

The Irish Catholic

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Devotion to Irish nun thrives as hopes rise for canonisation cause

Ruadhán Jones

Five years on from her death, devotion to Derry nun Sr Clare Crockett continues to grow, as hope increases the Church will soon open her canonisation cause.

On April 16, the five-year waiting period required by the Vatican before a potential cause can be considered for the sister - who died in an earthquake in Ecuador bringing orphans to safety in 2016 - will have elapsed.

Since her death, people have witnessed to their belief that Sr Clare lived a saintly life and reports of favours granted through her intercession have also been made.

Fr Stephen Quinn OCD of Termonbacca, Derry, who has walked closely with the family over the past five years, says he is very hopeful ecclesiastical authorities will begin the process to have her declared a saint.

"It would be very foolish for us not to consider it [the cause for canonisation] because it's unlike anything I've seen in the Irish Church for any person," Fr Quinn told *The Irish Catholic* of the devotion evident to Sr Clare.

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Knights in shining armour



The Knights of St Columbanus in Queen's University Belfast welcome four new knights to the council. Pictured are knights Ben Catney-McKernan, Ruairi Crummey, James McKenna, Gerard Scullion, with Michael Ward, Grand Knight.

'Horrendous' attacks on Catholic homes dubbed 'sectarianism'

Chai Brady

Attacks on three homes in Carrickfergus attributed to loyalists aiming to intimidate Catholic residents have been dubbed "horrendous" and sectarian.

Windows of houses were smashed in three areas in Woodburn estate, with the PSNI saying a man wearing a balaclava was seen running away after two of the incidents.

Responding to reports, SDLP Cllr Eugene Reid of the Mid and East Antrim Borough condemned the attacks saying: "I think it's horrendous that almost on the anniversary, 23 years after we signed the Good Friday Agreement, this sort of thing is going on. It's appalling to think this level of sectarianism still exists. I would condemn it wholeheartedly."

"Like all of these things, the onus is on us all as public representatives to try and engage with all people at all levels."

According to a Belfast newspaper security sources blamed the UVF for the intimidation, claiming the group had drawn up a list of Catholics or people living with Catholics in the area.

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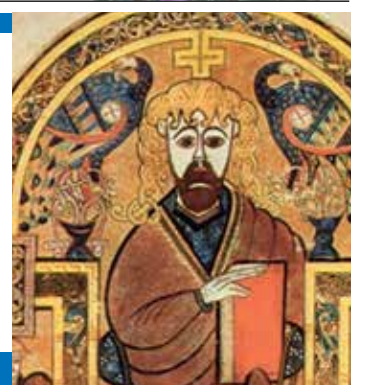
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A powerful example of other, in a world obsessed with self

Admirer for members of the British royal family is not something that comes to me spontaneously. It would, of course, be hard not to have sympathy for Queen Elizabeth II given some of the embarrassment her adult children have caused her. The monarch has witnessed first-hand the consequences of marital infidelity and subsequent family breakdown. Four of her children are divorced.

Most families get to deal with these crises with a fair amount of privacy. Not so a royal family, and it must have been distressing down the years for the queen to see lurid details of her children's transgressions in the media.

Grandchildren

Often her grandchildren have not entirely covered the family in glory either which is surely a source of disappointment, however much she evidently loves them.

Philip embodied the profound Christian paradox that there is no love in life worth having that does not involve sacrifice

One constant for Queen Elizabeth II has been her husband of 73 years the Duke of Edinburgh. Until his death on Friday at the age of 99, Philip was the longest-serving consort in British history.

Anyone who has lost a spouse will know the pain that the queen is feeling at the moment and the void that will be with her for the rest of her life following his death.



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



The late Duke of Edinburgh, holds up a bottle of whiskey as he and Britain's Queen Elizabeth II present gifts to Pope Francis during a meeting at the Vatican in 2014. Photo: CNS.

Much has been written about how Philip had a thoroughly modern approach to monarchy. He recoiled, apparently, at the stuffier sides of court life. And yet, for all of his modern approach to an ancient institution Philip seemed to perfectly embody a very old-fashioned if much-maligned virtue: duty.

Self-esteem

In a contemporary world obsessed with self-esteem and self-actualisation, Philip knew that when Elizabeth II acceded to the throne his previous life had to die and he was at her service. At a time when the mantra is "do whatever makes you happy" he was a powerful symbol of the importance of doing what you ought to do, rather than simply what you want to do.

In an interview recorded to mark his ninetieth birthday and rebroadcast over the weekend, the Duke of Edinburgh was asked if he regretted having to put his own life on hold. His response was charmingly disarming. "It's what I had to do," he said with a gentle smile.

having that does not involve sacrifice.

Determination

His determination and dedication to service over so many years as the queen's side is an inspiration at a time when we are told to just set aside things that are too hard or too boring or not how we would like to spend our time.

"Life is too short," it is said, to spend time on things that don't offer instant gratification. Philip's example is a witness to the fact that perseverance is what matters, not constantly seeking after our own happiness above all else.

These are lessons we can all take to heart, whatever our views on monarchy.

There is a biblical truth here as well: discipleship means taking up the Cross. The more we avoid the Cross, the heavier it is. It is only a yoke that is good to bear, a burden that is light when we accept it.

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Devotion to Irish nun thrives as hopes rise for canonisation cause

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"Even if you consider it to Matt Talbot or Blessed John Sullivan – even Frank Duff. You compare it to those causes and it's unrecognisable in terms of how many pick it up, how many people use the candles, how many people use the devotion.

"It's blowing me away. Every time I think it's run its course, it gets another set of legs and goes again."

Sr Clare's sister Shauna Gill said she has been overwhelmed by the "non-stop" contact the family have had regarding their sister: "It has been fairly non-stop with people contacting us to say that they have had favours granted after asking Clare to intercede, especially about infertility and cancer".

It was speculated earlier this year that her order, the Servants of the Home of the Mother, would be announcing the opening of her cause April 16. However, the congregation later clarified this would not

be the case. It is now up to the Church in Ecuador to further the process.

Fr Quinn believes it's an important time to consider her cause, as the Irish Church seeks to reach out to younger people, for whom she has a strong draw.

"All comparisons are odious, but the only thing I can put it to is Thérèse or Teresa of the Andes or in Chile where people have picked up this odour of sanctity. You look at the video or read the book, there's an authenticity that speaks of Christ, it speaks of holiness."

Devotion to Sr Clare continues to rise and St Columba's Church Longtower in Derry reported that their retreat for Sr Clare, beginning April 19, was booked out in a matter of hours.

Ms Gill, who will be speaking at the retreat, said in a statement that "this is a very special time for the family, and everyone who is devoted to Clare as it marks the fifth anniversary of her death".



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We Need Worship group highlights public worship plight

Jason Osborne

A Facebook page dedicated to documenting the suffering of those going without public worship in Ireland has "given a voice to people".

Sandra Parda, of the 'We Need Worship' page told *The Irish Catholic* that the testimonies pouring in from around the country, and given a platform by the page, just "make my heart break".

"There's a lot of young people, but we also

hear from elderly people who don't have anything, and the sacraments are denied to them," Ms Parda said.

"We've been frustrated with the Government and the bishops," Ms Parda said, continuing "it doesn't seem to work to talk to them".

"I feel exhausted because I just don't feel like it's my job to be pleading with the bishops to open back our churches and explaining to them the importance of Mass," she explained.

"And yet I and many other people had to

step up, even when I don't feel like it's really our place to do so, with having bishops who are supposed to lead us."

Surprised

She described being surprised by their response to the pandemic, but said, "I love them and pray for them" and that she "can't imagine what a hard job that is, to lead the flock".

The initiative, which was started by a number of young people from around the country and continues to be run by them

despite their full-time employment and education, has received "good feedback".

Segments of the Irish media took notice of its "Let us go to Mass" campaign last November, which saw dozens of young people pleading with the Government for a return to public Mass.

"We were delighted with the feedback," Ms Parda said.

"Secular viewers didn't realise there were young people involved [in the push to get back to Mass]. They were shocked at the young people out there".

'Lord take him by the hand and bring him home' – moving tributes paid to Shay Healy



The late Shay Healy.

Ruadhán Jones

John McColgan, founder of Riverdance, said a "quiet prayer" for his friend, the Irish songwriter and broadcaster Shay Healy after he died following a "hard-fought battle" with Parkinson's.

Mr McColgan first met Shay Healy in the 1960s and said they remained friends ever since. Speaking on the

Brendan O'Connor radio show, he spoke of how he saw Mr Healy for the last time on Tuesday, April 6.

"I was let into his room because he wasn't well enough to get out of bed and it was the last time I saw him," Mr McColgan said. "I knew when I saw him that he wasn't long for this world and I said a quiet prayer to the Lord – please take him by the hand and bring him home."

Shay Healy was best known for writing the Eurovision Song Contest winner, 'What's Another Year', sung by Johnny Logan.

Mr Logan also paid tribute, recalling his "funny and quirky way of looking at life". He said Mr Healy once told Fr Brian D'arcy that "A good country song has to have a mother, religion and tragedy in it." That was Shay, he was just hilarious."

Bishops announce submission phase of synodal path

Staff reporter

The Irish Bishops have announced the initial submission phase of the upcoming synod, which was announced March 10.

Commenting on the development, Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick said the bishops were inviting submissions "to reflect on what methods/models to adopt" in the coming two years of conversations.

He gave as examples "parish hall meetings, focus groups, questionnaires, deep-listening sessions; written submissions; family-focused gatherings; summary of findings of assemblies that have already taken place across dioceses; and/or conferences".

"Feedback, which should be no more than 300 words and submitted by Pentecost Sunday 23 May 2021, ought to focus on the nature of the process for the consultation i.e. how we can best go about this initial phase of establishing the conversation," Bishop Leahy said.

The bishop said this phase is not about the prospective themes, which will be addressed in the next phase.

The responses will be considered by a task group put in place by the bishops this summer to plan and oversee the first steps along the synodal pathway.



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Dáil must change rule preventing 'Mass ban' query – TD

Jason Osborne

A prominent TD has said it is "extremely disappointing" that the Dáil refused to allow her to question Health Minister Stephen Donnelly on whether it is an offence to attend Mass.

Laois-Offaly deputy Carol Nolan was seeking clarification because the minister previously told the Dáil it was not an offence, but the State is

now arguing in legal proceedings that it is a penal offence carrying a fine.

The Irish Catholic revealed last week that the Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl, disallowed the query saying the matter is before the courts, but also because "requiring the minister to provide an interpretation of the law" is not in order as per Salient Rulings 696 and 697.

"I recognise the impor-

tance of the separation of powers, but the reply from the Ceann Comhairle is one in which a particularly expansive view of that principle was adopted," Ms Nolan told this paper.

"It also highlights the need to radically revise the continuing application of the precedent whereby I, as an elected member of the Oireachtas, am forbidden to ask a relevant minister to clarify an aspect

of the law through written parliamentary questions but am entirely free to raise the same issue on the floor of the Dáil where I would receive a reply," she said.

She said that there's a "tension" and "contradiction" here that must be resolved.

Meanwhile, Trinity College law professor David Kenny, said that "it's a stretch" to suggest that the rules mean that you "can't debate any law that

is subject to an ongoing court case" as it is "far too severe a restriction on the powers of debate in the house.

"Because even if you think it through, if a court case began and it showed up a very problematic aspect of a law, the argument that the Ceann Comhairle made here would suggest that the house can't debate changes in that law unless and until that court case is finished," Dr Kenny

said, continuing, "which couldn't be true."

That would constitute "a crazy restriction on the powers of parliament," he said.

Michael McNamara TD of Clare said that the situation was "worrying" to him and that "if you can't go to court to get an effective remedy," and "you can't have your democratically elected representatives raise it in the Dáil, well then what can you do?"

Fr Peter McVerry's delight at RTÉ interview success

Ruadhán Jones

Homelessness activist Fr Peter McVerry's interview with Tommy Tiernan met with much acclaim on social media, which he said was "pleasing".

After the 15 minute interview aired on Saturday, Fr McVerry – who spoke out forcefully on the issue of homelessness – was praised for "the quiet force of his witness".

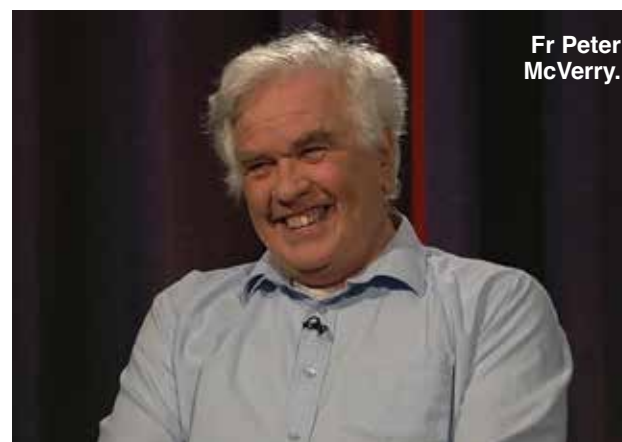
Fine Gael MEP Seán Kelly

took to Twitter to say "it was humbling and refreshing listening to the wonderful Fr McVerry" and praised his "wise words" – "live sensibly, give generously".

Former parliamentary correspondent for *The Irish Times*, Michael O'Regan, also spoke up, asking "when will Governments listen to Fr Peter McVerry"? He added that it was a "great interview with this great man who has dedicated his life to the marginalised".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr McVerry joked that he's happy "so long as I don't make a complete fool of myself", but he wished more of his message about homelessness had been aired.

"The message I want to put out which really he didn't address on the interview is the issue of homelessness," Fr McVerry said. "That's what I'm always interested in addressing rather than me personally. We did talk about that but it was all edited out."



'Delight and enthusiasm' among schools as all students return

Staff reporter

Catholic schools' representatives have said schools are "delighted" as all classes return for the first time, though challenging times remain ahead.

Mr Seamus Mulconry of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA) said schools know "an hour in the classroom is worth a week online".

"Schools are delighted and it's far easier to have a full reopening than a partial one," Mr Mulconry said.

His sentiments were echoed by Mr John Curtis of the Joint Managerial body for voluntary secondary schools (JMB/AMCSS), who said it is "one of the good days".

"Obviously there'll be complications here and there," he said. "In fairness to the department, they've supported us as well but the bigger issue as a society is that we try to minimise community infection. It will help keep our children in schools during the course of this term."

'Horrendous' attacks on Belfast homes

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East Antrim Alliance MLA Stewart Dickson told the Irish News that last week's attacks were "absolutely abhorrent" and urged anyone with information to contact the PSNI.

"This is nothing more than raw, naked sectarianism by paramilitary criminals," he said.

"Effectively, people are being targeted on the basis of perceptions of their backgrounds. That this should lead to such attacks is absolutely abhorrent.

"There should be absolutely no place for this kind of disturbing behaviour in Carrick or anywhere else for that matter, and I would urge anyone with information on who is behind this to go to the police."

Working for peace on the ground



Fr Martin Magill of St John's Parish joins youth workers from Holy Trinity Youth Club and West Belfast START Programme who were out supporting "detached interventions" in the Belfast unrest. Photo: Keith McCaugherty

When Terence O'Neill saw the Sacred Heart in a lift...

One of the great benefits of lockdown, for me, has been the experience of participating in various lectures and talks by Zoom. And I can now say that I've 'attended' Trinity College Dublin – at least vicariously, via excellent history seminars, hosted by TCD's Centre for Contemporary History and chaired by Prof. Eunan O'Holpin.

Civil servant

Recently, a distinguished retired civil servant, Sean Aylward, gave a zinger of a talk on the theme of 'Taoisigh Observed – a Private Secretary's Recollection of Jack Lynch and C.J. Haughey.' Mr Aylward, a most cordial man, gave a close-up view of having served these Taoisigh in office, as a top mandarin. The job, he jested, was something like serial matrimony: "to love, honour and obey" each political chief,



Mary Kenny



The much-loved image of the Sacred Heart and never to damage the relationship between the government and the civil service. Jack Lynch, he said, was a person of great empathy. He was "the guy next door". But although he was a Corkonian,

he wasn't always treated well in his native city. Cork, he said, is a "socially stratified city" dominated by merchant princes, and Jack wasn't accepted by that elite class. Thus, he never kept a home in Cork City, and would only stay there overnight, at the Metropole Hotel. Jack was basically quite shy, but he could charm people, especially by bursting into song – he assuaged a group of disgruntled Cork ladies by serenading them with *On the Banks of My Own Lovely Lee*. Charlie Haughey was one of the most decisive administrators ever encountered, with a phenomenal work rate. He quit smoking and drinking in the 1970s, and became

much more self-disciplined. He was always one for the stylish gesture and went to great pains to obtain an Irish Georgian silver teapot as a gift for Margaret Thatcher – but Sean was shocked to discover it cost more than his own annual salary! He praised both Anthony Cronin and Martin Mansergh as brilliant speechwriters during the Haughey years. And yet Sean Aylward

concluded that Bertie Ahern may have been "the most significant" Irish prime minister of the 20th Century. He really did build bridges. **Sacred Heart** Terence O'Neill became quite informal about dropping in on Irish government buildings in Dublin and on one occasion, Sean found himself riding up in a slightly juddery lift with Captain

O'Neill. The sometime Northern prime minister remarked on the fact that there was an image of the Sacred Heart in the elevator, and asked if this wasn't rather 'sectarian'? Sean Aylward replied, amicably, to the effect that the lift itself was so crumbly, it was no harm to have a picture of the Redeemer on the wall. This fine civil servant may also have missed his calling as a diplomat!

Complex questions and the search for answers

It's not surprising that there are ongoing challenges to Justice Yvonne Murphy's Mother and Baby Home commission. The whole question of who is responsible for the historic treatment of single mothers, and the difficult issue of consent in the matter of adoption, is so complex that the report itself was bound to be only part of the story. Philomena Lee, (and other applicants), claim that the report did not accurately reflect her evidence to the commission and that it breaches her rights to fair procedure and natural and constitutional justice. These

objections should be heard, recorded and considered. The report itself admitted, in its executive summing-up: "The story of mother and baby homes in Ireland is complex and its nuances cannot easily be captured in a summary." People do sometimes want simple answers to complex questions. Social and economic circumstances, family constellation networks, the quite shocking invisibility of many fathers of infants born out of wedlock, the punitive attitude of some clergy, the lack of care by the state, and much else all go into the mixture. There is also something

else. As Queen Elizabeth said, in response to Meghan Markle's accusations of royal family racism, "recollections may vary". We all remember things differently from one another, and from the way it was at the time, too. When I examine my old diaries, incidents are recorded that I had quite forgotten, others that I recall utterly differently. Those involved with the mother and baby homes were psychologically hurt and wounded by their experiences. They should be heard with respect and given all due process of law and human rights. But it's still complex.

● Sir Anthony Hopkins has become the oldest actor, at 83, to win a BAFTA award. He plays the key role in a new movie *The Father* written by Florian Zeller. I saw the original play twice, once in London, once in New York, and it is such a brilliant, and disconcerting, portrayal of the experience of the onset of dementia and the confused isolation that can occur in old age. A real insight into an experience of the human condition.



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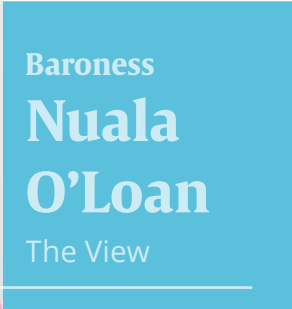
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Govt report on surrogacy fails to consider 'gravity' of 'exploitative' practice

Ruadhán Jones

A new report for Government recommends "exceptionally liberal" legal recognition of domestic surrogacy arrangements, despite the "exploitative" nature of the practice, a Catholic bioethicist has said.

The report by the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection, Prof. Conor O'Mahony, was released

April 7 and calls for the introduction of domestic surrogacy.

Surrogacy is where a woman agrees to carry, and gives birth to, a child on behalf of other intending parents, and relinquishes care of the child and all rights of parentage and parental responsibility to them.

Although the report says any legalisation

would be heavily regulated, bioethicist David Mullins said it "fails to take account of the seriousness of the international situation".

"Internationally, the majority of the moves have been toward banning it because once you introduce it, it's very hard to regulate," Mr Mullins said.

"It's hard to save people from exploitation because

cultural acceptability creeps in. That's what will happen here and yet the report is calling for exceptionally liberal regulations."

Currently, only nine of 43 European countries acknowledge surrogacy arrangements, while 24 ban it outright. There are no regulations in place in Ireland for domestic or international surrogacy.

The report calls for

acceptance of the reality of surrogacy, but Mr Mullins said that internationally this is not the case as "it's not a solution, it ends up being a completely exploitative practice".

"We have a supreme arrogance about us where we seem to think that we and we alone will be able to introduce sufficient safeguards that will protect vulnerable women, that

will protect the genetic link, that will protect families – without looking to every other jurisdiction where efforts have been made and failed spectacularly and caused a lot of pain," Mr Mullins concluded.

Mr Mullins said it is important to tackle the lack of legislation, but surrogacy is "ultimately a commercialisation of the sale of children".

Archbishop offers prayers on death of Britain's Prince Philip

Prince Philip is pictured tipping his hat outside Buckingham Palace in 2017 just before he retired from public life. Photo: Hannah McKay



Staff reporter

The Primate of All-Ireland has paid tribute to the contribution to peace and reconciliation of the Duke of Edinburgh who has died aged 99. Archbishop Eamon Martin also offered prayers for Prince Philip's soul and the divine consolation of his family.

Buckingham Palace announced on Friday that the husband of Queen Elizabeth II had died that morning. The couple were married for more than 73 years and the queen is due to turn 95

later this month.

Archbishop Martin – president of the Irish bishops' conference said in a statement: "Her Majesty the Queen, and all the members of the Royal family, are in our prayers on the death of a much loved husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather."

"Prince Philip has been a regular visitor to Northern Ireland in connection with his widespread charitable work. Many pupils from right across the community here have participated in the Duke of Edinburgh

Award Scheme.

"However, his visit to Ireland along with Queen Elizabeth in 2011, stands out as a cherished moment of peace and reconciliation and as an historic demonstration of the importance of mutual understanding and respectful relationships between these islands," the Archbishop of Armagh added.

Dr Martin said: "I will offer prayers for Queen Elizabeth and her family at this difficult personal time and will pray for the happy repose of the soul of Prince Philip".

Synod risks becoming 'talking shop' if not focused on mission, says bishop

Staff reporter

Bishop Dónal McKeown said that the Irish Synod must be focused on "re-energising the mercy mission" of the Church or risk becoming a "curious talking shop".

The bishop of Derry's comments come as the initial submission phase for the National Synodal Assembly begins.

Writing in *The Net*, Bishop McKeown said that synodality does not mean a "parliamentary approach where power blocks square up to each other to win votes and

promote their human agenda or the popular ideas in secular society".

"The Synod of Bishops on young people promoted the concept of 'missionary synodality'," Bishop McKeown continued. "Unless synodality is focused on re-energising the mercy mission of Jesus through the Church, it risks becoming a curious talking shop that is going nowhere."

Dr McKeown also wrote that the purpose of the synod is to ensure the Church is "fit for purpose in our modern technological world".

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ex-Bóthar CEO denies claim of misappropriating hundreds of thousands

Irish livestock charity Bóthar has claimed that its ex-CEO David Moloney misappropriated €465,000 in donations.

Last week, Bóthar acquired a temporary High Court injunction, freezing the assets of Mr Moloney, who resigned from his position as the charity's CEO in February.

The court heard that Mr Moloney denies all allegations of wrongdoing, protesting his innocence.

Counsel said that in the course of the investigation, it was alleged that between 2013 and 2019, Mr Moloney withdrew €192,000 of Bóthar's donated money, and said it was paid to a mission run by the Congregation of Mary Immaculate Sisters in Tanzania.

Bóthar spoke with the sister in charge of the mission, who claimed the order never received any money from either Mr Moloney or Bóthar.

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Food crisis greatest threat to Brazil poor – Irish missionary

Chai Brady

Poor families are struggling to buy food as prices rise “astronomically” and Brazil’s Covid-19 crisis worsens, according to an Irish Spiritan based there.

Fr Brendan Foley, the Superior of the Brazil South-West Province and parish priest in Perus, São Paulo told this paper that in response to the increase in food prices they opened a food bank which caters to the local community.

“Food prices are rising astronomically so our response to that for the local community was to open up a food bank with private donations from Ireland from Spiritan colleges, in doing so they were able to distribute monthly food parcels,” he said.

“People have donated to it so it has created a sense of solidarity. People who are educated and I would have considered having stable jobs are knocking on the door asking for food. It just shocks me. What is shocking is the slow wearing down of people spiritually and mentally.”

In his parish, Fr Foley says he lives in an area of extreme deprivation with many slum



Spiritan Fr Brendan Foley pictured with food parcels for the poor in Brazil.

settlements known as favelas. “They live in this milieu of a situation of trying to provide the best that they can, first the security, construction of houses, to find work at any cost and to find a sense of protection through health and education. They are in search of hope,” he said.

Fr Foley criticised Brazil’s President Jair Bolsonaro, saying he is “throwing out perverse politics that does nothing to help the poor of Brazil”.

“The symptom of that is that Covid has highlighted

these weaknesses within Brazilian society and politics,” he added.

“Even the odd jobs are hard to come by during Covid, so having a steady income this last year has proven very difficult. Having the threat always of Covid-19 – between infections and deaths – is a very real threat here in the parish, the greatest threat for the poorest is not having food on the table and not having a job to provide that food and home and place and space, so there’s a lot of vulnerability being experienced.”



Young Brazilians with food parcels in São Paulo, Brazil.

Disadvantaged pupils most affected by the pandemic

Jason Osborne

A recent report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said that many pupils will be heavily affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in the long run, with disadvantaged pupils especially affected.

A key point is that students with access to good technology and parents willing to help with their work will fare much better than those from disadvantaged backgrounds who don’t have access to such support and facilities.

General Secretary of the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) for Voluntary Secondary Schools, John Curtis, said it was an issue “we would have been aware of throughout the time of the pandemic”.

“There has been, to some extent, a digital divide in one respect. That some pupils are more readily engaged with the remote engagement than others. There is a disadvantage there,” Mr Curtis said.

“We’re also concerned as well that obviously there are some pupils who will more readily engage with school, and pupils who find school difficult will find remote engagement even more difficult because they don’t have the direction that they would normally have.”

However, supports are being envisaged for this summer after the model of last year, according to Mr Curtis, with “supplementary programmes” put in place last summer by the Department of Education to help students at a disadvantage throughout the pandemic.

‘Ideology not safety’ behind push for DIY abortions

Ruadhán Jones

Efforts by pro-choice activists to make at-home abortions permanently available are driven by ideology “not how can we help the mother and baby”, say the Life Institute.

In March, the Department of Health confirmed at-home abortion services would end after the pandemic. Pro-abortion groups, such as the National Women’s Council (NWC), are pressuring the Government to maintain the service.

Niamh Uí Bhriain of the Life Institute said their efforts show no consideration for

“safety issues”.

“Doctors for life say that at a very minimum, women should be able to see their doctor before undertaking something as significant as an abortion,” Ms Uí Bhriain said. “Over the phone consultations just are not the same as visiting your doctor.”

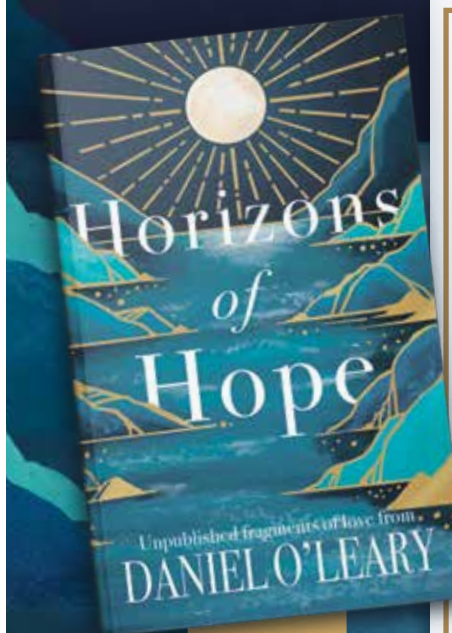
She added that abortion campaigners are pushing for an increasing liberalisation of abortion laws.

“Groups like the NWC seem to want to take away anything that might give women pause with regard to undergoing an abortion,” she said.

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Nuala O'Loan

The View



The violence which has been switched on can be switched off

The situation in Northern Ireland today cries out for leadership capable of taking all the people forward together.

It has seemed to me that those on other parts of our islands do not fully understand the situation here in the North. Indeed, I wonder, how many of us here comprehend it? To have that full comprehension we would have to be capable of understanding the impact of history on the psyche of the people here - not just recent history - the 'Troubles' - but also more distant history.

History, of course, is viewed through the lens of our context and experience. The people here have many contexts, but two in particular: for unionists it is a context within which they are celebrating the centenary of the establishment of Northern Ireland as a separate entity but a completely integrated part of the United Kingdom. For nationalists the centenary is not something which they would choose to celebrate. For them it was the time when the island of Ireland was torn apart - when Ireland became the Free State, and the North became a hostile and difficult place for many nationalists - most of whom were Catholics - to live.

“We have seen unilateral action by the British government in December 2020 with the threat to breach international law”

When I came here in 1976 I remember very clearly the sense that Catholics here looked towards Ireland for their identity, not Northern Ireland. That has changed over the decades and many people see themselves as being of Northern Ireland. Yet, we are still so divided within ourselves as a people. The reality is that most people in the rest of the United Kingdom really do not have any interest in us. For them the Good Friday Agreement solved our problems and we should just be getting on with it - whatever it is - the loss of loved family members in the 'Troubles' and of the 'disappeared', the



Workers make repairs on the peace wall gates at Lanark Way in Belfast, following a week of violence. Photo: Jason Cairnduff.

ongoing disabilities caused by conflict-inflicted injuries, the brave attempts to build a united society and an economy which has some resilience and stability. For many in the Republic it seems to me that there is a not dissimilar view - that really Northern Ireland does not have much to offer the South, but does have the potential to cause further problems for the country.

When I have travelled across the world, particularly in the context of the development of police accountability, the single most often asked question has been 'Why do Christians fight with one another in your country?' Not an easy question to answer other than by saying that we are not divided in our Christianity, we are divided in our politics and our loyalties. Yet surely our Christianity should bind us together in the Lord whom we all confess.

Tension

We live in a strange situation here. Tension is often present: some of it localised and transient, but impactive. The frustrations of the endless lockdown and the experience of so many people that their jobs, their social lives, their community have become something of a distant memory, because that most sacred

of ground - the meeting place between two (or more!) individuals has largely been closed to us all. In a society with the worst levels of ill-health in these islands, both mental and physical; alcoholism and the extensive prevalence of illegal drugs; the dreadful numbers of suicides; that sense of hope which is so fundamental to Christian belief has, for many, been extinguished.

“When I came here in 1976 I remember very clearly the sense that Catholics here looked towards Ireland for their identity”

It is in that context that the immediate issues: the fears of unionism generally of a united Ireland, of the loss of their political and civic identity is compounded by the regular talks of border polls, and by the complexities of the Northern Ireland Protocol which has placed a border through the Irish Sea between Northern Ireland and England, Scotland and Wales, resonate with unionists in a way which is almost elemental. They have

been misled too - told that there would be no Irish Sea border and that goods would move freely through the four countries of the United Kingdom, despite the fact that one country, Northern Ireland, is subject to European Union rules on the free movement of goods and services.

Rule

Then there is a further sub-context and it relates to the rule of law, that fundament of society which provides checks and balances for the government of a country. We have seen the complete disregard of Covid-19 rules applicable to the funeral of a leading IRA man, Bobby Storey, who was generally regarded as having directed IRA intelligence processes which facilitated and enabled the murder and destruction which was so much part of our lives for so long. That funeral was attended by deputy First Minister, Michelle O'Neill, Sinn Féin leader, Mary Lou McDonald, Gerry Adams and so many other leading politicians. This, at a time, when people were not able to attend the funerals of their dear friends, and sometimes even their families.

We have seen unilateral action by the British government in December 2020 with

the threat to breach international law on the withdrawal treaty, and more recently in March 2021, the unilateral extension of the grace periods for a variety of products under the NI protocol, resulting in attendant outrage by the EU and discomfort and unease, at the very least from the Irish Government. It is imperative that governments are seen to act within the rule of law.

Quite suddenly since Good Friday, we have seen the outbreak of violence in some unionist areas. At a time when we have seen successful operations to combat loyalist organised crime, that street violence - which was so much part of life here - has suddenly been switched on again. Loyalist paramilitaries withdrew their support for the Good Friday Agreement just four weeks before it all started. They deny involvement. A carefully chosen attack on the peace wall at Lanark Way in West Belfast was calculated to bring republicans out too. The rioting was largely switched off following the sad death of Prince Philip. The PSNI response on the loyalist denial was carefully worded: "It's our overall assessment that the violence that has taken place over the last few nights is not orchestrated by a group in the name of that

group." (emphasis added). Saying that there had been present on the streets people who could have connections to proscribed organisations, they said "We don't believe it has been sanctioned and organised for peaceful protests" (emphasis added).

“We live in a strange situation here. Tension is often present”

These have not been peaceful protests - over the weekend three families who were suspected of being Catholics were ordered out of their homes in Carrickfergus. So far, 88 police officers have been injured, vehicles burned and property destroyed. There are calls now for further protests, marches etc., - all in breach of the law.

The violence which has been switched on can be switched off - of that there is no doubt. We need support for communities both sides of peace lines. If this does not happen there is a risk of escalating violence, leading to death, injury, economic damage and much hardship. In this Easter season we need again to find hope here in Northern Ireland.

When I saw the poverty in the villages, I cried for nights on end', says Sister Marie Catherine, a missionary sister serving communities in Niger, West Africa. It is here, on the edge of the desert, where she has founded the 'Servants of Christ' congregation.

Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world. Famine and drought means that over 2.4 million, including 800,000 children, are starving and vulnerable. Women and girls endure the most - child marriage can see little girls married to men old enough to be their grandfathers, and female genital mutilation, a cruel, centuries-old tradition, is still widespread in Niger. Genital mutilation is nearly always carried out on young girls between infancy and adolescence. It has no health benefits, it only causes harm.

But there is hope

Sister Marie Catherine and her congregation are fighting poverty and drought, and also these inhumane, and degrading practices that violate human rights.

Their community gardens and craft workshops give local people the tools they need to tackle hunger and poverty. Hygiene programmes

Overseas Missionaries in Crisis

'Our task is to serve the poor. Even when it becomes difficult.' Sister Marie Catherine

show women how to make soap and the simple precautions they need to prevent the spread of diseases. Their feeding centre allows maize to be distributed to those families who need it the most. While their school offers girls and boys a better future.

Against the odds

Despite serving in a mostly male-dominated Muslim society, the sisters have still managed

to gain the respect of Imams (Muslim religious leaders), village chiefs and the Sultan. Their work is not concerned with converting Muslims to Christianity, they simply, 'want to know the people and show them the tenderness of the Lord', says Sr Félicité, a fellow sister of Marie Catherine.

They need your help

But why should you care about overseas missionaries when we face such challenging times ourselves? It is true, we are suffering, but just spare a thought for the men, women and children supported by Sister Marie Catherine. These people are already surviving alongside so many hardships - political conflict, violence, drought, extreme poverty, malnutrition, and now COVID-19.



The sisters bring hope, 'We want to show the people the tenderness of the Lord!'
Sister Félicité Sampo

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Regardless of what may come, Sister Marie Catherine remains hopeful, 'the symbol of our congregation is a large cross in a little boat. Our community is young and small', she explains 'but our devotion and trust in God is great. Our little boat is not easily rocked, even by big waves!'

The people of Niger need missionaries like Sister Marie Catherine, and Sister Marie Catherine needs the support of people like you.

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Churches must be visible in interface communities to maintain 'hard won peace'



Religious leaders have a key role in supporting peace and reconciliation, writes **Chai Brady**

Churches must be visible in communities and actively engage with young people and those involved in the violence that has wracked the North in recent weeks, according to a Passionist priest who has become well-known for his work in interface communities.

Fr Gary Donegan, formerly of Holy Cross in Ardoyne and now based at Tobar Mhuire retreat, Crossgar, Co. Down told *The Irish Catholic* that there must be a "visible response" and clergy and others involved in pastoral ministry should "get out and smell the sheep".

Almost 100 police officers have been injured in street violence which involved petrol bombs and various projectiles in mainly loyalist areas. The violence has been blamed on the Brexit-related Northern Ireland Protocol and the decision not to prosecute Sinn Féin members who attended Bobby Storey's funeral despite Covid-19 restrictions. However, many community leaders have rejected this and the police have warned of paramilitary involvement.

“There is also so much ‘gangsterism’ behind the turmoil”

For many young people involved, Fr Donegan says: "What has actually happened is a lot of young people who are sadly from socially-deprived backgrounds, often from single parent families, often from families with issues around drug and alcohol abuse - dysfunctionality in general - they've been locked up for over a year and here was the chance to get out."

Gangsterism

There is also so much "gangsterism" behind the turmoil, he said, with some loyalist paramilitary groups being heavily involved in racketeering and the illegal drugs trade he claimed.

"If you're part of one of these organisations, you're only relevant if there's trouble: how can you justify your existence 23 years after the Good Friday Agreement? But if you can stir up trouble, you can turn



Outreach workers from a Catholic youth centre on Belfast's Falls Road at the scene of violent unrest persuading young Catholics not to engage with loyalist stone-throwers on the other side of the peace wall that divides the communities. They also confiscated petrol bombs from rioters and destroyed a box of petrol bombs they came across. Photos: Mal McCann

around and say, 'well, we're here to protect you', he said.

"The reality is...an awful lot of it is actually to do with extortion, racketeering, drugs and very little of it is to do with the Northern Ireland Protocol," he said.

Fr Donegan warned that with many high-profile republican anniversaries and the loyalist marching season approaching, there has to be a "doubling up of efforts" to quell further violence particularly by engaging with youth leaders, community workers and "people who are there on the ground all the time".

He added: "We won the peace inch by inch. Under my watch, I'm not prepared to allow any inches to be lost."

Visible

Sociologist Dr Gladys Ganiel from Queen's University Belfast said that while it is positive many pastors and clerics have been visible in their communities for many years, there has been a process of population decline in loyalist areas which has heightened the problem.

"There's people moving out of the areas and a lot of the churches left and went to suburbs, so there's that sense that over many years - even with some exceptions - that loyalist areas felt a bit abandoned by the churches so there can be a credibility gap between the Protestant churches and working-class loyalism," Dr Ganiel said.

"They do feel abandoned by everybody, in some ways. A lot of the church-going population moved out to the suburbs, started going to suburban churches and then some of the buildings closed and then there's a sense that maybe the ones that

were left behind weren't as active in the community as they once were," she said.

She added that a ministry of presence, of "being there without making demands on people...would be really helpful and there are some that do that, but that sense of abandonment which goes back decades is very real".

“There's people moving out of the areas and a lot of the churches left and went to suburbs”

This week Church leaders across Ireland issued an open letter to political leaders in the North, the governments of Ireland and Britain, and the EU.

They urged politicians "to come together in a unified response to the heart-breaking scenes witnessed on our streets last week and renew

their commitment to peace, reconciliation and the protection of the most vulnerable".

Complex

The leaders stated that the causes of violence are "complex" and "deep-rooted", adding: "Church representatives and other community leaders working on the ground in affected communities have spoken to us of their frustration at seeing another generation of young people risk their lives and their futures because repeated warnings about the need to treat our fragile peace with care went unheeded."

There has been "failings of leadership from the Churches in our ministry to divided communities", they said.

"In such circumstances there is nothing ignoble in showing genuine sorrow. It is hardly surprising, given the complexities of our relationships at home and abroad, that politicians, political parties and others in leadership make miscalculations. Learning from the consequences of miscalcula-

tions is much better than an endless scramble to paper over the cracks."

The joint statement called on the Executive to make a joint approach with the British government and the European Union in relation to the challenges posed by the Brexit-related protocol.

In addition they described the Good Friday Agreement as a "beacon of hope for societies in conflict around the world" and the reduction in violence since then "teaches us that these challenges can only be addressed by political leaders coming together with a genuine desire to find solutions".

“In such circumstances there is nothing ignoble in showing genuine sorrow”

The leaders also expressed their support for the PSNI and "the importance of ensuring that any concerns about policing are addressed in a way that supports and strengthens democratic institutions and processes".

Bishop Noel Treanor of Down and Connor diocese also urged politicians to be more careful about their language and called on youth "to stop engaging in disturbance and violent activity now".

Speaking after of some of the worst violence in Belfast in recent years on April 8, Bishop Treanor said: "Sadly... we have experienced a return to civic unrest and violence on our streets. These scenes are deeply concerning for all of us who believe in and have worked together for a shared, brighter future for our society."



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Seeing everything through the lens of winners and losers makes losers of everyone, writes **Michael Kelly**

“Them ‘uns have everything and we have nothin’” was the rather colloquial summary of a local Protestant woman when asked by BBC Radio Ulster why her young co-religionists were setting fire to their own communities.

The ‘them and us’ narrative is a damning indictment of a failure of political leadership in the unionist community, 23 years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. It is also a depressing reminder that the mainstream voice of unionist – the DUP – has never actually subscribed to the principles of that agreement.

Having conspired – wittingly or unwittingly – to foist Brexit on the people of the North, that party now finds itself trying to re-assert dominance having lost the confidence of many disillusioned Protestants.

The former chief of staff to Tony Blair in No. 10 Downing Street Jonathan Powell this week pointed out an uncomfortable truth for Arlene Foster’s party: the DUP failed to speak out against the Irish Sea border when Boris Johnson was agreeing the Brexit deal with the EU.

He went on to question the party’s stance on the protocol, suggesting its vocal opposition is motivated less by principle and more by political fears of being outflanked by hard-line rivals.

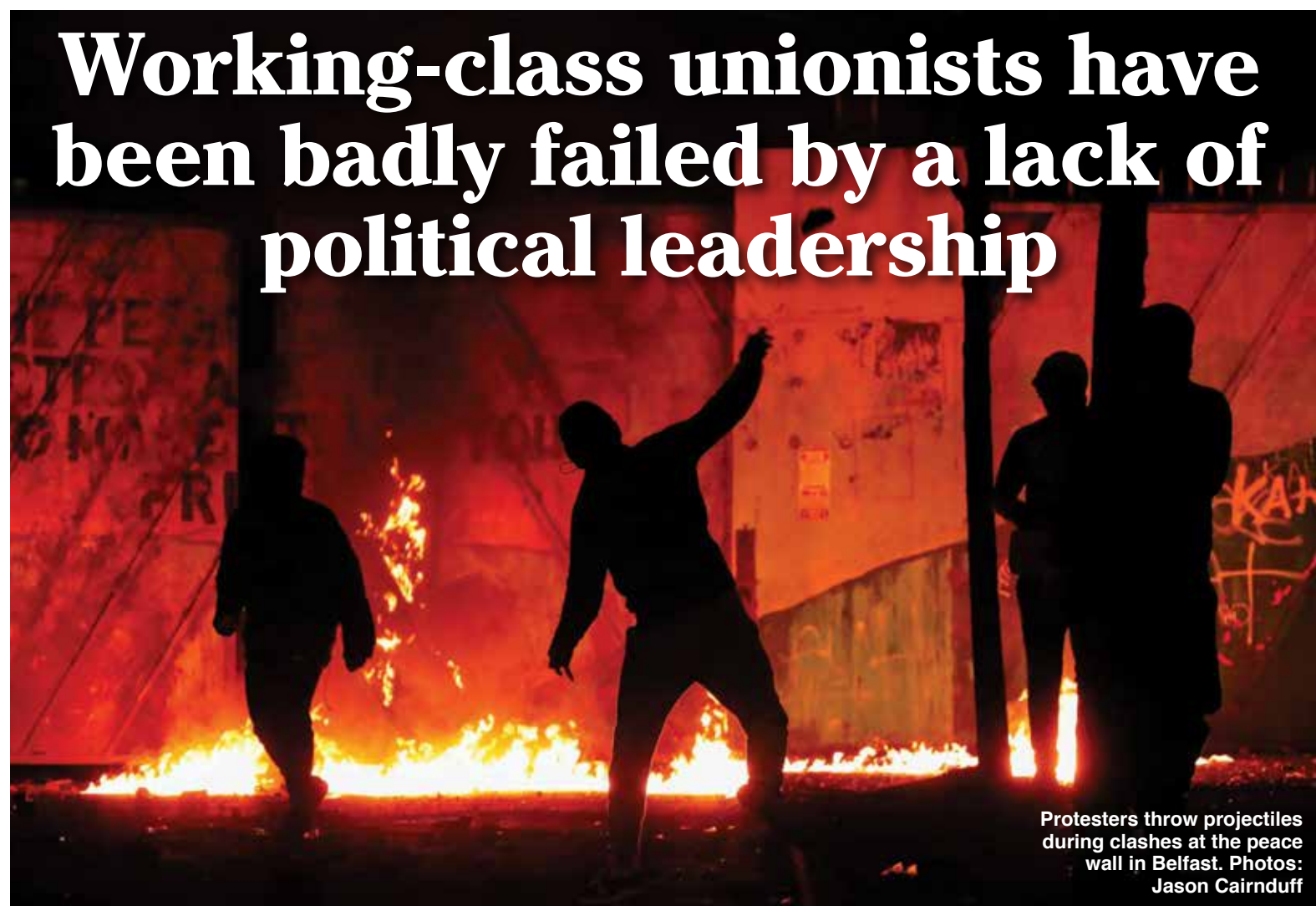
“The sense of alienation and deprivation that many working-class Protestants feel in the North is real”

He pointed to Theresa May’s determination to find a solution that would have avoided a border on the island of Ireland or the Irish Sea by keeping the whole of the UK in the Customs Union but “Boris Johnson threw that out of the window in 2019”.

Self-destructive

It was a self-destructive stance supported by the DUP – a fact not lost on Mr Powell, who was a key player in drafting the Good Friday Agreement.

“They’re raising it now partly, I think, because of the actual public anger at what’s happening in practical terms and the fact that opinion polls show the TUV and Jim Allister going up in the polls and them going



Protesters throw projectiles during clashes at the peace wall in Belfast. Photos: Jason Cairnduff

down, they see they’ve got a problem, and they feel they have to get onto the issue,” Mr Powell told the BBC.

When looking for a scapegoat for the recent violence in loyalist communities, it is not Brexit where unionist leaders should look to but their own failure to chart a course towards a genuine shared future with parity of esteem for all who share the region.

Time and again when given the opportunity to promote the vision of a shared society, many unionist politicians have preferred the binary language of winners and losers.

Any advancement – perceived or otherwise – for the Catholic minority was (and is) portrayed as a defeat for the Protestant majority.

Certainly, the sense of alienation and deprivation that many working-class Protestants feel in the North is real. But it is not actually borne out by the facts on the ground. Official data from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) shows that 16 of the most deprived

electoral wards in Northern Ireland are Catholic, while only six of the least deprived wards are Catholic.

When it comes to families, 22% of Catholics live in households experiencing poverty compared to 17% of Protestants. On youth unemployment, 15% of Protestants in the 18-24 year-old age group are unemployed but for Catholics in the same category the figure is 20%.

“Ian Paisley never missed an opportunity to rubbish the agreement amongst Protestants”

So while levels of deprivation are clearly stubbornly high in both communities, why are Protestants so likely to feel that they are hard done by?

Undoubtedly, some of it is historic. Northern Ireland was created a century ago as a self-consciously sectarian and supremacist state. Protestants – even poorer Protestants –

were taught to believe that they were something akin to a chosen people.

The 1912 Ulster Covenant – signed by over 500,000 Protestants in the North opposing Home Rule for Ireland – is replete with Calvinist conceptions of the covenant, the chosen people and a ‘promised land’.

Peace talks

During the peace talks that led to the agreement, DUP walkouts were so frequent that many officials observed that the party only entered various phases of the dialogue with a view to walking out.

When David Trimble led his mainstream unionist party to support the accord, the DUP was waiting in the wings at every opportunity to undermine support for the UUP and demonise those who pushed for the agreement.

This is despite the fact that the leaders of loyalism – former paramilitaries themselves – supported the truce.

Ian Paisley never missed an opportunity to rubbish the agreement amongst Protestants insisting that every move towards parity of esteem was a “sell out to Papists”.

The ‘no surrender’ mentality eventually obliterated moderate unionism, and this allowed Mr Paisley to do the hitherto unthinkable and share power with Sinn Féin in 2007.

Finally Mr Paisley had achieved his aim: once the poor cousin of the Protestant establishment, he was now the closest thing Northern Ireland had to a prime minister since the collapse of the old Stormont.

While Mr Paisley and Sinn Féin’s Martin McGuinness undoubtedly struck up a personal rapport, there is precious little evidence that the DUP ever really softened.

Marvyn Storey of the DUP said this week a fundamental unease in Northern Ireland is because “there is a party

in Government which never apologised for terrorism”. He didn’t name Sinn Féin – but clearly means the party his leader shares power with.

While the blatant disregard Sinn Féin showed for Covid-19 rules around the funeral of Bobby Storey upset many people, the entirely unforgiving attitude the DUP took to the spectacle undoubtedly inflamed tensions among working-class Protestants.

Arlene Foster’s full frontal assault on the PSNI Chief Constable Simon Byrne insisting he must resign, was followed quickly by bricks and petrol bombs from loyalist youths. Mrs Foster has been trenchant in her criticism of the violence but it’s worth asking that at a time of heightened emotions would everyone have been better served if rhetoric was dialled down a bit?

“While levels of deprivation are clearly stubbornly high in both communities, why are Protestants so likely to feel that they are hard done by?”

Unionist leaders need to calm tensions in their own communities. They also need to embrace the vision of the Good Friday Agreement which envisages a Northern Ireland which is a good place for everyone to live and in which everyone has a stake.

A shared economy tackling deprivation in all communities is a key part in building that fairer society. Blaming deprivation in one community on the perceived advances of the other community is a recipe for endless mistrust and naked hatred – only the Good Friday Agreement contains the ingredients for a better future: 23 years on it deserves to be read again.



Police came under sustained attacks by protesters in loyalist areas of Belfast.

Easter joy for Knock



Lighting of the Paschal Candle outside Knock Basilica, at the Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday night. Photos: Sinéad Mallee.



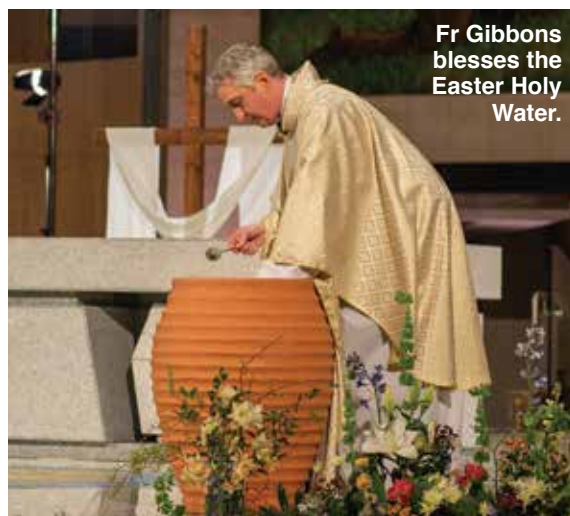
Fr Gibbons venerates the altar on Holy Saturday night.



Fr Richard Gibbons, rector of Knock Shrine, and James Campbell light the Paschal Candle outside Knock Basilica at the Holy Saturday Vigil.



Leanne Walsh (Schola Cantorum Basilicae) who sang at the Easter Vigil Mass at Knock Basilica.



Fr Gibbons blesses the Easter Holy Water.



Easter Holy Water displayed on the sanctuary of Knock Basilica.

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The 40 days between the resurrection and final ascension of the Lord were a time of preparation when the risen Lord came back to various people to help them make the transition from seeing in a physical way to knowing him by faith. As he said to Thomas, "You believe because you can see me, but blessed are those who have not seen yet believe".

Today's Gospel

Our Gospel today is Luke 24:35-48, a continuation of the encounter of the Risen Lord with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Their moment of faith came at the breaking of bread, which was one of the early names for

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



the celebration of the Eucharist. Their eyes were opened and they recognised the Risen Lord. Just as we, at the end of Mass, are sent out on a mission to love and serve the Lord, these two headed back towards Jerusalem on a mission of proclaiming the resurrection.

They were told that Peter also had met the Lord. But others in the room had not yet made the step of believing. Then the Lord stood among them and greeted them with peace.

If you read the story carefully, take note of the negative feelings. Some thought it was a ghost, they were alarmed, frightened, agitated, full of doubts, dumbfounded. If you are familiar with the type of meditation that asks you to put yourself into the story, would you identify with any of these obstacles or negative feelings? The risen Lord calmed their agitation as he prayed for them, "Peace be with you". To assure them of his identity he showed them the wounds of nails

in his hands and feet. Not only that but he invited them to touch the wounds. This was not a ghost. This was more than an apparition, it was a real presence.

Beside you and within you

It reminds me of a day when students in a seminary preparing for priesthood were on a day of recollection. Their spiritual guide for the day asked them to ponder on the Emmaus story for an hour before writing where they most felt the presence of the Lord in their lives. When the hour was over, they had time for a breath of fresh air. Two students who were close friends were walking down a tree-lined avenue. One was quite agitated. He was going through a period when he was very unsure of his vocation. He confessed to his friend that this hour of meditation really upset him. All he could write at the end was one angry sentence. "Jesus, where the so-and-so are you?" His friend smiled and said that he too had written just one short sentence. "I am right here beside you and within you." In that brief moment, the agitated one found the Lord's peace and the courage to continue on the road to ordination. The spirituality of the Easter season is based on

pondering on the scripture stories so as to open up the eyes of faith enabling us recognise how the risen Lord is right here beside us and within us.

Present in family life

Luke adds a lovely homely touch to the story when Jesus asked "Have you anything here to eat?" It is only in Luke's Gospel that one would find this reference to a homely meal. Scholars have counted no fewer than ten meals in this gospel, each one having a significance. One writer, a bit tongue in cheek, said that in Luke's gospel, Jesus is either at a meal, going to a meal or coming from a meal. Food or its growth is mentioned in every chapter of Luke. What is the significance of this meal where he took and ate a piece of grilled fish? What I see in this homely meal is the importance of family life for the transmission and formation of faith. Jews have a saying that God has no grandchildren. If parents do not pass on religious belief and the practice of prayer, how can the children become believers?

Symbols, action and stories

Pope Francis recognises that family life has changed radically

in recent years and older recipes do not always work. He suggests that children need symbols, actions and stories. A symbol might be a crucifix, holy water, lighting a candle at certain times, a crib, a statue, or grace before meals. The good example of Christian action might be a collection box for the poor, respect for the name of the Lord, participation in local social work. Stories are the best way for passing on the Faith: biblical stories, examples of the saints. Would a visitor to your home see any evidence that this is a Christian family?

Prayer

Risen Lord Jesus, you came through closed doors to step into rooms of fear, agitation, worry, doubts and lack of direction. You prayed peace on all in these rooms. Belief in your resurrection tells us that you are beside us and within us. Remove the cataracts that prevent us from recognising you. Open our eyes to discern the signs of your presence, our ears to receive your teaching and our hearts to experience your personal love for us. Breathe forth your peace upon us.

For us Catholics, there can be no denial of reason in our faith

Pope St John Paul II wrote in his 1998 encyclical *Fides et ratio* that faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.



The goal of the philosophical quest is to arrive at the most fundamental truth by which all else can be known, writes **Dr Gaven Kerr**

Philosophy originated with a group of thinkers known as the Pre-Socratics. They were known as such because they worked or flourished prior to Socrates, so prior to 469/70BC. The man credited with being the first philosopher is Thales of Miletus.

Thales was interested in astronomy, and he was reputed to have predicted an eclipse. One day he was walking along consumed with interest in the sky, so much so that he fell into a well directly in front of him. Some milkmaids nearby found this funny, as who could be so foolish to miss the well? The irony here is that it was precisely because Thales was not foolish but focused on matters more profound than the well in front of him that he fell in.

A similar moral can be drawn from Plato's myth of the cave in the *Republic*. Here Plato asks us to think of a group of people imprisoned

from birth in a cave. Behind them is a fire and between them and the fire their captors parade objects from the outside world so that the objects' shadows are cast on the back wall of the cave.

“Thales was interested in astronomy, and he was reputed to have predicted an eclipse”

The prisoners naturally assume that the shadows are real objects and that the voices of their captors are those of the shadows. A lucky prisoner escapes and makes his way out of the cave. At first, he is dazzled by the light and so can only come out of the cave at night. Gradually as his eyes acclimate, he is finally able to see reality as it is. Compared with his life in the cave, the life outside the cave is much more profound and significant. Yet returning to the cave, he will find himself not only blinded by the darkness but shunned by his fellow prisoners and treated as an outcast; indeed, his fellows will likely try to kill him if he attempts to free them from the cave.

Concerned

As with Thales so with Plato, the philosopher, represented by the freed prisoner, is concerned with the deepest of realities, so much so that it takes him away from the world of everyday experience to what lies behind that experience. The goal of the philosophical quest is to arrive at the most fundamental truth by which all else can be known.

There are truths that we can discover about created reality, and the knowledge of such truths is a good for human beings. We are animals capable of knowing the truth about reality. Christ reveals himself to us as the truth (John 14:6); those who hear the

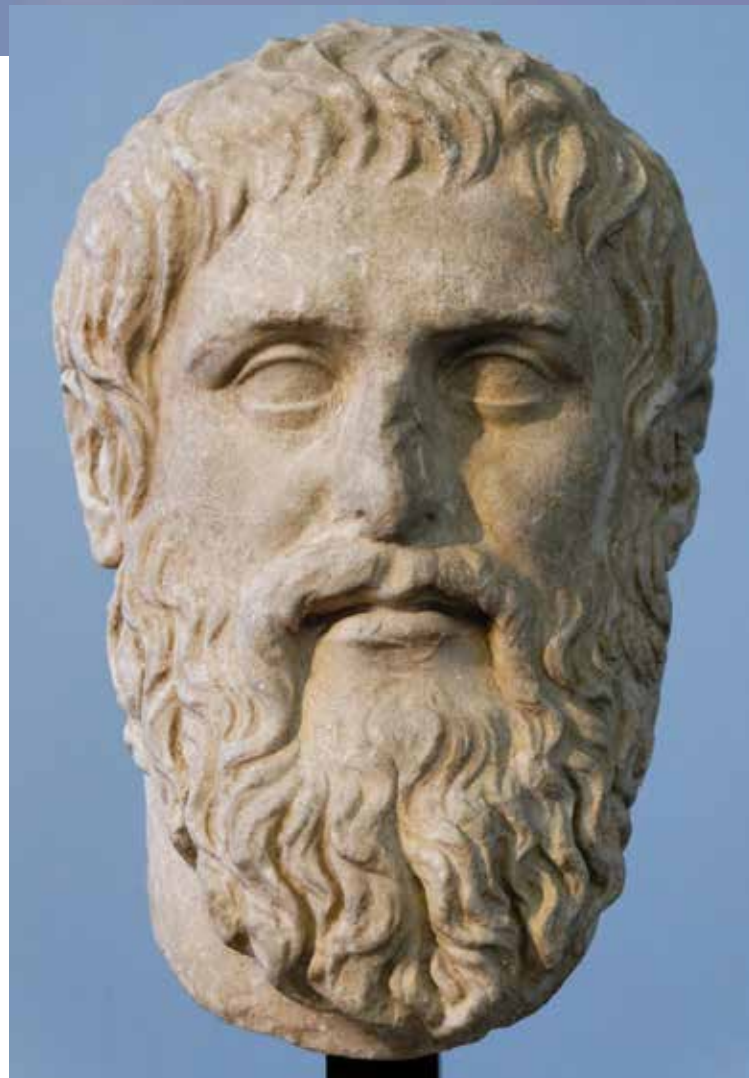
truth hear Christ's voice (John 18:37). Christ is divine, and through him all things were made (John 1:3, Colossians 1:16). All created things are a participation in the being of God, so that all created truths manifest the divine truth, which Christ reveals. The mysteries of the starry heavens, the dazzling light beyond the cave, these are but imitations of the divine truth itself. The philosophical journey out of the cave has as its goal not simply a knowledge of created reality, but ultimately a knowledge of its uncreated source – God Himself.

Devotion

Very early in the history of Christianity, philosophers came to realise that the Christian devotion to God as the ultimate end of human life incorporates the philosophical quest for wisdom. In Christ, the wonder which characterises the beginning of all philosophy finds its satisfaction, since Christ is the truth itself. This is something that the early convert, St Justin Martyr (born circa 100AD), realised. St Justin was himself a follower of Platonism, but when he discovered Christ he converted holding that it is in Christ that the philosophical quest is brought to completion. Having converted, Justin retained the dress of the philosopher; for him the philosophical life was not eradicated in Christianity but perfected.

“A similar moral can be drawn from Plato's myth of the cave in the *Republic*”

The stories of Thales, Plato, St Justin Martyr and many more disclose to us an unbroken line of continuity whereby the philosophical quest leads us to a consideration and, in the case of the saints, a devotion to God as the primary cause. When we come to follow Christ, we abandon some-



Plato is widely considered as one of the pivotal figures in the history of ancient Greek philosophy.

thing of our old life and put on the new man (Ephesians 4:24). But we do not abandon our humanity, only our sin. Our humanity, and with it our rational capacities, remains intact and indeed perfected in Christ. Hence, in Catholicism there is no denial of reason; rather the rational life is completed and perfected within the life of the believer. As St Thomas Aquinas points out in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* (Book 1, Chapter 2), the pursuit of wisdom unites man to God in friendship. What this entails is that the philosophical life can be part and parcel of a life of holiness, and in fact contributes to the life of the saint; we can look to the fathers and doctors of the Church for evidence of this fact.

Men like St Justin Martyr, St Ambrose, St Augustine, St Anselm, St Albert the Great, St Bonaventure, St Thomas Aquinas etc., saw in Christ the ultimate goal of the pursuit of wisdom. Philosophy is so strong within the Catholic tradition because Catholic philosophers have seen it as a way to holiness and thus a way to God.

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

“There are truths that we can discover about created reality, and the knowledge of such truths is a good for human beings”

Communities grappling with diseases old and new



Covid-19 has further pushed leprosy communities to the back of the queue and out of mind, writes Jason Osborne

Leprosy, or Hansen's disease, is a disease our Faith is well acquainted with, God himself healing both the disease and the social stigma around it during his embodied time among us on earth. Unfortunately, the disease persists today, plaguing communities around the world, with India, Indonesia and Brazil being a couple of the largest sufferers.

That hasn't stopped Christ's followers tending to this oft-marginalised and outcast community, the primary example being St Damien of Molokai, the Belgian missionary priest who contracted leprosy during his 16-year service to an isolated community of people who had the disease in Hawaii.

However, in the age of Covid-19, one could be forgiven for assuming other diseases and sources of physical suffering had disappeared – which is certainly not the case. What's more, in many instances, Covid-19 has further pushed communities of those living with leprosy to the edges of society, making it more difficult for them to secure the treatment they require.

“For those with leprosy, social distancing has unfortunately always been in place”

One organisation carrying on Christ's healing ministry to the leprosy community is St Francis Leprosy Guild, a British organisation founded in 1895 in London, and inspired by the examples of St Damien, St Teresa of Kolkata, St Marianne Cope and St Francis of Assisi.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Chief Executive Officer of St Francis Leprosy Guild Clare McIntosh told of the harmful effects Covid-19 has had on leprosy communities around the world.

“It [Covid-19] is a problem to be honest. Firstly, there's a problem in terms of it impacting on leprosy treatment. Leprosy is now curable, but it takes about a year's worth of treatment and, actually, you no longer spread the disease from whenever treatment starts. Even though leprosy is contagious, as soon as you start the treatment, it's no longer so,” Ms McIntosh explained.



St Damien de Veuster is pictured with young people at the settlement for those with Hansen's disease, or leprosy, on the Hawaiian island of Molokai. Photo: CNS.

“So what we've been experiencing over the past year is that all the difficulties that we've been having with Covid, and in particular, the fact that international barriers have been shuttered and so on, have meant that the drugs haven't been getting to these communities.

“In effect, some people aren't making it through the year's worth of treatment and that therefore means that they could be becoming contagious again.”

Standard practice

“Social-distancing” has become standard practice throughout most of the world over the last year, but for those with leprosy, social distancing has unfortunately always been in place – a distance that has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

“Another issue is that leprosy communities very often are communities outside of normal society. Because there's such a big stigma around leprosy and concern about it being contagious, they're set off from society and living very closely together,” Ms McIntosh said.

“So, what we've experienced with leprosy is that once Covid gets into these communities, it spreads incredibly quickly. I was just tweeting about a centre that's in India, where actually 25% of its people affected by leprosy at the moment are currently testing positive for Covid so that community is having to be isolated.”

As mentioned, India is the world's leprosy hotspot, with 60% of leprosy



Kwami, a man affected by leprosy. Photo: SFLG.

worldwide located there. This is followed by Indonesia and Brazil – the Brazilian leprosy communities also being “very, very badly” affected by the country's difficulties with the virus, according to Ms McIntosh. “There's a lot of concern about the impact on the community there,” she said.

“As Christ found during his time roaming the earth, social stigma was rife, especially for those with leprosy”

“The number of leprosy diagnosis worldwide each year is about 200,000. As you can imagine, generally in impoverished countries, so certainly data isn't incredibly accurate, it's thought actually that the real number of people with leprosy could be several times that, but that's a number that officially reported.

“And then as we say, we are hearing in individual communities of about 25% of those communities being affected with Covid at any single point in time.”

This results in an awfully large number of people suffering from the double-isolation of leprosy and Covid-19, a situation which deprives them of the treatment they need.

Struggles

In the West, a blind eye has often been turned to the struggles of those in the poorest communities of the poorest nations, and this attitude has continued under the pandemic conditions, as exemplified by the grabs for vaccines by developed countries. As a result, Ms McIntosh said they've watched the leprosy communities they work with struggling to access



Manuel, being examined for leprosy in Mozambique. Photo: SFLG.

the vaccines that would solve their Covid problem, at the least.

“We're trying to speak up to be honest. There's a programme called Covax, which is the international programme by which they're trying to get better-off countries to pass over vaccines that they don't need. There's been a lot of focus on that programme at a high level, but really people haven't been speaking out about it,” Ms McIntosh said.

The difficulty, Ms McIntosh continued, is how to get those vaccines to those who need them most – such as those with leprosy – so that they don't just go into “VIP and corrupt circles”.

It is a matter of the utmost importance because, as Christ found during

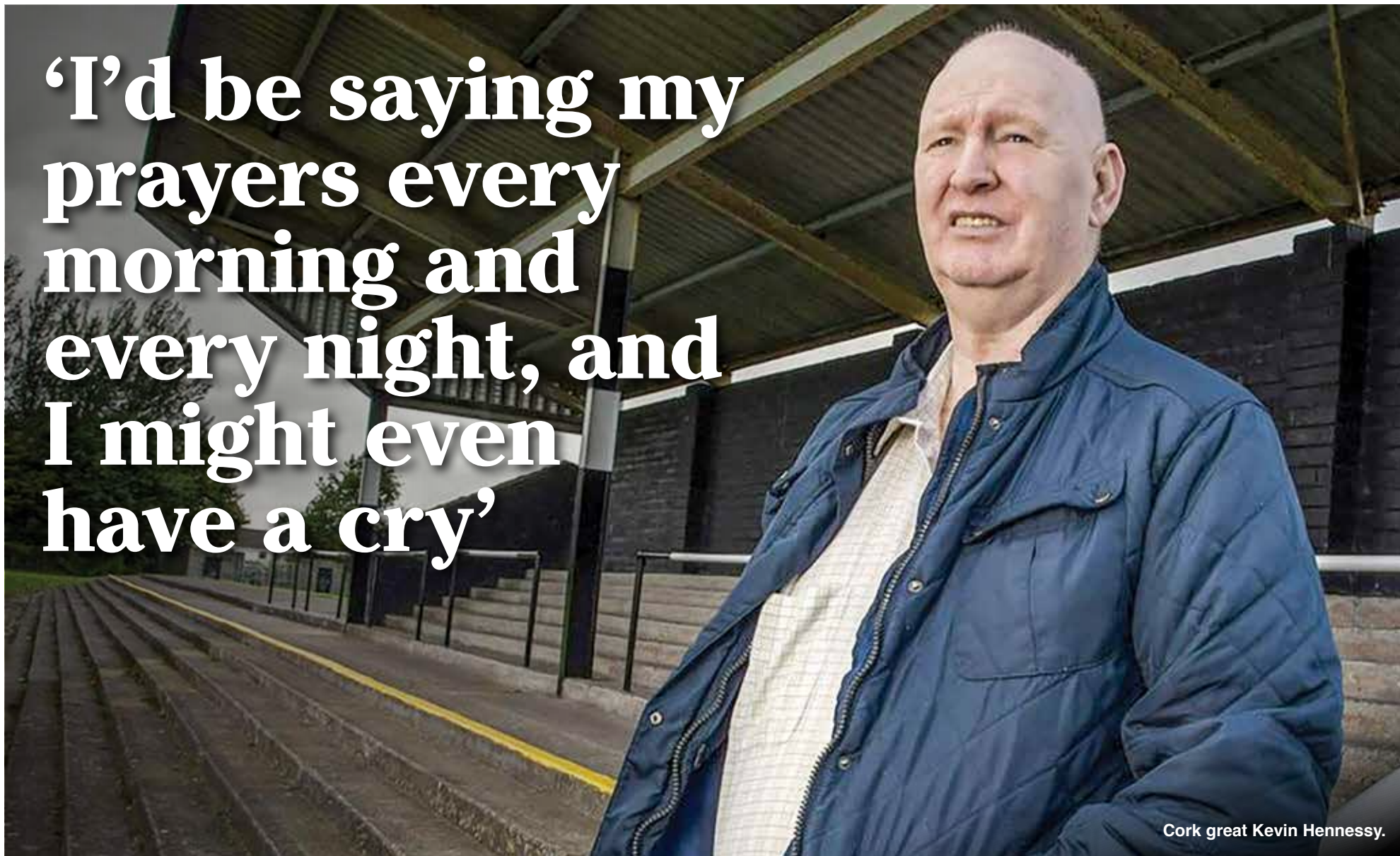
his time roaming the earth, social stigma was rife, especially for those with leprosy.

“The thing about leprosy is that it's a visible condition, often causes disabilities or deformities, and even once we cure the condition, people still live with those disabilities or deformities, which means that they get a lot of prejudice against them,” Ms McIntosh said, highlighting the importance of getting the vaccine to those who need it as quickly as possible, and so limiting Covid's interference.

“That's why we're saying really that the Church in particular needs to be really speaking out about this and making sure that it is fairly distributed amongst people that need it.”

“Some people aren't making it through the year's worth of treatment and that therefore means that they could be becoming contagious again”

‘I’d be saying my prayers every morning and every night, and I might even have a cry’



Cork great Kevin Hennessy.



A hurling great tells **Seán Ryan** how a long stint in hospital has led to a deepening of prayer

“Illness weakened my body, but it strengthened my Faith.” That’s how former Cork hurling star, Kevin Hennessy, sums up the transformation in his life from sport star to cripple.

Between 1979 and 1992, he played in nine All-Ireland hurling finals, winning six and losing three. Playing any position between midfield and corner-forward, he won minor (1979) and under-21 (1982) medals before ascending to the senior ranks and winning a further three medals (1984, 1986 and 1990), while also adding a club all-Ireland with his native Middleton.

Along the way, he registered the quickest goal in hurling final history, when he slotted the sliotar past Galway goalkeeper, John Commings, in the 1990 decider, after just 48 seconds.

Golf

Upon retiring from the inter-county scene, he put his competitive nature to work at golf. A member of the East Cork Golf Club, he started off on a 16 handicap and eventually lowered it to nine, bagging the club matchplay title among other trophies. He had just bought himself a new set of clubs – an “expensive investment” as he admits – when illness called a halt to his sporting ambitions, and led him down a path of pain, involving more time in hospitals than he ever spent on hurling fields or golf courses.

“Cancer attacked him in his brain – five tumours, each the size of a five-cent piece”

First up was a hip replacement, probably a legacy of his sporting career. It should have been a routine operation, but it wasn’t. A letter informed him that the replacement was faulty and so he had to undergo the operation again. Two years later, he was visited by cancer – the disease he had secretly dreaded. As one of nine children – seven sisters and a brother – he had at one time morosely speculated on the likelihood that at least one of the siblings would get cancer.

“I’d be saying my prayers every morning and every night. And I might have a cry, because I’d be thinking: ‘Jesus, I don’t want to die’”

“I’m just glad that I was the first,” is his view now, “and, thankfully, the only one so far.”

Cancer attacked him in his brain – five tumours, each the size of a five-cent piece. That explained the severe migraines he was suffering, and the good news was that, although it was inoperable, the cancer was treatable. Good news at the time, but there was a sting in the tail, as he discovered 13 years later.

Treatment

The treatment involved a six-month spell in Cork University Hospital undergoing a mixture of radiotherapy and chemotherapy. As far as Kevin was concerned, the real heroes of this ordeal were his wife Una and his three children, Caoimhe, Seán and Megan. “They were terrific,” he recalls, “they were always there for my treatment, five days a week, same time every day. Going through a treatment they made sure someone was with me. My sisters rowed in to lighten the load, and they ran a roster to help my wife, who works in special needs.

“On Tuesdays, my treatment would be a shunt in my head, which took two hours, and on Fridays it would be treatment in my chest which would take 24 hours. It would be the same every week,” he recalls.

In the midst of this torment, Kevin discovered the comfort of prayer. “I was praying every day and was taking more and more to it, and I got solace from it. I try to live my life the way my mother raised me. I’m not a Holy Joe, but my own parish priest, Fr Denis Kelleher (he’s now in Aghada) and the former Bishop of Cork, John Buckley, who used to play for Sarsfields, would visit me.

“As far as Kevin was concerned, the real heroes of this ordeal were his wife Una and his three children, Caoimhe, Seán and Megan”

“When you’re in hospital, you’ve a long day ahead of you, and with big gaps all day, you fill them with silent prayer. When I was first in hospital, I was 42/3 and then I asked the Lord to get me to 50, and then to 60 [he turned 60 in March], and then I’ll ask him to make 70.

“You’d get very religious. I’d be saying my prayers every morning and every night. And I might have a cry, because I’d be thinking: ‘Jesus, I don’t want to die.’”

The treatment was successful but, 13 years later, it came back to haunt him. It first materialised as a blindness in his left eye, and a loss of power down his left side, which led to an inability to dress himself, or even hold a spoon in his weakened hand.

SMART syndrome

Further tests revealed that he had acquired SMART syndrome. “I had never heard of it, and when they showed me a scan of my brain, it looked like a ploughed field, with a white line coming down and hitting one of the furrows. They told me I was number 84 in the world with this syndrome, but that it was not life-threatening.”

SMART stands for stroke-like migraine attacks after radiation therapy. It is a result of all that radiation he endured as treatment for his cancer in 2006. Most patients don’t live long enough to fall victim to SMART, with susceptibility thought to be between 12 and 14 years after radiation. Kevin is heading towards 15.

Last year he won a Nissan Qashqai in the local revenue staff credit union draw, but he has yet to drive it. “I’m crippled,” he admits, “I can’t walk properly, and I am very grateful to my wife – she drives me around the place. And Megan’s child, JJ, he keeps me going now.”

As for regrets about the time he devoted to sport, he is adamant: “None, I’d do it all again. Sport was great to me, and I owe it nothing.”

He ends our conversation on a hope-filled note, which is a good reflection of the battler he is: “I’m hopeful that I’ll be back driving soon, and back to work in Revenue. I know I’m susceptible to the virus, but I’m on the list for the vaccine.”

A still from
Resurrection
depicting Jesus'
crucifixion.

Nourishing audiences with the greatest story of hope



'Resurrection' is a film bringing light during dark times and showcasing high quality Biblical drama, Derry's Roma Downey tells Chai Brady

Set during the period between Christ's crucifixion and his resurrection, a new film with Irish links focuses on the trials and uncertainty faced by the apostles in Jerusalem as they debate whether to flee, all the while dodging Roman soldiers.

“Mrs Downey says that the Bible is very much factual in that it doesn't read like a novel when it comes to the emotional experience of individuals at the time”

One of the producers of *Resurrection*, Roma Downey, who is from Derry but now lives in the US, has a long career in the entertainment industry and has been involved in acting and subsequently producing for decades.

Mrs Downey comes from a theatre background, previously performing with the Abbey Theatre before getting her big break.

She joined the Abbey Players and toured the US in a production of *The Playboy of the Western World*. Her career went from success to success, with one of her major roles being the angel Monica in the hit CBS television series *Touched by an Angel* for nine seasons over the course of a decade. Her performance earned several Emmy and Golden Globe Best Actress nominations.

Biblical stories

She has produced and co-produced multiple films, many of which have brought Biblical stories to the silver screen with all the modern-day cinematic trimmings.

Regarding *Resurrection*, which was released on March 27 on Discovery+, a relatively new streaming service, she said: “People are hungry for that message of hope, particularly this year. The resurrection story is the greatest story of hope that there is because it reminds us that hope didn't die on the cross, that there is the opportunity for renewal and rebirth.”

“It's been told in such an exciting way, it's not like an old Bible movie of the past. It plays out like a thriller, it's got the tension of the time in 1st Century Jerusalem, which was a very dangerous place to be. The Roman regime was cruel and very oppressive and Pontius

Pilate ruled with an iron fist.

“The first scene in the story is the crucifixion of Jesus. And then it immediately cuts to the aftermath and the story then unfolds through the point of view of the disciples and we really get to see their humanity in the story.”

Mrs Downey says that the Bible is very much factual in that it doesn't read like a novel when it comes to the emotional experience of individuals at the time. Film, she explains, is a powerful way of bridging that gap and bringing the Gospels alive.

“We really get to see that they [the disciples] are afraid and that they're heartbroken that Jesus has died and they're confused because he was their leader and they don't know what to do next. I think in many ways we the audience can identify with them more. In the 21st Century they are now saints and we regard them as perfect people but the truth is they were just people like you and me, and when Jesus was killed I'm sure they thought they were next.”

Films about faith and religion are well-meaning but unless they are excellent people won't be interested as audiences are far more sophisticated nowadays, says Mrs Downey. “Even our kids are very sophisticated and so we worked

diligently to make sure that this film was as good as any other film coming out of Hollywood,” she says.

“I think if less people are attending Church and if people are moving away from the Church these stories are in danger of getting lost and I think film is a way that you can reach people. Obviously, TV is a way you can reach people in their own homes. Then if you were to go back and pick up your Bible to read scripture or if you are attending church and you hear the readings, I think it gives it a new and different kind of aliveness.”

“At LightWorkers which is my company, is something that I've been committed to do, to tell uplifting stories, stories of encouragement, stories of hope”

“It brings the story to life. The Bible is written in such a way that it's factual. It doesn't have the opportunity to tell you what people are feeling, the nuance of emotion or to make those emotional connections with you, we're able to do that as filmmakers, we're able to make those emotional connections and to fill in the gaps.”

An example of this in the film is when British actor Adam Levy, who plays Peter, struggles with the fact he denied knowing Jesus three times. This of course has also been the subject of major works of art, probably most popularly Caravag-

gio's *Denial of Saint Peter*.

“You know that he felt ashamed, that he felt guilty,” says Mrs Downey. “So that's what we're able to do in film, we're able to breathe all those emotions into it and make it a living experience for people to enjoy.”

“The feedback so far is that people have found that very exciting. I remember growing up in Derry and gathering with my family around the TV to watch the Easter movies of that time which would have been things like *Jesus of Nazareth*, or *The Greatest Story Ever Told* and quite frankly, you know, the movies were great, but they've aged out and so for a new generation we need to refreshen these stories and, at LightWorkers which is my company, is something that I've been committed to do, to tell uplifting stories, stories of encouragement, stories of hope.”

Roma launched LightWorkers Media (LightWorkers) in 2011 along with her husband Mark Burnett. LightWorkers has produced the series *A.D.: The Bible Continues*, *The Women of the Bible*, *The Dovekeepers*, *Answered Prayers* and feature films *Little Boy*, *Woodlawn*, the re-make of *Ben-Hur*, *On A Wing and A Prayer*, *Messiah* and *Country Ever After*.

Derry girl

Growing up in Ireland during the Troubles has helped shape the person Mrs Downey has become, she explains, saying it's “amazing” that as a young person who didn't know anything else you can just get on with your life.

“I think the Irish in general are very much like we have to just get up and get on with it so childhood was a little bit like that. Obviously

it was a dangerous time and, in the neighbourhood, there was a lot of rioting and shooting and CS gas and all the things that you might imagine," she says.

"But there was also great humour and community spirit. I think it was the strength of that community spirit that allowed us as the children of the Troubles to feel safe even though the streets were unsafe.

“Her faith has played an important part of her life, particularly aged 10 when her mother – who she describes as vibrant, joyful and that laughter came easy to her – died of a heart attack”

"Neighbours really were neighbours back then, people looked out for each other and we belonged to each other. I would think certainly I have within me a natural desire to bring people together and I think that might have been shaped by this sort of inherent divisionism that was so apparent in our lives, and my longing for us to remember all the things that we have in common with each other instead of the constant focus and battle about our differences. I would think that experience of growing up there yielded a bit of a peace-maker in me."

Her faith has played an important part of her life, particularly aged 10 when her mother – who



Jesus, portrayed by Juan Pablo Di Pace in the film *Resurrection*, speaks to Peter, who is played by Adam Levy.

she describes as vibrant, joyful and that laughter came easy to her – died of a heart attack.

Resurrection

"It was like the lights had been turned out, and honestly I think if it hadn't been for my faith and the promise of the resurrection, the hope of heaven, I don't know that I would have been able to deal with that at that young age, so I'm sure that profound loss also shaped the woman I've become, the choices I've made," she says.

Although Mrs Downey lives in California, Derry and the Bogside where she grew up is still close to her heart and she tries to visit every year to see her family and friends, many of whom still live in the Derry and Donegal area. "It's an important part of me, it's my heritage, it's who I am. You can take the girl out of Derry but you can't take Derry out of the girl. I am the original Derry girl," she laughs.

The Hollywood trade publication *Variety* dubbed Mrs Downey a "Trailblazer" and listed her in *Variety*'s '100 Most Powerful Women in

Hollywood'. Asked whether she has experienced challenges as a woman, particularly a woman of faith, in the entertainment industry, Mrs Downey says she has always felt a boldness and stood up for what she believes in.

"I'm a naturally compassionate person which I believe is connected to losing my mother. I think when you've suffered particularly at a young age, you develop skills, skills like compassion and empathy, so those are very much what makes up my own character. I think I'm a decent person, and you know, I've always treated people like I would want to be treated and for that reason I think ultimately people see you're a good person and maybe they don't hold it against me," she says.

Hollywood

"I have clearly been outspoken, I'm very noisy about it and my husband and I always joke that we're the noisiest Christians in Hollywood."

Roma and her husband Mark produced 'The Bible' series on the History Channel which was viewed by more than 100 million people in the US alone. They also produced the feature film *Son of God* which became one of the most successful faith movie box office openings.

Five years ago, Mrs Downey received the Irish Diaspora Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Screen from the IFTA as well

as her star on The Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Speaking about her faith Mrs Downey says it creates a moral compass with which people can live their lives, which is important in modern times in a world where morality is "breaking down".

“However, during the pandemic Mrs Downey says she has been impressed by the gestures made and community spirit expressed”

"There is so much violence, so much gun violence over here in the States," she says. "It's just getting worse and worse, every day you turn on the news and somebody else has gone into a building or a shop and just killed innocent people. Just the randomness of it is terrifying. You think, what is it? What has broken down in our society that people are behaving in this monstrous way? I don't know what the answer is, obviously there has to be better gun laws, but even if they brought a law in tomorrow it's not going to take all the guns away that are already out there."

However, during the pandemic Mrs Downey says she has been impressed by the gestures made and community spirit expressed.

"One of the things that touched me, you know particularly back in the beginning was when people were coming out and everybody was clapping. Out here everybody came out onto their front doorsteps or hung out the windows of their apartment and were clapping for the front line workers. Stuff like that was so moving to me, anything that brings people together. We saw the kindness of people. People looking out for older people in their neighbourhoods, people dropping food off at the front door of some grandmother that lived by herself," she says. "When we saw people digging deep, I think the best of people was revealed. I think also that everybody's had to re-examine their lives, like what's important? If you thought you were going to die tomorrow, what are you doing? What's your priorities? I think that maybe there would be some re-examination and we can step out remembering to be kind to each other."

While Mrs Downey has moved from in front of the camera to behind it, there is no doubt she is continuing to make waves in cinema, bringing to life the Gospel on the silver screen and endeavouring to spread hope in difficult times.



Hailing from Derry, the producer of *Resurrection* Roma Downey.

“Five years ago, Mrs Downey received the Irish Diaspora Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Screen from the IFTA as well as her star on The Hollywood Walk of Fame”

Out&About

Easter Joy across the island



KERRY: The Bishop of Kerry Ray Browne, concelebrated Mass with Fr Padraig Walsh PP and Fr Amos Ruto Surungaithe on Easter Sunday morning at Our Lady and St Brendan's Church, Tralee. Photo: John Cleary.



DOWN: Fr Alexander with Deacon James McAllister before Easter Vigil Mass held in the church grounds with 132 cars accommodating just over 400 parishioners.



DOWN: Archbishop Eamon Martin, Primate of Ireland, celebrates Holy Thursday's Chrism Mass at Newry Cathedral, April 1.

IN SHORT

Concern fears for impact of Covid-19 surge in world's poorest countries

The Irish charity has expressed concern about a sharp rise in Covid-19 cases and deaths in the world's poorest countries, as new waves of the virus wreak havoc. Concern Worldwide said in a statement that confirmed Covid-19 cases have surged by over 1.9 million, or 45%, to 6.3 million since the start of the year in the 24 countries where Concern operates, which includes Syria, Lebanon, Somalia and Kenya. Deaths from Covid have also increased by 26,125, or 42%, to 88,750 between January 1 and March 29 - with one country, Malawi, seeing deaths rise by 489%. After experiencing a low number of cases in

2020, many countries in Africa have since seen them rise sharply after Christmas. "Over the past year, we have reached millions of people through our Covid-19 prevention messaging campaigns, which includes radio broadcasting and vehicle-mounted loud-speaker amplification in some of the most remote areas," said Concern's International Programme Director, Carol Morgan, who leads the organisation's overseas operations. "However, more aggressive variants are now resulting in a much faster spread of the virus in many places, similar to what we saw in Ireland at the beginning of this year. "While vaccines are now becoming available, it is essential that we put all healthcare workers and elderly and vulnerable people at the top of the queue, irrespective of where they are in the world."

Government 'washing its hands' of expectant mothers – TD

The Government has been accused of "washing its hands" of expectant mothers who are not allowed the support of partners at scans and early labour. Social Democrat TD Holly Cairns said the current maternity hospital guidelines were set in September but since then the situation has significantly changed as frontline healthcare workers have been vaccinated. "It seems like the policy is for the government to just wash its hands of it. Over three months ago the UK changed their policy to allow expectant mothers to have someone with them at all stages of their maternity journey. It is unfathomable, that

this wasn't addressed this week along with other things like sports," she told Tánaiste Leo Varadkar. Health Minister Stephen Donnelly has told the Dáil that it is up to local clinical leads to decide when restrictions banning partners from attending the 20-week scan and other appointments as well as early labour will be lifted. A spokesperson for the Pro-life Campaign, Ms Eilís Mulroy, said that "Any changes that can be made to ensure that all women feel supported during scans and in the days and hours leading up to birth should be prioritised". Ms Mulroy added that "women who may not be in a supportive relationship at the time of their child's birth" should also be allowed "a close friend or family member with them as much as possible."

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



ARMAGH: Families of those disappeared gather in St Patrick's Cathedral on Palm Sunday to remember their loved ones in a Mass presided over by Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin.



◀ **DERRY:**

Student's from St Eithne's Primary School show off their prizes after winning in the Saint Mary's 'Paint by Pixels' art competition.

▼ **LOUTH:**

Fr Malachy Conlon, PP of Cooley Parish Co. Louth, on his walk around the parish during Lent where he visited more than 1,000 homes.



DUBLIN: The Easter display in St John the Baptist Church, Blackrock. Photo: Fr Peter O'Connor.



DOWN: Rose, Maria and Anna with Fr Anthony Alexander PP at the Easter Garden in the parish of Ardkeen, Newtownards.



CARLOW: The iCatholic.ie crew set up livestreaming services for Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty's Chrism Mass at the Cathedral of the Assumption.



DUBLIN: Fr John Bracken of Dundrum parish hands out one of 700 bottles of Easter water distributed over Easter weekend to Stephanie Dunne. Photo: Derek Dunne.



CORK: The clinical pastoral education group who graduated March 30 from Cork University Hospital are pictured with CUH CEO Dr Gerard O'Callaghan and Director of Nursing Ms Helen Cahalane.



ANTRIM: Fr Conor McGrath leads the celebrations for Palm Sunday Mass in Glenravel Parish. Photo: John McIlwaine.



DUBLIN: Fr Alex Conlan displays the Cross at Our Lady of the Rosary Harold's Cross after the Good Friday Passion Ceremony as an act of public witness.



WESTMEATH: Our Lady's Bower Secondary School student Ellen Reilly, who was named winner in the Senior Violin category at this year's Feis Ceoil Classical Musical Competition, is pictured with the school's music teacher Ms Hopkins.



ANTRIM: Fr Martin Magill blesses people's hands in St John's Church as part of Holy Week, April 1 2021. Photo: Hugh Russell.



ANTRIM: Students from Seaview Primary School show off their Easter eggs before heading off for their Easter holidays.



CORK: Parishioner Liz O'Connell reflects on the Easter Garden at Holy Trinity Capuchin Church, Cork.



CORK: Fr George O'Mahony PP and Fr Cian O'Sullivan of Ballincollig parish celebrate Dawn Mass Easter Sunday in the graveyard of St Mary and St John, Ballincollig.



CORK: Sr Rosarii O'Sullivan OLA celebrates her 101st birthday with Sr Patience Ezemigbo OLA from Nigeria.



ROME: Irish Ambassador to the Holy See Derek Hannon welcomes to the Embassy the director of the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome, Rev. Matthew Laferty.

Events

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



World Report

IN BRIEF

Canonical proceedings against French parish over mask-less Masses

● The archbishop of Paris announced canonical proceedings last Wednesday against a parish priest for reportedly refusing to follow coronavirus health measures at the Easter Vigil. A statement from the Archdiocese of Paris on April 7 said that the pastor of Sainte-Eugène-Sainte-Cécile church in Paris' ninth arrondissement did not enforce "the health measures in force to fight against the Covid-19

pandemic during a celebration on Saturday, April 3". "These measures were, however, the subject of clear instructions that the diocese of Paris regularly reminded all parishes of," it said. Archbishop Michel Aupetit's decision to open proceedings within Church law was made public the day after Paris police opened an investigation into the parish for "endangering the lives of others".

Philippine diocese launches app to link Covid patients with priests

● A diocese in the Philippines has launched an application, E-Pray, for spiritual accompaniment during Covid-19 isolation. E-Pray is a free web application where patients can type in their contact details so that priests can get in touch with them, reported ucanews.com. Novaliches Diocese in Manila said the app was developed in response to a recent spike in Covid-19 cases in the Philippine capital.

"With this E-Pray app, Covid patients can communicate with our diocese for spiritual advice and counselling... [and] allowing them to send their prayer intentions to us," the diocese said in an announcement on social media. "During times when we feel like we are about to surrender, the presence of a priest is very important for guidance," said Father Luciano Felloni, the diocese's social communications director.

Scholar urges Catholics to speak out against Equality Act

● Catholic scholar and legal expert Ryan Anderson warned that if the Equality Act is passed by the Senate and signed into law, it would significantly impact women's privacy and safety, genuine equality, medical practices and religious liberty. It also would negatively affect Catholic schools, shelters, charities and hospitals, not to mention individual educators, social workers and medical professionals who practice their faith, Mr Anderson said.

He made the remarks in the keynote address for the recent annual virtual fundraiser for the Diocese of Phoenix's John Paul II Resource Center for Theology of the Body and Culture. The Equality Act would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, public accommodations and more.

Bishops seek changes from Nigerian government

● Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah of Sokoto criticised the Nigerian government for investing millions of dollars in rehabilitating Boko Haram's so-called repentant members in the belief that they would turn over a new leaf. He said the public had not heard anything about a rehabilitation program for the thousands of Nigerian schoolchildren who had been victims of abduction. Bishop Kukah was one of several Nigerian bishops who

used their Easter homilies April 3-4 to call for change in the country. He said Boko Haram insurgents had waged war against their country, murdered thousands, and rendered entire families permanently displaced and dislocated. "Why should rehabilitating the perpetrator be more important than bringing succor to the victims?" he asked, noting that families of kidnapping and murder victims were left to deal on their own.

Christian arrested in India after saying Christ predicted in Hindu scriptures

An employee for the Archdiocese of Bhopal's commission for education has been released on bail after his arrest for the "intentional insult" of the Hindu religion.

Rajendra Dwivedi was arrested on Easter Sunday after he published articles on his blog claiming the salvation of Jesus had been revealed in the Vedas and Upanishads, religious texts in Hinduism, according to *Cruxnow.com*.

Although he works for a Catholic archdiocese, Mr Dwivedi is a Protestant pastor and a convert to Christianity.

Bhopal is the capital of the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, which recently passed a Religious Freedom Bill, which despite its name is an "anti-conversion" law aimed at keeping Hindus from joining other religions.

"It is again a sign of religious intolerance ... where the constitution values like freedom of expression and the right to propagate my own religion," said Fr Maria Stephen, the public relations officer for the Archdiocese of Bhopal.

"More similar arrests have taken place after the latest anti-conversion bill. The fundamentals take the maximum advantages of the bill," he told *Crux*.

"It is the fight between truth and lies, justice and injustice, light and darkness. The lies appear that they are fast in the race, but the truth endures for ever. It is what the



A woman wearing a protective mask prays inside a church in Mumbai, India, November 16, 2020. Photo: CNS.

Risen Lord taught us. Be not afraid," Fr Stephen said.

Hindu nationalists often accuse Christians of using force and surreptitious tactics in pursuing conversions, often storming into villages and leading "reconversion" ceremonies in which Christians are compelled to perform Hindu rituals.

These pressures on Christians, which also affect Muslims and other religious minorities, are part of what observers describe as a broad program for the "saffronisation" of India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, meaning

an attempt to impose Hindu values and identity while squeezing out rival faiths.

Mr Modi is a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has ruled India since 2014. The BJP is linked with the the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu nationalist group.

Madhya Pradesh – which is also ruled by the BJP – is one of several states in India to enact anti-conversion laws, despite the freedom of religion enshrined in India's constitution.

The Religious Freedom Bill was passed on a voice vote by

the state assembly on March 8, and replaces the government ordinance promulgated in January to prevent religious conversions through any "fraudulent" means. The state government said a total of 23 cases were registered under the January ordinance, including 11 charges against Christians.

Under the provisions of the new law, a "forced" religious conversion could lead to a one-to-five year jail term and a minimum fine of around \$350. If the person converted was a minor, the jail term and fine could be doubled.

Martyrs' bones identified almost 150 years after discovery in an attic

Two skulls and a cluster of other bones discovered in the attic of a house in the Welsh town of Holywell have been identified as Welsh priests and martyrs Philip Evans and John Lloyd.

The bones were discovered in 1858, but it wasn't until recently they were identified, by Jan Graffius, curator of the Stonyhurst Collections' assembly of Catholic martyrs' relics at Stonyhurst College in Lancashire.

Ms Graffius made the discovery having examined wounds to the skull and bones, and consulting with experts in

Welsh martyrs, she told *CNA*.

Evans and Lloyd were jailed, executed and buried together, Ms Graffius said, adding that "it makes perfect logical and historical sense for these two bones of these very closely associated men to have been rescued together, and secreted together".

Graffius said that she was "just thrilled" when she drew the evidence together and connected the Holywell bones to Evans and Lloyd.

"To be able to say with a good degree of confidence, 'this is who they are,' is very exciting," she said.

The story of the bones' identification is told in an online exhibition, "How bleedeth burning love": British Jesuit Province's Relics of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales," inspired by the 50th anniversary of the canonisation of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales.

The exhibition describes the discovery of the bones at Holywell as well as the lives of Evans and Lloyd, who were among the 40 martyrs canonised in 1970.

Church in France opposes bill to legalise euthanasia

As parliamentarians debated last Thursday a bill to legalise euthanasia, French bishops spoke out against the proposal.

A bill to institute a right to "a free and chosen end of life" was debated in the National Assembly, the lower house of

France's parliament, April 8.

"The solution when a person faces suffering is not to kill them, but to ease their pain and to accompany them," Archbishop Michel Aupetit of Paris told *France Inter*.

"It is all the more paradoxical that there is this attack

on death, on the manner of causing death, at the very moment when death surrounds us everywhere. On the contrary, we should fight for life," he exclaimed, urging better palliative care.

The bill's sponsor is Olivier Falorni, a member of

the opposition parliamentary group Liberties and Territories.

The government has not taken a position on the bill, though most members of the governing La République En Marche group support legal euthanasia.



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Dancing for justice in America



The Kalpulli Ketzalcoatlucue and Kalpulli Tlaloctecuiltli dance groups perform at George Floyd Square during the People's Power Love Fest in Minneapolis April 4. Photo: CNS

Vatican statistics show continued growth in number of Catholics worldwide

The number of Catholics and permanent deacons in the world has shown steady growth, while the number of religious men and women continued to decrease, according to Vatican statistics.

At the end of 2019, the worldwide Catholic population exceeded 1.34 billion, which continued to be about 17.7% of the world's population, said an article published March 26 in the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*.

It marked an increase of 16 million Catholics – a 1.12% increase compared to 2018 while the world's population grew by 1.08%.

The article contained a handful of the statistics in the Statistical Yearbook of the Church, which reported worldwide Church figures as of December 31, 2019.

According to the statistical yearbook, the number of Catholics increased in every continent except Europe.

At the end of 2019, 48.1% of the world's Catholics were living in the Americas, followed by Europe with 21.2%, Africa with 18.7%, about 11% in Asia (all figures for Asia exclude China) and 0.8% in Oceania.

The yearbook showed the number of bishops in the world – 5,364 – dipped

slightly with 13 fewer bishops than in 2018.

The total number of priests – diocesan and religious order – around the world slightly increased from 414,065 in 2018 to 414,336 in 2019.

The largest increases were seen in Africa and Asia, with a growth of 3.45% and 2.91%, respectively, followed by Europe with a 1.5% increase and the Americas with about 0.5% more.

At the end of 2019, 40.6% of the world's priests were serving in Europe, while 28% of priests were in Africa and Asia.

The number of

candidates for the priesthood – both diocesan seminarians and members of religious orders – showed a continued slight decline worldwide, decreasing from 115,880 at the end of 2018 to 114,058 in 2019, a change of -1.6%.

The number of brothers in religious orders continued its small yet steady decline worldwide from 50,941 in 2018 to 50,295 in 2019.

The number of women in religious orders showed an ongoing downward trend with a 1.8% decrease, going from 641,661 women in 2018 to 630,099 in 2019.

Catholic agencies step in once again to help minors at Mexico-US border

As the United States took in almost 19,000 migrant children, labelled “unaccompanied minors”, in March, faith-based organisations such as Catholic Charities throughout the country have been doing their part to help.

In Texas, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of San Antonio set up over 2,000 cots for their guests at the Freeman Coliseum to “welcome and care for unaccompanied migrant children”, the organisation said March

30 on its website.

Staff as well as volunteers from local churches have assembled hygiene kits of toothpaste and soap to give to minors who have been allowed into the country at its southern border with Mexico and are waiting to be reunited with family or who will soon go live with sponsors.

“It is a privilege to serve the community and an honour to help as much as we can these children who have been separated from their parents

for some time, especially in a country that is not their own,” said Antonio Fernandez, president and CEO of San Antonio's Catholic Charities.

“While I understand that this could be considered a political issue for many, it is strictly a humanitarian one to us at Catholic Charities,” he said.

Both political parties have sought the help of the Catholic Church, mostly because of its vast network of humanitarian agencies.

Vatican roundup

‘Profound evil’ of abuse must be eradicated, Pope Francis tells symposium

● As religious leaders, scholars, experts and abuse survivors come together online to participate in an international symposium on faith, healing and prevention, Pope Francis sent a message as part of opening remarks for the event.

Pope Francis hopes that by bringing together people from “various fields in order to share research... the symposium will contribute to a greater awareness of the gravity and the extent of child sexual abuse and promote more effective cooperation at every level of society in eradicating this profound evil,” said the message, sent on behalf of the Pope by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state.

The international and interreligious virtual “Symposium on Faith and Flourishing: Strategies for Preventing and Healing Child Sexual Abuse” was held April 8-10. Hosted by Harvard University and its Human Flourishing Program, the symposium was also being sponsored by numerous organisations, including the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors and The Catholic University of America.

The Pope's message was read by Michael Hoffman, a child sexual abuse survivor from Chicago, who works to raise awareness about abuse and supporting best practices for child safety.

Pope appeals for global Covid-19 recovery plan

● Pope Francis appealed for a global coronavirus recovery plan in a message to participants in the spring meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In a letter published by the Vatican April 8, the Pope called for a comprehensive approach to rebuilding the world economy in the wake of Covid-19.

He said: “There remains an urgent need for a global plan that can create new or regenerate existing institutions, particularly those of global governance, and help to build a new network of international relations for advancing the integral human development of all

peoples.”

“This necessarily means giving poorer and less developed nations an effective share in decision-making and facilitating access to the international market.”

The Pope's message was entrusted to Cardinal Peter Turkson to be presented during the April 5-11 meetings of the international financial institutions.

The Pope wrote: “It is my hope that your discussions will contribute to a model of ‘recovery’ capable of generating new, more inclusive, and sustainable solutions to support the real economy.”

Vatican Observatory launches a podcast and new website

● Vatican Observatory fans and astronomy nerds will want to check out the observatory foundation's new podcast, website and online store for the usual “merch” of hoodies, ball caps, tote bags and phone cases but also bright posters of the Horsehead Nebula, the Milky Way and other starry scenes.

People will find everything at vaticanobservatory.org and new content posted on social media: [facebook.com/VaticanObservatory](https://www.facebook.com/VaticanObservatory); [instagram.com/vaticanobservatory](https://www.instagram.com/vaticanobservatory); twitter.com/VaticanObserv; [youtube.com/c/vaticanobservatory](https://www.youtube.com/c/vaticanobservatory); and [linkedin.com/company/vaticanobservatory](https://www.linkedin.com/company/vaticanobservatory).

The podcasts are available on several platforms and they feature one of the Pope's own Jesuit astronomers speaking with a notable figure in the world of space exploration or science.

For example, one episode features Jesuit Bro. Guy Consolmagno – director of the Vatican Observatory and president of the foundation – speaking with US astronaut Nicole Stott and her husband Christopher Stott of the International Institute of Space Commerce.

They talk about moon tourism, as well as a lot of personal anecdotes, including how their faith fits in with their love of science.

“The Vatican Observatory is one of the oldest active astronomical observatories in the world with its roots going back to 1582,” according to its website.



Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

When I was a precocious sophomore in high school, I once barged into the office of the Capuchin priest who was in charge of our religion curriculum to inform him that I had serious intellectual reservations about the Catholic Faith, and I found the answers being supplied in class unsatisfying.

Fr Mike Scully stared at me for a moment with what, looking back, I now recognise as a bemused smirk, and then wheeled his chair across his office and produced a thick book off his shelf: *On Being a Christian* by Hans Küng.

I didn't know then that *On Being a Christian* is regarded as a masterpiece, one of the most daring and provocative explorations ever penned by a Catholic hand on the intelligibility of Christian faith in a modern, secular age.

Retrospect

Handing me the book was, in retrospect, a brilliant ploy to put me off, since what were the odds I'd actually get through all 720 pages? It was also fairly daring, given that Fr Scully knew full well Fr Küng's work was controversial, regarded by some influential figures in the Church as out-and-out heretical. Bear in mind this was 1981, two years after Fr Küng's license as a Catholic theologian had been pulled, in one of the first signs that the winds in Catholicism were shifting under the new Pope John Paul II.

“I had the chance to sit in Fr Küng's living room in Tübingen, Germany, on a reporting trip and tell him that story”

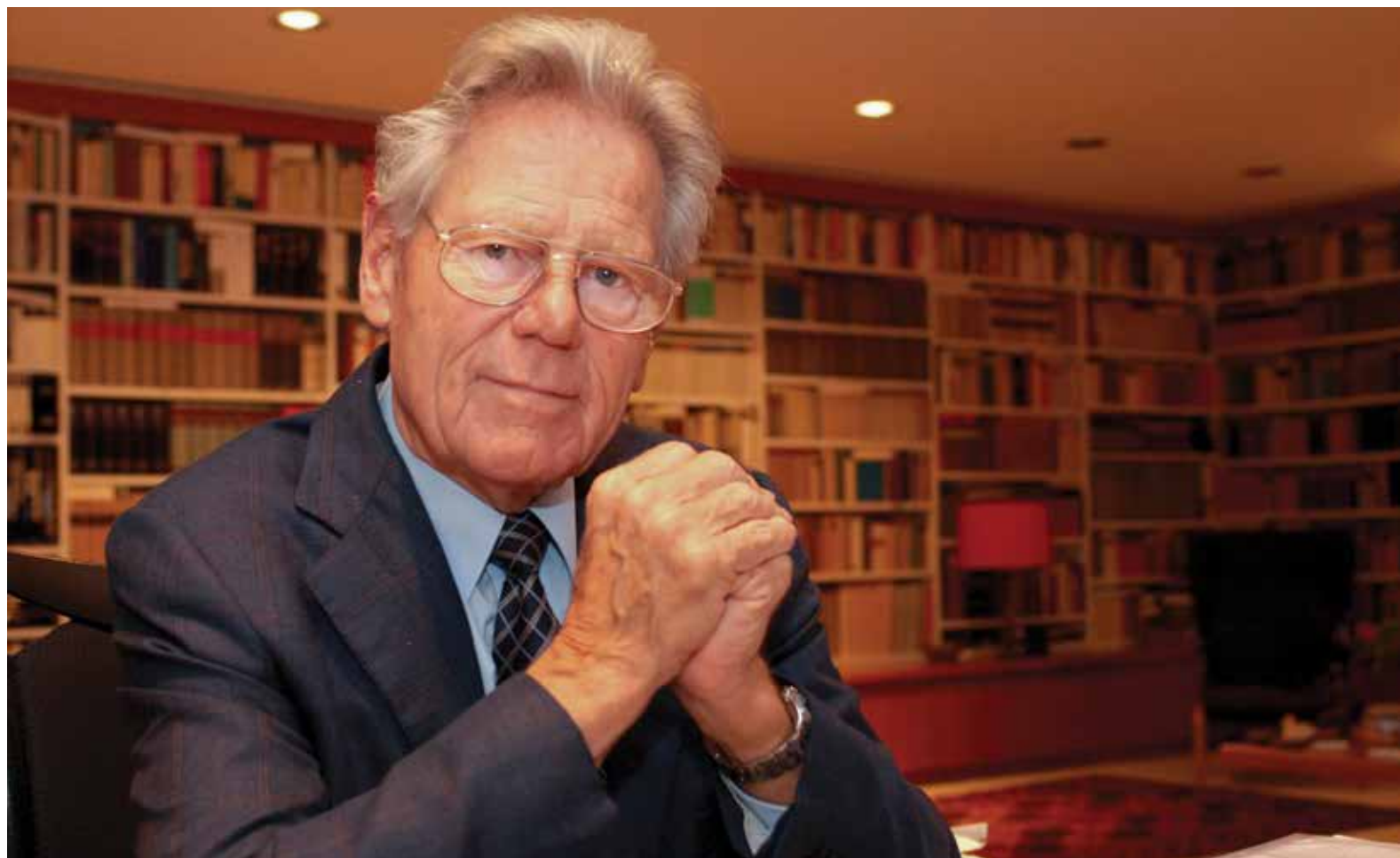
In the end the move was perfect, because the effort to make sense of both Fr Küng and his critics was probably the best possible introduction to the contours of an adult faith in the post-Vatican II era.

Many years later, I had the chance to sit in Fr Küng's living room in Tübingen, Germany, on a reporting trip and tell him that story. He smiled, then began quizzing me to see if I'd actually mastered his ideas.

With the death on Tuesday of the 93-year-old Fr Hans Küng – despite all his battles with officialdom, Fr Küng was never stripped of his priesthood – liberal post-Vatican II Catholicism has lost its muse, and the entire Church has lost an original mind.

Born in 1928 in Switzerland, Fr Küng was a theological wunderkind who, in his 30s, published a book titled *The Council, Reform and Reun-*

Küng, original celebrity theologian and liberal muse, dead at 93



Fr Hans Küng is pictured in his office in Tübingen, Germany, in this February 2008 file photo. Fr Küng, a prominent and sometimes controversial theologian who taught in Germany, died April 6, 2021, at age 93. Photo: CNS.

“In the popular Catholic mind, Fr Küng likely will be forever linked with the figure who was his erstwhile colleague”

ion that many observers credit with outlining the agenda for the closing acts of Vatican II. After the council he became the original theologian-celebrity, a lightning rod inside the Church for his liberal positions, including his open rejection of the dogma of papal infallibility, but also widely hailed even in non-Catholic circles for his reputation as a daring intellectual maverick.

At the peak of his fame, how hotly did his star burn? Consider that when he visited the US in 1981, he was actually a guest on “The Phil Donahue Show”.

Reactions

Küng evoked strong reactions. To admirers, he was the Catholic Solzhenitsyn, a brave dissident speaking truth to power from the ecclesiastical gulag; to detractors, he was a glib snake oil salesman, a traitor who sold out the Faith for forty pieces of pop culture silver.

In the popular Catholic mind, Fr Küng likely will be forever linked with the figure who was his erstwhile colleague and, later, his central antago-

nist and *bête noire* in the growing divides within Catholicism after the council – Joseph Ratzinger, the future doctrinal czar of the Vatican under John Paul II, who would go on to become Pope Benedict XVI.

During the Second Vatican Council, both Ratzinger and Fr Küng were part of the broad reform majority, seeking to open the intellectual windows and let in some fresh air amid the fossilized neo-scholasticism that had come to dominate Catholic thought and life. In 1966, Fr Küng was serving as the dean of the theology department at Tübingen when the chair in dogmatics became available, and he didn't bother filling out a *terna*, or list of three names, insisting instead that his colleague Ratzinger get the job.

The two were a study in contrasts – the flamboyant Fr Küng zipping around town in his Alfa Romeo, the shy and bookish Ratzinger pattering to and fro on his bicycle – but they hit it off.

Before long things began to sour, as Küng became the captain of the “spirit of Vatican II” constituency in Catholicism, pushing for ever bolder and

more sweeping changes in doctrine and practice, while Ratzinger became an important member of the camp worried the baby was being thrown out with the bathwater. In 1971, Ratzinger criticized Fr Küng's book on infallibility, and in 1976, Ratzinger wrote that *On Being a Christian* had “handed over [Christian faith] to corruption at its very foundation”.

“He became the original theologian-celebrity, a lightning rod inside the Church for his liberal positions”

For his part, Fr Küng clearly carried a long grudge. In 1997, another German Catholic theologian who had often been at odds with Ratzinger, Johann Baptist Metz, celebrated his 70th birthday with a symposium in Ahaus, Germany. Ratzinger was on the program, and the two men spoke fondly of one another. Fr Küng, however, derided Metz for appearing with Ratzinger.

It was all a bit much for Metz. “Sometimes Fr Küng conducts himself like a second magisterium. To tell you the truth, one is enough, at least for me,” Fr Metz said.

Background

That background makes the happy ending to the story especially sweet, since shortly after his election to the papacy, Ratzinger invited his old friend to visit him in the Vatican and the two spent an afternoon in warm reminiscence.

“It's clear that we have different positions,” Fr Küng said in a telephone interview from Tübingen afterwards. “But the things we have in common are more fundamental. We are both Christians, both priests in service of the Church, and we have great personal respect for one another.”

Looking back, it's not clear to me that I understood much of *On Being a Christian* when I first tackled it at 16 – quite honestly, it's not clear to me how much I understand today. But here's what I do get: Few figures ever left a bigger imprint on the Church in their time than Hans Küng, and few had the same ability to make faith seem relevant, perhaps hip and daring, even in the world's most thoroughly secular milieu.

Hans Küng made us think, and probably will for as long as Catholic theology is consumed. Not a bad legacy, that. *Requiescat in pace.*

Scottish bishops urge 'human life' be at centre of May 6 parliament elections

A voter leaves a polling station in 2014 in Portree, Scotland. That year Scots narrowly voted not to press ahead with national independence. Photo: CNS



Charles Collins

Scotland's bishops are urging voters to consider ongoing efforts to legalise assisted suicide when the vote in elections for the Scottish parliament on May 6.

“They also pointed to the current efforts to introduce assisted suicide in Scotland”

In a pastoral letter issued April 9, the bishops urged voters to put “human life and the inviolable dignity of the human person” at the centre of political discussions in the country.

Under the United Kingdom's devolved system, Scotland is in charge of most of its own domestic affairs. Recent polls show the ruling Scottish National Party – which advocates for Scottish independence – is likely to win a majority of seats.

In their letter, the bishops said it was “critical to ascertain candidates’ personal values and opinions and not concentrate solely on party policies” when casting a vote, especially since many issues involve a “free vote” – meaning candidates aren’t forced to vote along party lines.

“It is the duty of parliamentarians to uphold the most basic and fundamental human right to life. Elected representatives ought to recognise the existence of human life from the moment of conception and be committed to the protection of human life at every stage. Caring for the unborn and their mothers is a fundamental measure of a caring and compassionate society; a society which puts human dignity at the centre,” the bishops write.

They also pointed to the current efforts to introduce assisted suicide in Scotland.

“It is incumbent upon our parliamentarians to show compassion for the sick and dying. This is not achieved by assisted suicide or euthanasia but by ensuring support is provided through caring and attentive politics, including investment in palliative care,” the letter says.

Critics

The bishops also allude to the hate speech legislation currently making its way through the parliament, which critics say is heavy-handed

and could put religious organisations at risk for their teachings on traditional sexuality.

The letter says if Scotland is to be a tolerant, open, diverse country, “then we must be free to discuss and debate ideas, even those which are deemed by some to be controversial”.

“The pandemic has placed immeasurable pressure on businesses and many people have lost their livelihood”

“Whilst being mindful of the need to protect citizens from hate, government must not overstep into the realm of unjust restrictions on free speech, free expression and freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This must include, among others, the freedom to express belief in the biological reality of sex and gender,” the bishops state.

The letter also touches on the Covid-19 pandemic, and the economic crisis it has caused.

“The pandemic has placed immeasurable pressure on businesses and many people have lost their livelihood. The state has a duty to sustain business activities

by creating conditions which will ensure job opportunities, especially in times of crisis. This must be accompanied by a just wage to provide a dignified livelihood for the worker and their family,” the bishops write.

“Sadly, poverty remains a scourge for too many people. The marginalised, the homeless, and the lonely and isolated have been cast further adrift because of the pandemic. And poverty now affects 24% of children in Scotland. We need elected representatives who respect a preferential option for the poor, who are willing to prioritise their need and respect their human dignity,” the letter continues.

The bishops use the letter to also urge the Scottish parliament to continue to support “an open and diverse state education system which includes Catholic schools”.

Catholic educational institutions

Scotland, like the rest of the United Kingdom, gives government support to Catholic educational institutions. Over 10% of the schools in Scotland are state-supported Catholic schools. Most schools are “non-denominational,” but have historic ties to the Protestant Church of Scotland, and the law in Scotland still mandates that communal “religious observances” take place in schools, saying this “complements other aspects of a pupil’s learning and is an important con-

tribution to pupils’ development”.

“The right of parents to choose a school for their children which corresponds to their own convictions is fundamental. Public authorities have a duty to guarantee this parental right and to ensure the concrete conditions for its exercise,” the bishops write.

“A referendum held in 2014 was won by those seeking to remain in the United Kingdom, but there are efforts to put the matter to the vote again later this year”

The bishops avoided one of the most contentious issues surrounding the May 6 poll: Efforts to hold a second referendum on Scotland’s independence.

A referendum held in 2014 was won by those seeking to remain in the United Kingdom, but there are efforts to put the matter to the vote again later this year, despite the fact the London government says such an action would be illegal without permission from the UK parliament.

i Charles Collins, managing editor of Cruxnow.com

Letters

Letter of the week

Government uninterested in churchgoers as support base

Dear Editor, The Irish Government decided it is more important to open the Dublin Zoo and Fota Wildlife Park before the churches. During Holy Week, Taoiseach Micheál Martin announced that the Government plans to re-open the Dublin Zoo and Fota Wildlife Park on April 26. He said the Government will consider re-opening churches in May. I assume that the Government no longer rates churchgoers as a critical support base. How it can argue that visiting Dublin Zoo and Fota Wildlife Park, fine places in their own right, is safer than attending church services is beyond me.

My local Catholic Church in Tramore has to be one of the safest places to

be, much more so than queuing and hanging around coffee shops in groups in the area or visiting supermarkets where some customers chat with each other often not observing the required social distancing requirements. The safety precautions carried out when the church was open for services was exemplary. There were enthusiastic and dedicated stewards available to ensure visitors used hand sanitisers arriving and leaving the Church. They monitored each person to ensure they were social distancing correctly and wearing masks, otherwise, they couldn't enter or stay in the church.

Interestingly, the British government who is going through hard

times as well allows worshippers to attend church services. Catholic friends of mine were able to attend Holy Week services and had ashes on Ash Wednesday etc.. Who would have ever thought that an Irish Government would fall behind Britain in looking after its church-going people?

Things have certainly changed in Ireland, not sure if it's for the better. Churchgoers should remember how they have been treated by politicians and should make their views known when they are canvassed for votes at the next election.

*Yours etc.,
Eddie O'Mahony,
Tramore, Co. Waterford*

Observing fertility and being responsible

Dear Editor, NFP [Natural Family Planning] and contraception have the woman at the centre. After all the woman is the one who puts her body fully in a sexual relationship. A very important factor, that, regrettably, Mr Quinn forgot to mention in his recent article [IC 25/03/2021]. I know non-Catholics who practise NFP, with the observation of fertility and infertility times in the woman's cycle. And mothers who teach their daughters to observe their fertility.

The reason being that this is the way the woman's body works and needs to be respected, while contraception is harmful for the woman. (Another being that knowing the cycle makes it easier to conceive.)

The other factor of how to go about bearing in mind this cycle for deciding how many children to have and when is another issue. The Church is insisting that responsible love be the guide.

*Yours etc.,
Conchita Legorburo Serra
Dalkey, Co. Dublin*



The Church should not be treated like a lobby group

Dear Editor, It is an outrage that attending your local church for Mass is deemed a criminal offence by this Government, subject to a fine or even jail time no less. This Government seems to have no respect or understanding of people of faith. In recent times in Ireland there have been very few politicians able to articulate the feelings and needs of religious people – we are blessed to still have a few. Decades ago if the bishops

had a meeting with the Taoiseach I'm sure there would be some sort of understanding hammered out and actions taken on the issue, but recently when the bishops met the Taoiseach all that came from the Taoiseach's office was platitudes. It was good to see the bishops being openly critical of the Taoiseach in a statement last month, saying that none of the issues they raised had been responded to. It seems

as if the hierarchy are treated the same as a lobby group, trying to get their sector open before other sectors are open. The Church in Ireland is not the same as hospitality, hairdressing etc... industries, and should not be treated as such, freedom of religion is a human right – getting your hair cut, having a pint or going out for a fancy dinner, is not. This dismissal of the Church, for me, is one of the

many convincing signs that the Church in Ireland has shrunk phenomenally both in the size of congregations and influence. Why else would the Faithful not be taken seriously? Being physically present at Mass is not a luxury, it is essential for believers and it's shameful and disrespectful the Government can't seem to fathom this.

*Yours etc.,
Colm O'Donnell
Tallaght, Co. Dublin*

Hearing the voice of courageous young people

Dear Editor, The focus on young Catholics and the need to hear their voices regarding the national synod announced by the bishops was lovely to see on your front page [IC 08/04/2021]. Too long have we heard the same tired voices of people who have gripes with the Church, many being constantly wheeled out by secular media. Let's hear from young people who despite all the odds decided to join the Church

and fight an uphill battle – these young people are the future of the Church. Sure, it's important to reach out to those who are just nominally Catholic or have left because they don't like a particular aspect but it's equally important to connect with people, particularly youth, who are actively trying to live the Church's challenging teachings while at the same time possibly being mocked or excluded by

their peers. It is courageous.

Modern Ireland is not an easy place to be Catholic, or even Christian, to choose to enter the Church at a time like this takes guts and that is what is needed more than ever in this country – there's too many lily-livered invertebrates about these days.

*Yours etc.,
Rebecca Murphy
Mullingar, Co. Westmeath*

facebook community

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

Government in south neglecting spiritual wellbeing of Faithful – Archbishop Martin

I hope everyone remembers this when these so-called politicians come begging for our votes. Hit them where it registers. – **Mary Carroll**

Good for you Archbishop Eamon Martin. Someone has to confront the Government – **Sheila Boyle**

I wouldn't call it neglect, I'd call it discrimination. – **Caroline Dunlea**

Neglecting? They are showing the hierarchy and the Catholics that elected them that they simply don't matter. That's what happens when they are not taken to task over their promotion of a Godless agenda. They see the Church as weak and have no idea what it is. – **Eilín Glynn**

Controversial theologian Fr Hans Küng dies at 93

Have enjoyed many of his books. A brilliant mind but writes for everyman. RIP. – **Sandra Dunne**

A wonderful theologian who gave so much to the spiritual intellect of many people. In Covid times he reminds us that Gods love does not protect us from suffering it helps us in the midst of suffering. RIP Hans Kung. – **Catherine Clarke**

A wonderful intellect. RIP. – **Colm Clarkin**

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

Leadership of ACP 'has lost the plot'

Dear Editor, We live in strange times. The Irish Examiner reported that "Fr Tim Hazelwood, a member of the Association of Catholic Priests [ACP], said bishops in particular need to give leadership during the pandemic, especially when it comes to observing guidelines and restrictions".

We are told that "Fr Hazelwood was commenting after a screenshot was circulated of Bishop [Phonsie] Cullinan celebrating Mass without wearing a mask in close proximity with a number of other priests".

Has the ACP established teams of what in Penal times were termed "priest hunters"? Surely if the ACP wanted to rebuke Bishop Phonsie it should have given him a phone call or dropped him a polite note.

I am also at a loss as to why the ACP has rebuked those bishops calling for an early restoration of public worship. In my humble opinion the leadership of ACP has lost the plot!

*Yours etc.,
Alan Whelan
Killarney, Co. Kerry*

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



▲ **COLOMBIA:** Venezuelan refugees arrive by boat in Arauquita, April 5, after fleeing their country due to a military offensive. Photo: CNS

◀ **AUSTRALIA:** A man pulls trash cans at a rest stop along the Hawkesbury River in Mooney Mooney, April 7, as a rainbow forms following a morning rain shower.



ENGLAND: A mourner holds flowers and pictures of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, outside London's Buckingham Palace.



ITALY: Restaurant owners scuffle with police in Rome, April 6, as tensions rise over restrictions on businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic.



MYANMAR: A man flashes the three-finger salute as he passes burning tires in Mandalay, April 1.



USA: A demonstrator holds a 'Black Lives Matter' flag and another sign outside the Hennepin County Government Center in Minneapolis, April 6.

Taking tension out of the community



Whatever energy we don't transform, we will transmit. That's a phrase I first heard from Richard Rohr and it names a central challenge for all mature adults. Here's its Christian expression.

Central to our understanding of how we are saved by Jesus is a truth expressed by the phrase: Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. How are we saved through Jesus' suffering? Obviously, that's a metaphor. Jesus is not a sheep, so we need to tease out the reality beneath the metaphor. What prompted the first generation of Christians to use the image of a suffering sheep to explain what Jesus did for us, and how does Jesus' suffering take away our sins? Was there a debt for sin which only God's own suffering could cancel? Was the forgiveness of our sins some kind of private, divine transaction between God and Jesus?

Mystery

These questions have no easy answer, but this much must be said: while some of this is mystery, none of it is magic. Admittedly, there's mystery here, something that lies beyond what we can adequately explain by rational thought, but there's no magic here. The deep truths that lie somewhat beyond our rational



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

capacities do not negate our rationality; they only supersede it, analogous to the way that Einstein's theory of relativity dwarfs grade school mathematics.

Thus, allowing for some mystery, what can we tease out of the metaphor that presents Christ as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world? Moreover, what's the challenge for us?

Reconciliation

Here's the historical background to this image. At the time of Jesus, within Judaism, there were a number of atonement (reconciliation) ritual practices around lambs. Some lambs were slaughtered in the temple as offering to God for our sins, and some others were employed as "scapegoat" lambs. The scapegoat lamb ritual worked this way. A community would gather with

the intention of participating in a ritual to ease the tensions that existed among them because of their weaknesses and sin. They would symbolically invest their tensions, their sins, on to the lamb (which was to become their scapegoat) with two symbols: a crown of thorns pushed into the lamb's head (making it feel their pain) and a purple drape over the lamb's back (symbolising its corporate responsibility to carry this for them all). They would then chase the lamb out of the temple and out of town, banishing it to die in the wilderness. The idea was that by investing the lamb with their pain and sin and banishing it forever from their community, their pain and sin were also taken away, banished to die with this lamb.

It is easy to see how they could easily transfer this image to Jesus after his death. Looking

at the love that Jesus showed in his suffering and death, the first generation of Christians made this identification. Jesus is our scapegoat, our lamb. We laid our pain and sin on him and drove him out of our community to die. Our sin left with him.

Except, except, they did not understand this as some magical act where God forgave us because Jesus died. No. Their sins were not taken away because Jesus somehow appeased his Father. They were taken away because Jesus absorbed and transformed them, akin to the way a water purifier takes the dirt, toxins, and poisons out of the water by absorbing them.

“Because it is love that takes the worst that evil can do and, absorbing it, defeats it”

A water purifier works this way. It takes in water contaminated with dirt, impurities, and poisons, but it holds those toxins inside itself and gives out only the purified water. So too with Jesus. He took in hatred, held it inside, transformed it, and gave back only love. He took in bitterness and gave back graciousness; curses and gave back blessing; jealousy

and gave back affirmation; murder and gave back forgiveness. Indeed, he took in all the things that are the source of tension within a community (our sins), held them within and gave back only peace. Thus, he took away our sins, not through divine magic, but by absorbing them, by eating them, by being our scapegoat.

Love

Moreover, what Jesus did, as Kierkegaard so wonderfully says, is not something we should admire; it's something we need to imitate. N.T. Wright, in his recent book *Broken Signposts*, sums up the challenge this way: "Whether we understand it or not – whether we like it or not, which most of us don't and won't – what love has to do is not only to face misunderstanding, hostility, suspicion, plotting, and finally violence and murder, but somehow, through that whole horrid business, to draw the fire of ultimate evil onto itself and to exhaust its power. ... Because it is love that takes the worst that evil can do and, absorbing it, defeats it."

Whatever we don't transform, we will transmit. There's a profound truth here regarding how we need to help take tension out of our families, communities, churches, and societies.

“Looking at the love that Jesus showed in his suffering and death, the first generation of Christians made this identification”

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, April 15, 2021

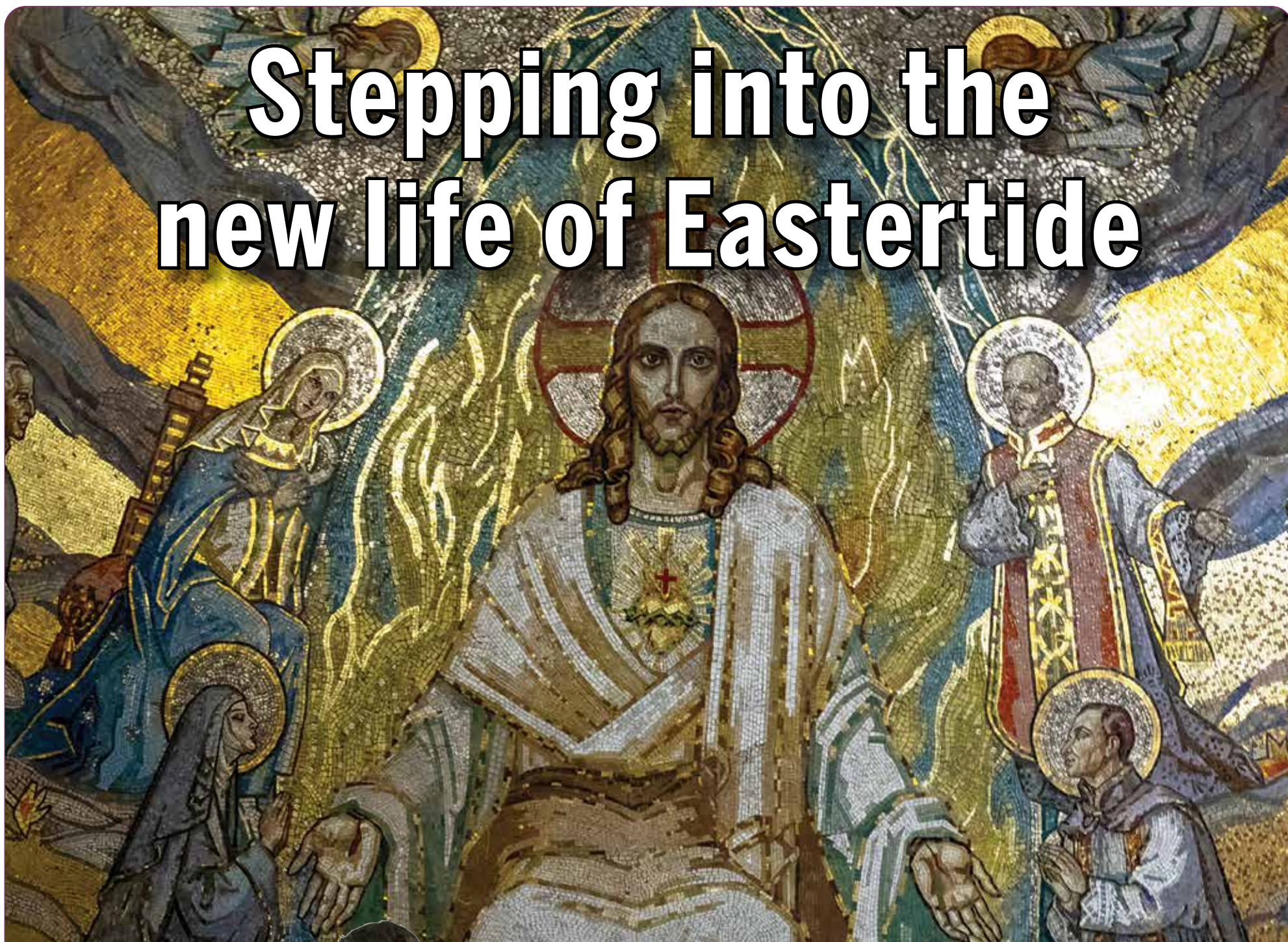
Personal Profile

Learning the importance of a Catholic presence in politics

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Stepping into the new life of Eastertide



Christ is risen! Often-times we partake in the Lenten preparation and the drama of Holy Week but forget about it all as soon as Easter Sunday turns to Easter Monday. As Catholics however, not only are we obliged to remain in the spirit of Easter, it's in our best interests. This is because the rising of Christ raises us to new life too, and it's this that we're celebrating and focusing on throughout the season of Easter.

Easter Vigil

The Easter Vigil is the beginning of the Easter season proper, with the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday being the pinnacle of the Liturgi-



Christ is risen, and this should be reflected in our daily life and activities, writes Jason Osborne

cal year. It is the marking of a new creation, a new birth – or a re-birth – the culmination of Christ's salvific action during his time on earth before the Ascension.

The Vigil has always been understood as the end of the paschal season, the end of repentance and sorrow, and the end of the Lenten conversion we were undertaking in preparation for

Easter. Rather than viewing it purely as an end, though, it ought to be viewed as a beginning. It is the beginning of a celebration, and is a major season of grace, joy and thanksgiving. Again, we often think of Easter as a once-off celebration, but it is the 'party to end all parties' – a 50 day celebration from Easter Sunday to Pentecost.

An entire season

Since the very beginning of the Church's life, the feasts of Easter and Pentecost were considered primary, with the paschal mystery being the first celebration to have both a time before the feast (of preparation) and a time afterwards of pure celebration.

The former understanding of the feast of Pentecost saw it being set off, as it had its own octave. In the new, reformed calendar, this situation is fixed as the solemnity of the Ascension does not end the season of Easter – it is one more, special day within an entire season of celebration.

The Easter candle is no longer

extinguished on the Ascension, but remains in a place of prominence until Pentecost, as the feast of Pentecost now concludes the Easter season. These days, the time between the Ascension and Pentecost (a single week) should be spent as a time of preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit – just as Our Lady and the apostles spent the week.

The principle behind the reform of the calendar is made obvious when the emphasis on Easter as a fifty-day celebration is considered.

Church dressings

The Easter candle, lit for the first

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Family News

AND EVENTS

WARNING OVER 'EYE-WATERING' LEVELS OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

The National Youth Council of Ireland has described the level of youth unemployment in Ireland as "eye-watering" and warned of a major social and economic crisis if young people continue to be unable to get onto the jobs ladder.

Speaking on RTÉ's *This Week*, Deputy director of the National Youth Council, James Doorley, said six out of ten young people in the labour market were now unemployed.

Recently released CSO figures showed that 59% of people aged 15-24 were unemployed in March.

"At the height of the last crisis ten years ago we had 30% youth unemployment and that was a huge political crisis," Mr Doorley said. "There doesn't appear to be a plan from Government. We have a social and political crisis if we allow young people with talent and qualifications to not gain a foot on the ladder."

REPORT RECOMMENDS VITAMIN-D TO COMBAT COVID-19

RTÉ has reported that a group of politicians recommended Irish people take daily Vitamin D supplements due to growing international evidence that it may help prevent Covid-19 outbreaks.

The recommendation is contained in a new report which says that anyone attending Covid-19 test centres should be given Vitamin D, and that an 'opt-out' system for the supplement should be created in nursing homes and among healthcare workers to encourage the uptake of the vitamin.

The 28-page report was composed by the cross-party Oireachtas Committee on Health in recent weeks as part of its ongoing review of the Covid-19 situation in the country.

The report is based on the views of the Covid-D Consortium of doctors from Trinity College, St James' Hospital, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, and Connolly Hospital Blanchardstown.

SCIENTISTS SAY BITCOIN COULD DERAIL CHINA'S CLIMATE CHANGE TARGETS

New research shows that bitcoin 'mining' in China is so carbon intensive that it could threaten the country's emissions reduction targets, the BBC has reported.

The cryptocurrency's carbon footprint is as large as that of one of China's ten largest cities, the study found.

China has stated that it wants its emissions to peak in 2030, and it has plans to be carbon neutral by 2060.

However, scientists say bitcoin mining could threaten to derail that plan. China accounts for more than 75% of bitcoin mining around the world, researchers said.

The study was written by academics from a number of universities across the world, and published in the peer-reviewed journal *Nature Communications*.

Rural areas in China are popular among bitcoin miners, mainly due to the cheaper electricity prices and undeveloped land to house the servers.

Miners play a twin role, auditing bitcoin transactions in exchange for the opportunity to acquire the digital currency.



Dubious definitions of free will

You hear a lot in apologetics about how if the materialist image of the world favoured by the likes of Richard Dawkins was true, there would be no room in reality for human free will. But why exactly is this? What's the nature of the tension between free will and scientific materialism, and can it be resolved?

There are few different ways that materialism might pose a problem for free will, but the most notable one is physical determinism. Determinism is roughly the idea that what is going to happen in the future is determined in advance by the laws of physics. If determinism was true, then if you knew the exact physical state of the universe plus the laws of physics, you could predict what would happen next everywhere with perfect accuracy.

“There are two major ways of thinking about free will, two different sets of necessary conditions for freedom”

Why is that a problem for free will? Well, 'what would happen next' would include all human actions: they would be just as much part of the closed, determined system as anything else. Why is that a problem?

To get an idea of the answer we have to ask another question. What would it be for human action to be free? What would be present if we were free, and absent if we weren't? It's not the feeling of freedom: we all feel like we're in control of our



Everyday philosophy Ben Conroy

actions – at least some of the time – but that feeling might be illusory. So what is it?

There are two major ways of thinking about free will, two different sets of necessary conditions for freedom. You can think about free will in terms of 'sourcehood', or you can think about it in terms of leeway.

A leeway theorist of free will believes that to be free, you have to have the ability to actualise different possibilities. If I freely chose to get myself a banana from the fruit bowl an hour ago, then it must have been the case that I had the power to do something else instead. If I had no option but to get the banana, then I wasn't acting freely. To be free I must have 'the ability to do otherwise'.

The prospect for this sort of freedom if determinism is true seems very grim. It seems like the definition of determinism that there is only one possible action available to me at any given time: the one the laws of physics have determined.

David Hume had a go at a leeway theory of free will that was compatible with determinism. We are free, he said, if we could have done otherwise had we wanted to. So if the police will arrest me every time I try to get a banana, I'm not free to get one. But if nothing would stop me getting a banana if I wanted one, then

truthfully say that getting that banana was 'up to me', not to anyone or anything else.

Now if determinism is true there is an unchangeable sequence of cause and effect. But a defender of the compatibility of free will and determinism will say that just because human beings are parts of that chain, it doesn't mean that their actions don't come from them. My banana-loving nature may be determined by physics: but it's still my nature, my character. The banana-grabbing that results from that character comes from me.

“But we can begin to see why physical determinism makes the possibility of free will dubious”

So on a sourcehood theory am I free even if determinism is true? Immanuel Kant pointed out a problem: if everything about our character is determined by brute physical processes, it's hard to say that we're really the ultimate source of any of our actions. How could we be, if my reaching for the banana was set in stone before I was even conceived? It's as though, he said, we looked at an arrow in mid-flight and said "it is the source of its own movement and direction" – completely ignoring the bow.

There is, of course, very much more to say. But we can begin to see why physical determinism makes the possibility of free will dubious.



Richard Dawkins
Photo by: David Shankbone

follow my desires seems like a hollow thing if those desires themselves are completely out of my control.

The other account of what it is to be free, sourcehood, seems to fare better if determinism is true. A sourcehood theorist will say I am free if and only if I am the true source of my actions. To be free I have to be able to

» Continued from Page 31



time from the fire of the Easter Vigil, is generally placed in a significant place between Easter and Pentecost and relit for all liturgical services throughout the season, and should be incensed whenever incense is used in the fifty days of Easter.

“All liturgical decoration, from the altar cloth to the hangings and banners should be white with contrasting colours, to raise the mind to the season of new life, fulfilment and joy”

The colour of the vestments for the season is white, and the cloth covering the altar is white as well, symbolising the newfound purity won for us by Christ in his victory over sin and its “sting” – death. In fact, all liturgical decoration, from the altar cloth to the hangings and banners should be white with contrasting colours, to raise the mind to the season of new life, fulfilment and joy.

A final, significant liturgical aspect of the Eastertide celebrations is that all penitential elements of the Eucharist are eliminated, replaced by alleluias and exclamations of triumph and joy.

Incorporating Easter joy into family life

So that's the liturgical background to Easter as a 50-day season of celebration and joy, but what about the effect it ought to have on us and those around us? How do we adjust from the penitence scarcity and asceticism of Lent to the abundance of Easter? There are a couple of ways to centre yourself and your loved ones on the special season through which we journey.

Respecting Sundays

A renewed attention to ‘Sunday rest’ ought to be considered. This is all the

more important in the context of the ongoing lockdown, as the distinction between work and leisure has grown increasingly blurred over the past year. I know I've often found the ‘work’ aspects of my life bleeding into the time I really ought to be using to switch off, and this is good for no one. God knows us better than we know ourselves; if we don't rest properly, we grow steadily more agitated until we boil over or meltdown, which often impacts on our families and friends.

It is essential to set aside the weekend, but Sunday most importantly, for your loved ones (and yourself). Christ didn't die and rise again to have us buzzing around in a state of constant stress and anxiety, and it is a lesson that requires constant re-learning. Worship God as best you can, take a walk, read a book, watch a movie, eat your favourite food, and spend time with those God has placed you with – you'll never regret having forced yourself to slow down.

Reinstating the family meal

This may not be possible every day throughout the Easter season, but it is a fitting thing to strive for each and every Sunday. Christ's rising offered

us, God's children, a seat at the eternal banquet in Heaven, and there are few better ways to instil this in the mind than simply gathering together as a family to eat together.

The symbolism of a family meal is all the more potent after Mass (in normal times!) as in Mass, God gathers us around his table, sending us forth to establish communities and fellowship in our own homes and families.

Social isolation is an enormous problem today, even in our homes, as each person spends much of their time in their own room, often leaving only for the essentials of eating and using the bathroom. Preparing a meal together, and sitting down to enjoy it together, is a concrete antidote to the distance that is growing between people in many homes around the country.

Praying together

Just as Our Lady and the apostles gathered in the upper room in order to receive God's spirit upon them, so too will we receive it if we gather together in prayer. Fr Patrick Peyton, “The Rosary Priest”, used to say, “the family that prays together stays together,” and he wasn't wrong.

As difficult a thing as it may be to do, inviting the family together to pray is a healthy, edifying practice that helps bring the Easter season to life, just as respecting Sundays and gathering together for meals does.

The rosary is an ideal communal prayer, but it is certainly not the only one. Other countries have traditions of reading the day's Gospel before the family meal, or reading and discussing it together at some other point throughout the day. It's a good way to get the family on the same page for the journey through Easter from Resurrection to Pentecost.

These are surely simple steps, but simple is often best, and these few steps will help us to live out the Easter events.



Faith — IN THE — family



Bairbre Cahill

We are in the midst of the Easter Season and I for one am glad that it is a season and not simply a day. I need time for Easter to grow gradually. I have struggled with stones and tombs this year and have needed a slow gentle dawning rather than exuberant exclamations of joy.

Resurrection joy comes in little things. I moved a fuchsia some weeks ago. It had been beautiful last year, large ballerina-like red-pink flowers dancing until an unexpectedly ferocious wind funnelled round the side of the house and stripped every flower, burned every leaf and ripped the younger branches from the plant. So it was moved, into a pot, sheltered now at the back of the house but oh every time I looked at the miserable, dried up shape of it I was convinced I had finished off what that wind had tried to do. And then, sitting outside the other day I glimpsed, and lost, searched and found again a tiny spark of green, budding out of dryness. It lives – and will bloom again with wildly dancing beauty.

Similarly, my daughter had asked me why the trees were still so bare, was it normal, should there not be more life to them? And then, with one warm sun-filled day it was as if a switch had been thrown and life-giving sap surged up stems and buds were suddenly present in an abundance that defied expectation. Life is burgeoning. It will not be stopped. That cycle of life and death and rebirth to new life is a reality that surrounds us. And if in these days I struggle with that then I need to spend more time outside, to tap into the swelling energy of nature, to know at the core of my being that resurrection is a reality.

And what does resurrection mean for us? The word ‘transformation’ echoes in me and I find myself wondering if I am prepared to allow myself to be transformed, challenged, made new by this resurrection which is at the core of our faith.

From Palm Sunday and through Holy Week I found myself contemplating the suffering and death not only of Jesus but also of a man called Cameron Todd Willingham, a Texan man who was convicted of the murder

of his three young children by arson. This man was no angel. He was a difficult, hard drinking, aggressive individual but always a good and loving father. However, when local police and fire investigators came to his home after the fire which killed his three little daughters they came with the ready-formed



conclusion that he was to blame. The film *Trial by Fire* follows Todd Willingham's story right to the point where he is carried forcibly to the execution chamber to die for a crime which it had become increasingly clear he did not commit. I was shocked, shocked that the few good people were not able to save the day, shocked that the Governor did not have a last minute surge of integrity, shocked that an innocent man was put to death, shocked that so many people involved in his dying promoted themselves as good God-fearing citizens. And that image accompanied me throughout the liturgies of Holy Week like a reflection of Jesus.

Power, fear, hatred and prejudice nailed Jesus to the cross – and pushed poisonous chemicals into the body of Todd Willingham. Surely if we believe in resurrection then we are challenged to reject the abuse of power and the potential of fear, hatred and prejudice to destroy life? I find myself coming back to this call to transformation, that it is not enough to celebrate Easter as a day or a season, but that instead it must become a way of being for us. I'm finding that this Easter challenges me to acknowledge what within myself taps into fear, hatred and prejudice. I also find myself invited into that growing, surging affirmation of life proclaimed throughout creation. This Easter, I need to take my time and grow into it.

Learning the importance of a Catholic presence in politics

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

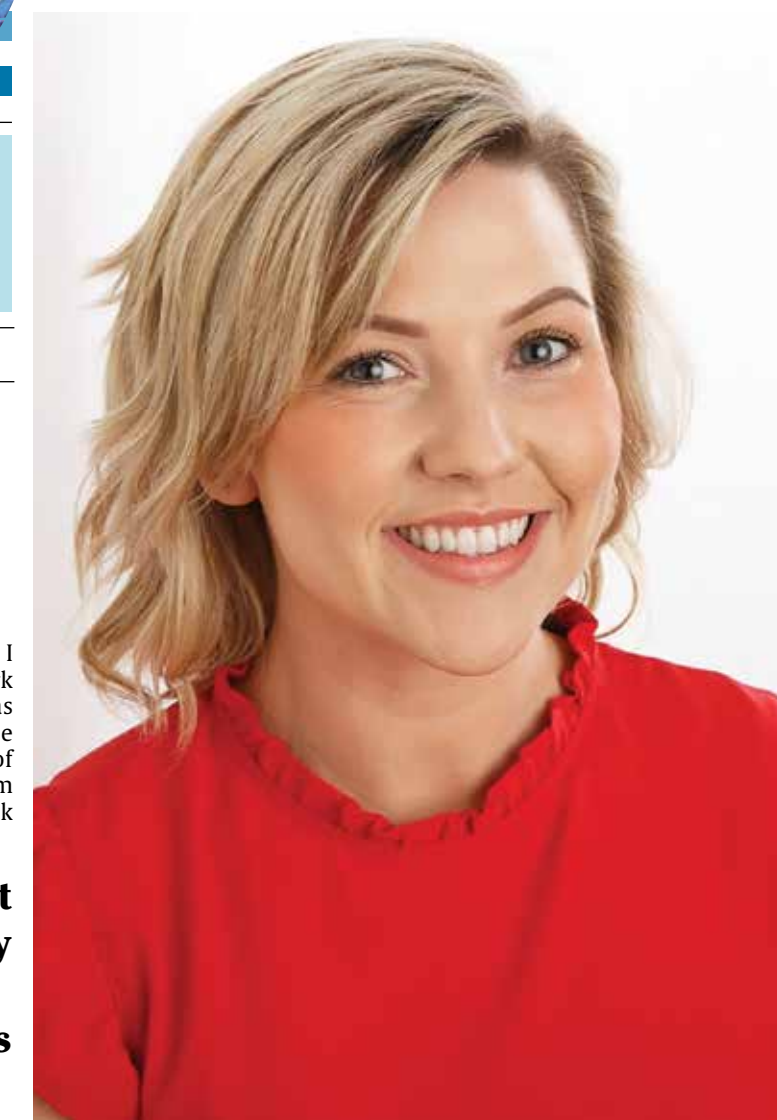
There is a temptation, when faced with the ease that abortion and similar evils are accepted in this country, to withdraw from the fight. It was exactly this temptation that Aontú representative for Cork North West Becky Kealy faced in 2018 – and ultimately resisted.

“When the referendum passed, I was just devastated like,” the Kanturk native tells *The Irish Catholic*. “I was like, that’s it, I’m so done with the world. I had this whole mindset of feck the whole lot of them now, I’m just going to live my life and just look after myself.”

“The turning point came when Ms Kealy was asked to be one of the main speakers at the Rally for Life in July 2019”

Aontú formed late in 2018 and in May 2019, Ms Kealy was asked if she’d consider standing for them in local elections. “I was thinking, what’s the point in doing that now because we can’t reverse what’s done,” Ms Kealy says. “I saw no light at the end of the tunnel. So I said no, I was just not interested.”

The turning point came when Ms Kealy was asked to be one of the main speakers at the Rally for Life in July 2019. Expecting that few people would turn up, she was amazed to see a huge crowd.



“When I saw everyone, it gave me another gee-up. I thought, ok I had my time out, we do have to fight and start new campaigns and stuff like that,” Ms Kealy says. “Then, Paddy Scully, who stood in the local elections in Kanturk in May, he came to me and said look, would you get involved. Things don’t look too good now, but we need to be in politics. That’s where we need to be, we need to be legislators.”

“I saw what he was saying and I saw light again and a battle coming up, a more long term one. I prayed

about it and I had other people pray for me as well. As much as they were praying for me to run and get elected, they all saw the sacrifices I would have to make and how hard it would be, so we all just wanted what God’s will was.”

Election

“I made a decision and I was at peace about it. That was August 2019. I was selected as a candidate then for the next general election in October 2019 and then the election was called 2020. So I hardly had

time to think!”

Though she wasn’t successful in getting elected in 2020, the campaign was a significant moment in what had been a two-year *volte face* for Ms Kealy. Before the Save the Eight campaign in 2018, she admits that she “had strayed from God” and gone down the wrong paths.

“We were brought up in the Faith, my mother’s a fierce woman of faith,” Ms Kealy explains. “Then you hit your teenage years and stuff was messy at home, so I strayed away from God. I always knew he was there but I wanted to try and convince myself that he wasn’t so that I could do my own thing. I went down all the wrong roads, did all the wrong stuff.”

“Ms Kealy’s return to the Faith and the beginning of her political career were closely intertwined”

“Then what happened was I started at UCC and I was still away from God but it was when the posters were going up about Repeal of the 8th – I didn’t even know what it was until I asked someone and they said, oh yeah, they’re trying to legalise abortion in Ireland. I remembered my mother telling us what abortion was when we were young. There was a prayer up on a fridge against abortion and I remember asking her and her telling me.

“Something just set-off inside me, a fire just erupted and I went I’m going to do everything that I can to stop this bad thing like. That’s when I got involved in campaigning. Fr Marius had met my mother at a prayer night one night and she said I’ve a daughter in UCC and he was like, oh tell her come to the Catholic society. So I

did, I went and I remember it was really cringe at the start but I stuck with it. Then I got in touch with Fr Maurice Colgan and I started getting new friends, good friends, and started campaigning then for the 8th.”

Ms Kealy’s return to the Faith and the beginning of her political career were closely intertwined, so it is not a surprise that she believes her personal beliefs and her political actions should not be separate.

“You can represent the people in your constituency as long as it’s in line with your own principles,” Ms Kealy says definitively. “We’re talking about abortion at the end of the day. Go into Kanturk, there’s no one thinking about it or talking about it, very little.”

“The majority know it’s the bread and butter issues. They worry about their kids going off to school, trying to afford mortgages, all these day-to-day things that go on inside a household. You need to meet people where they’re at. When I think of it, when Jesus was here, the man who had no sight, the man whose arm he prayed over and it grew back.”

Moral issues

“He just did that, he helped them with the issues they wanted. He didn’t go preaching to them about homosexuality or abortion or gay marriage or any of these things. He just met them where they’re at and that’s what I’m trying to do. Obviously when it comes to the big moral issues, when it comes up again – say there’s another referendum on abortion – I’m going to stick to my guns and I’m representing the people in my constituency who think along those lines.”

Ms Kealy is confident that she will be elected at some point, that God wants her in power. For now, she is content to “commit myself to serving people and making the quality of their life better”.

How to put an end to uninvited relationship advice

A close friend of mine loves to give me advice about my personal life. She is very keen on telling me what to do and I am fed up. How should I deal with this?

The first thing you have to consider is what is your friend’s intention. Is she genuinely looking out for you or just being overbearing? On the one hand, your friend might genuinely have no idea that she is overstepping the mark.

On the other hand, there could be undertones of jealousy or other motivating factors that are not well-intentioned. Then you have to examine yourself. Are you suddenly changing the goalposts? Have you gone from allowing advice and discussion on your relationship to suddenly taking it off the table? You will need to understand these things in order to be able to approach and discuss the changing dynamic of your friendship.

Perhaps you were looking for lots of advice in the early stages of your relationship and now that things are going well you feel advice is no longer needed. But have you explained this?

You also need to be honest with yourself. Is your

friend being overbearing or are they giving you good advice that you don’t want to hear.

Sometimes real friends tell you what you need to hear rather than what you want to hear, even when it might be difficult to hear.

Ultimately, your relationship is about two people not three. Once you have addressed these questions you might feel like avoiding the person, but the best thing to do is deal with it head-on so that as a result your friendship isn’t badly affected.

The next time a piece of unsolicited advice comes your way, just be honest, say you really appreciate the advice but you are happy how things are progressing and will ask for help if you need it. This will ensure your friend won’t feel you’re shutting them out completely. If they offer an opinion in future, start with a gentle reminder of your discussion, then try to change the subject to another topic.

Important

It’s really important this is said with love and not on the attack or putting your friend on the defensive.

Stay calm and warm, that way they will be more likely to properly absorb what you are saying. Of course, you still have to be prepared for a defensive reaction, “I was only trying to help”. Once again, reassure them of your appreciation of their friendship, say you really value all the chats and advice you have been given to date.

It’s important to let your friend know you are happy in your relationship, make it clear that you are different people and consequently might deal with situations and relationships differently. It’s also important to find new things to share and talk about. Ask for advice in another area of life, tell them you could do with some tips and their opinion that your friend might be able to help you with.



Wendy Grace



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Tributes highlight the role of faith in duke's long life

With Covid-19 dominating the news and current affairs programming it is usually only very bad news that knocks it off the top spot.

And so it was last Friday, especially in the British media, when news was announced of the death of Prince Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh. It was wall-to-wall coverage in a way we rarely see. Even that national institution that is *Gardeners' World* was bumped off its Friday night slot on BBC Two, while BBC Four programmes were suspended that same night. However, BBC was then inundated with complaints about the blanket coverage. English republicans, estimated at around 25% of the British public on **Ayesha Hazarika** (Times Radio, Saturday), kept a fairly low-profile as the tributes flooded in and media outlets grabbed anyone they could find from the relatively large pool of royal watchers.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols gave a gracious assessment on **Times Radio Breakfast** last Saturday morning. He had met the duke, including while they waited together for the arrival of Pope Benedict XVI at Edinburgh airports for the papal visit in 2010. He found him to be a man of wit, spirit and forthright opinion. Presenter Luke Wilson quoted Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby's reference to the prince's "outstanding exam-



Children place flowers outside Windsor Castle following news of the death of Prince Philip at the weekend. Photo: CNS

ple of Christian service" and Cardinal Nichols suggested that "the inspiration in his life was of his faith". He believed this faith would support the family now and thought that the comparative privacy afforded by Covid-19 restrictions on the funeral would help the royal family, with its "complexity of dynamics", to find "healing and fresh resourcefulness". The cardinal also referenced the influence of the duke's mother, Princess Alice, who eventually became a nun in the Greek Orthodox Church and devoted herself to serving the poor.

Her unusual story, which was new to me, inspired an intriguing episode of **The Crown** (Netflix) and another touching episode featured the

duke finding a renewed interest in his faith when he visited a group of Anglican clergy in retreat because they were getting burnt out. It's a sign of our media saturated age that many know of the duke, or at least that particular and not always appealing portrayal of him, mainly through the Netflix series and I suspect it will become 'trending' again.

At home, sadly, the story that pushed coronavirus most consistently down the news priorities was the awful street violence in the North. Those of us who remember the 'Troubles' will have experienced the revival of some very unpleasant memories. "Blessed are the Peacemakers", says the risen Lord, and responsible leaders have been

urging calm. But some media commentators have suggested the influence of irresponsible leaders, sinister figures in the background that are using and manipulating the young people involved. Others commentators have called it "recreational rioting" and there also seems much truth in that. Worst of all is the sectarian nature of the violence, with, ironically, the barriers of the 'peace line' between the communities, becoming a particular flashpoint.

These developments were a serious worry to clergy from both communities in the North. On **Sunday** (BBC Radio 4) Bishop Noel Treanor of Down and Connor expressed his concerns and called for "new, inventive

PICK OF THE WEEK

ALL OR NOTHING - SISTER CLARE CROCKETT
EWTN Sunday April 18, 9pm

When young Sr Clare Crockett's life was tragically cut short, her talents, infectious personality and deep love of God inspired people on three continents.

PANORAMA

BBC One Monday April 19, 7.35pm

Clive Myrie investigates allegations of racism in the Church of England, hearing stories of racist abuse and claims of a culture that creates a hostile environment for Christians of colour.

FAITH AND LIFE

EWTN Friday April 23, 8.30pm

Fr Patrick Peyton, nephew of the famous Rosary Priest discusses his famous uncle and his current work at Collooney Parish in Co. Mayo.

and creative steps" to support the Good Friday Agreement. Rev. David Bruce, Presbyterian moderator, thought the duke's death might have a calming influence out of respect but he feared this would just be temporary. On **Sunday Sequence** (BBC Radio Ulster) Fr Gary Donegan CP and Rev. Norman Hamilton, former Presbyterian moderator, were pretty much of one mind on the matter. Various they emphasised the important role played by clergy and community leaders on the ground engaging with disaffected young people who might never see the inside of a church. They wanted Church leaders to be in support of such initiatives, not standing back, protecting the institution and being afraid of making mistakes. Further,

political leaders need to tone down their language.

As I was writing an early draft of this column I got a notification from my RTÉ News app that broadcaster Shay Healy had died. I really liked him as a presenter, partly I think because he didn't take himself too seriously, partly because he was also a writer of funny songs (I dabble myself!) and also because he kept on working with dignity even as his Parkinson's disease made that very difficult for him.

Am I imagining things or are prominent people dying more regularly these days?

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



Pat O'Kelly



Music

Farewell dear Ronnie...a great woman has gone

A phone call from my good friend and pianist, Alison Young, on Easter Monday evening told me of the death of the doyenne of our musicians, Veronica Dunne, some hours previously.

The news was unexpected as despite her 93 years Ronnie, as she was affectionately known, was still teaching until relatively recently. Her passing brought the end of an era but, through her extraordinary progeny of pupils and 'grand-pupils', her legacy lives on. RIP dear Ronnie.

Family

Born in Dublin's Clontarf district on August 2, 1927 into the comfortable family of builder William Dunne and his wife Josephine, Ronnie



Veronica Dunne

had two siblings. Her brother Billo was 14 years older with sister May four years her senior. In the circumstances the late arrival developed a healthy streak of mischief. As the family was musical, it was discovered early on that Ronnie had a 'good ear' and a particularly clear voice -

qualities that were carefully nurtured.

Initial schooling took Ronnie to the Holy Faith in Clontarf and then the Dominicans in Eccles Street, from where she was expelled! Some time at Loreto 'on the Green' led finally to boarding with the Sacred Heart nuns at Mount Anville.

These establishments promoted music in their curricula.

Ronnie was also having voice lessons from Dublin's eminent Hubert Rooney who had been a pupil of celebrated Polish tenor Jean De Reszke in Paris. Believing Ronnie should continue her studies abroad he advised Milan. However, one of the Mount Anville sisters considered Rome a better option as Milan was still impoverished by the aftermath of World War II. So Rome it was.

Before her departure a chance meeting with charismatic Vatican official, Msgr. Hugh O'Flaherty, opened many doors for Ronnie when she arrived in the Eternal City in September 1947. The Monsignor also kept a close eye on her spiritual and temporal needs.

With occasional home trips in between, Ronnie's base was Rome until 1951.

During these visits she was soprano soloist in Verdi's *Requiem* under Jean Martinon for Radio Éireann in April 1950 at Dublin's Phoenix Hall and later that month made her DGOS debut as Micaëla (*Carmen*) under Moravian-born Vilém Tausky at the Gaiety.

Verdi

Reprising the Verdi *Requiem* the following year, under Italian conductor Francesco Mander at Dublin's Capitol Theatre, Ronnie repeated her Micaëla and added Marguerite (*Faust*) to her DGOS repertoire.

In April and May 1952 she was with the DGOS again, this time as Mimi (*La bohème*),

under the influential Karl Rankl who, as music director at Covent Garden was responsible for rebuilding the company after the war, and Norina (*Don Pasquale*) under Tausky.

More significantly July 1952 found Ronnie in the Teatro Nuovo in Milan as Mimi. Reviews were favourable with the *Corriere Lombardo's* heading in bold 'Voce d'Irlanda escordiente Mimi' continuing with "this young singer possesses the sweet and fresh voice of a lyric soprano and she uses it with great taste".

Attending all six performances and finding what he wanted, Covent Garden's general administrator, David Webster, invited Ronnie to London to audition for his guest conductor, Sir John Barbirolli. More anon.



BookReviews

Peter Costello



Eastertide and the coming of a new faith to Dublin



A modern marker on the reputed site of St Patrick's Well in Dublin.

Peter Costello

St Patrick's Day and Easter coming so closely together this year, set my mind running back over what we know about the earliest years of Christianity in Ireland, more especially around Dublin.

Despite the assurance with which many people speak about this period, there are many mysteries about the events of the process of 'national conversion' and how it came about. That what happened is not crystal clear is a result of Ireland's centuries of social turmoil, chaos, war and destruction, especially around Leinster and the Dublin region.

First bishop

According to the contemporary *Epitoma Chronicon* of Prosper of Aquitaine, in 431, "Palladius, having been ordained by Pope Celestine, is sent as first bishop to the Scotti [that is the Irish] believing in Christ". As Prosper, a layman, was close to Pope Celestine, this carries real weight.

“There are many mysteries about the events of the process of ‘national conversion’ and how it came about”

Yet his mission according to some Irish sources was a failure; and in due course some of his doings became confounded with those of St Patrick. Patrick's mission (if we can judge by remarks in his *Confessio*), may have been a matter of self-election: he simply sent himself to Ireland, answering

a personal call. But that may be a minority view, all part of the controversies over St Patrick.

But what is really interesting is that phrase the “Scotti believing in Christ”. This means Christians had already entered and settled in Ireland, perhaps from continental Europe through Ardmore, Waterford and Wexford; or from Wales (parts of which were Irish kingdoms then) through Eblana (as Dublin was originally called).

That there was a long-standing but undocumented trade through Eblana is suggested by the pattern of the roads across Ireland that focuses not Tara or Armagh but on Dublin Bay, and those from Anglesey and Chester leading in to the main road south ending in London.

However Hillarie Belloc, in his insightful, but now little read, book *The Road* (1923), points out that these date back to 'barbaric times', by which he means certainly pre-Roman. People regularly moved between the islands.

But the later, much-cultivated legends of St Patrick — such as the saint's dramatic encounter with the high king at Easter time at Slane — have almost obliterated Palladius and more importantly those pre-Palladian Christians.

Limited

Where our information is limited we have to be open-minded in thinking about what might have happened; and to compare Ireland's experiences with those of the early Christians who travelled the length Asia along trade routes far beyond the borders of the Roman Empire.

The destruction at the time of the Reformation of St Mary's Abbey on the north bank of the River Liffey, which housed the largest library in Ireland, must

have resulted in the destruction of goodness knows what records, annals, histories and sagas relating to ancient Dublin and Leinster: this is one of the greatest losses ever to Irish civilisation.

Yet while our lack of legendary, traditional and even historical details about the coming of Christianity to the Dublin region is a sad loss, it does not in the end affect the outcome of history.

“Where our information is limited we have to be open-minded in thinking about what might have happened”

We may not know exactly how it happened, whether through the mission of Palladius, the inevitable seepage beyond the Imperial frontier of a new belief, or the efforts of St Patrick, but Dublin became, long before the Vikings, and still remains, if not a Christian city, at least a city for Christians. That is something all Dubliners can still see for themselves, at least for the time being.

Those first Christians in Leinster and Eblana were travellers and traders rather like those in South Africa two centuries ago: with no bishop, perhaps no pastors: alone among pagan native tribes. These lone individual witnesses to the Faith they held in their souls are worth thinking about long before ever we think about any other apostles of Ireland.

Are these pioneers, rather than St Patrick, the true models for modern Irish Christians?

A wary look at work in an era



Robots, Ethics and the Future of Jobs
by Fr Seán McDonagh
SSC, with a foreword by
Karlin Lillington
(Messenger Publications,
€19.95/£18.95)

Ruadhán Jones

The Russian quasi-mystic and film director Andrei Tarkovsky was reputedly terrified about the implications of robots. He thought *The Terminator*, though by his own account a mediocre film, pushed “the frontier of cinema as art” for its vision of the future — one in which man and machine must fight for ascendancy.

“Fr McDonagh argues that rapid technological advancements could eradicate 40-50% of current jobs over the course of the next 20 years”

The apocalyptic visions of *The Terminator* are unlikely to be realised any time soon — but Fr Seán McDonagh believes that automation does pose a credible threat to the stability of human life and sets out in *Robots, Ethics and the Future of Jobs* to show how and why.

Fr McDonagh is a Columban missionary, author and



environmentalist theologian of repute. He spent over two decades working in the Philippines and has written numerous books on ecology and theology including *To Care for the Earth* (1986), *The Death of Life, The Horror of Extinction* (2004), *Climate Change: The Challenge to Us All* (2006), and *Laudato Si': An Irish Response* (2017).

Green theologian

With *To Care for the Earth*, Fr McDonagh was one of the first 'green theologians' to champion the environmental cause. With *Robots, Ethics and the Future of Jobs*, he is setting out with similar intent to raise awareness on the pressing issue of the automation of jobs.

Fr McDonagh argues that rapid technological advancements could eradicate 40-50% of current jobs over the course of the next 20 years. As such, political and religious leaders should act fast to protect the most vulnerable.

Fr McDonagh balances the good with the bad, as best he can. Each chapter opens with an overview of the positive advancements made. For example, new mining technology will hopefully negate the need for men and women — even children — to undertake often dangerous and back-breaking work. The flipside is it will also eradicate jobs for those who often need them badly.

The book ranges widely, touching on issues from

“Fr Seán McDonagh believes that automation does pose a credible threat to the stability of human life”

Readers should note that *The Irish Catholic* circulates throughout the island of Ireland and the book prices listed are the retail price recommended by the Irish or British publishers, in either euros or sterling, as a general indication of what purchasers may expect to pay.

the future of of rapid change



Author Fr Seán McDonagh SSC.

artificial intelligence and the need for ethical guidelines, to surveillance capitalism and the potential dangers of the unregulated commodification of personal data. Each topic receives its own chapter – there are 11 in all – but the book is quite short. It's a summary of knowledge in the public domain rather than an in-depth study, as is indicated by the references, which are typically newspapers or magazines rather than studies.

“The book ranges widely, touching on issues from artificial intelligence and the need for ethical guidelines”

This has its pros and cons. As someone with a fledgling interest in the subject, it provided a useful

introduction. It is astonishing to consider the breadth of the issue – it is not limited to truckers and retailers, but also to high-end economic work, from factories in Bangladesh to stockbrokers in New York.

Changes

The scale of the changes and the speed at which they take place makes it hard to legislate or to comprehend the extent to which the shape of society may be affected. This is where the disadvantage comes in.

By condensing so much information into 180 pages, Fr McDonagh cannot deep-dive into the complex projections and speculations inherent in predicting the future of any field.

While he does mention historical examples of industrial revolutions, the book would have benefitted from detailed analysis of how these revolutions preceded and how our own potential revolution compares. Equally,

that much of the information is already publicly available means those who are sceptical or on the fence are unlikely to be convinced, though it may spark further research on their own.

“Fr McDonagh cannot deep-dive into the complex projections and speculations inherent in predicting the future of any field”

I had been warned beforehand that Fr McDonagh's prose can be dense and as such that it may be a slow read. That wasn't the case, the prose being pithy, but I came away wishing it had been more complex. While an engaging introduction to the subject, it arguably needed a longer, more detailed treatment.

The Kennedy legacy in a long perspective

From Whence I Came: The Kennedy Legacy, Ireland and America, edited by Brian Murphy and Donnacha Ó Beacháin (Merrion Press, €19.95/£17.95)

Joe Carroll

One would think that there is little new to be explored in the Kennedy-Ireland relationship 60 years after John F. Kennedy's election as the first Catholic President of the United States and its youngest.

But this book based on contributions to the annual Kennedy Summer School in New Ross provides many new insights. It is also a tribute to the school's founder, the political analyst, Noel Whelan, who died prematurely last year. With another Catholic installed in the White House it gains a topical interest for readers.

The 15 essays are based on revised talks to the school by Irish historians and political figures from the US. The main characters are, of course, Jack and his younger brothers, Robert and Edward but there are also chapters on Barack Obama and the campaign of Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primaries against Hillary Clinton.

Kennedy saga

The less glamorous side of the Kennedy saga is explored by local historian, Celestine Murphy, who has researched the Wexford roots of the overlooked great-grandmother of the president, Bridget Murphy. She met and married in Boston, the 'first' Kennedy, Patrick, soon after he emigrated from New Ross in 1849. He died of consumption after nine years of marriage leaving her with four young children. It was thanks to Bridget's efforts that the Kennedys survived and were launched on the path to the White House. Her grandson, Joe, was the multi-millionaire who made it happen.

Donncha Ó Beacháin spells out how much Joseph spent in bribes, donations and television advertising in getting his son, into the House of Representatives, the Senate and then the White House. There was no way his opponents could match this wealth. As Tip O'Neill remarked admiringly, "Money makes miracles".

Chances

Joe himself may have weighed his chances of the presidency, but when his patron, Franklin D. Roosevelt, went on to serve a third and a partial fourth term any chance was gone and Joe concentrated on clearing the way for his son. Historian Michael Kennedy considers

Joe's claim that as US ambassador to London in 1939, he played a role in the success of the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1938 which gave the Treaty ports back to Ireland and ended the Economic War. But there is no evidence he had any impact on the negotiations which were essentially between Éamon de Valera and Neville Chamberlain.

How President Kennedy's visit to Ireland in June 1963 was filmed is analysed by film historian, Harvey O'Brien, who critiques the four screen versions which ensued.

He insists that overlooked in all versions and apparently by the Fianna Fáil government of the day was that Kennedy in his address to the joint Houses of the Oireachtas was between the lines urging Ireland to play a more active role in the defence of the West against communism.

He digs out a 1952 memo by Mr Kennedy in his senate campaign in which he described Ireland as "an indispensable link in the chain of European defence." In the build-up to the 1963 visit the then Minister for External Affairs, Frank Aiken, pushed strongly for Mr Kennedy to take an anti-partition line but there was no chance of that. Mr Kennedy was to meet the British prime minister, Harold Macmillan, after the Irish visit to discuss a bigger role for Britain in the nuclear defence of Europe. It was not a time to raise the prospect of the 'dreary steeples' of Fermanagh.

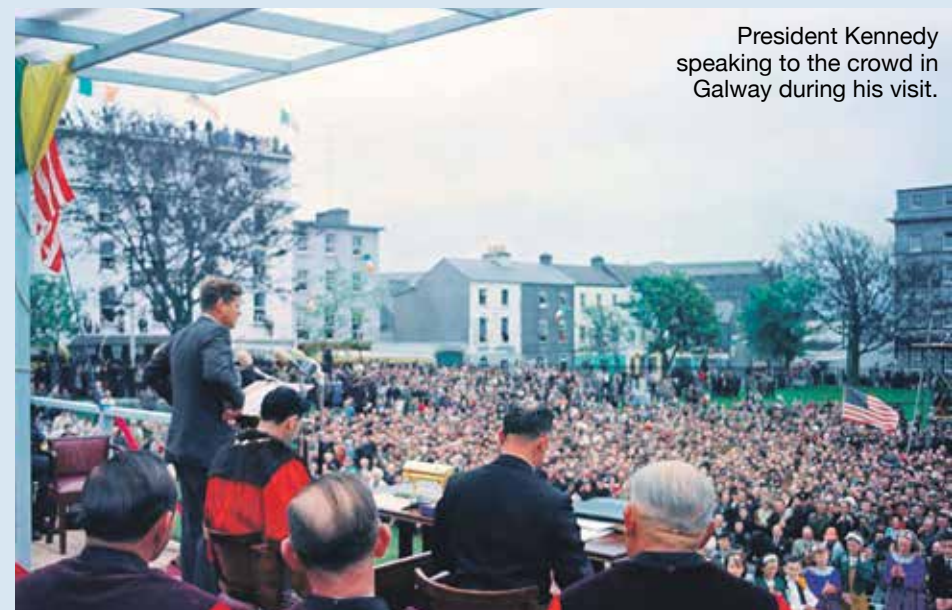
Felix Larkin asks the question: 'how good a President was he?' In domestic policy, he engaged cautiously with the civil rights issue aware of how much he depended on the votes of the bigoted south. But he was spurred into action over the ban on black students at a university in Alabama.

Policy

In foreign policy he showed courage and sure judgement as he dealt with the Cuban missile crisis, the *Test Ban Treaty* and Berlin. The serial-womanising by Mr Kennedy even as president only emerged in public long after his death, but Mr Larkin says that while reflecting badly on him as a human being it is not "strictly relevant to his standing as a leader or as a president".

The verdict? He endorses that of the President Kennedy biographer, Robert Dallek, that the thousand days of Kennedy "inspired visions of a less divisive nation and world, and demonstrated that America was still the last best hope of mankind".

❗ All editor royalties from this book are being donated to the New Ross Community Hospital, a registered Irish charity run by a voluntary board of directors.



President Kennedy speaking to the crowd in Galway during his visit.

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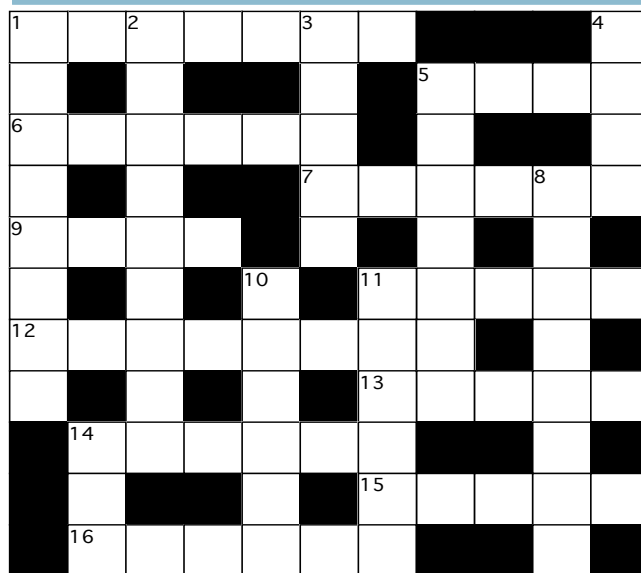
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Crossword Junior

Gordius 378



Across

- 1 A person who is hospital in order to get well (7)
 5 This river flows through the city of Waterford (4)
 6 Little Red _____ Hood (6)
 7 You use it to hit a sliotar (6)
 9 Ballina and Westport are in this county (4)
 11 The feeling of being furious (5)
 12 Putting on your clothes (8)
 13 There are 100 of these coins in a euro (5)
 14 This Ulster county is nicknamed 'The Orchard of Ireland' (6)
 15 Go around a planet (5)
 16 Rock travelling in space (6)

Down

- 1 They were built in Ancient Egypt (8)
 2 The most famous kind of cuddly toy (5,4)
 3 The time of darkness (5)
 4 City where the famous Wooden Horse was used (4)
 5 Weird (7)
 8 Something like this can be plugged in (8)
 10 Get away from being captured (7)
 11 It helps stop a boat from drifting (6)
 14 Part of the body between your shoulder and your wrist (3)

SOLUTIONS, APRIL 8

GORDIUS NO. 502

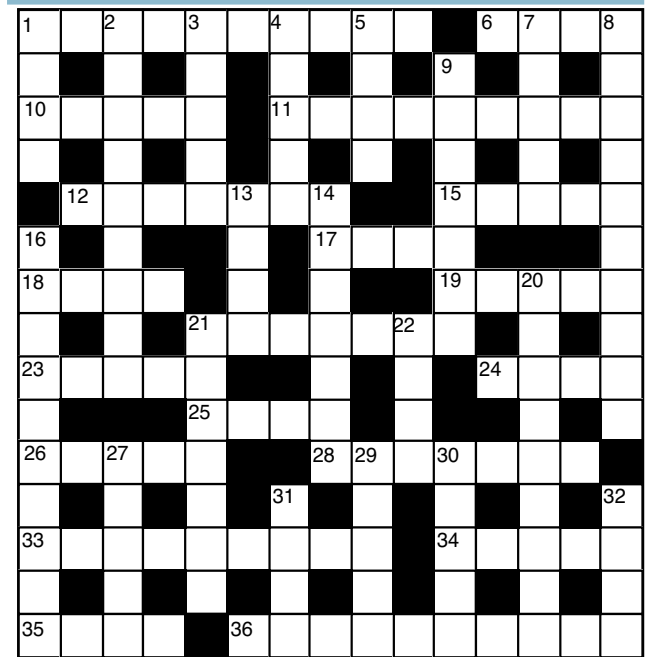
Across — 1 Lob 3 Search party 8 Little 9 Paraffin 10 Iowan 11 Ditch 13 Files 15 Praying mantis 16 Quieter 20 Spade 21 Nazis 23 Blame 24 Adenoids 26 Disapproval 27 DIY
Down — 1 Feature film 2 Nose dive 3 Demur 4 Warship 5 Grebe 6 Ormolu 7 Mod 12 Tetrahedron 13 Frost 14 Gully 17 Thank you 18 Van Dyke 19 Madras 22 Hence 23 Pared 24 Sou

CHILDREN'S No. 377

Across — 1 Gryffindor 6 Log cabin 7 Ear 8 Insects 11 Ten 12 Gorilla 15 Author 17 Design 18 League 19 Robots
Down — 1 Golden eagle 2 Yogurt 3 Flamingo 4 Nails 5 Right 9 Exits 10 Sea 13 Order 14 Light 16 Huge

Crossword

Gordius 503



Across

- 1 Is it a sport or a strangely lovely dance? (10)
 6 Irish winner of the 1925 Nobel Prize for Literature (4)
 10 Jewish teacher (5)
 11 Started, instituted (9)
 12 & 15 Is one's sister's husband a legal monk? (7-2-3)
 17 Draught cattle (4)
 18 South East Asian country, capital Vientiane (4)
 19 A man on his wedding day (5)
 21 Members of the Society of Jesus (7)
 23 Issue distributed for Countdown's Ms Dent (5)
 24 First after this (4)
 25 Beach material (4)
 26 Items of footwear (5)
 28 Withhold one's vote (7)
 33 I hate rock served as a vegetable (9)
 34 Finely chopped meat (5)
 35 Organs of hearing (4)
 36 Are they turf accountants or publishers? (9)

Down

- 3 Eject from a dwelling (5)
 4 Salt water (5)
 5 Produced an egg (4)
 7 Inn, guesthouse (5)
 8 Did the bereaved woman strike for what Jesus deemed the most valuable contribution? (6,4)
 9 Scandinavian marauders (7)
 13 Bee-house (4)
 14 There's confusion round at a Dublin maternity hospital (7)
 16 No stubble left? That was a near thing! (5,5)
 20 Readiness to do what one is told (9)
 21 Shylock's daughter, or sleuth Ms Fletcher (7)
 22 Pulls at (4)
 27 Riverside or marine mammal (5)
 29 As cheerless as Dickens' house (5)
 30 City in Florida found in the Stamp Archive (5)
 31 Sport played on horseback (4)
 32 Entreats, pleads earnestly (4)

Sudoku Corner

378

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 377

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

Last week's Hard 377

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

Notebook

Fr Conor McDonough OP



Creation's praise of God endures unceasingly

DURING THE EASTER Octave we friars here in St Saviour's in Dublin sang lauds each day in our little oratory. It's a quiet spot, certainly quieter than our church, whose doors open to a busy street. One morning as we sang I noticed a bright, delicate voice combining with our own chant: a bird in the alley outside was joining her praises to ours.

That might seem like a strange thing to say. Birds are not rational animals, after all, as we are. They're not capable of knowing and loving God in the way we do. But there is indeed a sense in which they – and all living things – give praise to God. The scriptures speak often of this, as, for example, in the Song of the Three Young Men (Book of Daniel 3). Sung in the Divine Office every Sunday morning, it calls on all of creation to bless the Lord: "creatures of the sea, wild beasts and tame, every bird in the sky, bless the Lord".

Living

All living things are – after all – God's creatures: "I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine" (Psalm 50:11). Simply by existing, by living, and, yes, by singing, God's creatures give glory to him. Their praise of God is not conscious, as ours is, but is magnificent



Kites in the form of birds are flown by environmental activists in St Peter's Square at the Vatican. Photo: CNS

in its own way. It was a song already ancient when our first parents were given immortal souls, and whereas our praise sometimes falters, creation's praise of God endures unceasingly. Whenever we consciously turn our minds and hearts to God in worship, we are simply joining this deep, omnipresent music.

Of all living things, birds are perhaps most conspicuous in their praise. Like the Church at worship, birds sing in gorgeous abundance, not sparingly. And just as our hearts are lifted up in praise, so the flight of birds lifts them to the heights. Again and again, the Scriptures name these

flying beasts with the wonderful name, "the birds of the heavens".

Writer

A second-century writer from North Africa, Tertullian, encouraging his fellow Christians to pray, pointed them to the example of birds: "All creation prays... The birds taking flight lift themselves up to heaven and instead of hands spread out their wings, while singing what sounds to us like prayer."

In Ireland too, the birds of the heavens feature in the Christian imagination. The legend of St Brendan's sea-journey to the Land of

Promise of the Saints, read throughout Europe, includes a wonderful account of the 'Paradise of the Birds'. At Easter, Brendan and his monks arrive at an island, "well-wooded and covered with flowers". They find on the island a tree with an enormous flock of snow-white birds perched silently on its branches. One of the birds flies down to Brendan – its wings tinkling like bells – and explains that the Irish monks are to rest and praise God with them throughout the Easter Octave.

Vespers

The monks wait, and at the hour of vespers, the birds suddenly all clap their wings together and begin to sing the hymns and psalms which the monks know and love so well. At every hour of the Divine Office the birds praise God "with voice and wing", and the monks pray with them in "mutual joy". On that island, the monks never grew tired of praise: the singing of the birds "was a delight ever new to them".

The story of St Brendan's voyage might be fantastical, but it tells the truth: the birds of the heavens, with all creation, are continually praising their maker. In this season of Easter, with voice and wing the birds of heaven invite us to delight anew in the worship of God at the heart of his world.

Keeping our gaze fixed on Christ...

● Do you know what an aviary is? I don't mean the kind of aviary in which birds are enclosed, but a genre of literature, popular in the Middle Ages, describing the appearance and behaviour of birds, as well as their moral and spiritual meanings. They were popular with preachers, who would pepper their sermons with exhortations drawing on our feathered friends. Don't be like the vulture, they would say, hanging around the deathly stench of sin. Don't be like the jay, chattering your gossip everywhere. Don't be like the goose, over-anxious about your safety. Instead, be chaste like the turtledove, penitent like the raven, intelligent like the rooster. And keep your eyes always on the risen Christ, the phoenix who rises from the ashes.



HELP TRAIN A YOUNG MAN FOR THE MISSIONARY PRIESTHOOD

YOUR EASTER GIFT TO OUR RISEN SAVIOUR



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

The great majority of young men who come forward to offer their lives to God, and His people, come from poor families. Their parents do not have the means to support them financially. The cost of educating and maintaining seminarians is often a heavy burden on the Religious Orders. It costs approximately €100 a month (€1,200 a year) to feed, clothe and educate a student for the priesthood. We appeal wholeheartedly, this Easter/Pentecost, to all readers to help train and support a candidate for the priesthood.

Any donation you can send will be most gratefully received, and will be sent without deduction, to help to train a young man for the priesthood.

EVERY EURO YOU SEND WILL BE VERY GRATEFULLY RECEIVED AND FORWARDED WITHOUT DEDUCTION.



We wish all our friends and benefactors a very happy and blessed Easter.

A NOVENA OF MASSES FOR YOUR INTENTIONS

We are arranging for a Novena of Masses to be offered for your intentions during Easter as a mark of gratitude for your kindness and support throughout the year.

May Our Risen Saviour bring you His richest blessings, peace and happiness.

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In these fraught times, missionary priests rely more than ever on stipends for their daily subsistence and for helping the poorest of their congregations. The Little Way Association will convey your stipends and your intentions to the clergy overseas. We like to send a minimum of €6 or more for each Mass.

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€..... **MASS OFFERINGS**
(Please state no. of Masses _____)
€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

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Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

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Address

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