

The Irish Catholic

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Irish pilgrims caught in Holy Land war pray for peace

Jason Osborne in Nazareth

Irish pilgrims in the Holy Land as war broke out this week say they are praying for peace, in the hope that escalating violence will not continue.

A group of 52 pilgrims led by Marian Pilgrimages and *The Irish Catholic* arrived in Jerusalem on Wednesday, just three days before terrorists in Gaza launched a combined rocket and incursion attack on southern Israel.

The Palestinian militant group Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on Israel, with its fighters entering communities near the Gaza Strip, killing hundreds of residents and taking dozens of hostages.

The Irish pilgrims were 100km away in Bethlehem, and the following day – as planned – moved 200km north to the childhood home of Jesus, Nazareth.

Galway pilgrim Maria Ó hAodha said the entire group was focusing on praying for peace while continuing to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

"It's very special to be here in the Holy Land, and to visit all the sites where Christ lived and preached and I think we're privileged to be here to be unified with the local people and be so aware of their historical problems, but

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Devastation in Gaza



Palestinians inspect damages in the aftermath of Israeli strikes in Gaza City, October 9, following a surprise attack on Israel from militant group Hamas.

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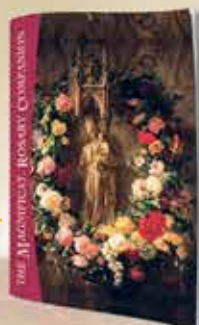
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Irish Holy Land pilgrims pray for peace

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obviously now that things are currently so unstable.

"I think we're in a privileged position to be here with them in solidarity," she told *The Irish Catholic*.

Monaghan based pilgrim Patrick Grant described the pilgrimage as "incredibly special" despite the tension caused by the situation in the south.

"While the conflict is causing uncertainty, I think that it is helping us to enter into it [the pilgrimage] on a different level, and helping to remind us to put our trust in the Lord - that he is good and he is going to take care of us and the land that he comes from," Mr Grant said.

Editor of *The Irish Catho-*

lic and author of *A Pilgrimage Guide to the Holy Land* Michael Kelly - who is travelling with the group - said that pilgrims are "obviously feeling anxious seeing the news from the southern border, but also trying to make the most of what will be for most pilgrims a once-in-a-lifetime trip".

Mr Kelly said that officials at the Irish Embassy in Tel Aviv had been in regular contact offering consular support for the pilgrims.

Most commercial airlines cancelled flights immediately, so the pilgrims were unable to leave the Holy Land early but were due to return to Dublin on a direct El Al flight today (Thursday).

Pray for peace in the Holy Land after horrific attacks

There is a dialogue in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring* which has been running around my mind during my time in Jerusalem:

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo. "So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

I've been involved in more than 30 pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and occasionally someone trips and falls, or has a difficult day or two after inadvertently drinking water from the River Jordan.

But nothing could have prepared me for the experience of the past few days in the Holy Land. Our pilgrim group of 52 souls were celebrating Mass with spiritual director Fr Conor McDonough OP in Bethany - where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead - when phones began to buzz with news of incoming rockets from the Gaza Strip.

I will confess to not being overly nervous, I've been here many times and experienced this before. But, we quickly organised our pilgrims for the short trip back to Bethlehem and the West Bank where they would be 100% safe. We returned quickly, and tried not to alarm people.

Horror

By this stage, a story of epic horror was emerging as it soon became obvious that hundreds of Hamas militants had crossed the border into Israel and were murdering and kidnapping people with apparent impunity.

What emerged on our television screens could only be described as diabolic, and I hope - dear reader - that you were not exposed. Suffice to say, the capacity of human beings to mistreat and ignore the

"The capacity of human beings to mistreat and ignore the inherent human dignity of one another is a painful reminder of the presence of evil in our world"



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



Smoke rises following Israeli strikes in Gaza, October 7, 2023. The strikes were in retaliation after Hamas breached Israeli security along the Gaza border at dawn and entered border communities amidst a barrage of over 2,000 rockets that reached Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Photo: OSV News photo/Mohammed Salem, Reuters

inherent human dignity of one another is a painful reminder of the presence of evil in our world.

The following day, we moved our pilgrims to the north of Israel, to Nazareth, with the gentle hand of our intrepid guide the legendary Bethlehemite Louis Michel.

Mercifully, our pilgrims were never in any danger and we were able to continue our progress in the north around the Sea of Galilee with minimum inconvenience.

Of course, the question that no-one knows the answer to is what the consequences of the weekend's horrific incidents will bring. Already the Holy Land is now in a state of war, many people will lose their lives and there will be widespread destruction as Israel has vowed to dismantle the capability of the Hamas terrorist organisation that has ruled the people of Gaza since 2007. Of course, the people of Gaza, most of whom are peace-loving, have no

choice in their despotic rulers. Frequent protests against the movement are crushed with ruthlessness.

Local people here worry that it will not be a short war, and that will be very

bad news for everyone. All we can do is pray, pray for the peace of Jerusalem that in the words of St John Paul II God will grant peace to the land he chose as his own.

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Exclusion zones legislation a 'draconian' restriction on free expression – Bishop Doran

Ruadhán Jones

Proposed exclusion zone legislation aimed at silencing pro-life witness is a "draconian" restriction on free expression and freedom of belief, Bishop Kevin Doran has said.

The 'Safe Access Zones Bill', currently before the Dáil, proposes 100-metre exclusion zones outside GPs clinics in which pro-life prayer and witness would be banned.

While the legislation exempts statements made within church buildings, it includes church grounds that fall within the 100-metre exclusion zone.

As the bill includes all GP's clinics, not just those performing abortions, churches and cathedrals around the country could face penalties

if they display pro-life related material on church grounds.

Bishop Doran, chair of the bishops' council for life, called the bill "draconian" and "fundamentally unjust", saying the constitution provides people the right to profess their faith publicly "not just in church buildings".

"The Church is not looking for special treatment," Dr Doran told *The Irish Catholic*. "The Church is looking for respect for freedom of religion and freedom of conscience in society – not inside church buildings."

He said that "our problem as Christians is with the whitening away of human rights and religious rights in the public space".

"It's a concern for Christians because it is a fundamentally unjust bill, precisely because it infringes rights to

freedom of expression and freedom of religion."

These rights are guaranteed under the Irish constitution and the UN Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees people the right to freedom of expression, the Bishop of Elphin pointed out.

He added that the bishops recognise there are times when rights have to be restricted to protect others.

But the "point is that the Garda authorities have made it perfectly clear over a number of years that there is no issue that they can't or couldn't deal with under an existing legislation".

"This draconian restriction on the right to freedom of expression is not serving anybody else's right which would otherwise be deprived," the bishops stressed.

President to visit Pope Francis for fourth time

Chai Brady

President Michael D. Higgins is set to meet Pope Francis next week during a visit to Rome, *The Irish Catholic* can reveal.

The President will meet Pope Francis in the Vatican on Thursday, October 19. This will be the fourth time they have met and it is expected they will discuss issues such as climate change and migration.

A spokesperson for Áras an Uachtaráin told this paper that at the President's meeting with Pope Francis "it is anticipated that they will discuss a number of issues of mutual interest, including climate change and migration."

He added that President Higgins has welcomed Pope Francis' exhortation *Laudate Deum*, which is a follow-up to his encyclical on the environment *Laudato Si'*, published in 2015.

lished in 2015.

The meeting is taking place in the context of a wider visit to Rome by the President, where he will speak a number of times at the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and also hold a bilateral meeting with the President of Italy.

While in the Vatican, the President is also expected to lay a wreath at the commemorative plaque for Msgr Hugh O'Flaherty in Campo Santo. Msgr O'Flaherty is well known for saving thousands of Jewish lives during World War II and his resistance to Nazism. He was nicknamed 'The Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican' due to his ability to evade traps set by German troops.

The President will also visit the Pontifical Irish College, where he will view the exhibition 'Ireland and the birth of Europe'.

Kanye West spotted sporting NI Catholic school's jumper



Staff Reporter

World-famous musician Kanye West has been spotted wearing a West Belfast Catholic school's sports jacket in an online video.

In footage posted on Instagram by fellow rapper Ty Dolla \$ign, the award-winning star can be seen wearing a top with the crest of St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School.

Former St Mary's pupil and ex-Northern Ireland footballer Ryan McLaughlin was among those who shared an image of the star sporting the top on X,

formerly known as Twitter, writing: "Why is Kanye West wearing a St Mary's Top?"

St Mary's principal told *The Irish News* that there had been "great excitement" around the school after the footage appeared.

"The top he is wearing was designed for the school for the MacLarnon Cup final on St Patrick's Day in 2008."

Speculating as to how Kanye West came to be wearing the jacket, Mrs Kelly suggested that as many students went to Philadelphia in 2008, one may have been left behind or given to a charity shop.

'I scream, you scream...'



Students from Scoil Mhuire Mount Sackville school enjoy a '99' ice-cream, as they help the National Transport Authority and Dublin Bus launch the new Route 99 bus service for Phoenix park on October 6.

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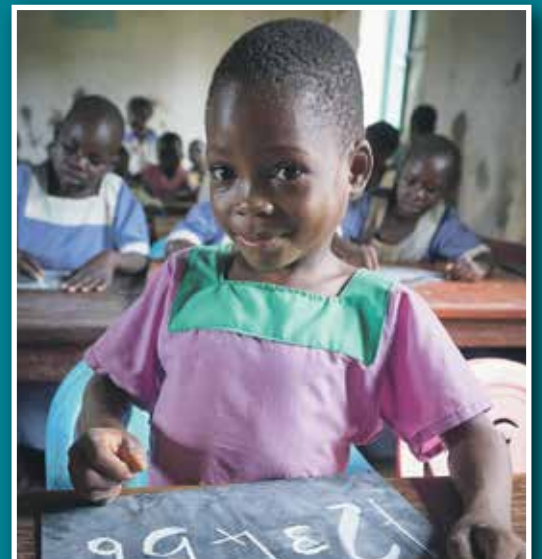


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Pope's climate denial warning not issue for Irish Church says Trócaire

Chai Brady

Denial of climate change is not an issue for the Church in Ireland, Trócaire has insisted, following Pope Francis' warning in his new exhortation on the environment that "scarcely reasonable opinions" on climate change exist "even within the Catholic Church".

The Pope published *Laudate Deum* on the feast day of St Francis of Assisi, October 4, which builds on his encyclical *Laudato Si'* – published in 2015. In it he criticises the inadequate response to climate change and highlighted that it is the most vulnerable who are impacted the most.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Jane Mellett, the *Laudato Si'* Officer in Trócaire welcomed the exhortation as a "timely reminder of the perilous situation we find ourselves in as a global

community".

"We echo Pope Francis's call for world leaders to take real and meaningful action at the upcoming COP28 conference and find 'binding forms of energy transition'; 'that they may demonstrate the nobility of politics and not its shame' (LD, 60)," she said.

In the exhortation the Pope said: "I feel obliged to make these clarifications, which may appear obvious, because of certain dismissive and scarcely reasonable opinions that I encounter, even within the Catholic Church."

Ms Mellett said she has not found this to be the case in the Irish Church, saying "the people I meet are very concerned and want to know what they can do, our Church leaders have also spoken out strongly on the issue and have urged parish communities, as well as global leaders, to take action".

"I think the Pope is referring to climate denialism in other parts of the global Church. How to respond to climate denial? The evidence speaks for itself. The impacts of the climate crisis are unfortunately now clear for all to see and experience and they will get worse," she said.

Trócaire has also called on parish communities to organise prayer services prior to COP28. The charity offered to liaise with communities in order to create awareness and to encourage prayer and action on this issue.

Ms Mellett added: "We cannot continue to ignore the devastating impacts of the climate crisis on people in the global south. Every day in Trócaire we see how droughts, flooding and cyclones are destroying people's lives and pushing them further into poverty."

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Euthanasia 'a statement of no-hope', Donal Walsh's mother warns

Ruadhán Jones

Society must promote hope, but assisted suicide is a "statement of no hope", the mother of inspirational teen Donal Walsh told a joint committee considering a bill to legalise euthanasia.

Speaking before the Joint Committee on Assisted Dying on Tuesday, Elma Walsh, whose son Donal died from terminal cancer in 2013, praised the quality of palliative care he received.

She warned that introducing assisted suicide would

"undermine the trust placed in doctors when it comes to end-of-life care".

Ms Walsh told the committee that while "society must promote hope, assisted suicide is a message of no hope".

"Palliative care allowed Donal to spread a message of hope and reduce suicides," she continued.

"Telling young people that their life itself is valuable, no matter how uphill it seems at the time, and legalising assisted dying at the same time is to bring about a clash

of cultures."

Ms Walsh pleaded with legislators and politicians to avert the "bizarre situation" where on "one hand we are putting out messages of suicide prevention and on the other we would be offering it".

"For some we will be saying your life is not living, suicide will be the expectation not an 'option'."

Ms Walsh said she "feared" what could be set in motion by the committee should they support TD Gino Kenny's bill to legalise assisted suicide.

Irish bishops call for prayers for persecuted Christians

Staff reporter

The Irish bishops' conference has called for dioceses and parishes to dedicate time to praying for persecuted Christians and to raise the issue with their political repre-

sentatives.

In a statement following the bishops' autumn conference, they said "the continuing persecution of Christians in so many parts of the world is a reason for Irish people to take steps to show solidarity with them through prayer, the sharing of information

and to advocate for them with politicians and the wider community".

The bishops encouraged parishes to mark 'Red Wednesday', a day devoted to remembering persecuted Christians, on November 22 to highlight the plight of the thousands of believers who witness to their faith with

their lives each year.

In addition, the bishops welcomed Tánaiste Micheál Martin's call for the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority to respect their obligations to respect the rights of Christians in the Holy Land.

A deacon of hope...



Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin is pictured with deacons Davis Haberkorn and Francesco Campiello from the Armagh Diocesan Missionary Seminary in Dundalk, after their ordination to the diaconate in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, on Sunday, October 8.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Creelough victims 'forever in our hearts'

At a service marking the one-year anniversary of the tragic explosion in Creelough, Co. Donegal, Fr John Joe Duffy said the memories of the 10 victims "will be forever held in our hearts".

Fr Duffy praised the "trojan efforts" of those who rushed to the scene and emergency services who came from across the island for a huge rescue operation.

"They are the very definition of the greatness of humanity at its best," he said.

The cause of the explosion remains unknown and the site has been covered by an enormous 22ft grey hoarding as the Garda investigation continues.

Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe Andrew Foster also took part in the service.

Top international speaker for PLC conference

Keynote speaker at the Pro Life Campaign's national conference, taking place Saturday, October 14 in the RDS, will be Obianuju Ekeocha, founder of Culture of Life Africa.

"Obianuju Ekeocha is an amazing person and truly inspiring. She is a highly respected and well-known pro-life advocate on the international stage," said Eilís Mulroy, spokesperson for the PLC.

Other guest speakers include pro-life Kerry GP Dr Andrew O'Regan, Cllr Deirdre Donnelly, Aontú candidate Luke Silke and Melissa Byrne of Students for Life, the PLC said in a statement.

"Increasing the number of people who vote pro-life at election time is a really important goal that the movement has to deliver on," Ms Mulroy said.

Goodbye to the Irish pub?

The Irish pub has been a feature of our landscape and society for many a long year. 'The Brazen Head' in Dublin's Merchant's Quay dates from the year 1198 AD – or, anyway, claims that there has been a tavern on the site since that time. (The present building is from 1754, which is historic enough.)

Charming

I have on my wall a charming copy of a painting signed by the late artist Harry Kernoff,



Mary Kenny

bearing the legend 'A Bird Never Flew on One Wing'. Two Dublin men are portrayed having their pints, and in the background is etched the name of every watering-hole they have frequented – citing the bird's need for another wing – from Madigan's and Mooney's to McDaid's, the Palace Bar and the Bailey. Where would classical

Irish literature, or drama, be without the back scenario of the pub? From *Ulysses* to *The Plough and the Stars*, from Conor McPherson's *The Weir* to Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*, the tavern has been a crucial location to the dramatic portrayal of Irish life.

Experience

And when President John F. Kennedy requested a

typical Irish experience, he was taken to Mulligan's in Poolbeg Street, which – even in the 1970s – still had sawdust on the floor.

The pub has also been seen as a place of temptation, transgression, tomfoolery and wastefulness and denounced, sometimes, in sermons as a den of iniquity.

The Methodists led the campaigns against the public house, where a man might lose the best part of his week's wages, as well as having a fall from grace.

Music-hall artistes, back in the day, sang about children pleading with the

landlord, 'Sell No More Drink to My Father'. In Ireland, Jesuit priests rightly campaigned against the nefarious habit of paying working men – notably dockers – in the pub.

“2,000 pubs in Ireland have closed since 2005”

Irish rural life could sometimes be 'over-pubbed', with small towns having too many public houses. But now, accord-

ing to Limerick publican, Mike McMahon, the traditional Irish pub could become a rare experience.

High excise duty on alcohol, difficulty in finding staff, and insurance costs are among the problems for the modern landlord. The smoking ban, the drink-driving laws, have obviously been contributory factors to the decline: 2,000 pubs in Ireland have closed since 2005.

Gaiety

Pubs have been the source of gaiety and misery, of great friendships forged – and of bitter feuds, violent brawls and the onset of alcoholism.

But Ireland wouldn't be Ireland without the traditional local, which was a focus of community life and often an alleviation of loneliness. And attracted such a legendary reputation that 'the Irish pub' has had an outreach around the world.

Last jitterbug in London



Michael Caine stars in *The Great Escaper*.

It's nice to see movies starring older people, who have often been sidelined on screen. *The Great Escaper* recounts the true story of oldster Bernie Jordan, who dodged out of his care home on England's south coast to take a solo trip to France where veterans were marking the 70th anniversary of the 1944 Normandy landings.

It's not sentimental about the brutality of war, and the wanton destruction of life. It also shows how men in conflicts care about their comrades and mourn their dead mates all their lives. There's a touching scene of sharing the regrets of war with veteran German soldiers and sailors.

And with Michael Caine and Glenda Jackson

as the spirited, if crumbling, nonagenarians, it unflinchingly depicts what General de Gaulle called "the shipwreck of old age" – with flashbacks to the characters' younger selves. It was Dame Glenda's last movie and she made her exit with all guns blazing. And the 'jitterbug' – an energetic 1940s dance – is impressively performed!

“From *Ulysses* to *The Plough and the Stars*, from Conor McPherson's *The Weir* to Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*, the tavern has been a crucial location to the dramatic portrayal of Irish life”

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● Jonathan Ruffer made a lot of money as a City of London investor, and has now directed his millions to launching a Faith Museum in Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham – a former mining town.

Mr Ruffer became a Christian at Cambridge, and later in his career, he went on a retreat and came to feel he needed to change his life. The Faith Museum, just recently opened in this deprived part of north-east England, is the result.

The art critics have hailed the Faith Museum as a stunning success, with its remarkable paintings, tapestries, manuscripts and artefacts relating to faith (mainly Christian, but including some other faiths too.)

Part of Jonathan Ruffer's agenda is to tell the history of Britain through religion – how Christianity first appeared from the time of the Roman invasion, about 43 AD.

There's a silver signet ring on display dating from 200 AD, bearing the fish and anchor symbol that Christians wore as a secret code for their faith. And obviously settlements like Iona, founded by Irish monks, are a prominent part of the story.

The art critic Neil MacGregor has pointed out that this museum is showing a secularised world just how central faith has been to history and culture.

Homelessness charity criticises 'one-off' Budget measures

Chai Brady

Homelessness charities have welcomed certain measures to help vulnerable families and children in Budget 2024, but have criticised "one-off" measures introduced to assist those struggling with the cost of living crisis.

A weekly welfare and pension payments increase of €12, as well as a range of lump sum payments, was not seen as adequate by Focus Ireland.

Speaking on RTÉ Radio 1 after Budget 2024 was announced on Tuesday afternoon, a St Vincent de Paul spokesperson welcomed some of the measures in terms of tackling child poverty, including the

extension of child benefit to students who are still in school aged over 18, and the extension of free schoolbooks to the Junior Cert Cycle.

However, she said: "We're really concerned around the social protection package. There are one-off measures there that will help families in the short term but the reality is the increase of €12 in the core social welfare rate is less than half of what was needed to keep people standing still given the rising cost of living."

The charity had called for an increase of €27.50 following research they had undertaken. "Similarly for children we only saw a €4 increase, we needed to

see €10 for children under 12 and €15 for children over 12, so really the reality is, when you take it in a whole, while there is welcome measures there, we are likely to see poverty rise next year because of those inadequate social welfare measures," the spokesperson added. Some of the measures included an increase in the minimum wage to €12.70 per hour, rent relief increase from €500 to €750 per year, tax relief for mortgage holders, three energy credits of €150 each paid to households this winter and the 9% VAT rate for gas and electricity will be extended for 12 months.

A spokesperson for SVP told *The Irish Catholic* that

the Budget "certainly made a number of very important investments in the areas of education and child poverty and they will make a difference to a lot of children and families across the country".

He added: "But the main issues the SVP has is the continued reliance on one-off measures. It leaves a lot of households exposed to the continuous impact of the cost of living."

"For example, the addition of €12 to social protection payments is actually less than half of what was needed to keep pace with living costs, so while there is a lot to welcome, unfortunately it's mainly one-off payments."

No model proposed for Mary Immaculate's alignment bid

Ruadhán Jones

Negotiations between Mary Immaculate College (MIC) and University of Limerick (UL) are yet to settle on a model for a closer alignment between the two colleges.

Negotiations have been underway for almost a year as the colleges seek "closer structural alignment".

Correspondence from MIC's union representatives to college staff, seen by *The*

Irish Catholic, show that no model was presented to the college's governing authority at a meeting on September 25, after an inconclusive meeting with Higher Education Authority (HEA) at the end of August.

The plan had initially been to present "viable model(s) for alignment" to the governing authorities in September/October this year, this paper reported in July.

Now MIC-UL negotiation

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Culture wars' distracting Govt from real problems – Tóibín

The Government has let culture wars distract it from real issues, as the "fabric of Irish society is fraying", Aontú leader Peadar Tóibín said at the party's Ard Fheis.

Mr Tóibín criticised Minister for Justice Helen McEntee for focusing on a Hate Speech Bill while crime and anti-social behaviour have reached a "dangerous tipping point".

The Meath TD also hit out against recommendations to not employ doctors and nurses who support the right to life "at a time when the health service is under so much pressure".

"Ireland is at a crossroads. The choices we make over the next number of elections will determine the shape Ireland will exist in the coming years," Mr Tóibín said on Saturday, October 7.

Artists called to help promote priestly vocations

Ireland's bishops have put out a call for artists of Faith to submit their work to be featured in an exhibition entitled 'Art for Vocations' which will be held in Laois.

In a statement the bishops said: "Perhaps you have already created, or are willing to evoke, the beauty of a vocational calling through paint, sculpture, print, poetry and/or photography. If so, you are invited to apply with your name, an image of your artwork or exhibit, by email to info@vocations.ie"

The exhibition will be held at Portlaoise parish centre from 3-6pm on October 18, the Feast day of St Luke, patron of artists.

On the day, artist Eoin Madigan will give a talk on 'Finding God in Paint'.

teams are to engage with the HEA again in mid-October and hope to bring a model to the respective governing authorities in early November.

MIC's president Prof. Eugene Wall has agreed to meet with union representatives on October 31 for an informal discussion.

"It is envisaged that, amongst other topics, matters pertaining to structural

alignment will likely be discussed," the correspondence from MIC's Irish Federation of University of Teachers branch said.

Negotiations between MIC and UL have been shrouded in secrecy, with senior management at MIC refusing to reveal information about the negotiations to staff until they have been completed.

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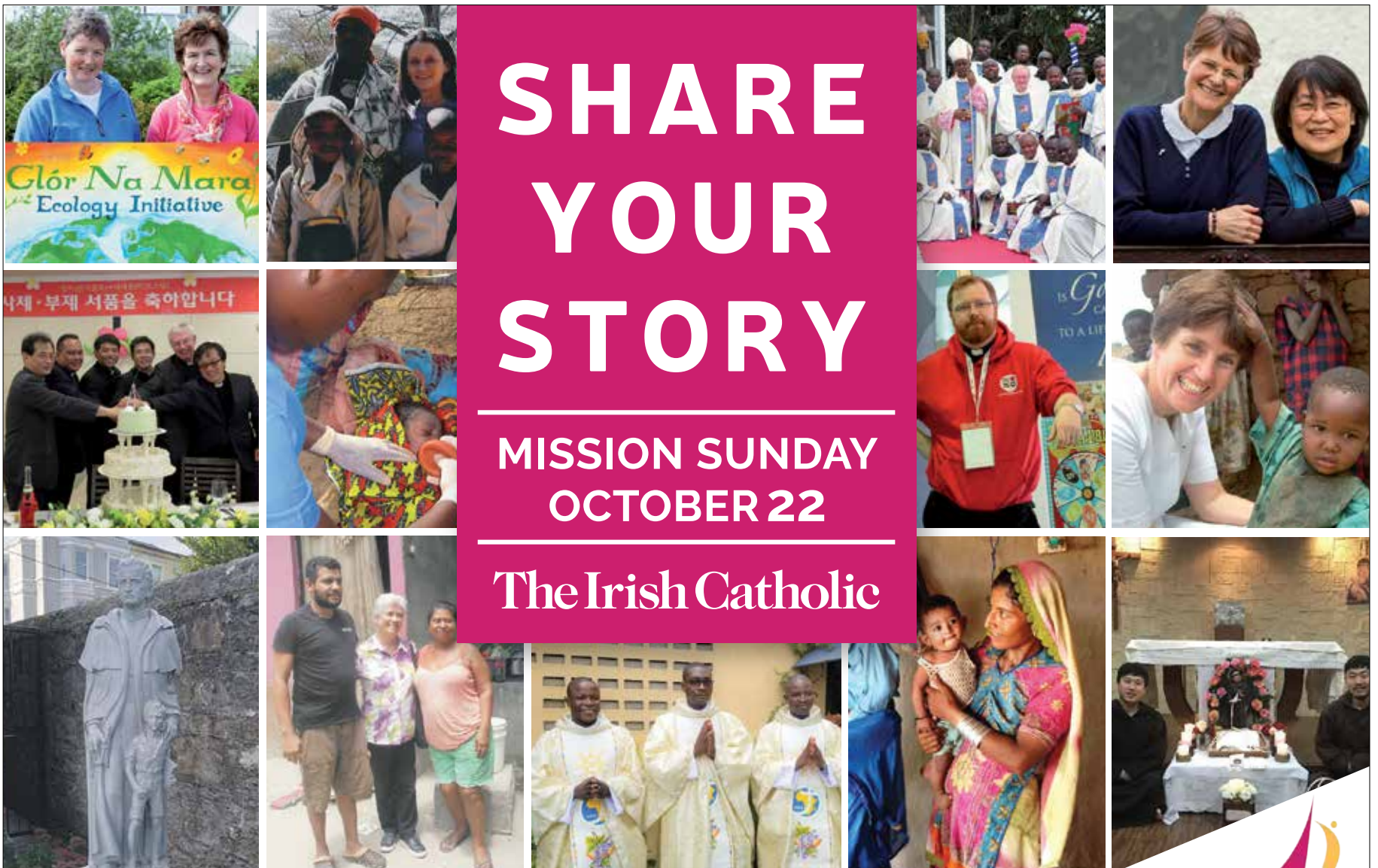
Chai Brady

Volunteer with charity Depaul Sr Nuala Kelly was awarded a British Empire medal for her services to the community in Belfast.

Sr Kelly has had a huge impact on the work the charity performs and on those who avail of their services, Depaul informed *The Irish Catholic*.

Sr Kelly said: "The question I kept asking myself was why me? There are so many people who do extraordinary things who have never been nominated. It was totally out of the blue but a wonderful experience."

"It's something very special to receive this award. I have been volunteering with Depaul since I moved to Belfast in 2005. I volunteer between three of the services in Belfast, they have become like a family to me. I do what I do because I love it and I understand the impact it can have. My inspiration comes from Sr Louise Marillac and St Vincent de Paul."



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Niamh Uí Bhriain

The View



An elderly person should never be made to feel unwanted

A report on assisted suicide in Oregon showed that over 53% of people whose lives were ended by the procedure in 2020 reported the fear of being a burden on family, friends or other caregivers as a reason.

There is something desperately sad in that statistic – one that was consistent with findings in previous years in Oregon and with reports from other states such as Washington. It speaks to a fear that is not connected to physical pain or suffering but to the terrible realisation that there may be a deficit of love in the world. An elderly person, no more than a child, should never be made to feel unwanted nor be made to feel a burden. That would be a measure of a fundamental failure of society, and of the social contract that is supposed to keep us all safe from cradle to grave.

Utilitarian

In an increasingly utilitarian world, however, ideals around duty and sacrifice are held to be old-fashioned at best, and are often seen as an intrusion on autonomy. As with many other life-ending proposals, while assisted suicide is heralded as being about choice, in reality it can often feel more like an obligation.

The very valid concerns around the state playing a role in facilitating a person to end another person's life – even with the latter's consent – are often dismissed as being based on religious grounds. Last week, however, the Oireachtas committee looking at assisted suicide heard from Dr Kevin Yuill, CEO of Humanists Against Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia, who gave a clear and compelling case against moves to change the law and permit the life-ending procedure.

Dr Yuill said that in every country where the procedure has been legalised for a reasonable length of time, cases have increased rapidly and the criteria for eligibility have expanded – and that a “number of grotesque examples of unnecessary deaths” have been observed.

“The case for assisted dying is based on fear. The

answer to fears about death, however, is better palliative care,” he said.

“The problem is not the fate of the individual concerned but the fate of a society that agrees to kill them”

Speaking of Canada, he said that assisted suicide was legalised in 2016 and that “many seek it for problems of homelessness, poverty and inadequate medical resources”, whilst “some 17.3% of those who opted for it in 2021 cited loneliness and/or social isolation as a reason”.

“This is before mental illness becomes an eligibility criterion in March 2024,” he told the Oireachtas committee, adding that “there have been at least eight cases in the Netherlands where the only illness was autism and the reason cited was intolerable disruptions to daily routines”.

“There have been many more for mental illness. In Belgium, euthanasia for those suffering from dementia is increasingly routine,” Dr Yuill, who is associate professor of American history at the University of Sunderland, said. He also argued that “the case for legalised assisted dying is flawed”, saying that “true autonomy” would actually mean anyone who wanted to die by suicide should have the right to assisted dying, while using compassion as a premise involved judgment in regard to another person's life.

“The case rests on two basic premises, and has done since it was first brought into being or proposed seriously in the modern form in 1870. Those premises are autonomy and compassion. True autonomy would mean that anyone with suicidal impulses should be allowed to have an assisted death. Compassion implies euthanasia and a judgment that death is in another individual's best interests. As a historian, I can provide many examples of how that has become problematic and of



how acting on compassion is not always a good thing,” he said.

“We believe that it is wrong for the state to kill citizens, whether as punishment for a crime, as in capital punishment, or simply because peoples' lives are wretched, either in their judgment or somebody else's. The problem is not the fate of the individual concerned but the fate of a society that agrees to kill them. Even when it involves best possible motives, institutional killing by the state is problematic,” Dr Yuill said. He introduced a welcome element of realism into the debate, if you can call the media's mostly one-sided coverage of the issue a debate. Assisted suicide – coyly described by its proponents as assisted death – demolishes the idea that the state should have no part in killing a human being.

Observation

And, his observation is entirely correct: what does it say about a society when it agrees that people who are sick, or lonely, or depressed or fearful can be killed? We can dress our motivations up as compassion all we like, we can argue for autonomy and better decision-making and choice, but we know in our hearts that

assisted suicide is often quietly seen as ridding society of the burden of caring.

“Anyone who looks closely and critically at the issue will see past the emotive stories and simplistic assumptions used to justify the push for legalisation”

“Opposition to assisted dying is usually derided as being religious in nature, which is easier than confronting hard questions or inconvenient truths. It is easier to shut down ‘religious bigots’ than to consider what they say, just as it is easier to use the term ‘assisted dying’ instead of the more accurate but controversial ‘assisted suicide’,” Dr Yuill wrote in the *Economist* recently. But he warned, as an atheist and a liberal, he could see that “anyone who looks closely and critically at the issue will see past the emotive stories and simplistic assumptions used to justify the push for legalisation”.

He also made the point that the argument for auton-

omy was undermined by the involvement of medical professionals and that “assisted-suicide regimes use physical criteria to divide a population between those whose suicides are regarded as terrible and those whose suicides are regarded as desirable”.

“Some lives are worth more than others. No wonder so many disabled people agree with their religious compatriots in resisting the headlong rush to assisted death,” he said.

Dr Yuill was joined by Irish expert, Dr Thomas Finegan, at the Oireachtas Committee, and he too referred to the enormity of the change that would be accepted by society if assisted suicide was legalised. It is not simply a matter of changing the law: it is an upending of norms that have long protected us when we are vulnerable.

Feature

“The unique, distinguishing feature of euthanasia is the consensual, intentional killing of the patient. Introducing death as a legitimate healthcare intention would not be a mere expansion of healthcare. Rather, it could only be introduced by disavowing a primary healthcare norm, that of no intentional killing,”

Dr Finegan said.

Gino Kenny, the PBP representative for Dublin Mid West took issue with both men for their use of the word ‘killing’, but he must know that this is nonsense. No amount of circumlocution nor the use of euphemisms can change the reality of what's happening, and those supporting assisted suicide should at least be honest enough to admit that.

In Canada, where the number of assisted suicides has gone through the roof, a paper, entitled ‘Cost analysis of medical assistance in dying in Canada’ and published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, noted approvingly that assisting patients to end their own lives “could result in substantial savings”.

It said: “If Canadians adopt medical assistance in dying in a manner and extent similar to those of the Netherlands and Belgium, we can expect a reduction in health care spending in the range of tens of millions of dollars per year”.

We should all – those of all faiths and none – be saddened by a drift to a society where the old, the sick, the most vulnerable are now being offered assistance to kill themselves rather than assistance to live. And we should all oppose it.

Hollowness of 'enlightened' sex education documentary



There are real limits to using consent as a moral benchmark for matters sexual, writes **Fr Andrew McMahon**

“**C**hildhood is shrinking”, declared presenter Richie Sadlier, introducing his two-part documentary, *Let's talk about Sex*, on RTÉ2 last month. The former footballer, turned psychotherapist, set out to portray the sexual world of Irish post-primary pupils and to argue, in view of it, for a radical revision of sex education in schools.

Parents are unlikely, says Sadlier, to be aware of much of that world and shedding light upon it was a core objective of his work. It is a world where, apparently, 11 is the average age when pornography is first viewed, while – as one school-

boy put it – “teenage, unprotected, underage sex happens a lot more frequently than people would like to admit or think”.

If such claims are true, then Sadlier's conviction that “childhood is shrinking” would appear something of an understatement. It remains a highly significant observation, nonetheless, and demands reflection. After almost three decades of unprecedented emphasis upon child protection within and beyond Irish society, childhood, it appears, is being undermined as never before. Moreover, it is in the domain of the sexual, in particular, that this undermining may be most prevalent, with children being “exposed to adult issues” according to this documentary, “way younger than any previous generation”.

While safeguarding systems have tended to stress potential harm to minors from the adult world, this documentary focused principally on the behaviour and attitudes of young people themselves. Groups of 15–16-year-olds at two Maynooth post-primaries were encouraged to talk openly about sexual matters. What emerged from their conversations was telling.

“Sexting”, for example – or the sharing digitally of explicit images of oneself – appeared to be almost expected where a pupil was in a more intimate relationship with a peer. And while unease was expressed at how pornographic material could reach an unsuspecting schoolchild – through something like their mobile phone – the impression given was that accessing porn was something

knowingly and routinely chosen by many, if not most, Irish youth.

Sadlier's stance, throughout, was one of concern that sex education in Irish schools hasn't addressed these realities, while a visit to Maynooth University campus, nearby, appeared to confirm his thesis. Against the backdrop of SHAG (Sexual Health and Guidance) Week there – principally given, it seemed, to condom distribution – undergraduates were on hand to endorse the presenter's criticisms. One student cited her attendance at a ‘convent school’ as the apparent cause of her deficient learning in this area.

Legacy

The remark reinforced a key theme of Sadlier's, who had begun by claiming that, as a “predominantly Catholic country”, Ireland had always had “a complicated relationship” with sex. A persistent inference of his was that the lingering legacy of that Catholicism could well derail the enlightened approach to sex education his documentary was advocating.

While this may concern Sadlier, it seemed a distraction from the more obvious weakness in his work. Namely, that aside from claims to the effect that we were failing our children and needed to do much better, this presenter – in the course of nearly two hours' television – couldn't sketch out the basics of a credible alternative framework to replace the supposedly redundant Catholic one.

In keeping with an approach common in western society today, Sadlier seemed

to operate on the premise that ‘consent’ was the only relevant ethical consideration. Nowhere, therefore, did his narrative raise the possibility that something like the ‘sexting’ discussed could seriously diminish a culture of self-respect among young people. Nor, either, that it must surely run, especially in a school context, contrary to every principle of child safeguarding. The main concerns emerging, rather, were that someone might feel pressured into ‘sexting’ – as opposed to freely choosing it – while a recipient might share another's image with a third party, without the consent and contrary to the intentions of the sender themselves.

“**They feared that pornography was creating illusions about sex in the minds of its users**”

Similarly, nowhere was it proposed to pupils that pornography could be seen as inherently wrong, destructive of its participants or demeaning of their human dignity. The presenter's main concern, it seemed, was that porn regularly featured non-consensual acts – effectively rape and assault. With no means of indicating to a viewer that it was crossing a line in this way, it risked normalising such behaviour, argued Sadlier. In some ways, the teenagers themselves appeared to have a broader sense of what was at stake. They feared that pornography was creating illusions about sex in the minds of its users and causing unrealistic expectations – “setting us up for failure” in real-life relationships, according to one male pupil.

Unmasked

The hollowness of what was being put before the young people was momentarily unmasked some distance into the second segment of the documentary. To gauge their views on various sexual topics, Sadlier had been making statements and inviting pupils to take a position in response. When one such statement declared that “Simon likes to choke his partner during sex”, the presenter, understandably, expected a censorious reaction. While most clearly disapproved, one young lady was unconvinced. If Simon's partner's choking was consensual – she seemed to reason – there

appeared little ground for such reproaches.

Sadlier considered the exchanges indicative of “the influence of porn” – as linking sex with choking had not caused greater reaction. Perhaps. But he appeared to miss a more fundamental lesson: In appealing to consent as the overriding principle in the case, the schoolgirl merely echoed what had seemed an underlying assumption of the documentary up to that point. Furthermore, in pushing the supremacy of consent to its logical conclusion, in this way, she had exposed its real limits as a moral benchmark for matters sexual. For human beings can consent to degrade or abuse themselves and others, sexually speaking, and will sometimes do so.

Awareness that this is so has traditionally influenced approaches to sexual morality and provided the rationale

for clear ethical frameworks in this area. Having dispensed with these over recent decades, champions of personal autonomy struggle to devise coherent discourses in their wake. Despite his enthusiasm and sincerity, it proved beyond Richie Sadlier too. Apart from impassioned pleas that “we've got to keep talking about sex” and “support young people”, it was obvious – by the close of his documentary – that he had little by way of an overarching or integrated vision to offer them. It will be interesting to see if the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment can do better. And whether their revised programme, in the area of relationships and sexuality, will prove worthy of the noble ideals of education.

i Fr Andrew McMahon is a priest of the Diocese of Dromore.



Richie Sadlier, who presented the documentary *Let's Talk About Sex*

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‘Liberal’ Ireland’s growing intolerance revealed



Government interference is becoming more and more sinister, writes David Quinn

In late July, a group of Evangelical Protestants called ‘Christian Voices Ireland’ organised an event in the National Boxing Stadium in Dublin to protest aspects of the new Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme currently being rolled out in Irish secondary schools. SPHE incorporates Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).

The event drew an extremely impressive crowd of around 1,000 people. I was there, and I would say the average age of the people in the audience was around 40, and therefore the age group most likely to have children in school.

Even though it was organised by an Evangelical group, Catholic parent groups were also in attendance as were a smattering of Muslims. Muslims in general are very concerned about the new programme.

Diversity

Liberals like to praise diversity. Well, this audience was diverse. Many of the ‘new Irish’ from Africa, Asia and South America were present. The main organising group behind the event is called ‘All Nations Church’, headed by Pastor John Ahern. It draws around 500

people to Sunday worship each week, and they come from many different countries.

In fact, the Sunday service takes place in the National Boxing Stadium because there are few other venues big enough to handle it. Therefore, it made sense that Pastor Ahern would organise the event about the SPHE programme at the same venue.

The best-known speaker on the night was Aontú leader, Peadar Tóibín. A particular focus of the evening was what the SPHE course teaching teenagers about gender issues, especially the extremely contentious theory that a person’s ‘gender’ (whether they are male, female or ‘gender non-binary’) has nothing to do with their physical sex.

Pastor Ahern decided to organise a second event about the same topic and it took place last week, also in the National Boxing Stadium. The main speaker was Senator Sharon Keogh and it attracted hundreds of people.

“Soon, anyone who believes in traditional Christian (or Jewish or Muslim) teachings on these matters will only be allowed to express their views in their own places of worship”

Activists were ready this time and targeted the Irish Athletic Boxing Association (which runs the stadium) with complaints that they were hosting ‘anti-trans bigots’.

The IABA immediately panicked and announced an investigation into the event on the grounds that it might have violated their ‘inclusion’ policy which says the association welcomes “all members of all communities” regardless of their “gender identity or sexual orientation”.

Then, to make matters worse, Sports minister, Catherine Martin weighed



Sports minister Catherine Martin

in. It was a terrible act of political interference. Responding to a question from *The Journal*, she said: “They [the IABA] weren’t aware of the exact use of it [the National Boxing Stadium] and I’m glad that they have said that they’d keep a much closer eye on their leasing arrangements. I think that is welcome.”

Welcome?

Why is it welcome? Is Minister Martin saying public venues, especially those in receipt of State support, should not host events that criticise the State’s highly ideological and contentious SPHE programme? Is this really what she was saying, because it sounded like it.

If this is what she meant, it is actually highly undemocratic and quite sinister as well because it means we have now reached a point in this country where venues will be denied to you if you dissent from certain aspects of the State’s official ideology, especially it would seem, on matters of sex, sexuality and gender.

Soon, anyone who believes in traditional Christian (or Jewish or Muslim) teachings on these matters will only be allowed to express their views in their own places of worship, and we have to wonder how long this will be permitted long-term. Already we see how a priest who says anything controversial within the four walls of his church can land himself in hot water with the media. (See the example of Fr Sean Sheehy in Kerry a few months ago).

Even without the law being on their side, it is now easily for militants to target venues, including hotels, and panic them into cancelling events that are pro-life, or pro-traditional marriage, or which reject gender ideology.

The new ‘hate crime’ bill

also looms, so we must see what effect this will have on public debate.

When *The Journal* was reporting Catherine Martin’s comments on the event in the Boxing Stadium, it claimed that Christian Voices Ireland “rejects the existence of transgender people”.

Unchangeable

In fact, what the website of Christian Voices Ireland says is, “The Bible teaches that gender is unchangeable and that the expression of human sexuality is to be limited to the marital relationship of one man and one woman only.”

This is what all orthodox Christians believe. If groups that wish to teach this in venues other than churches are now to be prevented from doing so by activist campaigns and pressure from Government ministers, it is a very big jump in the direction of authoritarianism and must be strongly resisted.

Indeed, it must be asked whether the Boxing Association is as ‘inclusive’ as it really thinks it is. Transgender activists demands that if a boxer

who is biologically male now identifies as a woman, then he should be allowed to take part in women’s boxing. The IABA does not allow this. Not yet anyway. But in the eyes of some, that would make them ‘bigots’.

Christians are going to have to use the law to combat attempts to restrict their access to public venues.

“What a message it would be to them if a Christian group can no longer hire the boxing stadium because of their Christian beliefs”

For example, if Christian Voices Ireland is refused permission to hold future events in the National Boxing Stadium on the issue of SPHE, it will be very hard for the Boxing Association to argue that this is not discrimination against them on the basis of their religious beliefs, and Christian Voices Ireland would almost certainly have a case against the IABA.

It would be even worse if the Boxing Stadium was refused in the future to All Nations Church for its Sunday worship because of its traditional Christian views on sex, gender and marriage.

Good luck to the IABA explaining to a judge why it kicked out a Christian church when it allows so many other groups to hire the venue.

Ironically, this is a ‘diversity vs diversity’ clash in some ways. A lot of Evangelical Christians in Ireland today come from overseas, with many from Africa, Brazil, India or parts of Eastern Europe.

Also, boxing itself attracts committed Christians, who are often Evangelicals. What a message it would be to them if a Christian group can no longer hire the boxing stadium because of their Christian beliefs.

This latest episode is further evidence of the growing illiberalism of ‘liberal’ Ireland. It is becoming ever more intolerant of anyone who disagrees with it on certain issues. Christians are going to have steel themselves to fight for their right to be heard in the public arena, including and especially when liberals don’t like what they have to say.

“We have now reached a point in this country where venues will be denied to you if you dissent from certain aspects of the State’s official ideology, especially it would seem, on matters of sex, sexuality and gender”

QUB Catholic students celebrate dedication of studies Mass

Ruadhán Jones

Queen's University Belfast's Catholic chaplaincy celebrated their annual dedication of studies Mass on Sunday, October 1.

Bishop of Ossory Niall Coll, a former lecturer at QUB's sister institution St Mary's University College, was chief celebrant, with music and song provided by the chaplaincy choir Canticle, and refreshments were offered afterwards in the chaplaincy's new home at No. 42 University Road.

The venue for Mass, the university's Great Hall, was not the usual one, chosen because the chaplaincy is redeveloping its landmark site on Elmwood Avenue.

During Mass, one of QUB's recent graduates, Lauren Boyd, was received into the Church, having been instructed in the Faith in Chaplaincy this past year.



Pupils of St Dominic's Grammar School Belfast attend the Mass.



Marcella Walsh leads QUB Catholic chaplaincy's choir Canticle, who sang for the dedication of studies Mass on October 1.



Pupils from St Joseph's College Belfast and Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School Belfast



Canticle, the chaplaincy's choir, pictured after the Mass.



Chaplain Fr Dominic McGrattan, Bishop Coll and director of campus ministry Shannon Campbell are pictured celebrating the beginning of a new academic year.



Bishop of Ossory Niall Coll celebrated the dedication of studies Mass in QUB's Great Hall in the Lanyon building.

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Religious leaders told to 'embrace change' at major conference

Staff reporter

Hundreds of people attended the AMRI (Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland) leaders conference and AGM which heard from several speakers focused on responding to a rapidly changing modern world.

The conference was held on September 27 and 28 in the Tullamore Court Hotel. The keynote speaker was Sr Lynn Levo CSJ, who said before the conference: "Change is inevitable, unavoidable and constant and you as leaders have a choice about how to respond. Embracing change – not digging in, denying or resisting change – offers an opportunity to move beyond old patterns of seeing and acting, shifting how you think, know and act together with your members."

AMRI represents and promotes active collaboration between religious institutes, societies of apostolic Life and lay missionary organisations.

Their 2023 conference continued the conversation from last year, addressing the question: 'How to be a leader of change?' It explored themes of hope, transformation, grief and self-care. The conference was for leaders and their leadership teams.



Sr Claire Donnelly, Sr Teresa Murphy, Sr Ann Sullivan and Nicola Keogh.



Srs Eileen O' Flynn, Rose Marie Conlon and Teresa Cooney.



Fr Kyran Murphy, Sr Barbara Murphy and Sr Anne O'Dwyer having a chat during a break in the conference.



Sr Bridget O'Connell and Fr Michael Casey.



Srs Catherine Young and Irene Balzan.



Fr Terry Howard and Sr Avril O'Regan.



Sr Maureen Enibe, Sr Anne Codd and Fr Colm Reidy.



Bro. Barry Butler and Sr Breege O'Neill.



Srs Helen Lane, Mary Corr and Marta Silva.



Srs Josephine Fallon, Brid Geraghty, Emmanuel Kwak and Kathryn Williams from the Disciples of the Divine Master with Apostolic Nuncio Luis Mariano Montemayor who spoke at the conference.



Srs Maria Gonzaga and Teresa Brogan.



Srs Patricia Ojo, Marie O'Halloran and Josephine Enenmo.



David Rose Secretary General AMRI, Sr Mary Hanrahan Vice President AMRI, Abbott Brendan Coffey OSB, President of AMRI, talking with Apostolic Nuncio Luis Mariano Montemayor.



Ger Gallagher taking an AMRI staff selfie at the conference in Tullamore.



David Rose, Secretary General of AMRI, speaking at the conference.



Photos: John McElroy



THE SYNODAL TIMES

OCTOBER
2023 ISSUE

For the October issue of The Synodal Times, we ask a wide range of Catholics what they want to see from the upcoming Synod of Bishops meeting. We also break down just exactly who will be in attendance at this all-important event in Rome.

The issue will also feature the big interview with Dr Myriam Wijlens on how 'Synodality also means accountability'. And finally, Professor Serena Noceti will enlighten readers on the topic of laypeople becoming members of a synodal Church.

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Jerusalem church leaders call for peace following deadly Hamas attack



Judith Sudilovsky

Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem united in a call for peace and justice amid unfolding violence, following a surprise attack by Hamas in southern Israel, which has left hundreds of Israelis dead, among them civilians and dozens of soldiers and police who were killed battling the Hamas fighters. More than 2,000 people were injured and over 250 bodies had been recovered from the site of the music festival that was attacked by Hamas fighters on October 7 in southern Israel. Thousands of people in Palestinian territories have been injured in Israeli airstrikes, which began hours following the Hamas attack.

During the Angelus prayer on October 8, Pope Francis said he was “following apprehensively and sorrowfully what is happening in Israel where the violence has exploded even more ferociously, causing hundreds of deaths and casualties”.

He appealed: “May the attacks and weaponry cease. Please!”

He said that “terrorism and war do not lead to any resolutions, but only to the death and suffering of so many innocent people.” The Holy Father stressed that “War is a defeat! Every war is a defeat!” He also asked for prayers for peace in Israel and Palestine.

Suffering

“The Holy Land, a place sacred to countless millions around the world, is currently mired in violence and suffering due to the prolonged political conflict and the lamentable absence of justice and respect for human rights,” The Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem said in an October 7 joint statement.

As custodians of the Christian faith, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches said they “stand in solidarity with the people of this region, who are enduring the devastating consequences of continued strife”.

“We unequivocally condemn any acts that target civilians, regard-

less of their nationality, ethnicity or faith,” said the patriarchs, among them Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Some countries started to evacuate their citizens from Israel, with some 200 Polish pilgrims and tourists being airlifted from Ben Gurion International Airport in the early morning hours of October 9 by two C-130 Hercules planes that landed at Tel Aviv airport amid rocket strike from Hamas, and the Israeli Iron Dome intercepting rockets from Gaza.

American officials said on October 8 that they were also working through plans to evacuate thousands of Americans from Israel if necessary.

Cardinal Pizzaballa expressed “condemnation” and great concern in an October 7 interview with the Italian Catholic daily newspaper *Avvenire*.

“May all religious leaders work to calm the situation and calm down the spirits. In short, let no one throw fuel on the fire”

“We need to stop the violence and then apply diplomatic pressure to prevent the game of retaliation from becoming a vicious cycle from which it is difficult to escape. So (we must) try to bring back a minimum of reasonableness between the parties. Even if it seems difficult right now,” said Cardinal Pizzaballa, who became the first resident cardinal in Jerusalem’s history during a September 30 consistory in Rome.

The Latin Patriarchate announced the postponement of all ceremonies to honour the newly created cardinal due to the current situation. The patriarchate also called for all October 8 Masses to be offered for the intention of a ceasefire and an end to the “ongoing war in the Holy Land to prevent further bloodshed, shattering of lives and burial of hopes”.

“May all religious leaders work to calm the situation and calm down the spirits. In short, let no one throw fuel on the fire. And I hope for prayers for peace. And already today we will carry out an initiative in this sense in all our churches,” Cardinal Pizzaballa told *Avvenire*. Shocked by the unhindered breakthrough of hundreds of Hamas



An Israeli police officer carries part of a mangled rocket after it was fired from the Gaza Strip toward Ashkelon, Israel, October 9, 2023. (OSV News photo/Violeta Santos Moura, Reuters)

gunmen through the fence barrier, Israelis hunkered down in safe rooms and called to relatives and radio programmes whispering terrified messages as they heard the militants breaking into their homes. The attack included the takeover of the police station in the city of Sderot, which was later reclaimed.

The attack took place under the barrage of thousands of rocket attacks, which were largely intercepted by the Israeli Iron Dome defence system.

Hamas breached Israel’s security gate in the early morning of October 7 and infiltrated dozens of Israel border communities, killing people in their cars and homes and taking others hostage, including several elderly people, a mother with her two preschool-aged daughters, young people and foreign workers. Soldiers were also taken hostage. Social media videos showed captives and bodies of dead Israelis paraded through the streets of Gaza.

Terrified

One video showed a terrified young woman being pulled by the hair and transferred from one jeep into another by armed Hamas gunmen. In another video, the body of a young man in shorts taken from a kibbutz, a Jewish communal settlement, was paraded through the streets on the back of a motorcycle.

Thousands of young Israelis and foreigners had been celebrating at a nature dance party next to one of the kibbutz, and dozens were murdered by the gunmen as they fled in panic through the desert. Many of the captives had been at the party.

The attack took place on the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah, which marks the completion of the annual cycle of reading the Torah scroll. The attack also fell a day after the 50th

anniversary of the beginning of the 1973 War, which began with a surprise attack on Israel by a coalition of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria on Yom Kippur, Judaism’s holiest day of the year.

“Another video showed gunmen sitting on and near the half-naked body of another woman with dreadlocks, later identified as a German national, in the open back of a truck”

The attack follows a year of increasing violence from both settlers and the Israel Defence Forces after the election of Israel’s far-right nationalist government.

For many Israelis, there were moments of terror and desperation as they identified their loved ones on the horrifying videos. One video showed a shrieking young woman speeding away in a motorcycle sandwiched between two gunmen as her boyfriend was led off by others. One shirtless man was led through the streets by the neck as gunmen pushed his head down. Another video showed gunmen sitting on and near the half-naked body of another woman with dreadlocks, later identified as a German national, in the open back of a truck.

Kibbutz residents said it took some eight hours for the Israeli army forces to reach their communities. One mother told Israel radio she and her children were rescued by special forces through the window of their safe room and taken by armed guard to a secured location because mili-

itants were still roaming their kibbutz. Another resident speaking by phone on TV news began crying as she told the anchorwoman that men had broken into her home and were trying to get into the safe room where she was.

After the Israeli army and police gathered forces and responded to the attack, the *Associated Press* reported that Israeli Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari told reporters “hundreds of terrorists” have been killed and dozens captured.

In the Italian newspaper interview, the reporter noted Cardinal Pizzaballa’s pain at the violence and concern that it would escalate because of the captive Israelis.

Extension

“The extension of the attack. And the fact that there are many Israelis kidnapped, civilians too. These are decidedly new elements, also taking into account the context of great mistrust that exists. Of course, I hope I’m wrong, but I fear that the situation will get even worse. There will be retaliation for retaliation,” he said. Meanwhile, Israeli forces also exchanged fire with Hezbollah over the weekend as Lebanon’s militant group fired dozens of rockets and shells at Israeli positions in a disputed area along the country’s northern border.

The Patriarchs and Head of the Churches said that it is their “fervent hope and prayer” that all parties involved “will heed this call for an immediate cessation of violence.” They also called for dialogue “seeking lasting solutions that promote justice, peace, and reconciliation for the people of this land, who have endured the burdens of conflict for far too long”.

i Judith Sudilovsky writes for OSV News from Jerusalem.

“We need to stop the violence and then apply diplomatic pressure to prevent the game of retaliation from becoming a vicious cycle from which it is difficult to escape”

Synod must make 'practical recommendations' – Bishop Leahy



Synod should set a basis for discernment around hot-button issues, Bishop Brendan Leahy tells **Ruadhán Jones**

Expectations are high for the bishops ongoing gathering in Rome, the 'Synod on Synodality', which began on Wednesday, October 4 and lasts until October 29.

Two Irish bishops will be among the 464 participants – including laywomen and men, religious and priests – of what is being billed at the most significant Church gathering this century.

Expectations are high that the synod will address hot button issues, which often featured in diocesan and national submissions, such as the blessing of same-sex unions and the ordination of women to the diaconate.

Pope Francis 'yes' to the blessing of same-sex unions in some situations, coming in response to the *dubia* or 'doubts' of five of his cardi-

nals, has heightened expectations further.

However, the Pope also stressed in his homily for the gathering's opening Mass that the synod is not a "polarised parliament"; although their will be votes taken, they don't bear weight in Church governance, serving as advice to the Pope, who can act on them as he sees fit.

Challenges

Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy, speaking to *The Irish Catholic* from Rome ahead of the synod, acknowledged that there are "great expectations", adding that "we have to live up to people's expectations by making really practical recommendations here at the synod".

That will be the challenge, he continues, for the bishops and experts, including members of the laity, and male and female religious.

"The fact that there are high expectations says something to us, that people are genuinely interested," Bishop Leahy says.

"They want to see a Church that is more inclusive, they want to see a Church that is somehow reaching out to people. In that sense, we have to live up to people's expectations."

However, he stresses that they are "clearly" not going to be able to resolve the hot button issues in the four-week gathering.

"But if we could set the basis for further clarifications or discernment, then I think we will have done a good job," says Bishop Leahy, who is joined by Bishop of Raphoe Alan McGuckian SJ at the synod.

These issues "emerged along the way, from parishes

to dioceses, to national, to continental – all of those issues have already been voiced... But the context, the specific context, is not that we're going to resolve all those hot button issues at the synod, but rather we're opening up to how it is we can best discern synodally, participating all together on some of these topics," the bishop explains.

While these 'hot button' topics will be addressed, the primary focus of the synodal gathering is the *Instrumentum Laboris* (IL), the working document that gathers together the overarching themes that emerged from parish to continental level.

According to Dr Leahy, "The basic theme is always going to be, how are we journeying together as members of the Church, how are we getting on with another, how are we letting God enter into our history more on a day-to-day level".

One important section of the IL lists the criteria of synodality, what it involves and what it means to work together 'synodally', he adds.

"I think we're going to have to tease that out a bit more because it's not as if we can automatically say we know it already in advance; it's a work in progress, we're still learning," the bishop of Limerick says.

"This is obviously a key moment, but to come back to it again, the question is, how do we further articulate this in terms of consultative structures across the board in the Church?"

This is not an optional extra, something that can or cannot happen, he clarifies. It must be made "part and parcel of the dynamic of Church

life today, more so than we have lived in the past".

If this topic is clarified better, "we will have the stepping stones to embedding the culture of synodality in our local church, which means our own parishes, our own dioceses", Dr Leahy says.

"That then will provide the space for further treatment of some of the topics in question. They'll be there and they'll surely come up, but it won't be the immediate focus of this particular synod."

Ultimately, embedding the practice of synodality will mean "the processes of making sure that the voices of all emerge, can be heard and are welcomed and are brought as it were to the table where we are as a family joining together, with no one excluded".

Gathering

The synod gathering takes place 61 years since the beginning of Vatican II. Bishop Leahy sees it as



Bishop Brendan Leahy

an opportunity to really "unpack" what Vatican II has to offer.

"We've had 50-60 years now where we've understood a lot but we need to make it more grounded in people's lives as to the actual vision of Vatican II, which was of communion, partici-

pation and mission.

"Those things remain generic until we actually articulate, step by step – meaning in Canon law, in structures, in day-to-day life of parishes – what that means for men and women together. That's I think what this is about."

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Pope Francis speaks to participants of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops during their first session in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican October 4. Photo: CNS

Out&About

Festivities for St Finbarr



CORK: A priest distributes Communion during Mass at Gougane Barra in the Shehy Mountains, October 1, to celebrate the feast of St Finbarr, the patron saint of Cork and Ross. Photo: OSV News.



CORK: Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin is pictured with Fr Roman Biletskyy and members of the Ukrainian Catholic Community at Mass in Gougane Barra. Photo: Nora Ní Luasa.



KERRY: Fr Francis Nolan is pictured with parishioners and their pets after the Blessing of Pets at Churchill, Church of the Immaculate Conception on Sunday, October 1. Pictured are (from left) Nora and Jimmy Finucane with Olly, Patricia Williams with Bear, Jana Finucane, Fr Nolan PP, Breda Moriarty with Max and Coper, Helen Williams with Ollie and Denise Williams with Evy. Photo: John Cleary.

INSHORT

St Mary's Baldoye goes co-ed

St Mary's Secondary School Baldoye has announced its transformation to a co-educational school from September 2024.

After consultation with students, parents, staff, local primary schools and in response to demand from the wider community, the school will be open to boys in the local area, on a phased basis, the school said in a statement.

For the first time in its history, the school is accepting applications for boys starting first year in September 2024, "ushering in a new chapter of opportunity and growth", a spokesperson for the school said.

Capacity and facilities in St Mary's have been expanded in recent years with "extensive renovations and upgrades to the existing building" and significant further work in the

pipeline, the spokesperson continued.

A period of consultation with parents of incoming first years has already begun. Ms Kate O'Regan, Co-Educational Liaison Officer, is looking forward to working closely with these students and parents.

"As the school embarks on this transformative journey, it remains focused and committed to nurturing, not only the academic excellence and learning environment of students, but also their character, compassion and community spirit," the school's statement said.

Alone responds to 'unprecedented' requests for help in 2022

Alone, the charity that supports the elderly, interacted with the largest

number of people in its history in 2022, its annual report shows.

The charity saw "unprecedented" levels of demand for its services last year, supporting 22,300 in total, the highest number in its 45-year history.

Loneliness/social isolation remained the highest area of support, closely followed by housing and financial support, the charity said in a statement.

Alone provided 25,687 unique supports, and successfully completed 87% of these supports on time.

"Alone is at the forefront of solving the problems of an ageing population from combatting loneliness, benchmarking the State pension, expanding housing options for older people and using technology to allow older people to age in place," said CEO Seán Moynihan.

'Historic' synod can make a difference – Archbishop Farrell

The "historic" synod gathering of bishops currently taking place can make a difference to the Church's mission worldwide and locally, the archbishop of Dublin has said.

In a letter to Dublin diocese parishes, Archbishop Dermot Farrell encouraged all parishioners to join in prayer for the dialogue taking place in Rome.

"Pope Francis is reminding us that listening to the voice of God could be hugely enriched if all of God's people, not just those in leadership, took part," said Dr Farrell.



TYRONE: Cllr Dominic Molloy, Chair of Mid Ulster District Council, is pictured with staff and volunteers at St Vincent de Paul charity shop in Killyclogher for St Vincent de Paul Day.



KILDARE: Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty is pictured after baptising his grandniece Aoibheann, along with her parents Denis and Sineád and sister Fiadh on October 1.



ARMAGH: Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin presents flowers to Ms Jean Hanratty to mark her generosity of service to Apostolic Work in the Archdiocese of Armagh. Apostolic Work celebrates 100 years of service this year and Jean has recently stood down as president of the Armagh Archdiocese Branch.



DUBLIN: On the feast of the Intercession and Protection of the Blessed Virgin, celebrated on October 1 according to the Gregorian Calendar, members of the Ukrainian Catholic community came forward to renew their marriage vows in the Church of Our Lady of Consolation in Donnycarney.



WEXFORD: FCJ Secondary School, Bunclody mark the beginning of the academic year with the first Mass in the new school gym, celebrated by Fr Joe Power with the whole school population of 1,000 students in attendance. The construction of the gym was made possible through the generosity and support of the Faithful Companion of Jesus Sisters.



ARMAGH: St Patrick's Cathedral parish choir are pictured following the presentation of the St Patrick's medal to Mr Colm Murphy, director of music for the cathedral Parish, along with four parish volunteers on Saturday, September 30.



CORK: Fr Conor McDonough OP is pictured at an exhibition of a 15th Century Irish language manuscript associated with the Franciscan Friary in Cork, on loan from Rennes to the Glucksman in University College Cork. He is pictured with Dr Chantal Kobel (Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies), Sarah Toulouse (Rennes Metropolitan Library), Dr David McCay (Cambridge University) and Dr Andrea Palandri (DCU).



DOWN: The investiture of Gerald Harbinson as a knight of St Gregory took place recently in the church of Our Lady of the Assumption, Newcastle. Bishop Donal McKeown, Apostolic Administrator of Down and Connor presided. Pictured (from left) are Fr Jim Crudden PP, Mrs Martina Harbinson, Mr Harbinson KSG, Bishop McKeown and Deacon Jackie Breen.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



TIPPERARY: Edward (Eddie) Sweetman received his Benemerenti Medal on September 6 in St Mary's Church, Irishtown, Clonmel. He was awarded the Medal for 40 plus years of service as sacristan to the parish. Mr Sweetman is almost 92 years old and retired a couple of years ago. The medal was presented by the Canon Billy Meehan.



WEXFORD: Sr Aisling Maura of Our Lady, Star of the Sea (centre) is pictured following her first profession as a Carmelite nun. She is pictured with her new sisters from the New Ross and Tallow communities.



CORK: Fr Patrick Winkle PP and parishioners of Carrigtwohill Parish in the Diocese of Cloyne celebrate the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, and mark the end of the Season of Creation, by planting a tree in St Mary's Cemetery in honour of Grandparents on October 4.



HOLY LAND: Pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly at Magdala Retreat Centre, Sea of Galilee are pictured with Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly SMA KC*HS, spiritual director Fr Celsus Tierney PP Holycross and Ballycahill and Fr Pat Murphy PP Templetuohy and Moyne.

ANTRIM

Antrim prayer group meet in St Catherine's office beside Antrim parochial house on Wednesdays at 7pm.

Beginning experience is offering a programme of bereavement support in St Bride's Hall, Derryvolgie Ave., Belfast on two Saturdays, October 28 and November 25. Booking essential. Contact Marie at belfastbe@yahoo.com.

ARMAGH

Apostolic Workers to hold their annual remembrance Mass on Saturday, October 21 at 6.30pm in Armagh Cathedral.

CARLOW

Irish language Mass takes place in Carlow Cathedral on the first and second Saturday of each month at 6.15pm.

CAVAN

Cavan Town Mens Shed meet at rear of Cana House, Farnham St. Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10am-1pm. New members always welcome.

CORK

New Youth 2000 prayer group (18-35) meets in St Patrick's Church, Fermoy, on the second and fourth Friday of each month at 8pm.

Vocations weekend October 28-29 for the Adorers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of Montmartre, Order of St Benedict. Takes place in St Benedict's Priory, Cobh. Contact cobhtyburnconvent@gmail.com.

DONEGAL

Rosary on the coast for world peace and the protection of unborn babies takes place at Lisfannon Beach, Buncrana, on the first Sunday of every month at 3pm, and at Benone Strand on the third Sunday of every month, at 3pm.

DOWN

Lectio Divina in Newry Cathedral takes place in the Parish Centre on Thursday after 10:30am Mass, usually getting underway by 11:15am.

DUBLIN

St John Henry Newman conference takes place Wednesday, October 25 at Newman House MoLI, 86

St Stephen's Green, on 'The Academic and Pastoral Vision of the Catholic University' from 5.30pm and 'Frustration and Failure' in Newman University Church on Thursday, October 26, from 5.30pm. Guest speaker Dr Paul Shrimpton.

Dublin Bay North young group to host an 11-week Alpha programme to explore the Christian faith every Thursday from 7.30-9pm in St Anthony's House behind St Anthony's Church. Contact parishesyouthgroup@gmail.com for more information.

FERMANAGH

A novena Mass to St Peregrine, patron of those who have cancer, is celebrated every Tuesday at 7pm in Holy Cross Church in Lisnaskea. It is also live streamed at Churchservices.tv/lisnaskea.

GALWAY

October rosary procession takes place in Galway Cathedral at 8pm each Sunday evening during October.

KERRY

Youth 2000 Prayer Group (18-35) meets on Thursdays at 8pm in St John's Church side chapel, Tralee.

KILDARE

A Medjugorje Prayer Group meets every Monday at 7pm for 40 minutes in the Dominican Oratory, Newbridge.

KILKENNY

St John's Parish Scripture group meets in the presbytery at 7.30pm each Thursday to reflect on Scripture texts for the following Sunday's Mass.

LEITRIM

Daily rosary at 6pm in St Joseph's Church, Leitrim Village.

LIMERICK

Young adult study group takes place every second Sunday 6.30-8.30 in St Saviours Dominicans parish hall. Meetings will focus on the human person and our call to love, according to the teachings of St Thomas Aquinas and St John Paul II.

LOUTH

'Does God exist? Are you happy?' Talks on faith for young and adults by the Neocatechumenal Way

take place in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Drogheda; Mondays and Thursdays at 7.30pm, come and listen!

MEATH

Fr John Byrne to continue his introduction to the Bible on Mondays at 12 noon via the Kells webcam, accessible on www.kellsparish.ie. This year he will introduce the St. John's Gospel and each session will last 25 minutes. For queries, you may contact Fr Byrne on email: jplowebyrne@gmail.com

MONAGHAN

During the month of October the rosary will be recited at Our Lady's Shrine, Kednaminsha, Inniskillen, each Sunday at 8pm. The rosaries will be offered to ask Our Lady to increase vocations to the diocesan priesthood and to ask God's blessings on those serving as priests and religious.

ROSCOMMON

Eucharistic adoration takes place the first Friday of each month in Drumboylan Church (Ardcarne Parish) from 9am-10pm.

SLIGO

There will be Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction after the 7pm Mass every Tuesday in Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Church, Dromore West and after the 10am Mass every Wednesday in Our Lady Star of the Sea Church, Rathlee. Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction also takes place after the 10am Mass every Thursday in St James's Church, Easkey.

WATERFORD

The Cistercian Community at St Mary's Abbey, Glencairn invite single women, aged 19-40, to their upcoming monastic vocations weekend on October 27-29. Contact Sr Sarah at vocations@glencairnabbey.org to register.

The Chosen Zoom gatherings take place on Tuesdays from 8-9.15pm and in person on Wednesdays from 2.30-4pm in St John's Pastoral Centre, John's Hill, Waterford City, facilitated by Sr Kathryn. Contact waterford@ascj.us.org

WEXFORD

Taize prayer services return to Good Counsel College Church, New Ross, on October 6, taking place first and third Fridays of each month from 8-9pm.

Christmas

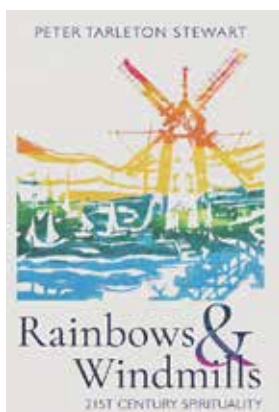
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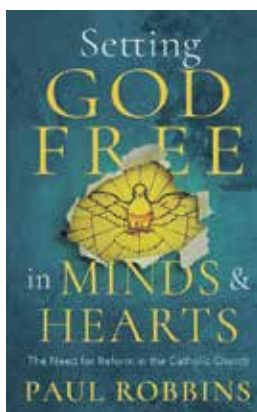
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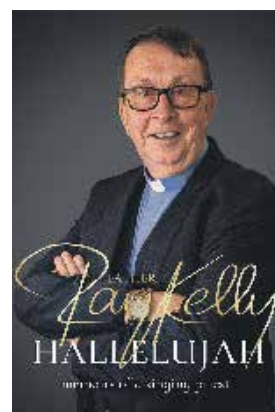
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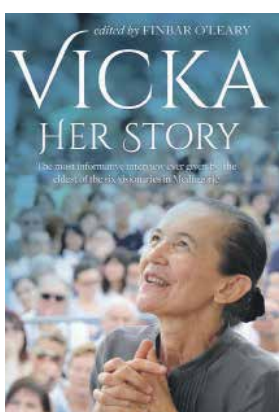
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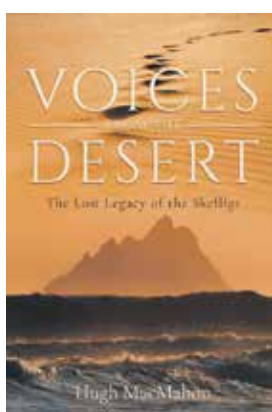
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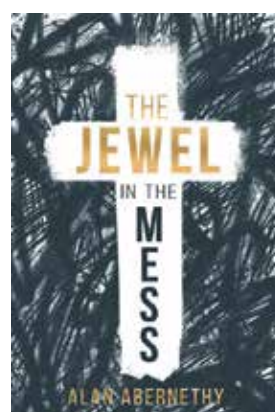
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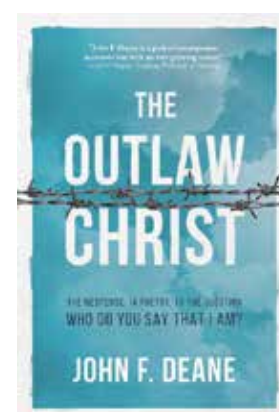
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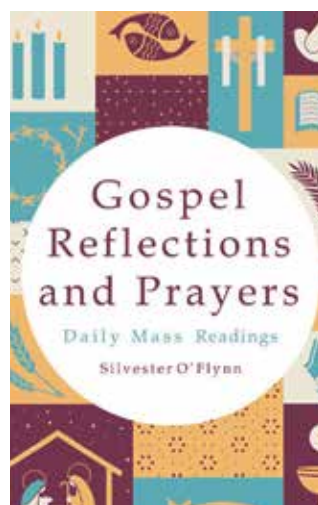
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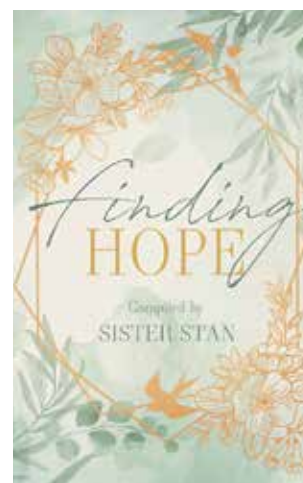

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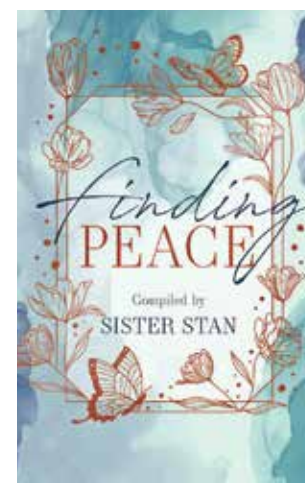
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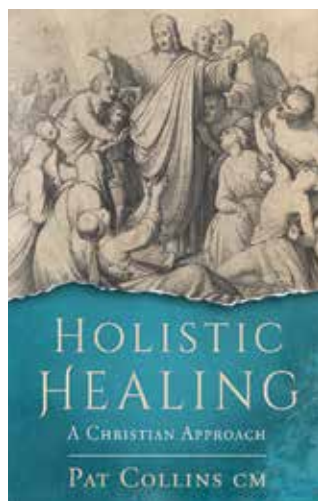
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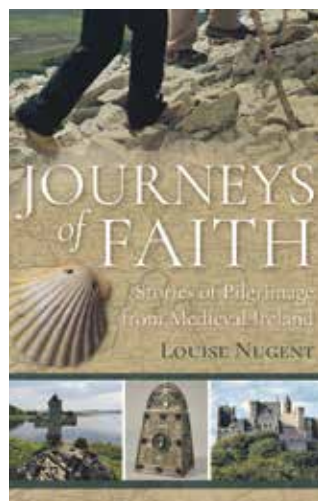
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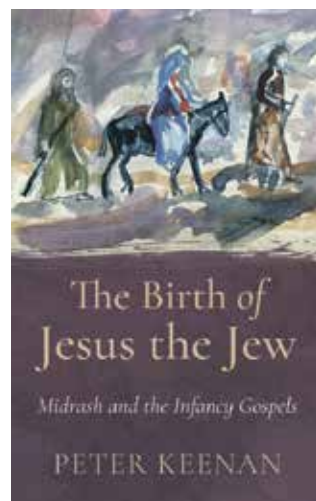
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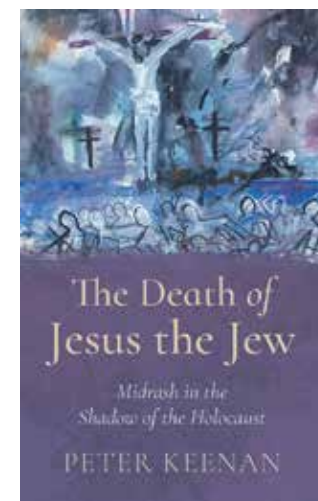
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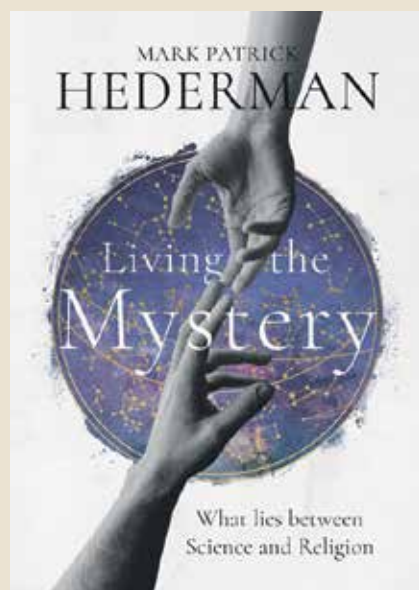
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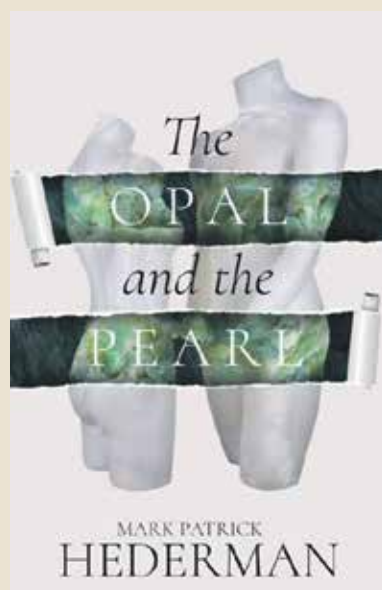
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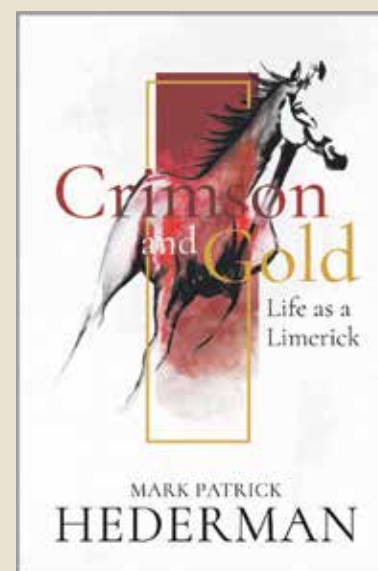
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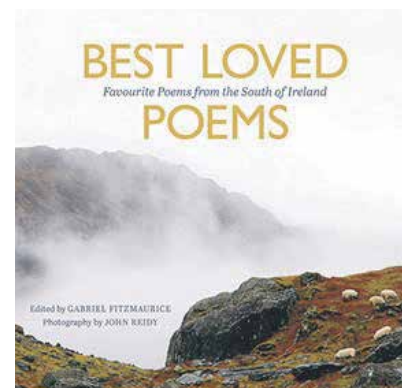
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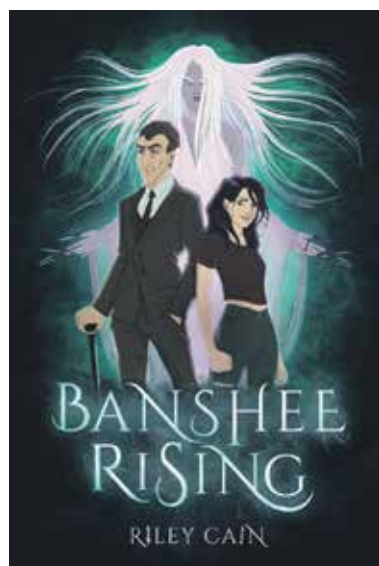
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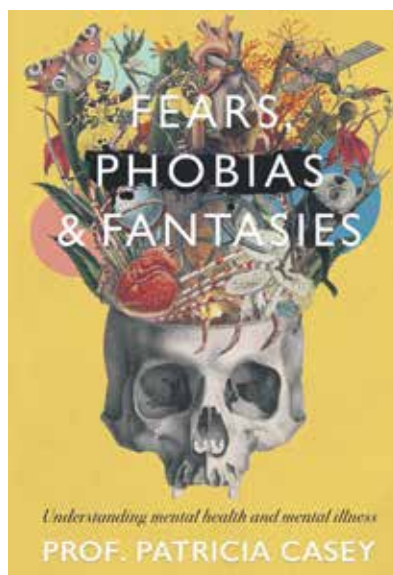
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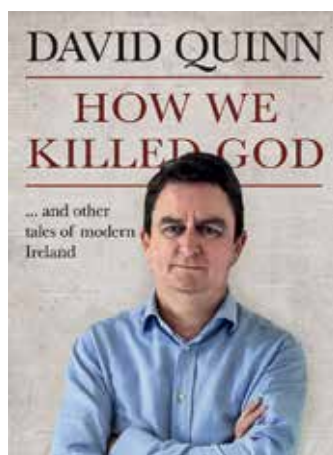
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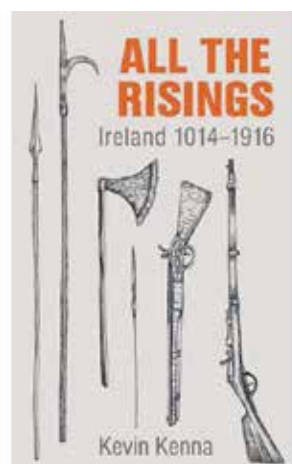
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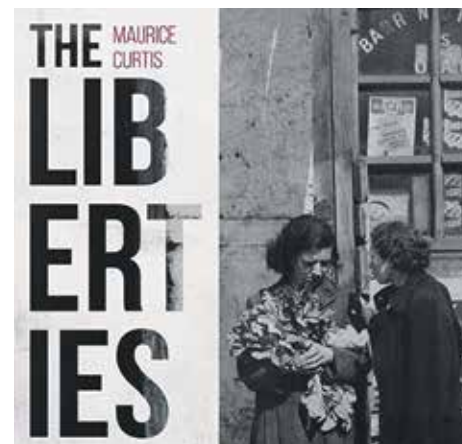
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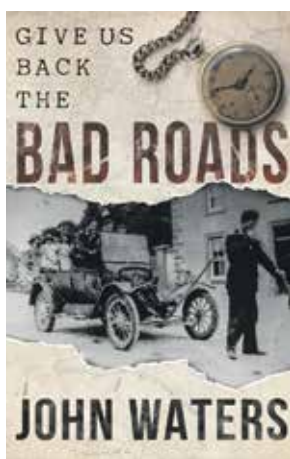


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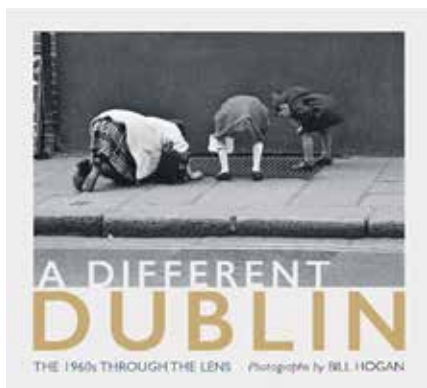


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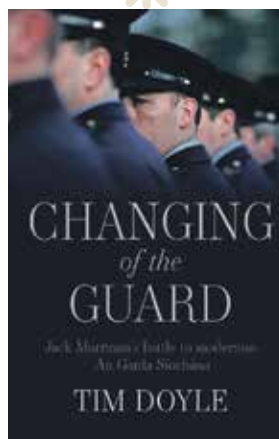
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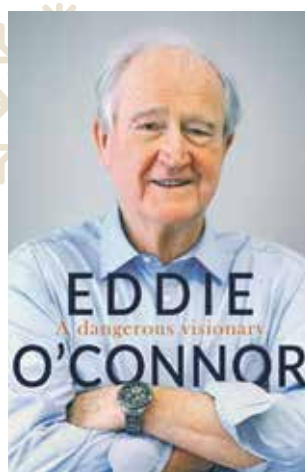
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'Red Mass' marks opening of legal year in Dublin

Ruadhán Jones

Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell celebrated the annual 'Red Mass' to mark the opening of the legal year in St Michan's Church, the Four Courts parish church, on October 2.

The Red Mass gets its name from the red vestments worn by the celebrant and is a tradition that originates from the 13th Century.

In his homily, Dr Farrell said that today "we must ask: is justice equal for all, especially the poor?"

"Is justice equal for the homeless, the unemployed, migrants and refugees, the low-paid workers in our midst," he asked the congregation, which included barristers, representatives from other common law jurisdictions, the Chief Justice, Attorney General, Garda Commissioner and Army Chief of Staff.

"The rights of the poor are not poorer rights. When rights are not recognised and guaranteed, might is right, and the only law is the law of the strongest," the archbishop said.



Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell is pictured with Irish barristers and representatives from other common law jurisdictions after the annual 'Red Mass' to mark the opening of the legal year on October 2. Dr Farrell is pictured with: Mr Joseph O'Sullivan BL, Mr Joseph Merrick BL, Mr Kevin Bell BL, Mr Paul Brady BL, Capt. Richard O'Hagan BL, Mr Alan Browne BL, Mr Neil Steen SC and Mr Tadhg Dorgan BL. Photos: John McElroy.



Mr Kenneth Hyland BL, Ms Genevieve Hyland BL and Mr John Reid Solicitor.



Mr Joseph O'Sullivan BL in conversation with the Vice Chair of the Bar of Ireland Ms Denise Brett SC.



Ms Veronica Gates BL, Ms Siobhan Kelly BL, Mr Justice Patrick McCarthy, Mr James O'Reilly SC and Mr Alan Brown BL.



Fr Sean Kelly OFM Cap. and Lt. Colonel Richard Brennan of the Defence Forces Legal Service



President of the High Court, Hon. Mr Justice David Barniville in conversation with Attorney General Mr Rossa Fanning SC. Also pictured are Ms Justice Caroline Costelloe, Mr Justice Tony O'Connor, Ms Justice Emily Farrell and Mr Justice Alex Owens.



His Honour Judge Tom Teehan, pictured with Superintendent Jonathan O'Brien of the Bridewell Garda Station, Ms Maura Derrivan President of the Law Society and Inspector Brian Hunt, from Bridewell Garda Station.



World Report

IN BRIEF

Two churches are 'completely destroyed' in Chile arson attack

● St Alberto Hurtado Chapel in the Archdiocese of Concepción and St Joseph Church of the Diocese of Linares were set on fire over the weekend. Both churches are located in central Chile.

According to a Facebook post by the Archdiocese of Concepción, the fire in the chapel was started around midnight on Sunday, October 1, and the building "was completely destroyed due to arson".

The chapel was part of St Joseph Parish in the town of Curanilahue and served a community of about 50 faithful.

The archdiocese said the auxiliary bishop and pastor of St. Joseph Church in Curanilahue, Oscar García, "immediately arrived at the scene to accompany the community in this difficult moment".

Suspects arrested in killing of seminarian in Nigerian diocese

● Security officials in Nigeria's Plateau State have reportedly arrested eight suspects in connection with a fire at a parish rectory in Nigeria's Kafanchan Diocese that resulted in the death of a seminarian.

Seminarian Na'aman Danlami died after Fulani bandits reportedly attacked St Raphael Parish Fadan Kamantan on the night of September 7 and set the rectory ablaze in what was

confirmed as a kidnapping attempt.

In a September 29 press conference, the leadership of the Special Military Task Force, Operation Safe Haven (OPSH) told journalists that eight suspects linked to the tragic incident had been arrested.

Captain James Oya said they arrested "the suspects involved in the attack and burning of St Raphael's Catholic Church Fadan Kamantan on September 7".

Dubia not an 'attack' on Francis – cardinal

● Cardinal Raymond Burke said when he and four other cardinals formally asked Pope Francis to respond to questions related to the synod on synodality, they were seeking reassurances about the 'perennial truths taught by the Church and not attacking the person of Pope Francis.

"The five *dubia* deal exclusively with the perennial doctrine and discipline of the Church, not the agenda of the Pope and certainly not the agenda of the five of us cardinals," Cardinal Burke said October 3 at a conference in Rome about perceived problems with the synod, which was to begin the next morning.

"They have nothing to do with the person of the Holy Father," the cardinal said.

Catholic teachers targeted in Cameroon gun attack

● A Catholic priest and three Catholic teachers in Cameroon's troubled southwest region are recovering from bullet wounds after they were shot in what Church authorities say was a targeted attack on the Catholic primary school in St Martin of Tour's Kembong Parish September 26.

The attack comes amid the country's struggle with seven years of separatist violence, and the Church still seems to be the only possible peace-negotiating partner.

According to Fr Christopher Eboka, the Mamfe Diocese's director of communications, the attackers entered the school in search of Fr Elvis Mbangsi, whom they shot four times – on the left wrist, right thigh, left knee and right foot. The other teachers were each shot twice in the legs.

Mexican president soft on crime say bishops

● During the third edition of the "Together for Mexico" meeting, held October 1 with the theme "Artisans of Peace", Bishop Victor Alejandro Aguilar, who heads the Episcopal Dimension for Laity of the Mexican Bishops' Conference, criticised the policy of the government of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador against organised crime, calling it "hugs for drug traffickers and bullets for the poor".

Abuse should be seriously addressed by the Synod on Synodality says survivor

While the doors of the Synod on Synodality, taking place in the Vatican October 4-29, are closed to journalists and the public, a group of survivors of sexual abuse anxiously awaits news on how the assembly addresses the clerical sexual abuse that affected their lives so painfully.

While OSV News sources say abuse has been mentioned a few times in the first synodal week – synodal groups spoke about abuse; none of the individual interventions have so far – it is not clear how and to what extent it will be brought into discussion.

Some abuse survivors expect concrete outcomes regarding abuse policies during the Synod on Synodality.

Others say that it's enough that the universal Church learns from Churches where good practices have already been established and made a difference.

Teresa Pitt Green of Spirit Fire, a Christian restorative justice initiative founded by two survivors of clergy abuse in the United States, told OSV News in an email exchange that "if the synod is trying to make the Church more welcoming to more people, it would be smart to restore a sense of safe harbour for the vulnerable and weak".

"It's one of the major issues that the Church has



Peter Isely, right, a survivor of sexual abuse by a priest, and founder of ECA (Ending Clergy Abuse), Tim Law, and Denise Buchanan, attend a march with survivors of clergy sexual abuse and activists near the Vatican in Rome September 27. Photo: OSV News/Guglielmo Mangiapane, Reuters.

on her plate today," Robert Fidura, a survivor of clergy sexual abuse from Poland, told OSV News.

"If they don't address abuse seriously at the synod, it's like they turn a blind eye at what's really going on, and all the good things the Church did and will do will again be seen in the shadow of not addressing abuse properly," he said, speaking from the perspective of a Catholic who is still an active member of the Church.

For survivor Peter Isely,

even more is at stake as he and a group of other victim-survivors gathered in Rome to demand a universal zero tolerance policy on abuse from the Church.

"There is no zero-tolerance requirement for abuse of children by clergy in the Catholic Church. There isn't. Pope Francis has talked about zero tolerance when it's convenient," Mr Isely told OSV News from Rome.

When asked by OSV News what will happen if abuse is not properly addressed at the Synod on

Synodality, Jesuit Fr Hans Zollner, director of Rome's Institute of Anthropology – Interdisciplinary Studies on Human Dignity and Care at the Pontifical Gregorian University, told OSV News that "many people who have been affected by abuse and many who have lost trust in the Church leadership will be deeply disappointed. Their anger, pain and disappointment at the actions of the Church will certainly not diminish."

Boston diocese opposes cancelling statute of limitations for abuse claims

Advocates say getting rid of the statute of limitations for victims of child sexual abuse is a matter of moral justice, but the Archdiocese of Boston says the move will hurt its own efforts to help sexual abuse victims.

The Massachusetts Legislature is considering eliminating the civil statute of limitations for adult victims of child sexual abuse.

The current law allows victims to file civil lawsuits up to 35 years after the abuse.

The lawmaker behind the effort, State Senator Joan Lovely said victims still need more time to reckon with the trauma they suffered as children.

Senator Lovely, who says she is a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, told WGBH's *Greater Boston* news show that many victims are unable to come forward until well into adulthood.

A statement from the Archdiocese of Boston said removing the statute of limitations for civil lawsuits would put at risk the archdiocesan aid program for sexual abuse victims.

"The legislative changes currently proposed and under consideration would jeopardise our ability to continue to (assist victims) and would make it difficult to sus-

tain the many works of mercy the Church is committed to through social justice and support for the neediest," the statement said.

David Vicinanza, a New England attorney who has represented both sexual abuse victims and Catholic institutions throughout his career, called completely lifting the statute of limitations for child sexual abuse victims "almost an incontrovertible good policy".

"From a moral perspective it's not a close call, it's the right thing to do," he said.

British PM says traditional understanding of gender 'common sense'

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak asserted on Wednesday, October 4, that the fact that "a man is a man and a woman is a woman" is "common sense".

Mr Sunak, who assumed office last October and is leader of the Conservative

(Tory) Party, made the comments during a speech at his party's annual gathering in Manchester.

"We shouldn't get bullied into believing that people can be any sex they want to be. They can't. A man is a man and a woman is a woman –

that's just common sense," Mr Sunak said as reported by *The Washington Post*.

He also asserted that "it shouldn't be controversial for parents to know what their children are being taught in school about relationships".

The comments drew ire

from supporters of transgender ideology in the UK, who have criticised Mr Sunak in the past for allegedly making jokes at transgender people's expense and for denying in an interview that he believes "trans women are women".



Edited by Ruadhán Jones
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'All God's creatures got a place in the choir'



A priest blesses a dog outside a church during a prayer service for blessing of the animals in Rio de Janeiro October 4, 2023, the feast of St Francis of Assisi, patron of animals. Photo: OSV News/Pilar Olivares, Reuters

Nicaraguan priests kidnapped from parishes amid govt crackdown

A pair of priests have been reported abducted from their parishes in Nicaragua as the country's increasingly totalitarian regime continues cracking down on the Church and silencing all dissenting voices.

Frs Ivan Centeno and Julio Norori were abducted October 1 by plain-clothed individuals, prompting fears the priests were taken by paramilitaries.

The Churchmen have been identified as pastors of parishes in the Diocese of Estelí in the country's northwest, where imprisoned Bishop Rolando Álvarez is apostolic

administrator.

Immaculate Conception of Mary Parish in the municipality of Jalpa, where Fr Centeno is pastor, said in an October 1 Facebook post: "Brothers, we ask for your prayers for our parish and our priests. United in prayer!!!"

Independent Nicaraguan media outlet 100% Noticias quoted a witness saying, "Four men in civilian clothes were waiting for Fr Julio Norori", pastor at St John the Evangelist Parish in the town of San Juan del Río Coco.

A third priest, Fr Erick Ramírez, also was reported missing. But his parish

later said via social media that he was in "perfect conditions" at his church.

The abduction provoked outrage from Nicaraguans forced into exile – and stripped of their Nicaraguan citizenship, in some cases – by the regime of President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo.

"The fierce persecution of the Catholic Church continues. I ask the Church around the world for their prayers for our persecuted Church!" Auxiliary Bishop Silvio José Baez of Managua said via X, formerly known as Twitter. Bishop Baez has resided in Miami since

2019 after being asked by the Vatican to leave Nicaragua for his own safety.

Church repression has hit such levels that priests in Nicaragua report spies sitting in their celebrations of the Eucharist and feast day celebrations have been largely curtailed.

At least three priests traveling abroad – including two churchmen accompanying pilgrims to World Youth Day in Portugal – have been denied reentry into Nicaragua in recent months, despite being citizens.

Armenian Christians 'disregarded' for economic profits – bishop

An Armenian Catholic bishop told OSV News that tens of thousands of ethnic Armenians have been "completely disregarded for political and economic profits", as Azerbaijan takes control over their former home.

Following a lightning offensive and ceasefire in September, Azerbaijan regained control over Nagorno-Karabakh, an ethnic Armenian enclave within its borders.

More than 100,000 enclave residents, mostly Christian, have now fled from the Muslim-majority

Azerbaijan for Armenia.

The swift exodus has raised alarm, even as a United Nations mission said it had found no evidence of violence against the residents – a narrative disputed by residents themselves.

"It's sad and painful to see the differences in the narrative about the situation between the reports of the UN mission in Azerbaijan and the UN mission in Armenia, as if they are speaking about two different realities," said Bishop Mikael Mouradian of the California-based

Armenian Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg.

"It saddens me to read and witness that the suffering of an entire nation can be completely disregarded for political and economic profits."

The head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicos Karekin II, echoed that lament in an October 1 message.

"The response of the world to the aggressive, genocidal actions of Azerbaijan was inadequate," Karekin II said.

Vatican roundup

Motherhood a gift not a liability Vatican tells UN

● Through a "narrow focus on pregnancy prevention" and the promotion of abortion, many international organisations too often view motherhood as a liability to the advancement of women, the Vatican said.

"Respect for women must include cherishing their unique gifts and capacities, including motherhood," said Msgr Robert Murphy, speaking on behalf of the Holy See's permanent observer mission to the United Nations.

Addressing a committee meeting focused October 4 on "the advancement of women", Msgr Murphy, the deputy permanent observer, criticised efforts to reduce maternal mortality through pregnancy prevention without working to make childbirth safer, as well as the promotion of abortion while ignoring the need to ensure greater support for the mothers of unborn children.

The Vatican representative also condemned the practice of prenatal sex selection – the use of techniques to choose the sex of child, including embryo implantations following in vitro fertilisation and the selective termination of pregnancies – which, he said, has led to "millions of missing girls" and is "an affront to the dignity of women".

Msgr Murphy also addressed the exploitation of women in the production of pornography and criticised its "violent and demeaning content, often grounded in misogynistic and racist stereotypes".

Cardinal Zen voices concerns about synod

● Just days before the Synod on Synodality kicked off its first round of meetings at the Vatican, a letter from Cardinal Joseph Zen was leaked to media, voicing serious concerns to cardinals and bishops worldwide about the gathering in Rome.

The letter, a copy of which was obtained by CNA, was dated September 21 accuses synod organisers of manipulation and pursuing an agenda rather than allowing for authentic ecclesiastical discourse.

Cardinal Zen examines the theological framing of synodality by drawing on a recent document by the International Theological Commission, 'Synodality in the life and mission of the Church', underscoring

that synodality, at its core, refers to the "communion and participation of all the members of the Church in the mission of evangelisation".

The cardinal expresses reservations about the scant reference to this critical Vatican-approved document in the preparatory materials for the synod, implying a potential deviation from foundational ecclesiastical principles.

"I am confounded by the fact that, on the one hand, I am told that synodality is a constitutive element of the Church, but, on the other hand, I am told that this is what God expects from us for this century (as a novelty?)," he said.

India's first tribal bishop dies at 83

● Retired Cardinal Telesphore Toppo of Ranchi, India, whose induction into the College of Cardinals was seen as recognition of the Church's growth among the tribal peoples of India, died October 4 at the age of 83.

According to the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India, which he twice led as president, Cardinal Ranchi "was the first and only Asian tribal to have been accorded such a distinguished ecclesiastical office".

A member of the Kuruk tribe, he was named a cardinal in 2003 by St John Paul II.

"God willed that I should be the first tribal priest to become a bishop, and now he wills that I should be the first tribal bishop to become the first tribal cardinal. Praise the Lord," Cardinal Ranchi said at the time.

India's population of more than 1 billion people includes about 104 million tribal peoples, also known as Adivasis.



Letter from Rome

Clock ticking on dangers of climate change – Pope Francis



Gina Christian

Pope Francis warns the clock is ticking on the dangers of climate change – and both a paradigm shift and practical action are critically needed to avert looming disasters in nature and human society.

The Pope released his new apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum* ('Praise God') on October 4 as a follow-up to his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si', On Care for Our Common Home*. The exhortation's publication coincided with the feast of St Francis of Assisi, patron of ecology, whose famous canticle inspired the title of *Laudato Si'*.

Though only about one-fifth the length of *Laudato Si'* (which it references extensively), the exhortation's message is even more urgent, since "the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point," wrote Pope Francis. "Climate change is one of the principal challenges facing society and the global community."

Key messages

The text reiterates key messages that have resonated throughout Pope Francis' papacy – among them, concern for the marginalised, care for creation, human ecology and a "synodal" approach to resolving global problems.

With "the effects ... borne by the most vulnerable people", the issue of climate change is "one intimately related to the dignity of human life", he said.

Addressed to "all people of good will," the exhortation declares that "it is no longer possible to doubt the human ... origin of climate change", citing data from sources such as the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

While noting that "not every concrete catastrophe" is due to global climate change, humans bear responsibility for specific changes that have led to "extreme phenomena" – such as storms, heat waves and flooding – that are "increasingly frequent and intense", said the Pope.

He pointed to rapid, human-driven upticks in greenhouse gas emissions, which trap radiation from the sun in earth's atmosphere and warm the planet. The global average temperature – a metric



Workers dump waste into a landfill located just beside the Dhaleshwari River in Savar, Bangladesh. Pope Francis warns the clock is ticking on the dangers of climate change – and both a paradigm shift and practical action are critically needed to avert looming disasters in nature and human society. Photo: OSV News/Mohammad Ponir Hossain, Reuters

“The necessary transition towards clean energy sources such as wind and solar energy, and the abandonment of fossil fuels, is not progressing at the necessary speed”

that tracks changes in the earth's surface temperature against long-term averages for a given location and date – has risen over the past 50 years in particular, at a rate that could approach the recommended ceiling of 1.5 degrees Celsius in just 10 years, said the Pope.

That acceleration has a profound impact, causing dangerous shifts in climate and weather with effects ultimately felt "in the areas of healthcare, sources of employment, access to resources, housing (and) forced migrations", Pope Francis said.

He challenged "resistance and confusion" regarding climate change, "even within the Catholic Church", stressing that "the overwhelming majority of scientists specialising in the climate" support the correlation between global climate phenomena and spikes in greenhouse gas emissions.

Pope Francis said the planet itself has become a mirror of a deeply flawed view of human life and activity. Such a "technocratic para-

digm" (as the Pope described it in *Laudato Si'*) exalts technological and economic power as sources of reality, goodness and truth, promising unlimited potential if methodically developed.

Recent years

In recent years, that paradigm has advanced still further, with a goal of "(increasing) human power beyond anything imaginable, before which nonhuman reality is a mere resource at its disposal", he said.

Yet "not every increase in power represents progress for humanity," said the Pope, especially since (as he wrote in *Laudato Si'*) "we cannot claim to have a sound ethics, a culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded self-restraint."

The poor pay the highest price while inflicting the least damage on the planet, said Pope Francis, citing the United Nations Environment Programme's 2022 Emissions Gap Report, which found that per capita greenhouse gas emissions of richer

countries far exceed those of poorer ones.

The question of human power itself must be reexamined, and "human beings must be recognised as a part of nature", the Pope said, stressing that "everything is connected" and "no one is saved alone".

Lamenting the "weakness of international politics" in addressing climate change, Pope Francis drew on his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* to call for a "reconfigured multilateralism" – one "not dependent on changing political conditions or the interests of a few", but possessing a "stable efficacy" that can resolve "the real problems of humanity" by placing "the dignity of persons" before all.

Mixed results

International climate conferences held over the past several decades have had mixed results, said Pope Francis, labelling some as "failures" and others, such as the UN's 1997 COP3 (Conference of the Parties 3) in Kyoto – which sought to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 5% by 2012 – as noteworthy. While the Kyoto goal was not met, the 2015 COP21 in Paris marked "a new beginning", said the Pope, as it aimed to hold the increase of average global temperatures to under 2 and, eventually, 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine both hindered progress in tackling global warming, said Pope Francis.

He said COP28, set to take place November 30-December 12 in Dubai, will either prove to be a turning point for decisive action or "a great disappointment" that imperils any progress made so far.

"Binding forms of energy transition" that are "efficient, obligatory and readily monitored" are essential, said Pope Francis, as "the necessary transition towards clean energy sources such as wind and solar energy, and the abandonment of fossil fuels, is not progressing at the necessary speed".

The Pope invited Catholics and those of other faiths to recall their "spiritual motivations" for addressing the climate crisis, asking "everyone to accompany this pilgrimage of reconciliation with the world that is our home and to help make it more beautiful, because that commitment has to do with our personal dignity and highest values".

Humility is essential in this journey, he said, "for when human beings claim to take God's place they become their own worst enemies".

Gina Christian is a national reporter for OSV News.

Priest cases in India show complexities of life under Hindu nationalism

Nirmala Carvalho

Two incidents involving Catholic priests in recent days illustrate the increasingly complex situation for Christians in India facing a rising tide of Hindu nationalism, with one priest arrested under the country's controversial anti-conversion laws and another suspended for joining the right-wing BJP party of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In one case, a priest in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh was detained and eventually charged after going to a local police station to inquire about a Church employee who'd been arrested after a complaint from a member of a militant Hindu nationalist group regarding prayers being offered in a private home.

“The fundamentalists are going around as vigilantes to prevent even prayer meetings and worship of the Faithful”

According to observers, local police were originally looking for the employee's brother, who is also a Christian pastor, based on a complaint from a member of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad organisation. Eventually four members of the family were arrested, and, when they phoned Fr Sebastian Francis Babu for help, he too was taken into custody.

Bishop Gerald Mathias of Lucknow, the capital city of Uttar Pradesh, told *Crux* that the arrests amount to “sheer harassment of Christians”.

“The accusation of conversion is baseless,” Bishop Mathias said, ascribing the arrest of Babu to “sheer high-handedness of the police, who are simply under control of the right-wing BJP party”.

“The fundamentalists are going around as vigilantes to prevent even prayer meetings and worship of the Faithful,” Bishop Mathias said. “Police simply arrest Christians without verifying facts, with no evidence just because someone has complained.”

Founded in 1980 though with roots in earlier Hindu nationalist movements, the Bharatiya Janata Party, or BJP, stresses the importance of preserving and defending India's Hindu identity, an ideology sometimes described by observers as a “saffron wave”.

Since the party came to power under Modi in 2014, Christians and other religious minorities in India, especially Muslims, have complained of increasing harassment and marginalisation.

The BJP is also the governing party in Uttar Pradesh.



A man portraying Christ performs a re-enactment during a Good Friday procession in Mumbai, India, April 7, 2023. Photo: OSV News/Niharika Kulkarni, *Reuters*

“I only hope the judiciary will be more sensible and good sense will prevail,” Bishop Mathias said of Babu's arrest. “Our constitution guarantees freedom for every citizen to profess, practice and propagate religion of his or her choice. In fact, the anti-conversion law in the state is a violation of constitutional guarantees.”

Meanwhile roughly 1,200 miles away in the southern Indian state of Kerala, a Catholic priest of the Syro-Malabar Church, one of the eastern Churches in communion with Rome, was relieved of his duties as a vicar on Monday after joining the BJP.

Fr Kuriakose Mattam had been the parish priest of St Thomas Church in a small town in the Idukki diocese of the Syro-Malabar Church. His affiliation with the party was announced by the district leader of the BJP, who is currently running a membership drive.

Impression

The leader posted an image of Fr Mattam, 74, to his Facebook page, saying the priest “is of the opinion that there is a wrong impression about the BJP, as many things are not correctly presented.”

Shown wearing a saffron stole, a common symbol of the BJP, Fr

Mattam was quoted in the post as saying, “I don't agree to the common belief that the BJP is not the party for Christians. It is essential for our times that people of all faith should come together. I hope to get more opportunities to work together.”

“There is a fundamental group that is evolving within the Christian community clandestinely joining hands with the fundamental groups of the BJP”

Shortly afterwards, the Diocese of Idukki released a statement indicating that Fr Mattam had been relieved of his duties. A Church spokesperson cited a provision of Church law barring priests from membership in political parties.

Canon 384 of the Code of Canon Law for Eastern Churches states, “Clerics are not to have an active part in political parties nor in the supervision of labour unions unless, in the judgment of the eparchial bishop or, if particular law so states, of the patriarch or of another authority, the need to protect the rights of the Church or to promote the

common good requires it.”

In a video, Fr Mattam defended his decision.

Issues

“I follow contemporary issues,” he said. “I don't find any reason not to join the BJP. I have friendships with many BJP workers. Today I received membership. I have read from the newspapers and have an understanding of the BJP in the country,” the priest said.

In Kerala, Christians constitute about 18% of the state's population of 34.5 million people. A spokesman for the Syro-Malabar Church told *Crux* that “the diocesan bishop and the authorities concerned will hear Fr Mattam before further proceedings. We are following up the situation”.

Fr Joyce Kaithakottil of the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly in the Syro-Malabar Church told *Crux* that the Fr Mattam case is part of a broader pattern of some Christians, including some Catholic clergy, supporting the BJP.

“There is a fundamental group that is evolving within the Christian community clandestinely joining hands with the fundamental groups of the BJP,” Fr Kaithakottil said. “There is also an anti-Muslim feeling within this fundamental group of Christians.”

Fr Kaithakottil charged that senior bishops in the Syro-Malabar Church, including Cardinal George Alencherry, have at times shown sympathy for the BJP, asking, “Is it right from the part of the leadership to support the BJP publicly? Are they not aware of the Hindutva agenda of BJP and their fascist style of governance?”

The term “Hindutva” refers to the political ideology of Hindu nationalism.

Fr Kaithakottil also told *Crux* that Fr Mattam, who is reportedly near retirement, joined the BJP after an invitation from a parishioner, describing it as more of an “impulsive” decision than a pre-meditated one.

Some observers believe the BJP is especially anxious to trumpet Christian support now, given a wave of ethnic violence that's gripped the northeastern state of Manipur in which Christians have become frequent targets of largely Hindu mob attacks.

As of mid-August, estimates were that 120 Christians had been killed, with 4,500 buildings and homes belonging to Christians, together with 400 churches, destroyed and around 50,000 believers displaced.

i Nirmala Carvalho is based in Mumbai, India, and a contributor to *Crux*.

Letters

Post to: Letters to the Editor, The Irish Catholic,
Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford,
Dublin 18, D18 K277 or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

Letter of the week

Extend 'unwavering support' to faith-filled family and youth groups

Dear Editor, Congratulations to the 15 dedicated men who have taken the noble step of entering seminary to pursue their calling to the priesthood, representing a modest increase compared to the nine and six men who embarked on this journey in the preceding years [*The Irish Catholic* – October 5, 2023]. This increase in vocations is not only a source of hope but also a testament to the vital role played by Catholic families and youth groups in fostering vocations within our

Church.

In a time when the world faces many challenges, the willingness of these young men to embrace a life of service and spiritual dedication is truly inspiring. It speaks to the enduring appeal of the priesthood and the resilience of Faith within our communities. This increase, no matter how modest, in vocations is a sign that the seeds of Faith continue to be sown and nurtured in Irish homes.

Catholic families have long been

the primary cradle of vocations to the priesthood. It is within the context of strong, Faith-filled families that young individuals often hear the call to serve God and his Church. These families provide the nurturing environment where Faith is not just taught but lived out in daily life, setting a powerful example for their children. Their support, encouragement, and prayers play an indispensable role in the discernment process.

Additionally, Catholic youth

groups have been instrumental in fostering vocations by providing a platform for young people to deepen their faith, explore their spiritual calling, and form lasting friendships within the Church community. These groups create a sense of belonging and offer opportunities for young Catholics to engage in acts of service, prayer, and reflection, all of which can contribute to the discernment of a priestly vocation.

As we celebrate the dedication

of these 15 young men who have chosen the path of priesthood, let us also extend our gratitude to the families and youth groups that have played a pivotal role in nurturing these vocations. Their unwavering support and commitment to the Catholic Faith continue to be the bedrock upon which future generations of priests are built.

Yours etc.,
Mary Connolly

Waterford City, Waterford

300 trained to lead prayer at funerals in Cork and Ross

Dear Editor, I read, with interest, the article about parishioners leading funeral rites [*The Irish Catholic* – September 21, 2023].

In the Diocese of Cork and Ross lay people have been leading prayer at funerals since 2012. Over 300 people have been formed and trained for this ministry and over half the parishes in the diocese have trained teams in their parish.

Yours etc.,
Maura O'Flynn
Bantry, Co. Cork



Pope Francis' eco-exhortation is timely call to action

Dear Editor, I am writing to express my deep appreciation for the recent Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Francis, entitled *Laudate Deum*, and to share my thoughts on why this document is of utmost importance and relevance today.

Laudate Deum, which translates to 'Praise God', captures the essence of the Pope's message, calling upon all of us to rekindle our faith, gratitude, and reverence for the Creator. In a rapidly changing world marked by challenges such as climate change, social injustice, and moral dilemmas, Pope Francis's exhortation serves as a guiding light, reminding us of our shared responsibility to care for God's creation and our fellow human beings.

One of the key aspects of the exhortation that stands out is Pope Francis's emphasis on the interconnectedness of all creation. He underscores the urgent need for ecological conversion, urging us to adopt a holistic approach that considers the well-being of our planet and the dignity of every human person.

Laudate Deum

addresses the challenges posed by the prevailing culture of consumerism and individualism. In a world driven by material pursuits, the Pope's exhortation reminds us of the spiritual dimension of our lives and the importance of living in communion with others. It encourages us to build communities rooted in love, solidarity, and compassion, fostering a sense of belonging and interconnectedness. It invites us to reflect on how we can live out our Faith in a way that promotes the common good and upholds the values of justice, mercy, and humility.

Pope Francis's 'eco-exhortation' is a timely and relevant call to action for Catholics and all people of goodwill. It challenges us to live more intentionally, to care for our planet and each other, and to rediscover the joy of praising God in all aspects of our lives. Let us heed this call and work together to create a more just, sustainable, and compassionate world.

Yours etc.,
Barry Higgins
Donnybrook, Dublin 4

Hoping for the salvation of all is not optional

Dear Editor, Regarding the possibility of salvation for all people, Fr O'Brien's letter [*The Irish Catholic* – October 6, 2023] abbreviates my carefully worded phrase, "we can hope that they will", to "they will". That's precisely the heresy of universalism

about which he expresses concern. The Church's hope for the salvation of all, which is not to be confused with presumption or optimism, is expressed in *Lumen Gentium*, 16, and *Gaudium et Spes*, 19, and draws upon 1 Tim 2:4.

Hoping for the salvation of all is not optional for Christians. "What we cannot know with certainty", Cardinal Walter Kasper says, "we are obliged to hope for with confidence."

This hope of the Church, of course, must manifest

itself in how we, as the Body of Christ, live our lives, and thus may stir all hearts to embrace with joy the fullness of Gospel truth.

Yours etc.,
Fr Eamonn Conway,
University of Notre Dame
Australia

Media is weaponising Pope's message on same-sex blessings

Dear Editor, In the eyes of many, Pope Francis' latest comments concerning blessings for those choosing to live in intimate same-sex partnerships, seem to contradict the Vatican's own emphatic statement of 2021, which had declared that "God cannot Bless sin".

On closer examination his remarks have astutely changed the issue from one of 'to bless or not to bless' into one of sensitively exploring on a case-by-case basis, each desire, request, and demand for a blessing, given that so few have had the opportunity to appreciate

the Church's understanding of marriage, morality, modesty, etc. Subtly he is challenging the cosmetic, individualised, consumeristic, mentality that would have us treat God's largess and his Church as a kind of piggybank, for all on sundry to dip into at will. It is unfortunate that the media is weaponising the issue; giving the impression that some are unnecessarily being deprived of a token of comfort and solace, because they don't fit some archaic criteria.

The essence of a 'blessing' is that we seek to enfold in our own lives God's

will, because we have come to understand through (bitter) personal experience how naive it is to insist on being the author of one's own happiness.

The parable of the goats and the sheep says it all; we can be goats using religion to serve our own ends, or we can be sheep, those who have discovered that they are totally dependent upon God, and for whom following him and his ways is not optional.

Yours etc.,
Gearóid Duffy,
Lee Road, Co. Cork

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.

Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, October 12, 2023

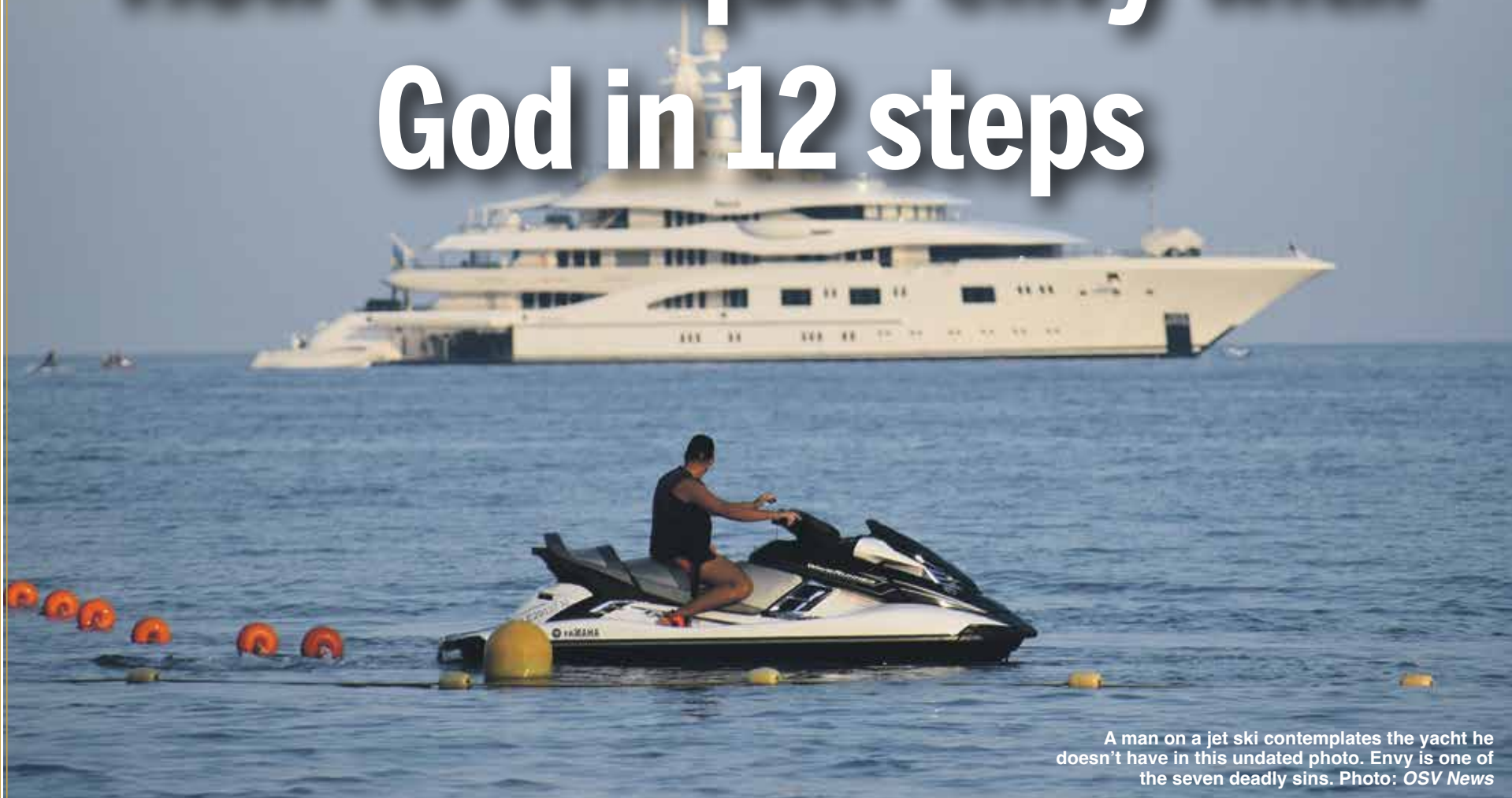
**Early
Church
mothers?**

Dr Marcellino
D'Ambrosio

Page 31



How to conquer envy with God in 12 steps



A man on a jet ski contemplates the yacht he doesn't have in this undated photo. Envy is one of the seven deadly sins. Photo: OSV News

When I was very young, I came across a story that has left an indelible impression on me. The story centres on two bedridden men who shared a hospital room. One bed was situated next to a window, and its occupant loved to tell his partner of the many delightful and entertaining events he could see. The co-occupant, deprived of such a view, grew increasingly envious.

His envy grew on a daily basis to the point that it incited him to murder his companion. At long last, he now had the bed next to the window. But when he pushed aside the curtains to enjoy the spectacle, all he could see



**Envy places us not
with others, but
against them, writes
Donald DeMarco**

was a brick wall. The deceased had not been a reporter, but a storyteller.

The moral that this story impressed upon me is that even if we gain what we covet, we may become disillusioned and made even more miserable. Envy can be traitorous.

The best and simplest definition of envy belongs to St Thomas Aquinas, who

described it as "sorrow at another's good fortune". St John Baptist de la Salle embellished this definition somewhat when he referred to envy as, "A criminal sorrow for the welfare of our neighbour".

Criminal

The inclusion of the word "criminal" is important, because it brings out the sinful character of envy

inasmuch as it violates the Christian command to love our neighbour.

Envy places us not with others, but against them. Therefore, it engenders the wrong feelings; it makes us sorrowful at the good that others have, and leads us to rejoice at their misfortunes. Envy is misanthropic.

Some people think that we need envy in order to be competitive and get ahead. They think that envy is the engine that drives progress. The absence of envy, however, does not render us stagnant.

It is perfectly consistent with Christian principles to 'aspire' to good things. Aspiration is the desire and the hope of achieving the things

God wants us to achieve. We can all aspire to be holy. Envy, on the other hand, is the desire to have what others have. Envy is covetous.

Inevitable

Some people think that envy is natural since it is so close to us that it seems almost inevitable. How commonplace envy is between one student and another who gets a higher grade, or one employee and another who earns a higher salary, or one ballplayer and another who amasses a higher batting average.

Yet, envy is not natural as much as it is primitive. Christians are called to grow beyond the primitive stage and become more complete and

“Let us be determined to bring to harvest the blessings that God has bestowed upon us. We can be determined to be better human beings”

more Christlike. Envy is complacency.

Ruinous

Because envy is a deadly sin and essentially a potentially ruinous disposition, it is wise that we take steps to rid ourselves of it. Here are 12 ways in which we can take steps to exterminate this scourge:

1. Thank God and be grateful for what he has given us. God has blessed us in different ways. Gratitude – the memory of the heart – is an effective enemy of envy.

2. Rejoice in what other people have, especially the gifts that God has lavished on them. We cannot have everything, and the gifts that others have complement our own.

3. Realise that envy makes us sad, a negative disposition that is not conducive to making the most of the gifts we have. God loves a cheerful giver, but he also loves a cheerful receiver.

4. Replace envy with determination. Let us be determined to bring to harvest the blessings that God has bestowed upon us. We can be determined to be better human beings.

5. Let us understand that envy is a self-administered poison. It is far better to compliment people for their accomplishments than grow green and sick with envy.

6. We contradict our-

selves when we are envious. We would prefer that others praise us for our achievements rather than have our accomplishments make them sullen with envy. Therefore, applying the Golden Rule, we should praise others in the way we would have them praise us. We should give and receive credit whenever credit is due.

“It is as foolish for musicians to envy one another as it is for people in general to envy one another in the symphony of harmonious social interaction”

7. We should meditate on how praising others is a normal human responsibility. Consider the responsibility that parents have in praising their children's accomplishments. It would be selfish and counterproductive for parents to envy their children. To 'parent' means bringing out the best in our children.

8. When we envy others we shortchange ourselves in two ways: first, by neglecting our own gifts; second, by being reluctant to accept and benefit from the gifts of others. Envy is self-defeating.

9. Envy, if not checked,

leads to other deadly sins, such as anger, sloth and avarice. Envy does not help us get what we want. It helps us to get exactly what we do not want. And this is precisely what happens when envy begets anger.

10. When we envy others, we rarely appreciate the fact that their gifts can demand hard work and even harsh suffering. Sometimes what we envy comes with a cost that we could not bear.

11. Realise that God knows what he is doing and doles out his gifts in accordance with his providential wisdom. Envy contains more than a touch of irreverence. God wants us to benefit from each other's gifts. He wants a community of helpers, not an anarchy of grouches.

12. The symphony of life requires a variety of gifts. The orchestra needs the concert pianist as well as the rarely used cymbalist. If every musician strove to be a concert pianist, no one could ever become one. The concert pianist requires a full orchestra to complement him.

Foolish

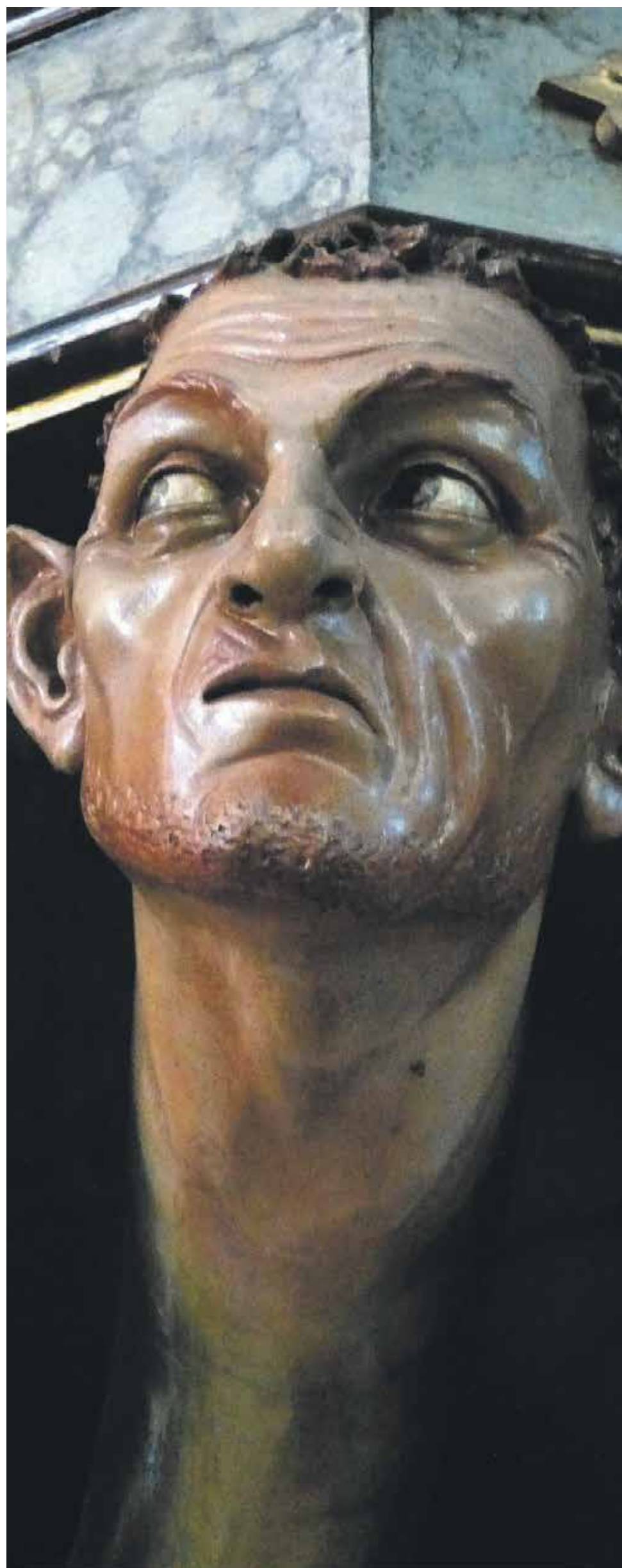
It is as foolish for musicians to envy one another as it is for people in general to envy one another in the symphony of harmonious social interaction. Consider the fate of poor Antonio Salieri, Mozart's rival, in Peter Shaffer's play *Amadeus*.

God is incapable of envy, and this is why he decided to share his wealth by creating us. Banishing envy is a way of becoming more Godlike.

i Donald DeMarco is professor emeritus at St Jerome's University in Waterloo, Ontario, and an adjunct professor at Holy Apostles College in Connecticut.



F. Murray Abraham stars as Antonio Salieri in *Amadeus*. Salieri's envy of Mozart almost consumes him.



Early Church Mothers?



Dr Marcellino D'Ambrosio

In recent years, some have charged that the role of women in the early church was glossed over or, even worse, deliberately suppressed. The best-selling novel *The Da Vinci Code* is a case in point.

But anything beyond a superficial reading of the New Testament shows this allegation to be groundless. True, none of the 12 Apostles selected by Jesus were women. But the four Gospels don't hide the fact that most of them fled when Jesus was arrested.

Who was left to stand bravely at the foot of the cross? Three women.

One was Jesus's mother, honoured ever since as the greatest of all creatures. Another, Mary Magdalene, was dubbed "apostle to the apostles" since she, the first to see the risen Christ, was sent by the Lord to bring the good news to the 12.

But how about the next few centuries after the first generation, the period when the New Testament took shape and the creed was hammered out? This was the era of the early Church Fathers. But, one may ask, were there also early 'Church Mothers'?

The men called 'Church Fathers' were teachers who guarded the faith taught by the apostles. Their teaching, put down in writing, survived to guide the Church through the ages.

Powerful

Women in the early Church did not generally leave behind doctrinal writings. But their lives had such a powerful impact that their stories were written, recited and sung from their day down to ours.

One of the most powerful evangelistic forces in the first few centuries was the extraordinary care given by Christians to the poor and the sick.

Two great epidemics ravaged the Roman empire in the 2nd and 3rd Century. Infected pagans were often abandoned by family afraid of infection. Christians, on the other hand, risked their lives to nurse the sick and bury the dead.

The emperor Julian the Apostate appealed to pagan priests to emulate Chris-



A mosaic of martyrs Perpetua and Felicity adorns a chapel wall in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. The early 'Church Mothers' – like the Church Fathers of whom we've heard so much – were influential in the first few centuries of our Christian development. Photo: CNS

tian charity lest even more Romans abandon the traditional gods for "the Galilean".

As one would expect, Christian women were the mainstay of what the emperor ridiculed as "this army of nurses". Many of these nurses were infected with the plague and thus quietly laid down their lives for friends and strangers alike.

Other Christian women laid down their lives publicly in the arena. Perpetua and her slave, Felicity, were both nursing babies when they were given the choice to sacrifice to the gods or sacrifice their lives. They died together rather than surrender their faith.

Their story, and the story of Agnes, the child martyr of Rome, became the most famous tales of martyrdom in the early Church.

Literature extolling feminine heroism was something utterly new in Western literature; up until this point, epic stories featured men who conquered by killing. In these stories of martyrdom, women won a crown by dying. The example of such courageous love of those considered the 'weaker sex' had a considerable impact on the pagan masses.

“So it is that some of the greatest Fathers of the Church owed their vocation to women”

Behind every great man stands a great woman, so the saying goes. So it is that some of the greatest Fathers of the Church owed their vocation

to women. St Augustine's dad was either a pagan or a nominal Christian. In any case, he died in Augustine's teen years and had little impact on the boy's life.

The devout St Monica, on the other hand, persevered in prayer throughout her son's rebellious years and introduced Augustine to Bishop Ambrose, who ultimately baptised him. Augustine later wrote over four million words on just about every conceivable topic. We'd have none of them had it not been for Monica.

A generation before Augustine, a young woman was born to a Christian family in what is now eastern Turkey. Macrina, the eldest of ten, dedicated her life to the education of her siblings.

The eldest boy, Basil, returned from higher stud-

ies in Athens very impressed with himself. Macrina, not so impressed, challenged her brother to seek true greatness in Christ.

Prompted by the example and words of Macrina, Basil forsook the vanities of the world to live the life of a monk. Later made bishop, Basil wrote a book whose words made their way into the creed.

Conversion

When we each Sunday profess faith in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, we are quoting Macrina's little brother, Basil the Great.

Another of Macrina's brothers found religion quite boring. Once again the words and example of his older sister helped prompt a conversion that ultimately propelled this man, known as Gregory of

Nyssa, to become one of the greatest Christian teachers of the 4th Century.

Gregory came to comfort the dying Macrina but found himself instead pouring out his heart and troubles upon the pillar whom he'd relied on all of his life. She challenged him to forsake self-pity, rejoice in his trials and "play the man".

Mothers give life, nurture it and make it grow. If the Church grew from a mere handful to multitudes despite brutal persecution, it was every bit as much due to the early Church Mothers as to the early Church Fathers.

i Dr Marcellino D'Ambrosio is co-founder of Crossroads Productions, an apostolate of Catholic renewal and evangelization.

Exploring the young life of St John Paul II



Ruadhán Jones

On October 22, we celebrate the feast of St John Paul II. While his image as Pope is iconic, his early life is less well known, making *Karol*, an exceptionally popular biography of the even more popular Karol Wojtyła, later known as Pope St John Paul II, a very useful film, as well as a good one.

It covers his life from the beginning of 1939 when Karol was only 19 years old and ends at the papal conclave in October 1978 that made him pope.

The incredible success of the movie prompted the creation of a sequel, *Karol: The Pope, The Man* (2006), which portrayed Karol's life as pope from his papal inauguration to his death. Part of its popularity is surely down to the timing of its release. It was originally slated to premiere at the very beginning of April 2005 in the Vatican, but was delayed due to JP II's death.

Conclave

In the end, it was broadcast for the first time by Italian TV station *Canale 5* on the first day of the 2005 papal conclave – no pressure there! As well as being broadcast on television, it got an official theatrical release, so they really struck at all audiences.

Having said all that about the coincidence of its release, there is of course the matter of the overall quality of production, which is really quite impressive. It's one of a multitude of made-for-TV saints' movies that were produced for Italian television, highlighting popular saints like JP II and also a few unknowns.

“Karol is directed by experienced filmmaker Giacomo Battiato, who is highly regarded as an erudite and flexible director of largely genre films and TV series”

As an aside, one of the better efforts is about an Italian saint I had never heard of, Giuseppe Moscati, who dedicated his career as a doctor to caring for the poorest of the poor. They are of the same type and style, being TV movies that try to show the men in all their youthful vigour. In the case of *Karol*, it has the added interest of exploring a period of the late pope's life that is not so well known.

Initially I was put off by the length of the biopic, as it is nearly four hours, but I watched it in a few large chunks and was generally drawn in by the energy and the solidity of the production. Earnest desire to do something good doesn't always come off – a life of Dorothy Day failed miserably trying to do the

same thing – but there is, as I said, some sense of enthusiasm and energy which I think it was important for the filmmakers to get across, both in terms of the pope's character and of those who loved him. It is something which they largely succeed in.

Karol is directed by experienced filmmaker Giacomo Battiato, who is highly regarded as an erudite and flexible director of largely genre films and TV series, most recently a version of Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*. Then of course you have a score by legendary Italian composer Ennio Morricone, and while it's not as memorable as some of his works, it doesn't exactly pale in comparison either.

Finally, I think a test of the success of a production is often measured in how many 'unknowns' become stars from working on it, and in that regard *Karol* fits the bill as it launched the career of Polish actor Piotr Adamczyk.

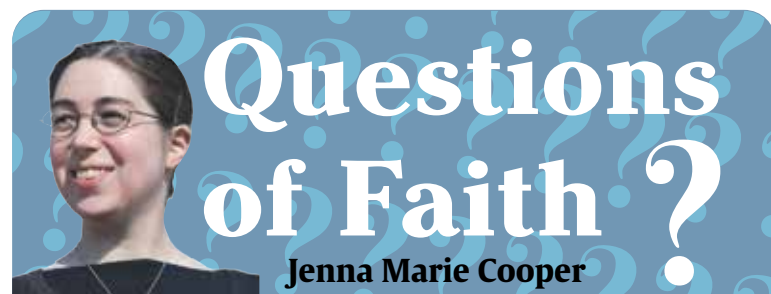
Eventful

JP II led an eventful life, and so the filmmakers had plenty of dramatic material to draw on. By the age of 20, he was effectively on his own as his family had died; he himself had survived WWII under the Nazi terror and then formed several underground Catholic groups in the face of the terror from the East, the Soviet Union.

There are a few additions – well, I don't know, they could actually be true stories – that work particularly well to draw out the young John Paul II's charisma and pastoral care. One of these is particularly notable, that of the Soviet spy who by following Wojtyła slowly comes to question his own beliefs, measuring them against the example of this great Churchman.

On the whole, I don't think it's as enjoyable as the Moscati film. I found that there were times that *Karol* became too obviously staged and lacked a little in subtlety. It does face an obvious difficulty in that it's covering a large time span and quite a full life, but even still there were times when that excuse seemed a thin one.

It is a film suited to family viewing, all the same, and could be broken up into manageable chunks quite easily, as it has an episodic feel to it. For younger children, it is a chance to introduce them to a saint that so many Catholics grew up venerating and cherishing.



Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper



Q: A two-point question: It is common to hear, 'It's a miracle', for a sports comeback victory. Does the Church actually have a definition of a miracle? When it comes to canonisation, miracles are required, aren't they? Does a miracle happen in other domains except health and medicine?

A: A miracle is an extraordinary phenomenon that cannot be explained by any natural cause. In its glossary, the Catechism of the Catholic Church defines a miracle as “a sign or wonder such as a healing, or control of nature, which can only be attributed to divine power”.

Calling something like an unlikely sports comeback a ‘miracle’ is using quite a bit of poetic license, since there is a readily discernible natural explanation for the victory (namely, the skill of the athletes, which the athletes acquired through their own human efforts).

There also are situations where God truly may have intervened in answer to a prayer – for instance, a disease goes into an unexpected remission after a course of medical treatment, or a wayward loved one has a surprising conversion of heart – but which cannot be called miracles in a strict technical sense, as there can be a strong natural component to such blessings.

In instances such as these, we might understand God as working within the natural order he established, albeit perhaps in an especially active way; this is as opposed to ‘breaking the rules’ of nature, which is what happens in a true miracle.

Medical miracles seem to be the kind of miracle we hear about most often today, but not all miracles are health-related. While Jesus seemed especially fond of performing miraculous healings, the Gospels give us many wonderful examples of other kinds of miracles – consider Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana; the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, and Jesus calming a storm.

In more recent times, there was the ‘miracle of the sun’ at Fatima on October 13, 1917, when numer-

ous witnesses saw the sun move and seemingly dance in a way that should have been impossible.

Q: Second point: We supposedly agree that the human ceremony of canonisation does not create a saint. That is God's doing. So, why are miracles so central to canonisation?

A: Theologically, a saint is anyone who is actually in heaven with God, but canonised saints are those whom the Church has officially recognised as presently enjoying the beatific vision.

This recognition is for the benefit of those of us still here on earth, as canonised saints are heavenly intercessors to whom we can confidently turn, and they serve as role models of Christian holiness in various states and circumstances of life.

As this is a determination the Church really wants to get right, the process of canonisation is necessarily a lengthy and involved one. For a non-martyr, the process begins with a very detailed investigation of the potential saint's life.

If this investigation shows that they truly lived a life of heroic virtue, that person is declared ‘Venerable’. If there can be a proven miracle attributed to the Venerable's intercession, that person is beatified and given the title ‘Blessed’; after a second miracle, the person can be canonised and is declared a saint.

Supposed miracles can be and are evaluated by either medical doctors or other impartial experts in their respective fields to rule out any merely natural explanation (thereby proving a supernatural one).

As such, miracles are central to the canonisation process because, to put it in very practical terms, they are the best we have in terms of finding objective signs from God that a person is in heaven.

i Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News.



Bishop of Krakow Karol Wojtyla, the future Pope John Paul II, is pictured in this undated photo. Photo: OSV News.

Our lifestyle and our over-strained planet



A woman is seen relaxing at West Meadow Beach in Setauket, New York, October 2. Photo: OSV News.

In a book, *The Book of Hope*, which he co-authored with Jane Goodall, Douglas Abrams makes this statement: Creating the human race may be the single biggest mistake evolution ever made.

He says this tongue-in-cheek since he recognises that the emergence of the human race was clearly intended by the evolutionary process and that rather than being a colossal mistake it is the apex of the process.

Nonetheless, today, the human race is a huge threat to planet earth. Simply put, there are now over seven billion people on the planet and already in many places we have used up nature's limited resources faster than nature can replace them.

By the year 2050 there will probably be ten billion of us. If we carry on with business as usual, the planet simply cannot sustain us, at least if we continue in our present lifestyle.

And the lifestyle referred to here is not, first of all, the lavish lifestyle of the rich who can be reckless and consume more than their share of resources.

They, of course, contribute to the problem and unduly influence the rest of us in our own habits of consumption; but, the lifestyle referred to here is what you and I, conscientious consumers, are living, even as we conserve, recycle, compost, drive electric cars, and try to live simply.



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

I can take myself as an example. I'm trying to be sensitive to what my own consumption is doing to mother earth.

Lifestyle

By comparison to those who have a luxurious lifestyle, I can claim to live pretty simply. I don't buy what I don't need, have a very small wardrobe, and am cautious about the amount of electricity and water I use.

I drive a second-hand compact car and try to drive it only when necessary. I help assure that the thermostat in our house is set so as to ensure the minimal use of electrical energy, and I live in a relatively small house, recycle, and try to use as little plastic as possible.

But, on the other hand, I have

two computers, a desktop in my office and a laptop at home. I have a cellphone which, through the years, has had to be updated four different times in terms of buying a new model and junking the old one.

I shower daily and, depending upon physical work and exercise, sometimes take a second shower. I drive a car. I get on an airplane at least once a month for conferences and meetings and I fly internationally several times a year to visit family.

I don't have a lot of clothes, but my ministry and work require a certain standard of dress (which I meet minimally).

I think I can claim a simple lifestyle, given where I live and the work I do. However, realistically, if all seven (plus) billion people in the world lived

as I do, there wouldn't be enough resources to sustain us.

Bottom line, the world cannot support eight billion people if everyone lives as I do, and as most of us do in the more affluent parts of our world. What's the answer?

We can lay a guilt trip on ourselves and on others, though this isn't necessarily helpful. What can be helpful? There's no easy answer.

Affluent

Those of us living in the more affluent parts of our world can make changes, but can we simply stop using computers and mobile phones? We can conserve water, but can we abandon our present standards of hygiene?

We can conserve electricity, but can we simply stop driving our cars and darken all our city buildings at night? We can be more scrupulous on how much we travel on airplanes, but can we live without airplane travel?

We can cut back on what we buy in terms of excess food, excess clothing, and excess luxuries and entertainment.

We can recycle, compost, and not use plastic bags – and all of this, cumulatively, will make a difference. Indeed, all of this needs to be done. However, helpful though this is, it alone will not solve the problem.

For Jane Goodall, beyond these individual things, we need to do some collective things to solve the existential threat to this planet.

She names three: first, we must alleviate poverty. If there are people living in crippling poverty, it is understandable that they will cut down the last tree to grow food or catch the last fish because they are desperate to feed their families.

Second, we must eliminate government corruption and corporate greed. Without good government and concern for the common good in business, it is impossible to solve our enormous social and environmental problems.

Moreover, those who for their own benefit refuse to face the problem will go on unchallenged.

Finally, collectively too, we must realistically face up to the tension between our lifestyle and the ever-growing population on this planet.

Thoughtless consumers are part of the problem – but so are the rest of us, me included, who fancy ourselves as living simply.

“We can lay a guilt trip on ourselves and on others, though this isn't necessarily helpful. What can be helpful? There's no easy answer”

'Rich food and choice wines'



October 15, 28th Sunday
in Ordinary Time

Is 25:6-10a
Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6
Phil 4:12-14, 19-20
Mt 22:1-14
Mt 22:1-10 (Alternate)

This Sunday's scripture is not very helpful if you're trying to stay on a diet.

Again and again, we hear about extravagant dining: "rich food and choice wines" in Isaiah; a full table and an overflowing cup in the psalm; a rich wedding feast in the Gospel from Matthew.

But this Sunday's readings are not about programming the new season of *The Food Network* or planning next month's Thanksgiving spread. It is, in fact, a reminder of how

The Sunday Gospel

Deacon
Greg Kendra



abundantly God loves us.

His generosity is a veritable smorgasbord of love, loyalty, steadfastness and mercy. The scripture gives us these very tangible representations of God's faithfulness and goodness – so real, we can almost taste them – to remind us of something we might easily forget. To paraphrase another familiar passage: we taste and see the goodness of the Lord (Ps 34:8).

One prevailing question of the week is: Do we understand what he does for us? He extends an invitation to his feast. Are we willing to

say 'Yes'? Even when we find ourselves overwhelmed by moments of anxiety and desperation, God invites us to be sated – filled with reassurance, courage and hope.

Consider St Paul's letter. Writing from prison, Paul sends this final message to the Philippians – words that are fundamentally a testament of faith.

Humble

"I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need. I can do all things in him who strengthens me."

Put another way – in the words of the angel who spoke so reassuringly to a humble unwed mother in Galilee – "Nothing is impossible with God" (Lk 1:37).

We belong to the One who

dwells in possibility and who never abandons us.

We are beloved by the Father, who invites us to share his feast, to dine at his table.

But first, we need to be open to the invitation.

In the parable of the wedding feast, Jesus offers a bold challenge to the priests and elders, and to all of us. It is the challenge to be properly prepared, willing to receive what God has made ready for us.

And the jarring twist in the end is about much more than wearing the right clothes. It is about having the right heart, a heart that is full of gratitude and open to grace.

Those familiar words of the 23rd Psalm we hear take on new meaning this Sunday: "You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows."

God pours out his redeeming love, and we are filled beyond measure. His table is set with mercy, with generosity, with tenderness. He gives us more than we ask for, and more than we deserve.

Banquet

Above all else, of course, he has given us his son.

He offers that gift again and again in the Eucharist – the ultimate banquet, the definitive feast.

In many ways, it's fitting that we encounter these readings during a time when autumn will soon give way to winter, and many around the country will enter the coldest, hardest season.

But the scripture this week reminds us of this uplifting truth: no matter what comes, what the forecast might be, we can do all things "in him who

strengthens us".

Christ is our strength. The Eucharist is our food. And God's love is the bounty that sustains us.

A lot of us need to hear that – people who hunger for the basic necessities of life, but also those who yearn for love and understanding, compassion and hope.

The king has set out a feast and he wants us there. Who could refuse?

The message is clear: come to the feast! Come with gratitude and a ready heart. Pull up a chair. Savour what God offers, treasure what he has put before us.

In the end, no one will leave God's table hungry.

i Deacon Greg Kendra is an award-winning author and journalist, and creator of the blog, *The Deacon's Bench*.

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



A dark cloud of grief and horror in the Holy Land

Media bias can be subtle sometimes, other times it can be laughably blatant. I got what I think is a case of the latter last week.

On **Morning Ireland** (RTE Radio 1, Tuesday) The 8am promo for what was coming after the news headlines said "Is Pope Francis opening the door to Church blessings for gay Catholic couples? We ask ... (wait for it!) ... former President Mary McAleese – not a Church spokesperson who could have given a definitive answer (I hope) or a professional religious affairs journalist who might have given the facts and added some enlightening commentary.

Yes, she's qualified in canon law, but this is more to do with Catholic moral teaching. What the Pope said last week has caused much controversy as outlined in last week's *Irish Catholic*, but any nuance in his words have been flattened into bald headlines that do not do them justice.

Read the original and then decide! I feel that some like Ms McAleese see in those words what they want to see, and are ultimately guilty of wishful thinking. As usual it wasn't a challenging interview, though there were lots of



Smoke billows from a boat following Israeli strikes the seaport of Gaza City, October 8. Photo: OSV News/Mohammed Salem, Reuters

hard questions that could have been asked.

On a **Tonight Show** (Virgin Media One, Tuesday), free of any conservative voice, after yet another soft interview with Mary McAleese, Fr Joe McDonald waded into the discussion.

I've often admired his contributions to debates but wasn't impressed this time. He gave a useful introduction about those who liked what the Pope had said and those who didn't, but then talked about the Pope being "less

worried now about being poisoned by the curia" and said "I have blessed a cow in labour, I have blessed a sick parrot ... but I can't bless two men or two women who love each other. There's something not quite right about that".

Well, I thought, the problem is not really about the love, is it? I don't know anyone who objects to people loving each other. He took a judgemental swipe at right wing Catholics, with an unhelpful reference (he described it as a little

"mischievous"), to "Catholic Isis".

Media pundit Joe Brolly proceeded to stir it up on Twitter/X, assuming ("without evidence") that Fr McDonald was talking about the Iona Institute, which he hadn't mentioned at all, unleashing a pile-on on Iona, causing the priest to clarify that he wasn't, in fact, talking about Iona. Good grief!

By the weekend a dark cloud of real grief and horror had descended, with the Hamas attack on Israel. Our editor Michael Kelly was caught up in the conflict – he was leading a group of pilgrims in the Holy Land.

A regular on the show he was able to give a dramatic first-hand account from Jerusalem to Audrey Carville on **Sunday Sequence** (BBC Radio Ulster, Sunday).

A frequent visitor to the area, he had never experienced anything like this. The pilgrimage would continue for now, he said, as they headed for Nazareth, away from the sites of the current conflict.

Also on the show, journalist Robert Mickens covered the start of the Synod on Synodality in Rome, touching on the concerns and hopes of liberals and conservatives.

Unfortunately, there are such conflicts, though these categories don't serve

PICK OF THE WEEK

HIDDEN FIGURES

Film 4 Saturday, October 4, 6.25pm

(2016) Oscar-nominated fact-based drama about three extraordinary women, who made a significant contribution to the space race in the early 1960s. Positive attitude to religious faith.

SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC ONE SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1.15pm

To mark National Adoption Week, Aled Jones is in central London to hear inspiring stories of faith and family.

EVERYBODY LOVES RAYMOND

CHANNEL 4 MONDAY, OCTOBER 16, 8pm

Prodigal Son – Debra gets Ray to go back to church. Some very funny and touching scenes.

the Church well, nor does the ensuing polarisation, fuelled of course by social media and intemperate commentary.

As a poet once wrote: "So, the body of Christ has wings now/A strange idea born of conflict/Unlike Christ ... if the right wing/Struggles with the left wing/The bird can't fly".

The main item was a discussion about the proposed new relationships and sexuality programme in Northern Ireland. Baroness Nuala O'Loan wrote about her concerns in a recent *Irish Catholic* article and articulated them very well on the show.

Her concern was that schools with a particular ethos wouldn't be allowed, under the proposed new

obligatory guidance (she hinted that such a concept was dodgy), to promote their own distinctive values in the area of sex, relationships and even abortion.

She was also unhappy with the nature of the public consultation, with the way parents were nudged towards certain desired answers. Sound familiar?

She discussed the matter with Michael Wardlow, former Chief Commissioner with the Equality Commission in Northern Ireland. He seemed to understand the concerns, but didn't seem to feel they were necessary, that there were enough safeguards.

At least it was a civilised and rational discussion.

Film

Aubrey Malone



Rise and fall of smartphone prototype

I don't have a Smartphone. I only have a stupid one. It's a Nokia. You might remember these little yokes. They're probably regarded as pre-historic by techno wizards these days. In fact I know they are. Because they've told me.

Needless to say, I know people who own smartphones. I marvel at what comes up on them. They can do everything but make the dinner. (Don't rule it out.)

But the Nokia does me. If I had a smartphone I doubt if I'd ever take my head out of it – like the other 99% of people on the planet. I don't want to be that guy.

BlackBerry (15A) is an entertaining comedy-drama about how the first smartphone came into being. We

follow its iterations from 2003.

Things kick off when a hyper-tense individual, Jim Balsillie (Glenn Howerton), gets fired from his job in Waterloo, Canada. Thereafter he mortgages his house to fund a little company called Research in Motion (RIM).

RIM has a brilliant idea – a mobile phone with an internet facility – but it's clumsily run. In fact it's being ripped off by one of its competitors.

Balsillie realises RIM's potential. The problem is that it's run by, as he sees it, a bunch of infantile nerds. Their main joy in life is the Friday movie rather than the fact that they're developing a technology that's going to change the world.

The brains behind the



A scene from the 2023 film *BlackBerry*

outfit is an Adam Sandler type geek called Mike Lazaridis (Jay Baruchel). He even speaks in that shivery voice Sandler has. Mike is so uncon-

fident he all but apologises for being alive.

His sidekick is the increasingly more hysterical Doug, played by the director of the

film, Matt Johnson. Doug annoys Balsillie intensely. He had the same effect on me. But he's Doug's best friend so he can hardly get rid of him.

Johnson makes us root for RIM all the way in this entertaining comedy. We root for them when they go into the red. We root for the when their systems crash. We even root for them when Balsillie is doing jiggery-pokery with stock prices.

Will they survive? Will they go for a keyboard display or a simple screen? How will they adapt their metrics to an ever-changing market?

These are issues I normally wouldn't give two figs about. Thompson persuaded me to.

BlackBerry is an enjoyable romp. It gives us a porthole

into a business that began as a cottage industry and went on to become a global phenomenon.

Parts of the film were too technical for my liking but Thompson keeps it rolling with all the mini-dramas. There are more horrible bosses than you can shake a stick at. They stop you getting bored with all the jargon.

The embryology of any product is always more interesting than its refinement. I always felt the Wright Brothers deserved more credit for what they did than whoever designed the Concorde.

The template is where the genius lies.



BookReviews

Peter Costello



Music, dance and the soul of the people

Forging the Dance: Eachtraí mo Shaoil – Exploring the Concept of Folk Theatre and the Birth of Siamsa Tíre, by Pat Ahern (O'Riain Publishing, €20.00)

J. Anthony Gaughan

Mention of Siamsa Tíre brings to mind Fr Pat Ahern and vice-versa. Apart from co-founding Siamsa Tíre in 1973 Pat was its *sprid*, the spirit that invigorated it over the years, much to the cultural benefit of Ireland.

Pat was born in Moyvane, near Listowel, Co. Kerry, on March 5, 1932. He was educated at the local national school, St Michael's College, Listowel, St Brendan's College, Killarney, and St Patrick's College, Maynooth.

Growing up in the townland of Co. Leitrim, Pat learned to play traditional fiddle. His mother was a traditional fiddle player. And as a youngster he was enthralled by the wizardry of the dance master, Jerry Molyneux, the legendary Irish Step-Dancer of North Kerry.

Exhibited

During his studies in Maynooth Pat exhibited his love of music and skill in the various elements of that discipline, not least that of choir-master. After his ordination in 1957 the bishop appointed him to a curacy in St John's parish, Tralee. He told Pat he expected him to enhance the music-liturgy in St John's Church and expressed a hope that he would set up a choir that would in time be the pride and joy of not only the parish but also the town of Tralee.

In this Pat did not disappoint. Apart from his choral and liturgical commitments, Pat prepared and presented hundreds of concerts featuring traditional song, dance and music, four major productions of the *Apparitions at Lourdes*, and a number of Passion Plays, that included the celebrated Millennium Pageant for the diocese of Kerry, 'Dance of Life', with a cast of 200 and a diocesan choir of 800 voices.

Pat's life-long ministry at St John's was interrupted on two occasions. He was seconded to the Catholic Communications Centre in Dublin from 1968 to 1973. The Centre had been set up by the Irish bishops to train priests and religious from home and abroad in the general area of communications, but especially in television.

He was given responsibility for radio. One of his tasks was to prepare the ground for the production of a religious radio



A scene from one of Fr Pat Ahern's productions.

programme, which would be broadcast weekly from RTÉ with the title, 'Network'.

Later he served in the parish of Knocknagoshel on the Kerry-Limerick border from 1985 to 1990. In this small village, using a cast of local people he presented the pageant on the 'Apparitions at Lourdes'.

“This book clearly records the unique and seminal role Siamsa Tíre and Fr Pat Ahern had in that resurgence of interest”

Pari passu with his priestly ministry at St John's, Pat was pursuing his second vocation, namely, promoting Irish song, dance and music and Irish traditional folk culture by using the devices of 'theatre', as a way of accessing that culture.

While recruiting for his choirs, he was ever on the look-out for talented traditional musicians and dancers. With some 20 or so of those he formed a permanent group of performers and with them presented concerts and began a series of experiments in the concept of 'folk theatre'.

In 1965 RTÉ got word of the Kerry experiments and invited the group to present a number of their programmes on the RTÉ series known as *Aililiú*. For this purpose the group chose the name *Siamsóirí na Ríochta* (The Entertainers of the Kingdom).

In time the content of those programmes became the staple element in the folk entertainment developed and fostered by Siamsa Tíre, the National Folk Theatre of Ireland, formally founded in 1974. Pat Ahern was appointed the Company's first Artistic Director, a post he held until his retirement in 1997.

Flourish

To ensure that traditional music continued to flourish, Pat supervised the building of the Teach Siamsa in Finuge in North Kerry in 1974 and the Teach Siamsa in Carraig in West Kerry in 1975. The aim of the Teach Siamsa was to gather in and train those who were interested in traditional Irish music. This building programme was crowned in 1991 with the erection of the Teach Siamsa in Tralee, Siamsa Tíre's home and theatre.

This book would be worth publishing if only for its wonderful collection of photographs detailing Pat's



Fr. Pat Ahern performs.

life and achievements. I found two particularly interesting, though laced with nostalgia. There is a photo of the successful third-year class football team at Maynooth (1952-53) – of which Pat was captain and of which I became a member on entering the college in the following year.

There is a picture of Liam Tarrant, the superb North Kerry step-dancer, performing for the 'great and the good' at

an open-air concert at Carraig in the West Kerry Gaeltacht in 1974. As he took the applause, Liam collapsed and died instantly on stage before an audience of a thousand people!

The resurgence of interest in Irish music and dance has been remarkable in recent years. Witness the reception given to Michael Flatley's wonderful Riverdance.

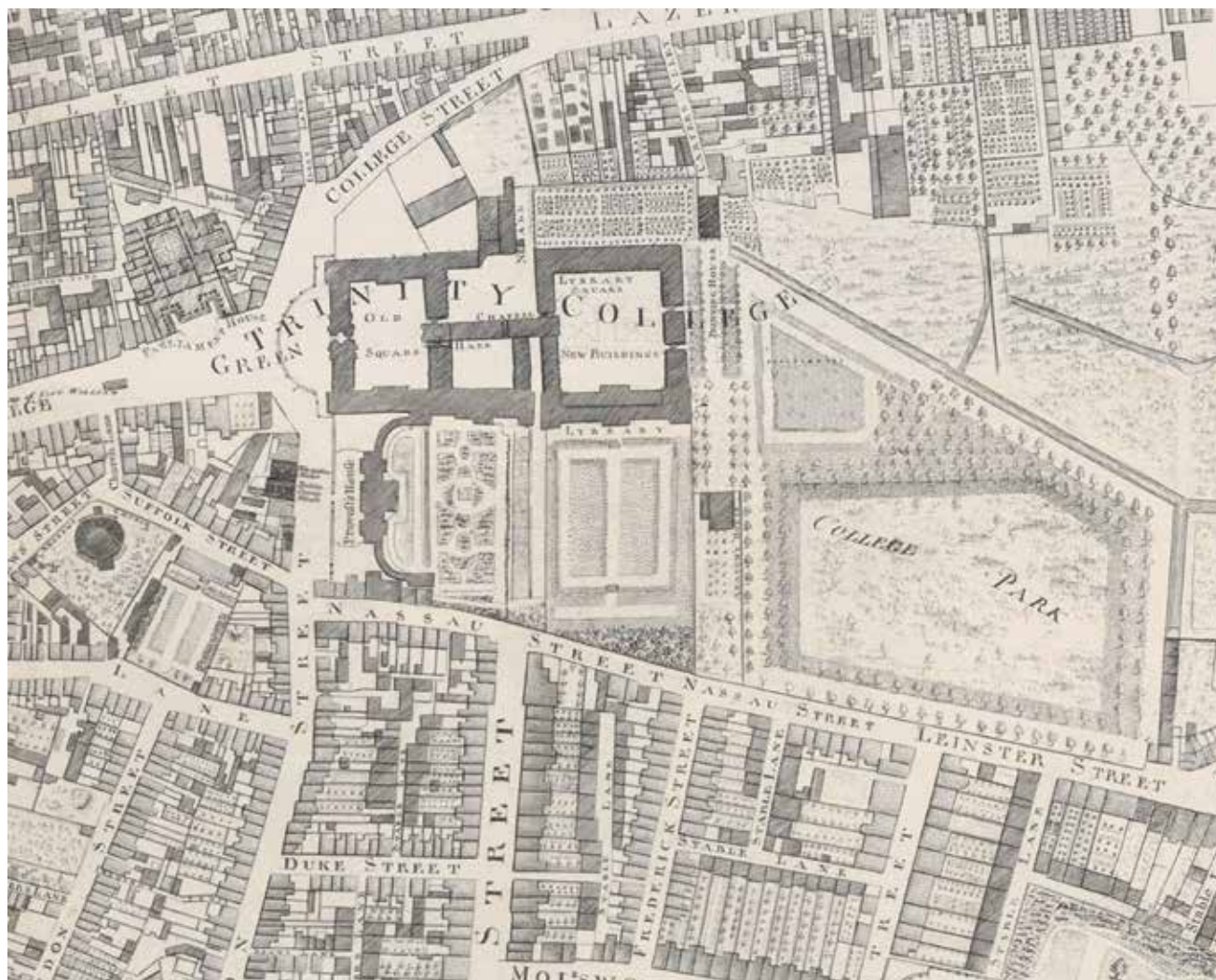
This book clearly records

the unique and seminal role Siamsa Tíre and Fr Pat Ahern had in that resurgence of interest.

This book is also important for another reason. The most modest of men, Pat's narrative tends to be all about others never about himself. Thus the contribution of the others who with Pat have given us the national treasure that is *Siamsa Tíre* is also fully acknowledged.

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.

Dublin: how the narrow lanes became broader streets



Dublin's streets broad and narrow from John Rocque's 18th Century map.

Dublin: Mapping the City, by Joseph Brady and Paul Ferguson (Birlinn, £30.00/ €34.99)

Peter Costello

This is a fine, solid, beautifully produced book, running to some 250 pages which will delight any one in any way interested in the history of Ireland's capital as expressed in maps over the centuries.

The production values are high, fine paper, careful scanning and layout, effective design that is easy on the eye. One can see going well as a Christmas present, but it should not be seen as merely one of the 'Xmas quickies' that Irish publishers are so fond of.

Indeed it is produced by a Scottish publisher of great distinction as part of a series on important cities of these islands of which three have already appeared.

The authors are very well qualified for their task. Joseph Brady taught for many years in the School of Geography at UCD and is one of the preeminent authorities in the field.

His co-author, Paul Ferguson, has been the long-time map librarian at TCD, curating a collection which he has carefully created over the last decades, and which is one of the real treasures of the university library.

Attitude

Now many people all too easily fall into the attitude that early maps are merely decorative which is a sad mistake. In this case the early maps, though very well illustrated and supported by detailed essays, are in fact the least important part of the book. John Speed, who published the first map of Dublin, is briskly dealt with, but John Rocque is explored with thoroughness as are all these maps of the 18th Century.

But it is with the maps from about the 1830s onwards, Victorian, Edwardian and modern, that the real interest of the book lies. The last 50 pages are truly revealing to those who struggle to understand the city they live in.

What is illustrated is the growing complexity of the city, social, spiritual and intellectual. The networks of nar-

row lanes inherited from the Norse and the Normans are shown broadening – the wide Street Commissioners of the 1780s were truly named and in O'Connell Street their work is still visible.

Whereas in say Rocque the churches stand out among the buildings, by the 1890s there they were challenged by the factories, the department stores, the large distilleries and breweries, where spirits, beer, bread and biscuits were made. The maps illustrate the constant challenge of the new for constant renewal, a process that still goes on but at a quicker rate.

Beginning with 1900 and a map of the tram service we see the emergence of the modern city, one still using gas, but now suffused by the electricity initially provided by the generators of the tram company, later by a state service. The old city took its quota of victims as seen in a 1906 map of the very high death rate in the innermost parts of the city.

But by the time of the Great War city planners were at work seizing upon the possibilities of relaying the city.

The opportunity for reconstruction followed upon the revolutionary years. A map of Marino offered a glimpse of the new suburbs that would emerge and continue to expand.

Fascination

I hope I have indicated in some small way the fascination of what is revealed by the authors on the basis of their decades long research. But in truth I found those last 50 pages I mentioned, which one would have expected to merely cover what we all know, to be full of detailed discussion of local areas such as the Grand Canal Dock scheme, which still seems to some in Dublin 4 to be an intrusive and inhuman creation.

This is a book wonderfully filled with information, written with a crisp clarity which is not always the case with academic books. Perhaps by learning about how what we have was developed over the last two lifetimes, we will make a better job, or at least a more humane one, of what is to come for the future citizens of Dublin.

The department of dead ends



The Church of the Annunciation, Finglas, Co. Dublin, in its last days.

Buildings End: An Ultimology Drafting Room

Exhibition at the Irish Architectural Archive, 45 Merrion Square E, Dublin 2, D02 VY60; first floor, ends October 18, 2023.

Peter Costello

This unusual exhibition at the Irish Architectural Archive (IAA), which has another week to run, is well worth catching, and the names of those mounting it should be noted for a sight of their future work.

At the heart of it is a long drafting table from an architect's office, the sort of thing on which the first tentative creative ideas for a new project were worked out, in the days before CAD.

Its real interest though is historical, for the worktop enshrines the only surviving relics of the Church of the Annunciation, Finglas West, built in 1967, only to be demolished in 2021.

This was one of those great basilicas which were the preferred architectural style of Dr McQuaid, the over-influential Catholic archbishop of Dublin. He hoped to see them filled with teeming congregations, but the influence of the diocese was ebbing away even as this church, said to be second largest in Ireland, went up. (What the largest was is the subject of some dispute among the experts: an 'it depends upon what you mean...' sort of argument.)

The work surface consists of frames of tesserae of stone and other materials salvaged from the site and set in plaster to make a series of tabletops to create the complete

drafting table 20 feet long. Visitors should make sure they look over the booklets attached to the table, one of which deal specifically with the decline of church buildings.

The exhibition is the creation of three artists Fiona Hallanin, Ellen Rowley and Kate Stein who make up the 'Department of Ultimology' group of artists based at Trinity College Dublin (TCD). This is not an actual department of the college but a cultural activity.

However, the basic idea behind the group is very important. In the field of architectural history scholars have been content to study the inspiration, creation, and use of buildings. But the focus of this group is on the decline, decadence, and redundancy of building (and many other social activities too).

Their aim is to explore the process of redundancy and how it takes hold. The abandoned buildings of Ireland are now becoming a major controversy, and rightly so.

The group goes some way in exploring in this case why churches of all kinds go out of use and die, so to speak. This is something we all need to try and understand. See the exhibition, or catch the film at a later day, but keep the inspirational ideas behind it in mind. They have lessons that apply to all of us, however cosy we think our neighbourhoods are.

Intending visitors should take care to check with the archive, at 01-663-3040, that the film *Making Dust* will be on view on their intended day at 1.45pm.

Classifieds

The deadline for advertising in the classifieds is 10.30am, the Friday before publication. Contact the Classified Team on 01 687 4028 or email advertising@irishcatholic.ie



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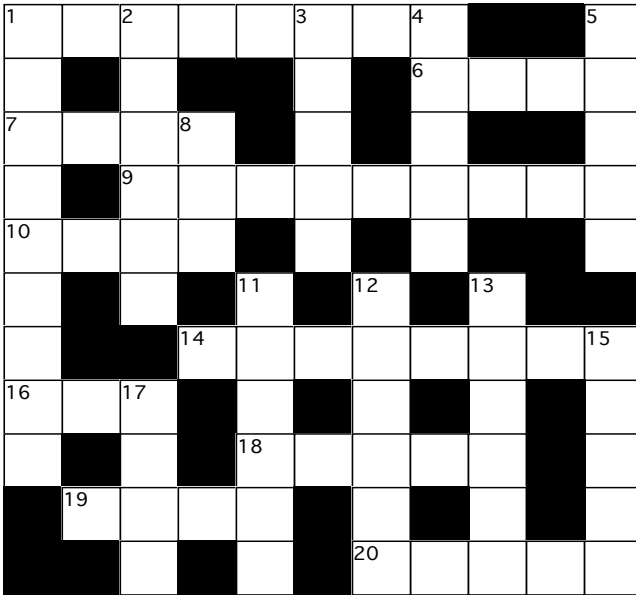
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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 504



- Across**

1 Hugely excited (8)
6 Slope at a door to make it easier to get in (4)
7 Use a hammer to drive it in (4)
9 Sad (9)
10 Sign over the way out (4)
14 Dangerous, stinging desert creature (8)
16 At this very moment (3)
18 Correct (5)
19 A joint in the leg (4)
20 This person usually works in a hospital (5)
- Down**

1 Type of orange (9)
2 Dried grape, often used in baking (6)
3 Such people don't tell the truth (5)
4 Makes a picture (5)
5 A witch might cast one (5)
8 Something you might bid for at an auction (3)
11 Frightened (6)
12 This creature was supposed to breathe fire (6)
13 Drop papers or other rubbish on the ground (6)
15 Sound (5)
17 Magician's stick (4)

SOLUTIONS, OCTOBER 5

GORDIUS NO. 631

Across - 1 Golden calf 6 Coop 10 Tempt 11 Manifesto 12 Athlone 15 Aisle 17 Mini 18 Hues 19 Titus Andronicus 21 Ostrich 23 Laser 24 Mayo 25 Ills 26 Scrag 28 Satchmo 33 Panama hat 34 Alter 35 Yoyo

Down - 1 Gate 2 Limitless 3 Extol 4 Cumin 5 Lend 7 Oasis 8 Profession of faith 13 Owes 14 Empress 16 Philosophy 20 Traumatic 21 Origami 22 Chat 27 Runny 29 Aster 30 Chain 31 Shun 32 Arms

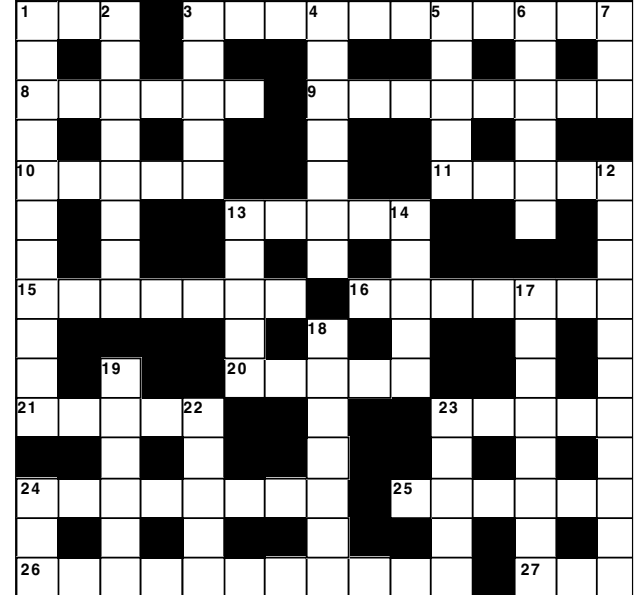
CHILDREN'S No. 503

Across - 1 Remember 5 Danube 6 Tide 7 Achill 9 Grin 10 Eire 12 September 15 Rat 16 Daily 17 Strange 18 Ranch

Down - 1 Radiator 2 Manchester 3 Mobile phone 4 Bedtime 8 Lit 9 Gem 11 Reader 13 Brian 14 Ray

Crossword

Gordius 632



- Across**

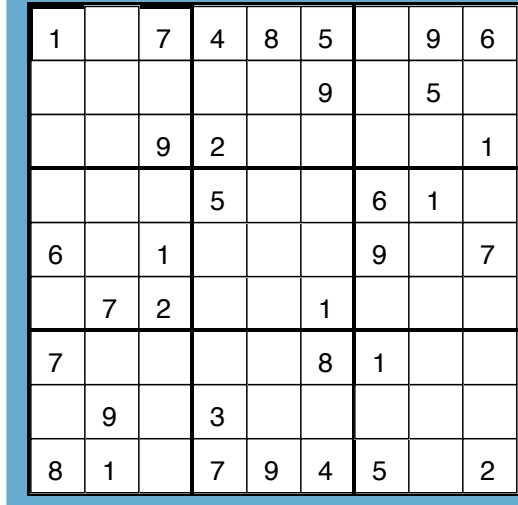
1 Small pocket-watch (3)
3 American dustbins (7,4)
8 Surname of the inventor with Christian names Thomas Alva (6)
9 Disciple of an Eastern religion (8)
10 Glint (5)
11 Highways (5)
13 Unwanted plants (5)
15 In a house, not outside (7)
16 James Joyce lived for many years in this Italian port (7)
20 Thermonuclear weapon that uses hydrogen (1-4)
21 Purloin broken slate (5)
23 Concise (5)
24 Traditional dance associated with sailors (8)
25 Long, slender sword (6)
26 Item of building material made with cinders, sand and cement (6,5)
27 Obtained (3)
- Down**

1 Birds that have not yet flown (11)
2 & 3 A couple on their wedding day (5,3,5)
4 They characterise champagne and sparkling wine (7)
5 Breed of duck (5)
6 Creature (6)
7 Took a seat (3)
12 Phrase about making security a priority (6,5)
13 Value (5)
14 Ornamental bush (5)
17 Highly remarkable (8)
18 Hide (7)
19 Pronouncement, edict (6)
22 The capital of Bolivia, the most elevated capital in the world (2,3)
23 The colour of ebony (5)
24 Type of cooker (3)

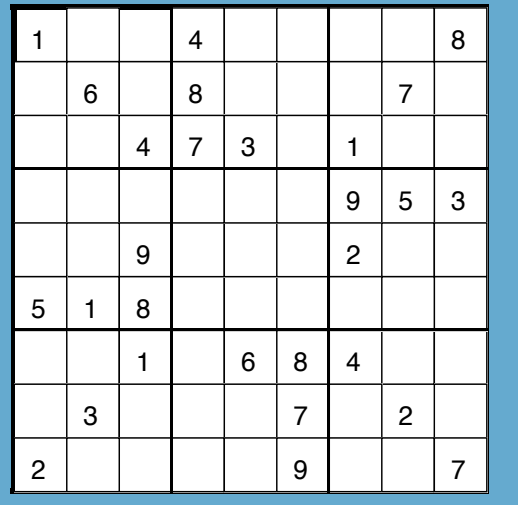
Sudoku Corner

504

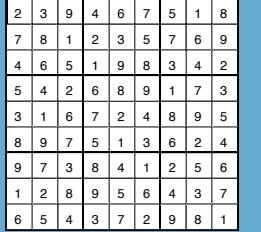
Easy




Hard



Last week's Easy 503



Last week's Hard 503



Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter



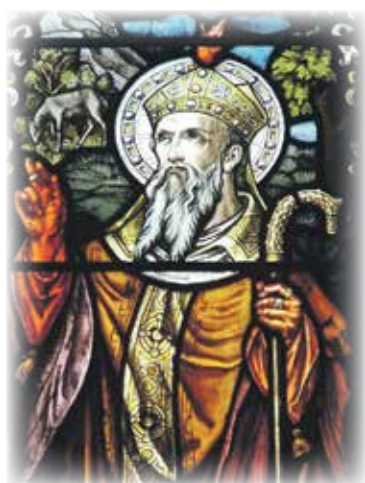
St Finbarr as a missionary disciple

I was asked to preach at the diocesan celebration in Gougane Barra at the start of October. We were marking the 1,400th anniversary of the death of St Finbarr, so it was a great privilege to be asked. I enlisted the help of our friend 'Father Google' to try to find out how widely known St Finbarr is. I always had the impression that he was just our own saint in Cork, but how wrong I was. Google showed me where churches in his name are located; and neither Cork nor Ireland have the greatest number.

Dedicated

Granted, there are five churches solely dedicated to Finbarr in Cork; one at Gougane, one each in Bantry and Kilmichael, St Finbarr's South Chapel in Cork and its close neighbour, St Finn Barre's Church of Ireland cathedral. And Ireland has one other: St Finbarr's Church of Ireland church in Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan — believe it or not!

St Finbarr has made his mark on the neighbouring island, with a Church of St Finbarr in Fowey in Cornwall and another in Aylsham (Kent), near Canterbury. The Isle of Barra in the Outer Hebrides in Scotland has a Catholic Church



of St Barr, and Scottish migrants no doubt took the name to the New World, where St Barra has a church in his name at Cape Breton in Nova Scotia (Canada).

The other end of North America shows more signs of our saint's influence — the first cathedral of Charleston was named after St John and St Finbarr, and Chicago also once had a church of St Finbarr on 14th St. Churches in his name still flourish in Brooklyn (New York), Naples (Florida), Burbank (California) and in San

Francisco too. (And there's one in Trinidad and Tobago, and in Nigeria a St Finbarr's Church in Rayfield Jos and another in Umuhia near the southern border.)

But the country with the greatest number of churches currently dedicated to St Finbarr is none of the above, not Ireland nor these islands, not even North America, but right 'down under', in Australia, with its nine sacred places dedicated to his name — at San Souci in Sydney; Glenbrook, Parramatta; Byron Bay, NSW; Bayside, Melbourne; Ashgrove, Brisbane; Quilpie, Toowoomba, Salisbury North, Adelaide; Yalgoo, WA and Invermay, Tasmania.

Tour

My point in this world tour was that far from being confined to one place as many pastors are, Finbarr was a dedicated missionary. His name has travelled and so also did he. Born in Murragh and Templemartin Parish and baptised at Kilmurry, his first monastic foundation was in beautiful Gougane Barra. But the proof that he was a true missionary is that he managed to leave Gougane, and move on, as missionaries do,

founding the monastery at Cork, and the city too.

And the punchline? (There had to be one): "The harvest is rich but the labourers are few", said Jesus. As it is today, so it was in Finbarr's day. So Finbarr had to become a missionary disciple — and so must you!

Enhancing baptism...

Eamonn Doohan from Three Patrons Parish in Derry (three-patrons.org) wrote about plenty of ideas for enhancing baptism. His parish has lay baptismal teams who meet with the parents of each child four weeks before the baptism, to pray and instruct. After the ceremony, parents receive a carved wooden oak-leaf with the child's name, to place on an ornamental tree in the church. Parents are also invited by letter to an annual blessing ceremony. He also alerted me to Banagher parish, also in Derry diocese, whose website has many sacramental resources including a nine-minute locally produced YouTube video about baptism (please see banagherparish.com).

Being thankful for RTÉ

RTÉ is coming in for a lot of stick these days, mainly because of its staggering financial scandals. Many loyal Catholics are joining in the attack, and that's a pity. Have we forgotten what a friend RTÉ was to us in Covid, with the daily 10.30am Mass they organised from churches all over the country? Housebound people continue to appreciate these daily celebrations. If RTÉ were purely profit-driven, these would disappear very quickly from their schedule. We may not approve of every bit of its output, but we should at least be thankful for these continuing moments of grace.



Please help The Little Way to bring clean water to remote villages



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

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

€..... CLEAN WATER PROJECTS

€..... MISSION CHAPELS

€..... HUNGRY NEEDY CHILDREN

€..... WELLS AND WATER

€..... MASSES (please state no.)
(We ask for a minimum of €6.50 or more for each Mass)

€..... 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

DONATIONS FOR THE
MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT
DEDUCTION FOR ANY
EXPENSES.

Bishop Barthelémy Yaouda has written to The Little Way Association from Cameroon telling us that the far north of his country is the driest and poorest area: "Women and children have to walk miles each day to collect clean water, sometimes making the journey several times a day." The bishop continues: "This has a bad effect on the children's education and is a severe burden for their mothers. Many villages use unsafe water from ponds and poorly-maintained wells for domestic purposes. These waters are teeming with bacteria, parasites and mosquito larvae which are propagators of several waterborne diseases. A well-constructed borewell will improve the health of the whole population. The village of Konkorong has 1,012 inhabitants and its current water point is used for both human and animal use."

The Little Way Association receives many requests for help with the cost of digging borewells to bring clean drinking water to remote villages. Any donation you can send us "for clean water projects" will be forwarded without deduction and will help to make one village's dream, of clean water, a reality.



PLEASE HELP FEED HUNGRY CHILDREN

Fr Eamonn Gowling is a Redemptorist priest working in a favela/shanty town in the Brazilian city of Fortaleza. He reports of the great poverty there and how more than 200 children benefit from a feeding programme he has started which provides a nutritious meal each day. For many of the children it is the only regular meal they receive. Fr Eamonn is one of the many missionaries The Little Way Association supports with funds to feed hungry children.

Can you spare a donation, large or small, to feed a hungry child?

Every euro you send to our fund for Needy Children will be used, without deduction, to provide food, health-supplies and basic necessities for deprived children.

MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS

In these difficult times missionary priests overseas rely more than ever on Mass stipends for their daily subsistence and in order that they may continue to minister to their poor communities.

We like to send a minimum stipend of €6.50 or more for each Mass.

WALSINGHAM THERESIAN CENTRE

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