

# The Irish Catholic

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## Tears and relief – Catholics killed by British Army ‘entirely innocent’

Chai Brady

A priest and nine other Catholics shot dead by the British Army in Belfast in 1971 “were entirely innocent of any wrongdoings” and killed “without justification,” a fresh inquest has found.

The coroner described the use of force by the troops as “disproportionate” and there were emotional scenes as families reacted to the vindication of their loved ones, who had previously been described by authorities as terrorists.

Bishop Noel Treanor of Down and Connor reacted immediately to the findings saying “It is a sad indictment on our society and state that these families have had to listen to misinformation and untruth propagated about their loved ones for almost 50 years”.

Ballymurphy parish priest Fr Paddy McCafferty said there was “relief and tears” as he watched with 70 family members in Corpus Christi Church. He said there was “huge relief” and “no ambiguity” at the verdict.

The bishop accompanied the families to the inquest. He said: “it was immensely humbling and moving to sit along-

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### All smiles at Holy Communion in Dunmoyle



St Brigid's, Altamuskin pupils Jack, Catherine, Christopher, Aoife, Brian and Molly with school principal Sinead Gormley and class teacher Ryan Lynch were delighted to receive their ice creams from The Sweet Spot's Conor Daly at Dunmoyle, Co. Tyrone, after making their First Holy Communion. Photo: Jason McCartan.

Joy at return to Mass with 1 in 4 saying mental health was affected

Jason Osborne

There was “absolute delight” as people returned to Mass this week, after stark figures revealed that one in four pre-pandemic regular church-goers said that the pandemic-imposed Mass ban has harmed their mental health.

A quarter of those polled said the inability to gather for Mass had affected their sense of wellbeing while 61% of respondents said their mental health wasn't harmed, with another 14% saying they weren't sure.

The research was carried out by Amarach on behalf of the Iona Institute.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* about the return to public worship, Bishop Paul Dempsey of Achonry said it was “lovely” to be able to celebrate Mass with people physically present for the first time this year.

“Even from the celebrant's point of view, over the last few months celebrating Mass in an empty church, an empty cathedral, was an eerie experience,” Bishop Dempsey said.

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

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

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

Ruadhán Jones, ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Jason Osborne, jason@irishcatholic.ie

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

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

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

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

**Magnificat:** magnificat@irishcatholic.ie

**Shop:** shop@irishcatholic.ie

**Managing Director:** Garry O'Sullivan

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# Finding a way forward that creates space for all voices

A report published by the Diocese of Limerick this week found "that challenges arise from the absence of formal 'official' recognition of the roles played by women in the Church and states that opportunities need to be created for women's voices to be heard in our liturgies, in Church leadership and in Church life" (see page 6).

The former Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin often remarked that he believed the alienation felt by many women within the Church was the biggest issue facing Irish Catholicism. It's not something his remaining colleagues are unaware of. In fact, of the bishops who have commented most enthusiastically about the ongoing synodal process, all have mentioned the need to hear the voices of women.

**"I was struck by the sincerity and how succinctly the woman expressed it, and so I wanted to write it down"**

And yet, I can't help but wonder that by focusing the discussion exclusively around gender we are missing something deeper. You might even say we're missing something that is missing: men.

## Report

RTÉ News carried a report on Monday night from Cork about the re-opening of Mass. Perhaps the most striking comment was from a woman who when asked what it means to be able to attend again replied simply: "it means everything".

I was struck by the



## Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



The appointment of Sr Nathalie Becquart to the Synod of Bishops has heightened discussions about the role of women in the Church.

sincerity and how succinctly the woman expressed it, and so I wanted to write it down. So I paused the television and re-winded to see the report again in full. It was only then that it struck me that all of the people interviewed about the return to Mass were women. Everyone except the priest, that was. As the camera panned the congregation, there were a couple of men – but I would estimate that the congregation was 90% female.

## Replicated

I've seen this replicated in parishes up and down the country where the vast majority of Mass-goers are women. It's often made me think: where are the men?

Are men less inclined to be religious than women? Do men not feel the same spiritual urges as women? I don't know if there is a simple answer. If there is, I don't know it – but I think it is a discussion worth having.

I can already hear some people – not without reason – cry "but all the priests are men".

But, to see the priesthood

as meaning that all men are included and heard in the Church is to hold to a very narrow view that sees gender as the only distinction.

**"I can't help but wonder that by focusing the discussion exclusively around gender we are missing something deeper"**

I think a wider vision would help us understand that part of the chasm that exists in terms of leadership and responsibility in the Church now is between those who are ordained and

those who are not. Some will say, well men are free to be ordained. But, this amounts to what Pope Francis calls the tendency to clericalise lay-people – to hold to the idea that to have any meaningful role within the Church one must become a priest.

## Mission

Surely at this moment in our history we are being called to a broader vision of mission, ministry and co-responsibility within the Church?

In his apostolic exhortation, *Querida Amazonia*, Pope Francis proposed that the real reform that is needed in the Church is transcending traditional divisions and "finding other, better ways, perhaps not yet even imagined".

There is a piercing need for women to feel heard and included in the Church, there is the same need for men and we must resist the temptation to fall back on clichés which mean by trying to address one sense exclusion we create another.

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## Ten Catholics killed by British Army 'entirely innocent' – inquest

**» Continued from Page 1**

side the relatives of the Bal-linmurphy victims as they listened to the findings of the inquest.

"These families have sat through and listened to the harrowing and graphic evidence about how their loved ones died as well as how they were treated both before and after their deaths," he said.

The inquest heard evidence that soldiers had treated the bodies of those who were killed with disrespect.

"These same families can now say with one voice that the truth has been heard. History will forever record the innocence of their loved ones," Bishop Treanor said.

Referring to Fr Hugh Mullan, who was killed while administering the last rites to the dying of his parish, Bishop Treanor said: "With selfless pastoral devotion, Fr Mullan made the ultimate sacrifice and lost his

life anointing his parishioners".

The bishop recalled how "Bringing consolation to the dying, Fr Mullan prayed, 'Through this Holy Anointing, may the Lord in His love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit.' Fr Hugh courageously wanted those who were wounded and dying to know that God accompanied them in their hour of need," he said.

Dr Treanor also paid tribute to the families. "I have witnessed over many years their respectful dignity and fortitude as they have pursued and campaigned for truth and justice."

"I have also been impressed by their strong sense of solidarity. These families who have been drawn together in sorrow and bereavement are also united in courage and hope. With the publication of the inquest today, they have been vindicated in protecting the innocence of their relatives," Bishop Treanor said.



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# Families of overseas prisoners 'utterly let down' by the State

Chai Brady

Not one Irish prisoner has been transferred to the State from overseas in the last four years, with a Catholic charity accusing the Government of causing families "anxiety" and not reforming a "broken system".

The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO) expressed concern after the publication of the 2020 annual report on prisoners transferred into and out of the State – published by the Minister for Justice and Equality. It focuses on the operation of the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Acts (1995 and 1997).

It revealed that no Irish prisoner was transferred into the State from an overseas prison for the fourth year in a row, and three quarters of those who applied to transfer to an Irish prison were refused last year.

## Figures

Coordinator of the ICPO, Brian Hanley said the 2020 figures "shine a light on what is at this point, a barely-functioning system".

"These numbers are unprecedented and run contrary to the Government's stated policy that prisoners should be permitted to serve their sentences close to their families – not least because of the humanitarian benefit to prisoner's families but also because of the improved resettlement outcomes such family engagement and supported release programmes have

for society. The system has essentially ground to a halt and Irish people in prison overseas and their families here in Ireland feel utterly let down by the State."

Mr Hanley continued: "Even the number of people applying to transfer into the State points to a broken system. Eight applications were received in 2020; whereas five years ago the number of applications was double that. Irish prisoners overseas are coming to the harsh realisation that the opportunity to serve their remaining sentence close to their families and support network is no longer a possibility."

He described this as "short-sighted, as prisoners who receive regular visits from families have been shown to be much less likely to reoffend".

Mr Hanley added that problems in the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Acts were highlighted by a Supreme Court decision in 2016 and "an amendment is required in order to deal with these issues".

"Despite the amending legislation being drafted two years ago, it is still not on the Government's priority list of legislation. The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas is calling on the Government to introduce the amending legislation without further delay."

See pages 18-19

# Frank Skinner opens up about the Faith

Jason Osborne

Prayer is the one place you can be "as profoundly you as you can be," TV star Frank Skinner told the BBC's *Songs of Praise* recently.

The famous comedian, writer, TV presenter and actor spoke of his up-and-down relationship with the Faith but revealed the importance it has in his life at this stage.

"I don't remember not having it (faith). I'm a cradle Catholic. I was already fully signed-up by the time I became aware of the world, and it's always been at the core of my being."

"When I was 19, I left the Catholic Church, which was a major family turmoil. But I left not because I stopped believing, but I had doubts about the Catholic Church," Mr Skinner said.

He went on to read "every anti-Catholic book" he could find so as to be convinced of his decision, but that it "didn't work".

He recently wrote *A Comedian's Prayer Book*, which he attributed to his deep interest in prayer.

"I'm very interested in prayer. I pray twice a day as a standard thing, and a bit more when I'm in the bookies," he laughed.

"I would say prayer is the only area of my life where I am completely free, honest, there's no act, there's no front. Even with your loved ones, there are things where you are sensitive to what you say and what you don't say. Just to have that place where you are you, as profoundly you as you can be."



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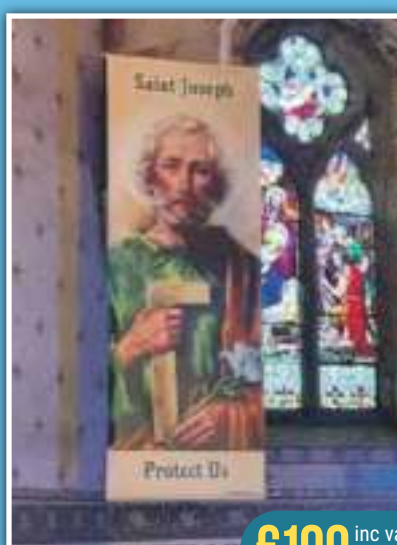
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# Gender-neutral bathrooms a result of identity confusion priest says

Jason Osborne

Gender-neutral bathrooms are the product of a lack of understanding about identity, a Wicklow-based priest has said.

This comes as the Department of Education recently announced that gender neutral toilets are an option for schools under new design guidance.

In the past few years, a number of secondary schools around the country have sought permission from the Government to install

gender-neutral bathrooms, with gender neutral bathrooms being one of the measures included in the LGBTI+ Youth Strategy that was published in 2018.

Fr Gerry Young of Greystones told *The Irish Catholic* that he would be "worried" about the promotion of "self-identity" because "if any of us look back at our lives and consider the things we thought we might be, we were horrified that we thought it and we're glad that somebody spoke sense to us".

Fr Young said that our identity doesn't come about as a result of what we "think we are," but that "we are what society needs us to be". It's not a "personal choice," he said.

"That's what we're called to," he said.

"I would have very clear and strong views about allowing children to develop in the proper way and self-identity – that we all have to stand back and recognise people's self-identity – that's not the issue," Fr Young said.

"We have to find out, who are we sup-

posed to be for people? I can't self-identify as a priest. I have to identify being a priest for the needs of my parishioners."

He said that "proper sexual behaviour" needs to be cultivated, because we have to "learn how to be people; how to be male and how to be female".

"Everything has to be cultivated, our whole lives. The plants, the animals, the way we deal with people. Everything is a cultivation," Fr Young said, continuing "proper behaviour is not a given".

## Govt should follow Pope's leadership on vaccine access urges Trócaire

Chai Brady

Church-charity Trócaire has welcomed Pope Francis' call for universal access to Covid-19 vaccines and a suspension of intellectual property rights on the vaccines.

The Pope made the call in a video message to the 'Vax Live' concert, an event promoting a more equal global distribution of Covid-19 vaccinations.

He said a "variant of this virus is closed nationalism, which prevents,

for example, an internationalism of vaccines... Another variant is when we put the laws of the market or intellectual property above the laws of love and the health of humanity".

Trócaire CEO Caoimhe de Barra said: "The Holy Father's endorsement of the campaign for vaccine equality is a significant moment. The Covid-19 crisis was unique in that it affected every country in the world at the same time. The virus knows no borders, and neither

should our response.

"The poorest countries are being left behind. People are being plunged into extreme poverty by this virus with little hope of vaccination on the horizon."

She added that the Pope has "offered huge moral leadership throughout the pandemic" and his comments on waiving patent protections are another example of that and the Irish Government and EU counterparts should back his call.

## Blessing the Belfast graves



Bishop Noel Treanor of the Diocese of Down and Connor blessed graves and said prayers in Milltown and Belfast City Cemeteries earlier this month.

## Ex-taoiseach remembers Ireland's debt to religious

Former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern visits Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican in this 2005 photo. Photo: CNS.



### Staff reporter

People should remember the contribution religious orders have made to Irish education and other services, according to ex-Taoiseach Bertie Ahern.

Speaking on *The Saint Patrick's Podcast* to Martina Purdy and Elaine Kelly, Mr Ahern spoke of the extensive religious presence in his native Drumcondra as he grew up.

"In the area where I lived in Drumcondra it was known as 'Holy Land' – we had all around us, my dad worked in All Hallows College, just down the road was Clonliffe College which was the college where the priests for the Dublin Diocese (were trained) – the Vicentian nuns were down the road, we had Franciscan brothers, we had the Rosminian fathers, Christian Brothers...we had several other religious groupings in the area," Mr Ahern said.

Asked what his parents would think of the

Ireland of today, Mr Ahern said he thinks they would have difficulty with the lack of recognition religious orders get for the work they've done and the institutions they've put in place.

"I think it's important for people nowadays, and this is where my mother and father would have difficulty," Mr Ahern said, continuing, "all of these religious orders and institutions ran very important services for the State, whether they were priests or whether they were students doing education."

"Where the Rosminian fathers are now is ChildVision, but they educated the people with visually impaired eyesight, but all of these things at one stage were run by religious orders and I think sometimes people forget that we mightn't have a lot of these educational institutions or services if it wasn't for religious orders," he said.

"I think people should remember that."

See page 12.



# Have your say

## SYNOD SOAPBOX

The Church in Ireland is moving towards holding a national synod in the next five years. It is part of the vision of Pope Francis of laypeople, religious, priests and bishops working together to discern where God is leading the Church and charting a future vision for Irish Catholicism.

As part of the process, The Irish Catholic wants to give a space for readers to share hopes and dreams for the future of the Church and what they would like to see as part of the synod process. The 'synod soapbox' will appear regularly in the paper as a space for dialogue and discernment.

If you would like to be part of the conversation, please send a submission of no more than 300 words to [editor@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:editor@irishcatholic.ie)

The Irish Catholic



# When a mature marriage ends...

**“T**he rich are different,” Scott Fitzgerald famously said, and it is an observation which contains some truth. And yet when Bill and Melinda Gates announced they were proceeding towards a divorce after 27 years of marriage, others could identify with what is called the ‘silver split’ – when older couples break up having gone past that silver wedding anniversary.

## Rocky patch

It is not unusual for marriages to hit a rocky patch in middle age. The joys, energies, even wild bickering of younger times have passed, and the kids have left home. Now, couples wonder if they have anything left in common? It's tempting to have an affair ‘just to find someone new to tell your old jokes to’ as the New York poet Fran Landesmann once quipped.

My own mother-in-law told me that she and her husband – who died before I could meet him – hit a



Mary Kenny



Bill and Melinda Gates

really bad phase in middle age. Fortunately, she had the means to take a prolonged cruise to South America, a sensible use of money during a period of alienation. But they got back together, and, she said “in old age, we were glad”.

The Gates' divorce has

prompted others to muse on a similar scenario. The writer Jane Gordon recalled that like Bill and Melinda, she and her spouse split up after 27 years, because they didn't see how they could ‘grow’ together. But now she greatly regrets it, and mourns how much they

have lost – the shared memories, how they had built a life together, all the nuances of the family connections.

There is a point in the sacramental vow “till death do us part”. It can become especially meaningful in the latter part of life.

## Disenchanted note

Melinda Gates, aged 56, made the decision to leave the 65-year-old Microsoft billionaire (net worth: over \$129 billion/€106billion) some time ago. His brief association with Jeffrey Epstein was a disenchanted note, too. He seems a bit of a cold-hearted geek – asked about religious practice he said that “I can think of more efficient ways to spend Sunday morning”. Life isn't just about “efficiency”, Bill!

Still, it was a marriage and the death of a marriage should be mourned. In many cases, its dissolution may be regretted.

● In Edna O'Brien's stories, there's mention of a traditional bogeyman who frightens children, ‘the Pooka’, a bad spirit with an aura of evil and threat. In their wisdom, Clare County Council had commissioned a hideous artwork elevating *The Púca of Ennistymon* which it planned to foist upon the public gaze.

Thank heaven for the common sense of Fr Willie Cummins of Ennistymon, who has denounced the sculpture of a pagan monstrosity from the altar, and prompted Clare Council to ‘pause’.

It's been suggested that Dylan Thomas might be a better candidate for an Ennistymon statue, since his wife, Caitlin, grew up there. Why not Caitlin's father, the poet Francis Macnamara, local bard and landlord, who wrote poetry about Ennistymon and started the hippy trend for Doolin? He wasn't uncontroversial either – nude bathing with the poet Augustus John caused local ripples – but still better than ‘the Pooka’!

## A good bet for bigger things

I am minded to place a tenner on Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Manchester, becoming next leader of the British Labour Party. He'd be the first Catholic in the post. Mr Burnham enjoyed a resounding victory in last week's local elections and has emerged as a big player on the British political scene.

Sir Keir Starmer, present head of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, is a consummate lawyer, but to many voters he lacks ‘authenticity’: too posh, too smooth. Andy Burnham is a true Lancashire lad who talks bread-and-butter issues – bus fares should be cheap, homelessness should be tackled. He did a lot to advance a successful second Hillsborough enquiry.

He is sometimes called ‘soft left’ but has also described himself as a ‘redistributist’, G.K. Chesterton's economic philosophy.

He has said he doesn't agree with the Catholic Church on everything – plenty of Catholics might say that! He voted for same-sex marriage and advocates LGBT rights. He is married to a Dutch wife, Marie-France: they have three children. His brother, Nick, is principal of Cardinal Newman College in Preston (the town whose historic motto was ‘Poor, Proud and Papist’).

Andy Burnham was twice rejected as Labour leader, and he says he's currently happy as Manchester supremo. But he's still a good bet for bigger things.

# Books from MARK PATRICK HEDERMAN

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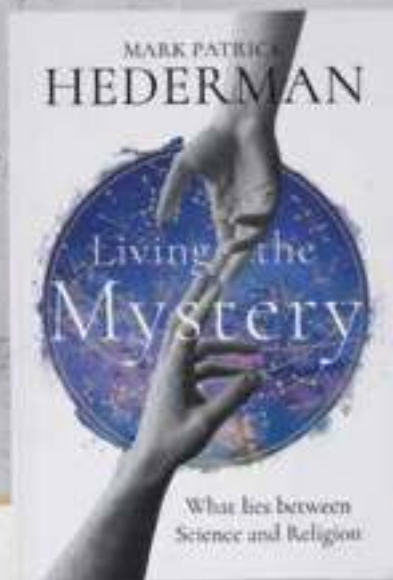


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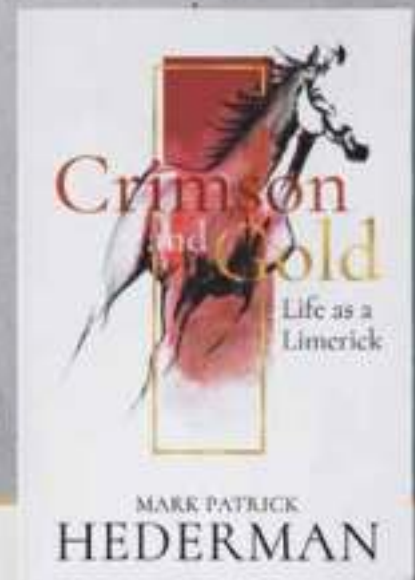
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# Limerick report finds scope for increased lay leadership

Jason Osborne

A Limerick diocesan report has found that there needs to be a "radical change of mindset" to balance leadership within the Church and "recognise the role of women".

The 'Role of Women in Church Leadership Working Group Report' found that "If you went into any parish, any church in the country, you would find that there are women involved all the time in the background doing work, helping out and stuff like that," in the words of Rose O'Connor, Chair of the Women in Church Leadership Working Group.

She noted that the findings were equally applicable to laymen, saying that "it's not just women, actually, it's laypeople in general".

She described a sense of "invisibility", which is in part due to a cultural attitude of the "priest as the centre of everything".

"We're so used to that clerical model of the Church," Ms O'Connor said.

"I think women have been playing a very important role in the Church almost forever, but I suppose what they don't have is any official recognition of the roles that they play and certainly when it comes to leadership and decision-making, they don't have a space in which their voices are heard."

Ms O'Connor emphasised that the working group is interested in what's possible "within the provisions of Canon Law".

"The other thing we've discovered is,

in terms of Canon Law, there is a lot of scope to do more than we're doing and to actually open that up a bit more," Ms O'Connor said.

She suggested that more official positions could be made of positions that "we're already familiar with", such as pastoral or parish councils, ministers of the Word and of the Eucharist, and finance committees.

In line with this, Ms O'Connor said she was fully supportive of Pope Francis' moves this year to institutionalise the roles of lectors, acolytes and catechists.

The report also suggests that these new roles are developed alongside other ministry roles such as the permanent diaconate to avoid either one displacing the other.

# German Catholics defy Vatican with same-sex blessings

Staff reporter

Priests and pastoral workers in Germany defied Pope Francis this week by conducting blessing ceremonies attended by same-sex couples. Organisers held a day of protest on Monday in response to the Vatican's recent declaration that the Church does not have the power to bless same-sex unions.

The ceremonies, known as *Segnungsgottesdienste für Liebende*, or 'blessing services for lovers', were promoted using the hashtag #liebegewinnt ('love wins'). Organisers said that the services were open to all couples, including - and in particular - those of the same sex.

Ceremonies reportedly took place in around 80 cities in Germany as well in Zürich, Switzerland's largest city.

Almost 130 participants gathered in the Augustinian Church, not far from Würzburg Cathedral, while almost 40 people attended a ceremony in the youth church at the same time.

In many places, a general blessing was given at the end of the service, which, however, explicitly included homosexual couples and their relationships. Sometimes individual blessings were

offered after the ceremony.

According to the organisers of a service at the Liebfrauenkirche in Frankfurt, "At the end of the Mass... Capuchin friars were available to all couples for personal blessings." The church, dedicated to Mary, belongs to the Diocese of Limburg, led by Bishop Georg Bätzing, chairman of the German bishops' conference.

In the Augustinian Church in Würzburg too all couples - expressly including same-sex couples - were invited to "come and get" the individual blessing in a backroom, after the service.

## Joy at return to Mass with 1 in 4 saying mental health affected

» Continued from Page 1

The bishop said that to have people physically present while celebrating the Eucharist was "very special".

"I think for a lot of people it was almost emotional to have that gathering together,"

he said.

This was echoed by Fr Edmund O'Rahelly of Ballina, Co. Tipperary, who said that priests "were never trained" to celebrate the Eucharist as they have been over the past five months.

Their opening Mass saw

mainly regular attendees, with 95% of the 30 in attendance regulars.

"I met people before they went into Mass and they were very excited about the fact that our churches were open again," he said, continuing "they felt very put out that we were fully closed for so long".

"It was soul-destroying saying Mass inside in the church on one's own. I mean, we were never trained to do that," he said.

"The whole idea of the celebration of the Eucharist is that it's a community - a community action more than anything, and here we were

doing it just to supply a need so that people would have it on the parish radio. Ok, some people got great solace from that, but I don't think it was a great way to be celebrating the Eucharist personally."

Fr John Bracken of Dundrum, Co. Dublin spoke of a "good turnout", with just over 70 people in attendance, separated into pods.

"What was lovely which surprised me, was the noise, the sound of people responding," Fr Bracken said.

"You just forgot, because you haven't had people in there in so long."

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### NI Charity welcomes proceedings against UK govt on porn access online

Campaigners have welcomed judicial review proceedings against the UK government alleging that ministers in the North have failed to protect children from online pornography. NI charity CARE said it is "simply unacceptable" that ministers have not acted.

Part 3 of the Digital Economy Act would have prohibited commercial pornography websites from making their content available to anyone under the age of 18 and create a regulator and an enforcement mechanism. James Mildred of CARE said: "The government has come under increasing pressure to act on commercial porn sites, a practically unregulated entity, which can be accessed by our most vulnerable and impressionable citizens, children."

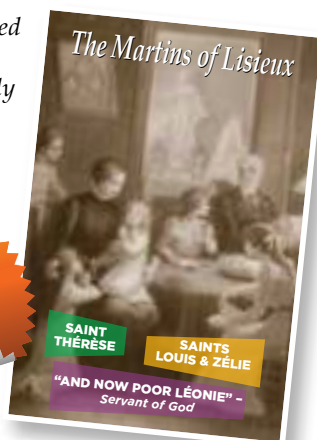
"We have come a long way from the days of top shelf magazines. Regulation of internet must catch up with previously established safeguarding standards. Of course, commercial sites are not the only source of porn online. Social media is awash with content. The Government can also address online harms through action on social media providers in its forthcoming duty of care legislation," he added.

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## Revelling Red Nuns



The Redemptoristines of Dublin celebrate 15 years since Sisters Maura and Lucy (back left and front right) entered the monastery, as well as Sr Magdalena's birthday (front left). They're pictured together with Sr Gabrielle.



## Nuala O'Loan

### The View



# Families need answers about loved ones' deaths

**F**or a long time now Ireland has been battling the Covid-19 pandemic and her people - north and south - have been trying to work out the implications of the UK's Brexit vote and the NI Protocol. It was never going to be easy. Since the UK left the European Union (EU) there have to be checks on goods entering Northern Ireland from Great Britain, since by entering Northern Ireland they effectively enter the EU. All very complicated.

There is another complication which has the potential to impact on British-Irish relationships and that is how the legacy of Northern Ireland's Troubles is addressed. In January 2020 the UK and Ireland agreed the 'New Decade, New Approach' deal. It had been agreed in the 'Stormont House Agreement' in 2014 that there would be a Historical Investigations Unit "to take forward investigations into outstanding Troubles-related deaths".

### Legislation

The British government said that it would, within 100 days, introduce legislation to implement the Stormont House Agreement. The Irish Government said that it would work with the UK government to support the establishment of the legacy institutions as a matter of urgency, including by introducing necessary implementing legislation in the Oireachtas.

**“Very few cases will lead to prosecution, because there will not be the evidence to bring a prosecution”**

In the event nothing happened. No legislation was introduced.

In recent weeks, particularly following the collapse of the trial of two soldiers accused of the murder of IRA man Joe McCann who was shot in the back in April 1972, suggestions have emerged that the UK government will now move to stop further historic investigations of Troubles deaths. There has been talk of a statute of limitations to prevent investigation of deaths which occurred before the Good Friday Agreement. Both Tánaiste Leo Varadkar and Foreign Affairs Minister Simon Coveney have expressed their



Fr Hugh Mullan's grave in his native Portaferry, Co. Down. Fr Mullan was shot dead by the British Army as he ministered to a dying man in 1971 in what became known as the Ballymurphy Massacre.

alarm, and said they oppose any such unilateral action.

It is all complicated by the fact that currently if a person is convicted for a terrorist offence committed before the 'Good Friday Agreement' in April 1998, the maximum sentence which will be served is two years. That provision for a limited sentence does not apply to soldiers who served during the Troubles and who are accused of murder or other serious crime.

There has been much prevarication as politicians sought to agree how the legacy of a troubled past should be dealt with, and for decades families of those who died have been waiting to learn exactly what happened to their loved ones.

### Inquest

This week the findings of the inquest into the deaths of ten people in Ballymurphy, West Belfast in August 1971 were published. They were Fr Hugh Mullan (38) who was shot dead as he went to help one of the injured; Frank Quinn (19) who tried to help Fr Mullan; Noel Phillips (19); a mother of eight children, Joan Connolly (44), who heard Noel Phillips crying and went to help him; Daniel Teggart (44); Joseph Murphy (41); Eddie Doherty (31); John Lavery (20); Joseph Corr (43); and John McKerr who was 49. Their families waited 50 years for this, and during the inquest soldiers, eyewitnesses, forensic experts and the former head of the British Army gave evidence.

I have been reading pen pictures of those who died written by members of their families in which they tell who the person was and how their death impacted on all the family members, and how those deaths still continue to impact across the generations.

What struck me as I read was the huge sense of loss, and the complexity and awfulness of the consequences of the deaths. These were good people, fathers, a mother, sons - all just trying to live their lives as best they could in the difficult days of 1971. So many Catholics had seen the British Army as protectors when they arrived. Joan Connolly's daughter described her mother making tea and sandwiches and "having a yarn" with the soldiers. She was one of many.

**“The British government said that it would, within 100 days, introduce legislation to implement the Stormont House Agreement”**

I learned too that several of these men or their fathers had served in the British Army, in the days before the Troubles; that one man had come from England to live in Ballymurphy; that Joan Connolly's daughter had been one of the many girls who had gone to army dances in the area the previous year, and fallen in love with a British soldier, married him, and given birth in May 1971 to their baby. Joan Connolly had gone to see her son-in-law who was serving in Flax Street after the baby arrived. There was great happiness. The baby was christened in Ballymurphy. Three months later his grandmother was shot dead by soldiers as she tried to help a dying boy.

Fifty years on, these families have endured more than 100 days of evidence and have been waiting since March 2020 for a verdict. Their pain over the years is unimaginable.

Northern Ireland is full of Troubles-related tragedy, and the trauma which so often comes with tragedy. What people want is to know what happened and why. They want to know if someone was with their loved one when they died. Sometimes they want to know if they said anything, if they suffered.

We are trying to build a new Northern Ireland in the midst of Covid-19 and Brexit, but underpinning it all is the legacy of the Troubles. In a country which proclaims itself as being built firmly on the rule of law, it is vital that the law in all its fullness is allowed to operate. It cannot be right to say to people that the deaths of their loved ones are too old to prosecute.

Very few cases will lead to prosecution, because there will not be the evidence to bring a prosecution. I know this because I have seen many historic death files - some of them so very thin, because there was often really no investigation. In order to prosecute there will need to be new evidence which was not available at the time of any investigation. It is not possible to prosecute using only evidence which was available at the time of the original investigation.

Families understand this. However investigation

is needed to find new evidence which may be available, and that is not a job for families. It is a job for investigators.

### Report

If there is no new evidence, after investigation, the investigators can produce a report which will tell families what has been found.

No one expects these prosecutions or reports to bring closure for the bereaved; they still have to live with the loss of what was, and of what might have been.

Nevertheless, in a country which proudly proclaims its respect for and adherence to the rule of law, it is essential that we at least try to resolve the unsolved murders of the Troubles. Fighting not to do so has cost huge money over the years. The time has come to use our resources positively and in the interests of justice and truth.

## AMPLIFYING VOICES OF CATHOLIC SISTERS AROUND THE WORLD



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# Faithful celebrate return



Parishioners are welcomed back to church for Mass in Tralee, Co. Kerry.



Cavan footballer and GAA 2020 star Padraig Faulkner delighted parishioners of Kingscourt parish in Cavan by bringing The Anglo Celt Cup and his All Star award on the first day of reopening for public worship. Photo: Gerry MacCormack



A parishioner receives Communion in St John's church Tralee, Co. Kerry.



The Hickey family of St John's church attend Mass in Tralee, Kerry.



Bishop Phonsie Cullinan of the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore bumps elbows outside the cathedral with parishioner James Murphy on Monday as in-person Mass returned.



Parishioners gather for Mass in Horeswood parish, New Ross, Co. Wexford.



Fr James Murphy photographs his congregation in Rosslare, Co. Wexford.



# to Mass across Republic



Parishioners rejoice outside the open door of Holy Cross Church in Dundrum parish, Dublin before attending public Mass.



Fr Michael Murtagh PP of Ballyroan parish in Dublin welcomes back his parishioners.



Fr John Bracken Co-PP of Dundrum parish distributes the Eucharist.



Administrator Fr Peter Finnerty in the Church of the Resurrection, Bayside, Dublin on Monday morning greets the congregation at the beginning of Mass. Photo: John McElroy.



Parishioners return for Mass at St Laurence O'Toole church in Kilmacud in Dublin.



Fr Gareth Byrne with Bernardine Mooney, Maureen and Joe Mooney, Mary and Liam Lally and Irene Culloty after Mass in St Gabriel's Church Dollymount, Dublin. Photo: John McElroy



The scene in St Gabriel's Church Dollymount, Dublin on Monday morning during Mass. Photo: John McElroy

Due to an influx of photos from across the Republic not all photos of the return to Mass could be featured, we will endeavour to do so in upcoming editions. Please send photos of your parish's return to Mass to [news@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:news@irishcatholic.ie)





Socially-distanced congregants at St Patrick's Church, Wicklow town, welcome Fr Donal Roche Adm. as he prepares to celebrate the first in-person Mass since Christmas. Photo: Susanna Braswell.



Parishioners outside St Mary's church in Westport, Co. Mayo, prepare to attend their first physically present Mass since December.



Parishioners receive the Eucharist in Portlaoise parish in Laois on Monday. Photo: Agnes Sasiada



Parishioners and Fr John Dunphy PP are pictured at the reopening of St Clare's Church in Graiguecullen and Killeslin parish in Carlow in Kildare and Leighlin diocese for Mass.

# Now is precisely the time to talk about a new Ireland



Everyone who has an interest in a peaceful transition to a more democratic Ireland ought to engage on unity, writes **Fr Joe McVeigh**

**M**artin Mansergh, in his recent column in *The Irish Catholic*, argues that this is not the time to be talking about a border poll. I totally disagree with him. The Belfast/Good Friday agreement of 1998 makes provision for the holding of a border referendum. It removed the unionist veto over any constitutional change in the status of the northern state. It is now 23 years since the signing of that international treaty. Much has changed since then. A major change occurred in 2016 when the Conservative government took the UK out of the European Union. This had major repercussions for Ireland and for the Good Friday Agreement.

The Brexit vote of 2016 put the issue of the parti-

tion of Ireland back on the political agenda. While a narrow majority in England and Wales voted to leave the EU, 55% of the citizens of the North voted to Remain.

**“The Brexit vote of 2016 put the issue of the partition of Ireland back on the political agenda”**

There are three main reasons why it is important to engage in discussions about the future Ireland we want to create for future generations.

1. Discussions on the prospect of a unity referendum are needed now to prepare the ground for securing the referendum and ensuring that the process is properly informed. We must avoid repeating the mistake of the Brexit referendum;
2. The political landscape has changed since Brexit. Failure to recognise that and act is a failure of leadership;
3. Those who say that now is not the time because unionism will react negatively are in fact undermining the democratic provisions of the Good Friday Agreement. They are handing those who have always resisted change with a new veto. That is the antithesis of the GFA which removed the old unionist veto over constitutional change;

He or she would be a strange kind of republican or democrat who would be unwilling to engage in discussions about our future. It is time for all parties on the island of Ireland to engage in discussions about the kind of new Ireland they want to bring about. Now is the time to talk about the necessary preparation for a border poll. A civic group of concerned citizens called 'Ireland's Future', which I support, have led the discussion about a new and inclusive Ireland.

## Right time

Now is the right time especially in light of the Brexit debacle to be talking about the shape of the new Ireland that we hope to build. The Good Friday Agreement provides the basis for political change by peaceful means. Everyone who has an interest in a peaceful future and a peaceful transition to a more democratic Ireland ought to be engaging in the debate. Already, some unionists have shown a willingness to engage and that is to be welcomed.

Those like Martin Mansergh and the leaders of the present Dublin coalition Government who are opposed are ignoring the reality of the change that has taken place and that is taking place and the absolute need to prepare for the future through ongoing dialogue and debate.

**Fr Joe McVeigh is based in St Michael's parish, Enniskillen and Lisbellaw, Co. Fermanagh.**





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The View



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Baroness  
**Nuala O'Loan**  
The View



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# Putting the ‘gift’ in Ireland’s gab



Martina Purdy and Elaine Kelly turn from walking to talking with their new podcast, writes **Jason Osborne**

**W**hile interest in St Patrick has never died out on this island, it's certainly enjoying something of a rebirth under the guidance of Martina Purdy and Elaine Kelly. First with their 'Saint Patrick's Way' pilgrimages, now with their brand new Saint Patrick Podcast, and working in conjunction with the great saint, they aim to "re-evangelise" these shores through honest, heart-to-heart conversations.

The podcast was developed as part of the effort to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Saint Patrick Centre in Downpatrick, with episodes going to air twice a month until next St Patrick's Day.

"When Martina and Tim Campbell [Director of the St Patrick Centre] came up with the idea of it, I was thinking, 'Oh my gosh, what am I getting myself into?' Martina is a consummate media professional, you know her CV, it speaks for itself. My life before entering the sisters was more, kind of, a private thing. I was a barrister. Yes, I knew a lot of people but I never worked in the media really," Elaine Kelly says, explaining her initial reticence about the podcast format.

**“The Irish patron is very relevant to people’s current situations”**

"But I have to say, it's been a gift because I find we get an opportunity to speak to people in these amazing times. Our perspective is, if you understand, it's a little bit different, we're not after any agenda. Personally, for me and the same goes for Martina, we want to talk to people to see their perspective on various things – how are they?"

## Formula

According to Elaine, the formula for the podcast is one of genuine discussion. "There are no 'incendiary device' questions," she says, insisting that it's all about "getting to the heart of the person".

And interesting hearts they're seeking to reach too, their podcast's line-up already boasting TV



Elaine Kelly and Martina Purdy at the helm of the podcast.

presenter Eamonn Holmes, former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and veteran journalist Mary Kenny. Both Elaine and Martina express delight at the opportunity to get talking about oft-undiscussed things with their guests, such as "Patrick, spirituality, the meaning of life without scaring people, about faith without frightening them," in Martina's words.

"My boss at the centre said, 'Get Eamonn Holmes,' and I said, 'Look, we have no audience, and he has millions, so how am I supposed to get him?' So I didn't have the nerve," Martina explains.

"But then one night, I saw that Eamonn on Twitter said that he just wanted to talk rubbish with new people, so I messaged him and said, 'If you're serious about that, you can come and talk rubbish with Elaine and I. So, he said yes right away and that was great."

## Stories

Martina laughs as she recalls one of the stories Eamonn recounted on the podcast, which saw him late for school because his bus had been hijacked. Upon arriving at St Malachy's in Belfast, he was given detention because there were "no excuses" for being late to school.

"Eamonn was very funny," she says, "we really enjoyed him. He's a gentleman".

"We were amazed at how much time he gave us. He was just happy to talk about his life, connection to Belfast, his connection to his faith, his connection to Patrick, the schools and stuff," Elaine says.

Both Martina and Elaine say they'd like to have more women on the podcast, with *The Irish Catholic's* own Mary Kenny impressing them both with her depth and breadth of knowledge on a variety of topics, including one close to their hearts: pilgrimage.

"Mary Kenny was brilliant because she had written an article for the *Indo* which was put into the *Belfast Telegraph*, and she had a great perspective, very well researched on pilgrimages. She went on to tell us how in Ireland as a whole, it's pilgrimage territory. Very much so," Elaine says.

**“‘Eamonn was very funny,’ she says, ‘we really enjoyed him. He’s a gentleman’”**

Martina echoes this, saying "Well with her I just think she's so interesting, because she was kicked out of convent school at 16 and she led the contraceptive train in the 70s, but she's kind of come full circle and become, you know, she says

she goes to Mass, she's obviously a committed Catholic, but she's so interesting because she's been on this amazing journey but she can't shake off her Catholic upbringing and she doesn't want to.

"She's so refreshing because she can say what she likes pretty much – she's got a lot of street cred. She cuts through a lot of nonsense. So, we did enjoy talking to her, though we had a few technical problems with her with lawnmowers and things," she laughs.

## Dream

Both Martina and Elaine share the "dream" of securing Patti Scialfa, Bruce Springsteen's wife, for the podcast at some point, Elaine explaining that Patti's mother was born in Belfast, providing a point of local interest for the podcast.

The reaction to the podcast has been pleasing to them both so far, with people lauding the interviews on social media, but their main hope is that the conversations lead people into deeper examination of their own lives – much as the present pandemic and restrictions are doing.

"Since lockdown, pandemic, people are more kind of introspective – what is my life about? What am I doing? The things that used to feed people are all of a sudden shut down and you were kind of on your

own turf," Elaine says.

Relating all things back to St Patrick, Martina explains that the Irish patron is very relevant to people's current situations, and hence they try to keep the focus on him and bring him into the conversation.

"We're trying to get him back to being the Christian hero that he is. The one thing about Patrick that a lot of people don't realise is that he saw his father's servants murdered before him. You know, when he was kidnapped, it wasn't a bloodless thing. Patrick was so forgiving despite the trauma. And also we saw, with Covid and lockdown, Patrick found God in the isolation and the quiet of the countryside," Martina says.

**“Both Martina and Elaine share the ‘dream’ of securing Patti Scialfa, Bruce Springsteen’s wife, for the podcast at some point”**

"To be honest, I really wasn't aware how interested people were or weren't about the podcast, but we just put them out there. I certainly find, I mean, having at first been like, 'Martina, I hope this works. I hope people enjoy this'. Having initially had that reservation – I've really enjoyed them and we're getting some amazing people. But we're interested in everybody," Elaine says.

With St Patrick's help and through genuine conversations, the hope is that everybody will soon be interested in them, too.

**“It’s been a gift because I find we get an opportunity to speak to people in these amazing times”**



# A window into religious belief during lockdown



Catholics protest the ban on public worship in Cork on April 29, ahead of this week's lifting of the ban. Photo: Cillian Kelly



**For many people, their religious faith increased during Covid-19 restrictions, writes David Quinn**

**W**e have been collectively living through the most unusual period of our lives since we went into the first lockdown in March of last year following the emergence in Wuhan, China, of Covid-19.

## Freedom

All parts of life have been affected, including the day-to-day things we had previously completely taken for granted, like the freedom to go into a pub or restaurant, attend a match, drop into a friend, have a big get-together in your house, attend school, college, and, of course, Mass.

We all wonder about the extent to which things will return to complete normality after this is all over. There are some things we hope don't get back to 'normal', like

long commutes to the office every day, or environmental degradation. Parents been able to spend more time with their children.

This is why there is talk of trying to 'build back better'.

## Religious faith

How will the Church emerge from it all? In fact, what has been happening to people's religious faith during the long periods of lockdown when we have been unable to attend Mass? The Iona Institute, (which I head), has commissioned a series of polls during lockdown to try and find out the answer to this question. The polls have been carried out by Amarach Research, and some of the results have been reported in this newspaper as they came out.

The results of the latest poll offer fresh insights into how Catholics have been practising their faith when they could not meet communally.

**“Many people have died because of Covid-19 and the lives of billions of people have been disrupted”**

For example, have people been praying more or less during the lockdown? The answer is that 15% of adults say they are praying more than usual, while 5% are praying less.

Among those who were praying anyway, the number has risen by 26%.

Has the pandemic made people's faith weaker or stronger? This is an interesting one, because when natural disaster happens, and unnecessary suffering occurs, we often question the nature, or even the existence of God. 'How can a good God let bad things happen?', we ask.

Many people have died because of Covid-19 and the lives of billions of people have been disrupted. Many have fallen into worse mental health as a result, untold numbers have lost their jobs, there are reports of increased domestic abuse, and so on.

Therefore, you might almost expect that people's religious faith would have weakened because of the pandemic. In fact, 12% say their faith has strengthened, whereas only 8% say it has become weaker.

Why is the number who say their faith has grown stronger half as high again as the number who say it has weakened?

## Believers

We can only speculate, but one reason could be that people seek meaning and purpose in suffering. They rebel against the idea that it means nothing and no good can come from it.

Among people who were religious before the pandemic began, 18% say it has made their faith stronger. Another reason may be that in times of trouble, we fall back on God more. Certainly, that should be the response of religious believers.

Similarly, 20% of respondents think they will be more 'spiritual' after the pandemic. 'Spiritual' is a

very nebulous, ambiguous term, but in this case, it probably means they will try to be less materialistic.

A quarter of people who were attending Mass regularly before the pandemic began say their mental health has suffered as a result, probably from the increased social isolation.

This is one of the costs of lockdown. We hear a lot about how lockdown can save lives, but it can do lots of damage as well.

What will happen to Mass-attendance now that we are able to go to Mass again, albeit with a cap on numbers?

A previous Iona/Amarach poll found that 4% of previous Mass-goers said they would not come back, and another 19% said they did not know.

**“Back in June the fear factor was still extremely strong and no-one had been vaccinated”**

This latest poll didn't ask that exact question, but 65% of people who were going to Mass regularly before the pandemic said they would go to Mass tomorrow if they were allowed. (The poll was conducted just before the latest easing of restrictions).

That's fairly encouraging. Last June, when we were first let back to Mass, only 27% said they would

'go tomorrow' if that could.

Back in June the fear factor was still extremely strong and no-one had been vaccinated. But now almost all elderly and vulnerable people have received at least one vaccination and therefore the link between daily cases and daily deaths is much weaker than it was.

In addition, the risk of attending public worship was never what we were led to believe. So long as numbers were kept limited and other safety measures adhered to, it was actually very safe which is why very few European countries banned public worship, other than in the first lockdown last year.

In any case, we should take a certain amount of cheer from the poll findings because they show that for many people, their religious faith has increased during lockdown, not the other way around.

## Fearful

The real test will, of course, be when we can come back to Mass as normal. Will some people become permanently fearful of the dangers of infection in crowded places? Will others have simply drifted away? Or maybe parishes might become proactive and invite those people who think we need to be more 'spiritual' to consider coming to church regularly maybe for the first time ever and consider the benefits of belonging to a spiritual community devoted to following the example of Jesus, even if we don't all do that as well as we might.



# Springtime in the Church will offer a fresh way to proclaim the Gospel

## The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester  
O'Flynn OFM Cap.



Some of the doors that have kept people locked in have been opened in recent days. But there is still a long wait until all doors will be opened. Religion has a huge role to play in sustaining hope by remembering the bigger picture of life.

**“On the Mount of the Ascension the apostles were told not to be looking up to the skies but to look out to the world as a field of mission”**

We are celebrating the Ascension of the Lord to heaven. St Luke tells us that it was 40 days after the Resurrection. In the Bible, 40 usually refers to a time of preparation. The Risen Lord appeared in various ways to the disciples to help them in the transition from knowing him in human flesh to knowing him as the unseen God through faith. “Blessed are those who have not seen yet believe.” After Jesus it would truly be a New Age...a new mission, a new power and a new hope.

### A New Mission

On the Mount of the Ascension the apostles were told not to be looking up to the skies but to look out to the world as a field of mission. “Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time”. That mission and promise extends to our time. God is not just up there, but

God is with us and in us. As Pope Francis put it, each one of us not only has a mission but each one is a mission to bring God's love and compassion to others. “I have no hands now but yours.”

### A New Power

Jesus promised, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.” Next week we will celebrate Pentecost. See how the power of the Spirit changed the apostles... from ignorance to belief, from fear to courage, from despondency to joy.

### A New Hope

The Ascension opens up the doors of heaven for us. This is beautifully expressed in the preface for the feast. “He ascended, not to distance himself from our lowly state but that we, his members, might be confident of following him where he, our Head and Founder, has gone.”

The renowned scientist, Stephen Hawkins, described human life as “chemical scum on an average-sized planet, orbiting around a very average-sized star, in the outer suburb of one of a million galaxies.” Chemical scum! No, thank you! Give me our beautiful, meaningful and hope-filled Christian religion any day. Planets and galaxies suggest a big story. But religion offers a story even bigger.

### A Winter of the spirit

The restrictions on normal life since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic have been severe. People lost their jobs, their business, forms of entertainment, recreation, freedom to travel and so on. Truly it has been a winter of the spirit. But winter is not altogether a

bad season. Winter gave the garden a rest period just as sleep restores our energy. A frosty night at the right time transforms fallen leaves and other matter into enriching compost. Winter is a great time for hacking away briars and unwanted roots. During the lockdown, creative people found new ways of shopping and communicating, new ways of raising funds and taking exercise. In many instances, things will never be the same again.

Maybe this new way of thinking will be of benefit to the Church in refreshing its mission. Pope Francis wrote that certain rules or precepts which were very effective in their time no longer help to shape people's lives. Certain customs which reflected a bygone society no longer serve as a means of communicating the Gospel.

**“Springtime in the Church will offer a fresh way of revitalising the living proclamation of the Gospel”**

The age profile of those who come to Mass is startling. Very few candidates are entering seminaries or religious life. The younger generation have lost the impact of religious vocabulary. They have not strayed away from their faith but from the faith of their parents or grandparents. It surely is a winter season in the Church, but when winter comes can spring be far behind? History shows that the lowest times produced the greatest saints and transformers. Springtime in the Church will offer a fresh way of revitalising the living proclamation of the Gospel.

### Trust in the Holy Spirit

At the time of his Ascension, when Jesus told the apostles, “you will be my witnesses



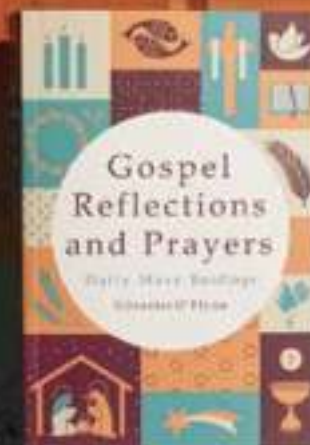
Christ's ascent to heaven is depicted in a stained-glass window at St Mary of the Isle Church in Long Beach, New York, USA. Photo: Gregory Shemitz

not only in Jerusalem but to the ends of the earth”, they must have felt totally flummoxed. They were told to gather together in prayer to prepare for the coming of the Holy Spirit. And the rest as we say is history.

The Ascension is dated on the fortieth day and Pentecost, a harvest festival, is the fiftieth. The nine days in between must be the original novena. For all of us it must be a week of intense prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to come and renew the heart of the Church and thereby renew the face of the earth.

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### Prayer

With St Paul we pray. “May God enlighten the eyes of our minds so that we can see what hope his call holds for us, what rich graces he has promised the saints will inherit, and how infinitely great is the power that he has exercised for us believers.”



# Smiles abound at Holy Communion



St Brigid's Primary School, Altamuskin pupils Brian, Aoife, Christopher, Molly, Jack and Catherine with Fr O'Dwyer, School Principal Sinead Gormley and P4 teacher Ryan Lynch pictured at their First Holy Communion in St Mary's Dunmoyle. Photos: Jason McCartan.



The Mullin family celebrate Catherine's big day.



Jack and the McCrory family.



Molly McCarville with mum Donna, dad Declan and little brother Déaglán.



The McCrory family.



The Conroy family.



Eamon and David Mullin serve Fr Michael O'Dwyer his morning coffee before the Holy Communion service in Dunmoyle.



Christopher and the Patterson family.



Aoife, Molly, Catherine, Brian, Christopher and Jack with P4 teacher Ryan Lynch and School Principal Sinead Gormley wait to receive their ice creams after St Brigid's Primary School, Altamuskin, First Holy Communion in Dunmoyle.



# The Mass ban and the drift towards a new form of totalitarianism



Fr Gerard Quirke celebrates the Eucharist at a Mass Rock on Easter Sunday, 2021, to highlight the ban on people attending Mass. Photo: Seán Molloy.



The return to public worship is welcome, but now is not the time for silence and inaction, writes **Dr Philip Gonzales**

**A**re we now living in a health dictatorship and one that is targeting religious services and public worship? These questions can no longer be avoided. With the Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin, I would like to express my “deep concern” over the criminalisation of public worship and outdoor Confession. This is a slippery and devious slope. We must call a spade a spade and say that a totalitarian precedent is being set. It is time for Catholics (and our religious brothers and sisters from all religions) to vigorously — yet peacefully and nonviolently — voice their concern over the way in which the Government in the Republic is

responding to the Covid-19 crisis. This is not the time for inaction and silence. It is the moment to show our deep solidarity as members of the body of Christ; a body which is communal and incarnate and that finds its life and centre within the sacramental life of the Church.

**“There is far more to human communal life than the biological. But how can the Government have really lost sight of this?”**

The Eucharist is essential and, indeed, as the great theologians Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar understood, the Eucharist institutes the Church. There is nothing more essential than Christ. There is more than simple bodily health. There is the health of the spirit which, for Catholics, is to feed off the body and blood of Christ. The Church has been nothing but cautious and compliant and all rightful caution can be met without excluding spiritual health.

## Believing citizens

A government that can no longer see — or care — about this aspect of its believing citizens is one that no longer understands or sees the common good and the essential nature of freedom to worship, not just for Catholics, but for all its believing citizens within the Irish Republic. Every governmental decision is being made on the sole basis of ‘biosecurity,’ and this is the bare minimum of human life and what it means to be human, communal, political, and religious.

There is far more to human communal life than the biological. But how can the Government have really lost sight of this? How is its stance towards public worship been the most extreme in the European Union? Can philosophy tell us anything about the kind of base biological politics and decision-making being practiced by the Government and its disastrous and inhuman decision to criminalise public worship, the Mass, and Confession? My position is that it can and that the response of the Irish Government to the Covid-19 crisis, although the most extreme in the EU, is part and parcel of a larger political shift in



Philosopher Giorgio Agamben has warned that the Church’s response to the pandemic has too easily forgotten the work of mercy.

Western liberal democracies and their drift towards a new form of totalitarianism. To understand this drift and what is happening in Ireland today and, indeed, around the world we must look at one of the major discoveries in political and juristic theory in the 20th Century, for totalitarianism feeds off our ignorance of history.

## State of exception

This drift is rooted in a politics that is more and more governed by the ‘state of exception.’ The most important political theorist in this regard is Carl Schmitt (1888-1985). Mr Schmitt was the leading jurist of the Weimar Republic and he became known as the ‘crown

jurist of the Third Reich.’ In 1922 he wrote a landmark book entitled *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, in which he famously and ominously declared “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception.” His basic point is that within politics there are always emergencies, exceptions, and events that cannot be foreseen and handled within the normal political order. And when these emergencies or exceptions happen rapid decisions are required that must bypass the normal deliberations of the workings of Western bureaucratic

**“The Irish constitution of 1937 has a narrow provision for the state of emergency that only allows the government to declare a national emergency “in time of war or armed rebellion”**





A man holds a sign outside Sts Anne and Mary's Cathedral in Cork on April 14 protesting the ban on public worship. Photo: Cillian Kelly.

democracies. This is seen in the fact that within the various constitutions of Western democracies there are articles or provisions for 'states of emergencies,' 'states of siege,' 'states of war,' 'martial law,' and so on.

### Suspend

There are articles and provisions in the law that suspend the normal working of the law, our rights, and freedoms. Historically, this is most notoriously seen in Article 48 of the Weimar Republic that allowed for a suspension of the law in the event that public security was under threat. Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party convinced President Paul von Hindenburg to trigger article 48 after the burning of the Reichstag, a fire that the Nazis alleged was set by the communists. This allowed for the Nazi regime to lawfully enact a continuous 'state of exception' that lasted the duration of their power. Under this legally valid suspension of the law came about some of the most horrific crimes ever committed against humanity.

Mr Schmitt joined the Nazi party in 1933 and devoted his legal brilliance

to justifying Hitler's killings of his political opponents as well as purging Jewish influence from jurisprudence. It would be easy to dismiss Mr Schmitt and his legal theory of the exception as a mere horrific Nazi episode which happened once and could never be repeated.

**“There are articles and provisions in the law that suspend the normal working of the law, our rights, and freedoms.**

As controversial as Mr Schmitt is, he is largely acknowledged as one of the greatest legal theorists in the 20th Century, by thinkers on both the right and the left. He seemed to hit the pulse of the development of Western liberal democracies in the latter half of the 20th Century and 21st Century. The Jewish philosopher, Jacob Taubes, suggests that Mr Schmitt's political theories were used in the founding of the State of Israel. It has likewise been argued

that he had a significant influence on American neoconservatism and its justification of its 'war on terror' as seen in the political thinking of Alberto Gonzales and John Yoo. An effect that was seen in the US *Patriot Act* of 2001. This law perversely erased any legal status of suspected terrorist detainees to the point of them not even having the rights of criminals charged with a crime or having the status of a prisoner of war (POW), as defined by the Geneva Convention. In a word, they did not exist before the law. Since 9/11 and the 'war on terror' the 'state of emergency' is becoming more and more the norm in Western governments' responses to perceived terrorist threats or otherwise. Mr Schmitt's theories, however, are not confined to the West but have also had an enormous impact on the Chinese government — that monstrous hybrid of capitalism/communism — since Xi Jinping became leader of the Chinese Communist Party, as seen in theorists like Liu Xiaofeng, Wang Shaoguang, Jiang Shigong.

In present day Europe the world-renowned philosopher, Giorgio Agamben,



The Nazis used the theories of Carl Schmitt to justify unseizable crimes.

**“A government that can no longer see – or care – about this aspect of its believing citizens is one that no longer understands or sees the common good and the essential nature of freedom to worship”**

is using Mr Schmitt's theory of the 'state of exception' to critique the current workings of Western democracies drift towards totalitarianism. Dr Agamben brilliantly showed how the 'state of exception' was used to justify the *Patriot Act*, and he was heralded as a kind of intellectual hero in doing so. Dr Agamben has recently caused enormous shockwaves when, at the outset of the pandemic, he was highly critical of the excessive response by Western democracies in the wholesale freezing of civil liberties in a universal 'state of exception' the likes of which the world has yet to see. He was also critical of the Catholic Church's response that too easily forgot the work of mercy, visiting the sick to the point of risking one's life for love of neighbour, as is integral to Christian teaching.

### Biosecurity

Dr Agamben is largely acknowledged to be one of Europe's greatest living philosophers, if not the greatest. But with his response to Covid-19 some are now dismissing him as a raving old man. Yet, what he is saying is that there is far more to human life than our obsession with 'biosecurity,' and that if fathers cannot be there for the birth of their children, if we cannot bury our dead, if we cannot receive our Lord, if we cannot love our neighbour and be with them in their time of sickness, then something perverse is going on. The trick of the theory

of the exception is that it tells us it will save the good by suspending the good, save our freedom by suspending our freedom. But this is false, and we must ask what is going on.

**“Who of us would have ever thought that in the 21st Century that we would be living in a country where it can be made a criminal offence by the stroke of a pen to receive the Eucharist”**

The Irish constitution of 1937 has a narrow provision for the state of emergency that only allows the government to declare a national emergency “in time of war or armed rebellion.” So, in mid-March of last year the Health (Preservation and Protection and other emergency measures in the public interest) Act 2020 was enacted. This gives the power for “far reaching regulations” to combat Covid-19, to the point of even allowing “detention and isolation of persons in certain circumstances.” This part has come under strong criticism by the Irish Council of Civil Liberties. And now, the criminalisation of public worship and outdoor Confession. This is the logic of the 'state of exception' to the core. Who of us would have ever thought

that in the 21st Century that we would be living in a country where it can be made a criminal offence by the stroke of a pen to receive the Eucharist, where to confess one's sins out of sorrow and love is a crime, where it is forbidden to bury the dead, where a father is not allowed to be present at the birth of his child? The good is not saved by forbidding what is most human about us and our freedoms are not secured by taking them away in the name of a 'common good' that knows nothing of the meaning of our communal and religious nature. When this is done, we are reduced to biological beings that are no longer human because all decisions are made solely on the basis of physical health. “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception.” In Ireland this is taking the form of a health dictatorship which makes all decisions only through the narrow lens of the health 'exception' of Covid-19. In these decisions what is human is forgotten and what is religious is criminalised.

We returned to Mass this week, but has the precedent been set for our future...?

**①** Dr Philip Gonzales is a lecturer in philosophy at St Patrick's College, Maynooth. This article is part of a new regular column where philosophers from Maynooth Drs Gaven Kerr and Philip Gonzales offer accessible introductory thoughts on perennial themes in the history of philosophy and the Catholic tradition.





There is a huge debt to Irish missionaries who have quietly ministered to Irish people incarcerated abroad, writes **Chai Brady**

**P**ope Francis has often spoke of the need for reform in prison systems, to tackle the root cause of crime and to assist people in their efforts to reintegrate into society after serving their sentence. The roadblocks to re-engaging with society prevent ex-convicts “from regaining the full exercise of their dignity” he said.

Taking into account the challenges faced by prisoners who exit prisons in Ireland, there are further complications for Irish people who are imprisoned abroad.

The ICPO (Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas) was established in 1985 by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, in response to serious concerns about the circumstances of Irish citizens arrested and in detention in England during that time.

It seeks to provide information, support, and advice to all Irish citizens and to their families. The work has grown considerably since the 1980s, with the organisation assisting almost 1,200 prisoners across 30 countries.

**“A whole range of issues can impact upon the level of need and the type of support that we provide”**

The numbers of people they support has remained broadly unchanged over the years, with 80-85% being imprisoned in the UK. There are also significant numbers in the US, Australia and Europe with some in the Middle East, Asia, Africa and Central and South America.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, the Coordinator of the ICPO Brian Hanley said the nature of the support they provide varies depending on individual circumstances, country of imprisonment, length of sentence, the conditions in prison and the level of family support.

“A whole range of issues can impact upon the level of need and the type of support that we provide,” Mr Hanley explains, “And ultimately, the ICPO since its inception has really been about providing practical pasto-

# Upholding the dignity of Irish prisoners overseas

ral support and care, meeting people where they're at.

“It might be information and advice on issues such as repatriation, licenses, discrimination, or perhaps advocacy around healthcare, and resettlement.”

## Support

Family support is a very important part of the ICPO's work, particularly as the costs associated with keeping in contact with loved ones are at times extortionate. “I'm sure the circumstances for any family with a loved one in prison are undoubtedly challenging and this in many ways can be exacerbated by time and distance and increased costs, perhaps additional worries about the circumstances and health and conditions and so on,” Mr Hanley said.

“We provide supports with family information days, assistance around prison visitation, getting information and facilitating communication between prisoners and their families.”

The ICPO is able to do this through its hardship fund, which provides financial assistance for families to stay in contact but also even for basics such as the provision of food, water, medicines and toiletries.

Mr Hanley said: “In lots of other cases it might be around assisting

with communication grants for phone credit or stamps, so that families can stay in contact and not become strangers or estranged with one another through time and distance. So, it's really important that we facilitate those and support those bonds through those grants where we can.”

Their 2019 annual report revealed there were 10,000 letters, phone calls, emails, to, from or on behalf of ICPO and Irish people in prison overseas.

“One thing that strikes me, and I didn't fully appreciate until I took this job, was how many people in prison particularly if they're there for

a long time have nobody. The levels of loneliness and isolation: It remains remarkable to me how many people for whom their ICPO caseworker is their only contact with the outside world,” he said.

Mr Hanley said he visited a prisoner a few years ago who hadn't received a visit for 16 years “so it can be really quite stark”.

Resettlement is another part of their work, in which they would help prisoners plan for their release. “It might be that they are looking to be referred or to get plugged into services here when they're released, whether

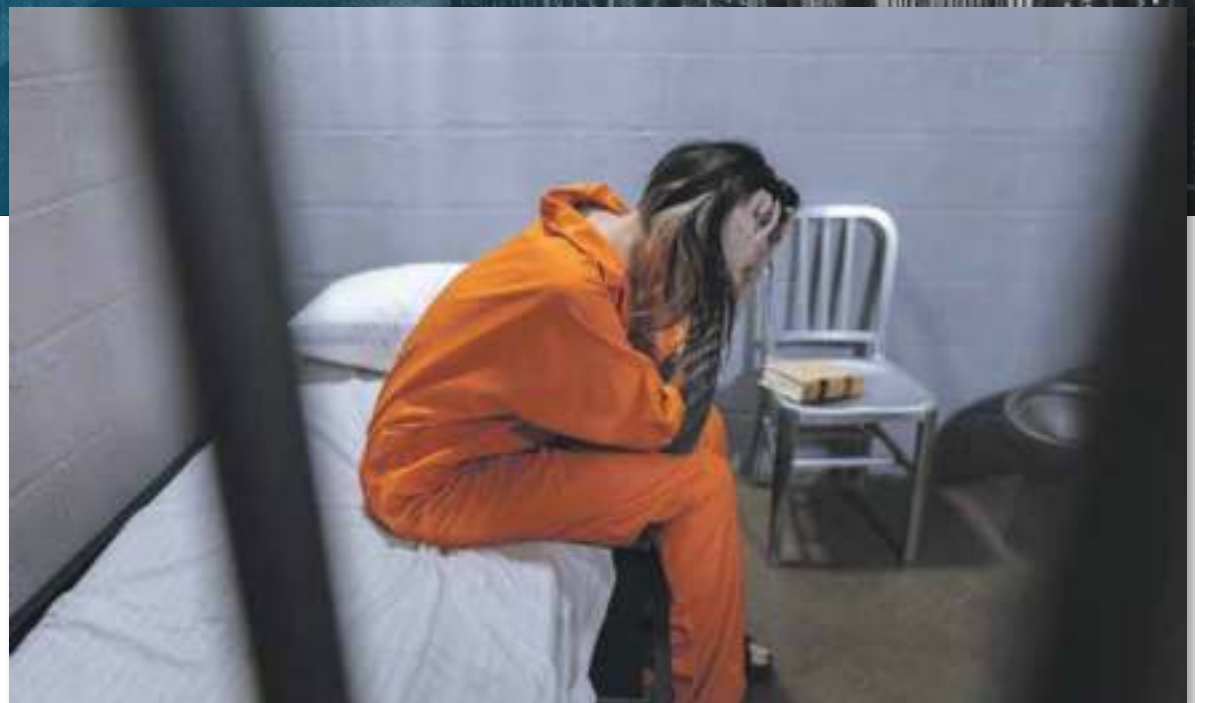
it's around vocational education, be it counselling or access to welfare benefits, particularly those who've been away for a lot for a very, very long time, and maybe were deported back here,” Mr Hanley said.

## Interest

“It's also in society's interest that these people referred to particular resettlement supports and post release support, as it does reduce the likelihood of reoffending. And it's in everybody's interest in that case.”

In some cases, a person who is deported back to Ireland may not have lived here for 40-50 years and don't have any family that can support their transition back into society and offer them a place to stay someone who cares for them.

“We do work with a number of other agencies in terms of accessing benefits, education, vocational assistance, counselling, and then the caseworkers would provide



**“We provide supports with family information days, assistance around prison visitation, getting information and facilitating communication between prisoners and their families”**



## “In some cases, a person who is deported back to Ireland may not have lived here for 40-50 years”

prisons around the world, with Mr Hanley reluctant to name any country or region as there could be a variety of prisons with different standards.

“Conditions certainly in some countries are an issue. In terms of our hardship grants, we can get grants to people, sometimes they’ll have to buy food, possibly water, toiletries, basic necessities like that, which are really important things in terms of the inherent dignity of every human person, that they would have access to those basic necessities,” he said. “And for whatever reason, they might not always be available, due to overcrowding and conditions and a whole assortment of other reasons. So where we can provide support in that respect, we certainly do.”

**“It remains remarkable to me how many people for whom their ICPO caseworker is their only contact with the outside world”**

“For families, it’s practical things like the distance, even time zones, even if you have a loved one in Australia, the concern might not be the conditions but the challenge is the cost of visiting or the time of day that you might get a call or not be able to get your son or daughter or husband or wife or whomever it may be. So they all bring with them their own particular challenges and of course, I’d say the length of time that somebody has been living in a particular country prior to the arrest maybe they’re only traveling or passing through, but others may have been living there for a period of time, and may or may not have support on the ground and all those things factored in.”

Regarding an Irish person receiving support from someone living in the foreign country, Mr Hanley says there is a “huge debt” owed to Irish missionaries. With many aging missionaries returning home or dying abroad, he said this “will be a challenge in years to come”.

“We have a huge debt to Irish missionaries, in terms of the visitation that they would have provided to many of our clients, providing on the ground practical witness, care and supports with people who might be in some of the most challenging conditions imaginable,” Mr Hanley said.

“They are willing to spend four or five hours driving, getting on a bus and traveling out of the city to wait for an hour and a half to queue to get into a prison to spend an hour and a half talking to somebody and providing that support, maybe bringing money for their prison canteen, for some basic necessities and things like that. Then obviously, with the prisoner’s permission, the missionary can let us know how they’re getting on, and if they need any further advice and support: it is certainly something that will be very hard to replace.”

He added that the Irish missionaries he has worked with are “incredibly

unassuming”, but the level of impact they have with the ICPO’s clients “is hard to quantify or measure”.

“I can think of so many right now, helping people to endure and helping people to persevere, and having people to withstand the difficulties particularly in those darker early days. Being that constant and that presence, someone that’s willing to come and sit with them is a huge gift that they give quietly.”

The ICPO had heightened concern for prisoners as the Covid-19 pandemic spread across the world as many are particularly vulnerable due to their confinement.

“I think what we noticed was an increase really in the level of mental health strain being experienced by many of our clients, many of whom might have underlying vulnerabilities,” said Mr Hanley.

“The majority would have been subjected to heightened restrictions and lockdown during the pandemic, meaning they are often spending 23 hours a day in their cells. So a priority for us, in addition to the individual casework support via phone, letter and email, we would have increased the hardship fund grants to enable clients to stay in touch with loved ones and the ICPO.”

“There were certainly some prisons where the virus did get a hold and it was particularly worrying. We’ve supported clients in their 80s and 90s who were particularly fearful of contracting the virus in a confined setting.”

### Concerns

Mr Hanley said: “On a number of occasions, we would have needed to contact prison health departments to raise concerns, maybe the physical and mental health of individual prisoners in relation to the virus, being locked down, and so on and so forth.”

A few months ago the ICPO dealt with a challenging situation in which an Irish prisoner who served his sentence abroad was deported back to Ireland after having lived 50 years in the country in which he was incarcerated. Although he was looking at returning to a country with no supports and facing potential homelessness, fortunately the ICPO managed to get him into quarantine and subsequently referred on to other services.

Speaking about the ICPO and how they adapted and continued to operate during the pandemic, he said: “I think overall as an organisation we adapted reasonably well in terms of working from home. Prisons came on a long way in many respects in terms of new methods of communication, that

they afforded prisoners, whether by secure email or even video calls in some instances.

“One particular challenge for the ICPO was our inability to undertake prison visits. Between the London and Maynooth offices, we would visit approximately 1,000 Irish prisoners overseas every year.

**“We do the best we can in all cases but I wouldn’t pretend that every situation has a happy ending and everything has worked out perfectly”**

“That has been something obviously we haven’t been able to do and very much look forward to being able to do again, that’s an important part of our work to go and to visit, to listen, to build a relationship and to understand their circumstance, to offer help where we can, whether resettlement or otherwise, or relay messages to family members, discuss how they’re getting on with their courses in prison and the whole assortment of issues that come up that are often more easily shared in a face to face capacity.”

For the ICPO, they are continuing to minister to those who are often forgotten and left behind by society, and while the prisoners are serving sentences for crimes they committed, their dignity is being maintained through their efforts with the help of the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference, the Department of Justice, the Society of St Vincent de Paul and the Sisters of Mercy.



a degree of accompaniment and support to those that want it,” Mr Hanley explained. “There are challenges, of course, and it isn’t a panacea unfortunately, and for some, I think particularly if they have underlying health or addiction issues, it is more challenging in terms of their resettlement”.

**“There were certainly some prisons where the virus did get a hold and it was particularly worrying”**

“We do the best we can in all cases but I wouldn’t pretend that every situation has a happy ending and everything has worked out perfectly. But in many cases, there are certainly positive outcomes for people and they get on with their lives and move on from what has happened.”

Last week the ICPO expressed concern after the publication of the Minister for Justice and Equality Helen McEntee’s annual report on the operation of the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Acts (1995 and 1997). The report provides annual figures on the number of prisoners transferred into and out of the State. It revealed that no Irish prisoner was transferred into the State from an overseas prison for the fourth year in a row, and three quarters of those who applied to transfer to an Irish prison were refused last year.

Mr Hanley said the 2020 figures “shine a light on what is at this point, a barely-functioning system”.

“These numbers are unprecedented and run contrary to the Government’s stated policy that prisoners should be permitted to serve their sentences close to their families – not least because of the humanitarian benefit to prisoner’s families but also because of the improved resettlement outcomes such family engagement and supported release programmes have for society. The system has essentially ground to a halt and Irish people in prison overseas and their families here in Ireland feel utterly let down by the State.”

### Transfer

Mr Hanley continued: “Even the number of people applying to transfer into the State points to a broken system. Eight applications were received in 2020; whereas five years ago the number of applications was double that. Irish prisoners overseas are coming to the harsh realisation that the opportunity to serve their remaining sentence close to their families and support network is no longer a possibility.”

He described this as “short-sighted, as prisoners who receive regular visits from families have been shown to be much less likely to reoffend”.

For families, having someone incarcerated overseas is a huge emotional struggle and undoubtedly this is exacerbated by a Government who are seemingly unwilling to expedite a required amendment to the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Act, which was highlighted by a Supreme Court decision in 2016.

In the meantime, prisoners can face very challenging conditions in



Coordinator of the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas, Brian Hanley.





# Out&About

## Striking prayerful poses



**ANTRIM:** Class P3 of St John's Primary School Carnlough are pictured after receiving the Sacrament of first Confession in St John the Evangelist Church, Carnlough.



**DERRY:** Fr Stephen Quinn of the Discalced Carmelite community Termonbacca, joins stewards monitoring proceedings at the Sister Clare Crockett retreat, which took place April 19-25.



**KERRY:** Members of St John's Parish Youth Group, Tralee, are pictured busily packing envelopes for St John's Communion Candidates with rosary beads and an image of Our Lady of the Wayside.

### IN SHORT

#### Archbishop Neary welcomes Knock inclusion in pandemic prayer marathon

Archbishop Michael Neary of Tuam has welcomed the inclusion of Knock, the international Marian Shrine, as one of thirty shrines around the world invited by Pope Francis to be part of the Pope's marathon of prayer for the end to the pandemic.

In a statement, Archbishop Neary said that Knock Shrine "welcomes the Holy Father's heartfelt wish that the month of May will be dedicated to a 'marathon' of prayer, to ask for the end of the pandemic".

Pope Francis launched the marathon –

which will run throughout May – at the Vatican May 1, during which he blessed special rosaries, one of which will be sent out to the Marian Shrine at Knock.

The Pope will also conclude the month of prayer from the Vatican on 31 May. The Pope has assigned a special intention for each day of the month.

The rosary from Knock on will take place Monday May 10, with the special intention of prayer for all people with disabilities.

Archbishop Michael Neary will preside, assisted by the Parish Priest of Knock and Rector of the International Shrine, Fr Richard Gibbons, as the rosary is recited at 5.00pm on Monday 10 May. It will be live streamed on the Knock Shrine website <https://www.knockshrine.ie/watch-live/> and on the Knock Shrine Facebook page.

[knockshrine.ie/watch-live/](https://www.knockshrine.ie/watch-live/) and on the Knock Shrine Facebook page.

#### Accord launches first online counselling service

Bishop Denis Nulty launched May 5 Accord's first online counselling service to support individuals and couples experiencing difficulties in their relationships.

To support this initiative, the Catholic marriage care service has commissioned a new digital media and local radio advertising campaign across the country to promote its online counselling service to prospective clients.

Welcoming the new service, Bishop Nulty, President of Accord CLG, said, it is the first

time in Accord's near sixty years' service that it will operate "its specialist counselling services online to those who, for whatever reason, are unable to travel to an Accord centre to access in person counselling".

"In launching the new online counselling service we hope to maximise accessibility to individuals and couples experiencing challenges in their relationships, even if they are unable to physically travel to see us."

Online counselling appointments can be accommodated every day from 9.30am through to 9.30pm. Those interested in availing of the service should access [accord.ie](https://accord.ie) or make contact with Accord CLG's administration team on [onlinecounselling@accord.ie](mailto:onlinecounselling@accord.ie).



Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**ANTRIM:** The staff and volunteers at Blest – a community for Catholic female students in Queen’s University Belfast – show off their new sweatshirts, May 4.



**ANTRIM:** Mass is celebrated by Fr Dominic McGrattan, chaplain to the Knights of St Columbanus in Queen’s University Belfast, in the chaplaincy prayer room – the first Mass celebrated there since its refurbishment, which was made possible by the Knights of St Columbanus – before they go on a hike, May 2.



Members of the QUB’s Knights of St Columbanus are pictured on top of Slieve Binnian in the Mourne mountains. Pictured (from left) are Dermot Brennan, Domhnall Lynam, (centre front) Gerard Scullion, James McKenna, Ruairi Crummey and Mark McDonnell, May 2.



Ruairi Crummey and Gerard Scullion are pictured with Fr Dominic McGrattan as they scale Slieve Binnian in the Mourne Mountains, May 2.



**TIPPERARY:** Cistercian monk Dom Kevin smiles as he receives a birthday cake from his superior, Dom Malachy Thompson, at Mount St Joseph Abbey, Roscrea, May 3.



**CLARE:** A smiling Fr Damian Casey OFM cuts into a cake in honour of the first Mass he celebrated since being ordained, in Ennis Cathedral, April 30.





**▲▼FERMANAGH:** Fr Joe McVeigh of St Michael's Parish Enniskillen and teacher Helen Cleary with the children of Tattygar Primary School, Enniskillen as they celebrate their first Holy Communion and Confession.



**KERRY:** Fr Seán Jones of St John's parish Tralee, helps prepare Caherleaheen National School second class students for their first Confession, which took place April 29.



**WATERFORD:** The Blessed Sacrament is exposed before a statue of Our Lady on the grounds of Glencomeragh House. Photos: Nodlaig Lillis.







▲▼ Fr Patrick Cahill, Spiritual Director at Holy Family Mission, leads community members of Holy Family Mission in a special Eucharistic Procession around the grounds of Glencomeragh House in the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore.



▲▼ Fr Patrick Cahill leads the community members of Holy Family Mission in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.



## 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

### Man charged in 2020 arson at Californian church

● Authorities announced charges against a suspected arsonist who investigators believe ignited an overnight fire that gutted much of Mission San Gabriel last July. Officials charged John David Corey Jr, 57, with a number of felony counts of arson, as well as possession of flammable material and first-degree residential burglary. Mr Corey was arrested last year for another “unrelated” arson attack in the San Gabriel Valley that occurred days after the July 11, 2020, fire at the famed mission. “It was during this separate incident that investigators deemed Mr Corey a person of interest in the Mission San Gabriel case,” the San Gabriel Fire Department said in a statement. “After a thorough investigation, investigators determined that Corey was responsible for the fire at the Mission San Gabriel.”

### Church cares for pandemic-hit poor in eastern India

● An archdiocese in the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand has launched a free lunch service for relatives of Covid-19 patients hospitalised in the state capital’s biggest hospital. The Archdiocese of Ranchi started the humanitarian initiative on May 4 outside the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS). More than 300 people receive a free lunch every day and the number will gradually increase in size,

Auxiliary Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas of Ranchi told UCA News on May 5. “Our Heavenly Father has been good to us and this goodness needs to be shared with the less fortunate, especially at this difficult moment,” Archbishop Felix Toppo of Ranchi said during a speech inaugurating the food stalls near RIMS. The free lunch consists of rice, lentils, chicken and vegetables with bottles of mineral water.

### Indian court takes up jailed Jesuit’s bail plea

● The High Court of western India’s Maharashtra state has asked for the response of a federal anti-terrorism agency to a bail application by an elderly Jesuit priest, seven months after it arrested and jailed him.

The court sought the response of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on May 4 after accepting the application of 84-year-old Father Stan Swamy, who pleaded for his release on bail from a prison in state capital Mumbai.

The priest, who suffers from Parkinson’s disease and other age-related illnesses, was arrested on Oct. 8 on charges of conspiring with the outlawed Maoist rebels against the Indian government. He was jailed on October 9.

A special NIA court has denied him bail twice — one sought on health grounds and the other on a regular basis.

### Ecuadorian bishops: corruption claims ‘without foundation’

● The Ecuadorian bishops have rejected claims that corruption was behind the unusual simultaneous resignation of a bishop and his presumptive successor. They said “false rumours” about the resignations aimed to discredit the Catholic Church’s pastoral work.

In reality, they said, Bishop Julio Parrilla Díaz of Riobamba resigned because of health reasons and because he had turned 75, the age established by canon law for bishops to submit their resignation.

For his part, Coadjutor Bishop-designate Fr Gerardo Nieves Loja, 57, resigned for personal reasons, the Ecuadorian Bishops’ Conference said in an April 28 statement titled “Debunking Falsehoods”.

The conference said that on March 25, Bishop Parrilla submitted his resignation to the Pope, citing his age limit and health problems.

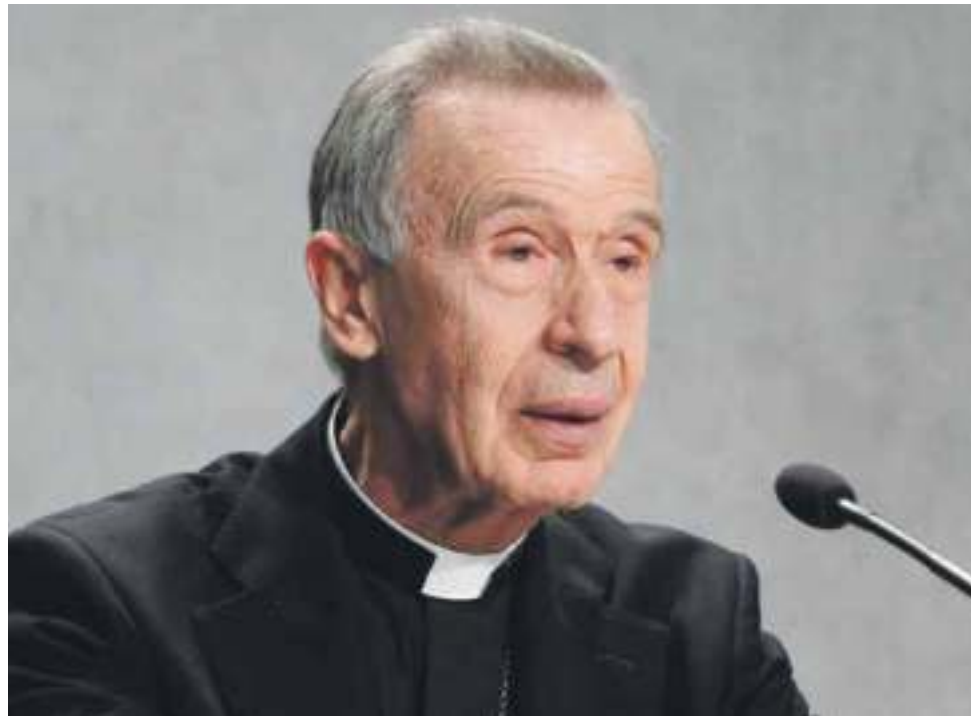
## Cardinal Ladaria cautions US bishops on politicians and Holy Communion

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has urged the US bishops to proceed with caution in their discussions about formulating a national policy “to address the situation of Catholics in public office who support legislation allowing abortion, euthanasia or other moral evils”.

Cardinal Luis Ladaria, congregation prefect, reiterated what he said he had told several groups of US bishops during their 2019-2020 “ad limina” visits, namely that “the effective development of a policy in this area requires that dialogue occurs in two stages: first among the bishops themselves, and then between bishops and Catholic pro-choice politicians within their jurisdictions”.

In the letter to Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Cardinal Ladaria also insisted: such a policy cannot usurp the authority of an individual bishop in his diocese on the matter; the policy would require near unanimity; and it would be “misleading” to present abortion and euthanasia as “the only grave matters of Catholic moral and social teaching that demand the fullest level of accountability on the part of Catholics”.

The letter, dated May 7 and obtained by Catholic News Service in Rome, said it was in response to a letter from Archbishop Gomez informing the doctrinal congregation that the bishops were preparing



Cardinal Luis Ladaria, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, is pictured in a file photo at the Vatican. Photo CNS.

to address the situation of Catholic politicians and “the worthiness to receive holy Communion”.

Cardinal Ladaria warned that without the unanimity of the bishops, a national policy, “given its possibly contentious nature,” could “become a source of discord rather than unity within the episcopate and the larger church in the United States.”

The cardinal also suggested the discussion “would best be framed within the broad context of worthiness for the reception of Holy Communion on the part of all

the Faithful, rather than only one category of Catholics, reflecting their obligation to conform their lives to the entire Gospel of Jesus Christ as they prepare to receive the Sacrament.”

Given the importance of the issue, which goes beyond the boundaries of the United States, Cardinal Ladaria also said, “Every effort should be made to dialogue with other episcopal conferences as this policy is formulated in order both to learn from one another and to preserve unity in the universal Church.”

When the U.S. bishops made their “ad limina” visits to the Vatican in 2004, Cardinal Ladaria said, “it was clear that there was a lack of agreement regarding the issue of Communion among the bishops.”

“At that time, the development of a national policy was not under consideration, and Cardinal Ratzinger offered general principles on the worthy reception of holy Communion in order to assist local ordinaries in the United States in their dealings with Catholic pro-choice politicians within their jurisdictions,” he said.

## Biden raises refugee cap but with caveat

President Joe Biden announced on May 3 he was raising the historically low refugee cap of 15,000 left by the Trump administration, but also warned that his administration may not be able to meet the new number of refugees it is seeking to resettle in what remains of the fiscal year: 62,500.

In a statement, the president said that while the previous cap set by Trump did not reflect the country’s values “as a nation that welcomes and supports refugees”, it may be difficult for his adminis-

tration to meet the new goal.

“The sad truth is that we will not achieve 62,500 admissions this year. We are working quickly to undo the damage of the last four years. It will take some time, but that work is already underway,” he said in the statement.

“We have reopened the program to new refugees. And by changing the regional allocations last month, we have already increased the number of refugees ready for departure to the United States.”

The announcement was aimed at sending a signal, he said, “to remove any lingering doubt in the minds of refugees around the world who have suffered so much, and who are anxiously waiting for their new lives to begin”. In November, Biden said during a virtual Jesuit Refugee Service event that he would be heading in a dramatically different direction from the previous administration on refugee admissions, stating his aim to raise the ceiling when he took office to 125,000.

## Church leaders offer prayers after Mexico City metro crash

Mexican Church leaders offered prayers for the victims of a metro line collapse that left at least 23 dead and more than 70 people injured.

Bishop Andrés Vargas Peña of Xochimilco — which serves three southern boroughs in Mexico City — offered con-

lences to the victims, while announcing each priest in the diocese would celebrate Mass three times May 4 “for the deceased, the injured and their families”.

The bishop asked parishioners to pray for the victims and also asked diocesan

priests in the affected area and hospitals treating the injured to provide spiritual support.

An elevated portion of a metro line in Mexico City collapsed at around 10:30pm, May 3, sending two train cars crashing onto a busy thor-

oughfare below and crushing at least one vehicle. Rescuers worked through the night to free trapped passengers and search for victims. Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum said the cause of the tragedy remains unclear.





Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

## Mexico city reeling after overpass disaster



The site where an overpass for a metro partially collapsed with train cars on it is seen at Olivos station in Mexico City May 4. Photo: CNS

## Cardinal sees 'risk of schism' in Germany after Vatican 'no' to same-sex blessings

Italian Cardinal Camillo Ruini has said that he is praying there will be no schism in Germany, as priests and bishops in the country announce their disagreement with a document from the Vatican saying the Church cannot bless same-sex unions.

In a May 4 interview with the newspaper *Il Foglio*, Cardinal Ruini said: "I hope with all my heart that there will not be any schism, and I pray for this."

The 90-year-old cardinal referenced Pope Francis' 2019 letter in which he asked German Catholics to keep a "connection with the universal Church".

"These words of the Pope offer a standard and a valuable direction," Cardinal Ruini said. "I do not deny, therefore, that there is a risk of schism, but I trust that, with God's help, it can be overcome."

Cardinal Ruini's comments come after a number of priests and bishops in the German-speaking world have expressed support for blessings for same-sex partnerships, despite a recent document from the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) which said the Church cannot bless such unions.

In Germany, Catholic pastoral workers have planned a nationwide event on May

10 in defiance of the Vatican ruling. Organisers hope that same-sex couples across Germany will take part in the initiative, known as "*Segnungsgottesdiensten für Liebende*", or "blessing services for lovers".

### Approval

The CDF published a *Responsum ad dubium* March 15, with the approval of Pope Francis, replying to the question, "does the Church have the power to give the blessing to unions of persons of the same sex?" The CDF answered, "Negative".

Cardinal Ruini, who was Rome's vicar general from

1991 to 2008, and president of the Italian bishops' conference for 16 years, said that "people certainly can be blessed, but because they are converted, not because they are confirmed in their sin".

"God himself blesses the sinful man so that he allows himself to be changed by him, but he cannot bless sin," he added.

"I would like to emphasise the strength of this position: it is not just a question of something that the Church has decided not to do, but of something that the Church cannot do," Cardinal Ruini said.

## Archbishop Cordileone: Catholics supporting abortion should not present themselves for Holy Communion

The Archbishop of San Francisco, Salvatore Cordileone, released on May 1, 2021 a pastoral letter in which he insisted that any Catholic cooperating with the evil of abortion should refrain from receiving the Eucharist.

"It is fundamentally a question of integrity: to receive the Blessed Sacrament in the Catholic liturgy is to espouse publicly the Faith and moral teachings of the Catholic Church, and to desire to live accordingly," wrote

Archbishop Cordileone. "... [T]here is a great difference between struggling to live according to the teachings of the Church and rejecting those teachings."

The letter, issued on the feast of St Joseph the Worker and at the beginning of the month honouring the Blessed Virgin Mary, comes on the heels of growing media coverage regarding whether President Biden should be admitted to Holy Communion within the Catholic Church.

Contained within his letter was a section specifically for Catholic public officials who advocate for abortion. "You are in a position to do something concrete and decisive to stop the killing," he said.

"Please stop the killing. And please stop pretending that advocating for or practicing a grave moral evil – one that snuffs out an innocent human life, one that denies a fundamental human right – is somehow compatible with the Catholic Faith."

## Vatican roundup

### Pope to institute formal 'ministry of catechist'

While millions of laypeople around the world are recognised as catechists in their parish or diocese, Pope Francis is preparing to formally institute the "ministry of catechist".

The Vatican press office said May 5 that Pope Francis' apostolic letter *Antiquum Ministerium* ("Ancient Ministry"), instituting the ministry, would be released May 11.

Pope Francis often has spoken of the importance of selecting, training and supporting catechists, who are called to lead people to a deeper relationship with Jesus, prepare them to receive the sacraments and educate them in the teachings of the Church.

In many parts of the world, especially in communities without a resident priest, catechists are the leaders of the local Catholic community, evangelising, convoking and guiding their fellow Catholics in prayer and works of charity. And, in missionary territories under the guidance of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, they already serve with a specific mandate from their bishop. The congregation's 1997 Guide for Catechists described catechists as "lay members of Christ's Faithful who have received proper formation and are outstanding in their living of the Christian life."

### 'Front-line' priests should have priority access to vaccine

Priests who are ministering "on the front lines" in parishes, prisons and hospitals should be considered "at-risk" and receive priority in Covid-19 vaccination programs, said the head of the Vatican Congregation for Clergy. Ongoing cooperation is needed between government and Church leaders "aimed at enabling clergy – at least those 'in the care of souls' – to exercise their ministry, something that could be done today by facilitating vaccine administration," said Cardinal Beniamino Stella, prefect of the Congregation for Clergy. In an interview with the Italian Catholic agency SIR

May 4, the cardinal recalled the 269 diocesan priests in Italy who died of Covid-19 during just the first year of the pandemic.

Many priests "succumbed to the virus while generously devoting themselves to ensuring that the people of God felt the closeness of their shepherds and that they received the comfort of the sacraments and the proclamation of the Word of God," he said.

The relevant civil and ecclesiastical authorities should consider recognising the important "social service" offered by priests by ensuring their access to vaccines, the cardinal reflected.

### Pope Francis: Migrants bearing brunt of 'aggressive' nationalism

Pope Francis said last Thursday that "aggressive forms of nationalism and radical individualism", exposed during the pandemic, are having a severe impact on migrants worldwide.

In his message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, issued May 6, he said that the coronavirus crisis had highlighted the deep divisions between human beings. "Our 'we,' both in the wider world and within the Church, is crumbling and cracking due to myopic and aggressive forms of nationalism and radical individualism," he said. "And the highest price is being paid by those who most easily become viewed as others: foreigners, migrants, the marginalised, those living on the existential peripheries." The World Day of Migrants and Refugees, instituted in 1914 by Pope Pius X, is celebrated annually on the last Sunday in September. This year it falls on September 26. In his message for the day's 107th commemoration, entitled "Towards an ever wider 'we,'" Pope Francis addressed what he called a "twofold appeal," to Catholics and the wider world, to embrace those on the margins. He urged Catholics "to make the Church become ever more inclusive."





# Letter from Rome



Robert Duncan

**T**he neighbourhood of ivy-draped two-story buildings, cobblestoned streets and Marian shrines adjacent to St Peter's Basilica is perhaps best-known today for serving gelato and pizza to tourists visiting the Vatican.

History, however, knows the "Borgo" – as the zone is called by locals – as a village of ecclesiastical artisans who produce and restore religious articles for the Vatican and wider Church.

With the rising costs of rent in central Rome, the abandonment of the artisanal trades by the younger generation and now the economic blow caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the tradition and ethos of the once vibrant neighbourhood of workshops and craftsmen are disappearing.

"A lot of workshops will be lost," said Ety Cicioni, a tailor who produces the uniforms of the Swiss Guard and has restored garments for the past three popes. "You will struggle to contain the costs of keeping a workshop in this area."

The trend, he explained, seems inevitable: younger people don't want to take up the family business – which in some cases spans generations – and those who continue will gravitate toward "industrialised" production and higher profit margins.

**“In February, the Italian news agency ANSA reported that Covid-19 had caused 20% of Rome's artisanal businesses to close permanently”**

Mr Cicioni, whose shop and studio 'I Sarti del Borgo' (The Tailors of the Borgo) saw a 25% profit loss due to the pandemic, hopes that the revival of something like a medieval guild could help those in the traditional trades.

"I would like to try to unite and create a sort of hub where, with the excellence of craftsmanship, we can face these challenges together," he said. "We can only do it if we unite, but at the moment it's very hard."

In February, the Italian news agency ANSA reported that Covid-19 had caused 20% of Rome's artisanal businesses to close permanently. In response, the city is considering creating two "ad hoc" districts in the Rome neighbourhoods of Testaccio and Tor di Nona to help artisans get back on their feet.

## Vatican's vanishing artisans: Traditional workshops struggle amid Covid-19



Ety Cicioni, a tailor who produces uniforms for the Swiss Guard and clerical wear, is pictured with his wife, Lucia Marcellusi, in his shop near the Vatican in Rome, April 29. Photo CNS.

**“Working for the Church hasn't stopped, because the Church continues its work and priests continue to celebrate Mass”**

Artisans who serve the Church do have an advantage when the economy comes to a halt, however.

"Working for the Church hasn't stopped, because the Church continues its work and priests continue to celebrate Mass. Bishops continue to be appointed," said Piero Savi, a jeweller who, with his brother Claudio, has produced papal crosiers, cardinals' rings and episcopal pectoral crosses.

### Difficult

"The only thing that has changed is that it's more difficult, and the turnaround time is longer," he said, since the sourcing of materials has been slowed down by the pandemic's toll on the global supply chain.

'Savi Gioielli' (Savi Jewellery) has a large American clientele, in part due to the influence of Cardinal James Harvey, who served as prefect of the Papal Household under St John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. Many US cardinals and bishops are pictured on the walls of the workshop wearing regalia pro-

duced or restored by the brother jewellers.

In the nearby Prati neighbourhood, Roberto Scura, who has restored books and manuscripts for a variety of ecclesiastical clients, including Rome's Pontifical Urbanian University and the Knights of Malta, said that customers are still reticent to enter shops even though Covid-19-related restrictions are being relaxed.

"Clients are not really going out as much; they are a bit tense, and so they don't often come bringing work," Mr Scura said.

"I hope that, slowly, everything will start again and that it goes well," he said.

According to the artisans interviewed by Catholic News Service, even if the pandemic were to disappear in a miraculous instant, the traditional trades face an uphill struggle to stay profitable.

Due to the advance of computerised methods in jewel production, for example, the essence of craftsmanship is under attack, Mr Savi said.

Before, "the workshop was the domain of the craftsman and he was its master," he said. Now, the major software companies "have made the craftsman a user of electronic programs, so he is no longer the master, the master is elsewhere."

**“Pope Francis underlined such spiritual benefits in work in his 2020 apostolic letter *Patris Corde*”**

"You work or you don't work according to the will of these new masters," Mr Savi said.

### Challenge

On top of that, Mr Savi explained the challenge of getting the smartphone generation, accustomed to social media influencer-level success, patient and interested enough to learn a traditional skill.

"In a world where speed and quickness are essential values, it

seems like a waste of time" to young people, he said.

Despite the challenges, the artisans praised the personal – even spiritual – rewards of working with one's hands.

"When I work, I just get into it," Mr Scura said. "The phone will ring but I won't hear it, because I'm totally involved in the work I'm doing. The work engrosses you."

Mr Cicioni said the fact that garments he sews will be donned by those representing the Church adds another positive dimension to his labours.

"There is something more, let's say, a value beyond the human value; there's a faith value when doing these things," Mr Cicioni said.

Pope Francis underlined such spiritual benefits in work in his 2020 apostolic letter *Patris Corde* ('With a father's heart'), which marked the 150th anniversary of St Joseph being declared patron of the universal Church.

"Work is a means of participating in the work of salvation, an opportunity to hasten the coming of the kingdom, to develop our talents and abilities, and to put them at the service of society and fraternal communion," the Pope wrote.



# China's new oversight body fuels fears about religious freedom



Elise Ann Allen

**C**hina's new regulations for religious personnel came into effect May 1, obliging those who hold any formal role in a religious group, among other things, to pledge allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party and to resist foreign interference.

Many Catholic observers have voiced fear the new rules not only violate China's agreement with the Vatican on bishops' appointments, but that they make reconciliation between the so-called "underground" Church and the official government-sanctioned Church more difficult.

Initially published in November 2020, with a final version released in February by China's State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), the new measures, titled, "Administrative measures for religious personnel", came into effect May 1.

Among other things, the new rules provide for the creation of a national database containing information on religious personnel, including rewards and/or punishments they've received, and details on whether their ministry has been revoked.

**“It also stoked fears over just how freely the Catholic Church is able to act in China”**

Consisting of seven chapters containing 52 articles, the rules are applicable to all religious personnel – bishops, priests, Buddhist and Taoist monks, etc. – and require those holding any sort of religious function to be formally registered with the government.

They also outline the rights and characteristics of religious work in China, and the obligations of those with religious roles.

## New rules

According to the new rules, anyone exercising a religious function in China must now adhere to these rules, which stipulate, among other things, that they must “love the motherland, support the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, support the socialist system, [and] respect the Constitution, laws, regulations and rules”.

Religious personnel are also required to “practice the fundamental values of socialism, adhere to the principle of independence and self-management of religion and adhere to the religious policy of China, maintaining national unity, ethnic unity, religious harmony and social stability”.

Obligations for religious personnel under the new rules include resist-



ing or countering “illegal religious activities and religious extremism and resisting infiltration by foreign forces that use religion”.

For Catholics, this provision would ban priests formally registered with and approved by the state-sanctioned Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) from expressing any form of communion with “unofficial” or so-called “underground” bishops and clergy who have Rome's blessing, but not that of the state.

## Compliance

Even Catholic bishops who are in compliance with government requirements can only exercise their ministry after registering with the state regulatory authority, meaning, in the eyes of critics, that it's the government calling the shots and not Rome.

The initial announcement of these new rules in November came just one month after the Vatican renewed its two-year provisional agreement with China on the appointment of bishops.

Though the terms of that agreement never have been made public, it is widely believed that it allows China to have a significant role in selecting the Catholic Church's leaders in the country, putting forward three candidates and leaving the choice to the Pope.

Many observers have voiced concern that China's new rules for religious personnel further limit

religious freedom, and thus stand in direct contradiction to the Vatican-China bishops' agreement.

According to the missionary news agency AsiaNews, despite the renewal of the agreement – which many believe is a down payment on eventual diplomatic relations, and are meant to unite the state-approved and underground churches – the Catholic community in China, along with all religious communities, still faces consistent interference from state forces.

**“Religious personnel are also required to ‘practice the fundamental values of socialism’”**

Fr Bernardo Cervellera, head of AsiaNews and an expert in Chinese affairs, wrote in an editorial published late last month that even after the Vatican-China deal was renewed, state actions against unofficial bishops such as detainment, house arrests, and fines have continued.

One of the most recent incidents cited by Fr Cervellera involved Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin of Wenzhou, in Zhejiang, who is recognized by Rome but not by the CCP.

As Christians in the area only number around 10%, some families

have built private chapels on their property where Mass and other liturgical services can take place.

## Chapel

According to Fr Cervellera, on March 16 a layman offered his chapel to Zhumin and around 20 Faithful for Mass. Police found out and the man was fined 200,000 Yuan (€25,668) for taking part in “illegal religious activities, also providing him with lunch, a rest room, etc.”, despite the fact that China's constitution guarantees religious freedom, and that the man had all the proper permits for his chapel.

Since Bishop Zhumin was ordained “by a foreign institution,” meaning the Vatican, the police report also stated that the Mass “goes against the principle of independence, autonomy and self-administration of the Church in China”.

The incident sparked concern among local Catholics that even praying in small groups at home, which has become a common practice during the coronavirus pandemic, might be considered illegal.

It also stoked fears over just how freely the Catholic Church is able to act in China, despite the renewal of the agreement on bishops' appointments.

Apart from this incident, there have also been reports a Vatican request for an office in Beijing was

denied, orphanages run by Catholic nuns known for saving unwanted baby girls have been closed, and police have more strictly enforced a law barring minors under 18 from attending religious services, even with their parents.

There is still another year and a half before the Vatican-China provisional agreement expires. Whether any of this will impact a potential second renewal of that deal, or whether China loosens its grip on religious communities over the next 18 months, remains to be seen.

**“The Vatican's soft approach to China could also have implications in terms of Vatican-US relations”**

In the meantime, the Vatican's soft approach to China could also have implications in terms of Vatican-US relations.

When the Vatican's agreement with China was renewed in October 2020, former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo complained openly about it, arguing that China's crackdown on religious minorities, including Christians, has intensified since the deal with Beijing was inked, and that Rome risks losing moral authority if it doesn't push back.

So far the Biden administration has taken a relatively hardline approach to China itself, but its position on Sino-Vatican relations isn't clear.

Elise Ann Allen is senior correspondent for Cruxnow.com

**“Many Catholic observers have voiced fear the new rules not only violate China's agreement with the Vatican on bishops' appointments”**



# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Do we have to reinvent the wheel for our synod?

**Dear Editor,** One wonders what is going to progress the synodal pathway from the hierarchy's invitation to conversations about holding conversations to Breda O'Brien's notion of "active connection?" [IC 06/05/2021]

Do we have to reinvent wheels in a synodal pathway when strong examples of pockets of Catholic renewal already exist elsewhere in Europe? Can we not learn from these?

One has observed in one French parish over a number of years a steady year-on-year increase in the attendance of young married people and their families at the Sunday Sacrifice of the Mass – almost 30% of a full church. One sees a Sunday religious

family ritual akin to Breda O'Brien's description of a Dundrum secular family shopping ritual. In 2018 the curate, while sharing coffee with some parishioners, made three points to me. 1) This process had taken 15-16 years of hope-based ministry effort by successive curates. 2) The young married people are of an age where people influence each other strongly. 3) The presence of an army training school helped. Catholic parishes of course always generate problems.

Small groups of young families do attend Sunday Mass in Ireland. They and not young people in general will form the backbone of future congregations. In 1969 a young Fr Ratzinger predicted the current Catholic situa-

tion in Europe and the necessary, slow, faith-based passage towards renewal evident in the parish cited above. He discounted the idea of mass conversion.

Breda O'Brien's exhortation towards small group activity is realistic. Could one such activity prioritise a learning of a suitable ministry for the small groups of young married people already observing Sunday obligation to develop their domestic churches? Why wait to see if the synodal pathway can discover such a necessary ministry? Or is it a case of "what's another year?"

*Yours etc.,*

**Neil Bray**

*Cappamore, Co. Limerick*

## Wishing a true sportsman good health

**Dear Editor,** It was heart-warming to read Kevin Hennessey's article [IC 15/04/2021] and to learn how this true sportsman dealt with serious illness recurrence, through his deep reliance on the solace he derived from prayer. His resilience and positivity on facing many setbacks is a powerful lesson to us all and we salute you Kevin as we did many a time in the hallowed grounds of Croke Park. I have a precious photo of my two garsúns [boys] taken with Kevin on All-Ireland day 1989, three Rebel jerseys proud pose!

We wish you a return to good health Kevin and an enjoyable East Cork drive in your new car.

*Yours etc.,  
Eilís Uí Bhriain  
Castlelyons, Co. Cork*



## TDs should gift salaries to help homeless rather than make 'cheap shots'

**Dear Editor,** You report Fr John Gilligan's criticism of Green Party MEP Ciaran Cuffe's 'cheap shot', [IC 29/04/2021]. Mr Cuffe suggests that the Catholic Church give the Clonliffe sale €95 million, paid by GAA, to "social housing", rather than spend on future

Dublin parish care, elderly or sick religious, vocations, and lay formation. The average priest's wage is now a modest €19,000, repeatedly cut, and very far short of MEP, Mr Cuffe's. Is there any record of Mr Cuffe or any Green TDs gifting any of their own fine MEP or TD

salaries/pensions – which in sharp contrast to clergy, now spiral ever upward – back to the State to alleviate the social housing homelessness he abhors? Why isn't he asking the wealthy GAA, Clonliffe's buyers, to gift more sites? Mr Cuffe and his Greens, so generous with

others money, might more usefully address gifting their own fine salaries, and rethinking their anti-life policies, before lecturing others. Cheap target Mr Cuffe. Show us your own example first.

*Yours etc.,*

**Oliver Maher**

*Harold's Cross, Dublin 12*

## A different way to celebrate the sacraments

**Dear Editor,** The Archbishop of Dublin's decision to direct parishes to abandon plans to hold First Communion and Confirmation ceremonies [IC 29/04/2021] provides a welcome opportunity for church communities to look at different ways of celebrating the sacraments.

For First Communion, why not permit parishes to invite parents to register their child for the sacraments of Rec-

onciliation and Communion? A parish team could help the child and parents prepare for the sacraments, rather like the current arrangements for Baptism. When the child is ready, s/he could celebrate her/his First Communion at a normal parish Mass, welcomed by the celebrant, congratulated by the congregation and surrounded by family!

For Confirmation, why not have the same arrangement, with more empha-

sis on the free decision of the young person to receive the Sacrament? Since a bishop normally celebrates the Sacrament, a group of parishes could have a day arranged annually for those who have prepared in their own parish. I think there would be fewer recipients but more meaning.

*Yours etc.,*

**Pat Keating,**

*Bray, Co. Wicklow,*

## facebook community

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

### Mass ban lifted as public worship permitted from May 10

About time. It should be immediate. Don't think people will forget what the article refers to, that worshippers in the Irish Republic have been forbidden to attend Mass for 27 of the last 30 weeks, the Government moving recently to make it a criminal offence with priests and Mass-goers facing up to six months in prison. – **Maria Conroy Byrne**

Terrific news. – **Guillaume Rouy**

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

## Clericalism is focused on maintenance, not mission

**Dear Editor,** When the dark cloud of the pandemic lifts, our Church will have a once off opportunity to rebuild, renew and experience a new springtime. But, will it happen? It is certainly the will of God that it would. However I would suggest the obstacle to it happening is the stranglehold of clericalism, which is to be found far more often today in the mentality of some laity than in that of the clergy. However, when it informs the motivation of some clergy it can be far more damaging to the Church.

Clericalism, I believe, negates the rights, challenges and responsibilities of Baptism. The focus of clericalism as a thought process is focused on "maintenance" rather than "mission". Renewal programmes motivated solely by shortage of priests and which would not have taken place without that motivation, are far removed from the required ongoing renewal and challenge required by the grace and vibrancy of Baptism.

Church services may have been stopped or seriously restricted during the pandemic and the church buildings closed but Christ and his Church were very much alive going to where people were at in their struggle, and, people will not forget that encounter. The acts of kindness of the community, neighbours, family members and local priests was the Church in action.

That must now be affirmed by the hierarchical Church by focusing on mission and Baptism. The default position is that of clericalism and focusing on maintenance. There will be no springtime emanating from the latter positioning, only a disempowerment of community and an effective disempowerment of Church. A new springtime in the Church will see no churches closed. While there may not be sufficient priests to say mass every Sunday in rural parishes or hear confessions the rural church building must be a facility for the coming together of the local Church. It may be for rosary, divine mercy devotions, private prayers, weddings or funerals etc...

*Yours etc.,*

**John J. Lupton Snr,**  
*Roscrea, Co. Tipperary*

## Pioneer of EU to be beatified

**Dear Editor,** You may be aware that Robert Schuman, the principal pioneer of the European Union is being beatified in June 2021.

As an outstanding Catholic layman, his life and work for peace in Europe deserves to be revisited.

Perhaps you might consider an article on him

*Yours etc.,*

**Bro. Michael Heffernan**  
*Whitehall, Dublin 9*

## 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.

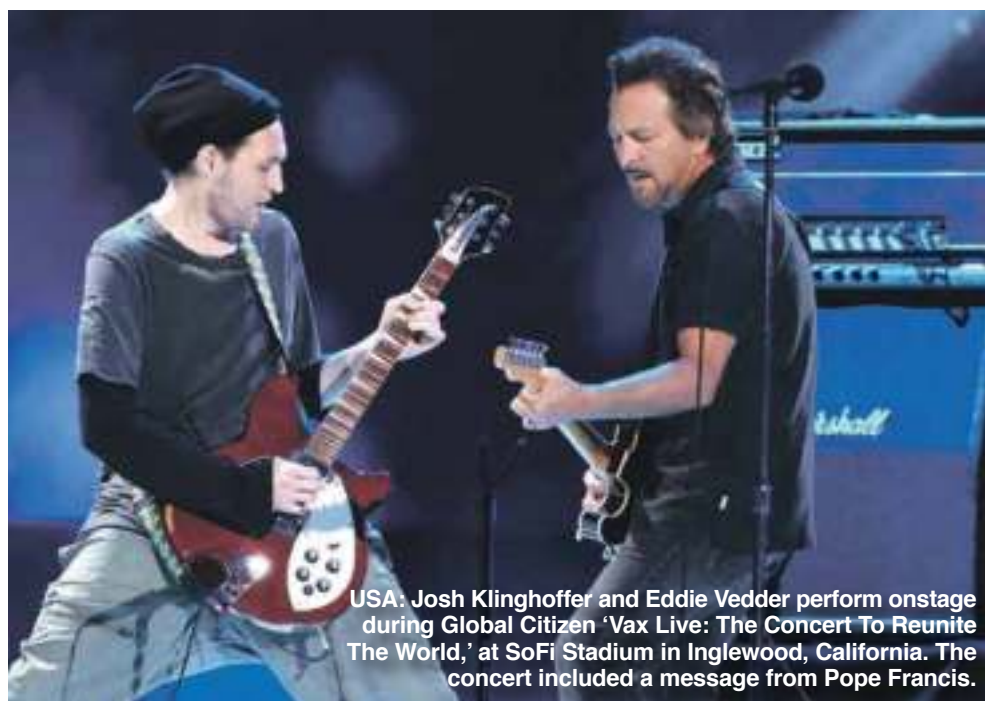


# Around the world



▲ **GUATEMALA:** A Mayan woman receives the AstraZeneca vaccine in San Pedro Sacatepéquez. Photos: CNS

◀ **VATICAN:** Swiss Guard recruit takes his oath during the swearing-in ceremony for 34 new guards on May 6.



**USA:** Josh Klinghoffer and Eddie Vedder perform onstage during Global Citizen 'Vax Live: The Concert To Reunite The World,' at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California. The concert included a message from Pope Francis.



**VATICAN:** People hold Colombia's national flag as Pope Francis leads the Regina Coeli from the window of his studio overlooking St Peter's Square on Sunday.



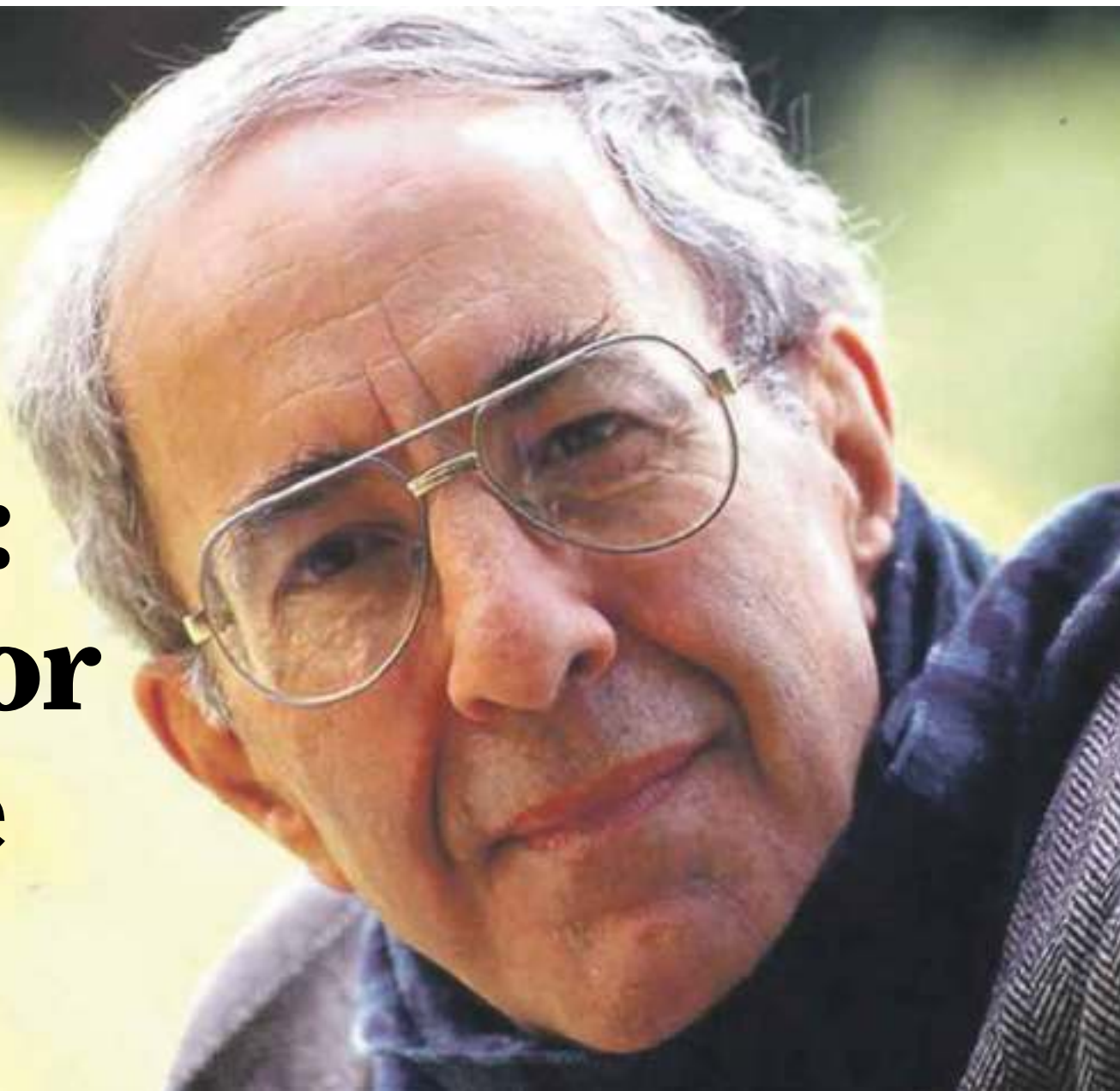
**MEXICO:** A cameraman takes video of a bullet-riddled chapel near Aguililla. The Mexican bishops have called on citizens to vote and support candidates promoting the common good in midterm elections.



**ITALY:** Ety Cicioni, a tailor who produces clerical wear, works next to his wife, Lucia Marcellusi, in his shop in Rome.



# Henri Nouwen: a saint for our time



**I**t is not enough today to be merely a saint; we must have a saintliness demanded by the present moment.

Simone Weil wrote that, and she is right. We need saints demanded by the present moment and I would like to propose someone whom, I believe, fits that description, Henri Nouwen, the priest and popular spiritual writer who died in 1996. What was his saintliness and why is it particularly apropos in terms of the present moment?

**“He was a complex, anguished, anxious person with a hypersensitive personality”**

Henri Nouwen is arguably the most influential spirituality writer of our generation. However, his spirituality was not born out of an easy temperament nor an untested faith. As Michael Higgins writes in his biography of Nouwen, his was a “genius born of anguish”. Nouwen was a saint wracked with anxiety, an ideal patron for a generation awash with it.

He was a complex, anguished, anxious person with a hypersensitive personality. He was prone to obsessiveness in his intimate relationships, occasionally manifested a neediness that was more childish than childlike, and was forever haunted by



**Fr Rolheiser**

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

the sense that (despite all the love, acceptance, and success he experienced) he was not really loved and no place was home for him. As well, he nursed a wound inside that he could never explain to others nor make peace with himself. Coupled with all this, he had an artistic temperament (with both its gifts and its burdens) and, like many artists, had to struggle to remain robust, normal, and balanced in the creative process, enjoy a down-to-earth sanity, and keep his sexuality within the bounds of his vows. Thus, he could go out on a stage, radiate a powerful energy and then step off the stage and within minutes break down in tears and beg someone to console him. In terms of his sexuality, though he was a vowed celibate who remained faithful to his vows, occasionally he would

fall in love so obsessively with someone that he was able to keep his vows and his sanity only by checking himself into a clinic for professional help.

This isn't the stuff you normally read in the lives of saints, at least of those who are officially canonised and held up as models of sanctity; but that is in fact the stuff of saintliness. Soren Kierkegaard, whom Henri idealised, defined a saint this way: “a saint is someone who can will the one thing.” Not an easy task. Not because the right thing is hard to will, but because we also will many other things. Thomas Aquinas affirmed that every choice is a renunciation. That's an understatement. Every choice is a series of renunciations, and that makes both choosing and saintliness difficult.

**“We need saints demanded by the present moment and I would like to propose someone whom, I believe, fits that description, Henri Nouwen, the priest and popular spiritual writer who died in 1996”**

## Diaries

Writing his diaries, Nouwen describes his struggle in this way: “I want to be a great saint, but I also want to experience all the sensations that sinners experience. I want to withdraw into the silence of prayer, but I don't want to miss anything happening in the world. I want to bury myself in anonymity among the poor, but I also want to write books, be known by others, see places, meet people, and do interesting things.” That's what he wrestled with, just as we all do, but he managed, in the end, to will the one thing.

**“However, the stories we hear of their lives tend to highlight more their virtue than their struggle”**

How did he do it, how did he become a saint despite it all? He did it through a humble honesty that never denied his struggles. He did it by accepting his own complexity, by falling to his knees in prayers of helplessness when his own strength wasn't enough, and by letting the poor love him. And he did it by sharing his wounds with the world, by seeking professional help whenever he broke down, and by learning

from all the pain, obsessiveness, and heartache that, in the end, our hearts are stronger than our wounds; because of that we can keep our commitments and ultimately find peace inside of complexity, temptation, and struggle.

The saints of old, no doubt, had their own struggles in trying to will the one thing, to healthily channel their wild energies and give themselves over to God. However, the stories we hear of their lives tend to highlight more their virtue than their struggle. For example, Mother Theresa is also a saint from our generation, and a very inspirational one at that. For many of us, her life and her virtue seem so far removed from our own earthy and messy struggles that we look at her as a saint we can admire but not quite imitate. That's unfair of course. She also had her struggles, mammoth ones. Still it is not her struggles that are generally highlighted when her story is told.

## Struggles

Henri Nouwen's story and his writings highlight his struggles, not just his virtue and wisdom. Knowing the earthiness of his struggles can give the impression that there is less in him to admire than in someone like Mother Theresa. Perhaps. But, in Nouwen we see someone we can more easily imitate.



# Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, May 13, 2021

## Personal Profile

A life 'looking down' to search for God

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# Braving the cold water



**A**vailing of the improved weather in recent weeks, I made my way to the nearby coastline for a plunge into the icy waters. Rarely does an activity result in such a sense of vitality and adventure, and it reminded me that I ought to take every opportunity I can to swim in the open sea while the seasons allow.

There is an unrivalled beauty to floating beneath the sky, with the shore at your back and a vast expanse of water stretching out before you. It comes with both benefits and dangers, but if done safely, it's an utterly worthwhile way to spend your precious earned leisure time. The sense of



**Restrictions are lifting and spring is upon us, so there's no better time to take to the sea for a swim writes Jason Osborne**

freedom is a potent antidote to the claustrophobia of the past year.

The suggestion of willingly embracing such cold water often elicits disbelieving responses, but there are many good reasons to do so as I just mentioned. In this article, I'll convey some of the benefits of the activity, while also communicating how to do so safely. Ven-

turing forth into the wilds of the sea, even if it's just footsteps away from the shore, requires wariness and caution, so don't take it lightly.

### The benefits

If you're to do something as crazy as immersing yourself in frigid water, it better be worth it, right? Fortunately it is, for a number

of reasons. The aforementioned beauty and freedom are enough for me, but swimming and brief interaction with cold water carry enormous benefits for your health. Some of these include:

- It results in a rush of dopamine: Enormous quantities of dopamine are thought to be released as a result of immersion in cold water. A recent study showed that immersion in water of 14 degrees Celsius resulted in a 250% increase in dopamine levels. Why is this of interest? Dopamine is commonly understood as the "happy hormone", as it often creates feelings of excitement or euphoria.

- It burns calories: The cold

results in a greater burn of calories, but cold water does it as little else can. Entering cold water sees your heart rate and blood pressure increase, as well as inducing hyperventilation. While these things are all potentially dangerous (and must be monitored if you're to get into the water), it results in an increased metabolic rate which burns through calories.

- Improves mental health: Scientists are increasingly coming to see the positive effect exercise has on our mental state, and sea-swimming is no different. One particular case study saw a 24-year-old woman with symp-

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## Family News



### AND EVENTS

#### MALIAN MOTHER GIVES BIRTH TO NONUPLETS

A Malian woman has given birth to nine babies, which is two more than the doctors had detected during scans. 25-year-old Halima Cisse gave birth to the nonuplets in Morocco. Mali's government flew her there as she required specialist care. "I'm very happy," her husband told the BBC. "My wife and the babies are doing well." Ms Cisse gave birth to five girls and four boys. A woman who had given birth to eight babies in the US in 2009 holds the world record for the most children delivered at a single birth to survive. Two sets of nonuplets have previously been recorded: One born to a woman in Australia in 1971, the other to a woman in Malaysia in 1999. However, none of the babies survived more than a few days. Fanta Siby, Mali's health minister, congratulated the medical teams involved in Mali and Morocco for the "happy outcome".

#### SINGLE-SHOT J&J VACCINE USED FOR FIRST TIME IN IRELAND

RTÉ reported that the single-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine was administered through homeless services in Dublin last Thursday. The single-shot vaccine is considered the best to use for hard to reach communities, such as the homeless. In clinical trials, the vaccine was found to have reduced the risk of people getting Covid-19 by 66% and of being hospitalised by Covid by 85%. It takes about two full weeks to be protected from Covid-19 by the Johnson & Johnson jab.

#### YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 'ENORMOUS STRAIN' BECAUSE OF PANDEMIC

An Oireachtas committee has heard of the "enormous strain" young people are under because of the pandemic, RTÉ has reported. They also heard that changes are needed to support services if a "surefire recipe for a mental health disaster" is to be avoided. Ian Power, CEO of SpunOut.ie, told the sub-committee on mental health that one in five young people using a free text service last year had considered ending their own lives. In over 400 cases, the National Ambulance Service was mobilised as young people were in "real and active and imminent danger," he said. He said that the text support service had 33,000 "support conversations" in 2020, with the vast majority of them being in the second half of the year. Rachel Traynor of the National Youth Council of Ireland listed a number of challenges young people are struggling with, such as increased anxiety, social isolation and loneliness, the loss of social skills and the negative impact of social media. She also mentioned a rise in addiction, and the concern over the impact of disruption to education.

# Realising we are wrong about what is good



If you do something voluntarily, it must be because you wanted to do it, at least in some sense. This apparently innocent statement can in the hands of some philosophers have quite disturbing implications.

First, let's think about the statement itself. It is true as far as it goes. Even if you do something that you really don't want to do in lots of respects, if you actually do it voluntarily you must have wanted to do it in some respect. You might have terrible stage fright and find the idea of public speaking horrifying, but if you actually get up and give a speech in public there must have been something desirable to you about giving it. Maybe you really wanted to impress someone in the crowd, or maybe you just wanted to overcome your fear. Whatever the reason, you must have wanted to do it more than you wanted to do anything else, all things considered. If that wasn't true, you'd have done something else.

**“It can be frighteningly plausible: it really doesn't seem possible to be motivated to act without having a desire”**

What about cases in which we say that a person overcame his desires to do what was right? Where a person does something not because they want to do it but because they think it is good? Cases of pure self-sacrifice like that of St Maximilian Kolbe, who took the place of another man who the Nazis were planning to kill. Certainly St Maximilian did



### Everyday philosophy Ben Conroy

not want to starve to death. But St Maximilian must have wanted 'to save the man he replaced', or 'to do the right thing' or 'to serve God' or 'love his neighbour' and thus wanted to take the self-sacrificial action he took as a means to these ends. The key point is that there is a very close connection between wanting to do something and thinking it is good. (Remember this, we'll come back to it).

**“A desire can be irrational if it conflicts with something you actually want more”**

So what's the problem with this? Well, according to David Hume and many of his followers, what I've said so far about desire makes morality something that's ultimately not answerable to reason. Huh?

#### Argument

Hume's argument is as follows: there are two kinds of states your mind can be in when it comes to deciding how to act. Those are beliefs and desires. A belief is about how the world actually is. A desire is about how you want the world to be. Hume thinks that a belief can never motivate a person to action without being accompanied by a desire. I might believe "those roast potatoes are very tasty" but unless I also want to eat tasty things, that belief alone will

never get me to eat the spuds. Here's where it gets disturbing: if only desires can motivate you, then you are ultimately controlled by whatever desires you so happen to have. As far as Hume is concerned, desires aren't rational things. He wrote that "it is not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger".

Sure, a desire can be irrational if it conflicts with something you actually want more. If you want to be a famous athlete and also to eat six donuts a day, something's got to give. But whatever your deepest or ultimate desires are will determine the rationality of all your other ones. If you



David Hume

don't happen to ultimately desire good things, then you can't be motivated to pursue them. You can't be rationally argued out of your deepest

desires: if they happen to include 'the destruction of the world', there's nothing irrational about that. The heart wants what it wants.

#### Influential

This picture of things is extremely influential in modern moral philosophy. That's because it can be frighteningly plausible: it really doesn't seem possible to be motivated to act without having a desire.

**“What about cases in which we say that a person overcame his desires to do what was right?”**

But that's not where Hume goes wrong. He goes wrong in thinking that desires aren't ever rational things. Earlier on we said that there was a close connection between desiring something and seeing something as good. To desire something you must see it as (in some way) desirable, or as in at least some way good. (This is a point of Aquinas's). We can understand that connection two ways. Like Hume we could say that what you see as good is determined by what you desire. But we could instead say that your desires are determined at least in part by what you see as good. And 'what you see as good' is something that is amenable to rational argument, something about which it's possible to be right or wrong. Rather than creatures governed by ultimately irrational urges, we might be creatures that pursue the good as we see it. If we realise we're wrong about what's good, that in itself can change what we want.



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toms of major depressive disorder and anxiety trialled on a programme of weekly open (and cold) water swimming, which led to an immediate improvement in mood and reduction in depressive symptoms. It resulted in a decrease in, and then cessation of, medication, which was reaffirmed after a year-on follow up. While it is no cure-all, cold water swimming may be a help.

- It's thought to boost your immune system: Research conducted by Czech scientists found that immersing yourself in cold water for an hour, three times a week, increases your white blood cell count, which boosts your immune system. This means that dipping yourself in cold water may result in less colds than otherwise, which is something few people expect.

- A social activity: Unlike certain solo sports and outdoor pursuits, tackling the sea with friends or family results in a real sense of camaraderie. The harshness of the environment, coupled with the shared sense of euphoria, results in an enjoyable, memorable experience together. As well as that, wrapping up after and grabbing a hot drink or food is a nice way to round off an intense swim-session together.

## “With some of the pluses in mind, what about the potential negatives of swimming in the sea, and how do we protect against them?”

As can be seen, there are a number of benefits to throwing yourself into the sea and lapping up the cold. Research is still being conducted into the precise effects these activities have on you, but there's already a solid body of evidence to suggest it's a good way to spend your time. What's more – exercise is rarely bad for you, with swimming one of the better, less damaging activities you

can put your body through. It tones muscles, burns fat and increases your stamina.

With some of the pluses in mind, what about the potential negatives of swimming in the sea, and how do we protect against them?

### The risks and how to mitigate them

As Swim Ireland says, and as experience and common sense dictate, “open water must be respected as an uncontrollable and unpredictable swimming environment”. It's a cliché at this stage, but we're at the mercy of the forces of nature we engage with. As a result, it's of the utmost importance that we keep our wits about us.

- Understand the weather and the tides: Weather and tides have a huge impact on whether it's safe to swim in a certain location. Before hopping into the water, it's best to find out from a reliable source what the best time to swim is, and where. If there are weather warnings in place, these must always be heeded – whether they come from the local council, lifeguards, the Coastguard or the RNLI.

- Learn about rip currents: Rip currents are strong currents that flow from the shoreline back out to sea. They're not always easy to spot, but are generally present as a calmer and deeper channel going out to sea. If you end up in this current, you're advised to swim parallel to the shore until you exit the current or raise your hand directly upward to attract the attention of the lifeguards. All



lifeguarded Irish beaches with rip currents will have information on them, so avail of that.

- Bring someone with you: A good rule of thumb whenever you're engaging in any sort of outdoor activity is to bring a partner along. They don't need to be in the water with you necessarily but should be there to keep an eye on you, and ready to offer a hand should you need it.

## “Enter the water slowly, walking in to your waist, splashing your face and upper body with the cold water, before moving the rest of the way in”

- Make yourself visible: Wearing something brightly coloured is advisable, in case misfortune does strike. Brightly coloured swimming hats are best as they're easily spotted, but brightly coloured floats are useful too, with the added benefit of their buoyancy.

- Acclimatise yourself to the cold to avoid shock: It's understood that all Irish waters are cold enough to cause cold water shock on every day of the year. Regular cold-water swimmers know their limits and how to adjust, but there are some steps to take if you're not used to it. Enter the water slowly, walking in to your waist, splashing your face and upper body with the cold water, before moving the rest of the way in. Your breath will quickly come in gasps, so it's important to keep your head out of the water and focus on controlling your breathing. Do a nice, easy stoke, and stay close to the shore. After a few minutes, get out to warm up. You'll be better prepared for longer next time.

The sea is not to be underestimated, but those who prepare can expect to reap the rewards.

## Faith — IN THE — family



Bairbre Cahill

**W**e are standing in a liminal space, an in-between space, how things were and how things may be in the future. Over the past year we have been unmoored, disconnected from our usual routines and while there has been an experience of loss there has also for many been an experience of gift, of being invited forward on an unknown road, a sense of the Spirit at work. As I have said before, I do not believe that God has “sent” Covid as a challenge or reprimand. I do believe however that there are questions we face within every life experience – “Where do I find God in this and how do I respond as a person of faith?”

Those are questions that I have lived with over this past year and I know that I am not alone when I say that I think we are being called into a time of transformation. I have been invited to take part in the launch of a book, *Maynooth College reflects on Covid-19* in mid-May. I have found the essays in the book very thought provoking and many of them have resonated deeply with me. Indeed I would suggest that any individual or parish group would do well to read the book and take time to reflect on the questions at the end of each chapter. Within those pages we encounter the call to walk with those who grieve, the call to prayer when we cannot attend Mass, an understanding of home as a place of faith and devotion, the question of community and what it means to be a eucharistic community rather than simply a group of people who receive the Eucharistic host.

There are questions we have to ask, conversations we have to have if we are to move forward in a way which will be life-giving. This has been echoed in the strong and challenging words of Bishop Michael Duignan in his ‘Pastoral Reflection on the Future of the Church in the Diocese of Clonfert’. Having known him for many years and worked with him on a variety of projects, it gladdens my heart that my friend has not been made timid by his ordination as Bishop.

What Bishop Michael is suggesting is that we need to find a new way of being Church and that to do so we may have

to let go of some habits of the past and discover new ways, new habits which allow the Gospel to shine forth. They are brave words, inspired by the writings of Pope Francis and underpinned by a confidence that it is the Holy Spirit who is leading – if we would but follow.

As I write, images from a recent Sunday Gospel echo



within me – images of a vine and branches, of pruning and growth. How have we been pruned over the past year? What new growth awaits us? I remember how the pastoral reflections offered in the run-up to the Eucharistic Congress in Ireland in 2012 caused outrage in many parishes around the country. The first theme of the reflections was Gathering as Community and there were those who insisted that gathering was irrelevant, that the focus should be solely on the Eucharist. I am inclined to think that such attitudes, such dismissal of community, have now come back to bite us.

Belonging, that business of being part of the vine, is something that has to be nurtured. I watched the film *Nomadland* recently and found there a most beautiful expression of the power and strength of community. Our sense of self, our sense of purpose are shaped by our belonging. Bishop Michael calls for the building of authentic Christian communities – even if they are small in number – which are nurtured and strengthened by Scripture, prayer and the sacraments in order to go out and work for justice and care for those who are on the margins of society. This is what a eucharistic community would look like and when we are part of such a community we know that we belong, that our identity is shaped by Christ, that life and faith are utterly intertwined. Isn't that a transformation you'd want to be part of?



# A life 'looking down' to search for God

## Personal Profile



**Ruadhán Jones**

**I**n the 1970s, the then Superior General of the Jesuits – Fr Pedro Arrupe, called by some the second founder of the Jesuits – had what Fr John Guiney SJ calls “a tremendous insight”: in order for the Jesuits to promote and preach the Faith, they must also promote justice. It was this insight or charisma which drew Fr Guiney, now head of Irish Jesuits International, to the order in the first place and then convinced him to stay.

**“His desire that Jesuits follow a strong option for the poor led Fr Guiney to a life as a missionary in East Africa, first Tanzania in 1979 and later Kenya”**

“I think after the 70s we (the Jesuits) took a very strong orientation of working with the poor,” Fr Guiney tells *The Irish Catholic*. “Fr Arrupe’s vision inspired me not only to join the Jesuits, but to remain. He really had a vision of Heaven not being something we wait for when we die, we must start creating it here on Earth, especially for the poorest and those who were suffering.

“His inspiration carried me as a missionary to Africa. I’m a farmer’s son from West Limerick and at the end of secondary school I was about to go and do agricultural science in University College Dublin. And I had this, I suppose what I’d call a conver-

sion retreat, at the end of my sixth year at school, led by a Jesuit. He introduced me to Jesus in some way that turned my life upside down and I joined the Jesuits.”

But, as Fr Guiney says, it was one thing getting in the door – staying was another, and that couldn’t have happened without the inspiration of Fr Arrupe. His desire that Jesuits follow a strong option for the poor led Fr Guiney to a life as a missionary in

East Africa, first Tanzania in 1979 and later Kenya.

“At the beginning I went to Tanzania in East Africa,” Fr Guiney explains. “The people who inspired me and graced my life there were people who suffered from HIV. I worked a lot with people who were HIV positive in our parish. You know at that time I used to marry people in January, young men and young women, and I would bury some of them in December.

“HIV devastated Africa in the 70s, 80s and 90s. Walking with young people who were living and dying with HIV changed my life and graced my life in Tanzania and later in Kenya. People who were HIV positive were very much people who found themselves on the Cross of Christ. At that time there was no cure, you know. Once you got HIV, people really felt they were dying and many of them did. I remember some of them when they got the news were suicidal and some committed suicide. So that was a very humbling experience and I think walking with them graced my life and changed my life.”

**“The real insight of the liberation theologians, which was a very strong theology of the 70s and 80s in Latin America, was that walking with the poor evangelises”**

From there, Fr Guiney headed further East into Kenya, where he worked in a slum parish in the capital city, Nairobi. He came into contact with thousands of refugees from the Rwandan genocide, a sobering experience and one which made an impression on him. However, it was in his next position as director of Jesuit Refugee Service Eastern Africa that his life was truly shaped.

“Working with refugees was both traumatic and grace filled because many of the people I worked with had lost relatives in conflict, were widows, orphans, people who were living with tremendous amounts of grief, but also tremendous amounts of hope,” Fr Guiney says. “People who wanted to forgive, that really touched my life.

“But I was losing faith. You asked me if ever I had problems with my faith, I really had problems with faith in God when I listened to the stories of man’s inhumanity to man, when I

saw the damage that was reaped on poor people, especially women and children in war situations. In listening to I suppose the people who suffered most, they were ready to forgive. They gave me hope that we can move beyond conflict, we can move beyond war, we can in fact – even in the darkness – find light, in hopelessness we find hope.

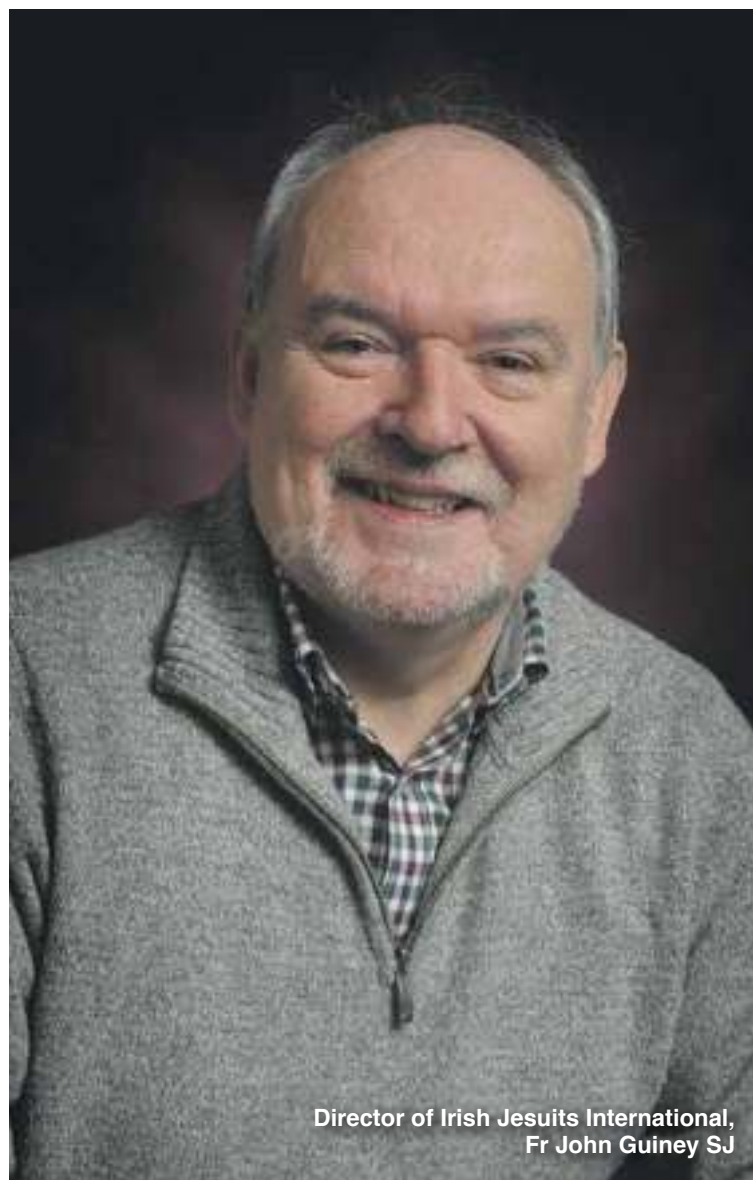
“The real insight of the liberation theologians, which was a very strong theology of the 70s and 80s in Latin America, was that walking with the poor evangelises. I experienced that kind of evangelisation through the poor, through my work with those who were HIV positive, through refugees. They brought me to God like the man brought to God on the stretcher.”

In 2007, Fr Guiney returned to Ireland to become director of what was then Jesuit Missions and is now Irish Jesuit International, where he continues his ministry to the poor.

“Our work in the Irish Jesuits International is an outreach to refugees all over the world,” Fr Guiney says. “Through funding and especially through mission funding, supporting educational projects in Syria, in Lebanon, Northern Nigeria now where you have a real conflict, in South Sudan especially. Children have only one chance at education. It’s so important to get children into schools when they have been displaced by the war.

“We as Irish Jesuits International, we really recognise that the health and wellbeing of children and of women is key in communities. That walking with the excluded, which is now a priority, was reinforced by the recent meeting of the Jesuit congregation in 2018. They recognised one of our preferences of work was walking with the excluded... There’s a lovely saying, I think it’s an Indian saying: ‘If we cannot find God in our lives, we are not looking down enough.’”

For more information about Irish Jesuits International, visit their website <https://www.iji.ie/>



Director of Irish Jesuits International,  
Fr John Guiney SJ

## Learning lockdown lessons as we reopen again

**Myself and my husband are of course, like everyone, so happy at the prospect of a return to some normality – but I am worried about balancing this return to a new normal while not leaving behind some of the things that we learned during the pandemic.**

**W**hat feeling shows is really good emotional awareness – you are trying to future proof your relationship without being overly anxious about it. Just like when we had to adjust to life during lockdown, we will now have to readjust to life as society once again opens up. For many of us it’s fair to say that things won’t be quite ‘the same’ and in a lot of cases this is a positive.

The first thing to do is to sit down and have a conversation with your spouse about your expectations. How will you now manage your family calendar again, prioritising your needs, various extracurricular activities and time together. What are the things that are really important that you learned from the pandemic that you want to make sure you maintain? Perhaps it’s having that family dinner all together every evening or having more down time

together. Many people noted that the huge positive of lockdowns was more family time together and a more relaxed slower pace to life. Can you maintain some of these positives? For example, do your kids really need to return to all of their extracurricular activities? The pandemic helped people to let go of the dangerous cultural phenomenon of wearing being ‘busy all the time’ as some sort of a badge of honour.

You might still be anxious about certain social situations, all of these things need to be talked about. Give yourselves and your children time to re-adjust and keep talking about your expectations which may well differ. One of you might want to jump into everything you can do as things reopen, while the other might want to take a more cautious approach, so it’s important to come to a compromise.

Just like when the lockdowns began you worked out your schedules, who would do what and what new roles and responsibilities you each have – you once again need to evaluate all of these things and

adjust accordingly. It’s probably a good idea at this point that you talk to your employer about continuing flexibility, for example maybe you have really enjoyed that you have been able to do the school run or be able to spend a weekday afternoon taking the

kids to the park. The vast majority of people that are usually office based have said that they are hoping when offices reopen for a blended approach, in other words several days at home and several days in the office. Several pieces of research have shown, in general, staff productivity actually increased working from home. Doing this will help inform your new ‘out of lockdown’ family timetable. It’s important that the good habits you

might have had pre-lockdown like a weekly date night out are now re-introduced and maintained. Don’t let yourselves fall into the trappings of the things that didn’t work before, focus on the things that have made life better, the things you want to reintroduce and together work out practical ways to make your new normal happen.



**Wendy Grace**





# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## As usual, religious programmes did not disappoint

I have three main go-to programmes every weekend when it comes to religious affairs. All three are on radio and all three had plenty of interest last week.

**The Leap of Faith** (RTÉ Radio One, Friday) was a particularly positive episode. The show featured an important interview with Catherine Wiley founder of the Catholic Grandparents Association. She pointed to a common problem – grandparents' concern that their adult children were not having their own children baptised or brought up in the Faith. During lockdown her group had brought concerned grandparents together in an online faith café (still going), which provided a supportive community. We are the children of the 1960s she said, ironically suggesting they were supposed to be the wild ones! Now, she said, we had lost our confidence in how to pass on faith and be models of faith, with parents assuming it was the schools' responsibility and schools assuming it was the parents' job, which of course it is, primarily.

Michael Comyn also interviewed Fr Bryan Shortall OFM Cap. about the impending easing of the main restriction on public worship. Fr Shortall was looking forward very much to having his parishioners back in the church, but, though welcome, it was in a way a stressful prospect as



Audrey Carville, presenter of *Sunday Sequence* on BBC Radio Ulster.

there would be limitation on numbers and a need for other protective measures. He was particularly positive in relation to the online engagement that had occurred during lockdown, with hundreds logging in on a global level. He hoped this would continue at some level. Mr Comyn asked him a question that surprised and impressed me – "Who's been looking after you and

your colleagues?" And yes, they were looked after – first-off he lived in a community and learned to cook in his formation days. Secondly there were parishioners who dropped food around to them.

Mr Comyn also quoted Church of Ireland Archbishop Michael Jackson as saying that he was "rejoicing" in the return of public worship. The issues were

much the same for Shaykh Dr Umar Al-Qadri and his Muslim community in Ireland. The restrictions on mosque attendance were sorely felt, and he expressed disappointment that places of worship were so restricted when they were not so in other European countries, where in some cases Covid-19 cases were more numerous. All contributors seemed optimistic about the future.

**Sunday** (BBC Radio 4) also looked at the re-opening of mosques, this time in Britain, but it was in the context of a controversy – in some mosques women had been excluded from congregational prayers. Campaigner Julie Siddiqi had been so excluded and was not staying quiet about it. She described being angry, upset and feeling let down. One mosque issued a statement to the effect that congregational prayer was an obligation for men, but not for women, so with Covid-19 related restrictions in place it was felt appropriate to maximise the space for men, but Ms Siddiqi wasn't impressed with this line of argument, and was critical of a more general exclusion of women in some British mosques.

There was also an interview with Dr Krzysztof Charamsa, formerly a priest with the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith and now a campaigner for LGBT causes, and in a same sex relationship. He threw around more

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### SUNDAY SEQUENCE

**BBC Radio Ulster Sunday May, 16 8.30pm**

Topical religious and ethical issues, often with a Northern Ireland flavour.

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

**EWTN Sunday May 16, 9pm**

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

#### SUNDAY MORNING STORIES

**BBC One Sunday May 16, 10.30am**

The Rev. Kate Bottley shares a collection of inspirational stories, rooted in faith, hope and spirituality.

accusations of homophobia than I've heard in a long time. Considering his background, I was surprised that he thought "a Pope can change everything". He had been asked if he thought Pope Francis was more open pastorally and emotionally to LGBT people, and was inclined to believe that, but of course that's a long way from the doctrinal change he was seeking. And I did find his re-interpreting of certain Scriptural passages rather unconvincing.

Later that morning **Sunday Sequence** (BBC Radio Ulster) featured an informative and detailed look, with professors Jon Tonge and Laurence Kirkpatrick, at the role of evangelicals and Paisley-founded Free Presbyterians in Northern Ireland politics, especially in the Democratic

Unionist Party (DUP). This was in the context of this week's election for a new leader of that party. The historical background was really interesting, but when the beliefs of these groups were being discussed I thought it would have been more useful, even respectful, if they had a representative of these groups to speak for themselves rather than having them characterised as right-wingers and fundamentalists (not saying they aren't, in terms of factual description).

The reference to "these people" sounded rather condescending.

[boregan@hotmail.com](mailto:boregan@hotmail.com),  
[@boreganmedia](https://twitter.com/boreganmedia)



Pat O'Kelly



# Music

## Veronica Dunne was above all devoted to her students

Following their honeymoon in Italy Veronica Dunne and Peter McCarthy settled into their home on Dublin's Bushy Park Road. However, Ronnie's commuting between Dublin and London to fulfil her Covent Garden contract became more difficult with the arrivals of son Peter in 1954 and daughter Veronica (Judy) in 1956.

Ronnie's farewell to the Royal Opera came in 1958 when she was heard as Mimi (*La bohème*) and Micaëla (*Carmen*) as well as Blanche (*Dialogues des Carmélites*) in the first performances in Britain of Poulenc's haunting opera on the sisters' martyrdom at Compiègne during the French Revolution.

The chance for Ronnie to appear in North America had



Mrs Dunne put considerable energy into fundraising for Dublin's National Concert Hall.

come early in 1955 when she joined the specially-formed Irish festival singers on a 15-week tour of the US and Canada. Under the direction of formidable pianist Kitty O'Callaghan, the group began the strenuous trip in St John's Newfoundland and included

New York's Carnegie Hall in its series of concerts.

Besides rearing her family, Ronnie continued to honour her singing commitments and in September 1959 commemorated the 200th anniversary of the death of Handel with performances of his oratorios

*Jephtha, Messiah, Samson and Solomon* in a number of countrywide venues.

Earlier that year she undertook the role of Eily in Benedict's *The Lily of Killarney* for Kilrush Operatic Society and she would return to that company on a number of occasions. Not content with singing in Ireland, Ronnie Dunne made a number of appearances with Welsh National Opera including *Tosca* in Swansea and *Marenka (The Bartered Bride)* and *Elvira (Don Giovanni)* in Cardiff.

Among her plethora of concert and recital engagements Ronnie was the soprano soloist in the RTÉ commissioned Brian Boydell cantata *A Terrible Beauty is Born* for the 50th anniversary of the 1916

Easter Rising and, at almost a moment's notice, she replaced the indisposed Heather Harper in the first performance here of Britten's *War Requiem* in Dublin's St Patrick's Cathedral in April 1967.

Ronnie's last operatic appearance brought her stunning portrayal for Opera Ireland of the dowager countess in Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* in 2002 and for which she had lessons in Russian. Her final goodbye to the stage came as Grandma Tzeitel in Lyric Opera's production of *The Fiddler on the Roof* at the Gaiety in 2011.

In 1981 Charles Haughey invited Ronnie to join the first board of the National Concert Hall (NCH). Serving three five-year terms she entered whole-

heartedly into fundraising at home and abroad for the Hall's organ that was launched in 1991.

There was further fundraising for her own triennial International Singing Competition, which has earned global respect since its establishment in 1995.

Ronnie Dunne began her long teaching career in Dublin's Municipal School in 1961. She later moved to the Leinster School and the RIAM as well as continuously giving lessons at home in Bushy Park Road. It would take several columns to do justice to her service to her students to whom she was dedicated and devoted. Ronnie died on April 5, 2021 aged 93. May her soul rest in peace.





# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## Recent books in brief

**Saint Ignatius of Loyola: A Convert's Story**  
by Patrick Corkery  
(Messenger Booklets, €4.95/£4.50)

From this month through July 2022 the Society of Jesus celebrates an Ignation year. This marks the 500th anniversary of St Ignatius' 'conversion'.

He had been struck down on the field of battle and was confined to his bed, recovering from a cannonball wound to his leg. During the period of confinement he slowly changed his reading from romances to spiritual books. So began a slow alteration of his own interior life, that he eventually wanted to share with others.

During this year there will be many events and publications, of which this is one of the first into the field. These small booklets (like the old Catholic Truth Society pamphlets on which three generations were reared) play an important role. Not everyone wishes to read larger biographies, or complicated theological treatments. So this booklet by Patrick Corkery, now studying for the Jesuit priesthood, will be ideal for many. In a way he is sharing his own present approach to the man and his teachings.

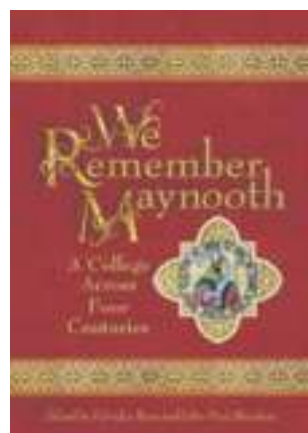
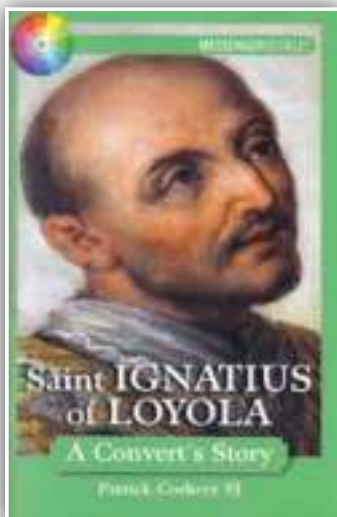
He remarks that after Loyola's death he was remembered as a small man with a constant smile. How lacking that smile is in the religious around us. The smile reflected his love of God, of course, but also for plain humanity. This is a good place for readers to begin their own search of the meaning of St Ignatius in the world today.

**The Prodigal Prophet: Jonah and the Mystery of God's Mercy**  
by Timothy Keller  
(Hodder & Stoughton, £9.99)

Of all the books of the Old Testament, the Book of Jonah, reading as it does like a moral fable (which indeed it is) is all too easily misunderstood. In this little book Pastor Timothy Keller suggests that all too many persist with the tale until the prophet is released from the belly of the whale, and then abandon it. However, he suggests that it is what happened next that is most important. In it he says "one of the most powerful and important lessons of the Bible is hidden".

He thinks too that the misadventures of Jonah take us too into places we would rather not go and relations with people we would rather not meet or care for. These he sees as some of the "deepest counsels of God". But this is God's message through Jonah: "how Christians in a time of great division [especially in America where the author lives] even when it takes them to uncomfortable places".

The notes in the old Challenger edition, I noted years ago, underlined three points here. Jonah was the only prophet aside from Christ to arise in Galilee. He prefigures in his own person the death and resurrection of Christ. But uniquely - and very relevantly for the world today - Jonah "was the only one of the prophets that was sent to preach to the Gentiles". Now that is a sobering thought, worthy of reflections.



**We Remember Maynooth: A College across Four Centuries**, edited by Salvador Ryan and John Paul Sheridan (Messenger Publications, €50.00/£40.00)

Peter Costello

This compilation of Maynoothiana has been prepared to celebrate the 225th anniversary of its foundation with a backward look or two at earlier events. It is the kind of book which the many thousands of those associated with Ireland's great seminary will want to read because of those associations. But this is a book which anyone interested in the making of the way we live today ought to read.

For some older readers the title will evoke a once famous book, Fr Neil Kevin's *I Remember Maynooth* (1945), a memoir of the author's time there (which incidentally includes a very remarkable true ghost story, with the true flavour of M.R. James).

### Seminary

But Maynooth is nowadays much more than a seminary. It has grown into a university of standing. The compilers of this book, though interested in trying to give an impression of those hundreds of years of tradition in which many thousands of priests for Ireland and for the missions were trained, also note the very name of the place became associated in the mind of the popular press with the teaching and authority of the Church in Ireland. They want to show what it really was in its multifaceted way.

**“What this ever fascinating book reveals is just how intellectual, social and culturally active Maynooth was”**

Fr John Paul Sheridan is, among other things, lecturer in religious education and catechesis at Maynooth. Salvador Ryan is professor of ecclesiastical history. But they are only

# Maynooth in the life of the modern Irish nation

**“The Irish people are not sentimental. See how quickly they abandoned the Gaelic language in the 19th Century”**

the compilers and editors. The real authors are the 100 contributors. They provide very varied and very personal views, which open out the impressions which many may have of this once closed off place in the last 80 years or so, since Neil Kevin put pen to paper. There are stories of ghosts here too, but they are more akin to the friendly household spirits of antiquity.

This is a large, handsome book, written with enthusiasm and vitality. It is filled too with fine illustrations, but the final impact is a of a chorus of voices telling the story of the place through its affect on themselves. Yet it seems also

to delve into every corner of the buildings.

### Changing

It presents a picture of aspects of a changing Ireland and changing Church, both modernising in response to the altered circumstances in which the Irish people found themselves.

Maynooth as a seminary is certainly a ghost of its old self. The astonishingly rapid decline of vocations was sudden and clearly unexpected. But looking back, it seems to me, not surprising.

The priest was seen in the hundred years from the 1860s as a respected profession, akin

in high social respect to a doctor, solicitor, bank manager, or accountant. The priesthood was a profession to which a son or two of the prosperous urban middle-class, the rural merchants and 'strong farmers' could put their sons.

The decline was often put to the effects of Vatican II. But religion had little to do with the matter, I think. After World War II in the United States there was an astonishing expansion of university provision. This was soon followed in Britain and Europe, and inevitably in Ireland. Suddenly the possibility of all kinds of new professions (not academic alone) became possible. What



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.



The glorious ceiling of the Lady Chapel at Maynooth. Photo: Paula T Nolan.

had been, let us say the old commerce course in University College Dublin, had now morphed into the possibility of a PhD in Economics, with a possibility of study in Chicago.

## “The parents of Ireland chose the path to prosperity”

The parents of Ireland chose the path to prosperity. I find here a very similar sentiment being expressed by Fr Peter Connolly - the man famous in the popular mind as having a good word to say for the early novels of Edna O'Brien.

“The Irish people are not sentimental. See how quickly they abandoned the Gaelic language in the 19th Century when they saw it as no longer of practical use. Religion will go in the next generation: and when it goes, it will go so fast that nobody will even know it is happening.”

## Sharply

That was in 1980. And was sharply to the point, though what he predicted had already begun, two decades before, heralded perhaps on that fateful New Year's Eve in 1961 when television arrived.

Yet what this ever fascinating book reveals is just how intellectual, social and culturally active Maynooth was. The old college now in a developing form was still playing a significant role in the emergence and development of the Irish mind.

We remember Maynooth is a wonderful compendium, and makes for richly rewarding reading. Readers of today will greatly enjoy it, but the historians of tomorrow will turn to it to seek materials about the development of modern Ireland since the end of World War II, and even earlier. It may seem an expensive treat, but it will be a richly rewarding one, for it is full of information and insights, and rich in humane sentiments.

# Bringing the printed book to the Americas

Peter Costello

**R**ecently congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, US representative in Washington for Georgia's 14 congressional district, a lady deep sunk in controversies of all kinds, raised a few more eye-brows by her reference to the “Anglo-Saxon heritage” on which “these United States” are raised.

She is, of course, one of those who have in any case little interest or respect for the numerous cultures that in effect created the modern United States - here we might well imagine that her Irish-America constituents might have a more nuanced view of the culture of Elizabethan and Jacobean England to which she was seemingly alluding. (That is if she could actually define what she meant in any case by the term.)

## Pilgrim Fathers

But the general claim is that the United States owes its cultural origins to the Pilgrim Fathers. They after all were strong-minded and belligerent folk whom England had exiled because they would not settle down as good neighbours. In the popular memory of the United States they are regarded as intolerant witch burners, which are not attractive attitudes for citizenship in a complex community. Their freedom was maintained by restricting that of others. (The Puritan ideal was more complex than this, but in the heat of controversy what one's political enemies believes quickly becomes distorted.)

The printed book is generally regarded as one of the critical steps in the creation of modern society, but it has not been without controversy.

The heirs of the Pilgrim Fathers used to claim that the first printing press in America, indeed in the Americas, was that set up in New England in 1639. Indeed the first book ever struck off in the New World was an Almanac, owned, edited and distributed by William Pierce, of Cambridge, Mass. Later Mr Pierce put out a metrical version of the Bible.

However, it was established in 1908 by a Dominican scholar, Fr. V.F. O'Daniel, that the first printing press on what is now US territory was set up by a Mr Glover, at Cambridge, Mass., certainly and in 1639. The first item printed was the Freeman's



An early press at work.

Oath, which made the Pilgrim Father's book the second.

But the simple claim that these presses were the first in the New World is mistaken. As early as 1536 - a mere 80 odd years since it was introduced by Johann Gutenberg - there was a press in the city of Mexico, as Fr O'Daniel explained in the typical combative style of nineteenth century religious controversy:

“There is the proud capital of the great empire of the Aztecs, whose powerful and haughty sovereigns had for centuries lorded over the surrounding nations, had offered hecatomb upon hecatomb of human victims to their idols, the white robed sons of St Dominic published *The Spiritual Ladder of St John* in the year of Our Lord 1536 more than 100 years before the Pilgrims published their first works at Cambridge, Mass. The book was of a religious character, while that of the Puritans was only an almanac”.

## “The simple claim that these presses were the first in the New World is mistaken”

I don't suppose, however, that a Dominican scholar of today would express his views of the facts in quite such a combative style today. (The work printed in Mexico, usually known as *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, composed about 600 AD by St John Climacus of Sinai, could not have been more Catholic.)

So the printed literary culture of the Americas, in Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, Swedish, and of course, English, owes its initiation to the culture of Latin Europe. According to H. L. Mencken in the 4th edition of *The American Language* (p. 682, aside from contributions from African cultures, a little Gaelic from Irish emigrants got in there too.

## Crowds

This linguistic carnival rather crowds in on the simple

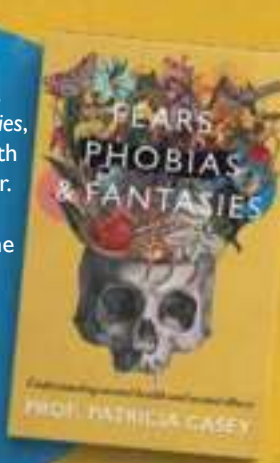
Anglo-Saxon culture seeming so all-encompassing in the view of Congresswoman Greene.


How sad for those with simple supremacist agendas, that the actual facts of history are so contrary, so complex, so open to constant revision. For the history of every country, not only in the Americas, but in Europe as well, is a process of constant, and necessary, revision; a process, too, of increased understanding.

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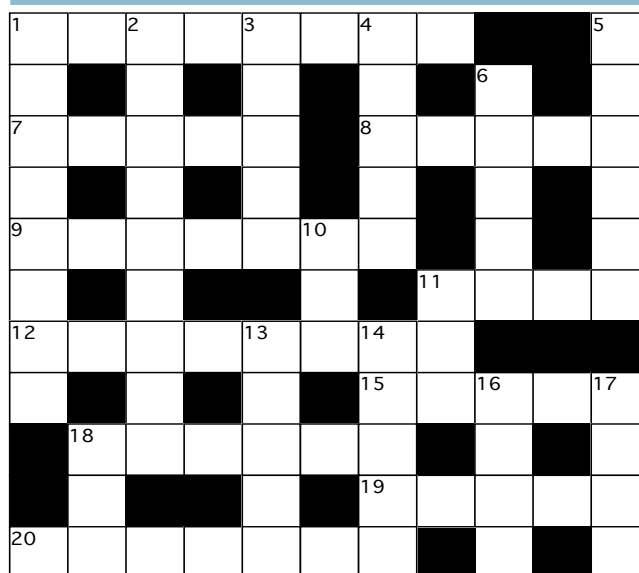
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## Crossword Junior

Gordius 382



### Across

- 1 It's important for your horoscope - it might be Aries or Leo, perhaps (4,4)
- 7 Surname of former American president Barack (5)
- 8 Wear it in the kitchen to protect your clothes (5)
- 9 Walked in shallow water (7)
- 11 This has a curved shape (4)
- 12 Healing cream (8)
- 15 Spooky (5)
- 18 Newspaper boss (6)
- 19 The second planet from the sun (5)
- 20 City in Spain famous for its oranges (7)

### Down

- 1 Dangerous, stinging desert creature (8)
- 2 Left behind, stopped taking care of (9)
- 3 Slowly-moving creature with a shell (5)
- 4 Defend, protect from harm (5)
- 5 Town in Tipperary (6)
- 6 Mistake (5)
- 10 What you see with (3)
- 11 Gobbled (3)
- 13 Copper or iron, perhaps (5)
- 14 "Stay confident, don't lose your \_\_\_\_!" (5)
- 16 You wear it on your finger (4)
- 17 Direction opposite to West (4)
- 18 A female sheep (3)

## SOLUTIONS, MAY 6

GORDIUS NO. 506

**Across** — 1 Cog 3 Distrustful 8 Aegean 9 Baguette 10 Canny 11 Femur 13 Caine 15 Wicklow 16 Fog lamp 20 Happy 21 Rooms 23 Queen of the May 25 Dangle 26 Downpatrick 27 Cat

**Down** — 1 Clam chowder 2 Gigantic 3 Diary 4 Tabloid 5 Stuff 6 Fatima 7 Lie 12 Resplendent 13 Cloth 14 Ebony 17 Allergic 18 Sprayer 19 Kowtow 22 Steep 23 Quack 24 Old

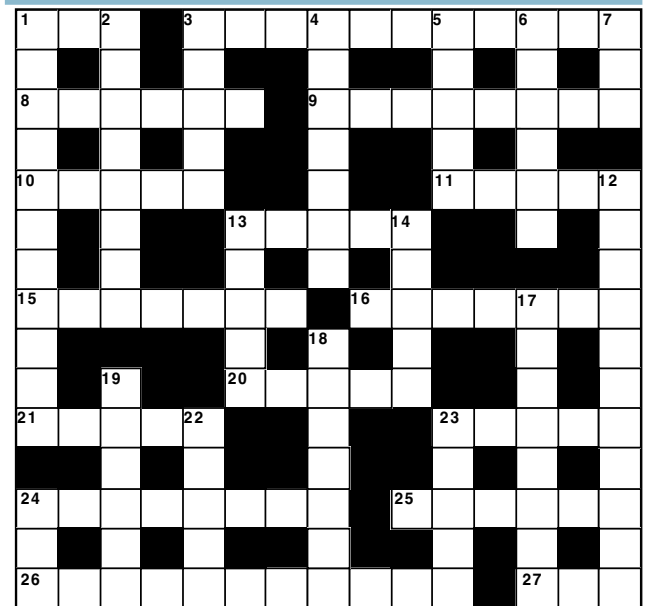
CHILDREN'S No. 381

**Across** — 1 Leonardo 7 Excellent 8 Ken 9 Yield 11 Cherry 13 Yelling 15 Adam 17 Rum 18 Flights 20 Meet 21 Swallow

**Down** — 1 Lucky charm 2 Open sesame 3 Archery 4 Delay 5 Acted 6 Here 10 Illegal 12 Yellow 14 Nut 16 Duet 19 Saw

## Crossword

Gordius 507



### Across

- 1 Jump on one foot (3)
- 3 Wherein to trade company shares (5,6)
- 8 Procured meat for Batman's city (6)
- 9 Historic Russian monk (8)
- 10 Part of flower, somewhat like a petal (5)
- 11 Put up a structure (5)
- 13 Act submissively (5)
- 15 Drank (7)
- 16 Wrestle with one's conscience, like no sage I upset (7)
- 20 Grace, elegance (5)
- 21 Shows signs of tiredness or boredom (5)
- 23 Might AI rib former Prime Minister Tony thus? (5)
- 24 Soft part of an infant's skull (8)
- 25 Taper (6)
- 26 Handy dating, perhaps - in both bright and dark times! (3,3,5)
- 27 Harry Potter's pal Weasley, played on screen by Rupert Grint (3)

### Down

- 1 1956 film, starring Bing Crosby, Grace Kelly, Frank Sinatra and Louis Armstrong (4,7)
- 2 Accommodate a prophet in a big fish? That's a scam! (3-2,3)
- 3 Growl aggressively (5)
- 4 These birds have curved bills (7)
- 5 Cox's Pippin, for example (5)
- 6 Young cat (6)
- 7 This heavy weight has not turned up (3)
- 12 One who will properly remove a bough or branch (4,7)
- 13 Bird sound responsible for part of the creche episode (5)
- 14 Scoundrel (5)
- 17 Person dwelling in an insular location (8)
- 18 Antonio, composer of 'The Four Seasons' (7)
- 19 A score (6)
- 22 A spin around an Iberian country (5)
- 23 Explosion (5)
- 24 Passing craze (3)

## Sudoku Corner

382

### Easy

5				9				3
			3		2	9		
	6		1	4	8			
	9	6		3		7	8	
7		5	8		9	3		4
	3	2		7		5	9	
			2	1	5		3	
		8	4		7			
2				8				7

### Hard

	7		5		4		1	8
		8	3			4		
6				7				
			7			8		
8	9						7	2
		1			5			
				3				6
		7			1	2		
4	3		9		6		8	

## Last week's Easy 381

4	8	1	2	9	3	6	7	5
6	5	9	4	7	8	3	1	2
2	7	3	1	6	5	9	4	8
7	1	6	9	3	2	8	5	4
8	9	4	7	5	6	2	3	1
3	2	5	8	4	1	7	9	6
1	4	7	6	8	9	5	2	3
9	3	8	5	2	4	1	6	7
5	6	2	3	1	7	4	8	9

## Last week's Hard 381

7	1	9	2	5	3	6	8	4
5	3	4	9	6	8	1	7	2
2	6	8	4	7	1	3	5	9
3	7	1	5	4	2	8	9	6
4	8	5	1	9	6	7	2	3
9	2	6	8	3	7	5	4	1
6	9	7	3	8	4	2	1	5
8	4	2	6	1	5	9	3	7
1	5	3	7	2	9	4	6	8



## Notebook

Fr Conor McDonough OP



# The hearts of those who gave a warm welcome to the Good News

**DURING THE GREAT SEASON** of Eastertide, basking in the light of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, the Church loves to read the Acts of the Apostles.

One way to read Acts is to focus on the energy and enthusiasm of the apostles and their co-workers. The extent of St Paul's travels, for example, is really astonishing – he travelled some ten thousand miles on mission – and everywhere he went he and his fellow missionaries faced opposition and contempt. What tenacity they had, what perseverance!

## Intimidating

But reading Acts in this way, while it can be inspiring, can also be intimidating. How on earth could we live up to their apostolic example when we struggle even to speak publicly about our faith? The whole thing sounds like such hard work: are we really up to the task?

A more helpful approach to Acts, I think, is to zoom in on the vignettes of conversion, the little stories that reveal the hearts of those who gave a warm welcome to the Good News about Jesus.

Take the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. It's a



The Holy Spirit depicted in a window in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican.

fascinating story. Philip is fresh from a fruitful mission in Samaria, but he felt called by the Lord to travel south, on a desert road. On this quiet road he met a foreign official. He could have passed him

by. Was the Gospel really meant for eunuchs, for foreigners? Whatever his doubts, Philip felt moved by the Spirit to join him, and he found that the Ethiopian was reading the prophet Isaiah: the eunuch was a man of prayer, a man searching for God! Faced with this open heart, Philip "beginning with this Scripture, told him the good news of Jesus". And, at the end of their conversation, the eunuch was baptised, finding in Jesus the God he was seeking.

## European mainland

There's the wonderful story of Lydia, too, the first convert we know of on the European mainland. In Acts 16 we see Paul, accompanied by Timothy, Silas, and Luke himself, journey to Philippi, a Roman colony in Greece. There can't have been many Jews there, since, we're told, there was no synagogue in the town. On the Sabbath the Jews of Philippi worshipped, we're told, beside a river. It was there Paul and his companions went, finding a group of women at prayer, among them Lydia, a wealthy businesswoman. Then, we're told, "the Lord opened [Lydia's] heart to listen to what was said by Paul". Following his preaching, Lydia, along with her

## Co-workers with the Spirit

The apostles' 'acts' are always acts of co-operation, acts of obedience. As these stories show so clearly, the most important apostolic act is simply to listen to the Spirit, even if what the Spirit is saying is surprising. Without that openness of heart the eunuch would have been left alone on the road, struggling with the Old Testament, and Lydia would have carried out her Sabbath ablutions weekly for the rest of her life, instead of being washed, once and for all, in the waters of Baptism.

It is in order to learn again this central lesson that the Church returns, year after year, to the Acts of the Apostles. Spreading the Gospel, building the Kingdom, is not *our* work, it is God's work, and he delights in making us his co-workers. We should work hard, certainly, but we should never be anxious about evangelisation. We shouldn't panic if we can't find the right words. We shouldn't worry if we feel we lack talent or courage, nor should we overestimate the value of the talents we do have.

Like Philip, like Peter, like Paul, we 21st Century apostles are co-workers with the Spirit: no more than that, and no less.

household, just like the Ethiopian eunuch, was baptised.

"The Lord opened her heart": this detail is key for understanding all these stories of conversion. The apostles do not appear in these stories as masters of the situation, or as skilled strategists, or as leaders. The apostles could never have planned or manufactured these situations. Instead, they arrive on the scene as humble co-workers in a work that precedes their efforts. Philip meets a eunuch to whom the Lord was *already* speaking,

through Isaiah. And Lydia is not converted by the force of Paul's personality, but because she had come to the river to pray, and the Lord had opened her heart.



## The Little Way Association HELPING PEOPLE AFFECTED BY VIRUS

India is bearing the brunt of a new wave of the pandemic. A doctor in Mumbai has described a covid ward there as resembling a scene from Dante's Inferno. Priests are among those dying from the illness, crematoria are overloaded, and at least one diocese has been offering its facilities to be used for treating covid patients. Even those who have not contracted the virus are suffering from the disease's impact on the Indian economy and society.

### Can you spare a donation for covid-stricken India?

The Little Way Association is in touch with the church in India, gathering details of the most pressing needs there. Many of our supporters in Britain and Ireland have themselves been affected by the pandemic but, if you can spare a donation for India, it will be forwarded to clergy and religious there without deduction.

**Every penny that you donate goes intact to provide basic sustenance, water, medicine and housing for the children, families and individuals who need them.**

**Please give what you can. Thank you and may God reward your generosity.**

**All our donors are remembered at Masses offered for their intentions and the missionaries always promise prayers for their benefactors.**



*"Jesus wills that we give alms to Him as to one poor and needy. He puts Himself as it were at our mercy; He will take nothing but what we give Him from our heart, and the very least trifle is precious in His sight." ~ St Therese*

### MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS

In these fraught times, missionary priests rely more than ever on stipends for their daily subsistence and for helping the poorest of their communities. The Little Way Association will convey your stipends and your intentions to the clergy overseas.

**We like to send a minimum of €5 or more for each Mass**

### WELLS NEEDED

Missionaries constantly appeal to The Little Way for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean water, the lack of which causes much illness and many medical needs. On average, women in Africa and Asia walk around three hours every day to fetch water, often in scorching heat. Can you help provide a well?

**Your kind gift will be forwarded intact and gratefully received.**

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION**  
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR  
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

€..... **POOR AND NEEDY PEOPLE OF INDIA**

€..... **NEEDS OF MISSIONARIES**

€..... **WELLS AND CLEAN WATER**

€..... **MASS OFFERINGS**  
(Please state no. of Masses \_\_\_\_\_)

€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

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Address

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