

The Irish Catholic

SPIRIT'S ALIVE

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RISKY BUSINESS

How much uncertainty will you live with now? Page 34



NUALA O'LOAN

Yes it's tough, but think of those who have it worse Page 9



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Hopes for quicker return to Mass as distancing to become norm

Chai Brady and
Róise McGagh

Bishops have expressed cautious optimism for a return to public Masses before the Government's July 20 target. At the same time, there has been a welcome for the decision of the northern Executive to put the reopening of churches as a key priority in easing lockdown in the region.

In a letter to priests, Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin said that "each church should be preparing its own clear plan in order to be ready for opening". He said that other European countries were providing a model that Irish parishes could follow.

Dr Martin said he believed that "Irish public health authorities will be influenced by the measures taken in other European countries."

"The reopening of churches in a number of European countries has in fact been accompanied by strict norms of public health," he said.

Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran said he finds it "disappointing to think that smaller, physically-distanced congregations would not be permitted to gather for Mass until July 20."

"I honestly believe that it should be possible to begin sooner, but always giving priority to public health. Whenever it happens, it will require flexibility and generosity of spirit on the part of everybody," he said.

Attendance
In his letter this week, Dr Martin urged parishes to devise a seating plan and clearly define the maximum number of people that the church can hold. "When this number has been identified, the parish must consider how to deal with possible larger attendance."

"This could mean suggesting that numbers be systematically spread around the weekdays or that extra Masses be scheduled for Sunday," he said.

He also said that "it would seem that the preferred option is for Communion to be brought to people rather than by a procession to the altar".

Bishop Doran said that he

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Loved ones are not forgotten



Bishop Noel Treanor visited both Newtown and City Cemeteries in Belfast at the weekend to perform the traditional blessing of the graves. Covid-19 restrictions prevents families from attending. See story, Page 3.

MARY KENNY

Re-cycling boom during the pandemic

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SACRAMENTS MOST HOLY

How has our spirituality fared with church doors closed? PAGES 14 & 15



KEEP THE PRESSURE ON

Irish bishops must tackle Mass restrictions PAGE 8



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It is a Herculean task to ready our parishes for the new normal

Like many people, I am acutely feeling the absence of Sunday Mass. Parishes are doing their best, and there is a wealth of creativity in many of the Masses that are being streamed online. But it isn't the same – not really.

I am blessed where I live that churches remain open as places of prayer and solace. In the stillness and beauty of my local church I am able to pray before the Blessed Sacrament.

Others are not so lucky. Many churches in various parts of the country remain locked much to the dismay of parishioners even if they do understand the genuine concern for public safety that motivates the closures.

It is welcome news this week that some diocese have begun the process of re-opening churches – at least for private prayer. In the North, the civil authorities have indicated that opening churches will be part of phase one of the relaxation of restrictions there. Though oddly there is no timeframe.

Isolation

Jesus calls us all as individuals, but he calls us to communion and community. No man is an island and the faith is not meant to be lived in

isolation. A hundred people in 100 houses with 100 iPads does not constitute the Church. Not really.

Returning to public worship – even with small physically-distanced congregations – must be our priority. No one is suggesting for one minute that the public health concerns should be taken lightly. But the goal must be to ensure that the churches can be as safe as they can possibly and reasonably be.

It will take a Herculean effort. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown up some of the challenges we face as a Church. Take for example the priests over 70 who are in active ministry and are now cocooned. In five years' time, they will mostly have retired.

We have also become reliant on a small and dedicated group of volunteers who are the backbone of every parish in the country. A friend who in the distant days of normality was a weekly Massgoer told me of

his disappointment that his own local parish church is not open for private prayer. When he enquired, he was told that all of the parish volunteers are over 70. But, while expressing regret, it hadn't occurred to him until I suggested it that the only way to fix this was for him to become a parish volunteer.

“Our response to the pandemic can be one that impels us forward to greater responsibility for the life of our parish”

Those of us who are younger and Massgoing will have to step up. It is not enough to marvel at John and Mary who have been working in the parish for 60 or 70 years and congratulate them on their commitment. We need a new generation of younger people to emerge and take

on co-responsibility for the various tasks that are required for the life of a busy parish. It's not about pensioning off those who are older, their wisdom is immense. But we do need to lighten their load and understand that being an intentional disciple means more than 45 minutes of a Sunday morning.

A return to public Masses will require a lot of thought, energy and work in terms of distancing, sanitising and operating one-way systems in churches to name just three things.

A time of crisis is always also a time of opportunity. God has not visited coronavirus on us to teach us a lesson or to bring about some positive end. But our response to it can be one that impels us forward to greater responsibility for the life of our parish. We can't leave it to the same few people who do everything. If our parishes are to have a future, we must be that future.

Hopes for quicker return to Mass

» **Continued from Page 1**
believed it was important for the Church to act in unison. “For the sake of avoiding confusion or mixed messages, it is something that we will have to do together.

“This is not made any easier by the fact that we have two political jurisdictions on the island, or the fact that the impact of the virus has been significantly different in dif-

ferent parts of the country,” he said.

Meanwhile, north of the border the plan published this week includes reopening of churches as part of phase one of easing restrictions.

Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown said: “I'm very happy with that. It will bring a lot of joy to very many people.

“I think people will be reassured that there actually is a

clear process in place. We're delighted that the opening of

churches for private prayer is on the top of the list,” he said.



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Plea for older people not to be left 'on the shelf' during restrictions

Chai Brady

Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran has warned that public health officials must balance the benefits of coronavirus restrictions on older people alongside the contribution over-70s make to communities.

Under State guidelines, older people are now permitted to exercise daily but are still expected to avoid other public contact including with family members.

Bishop Doran told *The Irish Catholic* that he believed that "cocooning

has been an essential element of the public health strategy during the pandemic.

"While it has been very difficult for people, I think many people have welcomed the protection it afforded. Usually, however, something comes out of a cocoon," he said.

Dr Doran said that he is "concerned that, while the 'roadmap' envisages some relaxation of the 'cocoon', it doesn't hold out any hope of a return to some kind of active life for the thousands of people who are currently 'under protection'.

"The cocoon isolates everybody over 70 years of age. Many of these people have a huge contribution to make to the extended family and to the communities in which they live," he said.

Bishop Doran pointed out that "they are 30% of the priests in active ministry in our parishes".

Caution

Underlining the need for continued caution and vigilance, Dr Doran said "we certainly have to be responsible about public health, but there is no life

without some level of risk.

"The benefit of the cocoon must be constantly weighed against the enormous impact on individual people and on society of placing an entire generation indefinitely 'on the shelf'," he said.

Bishop Doran (67) is amongst the majority of bishops who are not required to cocoon. Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop Michael Neary, Bishop Denis Nulty, Bishop Brendan Kelly, Bishop Donal McKewen and Bishop John Fleming are all over 70 years of age.

Bishop leads blessing of the graves

Staff reporter

Traditionally, the annual blessing of graves at Milltown Cemetery would have taken place on the second Sunday in May. However, because of the current pandemic and subsequent restrictions on movement and gatherings, it was necessary to adopt a different approach to the blessing of the graves this year.

To mark the occasion, Bishop Noel Treanor [pictured] privately visited both Milltown and City Cemeteries in Belfast at the weekend to celebrate a ceremony of prayers for the dead and bless the graves.

Solidarity

"In normal circumstances, families would have gathered together in these sacred sites to affectionally remember and pray in solidarity for all the beloved dead who are buried within these Milltown and City Cemeteries.

"United with families at home, we hold in our prayers all those who are buried within these cemeteries: relatives, friends, family members and neighbours," he said.



'Faith is key to my life' says former 007, Pierce Brosnan

Aron Hegarty

Actor Pierce Brosnan has said that his Irish Catholic Faith has kept him in "good stead" through the ups and downs of his life.

The James Bond star, who turns 67 at the weekend, was speaking on the *Late Late Show* in support of Pieta House and about the importance of Faith.

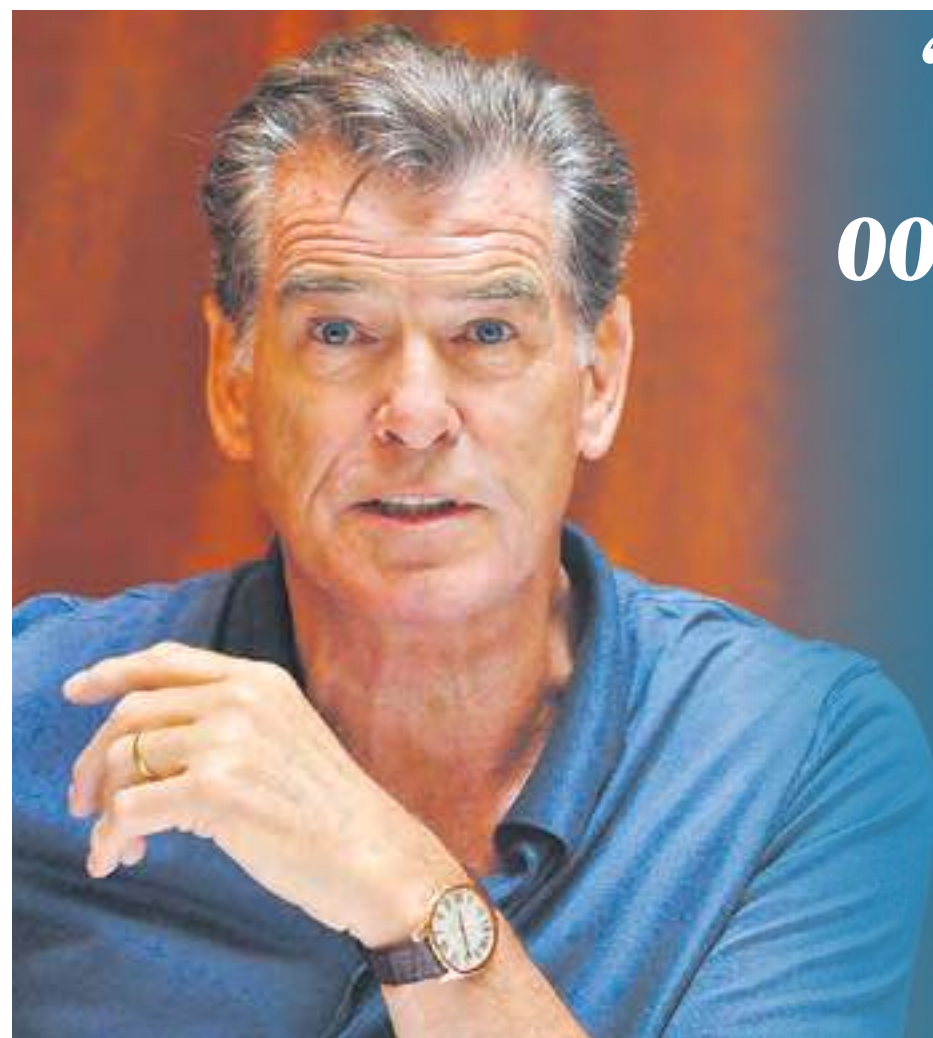
Mr Brosnan recalled growing up in Navan, Co. Meath where he attended the local secondary schools run by the Christian Brothers. "I was brought up an Irish Catholic, which has kept me in good stead throughout the trials and tribulations of my life."

He advised those

experiencing mental ill health to "stay in contact with friends, reach out to people and if you have Faith, some prayers in your heart, God in your heart and entrust God in yourself".

Mr Brosnan recently celebrated his 26th wedding anniversary to his wife, Keely. On being asked what is the key to having a long and happy marriage, he said: "Itw's constant work, supporting and loving each other.

"We have been blessed with a good friendship in life but always solving problems because there is always going to be problems, so you have to know how to solve them and get on with it," he said.



LOUGH DERG PILGRIMAGE SEASON 2020

"Lough Derg has delayed the opening of the island for the 2020 Pilgrimage Season. We welcome the Government roadmap to ease restrictions and we hope that the Island will be able to open for the later weeks of the Three Day Pilgrimage Season. There will not be any One Day Retreats on the Island in May, but we will offer a One Day Retreat in an online format on selected days beginning Saturday 16 May. These will be

carried on our new dedicated website www.loughderg.live. We look forward to welcoming pilgrims back to the Island when Ireland's public health restrictions allow, so that you can come to Lough Derg with confidence."

Ar Lu

Prior La Flynn



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Most would rather pray than go for a pint

Staff reporter

More Irish people are anxious to see a return to public Masses than pubs and restaurants with almost a quarter ranking churches in their top five.

Amárach research asked people to rate which ventures or destinations they would like to open first, and whether they would feel comfortable or safe in them in terms of social distancing.

The Amárach survey also asked people to select the top five venues or destinations that they would like the Government to prioritise as part of the reopening roadmap.

DIY centres ranked top with 65%, dentists came second on 42% while 40% opted for hairdressers.

Some 22% of people ranked offices in their top

five while 30% opted for schools while 26% said local sports facilities.

Churches and places of worship came next with 24% of people – almost a quarter – ranking it in their top five.

Theatres

When it came to restaurants and cafes, 21% of people ranked them in the top five. Just eight percent of people ranked pubs in their top five while just one percent of people ranked theatres and music venues in their top five things that they would give priority to opening.

A statement from Amárach said “the research shows there is a conflict between ‘priority’ vs ‘safety’” but reveals that people believe that churches are amongst venues considered “important and safe”.

‘Trust in God’ Primate asks pupils facing cancelled exams

Staff reporter

Reaching out to school students the Primate of All-Ireland drew from Gospel asking them not to be troubled and “trust in God”. Both A-Levels and the Leaving Cert have been cancelled north and south of the border due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Over the weekend, Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh in his homily for the Fifth Sunday of Easter said: “I think these words would also be very helpful for our A-level and Leaving Cert students who might be feeling anxious about what happens next. ‘Do not let your hearts be troubled; trust in God still and trust in me’.”

In another message to Leaving Cert students who are now set to received ‘calculated grades’, Fr Michael Toomey CC in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary said: “Don’t hesitate to reach out, to talk and get through this.”

He added that although vast majority of the population weren’t about to do the Leaving Cert, “we know from what we have experienced since we have all been impacted with these restrictions, that together we will work this out”.



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Vatican approval of land gift for hospital ‘shocking’

Chai Brady

The Vatican’s decision to allow the Sisters of Charity to gift lands to the State worth €200m for the new National Maternity Hospital has been dubbed “just wrong” as abortion will take place there.

Moral theologians previously urged Rome to block the handover.

Following the order’s announcement of the Holy See’s approval to transfer ownership of the Dublin 4 site, which will be “gifted” to the people of Ireland, Fr Vincent Twomey SVD said: “I’m quite shocked. I’m dumfounded really, I just can’t understand it.

“Everyone knows that it’s

just wrong, that abortion is wrong, I’ve no idea what the reason behind it is, why it’s being allowed, why it’s going ahead. The question you have to ask yourself is, was Rome faced with a fait accompli effectively?”

Fr Twomey said that “there is need for a maternity hospital quite obviously”, but that due to the change in law regarding abortion he is “very disappointed” of the transfer.

In the order’s statement Superior General Sr Patricia Lenihan said: “We are confident that the St Vincent’s Healthcare Group Board, management and staff will continue to provide acute healthcare services that foster Mary Aikenhead’s mission and core values of dignity,

compassion, justice, equality and advocacy for all into the future.”

Late last year, Rome-based moral theologian Fr Kevin O’Reilly OP told this paper that he believed the Holy See had an obligation to block plans by the sisters to facilitate the building of a new National Maternity Hospital where the Government said abortion will be facilitated.

Process

Irishman Fr O’Reilly, who lectures in the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas, better known as the Angelicum, said the move should be vetoed by Rome and that “in the wake of any future abortions, no one involved in executing the transfer to date

can reasonably turn around and say that this eventuality was unforeseen.

“It is bewildering that those who have facilitated the process to date clearly do not possess any degree of moral foresight.

“One can only hope that the competent officials in the Vatican will act in accord with the Church’s constant teaching and the dictates of right reason by forbidding this unconscionable act,” he added.

Under canon law, Irish religious bodies cannot sell or give away property worth over €3.5 million without permission from the Vatican.

See Page 8.

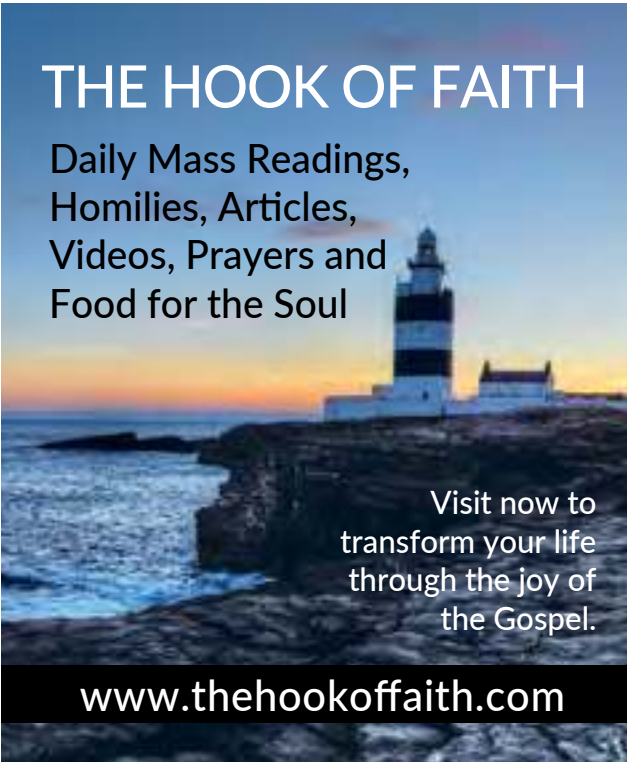
Psalm 23 is headline news in Derry



Young parishioners from St Joseph’s Church in the Parish of the Three Patrons, Galliagh in Derry, with a banner advertising their parish webcam Masses.

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The cycle of history is back!

I'm fascinated by the cycle of history and the way in which things discarded as outdated often come back into fashion again. The classic example is the tram: declared redundant in 1949, the city tram has returned as a wonderfully efficient and environmentally-friendly form of public transport.

And now the wretched coronavirus is producing a new revival – although it had been gathering pace over the past few years anyway: the bicycle. The bicycle is about to be hailed as the best form of public transport of all. In Britain, Boris Johnson has exalted the bicycle above and beyond any other transportation suited to our times: clean, cheap, healthy and perfectly accommodated to 'social distancing'.

In buses, coaches and trains, you may have to sit near to other people which could cause contagion, were the virus to linger. But on a bicycle, you're in splendid isolation.

All European cities are



Mary Kenny



to be exhorted to emulate Amsterdam and Copenhagen – where the bike is the most ubiquitous form of transport.

The bicycle has played its part in the history of human movement, and advancement.

In the 1880s, young women who took to their bikes were making the first steps towards emancipation – regarded as very spirited young ladies indeed.

“The bicycle is reckoned to have changed habits of courtship and marriage”

In the early 1900s, the bicycle was taken up by youth movements, including early Sinn Féin – Patrick Pearse was very fond of his bicycle.

Health movements, feminist movements and alcohol abstainers embraced

the bicycle, but it wasn't until after World War I that a bike became cheap enough for most working people.

My uncle remembered that by the 1920s, you could buy a bicycle for between £1 and 30 shillings, which was about the average weekly wage for many men.

The bicycle – niftily used by Michael Collins in his daring dashes around the country – is reckoned to have changed habits of courtship and marriage. Before the advent of the bicycle, young men and women tended to marry within their own communities and parishes. But the bicycle made it possible for young men to go a-courting many parishes away – a healthy chap could cycle 20 or 30 miles away to

No self-isolation for St Brendan

● May 16 marks the feast-day of St Bréanainn of Clonfert, who we usually know as St Brendan the Navigator. The 'Brendan Voyage' is described by O'Riain's *Dictionary of Saints* as the most influential of all mediaeval texts, attested by the 9th Century and translated into many languages from the Latin. Did Brendan get to America? He got to somewhere named the Land of Promise which is a fair description of territory across the Atlantic.

meet a sweetheart. And so the bicycle brought about more variety in spousal choice.

This was reckoned to be good for the gene pool, because of the dangers of kinship marriage within smaller communities. On the minus side, I suspect it may also have allowed more reckless lads to seduce and abandon girls further away; within their own communities they might be held to account.

Oh yes, the bike is indeed part of the cycle of history, and it's on its way back to the hub!

Online prayer is great but a little music wouldn't go amiss

● These Sundays I 'freelance' across different churches, as I have mentioned, for morning Mass via the wonders of the webcam. Last Sunday I visited, virtually, St Theresa's in Clarendon Street, Dublin, a church I'm very fond of. In normal times, it attracts people just popping in for a prayer, or catching a Mass during a lunch-break. I remember an Anglican visiting cleric who said that what he liked

about Irish Catholic churches was that 'the people treat the joint like their own'. Clarendon Street has always been like that.

It has also had lovely music, during normal times. So it was disappointing there was no cantor on the internet Mass last Sunday. It was a thoughtful, calming Mass, served by a Scottish priest and supported by priests from the

Indian sub-continent and the Philippines. But a webcam Mass is by definition 'distancing', and consequently a little arid. Webcam Mass, more than any other, needs music, and other churches are managing to provide it.

All that's required is one person singing, with one back-up violin to create an uplifting and spiritual accompaniment to an internet Mass.

Pope Francis' COVID-19 EMERGENCY FUND

Your help is urgently needed to support overseas missionaries as COVID-19 spreads through their fragile communities

In Africa, Asia and Latin America the Church is often on the frontline. In remote inaccessible areas, it is missionaries who respond, as best they can, to the medical and pastoral needs of suffering men, women and children.

They already face too many challenges, working in over-crowded communities with no running water. Here the advice of hand washing has little meaning. In shanty towns, refugee camps and shelters, social distancing is simply impossible, and because of poverty, self-isolation could mean starvation.

We can't turn our backs on them

World Missions Ireland is Pope Francis' official charity for overseas mission. We are committed to supporting overseas missionaries, through all the challenges, struggles and hardships they face.

Please, if you can, help us send financial support so that they have a fighting chance at suppressing COVID-19.

To make a donation visit www.wmi.ie/covid-fund or call Fiona on 01 497 2035. Thank You.





Monica O'Dowd
(née Heery)
 Colinstown, Tara, Co.
 Meath on 1st April 2020.

Monica died suddenly at her home in Skryne. Predeceased by her loving husband Pat in December 2018, her parents Patrick and Agnes, brothers Patrick, Thomas, Michael, Matt, Bill, Seamus, John and Laurence, and her sisters Ada, Eileen and Babs.

Dearly beloved mother of Mary, Pauline, Val, Rosaleen, Patrick, Brendan, Helen, Yvonne, Mick and Laura.

Sadly missed by her family, her much adored 21 grandchildren, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, brother Joe, sisters Ritie and Bernadette, brother-in-law, nieces, nephews, relatives and her many dear neighbours and friends.

Rest in peace Monica darling.

Parishes on road back to Mass

Róise McGagh

Dioceses across Ireland have begun working on their own roadmaps for a return to public Masses.

Archbishop Eamon Martin said at the weekend that “our parishes and dioceses have now begun to draw up their plans and ‘roadmaps’ for a return to collective prayer as soon as it is safe to do so.

“It has been very difficult for us not being able to gather together in our beautiful church buildings. We’ve had to rely on spiritual communion.

The Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin has suggested that parishes begin to prepare a detailed plan for full re-opening of churches. Many in the diocese have only remained open for private prayer. He suggested that markers should be laid out and written plans be developed regarding hand hygiene and church cleaning.

In parts of the country where churches have been closed, many will start to open in the coming weeks under similar strict social distancing and health guidelines.

Bishop of Clogher Larry Duffy insisted that “while it will be some time yet before

we see the restoration of what we would consider a normal routine at parish level, journeys always begin with small steps, taken together and for the good of all and, especially, taking into consideration the welfare of clergy and the needs of all our people.”

He asked that parishes in Clogher to prepare for accommodating congregations and to begin providing for the celebration of baptisms and extra options for funeral arrangements.

National effort

Meanwhile, in Kildare and Leighlin where churches have been closed since March 30, Bishop Denis Nulty has decided to reopen churches for a short time each day for private prayer.

“For an ordered and gentle reopening to happen and to continue to support the national effort in suppressing the Covid-19 pandemic, each parish would need to ensure a safe environment for both parishioners and parish staff,” he said.

“This gentle reopening of churches responds to the deep need for parishioners, some who have perhaps been cocooned for weeks, to call

into their local church,” he said.

In Raphoe, there will again be strict rules on social distancing, hygiene and cleaning for parishes that wish to open.

Bishop Alan McGuckian stated: “This period of gradual relaxation will be important. We recognise that there is always the danger of complacency setting in which could have disastrous consequences. I believe now is the time to cooperate generously in the gradual process of

relaxation.”

In Cashel and Emly parishes have been advised to prepare to reopen church buildings which have been closed since April 1. From May 18 they will begin opening daily for private prayer for a short time. Churches in Cork and Ross will follow suit on the same day.

Bishop Kieran O'Reilly of Cashel and Emly said: “This important stage of re-opening responds to the deep need of our parishioners to visit their local church to pray. The

journey ahead is uncertain and there is still so much that must be recommenced within our churches. For now, let us prepare well for this first stage so that the other stages will follow without any difficulty.”

Archbishop Eamon also recognised the need to pray at this time. He said on Sunday that he is “sure that many people are growing closer to God through this crisis, realising perhaps that the way they have been living their lives has been unsatisfying”.

‘Faith is a great strength in life’, says Dana

Aron Hegarty

Forty years on from her historic Eurovision win, Dana Rosemary Scallan has spoken about her Catholic Faith has helped her throughout life particularly during the period in the North known as ‘the Troubles’.

During the RTÉ programme *Dana – The Original Derry Girl* broadcast this week, Mrs Scallan recalled how she felt inspired by her husband Damien keeping his Catholic faith despite the repeated bombings of his Newry hotel.

The 68-year-old said her faith was “deepened” by the experience.

“I could see that he [Damian] had tremendous peace in the middle of this awful turmoil,” she said in the



Dana.

documentary.

“Gradually I began to feel that deepening of my own Faith, which was such a

strength to me and is still a great strength to me through my life.”

The documentary traced how St John Paul II’s *Totus Tuus* (totally yours) motto for his 1979 visit to Ireland inspired Dana to write her first religious song.

Album

This led to an album of religious music and she sang for the Pope in 1987 in New Orleans and again in 1993 at World Youth Day in Denver.

Dana represented Connaught-Ulster in the European Parliament from 1999-2004.

She twice ran for the presidency losing to Mary McAleese in 1997 and Michael D. Higgins in 2011.

God with us and in us

We may be irritated by restrictions on our movements, anxious about the future of jobs and business, or disappointed by no sport. We continue to need our regular doses of the Good News.

Sunday by Sunday we are moving on from the Resurrection of Jesus towards Pentecost. The 40 days from Resurrection to Ascension were a time of transition for the Apostles. They had to advance from knowing Jesus in the flesh to knowing the unseen God in Faith. As the Risen Lord said to Thomas: “Blessed are those who have not seen but yet believe.”

In today’s Gospel, Jesus speaks of “another Advocate to be with you forever”.

Advocate is a Latin word meaning a friend/helper called to your assistance. *Paraclete* is the Greek equivalent. The first Advocate was Jesus, the Son of God come in human flesh, one with us. “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us”.

The other or second Advocate is the Holy Spirit.



The Sunday Gospel
 Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.

St Irenaeus, who lived about 100 years after Jesus, reflected on the wonderful parable of the loving father welcoming back the prodigal son. Irenaeus focused on the two hands of the father, one visible, the other unseen. The visible hand, warmly shaking the trembling hand of the wastrel, represents Jesus. The unseen hand, behind the son's back, is drawing him into the heart of the father. This is the Holy Spirit, the second Advocate.

Effects

Jesus, speaking with Nicodemus, compared the Holy Spirit to the wind. We do not see the wind but we see its effects in the slanting of smoke, the scudding of clouds, or the scampering of leaves. While we cannot see the Spirit we can recognise the effects of

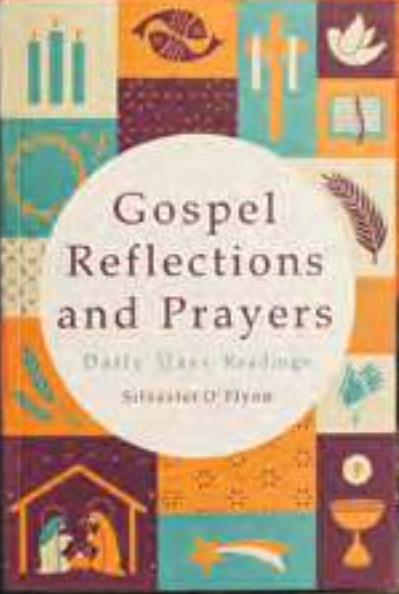
the Spirit. “By their fruits you shall know them.” St Paul listed nine fruits of the Spirit. Three fruits manifest an intimate relationship with God: love, joy and peace; three fruits are qualities of a Christian relationship with other people: patience, kindness and goodness; three fruits describe the inner strength of Faith: trustfulness, gentleness and self-control.

A great advance in personal prayer is from knowing a remote God-up-there to experiencing the warm presence of God-in-here. People have called it the 14-inch drop...from the brain to the heart.

I thank you, Lord, for the wonder of my being and the wonders of all creation. Even more wonderful is my sharing now in your divine life. You are as close to me as my breathing.

May the rhythm of my breathing be the rhythm of my prayer.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your Faithful,



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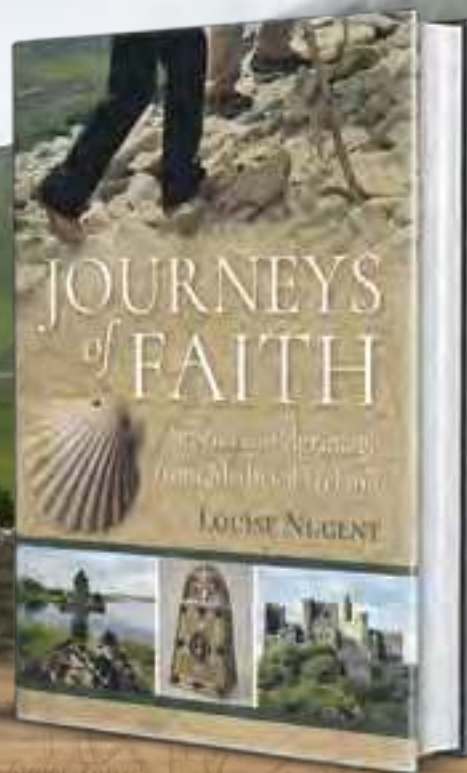
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The bishops need to publish a plan for a safe return to Mass



The Church should be lobbying for a swifter return to public worship, writes **David Quinn**

For the first time in the history of Christianity, churches have been closed across much of Europe to public Masses and other religious ceremonies. But the picture varies, and the speed at which public worship is being restored from country to country also varies.

For example, Poland never forbade public Masses. They have continued right through the pandemic to date, although under conditions of strict social distancing, meaning only five people present at any one Mass. As strict as this is, they had the freedom to do so because east European countries in general have been less badly affected by the virus than western European countries. On the other hand, the continuation of public Masses in Poland has not led to a wider spreading of the disease there.

In the Netherlands, which is far more secular than Poland, and which has had a much worse outbreak, they have not forbidden public worship either. They have simply limited gatherings to no more than 30 people.

In fact, the Churches have gone further than this anyway, and have cancelled public religious ceremonies expect for weddings and funerals under the limit of 30 people or less.

Statements

But the point is that they could have public ceremonies if they wanted. They simply choose not to.

Sweden has never stopped public worship either. Up to 50 can gather in a church, and Sweden,

No fanfare, less gratitude...



A BIG story that received little attention last week was the agreement by the Vatican to the handing over of land by the Religious Sisters of Charity for the purposes of building the new National Maternity Hospital right beside St Vincent's in Dublin 4. The site is worth an estimated €200m and it has been provided for nothing to the body that will

now own the land. If you remember, when it was originally announced that the new maternity hospital would be built on land owned by nuns there was the usual outbreak of anti-Catholic hysteria.

The nuns found themselves totally demonised, yet again.

There were demonstrations against the move, petitions signed,

ritualistic condemnations in the Dáil and dire warnings that the nuns would be 'interfering' with women's healthcare in the most horrible ways.

Laws

Forgotten was the fact that the Sisters of Charity founded Ireland's first ever hospital for women back in 1834, namely the original St Vincent's on St Stephen's Green.

They built it about as soon as possible after the lifting of the final Penal Laws. Now the land has been given for free and with almost no fanfare and less gratitude.

The real tragedy, of course, is that abortions will be taking place on land until recently owned by an order of nuns.

The order's founder, Mary Aikenhead, must be turning in her grave.

like the Netherlands, is very secular.

Countries like Italy and France also had worse outbreaks than Ireland. The virus also took hold in those countries quicker than here, but at the same time they are allowing public worship again much soon.

“A recent poll showed that 24% of Irish people want a return to public religious ceremonies as soon as possible”

Here the date scheduled for the return of public worship is July 20. But in France the date is June 2, and in Italy it is May 18. In all cases, social distancing will apply.

Originally, the Italian Government had scheduled a later return date for Masses, but the bishops pushed back in a public statement released on April 26.

They said the Government plan, “arbitrarily excludes the possibility of celebrating

Mass with the people”.

That very night, the Italian Government reacted by announcing that a protocol would be studied to allow “the Faithful to participate in liturgical celebrations as soon as possible in conditions of maximum security”.

That protocol was soon devised and released declaring May 18 as the return date. It lays out the safety measures and has been approved by the Italian health authorities.

Meanwhile, public Masses begin again in Austria this week and in Germany they began at the start of the month, again with social distancing. Cologne cathedral, for example, permitted 120 people out of a possible 800 to attend Mass.

Here in Ireland, the bishops are working on plans for a safe return to public Masses but at the time of writing, no plan has been made public. (The American bishops have published a 23-page plan.) Nor do they appear to be lobbying the Government, the way the

Italian bishops did, for a safe, earlier return than July 20.

On the other hand, publicans, hairdressers, etc. are lobbying for an earlier return than the present schedule.

A recent Amarach poll showed that 24% of Irish people want a return to public religious ceremonies as soon as possible, putting it in the top five for re-opening and far ahead of the number of people who want pubs or restaurants re-opened. This is despite the lack of coverage in the media of the suspension of public worship.

In fact, when you think about it, churches are some of the easiest places in which to maintain social distancing rules.

A church that fits 400 people, for instance, would celebrate Mass in front of 40 people. Churches frequently have the luxury of space.

Hopefully the bishops will come up with a suitable, published plan for a safe, earlier return to public Masses than July 20 and will learn from bishops overseas how to do this.

Nuala O’Loan

The View



In dark times we still have to think of those who have it worse than us

As we face another week in lockdown it would be easy to become discouraged, to wonder how on earth we can survive all this: these are difficult days.

However, it is sometimes important to put things into context and reflect on where we are from a wider perspective.

Yes, there are profoundly difficult days ahead. This virus has the potential to kill and has killed nearly 300,000 people worldwide. There are nearly four million cases across the globe. Some people will never know they had it, and others will come through it with relatively little suffering.

Some of those cases are in countries which are in a very different situation from ours – countries with no functioning health service capable of coping with sickness and death on the scale which could occur. Countries such as Syria, which is enduring a different kind of lockdown where the country has collapsed after the nine-year civil war in which nearly 400,000 people have died and almost 200,000 are missing, presumed dead; in which millions have been seriously injured and up to half the population displaced – seeking refuge where they can, their economy collapsed, their country destroyed.

It is in the context of that wider global tragedy that we, in Ireland, face the very difficult days ahead. Somehow, in the face of deprivation, unemployment, poverty and all that comes we will have to keep in our hearts a place for those whose lot is infinitely worse than that which we face.

Their suffering will be much worse than ours; their needs much greater; their prospects much poorer.

Prosperity

All is not gloom and doom though. It can be salutary to remember Ireland of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, before prosperity – such as it is – became widespread.

There are those alive today who remember walking to school barefoot, who remember that there was no general education for all, who left school at



Venice – once thronged with tourists, now left in its own peace.

the age of 12 and 14, who remember great hunger and deprivation. I remember very well seeing barefoot children begging in Dublin when I was a little girl and being profoundly shocked. We were poor, but not that poor.

“We will have to pay for what we are doing now in the days to come and it will be difficult”

Many alive today will remember an Ireland in which there were very few hotels, cafés, restaurants, businesses, shops or cars; very few opportunities really. It was an Ireland from which people emigrated in huge numbers seeking a future, because there was no future for so many here.

Although we do have great poverty in Ireland, north and south, although people are still emigrating for economic reasons, we will not start after Covid-19 with the kind of zero base we had in the 1970s. We have an infrastructure: transport, roads, health services, schools, colleges, universities – all key to the future prosperity of our country.

We have a functioning Constitution, Dáil Éirann in the South, the Assembly in the North, a judiciary, police service and a prison service to accommodate and attempt to rehabilitate convicted prisoners. We have an educated population – something

which countries emerging from war and conflict often lack. We start from a sound base.

There are, of course, those who will benefit financially from the virus – those who seize the opportunity to provide goods and services in a different, often virtual way.

There are those who are exploiting the situation, buying and reselling personal protective equipment at exorbitant prices. In this, as in every adverse situation which the world has faced, there will be those who make their fortunes on the back of the suffering of others.

The global economy is a complex construct, but the end result of what happened was that we, too, enjoyed many of the good things we had, because other people laboured often in other lands in situations which were fundamentally wrong, working long hours yet not even earning enough to live on. This was wrong.

The challenge for us now is to face our new reality – we cannot go on indefinitely protecting people’s health at the cost of the loss of the economy which supports the way of life which we have now secured as a people. We will have to pay for what we are doing now in the days to come and it will be difficult. We will ultimately have to go back to work and to a way of life which will be different. We have learned to socially distance.

We have learned that danger lies in a virus which we can neither see, touch,

taste, feel or hold. There have been previous viruses and there will be others in the future. Yet we have learned that many of us can work from home, that there are different ways of doing things. It is likely that all those journeys to work, involving both stress and expense, are not necessary – many people will be able to continue working from home.

We have seen bluer skies emerge as the world stopped travelling by plane, boat, train and car. We can hear the birds sing much more now, much of the background noise which dominated our world has, temporarily, ceased.

We have learned that the world can be different and that there is no inevitability

to anything. We thought we had certainty. We thought, for the most part, that our world would just carry on as it was. Now we know that there is no such certainty in this world.

“I think that to some degree the world had become a challenging place”

As a community, as a people, we have seen much unity, much selflessness and much courage in the way in which so many have responded. Surely we have to carry that unity of purpose, that courage and that recognition of the need to protect the common good into the future.

I think that to some

degree the world had become a very challenging place as the rich got richer, and homelessness and extreme poverty had become again part of our lives. As Catholics we should reflect on what life had become. Together, now, we have faced the reality and the fear and in so doing we must make sure that we hear with absolute clarity the call which is fundamental to our faith: the call to love, the call to holiness. As a people we had, to some degree, lost our way, become trapped almost in an unhealthy cycle. Somehow we have to repurpose our ways of being so that we learn to cherish all our people in the days to come, and that we do so as a holy people.

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- St. Augustine

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Out&About

Brightening up the Liberties



DUBLIN: On Holy Saturday, St Teresa's Church on Donore Avenue, Dublin 8 embarked on an initiative to brighten up the community and bring hope to those who were traveling to work each day or restricted in their movements to the streets of the Liberties due to the two-kilometre restriction (see story below).



► **LAOIS:** Members of the music ministry team of Portlaoise parish offered an evening of Songs of Hope from the Church of Ss Peter and Paul. Pictured from left to right are Nuala Kelly, Aisling Rohan, Georgina Cathart, Fr Ciprian Matei, Fr David Vard and Vivienne Graham. The event was broadcast live on Shalom World television and can be viewed on this link: <https://shalomworld.org/episode/songs-of-hope>

► **DUBLIN:** Dr Bernadette Sweetman from the Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education at Dublin City University shared a virtual Service of Light with her daughter Annie in preparation for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation.



IN SHORT

Shedding a little light

St Teresa's Church in Dublin 8 is reaching out to the community and trying to lighten the load of lockdown and brighten the days of those who still travel to work (see photo at top of page).

According to parish pastoral assistant Sam Byrne: "People in our parish were asked to create and hang pictures of rainbows on the railings of our church with words of encouragement, hope, support and love for others to read and draw strength from as they passed by."

"Our Initiative has grown substantially since then," according to Ms Byrne. "We started out with seven pictures laminated and hung on the railings. We awoke the

following day to see them joined by a knitted rainbow, hung anonymously."

The parish has had submissions online from the US, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Scotland.

Ms Byrne says that any further rainbow submissions, even from outside the parish, to the railings are very welcome.

Church leaders mark VE Day

Christian leaders across Ireland have marked the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day on May 8. In a joint statement, they noted that back in 1945 "countless numbers of people celebrated as nearly six years of war came to an end."

"Those years had brought immense

pain and suffering with millions of lives destroyed. Life would never be the same again for a generation," said the statement.

As well as Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin the statement was signed by his Church of Ireland counterpart Dr John McDowell, Dr William Henry of the Presbyterian Church, Rev. Sam McGuffin of the Methodist Church and Dr Ivan Patterson of the Irish Council of Churches.

Fr McVerry opens first service in Galway

The national housing and homeless charity, Peter McVerry Trust, has begun operating its first service in Galway. The charity, which worked with over 6,000 people across Ireland in 2019, is managing Westside

Modular Family Hub in Galway City, and the first families were placed in the homeless service on May 6.

The modular family hub is the first of its kind in Ireland and was developed by Galway City Council in partnership with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, and the Housing Agency.

Pat Doyle, CEO of Peter McVerry Trust said that the "city council has done a great job of delivering the project and we are looking forward to playing our role in working with the council and supporting families impacted by homelessness in Galway. We will do everything we can to ensure they get the high quality and professional supports they need, as we work on a daily basis to progress them out of homelessness."

Edited by Chai Brady
chai@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



DONEGAL: Members of the Cahill family from Letterkenny kept a safe distance while wishing granddad Dan a happy 86th birthday. Pictured (l-r) are Danny, Caoimhe, Méabh and Diarmuid. Mum Bairbre – who is a columnist with *The Irish Catholic* – took the photo.



ARMAGH: Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin blesses the work of the Order of Malta Ambulance Corps at St Patrick's Cathedral in Armagh.



CORK: The Parish of Doneraile in Cloyne Diocese is keeping parishioners in prayers at all the Masses and liturgies. Pictures of parishioners that were sent in have been put on the pews as a reminder of their lack of physical presence during the pandemic.



TIPPERARY: The Cistercian community at Mount St Joseph Abbey in Roscrea, Co. Tipperary celebrated a festive lunch under lockdown to mark the 90th birthday of Dom Laurence Walsh OCSO. He is pictured here with Dom Malachy Thompson OCSO.



CARLOW: Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin stepped in front of the camera to send a message of greeting to children who had been preparing to receive First Holy Communion and their families in the diocese this month.

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.**

May blessings for Co. Galway



Fr Tommy Marrinan took to the roads of Gort and Beagh in an open-air tour and blessing of parishioners, churches, cemeteries and townlands.

Hundreds of families came to their gates to receive a blessing and it took five hours to complete, given the huge crowds

The event was approved by Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora and Gort Gardaí.





A corona of thornes

Eastertide is the perfect time to contemplate the knowledge that each dawn Christ rises again with us and with us dies each evening, writes **John F. Deane**

I have been and am in lockdown in Leitrim. With my wife Ursula, we are classified as vulnerable. Without WiFi it has been difficult for me to write poetry and be in touch with other poets. In such isolation I still am able to relish the fellowship and encouragement (by email) of poets like James Harpur and Pádraig J. Daly, both of whom posted on some books to help us through.

It has been a time of difficulty and a time of blessing. Weather has been superb and spring in the countryside has been magnificent. Easter Week, with its memories and promise, was an added grace.

At first the ghostly blossoms of the blackthorn hung along the hedgerows in off-white nightgowns; the early marsh orchids rose in Lenten purple. But I knew that between the April blackthorn and the May white, we would suffer such sicknesses and deaths that grief would be our daily bread. A Paschal moon lifted white as buttermilk over the poplar trees and the world lay in unsettling stillness. Two thousand years and our souls are still small and hard as nubs, we have not learned to care for the ground beneath our feet.

Pressure

Without a computer I had to write by hand again. That slowed me down but then there was not much point in hurrying. Hopkins wrote that "there lives the dearest freshness deep down things" and the world around us, relieved of so much human pressure, at least for a time, showed forth the grandeur of God's creation.

We lived Holy Week in togetherness and were grateful for the television ceremonies.

First, we were reminded, there will be the long and penetrating shadow of the cross, then the piercing light

of the resurrection; we die in between.

I wrote a poem on the death of a friend – handwritten, then photographed on Ursula's smartphone – and sent it by WhatsApp to a journal in Britain; slow and laborious, perhaps, but it worked.

“I turned back, knowing we had all died with him this day”

The night of Good Friday was dark; I walked down cautiously to the red gate. New leaves on the poplars rustled softly. I found my imagination stirring! I knew that the souls of the countless dead watched, in absorbed silence, from the pine-tree forest across the road. I closed the gate, stirred again by the groaning sound it made.

A gentle breeze shushed all the forest in a shuddering sigh. I turned back, knowing we had all died with him this day but only he was taken down into the abyss.

During the reading of St John's Gospel I was smitten for the first time by the almost throwaway extra suffering forced on the Christ; John writes that after they had scourged Jesus, "the soldiers twisted some thorns into a crown and put it on his head". How

much extra and arbitrary pain they caused him to undergo!

Sunday morning dawned with birdsong. At the feeder were the finches: goldfinch, greenfinch, chaffinch. I opened the gate again onto an empty road. I knew that overnight the numbers of the dead had risen and I would have wept, for them and for the Christ, wept as

an older man weeps who has known humanity's many failures. Then, the heart open to the covenant cosmos has made with us, I felt that the Christ had stood beside me at the red gate, that I saw the deep punctures about his brow, that crown of thorns and briars hammered home.

Now I could weep but I knew, this special morning, that each dawn

he rises again with us and with us dies each evening. I imagined those souls watching from the forest and they whispered to me: "Tell them," they whispered, "tell them."

Now the blossoms of the blackthorn were fading and the nubs of the bitter dark sloes began to form. At the same time the blossoms of the whitethorn waited with

their 'voluptuous sweetness' to burst forth. All around, on the drumlins and low hills of Leitrim, the startling yellow-gold blooms of the furze cast a fire of loveliness around us. What could a would-be poet do but write:

*Now I sit, cocooned and
quarantined, stare
at the fire dying in the stove;
I will let
the summer moon rise high
above the poplars*

*and the bats go whizzing by
between the house
and outhouse. There is
disorder everywhere
in the world, disorder in the
blood, mourning*

*in the deserted streets and
down the twisting
mayflower-crowded country
lanes. At sunset
names of the dead are called
aloud and we see*

again their well-loved faces.

*Our covenant
with cosmos is under strain,
forcing the heart
into original vulnerability,
to seek*

*beyond the plate-glass walls
of commerce
for something blessed and
vital we have lost
while creation's fire burns on
and the days lighten.*

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To look at this coronavirus spiritually is to see it as a call to conversion, both personally and as the Church, writes **Fr John Harris OP**

On many occasions over the last few weeks I have been asked where is God in this lockdown and coronavirus crisis. Needless to say from the perspective of official Ireland, God is completely absent. Never in any of the public statements I have heard or read has there been any mention of prayer or God. Indeed, in the new phased reopening of the country, churches have been regulated with museums. I find this very interesting for it seems to point as to how the Church is seen by many in our society – a museum piece, a relic of the past which is kept as a matter of interest to a few.

If my reading of the Government plan is correct one will be able to go to a restaurant, get one's hair coloured or buy a cow at a mart before one can go into a church for Mass. There has to be a question here for Church-State separation! It has been a long time in Irish history since the civil power felt it could regulate Church services.

But what of the Church herself? For many, the closing of the doors of the churches was a statement. In the April 30 edition of *The Irish Catholic*, Bishop Donal McKeown challenged us as a Church that while we prioritise peoples' physical health we must be able to speak a language that goes beyond the economic and the hygienic. The bishop says "if after hearing the Gospel we have nothing to offer but the 'technocratic imagination...' then we have nothing to offer".

Responses

These words need to be considered seriously in any new pastoral responses to this ongoing health crisis and any others which may be part of our social lives moving into the future.

But what of the deeper question – where is God? Has he abandoned us? What is he saying to us as believers? As Christians, we always have to look for God in the situations we find ourselves living through and not outside. The logic of the Incarnation is that God is always to be found within the

Without the sacraments will our spiritual lives have been weakened...or will we appreciate them more?



human story. God in Christ Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit is with us and we seek him in the midst of our stories no matter how complicated they may be. The Christian always says in Faith: God is with us.

The easiest way we can see Christ present now is for us to see how many people have reacted in love to this crisis. Doctors and nurses have gone back into hospitals and nursing homes, those who have come back to Ireland to work on the front lines. The people who have continued to work in care homes and in supermarkets. People who are living the Gospel in giving. Neighbours and gardai who have knocked on doors of cocooned people, organisations who have organised to help those house bound. For as Christians, we believe where there is true love there is God.

But this crisis asks us to go deeper. The crucifix reassures us that Christ never abandons his people, even in the face of death. Christ is at one with us and

united to him life takes on a new meaning. That surely is the story of redemption. Christ becomes one with us and in his offering of himself invites us to give ourselves to him. In this communion our lives are renewed and glorified.

Distraction

This present situation has been seen only as a health crisis and that is okay for the health professionals, but for us believers such a response is inadequate. For us who accept Jesus as Our Lord this is also a moment of spiritual re-awakening. To look at this coronavirus spiritually is to see it as a call to conversion, both personally and as the Church. For us believers, we must endeavour to hear the voice of God in the silence, the lack of entertainment and the lack of distraction. This can also be for us a spiritual and religious moment. A moment for us all to reflect on God in our lives.

Now we have the time to rediscover our families and our neighbour communities we can

also reconnect in a new way with God. I must accept it as a time of grace. God is not absent. If we have the ears to hear and the hearts to believe. We have to live beyond the secular and the voices of secularism. God is not in the thunder and the rocks splitting as we discover in the story of the Prophet Elijah but in the simple silence breeze. It is a voice of great power who orders Elijah back to mission and not to feeling sorry for himself. It is a silent voice to action, to true conversion.

* * * * *

The great writers on the spiritual life have consistently written of periods in the spiritual life when God seems to withdraw from the affective powers of our souls. There are times when we feel God has abandoned us, when he doesn't seem to answer our prayers, times we get no good feeling from prayer, we enter into an arid, desert period in our spiritual lives. But the great spiritual writers reassure us that such times are not moments of

abandonment but rather moments of growth when we are moving into a new phase of the spiritual life. During these moments of aridity, God is calling us to a deeper love of him in himself and not simply for the gifts he gives us when we are close to Him.

“When we gather we are gathering in Christ, head and members, moments for encountering Christ sacramentally in our midst”

We seek now God for himself and not for the anything for ourselves. It is a moment of the growth in love, of deeper conversion. “Come back to me” says the Lord, as a Church and in our personal lives. As a 2nd Century author writes from the Office of Readings Week 32, Saturday: “The Faithful do not reap a quick harvest: they have to wait for it to ripen slowly because if God rewarded them quickly religion would be a career and not worship of God. It would consist in the

“To look at this coronavirus spiritually is to see it as a call to conversion, both personally and as the Church. For us believers, we must endeavour to hear the voice of God in the silence”



A priest celebrates Holy Thursday Mass via livestream April 9, 2020, at a nearly empty church in Bonn, Germany. We must pray that this doesn't become our new normal. Photo: CNS/Harald Oppitz, KNA

pursuit of self-interest, not piety”.

This time can be for the Church all over the world a time of refocusing our minds and intentions on God for himself. While the social aspect of our Faith is central to what we are called to as followers of Christ, yet our Christianity can never become just an individual activity (although it is always personal), likewise this social aspect can never become the central reason for our coming together. The Church is not simply a social institution. It is primarily a supernatural reality, and so when we gather we are gathering in Christ, head and members, moments for encountering Christ sacramentally in our midst. As the social aspect of our Faith has been limited during these months, maybe we are being called to refocus how we come together. Are our moments of Faith together moments of the encounter with God?

As an example, celebrating funerals during this time have become very different moments of encounter. They are now much more focused on the death of the person, the family gathered and the offering of the Holy Mass. A lot of the ceremonies which have grown up around the celebrations of funerals have been dispensed

with and the Mass has once again become central.

These months can be a time of real refocusing for us as a Church. We are being told by the experts that there is no going back to life before March 2020, there is now going to be a new normal. People are asking will the web camera now become the new normal for attending Mass. Maybe the absence of the real celebration of the Mass each weekend will cause us to look again at how we actually celebrate Sunday, as the Day of the Lord.

“The actual celebration and being part of the Eucharistic community is the source of our strength to be Christians in the world of today”

I am reminded of how Pope Benedict XVI spoke in May 2005 of the martyrs of North Africa who gave their lives for celebrating Mass on a Sunday. Presiding at the closing Mass of the 24th Italian National Eucharistic Congress, the Pope spoke in his homily about the group of Christians who were killed in 304 during the persecution of the Roman emperor Diocletian. The theme of the congress was the motto of the martyrs: ‘We Cannot Live without Sunday.’ The emperor, had prohibited Christians, “under pain of death, to possess the Scriptures, to meet on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist and to build premises for their assemblies”.

Abitene

In a small village called Abitene, Tunis of today, 49 Christians, meeting in the home of Octavius Felix, were taken by surprise on a Sunday while celebrating the Eucharist, defying the imperial prohibitions. Arrested, they were taken to Carthage to be interrogated by the proconsul as to why they had violated the emperor's order, one of the group answered simply: “We cannot live without meeting on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist. We would not have the strength to face the daily difficulties and not succumb.”

The Pope Emeritus reminded the assembly that “it is not easy for us either to live as Christians” in a world “characterised by rampant consumerism, religious indifference and secularism closed to transcendence.” So the actual celebration and being part of the Eucharistic community is the source of our strength to be Christians in the world of today. Maybe these months without the communal celebration of the Mass can be for us a refocusing of what the Sunday Mass is as the source of our Christian life. Maybe God is calling us back to Mass by our being absent from it.

For us Catholics, our churches are not simply places of assembling, they are places where we go personally to pray and encounter the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament amidst the communion of saints. They are places of worship,



Bro. Chris Gault OP who has returned from his studies for the priesthood to help out in the Belfast hospital where he trained as a junior doctor. He and people like him remind us that the easiest way can see Christ present now is for us to see how many people have reacted in love to this crisis. Photo: Mal McCann

sacred places, which invite us to go beyond the immediate and enter into the mystery – a door inviting us to the more rather than the less. As the virus has taken so much of what we thought we could not live without, pubs, cinema, work, travel, entertainment...maybe we are being asked to go deeper to the more.

Many years ago the spiritual writer Max Thurin, one-time monk of Taizé wrote: “Every church building must be ‘praying’ even when no liturgical celebrations are taking place there, it must be a place where, in a restless world, one can meet the Lord in peace. The Eucharistic liturgy is an act of thanksgiving, a connection, a memorial and an offering accompanied by intercession, which invite the celebrants and

faithful to turn towards the altar of the Lord in an attitude of adoration and contemplation.”

“Hopefully during these times, we can discover the place of sacred places in our lives”

Hopefully during these times, we can discover the place of sacred places in our lives, when we go into our churches as doors to heaven in the sense of opening us up to God. Maybe we can learn through this time of desert to say again with St Peter: “Lord to whom shall we go, you have the message of eternal life.”

In St Luke's Gospel, Jesus asks

the question: “When the Son of Man comes will he find any faith on earth?” (Luke 18:8). Over the last few years I have been reflecting more and more on this question.

As our society has changed so radically over the last decade this question seems so much more real to me.

When this health crisis is over, be it this year or next, if ever, when the new becomes the normal will this have been a time of a deepening of Faith or a weakening. Without the sacraments will our spiritual lives have been weakened or will we appreciate them all the more?

Without the normal, going regularly to church and the sacraments, let us pray that this doesn't become the new normal.



Pope Francis cuts a solitary figure in St Peter's Square during his March 28 prayer vigil. The crucifix reassures us that Christ never abandons his people, even in the face of death. Photo: Vatican Media

Ireland's Historic Role in Fighting Global Disease



Alison Bough

As the Covid-19 crisis continues around the globe, hopeful eyes are firmly focused on the scientific community in developing a vaccine. Huge numbers of Irish medics and specialists have flown home to play their part in fighting the pandemic, but many may be unaware of our country's role in historic medical breakthroughs.

Irish born doctors and scientists who have changed the course of modern medicine include Dublin's Francis Rynd who developed the hypodermic syringe, Co Down cardiologist Frank Pantridge who created the portable defibrillator as we now know it, and Offaly's John Joly who is responsible for developing radiotherapy for the treatment of cancer. In more recent years, Ireland has produced a Nobel laureate, with Donegal-native, Professor William C. Campbell, jointly awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 2015.

“Millions of people have received treatment, curing existing disease, creating immunity, and breaking the cycle of infection”

Professor Campbell and his colleague Professor Satoshi Omura received the honour for their pioneering work on the drug Ivermectin, which has defined an ongoing battle against a number of parasitic diseases in both animals and humans. One such disease is Onchocerciasis – more commonly known as River Blindness – a painful and debilitating disease that continues to ravage entire farming villages and communities in the developing world.

The disease is spread by the blackfly, which breeds in fast-flowing rivers and streams in tropical areas of Africa, Latin America and Yemen, and leaves men and women irreversibly blind. Rivers make the soil fertile, resulting in agricultural communities naturally gravitating towards them in spite of the risk. Dublin-based Sightsavers Ireland are an international charity working to completely eradicate the disease by 2025 and CEO Ciara Smullen explains the devastating impact River Blindness can have:



Simon (left) and his seven-year-old granddaughter Dorcas outside their family home in Nigeria. Simon lost his sight 30 years ago as a result of river blindness. Dorcas received the one billionth treatment for NTDs from Sightsavers and partners. Thanks to this treatment, Dorcas will be protected from river blindness. Simon told Sightsavers, “I have many hopes for my granddaughter Dorcas but the main one is that she is able to grow up without ending up blind like me.” Photos: Graeme Robertson/Sightsavers.

“Sightsavers teams regularly encounter entire farming villages that have been abandoned because of the fear of infection from blackfly. Unfortunately, the nature of the disease is that people who are infected with Onchocerciasis can transmit it back to uninfected blackflies, so the cycle of infection continues.

Our founder John Wilson witnessed the devastation caused by Onchocerciasis in Ghana back in 1952 and was appalled by it. He was inspired to work to eliminate avoidable and curable blindness. It was actually his wife Jean who coined the term ‘River Blindness’, which immediately explains how Onchocerciasis spreads and the impact it has.”

However, Ms Smullen says that with the support of pharmaceutical company MSD and the very drug that Professor Campbell co-developed, the process to eliminate this terrible disease is now well under way:

“Millions of people have received treatment, curing existing

disease, creating immunity, and breaking the cycle of infection.

With the situation we find ourselves in at the moment with Covid-19 it really brings home the commitment of Ireland's scientists, doctors, nurses and health workers in the field over many, many years and throughout the world.”

Speaking on the occasion of Sightsavers' billionth treatment a couple of years ago, Professor Campbell himself was keen to praise his fellow countrymen and women who had changed the face of modern medicine:

“For all those heroic men and women around the world who have ventured out and transformed a medicine into a miracle, I say that I salute you and I thank you.”

📌 Last year alone, Sightsavers delivered over 42 million treatments to protect people against river blindness – to learn more about our work visit www.sightsavers.ie



Dorcas plays with school friends. Dorcas and other children like her, who receive treatment for diseases like river blindness, are now able to go to school and continue to live their lives without the threat of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).

The Irish Spirit

May 14th, 2020
Issue No. 2

Ireland in Bloom

Discover the beauty and wonder still
accessible during the time of COVID

EXCLUSIVE EXCERPT

The Bee Sanctuary of Limerick

A POSITIVE PRAYER FROM

Fr Paddy Byrne

....and much more!

Mike O'Sullivan out with his dog,
walking along the wild garlic path
on Ross Island, Killarney National
Park. Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan

Ireland in Bloom

Despite the current situation, nature is still thriving in Killarney and the locals are taking an opportunity to enjoy their surroundings. Photographer Valerie O'Sullivan writes of the beauty and wonder still accessible during the time of Covid.

Living in Killarney with 25,000 acres of National Park, has made the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic more bearable, not wanting to brag, but it is wonderful to see all the locals still managing to walk their favourite route each day, and wonder at all its bounty. Nature is turning its head in all directions, dispersing its winter coat and unfurling its beautiful colours for summer. The usual question around the 15th April - 'Did anyone hear the cuckoo yet?' And the excitement when it arrives, means summer is definitely on the way. The annual carpet of bluebells in



“Gardeners in the National Park are very happy dispensing information and their wealth of knowledge of planting and pruning.”

Time to be biased...but keeping my distance for this photo was so difficult. Time for Bluebells as Ollie (5) and Alice Pyne (3) get a chance to play in this year's annual crop of Bluebells in Killarney National Park.



Muckross, a popular stomping ground for Holy Communicants for family photographs, is unusually void of people this year. A sea of wild garlic has covered Ross Island, and the smell just keeps on giving. The Cherry blossom has been and gone, which allows for one week of chatter of how beautiful it is along the Cherry Drive in Killarney House and Gardens. The older generation are talking about the bitter 'Scairbhín na gCuach' usually the last two weeks of April and the first weeks of May. It's a cold biting wind, 'Garbh' is rough and 'Síon' is bad weather.

This year nature seems to be happy with just the local residents living within the famous 5km radius, to enjoy the colours of the bearded irises, wild violets, marigolds, orchids and the whitethorn bush. Gardeners in the National Park are very happy dispensing information and their wealth of knowledge regarding planting and pruning.

Eggs have begun to hatch, and an eagle has successfully hatched in Glengarriff, Co. Cork, which has made headline news recently. People have time to look and listen this year. Normally, a tourist destination like Killarney gets busy after St Patrick's Day, hospitality is the lifeline of the town. Tourism has played an enormous role in the town since the 1700's, when the founding father of tourism in Killarney, Thomas Browne, 6th Baronet & 4th Viscount Kenmare, a progressive Catholic landlord and politician encouraged his aristocratic friends from the stately homes of Ireland, England and Europe to visit Killarney. The seat of the Bishopric was established in Killarney, the lands of Muckross transferred to the Herbert family who accumulated fortunes mining copper at Muckross Peninsula. Both the Herberts and Brownes built grand, new estate houses at Muckross and Knockreer Demesnes. This 'Beauty's Home' or 'Heaven's Reflex' with its lakes, mountains and never ending valleys, the island monastery of Innisfallen, views and towers at Aghadoe, Ross Castle attracted Poets, like Alfred Lord Tennyson, William Wordsworth, Thomas Moore, and many painters, Jonathon Fisher, Mary Herbert, Sir John Lavery.

The reputation and proud tradition of tourism has been established for centuries, even withstanding The Great Irish Famine, when the landlords provided for their tenants and townspeople. However, a powerful pandemic



Muckross House Gardens



Thanks a bunch... Sisters, Bébhin, Réaltín and Muireann O'Donoghue from Woodlawn Park, gathered some bluebells this week.



Stephen Moore keeping Muckross Gardens in pristine condition during the current Covid-19 restrictions in Killarney National Park.

COVID-19 which has brought with it consequences for all mankind, has stopped Killarney in its tracks. Staff work long and unsociable hours, it's a busy vibrant town, with tourists flocking to fulfil their bucket list and take the statutory selfie on the Lakes, climbing Ireland's highest mountain, a jaunting car trip, cycling, walking, and of course the nightlife. For the first time in all these busy centuries, tourism has been paused, the industry has fallen silent, and the busy staff, many of whom have worked in the trade since their school days, are now the very people who get to fully enjoy what the tourists came to see. It will be a long road to recovery, the community is a strong and supportive one, and know how lucky they are to have this 'heaven's reflex' to wonder and walk upon.

'The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls' by Alfred Lord Tennyson was written about his time at Ross Castle:

*The splendour falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story:
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.*

Valerie O'Sullivan is a photographer and media provider, based in Killarney. She covers a wide range of events in the Public Relations, Press, Tourism and Outdoor Sectors and is a winner of many national awards in the Press Photographs Association of Ireland competition.

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The Men's Shed of St Mary's Parish takes pride in their honeybee colony and enjoy sharing the hive with people in the local community.

Black honeybees feast under a very special piece of street art in Limerick city. A triptych of the late Cranberries singer Dolores O'Riordan overlooks a wildflower meadow provided for pollinators by the local authority.

Ger Ryan, Pat Collins and fellow members of St Mary's Parish Men's Shed are almost as proud of the new artwork sprayed on a gable end of St Nicholas's Street by Dublin street artist Aches, as they are of their apiary.

Constance Smith

A graffiti image of Limerick actress Constance Smith, who was cast in over 30 films in Hollywood in the 1950s, bookends the streetscape in Limerick's medieval quarter. Colonies of the native Irish honeybee have "reserved dining" from the wildflower crop close by, but they know they can also take off down the river Shannon for dessert.

'We got our first queen from a keeper in Clonlara, and we built the hives ourselves,' Ryan and Collins explain, walking down the garden of the men's shed premises.

'We got our first swarm in a copper beech tree across the road, and we learned how to merge two colonies,' they explain. 'We think that first swarm came from a hive on the roof of Brown Thomas in the city...'

St Mary's

There's been a tradition of keeping in St Mary's - better known as "the parish" - with several hives on the roof of St Munchin's Church of Ireland church for a time, while the Hunt Museum has both a hive and a small "bee loud glade" planted close by.

When the St Mary's Men's Shed opened in 2012, the initial focus was on planting a herb, vegetable and flower garden, with flowers donated by local garden centres. A carpentry bench is fitted with tools for carving Welsh marriage spoons and constructing hulls for local boats such as the Shannon cot and the gandelow.



TOP: Beekeeper, Pat Collins opening the beehives.

BELOW: Pat Collins, left, and Ger Ryan, right, wearing the protective gear to attend their beehives.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Beekeeper using the smoker to calm and control the colony during an inspection.

Photos by Valerie O'Sullivan

Ryan is from a family of fishermen and knows how to pole an angling cot up the weir, how to track eels and the social impact of restrictions on estuary fishing for salmon over the past decade.

Like Collins and a number of friends in the men's shed group, he has a busy schedule of bodhrán sessions and art classes and other activities, but is fascinated by the life cycle of the native Irish honeybee.

'So we got called out when people saw this ball of bees on a flower stand between Catherine Street and Shannon Street, and a Polish lady who owns a cafe nearby was able to tell us it had a queen as her father had kept bees back in Poland,' Collins says.

The men then installed several hives in an enclosed yard next to the Forty Shilling Almshouses, built in the 17th Century near St John's Castle. A steel door protects this apiary, complete with sliding peep holes to allow people to have a glimpse of the "Bee Sanctuary", as it is called.

'We got 16 jars of honey this year, and didn't go looking for more as we feel the bees need to have something to sustain them,' Collins and Ryan say.

'And what sustains us is watching them come and go, and introducing people to them for the first time. We have suits for people to wear, and it is wonderful to watch the reaction...'

“ We got 16 jars of honey this year, and didn't go looking for more as we feel the bees need to have something to sustain them”





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Our Lady of Perpetual Help, a source of comfort and blessing

Paddy Byrne

The following prayer is a very powerful one, a prayer I grew up with in Carlow Cathedral during the annual solemn novenas to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. These novenas were a time of great blessing and grace when God's spirit anointed the prayers of his people with those wonderful Christian virtues of faith, hope and love.

O Jesus, we believe in you, we hope in you, and we love you.

Strengthen our faith, renew our hope and love, and grant our prayers.

Touch with your healing love, O Lord, all who feel the hurt of life's wounds.

Long ago, when people prayed to you for healing,

You listened to them, blessed them, And answered their prayer.

Heal us now of our sinfulness

And of the hatred that divides us.

Take away our hardness of heart.

Open our eyes, which are often blind to the needs of others.

Remove our selfishness and our greed.

Give us self-control at all times, and fill our hearts with your eternal love.

O Jesus, we ask you now to heal and bless us, and fill us with your peace.

Amen

Over the years I have helped to coordinate a novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help in various parishes. The iconic image of this devotion is a powerful one: a young child in his mother's arms, comforted and assured despite the horrific images of his future passion and death, which angels around him are holding.

In my life, devotion to Mary has been a source of comfort and blessing. She is a gentle intercessor, always available, whispering my needs into the ears of her beloved son. I pray the rosary daily. It helps me to enter into the mystery of God's presence.

I'm attracted to Mary because of her great courage and generosity. Mary's yes was given wholeheartedly when she responded to an angel's invitation to be the mother of God's Son. In the same spirit, Mary listened to Gabriel's inspirational and positive words, 'Nothing is impossible to God'.

Part of the annual novena to Our Lady of Perpetual help is gathering thousands of petitions from those who attend. In 2016, our nine-day annual novena was attended by thousands of people in Portlaoise. The petitions they presented were very much the 'meat' of our prayer. They were heartfelt petitions, often from mothers praying for blessing and healing upon their families. I try to ground

this devotional formula with a guest speaker giving a testimony about he or she finds God's presence in the bits and pieces of daily life. Personal testimony is key to evangelisation, ordinary people witnessing extraordinary faith and healing.

Mary is a woman who challenges us. She looked beyond her own comfort at a young age when she went to help her cousin Elizabeth in her need. In the same ways she challenges me to never look inward or become blinded by the comfortable. The image of Mary at the foot of the cross is both heartbreaking and comforting. Her heart must have bled to see her son in agony, but her joy was great when he rose from the dead, victorious over the powers of darkness and oppression. Mary ponders things in her heart and we can all emulate her contemplation.

Sometimes in life we don't have the answers or even the right words. The beauty of cultivating a personal relationship with God is that no verbose formulas are necessary in order to converse with him. My greatest spiritual conversations happen in the silence of my own heart.

Mary is blessed with trust. 'Do whatever he tells you'.

Trust is indeed a spiritual gift; it is an innate understanding that no matter what, all will be well. I'm sure



that deep down Mary was greatly alarmed during that family wedding she attended with her son Jesus. In Cana, her son was about to perform a miracle but such a sign would bring him closer to confrontation with authority.

To say that she must have had mixed feelings is an understatement.

But her spiritual trust transcended her human fear, leading to the necessary transformation and spiritual blessing that turned water into wine. The transformation we need may be fear transformed into hope, sickness into health, debt and unemployment into new opportunity.



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Take Time - to Stop, Observe and Feel

Everyday experiences can be sacred when we take the time to stop, pause, pay attention and encounter a place, person, situation or object, in a fresh way, as though experiencing it for the first time. In the book, *The Sacred Life of Everything*, Sister Stan and Silé Wall invite you to meditate through the image and poem given.

Steps

1. Quiet the body
2. Invite the mind into stillness
3. Seek guidance
4. Gaze on the image
5. Become absorbed
6. Read / reflect on the poem or saying
7. Express gratitude



Scene

The Heron can stand silent for hours in quiet water, waiting and watching and scanning the water for small fish which they skilfully prey on and devour. They embody silence and stillness as they stand and wait. On the morning of 17th December 2018, a heron arrived on top of a building overlooking the Sanctuary garden. We watched her perched there for a

long time, standing still and tall, staring into the garden. We immediately covered the pond with a net only to find four of our fish were already gone. The heron continued to stand and stare, silent and still, all morning and afternoon, as she moved position to another rooftop overlooking the garden and pond. Hour after hour, day after day for the next three days she continued to stand and stare, focused, concentrated and still as death – waiting for her opportunity, watching us as we watched her. Watching her watching us brought a silence, a calmness, a stillness. For three days she had become our teacher reminding us to take time to be still.

Meditation

Allow your body to settle in this place. Allow your mind to settle, as you watch.

Breathe in and out with the heron. Gaze at the heron's majestic posture. Tune in to the stillness of the heron. Allow the silence and stillness to envelop you.

Breathe in the silence.
Breathe out the silence.
Breathe in the stillness.
Breathe out the stillness.
Breathe in the quiet water.
Breathe out the quiet water.
Breathe out the peace of this scene.
Savour the peace and stillness it brings.
Stay with the scene as long as you can.

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The Ecstasy of St Teresa

Craig Larkin, S.M.



THE BUTTERFLY

You must have already heard about God's marvels manifested in the way silk originates, for only God could have invented something like that. The silkworms come from seeds about the size of little grains of pepper. When the warm weather comes and the leaves begin to appear on the mulberry tree, the seeds start to live, for they are dead until then. The worms nourish themselves on the mulberry leaves until, having grown to full size, they settle on some twigs. Then with their little mouths, they themselves go about spinning the silk and making some very thick little cocoons in which they enclose themselves. The silkworm, which is fat and ugly, then dies, and a little white butterfly, which is very pretty, comes forth from the cocoon.

Teresa of Avila, The Interior Castle



St Teresa of Avila

One of the delights for any tourist in Rome is that one can walk almost anywhere and find, in unexpected places, treasures of art or architecture that would be considered priceless anywhere in the world. On the side of a not-too-frequently used street in Rome is a little church, not much different from the other 904 churches in the city. Inside, the light is dim, and one could easily miss a precious piece of work by Bernini, tucked away on the left hand side of the church. It depicts the *Transverberation of St Teresa*, an incident in the life of St Teresa of Avila, when, after a series of intense visions, Teresa's heart was, as it were, pierced with a spear by Jesus, symbolising her union with Him and the suffering that this would cost. This is what the mystics call the state of "mystical marriage". The sculpture is a masterpiece, and Bernini adds a human – almost comical – touch to the work. On either side of the piece he has carved a number of people, presumably friends or members of his family, sitting in viewing boxes, watching the experience as if it were an opera!

That part is not factual, but Teresa's experience is. It took place in 1559, twenty-three years before she died. St Teresa is one of the greatest mystics the Church has known, and, perhaps because of this, most of us are inclined to see her as someone

who was formed from an early age into the highest stages of prayer. But she didn't begin this way. She was a spirited woman, and in real prayer she was a late starter. She came from an affluent family from the Spanish city of Avila. She was one of 12 children, and when she was only seven she ran away from home with her little brother to seek martyrdom at the hands of the Moors. When Teresa was only 13 years old, her mother died. Teresa was a pleasure-loving girl, and her father sent her to a convent 'finishing school'.

At the age of 21 Teresa entered the Carmelite convent of the Incarnation just outside the city, joining a community of 150 nuns. In her autobiography, Teresa writes that she was afraid of marriage. That may have been one of her motives for entering the convent, but she also admits that she was not fired by great love of God in doing so. She herself writes that her first 20 years in the convent were what she called "20 years on a stormy sea". The stormy sea was a life of flippancy and

"The image of the butterfly emerging from its cocoon [...] helps us to see the really human side of Teresa, and brings home to us again the truth that while God has made us, loves us and keeps us as we are, God also invites us to a life that is different, fuller, richer and more glorious – if we want it"

superficiality on the one hand, and on the other a struggle with some alarming illnesses. For these years Teresa always prayed from a book, and one of her prayer books is still preserved in the convent. Its pages are yellow and dog-eared, and it is heavily marked. But prayer was hard for Teresa. She tells us that she would often spend the time of prayer watching the hands of the clock. For a year she gave up even trying to meditate.

But then, at the age of 40, a change took place. Teresa began to have visions "with the eyes of her soul" and to hear through her "inward ear" voices speaking to her. She feared that she was deluding herself. Some of her directors were sure she was deluding herself. But she found good guidance from three priests, two of whom were later canonised: St Francis Borgia, St Peter of Alcantara and Balthazar Alvarez. With their encouragement, she pressed on with her inner journey. This journey led her to become one of the greatest mystics and at the same time one of the greatest reforming figures in Catholic history. It's difficult to know what is more remarkable about Teresa: the

extraordinary graces of prayer granted to her by God, or her tireless energy in reforming and refounding convents. Perhaps the two things are just two sides of the same coin. She journeyed round those convents in an old, lumbering, covered wagon, sleeping in bug-infested inns on very cold nights. At the same time she was also writing prodigiously. She said once: "I wish I could write with both hands, so as not to forget one thing while I'm saying another." She had a mission, and having once known the touch of God, there was nothing that would stop her on that mission, not even the severe criticism that she had to suffer. A papal nuncio, one of her many opponents, called her "a restless, disobedient, contumacious gadabout". But Teresa knew what it meant to be changed by the love of

God. She knew, too, the hesitation that we so often feel at the outset of our journey to the Lord. From personal experience she knew that the only fear greater than the fear of asking God to set us free is the fear that this may actually happen! Teresa knew what it meant to let go of one life and emerge into another. Her famous book, *The Interior Castle*, describes the spiritual voyage as a journey through the doors of a mansion: one door leads to another, and another and another. Then we realise that this castle is actually within each one of us, and as we emerge from it, we enter into the everyday world to which we belong, but with a transformed view of reality. Teresa's writing is full of wonderful images, but the image of the butterfly emerging from its cocoon is one of her best. It helps us to see the really human side of Teresa, and brings home to us again the truth that while God has made us, loves us and keeps us as we are, God also invites us to a life that is different, fuller, richer and more glorious – if we want it.



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The aim of your life is to be truly yourself, fully alive and grateful

To live out your most precious dreams, to blossom into the best possible version of yourself, to grow into your full power, to find your own voice and to use it – that is the purpose of your whole life, the reason you were created. In the end, that is what good teaching, good parenting, good friendship, good religion and good art are about – to convince you of the beauty of your own 'wild and precious life', and of how to make it flourish. To be fully alive is the greatest gift you can give to yourself, and to the universe. 'Don't ask what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive' (Howard Thurman). Take a moment now to ask yourself what makes you feel alive.

To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.

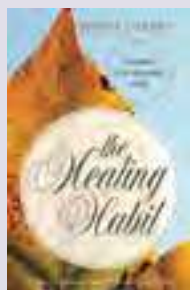
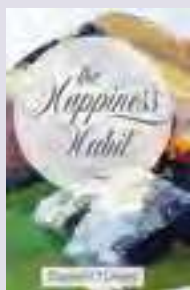
– William Shakespeare

When you feel and face your fear you transform it into courage

Fear is a crippling thing; it diminishes your mind and body; it shrivels your soul. Do you want to live in fear or in freedom? Everyone is afraid to some extent. Fear is an intrinsic part of being human. But be aware of its subtle power. Do not attack, avoid or try to banish your fears; meet them, accept them – and you will slowly transform them. They hold the key to your new purpose. Make frequent attempts to do what you fear most, to move outside your comfort zone, and then notice how strong you feel. Remember; most fear is imagined: F. E. A. R. – False Evidence Appearing Real. It takes daily courage to achieve this huge blessing, to live your life fearlessly. Begin taking the risk today – just one small, bold word or action! Try always to speak and act out of your true essence rather than your false ego.

Do the thing you fear and the death of fear is certain.

– Ralph Waldo Emerson



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Glad New Day

Each morning
we can choose
the quality of
the day ahead

From the book *Already Within*
by Daniel O'Leary



Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan

Some people are at their best in the morning; others blossom in the late evening; a few give little evidence of any interest at all in the day's proceedings. What we do, think and say, first thing in the morning, the saints tell us, deeply colours the rest of the day. When I was a child we were taught to 'make our Morning Offering'. It was a kind of statement of intent. No matter what, our dawn promise to God would hold true. Once we managed to get it right after we woke up, then everything would be right all day long. In his Sabbath, Wayne Muller quotes an old Hasidic poem:

"Take special care to guard your tongue before the morning prayer.

A person who wakes up in the morning is like a new creation.

All of your words each day are related to one another.

All of them are rooted in the first words that you speak."

'We should apprentice ourselves to coming awake,' the poet David Whyte writes, 'treat it as a form of mastery. The threshold of waking, the entry to the day, is the musician's foot lifted to begin the beat. Miss that beat and you will have to come to a stop, and start again. The dash and flair of the day comes from that foot hitting the floor after the correct restful anticipation. Sometimes a prayerful, painful approach to a difficult day may mean stopping and starting a hundred times, until we learn, like a virtuoso, the thorough, attentive, rhythmic presence of the true musician.'

Fear can ruin our timing – and energy. There are those who dread the arrival of each new day, their stomach already in a knot. The shadows that surface at night continue to haunt us in the light. Too many of us, quietly and hopelessly, wake up to another day of silent despair. Yet

every morning provides an opportunity to begin again, to stand on another mountain with a whole new perspective, to refuse to settle for what at first sight seems inevitable. For everyone there is another chance to decide what the day, and the rest of our lives, will be like; a choice about what to set down on the blank page handed to us by each dawn; will it be a sad sequel to yesterday's spent words – or a unique work of art? Every new morning, new week, new year offers us a choice – do we dance it, or do we endure it? Just as we still struggle with the mystery of how a divine incarnation could happen in an ordinary little baby in a very ordinary place in the course of our ordinary time, so too, even while raising the morning coffee-cup to our lips, we continue to struggle with the shocking belief that the cloud of our fears and despair can be dispersed from our hearts by the healing shaft of light we call God. It is the very ordinariness of the timing of the incarnate God that confounds us.

There is something essentially Paschal about concepts such as newness, beginning, beginning again. Few faiths carry such compassionately repeated opportunities for personal and universal repair, recovery and renewal. And the realisation of this redemption from the night of our fears and losses, can steal into, or slam into, our consciousness while we are busy washing our faces or brushing our teeth. True to the essence of incarnation, the whole economy of our salvation is revealed through the tiny spaces between our fleeting preoccupations. With the precision of a skilled surgeon, God's fingers find the fissures in our attention.

It is difficult to capture in logical prose the divine pleading, the urgent

invitation that lies waiting just below the surface of our conscious preoccupations. Like Thomas, we are so slow to believe. Yet this vision, this reality is, no more, no less, what the Christian faith means. Our wildest dreams, which may well be God's dreams too, are within our grasp if, for instance, even between showering and waking the children, we can, with a dogged loyalty, simply utter a heartfelt 'yes'. Another opportunity!

“We should apprentice ourselves to coming awake, [...] treat it as a form of mastery”

'How we greet the dawn is a measure of the freedom we have made for ourselves,' writes Whyte. 'Freedom in the midst of imprisonment, freedom in the midst of all the catastrophes common to the sins of humankind, the hidden made glorious by sudden visibility ... One of Blake's most famous engravings is of a young man leaping out of the picture with a great blaze of light behind him, called The Glad Day. It carries enormous energy and youthful power, as if the youth is leaping right in our face to ask us what we are up to on this glad day. I think of the Morning- Christ wrenching us from the tomb of our nights, bringing us to the threshold of a sweet freedom.'

"Every day is a new day, a new calendar.

You must begin today to remake

your mental and spiritual world ...

Only free people can make a free world.

Infect the world with your light.

Don't be afraid to love or to be loved.

As within, so without."

— Ben Okri

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FREE POSTAGE ON ALL ORDERS

Sr Clare 'on the scale of St Therèse', says Carmelite



At a time when young people need to see the shallowness of celebrity culture, the Church has found a powerful witness writes **Ruadhan Jones**

The Church should "look at and recognise that something extraordinary happened" in the life of Derry nun Sr Clare Crockett, according to Fr Stephen Quinn, a Derry-based Carmelite priest, who says he is "convinced of her sanctity".

Fr Quinn told *The Irish Catholic* that Sr Clare – who died in an earthquake in Ecuador four years ago – should be "held up to the light for all to see" and prayed for her miraculous intercession in an anniversary Mass on Sunday, April 19, in Termonbacca Carmelite Monastery in the Maiden City.

Fr Quinn spoke of her "profound importance" and of his own conviction regarding her sanctity.

"I'm a Carmelite priest and we have many saints," Fr Quinn said. "There are elements of them I see reflected in her life. That's why I, and so many of our friars, are convinced of her sanctity."

Fr Quinn believes that Sr Clare's importance is on a par with that of St Therèse of Lisieux and, because of the way in which she grew up, she is an ideal model for our young people today. A tearaway as a young girl, it wasn't until she was 18 that she discovered her vocation.

"Sr Clare, in her family life, is the polar opposite. St Therèse came from a Catholic home...and used this to propel her into an extraordinary life. Sr Clare came from a broken family in which the mother and father had separated, and the children didn't practice the faith.

"She went through all the behaviours typical of teenagers – the drinking, the celebrity culture. Yet, knowing all that, she was able to make this radical choice for Christ."

In his sermon at her anniversary Mass, Fr Quinn



Photo: Cara Barr

described the culture in which modern young people grow up as having a "cult of celebrity". He said that young people are fed on this culture from a young age, and it was despite this Sr Clare discovered her vocation.

"Famous actors and actresses appear to have it all sorted, to have everything they want," he said in his sermon. "Their opinions are courted on everything, from religion to politics. One can only imagine the thrill, it must be intoxicating."



Gerry McDaid

"At a young age, Sr Clare faced a big life choice – to be a famous actress or a famous nun...She only found truth and happiness in the moment she bent to kiss the feet of Christ on the Cross. She saw Divine Mercy itself... and realised how valued she is by God."

Following this encounter, Clare gave up her ambition to be a famous actress to

follow a new vocation as a sister in the Servants of the Home of the Mother, a relatively new Spanish congregation.

She entered as a novice in 2001, taking her perpetual vows in 2010. She was only 33 when she died in an earthquake in Ecuador in 2016, and her fourth anniversary was celebrated on April 16.

“In his sermon at her anniversary Mass, Fr Quinn described the culture in which modern young people grow up as having a “cult of celebrity”

Since her death, a strong devotion to her has grown locally and internationally, including in the Carmelite Order. Fr Quinn and his brothers in the Termonbacca Monastery have devoted Masses to Sr Clare every second Sunday for a year and a half.

"We celebrate a Mass every month here," he said, "asking for her intercession and for her to be recognised by the Church. The more I get to know her, the more profound she is and the more profound her witness is."

Fr Quinn recently organised a photo campaign, asking people to display an image of Sr Clare, then take a picture and share it.



Photo: Alana Vacris



Photo: Siobhán Summerville

"We had good response to the photo campaign, with people sending photos from England and Canada. We had a big response around Derry as well.

"We had 800 cards with a photograph of Sr Clare, and a prayer for her beatification on the back. The 800 went in two days, and that was just us. Her sisters are doing the same work and they had 1,000 and those went as well."

According to Fr Quinn, the campaign is a sign of the strong local devotion that has developed in Derry. In the Facebook livestream of the anniversary Mass, more than 200 people commented seeking her prayers and intercession.

"An awful lot of people are praying to her," Fr Quinn said. "There's a family in Derry, one of them is very sick with coronavirus, and they are praying every day to Sr Clare. There have been answers to prayers in some cases."

In recent months, a number of miracles have been attributed to Sr Clare's intercession. Speaking to *The Irish News* last month, Shauna Gill, Sr Clare's sister, said a young boy in the US who was on life-support recovered after a priest asked the Derry nun to intercede. The nun's intercession is also credited for the birth of twins to a couple who were believed to be infertile.

Though he couldn't give exact details, Fr Quinn told

The Irish Catholic that a miracle in a county near Derry is being attributed to Sr Clare's intercession.

"There was a young woman who was discovered to have a large growth," he said. "She prayed to Sr Clare that it wouldn't be cancerous or life-threatening. When they opened her up, they discovered that there was no cancer in the growth and the doctor was amazed. He couldn't understand why there was no cancer in a growth that size."

Fr Quinn finished by saying that Sr Clare speaks to "young people in a way that no sermon can, and very few priests can".



World Report

IN BRIEF

Uganda Martyrs Day postponed due to Covid-19

● The Annual Martyrs Day celebrations in Uganda that were set for June 3 have been postponed due to the coronavirus.

The decision to defer the celebrations was taken by the bishops at the request of the Catholic diocese of Masaka.

“Even if the current lockdown is eased it will not be possible in the time available to properly organise the 2020 Namugongo (Shrine) Martyrs Day,” said Rt. Rev. Joseph Antony Zziwa, chairman of the country’s episcopal conference.

Martyrs Day is a public holiday to remember the killing of 22 Catholic and 23 Anglican converts to Christianity in the historical Kingdom of Buganda.

Pope appoints Apostolic Nuncio to Ghana

● Pope Francis has named the Rev. Henryk Mieczyslaw Jagodzinski as the new Apostolic Nuncio to Ghana. Msgr Jagodzinski takes over as the country’s ninth nuncio from Most Rev. Jean Marie Speich, who has been reassigned to Kosovo.

Born in 1969, Msgr Jagodzinski (61) was ordained a priest in the Diocese of Kielce in his native Poland then earned a doctorate in canon law at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome.

He entered the diplomatic service of the Holy See in July 2001 and had stints in Belarus (2001-2005), Croatia (2005-2008), India (2015-2018) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (2018-2020).

Turkey’s Christian ‘doctor of the poor’ dies

● A Christian in Turkey, known as the “doctor of the poor”, has succumbed to the coronavirus and passed away last week.

Murat Dilmener, aged 78, was the first Syriac Christian employed as a professor in a medical school in the country.

He was born in Mardin and volunteered for initiatives in the churches of

his community.

In 2004, Turkish authorities accused Dilmener and 135 other doctors of stealing public funds and treating poor patients free of charge without permission at a public hospital in Istanbul.

The accusations were later disproved and he became branded as the “doctor of the poor”.

China bishop dies after virus recovery

● Bishop Joseph Zhu Baoyu, who recovered from Covid-19 in February, died in his sleep aged 98 last week.

Bishop Zhu of Nanyang Diocese was diagnosed with pneumonia on February 3 and admitted to hospital.

There he tested positive for Covid-19 and when he left hospital on February 14, he was reportedly the oldest person to have recovered from the virus at the time.

Bishop Pietro Jin Lugang succeeds him and, in doing so, becomes the first underground bishop to be recognised by the Chinese government since 2018 China-Vatican agreement.

Diocese in UK creates ‘dial-a-Mass’ service

● A Catholic diocese in the UK has launched what is believed to be the first-ever Mass available to listen to directly by phone.

The new service is being provided by the Middlesbrough diocese for Catholics without internet access.

The idea was proposed by a local Knights of Columba member and a phone number was set up. Fr Albert Schembri of St Mary’s Cathedral celebrated the first recorded Mass with 100 people last week.

Canon Derek Turnham, head of diocesan communications, said he was “delighted” by the new system, which expands upon the digital outreach by parishes already taking place over email and social media networks.

EU bishops warn religious freedom under threat

An influential umbrella organisation for bishops across the European Union has warned that restrictions on public Masses and other ceremonies are a risk to religious freedom.

In a statement the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) has that basic freedom is at stake in the continent’s battle with the coronavirus.

Fr Manuel Enrique Barrios Prieto, General Secretary of COMECE, warned there is a widespread feeling within the Church that the “fundamental right” of religion and worship could be eroded.

“The reopening of churches must be implemented by civil authorities in dialogue with ecclesial institutions,” Fr Barrios Prieto insisted.

“Freedom of religion, including freedom of worship, is a fundamental right and a real necessity for many people.

“The reopening of churches,” he continued, “in compliance with the rules of sanitary caution, must be implemented by civil authorities in a clear and non-arbi-



Closed: church doors throughout Europe.

trary way, in full respect of and in dialogue with ecclesial institutions.”

COMECE pointed out that in the current emergency, having dialogue between Churches, the European Union and national institutions is as crucial as ever.

Context

In the context of the ever-growing attention of the EU for the upholding of fundamental rights and the rule of law in the member states, the organisation said monitoring respect for the fundamental

right to freedom of religion in anti-Covid-19 public policies should be part of the process.

The ‘Joint European Roadmap towards lifting coronavirus containment measures’ recently published by the EU Commission lacks of any explicit mention of religious services.

“This is disappointing,” said Fr Barrios Prieto, adding that “it neglects the key role of religion in European societies.”

COMECE reiterated that religion is not a private issue, but a public and collective

dimension expressed in all main human right texts, including the EU Charter.

The approach of certain secularist actors against the role of religion in the public square may, according to COMECE, have contributed to its marginalisation in the context of the present pandemic.

In its document Respecting democracy, rule of law and human rights in the framework of the Covid-19 sanitary crisis - A toolkit for member states, the Council of Europe (COE) underlines that the effective enjoyment of the fundamental right to freedom of religion is “a benchmark of modern democratic societies”.

The COE also calls on the authorities to ensure that any restriction is “clearly established by law, in compliance with relevant constitutional guarantees and proportionate to the aim it pursues”.

The Council of Europe – not to be confused with the European Union – is a 47 member state body set up in the aftermath of World War II to promote dialogue and mutual cooperation.

Myanmar bishops call on Catholics for day of prayer

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Myanmar (CBCM) has urged the Faithful across the country to join a day of prayer to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic.

Pope Francis accepted a proposal from the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity for May 14 to be a day of prayer, fasting and works of charity to call for divine intercession to help humanity overcome the virus.

The Pope made the announcement after praying the Regina Caeli at the Vatican and the CBCM issued a letter requesting bishops from 16 dioceses to encourage Catholics to join them.

Bishop John Saw Yaw Han, secretary-

general of the CBCM, signed the letter last week, while Cardinal Charles Bo of the Archdiocese of Yangon called for a focus on prayer, fasting and charitable works on the date.

“As prayer is a universal value,” said Pope Francis. “I have accepted the proposal of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity so that believers of all religions unite spiritually in a day of prayer and fasting and works of charity to implore God to help humanity overcome the coronavirus pandemic.”

Church officials in Myanmar have extended the suspension of public Masses and other liturgical ceremonies in 16 dioceses to May 15 and urged

people to follow guidelines from the Health Ministry.

Campaigns

The CBCM and Caritas (Karuna) Myanmar have joined the nation’s battle against Covid-19 through awareness campaigns, providing health aids, equipment and offering Church properties as quarantine centres.

In addition, diocesan response teams and nuns have also reached out to the communities most in need by providing basic food items such as rice, cooking oil, beans and salt.

Catholic official warns lifting Pakistan lockdown is ‘risky’

A Pakistan Catholic figure says the easing of coronavirus restrictions by the country’s leader is a “risky move”.

Despite a record spike of new cases in a single day (1,523), Pakistan’s Prime Minister Imran Khan last week announced the lifting of the nationwide lockdown.

Fr Saleh Diego, vicar general of the Archdiocese of

Karachi, hopes that the government’s decision would not jeopardise the efforts made to contain the virus.

“The government is obviously more concerned about the plight of daily wagers and other low-income groups,” he said.

“But it should keep in mind that this can turn out to be a risky move in view of the

virus situation.

“The government should at least have issued strict guidelines such as mandatory wearing of face masks and enforcement of Standard Operating Procedures regarding social distancing in offices, workplaces and factories.”

Fr Diego expressed his concerns about workers traveling from one place to

another while public transport is unavailable.

“If the government has decided to reopen businesses, it should have allowed public transport with certain conditions,” he added.

“Mandatory thermal scanning before entering or exiting a workplace should also be considered.”



Edited by Aron Hegarty
aron@irishcatholic.ie

Dog-gone hungry!



A dog in Ocean City, Maryland licks its lips at a bucket of french fries held by its owner. The US has begun to ease coronavirus restrictions. Photo: CNS

Cardinal Sarah denies signing letter on pandemic exploitation

Just hours after the publication of a controversial open letter, one of the signatories – the prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship and Sacraments – said he did not sign it.

Cardinal Robert Sarah denied signing the letter, titled 'Appeal for the Church and the World', which says the coronavirus has been exaggerated to foster widespread panic and establish a "one-world government".

He tweeted: "I share on a personal basis some of the questions or concerns raised with regard to restrictions on fundamental freedoms, but I have not signed this petition."

"I explicitly asked [sic] the authors of the petition titled 'Appeal for the Church and for the World' not to mention me."

The cardinal was listed as a signatory of the letter when it was published last week by the *National Catholic Register*, *LifeSiteNews* and other websites.

However, Cardinal Sarah's denial raises questions about the legitimacy of other reported signatories to the letter.

Jeanette DeMelo, editor of the *National Catholic Register*, said the principal author of the letter is Archbishop Carlo Vigano, a former Papal Emissary to the US.

DeMelo said that Vigano had vouched for the authenticity of Sarah's signature.

"The Register contacted Archbishop Vigano, the principal author, and asked him specifically about the authenticity of the signature of Cardinal Sarah and he said 'I can confirm 100% that Cardinal Sarah signed it,'" DeMelo said.

The letter argued that the pandemic has been sensationalised and exploited to impede civil rights and exact government control over individuals and families.

"We have reason to believe [sic] that there are powers interested in creating panic among the world's

population with the sole aim of permanently imposing unacceptable forms of restriction on freedoms, of controlling people and of tracking their movements," read the letter.

Among the letter's reported signatories were four cardinals: Cardinal Sarah, Cardinal Gerhard Muller, Cardinal Joseph Zen and Cardinal Janis Pujats.

Along with several bishops and priests, the letter's reported signatories also included academics, journalists and scientists.

Vatican journalists Marco Tosatti and Robert Moynihan, *Lifesitenews* editor John-Henry Westen, Population Research Institute president Stephen Mosher and pro-life group leaders were among those listed.

In the letter, they encouraged Catholics to "assess the current situation in a way consistent with the teaching of the Gospel. This means taking a stand: either with Christ or against Christ".

Vatican roundup

'Respect dignity of farm workers', says Pope

● Pope Francis has appealed for migrant farm workers, who pick crops with bad conditions and low pay, in Italy and worldwide to be respected and not exploited during the pandemic.

The Holy Father made a fervent appeal for the respect of the dignity of workers who have called out to him for help.

"I have received several messages on the world of work and its problems," said the Pope during his General Audience last week. "In particular, I have been struck by the plight of farm labourers, many of them migrants, who work in the fields of the Italian countryside."

"Unfortunately," he pointed out, "on many occasions they are very harshly exploited. It is true that there is a crisis for everyone, but people's dignity must always be respected."

"That is why," he continued, "I add my voice to the appeal of these workers and of all exploited workers."

"I urge everyone to use the crisis as an opportunity to focus once again on the dignity of the human person and make the dignity of work the centre of our concern."

Caritas joins Pope plea for global solidarity

● Caritas Internationalis has followed Pope Francis' request for the promotion of a 'global creative solidarity' to avoid another "humanitarian tragedy".

The organisation said it is deeply concerned about the humanitarian crisis that is following the spread of coronavirus and urged the international community to take courageous and immediate actions.

"We are aware that we are facing an atypical emergency in which the countries that are normally among the largest donors are the

most affected by the virus," said Secretary General of Caritas Internationalis Aloysius John.

"This new humanitarian crisis cannot be stopped unless courageous actions are taken to support the most vulnerable communities."

He stressed that "the use of international aid to respond to national needs is not the right solution" and if no immediate action is taken, "the consequences of the coronavirus will kill more people than the pandemic itself".

Pope combines Canada diocese and archdiocese

● The Holy Father has ordered the merging of the Archdiocese of Ottawa and the Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall in Canada. In doing so, Pope Francis has named current Archbishop of Ottawa, Terrence Prendergast, as Archbishop of the new ecclesiastical circumscription of Ottawa-Cornwall.

In addition, the Pope has appointed Bishop Marcel Damphousse as Coadjutor Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall, transferring him from the office of Bishop of Sault Sainte Marie.

Archbishop Prendergast, born in Montreal, was ordained a priest in 1972 and holds Master of Divinity and Doctor of Theology degrees from Regis College in Toronto.

He later served as Dean of Theology at the college before taking up the role of Executive Secretary of the Vatican's Apostolic Visitation of Canadian seminaries.

Nominated a bishop in 1995, Archbishop Prendergast was installed as the Archbishop of Ottawa by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007.

Archbishop Damphousse, born in Manitoba, was ordained priest in 1991 and incardinated in the Archdiocese of Saint-Boniface.

He was appointed Bishop of Alexandria-Cornwall in 2012 and was consecrated before being transferred to the Diocese of Sault Sainte Marie in November 2015.

Young Vietnamese Catholics feed the hungry

Marie Le Tran Thuy Vi and her friends are living their Faith through preparing, cooking and packing food at Phu Trung Church to hand out to the poor of Ho Chi Minh City.

Vi, 22, and her group with 10 youths hand out 150-175 servings within 45 minutes each night. Recipients include homeless people, lottery ticket sellers, guards, motor-bike taxi drivers and street cleaners.

She said the pandemic is a good chance for Catholic youths to live out the spirit of love and charity with concrete work.

"We are very happy to serve free dinners to people in need and help them overcome the Covid-19 pandemic," she said.

"We are grateful to them as God sends them to us so that we can do something helpful for them."

Fr Martin Tran Dinh Khiem Ai, assistant priest of Phu Trung Parish said parents of catechism students volunteer to prepare dinners from 1pm to 6pm.

He added that young Catholics transport and offer meals to poor people in the city's six districts, finishing their work at 10pm.

"The pandemic provides a good opportunity for local Catholics to work together

and to serve the poor in the hard time," he said.

Vi said the pandemic is a grave crisis, but has opened young people's hearts by inducing them to return to core values and spend more time doing charitable work, serving the common good.

"I hope many young people will find value in life and commit themselves to building a better society," she said.

Letters

Letter of the week

The wisdom of Pope emeritus Benedict

Dear Editor, How to sad to read [IC 7/5/20] that Pope emeritus Benedict XVI feels that there has been an attempt to silence him in retirement.

There has certainly been a sense from some ideologically driven voices within the Church to present him in opposition to his successor Pope Francis. Unfortunately, this has come from people who would describe themselves as liberal as well as people who would describe themselves as conservative. It is clear to me that

there is a continuity between Benedict XVI and Francis. It is also evident to me that both men share a genuine affection for one another and a deep love for the Church and the People of God.

The institution of a Pope emeritus was never going to be an easy thing to navigate in the Church and there will certainly be lessons for the future. Benedict XVI is a man filled with wisdom and humility – a strength of character displayed in his initial

decision to relinquish the papacy in 2013. I wonder, though, with the benefit of hindsight might the Church and indeed the papacy be better served if Benedict had of stuck to what seemed to be his original plan: to accompany the Church in silence in his retirement.

Just a thought.

Yours etc.,
Alan Smyth,
Drogheda, Co. Louth.

Our sense of sin has vanished

Dear Editor, I wish to congratulate Maria Steen on her splendid, timely and courageous article on sin [IC 30/4/20]. The whole sense of sin has vanished from our Catholic consciousness. The vast majority of Catholics have no knowledge, or very little, knowledge of the Commandments, or the teachings of their Church, with the result that they don't know the difference between right or wrong. It's a case of pleasing oneself, and forget the consequences.

People attend Mass when it pleases them and go up and receive Holy Communion, even though they may not confess their sins in the Sacrament of Penance for years.

Why don't our bishops and priests point out to the Faithful that they must always receive Holy Communion in a state of grace? They could easily make that announcement at the beginning of Mass. To do so would be a great act of charity and mercy, and many souls would be saved.

Yours etc.,
Eilis McNamara,
Glin, Co. Limerick.



Return to prayer would be a blessing

Dear Editor, Hundreds of column inches have been written about how 2020 will change us forever. Many commentators confidently predict that the coronavirus pandemic will fundamentally change how we view the world. Perhaps they will be correct.

We can certainly hope and pray that the fragility of our world which is being

exposed at the moment will help people to understand that we are one family and we are all dependant on God.

A return to prayer and the importance of Faith in daily life would certainly be a blessing.

Yours etc.,
Peter Kirk,
Dungannon, Co. Tyrone.

More hypocrisy from NHS on saving lives

Dear Editor, Recently the commentator Douglas Murray of *The Spectator* has asked, in the light of the current praise for the NHS, is it taking on aspects of a secular Church?

With the weekly Thursday 'clap' of support, together with politicians and others out

doing themselves in offering praise for the 75-year-old institution, it would appear so!

However, with the new chant of "save lives, protect the NHS" a darker aspect emerges that rings hollow.

The NHS' close alliance abortion and its defence

of the practice with near dogmatic zeal proves the hypocrisy of this new chant. Until worldwide medicine rediscovers the Hippocratic Oath in its purity by which it was first envisioned – not to kill the unborn – then the current adulation of the NHS could be viewed

as a something that would make the Charge of the Light Brigade look like a sensible military exercise.

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

Fuelling the car but not the soul

Dear Editor, It is high time to allow the faithful to attend public Masses in their local churches. Morning Masses from Monday to Saturday are not crowded so no problem maintaining social distances. The same applies to Eucharistic Adoration.

Weekend Masses are generally well attended so the crowd could be handled as follows: the elderly and those not at work could attend morning Mass on Saturday or go to a morning or evening Mass on Monday.

It is ironic that I can refuel my car at

any petrol station but cannot refuel my soul. We can buy food and alcohol in our supermarkets but cannot feed our spiritual lives in our local church

Jesus said that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them". So he is well able to protect his followers from the coronavirus. Indeed, in Psalm 91, God tells us that "you will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday".

God also says that "if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (II Chronicles 7.14).

So if people say more prayers this will end the coronavirus pandemic.

Yours etc.,
Liam de Paor,
Carrickane, Co. Cavan.

facebook community

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

No patient's needs should be dismissed because they are no longer deemed useful to society

Maddening to hear when someone makes a comment to the effect that "most of the deaths from the coronavirus were in nursing homes", as if those deaths aren't every bit as meaningful to our society and humanity. Each person has their own 'dignity' from conception to the grave.

– **Cynthia Neary**

Archbishop Eamon Martin's comments for exam students

When will the archbishop have a word for all the Catholics in this country without access to sacraments until end of July? When? – **Guillame Ryou**

We need answers about the failure to protect nursing home residents

A lot of older people are in the nursing homes have a lot of complaints. – **Eilish Higgins**

Yes the Government does have a lot to answer for in the treatment of the elderly in these homes! – **Catherine Rose**

OLA Sisters – a gift of life to the world

Happy feast day sister. What would the world do without great missionary like you. Thank you and may Jesus keep you and all the sisters. safe. Great work for the poor.

– **Jacinta Newell**

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

A source of inspiration in tough times

Dear Editor, I wanted to write to express my sincere gratitude to you and all at *The Irish Catholic* for the way that the newspaper has continued seamlessly in what must be difficult times. It continues to be a source of inspiration, information and hope at a time when many of us are anxious and even frightened by daily news of the coronavirus pandemic.

The newspaper continues to highlight the positive things that are going on and the work that the Church does to try to reach out to people in very difficult circumstances. I am delighted that I am still able to get the newspaper in my local church even though we are no longer having public Masses. I love to see the many creative ways in which parishes all over the country are responding at this very said time.

Yours etc.,
Breda Ennis,
Castleblaney, Co. Monaghan.

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



LEBANON: Women pray during Mass at the Maronite Catholic Cathedral of the Resurrection in Beirut. Photos: CNS



SOUTH AFRICA: Children wait in line for food at a school near Cape Town during the Covid-19 pandemic.



▲ **BRAZIL:** An indigenous child in Manaus. Church-backed agencies are accusing the Government of doing very little to protect the country's indigenous population from Covid-19.

◀ **MEXICO:** People wait in a long line to enter a wholesale market to buy cakes for Mother's Day celebrations on May 10 in Ciudad Juarez.



SWEDEN: Cardinal Anders Arborelius of Stockholm speaks via Zoom. The cardinal has expressed concern over the government's relaxed approach to Covid-19 and its effect on the elderly and migrants.



USA: Dr Sara Stulac reads a book with a two-year-old after she did a routine checkup in the back of an ambulance in Boston.



Leaving peace behind as our farewell gift



Fr Rolheiser

There is such a thing as a good death, a clean one, a death that, however sad, leaves behind a sense of peace. I have been witness to it many times. Sometimes this recognised explicitly when someone dies, sometimes unconsciously. It is known by its fruit.

I remember sitting with a man dying of cancer in his mid-50s, leaving behind a young family, who said to me: "I don't believe I have an enemy in the world, at least I don't know if I do. I've no unfinished business."

I heard something similar from a young woman also dying of cancer and also leaving behind a young family. Her words: "I thought that I'd cried all the tears I had, but then yesterday when I saw my youngest daughter I found out that I had a lot more tears still to cry. But I'm at peace. It's hard, but I've nothing left that I haven't given."

And I've been at deathbeds other times when none of this was articulated in words, but all of it was clearly spoken in that loving awkwardness and silence you often witness around deathbeds. There is a way of dying that leaves peace behind.

Disciples

In the Gospel of John, Jesus gives a long farewell speech at the Last Supper on the night before he dies. His disciples, understandably, are shaken, afraid, and not prepared to accept the brute reality of his impending death. He tries to calm them, reassure them, give them

things to cling to, and he ends with these words: I am going away, but I will leave you a final gift, the gift of my peace.

I suspect that almost everyone reading this will have had an experience of grieving the death of a loved one, a parent, spouse, child or friend, and finding, at least after a time, beneath the grief a warm sense of peace whenever the memory of the loved one surfaces or is evoked. I lost both of my parents when I was in my early 20s and, sad as were their farewells, every memory of them now evokes a warmth. Their farewell gift was the gift of peace.

In trying to understand this, it is important to distinguish between being wanted and being

needed. When I lost my parents at a young age, I still desperately wanted them (and believed that I still needed them), but I came to realise in the peace that eventually settled upon our family after their deaths that our pain was in still wanting them and not in any longer needing them. In their living and their dying they had already given us what we needed. There was nothing else we needed from them. Now we just missed them and, irrespective of the sadness of their departure, our relationship was complete. We were at peace.

The challenge for all of us now, of course, is on the other side of this equation, namely, the challenge to live in such a way that peace will be our final farewell gift

to our families, our loved ones, our Faith community and our world. How do we do that? How do we leave the gift of peace to those we leave behind?

“When some people leave anything, a job, a marriage, a family or a community, they leave chaos behind, a legacy of disharmony, unfinished business, anger, bitterness, jealousy and division”

Peace, as we know, is a whole lot more than the simple absence of war and strife. Peace is constituted by two things: harmony and completeness. To be at peace something has to have an inner consistency so that all of its movements are in harmony with each other and it must also have a completeness so that it is not still aching for something it is missing.

Peace is the opposite of internal discord or of longing for something we lack. When we are not at peace it is because we are experiencing chaos or sensing some unfinished

business inside us.

Positively then, what constitutes peace? When Jesus promises peace as his farewell gift, he identifies it with the Holy Spirit; and, as we know, that is the spirit of charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, longsuffering, fidelity, mildness and chastity.

How do we leave these behind when we leave? Well, death is no different than life. When some people leave anything, a job, a marriage, a family or a community, they leave chaos behind, a legacy of disharmony, unfinished business, anger, bitterness, jealousy and division.

Their memory is felt always as a cold pain. They are not missed, even as their memory haunts. Some people on the other hand leave behind a legacy of harmony and completeness, a spirit of understanding, compassion, affirmation and unity. These people are missed but the ache is a warm one, a nurturing one, one of happy memory.

Going away in death has exactly the same dynamic. By the way we live and die we will leave behind either a spirit that perennially haunts the peace of our loved ones, or we will leave behind a spirit that brings a warmth every time our memory is evoked.

“Peace, as we know, is a whole lot more than the simple absence of war and strife. Peace is constituted by two things: harmony and completeness”

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, May 14, 2020

Personal Profile

Emma Edgeworth:
inspired by sisters
in Zambia

Page 34



The problem with cheap food that won't go away



‘Social solidarity’ is apparently experiencing something of a renaissance of late.

Acts of reciprocal kindness are increasing.

Our hard-nosed individualism is being destabilised through a reawakening of a sense of interdependence.

Communities, families, and politicians have all stepped up to applaud frontline healthcare workers.

At the same time questions are already being asked about how durable that sense of solidarity will be when it comes to meeting increased pay demands from these essential workers in the post-Covid-19 world.



How should the principle of a fair days pay apply to those who nurture, grow, and produce the very food we eat asks David Mullins

Will those of us who take our hands out of our pockets to clap them on be prepared to put them back in when it comes to increasing their salaries?

I suspect that many people will be more than prepared to accept such claims on the principled basis that a fair day work deserves a fair days pay.

But what of all those other ‘frontline’ services and workers?

In particular, how should the principle of a fair days pay apply to our farmers; those who nurture, grow, and produce the very food we eat and without whom the food chain would be reduced to a series of brittle links?

This is an issue that has re-emerged with some force within the agricultural community.

For despite the reality of the coronavirus and the threats to livelihoods that it is creating; exploitative and manipulative practices by supermarkets and meat processing monopolies continue apace.

This is something that is easily forgotten as the supermarkets and monopolies undergo something akin to reputational rehabilitation.

“We are all in this together” so the messaging goes.

Except of course that from the farmers’ perspective, this is simply not true.

A recent statement on the beef crisis by the President of The Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers’ Association (ICSA) sums up the issues at stake:

“The relentless focus on driving down price is part of the problem, but it is also the insistence that farmers are entitled to less than half the retail price after a process of breeding and feeding that takes three years.

“Then, within three weeks, the processors carve up the majority of the value of the animal for themselves. It is not good enough that retailers with considerable influence on the food chain can try to dodge their responsibilities.”

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Family News

AND EVENTS

FAMILY BEHIND WELL-KNOWN HOTEL LAUNCH COOKBOOK FOR CHILDLINE

Many families who are under lockdown are re-discovering the art of cooking – with varying degrees of success.

Now, the family behind the famous Gougane Barra Hotel in Ballingeary, Co. Cork have launched a cookbook in aid of Childline.

Chef Katy Lucey and daughters Jane and Ali hope that their book can help families enjoy time together as well as raise much-needed funds for children who are in need.

“Our homely recipes for brown bread, scones and vegetable soup have amassed a huge following on Facebook since I began posting them during the lockdown,” according to Katy. “The video on making scones attracted a worldwide audience of 90,000 viewers including from places like Sydney, United Arab Emirates and the USA! It’s mad, but wonderful,” she said.

People across the globe are savouring a little piece of West Cork heaven.

“The bakers are sharing photos of their culinary efforts with us. They are really enjoying the whole experience,” according to Katy.

The e-cookbook with 17 recipes costing €7 is available on the Gougane Barra Hotel website. All proceeds to Childline.

NORTHERN EXECUTIVE ANNOUNCES FRESH HOSPICE FUNDING

The Nioth’s Finance Minister Conor Murphy has announced £6.75 million (€7.74 million) for local hospices to support them with the current financial challenges they are facing. Making the announcement, Mr Murphy said: “The care and support our hospices provide is truly inspiring.

“Our Hospices are there for people and their families when they need it most,” he said.

This support package includes:

- £3.2 million for the NI Hospice including the Children’s Hospice;
- £1.6 million for Marie Curie;
- £1.1 million for Southern Area Hospice;
- £600,000 for Foyle Hospice; and
- £250,000 for Cancer Fund for Children.

GARDAÍ WARN OVER PARCEL SCAM

Gardaí have warned against a scam targeting consumers is capitalising on the fact that more people are shopping online due to the current pandemic.

In this instance, a phishing email purporting to be from courier DPD has been sent to a customer claiming that the courier was unable to deliver a parcel. The consumer is then prompted to fill out a contact form.

However, according to the DPD website, there are a number of ways to identify a fraudulent email including: poorly written sentences, an impersonal greeting, or a vague email address.

Gardaí are warning people to be wary of links contained in emails requesting a small fee to resend the parcel which requires personal or financial details.

As is advised upon receiving similar emails, people are asked to contact the company directly, to not click on the link or provide any personal details, and to simply delete the email.

How much risk to tolerate is a question of practical wisdom



As we start coming out of the coronavirus lockdown, people are talking a lot about risk. How sure should we be that the situation is completely under control before we reopen? How much risk of infection should we be willing to tolerate for individuals? How much risk should we accept of a renewed spread of the coronavirus through society?

It’s tempting to say “let the experts decide”. Let those who know the most about public health weigh up the risks and make their recommendations, and let the rest of us fall in line. But this would be a mistake. This is not, at all, because medical or scientific experts are unreliable. It is because the question of how much risk to tolerate is not a medical or scientific matter; but a question of practical wisdom – in this case, a question of political philosophy.

“How sure should we be that the situation is completely under control before we reopen?”

Lest there be any doubt: listening to expertise is wise. Despite the failings (some of them egregious) of some public health experts and authorities in this crisis, the response to the pandemic would have been much worse had we ignored the experts. In aggregate, more lives would likely have been saved had more countries listened to them earlier.

And it’s not that experts have nothing to say about pandemic risks. It’s from public health experts, immunologists, and epidemiologists that we learn



Everyday philosophy

Ben Conroy

what the likely levels of risk actually are.

What they cannot tell us is how to weigh risk and reward. To pick two completely made-up numbers, imagine that the experts told us that keeping a full lockdown in place until September would result in a 0.03% chance of a major resurgence of Covid-19, whereas as a phased reopening plan like that being pursued in Ireland would give us a 0.5% chance of a resurgence (again, totally made up numbers). Could medicine or science tell us what the right option to take would be? They could not. To do so is not their function.

The craft involved in decisions like this is the craft of politics. Weighing up a whole array of important social goods against uncertain and shifting risks of varying severities is not the sort of task that can be accomplished just by learning and following a set of rules. It requires practical wisdom, the wisdom to know how to approach a situation where the right answer is not and cannot be specified in advance. And practical wisdom is a virtue that leaders and citizens, not just experts, can aspire to.

This sort of point has sometimes been made by people who want to open things up faster. But its logic can just as easily lead to more caution rather than less.

When something surprising and bad happens to the world, people often say that someone should have seen it coming. There are always some warning signs, and those are seized on in order to justify charges of incompetence and neglect against the people who let the bad things happen.

Sometimes, of course, those charges are absolutely justified. But what’s often forgotten is just how unpredictable the world generally is. The real warning signs are hidden among millions of red herrings. Most potentially really bad things won’t actually be that bad.



One way to deal with this uncertainty is to get better at predicting what will actually go wrong. But another is to err somewhat on the side of caution. Back in January, the

chance of the new Wuhan coronavirus causing a global pandemic of this scale was, as far as most of the world could reasonably tell, still genuinely quite low. But given the devastation that pandemics cause, it would have been entirely reasonable of governments and policymakers to apply the precautionary principle: taking more action to avert an unlikely disaster than a strict utilitarian calculus might warrant, because the disaster’s consequences are so terrible. Politicians and policymakers would have been right to do more than experts were then advising.

Of course, applying the precautionary principle to the greatest extent possible would be just as much of a disaster: it would bring about a hypochondriac world, cringing at the shadows of possible pandemics. But this is the point: knowing how much caution to apply is a tricky balance that requires practical wisdom. There is no rulebook that will give you the correct level of caution for every circumstance in advance.

The point about acceptable levels of risk doesn’t just apply to pandemics or politics, but to many areas of life. What threshold level of certainty should we require before the publication of the results of a scientific experiment? How confident should we be that we won’t be hurt before we place our trust in another person? There are right answers to questions like this: but the only way to find those answers is through doing the hard, necessary work of becoming wise.

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This statement, which could be replicated with some ease, highlights how the problems confronting farmers and many other food producers are not 'merely' economical.

They are also profoundly ethical.

In fact, I would argue that there is a dimension to this problem that can be usefully explored through an engagement with the theological concept of the 'structures of sin.'

“Our hard-nosed individualism is being destabilised through a reawakening of a sense of interdependence”

One understanding of this concept from a Catholic social teaching perspective points to institutionalised modes of behaviour that create or enable oppression and injustice.

In the sense in which it is being used here, it is about the wielding of corporate force or power toward economic ends that are in opposition to social solidarity and the common good.

It should not require a detailed theological examination in order to see how domination of the commercially-weak farmer by commercially-strong organisations is inherently opposed to a common sense notion of the common good.

The value of combatting this kind of power imbalance has also been recognised by the bureaucratic behemoth that is the European Commission in the shape of the European Union Directive on Unfair Trading Practices in the agricultural and food supply chain.

The EU even went so far as to give an Aristotelian flavour to the directive when it centrally incorporated this quote from the Rhetoric into one of its explanatory documents: "Fairness is justice that goes beyond the written law."

The directive, which is due to come into effect in May 2021, is by no means perfect.

But at the very least it is a starting point in terms of introducing, or rather

forcing under penalty, greater levels of equity into agricultural markets like those that exist in Ireland.

It also takes the ethical burden away from the ordinary consumer, who may have limited resources and who will naturally go for a good 'bargain.'

Instead it places the weight of responsibility back onto the likes of the 'buyer' i.e. the supermarkets and food processing giants which are often de facto monopolies.

Of course, there are elements to this debate that are contentious.

As a matter of interest, the relationship between the Church, or at least, the bishops, and Irish farming bodies has not always been that great.



Back in 2006 the then President of the Irish Farmers' Association went so far as to say that charities such as Trócaire had "succeeded in destroying the Irish sugar industry" in their campaign that "sharply reduced EU support prices that rendered sugar refinement in Ireland unviable."

He went on to say that the beneficiaries of the reforms were not poor farmers in developing countries but "the sugar barons of Brazil and Australia, and multinationals like Tate & Lyle".

It is important that we avoid such zero-sum outcomes being replicated now at both national and EU level.

The objective should not be to pit one group of 'poor farmers' against another. It should be about equalising hugely disproportionate imbalances in purchasing and trading power.

I mentioned at the start of this piece about how a sense of interdependence has been reawakened by the harrowing cultural experience of Covid-19.

One of the most enduring ways in which we can embed this sense is by creating, not structures of sin, but 'structures of solidarity' as the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of The Church puts it.

At present the Irish farmer can see very little in terms of such meaningful structures being present on the ground.

“Communities, families, and politicians have all stepped up to applaud frontline healthcare workers”

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) is supposed to be one such structure that farmers can rely on, but there is widespread suspicion toward it within the agricultural community.

This problem will become even more acute in May 2021 because the CCPC are the ones who will be tasked with enforcing the Unfair Trading Directive.

This will have to be addressed in the post-coronavirus world if anything resembling a more ethical and dare I say, a more Catholic approach, to the primary stewards of the food producing environment is to become a reality.

David Mullins is a writer and commentator on bioethics who did his postgraduate work on Catholic bioethics at St Patrick's College, Maynooth.

Faith — IN THE — family



Bairbre Cahill

Why is the food better during a lockdown?" my son asked.

Unsure what sort of a back-handed compliment this was I simply replied, "It is not that the food is better, it is just that it's the highlight of the day now!" And it is certainly true that food has taken on a new significance. My shopping bills have definitely taken on a new significance with our empty nest full again and the fridge emptying faster than I can fill it.

Meals put a shape and structure on the day. A special dish, a family favourite, a new recipe – such small things matter. We have remembered the importance of sitting down together and have recognised how blessed we are that we can put good food on the table.

What else do we find ourselves remembering in these strange times? The joy of birdsong - so often we have been too busy rushing from here to there to even notice. Now the garden and the small wood beyond seem to reverberate with the songs of a multitude of birds. The excitement of seeing new shoots break through seems to carry a particular significance this year. Perhaps it is that sense of hope and new life, the promise of raspberries on canes, strawberries and blackcurrants, lettuce with that wonderful smell of earthy goodness, potatoes dug from the earth of our own garden. New growth confirms the health and vitality of nature, its unstoppable force.

We remember with an aching heart, the gift of friendship. We may have a hundred friends or more on Facebook – and it is good to connect with them – but nothing beats sitting down over a cup of coffee to talk. It is the being present to each other, the energy that is created just by being together, the love that is felt. These days remind us that we are, above all, called into relationship. That is the essence of our humanity just as it is the essence of God who is Trinity. It is in and through relationship that we become more fully ourselves.

In these strange days there is a conversation with the butcher about the state of the country – him behind a perspex screen, me with my mask on, separated and yet needing

to connect with each other, feeling better for the quick chat. There is the friendly word for people we pass when out walking, the sense of being in this together, the frequent benedictions of the good weather.

We have been reminded where true value lies when we see the work of those on the front line, the volunteers, the community organisations. There is a real sense that we have been reminded who we are. Our ultimate value lies in our humanity.



In the midst of this there is the sadness and heartbreak of realising how many people have died. While we try not to be overwhelmed by statistics and projections it is vital that we remember the human tragedy of every life lost, the families and friends in mourning, the grief complicated by social distancing. Our greatest act of solidarity and respect to these families is to do everything in our power to slow and stop this virus. Such solidarity is at the heart of relationship, of community, of what it is to be a Christian.

And it is that solidarity which reminds us that this is not just about our community or even our country. Think of a country like Somalia with only fifteen ICU beds for the whole population. Think of over 70 million displaced people in refugee camps around the world who are at increased risk of Covid19. Think of people at significant risk in the Direct Provision settings and homeless shelters within our own country.

This pandemic reminds us that we are one body, one humanity. Discomfort at inequality can and should motivate us to action and to that genuine solidarity which is at the heart of relationship, of community and of what it is to be a Christian.

Emma Edgeworth: inspired by sisters in Zambia

Personal Profile



Róise McGagh

In 2017 Emma Edgeworth took a career break. She left her home county of Kildare and headed for Mongu, the capital of the Western Province in Zambia.

Emma was already working with children and families in the Dublin area when she saw the development role with Viatores Christi advertised on a professional website. She interviewed for the position in January and then set off in May for Africa.

She was based in a facility for children with physical and intellectual disabilities under the Cheshire Home Society of Zambia. It is run by presentation sisters, with Sr Cathy and Sr Stella from Ireland leading the team.

"I would look at it nearly as an early intervention residential service, the children got to go to school there which is very unusual because children in Zambia are often excluded from education when they have a disability. Whether it's finance or actual functioning; if they can't walk, they can't go through the deep sand to get to school," says Emma.

"The sisters over the years would have fought hard to establish good quality education within Cheshire Homes, they would also access physiotherapy daily."

The children have access to their usual carer, be that a family or home village member as well as school, an extensive physiotherapy programme, activities to stimulate

their development and nurses and doctors on site.

Doctors fly in on a small plane three times a year to carry out elective surgeries on the children, fit prostheses and carry out general appointments. The children's aftercare is facilitated in the home as well in their own home.

"A lot of children would have had snake bites and many of the children had cerebral palsy."

Emma says the sisters were inspiring to be around, that they held their standard high and were very innovative.

"Sr Cathy Crawford she has developed initiatives in the local area. There was a lodge where people could stay with a restaurant, and the profit made there was put back into the home, it was to

generate income to make it become independent."

As well as this the project has generous donors in Ireland and Britain, and another funding project that sells bricks to locals.

"She's an amazing woman Sr Cathy, and all the sisters. They're just a force of nature really and all their work is driven by I suppose their faith."

"Nano Nagle would have been their founder and it's a really fantastic order, the sisters themselves I suppose they are dedicated to reaching out to people on the margins and providing a compassionate human rights based service to them. It's a fantastic order made up of such wonderful women so bright and driven and creative."

Emma, in her year there worked hand in hand with the staff in the homes and also with the children. "A lot of my role was around training and development in the area of early childhood education, child development, child protection and children's rights - so it was quite a broad base."

Emma helped redesign their mother and baby programme along with the sister in charge of education, "That's really early intervention and mums would travel from all over the Western Province where Mongu is in Zambia."

They would come to the home with young babies and children and the staff would work to target the children at an early age which eventually leads to better outcomes, especially in terms

of their physical development explains Emma.

"My work was very much in partnership with the sisters, the Presentation Sisters have been running that organisation for many years and I really learned more from them than I'm sure they learned from me but it was really interesting place to be able to merge our skills for the best interests of the people who attend Cheshire home."

“The sisters over the years would have fought hard to establish good quality education within Cheshire Homes”

She says the standard were beyond what she expected in a developing country in terms of the child protection and education.

"A lot of the women I work with might not even have attended school or might not be able to read or write, but we were able to devise the kinds of programmes and trainings and different aids to ensure that everybody could participate."

Emma says she was grateful for the warm welcome she received at the home and in the locality, that it enhanced her work.

"There are no hierarchy or power issues, everybody was there for a mutual understanding that the needs of the children need to be met in the best way possible, so it was that again which made my experience a lot easier as well."

She had always wanted to return since she spent three months in Nigeria during her undergraduate degree but only if it was in a useful capacity. Emma was so inspired by her trip that she is now secretary for VC. "It's so amazing to see people dedicate their whole lives towards helping others and it's really inspiring to be honest".



An IOU for a post-virus dinner is an ideal treat

My wife's birthday is coming up in the next few weeks. I really want to do something special for her but am stuck for what to do as it's during the coronavirus restrictions. What advice do you have for celebrating a special occasion during the lockdown?

It's hard to believe that this is something that people started talking about when Mother's Day fell just as restrictions began. From birthdays to baptisms there are so many important celebrations that have been put off or delayed. Of course this is really difficult, yet the funny thing is the advice I will give you much of it would be the same whether we were in lock-down or not. The most important thing is showing your wife you love her and making her feel appreciated, and of course celebrating this past year of her life with you and your family. The best way to do this is not by spending lots of money, it's about spending time and effort, putting thought into the card you write, the cake you might make with the kids and the time you give her to herself on the day to rest and relax.

Lots of restaurants (that are not traditionally take-away) are doing home delivery, so why not bring the restaurant to her on her birthday. Make sure you dress the table with candles and your nice cutlery and china! Spend some time honouring all the positives from the last year of her life, thinking of things you are thankful for and happy memories. It would be great to get the kids involved in this bit too.

If you want to get lots of her friends together, apps like Zoom, House-party and messenger rooms are a great way of getting lots of people together online. Lots of apps allow you to play fun games too. If you think she might fancy something a bit more low key, after your dinner why not organise a spa at home evening, you can get the bubble bath and candles ready. You could order online a nice face mask, scented candles and bath salts to really help her relax.

Be sure to involve other family members by setting up a group video call. It might be nice to present the birthday cake during this call and everyone can enjoy the obligatory happy birthday

and blowing out the candles. You could also ask a few of her girlfriends to record and send you some happy birthday video messages that you can make a compilation of. If you're not techy you can use a service such as tribute to help you put the clips together.

If your wife is a fan of a particular actor or celebrity, the website CAMEO allows you to search for specific actors, sports stars and musicians who can do a personalised birthday message for her. For whatever gift you are planning on buying make sure to order it well in advance as most providers delivery times are slower than usual.

Why not also make plans for when the restrictions are easing - you can print off an IOU for a dinner or other activity to do, please God before the summer is over.

If you took even some of this advice, I am pretty sure that this birthday would turn out to be one of her best yet! And remember, one thing that no mother will ever be disappointed with is a lie-on and a quiet breakfast in bed!



Wendy Grace

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Keeping the Faith despite commercial pressure

I've never been that much of a lover of Barbara Streisand's music or acting but I have been a long-time fan of Leonard Cohen and have fond memories of seeing him perform in Dublin's 3 Arena.

What connects them apart from music is their Jewish heritage and this was explored with Michael Comyn by historian Yanky Fachler on **The Leap of Faith** (RTÉ Radio 1) on Friday. Both were proud of this heritage – Fachler pointed out whimsically that Streisand changed neither name nor nose to get ahead in the entertainment industry though she was advised to do both!

Leonard Cohen didn't change his name either and right to the end his Jewish heritage was important to him. For his last album before his death he got the cantor and choir from the synagogue in Montreal where he had his own *bar mitzvah* to sing on the title track *You Want It Darker* with its haunting refrain "I'm ready Lord".

Allusions

Of course, Cohen's influences and related allusions ranged far and wide from Judaism to Buddhism to Christianity – for example, he co-wrote the beautiful *Song of Bernadette* with Jennifer Warnes and duetted with her on the intriguing *Joan of Arc*.

Jewish heritage in Mon-



RTÉ Radio 1's *The Leap of Faith* revealed that the Jewish heritage of Leonard Cohen was important to him.

tréal also figured in a new series on BBC World Service, also on Friday. Former Lebanon hostage and journalist John McCarthy presented **Reflections on Faith in a Global Crisis** and one of those he interviewed was Miriam Camerini, a trainee rabbi from Italy who has been stranded in Canada during lockdown.

She said it was "not a happy experience" to be cut off from the rituals of her Faith, but it was also a time

to learn new things and look to internal resources. She said times of crisis could lead to two reactions – either to close up or to open up to new life and certainly she favoured the latter.

Christian pastor Jessie Woods and his wife Jessica had parishes both in Arizona and across the border in Mexico and, like so many, they were learning to do streaming services online. They regarded the local church as "a gift of

God to his people" and found Faith "a tremendous help" in the current crisis.

He also harked back to Jewish heritage, referencing the psalms and David's cries of anxiety and frustration. John McCarthy remembered his own situation as a hostage in Lebanon and though he said he wasn't then "someone of great Faith" regarded himself as lucky to have had a Bible as he found certain passages uplifting. Pastor Woods agreed and instanced psalm 23 – we heard a striking musical version of it from Jessi Colter (wife of the late country singer Waylon Jennings). I was pleasantly surprised to learn that she had released a whole album of the psalms set to music.

Like Miriam Camerini, Hindu novelist Amish Tripathi found himself stranded away from home, this time in London. He was conscious of the ups and downs of life and told of how, after being an atheist for a while, to the displeasure of his parents, he had come back to his religious faith when he was writing his first novel.

New series

Another new series started on BBC1 last Sunday. The first episode of **Sunday Stories** featured several personal stories to illustrate the theme of courage. They were previously broadcast items, gathered as an uplift in the present circumstances. Again

PICK OF THE WEEK

MESSIAH

EWTN, Saturday, May 16, 7pm

New documentary series. In this episode, the story of Pentecost.

MASS

RTÉ1, Sunday, May 17, 11am

Featuring a special acknowledgement of frontline healthcare workers, with Fr Damian O'Reilly, Chaplain in St Vincent's University Hospital, Dublin.

SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC1, Sunday, May 17, 1.15pm

Aled Jones [pictured] explores why, in times of trouble, Christian hymns can lift our hearts and soothe our souls. Includes a meeting with Catholic hymn writer Bernadette Farrell.



Jewish heritage figured, this time in the story of Eli Apt, a 90-year-old Jewish man who escaped from Nazi Germany as a child on the Kindertransport. Now he was celebrating his blessings by doing a parachute jump for a Jewish charity.

The show didn't avoid controversy as one item was a celebration of women's ordination in the Anglican Church, including related protests, scenes of a female Vicar encouraging people to pray to God as 'she' and a fashion show highlighting stylish garb for female clerics.

We saw a young man, a reformed criminal, doing a theology degree and welcoming the idea of God as Father – helping to eradicate previ-

ous (presumably negative) relationships with fathers.

A young woman had gone from banking to Buddhism after a traumatic incident when, like John McCarthy, she was held hostage. Finally there was a story about encouraging young Asian children and their families to attend their local football matches without fearing racist abuse.

It was strange, even nostalgic, to see the crowded football stadium in pre-coronavirus days.

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



Pat O'Kelly

Music

The prolific Stanford earns his place in RTÉ's digital world

I am grateful for a recent email from Dr Una Hunt telling me that Charles Villiers Stanford's opera *The Veiled Prophet [of Khurassan]* is now available to view on the RTÉ Player.

The recording was made at last year's Wexford Festival when David Brophy conducted its single performance.

Excepting Polish baritone Simon Mechlieski as the prophet, the cast was principally Irish. The producer was the ubiquitous Una Hunt.

She has undertaken invaluable research into forgotten Irish composers, not least Limerick-born George Osborne (1806-1893). Her CD of his piano music is available on the RTÉ Lyric FM label. Performer and academic, Una



Charles Villiers Stanford.

Hunt has double doctorates in music with her PhD from Maynooth and DMus from Queen's in Belfast.

Stanford's opera was ini-

tially produced in a German translation at Hanover's Hoftheater on February 6, 1881. Reviewing it, *The Musical Times* reported that Stanford "has come before the world in a new light as the composer of grand opera, a work of greater importance than has hitherto appeared from his pen".

Interestingly, Stanford based the opera on Thomas Moore's famous poetical Oriental romance, *Lalla Rookh*, with its name taken from the heroine of the story, the daughter of the 17th-Century Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb.

Strangely, *The Veiled Prophet*, set in Persia, was not seen at Covent Garden until 1893 when it was sung in Italian as *Il profeta velato*.

The Wexford staging on October 28, 2019 was the first in its original English.

That performance was critically well received with *Opera News* referring to Stanford's "sense of structure and his ear for orchestration being very strong".

The cast was also highly praised with *Operawire* mentioning Simon Mechlieski's "accenting and colouring the vocal line skilfully to bring out the power and charisma of the prophet Mokanna".

There were plaudits, too, for Sinéad Campbell Wallace's "truly excellent" and "emotionally expressive performance" as priestess Zelica. The reviewer found Mairéad Buicke "no less impressive" as slave-girl Fatima and for

"singing her principle aria, There's a bower of roses, with great nuance and depth."

John Molloy and Gavan Ring were honourably favoured with the former's "true bass voice produced with seeming effortlessness" and the latter giving "equal pleasure".

Conductor David Brophy was singled out for "energetically driving the drama forward and successfully contrasting the large scale choral [Wexford and TU Dublin Conservatoire choruses] and orchestral pieces with the small-scale chamber-music-like qualities of other sections".

Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) was born in Dublin's Herbert Street. He

studied initially at the Royal Irish Academy of Music before entering Queen's College, Cambridge in 1870. He moved to London's Trinity College three years later and undertook further study in Leipzig and Berlin.

He was appointed professor of composition at the newly founded Royal College of Music in London in 1883 and held the chair of music at Cambridge from 1887. His pupils included Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst and John Ireland. Quite a prolific composer, Stanford made a very significant contribution to the music of the Anglican Church. He is buried beside the revered Henry Purcell in Westminster Abbey.



BookReviews

Peter Costello



The Pope's empathy for 'the City and the World' in a time of global pandemic

Strong in the Face of Tribulation: The Church in Communion, A Sure Support in Time of Trial, compiled and edited by the Dicastery for Communication of the Holy See (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, gratis, by download from the website of the publishing house, in pdf format; currently available in English, Italian, Spanish and French)

Peter Costello

The scene on Friday, March 27 in St Peter's Square when the Pope gave the blessing to the city of Rome and the world at large, was in an eerily empty space, where normally on great Church occasions the space is packed with worshipers and pilgrims, was one of the most strangely moving presentations on television in recent decades.

Countless millions were present in spirit in that silent, rain-washed space.

The rituals, prayers and homilies reflect the Pope reaching out to the world in this terrible time for many countries and countless families and individuals.

He is a true pastor, reaching out to sustain and fortify the afflicted in a time of woe.

“The US is filled with mourning, but its people have not yet realised the true scale of the nation's loss over recent months”

Everyone is wrapped in his sense of charity, and warmed by the blessing his imparts in the name of Jesus Christ. Many will be grateful to have this record, for much that is in it will come to remind and reward them by re-reading in years to come.

This is a substantial enough book, running to over 180 pages. It is in three parts. It provides a record of the prayers and ceremonies for separate needs. The second part explains how people, at a time when churches are closed, can express and feel a sense of communion with God and others,

From Rome

how they can attain the expurgation of their sins while the confessionals are closed. These pages alone are of great value.

The third part records the words on the present predicament of humanity since the end of February. These texts are not in any way finalised, but will be undated and revised at time goes on, so the book ought to be revisited later on.

It is above all a record of the most moving ceremony in St Peter's which engaged the world, with the Pope, his own frailties of age undisguised, seeming in a way to carry on his shoulders the troubles, the real troubles, of the world.

One would not like to see the need again for such a thing. But many will like to have this record to look back and evidence as the deep empathy for the afflicted of Pope Francis.

Echo

'An Extraordinary Prayer in the Time of Pandemic' was a sombre echo of an announcement by Italian officials minutes earlier that day that the coronavirus death toll in the country had surged past 9,000 in total.

What it is today in the US, now the worst-affected country in the world, is unclear as the victims seem not all to have been assessed or counted properly.

That country is filled with mourning, but its people have not yet realised the true scale of the nation's loss over recent months. It is set now at over 73,000 deaths, but will go higher.

A unit of the White House staff predicts many more Americans falling ill, 3,000 a day dying, by June 1.

Total deaths at the end, whenever it comes, may be well over 200,000.

Imparting his traditional blessing 'to the City and the World', Pope Francis embraced the world in its pain. As Vicar of Christ he demonstrated that the Saviour's role was to suffer, and not to live to reign in earthly power. Love in all its aspects represents the true values of Jesus and Christians today.

For many, indeed for those millions mentioned above, anything else is a negation of Faith.

Two views of the from Dublin and



Helpful thoughts and advice in a

Coping with Coronavirus: How to Stay Calm and Protect your Mental Health. A Psychological Toolkit by Dr Brendan Kelly (Irish Academic Press, €3.99 pb; Kindle price, €0.99)

Anthony Redmond

I am sure I speak for a lot of people when I say that I feel as if I am living through a strange, bizarre nightmare when I contemplate what has happened over the past few months with the arrival of the coronavirus in our world. It has shaken all my certainties and everything I took for granted in my life.

Very few people alive today have ever known anything quite like it and, in many cases, we are gripped by fear and anxiety and total confusion about the future. Of course, when this all started some months ago, I met people who told me not to be worried, that it was no worse than the common cold or possibly the flu. They seemed quite *blasé*

From Dublin

and unconcerned.

I don't think that there are too many who feel like that now. Reality has set in.

Dr Brendan Kelly is Professor of Psychiatry at Trinity College Dublin and Consultant Psychiatrist at Tallaght University Hospital. He has produced a timely and wonderful book offering us advice on how to stay calm and maintain a sense of proportion and rationality at this troubling time. He writes with compassion, wisdom, concern and a sense of reason and proportion.

He tells us to stay informed about Covid-19, but not to become completely obsessed with it. He asks us not to fall into unhelpful thinking habits. He warns us not to fill in knowledge gaps with speculation or random musings on social media. God knows, there are numerous conspiracy theories and myths about and some of them quite hair-raising.

This book offers us

practical advice on what to do if we think we might have the virus.

The author suggests that we spend no more than 15 minutes twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening, consuming news on the subject from reliable sources like the WHO.

“One is struck by the sheer goodness of people”

We are also advised to have a healthy diet, good sleep, exercise and to find an interesting activity that absorbs us. He writes: "The urgency of the current pandemic underlines these needs

to focus on reality, focus on compassion and focus on each other."

He continues: "Above all, we must keep going. At a time

like this, we cannot let the problems of today blind us to the possibilities of tomorrow. Small actions hold the key. In that spirit, if you have been reading this book on a computer, tablet or smartphone, please wipe down your device and wash your hands with care. Simple actions save lives."

I was about 20 years old when I read *The Plague* [La Peste] by Albert Camus and I recall the profound impression it made on me. Camus' powerful novel appeared in 1947 and it was set in the Algerian city of Oran.

Camus described the disbelief and indifference of the people there when first they heard about the

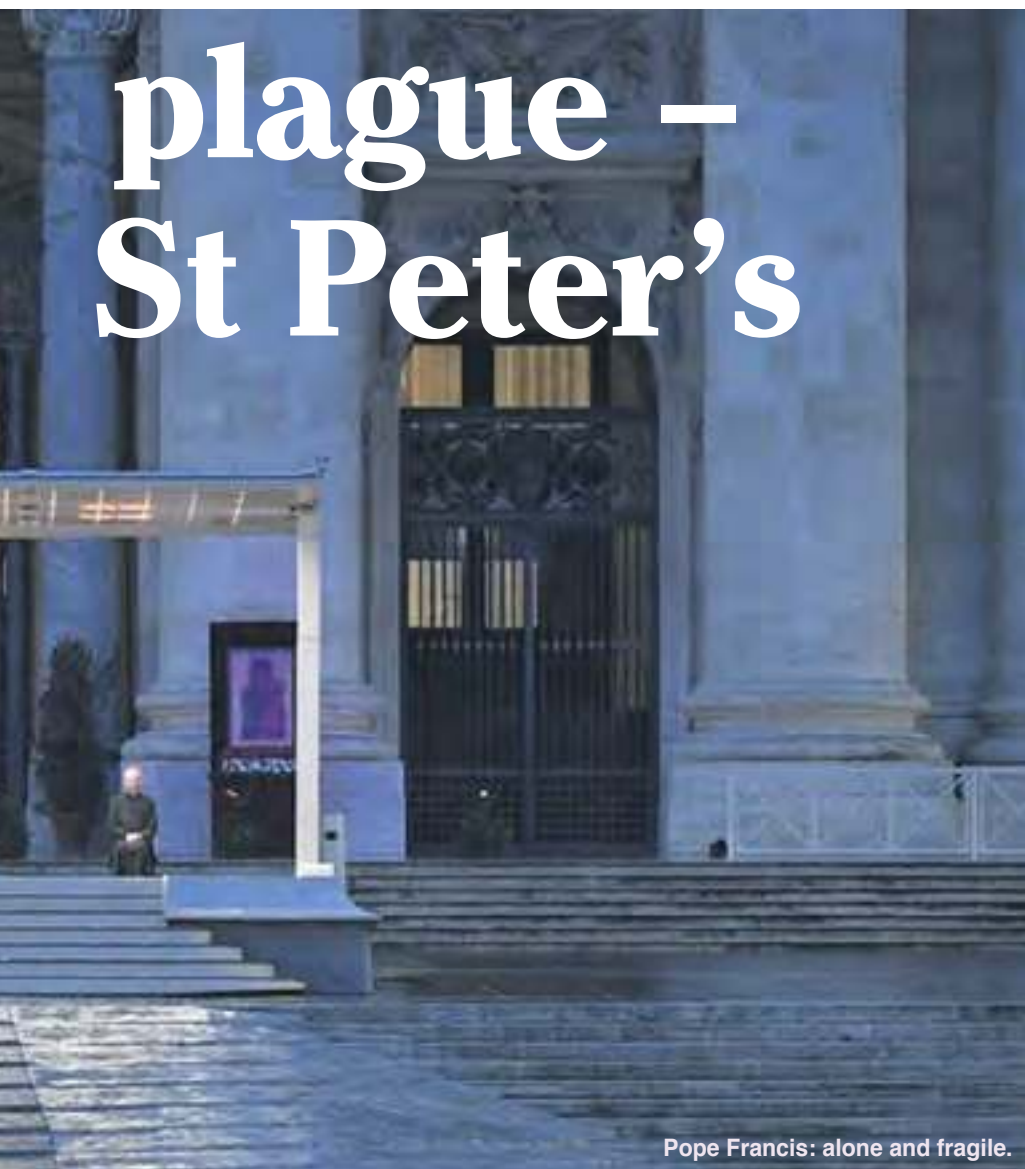
plague. He goes on to describe in detail the terrible consequences that followed and the different reactions of different people. The plague finally ends and hope and peace are restored.

The main character in the book, Dr Bernard



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.

plague – St Peter's



Pope Francis: alone and fragile.

time of plague and fear

Rieux, says: "There is more to admire in man than to despise." I think of those words when I see the truly extraordinary courage, unselfishness and self-sacrifice of those amazing people on the frontline helping others, nurses, doctors, care workers in nursing homes, ambulance staff and many more.

God bless them. No words can adequately praise their heroism and dedication. The world will never forget them. I think of all those kind and caring people who are raising money to help the care workers and to buy medical equipment for them.

A 99-year-old British World War II veteran, Captain Tom Moore, walked 100 laps of his 25m garden with the help of a walking frame and he raised €31m for health workers.

An eight-year-old boy from Co. Galway, Dylan Moran, took part in a 42km cycle marathon while staying within his two kilometre permitted radius to raise money for healthcare staff. A number of very brave people have agreed to be injected as part of human trials in

Britain for a coronavirus vaccine.

Researchers from the University of Oxford administered the doses to volunteers. The Imperial College London is hoping to have a vaccine by the end of the year.

One is constantly struck by the sheer goodness of people. This terrible time has made us seriously reflect on life and examine our values. It will give us a new appreciation of life and our loved ones.

My wonderful sister, Mary, who has underlying health issues, has kept me company during the isolation, and my good friend, Luca, has brought me groceries every week.

When this worrying time is over, there will be awful grief and deep sadness for those who have died and we shall celebrate their lives and have a chance to try to console their loved ones. This isn't something we can simply bounce back from.

I also think that it is vitally important that existing medical problems should be dealt with. Other

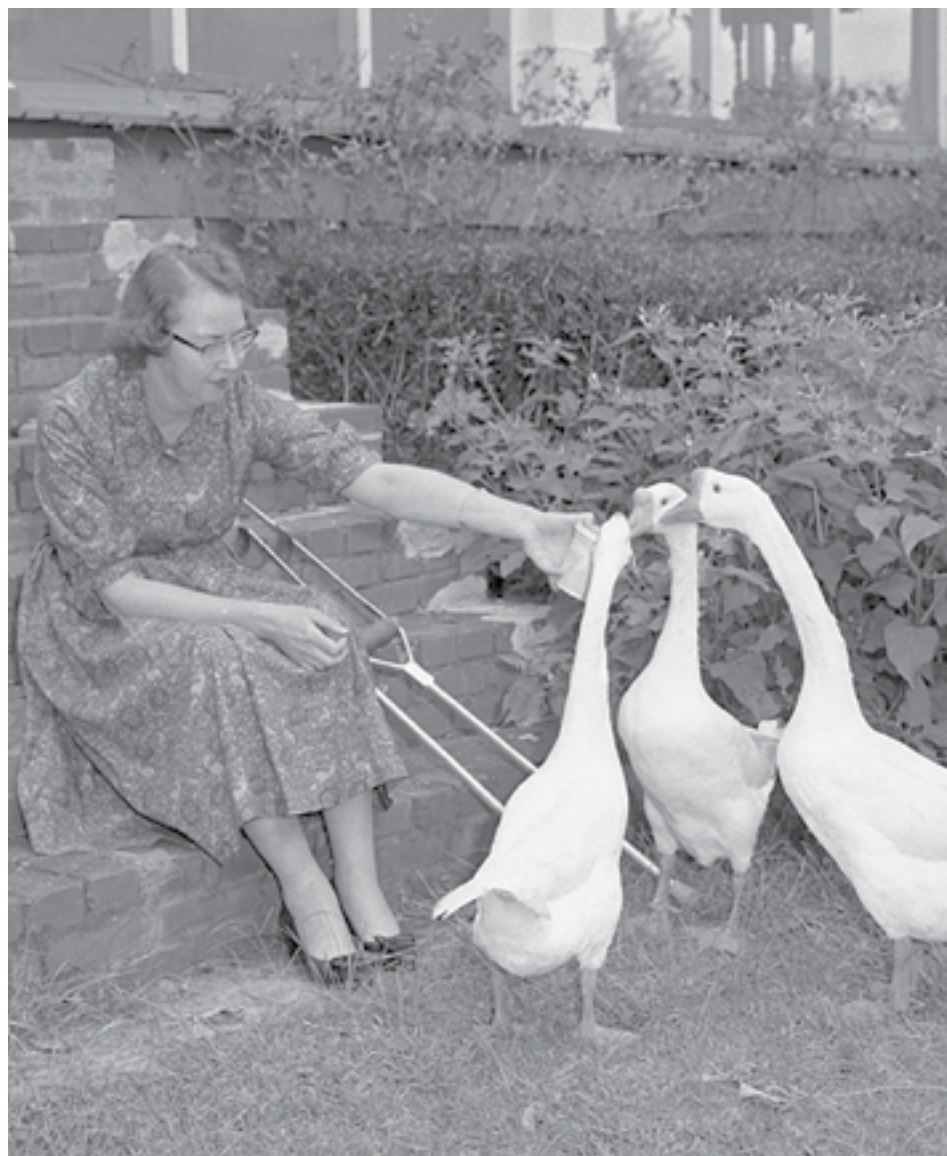
serious health issues cannot be ignored, but I fear that this is happening at the moment. Those who are ill from other health conditions cannot be ignored.

Another thing that strikes me as ridiculous is the fact that people can come from Northern Ireland here on a day trip or go to their holiday home and there are no restrictions on this, but we in the Republic may only walk a maximum of five kilometres from our home. Utterly crazy!

I would highly recommend Dr Kelly's helpful book which helps us to deal with panic and anxiety. He says: "This book is dedicated to all who are affected by coronavirus and all who care for them. Royalties from the sale of this book will be donated to medical charities assisting with the global response to coronavirus."

We desperately need to avoid despair and a sense of nihilism and helplessness. It is important to keep hope and positivity alive. With God's help we shall smile and experience joy, freedom and peace again.

The saintly suffering of Flannery O'Connor



Flannery O'Connor.

The Abbess of Andalusia: Flannery O'Connor's Spiritual Journey
by Lorraine V. Murray
(St Benedict Press, Charlotte NC; Kindle-edition, £7.46 through Amazon UK)

J. Anthony Gaughan

Many people are finding the restrictions caused by Covid-19 somewhat tiresome. In these circumstances it would be difficult to recommend a more appropriate read than this biography of Flannery O'Connor. The distinguished American writer coped with and turned to her advantage a lockdown few others will ever experience.

In 1950, at the age of 25, Flannery first became aware of the symptoms of lupus, an incurable disease which wreaks havoc on the body's immune system, resulting in damage to the joints, skin and organs. Not long afterwards she needed crutches to walk.

She left Connecticut, where she had begun a writing career, and returned home to live with her widowed mother. Home was a small two-story house with a 500-acre farm, named 'Andalusia', near Milledgeville in Georgia. Here she spent a well-nigh monastic existence.

She began each day by attending Mass, then spent two hours at her desk and in the afternoon corresponding with a wide circle of friends.

With her novels, short stories and essays, Flannery became one of the most distinguished writers of her time. She won prestigious awards and prizes.

Her writing was impregnated by Catholic doctrine, such as that on sin and damnation and on mercy and redemption. Hence, she was named by the *literati* the doyen of the Catholic novel.


“Her extant letters indicate that she read widely...and acted as a sage spiritual adviser to many of those with whom she corresponded”

But this appropriately entitled biography shows that she was much more than a well-known author. Her extant letters indicate that she read widely – ranging from the works of St Thomas Aquinas to the journals of St Thérèse of Lisieux – and acted as a sage spiritual adviser to many of those with whom she corresponded.

Flannery died on August 3, 1964 though not before exhibiting during the final months of her illness an edifying appreciation of the redemptive value of infirmity, pain and death itself.

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— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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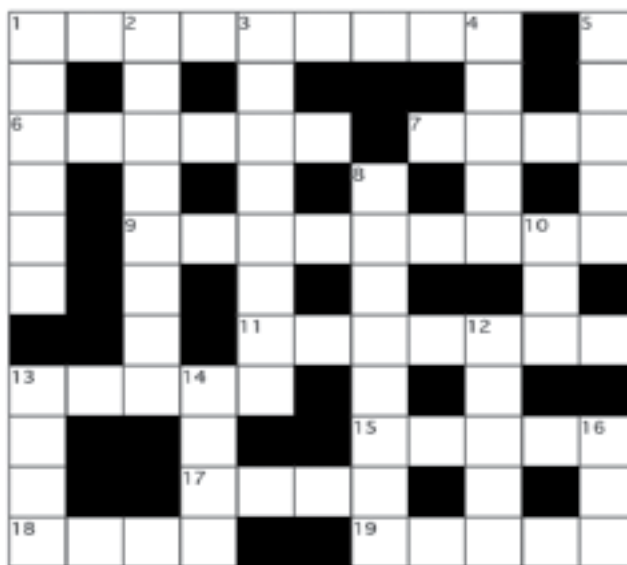
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Crossword Junior

Gordius 332



Across

- 1 A golfer's perfect score (4-2-3)
6 The jury says this if the jurors think you committed the crime (6)
7 Adam and Eve's first two sons were Cain and ____ (4)
9 This grows tall and has a lovely yellow colour (9)
11 Green jewel (7)
13 Exhausted (5)
15 Sugary topping on a cake (5)
17 What a cygnet grows up to be (4)
18 You might see this flower in a pond (4)
19 Try an answer, even

though you're not sure (5)

Down

- 1 Harry Potter's enormous adult friend (6)
2 This rugby team from Ireland has been European champions four times (8)
3 Meant (8)
4 Joint in the arm (5)
5 We put up a ____ panel to get energy from sunlight (5)
8 Dozing (8)
10 Slippery fish that looks a bit like a snake (3)
12 Living (5)
13 A dog wags it when he's happy (4)
14 Not difficult (4)
16 Oxygen is one (3)

SOLUTIONS, MAY 7

GORDIUS No. 454

Across – 1 Watchstrap 6 Opal 10 Aided 11 Midstream 12 Sleeper 15 Radon 17 Enid 18 Meal 19 Occur 21 Tearoom 23 Liege 24 Clap 25 Rant 26 Totem pole 28 Spreads 33 Mail train 34 Hinge 35 Reef 36 Holy Island

Down – 1 Weak 2 Tidal wave 3 Hedge 4 Tomme 5 Andy Pandey 7 Plead 8 Lemon drops 9 Stardom 14 Regrets 16 Small-timer 20 Caledonia 21 Termite 22 Omar 27 Trite 30 Ethos 31 Cato 32 Mead

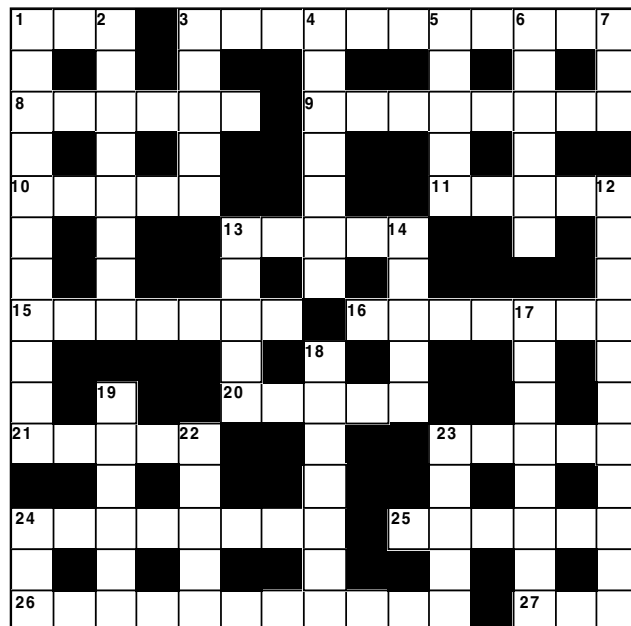
CHILDREN'S No. 331

Across – 1 Walk the dog 7 Biscuit 8 Tie 9 Irish 10 Noise 11 Eggs 14 Street 16 Pie 17 Polo 18 Easter 20 Red 21 West 22 Starts

Down – 1 Website 2 Listing 3 Truth 4 Extinct 5 Outside 6 Desert 12 Goose 13 Sport 14 Seeds 15 Elect 19 Sea

Crossword

Gordius 455



Across

- 1 A pound of priestly attire (3)
3 No milk is needed for this beverage (5,6)
8 & 9 Creature with heavenly plumage? (4,2,8)
10 Consumed in the middle of Chelsea Tennis Club (5)
11 Slang traditionally used by criminals (5)
13 Sponsors sporting defenders (5)
15 Helped with a criminal act (7)
16 Name a bird with a pencil that's broken (7)
20 Perish in water (5)
21 As above; same again (5)
23 & 22d Musical play that's just dandy? (5,5)
24 It's chopped deer geek had for breakfast (8)
25 Album I destroy in part of California (6)
26 A resort John transformed to a legendary siege-breaker (6,5)
27 Is it taken from a 12 down for fishermen to use? (3)

Down

- 1 Shortened by making the bead vibrate strangely (11)

2 Male singing voice (8)

3 & 13d Bakery product, or Cockney rhyming slang for 'dead' (5,5)

4 Make headgear with cereal on a whim (7)

5 Oriental city located in part of Oskaloosa, Kansas (5)

6 Hairy feature of a broken finger (6)

7 Female sheep (3)

12 In which racquet-eers are sentenced? (6,5)

13 See 3 down

14 Group of geese in flight (5)

17 A chimp on form is best (8)

18 Weapon that can break down the pet door (7)

19 Artist's workplace (6)

22 See 23 across

23 Pursue Charles to the East (5)

24 The king takes it as equipment (3)

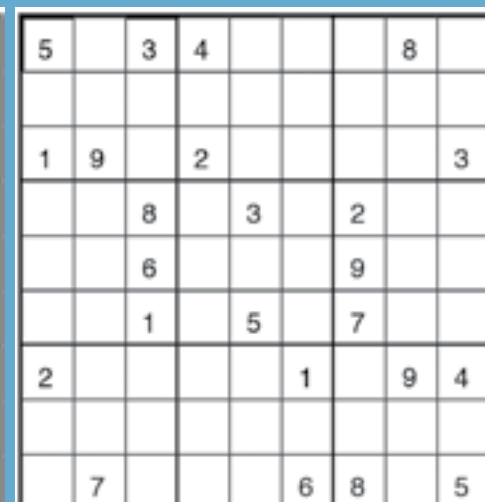
Sudoku Corner

332

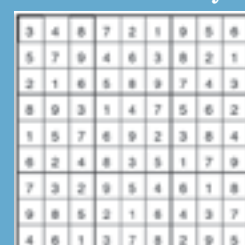
Easy



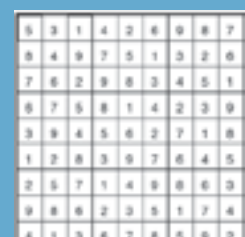
Hard



Last week's Easy 331



Last week's Hard 331



Let the Spirit adorn our souls with patience

“PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE, get it if you can, seldom in a woman, never in a man.” One of my earliest memories is hearing my grandmother recite this proverb. I’m not sure what impatience on my part warranted this correction, and I’m not sure it had much effect either!

What does patience mean, and is it really a virtue? Traditionally it refers to the ability, built up by practice, to endure with unavoidable suffering as you wait for something good. It means refusing to focus on your sufferings, and instead keeping your heart set on the good thing you’re waiting for, whether it’s an apple pie or the end of a prison sentence (or, in a case of truly heroic patience, Mayo winning the Sam Maguire).

Futile

If we fail to cultivate patience we find that we give in quickly to complaining, which is usually entirely futile. Think of a group of people waiting in line in a bakery. Simply standing there is tiresome, it involves a certain suffering. A patient person will deal with the situation by setting her heart on the goodness of the



bread, and smiling through the wait. An impatient person will start complaining, not shortening the queue, of course, but taking everyone else with her into a spiral of misery.

Patience isn’t, of course, a matter of being totally passive or apathetic. If there’s something reasonable we can do to end our suffering, then we should do it. We’re not masochists. But when nothing can be done, the virtue of patience is what we need.

At this stage of the coronavirus pandemic, the limits of our patience are being tested. How long more will our churches be

closed? How long more will public Masses be suspended? How long more will we have to limit our socialising and our movements? In the last week I’ve noticed many people who had been dealing with this new situation in a sensible and peaceable way suddenly giving in to irritation and venting.

These reactions are entirely understandable, but we should remember that patience is one of the virtues that should characterise a Christian, and mark us out from the impatient world.

History

The history of our spiritual ancestors, the people of Israel, is full of periods when patience was a key virtue. Just think of the Exile, when, for some five decades, the Jews had to live in Babylon, far from their beloved city of Jerusalem and its temple. At the beginning of the Exile, when some self-proclaimed prophets were provoking false hopes of a speedy return, the prophet Jeremiah wrote a letter to the exiles encouraging them instead to wait quietly, to accept the plans of God, and to flourish even in exile.

In the New Testament too the virtue of patience is constantly

underlined. The greatest example is of course Christ’s patient endurance of the Cross for the sake of our salvation.

As his followers, the early Christians knew they too were called to patience. St Paul, for example, reminds the Corinthians that true love is patient, he tells the Thessalonians to be “patient with everyone”, and to the persecuted Roman Christians he advises “patience in tribulation”.

The Christians in Colossae should wear the virtue of patience like “clothing”, said Paul. He reminded the Galatians that patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, and he called the Church in Ephesus to “bear with one another” patiently.

We Christians are suffering, along with everyone else, and our suffering is multiplied by our exile from the sacraments and common worship. But we shouldn’t waste our time with futile complaints, in conversation or on social media.

This time of exile is an opportunity for us to wait quietly and to let the Spirit adorn our souls with the beautiful virtue of patience as we fix our hearts on the good things our good God has in store for us.

Keep calm and keep smiling!

One way to work on our virtue is to meditate on role models. During these days, many people have been thinking back to the Second World War, for example. Those years saw millions of people quietly and calmly enduring the absence of their loved ones, as well as dietary limitations and a loss of freedom to travel.

For many, the song that has helped connect them with that brave generation is Vera Lynn’s *We’ll Meet Again*: “We’ll meet again/don’t know where/don’t know when [...] /Keep smiling through/Just like you always do/’till the blue skies drive the dark clouds far away”.

It’s a beautiful monument to the patience of the World War II generation, whose virtue is worth emulating in our time. Keep smiling through...



HELP TRAIN A YOUNG MAN FOR THE MISSIONARY PRIESTHOOD

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Each year THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION receives numerous requests from Religious Orders in mission lands for help to train their seminarians.

It costs approximately €100 a month (€1,200 a year) to feed, clothe and educate a student for the priesthood

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