

The Irish Catholic

A NEW SHEPHERD

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Turn no-one away from synod, archbishop pleads

Ruadhán Jones

One of Ireland's most-senior prelates has insisted that the planned synod gathering on the future of Catholicism must be open to all voices if it is to bring meaningful reform to the Church here.

Archbishop Francis Duffy warned that the process would only be worthwhile if Church leaders can reach out to those who are not involved with the Church and those who feel hurt and alienated including women.

Archbishop Duffy – who was installed as Archbishop of Tuam at the weekend – told *The Irish Catholic* the Irish synod should be open “as wide and to as many people as possible”.

He described the synodal process is “essential” as Ireland grapples with issues like the declining number of priests and religious, as well as lower engagement with the Church.

It is an important opportunity to ask the questions Pope Francis has posed to the Church globally, Dr Duffy added: “What does God want of the Church in Ireland, what does it want of Tuam at this time – that’s the basic question and I think it’s important to have that asked and to listen to the great variety of things that people say.”

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Santo Niño devotion comes to Dublin



Desmond Bagares and Patrick Delos Santos praying during the novena leading to this weekend's feastday of Santo Niño de Cebú in St Joseph's Church, Berkeley Road, Dublin 7. The devotion is hugely popular with the Filipino community in Ireland who along with the Discalced Carmelite friars work to make devotion to the Christ Child Santo Niño more widely known in Ireland. See page 9. Photo: Juanito Paraguya.

‘Dishonest’ Govt pregnancy helpline ‘leading women toward abortion’

Staff reporter

The HSE-run pregnancy helpline My Options is “leading vulnerable women toward abortion”, a study from Students for Life has shown.

Katie Fenton of Students for Life warned the helpline is “failing women in crisis pregnancies” by not offering continued-pregnancy practical support.

Students for Life investigated how My Options counsellors interact with callers between November 2021 and January 2022, conducting a series of phone calls to the helpline.

Ms Fenton said their research shows My Options is effectively “functioning as a portal towards an abortion”, adding that it is “leading vulnerable women toward abortion”.

She called the service “dishonest” in describing itself as offering “information and support on all your options”.

“It’s meant to be giving counselling to women who are facing unplanned pregnancy situations,” Ms Fenton continued.

“But from the research and the calls we made, in all of the

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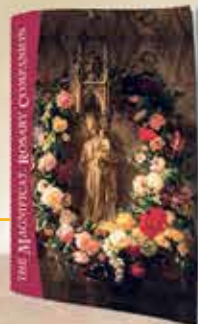
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The grace to see people as God sees them

I came across a quotation recently something along the lines of: counting other people's sins does not make you a saint.

Though I haven't been able to find out the origins of the phrase, it resonated with me and struck me as very wise indeed. It speaks to something persistent at the very heart of the human condition where we sometimes feel an unhealthy need to police others. We've seen it in the Church and society throughout history. Irish attitudes to unmarried mothers for large parts of the 20th Century is a case in point. Was the harsh and judgementalist attitude that was often meted out in these circumstances the compassionate face of Christ or was it a narrow moralism devoid of love and mercy?

Sometimes the followers of Christ can be stingy with God's mercy in a way that God never is. God looks on us with infinite compassion, something we can never achieve with one another.

“There is an ever-present temptation to puritanism: the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be having a good time”

When Christianity becomes more about rules than about a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ, it quickly becomes little more than an ethical worldview. What Pope Francis has described as a “pathetic NGO”.

Puritanism

There is an ever-present temptation to puritanism: the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be having a good time.

Covid-19 has exacerbated the situation.

“Sometimes the followers of Christ can be stingy with God's mercy in a way that God never is”



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



A woman in New York City takes a Covid-19 test at a pop-up testing site as the omicron coronavirus variant continues to spread. Photo: CNS.

Neighbours have decided to call the police because people they have known for years had seven people in their home for dinner rather than the State-mandated six. Anyone who is viewed as breaking the rules is held up as an object of public ridicule. Many people seriously believe that putting politicians and hotel owners on trial for organising a dinner in Co. Galway following a golf tournament is a fruitful use of the precious time of a court.

Recreation

Or do they? Perhaps, it is more motivated by a sense that some people have enjoyed recreation that we have denied ourselves.

The latest casualty is the 30 or so staff who attended an outdoor garden party at the residence of Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson a week before such gatherings were permitted in law last summer. One understandably tearful woman told the BBC during the week that she was enraged by the Downing Street party because at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic she had declined to attend her mother's funeral because it meant travelling farther from her home than was permitted at the time.

Set against that, one can well imagine her annoyance. But, should not common sense have also prevailed in the case of her mother's funeral? Only the most cruel and legalistic reading of coronavirus rules would find her a law-breaker for attending the funeral of her mother.

“Counting other people's sins does not make you a saint”

Novak Djokovic, the Serbian tennis ace, has also been flogged in the court of public opinion for claiming – and being granted – an exemption from Covid-19 rules in Australia. I have no idea if Mr Djokovic is vaccinated or not, he is evidently private about the matter. But the ‘no vaccine, no mercy’ mentality seems more motivated by a feeling of ‘I've had the vaccine, so should he’ rather than a

genuine fear that Mr Djokovic is going to spread coronavirus around Australia – and I say this as someone who is fully vaccinated and has encouraged others to consider doing likewise.

Rage

Maybe, just maybe, rather than lining up to express rage about all the people we perceive to be rulebreakers or vaccine dodgers we might work on ourselves and try to see others with God's compassionate gaze. Certainly, I know being confronted with my own weaknesses and inadequacies leaves me with little appetite to count the sins of others but a greater appreciation of God's mercy.

i To join Friends of The Irish Catholic and support Catholic journalism, please phone the office on 01 6874094 for more information or to make a contribution.

Turn no-one away from synod, Archbishop pleads

» Continued from Page 1

Archbishop Duffy said the Church must use the synod to reach out as “wide and to as many people as possible”.

This meant, he said, “people who are involved in Church, people who are not involved in Church,” he continued. “People who feel left out, people who are hurt, people who feel not accepted, people who are struggling.”

“I think there is an opportunity there to engage, to listen, to discern, to pray and to consider all those elements of Church,” he said.

He admitted that the synod is “not an easy process, but it is a good process,” Archbishop Duffy said, stressing how important the synod is for the Church worldwide and in Ireland.

“I look forward to it,” he said. “It has to be, and is being, well thought out and managed.”

However, he also warned that the synodal journey is a

“pathway not a runway” and will not give an “instant solution”.

“The Holy Spirit is present and who knows where that combination of listening, walking together and prayer and discerning will lead,” Dr Duffy said.

“It presents a way of being Church and of living out our Baptism. It is not an instant solution. We have to remember it is a pathway not a runway. But, it is the way to go.”

Pope Francis launched a global ‘Synod on Synodality’ in October which will culminate in a gathering of the world's bishops in 2023. This synodal process coincides with the initial consultation phase of the Church in Ireland's process, which began in April 2021. The Irish synod begins with a two-year consultation phase, with the overall process expected to take five years.

Were you involved in pro-life campaigning, activism, counselling or work in the 1980s or 1990s? I would love to speak to you about your memories.

I am an historian researching the history of the pro-life movement in Ireland. The voices of men and women who took part in pro-life activism have been left out of the historical narrative and there is no balanced account of their work. It is really important that the experiences of people who took part in this work are recorded, especially for future generations.

If you are interested in taking part in an oral history interview with me or would like more information, please email L.e.kelly@strath.ac.uk, or write to: Dr Laura Kelly, School of Humanities, University of Strathclyde, Level 4, Lord Hope Building, 141 St James Road, Glasgow G4 0LT, Scotland.

Interviews can be anonymous if you wish and your memories will be treated with the utmost sensitivity and respect.

Kilmore priests warned not to speak about bishop's leave

Chai Brady

Priests of the Kilmore Diocese have told *The Irish Catholic* they feel left in the dark after being told by the diocesan administrator that they should not speak about Bishop Martin Hayes' leave of absence. The bishop wrote to the clergy in early December saying that he was taking a number of weeks leave on medical advice. The email was marked private and confidential, and asked the priests for their prayers and told them that Msgr Liam Kelly would be acting as administrator of the diocese in the bishop's absence to address the health issue.

Request

The Irish Catholic understands that, acting on the bishop's request for

prayers, a number of priests prayed for his well-being at Masses. However, this elicited a swift rebuke from Msgr Kelly who wrote to the clergy instructing them that they were not to offer prayers at Masses for Bishop Hayes' health nor were they to discuss his absence publicly.

“The bishop wrote to the clergy in early December saying that he was taking a number of weeks leave on medical advice”

Msgr Kelly's letter – which has been seen by *The Irish Catholic* – said that the bishop had no need to inform the priests of his

absence, but did so merely as a courtesy.

One priest told *The Irish Catholic* that he and confrères felt “left in the dark”. He said that parishioners have been asking about the bishop and “we're apparently sworn to secrecy about a secret we know nothing about”.

Another priest said that “obviously the bishop has a right to privacy about his medical matters, but we pray for people who are unwell all the time at Mass without disclosing their private medical information. It seems strange to be instructed not to pray for the bishop [at Masses],” he said.

One priest said that the clergy feel out of the loop regarding the absence of 62-year-old Bishop Hayes who was appointed in 2020. “There is huge secrecy around the whole thing,” the priest said.

College footballer to quit game in favour of Christ



Jason Osborne

Kansas State University footballer Landry Weber recently turned heads when he announced that he'll be going “pro” in a different direction: he's planning on entering the seminary and being ordained a priest following his college days.

“He'll be entering the

priesthood when his college career is finished” said announcer Tom Hart on Kansas State wide receiver Landry Weber.

Revelation

“I've never heard that line watching a football game before,” tweeted one bemused Twitter user following the revelation.

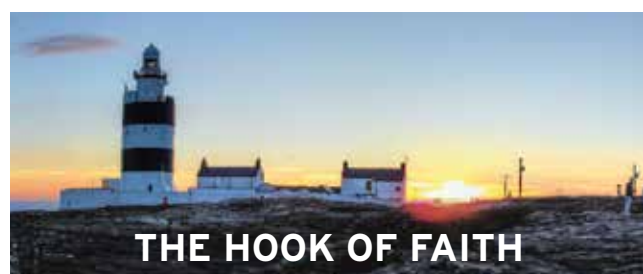
ter user following the revelation.

The 23-year-old told Catholic News Agency that while he initially began feeling a call to the priesthood during his first year of college, he “didn't really want much to do with it.”

But he reached out to a priest at his college parish as the feelings persisted, where he was given materials to read, and so Mr Weber continued to pray, go on retreats, and discern.

Mr Weber said he has a deep devotion to the Virgin Mary and that he consecrated himself to Mary twice during his college years, which were “very powerful experiences both times” and that his Marian consecration helped with his discernment.

After 18 months of discernment, Mr Weber realised it's likely he has a calling to the priesthood, which he intends on following.



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IC Holy Land trip to go ahead

Staff reporter

For the first time in almost two years, *The Irish Catholic* Christian Solidarity Pilgrimage to the Holy Land will go ahead next month. The February 16-24 trip looked uncertain due to Covid-19 concerns. However, Israeli authorities announced that the borders of the Holy Land would reopen to pilgrims in time to facilitate the trip.

The pilgrimage, with spiritual director Fr John Carroll and editor of *The Irish Catholic* Michael Kelly, will visit the sites associated with the earthly life of Christ including Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem and the Sea of Galilee.

Organised by Marian Pilgrimages, the trips have proven popular over the years particularly since the visit has a special focus on solidarity with the hard-pressed local Christian community.

There are a few remaining places, if you'd like to participate please email info@marian.ie or call (Dublin) 01 878 8159 or (Belfast) 028 9568 0005.

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Demographic ice-age behind Pope's pets comment, economist says

Jason Osborne

A "very real demographic winter" stands behind the Pope's recent controversial comments on pets, prominent economist Ray Kinsella has said.

The Pope provoked an outraged reaction last week when he criticised the replacement of children with dogs and cats

in many couples' lives.

"The other day, I was talking about the demographic winter that we have today ... many couples do not have children because they do not want to, or they have just one — but they have two dogs, two cats," Pope Francis said at his general audience on January 5.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Professor Kinsella said the

demographic winter that Pope Francis is talking about is "very real", particularly in Europe.

"The standard replacement rate is about 2.2 [children per couple]. The average replacement rate in Europe is 1.5. In some countries, it's gone as low as 1.2. So, there is no doubt that we're in a demographic winter," Prof. Kinsella said.

The Pope is not saying "that

having animals or having pets is bad," Prof. Kinsella explained, continuing, "He's saying, looking at a macro-level, what are the country's priorities?"

"What does an obsession with — he was talking about pampered-up pets, dressing up pets in coats and that — that tell us about our mindset?"

Prof. Kinsella criticised

the EU's negligence of the demographic winter Europe is entering, noting that demographics weren't mentioned by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in her most recent State of the Union speech.

"The single most important item on the European agenda is demographics, from a long-term sustain-

ability point of view, and it wasn't mentioned once," he said.

Prof. Kinsella said that what is needed is to "step out into the light" by looking at the magnitude of the demographic crisis, the underlying causes of it, "and the kind of policies we need to reanimate and grow Europe into a family friendly union or community".

School Covid debates must focus on education quality, say Catholic schools' reps

Ruadhán Jones

Debates around keeping schools open during Covid should focus on "the activity of education", said a diocesan Catholic schools' representative.

Given the difficulty in teacher supply, "the structured plan to actually deliver education" must be considered, said Alan Hynes of St Senan's Education Office, which assists schools in the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly and the Dioceses of

Kerry, Killaloe and Limerick.

Mr Hynes said children with special education or additional needs in particular "have had a very tough time", as "schools are having to redeploy special education teachers into mainstream classes".

"The debate needs to get away from whether schools should be open or not, to what is the activity of education taking place right now, how are things going for children with special needs and additional education needs in our schools,"

Mr Hynes said.

Meanwhile, Seamus Mulconry of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association said that while "there will be a very tough month ahead, it was important that children in the primary sector could come back to school".

Virtual learning is "hard to do" and "of limited effectiveness at primary level", he said.

Mr Mulconry paid tribute to principals for "working beyond the call of duty" to get schools open and keep them open.

'Vehicle of faith' Irish language fully recognised by EU

Staff reporter

This year began with the full recognition of the Irish language by the European Union for the first time in Ireland's history as a member state.

As an official language of the EU, all documents published by the union will be translated into Irish.

Welcoming the decision, parish priest of Arklow and keen gaeilgeoir Fr Pádraig Ó Cochláin said the Irish language and culture have been a great "vehicle for faith".

"Of course, I welcome the recognition of our language. Remembering 'tír gan teanga, tír gan anam', which means 'a

country without a language is a country without a soul,'" Fr Ó Cochláin said.

He said "there's a huge wealth" contained in the Irish language, even in terms of its greetings.

"Rather than saying 'Hello', they say 'Dia duit', which is 'God be with you'. The response then is, 'Dia is Muire duit', 'God and Mary be with you'... So there's a huge wealth of spirituality in the Irish language and the Irish tradition.

"Also when you think of Pentecost, you had all the people speaking in their own language, so language is very important in terms of our relationship with the Lord."

'Dishonest' Govt pregnancy helpline 'leading women toward abortion'

» Continued from Page 1

calls abortion was mentioned and making an appointment with your GP just in case, which is not how you counsel a woman in an unplanned or crisis situation like that.

"You need practical information [on alternatives] and that wasn't given. In one of the calls, someone called up asking about practical supports to continue a pregnancy and the counsellor tried to fumble their way to Google information about this."

The helpline is failing women who find themselves in unplanned situations, Ms Fenton said.

"Women have a right to information on continued pregnancy supports, on practical support. There is help out there, but the Government is failing to underpin this helpline with that correct information," she warned.

As the three-year review on the 2018 abortion law is to be undertaken soon, Ms Fenton added that this research proves how important it is to have "alternative voices listened to, our voice, pro-life people's voice. Because we are being drowned out of the conversation".

For more information on Students for Life's research, visit studentsforlife.ie

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tributes paid to Church of Ireland bishop of Clogher

Former Bishop of Clogher Brian Hannon has been remembered for his "immense contribution... to the Christian life on this diocese" by his Catholic counterpart.

Bishop of Clogher Larry Duffy said that Bishop Hannon "laid the groundwork for much that has been built upon since then in terms of inter-Church dialogue, witness and friendship".

"He never allowed such challenges to deflect from our shared Christian mission to build up the kingdom of God here; to love God, to heal wounds and to work together for peace," Bishop Duffy said in a statement.

He extended his "deepest sympathies" to Bishop Hannon's wife and family.

Getting to the corps of the message...



Irish Ambassador to the Holy See Derek Hannon attends Pope Francis' annual New Year greetings to the diplomatic corps at the hall of blessings, January 10.

Kate Hoey's remarks can be seen as a backhanded compliment...

I don't know whether Kate Hoey intended to be offensive when she claimed – in effect – that Nationalists/Catholics were now hogging too many of the jobs and influential positions in Northern Ireland, but that was how some people interpreted it, and offence was taken.

“It can be analysed as a significant social commentary on how the profile of the communities has changed since Kate was a lass”

Baroness Hoey, who comes from a strong farming family in Co. Antrim, wrote that “there are very justified concerns that many professional vocations have become dominated by those of a nationalist persuasion, and this positioning of activists is then used to exert influence on those in power.”

There was an angry backlash, accusing Kate Hoey of ‘McCarthyite’ tactics, and claiming that she wanted to return Catholics/nationalists to the position of second-class citizens, where they indeed had been throughout much of Stormont’s history.

Yet, surely Lady Hoey’s salvo can be also seen as complimentary? It’s pointing out that nationalists/



Mary Kenny



Kate Hoey

Catholics are now often much more successful than unionists/Protestants in a number of professions, and working-class Protestant boys, notably, need to pull

up their socks.

It can be analysed as a significant social commentary on how the profile of the communities has changed since Kate was a lass.

When Kate Hoey was born in 1946, unionists held all the political cards in Northern Ireland – and that included in overseas influence. Harry Truman, US President, refused to speak to any Dublin politicians about partition because he wholly supported the unionist position. Canada, too, having many Orange associations, took the same view.

Free State

In the 1950s, a Dublin building firm approached Harland and Wolff for a construction contract that had been openly advertised, but the Belfast bosses rejected any bid from ‘the Free State’.

And then, over the decades, things changed. Catholics began to benefit from better education and fairer legislation around employment.

The culture of work, and even capitalism, also altered. Victorian capitalism had been based on heavy industry, and, as Max Weber

pointed out, ‘Protestant virtue’ – the Calvinist values of work, sobriety, prudence, saving, strict Sabbatarianism. Then capitalism itself shifted towards a different model of agile and articulate communications, people-management, media, language skills, marketing, risk, persuasive salesmanship, flexibility – which were less amenable to the more rigid Calvinist code.

“Catholic schools, even in England, often teach more foreign languages, and teach them better, than other schools”

When I interviewed Enoch Powell, who had been a South Down MP, he made a stereotyped observation: “The Catholics have the blarney. The Protestants don’t,”

he told me.

Obviously, such generalisations are just that – generalisations. I’m sure there are taciturn Papists and chatty Prods.

But it probably is true, as Kate Hoey suggests, that Ulster Catholics/nationalists are more adept in modern communications, the arts, humanities, and PR. Catholic schools, even in England, often teach more foreign languages, and teach them better, than other schools.

Offensive

It’s silly of Michelle O’Neill of Sinn Féin to demand that Kate Hoey retract what she has written because it’s ‘offensive’. Firstly, critical opinions shouldn’t be censored. Secondly, Lady Hoey’s statement should be taken as a comment on the progress of Catholics and nationalists within the Northern Ireland framework – something to celebrate.

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Better bring your knitting

The current ‘must-see’ movie is the science-fiction comedy with a message *Don’t Look Up*, starring Leonardo Di Caprio and Jennifer Lawrence. It wasn’t well received by the critics, but its success has been spread by popular appeal to viewers (in cinemas and on Netflix).

Although the storyline is about a comet due to hit earth and destroy the planet, it is taken to be an allegory about climate change: it’s a warning, really, that we’re

not addressing the question of saving the planet from global warming properly.

The film is stylishly done, and the actors are compelling – notably Meryl Streep as a ghastly female-Trumpian US president and Cate Blanchett as a manipulative TV host, as well as Ariana Grande as an air-headed music performer. But at two hours, twenty-five minutes, it’s far too long – the message becomes laboured and preachy and the satire wears thin.

Still, some Catholic commentators in America have seen it as an illumination of the moral bankruptcy of our age – since the running theme is that serious ideas are not taken seriously, and most modern media just distracts us from focusing on what’s important.

It’s worth seeing – but bring your knitting, to fill in those *longueurs* in the lengthy script.

CORRECTION: I wrote last week that “Ireland’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP)....stands at \$107,490.” I should have added “per person” to that remarkably high annual GDP figure.

Minimum unit alcohol pricing sends the right message, says Fr McVerry

Chai Brady

The controversial law on the minimum pricing of alcohol has been welcomed by homelessness charity founder Fr Peter McVerry who said it is "very positive" but admitted there were downsides to the legislation.

Minimum unit pricing of alcohol, enacted on January 4, aims to stop the sale of strong alcohol at low prices, which has seen prices of certain products shoot up.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr McVerry praised the measure saying it could reduce the availability of alcoholic products particularly for young people. However, he said: "The

downside is that people who are addicted will be spending a bigger percentage of their income on alcohol, so there's plusses and minuses to it, overall I think it's a good thing.

"I think we do have to give the message that alcohol is something we can use in small amounts and enjoy, I think we have to send that message. The cheap alcohol that was available in supermarkets was giving the wrong message," Fr McVerry said.

Minimum unit pricing sets a minimum price on any alcoholic drink, depending on how many grams of alcohol it has. Currently the lowest price that can be charged for a gram of alcohol is 10 cent.

One standard drink has 10g of alcohol in it, meaning the lowest price that could be charged for a beverage containing one standard drink is €1.

Fr McVerry said that the families of addicts are suffering regardless of the price of alcohol and that the State should expand addiction services.

"The people who will suffer are families where a breadwinner, the main income earner, has an addiction," he said.

"If you have an addiction a lot of your income is going to go on drink anyway so I think there will be some downside to it in terms of families having somewhat less money

but I think they were struggling anyway with the addiction so overall I think it's beneficial."

Speaking of the services provided to people with an addiction, Fr McVerry added: "Addiction is a health issue, it's not a legal issue, it's not even a moral issue, and I think the services for people with an addiction whether it's alcohol or drugs are few and far between.

"The services that do exist are excellent but most of them are voluntary run with minimal State support. I think if we are seriously going to address addiction we need to expand, and the State must take responsibility for expanding the availability of services for people with addictions."

Donegal priest hails parishioners' response after storm damage to local church



Ruadhán Jones

Fr John Joe Duffy said the "living Church" was very active in the parish of Creeslough after their church suffered a possible €250,000 worth of storm damage.

Fr Duffy was "shocked" when the sacristan of St Michael's Church, Creeslough contacted him to say the church was "a terrible mess" after gale-storm winds overnight had damaged the back wall and the windows.

"We were shocked and devastated when we saw

the mess from outside. Myself and Fr Doohan were worried that we would lose the ceiling if we didn't react quickly."

Having put out a call for any building contractors in the area to give a hand, Fr Duffy said everyone responded "beautifully".

"Everyone who heard came to give their help, it was a real community in action," he added. "The messages of support from people all over have been tremendous, including from clergy from other denominations. It's very heart-warming."



St Michael's church was the fifth in a series of seven churches designed by renowned architect Liam McCormick and had celebrated its golden jubilee in August.

However, Fr Duffy said the damage to the church "faded into insignificance" when he heard the news that "sadly a former parishioner on Arranmore Island – an 18-year-old – drowned on Monday".

No complaints about pro-life protestors received by hospitals

Staff reporter

There have been no complaints submitted to maternity hospitals about pro-life protestors despite claims women are being harassed as they access facilities that provide abortion.

An investigation conducted by *Gript* revealed that of the 16 out of 19 relevant hospitals, none had received a formal complaint from staff or patients regarding pro-life protestors attempting to intimidate or harass patients.

This contradicts a myriad of claims by politicians, journalists and NGOs who have been pushing for the introduction of 'safe access zones' which would ban protesting within a certain distance outside places that provide abortion.

The hospitals were asked if "any staff or patients had

ever made a formal complaint to the hospital about pro-life protestors", and if there had ever been an incident at the hospital in which "pro-life protestors have impeded the ability of patients to access the hospital, or attempted to intimidate or harass patients?"

The hospitals who responded were: Cork University Maternity Hospital; South Tipperary General Hospital; Kerry General Hospital; University Hospital Waterford; St Luke's General Hospital; Regional Hospital Mullingar; National Maternity Hospital; Wexford General Hospital; Rotunda; Sligo University Hospital; Letterkenny University Hospital; Galway University Hospital; Portlaoine University Hospital; Mayo University Hospital; Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoine; Coombe Maternity Hospital.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Altar wine dodges minimum alcohol pricing

Altar wine in Ireland won't increase in price due to the introduction of minimum unit alcohol pricing on January 4, suppliers have said.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Michael McGown from Church Supplies Ltd said he doesn't believe altar wine will change in cost despite the new law. "We're on a standard price which has not gone up in five years. There would be no under-priced selling of altar wine – I think everyone is near enough selling altar wine at the same price," he said.

"It's really for these guys selling alcohol at low prices," he added.

Desmond Wisley of Desmond Wisley Ecclesiastical Supplies also said the cost of altar wine won't change due to the new law.



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Niamh Uí Bhriain

The View



Why are public funds being used to bully Christians?

Daniel and Amy McArthur are a young couple who run a bakery in Belfast. The couple are Christians and they make clear, on the bakery's website, that their faith is part of the business mission, stating: "Our name comes from the Bible. Asher was a tribe of Israel who had many skilled bakers and created bread fit for a king."

Was that why Ashers were chosen by an activist for same-sex marriage, Gareth Lee, to request a cake emblazoned with the message 'Support Gay Marriage'?

“Ashers Bakery could not be forced to actively promote a message which went against their beliefs by writing the slogan on the cake”

Who can say, though it seems that has been the case in other jurisdictions, such as in Colorado in the US where Jack Phillips, the Christian owner of Masterpiece bakery was dragged through the courts after declining to make a wedding cake for a gay couple. After winning his case at the US Supreme Court – who held that Colorado's Civil Rights Commission had targeted Mr Phillips in an act of "religious hostility on the part of the State itself", the baker was immediately targeted again by an action based on a request for a cake celebrating a gender transition.

The McArthurs have also been put through seven long years of being dragged to court or defending their religious freedom, an ordeal that must cause a stressful and difficult overhang for even the most resilient family. Their courage and perseverance is admirable, especially given the entirely predictable response of the media which was generally predisposed to treat the antagonist in the case as the person being wronged.

The Supreme Court in Britain disagreed, finding in favour of Ashers in 2018 and ruling that their objection was to the message on the cake, not the personal characteristics of Mr Lee.



Amy and Daniel McArthur with their daughters Robyn and Ella.

The bakery did not discriminate against Mr Lee as a gay man, the court found. "They would have refused to make such a cake for any customer, irrespective of their sexual orientation," it ruled in a unanimous verdict.

Ashers Bakery could not be forced to actively promote a message which went against their beliefs by writing the slogan on the cake. It was a matter, the court found, not only of freedom of conscience and the right to uphold religious beliefs – but is also one of freedom of speech.

Freedom

Freedom of expression, as guaranteed by article ten of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), includes the right "not to express an opinion which one does not hold", the court pointed out, adding that "nobody should be forced to have or express a political opinion in which he does not believe".

"The less favourable treatment was afforded to the message not to the man...The situation is not comparable to people being refused jobs, accommodation, or business simply because of their religious faith," the court decided.

“The answer to that is, of course, by the taxpayer, and the Equality Commission have forked out more than £250,000 in costs on this nonsense so far”

At that time the McArthurs welcomed the Supreme Court verdict saying: "It was clear we did not hate anyone. We didn't want to discriminate against anyone. We did what we did because of our Christian beliefs."

But Mr Lee, and his supporters, weren't happy to let

the family continue with that legal victory. The case was appealed again to the European Court of Human Rights. More stress and disruption for the family and for a small business, who doubtless already had all of the struggles that family businesses face in an environment that provides stiff competition from massive companies and supermarkets.

Last week saw another victory for Ashers as the ECHR ruled that the case was inadmissible because Mr Lee had not invoked his rights under the European Convention of Human Rights "at any point in the domestic proceedings" in the British courts.

Legal team

Mr Lee's legal team have now intimated that there may be further challenges, which brings us to an important and under-reported facet of the case: how it is funded.

The answer to that is, of course, by the taxpayer, and the Equality Commission

have forked out more than £250,000 in costs on this nonsense so far. The truth is that activists like Mr Lee appear to be facilitated in taking these kinds of cases *ad nauseam* by the taxpayer, even though it is likely that most people would agree with the Supreme Court that no discrimination has been shown in this case.

“That's what a private business was forced to do to stop attacks on its right to exist with a Christian ethos. Public funds should not be used to bully Christians”

The North's First Minister, Paul Givan, said last week that this was a case that never should have gone to Europe. "It never should have been brought to the courts in the first place," he said.

He added "I think the Equality Commission has very serious questions that they need to answer." It's my belief that many people who are tired of seeing their taxes fund this kind of nonsense would agree.

Faith

In Colorado, baker Jack Phillips has now reacted to the repeated attacks on his business by lodging a lawsuit against the governor John Hickenlooper saying the state "has been on a crusade to crush" him because state officials "despise what he believes and how he practices his faith."

"This lawsuit is necessary to stop Colorado's continuing persecution of Mr Phillips," it says.

That's what a private business was forced to do to stop attacks on its right to exist with a Christian ethos. Public funds should not be used to bully Christians.

Celebrating Santo Niño de Cebú



Staff reporter

Dublin's Filipino community continues to celebrate devotion to Santo Niño de Cebú this week in St Joseph's Church on Berkeley Road in Dublin. The devotion revolves around an image of the Christ Child widely venerated as miraculous by Filipino Catholics. The image itself is the oldest Christian artifact in the Philippines, originally a gift from explorer Ferdinand Magellan to Rajah Humabon and his chief consort on account of their Christian Baptism in 1521.

The novena culminates in the feastday this coming Sunday (January 16) with the rosary and a procession from 13.30 followed by Mass at 14.00.



Retracing the Lord's footsteps...

Staff reporter

Sunday's Feastday of the Baptism of the Lord was marked in the Holy Land by a pilgrimage to Qasr al-Yahud, near Jericho. On the border of the West Bank and the Kingdom of Jordan, it is the traditional site on the River Jordan where Jesus was baptised by St John the Baptist. The Franciscan friars who look after the holy places in the Holy Land were led by the Custos – or guardian – of the Holy Land Fr Francesco Patton OFM. Guests included the Consul-General of Italy, Giuseppe Fedele, the Consul-General of Spain, Alfonso Lucini Mateo and the head of the department of political affairs of the Belgian Consulate, Philip Haspelslagh.

The site has become more accessible in the last year after a successful operation to remove landmines which remained from the 1967 Six Day War.



Franciscan Fr Francesco Patton, custos of the Holy Land. Photos: CNS.



Fr Patton, sprinkles holy water during the ceremony.



Franciscan Fr Francesco Patton, custos of the Holy Land, stands at the edge of the the Jordan River.



Nuns dip their hands in the Jordan River during the ceremony at Qasr al-Yahud.



Members of the Missionaries of Charity and others gather during a ceremony marking the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

The Irish Catholic

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The marriage of heaven and earth

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



Christmas may be gone but we are still celebrating the Epiphany, that is the manifestation of the divinity of Jesus. There were three great moments of revelation. First was the adoration of the Magi and the three symbolic gifts. Next was last Sunday's reading of the Baptism of Jesus when the voice from heaven identified Jesus as the beloved Son of God. Today we have the third epiphany, the first miracle of Jesus, at the wedding in Cana (John 2: 1-11). There "he let his glory be seen and his disciples believed in him". The event is recalled in the second mystery of light in the rosary.

We are told that the mother of Jesus was there as well as his disciples. But we are not told the names of the bridal couple. It matters little because the real interest of the evangelist, John, is the marriage of heaven and earth, the union of God and humanity.

Before the time of Jesus, God's relationship with the 'chosen people' was like the courtship before marriage, a time of preparation. In today's first reading, Isaiah tells of this future marriage. "No longer are you to be named 'forsaken', nor your land 'abandoned', but you shall be called 'my delight', and your land 'the wedded'."

“The ultimate hour would come on Calvary as a prelude to the Resurrection”

The old religious system is represented by the six stone jars standing there, filled with water reserved for the ritual washings which were hugely important in the old religion. Stone jars were regarded as very clean, but an exaggerated insistence on ritual cleanliness was part of a system that left the people with hearts like the jars, made of stone. These jars numbered six, still short of seven which is always the number of fulness in John's Gospel.

"They have no wine", said Mary. They have a religion of laws, of purification and water, but they have



Christian pilgrims visit what is known as the 'wedding church' in Cana, Israel. The shrine recalls the story of Christ's first miracle at the wedding feast. Photo: CNS.

lost the sense of a loving God, a God of wine and celebration. Changing this purificatory water into the wine of celebration indicated that the preparatory courtship had reached the day of marriage. The best wine was kept till the last.

Each jar could hold 20 or 30 gallons, amounting to perhaps 800 bottles in today's measurement. And this, after they had scoffed what was already provided! John obviously wants the reader to take this huge number not literally but as a symbol of God's superabundant gifts. St Paul, in today's second reading writes, "There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done." The gifts of the Holy Spirit are many and varied.

Significant

The role of Mary is very significant in the story. The only other reference to her in this Gospel is on Calvary. Neither at Cana nor on Calvary is she mentioned by name but as the mother of Jesus. And in each place Jesus addressed her as 'woman'. It sounds rather cold to us perhaps, but it has a richer meaning. Calling her 'mother' would have expressed their personal relationship but calling her 'woman' identi-

fies her as the new Eve. On Calvary she is given to the beloved disciple: "behold your mother". He is not personally named either because he represents all beloved disciples.

Motherhood

The first hint of her universal motherhood is seen at Cana in her maternal sensitivity, aware that there are signs of anxiety among the servants. Next, we see how she addresses her son in the simple and trusting way that only a mother could. "They have no wine." Enough said.

He replied, "Woman, why turn to me? My hour has not come yet." The ultimate hour would come on Calvary as a prelude to the Resurrection. So confident is she in her son that she immediately directed

the servants (literally the deacons), "Do whatever he tells you." A proper devotion to Mary does not lead people away from Jesus but leads them closer to her divine son. And the first group she influenced were the apostles.

“The old religious system is represented by the six stone jars standing there”

"This was the first of the signs given by Jesus: it was given at Cana in Galilee. He let his glory be seen, and his disciples believed in him". More often than not, John refers to the miracles of Jesus as signs, encouraging the reader to move on from the particular event to

a wider understanding. And guess how many miracles in John? Seven, of course. And the central sign is the multiplication of the loaves and fishes in the lead up to his promise of the Eucharist, "I am the living bread come down from heaven ... and the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world (John 6:51).

Confidence

After seeing the first sign at Cana, the disciples moved

on to believe in Jesus. What about Mary? She showed such confidence in her approach to Jesus that we can say she believed before the miracle. She was the first believing cell in the body of disciples known as the Church. In a mother's womb the first cell of life divides into a multitude of extraordinary varieties to form the human body. Mary is the Mother of the Church.

Prayer

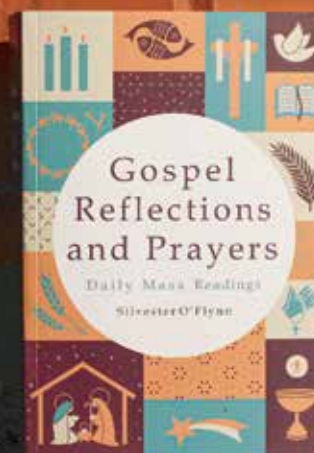
● O God of abundant giving, the enormous amount of new wine is an indication of the multitude of your blessings.

O God of the wedding, you reach down to embrace us in intimate love. As you let your glory be seen and the disciples believed in you, may we never lack signs of your love, nor the eyes to see them. We pray for those who do not believe: that their eyes may be opened to see the signs of your presence and power in the world. May they be drawn into the embrace of your love.

Lord, as you showed your power and divinity at a wedding, we pray for all married couples. Strengthen the bonds of those who are drifting apart. Help all families to grow in the likeness of your love. Take the water of our human efforts and transform it into the wine of divine love.

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Pope was absolutely right about pets and children



Deliberately setting out to lead a life that will have few demands placed on you is selfish, writes **David Quinn**

Pope Francis has landed himself in hot water after suggesting that some people might selfishly prefer pets to children.

He was speaking at his usual Wednesday general audience at the Vatican and was specifically discussing the example of St Joseph as a foster parent. He praised those who cannot have children of their own and adopt instead.

He told the audience: "If you cannot have children, think about adoption. It is a risk; yes, having a child is always a risk, either naturally or by adoption. But it is riskier not to have them. It is riskier to deny fatherhood or to deny motherhood, be it real or spiritual."

“Priests and religious forego having children of their own not for selfish reasons but to make themselves more fully available to serve people”

The remarks which got him into trouble were as follows: "many couples do not have children because they do not want to, or they have just one, but they have two dogs, two cats. Yes, dogs and cats take the place of children".

This was an indication, he said, of a "certain selfishness". He added: "Renouncing parenthood diminishes us. It takes away our humanity."

Cue uproar. Reporters knew they were on to a good thing when they heard this because



People wearing protective masks hold their pets during the blessing of the animals outside St Francis Church in Lima, Peru. The event was held in celebration of the October 4 feast of St Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals. Photo: CNS.

they are well aware how many people are devoted to their pets and love them as members of their families.

Francis was accused of being an out-of-touch, celibate old man who did not have children of his own and had no idea what he was talking about.

Some people, of course, totally misinterpreted what he said. He was not saying it is selfish, per se, to have a pet.

Lots of people have pets who also have children. There is nothing remotely selfish about that and Pope Francis was not suggesting anything of the sort.

Instead, he was referring to couples who specifically set out to have pets as a substitute for children because raising children is expensive and can be very demanding. Pets are undemanding by comparison, rarely cause trouble, and can show affection.

Pressing on

Before pressing on, the accusation that celibate men like the Pope have no right to talk about the issue in the first place needs to be addressed.

Priests and religious forego having children of their own not for selfish reasons but to make themselves more fully available to serve people. Maybe there are individual cases where priests or nuns lead a celibate life because they are selfish, but there are many more cases of priests and religious leading selfless lives of generous service. Some of them might have pets of their own for the sake of companionship, not selfishness, as was the case with Pope Benedict.

“Reporters knew they were on to a good thing when they heard this because they are well aware how many people are devoted to their pets”

But there is no doubt that some people do have pets as a child-substitute, and they are quite open about this.

One woman told the BBC: "I feel like I would be giving up a lot of my life to be a parent. That would cost money, that would cost time, that would cost things that you want to do."

Instead, she and her partner have a dog.

They took the view that having children was not the responsible thing in their case, given their attitude.

Same feeling

A growing number of people seem to feel this way. Some believe that the planet is overpopulated and are remaining childless for that reason.

But again, the Pope is referring to couples who won't have children, and have pets instead, because they want to avoid the demands involved in raising children. They want to have a life as free from anything burdensome as possible and pets fulfil their need to have something to nurture. In that sense, they are direct child-substitutes.

Deliberately setting out to lead a life that will have few, if any, demands placed on you is selfish. It is the very definition

of selfishness. If the whole world took that attitude, we would be in very deep trouble indeed.

True compassion is not merely feeling sympathy for someone. It is a willingness to suffer on their behalf, the way a parent does for a child going through difficulties. It means sharing their burden.

When the Pope said it was risky to have children – risky because you don't know exactly what it may bring – he also touched on a very deep truth when he added, "it is riskier not to have them" and to "deny fatherhood or to deny motherhood, be it real or spiritual".

Selfish

What he means is that leading a selfish life is a danger to your soul. That is not language we are accustomed to hearing today, but it is the truth.

Francis also puts having pets instead of children in the broader context of our growing demographic crisis.

Not a single country in Europe, Ireland included, is having enough children to replace itself. We are rapidly

ageing. In previous eras, only war or natural disaster has inflicted something like this on us and it is barely being spoken about. It is the giant elephant in the room.

“The Pope is referring to couples who won't have children, and have pets instead, because they want to avoid the demands involved in raising children”

In Italy, the situation is particularly disastrous. The fertility rate of a country needs to be 2.1 children per couple to keep the population level (without taking into account immigration). In Ireland, the number is about 1.5. In Italy it is more like 1.1, a little over half what's needed.

How is a shrinking number of young people supposed to look after a growing number of old people?

The Pope clearly touched a nerve with his remarks, but if pets really are replacing children, then the very future of our societies is at risk, and this cannot be ignored. It needs to be talked about, and as a matter of urgency.

“Before pressing on, the accusation that celibate men like the Pope have no right to talk about the issue in the first place needs to be addressed”

The Most Reluctant Convert on the screen

Scottish actor Nicholas Ralph plays the young C.S. Lewis in *The Most Reluctant Convert*.



Actor Max McLean is to be credited with bringing Christian legend C.S. Lewis' conversion to life on stage and on the big screen, writes Jason Osborne

Few contemporary Christian authors or thinkers have gripped the Faithful's, of all denominations, imagination like C.S. Lewis. The Northern Irishman's story is increasing in resonance as the decades progress, his own journey being one that can be easily mapped onto those being lived out by many today. Brought up religiously, he famously abandoned faith in favour of atheism as a young man, convinced that the Christian picture of the world couldn't be accurate.

How, then, did he find himself kneeling and praying years later at Oxford University, "the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England"? It's a tale that actor, founder and artistic director of the Fellowship for Performing Arts, Max McLean, seeks to tell in his latest offering, *The Most Reluctant Convert: The Untold Story of C.S. Lewis*.

Widely known for his work

winning actor and director of the New York-based Fellowship for Performing Arts. Occupying a crucial Christian niche in the arts industry, the Fellowship for Performing Arts is a not-for-profit production company producing theatre and film from a Christian perspective, for the world.

The film is not Mr McLean's first outing with C.S. Lewis, having adapted for the stage Lewis' much beloved *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce*. Before taking it to the screen, too, Mr McLean played the great convert on stage in *C.S. Lewis Onstage: The Most Reluctant Convert*.

Qualification

If these accomplishments qualify Mr McLean to bring Lewis to life on the screen, they are not his greatest qualification. Rather, his personal relationship with Lewis through his writings, and the effect he's had on Mr McLean's own faith, are what transform the movie from a faithful retelling of the facts of Lewis' life, to a heart-felt tribute to a spiritual friend and mentor.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Mr McLean told of the role Lewis has played in his life to this point, and what effect playing the author has had on him.

"Lewis has become over the years a spiritual guide, almost like Virgil was to Dante, and [Scottish author and Christian minister George] MacDonald was to Lewis. He helps me to understand the Christian faith at a level that I probably wouldn't have come to without dealing with the questions and answers that Lewis generated," Mr McLean says.

Asked whether it'd be fair to say

that the imitation of Lewis has had a spiritual effect on him, imitation of spiritual greats – Christ himself foremost among them – being prescribed by Thomas a Kempis, Mr McLean answers in the affirmative, but with a twist.

“Now we’re doing what they call premium video on demand which is available through January 2 [and has since been extended through to January 16] through cslewisovie.com”

"Yes, it would be a different kind of imitating, than in the sense of what Thomas a Kempis

had in mind. He had in mind, 'Take up your cross and follow me', and Lewis is not demanding that. But I think playing him required a deeper level of commitment because, you know, you're going to digest his words, you're going to digest his personality, so you have to imbibe him at a deeper level. If I wasn't playing

him, I wouldn't have worked as hard in getting to understand him. It was the demands of credibility with regard to making Lewis real to people on screen."

All of that digesting and imbibing of a personality seems to be paying off, though, with the movie outperforming Mr McLean, or anyone else's, wildest expectations.

"It's been far beyond what we expected. There was very little fanfare when the movie was



Max McLean as C.S. Lewis in *The Most Reluctant Convert*.

“The movie was also largely filmed in and around Oxford, lending the authenticity of the real setting to the screen”

announced, that it would show publicly on November 3rd, and I think we made the announcement in mid-September," Mr McLean explains.

"Almost immediately, the volume of tickets that were taken was way beyond people's expectations, so immediately the movie theatres in America began to take notice and then all of a sudden we went from a one-night event to a two-night event to a three-night event, to a two-week event, and then finally to a three-week and four-week event, so we were on until December 2."

Spiritual autobiography

"We finished, what was meant for one night, we came in on one month. Now we're doing what they call premium video on demand which is available through January 2 [and has since been extended through to January 16] through cslewisovie.com. And finally, we will make it available to Churches in January and then we'll probably offer it in DVDs and that sort of

As mentioned, the film seeks to convey Lewis' autobiography, which is inseparably intertwined with his spiritual autobiography, as told in his book, *Surprised by Joy: An Accidental Journey from Atheism to Christianity*. Acclaimed by many as a modern spiritual masterpiece, and a true glimpse into the man's mind, *Surprised by Joy* details Lewis' origins in Northern Ireland, his gradual disillusionment with faith as he grows up and attends school before heading to college, and his "surprise" when he rediscovers joy in his gradual discovery of God at Oxford. The effect the book has had upon many is summed up in the author's own words – "A young man who wishes to remain a sound atheist cannot be too careful of his reading" – helping many a reader to give God a second chance.

Adapting a dearly-loved book to the screen comes with its challenges, but *The Most Reluctant Convert* boasts a capable team and an innovative method for so doing.



Author C.S. Lewis is pictured in a 1955 portrait by Walter Stoneman. Photo: CNS.



A desk overlooks the garden in The Kilns in Oxford, England, where C.S. Lewis penned his Christian stories, including *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Photo CNS.

in his later years, Scottish actor Nicholas Ralph playing Lewis as a young man, and Eddie Ray Martin playing Lewis as a young boy, the film manages to convey the depth, nuance and span of Lewis' autobiography convincingly on-screen. The movie was also largely filmed in and around Oxford, lending the authenticity of the real setting to the screen.

“Lewis' imagination is one of the key traits that separates him from other Christian writers, having penned and appreciated fiction alongside his famous apologetics”

While Mr McLean was already extensively familiar with Lewis through his stage work and previous adaptations, taking his story to the screen required a new level of immersion, as mentioned above. Asked whether this newfound proximity to Lewis' work made him aware of any disagreements he shared with the author, Mr McLean remarks that despite the enormous amount of writing Lewis produced, he can't recall any major difficulties he encountered with Lewis' thought along the way.

“He had a particular way – his writing is intriguing, because

he was a very private man who captured a lot of his thoughts for public distribution. He wrote so many letters and he kept them and they were published,” Mr McLean says.

“Of course, we have to thank Walter Hooper [literary adviser for the Lewis estate] for that, you know, in terms of saving a couple of suitcases of Lewis' works and letters that Warnie

[Lewis' elder brother] was about to throw into the fireplace, a burning fireplace. It was a couple of years after Lewis died, maybe even within a year after Lewis died.

“I think, I'm sure there are, they don't come to mind and they weren't major, but I had to work hard enough to make sure I understood what he was saying, prior to critiquing what he said. I mean, there was a lot of stuff that I didn't put in. But I would say in general, certainly that wasn't the objective. I think subconsciously, there wasn't much, because if there was quite a bit, I wouldn't have wanted to do it,” Mr McLean laughs.

Imagination

Lewis' imagination is one of the key traits that separates him from other Christian writers, having penned and appreciated fiction alongside his famous apologetics. With Mr McLean also working in the arts, I ask whether imagination has an important role to play in bringing people to faith.

“I think it's a huge role, because I think that perhaps the

biggest deterrent to Christianity and religious thought is that it doesn't capture the imagination these days. It's believed that it once captured the imagination of naive people that were in a pre-scientific mindset, but in a post-Christian, post-modern world, our minds are engaged by other things and our imagination is engaged by other things,” Mr McLean says.

“What I believe he meant by that was that the imagination serves up the raw material of what we think about”

“And so, what I think still makes Lewis so compelling, at least to me, is he engages my imagination in a way that other writers don't. He himself calls the imagination, ‘the

organ of meaning' as distinct from reason, which he calls ‘the organ of truth’. What I believe he meant by that was that the imagination serves up the raw material of what we think about. We won't engage our rational faculties on something that our imagination is not particularly interested in. The rational part of our brain is ultimately what controls action in the sense that when you really want to bear down and study and learn, let's say you have in your imagination, you see yourself as a rich, successful lawyer. Arguing all the cases brilliantly. That's what's in your imagination, but the real work of doing it,” he laughs, continuing, “of going to law school and studying law, that requires the will and our rational part to bear down.”

Challenges

“So I do think that the idea of imagination, of being the instiga-

tor of action is really key. One of the challenges we have in the 21st Century is religious thought is not imaginative thought. It feels like prescriptive thought to people. People....saying it's irrelevant, you know, that's what college students think, and other people say I'll get to it when I get older, when I have time. It really captures your imagination when you learn that you're going to die in a fortnight. Then all of a sudden it's like, ‘Whoa,’” Mr McLean says.

“He was a poet at heart, and so he had a way with words that would trigger imaginative thoughts”

Imagination has an important role to play, then, in bringing people to faith, and is a large part of what makes Lewis so enduringly appealing to audiences today, but Mr McLean believes that Lewis' great learning only enhanced the effect his writings had.

“Lewis read everything, from the Greeks to the Moderns, I think, and he had a steel-trap mind that could remember what he read. He had this extraordinary ability to translate all of that data, I suppose, into magnificent prose and speech. He was a poet at heart, and so he had a way with words that would trigger imaginative thoughts.

“Then of course he submerged all of that under the rubric of a Christian worldview, you know? What was that famous line he says? ‘I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it, I see everything else’. And that's from the last line in the essay, *Is Theology Poetry?* which is a great title itself, and actually his answer to that question is that if theology is poetry, it's not very good poetry,” he says, laughing, “he said there's much better poetry in other places. I think that's really interesting.”

It's this combination of imagination and learning that produces a “constellation of ideas” that you “just don't get anywhere else,” Mr McLean says, continuing, “And because we have a memory of Christianity, he triggers that memory and gives it new life.”



A scene depicting Lewis' experiences during World War One in *The Most Reluctant Convert*.

Irish psychiatrists speak out against assisted suicide and euthanasia



The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland has deemed physician assisted suicide and euthanasia poor medical practice in a new paper, writes **Jason Osborne**

The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland (CPsychI), the professional body for psychiatrists in Ireland, has come out against the proposed introduction of physician assisted suicide and euthanasia (PAS-E) to Ireland in a new paper.

"Acknowledging the psychological distress often associated with the end of life, and because of the unintended consequences of permitting physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia", the CPsychI has produced this position paper as the representative professional body for psychiatrists in Ireland, the document reads.

In the paper, the CPsychI reaches the conclusion that PAS-E is "not good medical practice" and represents a "detrimental and radical change" in the practice of medicine. As such, the body recommends that it shouldn't be introduced.

“There is good international evidence by now that euthanasia safeguards and controls are regularly flouted”

This comes following an increase in calls for the introduction of the practices to Ireland in recent years, as countries like Canada, New Zealand and parts of Australia among others have introduced and expanded access to physician assisted suicide and euthanasia.

This debate has reached its zenith in Ireland with People Before Profit TD Gino Kenny's *Dying with Dignity Bill 2020* currently awaiting a special Oireachtas Committee to examine the issue.

The CPsychI in their recent paper stands firmly opposed to the introduction of the practice, saying in the executive summary of the paper they believe that, "the introduction of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia represents a radical change in a long-standing tradition of medical



Anti-euthanasia protesters demonstrate outside the Royal Courts of Justice in London July 17, 2017. Photo: CNS.

practice, as exemplified in the prohibition of deliberate killing in the Irish Medical Council ethics guidelines. We believe it will place vulnerable people at risk, and will lead to harmful consequences, such as an increase in the numbers requesting euthanasia or assisted suicide."

Expansion

It outlines the cause for this concern about the expansion, or contagion, of PAS-E under the section entitled, 'Expansion of Criteria for PAS-E', arguing on two grounds.

"On the one hand, there is the 'slippery slope' argument, according to which, even if a line can in principle be drawn between PAS-E for terminal and non-terminal illness, an expansion of criteria will occur in practice because the safeguards to prevent it cannot be made effective," the paper reads.

"There is good international evidence by now that euthanasia safeguards and controls are regularly flouted."

The body presents evidence that where euthanasia or assisted suicide have been legalised in a country, the number of people dying in these manners has increased by 500%.

Secondly, the college cites a "logical inconsistency" between allowing

PAS-E for suffering in one setting and denying it for suffering in others. As such, it says, the grounds for euthanasia in the Netherlands "are shifting from relief of suffering to autonomous patient choice".

Rather than go down this "slippery slope", the CPsychI advises that a "dignified death" is the target for all end-of-life care, and that this is possible with good palliative care.

Warn

However, the Irish psychiatrists warn that the term "death with dignity" is often employed by campaigners for PAS-E, to refer only to the deliberately procured death of an ill or disabled person, and that this term heavily implies that vulnerable people are "dignified" only in death.

"Not only is euthanasia not necessary for a dignified death, but techniques used to bring about death can themselves result in considerable and protracted suffering", the paper says, pointing out that while euthanasia is portrayed by its campaigners as a peaceful process, there are reports of prolongation of death (up to 7 days), and re-awakening from coma (up to 4%).

The psychiatrist body also raises the concern that PAS-E weakens suicide prevention initiatives and

negatively impacts those who are psychologically vulnerable, both of which have ostensibly been subjects of concern for successive Irish governments.

“Where euthanasia or assisted suicide have been legalised in a country, the number of people dying in these manners has increased by approximately 500%”

"The practice of euthanasia undermines the suicide prevention ethos and policies of developed nations, including that of the Irish Government through its National Office for Suicide Prevention," the paper says.

"Suicide prevention initiatives play an important public safety role in providing and indicating the importance of appropriate social and legal protections to those who are psychologically vulnerable from pressures to kill themselves both within and without...At a time where there is public concern regarding mental health and suicide to a greater degree than ever before, the introduction of PAS-E undermines the valuable work

done in addressing the causes of suicidality.

"In the face of claims that physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia are not 'suicide', there is evidence in the academic literature that such induced deaths have a specific contagion effect, following the introduction of medically-induced death of whatever sort," it argues.

Blow

The introduction of PAS-E is a serious blow to Ireland's mental health and suicide prevention strategies, the CPsychI arguing also that depression is the strongest determinant of a desire for death in serious or terminally ill patients.

"The prevalence of depression among terminally ill patients with a desire for death is eight times higher than in those without a significant desire for death," it says.

Euthanasia creates the risk that many people will die "from treatable psychological distress and mental illness," the paper says in its conclusion.

The issues raised by the CPsychI in their paper echo those raised in recent years by various other professional medical bodies, such as the Irish Society of Physicians in Geriatric Medicine, the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal College of Surgeons, the Irish Palliative Medicine Consultants' Association, and other international medical bodies, all of which oppose the introduction of any measure of PAS-E.

“The practice of euthanasia undermines the suicide prevention ethos and policies of developed nations, including that of the Irish Government through its National Office for Suicide Prevention”

Synods will not give an 'instant solution'



Archbishop Francis Duffy at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam. Photos: Ray Ryan.

Chai Brady

The synodal journey is a "pathway not a runway" and will not give an "instant solution", Archbishop Francis Duffy said during his homily for his installation Mass as Archbishop of Tuam.

Archbishop Duffy was installed in the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam on Sunday, January 9, taking the reins from Archbishop Michael Neary who served for almost 27 years.

The archbishop said that undoubtedly the Church's future depends on parishioners as the number of priestly vocations has "plummeted". This has led to an inability to maintain present parish arrangements.

He said: "Structures have already been modified to meet the current needs and more changes will be necessary building on good developments that have already taken place and also to accommodate and facilitate very positive new developments that will arise."

"Without a doubt the future of the Catholic Church depends, as always, on the parishioners, as well as the diminishing numbers of clergy and religious. It depends on your faith, your enthusiasm and on how the Holy Spirit moves through you. That is part of the Baptism call of every person, not just clergy or religious, but of all the baptised."

Archbishop Duffy said that it is timely and exciting that Pope Francis has moved the Church worldwide on to a synodal path.

"There have already been synods and synodal type practices for several years internationally and at home. Many dioceses continue to travel that road, it isn't always easy, it can be challenging and it can be energising," he said.

"The Holy Spirit is present and who knows where that combination of listening, walking together and prayer and discerning will lead? It presents a way of being Church and of living out our Baptism. It is not an instant solution. We have to remember it is a pathway not a runway. But, it is the way to go."

Speaking of Archbishop emeritus Michael Neary, Archbishop Duffy said the more he learns about Tuam archdiocese the more he appreciates the "breadth and depth of his shepherding and leadership".

"The recent very positive review of safeguarding in the Archdiocese of Tuam commented, 'The reviewers conclude that there is evidence of a robust safeguarding structure and practice in place under the active and compassionate leadership of Archbishop Neary'. I congratulate Archbishop Michael on this, and I thank him and those in every parish who are vigilant in safeguarding."

Support

Welcoming the new archbishop, Archbishop Neary said it was a "wonderful day" for the diocese adding "we congratulate you on your appointment, we rejoice with you, we pray for you, and we offer our wholehearted support as you assume your new responsibilities..."

He also expressed his gratitude for the lay Faithful, religious, priests and deacons. "I thank you that over 50 years as a priest, 30 years as a bishop and 27 years as your archbishop you have prayed for me, befriended me, supported and encouraged me. From the islands off the western seaboard to the island parish of Moore on the eastern boundary, you are the people from whom I have learnt so much," he said.

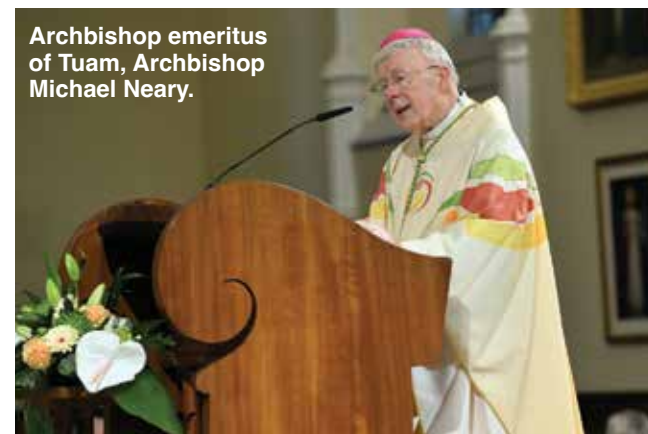
"With you I have journeyed, we have prayed together, we have celebrated together, we have dealt with challenges together, and very briefly today I want to thank you for being the people that you are, for reminding me of the God whom I have been called [by] and chosen to serve. For all of that I want to express my deep gratitude to you. And because I know you so well, I am confident that your relationship with Archbishop Francis will be characterised by the same warmth, affection and joy," he added.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the congregation in the cathedral was limited to members of Archbishop Francis' immediate family and a number of close friends, Papal Nuncio Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, Archbishop Michael Neary and a small number of bishops including the bishops of dioceses in the Tuam Province (Achonry, Clonfert, Elphin, Galway and Killala), members of the Tuam Council of Priests representing the clergy of the diocese, and members of the College of Consultors to whom the Holy Father's letter of appointment must be shown.

The laity and religious living in the archdiocese were also represented.



Archbishop Francis Duffy is greeted by Padraig and Mai O'Connor from Tuam at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam.



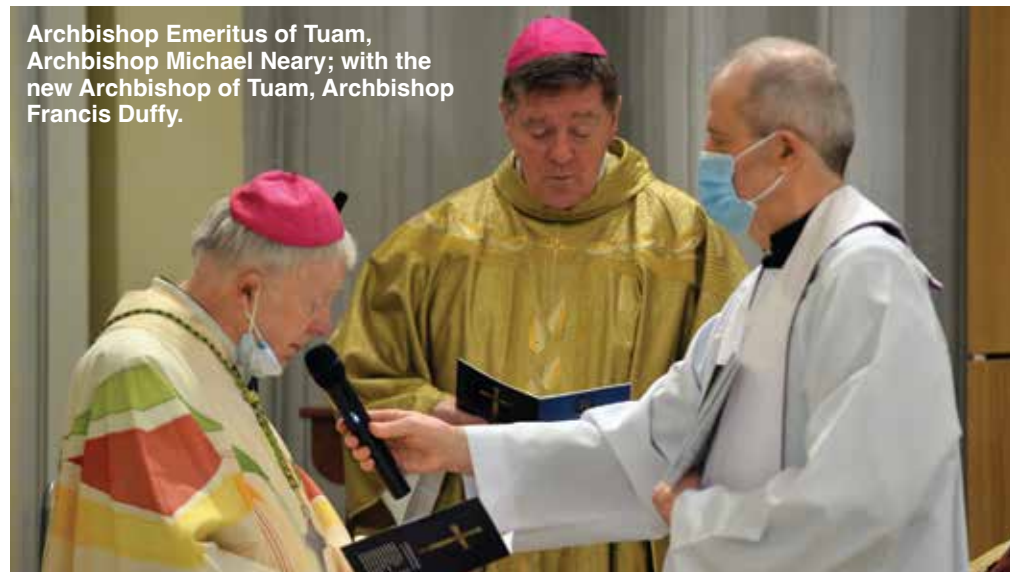
Archbishop emeritus of Tuam, Archbishop Michael Neary.



Deacon and priests at the cathedral.



Some of the congregation at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam.



Archbishop Emeritus of Tuam, Archbishop Michael Neary; with the new Archbishop of Tuam, Archbishop Francis Duffy.



Michael O'Connor presenting Archbishop Francis Duffy with a card and gift.



The archbishop is congratulated by the congregation after the Mass.



Archbishop Francis Duffy on his arrival at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam.



Archbishop Francis Duffy gets ready to meet members of his congregation after the Mass, pictured with Archbishop Michael Neary at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam.



Archbishop Francis Duffy blesses members of the religious as he enters the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam.



Archbishop Francis Duffy addresses members of the religious as he enters the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam.



Archbishop Francis Duffy celebrating mass at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam.



Archbishop Emeritus of Tuam, Michael Neary (left), His Excellency Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland (right) with the new Archbishop of Tuam, Archbishop Francis Duffy.



Archbishop Francis Duffy gets ready to meet members of his congregation after the Mass, pictured with His Excellency Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland and Archbishop Michael Neary at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam.



Archbishop Francis Duffy blesses a deacon at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam.



Sister Mary Lyons holds up the Papal Mandate as Archbishop Francis Duffy is installed.



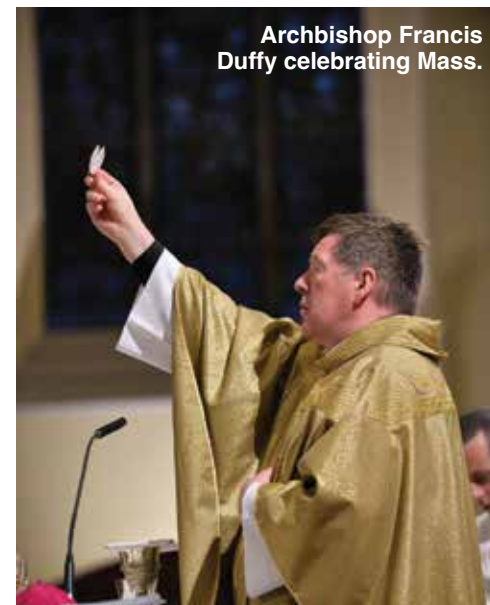
Archbishop Francis Duffy waits before he enters the cathedral.



Archbishop Francis Duffy gives out Holy Communion.



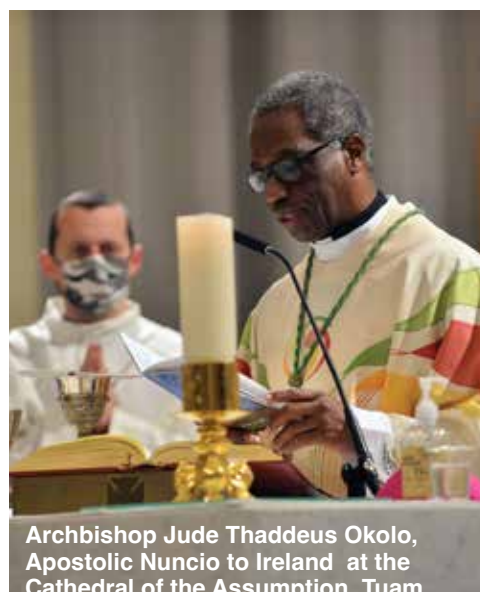
Bishops at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam.



Archbishop Francis Duffy celebrating Mass.



Deacon and priests at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam.



Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam.



Bishop Fintan Monahan of the Diocese of Killaloe.



Archbishop Francis is greeted by Bishop Paul Dempsey, at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam.



Some of the congregation at the cathedral.

An archdiocese with a rich culture and great tradition



Archbishop Francis Duffy addresses the congregation at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam. Photos: Ray Ryan.



Tuam's new archbishop Dr Francis Duffy is looking forward to taking up his role, he tells Ruadhán Jones

The tasks facing any new Irish bishop or archbishop are likely to be similar; declining vocations, a shrinking Church and a global pandemic. But despite the challenges, Archbishop Francis Duffy is looking forward to getting started, hoping to immerse himself in the culture, tradition and peoples of his new archdiocese.

Dr Duffy, formerly bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, is also hopeful that the new global and Irish synods can be an opportunity to foster greater involvement in the Church from the ground up.

He follows in the footsteps of Ireland's longest serving archbishop – now archbishop-emeritus – Dr Michael Neary, who had served in the role since 1995. When Dr Duffy's appointment was announced, Archbishop-emeritus Neary welcomed him, saying that of his “many gifts, your [Dr Duffy's] reputation as a hard-working, kind and generous pastoral leader – as well as being a popular bishop amongst your priests and people – precedes you”.

Enthusiasm

“I know, Archbishop Francis, that the news of your appointment today will be received with enthusiasm and joy in each of the 56 parishes and in many places beyond. I am certain that you will receive generous assistance and support from people in every corner of the Archdiocese, as I have

received it,” Dr Neary said November 10 2021.

Archbishop Duffy was born on April 21 1958 in the parish of Templeport, Co. Cavan to parents Mary Catherine Dolan and Frank Duffy. He attended primary school at Munlough National School, Bawnboy, and completed his post-primary education at St Patrick's College, Co. Cavan.

Francis studied for the priesthood at St Patrick's College, Maynooth and was ordained a priest for the diocese of Kilmore on June 20 1982 by Bishop Francis MacKiernan. He taught at St Patrick's College, Cavan, and was appointed principal of Fatima and Felim's Secondary School, Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim in 1996.

“I know, Archbishop Francis, that the news of your appointment today will be received with enthusiasm and joy”

After twelve years as principal Father Francis was appointed Diocesan Secretary and Financial Administrator and Chancellor. During that time he was resident priest in the parish of Laragh, Co. Cavan. He was then appointed Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, with his episcopal ordination taking place on October 6 2013 at Saint Mary's Church, Athlone.

Archbishop Duffy is now counting on the warm welcome promised by Dr Neary as he begins to find his feet, admitting that “Tuam is very new to me”.

“It is [hard to leave Ardagh and Clonmacnoise],” he says. “I didn't know it that well when I arrived, but I was there for eight years and enjoyed being there. It is a bit of a sudden change. When after a while you get settled and get to know more people and relax into the situation – it is a bit of an upheaval to have to move again.”

However, the Cavan man is keen “to get to know the

people there [in Tuam], to get to know the priests and to get to know the places”.

“I'll definitely make it my business to be getting out and about, to the extent that I can given the restrictions that are there of course. That's my aim, that's what I did at Ardagh and Clonmacnoise. I hope to do that again, to get to know the culture of the place. Each diocese is different, each has its own way of doing things. Of course, Tuam has a very rich culture with the great tradition of pilgrimage in various places,” Archbishop Duffy tells me.

Big challenge

The big challenge Dr Duffy identifies is one common to many Irish dioceses: the decline in vocations to the priesthood, which he points out has “diminished considerably”.

“That has been sustained for the last couple of decades. The number of priests is going down, the age profile is increasing. That is certainly a concern and people have often voiced that to me in Ardagh and Clonmacnoise as well. That certainly is a concern. Those issues have already been addressed in Tuam and that needs to look again as time goes on and the numbers continue to decline.”

In this context, the Irish national and global Church synods can be vital, says Archbishop Duffy, referring back to his own experience organising an assembly in Ardagh and Clonmacnoise.

“I think that the synodal process that Pope Francis has launched worldwide is an essential process,” he begins. “There are elements of synodality already in operation in many dioceses in Ireland. One, Limerick, has had a synod in very recent years.

“Other dioceses have had assemblies; we were just in the process of preparing our assembly in Ardagh and Clonmacnoise when Covid-19 struck. We had two very good preparatory mornings for all the delegates and we had carried out a listening process.

“We had met and gathered and trained ourselves

“The synodal process that Pope Francis has launched worldwide is an essential process”



Archbishop Francis Duffy takes a moment before he enters the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam.

“The number of priests is going down, the age profile is increasing. That is certainly a concern”

in what the process of discernment and listening was about. It was the people, the parishioners themselves, who carried out the listening process and helped and trained to do so. I thought that was really good.

“There was great energy there and really a feeling of the Spirit among us, the Holy Spirit working. Unfortunately, before our third and final training morning which was the lead up to the assembly itself, we had to stop the meetings. We did resume by virtual means in October. We were hoping to resume then another training session or two in the spring. But who knows what would happen because of the current situation.”

Opportunity

The synod in Ireland is an important opportunity for the Church to ask the question that Pope Francis has posed, Archbishop Duffy continues: “What does God want of the Church in Ireland, what does it want of Tuam at this time? That’s the basic question and I think it’s important to have that asked and to listen to the great variety of things that people say.

“People who are involved in Church, people who are not involved in Church. People who feel left out, people who are hurt, people who feel not accepted, people who are struggling. I think there’s an opportunity

there to engage, to listen, to discern, to pray and to consider all those elements of Church.”

When asked if the synod is a chance to ask questions in areas such as the greater involvement of women in leadership roles, Archbishop Duffy responds in the affirmative: “I think it’s important that the question that is asked is wide and to as many people as possible. I’m sure there will be a great variety of answers to it and that is integral to the process.”

“The synod in Ireland is an important opportunity for the Church to ask the question that Pope Francis has posed”

The archdiocese of Tuam has undergone a number of structural changes of late, most recently with the joining together of two dioceses – Galway and Clonfert – under one bishop, Dr Michael Duignan. Archbishop Duffy acknowledges that the topic of the future structure of the diocese has been discussed on and off over a number of years.

“The current proposal to have a union of Clonfert and Galway in the person of the bishop – each diocese remains a separate entity, but the bishop is the bishop

of both dioceses – that was an interesting development. It’s not an amalgamation as such. People will be certainly watching to see how that works out,” Dr Duffy explains.

Arrangements

As to whether or not such arrangements will be viable long term, given the potential strain on one bishop managing two different diocesan systems, Archbishop Duffy says he doesn’t know yet.

“As I said each diocese is different, in their way of doing things, in their management and administration. Kilmore is my native diocese, and then in Ardagh and now Tuam – each are different. It’s interesting to look at those differences.

“And to the question, how would one bishop feel about doing that, of course there are examples already of two dioceses with apostolic administrators. That is a different situation, but it is also an example of one person leading or administering two dioceses.”

There are a number of smaller communities within the archdiocese that Dr Duffy will now have responsibility for, including those devoted to the Traditional Latin Mass and the Irish language or Gaeltacht areas. The TLM came into particular focus last year, after Pope Francis released his *motu pro-*

prio, Traditionis custodes. This, and further releases from the Congregation for Divine Worship, centralised control of the Mass in the hands of the bishop.

Dr Duffy believes that the *motu proprio* has “good potential” as the foundation for positive relations or interactions with the TLM community.

“There are people of all ages indeed, but small in number, who like going to the Latin Mass,” he says. “I did talk to people who like going to the Latin Mass and have a great affection for it. They welcome the regulation and the clarity that is

given by the documents.”

The Irish language was in the news more recently, when the European Union announced that it would be recognised as an official EU language. Archbishop Duffy ministered as chaplain to some gael scoileanna in the past, and his first address after his appointment had been announced concluded in Irish. He believes that the Church has a role in continuing to foster the life of the Irish language in Gaeltachta.

Faith

“In terms of faith definitely, the Church has and continues to do that [pass on Irish in Gaeltachta] through the Liturgy in Irish,” Dr Duffy pointed out. “That’s very important for people in the Gaeltacht areas.

“The Church celebrates the sacraments and the Mass in the Irish language. My own experience of that is limited to going to gael scoileanna which I have visited, and where there are students from the gael scoileanna coming to Confirmation I would have Irish in it. It would be bilingual rather than all Irish. Recently I was looking at the Irish missal in Irish, which is a very big tome. There certainly is a very strong tradition of maintaining the Irish language in the liturgy.”

“Each diocese is different, in their way of doing things, in their management and administration”

The Covid-19 pandemic has been nearly all-encompassing in terms of its effects on the Church’s ministry. It has shared in the challenges faced by religious and non-religious alike, and Archbishop Duffy believes there are positive lessons to

be learned from it.

“I think that we saw a side of people that was very positive, where you had a lot of people helping others,” says Dr Duffy. “Certainly, in the first year, you had young people looking out for their neighbours. That was a great example of neighbourliness and looking out for other people. That was really good.

“In terms of liturgy, it did affect Mass. We had no Mass for a long time with a congregation present. So many churches moved online, although a lot had been already. That certainly appealed to a considerable number of people. Then, when we were able to have confirmation, we were able to have it in smaller numbers. Several people, priests and parishioners, remarked that they liked the smaller ceremonies.

“They felt it more meaningful, more relaxed; they felt that they just enjoyed it more and thought it more relevant and personal. That was a very interesting comment. Rather than a large, packed church you had small numbers. That spoke to people a lot of people, I think.”

Topic

As our conversation comes to a close, Archbishop Duffy returns to the topic of synodality, stressing once again just how important the process is for the Church worldwide and in Ireland.

“It’s not an easy process, but it’s a good process I think,” Archbishop Duffy said. “I look forward to that. It has to be and is being well thought out and managed. That’s a good thing and I think Pope Francis is right to do so, to launch us on that synodal path and ask the question – what is God saying to us today – wherever we are, parish, diocese or country.”



The archbishop is congratulated by the congregation after the Mass.

Out&About

Generous donors in Donegal



▲▼ **DONEGAL:** Students and staff of Scoil Mhuire Buncrana pack up boxes with donations for St Vincent De Paul's annual food appeal, co-ordinated by Ms O'Connor and the students. Over 50 boxes of food were collected for the local branch.



DUBLIN: Singers perform at St Saviours Dominican Church Dublin, which hosted a carol service to ring in the Christmas Season.

IN SHORT

Diocese of Kerry hosts online mission for parishes

The Diocese of Kerry is holding an online mission 'Moving Forward in Hope', from January 16 to 19.

The mission will offer parishes around the diocese "an opportunity for people to gather in reflection and in prayer, online and in the home", said diocesan communications officer Mary Fagan.

"Like the traditional parish mission, all are welcome to participate, inclusive of all age groups and those involved with Church or those who have disengaged with Church," Ms Fagan said.

In a press release, the diocese said they

hope the mission will "help to lift the spirits and hearts of those who take part, nurture faith communities in this ongoing Covid reality and encourage people to live with hope and solidarity as a community we negotiate our way through this challenging time".

A mission booklet is available online on dioceseofkerry.ie or in hard copy from your local parish church.

Guest speakers will include GAA pundit and counsellor Oisín McConville, Columban father and renowned environmental theologian Fr Seán Hogan, and there will be talks on health, wellbeing and love from Kate Liffey and Miriam Kerins Hussey.

Bishop of Kerry Ray Browne said that "as parishes of the diocese of Kerry, it is

good for us to unite online for a four-day mission, like we did last January".

Knights of Holy Sepulchre host online Knock pilgrimage

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem (EOHSJ) have announced that they will host an online pilgrimage to Knock Shrine January 28.

The annual pilgrimage of the EOHSJ Lieutenancy of Ireland International will commence at 5.00pm in the Church of St John the Baptist, and is free to attend.

In a press release, EOHSJ Lieutenant Peter Durnin KC*SG GCHS said that "owing to Government restrictions, relating to Covid-19 risk, the pilgrimage will be a semi-virtual

event with only a limited number of invited members attending in person.

"However all members, their families and friends are encouraged to participate virtually."

Knock is the site of the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Joseph and St John the Evangelist on the evening of August 21 1879.

The event will be live-streamed at www.knockshrine.ie/watch-live.

The program is as follows: commence 5.00pm; recitation of the rosary; evening prayer of the Church; Stations of the Cross; celebration of Mass with Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey and his homily will be focused on the forthcoming Synod.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



TYRONE: Mrs Celia McGinn, vice-principal of Sacred Heart College in Omagh, retired on the last day of term after many years of service to the school and the wider Catholic school community in the area. She is pictured with family members as the pupils bid farewell to the much-loved teacher.



ARMAGH: Knights of area 3 of the Knights of St Columbanus Armagh attend the rosary rally held in Armagh City, January 1.

CORK: Author Cornelius Lynch presents a €700 cheque to the Sisters Of Our Lady of Apostles to be used for the education of girls in Dodoma, Tanzania where they have just begun a new mission. Pictured (from left) are Sr Nora Lucey, Sr Mary Crowley and Sr Kathleen McGarvey, OLA Provincial.



DUBLIN: Archbishop Dermot Farrell helps Bro. Kevin Crowley dole out soup during a visit to the Capuchin Day Center for the homeless in December 2021. Photo: CNS.



KERRY: Fr Tadhg Fitzgerald collects the Fexco Kerry Hero Award for St Johns Parish Tralee – representing all churches and religious groups. The staff clergy and volunteers of St Johns Tralee faced and met all challenges including saying Mass to empty churches, managing numbers safely and providing hope in the real as well as the online world for people of faith.

Events

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



World Report

IN BRIEF

Unvaccinated Catholics asked not to attend Mass by English parish

● A parish in England has asked Catholics not to attend Mass if they are “not vaccinated and/or won’t wear a mask”.

The Parish of the Holy Family, East Nottingham, in central England, issued the request most recently in a newsletter dated December 26.

Under the heading “Keeping safe,” the parish asked Massgoers to use hand sanitiser and wear a face covering when attending the parish’s three churches.

“If you are not vaccinated and/or won’t wear a mask, please do not come to Mass,” it said.

Philippines cancels Black Nazarene procession for second year

● Philippine authorities are cancelling the country’s ‘Black Nazarene’ procession — an annual event where millions of Catholics accompany a revered statue of Jesus through the streets of Manila — for a second year because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The government’s coronavirus task force called off the January 9 procession,

or Traslacion, before related celebrations were scheduled to begin, Reuters reported.

For centuries, the Black Nazarene — a statue of a dark life-size Jesus carrying his cross — has symbolised passion, struggle, and faith for Filipino Catholics.

The Faithful usually carry a replica of the statue through Manila on January 9, the feast of the Black Nazarene.

Pope receives manifesto challenging German ‘Synodal Way’

● Pope Francis last Wednesday received a manifesto, backed by almost 6,000 Catholics, challenging the German ‘Synodal Way’.

The Pope was presented with the document, *New Beginning: A Manifesto for Reform*, after his general audience on January 5.

The manifesto offers a nine-point alternative plan for the Catholic Church in Germany, arguing that the Synodal Way will fail to produce genuine reform, reported CNA Deutsch.

The document says: “In its fixation on external structure, the Synodal Way misses the heart of the crisis; it violates the peace in congregations, abandons the path of unity with the universal Church, damages the Church in the substance of its faith, and paves the way towards schism.”

Church in Poland plans youth outreach in 2022

● The Catholic Church in Poland will focus on reaching out to young people in 2022, according to a senior official.

Bishop Artur Miziński, secretary general of the Polish bishops’ conference, said that there was an “urgent need” to improve communication between the Church and the younger generation.

“This is a challenge for the entire universal Church,” he said.

“There is an urgent need to seek and introduce new ways of reaching young people with the message of the Gospel. Catholic communities and movements, operating in the vast majority of the Polish parishes, serve this aim.”

Boy who embraced Pope during WYD in Rio now discerning religious life

● During World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, in 2013, a boy made his way through the crowd to hug Pope Francis tearfully. That boy, now a young man, is discerning religious life.

The news was released January 3 by the Bishop of Lorena, Joaquim Wladimir Lopes Dias, who in a Facebook post shared the photo of Pope Francis hugging Nathan de Brito, then nine years old, and another photo showing him now as a young man dressed as a postulant of the Order of Friars Minor in Rondonópolis.

Many Faithful, especially in Brazil, remember the image of Nathan de Brito hugging the Holy Father.

Indian officials force nuns off land as foreign funds restored

The Missionaries of Charity congregation has been forced to shut Nirmala Shishu Bhawan, a home for orphaned, destitute and abandoned children in Uttar Pradesh state, after its lease expired. The Defence Estates Office demanded \$250,000 from the nuns for trespassing.

The closure came on the heels of the federal government’s refusal to renew the congregation’s Foreign Contribution Regulation Act registration for foreign donations to carry out its charitable works across the country.

Ucanews.com reported India’s defence establishment claimed the Uttar Pradesh home was built on its land, for which the lease had expired in 2019. It claimed the Missionaries of Charity were trespassers and would have to pay penalty charges or face eviction.

Sister Prema Pierick, the congregation’s superior general, felt it prudent to surrender to army authorities and handed over peaceful possession of the home to the Defence Estates Office January 3, Ucanews.com reported.

The 11 remaining children, most of whom were severely handicapped, were relocated to other Shishu Bhawan homes, said Chhotabhai, convener of the Indian Catholic Forum who has been closely associated with the orphanage since its inception.

“It is unfortunate that an institution that served the abandoned and voiceless in the society is shut down instead of the land lease being



Children living on the street are seen outside the Missionaries of Charity motherhouse and orphanage in Kolkata, India, January 2. Photo: CNS.

extended,” he told ucanews.com January 6.

In a note to media, the Indian Catholic Forum questioned the Defence Estates Office for demanding such a fine for alleged trespassing and wondered why the Missionaries of Charity did not explore any legal remedies before handing over the land to the local authorities.

“These questions will now remain unanswered. It certainly doesn’t paint the army or DEO in a good light. Did it deliberately choose a soft target knowing that it did not have the stomach for a fight? This selective targeting also seems to have

the malodour of a communal bias. Is this how the nation repays the truedeshbhakts (patriots),” it said in the media note.

Meanwhile, the Missionaries of Charity have been cleared to receive and use foreign funding in India, after the religious order founded by Mother Teresa was unexpectedly ruled ineligible to receive donations from abroad late last year.

Vatican News reported on Saturday that the Indian government on January 7 restored the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) license for the religious order, allowing the group to once

again receive and utilise foreign funds.

India’s Ministry of Home Affairs had, on Christmas Day, ruled the Missionaries ineligible for foreign donations, without giving a full explanation of the reason.

The Indian government’s reversal comes as a relief.

“We never expected that our registration could be cancelled but it happened,” Sunita Kumar, a spokeswoman for the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta told UCA News following the announcement.

“We are happy that the restoration of our license happened without much delay.”

Kenyan bishop urges calm as tensions rise after attacks

Bishop Wilybard Lagho of Malindi continued to call for calm in the Kenyan coastal region of Lamu, but said land disputes were behind the latest attacks, which have left at least seven people dead.

The bishop told *Catholic News Service* there is credible evidence that the attacks are being perpetrated by local gangs with an aim of flushing squatters out of ranches.

Leases of some of the ranches were recently revoked by the government.

The bishop, whose diocese extends to Lamu Island, an Indian Ocean archipelago that lies about 60 miles from Kenya’s border with Somalia, appealed to the government to “move with speed to issue title deeds to genuine squatters”.

Earlier reports had indicated that the attacks were being carried out by suspected al-Shabab militants. The Somalia-based al-Qaida affiliate has been blamed for past attacks in the region.

On January 3, the number of the

dead reached seven after a 62-year-old man was killed in an attack, in which several houses were burned. The attacks started January 2, with the kidnapping of one person, who was later shot dead in the village as another four were burned in their house. Two other people were kidnapped, and a village elder was found butchered.

Those kidnapped are usually used to identify future villages for attacks, according to Church sources.

Afghan immigrant helps Church agency welcome refugees from his homeland

Sayed Wardak, 32, spent five years as a translator for the US Army in Afghanistan.

In 2016, after nearly a year of hiding from the Taliban and in fear for his life, Mr Wardak and his wife, Sairah, immigrated to the United States.

Knowing first-hand the perils of life in Afghanistan, and the challenges of resettling in a new country, Mr Wardak now assists newly arrived Afghan refugees as an employee of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Green Bay.

Mr Wardak serves part time as an interpreter. He helps refugees who speak Dari, the most widely spoken language in Afghanistan and translates Dari into English for other Catholic Charities staff members.

“I take people to the doctor, show them how to find a grocery store, help get their driving license, find jobs and legal documentation,” he told *The Compass*, newspaper of the Diocese of Green Bay.



Edited by Jason Osborne
jason@irishcatholic.ie

Kings and camels



Participants wearing costumes ride camels during the Three Kings Cavalcade in celebration of the feast of the Epiphany in Warsaw, Poland, January 6. Photo: CNS.

British tribunal: National Health Service harassed nurse for wearing cross

A Catholic nurse suffered harassment and discrimination because she refused to remove a small gold cross necklace at work, an employment tribunal ruled.

Mary Onuoha, 61, was subjected to "offensive and intimidating" treatment by the National Health Service, her employer, and was unfairly dismissed from her job at the Croydon University Hospital in London, the tribunal concluded.

In a judgment handed down January 5, the three-member tribunal panel rejected claims by the health service that the cross was not a symbol of the nurse's faith and that it was an

infection risk.

The tribunal said her managers created "an offensive, hostile and intimidating environment" for the Nigerian-born nurse. It singled out criticism by one manager, who interrupted surgery on an anaesthetised patient to castigate Ms Onuoha in an operating room in front of other staffers, one of whom was wearing earrings and a pendant.

"This was to treat the matter as if it was an emergency but ... it was not," the tribunal concluded.

Ms Onuoha said she had worn the necklace for 19 years without complaint but

was placed under pressure to remove it beginning in 2015. She said other staff were allowed to wear hijabs, saris, turbans, lanyards, jewellery and even bunches of keys around their necks.

She said she suffered a campaign of harassment and discrimination, including demotion, from 2018 until the summer of 2020, when she resigned.

The tribunal said the NHS "constructively dismissed" Ms Onuoha "without reasonable and proper cause," thereby discriminating against her and breaching her human rights.

It noted that "stopping

Christians from displaying the cross has been a feature of wider persecution campaigns" in parts of the world, and it acknowledged biblical teaching "imploping Christians to be open about their faith and not to hide it".

In a film made for the Christian Legal Centre, which supported the nurse in her lawsuit against the NHS, Ms Onuoha said: "I don't think I could do my job without the cross. I draw my strength from looking at the cross."

The NHS has apologised to Ms Onuoha and said it will review its policies. Damages and other costs have yet to be announced.

Ransom was paid for missionaries kidnapped in Haiti

A ransom was paid for the missionaries held hostage in Haiti, said the husband and father of six of the now-released hostages.

"There had been a ransom agreement reached with the hostage takers," said Ray Noecker, whose wife and five children were among the 17 people kidnapped by a Haitian gang on October 16. Mr Noecker was speaking at a January 2 prayer luncheon held in thanksgiving for

the release of his family.

"To my understanding, that ransom was actually delivered the Sunday night that my wife and son and other lady were released," he said. "The ransom agreement was for the entire group, but there was some division within the gang, so they were not able to release all of them at that time."

Mr Noecker did not know who paid the ransom, or how much was paid.

The ringleader of kidnapping and leader of the 400 Mawozo gang, Wilson Joseph, had initially threatened to kill the hostages unless he received his demands. The gang had sought a \$1 million ransom for each hostage. It was not clear whether this ransom applied to the five children in the group, the Associated Press reported at the time.

Vatican roundup

Pope sends Christmas greetings to Oriental Churches

● With Eastern rite Catholics and Orthodox Faithful celebrating Christmas on January 7, Pope Francis sent his best wishes for "peace and every joy".

Greeting the Faithful after the prayer of the Angelus last Thursday, Pope Francis sent his greetings to Orthodox Christians and Eastern rite Catholics who celebrated Christmas on Friday last according to the Julian calendar.

"I send my warmest wishes of peace and every good," he said. "May Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, shine on your families and your communities! Brothers and sisters, best wishes!"

The Pope then said that January 6 is commemorated as Missionary Childhood Day, to recall that even young Christians are missionaries by virtue of Baptism.

"There are many children in various parts of the world who seek to pray and offer their savings so that the Gospel might be proclaimed to those who do not know it."

And he thanked those missionary children, and recalled that Christian mission "begins with our Christian witness in everyday life."

Pope's January 2022 prayer intention is for victims of religious persecution

● For the first month of 2022, Pope Francis has asked Catholics to pray for those facing religious discrimination and persecution.

In a video appeal released January 4, the Pope called religious persecution "inhuman" and "insane."

"Let us pray that those who suffer discrimination and suffer religious persecution may find in the societies in which they live the rights and dignity that comes from being brothers and sisters," he said.

The video, which shows scenes of destroyed churches and clips from Pope Francis' March 2021 trip to Iraq, is promoted by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, which raises awareness of monthly papal prayer intentions.

Pope Francis' appeal came amid reports of rising persecution of Christians around the world.

The advocacy group Open Doors listed North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Nigeria among the 10 worst countries for Christian oppression on its annual World Watch List last year.

Iraq and Syria, described as having "extreme" levels of Christian persecution, are numbers 11 and 12 on the list respectively.

Overall, an estimated 340 million Christians worldwide face persecution, according to Open Doors' 2021 report, an increase of 30 million from the previous year.

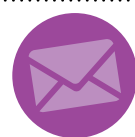
Agenzia Fides reported last month that 22 Catholic missionaries were killed in 2021, half of them in Africa.

Spanish Cardinal Álvarez Martínez dies at 96

● After Spanish Cardinal Francisco Álvarez Martínez died at the age of 96, Pope Francis offered his condolences to the Archdiocese of Toledo at the loss of a "devoted pastor who, for years and with fidelity, gave his life to the service of God and the Church."

The cardinal died January 5 at a hospital in Madrid. In announcing the cardinal's death, the current archbishop of Toledo, Archbishop Francisco Cerro Chaves, described his predecessor as the "118th successor of the apostles in this see," reflecting the tradition that holds the diocese was founded by the Apostle James in the first century. The archdiocese is Spain's primatial see.

Francisco Álvarez Martínez was born near Llanera, Spain, July 14, 1925. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1950 in Oviedo. From 1955 to 1958, he studied canon law at the Pontifical University of Salamanca and he earned his doctorate in canon law in 1962 from the Pontifical University of Comillas.



LetterfromRome



John L. Allen Jr

Presumably, when the prosecutors in the Vatican's "trial of the century," pivoting on a failed \$400 million land deal in London, rang in the New Year a few days ago, like everyone else, they wished one another a happy 2022.

They may have actually said "happier," because, let's face it, 2021 didn't go particularly well for the prosecution, which has suffered a series of setbacks and breakdowns and raised questions about whether this trial will ever get off the ground.

As it happens, the New Year actually has gotten off to a better start, because on January 8, the prosecution scored a sort of moral victory in the unlikely setting of a Swiss appeals court.

Request

That court rejected a request by Italian financier Raffaele Mincione to unblock assets frozen by Swiss authorities a year ago in response to a request from Vatican prosecutors, estimated at roughly \$70 million. Mr Mincione had claimed the sequestration was rendering him unable to pay off business debts as well as to provide for personal expenses for himself and his family. He also argued that the sequestration was illegitimate because prosecutors have denied him due process of law by failing to turn over key evidence.

“Mr Mincione’s lawyers cited the fact that his defence team has not been able to have access to the full versions of recordings of interrogations”

The last time such an issue was placed before a foreign court was in the UK, where a judge unfroze assets belonging to another Italian wheeler and dealer, Gianluigi Torzi, who was also involved in the London debacle. In that case, the judge accused Vatican prosecutors of “appalling misrepresentations” in its legal filings and, basically, gave Mr Torzi his money back.

Endorsement

Technically, the Swiss ruling wasn't exactly an endorsement of the Vatican prosecutors' indictment of Mr Mincione. What the court found was that since it has no way of knowing how many other assets Mr Mincione may have at his disposal, it couldn't determine how much real harm he's suffering,

After a dismal 2021, Vatican prosecutors get New Year's gift from the Swiss



Pope Francis leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking St Peter's Square. Photo: CNS.

“The New Year actually has gotten off to a better start, because on January 8, the prosecution scored a sort of moral victory in the unlikely setting of a Swiss appeals court”

Nonetheless, there were three related findings that had to bring some cheer to the beleaguered Vatican team.

First, Mr Mincione's lawyers had argued that the assets ought to be unfrozen in part because his defence team in the Vatican Case has sought to have access to four controversial papal rescripts at the beginning of the process which granted prosecutors broad powers, but those requests have been denied, suggesting a failure in discovery.

The Swiss court, however, ruled that Mr Mincione had failed to prove that the papal documents are being “deliberately kept hidden” – suggesting that disputes over which documents Mr Mincione's lawyers have a right to see is simply part of the normal legal wrangling in a case like this, and not necessarily evidence of an effort to thwart his rights.

Second, Mr Mincione's lawyers cited the fact that his defence

team has not been able to have access to the full versions of recordings of interrogations, including the star witness in the case, Italian Monsignor Alberto Perlasca, as an illustration of defects in the system.

Rejected

The Swiss court rejected that argument too. They said that the Vatican's criminal procedure is based on that of Italy, which, in turn, is similar to the Swiss system, which provides guarantees that the defence will have access to all materials relevant to its case. Implicitly, the court suggested that difficulties in getting certain materials so far could be due to a failure of due diligence on the part of Mr Mincione's lawyers.

Finally, Mr Mincione's team argued that the Vatican prosecution is illegitimate because there's no separation of powers – the Pope is both the supreme execu-

tive and the supreme judicial authority – and therefore a fair trial is impossible. That argument too was set aside, because, the judges said, it can only be invoked by someone who's actually in the foreign state in question and seeking the assistance of Swiss legal authorities.

“The Swiss ruling wasn't exactly an endorsement of the Vatican prosecutors' indictment of Mr Mincione”

Mr Mincione is not a resident of the Vatican City State, and the court said that his request for relief therefore “borders on recklessness, and this dilatory way of acting cannot find protection.”

Granted, none of this amounts to a finding that Mr Mincione is actually guilty of the crimes with

which he's been charged, which are basically that he defrauded the Vatican of millions of Euro by misrepresenting the details of the London deal. Nonetheless, it's also the first time a foreign court has examined the case and found the conduct of the prosecutors to date to be perfectly within internationally accepted legal standards.

Reality

Perhaps the reality is simply that the case against Mr Torzi is weaker than that against Mr Mincione, which could help explain the radical difference in judgment between the British and the Swiss courts. Perhaps, too, it's that Mr Torzi's appeal rested more on the facts of the case, while Mr Mincione's lawyers were operating more at the level of the integrity of the Vatican legal system in the first place.

In any event, the Swiss ruling is a rare ray of sunshine for Vatican prosecutors coming off a pretty dark year. We'll see if it translates into new momentum for them when the Vatican trial resumes January 25 – when defence objections, including the missing portions of the tapes, are expected to come to a head.

Cannes to show documentary on priests on path to sainthood



John Lavenburg

Last January when Chris Charles Scott directed a documentary about five French priests that cared for the sick through the 1873 yellow fever epidemic in Shreveport, Louisiana, he never expected that it would have a spot in this year's Cannes World Film Festival.

The expectation, Mr Scott said, was a regional and Catholic audience. Although now that the documentary's reach has extended far beyond those boundaries in both secular and sacred spaces, he recognises the timing of its November premier was pivotal.

People identified with making a personal sacrifice in a pandemic situation.

"We were [filming] smack dab in the middle of our own pandemic and seeing how we are in hopefully the last stages of this disease, a lot of people's priorities were realigned, a lot of people's paths were reshaped and I think that's why people resonate with this story," Mr Scott told *Crux*. "This is a timeless tale of what God's people do when bad things happen."

The documentary, *The Five Priests*, is the culmination of years of work by three Shreveport Catholics to spread the story of the five priest's sacrifice and get them on the path to sainthood. The five priests – Fathers Jean Pierre, Isidore A. Quémerais, Jean-Marie Biler, Louis Gergaud and François Le Vézouët – became Servants of God in December 2020.

“Ms White received an email from Cannes with the news of the documentary's official selection on January 5”

As history tells it, between late August to mid-November of 1873 Shreveport lost a quarter of its population to yellow fever. The mosquito-borne disease causes fever, nausea, and muscle pains and can lead to liver and kidney failure.

Care

While many people fled Shreveport for safety, Frs Pierre and Quémerais, who were assigned to the northern Louisiana city, stayed to care for the victims. Fr Biler, who was a chaplain at a local convent, also stayed in the city. Frs Pierre and Quémerais contracted yellow fever and died. When Fr Biler came down with the illness, he contacted Fr Gergaud – a priest from a nearby town – who arrived in time to give Fr Biler last rites. However, Fr Gergaud, too, quickly succumbed to



the virus. Hearing about the desperate situation, Fr Le Vézouët then left the diocese – to travel to Shreveport and minister to the sick and dying. He also, quickly contracted the disease and died.

The five priests are all from Brittany, France. They were recruited to come to the United States by Bishop Auguste Marie Martin, the founding bishop of what is now the Diocese of Shreveport.

Parallel

"It is a parallel with the conditions of the world today," Cheryl White, history professor at Louisiana State University Shreveport told *Crux*. "Five priests who made a decision to lay down their lives in an epidemic for strangers, and here we are living in a global pandemic, trying to look for examples of human virtue."

Ms White has done extensive

research of the priests over the past four years alongside Father Peter Mangum, the rector at the Cathedral of St John Berchmans in Shreveport, and local historian Ryan Smith. Their research culminated in the documentary, and a book, *Shreveport Martyrs of 1873: The Surest Path to Heaven*, that was released in October 2021.

Ms White received an email from Cannes with the news of the documentary's official selection on January 5. The festival takes place in May. It won best documentary feature in the Europe Film Festival. It's a finalist in the Texas Film Festival. The Roma Prisma Independent Film Festival and the Christian Film Festival have also named the documentary an official selection.

"The most exciting part about it for me is not the creative aspect, but the fact that it affirms for me the universality of the story of these five priests," Ms White said.

Apostolic Nuncio to the United States Archbishop Christophe Pierre, Bishop Francis Malone of Shreveport and Fr Mangum are the clergy featured in the documentary. Archbishop Pierre, who wrote the foreword for the book, is from Brittany, France, and has long championed the five priests' cause.

“The most exciting part about it for me is not the creative aspect”

Ms White and Mr Smith are also featured in the documentary, as is Shreveport Mayor Adrian Perkins, a city native who sees an importance in sharing this story as a community leader in a difficult time.

"Everybody can take away the fact that during a pandemic, or during any crisis for that matter, we are so much stronger when we come together and think about others," Mr Perkins

told *Crux*. "If we think about others, at the end of the day we're all going to be so much better off."

Suffering

In a similar sense Mr Scott said it was important for them to lean into the human suffering that took place during the 1873 yellow fever epidemic to really highlight the sacrifice the five priests made. Showing that dichotomy between the horror of the disease and the greatness of their sacrifice, he said, compelled people because deep down "we all have that capacity to serve".

The next step for the five priests is to be declared Venerable after an investigation at the Vatican. It is the first sainthood cause from northern Louisiana. In the meantime, Ms White, Fr Mangum and Mr Smith will continue sharing the story. They're in the process of adding French subtitles to the documentary, which they'll then share on a trip over there after Easter.

"I don't know what comes next but I know it'll be spectacular; it'll be great," Mr Smith said. "I think this is going to carry on for some time, maybe intermittently, but it's here to stay. These guys will be venerable I have no doubt about that."

“The documentary, *The Five Priests*, is the culmination of years of work by three Shreveport Catholics to spread the story of the five priest's sacrifice”

Letters

Letter of the week

Frustration with Church leaders regarding Holy Land Christians

Dear Editor, In relation to the statement by the main Christian Churches in the Holy Land [*The Irish Catholic* – December 23, 2021]. Firstly, it is appalling that a small minority of Jewish extremists has been responsible for “physical and verbal assaults against priests and other clergy and attacks on Christian churches”.

It is good to hear the acknowledgement “with gratitude the declared commitment of the Israeli government to uphold a safe and secure home for Christians in the Holy Land and to preserve the Christian community as an integral part of the tapestry of the local community”. Israel can and should commit more resources to tackling this aggravating issue.

However, I get frustrated with the same Church leaders when they don't acknowledge that the only country in the Middle East where the Christian community is growing is Israel. The Christian population in 1949 after independence was 34,000. The figures for 2021 have just been published and were 182,000, which is a more than 500% increase on 1949. In the past year during Covid-19 there was an increase on 2020 of 1.4%. These figures do not include the 30,000 Messianic Jews in Israel, who are Christians but identify as Jews. Yet in the same statement the Church leaders said that “the local Christian community” was “decreasing in number” and by local, they were referring to “Israel, Palestine and Jordan”.

These main Church leaders need to acknowledge that the number of Christians is decreasing in that part of the Holy Land controlled by the PA (Palestinian Authority) and ask why. The international charity Open Doors attributes to “Islamic oppression” the steep decline of Christian numbers in the PA-controlled areas. Aid to the Church in Need also confirms this point.

Would that the PA and Hamas would give the same commitment as Israel to safeguard Christians in the areas they control.

Yours etc.,
Paddy Monaghan
Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

Reality of Desmond Tutu's advocacy

Dear Editor, It seems that Archbishop Slattery OFM and Ms de Barra of Trócaire have fallen, like so many, into the common pattern of near beatification of a prominent personage at the time of their death and forget to look at reality [*The Irish Catholic* – December 30, 2021]. Yes, Dr Tutu did much to galvanise action against the Afrikan regime but failed miserably to promote the culture of life, with his vocal advocacy for abortion, artificial contraception, redefining marriage, and euthanasia! How can this be inspired by any sort of faith, never mind Christianity?

Yours etc.,
Fr John McCallion
Coalisland, Co. Tyrone



The politically correct virus is everywhere

Dear Editor, Jason Osborne's piece [*The Irish Catholic* – December 9, 2021] on a controversial internal European Commission (EC) document on 'inclusive communications' missed out on a more interesting back-story.

This 'Guide to Inclusive Communications' was issued without peer-review by the EC's Commission for Equality on October 26, 2021. The responsible commissioner was one Helena Dalli, a

Maltese socialist politician elevated to the Brussels post in 2019 and an obvious disciple of 'political correctness'.

The European Commission has a unique ethos. The president presides over 20-odd commissioners and must inevitably rely on the political maturity of individual commissioners to sense what will run and what won't. Ms Dalli obviously failed this “maturity-test” and once appraised of the situation, the President

Ursula von der Leyen moved quietly but firmly to have the document formally withdrawn.

Ms Dalli (the draft guide would have this written Ms Dalli) formally withdrew the document on November 30 admitting that the withdrawn document was immature and not up to the quality standard of the European Commission. Ms Dalli did not fall on her sword over this humiliation but one may

expect some changes in her cabinet.

The *Guardian* newspaper, that bastion of all things politically correct (PC), predictably attributed the withdrawal of the document to right-wing influence.

The PC virus is like Covid. It's everywhere.

Yours etc.,
Michael Gill
Fuengirola, Spain

Distinguishing disciplinary matters from truths of Creed

Dear Editor, Arguing that the synodal process is 'dangerous' Dr John Murray pointed to the Killala listening process of 2018, in which the desire of many for change in disciplinary matters such as ordination was expressed [*The Irish Catholic* – November 25, 2021].

This, Dr Murray tells us, is proof that the Killala process could not lead to 'true unity in faith' or genuine participation in the mission of the Church.

Is he arguing that to be Catholic we must add to belief in the life, death and resurrection of the Lord the belief that, for example, marital status or gender should forever determine who should preside at the Eucharist?

As Dr Murray must know, both

versions of the Creed were completed during centuries when celibacy was not a requirement for priestly ministry, while the celibacy rule was not adopted in the western Church until the 12th Century. Furthermore, the Creeds did not include the belief that ordination be denied to women, even though that was the practice of the Church at the time.

To make no distinction between disciplinary regulations (such as those relating to ordination) and the truths of the Creed is essentially to repeat the mistake of those who, by Jesus' time, had expanded the Ten Commandments into the 613 Levitical laws.

Jesus knew well that by restoring the primacy of the law of love he was unset-

ling those who had come to rely on their observance of the Levitical expansion of it.

With younger generations today having good reason to see the Catholic Church as unloving and unsafe, it surely behoves all of us to restore the primacy of the laws of love, and the principle of the hierarchy of truth, subordinating merely disciplinary arrangements.

To argue that the truth of the Creeds will be endangered by us Catholics 'walking together' to discuss such disciplinary matters is to say that the Holy Spirit is less powerful today than at the Council of Jerusalem.

Yours etc.,
Sean O'Connell
Coleraine, Co. Derry

facebook community

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

Respect 'diverging views' in synod process

Totally agree. We should respect the views of those who have put their hands up to be a part of this process. But, we should also not be afraid to challenge those who would seek to use this as a means to force their agenda on the wider Church community. We cannot allow this important process be abused. – **Thomas O'Mahony**

I missed the part in the Bible where Jesus told us to respect “diverging views”. I respect everyone's right to have a view in the secular public square. But I have no respect for Catholics who oppose established Church teaching trying to push their views. The basis for this synod if it's to take place, should be that it's taking place firmly within the confines of what the Church teaches. It can't just become another forum for dissident theologians to air their views. This comment seems to suggest that it will end up being just that. – **Adam Conroy**

Overturning the ignorant caricature of the Middle Ages

Absolutely true. Medieval scholars and churchmen also laid the basis of modern science. – **Charles Glenn**

There is a huge difference between a welfare state and the acts of charity practiced by individual, non-governmental, local groups. – **Jim Barclay**

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

The trouble with the word 'holiday'

Dear Editor, I read with interest the article regretting an EU proposal to redesignate the period of the nativity. The trouble with the idea is that the English word 'holiday' is of course a variant of 'holy day' while I understand that the German for 'holiday' is connected with the latin word *feria*, which is nothing more than the Catholic liturgy definition of week-days or days other than the sabbath.

What other words might be used in the EU languages to define 'holy days'?

The word that most delights me is 'clown' which might be reserved for EU people. Even if they have heard of Cromwell, would they understand what he had in mind?

Yours etc.,
Gerald Murphy
Rathfarnham, Dublin 16

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Around the world



▲ **USA:** Vehicles near Fredericksburg are seen on an icy stretch of Interstate 95, January 3. Photos: CNS.

◀ **VATICAN:** Pope Francis baptises a baby during Mass marking the feast of the Baptism of the Lord in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican, January 9. The Pope baptised 16 infants.



AFGHANISTAN: People are seen in Kabul, Afghanistan, January 3.



THAILAND: Myanmar refugees, who have fled a flare-up in fighting between the Myanmar army and insurgent groups and settled temporarily along the Moei River, receive aid from Thailand on the Thai-Myanmar border, in Mae Sot, Thailand, January 4.

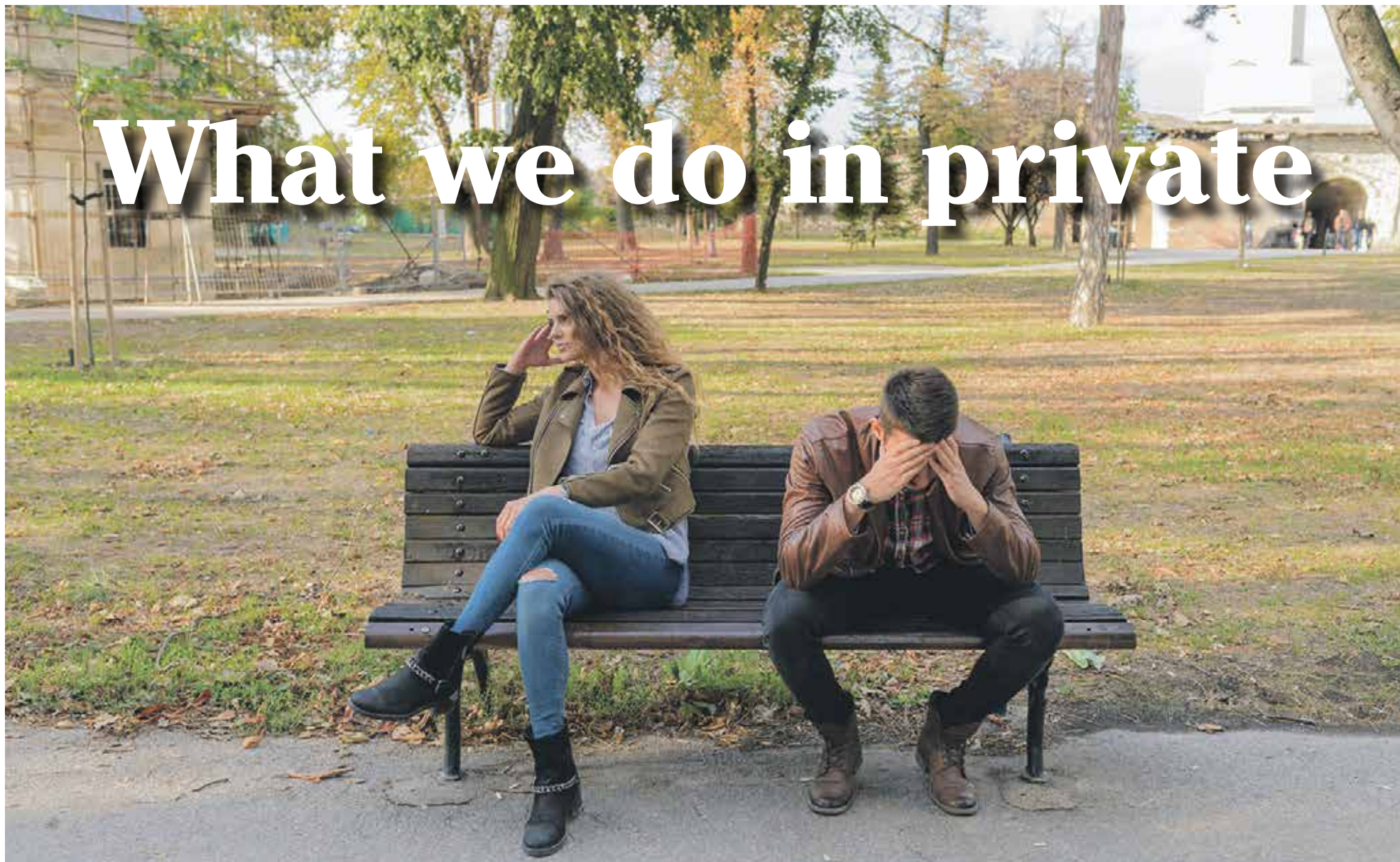


FRANCE: French President Emmanuel Macron walks with Nice Mayor, Christian Estrosi, as they arrive at St Roch Hospital in Nice, January 10. Macron toured the hospital during a visit to the Mediterranean coast to talk about internal security.



VATICAN: Pope Francis listens as George Poulides, the ambassador of Cyprus to the Holy See and dean of the Vatican diplomatic corps, speaks during an annual meeting with diplomats accredited to the Holy See, at the Vatican, January 10.

What we do in private



No one is an island; indeed, no one is ever really alone. If you are a person of faith or even just someone with a highly attuned intuitive sense, you will know that there is no such thing as a truly private act, for good or bad. Everything we do, no matter how private, affects others. We aren't isolated monads whose private thoughts and acts have no effect on anyone else. We know this, and not just from our faith. We know it intuitively by what we sense in our lives.

“This belief is shared by basically all the great world religions – Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, and American and African Native religions”

How do we sense what lies hidden in the privacy of other people's lives? Conversely, how does what happens in the privacy of our own lives affect others?

We don't have a metaphysics, a phenomenology, or a science through which we can tease this out explicitly. We just know it is true. What we do in the private recesses of our hearts and minds is in some ways sensed by others. Every religion worthy of the name teaches this, namely that we are all in some real, mystical, symbiotic



Fr Rolheiser

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communion with each other where ultimately nothing is truly private. This belief is shared by basically all the great world religions – Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, and American and African Native religions. No religion allows for a private sin that does not affect the whole community.

Thoughts

This explains some of Jesus' teachings. Jesus teaches that it's not only our outward actions that help or hurt others; it's also our innermost thoughts. For him, not only may we not do harm to someone we hate, we may not even think hateful thoughts about him in our private thoughts. Likewise it is not enough to discipline ourselves sexually so as to not commit adultery, we have to even discipline the erotic thoughts we have about others.

Why? What's the harm in private thoughts? It is more than

the danger that if we think certain bad thoughts about others we will eventually act them out (true though this may be). What is at issue is something deeper, something contained explicitly in the Christian notion of the Body of Christ.

“Both healthy enzymes and harmful cancer cells work in secret, below the surface”

As Christians, we believe that we are all members of one living organism, the Body of Christ, and that our union with each other is more than metaphorical. It is real, as real as the physicality of a living body. We are not a corporation, but a living body, a living organism, where all parts affect all other

parts. Hence, just as in a live body, healthy enzymes help bring health to the whole body, and infected and cancerous cells threaten the health of the whole body, so too inside the Body of Christ. What we do in private is still inside the body. Consequently, when we do virtuous things, even in private, like a healthy enzyme, we help strengthen the immune system within the whole body. Conversely, when we are unfaithful, when we are selfish, when we sin, no matter that this is only done in private, like an infected or cancerous cell, we are helping break down the immune system in the body. Both healthy enzymes and harmful cancer cells work in secret, below the surface.

Implications

This has important implications for our private lives. Simply put, nothing we think or do in private does not have an effect on others. Our private thoughts and actions, like healthy enzymes or infected cells, affect the health of the body, either strengthening or weakening its immune system. When we are faithful, we help bring health to the body; when we are unfaithful, we are an infected cell challenging the immune system within the body.

Whether we are faithful or unfaithful in private affects others, and this is not something that is abstract or mystical. For example, a spouse knows when his or her partner is unfaithful, irrespective of whether or not the affair is exposed. Moreover, the spouse knows this not just because there

may be subtle betrayals of the infidelity in the other's body language and behavior. No, she knows this at a gut level, inchoately, mystically, because in some dark inexplicable way she senses the betrayal as a strain on the health and integrity of their marriage. This may sound more metaphorical than real, but I invite you to check it out in life. We feel infidelity.

“Our private acts, like our public ones, are either bringing health or disease to the community”

We know some things consciously and others unconsciously. We know certain things through observation and others intuitively. We know through our heads, our hearts, and our guts, and through all three of these faculties, sometimes (because inside of a body all parts affect each other) we know something because we sense it as either a tension or a comfort inside our soul. There are no private acts. Our private acts, like our public ones, are either bringing health or disease to the community.

I leave the last words to the poets: “If you are here faithfully, you bring great blessing.” (Parker Palmer)

“If you are here unfaithfully, you bring great harm.” (Rumi)

“As Christians, we believe that we are all members of one living organism, the Body of Christ, and that our union with each other is more than metaphorical”

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, January 13, 2022

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Dealing with loneliness

Loneliness has been a problem since people began walking the earth – God creating Eve after noting that it wasn't good for man to be alone. Unfortunately, despite the heart's deep desire for communion, with God and others, many people today continue to experience crippling and acute loneliness and isolation.

Dealing with the onset of Covid-19 at the beginning of 2020 had many opportunity costs, and one of the first things to go was the freedom to socialise as we'd had the privilege to up until then. Nearly two years on and with a drastically changed landscape, the intensified isolation that set in around that time continues to linger over the lives of many. Speaking to some friends recently, some complained that the "golden age"



The early days of the pandemic long behind us, loneliness continues to plague many with force, writes Jason Osborne

of socialising and community we'd enjoyed in 2019 and before was long gone, and that nothing of the sort had established itself since, whether in person or over Zoom.

While it was good and right to be cautious and careful in order to protect people from a then-unknown disease, we must not now lose sight of the fact that other problems have reared their heads which must be attended to – loneliness and isolation being at the forefront of them, affecting young and old alike.

While we're unlikely to be able to drop back into the casual community we had pre-pandemic any time soon, that's no reason to throw in the towel against loneliness.

Identify it

Before saying anything else, there are many sources of feelings of loneliness and isolation. Moving to a new area or a new country, or changing your setting in some other natural way often results in these feelings,

but they're entirely normal. In fact, it would be strange if they weren't experienced!

More common at the moment, I think, is the sense that a greater distance has developed between families and friends, and that opportunities to overcome this distance are limited by the ongoing 'state of emergency' the world finds itself in.

Once the source of the feelings is identified, it's easier to take steps to set things to rights, or at least, to create a healthier social environment for ourselves.

Appreciate the people you do have

An oft-overlooked step for dealing with painful loneliness is slowing down and taking stock of the family and friends you're

hopefully already blessed with. Very few unfortunate people have absolutely no one they can turn to, with most of us having at the very least a dependable spouse, parent or parents, siblings or a friend or two.

Compared with the socialites of his day, Jesus had a mere handful of people he could truly turn to throughout his public ministry – his mother, his wider family, the apostles and others perhaps that have gone unrecorded. In the grand scheme of things, it wasn't that many, and yet, fully man as well as fully God, you'd be hard-pressed to find someone who drew as much sustenance from those the Father had placed him with.

This is all just to say that we

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Family News



AND EVENTS

NEW RESOURCE HELPS CARE HOME RESIDENTS AND FAMILIES DURING PANDEMIC

Care home residents and their families have been particularly affected during the pandemic. In response to this, a new online resource led by Queen's University Belfast has been developed to bridge the gaps of information to enable carers and their families to make informed decisions around end of life care.

Advance care planning (ACP) is a process that supports adults at any age or stage of health in understanding and sharing their personal values and preferences regarding future care and realistic treatment choices.

The Covid-19 pandemic has raised particular challenges for care home residents, their families and the staff that look after them, a press release from Queen's University Belfast said.

Lead researcher Professor Kevin Brazil explained: "Many families of care home residents have felt like they've been left in the dark during the pandemic, anxious that the needs of their loved ones weren't being heard."

"Bringing together experts in ACP, this resource offers information for both families and care home staff to better understand how they can ensure the best standard of ACP is in place, helping to overcome obstacles that Covid-19 has presented."

CALIFORNIA TWINS BORN IN DIFFERENT YEARS

A set of twins born 15 minutes apart in California have very different birthdays – one in 2021 and the other in 2022.

Alfredo Antonio Trujillo came into the world at 11.45pm on New Year's Eve in the city of Salinas.

A quarter of an hour later, on New Year's Day, his sister Aylin Yolanda Trujillo was born.

The Natividad Medical Center, where the babies were delivered, said some estimates suggest there is a one-in-two-million chance of twins being born in different years.

"It's crazy to me that they are twins and have different birthdays," the babies' mother, Fatima Madrigal, was quoted as saying in the statement.

Dr Ana Abril Arias described the births as "one of the most memorable deliveries of my career".

"It was an absolute pleasure to help these little ones arrive here safely in 2021 and 2022."

APPLE BECOMES FIRST FIRM TO HIT \$3TN MARKET VALUE

US technology giant Apple has become the first company to hit a stock market valuation of \$3tn.

The firm's share price has risen by around 5,800% since co-founder and former chief executive Steve Jobs unveiled the first iPhone in 2007.

Apple has been one of the big winners of the pandemic, as coronavirus lockdowns saw spending on gadgets jump.

"Hitting \$3 trillion is another historical moment for Apple as the company continues to prove the doubters wrong," Dan Ives, an analyst from Wedbush said.

It took just over 16 months for Apple's stock market valuation to rise from \$2tn to \$3tn, as the world's biggest technology companies saw demand soar as people became more reliant on smartphones, tablets and laptops during lockdowns.

Renewing family hope for 2022



The words "New year, new me" can ring a bit hollow for us and for our families if we know that so many resolutions and plans that we made in other years were quickly forgotten or abandoned. Left to ourselves, we human beings can often find life a struggle or, even if we appear to be flourishing, our lives can feel like they're lacking that essential flavour, that something that gives life true meaning and direction.

We all laugh at the jokes about Irish people giving directions and at the famous, "Well, I wouldn't start from here." If we're already headed off in the wrong direction, all the great ideas and suggestions about how to be better people and better Christians may be falling on deaf ears. The approaches of other Catholic parents and families may not suit every family especially if they have children who are resistant or who have even fallen away from the practice of the faith. These families are often left floundering and wondering where they fit into their local Catholic communities. I grew up with parents who met through the Legion of Mary and who were very engaged in their faith but it didn't stop me, as a child, from rolling my eyes sometimes at the suggestion of the Rosary or not being too impressed at having to get up for early Mass, something my family often did during Lent. For other families, it's a lot more than the eye roll and they've found that children who once loved going to Mass and saying their prayers have turned their back on their childhood faith.

A new year is a good time to look at how we're doing as a family and to renew our hope and trust in God that we will have the strength to move



A parent's perspective Maria Byrne

forward no matter what family difficulties we're facing. When we are feeling a bit low, the words of St John of the Cross are encouraging: "The soul of the one who serves God always swims in joy, always keeps holiday, and is always in the mood for singing." When I was a child, I hated going back to school after the Christmas holidays. Looking back, I never remember my late father complaining about returning to his work as the principal of a country primary school. He had that inner joy and happiness that came from his close relationship with God.

“Even if we come up against raised eyebrows or bored expressions, we have to just press on”

With 2022 lying ahead like an unopened book, maybe a better approach to renewing our lives and helping our children would be to set aside the overly ambitious lists. A few things done well is better than setting goals that we have no hope of achieving. One very manageable goal is to include some daily prayer in our busy schedules. Prayer is absolutely necessary for our spiritual growth and to strengthen our relationship with God. Even the reluctant teenager or young adult will probably join in a period of

family prayer if it's not too long and becomes part of the normal family routine. Even if we come up against raised eyebrows or bored expressions, we have to just press on. Start every day with a morning offering, say the Angelus at midday and 6pm and have a period of night prayer. It's also good to say small



prayers throughout the day even if it's just a "Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in thee" or a Grace before meals. A bit of creativity goes a long way and letting children have a role in the planning and execution makes all the difference.

Parishes and schools have a role here too in developing prayer initiatives that include the input and cooperation of the parents. I saw a very interesting event being promoted recently by the parish of Sallins near Naas, Co. Kildare. It was a children's Rosary prayer meeting which included children learning and practising the Rosary, with families invited to join in the benefits of praying as a group. One of

the really great benefits of this sort of event is that as well as educating children, it brings together parents who can chat, exchange ideas and form friendships. For many parents, trying to bring children up in the Catholic faith has become a lonely path. We all need the support of other parents and families and our parish and faith communities. This can be even more challenging if we're parenting alone or if one parent isn't Catholic or has no interest in faith and religion at all. If one or more of our children has stopped practising, we can feel that all our efforts were in vain. We can't underestimate the power of sowing little seeds.

“And remember that it's God, not us, who's in the driving seat”

Keep inviting children to Mass and the Sacraments, say the Rosary during a car journey, seek out youth talks and retreats online and engage with the great organisations like the Legion of Mary, Opus Dei and Youth 2000. If you have children in college, look for Catholic college groups or Catholic affiliated groups that are involved in works of charity. It's often the example of others that changes hearts and minds. And remember that it's God, not us, who's in the driving seat.

Finally, we must have hope. Pope Benedict talked of the star of hope having risen and how suffering, despite everything, becomes a hymn of praise. Not a bad message to embrace as we face into the joys, sorrows and unique challenges of a new year.

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don't need legions of friends as perhaps social media has made us think. Rather, we need to appreciate those we already have beside us, and make greater efforts to connect with them. There's a real sense in which the world would immediately find itself on a better path if we each turned to our neighbour and formed a better, more solid relationship with them, whether they be a spouse, parent or anyone else.

Pick up the phone

I used to be a bit of a luddite, and when the pandemic forced me into greater use of all things electronic, I resisted. While these things cannot replace that face-to-face connection, I was wrong to write them off altogether, having come to rely on both my phone and social media to keep in contact with friends and family over the past two years.

“Human contact is good for us, even if it's not a big meet-up of the old gang, or an in-depth phone call with an old friend”

The best basis for a good relationship is good, old-fashioned effort and self-sacrifice. We all tend towards laziness, and this is as true in our relationships as anywhere else. Picking up the phone to call someone we haven't spoken to in a while can be a daunting prospect, but chances are you'll be so happy you did.

Before the pandemic (and before my reluctant acceptance of this

increasingly technological way of life), I hadn't experienced many edifying phone calls, using them just for organisational purposes or for the briefest of calls. However, over the past two years, they've changed for me, manifesting themselves as concrete ways to reach out to others in the only way I can.

I've come away from many a call over the past two years feeling warmed and reassured that a friendship or relationship is in a good place, and will continue to be so long as we both keep making the effort to reach out to one another.

Get outside

God created the entire world to draw us into communion with himself and others. While we can find it in our bedroom on the phone to a friend, more often than not, getting outside offers a better environment for weathering pangs of loneliness.

Crowds have been a depressingly scarce sight over the past two years,



but thankfully, they're returning, slowly but surely. Human contact is good for us, even if it's not a big meet-up of the old gang, or an in-depth phone call with an old friend.

Going for walks and exchanging greetings with people is a quick and simple way to put a little human contact back into your life, and is a good idea whether we're feeling lonely and isolated or not. Cities often have an 'anonymising' effect, and taking time to view and treat the people around you as people is likely to have a healthy effect on both you and your community.

“The key is to appreciate those you already have, and keep an eye on the horizon and an open heart for those God sends your way who share your values and interests”

It's standard practice in villages and towns, but for the modern, urbanised city-dweller, little touches like this are necessary for a healthier human experience.

These are but a few suggestions for handling the current season of isolation many are going through. The key is to appreciate those you already have, and keep an eye on the horizon and an open heart for those God sends your way who share your values and interests. They'll surely come if you look hard enough.

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



A new year is upon us. It should be a time of hope, yet it increasingly seems that each passing year brings some new and darker strangeness into the world. Each year, the country of my youth seems like a more distant land.

I recently happened upon the striking words St John Paul II spoke in Limerick in 1979. I was just three years old then, the age my youngest is now. He spoke prophetically, saying, “Ireland is at a point of decision in her history. The Irish people have to choose today their way forward. Will it be the transformation of all strata of humanity into a new creation, or the way that many nations have gone, giving excessive importance to economic growth and material possessions while neglecting the things of the spirit? The way of substituting a new ethic of temporal enjoyment for the law of God? The way of false freedom which is only slavery to decadence? Will it be the way of subjugating the dignity of the human person to the totalitarian domination of the State?”

Nobody alive today can doubt the choice which Ireland has made. Ireland has been transformed from being a flawed but profoundly Christian nation, into one where Christians often fear for the future, and are made to feel increasingly unwelcome.

In 1979, St John Paul spoke of the profound nature of this fateful choice, in terms we rarely hear from Irish Church leaders today. He said: “your country seems in a sense to be living again the temptations of Christ: Ireland is being asked to prefer the ‘kingdoms of the world and their splendour’ to the Kingdom of God (cf. Mt 4 :8). Satan, the tempter, the Adversary of Christ, will use all his might and all his deceptions to win Ireland for the way of the world. What a victory he would gain, what a blow he would inflict on the Body of Christ in the world, if he could seduce Irish men and women away from Christ. Now is the time of testing for Ireland.”

If Ireland has made a deal with the devil, then it has surely received its pieces of silver, since Ireland has become

one of the wealthiest nations on earth. It is also the main European hub for the immensely culturally powerful new technological behemoths which bestride the world, shaping men's minds, and their very souls. Few lament the days when Ireland was poorer. Yet De Valera, for one,

wanted Ireland to be only moderately prosperous, at most. Nowadays, the very notion of a leader seeking to limit his nation's wealth seems absurd, but perhaps he saw further than others.

In his often-mocked 1943 speech, De Valera said that, “The ideal Ireland that we would have, the Ireland that we dreamed of, would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as a basis for right living, of a people who, satisfied with frugal comfort, devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit – a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contest of athletic youths and the laughter of happy maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age.”

The entire rationale for this often derided vision of Ireland came in the very next line. This Ireland would be, “The home, in short, of a people living the life that God desires that men should live.”

De Valera's successor as taoiseach voted for abortion and thinks children can change their gender. He believes, in other words, that romping, sturdy Irish lads can become happy maidens. Those who would dare to question such innovations are – perhaps ironically – routinely demonised nowadays.

Ireland in 2022 is a truly strange land. Contrary to rumour, traditional Ireland still lives and breathes, especially in rural places. Meanwhile, a glittering new Ireland bestrides politics and the media, contemptuous of the traditional culture it has so swiftly colonised in recent decades. Those of us raising children in this culturally and spiritually divided land can only wonder what the future holds. We hardly dare to think of the deep divisions growing beneath us, like silently moving tectonic plates, as we send our children out into a world where what they love most deeply, is increasingly hated.



Teaching the endless interest of the Bible

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

Fr Kieran O'Mahony OSA is one of Tarsus Scripture School's founders and key lecturers. The expert in Biblical Scholarship has dedicated his life to conveying his great love of Scripture to interested laity and religious, in the hopes that they too might see that the Scriptures are "endlessly interesting".

The Dublin-based priest was born in Youghal, Co. Cork and tells me that from an early age, he knew he had a vocation to the priesthood.

“Fr O'Mahony's love of Scripture became a passion within his overall vocation, developing over time, but with a concrete beginning”

"I was asked this [what brought you to the priesthood] one time by a Dutch minister of religion," Fr O'Mahony explains. "He was the father-in-law of a friend of mine. He said, 'when did you first feel your vocation?' I said when I was about six, and he said 'so did I'.

"That's not atypical, I think. Then I went on to study, which I enjoyed. It's been an extraordinarily happy and fulfilled life. I suppose you shouldn't say that, it makes you sound detached from reality! But it has."



What drew him to the Augustinians was a combination of circumstance – he studied in one of the order's schools – and of the order's communal nature.

"I went to school with them and I thought the mixture of community prayer and community work was a marvellous mixture and a model. There's great emphasis on community, on community prayer and community work together – I thought it was like the Acts of the Apostles, even when I was a teenager I saw that."

Fr O'Mahony's love of Scripture became a passion within his overall vocation, developing over time, but with a concrete beginning.

"It happened very recognisably," he explains. "When I was Rome, I had been very into the systematic

theology. I did a post-graduate systematic on the meaning of the death of Jesus in a writer called Hans Urs von Balthasar. I did a thesis on that.

"Then I realised at the end of that that I just didn't know enough Scripture to see where von Balthasar was wrong. I knew he was wrong. That was an important block. I knew straight away that you couldn't keep doing this if you didn't go back into Scripture."

Teaching

After studying, the Augustinians asked Fr O'Mahony to go back to teaching in a secondary school, which he says he enjoyed very much.

"At the time there I began giving retreats. To make sure that people would have a lasting benefit, I based the retreats on Scripture from the

start. Because, I thought, next year they won't remember what you said or even who you are. They won't.

"But if you do Scripture, it'll keep coming back in the Liturgy and it will be of lasting value I thought. I did that for a couple of years. Then I realised I didn't know enough to do it right. You were dependent on the last commentary you read, so it wasn't great."

After this realisation, the next key moment for Fr O'Mahony was a trip to the Holy Land in 1983.

“First there was the Orlagh Bible week every summer for 17 years, held in an Augustinian retreat centre”

"It was a peculiar one," he begins. "It was a pilgrimage organised by the Israeli government for people who might take people on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It was kind of a freebie. While I was there, the penny dropped. It just made sense of everything really. We began reading from the book of Deuteronomy, all the places I was in were coming up in it. It had a big effect on me.

"So I bought a Bible in Hebrew, not knowing the language. I said to myself, I'm going to learn this language and get to know this stuff. I asked my order and they said yes – they were very good. I had a marvellous time, they are some of my happiest memories."

In the course of his studies, Fr O'Mahony became quite a polyglot. Already knowing French and English, he learned German, Spanish and of course Hebrew. He returned to Ireland and began to put his new learning into practice, in a number of Augustinian run Biblical courses.

First there was the Orlagh Bible week every summer for 17 years, held in an Augustinian retreat centre. After that came the Scripture

Summer School, which lasted for five years, attracting more than 70 students. Over the course of Covid, as everything moved online, the summer school went digital and became Tarsus Scripture School and attendance rocketed up to 400 plus.

"There was no going back, no going back whatsoever to meeting physically. It was too physical. We devised a system where we each do five or six presentations on the summer school end of it. We do question and answer sessions and meditations and other things.

"There's over 20 years' experience behind this relatively new adventure, the Tarsus Scripture School. We've changed personnel over the years. There are three of us involved now, Sean Goan, Jessie Rogers and myself... The three of us work very well together. We're on the same page as regards how to approach Scripture."

Scripture

There is a great hunger for learning about Scripture generally, Fr O'Mahony says, adding that "once it's explained in the context of faith, it's a great help to people". He himself has found studying the Bible to be "endlessly interesting".

"There's no end to it. You go down a new pocket and you find something new. When James Joyce finished *Ulysses*, he supposedly said 'That will keep the academics occupied for a good bit of time'. Which of course it has done, because it's all full of references to Greek mythology. And the Bible texts are very like that. The amount of back references, they're completely intertextual.

"For instance, I've said it in the church here a few times, why do we read the Old Testament? One reason is because we can't read the New if we don't read the Old. We just won't get it, we won't understand. They're all tied up."

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



Children's Corner

Chai Brady

How to create some homemade bath salts

Over the Christmas many people may have given or received bath salts as a gift. The popular substance is dissolved in bathwater to enhance the experience and is said to have medicinal qualities.

The use of salts for healing purposes has been happening for thousands of years and can be tracked back to ancient China and Greece.

Whether you're making a special present for someone else, experimenting at home or just want to relax in a hot bath, give this experiment a go. Create your own bath salts with a variety of refreshing fragrances, experiment with different essential oils to see which you like best.

As the pandemic continues, a relaxing bath every now and again could be just what is needed at this chaotic time!

Apparatus:

- 1 cup of washing soda (sodium carbonate)
- A plastic bag
- A rolling pin (or something similar that can crush lumps)
- A bowl
- A spoon for stirring
- Essential oil
- Food colouring

Method:

Take the cup of washing soda and put it into a plastic bag. Crush the lumps with a rolling pin or similar object. Empty the bag into a bowl and stir in five or six drops of your favourite essential oil such as rosemary, lavender or mint. Stir in a few drops of food colouring until the mixture is evenly coloured. Put the mixture into clean dry containers and enjoy as you please.



What's happening?

Bath Salts are typically made from Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate), table salt (sodium chloride) or washing soda. The chemical make-up of the mixture makes it easy to form a lather. Bath salts are said to improve cleaning and deliver an appealing fragrance when bathing.

Aside from the bath salts, having a bath in general is known to have a variety of health benefits. These include improving heart health, your lung capacity and oxygen intake, it can reduce pain and inflammation as well as decreasing stress and anxiety levels.

In addition, baths also clean and moisturise your body, eyes and hair. So perhaps the addition of homemade bath salts could be an added incentive to have a relaxing bath?



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



The Pope can certainly provoke a debate

One of the welcome things about the extended holiday period is that we get a greater variety of presenters, on the radio shows in particular.

And so it was that Katie Hannon stood in for Joe Duffy on *Liveline* (RTÉ Radio One) last week. Thursday's show was dominated by a discussion of Pope Francis' words on children and pets, especially the suggestion of selfishness in married couples having pets instead of children. Most of the contributions were nuanced and thought-provoking. One caller suggested the Pope's words were a catalyst for debate, and if so it certainly worked. Another caller said she preferred dogs to humans. She thought the Church needed people to go back to Mass and this wasn't going to help. Katie Hannon suggested there was "a real issue at the heart of what the Pope is saying".

Angry

One caller was particularly angry, but I think he missed the point – Pope Francis was decidedly not getting at couples who couldn't have children, or that had pets and children. This caller didn't help his case by going over the top – at one stage he said a dog of his had been stolen and suggested the culprit was probably "one



The Pope's remarks about pets at his weekly general audience provoked controversy. Photo: CNS

of the Pope's gentlemen"! Towards the end of the show a woman called for courage and trust for the future, for couples to be generous in their attitude to having children.

The issue was raised again on *Drivetime* (RTÉ Radio One, Thursday) when Sarah McInerney spoke to papal biographer Fr Michael Collins. It was a cheerful discussion, as he usefully pointed out that the context

was a papal address with a sensible message about St Joseph and caring for children through adoption, but that he had "kind of spoiled the message" by going off the cuff, with his trademark unpredictability. This approach made him different to other Popes (for sure!). He also said it was good idea to write down and rehearse what you were going to say if speaking in public, otherwise you could put your foot

in it. He did agree with the pontiff's related warnings about a demographic winter.

But the media wasn't done with the story yet. Matt Cooper revisited the topic on *The Last Word* (Today FM, Friday) with journalists Mark Paul (*The Irish Times*) and Martha Brennan (*The Echo*) reviewing the stories of the week. Mr Paul pointed out, usefully, that the Pope's words were in the context of low birth rates, but I thought he was somewhat dismissive when he said that he wasn't sure people take much notice of what priests say about parenthood – obviously some do, and let's not forget priests are also part of families. Ms Brennan said she wasn't offended by the remarks, but remarked tongue-in-cheek (at least I think I detected whimsy!) that it was all over Twitter, warning against the perils of messing with what she called 'pet parents'.

Exercising

The subject was still exercising the media at the weekend. On *Sunday* (BBC Radio 4) stand-in presenter Emily Buchanan spoke to two Catholic writers. Caroline Farrow thought the Pope was maybe "a little tone deaf" but wasn't going to "blast" him for restating Catholic teaching on being open to life and children. It wasn't a binary choice between chil-

PICK OF THE WEEK

THE SIDEWALK CHRONICLES

EWTN Sunday January 16, 9pm

Documentary about women in crisis pregnancies, and the pro-life movement heroes who reach out to them with love and support.

FATHER BROWN

BBC One Monday January 17, 2.15pm (and daily, weekdays)

A mysterious saboteur tries to stop Kembleford winning the three counties choir competition.

MARCH FOR LIFE

EWTN Friday January 21, 2.30pm

Complete coverage of the pro-life event, live from Washington, D.C.

dren and pets. Tina Beattie accepted that the Pope had ethical concerns and referenced him previously commenting on people spending more on pets than on hungry children. But in this case she was irritated and felt his comments were unhelpful.

On a more positive note, last Sunday was the feast day of the Baptism of Jesus, and *Songs of Praise* (BBC One, Sunday) had a special on Baptism for the occasion. Sean Fletcher reported from Liverpool cathedral where the main baptismal font was quite impressive. It was near the entrance to the cathedral and featured several tableaux in stone as well as a symbolic water feature on the surrounding floor area. There was also a colourful icon of Jesus' Baptism, among the several

artistic depictions of the event. It was great to see young couples enthusiastic about having their babies baptised, with young Godparents conscious of their responsibilities.

We saw several total immersion baptisms, from a Pentecostal Church and an Orthodox Ethiopian community whose celebrations were dramatic and colourful. Most of the songs were from packed congregations pre-coronavirus, though my favourite was a recent outdoor performance by vocal group Stellina, who sang, appropriately, *Wade in the Water*.

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Pat O'Kelly



Music

A great passes...and hopes for 'Music for Galway'

As I rarely 'read the deaths' in the daily newspapers, notable departures sometimes escape me. This happened recently with the death on November 9 of the doyen of our composers, John Kinsella.

We first met in the 1970s serving on the organising committee of Dublin's '20th Century Music Festival'. At the time John was RTÉ's assistant head of music and a distinguished composer, although most of his major works would be written following his retirement from RTÉ in 1988. I was a member of the Music Association of Ireland's council, the festival's over-riding authority. Besides his agreeable company, I found John to be a man of wisdom and integrity and never



Riona Ó Duinnín who is set to feature in 'Music for Galway'.

had reason to change my mind.

Dublin-born (1932), John's parents encouraged his love of music. Studying at the munici-

pal school, his favoured instrument was the viola, which, with a group of close friends, he played regularly when they met in each other's houses for chamber music sessions. John's knowledge of the repertoire was extraordinary.

11 symphonies

That being said, the bulk of John Kinsella's compositions lie in his cycle of 11 symphonies, written between 1984 and 2019 with his final work in the form paying homage to one of his idols – Finnish composer Jean Sibelius.

In his programme note for the symphony's premiere, John told us he had examined sketches of material Sibelius had left, at his death, for the

possible inclusion in an unrealised eighth symphony. But, as John Kinsella pointed out, "While no real claim can be made to the relevance of the material to an eighth symphony, its mere existence was a stimulus for my new work".

Looking back over my own scribbled notes on the 11th symphony's first performance on November 29, 2019 I found its three movements had Sibelius connections that were "strong and muscular, hauntingly evocative, volatile and invigorating".

Writing about John Kinsella, Séamus Crimmins, former head of RTÉ Lyric FM, reminded us of him being "gentle and reserved by nature with his compositions characterised by

rigorous self-examination, passion, single-mindedness and originality".

A founding member in 1981 of Aosdána, Ireland's Academy for Creative Arts, John Kinsella received the NCH's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2019.

Following the death of his first wife Bridget O'Neill, he was married to violinist Thérèse Timoney for the past 43 years. May his soul rest in peace.

Festival

Covid-19 permitting, 'Music for Galway' brings its winter festival to the city's Town Hall Theatre and St Nicholas' Collegiate Church between January 21 and 23. It celebrates Dublin-born composer Charles Villiers

Stanford (1852-1924), professor of music at Cambridge and London's Royal College of Music.

As well as Stanford, there will be works by his pupils Frank Bridge (1879-1941), Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979), Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912) and William Hurlstone whom Stanford considered to be the most talented of his many disciples but who died aged 30 in 1906.

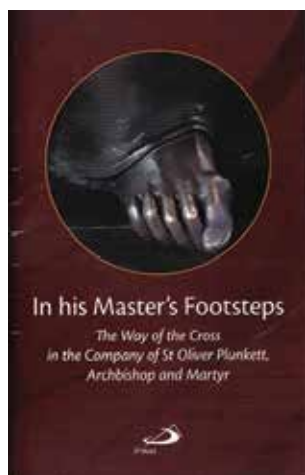
Festival artists include Sharon Carty, mezzo; Riona Ó Duinnín, flute; Finghin Collins, piano, and among others, the ConTempo String Quartet with 'Stanford and his pupils' the theme of two lectures by visiting musicologist Jeremy Dibble.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



A martyr in the context of Christ's passion



In his Master's Footsteps: The Way of the Cross in the Company of St Oliver Plunkett, Archbishop and Martyr
(St Paul's Publishing, €5.50 / £4.60)

Peter Costello

This aid to making the Stations of the Cross has been written by Canon Benedict Fee, the parish priest of Clonoe, in Co. Tyrone. It is built around the example of St Oliver Plunkett. The martyred Archbishop of Armagh was the victim of the sort of "hate speech" which has become too much an element in recent decades on the internet.

Admirable

If Oliver Plunkett is an admirable and inspiring figure, Titus Oates whose lies and intrigues brought about Plunkett's death, is one of those vicious creatures that always emerge in times of stress and conflict – large numbers of them are now at large in parts of Western culture.

Reflecting on the Resurrection Canon Fee remarks near the end of his text that St Oliver being in these islands "the last person to die publicly for the faith",

“The martyred Archbishop of Armagh was the victim of the sort of ‘hate speech’ which has become too much an element in recent decades on the internet”

in the aftermath of which "it was then time for a new understanding, and a new way of respect, tolerance and peace". This is sentiment very much for our times.

Cannot forget

Yet we cannot forget too as the Pope said on his visit to the Cathedral of Our Lady of Salvation in Bagdad last year where 50 worshippers had been killed the previous year in a terrorist attack: "Christians are called upon to bear witness to the love of Christ in every time and place."

“Reflecting on the Resurrection Canon Fee remarks near the end of his text that St Oliver being in these islands ‘the last person to die publicly for the faith’”

An interesting feature is the inclusion of a brief account of three Armagh people in missionary service who gave their lives for their faith. We seem to hear little of these modern martyrs, more recent followers of the Way of the Cross that Canon Fee illuminates in this little booklet.

Benedict Fee is also the compiler and editor of *Not Force nor Might: The Gift of the Martyrs* (also from St Paul's), a collection of prayers and reflections issued to mark the 350th anniversary of Oliver Plunkett's death. His shrine in St Peter's Church in Drogheda is one of the most popular places of devotion in the country.

In the end for Cardinal Pell 'the gates flew open' and 'the chains came loose'

Prison Journal: vol. 2 The State Court Rejects the Appeal
by George Pell
(Ignatius Press, £14.50 / \$19.95)

J. Anthony Gaughan

The context in which this journal (one of three) was written is a sobering morality tale.

Cardinal George Pell was born in Ballarat, Victoria, Australia, on June 8, 1941. He was educated at the Loreto convent school and St Patrick's College. After attending Corpus Christi Seminary, he was ordained on December 16, 1966. Following his ordination he spent study periods in the Pontifical Urban University in Rome and in Oxford University in the UK. He was first a curate and subsequently parish priest in Ballarat from 1971 to 1984, as well as director of the education programmes in the diocese of Ballarat.

“Pell preached the Christian message and championed Christian values in season and out of season”

Pell was appointed as an auxiliary bishop in the archdiocese of Melbourne in 1987. Then he was given responsibility for the two most important episcopal appointments in Australia; he was archbishop of Melbourne from 1991 to 2001, and archbishop of Sydney from 2001 to 2020. He received the Red Hat from Pope John Paul II in 2003 and was appointed in 2014 the first prefect of the newly created Secretariat of the Economy, where he was responsible for the annual budget of the Holy See and the Vatican. A committed evangelist, Pell preached the Christian message and championed Christian values in season and out of season. Moreover, he never

flinched from robustly responding to what he considered to be unfair attacks on the Catholic Church and its teachings. For this he incurred the hostility of elements of the Australian media, some of whom set out to demonise him.

Denial

His outspoken denial of climate change was a view driven more by his social views than any understanding of the sciences involved. It left him exposed to antagonistic criticism in a matter of a distinguished churchman stepping out of his area of special authority to take part in a controversy that was beyond his role. It earned him little credit in Australia or around the world, and affected attitudes to him when he came to his legal trials.

The Australian police charged Pell with historical sexual assault charges in 2017. He denied the charges. In the shadow of a campaign of vilification directed at him, he was arraigned before two courts in 2018. The first trial ended in a hung jury. At the retrial he was found guilty and sentenced to six years in prison.

Pell appealed to the Supreme Court of the province of Victoria. The appeal was rejected on a vote of 2 to 1. In the glare of publicity Pell was led handcuffed from the court to begin his sentence in prison. Finally, to spare the blushes of the Australian legal system at the egregious miscarriage of justice, the Australian Supreme Court voted 7 to 0 to quash the original convictions. In the meantime, however, Pell had to spend more than a year in prison, most of it in solitary confinement.

“His outspoken denial of climate change was a view driven more by his social views than any understanding of the sciences involved”



Red Hat

When the Pope confers the Red Hat there is the implicit assumption that the recipient is expected to defend the Catholic Faith even to the extent of becoming a martyr to that end, hence the colour of the hat! It was presumably in that spirit that Pell accepted his public humiliation, the contumely heaped on him by the media and the rank injustice of the various legal proceedings. Bearing no ill will towards his accusers, judges, prison guards, journalists and those harbouring and expressing hatred for him, Pell availed of his sojourn in prison to deepen his spiritual life and used his time as a kind of 'extended retreat'. He filled the pages of his diary with spiritual insights, prison experiences, prayerful reflections, comments on current

events inside and outside the Church, and moving prayers.

“In the glare of publicity Pell was led handcuffed from the court to begin his sentence in prison”

And there is a further silver lining to his otherwise sorry episode. It provided Pell with the opportunity to display true Australian grit in the face of the most challenging and adverse of circumstances.

① The narrative of the cardinal's experiences is complete by Prison Journal 1: The Cardinal Makes his Appeal and Prison Journal 3: The High Court Frees an Innocent Man (both from Ignatius Press).

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.



Cardinal Pell leaving court under police guard during his trials.

Recalling those little moments of life now past

Stolen Moments
by John Quinn
(Veritas, €16.99 / £14.50)

Peter Costello

Over recent years John Quinn's books have proved popular and for good reason. This new book is a sort of sequel to an earlier book *Moments* (which appeared back in 2011). In this book I can see why.

These days I find I do not sleep quite as well as I once did, and often am awake at 3 o'clock in the night. I found that a long book, novel or complicated history did not provide those moments of relaxation that induced the return of soothing sleep. I found short stories and essays filled the bill far better.

John Quinn's pieces in this book and his previous one would have worked just as well. These days our papers and magazines are filled by journalists determined often enough on investigative, world changing report-

ing. Even the *New Yorker* has lost the tone of civilised amusement it had back in the 1930s when it was a popular read among some middle class Dubliners.

This strain of literature can perhaps be traced back to Daniel Defoe. But John Quinn writes what were once called "essays" (before the term was filched by academics for a very different kind of composition), and which derived from the sort of things that Charles Lamb, Goldsmith and Addison wrote. Older readers will remember the sort of style I mean from the old days of Carty's *Senior Prose*. But in Ireland the essay died out in the 1960s when students were encouraged to become short story writers like Hemingway or James Joyce. It was forgotten that self-expression can take many forms.

There are some 94 short pieces collected in here, reflective, genial, kind-hearted and humane, drawn from ordinary



life, small places, and things many still have the kindly thought for. If you too are seeking quiet moments in the days or nights of these troubled and fear-filled times, this is a book for you.

I would also like to draw attention to Quinn's earlier book *Daily Wisdom* (*Leann an Lae*), a gathering of Irish proverbs and sayings for each day of the year, an epitome of insightful moral folklore from rural Ireland.

Shaping up the Men in Blue

Changing of the Guard: Jack Marrinan's battle to modernise An Garda Síochána

by Tim Doyle
(Currach Books, €20.00 / £17.99)

Joe Carroll

In the 1950s a revolt was stirring in the lower ranks of An Garda. Although a much sought after permanent job, especially in rural Ireland, working conditions were tough, especially for the younger members who started at £5 a week, worked long hours with no overtime and often had to live in overcrowded barracks with no inside toilets.

The disciplinary code inherited from the Royal Irish Constabulary era left young gardai open to bullying from frustrated sergeants and inspectors.

Indifferent

The Department of Justice, which ruled the force through the commissioner, was indifferent to these grievances. A breaking point was reached when a 1961 modest pay increase excluded young gardai. The Dublin gardai organised a protest meeting on November 4, 1961 in the Macushla ballroom off Amiens St. They knew they risked dismissal but about 800 crowded into the hall watched by inspectors noting names.

Inside was near bedlam as there was no one organiser but when a young garda called Jack Marrinan, stationed in Rathfarnham, called for order and proposed several motions to be voted on, he little knew that this was to be the beginning of an 18-year term as full-time secretary of a new Garda representative body.

“It was to be a virtually one-man job of long hours and constant travel around over 700 Garda stations”

But first he and 10 other Macushla participants were dismissed from the force by Commissioner Daniel Costigan and over 100 others were issued with disciplinary forms which could lead to their sacking.

Marrinan, who had evening course degrees from Trinity College, sought legal advice from John A. Costello, who had recently been taoiseach in the coalition government. But behind the scenes



Jack Marrinan

other forces were at work to calm the revolt down.

Archbishop John Charles McQuaid had been aware of the unrest in the gardai even before Macushla, and after the sackings he and the new Minister for Justice, Charles Haughey, met privately in Archbishop's House. They worked out a compromise which was to be put to the dismissed gardai who would be re-instated on acceptance.

That was the end of the revolt and the start of Marrinan's new career out of uniform as the full-time secretary of the new Garda Representative Body, later to be called Association. In this book, the author details how Marrinan turned the GRA into a powerful negotiating body which won steady pay rises and improved working conditions for the members.



Setting up the Garda Review with Conor Brady as first editor, allowed Marrinan to communicate with the thousands of members and inform the public and the government of grievances and how they could be peacefully solved without recourse to ballroom meetings.

It was to be a virtually one-man job of long hours and constant travel around over 700 Garda stations. He also provided valuable input into the 1970 landmark Judge Conroy report into reforms needed in the force from top to bottom.

Border

As the Northern Ireland troubles spilled across the border, the toll of gardai murders by the IRA increased tensions. Relations with successive commissioners became tense and Commissioner Garvey tried to have Marrinan and the GRA prosecuted for "usurping the functions of Government". But he went on to serve 27 years representing the GRA. He died in 2015.

The author, a former junior colleague of Marrinan, tells the story well of how the young garda from Lisdoonvarna who might one day have become a commissioner himself became the best-known face of the Garda Síochána as commissioners and Ministers for Justice over the decades came and went.

Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock



We need to have close contacts

THERE WAS A TIME when:

- Being a close contact was a good thing.
- To walk into a bank wearing a mask spelt danger!
- To give someone the elbow was akin to ignoring.
- If you sneezed, a stranger would say "God bless you".
- Delta was an airline!
- We worried about who was in hospital and not how many.
- To gather friends to celebrate a life event was a joy.

It was a good time. As we enter a New Year, we bring with us much of the fear that has lived with us since March 2020. The progress we have made can all too easily get lost.

Difference

Vaccinations have undoubtedly made a difference. They are not the bullet proof vest we might have thought they would be. When I got my vaccine, I felt a new hope and this hope was built upon with the second jab and the booster was the icing on the cake. Yet Covid continues. Numbers are on the rise. A



recent satirical image of Tony Holohan selecting the Lotto numbers poked fun at the daily numbers we hear but does not lessen their seriousness or belittle their reality. The numbers are there. The bullet proof vest has been dented but progress is being made.

Luke O'Neill brings a positive message and a hint of hope. Practical and rooted, he reassures us that these days will pass. We are reminded that we are in a better place because of the vaccine and our graveyards testify to that truth.

I remember an April funeral with a handful of people, bidding

farewell to a much-loved neighbour. I recall one of our priests, a man good to me and admired by me since my school days, a man who was always there in my life and priesthood, who died and was buried. I, like countless others – lucky enough to be his friends, thankful enough to have been his former pupils or parishioners – could do no better than visit his grave, weeks after he was laid to rest. I still look out for him, expecting him to be at the next gathering of our diocese. Of course, I know he will not be there but the fact I did not get to see him in death,

leaves that vacuum – that place of uncertainty. Countless people in Ireland and beyond, know that uncertainty and grief far greater than I. Thankfully Covid-related funerals like that are not the norm now and we have found ways of expressing grief and being with people at those final moments.

Stretched

Our hospitals are coping, even if stretched, and our ICUs are available to those most in need. Symptoms for many have lessened and leave as quietly as they arrive.

We need to have close contacts. We need to say "God Bless you" when someone sneezes and we need hope. Find the voice of hope and share that voice with all around you. A positive word from you could mean more than you will ever know.

I saw a WhatsApp recently that sums it up well. One man says to another: "It is hard to know what this year will bring."

"It will bring flowers", the other replied.

"How do you know?" asked the first. "Because I planted them", came the reply.

A message in Advent

● In the early days of Advent, I received a WhatsApp message from a priest. He included a video of the Advent Wreath in one of his churches with its first candle aglow and spoke with enthusiasm around Advent and the journey to Christmas. He wished me well for my own journey, he concluded with a reference to my pieces in *The Irish Catholic*. It was a kind reference and I appreciated it. He, like the message sent, was full of life, hope and expectation. It all mattered to him and clearly, he wanted to do his best for his people. He was buried just before Christmas. Though we never met, I am saddened by this. Rest in Peace, Kevin McNamara.



COULD YOU HELP TO SAVE A POOR HELPLESS CHILD

The Little Way Association receives numerous requests from missionaries throughout the world asking for help to feed, support and educate needy, deprived children. Due to COVID-19 they are faced with many sufferings. They tell us of orphaned children left alone with no one to love or care for them, of families so poor that they cannot afford to send their children to school, and of street children, totally abandoned, hungry and homeless, experiencing much anguish and hardship during their most tender years. The whole future of these children often depends upon whether a missionary can find sufficient funds to care for them.

Your New Year's gift will mean a chance of health and happiness for a deprived child.

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

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Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466
www.littlewayassociation.com

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DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.



As 2022 begins, please consider making a gift to The Little Way Association's fund for children.

Every euro you send will be gratefully received and sent without deduction, to enable a missionary priest or sister to carry the love, care and compassion of Christ to a deprived, abandoned or orphaned child.

Thank you, and may God reward your generosity.



It was St Therese's vocation to be **"love in the heart of the Church, and to assist priests, missionaries and the entire Church"**, and this has been the continuing inspiration of The Little Way Association. Ever since St Therese's death on 30th September 1897, countless priests and missionaries have given witness to the extraordinary way in which she has helped them. Let us pray for the fulfilment of her desire that the Gospel message would be spread throughout the world.

We wish all our friends and benefactors a very happy and peaceful New Year

May St Therese reward you in a special way for the sacrifices you make to support our work, and may she obtain all the blessings and graces you need for 2022.

Daily Mass for your intentions

You and your intentions are remembered in a special Mass offered in the Missions for all Little Way benefactors and friends.