Continued to raise doubts about the transfer of \$2.3 million in Australia, suspecting that those funds were used by Cardinal Becciu to negatively influence the penal process for abuse of minors”**

“For over a year, I underwent public pressure with the accusations of having paid for false testimonies against Cardinal Pell,” he said. The cardinal also said Cardinal Parolin confirmed that “it did not happen”.

In a letter dated April 29, 2021, he said, Cardinal Parolin confirmed that the money in question was used to purchase an internet domain name and that Cardinal Pell “continued to raise doubts about the transfer of \$2.3 million in Australia, suspecting that those funds were used by Cardinal Becciu to negatively influence the penal process for abuse of minors”.

“I regret that Cardinal Pell has stumbled into this misunderstanding,” Cardinal Becciu said.

**“The cardinal testified that Msgr Perlasca asked for his help after Pope Francis removed him from the Secretariat of State and appointed him substitute promoter of justice at the Apostolic Signature in 2019”**



# Letters

## Letter of the week

### We have to keep telling the truth

**Dear Editor,** I agree wholeheartedly with your Editor's Comment about what Ireland can learn from the pro-life community in the United States (*The Irish Catholic*, May 5, 2022). It is not at all clear to me what in fact the US Supreme Court will do in terms of the notorious Roe V Wade case that is currently before it. It is also difficult to understand what was behind the leak of the draft document. Was this an anxious liberal trying to embarrass the Supreme Court into recoiling from this position and perhaps galvanising the floundering administration of President Joe Biden?

On the other hand, was it an anxious conservative who was worried that the Supreme Court could change the draft and come to a different conclusion that the one indicated trying to hold their feet to the fire?

If Ireland is any country to go on, it will be difficult to get to the bottom of the leak and the person who broke confidence and leaked the document never mind their particular motivation.

In any case, the main point is that the pro-life community in the US has managed to keep the issue of abortion at the political centre by constant activ-

ism and working to prevent and limit abortion wherever they can. It's true that many in the pro-life community in Ireland feel jaded and dejected – but this cannot be a strategy. The lesson we need to take from the US is that we need to keep patiently and politely pointing to the truth that abortion is wrong and that women and their unborn children deserve better. It is a stain on the conscience of the world.

*Yours etc.,  
Mary Ward  
Ranelagh, Dublin 6*

## Remember Donald Trump

**Dear Editor,** Pro-life activists in the US may well be on the cusp of an historic victory in the Supreme Court (*The Irish Catholic* May 5, 2022). I will rejoice with them – but let us not forget the character of the man they laud for this victory: Donald Trump. Mr Trump did more than any politician to cheapen political debate in the US and his attitude towards women shows that he is not the sort of man who should be held up as a person of virtue to emulate.

I suppose the old saying is true that God can write with crooked lines – and Mr Trump is very crooked indeed.

*Yours etc.,  
Orla McCarthy  
Belfast, Co. Antrim*



## A good showing for Aontú

**Dear Editor,** Before the assembly elections in the North many people – including many journalists and political commentators – had written Aontú candidates off.

How wrong they were! Either they had no idea what was going to happen, or they knew and were trying to downplay it. We all know that there are far too many journalists who

are really just campaigners. The results for Aontú – even though they did not win a seat – are really encouraging and show that people are looking for a credible pro-life alterna-

tive to both Sinn Féin and the SDLP. Aontú people should be greatly heartened by the results and it is now a great base on which to build for the future – particularly in local elections.

*Yours etc.,  
Patricia Brady  
Letterkenny, Co. Donegal*

## People need help now

**Dear Editor,** I enjoy your regular items on the environment and on *Laudato Si'* in particular and Pope Francis is offering tremendous leadership on the issue.

The advice from Jane Mellett about retrofitting and the need for greater insulation is great – but the price of gas has doubled in a year. We can't insulate our way out of this crisis in the short-term. People need direct cash assistance from the Government so they don't have to choose between eating and heating.

The poor St Vincent de Paul Society is already out the door with requests for help. The Government need to do their bit.

*Yours etc.,  
John Brady  
Clontarf, Dublin 5*

## It's time to turn off

**Dear Editor,** We all of us miss those lost to Covid-19. In this instance I don't mean those who tragically lost their lives, all of whom we miss and commend to God's mercy. But what I'm talking about is our friends and neighbours who were regular daily Mass-goers before the pandemic and now join us via their tablets or mobile telephones instead. Undoubtedly, some of them feel too vulnerable to go to Mass even now. But many others have simply gotten out of the habit of going to Mass or they find it 'handier' to sit at home and join from afar. I met a woman recently who I knew as a regular at morning

Mass before the pandemic. I asked her why she no longer attended. "Oh, I'll be back as soon as I feel safe," she told me. We were talking in a packed supermarket without masks where the woman involved was in a hurry because she was on the way to a hairdressing appointment because she had a social function to attend that night.

It's time to turn the webcams off – it has become too easy for people to stay at home.

*Yours etc.,  
John Daly  
Ballina, Co. Mayo*

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

### Church in Ireland not to blame for institutions

A balanced account at last. Well done, Prof. Brendan Kelly – well done. – **Goretti Fitzgerald**

I'm a great admirer of Prof. Kelly but I've found that quoting him on the dangers of cannabis is yet one more of those things that brings the wrath of Irish 'progressives' down on your head. – **Charles Glenn**

The 'princes' of the Church failed utterly to defend its reputation because they... – **Micheál Lyons**

### Why do we seek the living among the dead?

Rubbish! We, the laypeople were never allowed in the nave of the church. The Church is dying because it is constantly looking for lay pop stars and divas to entertain. The Mass was never an entertainment. It was and is a sacrifice. A re-enactment of our Lord at Calvary. – **Gary Robertson**

### Catholic schools confident of places for Ukrainian students

Great for those rural schools who were losing pupils. – **Denis Kearns**

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

## Whither the climate emergency

**Dear Editor,** Covid-19 distracted the public mind for almost two years away from the urgent need to tackle climate change. This was understandable since we were in the midst of a global pandemic where people feared for their very lives. But, when it comes to the environment we are in an even deeper and more persistent crisis. Entire ecosystems have already been wiped out and we know already that climate change is not now reversible. Everything we do from here on in is simply trying to lessen the damage that has already been caused. If the climate emergency is not tackled – and tackled as a matter of extreme urgency – countless numbers of people will die that will make Covid-19 seem like a blip on the map of human history.

*Yours etc.,  
Patricia Lawler  
Thurles, Co. Tipperary*

### Letters to the Editor

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

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

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



# Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, May 12, 2022

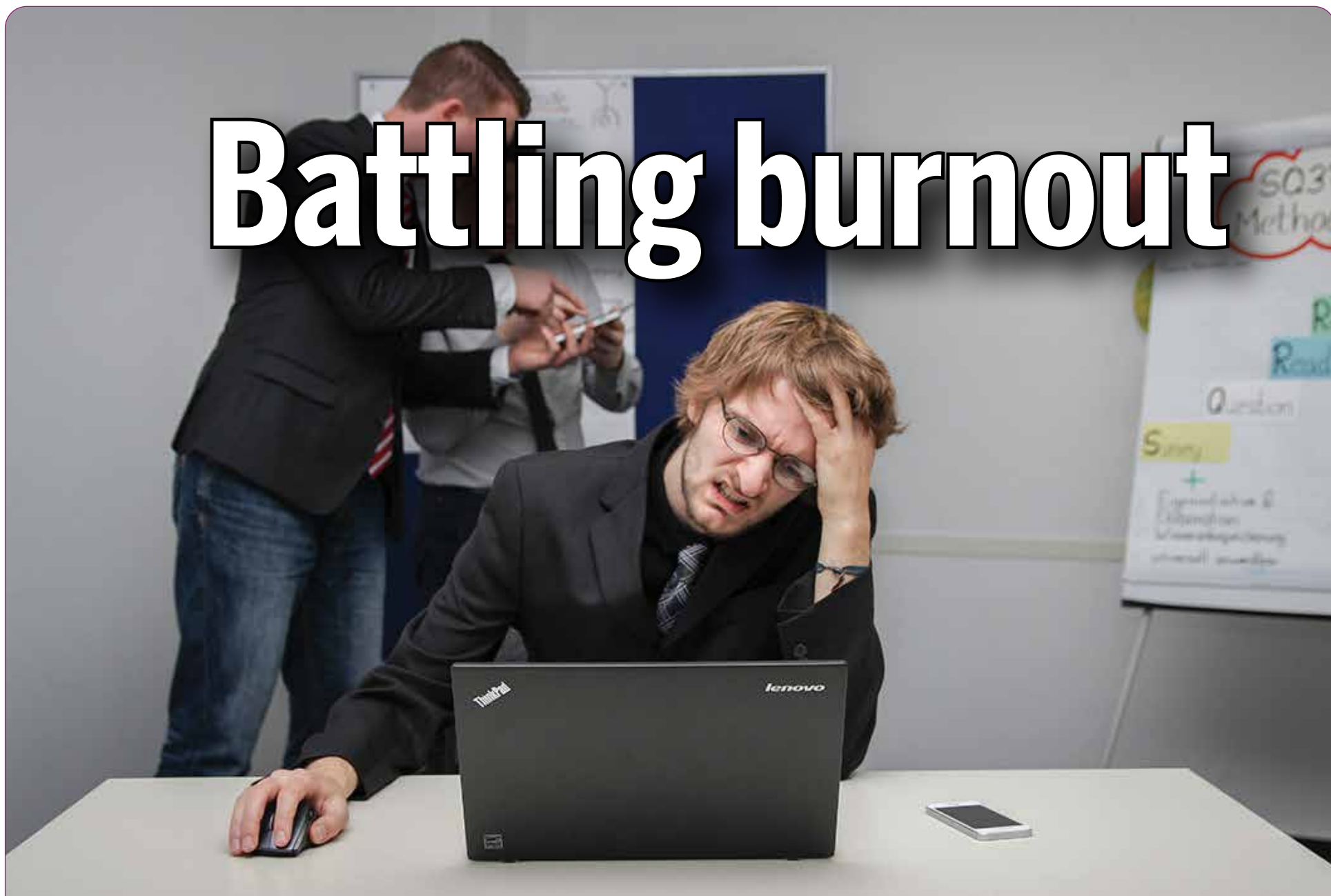
## Personal Profile

Getting God's message onto the airwaves

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# Battling burnout



**A** cursory google reveals that the number of people wondering whether they're burnt out is at something of an all-time high. Anecdotally, chatting to friends reveals a general sense of lingering exhaustion or lethargy that started during the pandemic and has yet to abate. If these symptoms sound familiar to you, you're not alone. Personal circumstances aside, who isn't wrung-out by this pandemic and conflict-ridden world from time to time?

### Burnout

"Burnout", typically in relation to our work or career, is a state of physical, emotional, or in the case of practicing Catholics, spiritual exhaustion that results in a general lethargy and aimlessness. Our sense of identity and motivation



**The Covid pandemic seems to be followed by a pandemic of tired and stressed-out people, writes Jason Osborne**

can take a hit when the burnout-induced fog descends upon us, too.

It isn't a medical condition, with some experts thinking that factors such as depression are behind it. Whatever the cause happens to be, burnout results in a number of debilitating and diminishing symptoms that can make getting through the days a greater challenge than usual. These symptoms include:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Forgetfulness

- Lack of ambition
- Irritability, diminished patience
- Poorer decision making
- An ongoing sense of aimlessness/purposelessness
- Negative outlook
- Muscle pain, fatigue and/or insomnia.

Burnout often arises in connection with our personal circumstances or difficulties, but it can also trouble us spiritually, too. More traditional language might

refer to it as "desolation" or "acedia", but burnout might be the word that comes to mind quicker in our present age.

Listlessness or torpor in prayer, a loss of interest in God and all good things, reluctance to enter into fellowship or partake of communal activities are all indications that we're going through a dry spiritual spell, and this can be difficult. How to get back on the horse when the motivation just isn't there, whether it be professionally or spiritually? Actually, there's quite a bit we can do about it.

### Identify the source

In a suitably Ignatian step, the best course of action initially is to identify what exactly is wrong. Is it a long-term, continually stress-inducing situation in the home or

workplace? Are demands being made of you that you find it difficult to keep up with or satisfy? Are you being asked to do more with or for less? All of the above are serious stressors, and over a period of time could result in a deeply tiring sense of burnout.

If it's burnout of a spiritual bent that you're facing, could it be that your prayer life is lacklustre? Does your understanding of the Faith match up with the demands of your life, giving consolation and life-giving impetus? Or do you find yourself asking God "why?" over and over, while lamenting your unanswered prayers?

It can be difficult to discern the source of our troubles, but silence and stillness are our friends here. When the haze of burnout

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## Family News



## AND EVENTS

NASA'S CREW-3  
ASTRONAUTS SPLASH  
DOWN SAFELY

The four members of NASA's Crew-3 mission returned to Earth Friday after having spent six months on board the International Space Station (ISS).

After a 38-minute freefall, the capsule slammed into the discernible atmosphere at nearly 5 miles per second.

The SpaceX Crew Dragon carrying the four astronauts, three Americans and one German, parachuted safely into the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Florida.

Raja Chari, Tom Marshburn and Kayla Barron, all of NASA, and Matthias Maurer with the European Space Agency (ESA) spent 176 days at the ISS.

All four looked in good shape, smiling and waving to the ship's crew as they were carried inside for initial medical checks.

The astronauts, part of the third long-duration team launched by SpaceX to the ISS, conducted hundreds of scientific experiments during their time at the space station.

66 MILLION YEAR OLD  
FOSSILS FOUND OUTSIDE  
THAILAND MALL

More than 70 shells embedded in a footpath outside a Bangkok shopping mall have been found to be the fossils of marine creatures that lived more than 66 million years ago, Thai experts have confirmed.

An eagle-eyed shopper first spotted the snail-shaped fossils, measuring up to 12cm across, dotted along a 400-metre stretch of pavement by the Siam Square shopping centre in a major tourist district.

Palaeontologists from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment investigated and found 77 ammonite fossils.

Ammonites are marine creatures believed to have died out 66 million years ago, Preecha Saithong, director of the ministry's fossil protection division, said.

"The ammonites are real," he said, adding that the fossils differed from ones usually found in Thailand.

Local media reported that the footpath was repaired two years ago and the shells may have been inserted into the concrete as decoration by sub-contractors.

IRELAND'S LAST WOODEN  
TRADING SHIP SAILS TO  
LONDON

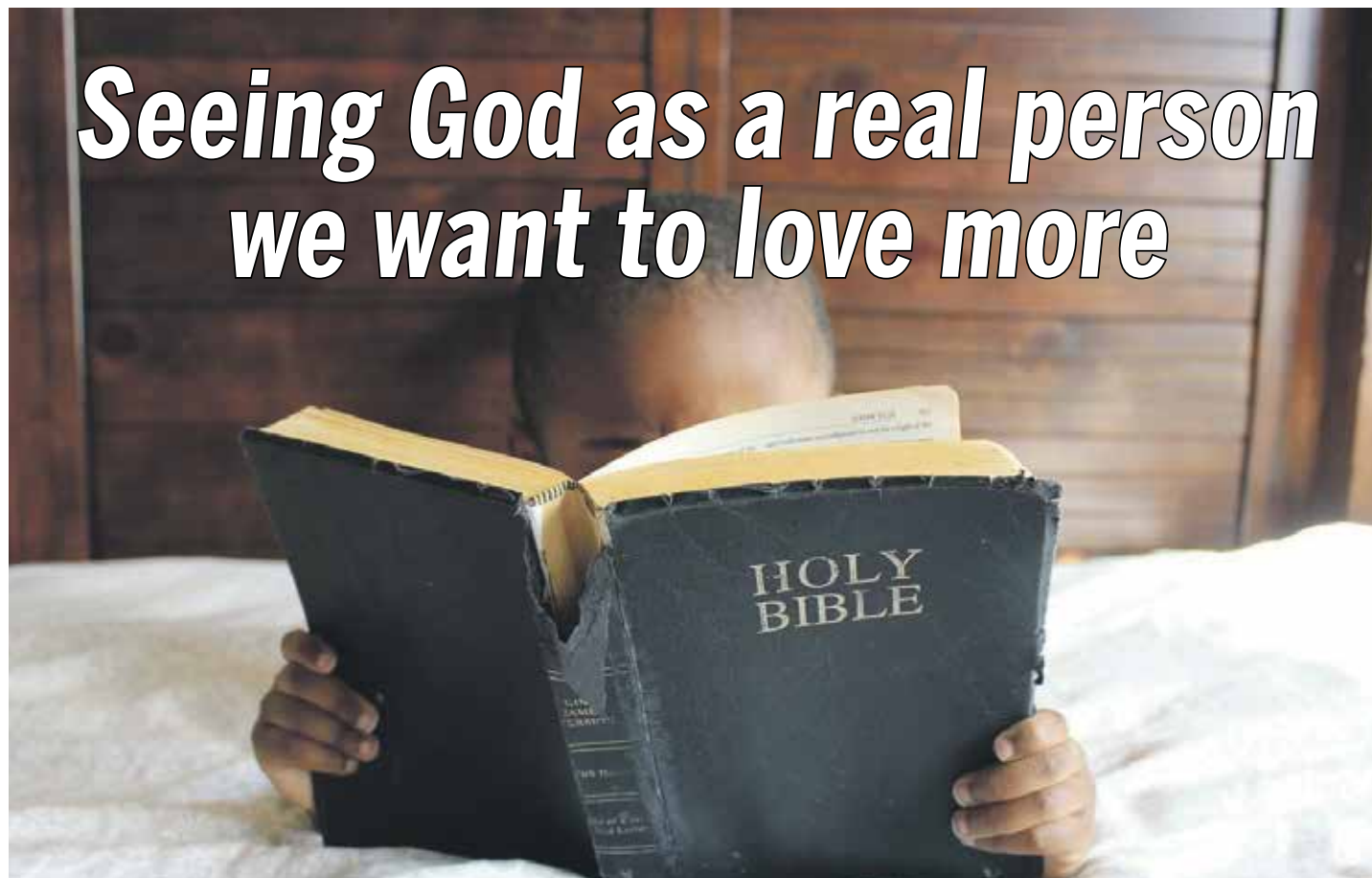
Ireland's last surviving wooden sail trading vessel has travelled up the Thames in London at an event to mark Anglo-Irish trade and cultural links.

The *Ilen*, a 96-year-old cargo ketch, left Steamboat Quay in Limerick on 23 April for the 750-nautical mile voyage, sailing up the River Thames and berthing at St Katharine Docks in the shadow of Tower Bridge.

The vessel's skipper, Gary MacMahon of the *Ilen* Marine School, said the purpose of the voyage was "to celebrate the ancient cultural and trading relationship between the two port cities".

"It is the culmination of a series of voyages – the Kingship voyages – to many of the Irish towns and cities that have grown from medieval walled settlements built on tidal river estuaries," he said.

Since its re-construction and launch in 2018, the Limerick-registered *Ilen* has voyaged over 10,000 nautical miles, including a trip across the north Atlantic to Greenland, as well as to most of Ireland's significant ports.

Seeing God as a real person  
we want to love more

I'm delighted that, after two grim years, I can finally attend the annual Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help this year in my neighbouring parish of Newbridge, Co. Kildare.

Nothing replaces attending these parish events and celebrations in person and no Zoom login is ever comparable to being present at Mass and being able to receive the Holy Eucharist. We are communities of faith and are not designed to be sitting alone in our homes cut off from our faith communities.

**“The theme for the Newbridge novena is ‘Let’s be Good News’, which is a very positive, uplifting theme”**

My 15-year-old daughter accompanied me, remembering the novena from when she was younger. It was hard to believe that she was only 12 years old the last time this was even possible. I felt a bit sad thinking about it and pondering on those missing years when so little seemed possible but, there's little to be gained from looking back regretfully. I prefer to focus on the joy of this wonderful Easter season and to look forward with hope to continuing to celebrate the good news of the Resurrection. The theme for the Newbridge novena is 'Let's be Good News', which is a very positive, uplifting theme.

Of course, to spread the good news, we have to know what the good news actually is and to focus on how we can pass this message of joy onto our children. It's not the sort of joy that always guarantees us an easy life or that things will never go wrong; it's a joy that comes from our relationship

A parent's  
perspective  
Maria Byrne

with Jesus, knowing that God loves us and that, as he promised, he will be with us until the end of time.

We sometimes make the mistake of compartmentalising our practice of religion, reducing it to a list of duties that we have to perform or just some more time slots in our busy schedules – time for exercise, time for work, time to eat, time for God. Imagine if we viewed our spouses, family members or close friends like this, seeing them as entries in a calendar rather than real people who we want to love more and have better relationships with.

I remember talking about something faith-related with one of my children when they were small. They were a bit annoyed or frustrated at something and responded to my comments by saying that "Not everything has to be about religion". I think I replied that everything really is about religion and about God and his love for each and every one of us. When those who oppose denominational education talk about slotting religious instruction into a short time frame at the end of the school day or insist that religion and faith are personal matters for the privacy of one's own home, they are missing the point completely. The author, Peter Seewald, once asked Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI if he ever got weary of having to deal with God every day wondering if he ever got "sick and tired of it". Pope Benedict wisely answered saying: "Dealing with God every day is a necessity for me."

He said that just as we have to breathe every day and need light and food and friendship every day, and really need certain people every day, dealing with God is one of the fundamental elements of life. If God suddenly disappeared, he said his soul couldn't breathe. That's the kind of message we really need to



hear and the passion we need to express. Jesus really did rise from the dead and is God with us, not just an abstract idea or an historical figure.

To make Jesus central in our lives and the lives of our children, we can't just slot him into one small section of our days or lives. Children learn by example and can detect if our joy is real, whether we're all words and no action and if we really live our lives as if we're buoyed and excited by the 'Good News'.

Do we rise joyfully in the morning ready to greet the day with a prayer? Is attending Mass and the sacraments a blessing to us or a chore? Do we preach the Gospel and the need to grow in

virtue while our own spiritual lives stagnate? St John Henry Newman wrote in his beautiful *Mission of My Life* that: "God has created me to do him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission." What a powerful statement.

In a world that is often chaotic and confusing, imagine if we could get that one point across to our children, that each one of them has a particular mission, a definite path.

While their lives may seem dark or very challenging at times, as John Henry Newman confidently assured us "He knows what he is about".

**“The friend who is ever concerned that wine not be lacking in our lives”**

I spotted a Charlie Brown meme on Facebook recently where Charlie is saying in usual Charlie style: "The world is suddenly crazy."

Snoopy is the clear-headed friend responding: "Good thing God is the same yesterday, today and forever."

In a sometimes crazy world, God is our light, leading us through the gloom to true happiness. Jesus is our friend; he overcame death; we have our Holy Catholic Church, the sacraments and Our Blessed Lady who Pope Francis describes as "the friend who is ever concerned that wine not be lacking in our lives". That really is good news that is worth spreading.



» Continued from Page 31



descends upon us, start freeing up even 15-20 minutes a day for contemplative or mental prayer, time for reflection or an examination of your interior life to see if anything obvious leaps out at you as the persistent thorn in your side.

### Short-term changes

Identifying short-term changes is invaluable as, aside from offering you some respite, they will free up some breathing room for you to identify longer-term structural changes you can make.

**“Those of us who are particularly agreeable, people-pleasers as it were, can often agree to more than we’re capable of delivering, out of a desire to say yes and a fear of saying no”**

If you’re weighted down in work with more projects or tasks than you can realistically handle, perhaps it’s time to talk to the boss and see if anyone else can pitch in and help you. If you’re struggling under a personal burden, talk to friends and family to see if they can offer practical, emotional or even spiritual support.

Those of us who are particularly agreeable, people-pleasers as it were, can often agree to more than we’re capable of delivering, out of a desire to say yes and a fear of saying no. If you’re such a person, and I certainly am, perhaps it’s time to consider if investing in a measure of disagreeableness would be to your benefit? We can’t do everything for everyone, and sometimes for our own sake and the sake of those around us, we have to draw lines and consolidate what we have without taking on more.

### Examine your options

If your job has you burnt out and struggling to get off the floor, it’s time to sit down and survey the landscape of possibilities. The same goes for personal or spiritual issues that beset us, inducing burnout.

In the workplace, could I talk to my boss? Could I delegate some of the workload I’m currently grappling with? If neither of those will work, have I considered leaving my role and finding work someplace else? With personal issues, have I talked honestly with the people involved? Am I open to different opinions than mine, and the solutions they might offer?

Sometimes just knowing that there are a variety of potential solutions, or “escape routes” if the situation is dramatic enough, can have a healing effect on the internal pressure we’re facing.



### Practice effective leisure

A good rest can be the key to rejuvenation, but “good” is the main word here. Too many of us waste our free time doing things that aren’t truly restful. I’m the foremost culprit when it comes to misusing my free time, scrolling social media or reading inane news. None of these activities are likely to nourish my soul, and so many hours, pregnant with possibility, pass me by, and I continue to feel unrested.

**“If you’re floundering in prayer, cut out the mindless fluff that so often occupies us when we sit down to be with God”**

What do you truly enjoy? For me, it’s reading, watching movies, hiking, writing and more. Some of my friends enjoy fishing, exercising, painting, listening to or playing music – the list is truly endless. These activities are the ones likely to revivify us, at the end of which we can truly look back and say our time was well spent. This leaves us feeling good about ourselves and the situation we find ourselves in, rather than despondent and aimless.

If you’re floundering in prayer, cut out the mindless fluff that so often occupies us when we sit down to be with God. Don’t be afraid to change your prayer routine if your prayer has purely become routine, with little engagement on your part. The bottom line, on both the natural and supernatural levels, is that good leisure, good prayer, and ultimately, good respite come from our active engagement with our activities. This will go a long way towards putting us in a position to combat our burnout over the long-term.

## Dad’s Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



I’m an incurable nostalgic. So much so, I often think that nostalgia isn’t quite what it used to be. When it came to booking a hotel for my son’s confirmation dinner, I naturally booked the very same hotel where I’d had my own confirmation dinner, some 33 years ago. Just like my son, my sponsor was also my grandmother. We even recreated a photo from 1989 which featured me and my granny standing by the river. He and his nanna stood at the very same spot, by the very same table, with the very same trees in the background. It was uncanny to see how little had changed in the scene, and how quickly one generation follows another.

Yet it was also striking to consider how radically Ireland’s cultural and spiritual landscape has changed since 1989. Back then, it was taken for granted that everyone would be confirmed. It was a sort of automated process. Nowadays, even in Catholic schools, not all kids are from Catholic families, and not all will choose to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. It is good for kids to understand differences in belief and culture, and to also independently develop their own understanding of faith. In my day, preparation for confirmation was all about learning all your catechism by rote, but now it’s far less didactic. The hope today is that the kids might develop a meaningful relationship with God. That is surely an improvement.

At my confirmation, our priests and teachers did not warn us to expect our Christian faith to be challenged or disparaged by society at large. Ireland was still an overwhelmingly Catholic country back then. Indeed, 1980s Ireland was a place of moving statues, ghosts and apparitions, where the supernatural always seemed readily to hand. Nowadays, things are very different.

Today, children are told that they themselves must make a conscious decision to keep their faith. They are openly told that they are entering a society which is often hostile to their faith. There’s no doubt that Ireland has now become a cold house for people of any Christian faith. Yet the Catholic faith in particular is routinely derided in the media, and society

at large. There is a strange presumption that because it is technically a majority faith, it can be freely demeaned and even discriminated against. Yet it was a majority faith during the persecutions of the Penal times too. The truth is only slowly dawning that, in Ireland, practising Catholics are already a minority of perhaps 25% at most –



especially in the wake of the pandemic.

When I first started visiting England regularly some 15 years ago, I would sometimes end up going to Mass. It was novel to hear an (invariably Irish) Catholic priest speaking about the challenges of life as a religious minority in an indifferent society, which adheres to different values. Yet here we are now, in once holy Catholic Ireland, where practising Catholics are now becoming a marginalised minority, in a hostile or indifferent society, which holds very different values. Yet despite the many changes since 1989, there is continuity too across time – especially in rural Ireland, where the old way of life continues relatively intact. It’s also true to say that many things in modern Ireland are far better than they were in the past.

The big Confirmation day was a happy day for all of us. There was great joy in seeing our wonderful young lad take a stride towards adulthood, surrounded by his friends and those who love him. For, while the world has recently seemed wracked by disease, confusion and war, our little corner of it still feels like a safe haven. I wonder what the future holds, and what the Ireland of 30 years’ time will be like. Will my son’s child stand in that very same spot by the river, with his grandmother, on their confirmation day?



# Getting God's message onto the airwaves

## Personal Profile



**Ruadhán Jones**

**A**idan O'Rourke, manager at Radio Maria, says it is a great blessing to serve people by bringing God to them over the radio. Having explored the ways God might be calling him, he feels that he is now fulfilling his vocation through his work with the station.

The eldest of four brothers and two sisters, Aidan says he grew up in what "I suppose you could call a standard Irish upbringing". He was taught his prayers, went to Mass on a Sunday, but aside from that had little else to do with the Faith.

"But what I learned most from my parents is the way of living," Aidan recalls. "They are very decent people, very respectful of others, putting family first, always visiting friends, neighbours, grandparents. I'd never have heard swearing growing up at home. They instilled good values in us. That ideal of going to Mass as a family and Sunday as a day given to the Lord was also something they gave us."

However, when he left home to study architecture at Carlow College, Aidan exercised his newfound freedom by giving up going to Mass on a Sunday.

"Looking back, I think I felt deep down I was missing something," Aidan says. "I was not really living the life God really wanted for me – I didn't have a sense of peace by not

going to Mass. Also, not too many people in college go to Mass during the day, it was something that I thought I was being a bit of an odd-ball to do. But it was something I felt deep down I was missing in my life."

### Faith

"I had a friend who would bring up topics around the Faith. It wouldn't be every conversation, but he was a good friend and those conversations helped me reconsider going back to Mass. Then I decided to go back to Mass on Sundays, I remembered what my mother said that one hour a week really isn't that much to give."

"Then, as it happened, I would be going through something and I would hear something in the readings or during Mass that would help

me, give me encouragement. It was as though it was especially for me."

"And that happened a good few weeks in a row, and I thought maybe God is speaking to me through the priest and through the readings. I started to go back and I felt a sense of peace once I started going on a Sunday. Over time it grew to once during the week."

Aidan finished college around the time of the financial crash. While many of his friends left Ireland in search of work, he found work in Ireland and took the time to discern.

"At this stage, I was getting to Mass most days of the week and I was giving the evening time to prayer and reading up about the Faith," Aidan explains. "I got involved in different groups, especially with Youth 2000,

but then particularly the Legion of Mary. I felt that was a huge moment for me, because you have to go out and be evangelical and visit people."

"That got me out of my shell. It was such a good experience, knocking on doors pretty much every week. In four years, I had just one negative response. I was thinking before I started that they'd slam the door in my face, you know – how dare you preach to me about the Catholic Church."

**“Most people do it in their average jobs, as it were, just living the Faith in whatever way God has called you”**

"But I couldn't believe it, people were so open. There were a lot of people who would maybe like to speak about it, but they don't have the opportunity. People would ask questions and I just wouldn't know."

This spurred Aidan on to study catechetics more seriously. Around the same time, he met the bishop of his local diocese of Limerick, who asked if he had ever considered the priesthood.

"And the truth was, I never had," Aidan says. "I thought about it for a couple of weeks and I thought, the Lord is not going to try and trick me. If I'm not called to be a priest, the Lord will make it known to me one way or the other."

He spent four years in the seminary, three in Maynooth and one in Spain. However, by the end of the second year Aidan already felt that the priesthood wasn't for him. After three the idea was further away. He spoke to the bishop and they decided he would give it one more year and see how he felt at the end.

By the time the fourth year finished, he felt a sense of peace at his decision and left the seminary to pursue his vocation elsewhere.

"Since then, I'm very grateful for the opportunity I got to work in Radio Maria," Aidan says. "It came at a time when the station was only developing. It had been founded in 2015 and Fr Eamonn McCarthy became the priest-director in 2017 and got in contact with myself to help them."

"I feel like I'm fulfilling my vocation here in so many ways because it's a great opportunity to reach out to people. You don't have to be a priest or a religious to give your time to the Lord. Most people do it in their average jobs, as it were, just living the Faith in whatever way God has called you."

### Gifts

"It's real blessing to use the gifts and talents God has given you in his vineyard. You get to see all the great work that's going on across the Church. Particularly during lockdown, a time when everybody's mental health was affected, a lot of people connected in with ourselves. People turned to us and it was a great blessing to serve them."

As the staff continues to grow, and in order to be able to help them, Aidan has taken up a night course in management: "Hopefully I can keep trying to improve the gifts the Lord has given me, and be part of a station that's growing, and learning the skills is one way of doing that," he finishes.

Aidan O'Rourke, manager at Radio Maria.



**Do you know someone who we should profile? Send an email to [ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie)**



## Children's Corner

**Chai Brady**

## Spinning a bucket and learning about a force

**I**f a person was to say that you couldn't get wet despite an upside-down bucket of water being above your head, you might think they have lost their mind. But what happens when the bucket is spinning quickly in a circular motion?

This experiment examines something people may have already experienced in their day-to-day life yet they don't understand the force at play. So let's have a bit of fun while learning a thing or two about centripetal force.

### Apparatus:

- A bucket with a strong handle
- Water
- An open area outdoors where it's not a problem to spill some water.

### Method:

- Fill the bucket until it is around half full with water.
- Stand well clear of other people or anything else that could get in the way.
- Hold the bucket by its handle with your arm extended and start spinning it by your side towards the sky and back to the ground in a circular motion, make sure to spin it fast enough to keep the water inside the bucket. Be prepared to get a little wet as your technique improves.

There's half a bucket of water spinning upside down above your head and yet it's not falling out and getting you wet, what's going on?

This experiment makes use of something called 'centripetal force', which is a force



acting on an object moving in a circular path, directed towards the centre around which it is moving. This type of force can also be seen on roller coasters or by satellites in orbit around a planet.

As you spin the bucket you might feel that it wants to fly off in a straight line away from you (you might even accidentally let go of it), this is a demonstration of Newton's first law of motion, that an object will continue in a straight line unless an outside force (in this case your arm) acts upon it.

Probably one of the most important examples of centripetal force is the motion of our planet. The only reason Earth isn't hurtling through space in a straight line is the pull of the sun's gravity. The centripetal force of gravity forces the earth to revolve in an elliptical pattern around the sun. Without this force, the planet and humans would not last very long!





# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## The usual pro-choice bias is always on display

Sometimes you get a strong sense that mischief is afoot – that was certainly the case when I heard early last week that a draft of the US Supreme Court judgement on *Roe v Wade* had been leaked to the media. With leaks you have to figure out who benefits, and in this case the guilty party is likely to be someone on the Democrat/pro-choice/pro-abortion spectrum. I found the coverage either neutral or biased towards the pro-choice side.

On the **Hard Shoulder** (Newstalk) that evening law lecturer Jennifer Kavanagh analysed the news but I didn't find it neutral or dispassionate – she referred to “termination care”, a new one on me, and said that any woman in a modern democracy would expect this to be available. So much for all the pro-life women – erased and excluded again. Matt Mayer of *The Spectator* gave a more rounded view. He said the leak was “deeply problematic” and that a threshold had been crossed – justices could no longer trust their clerks. The left, he said, were cheering the leak, while those on the right were castigating it, but welcoming what it indicated re *Roe v Wade*. He pointed out that overturning it would not ban abortion but would give the decision-making back to the individual states where it belonged, leading to a more “vibrant democ-



People in Washington react to a leaked document on *Roe v Wade* outside the US Supreme Court. Photo: CNS

racy”, rather than such issues being decided by a few judges.

On **Ian Dale** (LBC, Tuesday) Simon Marks' report on the “extraordinary” leak was pretty balanced. He mentioned that the Democrats were fundraising just hours after the leak, and it looks like this controversy will conveniently boost their flagging ratings for the upcoming mid-term elections.

### Reported

On the **Nine O'Clock News** (RTÉ One, Tuesday) President Joe Biden was reported as saying that the judgement as leaked could threaten other rights – e.g. “the right to marry”!

If Donald Trump had said something as far out it would have carried the label ‘without evidence’. Washington Correspondent Seán Whelan described the leak as “extraordinary” and said such a thing had never happened before. So again I wondered who had crossed a line, thinking the pro-abortion cause trumped all other rights and appropriate professional behaviour.

On **Dan Wooten** (GB News, Tuesday) conservative commentator Calvin Robinson said abortion had become a lifestyle choice for some, who treated it as contraception. I remember some of our repealers saying they regarded it as

such, a necessity, during our 2018 referendum. Mr Robinson said someone needed to argue for the unborn baby and protect that body that wasn't the woman's body. He said if abortion was the answer we were asking the wrong question.

On **Spicer and Co** (Newsmax, Tuesday) Carrie Severino of the Judicial Crisis Network described the leak as “incredibly out of line” and saw it as evidence of “how low the left has sunk”. Nevertheless, she said it was not an obvious criminal offence, but maybe it could be a firing offence, unless one of the justices was responsible – these are lifetime appointments.

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### SUNDAY SEQUENCE

**BBC Radio Ulster Sunday May 15, 8.30am**

Comprehensive coverage of topical religious issues.

#### LIBERATING A CONTINENT – JOHN PAUL II AND THE FALL OF COMMUNISM

**EWTN Sunday May 15, 9pm**

A documentary on St John Paul II's role in the collapse of communism and the liberation of Central and Eastern Europe.

#### TIME

**RTÉ Two Tuesday May 17, midnight**

Continuing the fine series starring Seán Bean as a teacher in prison. Positive attitude to religious faith.

One sad aspect of the fallout of all this was reported on the **News** on BBC Radio 4 last Sunday morning – attacks on, and disruptions at, US Catholic churches by pro-abortion activists.

### Abortion issue

And so, as it poisons law, medicine, politics and journalism, the abortion issue has poisoned the National Maternity Hospital project. Last week's intense media debate was between those who want abortion availability and believe it *will* happen in the new hospital, and those who want abortion availability and fear it *won't*. Those who think it's objectionable that a maternity hospital should provide abortion at all (seeing as how it's the opposite of maternity) aren't heard. Further, you'd wonder why scarce health resources are spent on those who aren't ill

– presuming pregnancy is not a disease. I've never heard an interviewer raise that point.

Prof. Mary Higgins spoke on the **News at One** (RTÉ Radio One, Tuesday) representing the former view. She said the NMH would be a “wonderful” facility for “the women, the pregnant people and the babies of Ireland” – except the aborted ones of course, but she wasn't asked about that. Later on **Drivetime** (RTÉ Radio One) we had Dr Peter Boylan not being happy with the proposed governance arrangements because he foresaw obstacles to abortions being done on Vatican-owned land. At least he has clarity on the Church's teaching, but I suspect his fears may be groundless as questionable compromises are made.

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# Film

## Hollywood Comes to Downton

Cut glass accents, flowing gowns, tuxedoed toffs, billiard table lawns – it has to be Downton, doesn't it?

The 2019 feature went down a bomb with audiences. It had to be only a matter of time before a sequel hit the screen.

**Downton Abbey – A New Era** (PG), penned again by Julian Fellowes and with Simon Curtis directing, has an imaginative plotline. Actually, two plotlines – and some additional cast members.

But the structure and texture is the same. And Maggie Smith (the indefatigable Countess of Grantham) still gets most of the best lines.

As the film begins, she learns to her amazement that she's inherited a French villa

from an old lover who's just died. His widow (Nathalie Baye) – understandably – isn't too happy.

Her son (Jonathan Zaccai) invites some of the Downtoners to see it. They even bring Mr Carson, the butler, with them. “The French,” he observes, “are so French.” Hmm.

The parentage of Lord Grantham is called into question here. (Hugh Bonneville looks like a shadow of his former self in this role. What kind of diet has he been on?) Is he the product of his mother's illicit liaison?

Meanwhile back at the abbey the second plotline unfolds. We witness the arrival of a film director (Hugh Dancy) to make a film



Dame Maggie Smith and Michelle Dockery star in a scene from *Downton Abbey*. Photo: CNS

within its walls. The posh folk are none too enamoured of the acting profession. But they need the money.

“I'd prefer to eat pebbles,” Countess Grantham reflects. When she sees the low rent leading lady (Laura

Haddock) she observes that she has “all the charm of a verruca.” (See what I mean about the best lines?)

It's 1929. The age of the silent movie is coming to an end. So, it seems, is Ms Haddock's career. She may look like Jean Harlow but her voice is like chalk scraping off a blackboard. Lady Mary Crawley (Michelle Dockery) offers to dub her lines.

Dame Maggie says to Ms Dockery, “The best thing about films is that you can't hear them.” She adds waspishly, “It would be even better if you couldn't see them either.” Mr Bonneville snorts of the Hollywood ethos, “Actresses plastered in make-up...and actors just plastered.”

The servants get in on the fun. Ms Haddock throws tantrums as the silent movie becomes a talkie. Lord

Grantham's wife (Elizabeth McGovern) announces a health problem. Mr Carson struggles with the oppressive French climate. Our Grantham Countess shuffles off the mortal coil as if she's the Queen Mother.

Put your feet up and savour, if you will, the goings-on of the idle rich – and the busy poor – for two hours. They're an antidote to global warming, rising prices, even violence in the Ukraine.

In a world of flux it's reassuring to know some things never change. God is in his heaven and all is right with the world. We feel assured Lord Grantham's lineage will be preserved. We know his good lady will be found to be in rude health. We suspect Ms Haddock might not even be as bad as she's painted. Enjoy.

Aubrey Malone





# God makes all things new

**W**here is the risen Lord to be met? The liturgy each Sunday in this Easter season directs our thoughts to the various situations where the Lord is present and active in our midst. Over the weeks we have reflected on his presence in the mission of forgiveness, in the faith of those who do not see yet believe, in the breaking of bread and in the call of the Good Shepherd to his flock. The message of today is the presence of the Lord in the Church as a community of people inspired by the new way of love revealed in the example of Christ.

## A new creation

It rarely happens that all three Sunday Mass readings touch on the same theme. This Sunday however has the theme of newness in all three readings. As nature in May has totally recovered after the sleep of winter, we celebrate the newness of life in the liturgy of Easter and Pentecost. Creation is not an event finished in the past but is new every day, evolving and changing, dying and rising.

## Fresh hearts

Today's first reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostles. The preaching of Paul and Barnabas put fresh heart into people, encouraging them to persevere in faith. Faith gives a new, refreshing way at looking at the hardships of life. The eyes of faith keep mind and spirit ever young. Some of the youngest people I have met are well advanced in years but very young in spirit. Boredom and staleness are not part of their vocabulary.

**“Let us draw hope and strength from the Mass readings of this Sunday”**

The second reading today is from the Apocalypse, a highly imaginative but difficult book, written to sustain hope for Christians who were suffering violent persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire. After all sorts of monsters, calamity and terror, the visionary finally sees a New Jerusalem coming down from heaven, as beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband. God will make his home among them: his name is God-with-them. God spoke: “Now I am mak-

## The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



ing the whole of creation new.”

One is reminded of the exciting words of Patrick Kavanagh in his poem, *Advent*:

“And the newness of every stale thing

When we looked at it as children”

**“The Gospel is a reminder that the supernatural grace of the Holy Spirit can transform people”**

Remember how Jesus told us that unless we become like little children, we will not enter into the sort of kingdom that he came to establish. Faith retains the child's sense of wonder which goes beyond human science. The psalms encourage us to sing a new song unto the Lord.

## New commandment

This leads us to the Gospel of the day, taken from the parting words of Jesus to the apostles at the last supper. Judas had just left them. The evangelist tells us that night had fallen. This indicates that the Passion of Jesus was about to begin. However, the death of Jesus would not be a tragedy but would open the door to glory. There would have been no resurrection if there had been no death. And the resurrection opened the closed doors when the Risen Lord told the confused disciples, “As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.”

The New Jerusalem is inspired by the standard set by Jesus: “I give you a new commandment: love one another, just as I have loved you, you also must love one another.” Even some pagan philosophers in Rome admired how these Christians loved one another.

The commandment of love was not entirely new as it was there for hundreds of years in the Jewish writings. However, the teaching of Jesus was new in two ways: in the standard of love that he set; and in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus set an example of love that has no limitations, extends to enemies, totally forgiving, refusing to



Jerusalem's Old City. Catholics believe that the New Jerusalem already exists as a spiritual community in Heaven, the Church triumphant.

be poisoned by the wrongs done by others, generous in sharing and caring, and is self-sacrificing. These ideals are beyond natural instinct but become possible by the supernatural grace of the Holy Spirit. “By this love that you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples.”

## Walking with the Spirit

Pope Francis has invited us to take a walk with the Risen Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That is what the Synod means. We are asked to ponder and pray as individuals, to avail of discussions with other people, perhaps to respond to a questionnaire. What is the future of the Church? What

does it mean to you? Are you hurt? Disappointed? Do you see glimpses of hope? Do you wish to let everything stay the same? Or are you hoping for changes.

Let us draw hope and strength from the Mass readings of this Sunday

Paul and Barnabas put fresh heart into people, encouraging them to persevere in the Faith.

The visionary who wrote the Book of Revelation saw the holy city, and the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven. In this mystical city God sets up home and is known as God-is-with-them. “Now I am making the whole of creation new”.

The Gospel is a reminder that the supernatural grace of the Holy Spirit can trans-

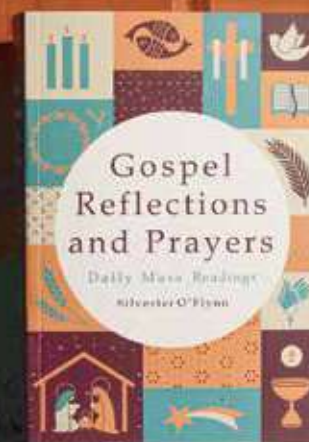
form people into Spirit-filled missionaries inspiring people into a kingdom of love, truth, justice and peace.

The greatest proof of the resurrection is not the fact that the tomb of Jesus was empty but the transformation of the Christian com-

munity into a new way of thinking, acting, forgiving, sharing, caring, making peace and praying. No room here for mediocrity or minimalism. “By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples.”

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## Prayer

O God, you can make all things new. The prophet Ezekiel promised that you would remove our hearts of stone and put a new spirit within us.

As we look forward to Pentecost, we pray that you will remove the hardness of

heart which refuses to forgive: the mediocrity which settles for the bare minimum; and the selfishness which fails to care and share.

Send forth your Spirit to renew the face of the earth. Enkindle within us the fire of your love.



# Spirituality – A place where all believers can come together

**W**here can all of us believers come together beyond the divisions created by history, dogma, denomination, and religion? Where is there a place all people of sincere heart can find common ground and worship together? That place is found in the ecumenical and interreligious pursuit of spirituality, and our theology schools and seminaries need to create this place within their academic vision and structures.

**“They are the rule book for how we need to discern faith and religious practice as we live out our discipleship”**

What is spirituality as an academic discipline within our theology schools and seminaries? It has actually been around a long time, though under different names. In Catholic circles, formerly it was handled piecemeal as moral theology, liturgy, ascetical theology, and as mystical and devotional literature. In Protestant and Evangelical circles (where, until recently, mystical and devotional literature were distrusted) there were courses on discipleship, worship, and Christian ethics.

## Study

So what is spirituality as an area of study? At the risk of a vast over-simplification, let me propose an analogy as a way of understanding how spirituality relates to theology



**Fr Rolheiser**

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

and dogma. Spirituality is related to theology and dogma akin to how an actual game of sports is related to the rule book of that sport.

For example, for the game of baseball there is a rulebook, one initially codified and then periodically amended through the many years the game has been played. To play the game today one has to stay within those rules. There is no game outside those rules. However, while these rules critically dictate the lines within which the game has to be played, they are not the game itself. They merely dictate how it is to be played and ensure that it is played in a fair manner.

## Critical role

In essence, that is the critical role of theology and dogma. They are the rule book for how we need to discern faith and religious practice as we live out our discipleship, if we are legitimately to call ourselves Christian. But, while they make the rules, spirituality is the

actual game; it's how in actual practice we live out our faith and discipleship.

Thus, spirituality takes in morality and ethics, worship, ascetical theology, mystical theology, devotional theology, and everything else we do in living out our discipleship. Theology makes the rules, while spirituality tries to instil the motivation, the fire, the hope, and the practical guidance for the game itself, lived discipleship.

## Apologia

I offer this little apologia for spirituality as an academic discipline in view of affirming that spirituality is that place where believers can come together in a common heart beyond the long-standing divisions created by history, dogma, ecclesiology, and different notions of faith. Spirituality is a place where we can meet in a communion of faith that takes us (at least in that place and moment) beyond our different histories, our different denominations, our dif-

ferent religions, and our different notions of faith.

**“Theology makes the rules, while spirituality tries to instil the motivation, the fire, the hope, and the practical guidance for the game itself, lived discipleship”**

I know this is true because I have seen and am seeing it first-hand. Oblate School of Theology, where I teach, has an Institute of Contemporary Spirituality in which I see Catholics, Protestants, and Evangelicals of every persuasion studying together, searching together, and praying together in a way that denominational differences simply don't enter into. Everyone, irrespective of denomination, is searching for the same things: What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus today? How does one genuinely pray? How do we sustain faith in a secular world that so easily swallows us whole? How can we pass our faith on to our own children? How can we be both prophet and healer in our bitterly divided world? What

is a faith-based response to injustice? How does someone age and die well? What insights and grace can we draw from the deep wells of Christian mysticism and hagiography to help guide our lives?

## Searching

Everyone has the same questions and everyone is searching at the same places. Denominationalism recedes when spirituality takes over. Moreover, this doesn't just pertain to being together beyond the differences of denominations among Christians; the same holds true vis-a-vis our separation from other world religions. The questions we are grappling with as Christians are the same questions that Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Taoist, and other believers are grappling with, and they are looking to us for help even as we are looking to them for help. In spirituality, Christians learn from Sufi Islamic mystics, even as Islamic believers delve into Mariology and Christian mysticism. Buddhist, Hindu, and Taoist believers pick up the Spiritual Exercise of St Ignatius, even as Christians learn from various Buddhist and Hindu methods of meditation.

Jesus assured us that in God's house there are many rooms. Spirituality is one of those rooms. Spirituality is the room where all who are caught-up in a common need, common search, and common hope, can bracket for a time their denominational and religious differences and search together.

Don't get me wrong, this doesn't take away with our differences; but it gives us a place where we can be in a community of life and faith with each other, beyond those differences.

**“At the risk of a vast over-simplification, let me propose an analogy as a way of understanding how spirituality relates to theology and dogma”**





# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## The 'Walking Man' arrives at last



Set of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, 1960.

**Alberto Giacometti: Marvellous Reality**, a bilingual catalogue edited by Émilie Bouvard and others (Grimaldi Forum, Monaco/Fondation Giacometti, Paris, €35.00)

**Exhibition Giacometti from Life**, curators: Sean Rainbird and Janet McLean (National Gallery of Ireland); Catherine Grenier and Thierry Pautot (Fondation Giacometti), continues to September 4 2022, Beit Wing (Rooms 6–10). (Intending visitors need to book an exhibition ticket on-line.)

**Peter Costello**

It has been a very long time since any works by the Swiss-born painter and sculptor Alberto Giacometti, who was long resident in Paris, were seen in Dublin.

More than 50 works by Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966) are displayed in the first exhibition of the artist's work held at the National Gallery of Ireland. It includes bronze and plaster sculptures, paintings, drawings, and prints. So this show provides a unique opportunity to see examples of his work covering every period of his life.

### Highlights

The exhibition highlights the artist's close working relationships with family members and friends who modelled for him. But it does more than that.

Much of his work as a sculptor is characterised by a typical "walking man" figure, ever advancing but getting nowhere. Having seen some of his works in London, before even setting foot in this present exhibition, I associated Giacometti in my mind with the imaginative world of our own Samuel Beckett. I was

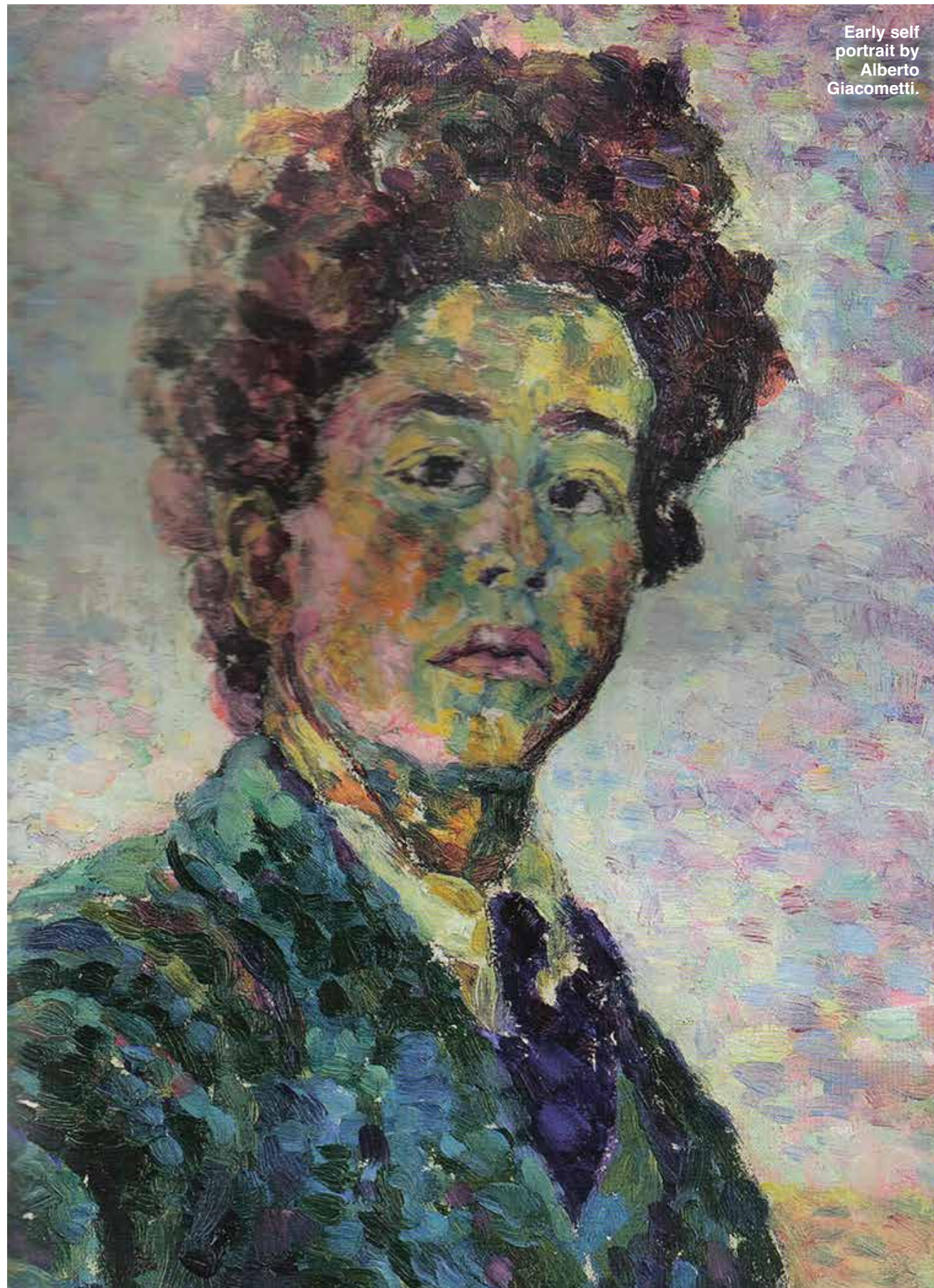
delighted then to learn from the excellent catalogue that accompanies the show that Giacometti had known Beckett as a friend who visited his studio.

Hugo Daniel, of the *Fondation Giacometti*, comments on their friendship. "It goes back to 1937 and developed in the post-war period. The two artists liked to meet in the endless evenings in the cafés of Montparnasse, then to stroll around Paris at night. Their deep kinship brought their works closer together, and this was expressed in an exceptional collaboration." This resulted in Giacometti, designing a stage setting for *Waiting for Godot* at the Théâtre de l'Odéon in Paris in 1961.

**“He is a man of mid-century, of those artists and writers who flourished between 1935 and 1965, a cohort of culture with their one special international identity”**

Much is made of Giacometti's relationship with Jean-Paul Sartre, but in reality (from an Irish perspective at least) the connection with Beckett is really far more vital, or so it seems to me. Many of the insights gained by critics into Beckett's vision can be pursued as well in the work of Giacometti.

This is only one of the surprises that the exhibition reveals. Giacometti began



Early self-portrait by Alberto Giacometti.

to emerge as an artist in the 1930s, but it was not really until he returned to Paris in the later 1940s that he became prominent on the international scene.

I think he is best seen not as an artist of the first half of the 20th century or the second half. He is a man of mid-century, of those artists and writ-

ers who flourished between 1935 and 1965, a cohort of culture with their one special international identity. (*Mid-century* was indeed the title in 1961 of one of the last novels of John Dos Passos.)

### Activities

This show takes the visitor from early life and activities

in his native Switzerland bordering with Italy, to his last days in 1966. What distinguished them all is his intense focus on individuals and their character. His technique was an attempt to give expression, not to a generalised image, but a deeply individual one. To appreciate his vision as an artist he

has to be approached with patience and attention on the viewer's part which has to be quite as intense as the artist's was.

### Smile

There is nothing spectacular in this show. The pieces are all less than life size, even tiny. One of the most inter-



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.

## in Ireland

The Walking Man II.  
Fondation  
Giacometti



esting is a bust of Simone de Beauvoir, in which that most flamboyant and larger than life writer is modelled on a miniature scale which still captures her appearance in an extraordinary way, which made me smile.

**“But what is on display is very engaging and well worth the time needed to explore it”**

His paintings seem less revealing. But there is an interesting point noticed by those photographers who made colour images of him at work. They observed that the artist's studio was in reality filled with colour, though his art works seem

to exist in a subdued grey, brown, tobacco-coloured realm.

One realises that if Giacometti had lived a little longer he might well have reverted to his very earliest years in which he added colour to some of his own father's sculptures to humanise them. If he had lived as long as Picasso we might have seen the development of a very different artist.

### Engagement

But what is on display is very engaging and well worth the time needed to explore it. This is yet another of the shows from abroad which have characterised the administration of Sean Rainbird as director, whose engagement comes to an end this year. Over the years we have had a lot to thank him for.

## Making life choices with Ignatius Loyola

**Trust Your Feelings: Learning how to Make Choices with Ignatius of Loyola,**

by Nikolaas Sintobin SJ  
(Messenger Publications,  
€12.95/£11.95)

### Peter Costello

This is the second of author Nikolaas Sintobin's books to come to us for review. The first was warmly commended to readers, and this new title is quite as good as the first, and can also be warmly recommended.

Sintobin brings to his vocation his experiences from his earlier vocation as a lawyer, as a seeker of solutions. He writes in an immediate and direct way that makes his observations very accessible. Nothing in the pages is fudged by “theology-speak”.

**“Take for instance what writes discernment when you are angry, or the section just before that on discernment when ‘you are in seventh heaven’”**

“Discernment” was what the saint encouraged, and Sintobin adapts Ignatius's way of doing this in a series of chapters that take for their focus very real life situations, which many of us will have encountered (and may now wish we had these pages before us at the time).

Take for instance what he writes about discernment when you are angry, or the section just before that on discernment



Nikolaas Sintobin .

when “you are in seventh heaven”.

I was struck, as a life-long researcher, in what he writes about career choices facing individuals, in the instance of a scientist whose whole being is devoted to his research, to the process of discovery. Offered a promotion which will take up the “career ladder” but away from actual research, does he choose the promotion to more money and to power, or does he follow his heart in staying with the research he loves and which he finds completely fulfilling.

### Ambitious

For a creative person, an artist, writer, musician, the choice is obvious. Yet

the choice of their true metier often brings them contempt from the more ambitious. But ask yourself: would you, in your heart of hearts, want to be Elon Musk?

**“The Spirit of God does not allow himself to be enclosed in a single faith or church”**

“Discernment requires,” the author says in nearly the last words of the book, “you to listen to the voice that speaks in your heart. Christians believe that this voice is the voice of God. It points out to each of us, to

everyone, the path of life.”

Earlier I was struck by this observation: “Discernment is not only for Christians. The Spirit of God does not allow himself to be enclosed in a single faith or church. Christians believe that the spirit of God wants to be present in every person of good will. This applied to people who adhere to a different religion or philosophy of life ...

“For non-Christians, the same condition applies, so that their discernment is sufficiently refined and reliable. They must also ensure that their hearts are formed and nurtured within the particular framework of their own tradition.”

Truly there is something for everyone in this little book.

## 34th International Hopkins Festival

July 22 to 28, Newbridge College Theatre, Newbridge Co. Kildare

### Peter Costello

“A bright gem in the literary world!” according to Patrick Samway SJ, this year the 34th G. M. Hopkins Festival is to be held. This is a very real triumph of poetry, art and music over world-closing circumstances. Poet Desmond Egan, the founder and moving spirit of the festival, with his band of helpers and supporters have brought one of Ireland's major summer cultural events through the Covid crisis to (hopefully) the renewal of “normality”.

Hopkins Festival 2022 Programme is now available, and the full details can be found on-line by searching G.M. Hopkins Festival 2022. The Hopkins event is the only festival devoted to aspects of Catholic culture in its widest relations with poetry and spirituality in Ireland, and deserves wide support.

The Hopkins Festival Opening will be presided over by UK Ambassador, Paul Johnston, a token of the continuing cultural relations between Ireland and its neighbours. Among the events there will be a Tra-

ditional Irish Music Concert; a Creative Writing Workshop directed by Patricia Cleary Miller (Rockhurst University Kansas ); an international poetry reading; Barry McGovern appears giving his acclaimed interpretation of the works of Samuel Beckett (“An act for our times!”), said one critic); and above all a multilingual translation workshop, and with a fine international array of speakers. Come along on the day of your choice.







# Leisure time

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— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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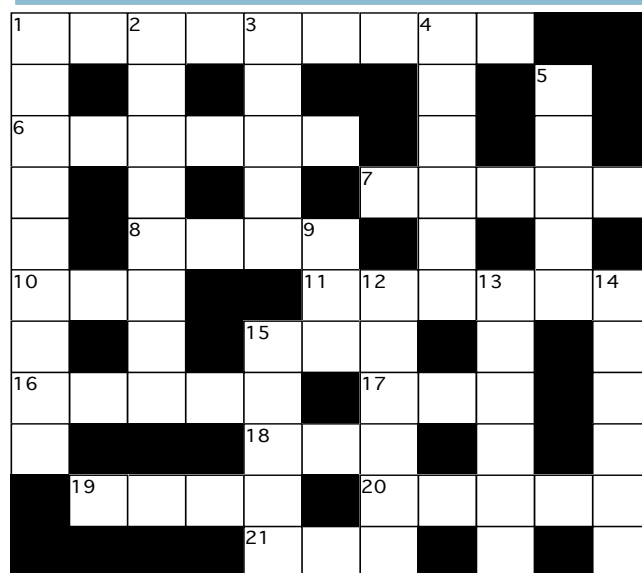
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One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

## Crossword Junior

Children's 432



### Across

- 1 Savings box that looks like a farm animal (5,4)  
6 Hopping mad (6)  
7 Little (5)  
8 We breathe and smell through this (4)  
10 You cook food in it (3)  
11 Snoozing (6)  
15 Paintings and other creative works (3)  
16 More pleasant (5)  
17 A gorilla, perhaps (3)  
18 Take something by force (3)  
19 Ball-point pen (4)  
20 Not heavy (5)  
21 Tiny (3)  
1 huge hedgehog (9)  
2 Enormous (8)  
3 Slang word for Americans (5)  
4 Usual, as you would expect (6)  
5 Not true (5)  
9 You listen with this (3)  
12 Jesus was born in this farm building (6)  
13 Some toys use the \_\_\_\_\_ from batteries (6)  
14 Captain Hook was one (6)  
15 It's shot from a bow (5)

### Down

- 1 Spiny animal, a bit like a

## SOLUTIONS, MAY 5

GORDIUS NO. 557

**Across** — 1 Cab 3 Nightingale 8 Locust 9 Leave out 10 Ideal 11 Lined 13 Piano tuner 15 Cure-all 16 Nomadic 21 Digit 23 Queen of the May 25 Virtue 26 Neanderthal 27 Rot

**Down** — 1 Calling card 2 Bachelor 3 Nasal 4 Holiday 5 Novel 6 Abound 7 Eft 12 Discernment 13 Pilot 14 Odour 17 Director 18 Encrypt 19 Agatha 22 Trend 23 Quill 24 Own

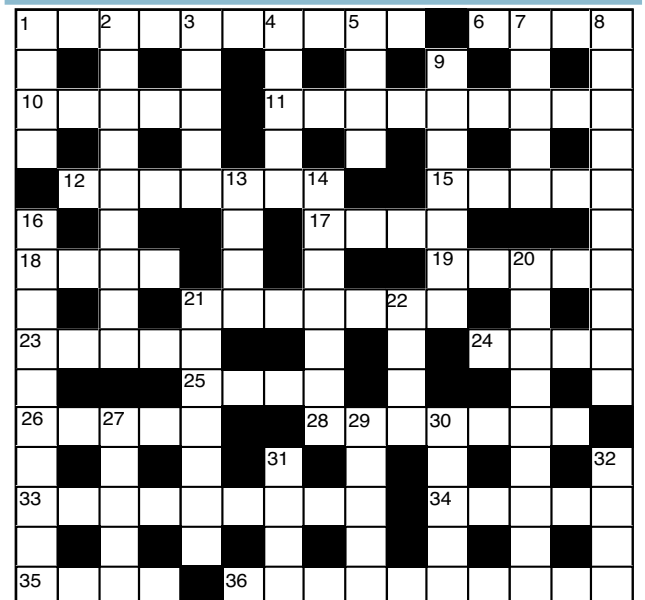
CHILDREN'S No. 431

**Across** — 1 Fruit tree 7 Blister 8 Level 9 Emerald 13 Ninety 15 Setter 18 First 19 Expand 20 Meteor 21 Yachts

**Down** — 1 Falling 2 Uneven 3 Tablet 4 Raise 5 Extra 6 World 10 Mystery 11 Rat 12 Lee 14 Earned 16 Trash 17 Rides 18 Feet

## Crossword

Gordius 558



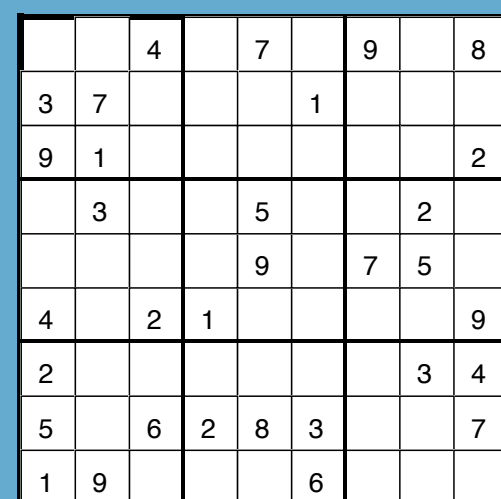
### Across

- 1 Stranded - aloft, with no booze? (4,3,3)  
6 Heroic tale, saga (4)  
10 Distinctive parts of a bird - or of an angel (5)  
11 & 33a Enumerate your benedictions and be grateful for what you have (5,4,9)  
12 & 35a From the Latin, a reminder that life is short (7,4)  
15 Inert gas (5)  
17 & 26a Tragically killed in marine activity (4,2,3)  
18 Zesty taste (4)  
19 Our planet (5)  
21 Get a keyboard instrument from an evil car (crashed) (7)  
23 Copper or lead, for example (5)  
24 Operatic song (4)  
25 Convenience, comfort (4)  
26 See 17 across  
28 Gnawing creatures (7)  
33 See 11 across  
34 Concerning the kidneys (5)  
35 See 12 across  
36 Bespoke, not off-the-peg (6-4)  
3 The central walkway in a church (5)  
4 Historic gold coin (5)  
5 Total victory or defeat (4)  
7 Conceited (5)  
8 One addressed in an epistle may have come from a rich nation! (10)  
9 The first course of a meal (7)  
13 Cuticle (4)  
14 Surname of Sir Laurence, extraordinary actor after whom one of the three theatres in the UK's National Theatre is named (7)  
16 In which a philately collection is kept (5,5)  
20 Fictional land created by Anthony Hope, in 'The Prisoner of Zenda', for example (9)  
21 Scour, purge (7)  
22 Christian name of children's author Ms Blyton (4)  
27 Completely smooth (5)  
29 Songbird - a type of thrush (5)  
30 Mistake (5)  
31 Historic Peruvian native (4)  
32 Adhesive (4)

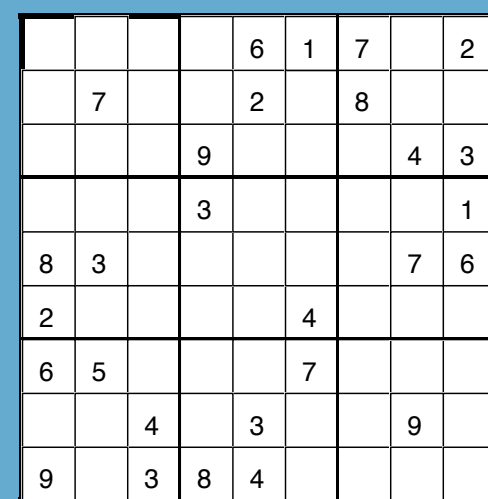
## Sudoku Corner

432

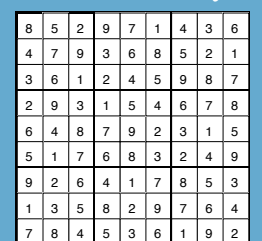
Easy



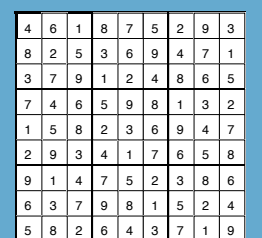
Hard



Last week's Easy 431



Last week's Hard 430





## Notebook

Fr Conor McDonough OP



# Maintaining the sacramental status quo is simply impossible

**IN J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S** *The Lord of the Rings* there is a wonderful passage when the wizard Gandalf is face to face with Denethor, the ruler of Gondor. In the face of the threat of the evil Sauron, Denethor sees it as his task to defend his kingdom, and above all to keep the walls of its capital. He will consider no plans that risk those walls. He's the Steward of Gondor, and he puts the preservation of its walls above every other goal.

But Gandalf's stewardship is of a different kind, and he takes Denethor to task:

"The rule of no realm is mine, neither of Gondor nor any other, great or small. But all worthy things that are in peril as the world now stands, those are my care. And for my part, I shall not wholly fail of my task, though Gondor should perish, if anything passes through this night that can still grow fair or bear fruit and flower again in days to come. For I also am a steward. Did you not know?"

## Important lesson

I'm convinced there's an important lesson in all this for the Church in Ireland. Not just an important lesson, but a vital lesson, a lesson on which the future life of the Church depends.

There are many in the Church who, for understandable reasons,



Ian McKellen plays Gandalf in the screen adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*. Photo: CNS

want above all to keep their local church open, to maintain the Mass times with which they're familiar. To anyone who has been paying attention to vocations figures in recent years, though, it's clear that maintaining the sacramental status quo is simply impossible. Parish priests are already overstretched with the tasks of maintaining worship in several centres, and this constant pressure means it's difficult for these priests to lead missionary outreach or to build meaningful Christian com-

munities. They're simply run off their feet.

All this means too that young men who are considering the priesthood fail to encounter a healthy life-

style among priests, and see instead levels of demand and stress that are so high it becomes difficult for them to imagine flourishing in that life.

Protecting the walls and maintaining the status quo feels like the safe option, but I'm convinced it is far from safe, and I expect that wise leaders in the Church will have to make tough decisions in the near future about the closure of churches and the merging of parishes.

## Respond

How should we respond to this when it begins to affect us? We could protest, and demand that the bishop change nothing, but that approach will bear little fruit. Instead I propose that we follow Gandalf's approach: not to focus on maintaining buildings and timetables, but to steward instead the *life* of the Church. This means that each of us focuses on building up and nourishing living communities of

faith, in our homes, at our schools, with our friends. It might mean getting involved in local prayer groups or the St Vincent de Paul. It might mean inviting your faith-friends to meet up in your house for coffee mornings or book clubs.

Nourishing the life of the Church can take many forms, but it's something we all can do, and must do. By our Baptism, we are all stewards. Our local church might close, and that will be painful, but if our focus is on doing our bit to preserve the life of the Church in all its richness, then the closure of a building will matter little.

The Church in Ireland is entering a dark night. We all know it. The question for each of us is what we can do to make sure the survival of whatever "can still grow fair or bear fruit and flower again in days to come". And in this task He is with us always.

## Au revoir for now...

This is my last piece for a while with *The Irish Catholic*. I've been tasked by the Dominican Order in Ireland with developing our online preaching, and I want to give that my full attention over the coming year. It has been an enormous pleasure for me to write for this paper, and I'm grateful to readers for their many kind words of encouragement. I'm grateful too to the staff of the paper who had to put up with my occasional tardiness and forgetfulness – thanks for being so patient!



## THIS EASTERTIDE, PLEASE HELP THE CHURCH IN UKRAINE

The Little Way Association is supporting the church in war-torn Ukraine. A grateful bishop whom we have helped writes: "Immediately after the beginning of the war we set up 450 places for internally displaced persons (women and children) from all over Ukraine in the houses of our diocese. In each facility they receive safe accommodation, meals, as well as clothing, hygiene products, etc. A further 1,200 places have been set up in the parish and family houses throughout the diocese. We wish you and all our benefactors God's richest blessings!"

The appeals for assistance continue to arrive at Sacred Heart House. A bishop in south-west Ukraine writes: "We are united and everyone wants to help those in need. Today we have many refugees. On the ground, in every city, town and village, we receive people who have left their homes because of the war. We provide them with housing and various kinds of help (food, hygiene items, clothes, etc.)."

"We try to help with humanitarian aid both in our territory and in the territory where hostilities are taking place. We share everything we can. As we are unfortunately not able to meet the current needs, we are asking you for your financial support for the procurement of the necessary items for the needy people who have been affected by the war or who have had to flee from the war zones."

**This Eastertide, please give what you can for the families, clergy and religious of Ukraine. Every cent you donate will be gratefully received and sent without deduction to help the suffering people of Ukraine. To donate online go to [littlewayassociation.enthouse.com/ukraine](http://littlewayassociation.enthouse.com/ukraine)**



"Jesus wills that we give alms to Him as to one poor and needy. He puts Himself as it were at our mercy; He will take nothing but what we give Him from our heart, and the very least trifle is precious in His sight." ~ St Therese

## MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS

In these fraught times, missionary priests rely more than ever on stipends for their daily subsistence and for helping the poorest of their communities. The Little Way Association will convey your stipends and your intentions to the clergy overseas.

**We like to send a minimum of €5 or more for each Mass**

## WELLS NEEDED

Missionaries constantly appeal to The Little Way for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean water, the lack of which causes much illness and many medical needs. On average, women in Africa and Asia walk around three hours every day to fetch water, often in scorching heat. Can you help provide a well?

Your kind gift will be forwarded intact and gratefully received.



Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION**  
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR  
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

€..... **UKRAINE EMERGENCY APPEAL**  
€..... **HUNGRY, SICK & DEPRIVED**  
€..... **WELLS AND CLEAN WATER**  
€..... **MASS OFFERINGS**  
(Please state no. of Masses.....)  
€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

To donate online go to  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

**DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.**