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The Irish Catholic

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Holding on to hope Pages 10-11



GRAIGUECULLEN & KILLESBIN

Leaving no one behind Pages 12-13



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Medjugorje trips get papal green light

Greg Daly

Pope Francis' decision to allow priests to lead formal parish pilgrimages to Medjugorje, where Mary has allegedly been appearing since 1981, has been enthusiastically welcomed by leading Irish promoters of the pilgrimage site.

Over two years after Archbishop Henryk Hosier of Warszawa-Praga was named as the Pope's special envoy to the Bosnia-Herzegovina shrine, tasked with evaluating the needs of pilgrims there, the Vatican has announced that the Pope will allow organised official pilgrimages there.

The Vatican has, however, stressed the Pontiff's decision should not be read as an authentication of the alleged apparitions.

"Of course we welcome it, because it opens up the whole place," Paul Wallace, chairperson of the

Don't miss the June 13 edition of The Irish Catholic for a special supplement on Medjugorje.



Medjugorje Council of Ireland, told *The Irish Catholic* regarding the May 12 announcement. "And it is a very special place in the history of the Catholic Church in the world, and for the future of the Church."

Hope

He expressed the hope that Irish clergy and bishops will lead official pilgrimages to the shrine, and that the announcement would lead to a rise in pilgrim numbers there.

"I believe this will accelerate visits to Medjugorje from the various dioceses, because this means that bishops can now support

pilgrimages to Medjugorje in the same way that they do to Lourdes," he said. "Now there's nothing to prevent bishops accompanying official diocesan groups to Medjugorje because it has received the imprimatur of the Pope. I think it's of massive significance."

The shrine has already proven especially valuable in how it has boosted sacramental devotion, he said. "It's a place of prayer and conversion. There have been big conversions there of people going back to two major sacraments of our Faith, Confession and the Eucharist. People go back to going to Confession

and go back to receiving the Eucharist on a regular basis."

With mercy being a central theme of Pope Francis' papacy, Mr Wallace said Medjugorje's role as "the Confessional of the world" is "up his alley, really".

Important

Mary Field, who co-ordinates pilgrimages to the shrine from Dublin-based Marian Pilgrimages, agreed that the development is enormously important.

"It's great to hear some kind of recognition from the Pope," she said. "I know there are certain limitations on that and groups going in keeping within the parish rules, but it's so positive. They've recognised the fruits of Medjugorje and the constant flow of pilgrims there and the amount of people taking Confession while they're there."

Special day for Julianne



Julianne Mahon of St Patrick's NS, Slane, is confirmed by Meath's Bishop Tom Deenihan in St Patrick's Church.

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An altar for the ages is blessed

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Michael Kelly's Editor's Comment returns in September

Persecuted Christian Bibi makes escape to Canada

Persecuted Christian Asia Bibi, who spent eight years on death row until her release last year, has escaped Pakistan and reached Canada last week. She is now reunited with her family. Ms Bibi was falsely accused of insulting Muhammad and was subjected to Pakistan's draconian blasphemy laws.



Mixed response to Pope's new safeguarding directive

Greg Daly

There has been a mixed reaction in Ireland to norms published by Pope Francis to tackle abuse and cover-up in the Church.

Archbishop Eamon Martin has hailed *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* ('You are the Light of the World'), the Pope's apostolic letter on safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults as "a significant move for the global Church".

Commenting on how soon the letter has come after February's Vatican gathering of bishops on the protection of minors in the Church, Archbishop Martin said: "I am pleased to see that Pope Francis has so quickly issued further specific concrete actions to deal with the issue of abuse."

Dr Martin detailed how abuse survivors and the faithful in general expect the Church to model best practice

in all areas of safeguarding, and praised the document as an example of the Church's commitment to listening to and learning from survivors.

"This continual work is extremely important in the path of purification in the Church," he said, adding that the letter affirms many practices already being observed in Ireland.

While agreeing that much of the letter's content is "excellent", however, leading child-protection campaigner Marie Collins said the document falls short by not detailing how the rules would be enforced.

"There are no sanctions," she told *The Irish Catholic*. "You can have all the golden rules you like, but if there's no sanctions to be imposed if you ignore them then they're not worth anything."

"They're there, but they're only an aspiration if there aren't any consequences for ignoring them. That's the big

problem with them as far as I can see: there is nothing set down as to what the consequences would be if you ignore them or don't follow them."

In addition, she said, a failure to encourage reporting of abuse to statutory authorities remains a problem with the policy.

"Even though it's very comprehensive about reporting it doesn't include external reporting in places where it's not mandatory," she said. "In other words if you can be committing a criminal offence by not reporting then you have to report, but apart from that it's basically not included at all. There's not even an encouragement there to report to the authorities."

Priests hit out at Pope's 'women deacon' remarks

Colm Fitzpatrick

A group which represents more than 1,000 Irish priests has said Pope Francis' comments about the status of women deacons is a "major disappointment".

The reaction comes after the Pope revealed that the 2016 commission he appointed to study women deacons in the early Church could not reach a consensus on whether female ordination was the same as its male counterpart. "We had come to expect reactions like this from previous Popes, but we thought Francis was different, and consequently our disappointment is greater," the Association of Catholic Priests said in response to the Pope's comments.

"The equality of women is critical for the credibility and the future of the Church. Introducing women deacons is such a minimalist step that if he cannot move on that, there is little or no prospect of any real movement towards equality."

The group added that the Pontiff's remarks on female deacons "confirms that women are not good enough" and that in the eyes of the official Church, "men are more worthy than women".

"It confirms that the Church continues to be a clerical hierarchical patriarchy. It confirms that injustice is built into the heart of the Church. This is an enormous blow to reforming the Church and bringing it into the 21st Century."



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Dominican Rosary priest goes to final reward

Ireland's very own 'Rosary priest' has died, aged 97.

Fr Gabriel Harty OP, the senior member of Ireland's Dominican province, passed away on Thursday in Drogheda's Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital.

Known as 'the Rosary Priest of Ireland', Fr Harty was known for his decades of promoting the Rosary through preaching, missions and publication of books, pamphlets and CDs. He spent several decades as the director of Ireland's Rosary Apostolate and Confraternity, and is the author of *The Riches of the Rosary* and a memoir, *Make the Wild Roses Bloom*.

Chaplain

Fr Harty had been based in Dundalk, which he first visited in 1954 when he blessed a statue of Mary for staff at PJ Carrolls during the Marian year. A popular figure in the town, where he was known as 'Fr Gus', he was chaplain to St Malachy's Girls NS, with one former pupil writing to Pope Francis to tell him of the priest's work. The Pope subsequently sent him a set of Rosary beads he had blessed.

Fr Harty was buried on Monday in Dundalk's St Patrick's Cemetery.

'Daring' Irish missionary who died in hit-and-run built peace among faiths

Chai Brady

The community of an Oblate priest who was killed in a hit-and-run in Roscommon over the weekend are "devastated" at the loss.

The retired but "very active" Fr Michael Guckian OMI (81) was hit by a car at 11pm on Saturday while walking back to his vehicle on a country road. He lived with the Oblates in Mary Immaculate Parish in Inchicore, Co. Dublin, but was spending time with relatives in Keadue.

Fr Guckian ministered

in the Philippines for over 30 years before returning to Ireland in 1999. He served in parishes, schools, a retreat house, but foremost he was among non-Christian communities.

After serving in several Muslim-dominated areas he was assigned to the Vicariate of Sulu, the most southern part of the Philippines, which has a population that is 97% non-Catholic.

In a statement given to this paper by the Oblates they said Fr Guckian accepted these tough assignments "even when

the Muslim rebellion was at its height in the Sulu archipelago".

"His daring missionary spirit in building peace among peoples of diverse faith in a foreign mission is a loving historic legacy bequeathed to the OMI Philippine Province." In the 1990s the security situation in Jolo worsened to "include threats to his life and kidnapping". It was then that he was transferred to Manila to work as a spiritual director.

The Oblates added that his "valuable missionary presence and activities for

the poorest of the poor in the most difficult and dangerous mission...is a great inspiration", noting that his passion and enthusiasm for the poor "will forever be remembered with gratitude".

Healthy

"It's devastating," said friend Fr Des O'Donnell OMI, who lived with him in Inchicore. "Terrible shock to us because he was the most pastoral priest you could think of, he visited the people all the time in their homes and in the hospital. Despite his age of 81

he was very healthy."

"I knew him very well, I met him in the Philippines and he lived just across the corridor from me, so I'll miss him very much."

Fr Guckian's funeral took place this week.

The driver of the car, a 20-year-old male, later presented himself at Carrick-On-Shannon Garda station.

Witnesses or anyone with information are asked to contact Boyle Garda Station on 071-9664620, the Garda Confidential Line 1800-666-111 or any Garda Station.

Church cameras make worship safer – priest

Colm Fitzpatrick

CCTV cameras are helping to reduce crime in churches and are improving parishioners' safety, a priest has said.

Fr Declan Hurley of Navan's St Mary's parish told this newspaper that the church's security camera system increases the chances of criminals being identified, creating a safer environment for worship.

"We have the constant passage of people and quite often the gardai request to view our footage and they're very grateful for our assistance in that regard, so it does mean that CCTV is a positive for churches," Fr Hurley said, adding that the camera system "provides great security" for Mass-goers.

His comments come after a pickpocket in St Mary's Church was identified last weekend using video footage captured by the cameras. Although this system plays an invaluable role, Fr Hurley also stressed how helpful it is for attentive parishioners to notify a steward or parish caretaker about any suspicious behaviour they witness.

"When it comes to dangerous places for where you can have your bags lifted and pockets picked, Mass is very low down," he said.

Echoing these comments, Fr John Walsh OP of Dublin's St Saviour's church said that while some people are "weary" of entering churches in disadvantaged areas as security is compromised, the combination of CCTV footage and warning signs about them act as a crime deterrent.

"...It's good for the people to come to the church every day to be aware as well, so it's also a warning to people coming in – you are watched. We have CCTV cameras and signs," he said.

Huge demand for Catholic education in south Belfast

Staff reporter

There is an "urgent" need for extra Catholic school places in south Belfast to cater for demand, according to a report.

The research commissioned by the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) found that six of the 14 primary schools in the Castlereagh/Carryduff area are at, or almost at, capacity. This includes three Catholic and three integrated schools.

In the Parish of Drumbo and Carryduff 80 children over a three-year period have missed out on P1 places at two schools. St Bernard's

in south Belfast turned away almost 50 children in the same period.

As St Joseph's school in Carryduff couldn't meet the demand for Catholic education in the area, the report recommends an extension to the school building. One of Northern Ireland's newest schools, St Ita's in south Belfast, was opened in 2005 to cater for the influx of demand in the area.

The report also found that the "ethos" of a school was frequently mentioned by parents when asked how they decided which school would be the first preference for their child.

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St Catherine's FC celebrate winning the 2019 Catholic Cup at Maynooth.

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Facebook censor image of unborn baby, dubbing it 'graphic or violent'

Chai Brady

Facebook's decision to censor an image of a baby in utero is "totally unjustifiable" according to a Christian advocacy group.

The Iona Institute criticised the social media giant for placing a "warning screen" over their paid advertisement which depicts an unborn baby at 11 weeks gestation. Beside the foetus are the words 'still one of us'.

The image is blacked-out with the message 'This photo may be sensitive to some people' and gives the option to click 'Uncover photo'.

Warning

In a statement to this newspaper a Facebook spokesperson confirmed they were aware the ad was running with a warning screen and said: "In accordance with our policies, a photo or video containing graphic content may appear with a warning to let people know about the content before they view it and may only be visible to

people older than 18."

An Iona Institute spokesperson said the decision affects the whole pro-life movement. Last year the group ran a billboard campaign with the same image across the country which was "not censored as too violent or graphic to be shown".



The spokesperson said: "Facebook is an extremely powerful company which is now suppressing the ability of the pro-life movement to get out its message. It appears to put an image of a child in the womb on a par with an image of an aborted foetus."

Similar imagery to the ad is shown every day in maternity hospitals all over the world,

they added, "parents show these images to their children without any qualms".

The European Parliament posted a video on Facebook and YouTube this month called 'Choose Your Future – European Elections 23-26 May' which opens with a similar image of a foetus.

Facebook failed to answer a follow-up question before this paper went to print regarding these concerns, with their classification of the ad.

This comes as RTÉ reported that the START group, which represents about 250 medical professionals involved in abortion, estimate they've carried out 800-900 terminations per month. This would point to the overall abortion figure this year reaching 10,000.

The Irish Catholic will be hosting a pro-life conference entitled 'The Future is Pro-Life' on Saturday, May 25, at The Alex Hotel in Dublin 2. Tickets are €30. Contact: 01-6874028 or email: events@irishcatholic.ie



President Michael D. Higgins was among the hundreds of colleagues, friends and family including former President Mary Robinson who gathered in Maynooth on May 10 to celebrate the life of Sally O'Neill. The Dungannon woman, who was a stalwart of Trócaire for 37 years, was tragically killed in a car crash in Guatemala last month. Photo: Garry Walsh

Fine Gael 'no longer Christian Democrats' – former senator

Greg Daly

Fine Gael is out of step with the Christian Democrat parties with which it shares a platform in the European Parliament, according to a former senator who lost the party whip in 2013 when she voted against the legalisation of abortion.

"I just think that they've lost all sight of principle. That doesn't seem to matter to them anymore," Fidelma Healy Eames, who is running as an independent in the upcoming European elections for the Midlands-North-West constituency, told *The Irish Catholic*.

Fine Gael is a member of the European People's Party (EPP), which in its 2019 manifesto declares that Christian values must be protected.

"While Europe is diverse and nuanced, we have one

thing in common: in every town and city there is a Christian church," it states. "Christmas, Easter and Pentecost are holidays we all share. We have to protect our European way of life by preserving our Christian values and fundamental principles."

'Handy'

Adding that it would be up to the EPP to rule on whether Fine Gael should still be considered a Christian Democrat party, Dr Healy Eames said Fine Gael "has it handy".

"They can be whatever they want to be at home, but still be members of the EPP. It's the EPP that should be looking at its policy framework and seeing do people comply," she said.

Meanwhile, in a pastoral message to the Diocese of Elphin, Bishop Kevin Doran has urged Catholics to vote in

an informed way, remembering that votes for candidates are usually votes for their parties' policies.

"It is not enough to read the slogans," he said. "Neither does it make sense simply to vote for the same party that your parents and grandparents voted for."

Fine Gael did not respond to a request for comment.

New church book will 'inspire many'

Colm Fitzpatrick

A new book exploring how God can be found in the most dark and chaotic parts of life has been praised as inspiring.

The Jewel in the Mess, the latest book by the Bishop of Connor Rev. Alan Abernethy which was launched this month, details how Bishop Alan came to find the message of Jesus through his struggle with depression and his diagnosis with prostate cancer.

"Bishop Alan speaks with humility, courage and honesty about the desolation resulting in his father's gambling and about how this scarred him in terms of his mental health," Mr Martin O'Brien of Columba Press tells this newspaper.

"His positive approach to his prostate cancer, for which he is being currently treated, will inspire many. He does not flinch from addressing shortcomings in his own Church and poses searching questions about its structures," Mr O'Brien added.



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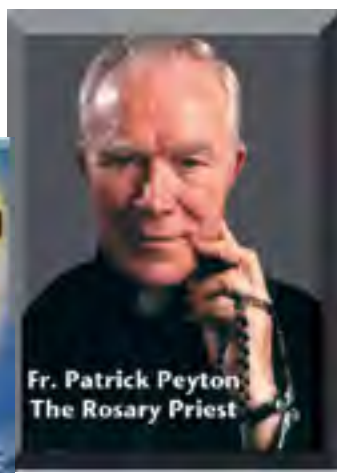
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I don't think I ever really understood loneliness when I was younger. Feeling lonely? Then join a club, develop an interest, get involved with a social project. The solution is in your own hands!

But perhaps we grow more understanding with age – hopefully so, anyway – and I have come to empathise, much more than I used to, about the issues of loneliness.

You can join all sorts of clubs and societies, and still feel, essentially, quite lonely. You can be in the middle of a crowd, and feel alone. You can attend events and still have the sensation of being solitary. However gregarious you try to be, you may experience that “existential loneliness” which I think St John of the Cross meant by “the dark night of the soul”.

Thoughts

And older people experience more loneliness because so many of those they knew and loved have departed this world. Their thoughts go back to their families and friends, their brothers and sisters, who once seemed to be always there – and just aren't materially present any more. Loneliness is not just being isolated – it's also about loss.

I once interviewed Marlene

Life isn't always rosy, but Que Sera, Sera



Mary Kenny

● **MANY WILL BE** the fond memories of Doris Day [pictured], songstress and film performer who featured in so many entertaining movies in years gone by and who died, aged 97, on Monday.

Calamity Jane was a defining DD film, though I don't think it would pass muster these days with the 'woke' cultural commissars. The storyline is about a tomboy gal who falls in love with an attractive hunk (Howard Keel) and then, under the aura of love, waxes feminine and womanly. (If they ever re-make it, *Calamity* will probably be re-cast as transgender.) But Ms Day dazzled as the buckskin sharpshooter and delivered her performance with brio.

Her most celebrated song was probably 'Que Sera, Sera' from Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. It's melodic and engaging, but the message is rather fatalistic – 'what will be, will be'. It implies we are the passive playthings of fate – 'kismet', rather than free will.

Dietrich when I was a young journalist and she was moving towards the senior years. She

had very little to say, except, in that smoky German accent, "all my friends are dead". How

depressing, I thought. But now I understand.

It's terrific that Eureka Secondary in Kells, Co Meath are promoting a social programme to alleviate loneliness among older people, calling it 'Never Home Alone', and urging the Department of Education to spread it wider. The idea is to bring older and younger people together, in various activities like dancing, arts and crafts, cooking and karaoke.

“Churchgoers everywhere are less likely to feel lonely”

It's a project that church communities could align themselves with. After all, churchgoers everywhere – according to Pew research in America – are less likely to feel isolated, and more likely to have that sense of community.

Loneliness can be ameliorated by more social awareness of its pervasiveness. Yet there's a part of the solitary experience that is inevitable in the journey of life.

A feel for the good old days

I was taken, last Sunday, to an Anglican Communion service at the Queen's Chapel of the Savoy, in central London. It's a beautiful little chapel often used by Queen Elizabeth; there are exquisite stained glass windows (one featuring St Brigid) and a stunningly pretty ceiling, decorated in a lattice design on a blue background.

Sunday morning service is tranquil, formal, with wonderful organ music, and prayers taken from the traditional Anglican *Prayer Book* – a Reformation translation of Catholic Latin prayers.

There were no women on the altar – the choir was all male, as were the readers and the chaplain, the Rev. Canon Peter Galloway. Communion was received kneeling at an altar rail, and reverently approached by the congregation. The whole tone was quiet and reflective, and it reminded me of pre-Vatican II devotions in the Catholic Church. It's not, of course, the same as the Mass, but there are similarities in style with old-fashioned Catholic devotion.

After the 11am service, the congregation was welcomed to refreshments, which includes a glass of wine – Her Majesty's hospitality, you might say.

In these ecumenical days we visit each other's churches in friendly fashion, and the Royal Chapel is certainly an interesting experience for visitors to London.



As a country, more than ever, we need principled people elected to public office. The Pro Life Campaign has produced research on the positions of candidates on abortion, in advance of the elections which we will review until polling day.

After voting for pro-life candidates, please use the proportional representation system wisely to ensure that the most aggressive pro-abortion campaigners do not get elected.

Share these findings and encourage others to vote and canvass for pro-life candidates. Thank you for playing your part.

Find out who the pro-life candidates are in your area
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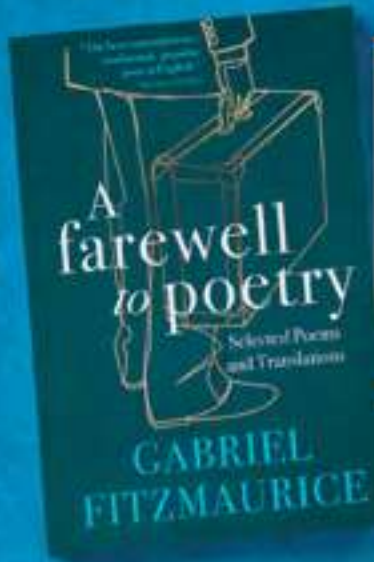
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Who should I vote for?



The PLC can help Catholics find and support pro-life candidates, writes **Eilís Mulroy**

All of the main political parties and indeed all of those at the national political level pay detailed and close attention to the local elections.

The reason they do so is because they provide a significant window of opportunity in which to assess and evaluate the mood of the country.

Significant losses or gains at the local level can have a major impact on the direction of national politics.

For proof of this, you need only look to the recent local elections in Britain where the governing party there lost over 1,000 local council seats.

This in turn has led to a dramatic shift in tone and policy direction from its parliamentary party leadership.

“I share the sense of betrayal that many people still feel by the positions taken by the leadership of the main national parties”

We too should not underestimate the capacity to shape national politics through our engagement at the local electoral level.

That is why the Pro Life Campaign has spent a lot of time recently engaged in compiling a detailed and systematic review of the pro-life positions of well over 2,000 local and European election candidates.

Informed

We have done so because we believe voters should have access to clear and informed data on where each candidate stands on the pro-life issue.



It has been our unfortunate experience that simply being able to accept the pro-life affirmations of some political candidates is no longer possible.

Review

To address that clear deficit and to offer voters a more detailed review of each candidate's history and record of support or opposition to pro-life concerns, we have compiled a comprehensive list which can be viewed at www.prolifecampaign.ie

During the upcoming local and European elections we are encouraging everyone to use their primary vote to support candidates with a record of consistent and principled support for pro-life issues.

After voting for pro-life candidates, we are urging people to use their other preferences wisely to ensure that the most aggressive pro-abortion campaigners do not get elected.

I share the sense of betrayal that many people still feel by the positions taken by the leadership of the main national parties.

But this should not lead us to act in a way that will ultimately be even more damaging to the cause of the unborn child.

Many local councillors, candidates and indeed a small number at the parliamentary level also feel deeply betrayed by their leadership.

Despite this they have sought to minimise the scale of the damage that was

inflicted on the right to life by recent political campaigns. We should not forget that.

As pro-life people we are committed to the highest ideals of compassion and the defence of unborn human life.

To translate those ideals into meaningful political protections we must work to maximise the local electoral presence of those who are open to positive engagement with pro-life concerns while minimising the presence of those who will aggressively advocate for abortion at every opportunity.

Majority

At this point it would be good to remember that the vast majority of those who are elected to the Dáil or Seanad have come through the local election and Council process.

To simply stand back and yield the political ground to those who shouted loudest for abortion would be a strategic mistake that could lead to irreversible consequences.

The Pro Life Campaign website will assist you in finding out who the pro-life candidates are in your local electoral area.

We all know that the road ahead is long and we will not falter in our dedication to this cause. On May 24 let's all use our vote to help ensure strong pro-life voices are elected.

For more information email elections@prolifecampaign.ie

✎ Eilís Mulroy is a spokesperson for the Pro Life Campaign.

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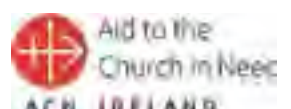
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Maria Steen

The View



State should allow some marriages to be permanent and legally binding

We are to have a referendum on May 24. The proposal is to change the Constitution to make it easier and quicker to get a divorce. The referendum will pass.

For anyone who is brave enough to take part in public debate opposing the proposed change, I predict that this is the way it will go: the person brought on to defend marriage (or rather to oppose progress, as it will be described), will be confronted with a woman, beaten by her philandering husband, who has now found love with a kind and decent man who cares for her. What kind of monster would oppose such a relationship? What kind of monster would 'force' her to stay with an abusive husband? The person who has walked into the lion's den to defend marriage, that's who.

The truth is that I don't know anyone who truly supports a Christian view of marriage who would want anyone to stay in an abusive marriage. In fact, it is contrary to

the central meaning of Christian marriage. The Church has for the longest time allowed annulments of marriage where one or other party is lacking the psychological, intellectual or volitional requirement to establish and nurture an intimate partnership of life. Someone with an abusive or manipulative personality is clearly lacking the understanding of what is required in a marriage, and often lacking the proper intention.

But no defender of marriage will ever be given a chance to express this in public 'debate'. Rather he or she will be cast as a persecutor of abused women and children.

Newer model

By contrast, no one will interview those spouses who entered into marriage for life, only to be divorced against their will, rejected for a newer model and left holding the baby and struggling financially and in every other way. No consideration will be given to the damage to children. The framing of the debate

will be one way only – and that is one in which a 'Yes' vote is presented as a no-brainer. Anyone who has the temerity to oppose it will be cast out into the exterior darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

There is no winning – or even engaging in – this debate while broadcasters are biased and dishonest in how they set the scene. No scales of justice are applied to broadcasting in Ireland when it comes to these kinds of debates – the pretence of balance is kept up by inviting participants from both sides of the debate and applying the stopwatch to their respective contributions, but that is where any semblance of fairness stops.

It has become increasingly obvious that the majority of broadcasters and journalists in Ireland are polarising our society: they are overwhelmingly left-leaning on social issues and display a so-called liberal, anti-Catholic bias. They call the shots, frame the debate, make editorial decisions to use 'personal stories' rather than actually engage in any intellectual or reasoned debate. The result is that, before a contrarian even reaches a television or radio studio, the odds are stacked against him or her.

“When was the last time you heard any Irish politician proposing supports for marriage?”

Soon we will begin to follow the example of the US: left-leaning liberals tune into the mainstream media, while right-leaning conservatives tune into alternative media. It is rare to see the two in the same room having a genuinely impartially moderated and civil debate. And society is much the poorer for it.

But to return to the issue of divorce, the proposal before us seeks to take divorce out of the Constitution and allow politicians to make the rules about how and when one can get a divorce. In truth, this horse bolted a long time



ago. In 1995 to be exact, when we voted divorce into law in this country by a very slim margin.

That, more than anything else, signalled a seismic shift in our attitude to marriage. It was more significant than even the 2015 referendum. Why? Because from then on it meant anyone could walk away from a solemn promise for any reason whenever he or she liked.

The point is, if a marriage vow no longer means what it says, it can mean anything. What does a marriage contract mean in law if you can walk away when you like, for any reason, and do so – unusually in relation to breach of contract – with no penalty for breaking your promise?

Critics will say, “but the divorce rate in Ireland is incredibly low compared with other countries!” These same critics who boast that Ireland has a low rate of divorce are the very ones who want to make divorce easier and quicker. And the thing is, when you make something easier to do, more people will do it.

Indeed last year, a Euromonitor report on Ireland predicted that divorce will increase by 2030, while there will be a drop in marriage and birth rates. In an interview with the *Irish Independent*, Euromonitor International's economic and consumer data manager said that the main reason Ireland's divorce rate lags behind

other countries relates to our constitutional ban on divorce until 1995, coupled with the fact that the divorce process requires couples to be living apart for four out of the last five years.

The point is that if this is removed, we will follow the well-worn path that we see in other countries where 'quickie' divorces lead to increased rates of divorce. The more sinister aspect is that the availability of such divorces fundamentally alters society's perception of what marriage is.

No longer is it 'until death us do part'; rather it is 'for as long as I am getting what I want from this arrangement'.

“The thing is, when you make something easier to do, more people will do it”

In an era of increasing divorce rates, falling marriage rates and falling birth rates – which have tangible consequences for our society, not least the fact that with an aging population we won't have enough younger people to pay our pensions – when was the last time you heard any Irish politician proposing supports for marriage? When was the last time you heard anyone proposing that people should be encouraged to get married or to stay together?

The truth is that most

marriages that break up are low-conflict, and do not look that different from those marriages that stay together; perhaps with a little help and support, many more couples could work things out.

For those of us who believe in marriage as a life-long commitment, perhaps the time has come for us to demand that the State recognise our commitment for what it is: a life-long indissoluble union. Those of us who wish – of our own free will – to bind ourselves to our spouses for life cannot do so under the current civil law. Solemn promises are open to being set at nought, as so many in this country have found out to their distress.

Perhaps it is time for the State to recognise two forms of marriage: marriage that can be dissolved and indissoluble marriage. The prevailing worldview – according to the political and media establishment – is that the State should facilitate consenting adults in making their own commitments of choice. That being the case, shouldn't consenting adults be able to commit to life-long indissoluble marriage if they wish?

If people were given the choice between two forms of marriage, it might even encourage them to consider carefully what it is they are promising on their wedding day – and that could only be a good thing.

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Sacrifices in the name of choice



An obsession with autonomy is driving up Ireland's abortion rate, writes **David Quinn**

It was a classic case of 'burying the lede', that is to say, the real lead was not what the report highlighted. Instead the headline on the RTÉ website read: "Concerns raised about implementing new abortion laws."

The story was about the implementation to date of the law which came into effect on January 1. It examined some of the technical problems doctors say they are encountering such as how to calculate the three days between a woman asking for an abortion and obtaining one.

But a full 15 paragraphs into the report we arrive at the real story, namely that doctors facilitating or performing abortions in Ireland "estimate they are carrying out between 800-900 terminations a month".

This is a horrifying statistic, if true. We will not know for sure until the Department of Health releases official figures after the end of the year. But these doctors would be in an excellent position to estimate the numbers so far, seeing as they are the ones performing abortions or prescribing the abortion pill.

Current rates

If they are accurate, and the current rate continues for the rest of the year, it will mean that around 10,000 abortions will have taken place in the first 12 months of the new law's operation.

This would mean a doubling at least of last year's abortion total, which was around 5,000 when you allow for around 3,500 Irish women travelling to England for terminations and an estimated 1,500 who were using the abortion pill illegally.

If this climbs to 10,000 it will mean the worst fears of pro-life campaigners have



been realised. A doubling in the number of abortions will mean that virtually overnight we will have doubled the odds of our daughters and partners and sisters and wives having an abortion at some point in their lives. Even if you are pro-choice, who could want that? Even on pro-choice terms abortion is, at best, a regrettable necessity.

“There is very little awareness of the divorce referendum because there has been almost no debate about it”

If the number increases by 'only' 50% to 7,500 or so, that is still horrible. A 10% increase would be awful. What will then happen in the years ahead as abortion becomes more and more 'normal'?

Remember, abortions are being provided 'free' in this

country, which is to say, the tax-payer is funding them. And in about 80% of cases they are being provided by GPs, many of whom are easily accessible.

Also, the decades-long campaign against the Eighth Amendment has clearly persuaded large numbers of the public to simply regard abortion as part of modern life.

In other words, pro-choice propaganda has run deep, and if it turns out that the number of abortions is in line with what Irish pro-choice doctors are saying, it would be awful, but not a total surprise.

This same pro-choice mentality is at work in the divorce referendum as well. It takes place on May 24. There is very little awareness of it because there has been almost no debate about it.

This is partly the result of continuing fatigue from last year's momentous abortion battle, but also because the stakes are quite low this time. The big decision was made in 1995 when we

a couple would have to be separated for four out of the last five years before they could divorce.

Now a Fine Gael-led Government wants to take the waiting time out of the Constitution completely. Take careful note of that. This is what we will be voting on later this month.

“More than half of marriages that end in divorce are low-conflict”

If we vote in favour, which is extremely likely, the Government will then reduce the waiting time to two out of the last three years, but will do so through an Act of the Oireachtas. There will be absolutely nothing to stop a future Government reducing the waiting time to six months, or zero for that matter.

Pro-choice arguments are being deployed in favour of removing the waiting time from the Constitution. If someone wants to get a divorce, how dare society get in their way? We lose sight

of the greater good again.

The choice of just one of the spouses to end a marriage counts for everything. The choice of the other spouse who might not want a divorce, who might want to carry on for the sake of the children, counts for nothing. The happiness of the one person becomes more important than the happiness and welfare of the family as a whole.

It will be said that children cannot be happy in an unhappy home, but actually, more than half of marriages that end in divorce are low-conflict, meaning the children might not be aware one or both parents is unhappy.

Unfortunately, these kinds of issues are not being raised in the referendum. People will be taken in again by arguments based on notions of 'personal happiness' and 'choice' and nothing else will be considered.

That is the way we are now. The same logic that justified a liberal abortion law, also justifies a liberal divorce law. Nothing else but the choice of the one individual is considered.

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The OBLATES

Always Close To The People

Fr Tony Coote

describes how he was first diagnosed with motor neurone disease

I woke in my house in Mount Merrion, Dublin around 6.30am. I hadn't had much sleep. I had an appointment that morning in the Beacon hospital. I went to the window; the whole area was covered in snow. Normally on a Wednesday I would have had my parish duties to attend to, but that day the entire country was at a standstill owing to the heaviest fall of snow in years.

At around eight I phoned the hospital to say I was postponing because of the weather. However, when I looked out again an hour later, I saw cars making their way up the road, so I decided I would head to the Beacon after all.

My appointment was with a neurologist for 10.30am and we were to discuss the results of a brain scan I'd had about 10 days earlier. The reason for the scan was because I'd had two falls.

The first was in early November when I was coming down the steps of Saint Thérèse church in Mount Merrion. I was carrying a box and suddenly, without explanation, I fell, hitting my shoulder off a wall and my knee on the ground. An elderly man who was passing helped to pick me up. "Offer it up, Father," he said. I was convinced I was rushing, as usual, and had just missed a step.

No reason

Then on New Year's Day various members of my family were visiting for lunch. Just before dessert, I went in to the sitting room to put some logs on the fire and I suddenly fell face down on the floor, again for no apparent reason. Everyone came running and I heard someone say, "He's had a stroke."

Gently, they tried to lift me and were encouraging me to use my left hand to raise myself up. I told them I had no power in that hand, which seemed to confirm their suspicions about a stroke. Eventually they got me onto a chair and advised me to go to a hospital or call a doctor. I protested that I just needed some time because I was in a state of shock.

My guests started to leave, but only after making sure I

Holding onto hope when times look hopeless

had water and was okay to stand up. Over the next few days, my brother Pat stayed in touch to remind me to make an appointment with a doctor. I had only seen a doctor three times in my adult life, all in relation to issues with my elbow from playing squash. It took me two days to call a GP, who prescribed anti-inflammatory pain relief and advised me to take two weeks off – which I spent in Glendalough – to allow my knee and leg to heal because I still had pain there.

During this time, I noticed that my knee wasn't particularly swollen, and yet I still had pain there, and also

in my shoulder. I asked my GP to arrange for me to have scans of both. The results showed nothing sinister, just the expected tissue damage, so she referred me to an orthopaedic consultant in the Beacon and also a neurologist.

A week later I met the orthopaedic consultant, who had reviewed my scans, and he said that there was nothing there that he could detect. He asked me to describe any particular symptoms I was experiencing, and I said that sometimes my leg went into an involuntary spasm and began to shake. He said this was known as clonus, and I read something in his face that suggested it might be serious.

He asked if I intended to see a neurologist and I told him I had an appointment for later that week. The neurologist said that some of my symptoms were consistent with a stroke, but she couldn't detect anything definite and so arranged for a brain scan. Those were the results I was waiting for on that February day.

And so it was that on that snowy morning in February I was heading to the Beacon hospital. And yet there was a nagging feeling within me that said if it had been a stroke, I would have been called back sooner. Perhaps that was why I hadn't slept much during the night.

Neurologist

The hospital was mainly deserted except for a few staff who had braved the weather. My neurologist took me into a small bay behind a curtain and began to give me the results of my brain scan. She said that a radiographer and consultant radiographer had initially seen nothing in

the scan but when she looked again she saw what she called scrapings, which told her I had motor neurone disease (MND). She asked if I had considered that possibility. I said I hadn't, that I had resisted researching my symptoms online to find out more.

“I have thought about this many times since: what a cruel test for such a cruel illness – sticking needles into muscles, inflicting pain...”

At the time I knew very little about MND. I know far more now, of course. Motor neurone diseases are a group of neurodegenerative disorders that selectively affect motor neurons, the cells which control voluntary muscles of the body. Each motor neurone disease affects patients differently, but they all cause movement-related

symptoms, mainly muscle weakness. The rate of progression can be very different: some patients will be relatively symptom-free for years, while others will have a much faster onset.

Tests

I can't say what was going through my mind at that moment when the neurologist first mentioned MND, but on reflection I suspect that my body was going into shock.

She asked me to undress because she was going to carry out some tests that I later learned were called electromyography (EMG), and a nerve conduction test that involved sticking needles into my muscles and applying electroshock to my feet, which would give her readings on a laptop.

The readings were not clear, so the consultant had to twist the needle deeper into my muscles. I have thought about this many times since: what a cruel test for such a cruel illness – sticking needles into muscles, inflict-

“There was a nagging feeling within me that said if it had been a stroke, I would have been called back sooner. Perhaps that was why I hadn't slept much during the night”



Fr Tony and his brothers.

My mind was full of thoughts about what would happen to me, who I would tell and how. Reaching home, I went straight into the sitting room, still in my coat, the ticking of the clock the only sound I heard.

For some time I just stared out the window. I watched the world outside and it was peaceful, with hardly a car passing or a person walking by. I stood there for some time. I suppose I was letting the news I'd received seep into me and land there, amid feelings of confusion, fear and terror.

“I understand why people, when going through difficult times, might be angry with God and might give up their faith”

Later that day I contacted my brothers – Pat, Kieran and David – to tell them the news. Pat and Kieran both live in Dublin, while David is in Australia. There was, I think, a mixture of shock and confusion when they heard. Like so many people, they didn't understand the full weight of my diagnosis.

I then phoned the Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin, to tell him my news. That summer, I was due to move from the parishes of Mount Merrion and Kilmacud, where I had served for nearly 10 years, and I asked him if I could remain in the post since I knew so many people there.

I feared that by taking up a new appointment, I would arrive in a new place, a stranger, and would inevitably be

known as ‘the sick priest’. To my relief, the archbishop agreed and assured me that he and the diocese would help me in any way they could.

After making my calls, and when one of the neighbours had supplied me with fire-lighters, I settled down in front of the blazing fire with a glass of rich red wine. I went to bed late and didn't sleep.

My mind was spinning, thinking about how the diagnosis would affect my life. I tossed and turned, probably for most of that night. Of course, the night has a tendency to magnify everything. In its stillness you know – and I surely knew that night – that you are alone.

Vulnerability is never comfortable, because everything you have learned to count on seems uncertain, but it can also summon possibilities. All my life I have been a carer of one kind or another, especially through my priesthood. At ordination

I was called to be one who serves, and that is what I have been.

As a carer, I shielded myself from receiving care from others. While I responded to vulnerability in others, I had yet to learn how to acknowledge my own vulnerability. However, from early on in my diagnosis I knew people wanted to help and that this desire of theirs was genuine.

There was a huge outpouring of support. I received hundreds of Mass cards and letters. People were telling me that they were lighting candles in the church for me and indeed I felt the strength of this support. People also dropped a range of gifts at my door, including homemade cake, marmalade, bis-

cuits, chocolate, flowers, and of course red wine.

I suppose at this time too I was slightly embarrassed by all the attention and had to begin to understand that when you give, you must also be prepared to receive. I knew too that if I started to refuse help, gradually it would stop being offered. In a way then it was an easy choice: I needed help and I had to accept it. In the early days, this meant accepting help to carry shopping from the supermarket to my car.

It meant asking someone to tie my shoelaces since this was one of the first things I discovered I couldn't do by myself. I needed to be helped in and out of my car. I alternated between the wheelchair and a walking stick. When I was walking with the stick, I moved very slowly, as the tiniest obstacle on the footpath could trip me up.

I understand why people, when going through difficult times, might be angry with God and might give up their faith because they wonder, “What's the point? Nothing ever changes.” Others might say, “We've had to bear much more than other people, so why us?” Since I received my diagnosis, I have been asked if I ever think, Why me? and to that I say, “Why not me?” Why should I not bear some of the suffering that is in the world today?

Anyone who has faith knows that it will be tested from time to time. We might hang on to our Faith by believing that nothing can assail us, but the challenge is always to find our Faith in the more difficult moments. It can be easy to believe in the

sunshine, but much harder in the rain. This is not me being brave for the sake of being brave. This is what I believe, and that's why I can say that I don't believe we are heading

to a future of emptiness, but rather a destination of hope.

Live While You Can by Fr Tony Coote is published by Hachette Ireland.



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Young people in the parish receive the JPPI Award.



A happy group busily making St Brigid's Crosses.



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Leaving no



Parishes must be like early Christian communities which reach out to help, **Colm Fitzpatrick** learns

Churches are often referred to as the 'heart of a community', but in order for this living, breathing muscle to continue to beat, the parish must sustain and support it. This is no easy task; and requires more than just showing up to Mass now and again – a flourishing parish is one where people of all ages and backgrounds are welcomed into a community of faithful and are encouraged to achieve their potential, all the while recognising the place of God in their lives.

At a point in history where religious belief is on the decline, many parishes are finding it increasingly difficult to draw their local community together but for Carlow's Graiguecullen and Killeslin parish, this is a task that's been met with great success.

With a plethora of varied ministries on offer, a free food parcel delivery service and even a parish-owned pool, it's fair to say the goal of creating a tightly-knit community of believers here is going swimmingly.

Outreach

Most of the outreach initiatives take place in and around St Clare's Church, which attracts not only familiar faces who have been attending Mass for decades, but young people who are formed by the active and dynamic youth ministry present there.

"Young people play a massive role here, they're so important. People associate our parish with young people. So, from Sunday-school leaders to readers, young ministers of the Word, Eucharistic ministers, all our choirs, we have two children choirs and a youth choir, full of young people. They're on a rota for all those ministries



Youth retreat in Lough Dan, Co. Wicklow.



St Fiacc's House.



St Clare's Church.

and we've loads of altar servers. They're fantastic. They're really so committed and responsible and they come to all our Masses," Youth Ministry Co-ordinator of the parish Cathriona Kelly, tells *The Irish Catholic*.

The vibrancy of young people in the parish is such

that a youth Mass is held each month in the church, where young people greet parishioners, make prayer cards, and even count any money donated afterwards. Throughout the year, they also travel on pilgrimages and retreats where they learn more about themselves and

one behind



their faith. For Cathriona, it's vital that young people begin to develop the sense that contributing to and helping out in their local parish isn't a burden, but an important part of their social life.

"We normalise everything, it's not very high Christology – it's very much meeting them where they're at, figuring out where they're at in their stage of faith, if they're at any stage of faith at all, and these are kids that have been confirmed by us. We just try to figure out where they are, bring them on as much as we can step by step," she says, adding that each child plays a distinctive role in the parish.

"We have kids that are very quiet and they never like to read but they'll sing in the back row of the choir. We have kids that can't sing but

they'll altar serve or they'll make prayer cards with me in the parish and put them out on the noticeboards and decorate the church. It's just using their gifts and talents really and figuring out where their place is in the parish."

"We thought we were failing for a long time...now, we see those kids and they're back as adults"

While it's often claimed that young people today no longer care about religion, Cathriona explains that if they have an opinion on it, then they're interested in it. By building upon this interest, they can mature spiritually

and eventually give back to the parish, even when it seems as now young adults that they've abandoned the faith.

"You worry that you miss an opportunity with them – maybe you could have given them something more or maybe they needed something different than what we gave them. But really, if we give everyone the same and they know that they're welcome, no matter what time in their lives that they're welcome back, I think that's enough for us.

"But it took a long time for us to get to that stage. We thought we were failing for a long time because we wouldn't see them for a while and now, we see those kids and they're back as adults teaching our Sunday school



groups. And they're teachers in our school. They had a good experience of the parish and of church, and we gave that to them, we were part of a bigger picture that gave that to them."

Outreach and care don't solely extend to the youth of the parish, but also the more aged, some of whom are supported in St Fiacc's House, a low dependency supported care home that provides a residence for 18 people and day care facilities for up to 20 people.

Also in the vicinity is an activity centre, a library, a hairdresser's and a chiropodist. Close-by is the Poor Clare's community who have been living on the church grounds for over a century. They continue to offer a listening ear by making themselves available to talk face to face, or by responding to a request in writing.

Nearby is the parish swimming pool, situated in the historic building which was formally the old National school. A major local fundraising drive, under the leadership of Fr John Fingleton and Fr Jim O'Connell, enabled the pool to be opened on the June 1, 1994. The extensive facilities within the pool complex are open to all members of the public, and over 60 schools in the surrounding area and afar avail of it throughout the year.

These amenities provide a wealth of support to the parish community, and create a healthy environment where religion and everyday-life are intimately blended into one. In this way, those in the community can come to learn that their faith shouldn't be cordoned off once they leave the church, but realise that a holistic Christian lifestyle entails living out the Gospel message by serving others, without judgement.

"It goes back to our vision statement where a parish is not just a church but it's reaching out to people as well," parish priest Fr John Dunphy says, noting the real

need in parishes for both sacramental and liturgical elements as well as outreach initiatives.

"More than ever with the way the Church is portrayed, we need to focus more and more on the parish as a community and it's there for the community, whether it's through prayer, or through helping and to focus on the ideals of the early Christian communities," Fr John explains.

"Without these donations it would be a harder struggle for us. So I always say every penny makes a difference"

"I think it's necessary for us as a parish to go back to that vision and let the outside world see that this is actually what the vision of a Christian community is. It's maybe not the negativity that is constantly portrayed, and we never sort of get a break. There's so much negativity being portrayed, which a lot of is justified – we're not denying that – but there's other good things happening in parishes all over Ireland."

This notion is no better realised than in St Clare's hospitality kitchen which opened four years ago and has since been providing nourishment and company to those who need it most in the community. It now operates five days a week and all meals are provided free of charge, with no questions asked.

"It originally started in Lourdes when we were there on pilgrimage. I'm a volunteer and I met up with Fr John and a few other people and we were talking about the need of children who were going to school hungry and we just felt that we had to do something. So we decided then when we came back to Graiguecullen, perhaps we should have an evening of prayer and adoration and maybe see where we go from there," parish volunteer Iso-

bel Brooker says.

After Sacramental Co-ordinator and parish team member Suzanne McWey wrote numerous letters to unused building owners asking for help to achieve their goal, the parish team were blessed with the premises they have today which is only a short stroll from the church, directly across from Carlow Castle.

Although when obtained the building was a derelict shell, teeming donations totalling up to almost €160,000 and the unwavering support of volunteers allowed the food kitchen to become a reality.

"Without these donations it would be a harder struggle for us. So I always say every penny makes a difference, it really does make a difference because that penny will go into a euro. It does make a difference. I never say no because it's so important to keep that kitchen going," Isabel explains, adding that it's changed the lives of people throughout the community.

Volunteers

The kitchen is run predominantly by kindness of volunteers, and is a warm source of comfort for those struggling with the myriad difficulties that life can throw. Alongside the kitchen, food parcels are arranged every Wednesday and distributed by parish volunteers on Thursdays to families and individuals experiencing financial hitches.

With its keen determination to offer a helping hand where needed, the story of this particular parish is an acute reminder of how powerful community can be in creating a vision of society that leaves no one behind.

"We have got strong belief that things will work out and nothing is impossible. Nothing at all is impossible if you've got the right frame of mind and got the support," Isabel says.

New altar for the ages is



The altar is incensed.

There was “great excitement” in a Dublin parish as their long-awaited new altar was dedicated by the Archbishop of Dublin.

After decades of using a temporary altar over 300 parishioners gathered for the ceremony in Sallynoggin parish earlier this month.

Parish secretary Rachel Higgins said: “There was great excitement in the parish and an overwhelming voice of approval for the completed works. We were honoured that Archbishop Martin came to Our Lady of Victories to dedicate the new Altar. The ceremony is not one that is often experienced in a parish.”

The temporary altar was installed in Our Lady of Victories Church in Sallynoggin/Glenageary in 1977 for the ordination of now-Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin diocese – who used to be a parishioner.

Evident

The altar served its purpose over the next 30 years. While there were many plans for refurbishment during this time funds did not allow for any improvements. By 2010 it was becoming increasingly evident that the altar was not structurally sound.

Fr Padraig Gleeson was appointed to the church in 2013 and soon realised that the sanctuary was in serious need of repair or replacement.

A committee of parishioners was formed and architect Adrian Buckley was engaged to look at a new design. Ms Higgins said that from its



Chai Brady

inception to completion the parishioners were kept informed of the various suggestions from the committee and the architect via the parish bulletin and on notice boards in the church.

Ms Higgins said: “Finally we settled on a wooden altar which was designed by ICS Church Furniture from Co. Leitrim and the sanctuary itself was constructed by local builder John Nutty of JNY Construction.

“During the renovations we had marvellous support from our parishioners who helped clean the church and grounds every Saturday in preparation for our weekend Masses. Many parishioners took great interest in the daily progress of the construction. They frequently pointed out to Fr Padraig what needed to be done or had been omitted.”

She added that Fr Padraig appreciated people using their “natural gifts and experience” to contribute to the project’s success.

It took approximately four months from the beginning in late January to the dedication of the new altar on May 5 by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin.



Margaret Lundy and her daughter Bairbre.



Altar boys, David and Matthew Dooley prepare to incense the congregation.



Karen and Emma Cosgrave.



Regular Massgoer Josie Potts (95) meets Archbishop Martin – she is believed to be Sallynoggin’s oldest parishioner. Parish administrator Fr Padraig Gleeson (centre) spearheaded the refurbishment drive.



Margaret O’Sullivan, her daughter Olga and her fiancé.

blessed in Sallynoggin



The conclusion of the ceremony.



Above: Principal Barry O'Leary of St Kevin's School in Sallynoggin.



Right: Caoimhe Frain with Fiachra Coonan (in her arms), Donal Coonan, Ceolin, Cillian and Saoirse de Frein.

Below: The archbishop meets Felipe, Siofra and their dad Regulo Bernal.



Theresa, Laura, Brianne, Thea and Adrian Murphy.



Archbishop Martin with Elizabeth Dempsey, Ann Eble and Helen Roberts.



Paul McGuinness, Rosemary Swords and Eden McGuinness.



Geraldine Murray, Hilary Fitzpatrick and Breda McGrail.

When community comes



▲ Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo with members of In Caelo Choir.



◀ Opening procession of Saturday Mass.

▼ Sisters from the Holy Family convent have their walking shoes on for the pilgrim walk.



Bishop Nulty is presented with the image of St Conleth on stained glass by Brenda Drumm, Chair of Newbridge Parish Council.



Colm Fitzpatrick

This month saw the culmination of festivities at St Conleth's church, where the people of Newbridge's parish came together on his Feast Day to mark the 1,500th anniversary of his death and to celebrate the vibrant parish life that still exists in his name today.

The weekend of celebrations began with Mass where Kildare and Leighlin's Bishop Denis Nulty was the principal celebrant.

The Mass, which was concelebrated by priests and religious from the parish and from the diocese, was attended by more than 700 people with many of the ministries and services of the parish represented in the opening procession and throughout the Mass. Local school students and staff were also involved as well as the young people preparing for First Holy Communion in the parish.

Highlights

One of the highlights of the Mass was the reading of a special papal message from Pope Francis.

The message, which was signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, said: "His Holiness Pope Francis was pleased to learn of the celebration marking the fifteen-hundredth anniversary of the death of St Conleth, patron and first Bishop of Kildare, and he sends prayerful greetings to you and to the priests, consecrated men and women and lay faithful of the diocese.

"Joining you in giving thanks to Almighty God for the example of this saintly bishop and abbot, His Holiness encourages all of you to remain rooted in fidelity to the Lord.

"In this way, as you seek to proclaim the Gospel by

following Christ in missionary discipleship, each parish will be strengthened as a place where all can encounter 'a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach'" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 28).

“Jesus is risen and walks amongst us. He is still inviting us to breakfast. He is still calling us, like St Conleth and St Brigid to follow him”

In his homily for the Mass, Bishop Nulty said that St Conleth's life has given root to each person's faith in the parish, but that these roots do not trap, but should spur parishioners to continue to grow and spread the message of the Gospel today.

"St Conleth has given a root to your faith, your Christian identity in these parts. Pope Francis in *Christus Vivit* reminds us "roots are not anchors chaining to past times and preventing us from facing the present and creating something new. Instead, they are a fixed point from which we can grow and meet new challenges...we are sent today to proclaim the Good News of Jesus in a new age. We need to love this time with all its opportunities and risks, its joys and sorrows, its riches and its limits, its

to life



Final prayer service at parish church following the pilgrim walk.



Fr Paul Dempsey PP with Cathal Tobin, a student in the Patrician Secondary School in Newbridge.

successes and failures," Bishop Nulty continued.

Despair

"There is always the temptation to despair, to sit on our hands, to feel our time has passed. As a church, as a faith community we can sometimes wallow in a feeling of being bruised and battered. Nothing could be further from the truth. We owe it to St Conleth, and before him to Peter and before him, ultimately to Jesus to proclaim this good news message, that Jesus is risen and walks amongst us. He is still inviting us to breakfast. He is still calling us, like St Conleth and St Brigid to follow him."

At the end of the Mass Bishop Nulty was presented with an image of a piece of the stained glass from St Conleth's parish church which

depicts the saint.

The day after, a pilgrim walk took place from the parish church out to Old Connell where it is said St Conleth lived in seclusion. More than 80 people took part in the pilgrim walk to what is now an historic graveyard where a short prayer service and blessing of the graves took place.

Local historian Paul Cooke gave an overview of the stories of some of those who are buried in the graveyard which is now sited in a modern stud farm.

The weekend of celebrations concluded last Monday night when the parish Novena saw the Papal Nuncio to Ireland, Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, as principal celebrant and homilist.



▲ Papal Nuncio to Ireland, Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo with Fr Paul Dempsey and Amadeus Youth Group.



◀ St Conleth 1500 pilgrim walk including Scamp the dog

▼ Prayer service following pilgrim walk to Old Connell.



Out&About

Curraghboy remembers Fr Hugh Lee



◀ **ROSCOMMON:** A memorial table and benches donated by the people of Curraghboy community were blessed in St Brigid's Church by Fr Michael McManus, PP, in remembrance of Fr Hugh Lee MHM who died last year. In attendance were members of Fr Lee's family and Fr Philip O'Halloran of the Mill Hill Missionaries with members of the faith community of Kiltoom and Cam parish.

▼ **DUBLIN:** Broadcaster Matt Cooper and CEO of Peter McVerry Trust, Pat Doyle with supporters, at the launch of the 30th anniversary Wexford Cycle. This year, the event takes place on Saturday, September 14, and will see over 400 cyclists get on their bikes as they make their way along the route from Dublin to Wexford.



TIPPERARY: Family gather to celebrate the baptism of Fynn Doherty at Our Lady of Fatima Church, Cappawhite. (l-r) Noel Doherty, godfather; Brian Doherty, parent; Elizabeth Doherty and Fynn Doherty; Joanne O'Connell, godmother; and Fr Tadgh Furlong, PP.



CORK: Elsie Corkery and Annie Mehigan are awarded the Benemerenti Medal in Kimacabea parish as recognition of their service to the Church. Left, Fr Kevin Blade, Annie Mehigan and Angela O'Donovan (nominator); right, Fr Blade, Elsie Corkery and Rose Whooley (nominator).



Edited by Colm Fitzpatrick
colm@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



DUBLIN: Staff and volunteers of Radio Maria Ireland gather around for a cup of tea after Mass in the station to welcome Mr Vittorio Viccardi (President of the World Family of Radio Maria) who came to visit the Radio Maria Ireland station along with Raffaele Galati (European Co-ordinator).



FERMANAGH: Nancy Durnien contributes £1,200 towards Trócaire from her 90th birthday party. Canon Joseph Mullin of Aghalurcher parish, Lisnaskea, is pictured with Nancy as Bridie Duffy from the charity receives the cheque.



KERRY: Fr Brendan Walsh of St John's Church, Causeway, presents a Benemerenti Medal to Nellie O'Connor in recognition of 45 years' service as Parish Sacristan. Nellie also received a Papal Blessing and a Papal Scroll. Photo: Amanda O'Neill Photography



LIMERICK: Girls from the Mercy Sisters NS and boys from Doon CBS Primary School receive their First Holy Communion at Doon Parish Church and are pictured with their teachers, Ms Hazel Curran (Convent NS) and Ms Michelle Walsh (CBS). The celebrant was Fr Jimmy Donnelly PP, assisted by Fr William Kinane (Clonoulty/Rossmore, Co. Tipperary).

CARLOW

The 14th annual Solemn Novena will take place in St Clare's Church, Graiguecullen, will run for nine consecutive Monday nights until June 24.

CLARE

Youth 2000 prayer meeting every Friday at 7pm in the Poor Clare's Oratory, Ennis. Join other young adults for prayer and reflection followed by tea and chats in the Friary.

Annual Killaloe Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine will take place on Sunday, June 23. Led by Bishop Fintan Monahan. 2.30pm – Anointing of the Sick 3pm – concelebrated Mass.

Cloughleigh Oratory will continue to pray the Novena Prayer to St Anthony every Tuesday morning at the 9.30 Mass.

CORK

Medjugorje prayer meeting in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament every Wednesday night at 8pm in Holy Trinity Church, Fr Matthew Quay. Prayers for healing are on the first Wednesday of every month.

Rosary conscious group prayer meeting on Fridays from 7.30-8.30pm in the Portiuncula Chapel, St Francis Church, Liberty Street. Entrance to the Rosary through the Mass office door.

DERRY

Dungiven Parish: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Monday to Friday, 8-12pm and 3-9pm.

DUBLIN

Our Lady of Knock prayer meetings take place on the last Thursday of every month in St Gabriel's Nursing Home, Glenayle Road, Raheny, Dublin 5, from 8-9pm.

Holy Hour on Sunday, May 19 in the church of St John the Baptist, Clontarf Road, led by Fr Martin Hogan.

FERMANAGH

A Mass to St Peregrine for all the sick is prayed each Tuesday evening in St Patrick's Church, Derrygonnelly at 7.30pm: www.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly. There is also a St Peregrine Novena Mass in Holy Cross Church, Lisnaskea on Tuesday nights at 7pm. www.churchservices.tv/linaskea

KERRY

Weekly Monday prayer meetings led by Ben Perkins, from 8-9.30pm in the Ardferret Retreat Centre.

KILDARE

Praying, reading and sharing the following Sunday's Gospel in Resurrexit, Kilmeague, every Wednesday from 8-9.30pm. See www.resurrexit.ie for details, or ring 087-6825407.

May Masses and devotions at the Shrine at Our Lady of Clonfert Church. Daily Mass (Monday to Saturday) at 8pm with guest preacher and Mass at 12pm each Friday. Sunday Mass at 10am and 7pm each week of May. Full programme available at Clonfertdiocese.ie.

KILKENNY

Traditional Latin Mass every Sunday at 5pm in St Patrick's Church, College Road, Kilkenny (opposite St Kieran's College).

LEITRIM

Padre Pio Healing Mass in St Patrick's Church, Ballinamore, on Thursday May 30, at 7pm.

LIMERICK

Eucharistic Adoration takes place each Friday in Raheen church following 10am Mass until 10pm, Crecora on Thursdays, following morning Mass until 12pm and from 6-10pm, and in Mungret Church on Wednesdays, from 10-12pm.

LOUTH

Mass in reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary will take place at 10.30am every first Saturday of the month in St Malachy's Church, Anne Street, Dundalk. Organised by the Legion of Mary, Presidium of Our Lady of the Listening Heart. Spiritual Director Fr Bede McGregor OP.

A Centre Prayer Meeting is held at Mount Oliver (near Ballymascanlon, Dundalk) every Wednesday evening at 7.30pm. Contact 00353 863623361 from the North of Ireland or 0863623361 from the Republic of Ireland.

MAYO

Adoremus National Eucharistic and Marian Pilgrimage in Knock Shrine on June 14-15. Programme commences on Friday evening at 7.30pm and begins again on Saturday morning at 10.30 am. For more details, call 016625899 or text 0872478519.

There's no Planet B – Climate Change Conference at Knock Shrine on May 18. Guest speakers Lorna Gold, Trocaire, author of 'Climate Generation' and Dr Dermot Lane. The event will take place from 9.30am-3pm in St John's Centre.

MEATH

Enfield Prayer Group meets every Monday, 7.30pm, parish centre.

Adoration in St Patrick's Church, Stamullen after 10am Mass every Thursday until 5pm in St Mary's Church, and in St Mary's Church, Julianstown on Wednesdays from 9 am and after 10 am Mass.

ROSCOMMON

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St Croan's Church, Ballymoe, every Monday, 10-11am and Thursday, 8-10pm. Also at St Bride's Church, Ballintubber, every Wednesday, 7.30-8.30pm.

TIPPERARY

Three-hour vigil to honour the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima will be held in the Pallottine chapel, Thurles on Monday, May 13 from 7.30-10.30pm. Includes Eucharistic and Marian Hour, concluding with Mass.

WICKLOW

The Glencree Parish Group hold a special Mass for healing in St Kevin's Church, Glencree on the first Saturday of the month.

St Patrick's Prayer Group, Wicklow town, meet on Thursdays at 7.30pm in the De La Salle Pastoral Care Centre.

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Awakening Inner Peace

Sr Stan



This beautiful new book from Sr Stan is structured around the traditional monastic schedule of eight hours of daily guided prayer. However, it is written for readers to dip in and out of, to find the spiritual comfort they need at any time, with short but inspiring prayers, poems and biblical quotes.

WAS €12.99 **€9.75**

Padre Pio of Pietralcina

Fr Francesco Napolitano

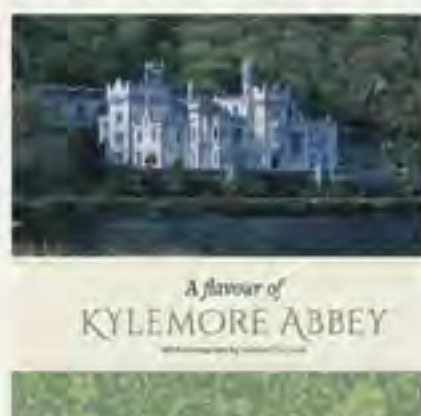


Written by Fr Francesco Napolitano, who knew and worked with Padre Pio, this biography brings you up-close to an extraordinary mystic's humble beginnings and recounts stories of the obstacles he overcame, the people he touched, and the stigmata he bore.

WAS €14.99 **€11.25**

A Flavour of Kylemore Abbey

Photographs by Valerie O'Sullivan



The Benedictine sisters of Kylemore Abbey are famous for their delicious home-baking and the wholesome food in the abbey restaurant and tea rooms. They even make their own chocolate. As well as offering a range of Kylemore's unique recipes, this book gives an exclusive glimpse into one of Ireland's most intriguing estates, beautifully documented by award-winning photographer Valerie O'Sullivan.

WAS €24.99 **€18.75**

Martin Luther

P. Fintan Lyons



In 1517, the priest and professor Martin Luther published Ninety Five Theses, a source of merciless criticism of the Church, which led to a divided Europe and subsequent religious wars. *Martin Luther, His Challenge Then and Now* is a study of the phenomenon of Luther, and his effects on Church and society.

WAS €14.99 **€11.25**

Gold Collection

Brian D'Arcy



The Gold Collection is a thoughtful distillation of the huge pastoral resource Fr D'Arcy has created over almost half a century. The pieces included here are the most representative, most incisive and most helpful examples of his columns and broadcasts throughout the years.

WAS €14.99 **€11.25**

Maranatha Yoga

Christine Pickering



This illustrated book is for those new to yoga or for those with years of experience of the postures, prayers and Christian reflections practised in Maranatha Yoga allowing the participant to connect with their spiritual selves, and reconciling the misconceptions about yoga in a Christian context.

WAS €12.99 **€9.75**

How We Killed God

David Quinn



For almost 25 years, David Quinn has charted the turbulent relationship between modern Ireland and the Catholic Church. From the controversies that have raged about Church and State, the abuse scandals and the right to life, this book is a very different take on nearly a quarter of a century of tumultuous change in Irish society.

WAS €16.99 **€12.75**

Dark Ireland

Richard Fitzgerald



As one of Ireland's outstanding photographers, Richard Fitzgerald has created a beautiful portrayal of a way of life that has nearly vanished forever. His camera focuses on the back roads of the countryside and records intimate moments of people in their cottages and farms.

WAS €24.99 **€18.75**

The Happiness Habit

Daniel O'Leary



Written for all who believe in humanity and are ready to nourish the divine beauty of their hearts. Beautifully crafted and lovingly presented, it is the perfect gift for someone you care about or yourself.

WAS €12.99 **€9.75**

Homily Hints

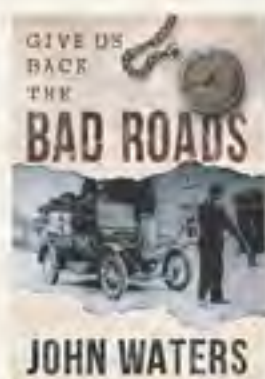
Fr Silvester O'Flynn



By offering two short reflections for each daily Gospel, *Homily Hints and Prayers* will help any preacher find inspiration to prepare homilies. These simple and clear reflections are called hints because they are designed to trigger one's thoughts.

WAS €19.99 **€14.99**

Give Us Back the Bad Roads
John Waters



In this book John Waters seeks to outline the unpleasant facts leading to his departure from the Dublin media, while looking back over the arc of his life, and giving his take on modern Ireland in his own inimitable style.

WGS €19.99 **€14.99**

Mythical Irish Beasts
Mark Joyce



In this beautifully designed book Mark Joyce brings us on a fantastic journey through Irish folklore with his stories of monsters and magical creatures, magnificently brought to life with his original illustrations.

WGS €22.99 **€17.25**

Mary Aikenhead - Friend of the Poor
Rosaleen Crossan



Mary Aikenhead, who is known as the Friend of the Poor, was a powerful catalyst for engaging others in her innovative and creative projects in caring for the poor. This book reflects on the influences which shaped Mary's character and inspired her unconditional response to the call of God in her life.

WGS €12.99 **€9.75**

The Liberties
Maurice Curtis



Dublin is full of ancient neighbourhoods, but none is more culturally and historically significant than The Liberties. In this book, historian Maurice Curtis leads us on a pictorial tour of Dublin 8, pointing out the places and people that have contributed to the neighbourhood's lasting legacy.

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The Opal and the Pearl
Mark Patrick Hederman



With seven billion human beings on one planet we need a new ethics guiding us in our way of relating to one another sexually. Author Mark Hederman, a Glenstal monk, delivers a stimulating critique of the Catholic Church's monosexual stance.

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The Elephant in the Church
Mary T. Malone



This revised edition of *The Elephant in the Church* explores what the author terms 'Women Christianity' from a historical perspective, following the story from biblical times to the women mystics in the years following Vatican II.

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Following the Pink Ribbon Path
Mary Redmond Ussher



Following the Pink Ribbon Path is a journal of personal reflections, beautifully-crafted prayers, poems and inspiring quotes by Mary Redmond Ussher (1950-2015) who was a distinguished employment lawyer, academic and social entrepreneur, and founder of The Irish Hospice Foundation and The Wheel.

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Beautiful Thoughts for Beautiful Minds
John Scally



In our increasingly busy lives, this is a book which causes us to pause and ponder. It features a unique mix of inspirational fables and parables, heart-warming original stories and positive true-life stories guaranteed to lift the spirits. All royalties are being donated to Epilepsy Ireland.

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World Report

IN BRIEF

Bill to end Louisiana death penalty fails

● A proposal to allow voters to decide if capital punishment should remain legal in Louisiana has been defeated in the state senate. Senate Bill 112 would have added a question to the next state-wide ballot proposing a constitutional amendment to abolish the death penalty. It was defeated last week by a vote of 25-13 against, having needed a two-thirds majority to pass.

Speaking during the senate debate, the bill's sponsor Senator Dan Claitor, said that respect for all human life was paramount.

The measure was supported by the Catholic bishops of the state. Speaking on behalf of the Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops, executive director Rob Tasman said that "justice can never be wrought by killing a human being".

Pastor jailed for converting people in India is freed

● A Protestant pastor in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh has been acquitted of charges held against him under India's state-level anti-conversion laws.

Pentecostal Pastor Balu Saste, his wife, his son, and members of his community were violently attacked by Hindus, later detained by the police and accused of trying to convert people to Christianity by force, according to ADF International.

The group announced last week that a court had dropped all charges against Mr Balu and his family.

"The acquittal of Pastor Balu and his family is a vital step towards the protection of religious freedom and the right to freely live out one's faith," said Tehmina Arora, Director of ADF India.

Gaza on edge of 'economic collapse', charity warns

● Although a ceasefire has calmed a violent situation in Gaza, one Catholic aid agency has warned that the people living there remain extremely vulnerable due to drastic cuts in US humanitarian assistance.

"Gaza is on the edge of a complete economic collapse," said Hilary DuBose, country representative for Catholic Relief Services in Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza.

"Any additional pressure could be disastrous for the people who live there, and restoration of humanitarian aid is urgently needed," she said.

A ceasefire called last week brought an end to a particularly violent weekend in Gaza, during which about 30 people were killed. Some 700 rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel over the weekend.

Witness to Church in face of adversity – bishop

● A new bishop in the Philippines has called for Catholics to show courage in the face of violence and persecution.

Speaking at his own consecration, Bishop Fidelis Layog addressed the difficult circumstances facing the Church in the country, but called them an opportunity to witness to the strength of God and his Church. "This is the time for us to show how strong we are in faith and how strong the foundation of our Church is," the new bishop said.

"Let us not fear knowing that we are never alone. God is with us. God will prevail." Pope Francis appointed Layog to serve as auxiliary bishop in the diocese of Lingayen-Dagupan last month.

US state declares porn a 'public health crisis'

● The Arizona legislature has passed a resolution declaring pornography a public health crisis and a danger to mental and physical health.

House Concurrent Resolution 2009 was approved 16-13 by the state senate May last week. The measure does not ban adult material, but rather makes a public statement against the dangers of pornography. "Potential detrimental effects on pornography users include toxic sexual behaviours, emotional, mental and medical illnesses and difficulty forming or maintaining intimate relationships," the resolution reads.

Francis prays for victims of Burkina Faso attack

Pope Francis is praying for the victims of the recent attack on a Catholic church in Burkina Faso, the interim head of the Holy See press office has said.

"The Holy Father learned with sorrow the news of the attack on the church in Dablo, in #BurkinaFaso. He prays for the victims, for their families and for the whole Christian community of the country," Alessandro Gisotti wrote on Twitter on May 13.

A group of gunmen burned down a Catholic Church during Sunday Mass and killed at least six people, including a priest, in the west African nation of Burkina Faso on May 12.

The attackers reportedly burst into the church, located in the northern town of Dablo, and started shooting at the beginning of Mass, around 9am local time. Mass celebrant Fr Simeon Yampa was among those killed in the attack.

France 24 cited a security source who said there were "some 20 to 30 armed men" involved in the attack. The gunmen are as yet unidentified.

A government official told the BBC that the militants also set fire to a nearby shops



and a health centre. Dablo's Mayor, Ousmane Zongo, said the town is "filled with panic" and that citizens are "holed up at home".

Separate attack

The people of Burkina Faso have suffered an increasing number of terrorist attacks in recent years from Islamic jihadist groups including al-Qaeda affiliates. Authorities said five teachers were shot to death in a separate attack last week.

The government in Burkina Faso declared a state of emergency in several northern provinces last December because of deadly Islamist attacks, including in the region where the assault on Sunday took place, Reuters reports.

Sunday's attack is the second on a Catholic church in the area this year; four died after an attack on a church in a nearby village in April. In addition, attackers targeted a Protestant church during

Pope Francis is pictured after delivering his Easter message and blessing *urbi et orbi* (to the city and the world) from the central balcony of St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on April 21.

the same month, killing six including the priest.

Last week, two French soldiers died during a successful attempt to rescue two Frenchmen, an American and a South Korean who had been kidnapped and were being held in that very region.

Before giving his Easter blessing *urbi et orbi* (to the city and the world) on April 21, Pope Francis prayed for peace in several countries in the African continent, including Burkina Faso, which he said are "still rife with social tensions, conflicts and at times violent forms of extremism that leave in their wake insecurity, destruction and death".

In 2017, Francis also offered prayers for the people of the country after gunmen opened fire in a Turkish restaurant in the capital Ouagadougou, killing at least 18 people and taking hostages before police ended the standoff.

'Cold hand of euthanasia' terrorises Canada, cardinal warns

Pro-life campaigners from across Canada gathered on Ottawa's Parliament Hill last week for the country's annual National March for Life. Carrying a variety of hand-made and pre-printed signs in a variety of languages, pro-life advocates, school groups, families, and clergy turned out to mark the 50th year of legal abortion in the country.

Police declined to give a formal estimate of the crowd; it is believed thousands of marchers were in attendance.

Addressing the crowd at a pre-march rally, Cardinal Thomas Collins of Toronto referenced the changing nature of the

pro-life movement in Canada as new laws have been passed over five decades.

Pointing to the spreading practice of euthanasia across the country, the cardinal said that it was paramount that "people recognise the reality, the profound preciousness of the gift of life from the first moment of conception until natural death".

Stressed

"In the past we've stressed so much - and rightly so - the first part of that," the second clause regarding natural death is now more relevant than ever, explained

Cardinal Collins. "The cold hand of euthanasia is upon our country as well."

Last year, more than 2,600 Canadians received "medical aid in dying", effectively physician-administered suicide. This total amounts to 1.12% of all deaths in 2018.

In Canada, doctors opposed to euthanasia do not have the legal right to refuse such requests, and are subject to losing their jobs if they fail to comply.

"There must be protection for all people," said Cardinal Collins. "Not only those in the medical world, but for everyone."

Ebola outbreak claims more than 1,000 lives

The Ebola outbreak that began last August in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has now claimed more than 1,000 lives, the nation's health ministry has confirmed.

Efforts to contain the disease have been hampered by misinformation and distrust on the part of local commu-

nities, who in some cases have retaliated against health teams by attacking them.

More than 100,000 people have received the Ebola vaccine but many more are fearful of it and refuse to receive it. In addition, violence in the eastern part of DRC has made it difficult to reach some areas

of the country, and difficult to monitor the virus as it spreads. This has led to fears that Ebola may reach neighbouring countries in the east, including Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi.

The ongoing Ebola outbreak is the second deadliest on record. An outbreak

in 2014-2016 in West Africa killed more than 11,000 people.

Symptoms of Ebola include fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, muscle pains and occasional bleeding and is primarily spread through contact with bodily fluids. The disease is fatal in up to 90% of cases.



Edited by Colm Fitzpatrick
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Pilgrims light up Fatima



Worshippers hold candles at the Marian shrine of Fatima in central Portugal. Thousands of pilgrims arrived at the shrine to attend the 102nd anniversary of the first apparition of Mary to three shepherd children. Photo: CNS

'Doubts' still remain about women deacons in early Church – Pope

The commission Pope Francis appointed to study the history and identity of women deacons did not reach a unanimous conclusion about whether deaconesses in the early church were "ordained" or formally "blessed", the Pope has said.

"What is fundamental is that there was no certainty that there was an ordination with the same form and same aim as the ordination of men," the Pope told reporters flying with him from North Macedonia to Rome on May 7.

Pope Francis spent just under half an hour on the short flight answering questions, including about the study of women deacons he commissioned in August 2013.

After the six men and six women

scholars on the commission finished their work, he said, there was "some agreement", but not on the crucial question of whether women were ordained or solemnly blessed like abbesses are.

"Some say there are doubts," the Pope said. "Well, then, let's study some more. I don't have a problem with that."

Commission

At a May 2016 meeting with the women's International Union of Superiors General, leaders of women's religious orders, one of them had asked the Pope, "What prevents the Church from including women among permanent deacons, as was the case in the primitive Church? Why not constitute an official

commission to study the matter?"

The Pope had told the sisters that his understanding was that the women described as deaconesses in the New Testament were not ordained like permanent deacons are. Mainly, he had said, it appeared that they assisted with the baptism by immersion of other women, with anointing women and with giving witness on behalf of women seeking a dissolution of their marriage because their husbands beat them.

However, the Pope had promised to set up the commission, and two of the scholars said in January that they had completed their work. The Pope did not tell reporters what steps, if any, would come next.

Mexican bishops make migration crisis appeal

The Mexican Bishops' Conference has made a public request for help from the country's authorities, as well as all people of good will, in addressing the migration crisis at the country's southern border. In a May 7 statement entitled 'Request for Help', the bishops noted that "we Mexicans have always been known for our joy, solidarity, treating others well and hospitality".

However, they lamented,

with the recent migrant caravans, "some people have taken on attitudes of rejection, indifference, xenophobia, discrimination and racism".

While Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador campaigned on a pledge of protecting migrants and their rights, the Mexican government has begun detaining migrants arriving in the coun-

try increased.

Mexico is currently facing a "humanitarian emergency" as migration caravans move through the country, often lacking basic shelter and necessities, the bishops warned.

They pledged "to do everything possible to be a Samaritan Church to make the journey of our brother migrants less onerous".

"We have requested Caritas

National's action in organising the aid in our country, just as we are motivating the different dioceses in our homeland to raise up an additional effort of generosity among our parishioners on behalf of our brothers," they said.

The bishops of Mexico called on the federal government to activate an emergency plan and request humanitarian assistance for those in need.

Vatican roundup

Concrete hope never disappoints, Pope tells Gypsy communities

Members of Italy's Gypsy communities must look to God to hold on to the hope of a future where they are no longer discriminated against or segregated, Pope Francis has said.

Speaking to 500 members of the Roma, Sinti and Gypsy communities during a May 9 prayer service in the Clementine Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Pope said he was moved by the testimonies of mothers who continue to hold on to the hope they see in their children's eyes.

"Hope can disappoint if it is not true hope. But when hope is concrete, as in this case, in the eyes of the children, it never disappoints, it never disappoints! When hope is concrete, in the true God, it never disappoints," he said.

During the prayer service, the Pope listened to several members of the Gypsy communities, including a priest from the Diocese of Sora-Cassino-Aquino-Pontecorvo, Italy, located roughly 75 miles south of Rome.

"Yes, I am a Roma priest! A Gypsy that becomes a priest always makes news and is considered different and peculiar," Fr Cristian Di Silvio told Pope Francis.

Nevertheless, through the help of his spiritual adviser, Fr Di Silvio said he learned that his Gypsy heritage did not make him different from any other Christian who is "unique and unparalleled".

Love of neighbour is central to Jewish-Christian relations

The love of neighbour is a common commitment among Christians and Jews, Pope Francis said to teachers and students at Rome's Pontifical Biblical Institute last week.

The Pope explained that Christian interpretations of Jesus' interactions with the Pharisees, as well as consideration of the Jewish heirs to the Pharisaic tradition, must seek this common ground with accuracy, free of prejudice and stereotypes.

Love of neighbour

"certainly constitutes an important basis for any dialogue, especially among Jews and Christians, even today", the Pope said in prepared remarks for the biblical institute, known in Vatican parlance as the Biblicum.

Pope Francis said that the influential 2nd-Century Jewish commentator Rabbi Aqiba, an heir of the Pharisees, described the words "love your neighbour as yourself" as "a great principle of the Torah".

New Vatican abuse norms move in right direction – archbishop

Pope Francis' new norms on protecting minors and strengthening accountability are the latest steps in driving home the message that the days of keeping abuse allegations covered up or ignored are over, said the Vatican's top abuse investigator.

In the past, some people may have thought they were protecting the Church by remaining silent, but that behaviour was never acceptable, Archbishop Charles Scicluna of Malta, adjunct secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, told reporters.

"The good of the Church requires condemnation" to the proper authorities when it comes to abuse of minors and abuses of power, he said.

The archbishop spoke to reporters about Pope Francis' latest apostolic letter, 'Vos estis lux mundi' ('You are the light of the world') at a news conference at the Vatican on May 9. The new document establishes and clarifies norms and procedures for holding bishops and religious superiors accountable when it comes to safeguarding minors as well as abuses carried out against adults with violence, threats or an abuse of authority.

The new norms are important, Archbishop Scicluna said, because they clearly tell people they have an obligation to report already existing crimes, negligence and inappropriate behaviour to Church authorities.

New Vatican rules on abuse will create 'stronger Church' – cardinal

New papal norms on preventing clergy sexual abuse are "a blessing that will empower the Church everywhere to bring predators to justice, no matter what rank they hold in the Church", Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, has said.

The new juridical instrument "calls for the establishment of easily accessible reporting systems, clear standards for the pastoral support of victims and their families, timeliness and thoroughness of investigations, whistle-blower protection for those making allegations, and active involvement of the laity," Cardinal DiNardo said on May 9.

The new document, was titled '*Vos estis lux mundi*' ('You are the light of the world'). Cardinal DiNardo praised it for leaving latitude

for national bishops' conferences, such as the USCCB, to specify still more to account for their local circumstances.

"It also permits the Church the time and opportunity to bring spiritual healing," he said.

Procedures

The document, which takes effect from June 1, clarified norms and procedures for holding bishops and religious superiors accountable in protecting minors as well as in protecting members of religious orders and seminarians from abuse.

It was meant to help bishops and religious leaders around the world clearly understand their duties and Church law, underlining how they are ultimately responsible for proper governance and protecting those entrusted to their care. It establishes a clearer set of universal proce-

dures for reporting suspected abuse, carrying out initial investigations and protecting victims and whistle-blowers.

"Today, Pope Francis ordered a worldwide response to the evil of sexual abuse," Cardinal DiNardo said.

"The Holy Father said a 'continuous and profound conversion of hearts is needed, attested by concrete and effective actions that involve everyone in the Church'. Pope Francis was clear that this responsibility 'falls, above all, on the successors of the apostles'.

Responsibility

"As part of this responsibility, bishops also will be held accountable under the authority of this '*motu proprio*', which covers sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable persons, sexual acts compelled through the abuse of authority, and any cover-up



Cardinal Daniel DiNardo.

of such crimes."

The cardinal said Pope Francis "made clear that protection and healing must reach all of God's children. Following on the meeting just two months ago of all episcopal conference presidents, the '*motu proprio*' shows Pope Francis expects swift and comprehensive progress.

"For the Church in the US, the task before us now is to establish whatever is necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the '*motu proprio*'.

"Our committees have already begun the work of preparing implementation measures for deliberation at the USCCB plenary assembly in June."

He noted the US already

had in place "the excellent foundation of the USCCB's Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, the Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons, and the Statement of Episcopal Commitment, all of which date back to 2002".

"By embracing the painful experience of survivors and working on these new protections, let us pray we continue to grow into a stronger Church," he said.

Response

The US bishops had planned to vote on their response to the clergy sex abuse crisis proposals during their November meeting but, at the

urging of the Vatican, they did not.

Cardinal DiNardo told the bishops that the Vatican wanted them to delay votes – on proposed standards of episcopal conduct and the formation of a special commission for review of complaints against bishops for violations of the standards – until after a February meeting with the Pope and presidents of the bishops' conferences around the world on addressing clergy abuse.

The *Associated Press* reported on January 1 that it had obtained the letter written on November 11 by Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, to Cardinal DiNardo, asking that the votes be delayed.

"Considering the nature and scope of the documents being proposed by the (conference), I believe it would have been beneficial to have allowed for more time to consult with this and other congregations with competence over the ministry and discipline of bishops," Cardinal Ouellet wrote.

At the end of the February summit on protection of minors, the Vatican promised to take action, including how bishops and religious superiors should handle abuse allegations and how they should prepare the relevant documents for the doctrinal congregation when an accusation is found to be credible.

Medical experts plead for end to 'germline editing'

A group of 62 doctors, scientists, and bioethicists have issued an open letter urging a global moratorium on experiments that alter human genes that can be passed on to subsequent generations, a practice known as 'germline editing'.

"Although we recognise the great scientific advancement represented by gene editing technologies and their potential value for an improved understanding and possible treatment of human disease, we strongly believe the editing of human embryos that results in births carries serious problems for which there are no scientific, ethical, or societal consensus," the letter from the American Society of Gene and Cell Therapy reads.

The organisation sent the

letter last month to US Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar.

"As a result, we contend that such human genetic manipulation should be considered unacceptable and support a binding global moratorium until serious scientific, societal, and ethical concerns are fully addressed," it reads.

Therapy

In *Dignitas personae*, its 2008 instruction on certain bioethical questions, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith said that while somatic cell gene therapy is in principle morally licit, "because the risks connected to [germline cell therapy] are considerable and as yet not fully controllable, in the present state of research, it is not morally per-

missible to act in a way that may cause possible harm to the resulting progeny".

The instruction also warned against a "eugenic mentality" that aims to improve the gene pool, adding that there could be social stigmas and privileges applied to people with certain genetic qualities, when "such qualities do not constitute what is specifically human."

The letter is not the first-time prominent scientists have addressed the issue of germline editing; in 2015, a group of five scientists published an op-ed in the journal *Nature* warning that "heritable human genetic modifications pose serious risks, and the therapeutic benefits are tenuous".

In March of this year, a different group of 18 scientists

took to the pages of *Nature* to call for a global moratorium on the practice of editing human DNA to create genetically modified babies, until the international community can develop a "framework" for how to proceed in an ethical manner.

At least four scientists have signed their names on both the March and April letters.

Calls

The two recent calls for a germline editing moratorium come in the wake of ethical questions surrounding the purported actions a Chinese biophysicist who claims he

created the first genetically modified babies late last year.

The biophysicist, He Jiankui [pictured], says his goal was to edit embryos to give them the ability to resist HIV infection by disabling the CCR5 gene, which allows HIV to enter a cell.

"The alterations induced by Dr He in these two girls would be expected to have been introduced into human germline cells, which would make the changes heritable and therefore passed on to future generations," the letter asserts.

In the April letter, the scientists drew attention

to scientific questions surrounding germline editing that, in their view, must be addressed before scientists proceed. These include how artificial changes to an embryo's genes "might interact with existing human genetic diversity when these new alterations are passed on to future generations".

Clinical germline editing is currently banned in the US and in 30 or so other countries throughout the world, including China.

"Before this status quo is revisited, it is vital that extensive discussions and engagement take place among all major stakeholders, including members of the scientific, medical, patient, caregiver, policy, legal, ethical and faith communities," the letter reads.



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Struggles abound in rebuilding Mozambique following cyclones

Helping children who lost their parents when a pair of cyclones hit Mozambique is among the most difficult work in the aftermath, an aid worker has said.

"It's not easy to find the links" to these children's relatives, said Martina Zavagli, country representative for the Association of Volunteers in International Service Foundation, or AVSI.

"Many children are alone" in the camps set up on land belonging to the Archdiocese of Beira, she said in a telephone interview earlier this month.

The "trauma is enormous", Ms Zavagli explained, noting that the Italy-based Catholic foundation has social workers "who have been trained so they can help prepare the children in this very sensitive time".

With high winds and torrential rain, Cyclone Kenneth made landfall in Mozambique's northern region on April 25, leaving at least 40 people dead out of the more than 240,000 affected.

Five weeks earlier, hundreds more died and tens of thousands had their homes and livelihoods destroyed when Cyclone Idai struck Mozambique before moving inland to Zimbabwe and Malawi. It made landfall near the port city of Beira and two of Mozambique's major rivers overflowed their banks, submerging entire villages.

In total, an estimated 2 million people have been affected by the cyclones, with Idai considered one of the worst natural disasters to hit the southern hemisphere.

Villages flattened

As with Idai, "villages have been flattened" in the wake of the second cyclone, the US bishops' Catholic Relief Services said in a statement.

"Roads have been washed out" and bridges destroyed, it said, noting the threat of water-borne diseases, such as cholera, typhoid and malaria "spreading quickly in the hardest-hit areas".

Tens of thousands of



Residents waded through a flooded road in Pemba, Mozambique, in the aftermath of Cyclone Kenneth. Photo: CNS

people from villages in the areas that are below sea level need help to be resettled, said Leah Marie Lucas of Caritas Mozambique in Pemba, on the country's north-eastern coast. Most are fishing communities.

Mozambique is a long, narrow country of about 30 million people with a 1,500-mile coastline along the Indian Ocean.

With rising sea levels, which most scientists attribute to climate change, most people will never again be able to live in their old neighbourhoods, Ms Lucas said. Unable to return, people who fish and others have lost their livelihoods, she said.

“The foundation established ‘child-friendly spaces’ in the camps and is helping to protect women”

Even when they know they have to, "it's very difficult for people to leave their homes and communities", she said. While Portuguese is Mozambique's official language, "there are many cultural groups with different languages".

These groups are tied to different religions, with a variety of food practices, dress codes "and other prac-

tices that show their distinct cultures", she said.

In coordinating rescues and distributing aid, Caritas Mozambique and other Catholic groups have formed strong partnerships with their Muslim-based counterparts in Pemba, Ms Lucas said.

With government, civil-society agencies and others, Caritas has organised volunteers who are helping with needs assessments and directing those in need to available resources, she said.

Maria Auxiliadora parish in Pemba, along with other Church schools, housed more than 1,000 people of different faiths who fled the storms.

In the crisis, the church is managing "to receive everyone... Christians, Muslims and everybody else", Fr Ricardo Rosa Marques, parish priest, told the *Associated Press*.

"For us, it's not important to know which religion a person may have", it's the person that matters, he said.

In Beira, Mozambique's second-largest city, which was almost completely destroyed, "things were chaotic" in the camps for displaced people with "masses of people all in the same place", Ms Zavagli said.

The foundation established "child-friendly spaces" in the camps and is helping to protect women, she said. Women are open to abuse "if they get up in the dark to use the restroom, for example", she said.



A Sri Lankan priest blesses people outside St Anthony Church in Colombo. A small section of the church, which was severely damaged in the terrorist attacks on Easter, was reopened for worshippers. Photo: CNS

Christian persecution at 'genocidal' levels – report

Increasing severity in the persecution of Christians in different parts of the world is reaching "genocidal" levels, according to a new report commissioned by the British government.

An interim report issued by an Independent Review set up at the request of the UK foreign secretary said that Christians are overwhelmingly the most targeted religious group in the world, and that "acts of violence and other intimidation against Christians are becoming more widespread".

The review has been led by Anglican Bishop Philip Mounstephen of Truro.

"I have to say that although I am personally experienced in the life of the global Church having visited in South America, in the Middle East, in Africa, in Asia and in many other places as well, I am nonetheless deeply shocked by the scale, the scope and the severity of this phenomenon," the bishop said in a statement.

Focus

The report was announced on December 26, 2018, by British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt, and was due to be concluded by Easter. However, Bishop Mounstephen said the scale of the problem was too large and won't have a final report until the summer. The interim report released on at the beginning of this month focuses on "the scale and nature of the problem".

"Evidence shows not only the geographic spread of anti-Christian persecution, but also its increasing severity. In some regions, the level and nature of persecution is arguably coming close to meeting the international definition of genocide, according to that adopted by the UN.

The eradication of Christians and other

minorities on pain of 'the sword' or other violent means was revealed to be the specific and stated objective of extremist groups in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, north-east Nigeria and the Philippines. An intent to erase all evidence of the Christian presence was made plain by the removal of crosses, the destruction of Church buildings and other Church symbols," the report says.

It adds that the killing and abduction of clergy represented a direct attack on the Church's structure and leadership, noting that where these and other incidents meet the tests of genocide, governments will be required to bring perpetrators to justice, aid victims and take preventative measures for the future.

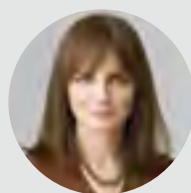
Impact

The document notes that the main impact of such genocidal acts against Christians is an exodus from the region, with Christianity now facing "the possibility of being wiped out in parts of the Middle East where its roots go back furthest".

"In Palestine, Christian numbers are below 1.5%; in Syria the Christian population has declined from 1.7 million in 2011 to below 450,000; and in Iraq, Christian numbers have slumped from 1.5 million before 2003 to below 120,000 today. Christianity is at risk of disappearing, representing a massive setback for plurality in the region," the report continues.

The report notes that violent persecution exists "in many forms," and can include both state and non-state actors. It lists church bombings, extrajudicial killings, enforced "disappearance", and the kidnapping of Christian girls as some of the actions which regularly affect Christian communities in parts of the world.

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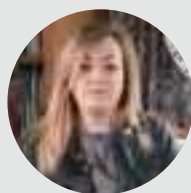
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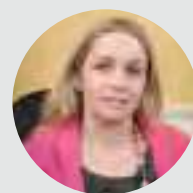
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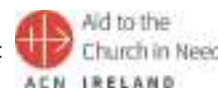
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Letter from Rome

Argentine bishops rue 'continuous attacks' on Pope due to abuse crisis



Inés San Martín

A group of Argentine bishops who travelled to Rome to meet their countryman Pope Francis have acknowledged that "abuses of power as well as sexual abuses" have caused distrust in the Church, but also expressed concern over what they called the "continuous attacks on the Pope" associated with the abuse crisis.

The bishops also said that the terms of a national debate over the legalisation of abortion "did us Argentines a lot of wrong", expressing surprise at the level of anger they encountered.

The words belong to Bishop Oscar Ojea, president of the Argentine bishops' conference, and they were expressed in a letter the bishops of the Buenos Aires region gave to Francis last Friday during their *ad limina* visit to Rome.

Bishop Ojea wrote that with the passing of the years, it's become evident to the bishops that they still have a "long way to go" to be able to live up to the responsibility of being a conference to which the Pope once belonged, and which he once led.

'Abortion militants'

Speaking about the debate over the legalisation of abortion, which took place last year after President Mauricio Macri gave the greenlight for a bill to be debated in Congress for the first time in over a decade, the bishops said they were surprised by the "great number of young people" who've become "abortion militants", in many cases manifesting "a great anger with the Church".

"We find ourselves facing a deep cultural change, continuously fed by the media and by those who have the power over them to confront the Church, which is accused of being a patriarchal institution, an enemy of women's rights that tolerates abuses and that negates rights," Bishop Ojea writes.

This hostile environment, he said, is fuelled by allegations of clerical sexual abuse of minors: "Our abuses of power, united with sexual abuses, have contributed to creating an attitude of rage and anger in many faithful, which, in your own words, is an expression of God's anger."



Pope Francis meets with bishops from the Argentine episcopal conference at the Vatican on May 2, 2019. The bishops were making their *ad limina* visits to Rome. Photo: CNS

"Confronted with this situation, we cannot victimise ourselves and we have to look for God's will behind this moment of great confusion," Bishop Ojea wrote. "What is the Lord telling us through these grave contradictions and the continuous attack on the Pope and the Church, trying to obscure the content of your magisterium?"

The Argentine bishops said they find themselves in a state of "perplexity" that is at times "paralysing", which leads to the need for a "deep examination of conscience".

"Thinking about what we might have done wrong helps us live the virtue of humility, which ensures interior peace and illuminates our path to make concrete decisions that certify that we're on the path of the Gospel," the bishops said.

The group of some 30 bishops, including Cardinal Mario Poli, handpicked by Francis as his replacement as archbishop of Buenos Aires, were in Rome last week participating in the regular

pilgrimage bishops' conferences make to Rome to meet the Pope and Vatican officials. Though it's supposed to happen every five years, this is the first time the Argentine bishops have travelled to Rome as a group since 2009.

"The Pope told us that we're all responsible and that we must work towards becoming a truly federal country"

Bishop Ojea began his letter saying he won't describe the social situation of the Buenos Aires region, as the Pope "knows it well", but he does dedicate a paragraph to saying there are many people unemployed and that among those who work, many earn their bread with the "sweat of their foreheads and their hearts because the salary is not enough".

Yet despite the situation, it's the people who, despite their concerns,

"give us a lesson of hope and even of good humour", because in their hearts the "flame of faith is still alive", kept that way by the Holy Spirit and expressed "with such clarity in our shrines".

"The soul of our people continues to be Christian, even amidst an acute cultural battle," Bishop Ojea wrote in the name of all the bishops.

Encounter

The second group of Argentine bishops making the *ad limina* visit met Francis last Friday for a little over two hours. Bishop Gabriel Barba of LaFerrere spoke to Argentine journalists afterwards, calling the encounter one of "open, fraternal and deep dialogue".

"We spoke about the matter of abuse, and the Pope told us that we must own up to them and that there's been a maturation as mechanisms being put in place," Bishop Barba said.

The group also spoke about global warming and about

Argentina, but without going into "the politics of yesterday, today and tomorrow, but with a historic perspective".

The Pope reportedly spoke about Argentina's attempts to become a "federal country" – meaning not entirely centred on the national capital, with all the regions playing a role in national life and getting a fair shot – something "we're far from", Bishop Barba said.

"He told us that we're all responsible and that we must work towards becoming a truly federal country, from the culture of encounter," he explained. "It's not about assigning blame to others or a sector of society – we're all responsible."

Speaking about a possible trip to Argentina by Francis, the bishop said that the issue is "open", even if it won't happen this year.

📍 Inés San Martín is Rome Bureau Chief of Cruxnow.com

"We spoke about the matter of abuse, and the Pope told us that we must own up to them and that there's been a maturation as mechanisms being put in place"



Jean Vanier, founder of the L'Arche communities who helped improve conditions for the developmentally disabled in multiple countries over the past half century, died on May 7 at age 90.



John L. Allen Jr

With death of Jean Vanier, Catholicism loses a living saint

Theoretically, all baptised Catholics are supposed to strive for sanctity. If you're like most of us, however, you rarely meet someone who just seems to radiate holiness – not a faux saccharine piety, but the real deal. We're talking about the sort of personality with whom, after an encounter, you walk away thinking: "I just saw a living saint."

20th-Century Catholicism bred a handful of such figures, among whom both Mother Teresa and Jean Vanier figured especially prominently – making it apt, perhaps, that Vanier died on the very day Pope Francis was in North Macedonia paying tribute to the feisty "saint of the gutters" with whom Vanier was so often compared, and paired, in life.

Cancer

Vanier, who was 90, died from cancer last Tuesday morning in a facility in Paris run by the L'Arche community that he founded in 1964. Upon hearing the news, Francis released a brief statement through

a spokesman saying he's "praying for [Vanier] and for the entire L'Arche community".

By the time I arrived on the Vatican scene in the late 1990s, Vanier was already a fixture on the global Catholic scene, famed for his outreach to people with physical, mental and emotional disorders. His idea was not to treat such people as the objects of charity, but rather as friends and even teachers, founding communities in which they lived alongside people without disabilities in a spirit of mutual respect and care.

I remember distinctly the first time I came face-to-face with Vanier, which was during a Vatican news conference in the run-up to the Great Jubilee Year of 2000. He'd been asked to speak on a panel about some papal initiative, and for much of the discussion, to be honest, he didn't seem

especially dialled in.

Yet when I asked Vanier if Pope John Paul II had become a more powerful symbol for the people he lived and worked with because the aging Pontiff was himself, in a sense, "disabled", Vanier lit up.

“The sincerity and conviction with which he spoke was electric”

His response was simple and unequivocal: "The Pope has never been more beautiful than he is right now," he said, and then explained how what the world often sees as weakness and embarrassment can, seen through different eyes, often reveal itself as a tremendous gift.

It's hard to describe now, but the sincerity and conviction with which he spoke was electric, and by the time he was done, I was sold.

Vanier was born in 1928 in Geneva to Canadian parents, and went to study in Canada, England and France. In 1945, he visited his father in Paris who was then serving as the Canadian Ambassador to France, where he saw first-hand the horrors of the Holocaust as he and his mother volunteered to assist concentration camp survivors.

Vanier earned a PhD in Philosophy from the Institut Catholique de Paris in the mid-1960s with a dissertation on happiness in Aristotle, and, at that stage, he saw a scholarly career stretching ahead. Moved by a desire to do "something else", however, he abandoned academia.

Through friendship with a French priest, Vanier became aware of people suffering from disabilities and invited a couple of other friends to come live with him and a

handful of disabled persons in Trosly-Breuil, France, thereby launching the L'Arche movement.

In 1971, Vanier also co-founded the Faith and Light movement, focused on people with learning disabilities. L'Arche has spread to more than 37 countries, and Faith and Light to roughly 80.

Recognition

Over the years, Vanier has received virtually every honour and distinction to which any humanitarian could aspire, including the Companion and Order of Canada, the French Legion of Honour, the *Pacem in Terris* Peace and Freedom Award, the Knights of Columbus *Gaudium et Spes* Award and the Templeton Prize.

Undoubtedly, however, Vanier would say he was less interested in prizes and recognition than in the various ways his

community's spirit took root around the world.

Henri Nouwen is one good example. The famed Catholic priest and writer met Vanier while Nouwen was teaching at Harvard in the mid-1980s, and a friendship blossomed. Vanier invited Nouwen to join him at Trosly-Breuil, where Nouwen discovered a new sense of purpose. He eventually moved into a L'Arche center in Ontario in 1986, where he became its pastor for the last decade of his life.

While in Ontario, Nouwen became close to a man named Adam Arnett, who had several developmental disabilities. Nouwen always insisted that he, not Arnett, got the most out of their relationship, and he'd eventually write about the experience in the 1997 book *Adam: God's Beloved*.

There's another layer to the story, because while Nouwen was discovering Vanier and L'Arche at Harvard he was also teaching a deeply thoughtful young Ukrainian Greek-Catholic priest by the name of Borys Gudziak.

A decade later, Gudziak would be tasked with rebuilding a genuinely Catholic University in Ukraine after the fall of communism, and he began with a diagnosis: That the Ukrainian people were suffering from a profound "trust deficit", after seven decades of being programmed during the Soviet era to lie, conceal and hide their true selves.

“Vanier has received virtually every honour and distinction”

To remedy that trust deficit, Gudziak turned to Nouwen, Vanier and L'Arche, inviting mentally handicapped people to become part of the university community. At the Ukrainian Catholic University, the mentally handicapped actually serve as "professors of human relations".

"This is not some kind of handout," Gudziak told me in 2012. "We need the gifts they have. They don't care if you're a rector, a doctor, or how rich you are. What they force us to confront is the most important pedagogical question of all: can you love me?"

If one measure of a life is the way it shapes others, then Vanier's living legacy in such unlikely venues as Ukraine suggests that his life was a prodigy indeed. *Requiescat in pace*, Jean Vanier.

John L. Allen Jr is Editor of Cruxnow.com

Letters

Post to: Letters to the Editor, The Irish Catholic,
23 Merrion Square North, Dublin 2,
or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

Letter of the week

We must work for more vocations

Dear Editor, Your vocations supplement this week (IC 9/5/2019) was really quite fascinating and the sort of thing that young men and women discerning clerical or religious vocations would surely find both interesting and useful.

I've no doubt that the many religious orders that have advertised in your paper were delighted with this kind of coverage, especially coming right after the careful and thorough analysis of the financial state of our orders in the previous issue.

That said, there was one glaring

absence in the supplement. Where was there any coverage, or indeed any advertising, from our dioceses? We have 26 dioceses in Ireland, all of which have designated vocations directors, and we even have a national office for diocesan vocations, announced with much fanfare a couple of years ago. But how many diocesan seminarians do we have in formation? Do we even have twice as many seminarians as we have vocations directors? What are we doing wrong?

It won't do – it won't – to wheel

out nonsense about how we're being called to move to a less clerical Church, when even our nearest neighbours are seeing far higher proportions of men entering seminary than us. It seems unlikely that God wants us – unlike our neighbours – to be a Church without Confession or Communion. We must pray for vocations – we really must – but we need to work seriously and intelligently for them too.

*Yours etc.,
Caroline McCarthy,
Clondalkin,
Dublin 22.*

There is simply no demand for this referendum

Dear Editor, On May 24 we will be asked to further diminish and discredit what remains of our country's legal understanding of marriage.

Fine Gael seem determined to entirely erase the concept of marriage, from the aspirational landscape of young people, leaving them bereft of this most beautiful, rewarding, fulfilling and necessary institution for human flourishing, happiness and indeed the continuation of the human race.

Marriage is not primarily

based upon a commitment to one's own happiness, as we find in co-habitation and civil-partnerships. What sets it apart as distinct from these, is that it involves the couple's renunciation of their autonomy as individuals, in favour of taking on responsibility for creating a home, and where possible, as part of this conjugal vocation, founding a family.

During multiple referendums (divorce and same-sex), the Government repeatedly assured us of their commitment to strengthen and support

marriage. Yet in the last 12 months it has withdrawn its support from Cork's local Marriage Advisory Agency (forcing it to shut down) and it has also threatened the funding of Family Centres elsewhere.

Unfortunately, our Government is pursuing policies that are ambivalent to the human cost of their undermining of marriage: homelessness, mental health issues, addiction, even violence, abuse and neglect.

There is no demand for this constitutional change, aimed at eliminating the

pause period before issuing divorce proceedings. It can only add to the pain and emotional turmoil, when couples are most in need of comfort, clarity and confidence.

As they work through efforts to renew the relationship, legal professionals will be emboldened to advise them to cut this process short and to speed down the path of repudiating their spouse. Vote 'No'.

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

Let's question hypocrisy

Dear Editor, Bishop Doran's advice that Catholics should challenge politicians and their teams when they're having church-gate collections or seeking support outside our churches (IC 9/5/2019) is smart and sensible. After all, it seems clear that the hypocrisy of politicians in trying to get the support of ordinary Massgoers is in no danger of drying up, and if we can't stop them from doing this we might as well take advantage of the situation and hold them to account.

*Yours etc.,
Mark Brady,
Ballyfermot, Dublin 10.*



Endless list of problems caused by divorce

Dear Editor, With the local elections only around the corner including a divorce referendum section asking people to vote whether or not to take the 'living apart period' out of the Constitution, I feel compelled to explain to people from a child's point of view what the lasting legacy of divorce actually is.

Removing the period of estrangement will most likely encourage couples to seek divorce too quickly without giving themselves the time and patience to resolve their difficulties.

I have first-hand experience of being a child of divorced parents in which I was also separated from my only brother who lived with his dad. Due to the grace of God and my openness to

being finally healed of this childhood trauma (in my 40s) I feel obliged to warn other couples against this (in most cases) unnecessary fate.

Everyone has marital trials and often it's the unexpected external factors which can affect your relationships. Working your way through the trials and forgiving each other from the heart is so worth it though. Sometimes all it requires is a little patience and 'not' speaking the harsh words.

When separation and divorce occur, mentally a child 'grows up' overnight.

You may be encouraged, by some friends, or relatives, or worse – some advice you read on the internet, to leave your spouse. In a nutshell this is what

'is' ahead when the family unit is broken up: custody battles, property battles, visitation rights, stressful visits, children with low self-esteem inside (they might seem perfectly fine on the outside), lack of continuity of children's schooling and extra-curricular activities, fault-finding with new partners, old age spent reflecting on past regrets...

This doesn't have to be the fate for you or your spouse or your children. If one couple could be dissuaded from taking this path, this letter was worth the ink.

*Yours etc.,
Shirley Keogh,
Ballinasloe, Co. Galway.*

facebook community

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

Who goes to Hell and who doesn't?

If we're to take Fr Rolheiser's logic then no one goes to Hell. I certainly do not want anyone to go to Hell but do we take it then that Our Lady was telling lies or trying to frighten children when she allowed the three young visionaries at Fatima to see Hell or was St Faustina delusional when she spoke of Hell? – **Peter Killeen**

Origen had this idea that Hell would be empty and the devil himself could be saved but it was condemned as a heresy so I'm wondering why Fr Ronald would see fit to repeat it? I do agree that only God is the judge and all we can do here is our absolute best. I also think some of us tend to fall into a habit of trying to avoid Hell but abandon transforming the self and tend to approach God not out of a reverent fear or love but a fear in which we are afraid of what might become of us if we don't. We should ask God to help us move from going to Confession and Mass out of fear of Him to doing it out of love for him because we will be judged in the end to the measure of our love and not fear. – **Stephen McElligott**

A chance to boost real Catholic marriage preparation

If you go to Mass, the priest will know you and can vouch for you. If you don't go to Mass, then you shouldn't get to abuse our churches and our sacred Sacraments just so you can have pretty photos. It really is that simple. – **Kelley Rickard**

Here's the problem. Despite the confusing terminology, the Church does not act as a solemniser of civil marriage. It's really the reverse. The State recognises the validity of Catholic marriages so long as the solemniser is registered. Why would we give up State recognition of our marriages? Secondly, so long as the Church requires Catholics, good, bad, practising or lapsed, to be married in Church for validity, then we can't in conscience refuse them a church wedding. To do so is to force them into a sinful invalid union. And there's currently no way for them to formally leave the Church – **Christopher McCamley**

Pro-life duties extend to all species

Of course if we are the people God created us to be, we will have no problem doing this. However, it seems the preservation of environment has taken over as the first priority rather than the preservation of human life at its first beginnings. What does it profit a man if he gains the world and loses his soul? Legalised abortion worldwide is killing pre-born children in their millions. If this was an animal species there would be an international outcry.

The First commandments that we have been given tell us to love God and the following seven to love our neighbour (for the love of God). If we do this and in its proper order then everything will be as it should the environment included. – **Eilin Glynn**

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

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Around the world



▲ **USA:** A woman attends the annual pilgrimage of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington.

◀ **MACEDONIA:** People attend Pope Francis' celebration of Mass at Macedonia Square in Skopje. Photos: CNS



USA: Students mourn during a vigil for victims of a shooting at the STEM School Highlands Ranch in Colorado. Catholic leaders are calling for prayer and action in response to the shooting inside the charter school near Denver Kendrick Castillo, an 18-year-old Catholic senior was killed when he "lunged" at one of the shooters to save others. Eight other students were wounded.



LESBOS: Two women from Afghanistan stand outside their tent in the informal Moria refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos.



MEXICO: Private security guards in Tapachula are seen at an immigrant detention centre where migrants broke out and escaped. The Mexican bishops' conference appealed for assistance for thousands of migrants stuck in Chiapas state as Mexican officials stepped up enforcement and stopped issuing travel documents.



VATICAN: Pope Francis listens to men sing during a meeting with Italy's Roma, Sinti and Gypsy communities at the Vatican.

Language, symbols and self-understanding



A reporter once asked two men at the construction site where a church was being built what each did for a living. The first man replied: "I'm a bricklayer." The second said: "I'm building a cathedral!" How we name an experience largely determines its meaning. There are various languages with a language and some speak more deeply than others.

Thirty years ago, the American Educator, Allan Bloom, wrote a book entitled *The Closing of the American Mind*. This was his thesis: our language today is becoming ever-more empirical, one-dimensional, and devoid of depth. This, he submits, is closing our minds by trivialising our experiences.

Provocative

Twenty years earlier, in a rather provocative essay, 'The Triumph of the Therapeutic', Philip Rieff had already suggested the same thing. For Rieff, we live our lives under a certain "symbolic hedge", that is, within a language and set of concepts by which we interpret our experience.

And that hedge can be high or low. We can understand our experience within a language and set of concepts that has us believe that things are very meaningful or that they are quite shallow and not very meaningful at all. Experience is rich or shallow, depending upon the language within which we interpret it.

For example: imagine a man with a backache who sees his doctor. The doctor tells him that he's suffering



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

from arthritis. This brings some calm. He now knows what ails him.

But he isn't satisfied and sees a psychologist. The psychologist tells him that his symptoms are not just physical but that he's also suffering from mid-life crisis. This affords him a richer understanding of his pain.

But he's still dissatisfied and sees a spiritual director. The spiritual director, while not denying him arthritis and mid-life crisis, tells him that this pain is really his Gethsemane, his cross to bear. Notice all three diagnoses speak of the same pain but that each places it under a different symbolic hedge.

The language we use to understand an experience defines what the experience means to us

The work of persons such as Carl Jung, James Hillman and Thomas Moore have helped us understand more explicitly how there is a language which more deeply touches the soul.

For instance: we see the language of soul, among other places, in some of our great myths and fairy tales, many of them centuries old. Their seeming simplicity masks a disarming depth.

To offer just one example, take the story of Cinderella: the first thing to notice is that the name, Cinderella, is not an actual name but a composite of two words: *cinder*, meaning ashes; and *puella*, meaning young girl. This is not a simple fairy tale about a lonely, beaten-down, young girl.

It's a myth that highlights a universal, paradoxical, paschal dynamic which we experience in our lives, where, before you are ready to wear the glass slipper, be the belle of the ball, marry the prince and live happily ever after, you must first spend some prerequisite time sitting in the ashes, suffering humiliation and being purified by that time in the dust.

Notice how this story speaks in its own way of what in Christian spirituality we call 'Lent', a season of penance, wherein we mark ourselves with ashes in order to enter an ascetical space in order to prepare ourselves for the kind of joy which (for reasons we only know intuitively) can only be had after a time of renunciation and sublimation. 'Cinderella' is a story that shines a certain light into the depth of our souls. Many of our famous myths do that.

However no myth shines a light into the soul more deeply than does scripture. Its language and symbols name our experience in a way that helps us grasp the

genuine depth inside our own experiences.

Thus, there are two ways of understanding ourselves: we can be confused or we can be inside the belly of the whale. We can be helpless before an addiction or we can be possessed by a demon. We can vacillate between joy and depression or we can alternate between being with Jesus 'in Galilee' or with him 'in Jerusalem'. We can be paralysed as we stand before globalisation or we can be standing with Jesus on the borders of Samaria in a new conversation with a pagan woman.

We can be confused or we can be inside the belly of the whale

We can be struggling with fidelity in keeping our commitments or we can be standing with Joshua before God, receiving instructions to kill off the Canaanites so as to sustain ourselves in the Promised Land.

We can be suffering from arthritis or we can be sweating blood in the garden of Gethsemane. The language we use to understand an experience defines what the experience means to us.

In the end, we can have a job or we can have a vocation; we can be lost or we can be spending our 40 days in the desert; we can be bitterly frustrated or we can be pondering with Mary; or we can be slaving away for a paycheck or we can be building a cathedral.

Meaning depends a lot on language.

QUESTIONS of faith

Each week Colm Fitzpatrick looks at interesting and sometimes controversial questions people have about Catholicism...



Do animals go to heaven?

Most people have experienced the sadness of witnessing an animal die, usually a beloved pet who brought great joy throughout their short lifespan. During the grieving period, it's common for parents to tell children that there's a special place for all the animals who have departed from their world – like a pet heaven.

This image of a pet no longer in pain and experiencing paradise can certainly alleviate the worry of a young child wondering where their favourite animal has gone to, but is there any truth to the claim?

The Church has no official teaching on the matter of pets entering heaven, but there are theological principles that can direct us to what answer is most probable.

Catholics believe that all living things have souls, and this includes not only humans, but also plants and animals. When a living thing dies, the soul separates from its body or organic makeup. In the case of animals, the soul goes out of existence. However, the souls of human beings are radically different from the souls of other living things. Whereas the souls of animals are contingent upon their material makeup, human souls remain in existence after death because it is immaterial.

This means that that human souls can't be destroyed, and so are immortal.

Reasonable

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said in a sermon in 2008, that when an animal dies, it "just means the end of existence on earth". It's reasonable to believe then that all animals that die before the Second Coming and the creation of the "new heaven and new earth" will cease to exist.

This, however, doesn't

necessarily mean that there won't be any animals after the Second Coming.

Some theologians argue that animals flourished in the Garden of Eden, before sin entered the world, and so there's no inherent or theological contradiction in positing that God could create more animals. Animals were present when the fullness of grace abounded. However, others argue that there will be no need for animals to exist in the new creation, which pertains to ultimately knowing and loving God. Of course, this is all just speculative, and we will only really ever find out the answer at the end of time.

The souls of human beings are radically different from the souls of other living things

Accompanied with this question is often another: 'How will I be truly happy in Heaven without my pet?' Scripture teaches that for those in heaven, God "will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4). While it's not clear how this will be achieved, it seems those in heaven will somehow be reconfigured to understand the nature of all things and be fully capable of contemplating God.

Possibility

To sum up, it's likely that animals that have existed and continue to exist until the Second Coming will pass away like other material things, but that there is a strong possibility animals created anew could exist in Heaven.

Got a question or comment?
Email colm@irishcatholic.ie

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, May 16, 2019

Personal Profile

Transforming
division and
bridging fractures

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Plan your summer fun



Now that young people are at the cusp of surviving another school year, they'll have three months off to relax and recharge before kicking back into gear in autumn. However, nobody wants to run out of things to do after a week, and many parents are apprehensive about leaving their kids and teens to their own devices while they go off to work.

A natural solution is summer camp. Some run for a few days, others assign you a bunk for a month. There is a wide range of summer camps and day programmes for kids and parents to choose from, including sports, art, technology and Irish language. Whether families are looking at something based in



Hannah Harn discusses summer holiday options for kids of all ages

faith or adventure, there are endless options for young people to go out and be engaged with their peers this summer.

One option for young women is The Michaela Foundation, which offers week-long summer day camps for girls ages 11-13 years old. They will spend their week engaging in a variety of activities with girls their age while learning about faith, the Irish language, mental and

physical health, and personal creativity. Young adults 17 years or older can also apply to volunteer at the camps. The Michaela Foundation has locations in 10 different counties across Ireland.

The foundation, inspired by the life of Michaela McAreavey, is based around lifting up young women to be better for themselves and others. The programming of their week-long

summer day camps covers five areas: fun, faith, fashion, culture, and well-being. The camp is built around increasing and encouraging confidence in young women and introducing them to new aspects of faith and culture while with their peers.

"The activities we do and that the girls take part in are important, but they come secondary to the interaction with the young girls involved," says Orla McIntyre, Operations Manager of the Michaela Foundation. "They're the driving force behind the lessons we try to teach the girls. We want to see them being confident in who they are."

Volunteers and attendees, called campettes, have said they

grew in confidence and became more comfortable challenging themselves while and after working with the programme. According to Orla, volunteers at camps return with the same sense of growth as kids, and have added a valuable item to their curriculum vitae or resume in the process.

If your child has a love for adventure and the outdoors, the Killary Adventure Company offers longer residential camps for ages 8-17. From daily programmes to 14-day multi-activity summer camps and wilderness journeys, everybody can find the programme that suits them.

Residential camp should not make parents nervous, even if it

» Continued on Page 33

Family News



AND EVENTS

Big benefits for baby swimmers

Babies have a real affinity with water, and because they've spent nine months floating in the womb, being in warm water feels much more familiar to them than being on dry land. However, this early confidence usually diminishes with time, and can even turn to fear. What better way to acquaint your child with water than a Water Babies Family Fun day? Kicking off on June 9 from 3-6pm in Malahide Rugby Club in Malahide, Dublin, all the proceeds will go to Crumlin Children's Hospital. Water Babies are celebrating 10 years teaching babies how to swim which they say promotes bonding, confidence, strength, physical and mental health and more. There will also be a BBQ, bouncy castles, games, music and more. Family entry fee is €15 with food costing extra. Tickets can be found at www.eventbrite.ie/e/water-babies-family-fun-day-and-bbq-tickets-61029579114?aff=ebdssbdestsearch.

FATTY LIVER DISEASE ALERT FOR YOUTH

Experts are warning that high levels of fatty liver disease among young people, caused by being overweight, could signal a potential public health crisis.

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease is fairly common among older adults, detectable in about a quarter of the population. But a study has found that substantial numbers of 24-year-olds are also affected, putting them at risk of serious later health problems, such as liver cancer, type-2 diabetes and heart attacks. Researchers from Bristol University tested more than 4,000 young people enrolled in a longitudinal study called the Children of the 90s, set up to follow the lives and health of children born in 1991 and 1992 in Avon, England.

All of them had been given an ultrasound at the age of 18, which revealed that 2.5% had non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. Five years later, a newer kind of scan called transient elastography or fibroscan detected that over 20% had fatty deposits on the liver, or steatosis, indicating non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. Half of those were classified as severe. The scans also found that 2.4% had fibrosis – scarring on the liver.

Children up to 3 need to be carefree

A study by the US-based Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) has found evidence that children under three are the most vulnerable to the effects of adversity – experiences including poverty, family and financial instability, and abuse – based on chemical tags that alter gene expression and may have consequences for future mental health.

The report finds that the timing of adverse experiences has more powerful effects than the number of experiences, or whether they took place recently.

Erin Dunn, one of the researchers involved in producing the report, said that the research sought to answer "one of the major unanswered questions in child psychiatry", namely 'how do the stressors children experience in the world make them more vulnerable to mental health problems in the future?'

The findings of the report suggest that the first three years of life may be an especially important period for shaping biological processes that ultimately give rise to mental health conditions.

Learning to watch ourselves

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* gave us many chilling ideas. One of the most influential is 'thoughtcrime'. The idea of a regime so authoritarian that it would police the inside of your mind, always trying to catch out forbidden thoughts, is terrifying. Thoughtcrime elegantly describes both genuine North-Korea-style domination and more subtle forms of conformism.

“The idea of a regime so authoritarian that it would police the inside of your mind, always trying to catch out forbidden thoughts, is terrifying.”

Despite this, I think that we have learned a bad lesson from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In that book, a thoughtcrime is a distinct offence: the more general term is 'wrongthink'. Whether Orwell intended it or not, the two concepts have pushed us towards the view that what is inside your head is not a proper object of moral consideration – that there's something authoritarian about the idea that there are morally good and bad ways to think.

This is quite wrong, and it's especially foreign to any of the many moral traditions that are concerned with the quality of people's characters – Christian ethics naturally among them.

First, think about the effect that thinking has on behaviour. Say you have a co-worker named Billy. He's a friendly presence around the office, he brings people coffee; he seems like a kind, decent guy. The trouble is that he can be a bit of



Everyday philosophy Ben Conroy

a monologuer: every so often he corners you and drones on about old Simpsons episodes.

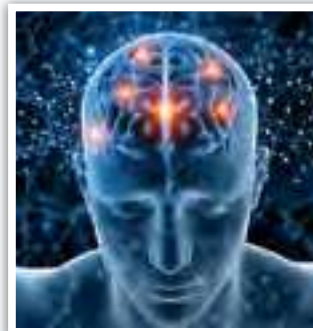
If, when you think of Billy, it's always as Billy-the-annoying-monologuer rather than Billy-the-kind-coffee-bringer, you're much more likely to resent him and to gossip about him rather than looking out for opportunities to appreciate or be kind to him. In general, if we're always thinking about people in terms of what annoys or frustrates us about them, that's unlikely to make us better at loving them.

Now, there are some obvious objections to this. First, I want to make it clear that I'm not arguing for a duty to always 'think positive' or to ignore genuinely bad behaviour from others. Sometimes, loving other people means confronting them about things that they're doing wrong. But Billy's Simpsons monologuing is a very minor sin at most, and dwelling on it unnecessarily will change your relationship with him for the worse. Thoughts matter.

The second objection is this: sure, thoughts can affect actions, and if they do maybe you should rethink them. But if thoughts don't affect our actions, what's the harm? It's more difficult than you might think to not let your habits of thought affect your habits of action. But let's concede the point, and imagine that this strict separation is possible.

Imagine two men, David and Darren, who live more or

less identical lives. Both are family men, good neighbours, and fun to be around. The only difference is this: when David gets lost in a reverie, he likes to think about his family, or his favourite music. Darren, on the other hand, likes to think about imagined scenes of horrendous violence. Who has a better character?



This might be an extreme example, but it illustrates a general point. Holding onto the wrong thoughts – for example, harbouring a deep grudge against someone who has already apologised – is not good for you, even if it never affects your actions.

You might worry that to blame Darren for his thoughts is too quick. Thoughts, after all, tend to come to us unbidden: we don't select our future thoughts and queue them up to come to us whenever we want. Is this enough to make concern about the morality of our thoughts pointless? I don't think so.

We may not have direct control over what thoughts come to us, but most of us can choose to entertain a thought, lingering on it and keeping it to the front of our minds. Or we can let it go. If that's difficult, we can try to think of something else, go for a walk, talk to someone, or pray – all actions very much within our control.

“In the long run, how we think is largely under our control.”

And over time we build up habits. The more we think of people as nuisances, the easier it will be to do so, but habits can also make it easier to see them as creations of infinite dignity. In the long run, how we think is largely under our control.

There are important exceptions. Some people suffer from intrusive thoughts because of reasons like past trauma or obsessive compulsive disorder. People in these situations aren't blameworthy: they need healing, not moral improvement. More broadly, just as it isn't good to actively entertain immoral thoughts, neither should we obsess about trying to chase out every single undesirable thought on the spot. There is a virtuous mean: doing what you can to improve the way you think without losing yourself in scrupulous micromanaging.

But to hit this mean is virtuous, not morally irrelevant. For the government to try to convict us of thoughtcrime is evil: but governing our own thoughts is an essential step on the path to goodness.

» Continued from Page 31



would be their child's first time away from home without their parents.

"Most parents are happy to send their kids away for a bit," jokes Shane Young, General Manager of Killary Adventure. He reminds parents that the young people who come to camp are both well taken care of and happy to be there, too.

"It's up to the kids how long they want to go," says Shane. "Kids are so resilient, and it's really valuable life experience."

"There's always someone there for kids to talk to," he continues. "We get that we're like surrogate parents while they're here."

“But one of the biggest benefits is the opportunity to meet, live with, and become friends with other children from Ireland and the rest of Europe.”

But one of the biggest benefits is the opportunity to meet, live with, and become friends with other children from Ireland and the rest of Europe.

"It's an international camp," Shane explains. "We have kids from Spain, from Ukraine, even. They may separate themselves at first, but soon they turn to each other, start interacting. They don't even need a language to interact."

If language is something of interest, there's also the option of heading to the Gaeltacht for some Irish language immersion. Comhchoiste Náisiúnta na gColáistí Samhraidh (CONCOS), also known as the Irish Language Summer Colleges, offers summer programmes from one to three weeks in length across the island. However, the western counties, including Cork and Kerry, are usually more popular.

One option for teens and young adults is a domestic or an international volunteer programme.

Global Vision International offers a variety of two-week volunteering trips around the world, including marine conservation in Greece and rainforest preservation in Costa Rica.

Projects Abroad also has programmes for secondary school students, such as volunteer building in Nepal and medical internships in Sri Lanka. There are volunteer programmes and internships available for almost any field of interest, so young people can turn a hobby or pastime into a potential career goal.

If your child is looking to try something a little out of the ordinary, check out the School of Irish Archaeology, which runs The Big Dig camp. Featuring hands-on education and field trips, this five-day programme is perfect for future scientists. Meanwhile, kids and teenagers with their eyes on the skies may enjoy enrolling in the Atlantic Air Adventures Summer Aviation Camp, which teaches flight planning and flight science and gives kids the chance to try a real flight simulator.

There are even Church-led summer programmes, as well. Scripture Union offers a series of shorter camps, many of which are all-inclusive, for younger children as well as teens and young adults.

According to Emma Fawcett, Camps and Volunteer Manager at Scripture Union, faith-based youth camps are a great way to reassure



young people of their faith. They offer paid, week-long residential camps as well as free programmes for all ages and families.

"It's really encouraging to children," says Emma. "They may be the only person of faith in their school or class, so it's good to be in a like-minded community. And teens get some added encouragement to continue pursuing their faith."

She also points out the importance of that community as a support system. "It gives them something else to live for," she says. "There are other people who believe what you believe. It helps them stick to their faith."

"There's also not a lot of reception, so it's a kind of holistic approach," she adds. "It's a lot of people-time and it's a lot of off-screen time, which is good."

“Summer is also a great time for young adults and teenagers to think about earning some money.”

Summer is also a great time for young adults and teenagers to think about earning some money. Summer jobs, even just part-time, can be great opportunities for young people to take on new responsibilities and make some extra money toward more expensive activities they might be looking at.

If they're too old to attend camp, teenagers should also think about volunteering or working for one of the many camps in their area, whether it's teaching young children to play football or helping a child finish a mural. Returning to camp as a helper or staff member is also a great way to help teach some extra responsibility while still getting to engage in the fun side of work.

Faith — IN THE — family



Bairbre Cahill

What could a mother buy as a gift for her daughter's First Holy Communion? A mum on Facebook commented that she had asked her own daughter what gift she would like. The reply - "You have already bought me my dress and you have organised a party with a bouncy castle but if you want to buy me a present, I'd like a pony." Meanwhile a recent newspaper headline suggested that Holy Communion season is a great time to teach your child some financial management. I have the greatest empathy for any parent trying to keep their child focused this month on what their First Holy Communion is actually about!

Almost inevitably over the next month or so there will be articles in newspapers and online suggesting that sacramental preparation is taking up too much time and should be taken out of schools. I know that we can easily have a gut reaction to these comments, ready to fight our corner but I'm beginning to think we need to take a moment and consider the wisdom of this.

I'm not suggesting that the secularising agenda is something we should embrace. The urge to move Holy Communion preparations out of school is generally motivated by a desire to strip all mention of faith from our schools and I certainly don't agree with that. However, I do think that the actual preparation for Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation should be taken out of school and should find a new home in our parishes.

For many years now I have been doing Confirmation retreats in a number of schools. I have had a growing unease and this year I couldn't avoid it any longer. The preparation of the children in the schools is excellent. We have teachers who are doing a great job, are really committed and are trying their best to instil faith in their students. However, for many of these children - I would say about half - religion is something which is only done at school and has no relevance in their lives outside of school. They are not praying - many have told me they only experience prayer at school - and

they are not involved with their parishes. These are good kids who are just really disconnected from any sense of a living faith.

I worked with those classes over those days feeling like I was pushing some of them as square pegs into round holes. I felt it was unfair to



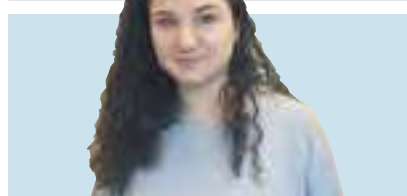
those children for whom Faith had no meaning, all this talk about commitment, about being prepared to stand up as people of faith. I also felt that it was unfair to the children who were actually involved in their faith at least to some extent. We seemed to be telling them that the commitment we were asking of them didn't actually count for anything. We have a production-line approach to the sacraments. That isn't the fault of the schools. At diocesan and indeed national level we need to have an honest conversation about this.

So, what would I do differently? I would continue to encourage a vibrant Catholic ethos in the school, one that influences every part of the school day. I would invite every family that wants to celebrate the sacraments to get involved with their local parish. That puts a responsibility on the parish to be warm and welcoming, to develop a relationship over time with families, to have people like you and me, trained as catechists to work with the children and their parents. I would remove the idea that you celebrate First Holy Communion or Confirmation at a particular age. I would have a minimum age but beyond that it would be when the child or young person is ready.

Would we have less people celebrating the sacraments? Yes, probably but you know, that is ok. Are we being invited to be a small but welcoming, humble, authentic Church? I think so.

Transforming division and bridging fractures

Personal Profile



Hannah Harn

Though Rev. Alex Wimberly, the newly appointed leader of Corrymeela in the North of Ireland, is originally from the United States, he is no stranger to Ireland. A fourth-generation Presbyterian minister, married with three children to Rev. Kiran Young Wimberly, a fellow minister, Rev. Alex worked in Belfast as minister of the McCracken Memorial Presbyterian Church for almost seven years.

"My father, my grandfather, my great-grandfather were all ordained Presbyterian ministers," he said. "It was my father who brought us to Northern Ireland for the first time when I was five years old. He did a pulpit exchange with a minister from Antrim, so we came to Carnlough and learned about and fell in love with Northern Ireland and Ireland in general."

Growing up, he was encouraged to "think big thoughts and ask big questions" without feeling embarrassed. "I grew up thinking that church was a place we could come together with people that are different than us because there was probably something that would connect us at the end that was true and right."

While he hadn't always planned on being ordained, as he felt "a fourth generation was probably pushing it", he took the opportunity to attend seminary at Princeton Theological Seminary.

He was unsure whether he'd take the pastoral or academic route then, but when asked if he would return to Belfast in his mid-20s,

he took it. He would be learning from a minister there to experience congregational work to see if it really was a calling. His plans soon changed.

"He began running two services each Sunday, handled all the youth work and the meetings, took on the pastoral care and funerals."

"Not two days after I arrived, that minister took ill and was in the hospital for four months," he said. "So I found myself, very green

behind the ears, looking after a congregation of about 500, not really knowing what I was doing." He began running two services each Sunday, handled all the youth work and the meetings, took on the pastoral care and funerals.

"The congregation was extremely patient and kind and gracious with me and I learned not only how to do all the work but that I loved it," he explained. From 2007 to 2013, Alex worked in Belfast as minister of the McCracken Memorial Presbyterian Church. When he returned to the US to pursue a doctorate in History at Notre Dame University, he knew he wanted to continue his work in pastoral ministry.

"I also felt as if I was being led back to Ireland in some capacity, but didn't know exactly how that would work," he said. "So coming back as the chaplain for Corrymeela allowed me to do ministerial work, to offer a prophetic voice from this perspective of faith that Corrymeela holds but also to provide a pastoral presence to the people in this community."

He now strives to bring that same sense of welcome and belonging, to both faith and community, through his work with Corrymeela.

"I really fell in love with the work here, trying to transform divisions through human encounter and trying to bring people together in the way that our faith can inform what we do and never in a way that our faith becomes a barrier to other people."

"I really fell in love with the work here, trying to transform divisions through human encounter and trying to bring people together in the way that our faith can inform what we do and never in a way that our faith becomes a barrier to other people."

He first came to Corrymeela two years ago as a volunteer while finishing his doctoral dissertation. A year in, he took on his first major role.

"I was appointed as the chaplain at Corrymeela, which has come to mean looking after the volunteers, but also working with our faith-based elements, both at the centre and out in the community," he said. "We allow people to speak into that space... because we believe that scripture is a great way to start a conversation, but never to end a conversation because we don't like to think there is only one

way to think about these issues."

Earlier this year, he was appointed to succeed Pádraig Ó Tuama as the leader of Corrymeela.

"I have come to know the people who are involved in this community very well, and like all communities, there is fracture within us," he said of his new position. "Part of my sense of calling to this role of peace and reconciliation is that we can bring this peace and reconciliation if we aren't really attending to our relationships within."

"I'm also very aware that, because I'm an American, that may provide some advantage of fresh eyes, but will also require the community to help me lead," Rev Alex said. "It's important to me that I not be a leader that is just out front and embodying Corrymeela for the community but who is encouraging the community to step up and embody our work of reconciliation collectively."

Going forward, Rev. Alex is hoping to focus on Corrymeela's cross-border work, both between the North and south of Ireland and between Ireland and Britain.

"Brexit is obviously very important to us, so I think being a Christian organisation that can speak from a position of faith to the issues that this island is going to be facing is going to be very important," he explained. "And I think that as people in Ireland feel less and less at home in their home denominations, their home congregations, to know that there is an ally in terms of a place for faith and witness is going to be increasingly important for people."

Rev Alex is married to the Rev. Kiran Young Wimberly, also an ordained Presbyterian minister, and they have three children. It is expected that he will take up his post in the early months of summer 2019.



Children's Corner

Chai Brady

Having a blast with volcanoes

It's an age-old experiment that most people are somewhat familiar with but many may not know exactly how to recreate the spectacle.

Volcanoes are one of nature's most beautiful, and devastating, phenomenon. They spur on so many questions. An easy way to teach and talk about them – or just have fun – is to create your own volcano using household ingredients and some imagination.

By the end you can create your own volcano and set up some massive eruptions!

You'll need:

- Plastic cup (You can try a water bottle, but a plastic cup works better)
- Water
- 3-4 tbs of baking soda at least (if you use 4-6 it makes your eruption extra foamy and will do 2-3 eruptions)

- 1 tsp of dish soap
- 1/2 oz to 2 oz of washable paint, depending on the intensity of the colour desired
- 1 cup (8 oz) of Vinegar to start with per eruption

Start off by combining the base ingredients. Put the water inside the plastic cup. Fill it about 2/3 full. Add the baking soda, dish soap, and washable paint. By using washable paint, you don't have to worry about any staining of the rocks (or little fingers) that food colouring might cause. You can also use liquid watercolour as well, but it doesn't work nearly as well as the washable paint.

Try to find a good location to build the outside of your volcano. Pea gravel, sand or even earth can be used to form your volcanic mountain – you can be

artistic with the shape.

While you mix the base ingredients, have your teammate make the mound. Once you have a mound, put the cup on top of it, and turn it into a mountain.

Now that everything is in position give the base ingredients a good stir before adding the final element: vinegar. Pour in your vinegar until your mountain starts foaming over and the lava starts pouring.

For added entertainment you can mix the colours and add all sorts of different shades of washable paint to the cup, then wait for the eruption to see the result. Remember, you can pour the vinegar in about three more times before needing to add more baking soda to the solution.

Proven to be a hit, this experiment will no doubt lead to huge amounts of entertainment for the family, after all it's not every day you get to see a volcano erupt at close quarters and live to tell the tale!



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



A welcome early start for Harvest time

I've often wondered why Ireland doesn't have a dedicated high-profile Christian arts festival. There was plenty of arts content during the Eucharistic Congress and the World Meeting of Families, but an annual event would be in order. A few years ago Glenageary, Co. Wicklow, had its MAD ('Make a Difference') festival thanks to the late Tim Philips and it was wonderful, but now there's a gap in the market.

These thoughts were prompted by last Sunday's **Songs of Praise** (BBC1) which paid a visit to Spring Harvest, one of the UK's most prominent Christian festivals, now in its 40th year.

Participants described it as a spiritual "boot camp", a life-giving place, a place where you can learn a lot about faith and get to know God.

It was good to see songwriter and worship leader Graham Kendrick still going strong – he credited Spring Harvest with inspiring his ministry from the early days, though his performance of his song 'Meekness and Majesty' came from a different church location.

Surely there must have been enough performances at the festival to fill the programme without showing songs recorded elsewhere. There were however some good stories of faith-inspired people who, like Kendrick,

Graham Kendrick featured on BBC1's *Songs of Praise*.

credited Spring Harvest for their inspiration – for example a young couple who helped community relations and social problems on a one-to-one basis in a Manchester suburb.

Of all the songs I particularly liked 'Knowing You Jesus' which I hadn't heard before – "all I once thought gain I have counted loss".

Blessed

In the West we're blessed to have relatively stable countries, with the opportunity to have arts festivals. In the developing world the prob-

lems can be more basic and pressing, with the focus often on survival. Tuesday of last week saw the return of **What in the World?** RTE's series about the developing world.

The opening episode focused on Somalia – deemed a 'failed state' ravaged by war, poverty, hunger, climate change, drought and Al Shabaab an Islamist terrorist group.

It was disturbing to watch ordinary people trying to go about their lives under such conditions. Worst scene of all was the aftermath of a suicide bomb that killed 600 in Mog-

adishu. Also graphic but with a happier ending was the scene of an emergency Caesarean – the mother had been told her foetus was dead, but was thrilled when the baby was alive on delivery.

Much of the documentary was shot in a camp for internally displaced citizens – some had been there for over seven years. It was heart-breaking to hear mothers telling of their children who had died, of malnutrition or cholera or other ailments.

A government minister said the main problem in the country was lack of clean water and it was unnerving watching young men drinking from a very dirty-looking river.

Documentary maker Peadar King took a low key approach and didn't make a big deal of his own presence. I would have liked more political context along with the



Datshiane Navanayagam.

PICK OF THE WEEK

MARCH FOR LIFE IN ROME
EWTN, Saturday, May 18, 2pm

Live coverage of the pro-life event from Rome.

QUEST FOR SHAKESPEARE
EWTN, Sunday, May 19, 9am

Host Joseph Pearce examines Shakespeare's Catholic motives in *Hamlet*.

HOW TO BUILD A CATHEDRAL
BBC4, Tuesday night, 1.50am

Architectural historian Jon Cannon goes in search of the clues that shed light on how our medieval forebears were able to build the wonders of their world.

painful personal stories, but it was good to see the Trócaire label on some of the supplies.

Channel 4's **Unreported World** series also brings us stories from the developing world, though the reporter/presenter tends to be much more prominent.

In last Friday's episode, conveyed empathy in the story of young girls in prison in Madagascar, described as one off the poorest countries in the world, where adults can be held in jail for five years without trial, with under 18s potentially incarcerated for three years.

The programme went for a subjective approach, focusing on just one teenage girl, Saholy, who had been accused of petty theft, which she denied.

The programme makers inserted themselves into the story and helped to locate her parents who, in a faraway vil-

lage, weren't aware of their daughter's plight. Apparently some parents disown their jailed children, but Saholy's parents came to visit her and there was a tearful reunion. It was a moving event, though I'm always uneasy at the intrusiveness of the camera on such occasions.

They confronted Saholy's employer who had accused her but not informed her parents of her whereabouts (they made out this was the girl's own wishes) – in fact, even as the parents visited her in jail, the employer, a doctor, said that Saholy was in church! Unfortunately we were told at the end that she was still in jail without trial.

No happy ending there.

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Film

Aubrey Malone



Portrait of the artist as a young man in love and war

Tolkien (12A)

We're in World War I. A soldier stands in the trenches in the heat of battle. Memory and desire percolate in his brain. He has a fever. He's looking for a lost friend.

His mind wanders back to the past – to the poverty of his childhood, the death of his mother, finding love... and then sacrificing it to go to college.

When he gets to Oxford, JRR Tolkien – for it is he – becomes friendly with three kindred souls. They're all idealists. Artistic eccentrics, they form a society they believe will change the world.

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive," wrote Wordsworth, "to be young was very

Nicholas Hoult and Lily Collins star in *Tolkien*.

heaven." But storm clouds are gathering on the horizon. The war will change their lives irrevocably. Paradise has to be postponed, if not renounced altogether. Nostalgia becomes

the substitute for idealism.

The orphaned author fine-tunes his love of language against the backdrop of a burgeoning love. A kindly priest (Colm Meaney doing a fine British accent) oversees his

path towards self-definition. A university professor (Derek Jacobi) becomes a different kind of Svengali later on.

War is the conduit through which the emotionally vulnerable Tolkien stripmines the mother lode of his imagination. Soon he will write the magic sentence: "In a hole under the ground there lived a hobbit." It will change his life, leading him to the "sacred place" of Middle Earth with *Lord of the Rings*.

Slow burner

This is a slow burner of a film. Some people might find it too leisurely but therein lies its charm. It doesn't throw itself at us, maturing like a fine wine.

In Nicholas Hoult we have

a new Hugh Grant. Or maybe even a new Daniel Day-Lewis. He bathes himself in his character without trying too hard. As Edith, Lily Collins is the ideal wife to help him realise his potential and become the person he has to be.

Dome Kanukoski's film captures Tolkien before fame found him. The formative years of any icon's life are often the most interesting. So it proves here. Tolkien is respectful of him both as a man and an artist.

That's why I'm amazed the (litigious) Tolkien estate issued a statement saying it doesn't endorse the film in any shape or form. "Tolkien (sic) has become a monster," his son Christopher stated, "devoured by his popularity

and absorbed into the absurdity of our time."

I find this statement both melodramatic and precious. Authors are public property. Their families can't expect people to read their books and not be interested in their lives.

If we take something like the recent *Detainment*, which exploited the horror of James Bulger's death unashamedly without consulting his family, Christopher Tolkien's point would be relevant. Tolkien is a totally different kettle of fish.

Don't expect any fireworks – except on the battlefield – but this is still a quietly powerful biopic of one of the most groundbreaking authors of our time. Or any time.

Very good
★★★★



BookReviews

Peter Costello



‘The things that you’re liable to read in the Bible...’

The Badly Behaved Bible: Thinking again about the story of Scripture

by Nick Page
(Hodder & Stoughton, £16.99)

Peter Costello

This is a book which many people really need, but do not realise that they do. Anyone truly interested in the power of the Scriptures should read it. I suspect that for many people it may have a life-changing effect.

I enjoyed previous books by Nick Page, especially *Revelation Road*, his decoding of the *Apocalypse* of St John, or what many Christians call ‘The Book of Revelation’.

Here, however, it is the whole Bible, both the Old and the New Testaments, that passes under his scrutiny. He writes in a lively, very personal, down to earth style. There are even jokes – though perhaps a tad too many even for my taste – but everything he says is in line with current academic and theological thought. Only it is expressed in a manner that few academics or theologians would use.

Activity

But what the scholars think they know is often beyond the ken of the people in the pews. At one point Page says that after many years of writing, preaching and counselling, he has given up

on Biblical study. It is that activity that he identifies as the real problem.

Modern translations of the Bible, no matter whose auspices they are published under, tend to concentrate on getting every grammatical and rhetorical minutia out of the ancient texts in Hebrew and Greek.

This, he suggests, kills the meaning of the Bible. Most Biblical translators simply cannot write, he claims. They end up depriving the Bible of its power to affect the reader, or listener (the scriptures were for centuries intended to be heard and not read privately).

“Rather than letting its stories change us, we try to change the Bible”

But there is also the way people approach the Bible. It is rarely read as a whole. Evangelicals at their services, for instance, will be obediently turned to whatever passage in the Old or New Testament the preacher alludes to. Yet do they settle down to read for their own pleasure the full text? Rarely, he thinks. Study groups also deprive the Bible of its power, again by picking it apart, and not seeing it whole.

As regards the man-in-the-street language of the Bible, that is all too often tidied up to make

it acceptable for modern polite readers. If you want to see the kind of language he means look up your Douay version of I Kings 25:34 – where the word ‘male’ is used to avoid reference to a natural function. Mark 7: 19 is another instance. On which Mr Page comments: “We mustn’t let the Bible be what it is. We have to censor it. Even when it comes out of the mouth of Jesus.”

But the theme of this book is that we look to the Bible for answers, but what it provides us with are not answers, but more questions. We have to think it out for ourselves.

We should not be put out by this. The translation can be misleading. In Matthew 28:17, the apostles encounter the resurrected Jesus: the translation says “they worshipped him, but some doubted”. Actually the text says “they worshipped him, but they doubted”. In this apostolic manner he urges us to embrace our doubt, and in that way realise the fullness of faith.

His last word: “The Bible is an invitation. The Bible is a call. The breath of God lifts its pages.”

Yet we want always to master the text, to control it. Rather than letting its stories change us, we try to change the Bible. “We want to make the Bible dance to our tune, but the Bible has music of its own.” It escapes our control, and Christians should follow where it indicates.



Jesus, wearing his ritual prayer shawl, reading from the scroll of the Torah in the synagogue, by J. J. Tissot.

Not just a hospital but a site that illustrates social improvement

The History and Heritage of St James’s Hospital Dublin
by Davis Coakley & Mary Coakley
(Four Courts Press, €40.00)

Peter Costello

These days the site at St James’s Hospital has become a controversial place due to the development scheme for the National Children’s hospital, which has in recent times been taking up so much space in the newspapers.

This, book, however is a backward look at the long and involved history of St James’s Hospital, the largest teaching hospital in Ireland.

Prof. Coakley and his wife have devoted themselves to researching,

untangling and recreating the centuries of development that led to the emergence of that establishment.

They are both established writers, on cultural matters in Dublin and Cork. But this is an institutional history and aims to provide a history of St James’s, but also to explore and reveal the social and political nature of what went before.

It began in 1603 as a Foundling Hospital and Workhouse for Dublin. The notion of a workhouse now appals us, but it reminds that



The emergence of the present hospital in the mid 19th Century and the role of the Sisters of Mercy in its organisation are described. Here again reminding us that so

social improvement cannot be obtained unless we know what went before.

The impact of the Great Famine on the city of Dublin is described, and this for many readers may well be quite unfamiliar as most of what is written about the “Great Hunger” is founded on rural Ireland.

much of the good that was done in the past was depended on voluntary work and contributions, and not on the often fickle support of the state – indeed the state then did not always see it as its duty to do anything,

Important

I have a friend who always described the South Dublin Union as ‘Kent’s Fort’, and indeed the role of this strategic bastion of buildings was important, not just in 1916, but later.

But with the coming of a new State the treatment for the sick poor reflected a change of emphasis from the mentality that created the workhouses.

The final chapters cover the

developments of health treatment and hospitals over the last 70 years or so. These are important but of perhaps less interest to the general reader.

In the controversies of today we often fail to see how far we have come in the provision of care and welfare.

But there will also be some who will mourn the loss of the role of the nuns in this area.

The modern hospitals so often seem well provided with treatment, but nursing care can sometimes lack the human warmth that is so essential (as the Mercy Sisters knew) to the healing process, or sustaining people in their last days.

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 Irish as achievers

What Have the Irish ever Done for Us?

by David Forsythe
(Curragh Press, €14.99).

J. Anthony Gaughan

This is an interesting collection of brief biographical accounts of Irish people who have made a significant impact on the world at large.

The author defines an Irish person as one born in Ireland, or residing in the country, or identifying as Irish. His list includes men and women, some well-known, some not so well-known.

The listings are under 20 headings. The list under the 'Irish at War' is headed by the Duke of Wellington. It is frequently stated that when reminded that he was Irish he responded that one could be born in a stable and not be a horse. However, it was not he who made this remark, but Daniel O'Connell who said it about him during exchanges in the House of Commons.

Under 'Engineering Pioneers' there are two well-known names: Henry Ford of the Ford Motor Company and Harry Ferguson of the Ferguson Tractor Company. The genius of James J. Wood is also noted. His innovative inventions delivered suspension bridges, elevators and refrigerators. Brooklyn Bridge in New York, the first wire suspension bridge, is a monument to the technology he developed.

Also included are others who were responsible for equally memorable monumental structures. James Hoban built the large white house in Washington DC and Kevin Roche, the doyen of modern architecture, designed iconic buildings across the US and the ultra-modern convention centre in Dublin.

Speculation

George Boole is probably the least known of those listed yet it could be argued that he made the most significant contribution to our modern scientific world. He was a professor in the Queen's College in Cork (later UCC). Acknowledged as the father of pure mathematics, his speculation and

published work laid the ground work for electronics, the internet and the world wide web.

In this context the author lists two Irish-American women who were beneficiaries of his mathematical speculation: Kathryn Dwyer Sullivan and Eileen Marie Collins, veterans of the US Space Programme.

The list of those who excelled in the world of entertainment is a parade of familiar names: comedians (Spike Milligan and Dave Allen), playwrights (George Bernard Shaw and Samuel Beckett), poets (W.B. Yeats and Séamus Heaney) and ballet (Ninette de Valois).

Less familiar are the names on the list of women who spent their lives combating social injustice. Their struggle for the rights of women and children, workers and the

oppressed was conducted outside Ireland. Mary Lee was a women's suffrage pioneer in South Australia. Mary Fitzgerald was a champion of the mine workers in South Africa. Mary Harris, known as Mother Jones, became a figurehead for workers in the mines, textile-mills and railways across the US.

Under the heading 'Adventurous Irish Women' the author recalls the story of Kate Shelley. During a violent storm in the US a railway bridge over a deep ravine was severely damaged. She managed to cross it on her hands and knees and warn those in charge of an oncoming train, thereby saving the lives of more than 200 passengers.

Here also an account of Lizzie Le Bond, a trailblazing mountaineer. But the author's female readers will not be impressed by his inclusion of Lola Montez, a celebrity who was famous for being famous, or as some might claim, for being infamous.

Others will be prompted to compile their own version of this publication. One from a Catholic perspective would surely include Daniel O'Connell as a leading protagonist of the democratic process. And it would not be difficult to select heroines from among the foundresses of the various female religious orders whose members provided education and care for the poor and the oppressed for more than two centuries across the world.



What we have made of our country

Shaping Ireland: Landscapes in Irish Art
National Gallery of Ireland, Merrion Square, Dublin

Beit Wing Rooms 6-10,
Exhibition runs to July 7

These days, when everyone is so conscious of the world around them and with environmental matters, it will come as a surprise to many to discover that the admiration of landscape is quite a recent development.

It was unknown to the ancient or to the middle ages. Then what was admired was farmed land, made-use of

land. The mountains and forests were seen as the wilderness, dangerous places, filled with dangers and outlaws.

The show presents a creative selection of artists' responses to the landscape both wild and cultivated over the last 200 years or so, illustrated by veering from paintings and etchings to videos and photographs.

These works of art are responses; to the viewer they pose questions in their own way. They do not provide answers. What we did, and are doing, to what has been called "our common home" is often dismaying. But that

common home is not just the common home of humans, but of all living things.

It would have been good to see a few more images of animal life to fill out the emphasis on a common use for all creation. We need to think to that just as we demand privacy, perhaps nature does too. There will have to be places set aside where people simply do not intrude.

There is much to enjoy in this show, but many of the items and their possible significance will linger long in the memory. **P.C.**

WebWatch

Greg Daly



Wild accusations and ignorance not worthy of scholars

Francis Derangement Syndrome hit a new low over the last fortnight, with the publication of a preposterous open letter from a handful of Catholics calling on bishops to "address the situation of Pope Francis' public adherence to heresy".

Published on the ever-untrustworthy lifesitenews.com with the tagline 'Prominent clergy, scholars accuse Pope Francis of heresy in open letter', it is hard not to sympathise with Michael Sean Winters of America's nchronline.org when he says: "I think all the names but one, Dominican Fr Aidan Nichols, are more accurately described as obscure."

"Later," he continues of the report's reference to the scholars as "well-respected", "I think Fr Nichols was respected. After this foray into ecclesial politics, perhaps not so much."

Winters' analysis is patchy at best, but he's surely right to describe the letters' authors claims as assertions, rather than statements of indisputable fact. "It takes a particular interpretation of the Catholic tradition and makes an idol of it, insisting that it and it alone is the only valid interpretation," he writes.

Better readings

Jimmy Akin and Ed Condon offer rather better readings in 'On charging a Pope with heresy' at nregister.com and 'Analysis: serious and unserious allegations of papal heresy' at catholicnewsagency.com.

"If you are going to charge anybody with heresy – but especially if you are going to charge a Pope with it – you need to prove your case, and this letter doesn't," writes Akin, clearly mapping out how the case laid out in the open letter fails in a number of ways, not least by failing to show that Pope Francis obstinately doubts



Fr Aidan Nichols.

or denies dogmas.

"One of the requirements for doing this is showing that his statements or actions cannot be understood in another sense. If they can be understood consistently with dogma then the obligation of charity – and Pope Benedict's 'hermeneutic of continuity' – requires that they be taken this way," he writes, before pointing out that relevant statements in the letter have already been shown by Cardinal Gerhard Müller as being possible to read in harmony with Church teaching.

“If you are going to defend the letter, do so with a clear understanding of what you defend”

"You can't make a successful charge of heresy as long as this is the case," he points out.

Condon, meanwhile, observes that "despite the letter's strident claims, the arguments advanced by its authors do not appear to make a legal, or consistent, argument against the

Holy Father regarding the specific charge of canonical heresy".

Although the letter's authors claim the Pontiff has committed the "canonical delict of heresy", Condon says they "appear unable to distinguish between the crime of heresy and what their letter actually appears to allege – material heresy".

Even Fr Thomas Weinandy, who has previously written to the Holy Father, declaring his papacy marked by "chronic confusion", has criticised the letter in firstthings.com as being "extreme in its appraisal and intemperate in its approach".

Confusion, presumptuousness and arrogant accusations may be par for the course for some of the letter's authors, but Fr Nichols' involvement may seem to give the affair a hint of gravitas. Venerable reputation, sadly, offer no guarantee against theologians going off the rails, as Henry Karlson spells out in 'Being a prominent scholar or theologian does not give one authority to denounce the Pope' at patheos.com/blogs/henrykarlson.

Some, of course, will point out that Fr Nichols has form for criticising Pope Francis, but as Mike Lewis writes at wherepeteris.com, this new letter is no simple request – or demand – for clarity, that watchword of the Pope's antagonists over recent years.

"This letter makes specific claims about Pope Francis, and it requests the bishops of the world to take specific actions, with an explicit purpose," he writes, directly addressing those who would excuse the letter even if they do not wholeheartedly back it. "If you are going to defend the letter, do so with a clear understanding of what you defend. The authors are stating that Francis is no longer Pope, and are asking the bishops of the world to confirm this in an official declaration."

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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 282



ACROSS

- 1 Cruel-sounding name for an orca, like Free Willy (6-5)
 7 Horrible dream (9)
 8 Walk heavily over something and squash it (7)
 11 Popular flowers with thorny stems (4)
 12 He says Mass (6)
 13 You might find a pearl in one (6)
 15 Doing nothing (4)
 16 Dragged (6)
 17 Time when you might receive a chocolate egg (6)

- 2 Turn them on when it gets dark (6)
 3 Added-on bits you might have to pay more for (6)
 4 Take the sweet from its _____ before you eat it! (7)
 5 Hatchet (3)
 6 Lively, always wanting to be doing things (9)
 9 Creature such as a lizard or a snake (7)
 10 The world's highest mountain (7)

DOWN

- 1 A baby one is called a Joey (8)

- 12 Group of lions (5)
 14 Belonging to you (4)

SOLUTIONS, MAY 9

GORDIUS No.402

Across – 1 Cap 3 Litmus paper 8 Motive 9 Youngest 10 Actor 11 Hutch 13 Valid 15 Lantern 16 Give the plot away 20 Silly 21 Yanks 23 Greed 25 Window 26 Nom de guerre 27 Ray

Down – 1 Campanology 2 Petition 3 Lover 4 Maypole 5 Punch 6 Pretty 7 Rot 12 Home and Away 13 Virus 14 Deity 17 Toreador 18 Glory Be 19 On form 22 Snake 23 Guide 24 Pan

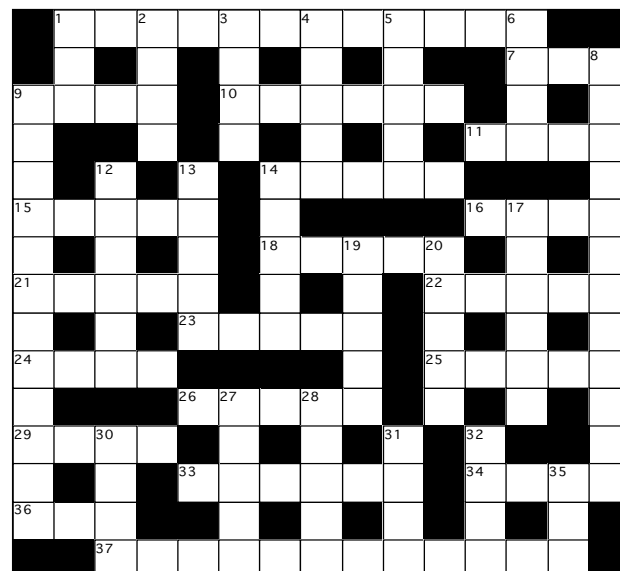
CHILDREN'S No.281

Across – 1 Librarian 6 Paddling 7 Whisper 9 Please 12 Gas 14 Prepared 16 East 17 Here 18 Signpost

Down – 1 Laptop 2 Budgie 3 Allows 4 August 5 Squares 8 Herring 10 Larger 11 Apples 13 Asses 15 Deep

Crossword

Gordius 403



ACROSS

- 1 Sportingly, you may be stumped by this answer (6-6)
 7 The Age of the Eastern Artist (3)
 9 Mr Biden swallows potassium? That's enough to make you laugh! (4)
 10 How do you curl your hair? With license (6)
 11 Poke with a soft stick (4)
 14 The Devil (5)
 15 Group of soldiers found amongst the Metro operators (5)
 16 City on the river Avon (4)
 18 Behold - commercials aplenty (5)
 21 Bury (5)
 22 Will he fit up a criminal? (5)
 23 Large, predatory seafish (5)
 24 For long periods of time, one's nose was out of joint (4)
 25 Pandemonium (5)
 26 One is powerless to control such a flight! (5)
 29 Possess part of Fifth Avenue (4)
 33 See 36 across
 34 Florida islands found in a piano (4)
 36, 33a & 8d Five hens' teeth also? Dash around for miraculously filling foods! (3,6,3,3,6)
 37 By the end of the ceremony,

there shouldn't be a single lady wearing it! (7,5)

DOWN

- 1 It's a question of identity! (3)
 2 Ship's complement (4)
 3 Can you glimpse even simple plain yoghurt starters? (4)
 4 This style of Indian dish is a knockout. Right, Mother? (5)
 5 Musical of inevitable heart (5)
 6 Back (4)
 8 See 36 across
 9 In such manner is one equitable, as Tommy Cooper might have put it (4,4,4)
 12 Material for Eastenders' Dot (6)
 13 As are fitted to the boots of some London soccer players? (5)
 14 Type of dance or type of sauce (5)
 17 With Alan, I'm becoming a beast (6)
 19 Joint just above the foot (5)
 20 Part of the gun used in soup-making (5)
 27 Dolly is upset with him (5)
 28 Type of couch or bed (5)
 30 Six cardinals? What a vista! (4)
 31 Availed of redistributed dues (4)
 32 Island where you may order 34 across (4)
 35 Affirmative word (3)

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Sudoku Corner

282

Easy



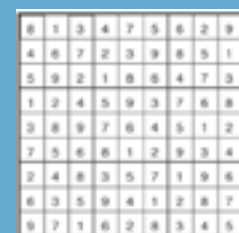
Hard



Last week's Easy 281

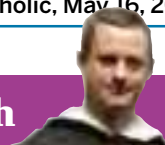


Last week's Hard 281



Notebook

Fr Conor McDonough



Find for yourself the riches of Ireland's monastic sites

IN THE LATE AFTERNOON of Holy Saturday last I found myself huffing and puffing down a windy, bumpy road in Glendalough. I had lost the pilgrim group I was meant to be leading, and I wasn't sure if this path led back to the monastery, where our lift was waiting for us. Naturally enough, I asked all of those walking in the opposite direction if I was on the right road, and each and every one gave me the same bemused look and similar replies: "To the monastery? Not a clue..."

This uncertainty added to my panic, but eventually I began to wonder whether these hikers realised the valley they were in was home to an ancient and important monastery, so, to test my hypothesis, I changed my question for the next person I met: "Does this road lead back to a car-park?"

"It sure does, man, straight on!"

Religious literacy

Among my generation, the decline in religious literacy is a problem. I'm not speaking here about faith in Christ as such, merely awareness of the Christian culture that we have inherited: music, art, forms of prayer and the

Annaghdown.



sacred geography of wells, holy mountains and monasteries.

Now this decline is certainly to be lamented, but it can be a helpful wake-up call for people of faith too. When was the last time you took a spin out to a holy

site in your area? From Derry to Ferns, from Tallaght to Aran, Ireland is covered with stunning examples of monastic ruins, and, with the advent of the internet, it requires no specialist knowledge to discover them.

● **THE GREAT** Anglican historian Gregory Dix wrote beautifully about the experience of connecting with Christian heritage: "To those who know a little of Christian history probably the most moving of all the reflections it brings is not the thoughts of the great events and the well-remembered saints, but of those innumerable millions of entirely obscure faithful men and women, every one with his or her own individual hopes and fears and joys and sorrows and loves – and sins and temptations and prayers – once every whit as vivid and alive as mine are now."

"They have left not the slightest trace in this world,

● Some years ago I went looking, with some fellow friars, for the remote Dominican ruins at Toombeola, Connemara. Without GPS, we had to stop and ask whatever locals we could find.

One boy looked utterly stunned to be asked the way to Toombeola. He was used to being asked the way to Roundstone, or to Galway, but not to Toombeola. "It's here!" he said, in utter amazement.

Just visit monastic.ie or the Early Christian section of megalithicireland.com, or have a look at the county-by-county list of monastic houses in Ireland on Wikipedia. You'll have no trouble identifying a site, and with a bit of help from Google Maps, you'll have

not even a name, but have passed to God utterly forgotten by men. Yet each of them once believed and prayed as I believe and pray, and found it hard and grew slack and sinned and repented and fell again.

"Each of them worshipped at the Eucharist, and found their thoughts wandering and tried again, and felt heavy and unresponsive and yet knew – just as really and pathetically as I do these things."

"The sheer stupendous quantity of the love of God which this ever repeated action has drawn from the obscure Christian multitudes through the centuries is in itself an overwhelming thought."

no trouble getting there!

The week after Easter I decided with my mother to make the most of a drizzly day, and to visit an unexplored site: Annaghdown. We took an unfamiliar turn off a very familiar road and ended up in a place of extraordinary peace on the shores of Lough Corrib.

We were welcomed by a quiet herd of deer and wandered in silence around the churches and houses of canons and canonesses and the ancient cathedral, with their stunning samples of Romanesque sculpture.

These sites are not neutral spaces: Annaghdown, Glendalough or any monastery you might discover on your own this summer. They had been the home of prayer for centuries, and it's hard not to hear a distant echo of chanted praise in these sanctuaries, and to join in.



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