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Ireland must 'fight harder' for Middle East Christians

Chai Brady

Irish Catholics have a special onus to "fight even harder" to defend embattled Christians in the Middle East because of Ireland's history of persecution.

Multi award-winning war reporter and senior fellow at Yale University Janine di Giovanni told *The Irish Catholic* that Christian communities face an existential threat across Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine, and soon may "vanish".

"Catholics in Ireland absolutely have a deep understanding of the pain of being persecuted and discriminated because of your faith. So they, of all people, should fight even harder for these people, these Middle Eastern Christians who are so embattled," she said.

"You can see how touching it is for someone in a really remote village in Egypt to have to walk miles and miles to find a church, and then to get there and it's padlocked – the local people have padlocked it because they don't want them to pray, and you're not allowed by Egyptian law to build churches – still, they'll find a way to pray."

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Confirmed in God's love



Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty administers the Sacrament of Confirmation in St Peter and Paul's Church, Portlaoise.

MARY KENNY

Would you defend your country?

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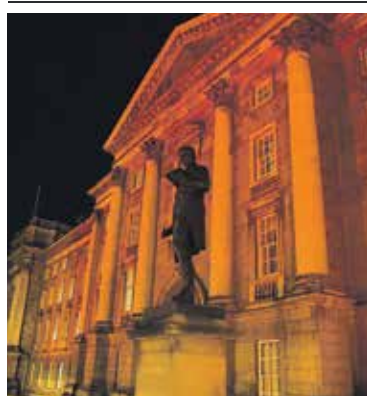
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NUALA O'LOAN

We need heavier sanctions for Putin and his oligarchs Page 8



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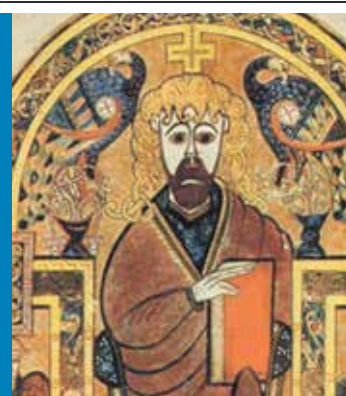
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Ireland must 'fight harder' for Middle East Christians

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Ms di Giovanni added it is "almost like going back to the persecution of Christians in Roman times".

While extremism and persecution are major issues, Ms di Giovanni said climate change, migration and economic insecurity are also leading to the exodus of Christians from lands they occupied for thousands of years.

Material concerns such as a lack of job opportunities for Christians mean many move away once completing their education, which she said is "terrible, because then there's a vacuum".

"These are lands where they have lived for 2,000

years. So absolutely, I can understand being a young person: there's no work and you want to migrate to Canada or the US, or Ireland or wherever. But if they do that, they leave a hole. And literally the villages will be dead villages. There wouldn't be people to go to church, so these minorities will vanish... migration really is their enemy".

While her outlook is bleak, she adds that Middle Eastern Christians still strive to survive and "what is really heartening is how people will still try, that their belief in God, no matter what, is so strong".

"So I really hope that Irish Catholics will recognise the pain that their

God does the work – we are just the conduits of grace

When I made my Confirmation in 1990, our teacher excelled at helping us to memorise the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Each of us boys could rhyme them off one by one. Probably not to the same extent that previous generations could recite the catechism from heart, but certainly in a way that is probably alien to young people making their Confirmation today.

In our list, fear of the Lord came last after wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fortitude and piety.

Probably because of the negative connotations aroused by the word fear, most catechetical material I see today aimed at confirming refers to this gift as 'wonder and awe in God's presence'.

“Cardinal Newman summarised it like this: ‘God has created me to do him some definite service’”

It is a holy gift to be sure. It is the gift that helps us to see the work of God in the ordinary and extraordinary ways. It is an acknowledgement of the power of God working through our lives, through the lives of others around us, through the Church and through creation.

God's working in the world is mysterious – we don't fully understand it. Sometimes we don't understand it all – but our faith teaches us that God's gentle hand is guiding everything that we do. Our lives matter, and our contribution to the building up of the Kingdom of God cannot be left to someone else.

“In our list, fear of the Lord came last after wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fortitude and piety”

ancestors went through and try to be compassionate towards others living in this way," she said.

Ms di Giovanni's recently published book *The Vanish-*



Editor's Comment
Michael Kelly



Service

Cardinal Newman summarised it like this: "God has created me to do him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do his work... Therefore, I will trust him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve him.

"If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what he is about. He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers. He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me. Still, he knows what he is about," the cardinal-saint wrote.

An old priest friend of mine once told me that he saw his ministry as little more than helping people discover what God has put within them. He saw his

entire work as a priest as helping to animate people towards an intimate relationship with God. Whether it was celebrating the Eucharist, administering the Sacrament of Reconciliation, visiting the sick or comforting those in distress – he wanted to be a channel of God's grace.

“The followers of Jesus have a sacred responsibility not to be conduits of bitterness and resentment”

It's not a bad vision of priesthood – and it's an even better vision of the Christian life. Personal piety is important, and it can be an aid to others, but we have a responsibility to those around us. Faith in God is not a treasure to be stored away or used only for oneself. The unhappiest people that I know are people who live for themselves alone. And the happiest people I know are

those who live for others: spouses who delight in husband or wife; fathers and mothers who would give the last sweat of their brow for their children; priests and religious who spend themselves in the service of others – the list is endless. The paradox, as Jesus points out, is that "anyone who finds his life will lose it; anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39).

Responsibility

Ultimately, God does the work – we are but conduits of grace. But, the followers of Jesus have a sacred responsibility not to be conduits of bitterness and resentment. People who are attracted to our way of life will not be attracted because we are a smart-aleck or we look down on those who are not part of our community. They will be attracted by truth, of course, beauty, of course, – but first and foremost by the goodness of those of us who call ourselves Christian.

Wonder and awe in God's presence rests is allowing the power of God to work through our lives and the lives of those around us.

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ing: *Faith, Loss, and the Twilight of Christianity in the Land of the Prophets* investigates the possible extinction of Christian communities across the Middle East.

Irish religious determined to do whatever they can to welcome 'desperate' Ukrainian refugees

Ruadhán Jones

Irish religious are in contact with the Irish Government to offer housing and support for Ukrainian refugees, saying they will do whatever they can.

The Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI) are in dialogue with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), who are co-ordinating the housing of refugees.

AMRI sent out a letter to its 155 members last week to ask if they have vacant property, and a number have responded with offers of properties and skills.

Committed

Secretary general of AMRI David Rose told this paper "the religious really want to welcome the Ukrainian refugees" and are committed "to support in whatever way they can".

"A number of congregations have brother and sister communities in Ukraine and in Poland and they're hearing first-hand how desperate the situation is," Mr Rose said.

"They've opened their communities over there. They've opened their churches, they're facilitating the refugees. The communities over here want to do something similar."

Predictions

Up to five million refugees from Ukraine are expected to flee the country due to the Ukraine-Russia war, with predictions that Ireland could take in more than 100,000 refugees.

Responses were coming in all week, Mr Rose said, with offers ranging from sisters in a big convent offering a whole wing, to a room in a congregation's house.

"We had one congregation, a male one, and they can take on one male refugee is what they're thinking," he continued.

Mr Rose said that congregations offer a "whole network of support" in addition to housing, such as English lessons and trauma counselling.

"A number of congregations have brother and sister communities in Ukraine and in Poland and they're hearing first-hand how desperate the situation is"

Meanwhile, the Irish bishops' conference announced it made contact during the Spring general meeting with the DCEDIY, "to seek advice on how dioceses and parishes may best pledge support for the Government's plan to accommodate refugees fleeing Ukraine".

They called on parish communities "to give serious consideration to ways in which refugees can be accommodated and integrated while with us" in a statement March 9.

Future

"As tens of thousands of refugees arrive in Ireland in the near future, there is no doubt that the Gospel is calling on us to open our hearts and our homes," the bishops said.

"We welcome the waiving of visa requirements for Ukrainians seeking refuge in Ireland and in other EU countries," they continued.

"The Northern Bishops, in particular, also call upon the UK Government to prioritise the rights and dignity of all Ukrainians who seek refuge in Northern Ireland."

The bishops said that a special collection will be taken up Sunday March 27 to meet the needs of the Ukrainian people.

In Rome with love: Italian region gives couples €2,000 to get married

Jason Osborne

Italy's central region of Lazio, which includes Rome, is offering up to €2,000 to couples who choose to marry there, as part of its 'In Lazio with love' scheme.

The regional authorities have allocated €10 million in funds as part of their plans to support companies and services in the badly affected "wedding supply chain" as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The offer is aimed at both Italian and foreign couples who celebrate a marriage or civil union in the Lazio region between now and the end of the year, and who also purchase wedding-related goods and services in the region.

Couples who take part can claim the money back on everything from wedding clothes to rings, flowers, hairdressers, photographers, catering, wedding planning services and more.


The offer does not include online purchases, and couples can present up to five receipts for payments related to their wedding in Lazio.

For more information, visit www.regione.lazio.it/nellazioconamor

Comfort in communion




Fr Vasyl Kornitsky gathered with members both old and new of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic community in Dublin after Mass on Sunday, March 13 for tea and biscuits. Photo: Ukrainian Catholic Church in Ireland



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If you want life, embrace the Truth."

- Pope St. John Paul II

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Primate joins NI state in apologies to abuse victims

Chai Brady

The Primate of All-Ireland joined with government leaders in the North of Ireland who issued a state apology to abuse victims, saying courage and perseverance brought their stories to light and “uncovered the enormity of harshness and brutality” they experienced.

Archbishop Eamon Martin said on Friday: “On behalf of the Catholic Church in Ireland, I repeat today my unreserved apology to all those who suffered from their horrific experience in Church-run institutions, and to their

loved ones. Today is a day of mixed emotions for them. Their reactions to today’s apologies must be heard and respected. Words are not enough and will never undo the harm that has been caused.”

He added that it’s understandable that people who were abused may find it hard to forgive or be reconciled with the Church and “that is why we must do everything we can to demonstrate that we are serious about making reparation for the sins and crimes of the past”.

Victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse in the North were told the state failed to protect them from abuse in the apology

made by five ministers in Stormont, March 11.

The state apology was made by ministers Michelle McIlveen, Conor Murphy, Nichola Mallon, Robin Swann and Naomi Long. The ministers represent each of Stormont’s main political parties. Abuse survivors watched in the assembly chamber.

The DUP’s education minister Michelle McIlveen said: “We recognise that, as adults now and survivors of historical institutional abuse, you carry the effects of that suffering and its continued impact on your daily life.”

She said the state apologises “to you for the trauma inflicted upon you as children whilst

in the care of the state. We are sorry. The State failed to protect children in its care from abuse that could and should have been prevented or detected”.

Minister McIlveen said: “We neglected you, rejected you, we made you feel unwanted. It was not your fault. The state let you down.”

Minister Nichola Mallon of the SDLP said that no apology can “make up for our failings, and the pain that you as victims and survivors have endured as a result. But we hope that our clear and outright acknowledgement will bring some relief”.

Sunday obligation in Ireland to return after Easter

Ruadhán Jones

Attendance at Sunday Mass is going to become an “essential expression of faith” after Easter Sunday, the Irish bishops’ conference have announced.

It is more than two years since the Sunday obligation – the duty of Catholics to attend Mass on Sunday – was temporarily lifted at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020.

In a statement following the Irish bishops’ Spring general meeting, the bishops said from Easter Sunday, April 17, weekly attendance at Sunday Mass “will once again be deemed an essential expression of faith for all in our Church in Ireland”.

They added that, “as always, those whose health is vulnerable or who are unwell will not be under any obligation to attend Mass, and should keep themselves safe and pray at home until they are better”.

In their statement, the bishops described the Sunday Eucharist as being “our greatest act of thanksgiving”.

“We pray in the Mass that it is ‘indeed right and just, our duty and our salvation’ to give thanks to the Lord, and the Sunday Eucharist is our greatest act of thanksgiving,” the bishops said.

“During the Season of Lent, we encourage everyone to return to Sunday and weekday Mass in our churches, welcoming each other back as we gather once more together.”

Consultation reveals scant support for exclusion zone bill

Jason Osborne

A public consultation on whether to introduce exclusion zones around abortion clinics in Northern Ireland has found that only 13 of the 6,412 submissions from members of the public supported the bill.

This works out as 0.2% of

the total submissions.

Despite the strong opposition to the *Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill*, MLAs voted in support of it by 58 votes to 28 at the consideration stage.

The bill would make it illegal to “influence a [person seeking an abortion], whether directly or indirectly” within “safe access zones”.

A report on the consultation released by the Northern Ireland Assembly states:

“Many of the submissions that stated opposition to the bill from both organisations and individual[s] expressed their opposition to abortion provision in its entirety, on the grounds of religious belief and moral conviction.”

Mini diggers start new school building



Northern Ireland’s Education Minister Michelle McIlveen is pictured with pupils Oisín and Katie from Primary School and Mullabuoy Primary School at the sod cutting ceremony for the new £4.7 million Our Lady of Fatima Primary School. Photo: Lorcan Doherty



Have your say SYNOD SOAPBOX

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

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

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

The Irish Catholic

Would you defend your country?

There's currently a map of Europe on display on social media asking the question 'Would you fight for your own country?'

Perhaps an apt question during St Patrick's week.

Portugal and Spain are on 28% and 22% respectively, and Italy on 20%

According to this geographical graphic, 38% of people in the Republic of Ireland would indeed fight to defend their country. The United Kingdom has a rather lower score – just 26%.

France can muster 28% of patriots ready to take up arms for the French Republic, while Germany and the Netherlands are



Mary Kenny

on the pacifist end of the spectrum, with 18% and 15% respectively.

In Switzerland, 40% would defend the nation: then, the Swiss constitution guarantees the right of every citizen to bear arms, a tradition going back to William Tell.

Portugal and Spain are on 28% and 22% respectively, and Italy on 20%.

Geographically

Perhaps significantly, as nations are geographically placed more closely to Russia, the willingness to engage in military defence increases. Poland is on 48%, Sweden on 55%, Norway

(which has a border with Russia) on 58%, Ukraine itself on 62% and gallant little Finland on 74%. The Balkans also have quite a high average score, along with Greece and Turkey.

For a nation that is geographically quite removed from Mr Putin's long reach, Ireland shows her mettle with 38% – the same as Denmark, which is arming itself to the teeth at the present time.

And despite the distance, the Cork fishermen, led by the valiant Patrick Murphy, showed that there were Irishmen of spirit prepared to take on prowling Russian submarines with fishing trawlers. Bravo to them!



Irish Defence forces.

Poland is on 48%, Sweden on 55%, Norway (which has a border with Russia) on 58%, Ukraine itself on 62% and gallant little Finland on 74%

It's 50 years since that ground-breaking movie, *The Godfather*, appeared on our screens, with Marlon Brando giving the performance of his life as Don Corleone, the Mafia boss, and Al Pacino as his son Michael. It made a stunning impact: it was subtle, complex, sophisticated and actually drew the viewer's sympathy for the Mafia family.

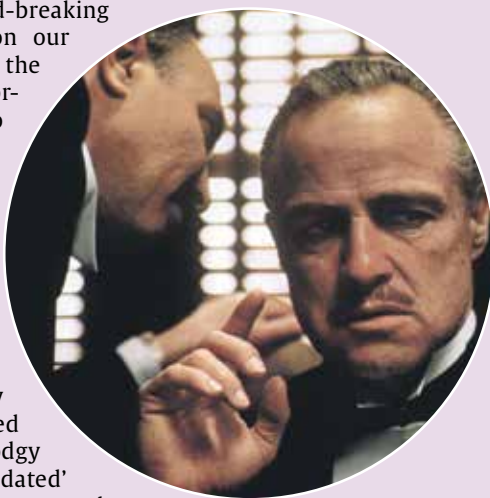
I remember emerging from the cinema, and thinking about my links with my own family, and how deep is that sense of loyalty to kin. And yet I knew the film was morally ambivalent. These Mafiosi controlled networks of vice, prostitution, dodgy gambling casinos, and they 'liquidated' those who stood in the way of their power and money.

And juxtaposed, always, against their nefarious activities, were beautiful shots of Catholic ceremonies, with all the exquisite ornament and statuary of Sicilian churches.

The director, Francis Ford Coppola, deliberately portrayed the Corleones like an order of Mediaeval knights, with a code of honour and a manly discipline.

Martin Scorsese uses a similar approach in *Goodfellas* – a great movie – and *The Irishman*, in which he interweaves the Irish and Italian communities, and their common Catholic culture.

The uneasy moral dimensions of such brilliant – or cynical? – films might make a compelling discussion point for senior school pupils in religious education.



Reviewing Ireland's past

Ireland's *Dirty Laundry*, on RTE, has been revisiting the stories of women incarcerated in Magdalene laundries, often consigned through miserable family circumstances – an alcoholic father, a stepfather who didn't want his wife's children, or just being 'abandoned by everybody'. It is right that the women now get their chance to tell their

stories – and more nuns, too, should break the habit of silence and tell theirs.

Yet these documentaries take a rather clichéd overview of Ireland in the past, depicting it as a kind of 'theocracy' from 1923. In fact, the Free State had a secular constitution which separated Church and State: it also went to some trouble to introduce a large

number of Protestants into the Senate, for balance and diversity. Indeed, strong nationalists, like 'Todd' Andrews (Ryan Tubridy's grandfather) objected to the fact that there were so many southern unionists in the early Free State framework – far too generous to the old ascendancy, in his opinion!

Barry Cryer was a Leeds-born comedy performer of the old school – genuinely funny, sunny and rarely 'blue' in his gags. I got to know him in the last few years – he died in January, aged 86. Barry always liked to mention that his wife Theresa, was "a lovely Irish Catholic lady".

He wrote scripts for Dave Allen, and one of his clerical jokes featured a man appearing in a train carriage and asking loudly: "Is there a Catholic priest present?" No response. "Is there an Anglican vicar? A Jewish Rabbi?" Silence. And then a hesitant voice piped up: "I'm a Methodist minister, if that's any help."

"You're no use to us," says the chap. "We're looking for a corkscrew!"

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Schools 'absolutely dreading' heating bills as prices spike

Ruadhán Jones

As fuel prices rise and Covid funding ends, schools are "absolutely dreading" heating bills, with costs for some jumping 100% in two weeks.

"We're in a bad state at the moment," says Ailish McKeown, principal at Kilskyre NS, Co. Meath.

"Our gas bill has gone up 100% in about two weeks. Gas had gone up anyway, but now it has inflated completely."

Schools are already using more heat than normal as windows are kept open constantly to mitigate Covid.

"I actually said to staff that we're going to have to turn the heating off more often, because we're warming the yard at the moment," Ms McKeown said. "There'll be children sitting with their coats on again."

Caherleaheen NS in Kerry have already seen an increase of €700 on their fuel costs, and principal Mary Connolly fears it's only going to go higher.

"There will be no money to spare," Ms Con-

nolly said. "We are a cold building, we're not like a house. We don't have insulated walls."

Principal Terence McDowell of St Eithne's PS, Derry, said that while they haven't got their bill yet, they "are absolutely dreading it".

"We've got to use extra heating" to accommodate Covid ventilation requirements, he said. "This increase in prices is going to have a detrimental effect."

Funding to facilitate Covid-19 mitigation is set to end in March, Mr McDowell said: "We're told more or less that the money has to be spent. We're not going to get anything addi-

tional after that. It is a worrying time for us."

The Derry-based principal said he will be writing to the education authority, to ask what support they will be giving.

He warned that if there isn't additional financing, there are "big connotations" to that as it will affect their ability to fully resource their schools.

The deputy principal for Presentation Secondary School, Co. Wexford, echoed Mr McDowell's fears that higher fuel costs will mean cutting down on subject budgets. "It has a knock-on effect," said Ms Mary Dooley.

Doctor cleared over abortion reversals hopes outcome influences Irish policy

Jason Osborne

Irish Cardiologist based in England Dr Dermot Kearney said he has "hope" that the reversal of a ban that kept him from offering the "abortion pill reversal" treatment to women who wanted to keep their babies will influence the situation in Ireland.

Dr Kearney, who along with Consultant Obstetrician Dr Eileen Reilly helped 32 women to give birth to healthy babies after reversing the effects of

the first abortion pill, said that he was "delighted" to have been cleared of all sanctions against him.

The UK's General Medical Council last year ordered Dr Kearney, then-president of the Catholic Medical Association (CMA), to stop prescribing progesterone, a natural hormone, to women who desired to "reverse" their medical abortion part of the way through.

However, having been exonerated, Dr Kearney told this paper the ruling is likely to influence attitudes in "English-

speaking countries".

"Lots of other countries, will be influenced by what happens with the UK GMC...Ireland will often do what England does as well.

"There were doctors providing the rescue service in Ireland and when we were ordered to stop, they stopped as well, because they were afraid the Irish medical council would react in the same way and discipline doctors, so they just stopped doing it," Dr Kearney said.

See page 18.

Bishops launch podcast about drugs addiction

Staff reporter

The Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative (IBDI) has launched a new podcast to raise awareness about the effects gambling, drugs and alcohol addiction can have on young people's lives.

The first episode of the 'Leave Your Mark' podcast saw a discussion between Tyrone GAA midfielder and 2021 All-Ireland winner, Conn Kilpatrick, and 2002 All-Ireland winner, Armagh's Oisín McConville about their personal experience with

gambling addiction, which they believe is a growing problem among young people.

Welcoming the new series, Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh Michael Router described addiction as a "frightening aspect of life in Ireland today".

"The rise in the abuse of drugs and alcohol is well documented and many parents, families and communities have suffered and are struggling to respond," Bishop Router said.

The Irish Catholic

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An end to Lough Derg lockdown



Lough Derg Prior Fr La Flynn is pictured at the official opening of a new museum at the visitor centre at Lough Derg, ahead of re-opening Station Island for its full pilgrimage programme this summer, along with members of the Lough Derg team and representatives from Donegal County Council.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iconic Cork crucifix falls in high winds

The iconic cross on the Church of the Ascension overlooking Cork city fell during high winds last Thursday.

The cross, erected in 1962, had been previously damaged by storm Franklin in February, when gale force winds left it tilted.

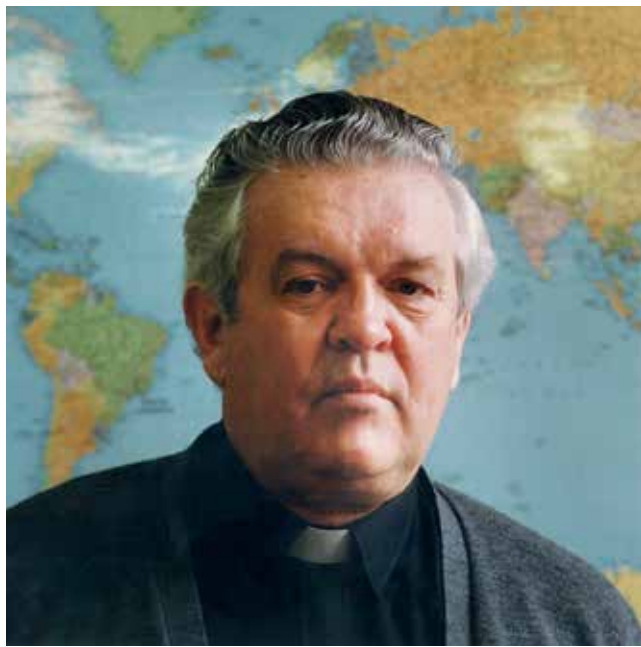
In a statement on March 11, the parish said that the cross fell during the night of March 10, causing some damage to parts of the church roof.

Works were underway immediately to erect scaffolding, in order to assess the full extent of the damage.

"Ferocious winds all day yesterday finally dislodged the tilting cross. We are grateful that there was no loss of life or injuries," the parish said.

A GoFundMe has been set up to raise funds to repair the cross: www.gofundme.com/f/ascension-cross-gurranabraher.

“A legacy of *incredible* humanitarian significance”



Fr. Aengus Finucane.

The Irish Catholic looks at a rich and varied life lived in the service of others and of God.

Fr. Finucane was ordained as a Holy Ghost Priest in 1958. In his first assignment in Uli, Nigeria, Fr. Finucane found himself involved in the bitter civil war between Nigeria and Biafra.

Following Biafra's attempt to secede, this widespread conflict had displaced millions. What's more, there was a blockade of food, medicine and basic necessities by the Nigerian authorities.

At the height of the crisis in the summer of 1968, it was estimated 6,000 children died every week.

An Irish effort

In response to the Biafrans' terrible plight, Concern Worldwide – originally called Africa Concern – was founded and began raising awareness and funds to help those suffering.

On 6th September 1968, the 600 tonne, Columille set sail for Sao Tome – a Portuguese island close to West Africa. The cost of chartering the ship and its vital cargo of powdered food and medicines was all paid for with donations from the people of Ireland.

To circumvent the blockade, the supplies were then flown from Sao Tome to Biafra overnight. The following day in Uli, Fr. Finucane was among the Holy Ghost priests who would help distribute the life saving supplies.

With his commitment and

that of the Irish public and priests, this operation grew into one flight a day for 11 months.

Fr. Finucane was deeply committed to helping the poorest of the poor. So after leaving Biafra, in 1972 he became Concern's Field Director in Bangladesh after its war of independence from Pakistan – the war had left millions in desperate need of food.

The period after Fr. Finucane's time in Bangladesh was particularly testing. In Thailand's Kampuchea refugee camps he saw the desperation of Cambodians who had fled the Khmer Rouge's genocide.

And in Uganda the horror of HIV in Kampala, where even in the best hospitals one third of the children born were HIV positive.

Fr. Finucane worked tirelessly to alleviate suffering, and recognised his responsibility to help the poor and underprivileged.

Concern appointed Fr. Finucane as its Chief Executive in 1981.

During his 16 years as the head of the charity he was 'on the ground' during many of the world's worst disasters. These included the 1983-1985 famine in Ethiopia and the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

Relinquishing his post in 1997, Fr. Finucane became Honorary President of Concern Worldwide US. He held this post until his death on 6th October 2009.

Fr. Finucane's legacy

Fr. Finucane is the cornerstone behind much of what Concern has become today. It was he who expanded its aid work into 11 countries and dramatically increased its fundraising.

Tom Arnold – Concern's CEO from 2001 to 2013 – says:

“There can be few Irish people of his generation, or of any other generation, who have contributed as much to improving the lives of so much of humanity.”

“He inspired a whole generation of Concern overseas volunteers.”

Fr. Finucane continues to inspire as his legacy still influences Concern 12 years after his death.

“Do as much as you can, as well as you can, for as many as you can, for as long as you can.”
– Fr. Aengus Finucane

In 2020 Concern worked in 23 countries, responding to 78 different emergencies, helping 36.9 million of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.

Concern's vision, mission and work continues to strive to end extreme poverty, whatever it takes. The charity believes that no-one should live in fear of not having enough food.

The devastation of climate change

Today one of the primary causes of acute food insecurity are weather extremes.

Climate change is increasing hunger levels and pushing even more people to the brink of famine. With multiple famines predicted, there are currently 41 million people teetering on the edge of starvation.

Extreme weather caused by climate change is having a devastating effect on the most vulnerable people in the world's poorest countries.

And these calamitous weather conditions are now more frequent and varied. No sooner has one disaster struck than another arrives. People don't have enough food for months, sometimes years on end.

In Malawi droughts, floods and strong weather patterns are a regular occurrence – placing huge stress

on land and crop production resulting in food shortages and hunger.

These weather extremes affect an already vulnerable population where 80% source their livelihoods from the land, 71% live below the poverty line and an estimated 20% are living in extreme poverty.

People like Yona Lambiki and his family.

Yona, a farmer, lives in Nkhambaza village with his wife and five children. He was always able to support his family with the crops and food he grew providing them with a healthy balanced diet. Any excess was sold, with some of the money used to pay for his children's schooling. But two years ago everything changed ...



Crops destroyed by Cyclone Idai.

In March 2019 Cyclone Idai caused devastating floods and loss of life in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The floods completely destroyed crops just weeks away from harvest – food people were relying on for survival.

Although his house wasn't affected, like thousands of others, the crops Yona was about to harvest were completely washed away. There was nothing for his family to eat, let alone any to sell.

Help for now and the future

But thanks to Concern's generous donors and Yona's hard work he is now able to look after his family again.

Yona immediately received a vital cash transfer from Concern. With this he bought food and other basic necessities his family needed to be safe and free from hunger.

Yona received seeds including maize, tomatoes, beans, three bundles of sweet potato vines and other vegetables to grow so he could, once again, support his family. He also received, fertilizer and a hoe to help him grow his crops. As well as five goats for milk and manure.



Photo: Jason Kennedy / Concern Worldwide.

“I would really love to meet everyone that is behind this support so I could thank them in person.” – Yona Lambiki

Like other families in his community, Yona planted the seeds he received in his home garden. What they harvest is used to feed their families, any excess is sold to improve their livelihoods.

But Concern do far more than simply give communities plants, seeds and tools. They provide training in Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) to ensure long term, inter-generational support.

providing support for years – possibly decades – to come.

On speaking about the people who support Concern and make our work possible, he said, *“I'm so very happy with the support I have received from Concern. My life and family's life is healthy and can afford everything we could not afford before. I'm so happy and thankful to Concern.”*

Will Fr. Finucane inspire you too?

There's a way you, just like Fr. Finucane, can leave the world a better place. And help improve the lives of families like Yona's both now and for future generations.

How? By leaving Concern a gift in your Will.

When you leave a gift, your legacy lives on – helping for years to come.

*“I know that this is a very personal decision. But I assure you, **gifts in Wills have had a phenomenal impact in reducing extreme poverty, hunger and suffering around the world.** Today, as the catastrophic combination of conflict, climate change and COVID-19 have plunged so many people into the grip of crisis, **your gift will help us to be there in their time of need.**”*

– Dominic MacSorley, CEO, Concern Worldwide

Gifts in Wills are a vital source of funding for Concern.

Your legacy will help families like Yona's reverse the many struggles caused by Climate Change ...

... will provide the tools and knowledge they need to not just survive but help themselves – a gift from you they can pass down for generations.

To find out more about how a legacy gives a safe, secure future, please request your complimentary copy of 'A World Without Hunger' – Concern's legacy booklet.

You'll learn of others who desperately needed help, and how legacies from people just like you have done so much.

There are also answers to common questions people ask about leaving a gift in their Will. And explains how to get started.

Requesting your free booklet does not oblige you to do anything else.

To receive your free, no obligation booklet – in complete confidence – please contact Concern's Legacy Manager, Siobhán O'Connor. Call **01 417 8020**, email **siobhan.oconnor@concern.net**, or write to 52-55 Lower Camden Street, Dublin 2



Nuala O'Loan

The View



We must intensify the isolation and ostracising of Vladimir Putin and his closest oligarchs

I sat with many hundreds of MPs and members of the House of Lords to watch President Volodymyr Zelenskyy address parliament from Ukraine on the terrible situation in his country. It was one of those totally unprecedented moments - the first occasion on which a president had addressed parliament in this way: a president who was being hunted by the invading Russian troops, for whom killing this great leader was a matter of urgency. There are reports that there have been multiple attempts to kill him just this week.

On screen, we saw a man in a simple dark T-shirt, not the normal apparel for a president speaking to the world. He looked slightly strained, but he spoke with great vigour and passion. As he started to speak, all the assembled parliamentar-

ians rose to their feet applauding in unanimous tribute to a great and courageous man. He spoke for only a few minutes - security considerations prevented him speaking for longer and as he finished his brief and compelling address, we rose again to applaud and carried on clapping long after he had faded from the screen on which we had watched him. Formal tributes followed by the party leaders. Then suddenly it was over and the two separate chambers of parliament resumed their work of debating and passing law.

Broadcast

It was a moment broadcast across the world - not least to Russia - though very few Russians would have been permitted by President Vladimir Putin to watch it. What made it so terrible to watch was that it almost seemed surreal, that a president could

really be speaking from a country in Europe which had been invaded and was being systematically destroyed by a neighbouring country. Russia's incursion into Ukraine has been slow and terrible. Systematically, central services have been bombed and destroyed, as have apartment blocks, schools, hospitals and railway stations. In many areas there is no water, no electricity, no fuel and now no roads to drive safely on. In some places like Mariupol there is not only no water, there is no food at all in what remains of the shops. In the biting cold, through freezing temperatures, women and children are fleeing trying to find safety. The men are staying behind to fight. Many women and their little ones cannot get out - we saw the terrible pictures of the bombed maternity hospital: women, their bellies great with child, struggling across the frozen



A person is carried out after the destruction of the children's hospital in Mariupol, Ukraine on March 9. Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, condemned Russia's bombing of the hospital. Photo: CNS

bombing land seeking safety where there seemed to be no safety. Many were reported to have died: medical staff, mothers and their new-born babies, and they will most likely find more bodies as they dig through the rubble. How many of those babies in their mother's wombs will have survived that terrible bombing?

There is no purpose in this conflict. It did not need to happen. The people of Ukraine are a proud, independent people, so many of them as courageous as their president: young boys and old men and women presenting themselves to fight for their freedom.

“Systematically, central services have been bombed and destroyed”

In Russia brave people are daring to demonstrate across the country against the devastation being inflicted on Ukraine, against this terrible act of war being perpetrated by their country. A law has been passed in Russia making it an offence to talk about the war, even to use the word 'war'. President Putin is ruthless and those brave souls who gather their courage and go out to call for the immediate cessation of the murderous attacks on Ukraine know that they will pay a terrible penalty. We should celebrate their courage and acknowledge that this war is being waged at the behest of President Putin and his henchmen, not on behalf of all Russians.

There can be no doubt that those in the democratic west could have handled the increasingly ominous situation in Russia better. For years we have seen the proud boasts

of Russian oligarchs as they invested billions in property in the west, and particularly in London, laundering it so that the money cannot be traced and seized.

We have known something of the levels of economic crime in this country, and we saw the poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko, of the former Russian military officer and British double agent, Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in Salisbury and there was other lower profile activity. We did not act to bring it to an end. We saw prominent Russians moving into positions of power in the UK, making significant political donations. We saw similar things happening as China moved to infiltrate our universities, industry, society. We did not act.

Indifference

Too late, it seems to me, we have awakened from the culture of indifference and even greed which seemed to mark our attitude to what was happening under our very noses.

New economic crime law is being rushed through the UK parliament to make our anti money laundering processes more effective, to provide the resources to make the structures stronger, so that we will know who actually owns such significant amounts of property in the UK, and to enable better tracking of and challenge to unexplained sources of wealth. It will be six months though before it is effective. It is too little too late. At least it is action though, and it is to be followed by further legislation.

In the meantime existing law has finally been used to freeze the assets of some 394 Russians, some of whom are very close to President Putin,

and others who were part of the Russian parliament which passed legislation designed to legitimise President Putin's war crimes. All these people have had all their assets in the UK frozen and they will not be allowed to travel into or live in the UK. Their ships, airplanes and even, in the case of Roman Abramovich, Chelsea Football Club, have all been frozen and control has passed to the authorities. Work is ongoing internationally to promote greater global anti-corruption activity.

“New economic crime law is being rushed through the UK parliament to make our anti money laundering processes more effective”

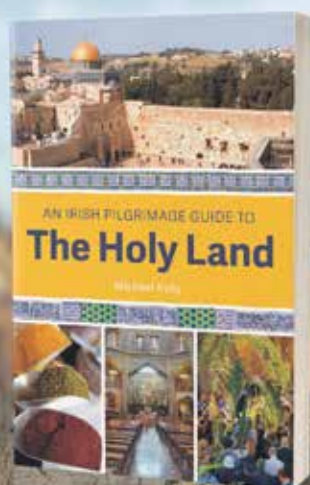
The commercial world has reacted against Mr Putin too - company after company has pulled out of Russia, closing their premises yet continuing to pay their staff in Russia, refusing to trade with Russia; we have seen dockers refuse to unload Russian oil ships. This has to be the way forward - to help the people of Ukraine in the battle for their survival as an independent country - providing food and clothes and money to bring aid and assistance, while simultaneously sanctioning, cutting off supply lines, isolating and ostracising Mr Putin and his oligarchs.

This terrible war in Ukraine must not be allowed to spread. The suffering of the people of Ukraine is a problem for all of us. Each of us must work and pray for peace - in Ukraine and the world.

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Abortion and pornography are at the root of misogyny



Tackling misogyny while promoting abortion and pornography is like fighting with one hand tied behind your back, writes **Ruadhán Jones**

In recent months, we have had impassioned discussions on misogyny and violence against women in Ireland. However, as my colleague Jason Osborne has pointed out, there has been little in the way of soul-searching as to why these problems are on the rise in Ireland.

All sorts of activists have proposed solutions, with international women's day, March 8, providing a platform for the usual promotion of abortion, contraception and legalised sex work as a means of liberating women.

At the same time, attacks are launched on anything from single-sex schools to the Church in Ireland. What the Church taught, and attempts to teach today, is considered anti-woman. It is accused of perpetuating myths about gendered natures and so forth which are really disguised efforts to control female sexuality.

These myths are to blame, so the narrative runs, for latent misogyny in Irish society today. However, this doesn't explain how, as Church influence has waned, gender-based violence has risen. Something at the heart of our modern culture has prompted the change.

What the activists don't realise is that our culture has led an attack on femininity and womanhood at their roots by promoting the instrumentalisation of women's bodies, a tendency expressed in the push for abortion, contraception and pornography. Equally, by attacking Church teaching on the natures of men and women, they have undermined the primary means of tackling misogyny wholesale.

Physical dispositions

According to the Church, men and women's natures are the result of their physical dispositions with regard to procreation. Edith Stein, also known as St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, writes that for a woman, "the soul's union with the body is naturally more intimately linked" by virtue of her body's capacity to conceive a child. Motherhood expresses a unity of body and soul, as in woman a new creature can be formed. This gives women a very person-centric worldview and they



Pro-life demonstrators are seen outside the US Supreme Court in Washington December 1, 2021. Photo: CNS

tend to be open to receiving life in whatever form it comes.

In men, by contrast, the body tends to have the character of an instrument which serves them in their work and which is accompanied by a certain detachment. "His physical form is not designed for bearing and nursing a little person," writes Mary Stanford, an American professor of theology. "What characterises his physical form is size and strength. His capacity for battle and for work indicates that he is designed not to receive and nurture a person, but instead to *act on the world*" (her emphasis).

“According to the Church, men and women's natures are the result of their physical dispositions with regard to procreation”

Our present culture would deny any such analysis, while implicitly favouring a hyper-masculine interpretation of our relationship with our bodies and the world. We assume that the body is basically an instrument to be used for personal pleasure. We go so far as to abuse our bodies for emotional or psychological satisfac-

tion and enshrine these actions as the pillars of our society.

The promotion of pornography is one of the prime examples of this approach. There is a myth that such a thing as "the right kind" of pornography exists, one in which male and female bodies are equally treated as objects of pleasure. "Porn literacy" is encouraged so that men and women can be educated on how to enjoy their sexuality correctly, and efforts are made to "clean up" and legitimise the sex industry.

Degrades

However, porn degrades both the consumer and the participant regardless of its so-called quality. It teaches us to see our bodies as objects, so that women are taught to monetise their bodies for personal gain, and men are taught to expect women to do so for their own sexual pleasure.

This has the effect of distancing us from the person involved in any sexual encounter, treating them as something akin to a product for our consumption. This is furthered by the promotion of contraception, which severs sex from the openness to life, and places the sole focus on personal pleasure.

Unsurprisingly, as pleasure seeking demands ever more extreme highs, its object must be driven further and harder. Should we be surprised then that a society which encourages por-

nography use tends towards greater violence against women?

That said, it is only a minority of men that become explicitly violent, and even fewer women. There is a subtler issue that this shared misunderstanding of the body and of pleasure leads men and women to. That is, you begin to behave as though even your wife or husband, girlfriend or boyfriend, is an object for your use to attain happiness.

“St Paul entreats men to ‘love their wives as their own bodies’, adding that ‘whoever loves his wife loves himself’”

A marriage becomes a community in which individuals are pitted against each other in their desire for personal happiness. Again, contraception aids and abets in this belief.

The second example is abortion. This attacks women at the very root of their natures – their motherhood. Abortion is promoted as a means for woman's liberation. The measure of freedom here is the male body, "free" as it is from the burden of child-bearing, more capable of exerting its will on the world.

By its promotion, a woman's ability to bear a child is problematised

and their bodies further instrumentalised. To have a baby is akin to malfunctioning as a human being, frustrating our desire for happiness. The traditionally feminine virtue of receptivity takes on negative connotations, obstructing our path to happiness, while forcing ourselves on the world is valorised.

Promote

Those who promote abortion, and at the same time call for the end to misogyny, fail to see that they are promoting one kind of good over another, the freedom to act over the freedom to receive. Their hyper-masculine vision of freedom shorn of its access to feminine reserves is itself misogynistic.

St Paul entreats men to "love their wives as their own bodies", adding that "whoever loves his wife loves himself"; but men cannot do this if they do not understand the body, whether male or female. In fact, St Paul's teaching is arguably a factual claim about the way men relate to women – men will treat women as they do their own bodies.

If they are taught that their bodies are instruments for their use in pursuing pleasure, then women will receive the same treatment. Wherever the body is instrumentalised for the pursuit of pleasure, the maltreatment of women will follow.

Not only women, as I have noted, but men also. Tackling misogyny is a matter on which the good of men and women rest. But to do so while simultaneously promoting abortion, contraception and pornography is like trying to fight with one hand tied behind your back.

“All sorts of activists have proposed solutions, with international women's day, March 8, providing a platform for the usual promotion of abortion”

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The grace of Confession

Lent is a season of preparation for Easter when we will renew our baptismal promises to reject the wiles of Satan and to commit ourselves afresh to being a follower of Jesus Christ. Today's Gospel (Luke 13: 1-9) is an encouragement to improve our lives with the help of God's grace. Remember that Luke is the evangelist of mercy and of the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Tragedies

There had been two tragedies in Jerusalem. Pilate, the Roman governor sent in his troops to quell some disturbance and several pilgrims from Galilee were killed. Then, a tower at the pool of Siloam, where people went for a cure, collapsed, killing 18 people. Minds started judging and tongues were wagging. People were saying that God was punishing these people because they were sinners. Jesus replied that these Galileans were no worse than the people who were condemning them. Those who were pointing the finger of blame at others had three fingers pointing back at themselves. Instead of examining the lives of other people, they would be better off examining their own lives. "Unless you repent you will all perish as they did."

What would Jesus do?

This idea of a punishing God is still around. The best way of knowing the mind of God is to see the way Jesus preached and acted. God the Son, the Word made flesh, is the living revelation of God in a human life that we can understand. Several times in the Gospel Jesus made it clear that God's desire is that sinners would repent, thereby allowing his mercy to heal them. He came to heal them, not to judge and condemn them. We never see him punishing people. The time he took a whip to end the commercialisation of the temple was not an act of punishment but a symbol of protecting the sanctity of a holy place. He actually shocked the pious religious leaders the way he sat with sinners, and worse again, shared food and drink with them! Pope Francis called his approach a revolution of tenderness. That is what God is like, not vindictive but merciful.

Punishment

God is not in the business of punishment. The fact is that sinful behaviour carries its own inbuilt punishment. Sinful living sows the seeds

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester
O'Flynn
OFM Cap.



of unhappiness. Sin breaks the peace and harmony of our relationship with God. Sin disrupts our relationship with others by fostering anger, distrust, hatred, bitterness and prejudice. Sin poisons one's inner dignity and peace. Even the ultimate punishment of hell is self-inflicted. "Everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it to prevent his actions from being shown up" (John 3: 20). Those who are hardened in evil refuse the light of God's mercy.

Fruitless tree

Jesus continued his teaching with his parable of the fruitless fig tree. For three years it had produced no fruit. "Cut it down", said the owner. But the gardener pleaded, "Let us give it one more chance. Give me time to dig around it and manure it, and we'll see next year." God is the patient gardener who loves all his trees, even the fruitless ones. He will give it one more chance...and another chance after that...and yet another one more chance if necessary. His mercy has no end. The Responsorial Psalm today is a beautiful description of God's unending mercy:

"The Lord is compassion and love,
slow to anger and rich in mercy.

For as the heavens are high above the earth
so strong is his love for those who fear him."

Digging

The remedy suggested by the gardener was digging followed by enriching the earth. Digging around the roots is a good image of an honest, searching examination at the roots of our failures and misdeeds. Digging is not comfortable and confessing is humiliating but this is the best way to allow God's healing grace into our lives.

Spiritual healing is to be seen in the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5: 22-24). The first three fruits describe a healthy relationship with God: love, joy and peace. This person enjoys God.

The second threesome form a healthy relationship with people: patience, kindness and goodness. Patience allows one to accept others with all their differences and oddities, without being disturbed. Kindness in thought, word and action makes the



world a better place for others. In one of the Beatitudes Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Goodness is an inner eye that will search for whatever is good in others rather than concentrating on their faults.

The third threesome describe the inner strength of a person at home with God, with other people and oneself: trustfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Trustfulness is a strong backbone of hope which supports a person through all sorts of difficult times. Gentleness begins with being gentle with oneself, not to be beating yourself up when you make a mistake. A famous spiritual guide from the east described how his first year in monastic life was spent practising how to

close a door gently. A soul at peace will be seen in a body at peace. The final fruit of the Spirit is self-control: perhaps we should call it Spirit-control.

We are blessed to have a special Sacrament to celebrate God's mercy. More about that next Sunday when we reflect on the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Prayer

My soul, give thanks to the Lord, all my being, bless his holy name.

My soul, give thanks to the Lord and never forget all his blessings.

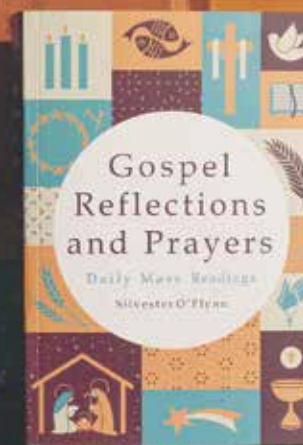
It is he who forgives all your guilt, who heals every one of your ills,

Who redeems your life from the grave,

Who crowns you with love and compassion.

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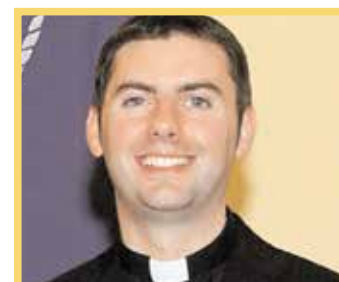
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Church put in no-win situation over its land



The Church is asked to sell its land for housing, then blocked from doing so, writes **David Quinn**

The Catholic Church is often asked to sell or donate some of its lands to help address the housing shortage. But now in Dublin it is being blocked in certain instances from doing exactly that.

It is a little complicated, but essentially Dublin City Council (DCC) wants to change what can be done with lands that come under the heading Z15.

If Dublin archdiocese attempts to sell land for residential use that comes under this heading, it will almost certainly be refused permission to do so under the DCC Draft Development Plan. That will obviously make it very hard for residential property to be built on such land and in turn that will make it more difficult to alleviate the housing shortage. At the same time, critics of the Church will continue to accuse it of not giving up enough of its property.

“A wish to make it very hard for this to happen again seems to be behind its designation of a lot of Church land in Dublin as Z15”

A lot of Church land happens to fall in older parts of cities because the Church itself is so old and was able to buy land in those areas as they developed in the 19th or 20th centuries.

The land might be attached to a school, for instance, and a lot of it unused. People in the local area probably like to use it as a local amenity or semi-public park.

Clonliffe College in Drumcondra, Dublin, would have been a good example of that. The college was the old diocesan seminary. Drumcondra is one of Dublin's older suburbs. When land there was plentiful, Dublin archdiocese was able to buy plenty of it, as was the GAA. Croke Park is very close by.

A few years ago, 31 acres of land at Clonliffe College was sold off to the GAA for a cost of €95 million. Some of that has in turn been sold off to build 1,600 apartments. Most will be studio and one-bed units suitable mainly for single people or couples. These received permission to go ahead last November.



The old Holy Cross Seminary, also known as Clonliffe College. Photo: William Murphy

Dublin City Council did not like what was happening one bit. In a complaint to An Bord Pleanála, it said: “It is considered unlikely the development will provide an attractive mixed-use sustainable neighbourhood and ‘a good urban neighbourhood’ in compliance with the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022”.

A wish to make it very hard for this to happen again seems to be behind its designation of a lot of Church land in Dublin as Z15.

It would make it almost impossible for the Church in Dublin to pull off a future deal like the one with the GAA.

Harder

In turn, this will make it far harder for Dublin archdiocese, or individual religious orders, to raise much needed funds, as well as meaning less land is available for houses or apartments.

Defending the DCC plan, Labour party councillor, Mary Freehill, explicitly said fellow councillors want to prevent a repeat of the

Clonliffe College deal and make sure available land is put to what they think is the best possible use.

Dublin archdiocese has objected to the Dublin City Council proposal. In a statement released a few weeks ago, it said it has made a submission to DCC arguing against its restrictive rezoning plan.

Status

The statement said: “The Draft Plan proposes a zoning status for certain institutional lands which would preclude any housing or office development in all but ‘highly exceptional’ circumstances. In its submission [to DCC], the Archdiocese has pointed out that this would unfairly restrict options which might be appropriate in the event that a church or school property was no longer required to meet the needs of the mission of the Church in particular areas. A more reasonable approach would be to allow future uses of redundant sites to be considered on their merits, without unnecessary restrictions.”

In other words, it doesn't want a blanket approach, but for each par-

cel of land and its future to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

In a submission to the DCC on behalf of the archdiocese, legal firm, Mason Hayes & Curran, even seemed to raise the possibility of a constitutional challenge to the proposal under the sections of the Constitution dealing with personal freedom, property rights and freedom of religion.

“Mary Freehill, explicitly said fellow councillors want to prevent a repeat of the Clonliffe College deal”

As time goes on, some parishes are going to be closed down, or have land beside them sold off.

It is no good if the Church simply sits on lots of land that is no longer being put to good use and as the number of Mass-goers declines.

A smaller number of Mass-goers also means less revenue for the archdiocese as the Sunday collec-

tion declines. In addition, Church finances have been hard hit by Covid-19.

Every diocese in the country faces a similar situation.

The draft plan of Dublin City Council, one that other councils around the country might emulate, is therefore a very big threat to the financial viability of Dublin archdiocese, as well as hampering efforts to address the housing shortage.

The irony is that the move by DCC comes soon after Housing Minister, Darragh O'Brien, specifically asked the bishops if they could do more to help tackle the housing crisis, something the hierarchy is open to.

Statement

The recent statement from Dublin archdiocese noted this irony. A double irony is that even if the Church was simply to give away its land for free, as some critics want, it would make no difference to the housing shortage in many cases because permission would still be refused for residential use.

The issue, in fairness to DCC, is not black or white. You can't sell off every parcel of land in every suburb of Ireland for housing. If we did that, there would be no green spaces or public amenities.

At the same time, we can't say we are really serious about the housing shortage if we object whenever some green space we like is up for redevelopment. But in practice we object time and again.

As Dublin archdiocese rightly says, DCC should not impose such a blanket restriction on so much Church land but instead let each piece be considered on a case-by-case basis. If not, then the archdiocese does need to seriously consider a constitutional challenge.

Meanwhile, those who attack the Church over its failure to dispose of enough land might like to consider redirecting their fire at Dublin City Council.

A 3-D image of the proposed development of 1,600 build-to-rent apartments on Clonliffe Road in Drumcondra, Dublin, the site of the old Holy Cross Seminary.



Contrarian Catholics do the Church a disservice



A Catholic tendency to go against the crowd in all things sometimes works against the Church, writes **Jason Osborne**

While the rest of the world rallies around Ukraine following Russia's violent invasion nearly three weeks ago, a not-insignificant minority of Catholics have taken it upon themselves to champion Russia's cause.

Admittedly, I write on the basis of anecdote, having conducted no polls or formal research into Catholic opinion on the conflict and its wider implications. I suspect the vast majority of Catholics both in Ireland and around the world see the situation for what it is, but having personally encountered a number of Catholics offering a contrary view of the war, I realise it isn't a negligible issue.

Their basic line goes that 'the West', led by the United States, is hopelessly corrupt, upholding and spreading a system that promotes abortion, transgenderism, the dissolution of the family and more, ultimately threatening the salvation of souls. Countries that don't toe the line, such as Russia in this instance, are bound to come into conflict with the West as a result, inviting economic war or worse upon their own heads.

“Most western countries do promote practices that directly contradict Church teaching”

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, they argue, is akin to a domestic dispute, into which the West, with its own questionable track record, ought to have no say. Sympathetic to the Russian claim to Ukraine in large part because of Putin's veneer of Christianity and Christian motivation, they see his attempts to draw Ukraine out of Western clutches as ultimately to the good. While the war and bloodshed are regrettable, a Ukraine bound to Russia rather than the West is in Ukraine's, and the world's, best interests.

The argument has some merits, there can be no doubt about it. Most western countries do promote practices that directly contradict Church teaching, which we as Catholics know to be true. Abortion is carried out at an industrial level, ending lives on a scale difficult to comprehend (however,



A service member of pro-Russian troops wearing a uniform without insignia drives an armoured vehicle in the separatist-controlled village of Bugas, Ukraine, in the Donetsk region March 6, during the Ukraine-Russia conflict. Photo: CNS

Russia and many of its former Soviet satellites far outpace most individual western country in this, Russia having performed the second most abortions in the world after China). The absolutely essential family unit is threatened and attacked at every turn, with marriage increasingly disincentivised for young people through a variety of means. This presents a real problem for the future.

Vilified

Religion is increasingly vilified in many western countries, and any Catholic in Ireland will tell you it's a less hospitable landscape now for faith than it was some years ago. The Church is regularly the target of ill-informed and biased tirades from politicians across the board, while in Finland, Finnish politician Paivi Rasanen is currently on trial for "hate speech" against gay people, following tweets referencing the Bible.

Western countries also, the United States foremost among them, have a track record of carrying out questionable (at the least) wars and operations on occasion, which often cause more harm and turmoil than good. A US drone strike in Kabul on August 29 last year that killed 10 civilians, seven

children among them, being some of the most recent proof of this.

With all of that said, the case for Russia in its war against Ukraine remains indefensible, and anyone claiming to be motivated by love for God and their neighbour should see this to be true. At the time of writing, reports are emerging from the Ukrainian city of Mariupol of Russian airstrikes against a hospital full of mostly women and children. This follows reports in previous days of the Russian shelling of humanitarian corridors, opening fire as people attempted to flee the areas of heaviest fighting.

“A number of flashpoint issues in our culture that often stoke Catholic and conservative ire have a golden thread within them”

I believe there is a tendency in some Church circles to adopt contrarian stances out of the belief that a world as corrupt as the West can-

not be right about anything. I share this scepticism, believing many media outlets and public figures to have biased or flawed views on a great many things – the current war in Ukraine included.

However, it's a tendency that must be tempered by our Catholicism. A number of flashpoint issues in our culture that often stoke Catholic and conservative ire have a golden thread within them, and this can be recognised without buying wholesale into narratives we disagree with.

Issues

A selection of these issues might include the current war in Ukraine, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the climate crisis. Referring again to anecdote, I know Catholics who scoff at all three, and it's possible you do, too. The war in Ukraine is the West's fault, the Covid pandemic was a sham and the environment is ours to do with as we please, humans being at the pinnacle of the creation pyramid, they say.

I agree that there could have been smarter diplomacy with Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union, that many, many erroneous decisions and assumptions were made

throughout the entirety of the pandemic, and that much of the climate crisis talk is blown out of all proportion and does little more than generate fear and nihilism.

It seems to me, however, that the correct response isn't to set your face against the world and adopt opposing stances wherever possible. Catholics must sometimes become comfortable with holding nuanced positions that overlap with those held by the majority of a secular population. It's possible to believe that Russia alone is culpable in this instance for a terrible and violent invasion of another country, that Covid killed and harmed a great many people and that the response to it was dreadfully destructive, and that while much of the climate rhetoric is overblown, learning to treat God's creation with a softer touch and view it with greater respect are to the common good.

“Their basic line goes that ‘the West’, led by the United States, is hopelessly corrupt”

It's possible to hold these views, agreeing with many of our secular contemporaries, without compromising on our Catholicism. Indeed, our Catholicism demands it, for if we find ourselves supporting unjust wars that kill thousands, and falling into hostile contrarianism more and more often, I find it hard to believe it's the kingdom of God we're contributing to.

“Religion is increasingly vilified in many western countries, and any Catholic in Ireland will tell you it's a less hospitable landscape now for faith”

‘Their faith is more powerful than any



It is time for a call to action for Christians in the West to stand up for their embattled brethren, **Chai Brady** hears

Given their status as a tiny minority in the region today, it's sometimes hard to believe that the Middle East is the birthplace of Christianity. The first followers of Jesus – quickly known as Christians – have lived in the Holy Land for almost 2,000 years.

But at the beginning of the third millennium of Christianity, their continued presence in their historic lands is far from certain. Pope Benedict XVI on a visit to the Holy Land in 2010 referred to the stones that mark the many sites associated with the ministry of Jesus. But he went further still – describing the local Christians as the ‘living stones’ and pleading with them to remain with Christians all over the world to work to ensure they can stay.

It's a sobering reality that if Christians were to disappear from the Holy Land and the wider Middle East – fleeing persecution, hardship or searching for a better life – the holy places become little more than museums, a marker to events long ago rather than places of worship for a living community.

“They’re extremely vulnerable, they’re under threat by many things: extremism, but also climate change and migration - and economic insecurity”

The exodus of Christians from the Middle East is at catastrophic levels – and yet it hardly features in western coverage of the region.

It was their vulnerability and the fact that their plight is largely ignored that led acclaimed journalist Janine di Giovanni to turn her attention to their forgotten suffering.

The Vanishing: Faith, Loss, and the Twilight of Christianity in the Land of the Prophets investigates the possible extinction of Christian communities across Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine, and what can be done to remedy their growing exodus. A senior fellow at Yale University, Ms di Giovanni brings the rigour of journalism with the urgency



Pope Francis participates in a memorial prayer for the victims of the war at Hosh al-Bieaa (church square) in Mosul, Iraq, March 7, 2021.

of someone passionate about the situation.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Ms di Giovanni paints a bleak picture about the state of the Christian community in the Middle East. “They’re extremely vulnerable, they’re under threat by many things: extremism, but also climate change and migration - and economic insecurity.”

She sees the aim of the book as creating “a living document of these people and their extraordinary faith”.

Asked whether she thinks Christians in the Western world understand the importance of the ancient heritage of Christians in the Holy Land and wider Middle East, Ms di Giovanni is adamant: “Not at all. I’ve always been aware of them because I’m a Catholic and wherever I go in the world I always try to go to a church.”

“I was aware that for Christians, especially in Jerusalem, the pull to their ancestral land is so strong,” she says.

Suffering

But, as for the wider Christian community? Most “really have no idea how their brothers and sisters throughout the Middle East are suffering – so much – and what we take for granted.”

“When I want to pray, I wander down the street in Manhattan and I find any church that I can walk in. If you’re a Christian in Egypt, there’s a good chance that you live in Minya, in the countryside. It’s banned to build more churches, or you find a church with a padlock on it, or you risk getting burned alive - which happens - or fire-bombed on a bus going to a holy site. So I think most of us live very protected lives in our safe countries and we have no idea what happens to these people outside, and especially in the Middle East,” she says. While persecution is a major issue,

with charities recording that Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the world, there are other material concerns such as a lack of job opportunities for Christians, meaning many move away once completing their education, which Ms di Giovanni says is “terrible, because then there’s a vacuum”.

“I would say the Christians in Gaza are in a terrible humanitarian situation, absolutely dire”

“These are lands where they have lived for 2,000 years. So absolutely, I can understand being a young person: there’s no work and you want to migrate to Canada or the US, or Ireland or wherever. But if they do that, they leave a hole. And literally the villages will be dead villages. There wouldn’t be people to go to church, so these minorities will vanish. And that’s why I called it *The Vanishing*,” she says starkly insisting that “migration really is their enemy.”

Over the past few decades conflicts in the Middle East, which Western countries have been intrinsically part of, have caused devastation for the civilian population of all faiths. In some cases, Christians have borne the brunt of war and extremism.

“All civilians are collateral damage in the Middle Eastern wars... So in that way we can’t differentiate between Christians and Muslims or Jews, or any of the other minorities,” Ms di Giovanni states.

The wider picture is that “People in the Middle East are suffering from the fallout of many wars and climate change and other things,



Janine di Giovanni

but the Christian groups that I talk about, especially those in Iraq and Syria, are suffering from the fallout of the Islamic State. Their villages were destroyed, their churches were burnt and they are very much caught in the middle.”

Conflict

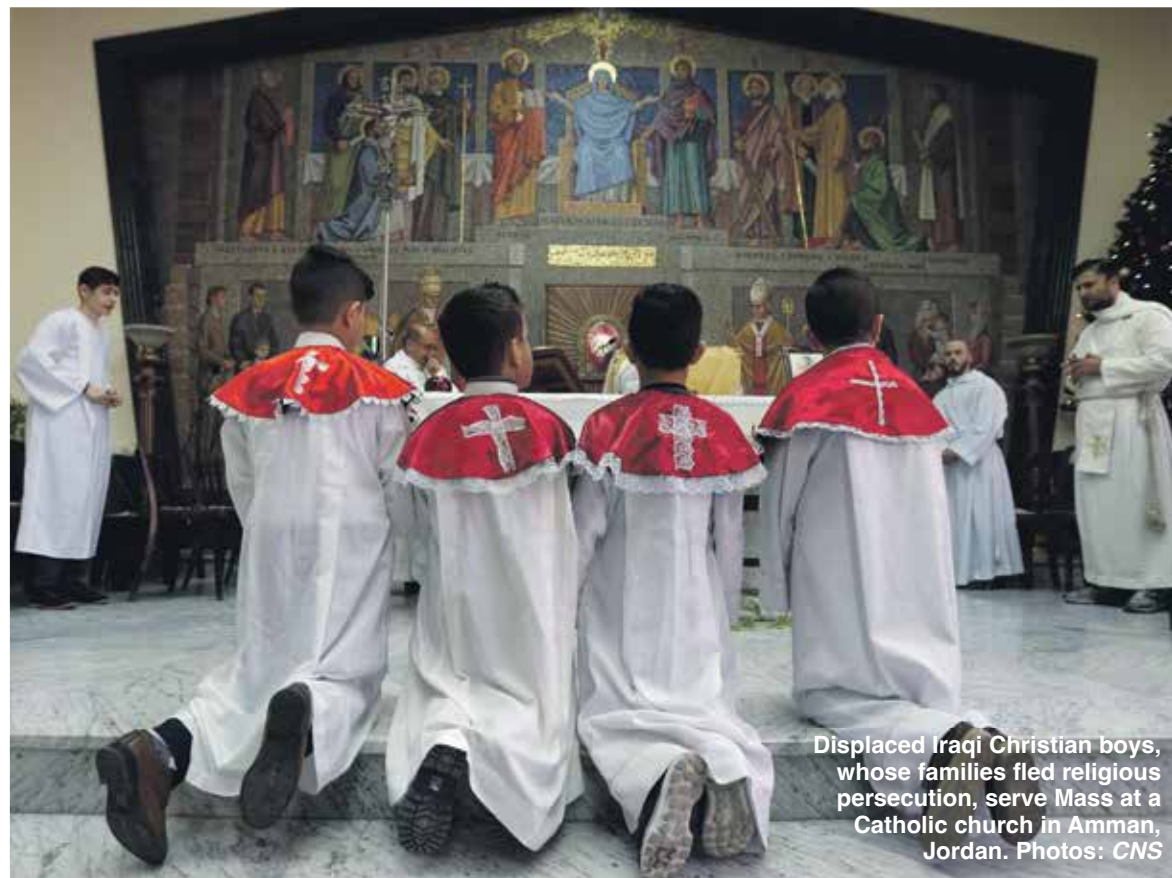
When it comes to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, Ms di Giovanni refers in particular to the southern Palestinian enclave on the border with Egypt currently ruled by the Islamist group Hamas. “In Gaza, they [the Christian community] are in

a terrible situation because they are basically caught between Hamas and the brutal restrictions and occupation of the Israeli government,” she says.

The fewer than 1,000 Christians who today call Gaza home are prevented by Israel from travelling to other Palestinian parts of the Holy Land associated with Jesus such as Bethlehem and Jericho to celebrate Christmas and Easter, and where many have relatives.

“I would say the Christians in Gaza are in a terrible humanitarian situation, absolutely dire...The Israeli restrictions are so fierce,” she

of the armies trying to destroy them'



Displaced Iraqi Christian boys, whose families fled religious persecution, serve Mass at a Catholic church in Amman, Jordan. Photos: CNS

“Iraq is suffering like everyone else in the region from floods, from droughts, from things that affect the crops as well as extreme temperature changes

says, “And of course when there is bombing, bombs don’t differentiate between Hamas and civilians. So, they are equally terrified and brutalised by the force of the Israeli military which continues to this day to threaten their existence.”

After Church leaders in Jerusalem warned that not enough is being done to prevent attacks on Christians by Jewish extremists in Jerusalem, she insists that Western governments must do more to speak out against the restriction and demand that Israel move against those intimidating Christians in the holy city.

“Each case is very unique and each of them faces different challenges”

Material concerns are also always part of the story. “I truly believe economic initiatives are really important. For instance, in Gaza there is a generation that is so bright, so clever, so incredibly ambitious and strong, and they’re completely thwarted by the closures – the siege in Gaza. And they need economic initiatives, they need training, they need education. Education is primary,” she says.

Ms di Giovanni is passionate that offering Christians a viable future is key. “In every country, there is violent extremism. It all comes down to how we educate people. And I think this is the biggest thing we can do – to give them this chance so that they can educate themselves so that they want to stay in their ancestral lands and they can have small businesses or whatever.”

Having covered warzones around the world, Ms di Giovanni has won

more than a dozen awards for her reporting. She has reported from Syria, Egypt, Kurdistan, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan as well as North Africa and South Sudan to name a few. In 2013, she was named one of the 100 most influential people in the world of armed violence by Action on Armed Violence.

Work

Regarding her work in conflict situations compared to what Christians face now in the Middle East, she says: “It’s a different thing because in some places they’re not actively at war. So the Syrian Christians are going through their issues with geo-

politics as well as other things they’re facing. Iraq is no longer at war but the Iraqi Christians in the north are under threat from Iranian-backed militias and also from Turkish air strikes.

“Egypt is not at war but they are persecuted... Each case is very unique and each of them faces different challenges.”

Climate change is also an ever-present threat in the Middle East. For Christian farmers in the North of Iraq – who have already been facing an existential crisis in many ways – their livelihoods are in peril due to climate change which has been exacerbated by Islamic extremism. “When ISIS rolled through, they basi-

cally scorched their farms, they burnt down their silos, they destroyed their irrigation pipes. Iraq is suffering like everyone else in the region from floods, from droughts, from things that affect the crops as well as extreme temperature changes,” she says. “All of this means that these lands are, and will in the future, become uninhabitable.

“And these are the lands of Jesus Christ and they’re the lands of the prophets. These people are the direct descendants of the prophets, to remove them from these lands which are so holy and so sacred to them is a deep tragedy,” she says. Throughout the book, it is clear that Ms di Giovanni’s Catholic faith plays an important part in her life, no matter where she is in the world, there has always been a sense of ritual and belonging “no matter how difficult, dark, or dangerous the situation was”.

Persecution is an integral part of the story of Irish Catholics, the worst being during the Penal Laws when Catholics were forced to huddle at Mass rocks around the country under fear of imprisonment or death. Even today, Dublin remains the only capital city in Europe not to have a Catholic cathedral – a poignant symbol of a sad history.

Speak up

Ms di Giovanni believes that this history and the enduring place of Catholicism in Ireland puts a special onus on Catholics here to speak up.

“Catholics in Ireland absolutely have a deep understanding of the pain of being persecuted and discriminated because of your faith. So they, of all people, should fight even harder for these people, these Middle Eastern Christians who are so embattled.

“You can see how touching it is for someone in a really remote village in Egypt to have to walk miles and miles to find a church, and then to get there and it’s padlocked – the local people have padlocked it because they don’t want them to pray, and you’re not allowed by Egyptian law to build churches – still, they’ll find a way to pray.”

The historic parallels are stark. “This is almost like going back to

the persecution of Christians in Roman times,” she says. “And what is really heartening is how people will still try, that their belief in God, no matter what, is so strong. So I really hope that Irish Catholics will recognise the pain that their ancestors went through and try to be compassionate towards others living in this way,” she says.

The book is an easy and engaging read, and it gives readers an insight into not only the challenges Christians face, but the complexities of the Middle East.

“Ms di Giovanni believes that this history and the enduring place of Catholicism in Ireland puts a special onus on Catholics here to speak up”

Ms di Giovanni believes “it lays out a very comprehensive story of their [Christians] history, their narrative, but also what we can do to help them. The book is really a call to action and a call for people to understand that our brothers and sisters do not have the luxury we have of going to pray whenever we want to, wherever we want to, in whatever church. Their lives as Christians are embattled”

“That’s really why I wrote the book. I hope it’s distributed in parishes. I hope parish priests read it,” she says. Ms di Giovanni is due to present a copy of the book to Pope Francis next week. “I am really hoping the word gets around,” she says.

Much of the book reads like diary entries as she brings the reader through different war-ravaged regions of the world in which she has travelled. There is also always a political and cultural context given, which creates a harrowing picture.

Communities

While documenting many hardy Christian communities who still go to their churches that have been destroyed and practice the faith despite threat of attack and persecution, the future is far from certain, indeed, there may not be one for them if action is not taken. “Perhaps I am naive, but that is what I have taken from my many years working on this book and all that I gathered in the decades leading up to it. I learned something profound from all of the people I encountered in Syria, Iraq, Gaza, or Egypt who prayed quietly and without any kind of assurance that they would be delivered or redeemed. Still, they continued to pray.

“So in many ways, this is a book about dying communities, but it is also about faith. I wrote it so that the people I documented would never disappear. They are here on these pages, and therefore they live forever. But I also wrote it as a way of acknowledging that their faith, in many ways, is more powerful than any of the armies I have seen trying to destroy them,” she writes.

Displaced people fleeing violence in Iraq walk toward the Syrian border town of Elerbeh in this file photo. Photo: CNS



Irish doctor in UK vindicated following baby-saving ban



NHS consultant Dr Dermot Kearney has been cleared of all sanctions placed after he saved 32 babies using the 'abortion pill reversal' treatment, writes Jason Osborne

An Irish Cardiologist based in England, Dr Dermot Kearney, is enjoying "great relief" following his sudden exoneration after a ban placed on him by the General Medical Council (GMC) for offering the "abortion pill reversal treatment" to women who wanted to keep their babies was reversed.

“A practicing Catholic, when asked whether he thought his faith was used against him in this instance, Dr Kearney said, ‘they tried’”

“It’s a relief, but also a surprise that it happened so fast,” Dr Kearney told this paper.

Dr Kearney, who along with Consultant Obstetrician Dr Eileen Reilly helped 32 women to give birth to healthy babies after reversing the effects of the first abortion pill, said that he was “delighted” to have been cleared of all sanctions against him.

The General Medical Council last year ordered Dr Kearney, then-president of the Catholic Medical Association (CMA), to stop prescribing progesterone, a natural hormone, to women who desired to “reverse” their medical abortion part of the way through.



However, when Dr Kearney began legal proceedings at the High Court to challenge the restrictions placed upon him by the GMC last May, the regulator went on to declare that there was no case against him.

“I was getting ready for my High Court appearance on the 24th of February when on the 15th of February I got a phone call from my barrister telling me the good news that the GMC had informed him that they were dropping the case,” Dr Kearney said.

Caseworkers for the GMC found that the women Dr Kearney had supported had received a high standard of care, and following expert advice, that the abortion pill reversal treatment was safe.

Survival rate

It is a common procedure in many parts of the United States, where the survival rate for the baby “is up to 68-70%,” Dr Kearney said.

“Everybody knows about it, in fact in some states it’s mandatory that if you’re provided with abortion pills, you must be informed that there is a reversal treatment. So some states, about 13 states, have that as a mandate.

“There’s a greater awareness, and there’s many more doctors, about 700-800 doctors throughout all 50 states who are providing the service,” he said.

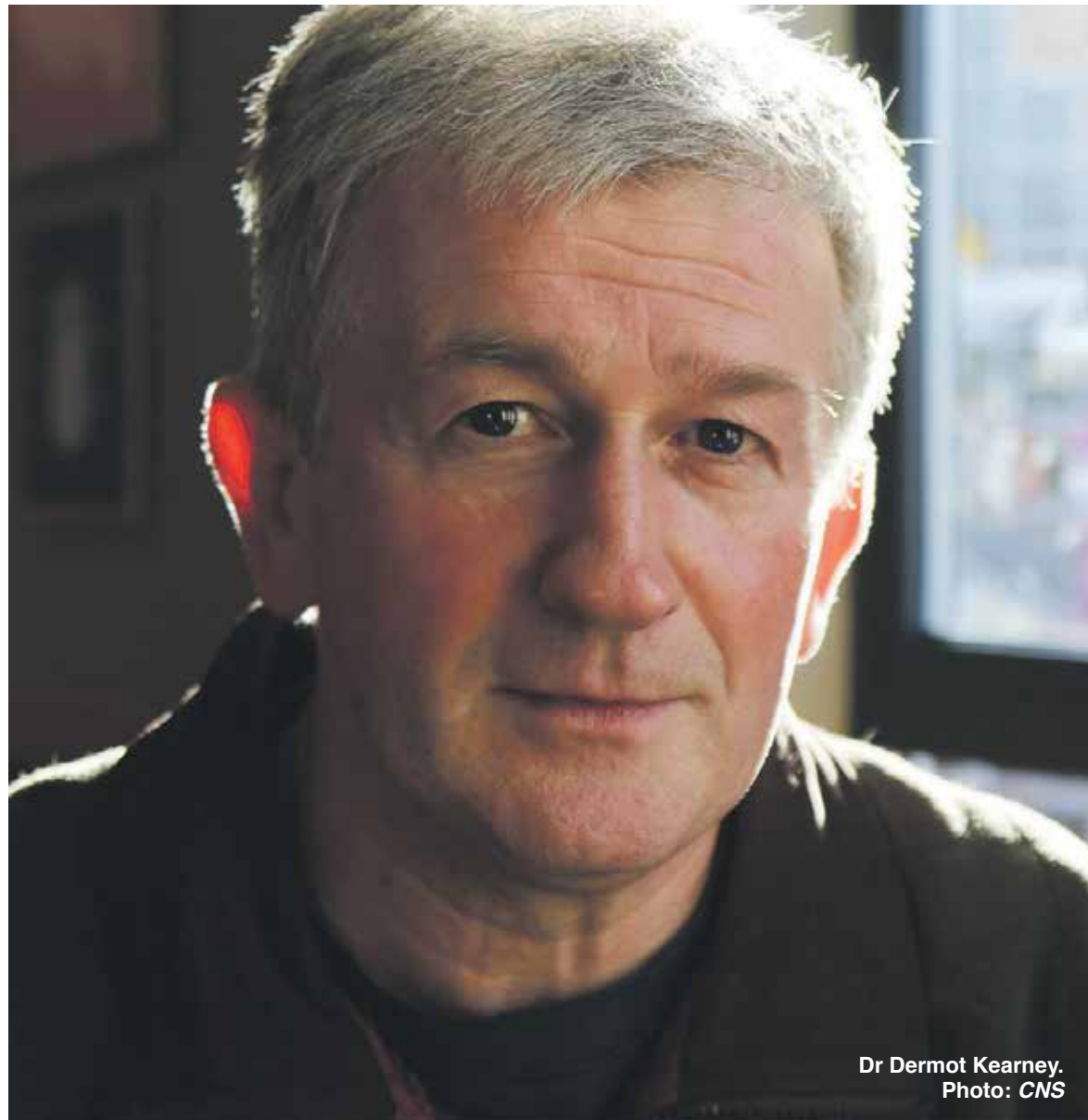
A practicing Catholic, when asked whether he thought his faith was used against him in this instance, Dr Kearney said, “they tried”.

“In the formal letter of complaint from the RCOG [Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists], which again, this is very difficult for me to understand, and I’m surprised that they put it in writing, but they actually admitted that, we’re not so much concerned about the treatments that are being used here, our main concern is the people involved.

“One of them is the president of the Catholic Medical Association [they said]...and then they went on to say that because of this, a neutral, non-judgemental approach to these vulnerable women could not be guaranteed, so basically because of my faith. They were trying to make it a religious issue,” Dr Kearney said.

Dr Kearney said he and his colleague got involved in this service “because nobody else would”.

“The Catholic Medical Association was approached initially by Life, the organisation Life, and then later by Good Counsel, because women were coming to them seeking help. They’d taken the first pill and nobody would help them, and they came to those organisations who didn’t have any doctors onboard in their organisa-



Dr Dermot Kearney.
Photo: CNS

tions, but they came to us knowing that probably with our faith we might be sympathetic to this cause, that we would at least have a pro-life outlook.

“Lots of other countries, particularly English-speaking countries, will be influenced by what happens with the UK GMC”

“But they could’ve gone to anyone, they could have gone to a secular group, an atheist group, so you didn’t have to be a Catholic or a Christian or a person of faith to provide this service, so it wasn’t a faith issue,” he said.

In return, the CMA has now put in a formal complaint to the GMC about this perceived anti-religious bias, the results of which Dr Kearney awaits.

Dr Kearney sees the potential ramifications of the case as being positive for the pro-life cause, as “it has actually brought a great deal of publicity and a public awareness that otherwise

would not have been there”.

“We had been trying for the best part of a year to try and create an awareness about this issue, because we wanted women to get to us, women who needed help, we wanted them to be aware of the help that was available, much earlier than happens in practice.”

Consequences

This case may have consequences in the Irish context, Dr Kearney said, with many jurisdictions in the English-speaking world likely to be influenced by the UK General Medical Council’s decision.

“Lots of other countries, particularly English-speaking countries, will be influenced by what happens with the UK GMC. So, for example Canada, doctors in Canada who’ve been providing this service, they’re under tremendous pressure from groups like Open Democracy to try and shut them down and they’ve been criticised and there’s been discussions in the Canadian parliaments, the local, provincial parliaments about it. So, this will have I think a major impact on Canada.

“Canada will do what England does, and Ireland will often do what England does as well. There were

doctors providing the rescue service in Ireland and when we were ordered to stop, they stopped as well, because they were afraid the Irish medical council would react in the same way and discipline doctors, so they just stopped doing it.”

“We know in that time there was seven in Ireland, seven that we’re aware of”

“They’ve now decided they’re going to have to get this up and running again,” because there are women in Ireland in need of it, he said.

“The last case we did was at the end of April, so between the 1st of May, and the 31st of January, there’s been 160 calls to the [international] helpline for help in the UK. 160. There was 22 in January alone. So month by month there’s large numbers. We know in that time there was seven in Ireland, seven that we’re aware of. There might have been others that didn’t know how to contact the helpline,” Dr Kearney explained.

Archbishop Farrell ordains two new Dominican deacons



Bro. Anthony Kavanagh OP, Archbishop Dermot Farrell and Bro. Kellan Scott OP are pictured together after their ordination ceremony.



Archbishop Farrell celebrates Mass, March 5.

Ruadhán Jones

Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell ordained two Dominican friars, Bro. Anthony Kavanagh OP and Bro. Kellan Scott OP, to the order of diaconate, March 5.

A large congregation was present to participate in this celebration in St Saviour's Dominican church, Dublin, along with Dominican friars, sisters and laity from throughout Ireland.

The archbishop of Dublin, quoting Pope Francis, called on Bros Anthony and Kellan to be "contemplatives, whose closeness to people enables them to proclaim

before the wounds of our world the power of the Resurrection at work even now".

"Down through the centuries, in difficult times, members of the Order preached the Good News of the Gospel," Archbishop Farrell continued.

"The vocation of Dominicans has been shaped by the demands of history and of the world of the day. The call is to live life in response to the needs of others and to the demands of the Gospel at any given moment."

If you believe you have a vocation to the Dominicans, vocations director Fr Colm Mannion OP, can be contacted at colm.mannion@dominicans.ie and 086-0864420.



Bro. Kavanagh and Bro. Scott process into St Saviour's Church, Dublin.



‘I am not worthy to come to the aid



St Patrick, patron of Ireland, is depicted in a stained-glass window at St Christopher Church in Baldwin, N.Y. Photos: CNS

This is a translation of St Patrick's Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus where the saint excommunicated Coroticus and his followers because they had taken some of Patrick's converts into slavery while raiding in Ireland.

I declare that I, Patrick, – an unlearned sinner indeed – have been established a bishop in Ireland. I hold quite certainly that what I am, I have accepted from God. I live as an alien among non-Roman peoples, an exile on account of the love of God – he is my witness that this is so. It is not that I would choose to let anything so blunt and harsh come from my mouth, but I am driven by the zeal for God. And the truth of Christ stimulates me, for love of neighbours and children: for these, I have given up my homeland and my parents, and my very life to death, if I am worthy of that. I live for my God, to teach these peoples, even if I am despised by some.

“It would take a long time to discuss or refer one by one, and to gather from the whole law all that is stated about such greed”

With my own hand I have written and put together these words to be given and handed on and sent to the soldiers of Coroticus. I cannot say that they are my fellow-citizens, nor fellow-citizens of the saints of Rome, but fellow-citizens of demons, because of their evil works. By their hostile ways they live in death, allies of the apostate Scots and Picts. They are blood-stained: blood-stained with the blood of innocent Christians, whose numbers I have given birth to in God and confirmed in Christ.

Baptised

The newly baptised and anointed were dressed in white robes; the anointing was still to be seen clearly on their foreheads when they were cruelly slain and sacrificed by the sword of the ones I referred to above. On the day after that, I sent a letter by a holy priest (whom I had taught from infancy), with clerics, to ask that they return to us some of the booty or of the baptised prisoners they had captured. They scoffed at them.

So I don't know which is the cause of the greatest grief for me: whether those who were slain, or those who were captured, or those whom the devil so deeply ensnared. They will face the eternal pains of Gehenna equally with the devil; because whoever commits sin is rightly called a slave and a son of the devil.

For this reason, let every God-fearing person know that those people are alien to me and to Christ my God, for whom I am an ambassador: father-slayers, brother-slayers, they are savage wolves devouring

the people of God as they would bread for food. It is just as it is said: “The wicked have routed your law, O Lord” – the very law which in recent times he so graciously planted in Ireland and, with God's help, has taken root.

I am not forcing myself in where I have no right to act. I have a part with those whom God called and destined to preach the Gospel, even in persecutions which are no small matter, to the very ends of the earth. This is despite the malice of the enemy through the tyranny of Coroticus, who respects neither God, nor his priests whom God chose and granted the divine and sublime power that whatever they would bind upon earth would be bound also in the heavens.

Therefore I ask most of all that all the holy and humble of heart should not fawn on such people, nor even share food or drink with them, nor accept their alms, until such time as they make satisfaction to God in severe penance and shedding of tears, and until they set free the men-servants of God and the baptised women servants of Christ, for whom he died and was crucified.

Evildoers

The Most High does not accept the gifts of evildoers. The one who offers a sacrifice taken from what belongs to the poor is like one who sacrifices a child in the very sight of the child's father. Riches, says Scripture, which a person gathers unjustly, will be vomited out of that person's stomach. The angel of death will drag such a one away, to be crushed by the anger of dragons. Such a one will the tongue of a serpent slay, and the fire which cannot be extinguished will consume. And Scripture also says: “Woe to those who fill themselves with what does not belong to them”. And: “What does it profit a person to gain the whole world and yet suffer the loss of his or her soul?”

“Let every God-fearing person know that those people are alien to me and to Christ my God, for whom I am an ambassador”

It would take a long time to discuss or refer one by one, and to gather from the whole law all that is stated about such greed. Avarice is a deadly crime. Do not covet your neighbour's goods. Do not kill. The murderer can have no part with Christ. Whoever hates a brother is guilty of homicide. Also: Whoever does not love a brother remains in death. How much more guilty is the

either of God or of human beings'

one who stained his hands in the blood of the children of God, who God only lately acquired in the most distant parts of the earth through the encouragement of one as unimportant as I am!

Surely it was not without God, or simply out of human motives, that I came to Ireland! Who was it who drove me to it? I am so bound by the Spirit that I no longer see my own kindred. Is it just from myself that comes the holy mercy in how I act towards that people who at one time took me captive and slaughtered the men and women servants in my father's home? In my human nature I was born free, in that I was born of a decurion father. But I sold out my noble state for the sake of others – and I am not ashamed of that, nor do I repent of it. Now, in Christ, I am a slave of a foreign people, for the sake of the indescribable glory of eternal life which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

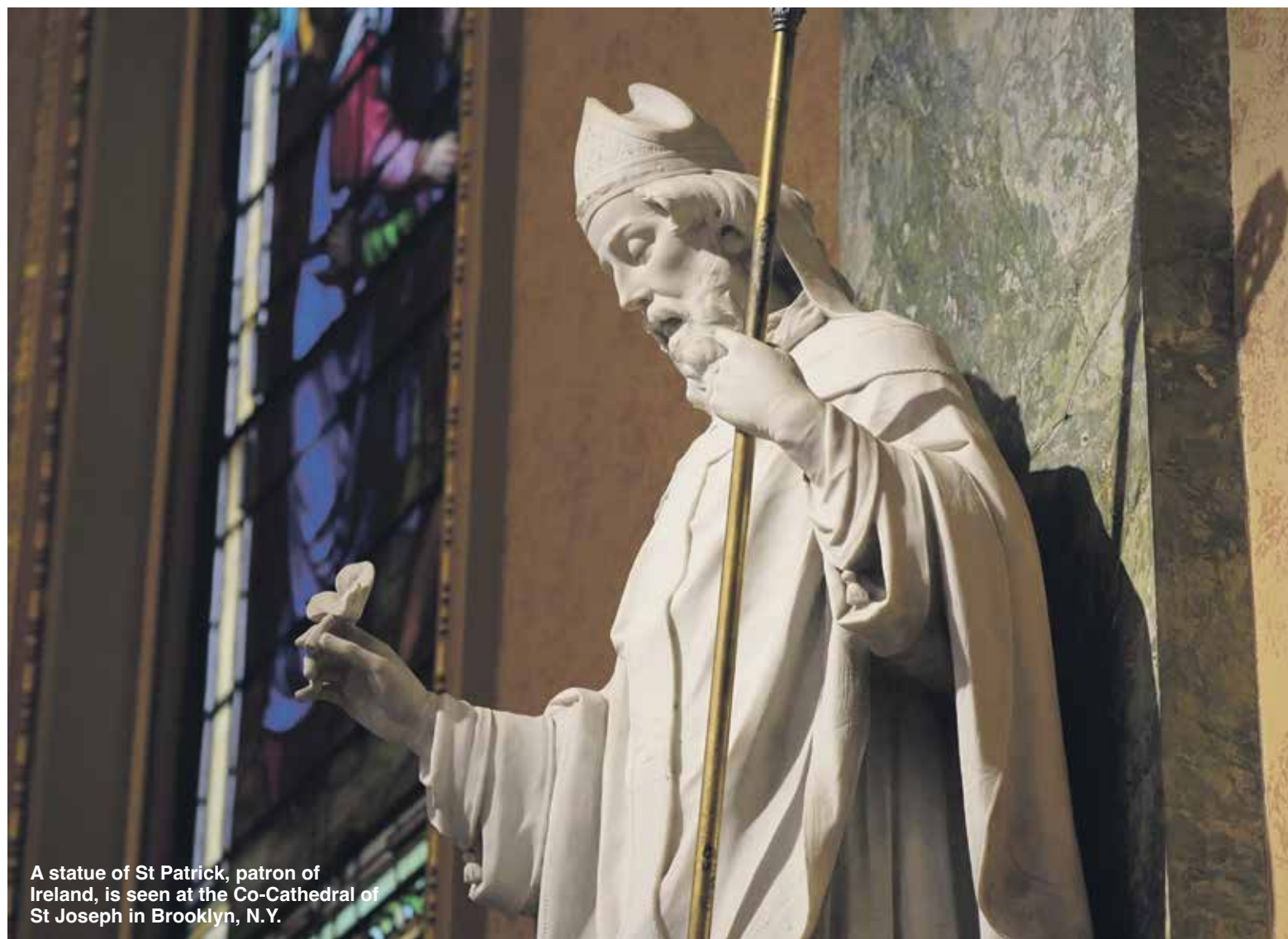
If my own people do not recognise me, still no prophet is honoured in his own country. Could it be that we are not of the one sheepfold, nor that we have the one God as our Father? As Scripture says: "Whoever is not with me is against me"; and "whoever does not gather with me, scatters". But it is not right that one destroys while another builds. I do not seek what is mine: it is not my own grace, but God who put this concern in my heart, that I would be one of the hunters or fishers whom God at one time foretold would be here in the final days.

“Who among the holy people would not be horrified to take pleasure or to enjoy a banquet with such people?”

They watch me with malice. What am I to do, Lord? I am greatly despised. See – your sheep around me are mangled and preyed upon, and this by the thieves I mentioned before, at the bidding of the evil-minded Coroticus. He is far from the love of God, who betrays Christians into the hands of Scots and Picts. Greedy wolves have devoured the flock of the Lord, which was flourishing in Ireland under the very best of care – I just can't count the number of sons of Scots and daughters of kings who are now monks and virgins of Christ. So the injuries done to good people will not please you – even in the very depths it will not please.

Horried

Who among the holy people would not be horrified to take pleasure or to enjoy a banquet with such people? They have filled their homes with what they stole from dead Christians; they live on what they plundered. These wretched people don't realise that they offer deadly poison as food to their friends and children. It is just like Eve, who did not understand that it was really death that she offered her man. This is how it is with those who do evil: they work for death as an everlasting punishment.



A statue of St Patrick, patron of Ireland, is seen at the Co-Cathedral of St Joseph in Brooklyn, N.Y.

The Christians of Roman Gaul have the custom of sending holy and chosen men to the Franks and to other pagan peoples with so many thousands in money to buy back the baptised who have been taken prisoner. You, on the other hand, kill them, and sell them to foreign peoples who have no knowledge of God. You hand over the members of Christ as it were to a brothel. What hope have you in God? Who approves of what you do, or whoever speaks words of praise? God will be the judge, for it is written: "Not only the doers of evil, but also those who go along with it, are to be condemned".

Children of God

I do not know what to say, or how I can say any more, about the children of God who are dead, whom the sword has touched so cruelly. All I can do is what is written: "Weep with those who weep"; and again: "If one member suffers pain, let all the members suffer the pain with it". This is why the Church mourns and weeps for its sons and daughters whom the sword has not yet slain, but who were taken away and exported to far distant lands, where grave sin openly flourishes without shame, where freeborn people have been sold off, Christians reduced to slavery: slaves

particularly of the lowest and worst of the apostate Picts.

That is why I will cry aloud with sadness and grief: O my fairest and most loving brothers and sisters whom I begot without number in Christ, what am I to do for you? I am not worthy to come to the aid either of God or of human beings. The evil of evil people has prevailed over us. We have been made as if we were complete outsiders. Can it be they do not believe that we have received one and the same Baptism, or that we have one and the same God as father. For them, it is a disgrace that we are from Ireland. Remember what Scripture says: "Do you not have the one God? Then why have you each abandoned your neighbour?"

Grieve

That is why I grieve for you; I grieve for you who are so very dear to me. And yet I rejoice within myself: I have not worked for nothing; my wanderings have not been in vain. This unspeakably horrifying crime has been carried out. But, thanks to God, you who are baptised believers have moved on from this world to paradise. I see you clearly: you have begun your journey to where there is no night, nor sorrow, nor death, any more. Rather, you leap for joy,

like calves set free from chains, and you tread down the wicked, and they will be like ashes under your feet.

And so, you will reign with apostles and prophets and martyrs. You will take possession of an eternal kingdom, as he (Christ) testifies in these words: 'They will come from the east and from the west, and they will recline at the table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens. Left outside are dogs and sorcerers and murderers; with the lying perjurers, their lot is in the pool of eternal fire'. It is not without cause that the apostle says: "If it is the case that a just person can be saved only with difficulty, where will the sinner and the irreverent transgressor of the law find himself?"

“O my fairest and most loving brothers and sisters whom I begot without number in Christ, what am I to do for you?”

So where will Coroticus and his villainous rebels against Christ find themselves – those who divide out defenceless baptised women as

prizes, all for the sake of a miserable temporal kingdom, which will pass away in a moment of time. Just as cloud of smoke is blown away by the wind, that is how deceitful sinners will perish from the face of the Lord. The just, however, will banquet in great constancy with Christ. They will judge nations, and will rule over evil kings for all ages. Amen.

Witness

I bear witness before God and his angels that it will be as he made it known to one of my inexperience. These are not my own words which I have put before you in Latin; they are the words of God, and of the apostles and prophets, who have never lied. "Anyone who believes will be saved; anyone who does not believe will be condemned" – God has spoken.

I ask insistently whatever servant of God is courageous enough to be a bearer of these messages, that it in no way be withdrawn or hidden from any person. Quite the opposite – let it be read before all the people, especially in the presence of Coroticus himself. If this takes place, God may inspire them to come back to their right senses before God. However late it may be, may they repent of acting so wrongly, the murder of the brethren of the Lord, and set free the baptised women prisoners whom they previously seized. So may they deserve to live for God, and be made whole here and in eternity. Peace to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“I live as an alien among non-Roman peoples, an exile on account of the love of God – he is my witness that this is so”

Portlaoise parish celebrates confirmations

Ruadhán Jones

Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty visited Portlaoise parish to administer the sacrament of Confirmation on March 4 and 5.

Bishop Nulty concelebrated Mass in St Peter and Paul's Church, Portlaoise, where dozens of young people from several local

schools received the Sacrament – and the sun shone to greet them.

The schools were: Holy Family Senior School, Scoil Bhride, The Heath NS, Ratheniska NS, Gaelscoil and St Francis School, as well as those who made Confirmation and attend Educate Together, Maryborough NS, Dunamase College and St Mary's CBS.



Heath NS, Ratheniska NS, Gael Scoil, St Francis school, Educate Together and other schools are pictured, March 5.

in the sun



Scoil Bhride students pictured after their Confirmation.



Bishop Nulty administers the Sacrament of Confirmation.



Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty concelebrates Mass in St Peter and Paul's Church, Portlaoise.



Holy Family Senior School, grade B.



Holy Family Senior School, grade A.



World Report

IN BRIEF

Our Lady of Fatima shrines asked to pray for Russia's conversion

● Our Lady of Fatima shrines worldwide were asked to unite in prayer for the conversion of Russia on Sunday.

The appeal was made by Father Andrzej Draws, rector of the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Fatima in Krisovychi, western Ukraine, following the full-scale Russian invasion of the country on February 24.

He invited all shrines in honour of Our Lady of Fatima to unite in prayer for the conversion of Russia on March 13.

The appeal came after Ukraine's Latin Rite Catholic bishops asked Pope Francis to consecrate Ukraine and Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

First Mass since Reformation celebrated at Swiss cathedral

● The first Catholic Mass in nearly 500 years was celebrated at a cathedral in Geneva, Switzerland, for the vigil of the First Sunday of Lent.

The last Mass celebrated at St Pierre Cathedral took place in 1535. After the Reformation, the building was taken over by John Calvin's Reformed Protestant Church, which

destroyed the cathedral's statues and paintings, and banned Catholic worship.

The Mass took place on March 5, having been postponed for two years because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Around 1,500 people attended the Mass. The main celebrant was Fr Pascal Desthieux, the episcopal vicar of Geneva.

Ukraine's 'City of Mary' has been turned into a 'cemetery'

● A Ukrainian Catholic leader said that the besieged city of Mariupol — the "City of Mary" — has been transformed into a cemetery by Russian bombardment.

In a video message issued March 10, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk lamented what he described as the "mass murder" of Ukrainians following Russia's full-scale invasion.

"Today my conscience and the conscience of every Christian demands that we raise our voices throughout the world and loudly say the word 'No,' to declare strong opposition to the mass murder of people in Ukraine," he said.

Ethiopian bishops reiterate call for peace in their country

● Catholic bishops in Ethiopia reiterated their call for peace and dialogue in the Horn of Africa country, as conflict in the northern region of Tigray threatens to trigger a famine.

The bishops said they had never been silent about the war. They said the Church was delivering humanitarian aid in all conflict areas and followed all the professional

and legal reports on the alleged human rights abuses linked to the conflict.

"The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ethiopia renews its appeal to all parties involved in the conflict in our country to drop their guns and start a genuine dialogue for the interest of the people," said the March 8 bishops' statement.

Bishop in Puerto Rico says his removal by Pope Francis 'unjust'

● A Catholic bishop in Puerto Rico described his removal from office by Pope Francis as "totally unjust."

Bishop Daniel Fernández Torres, who has led the Diocese of Arecibo since 2010, said he had been asked to resign because he "had not been obedient to the Pope nor had I been in sufficient communion with my brother bishops of Puerto Rico".

The Holy See press office announced March 9 that the Pope had relieved the 57-year-old bishop of the pastoral care of his diocese. The Vatican did not give a reason for the Pope's decision.

Papal envoy to Ukraine decries Russian bombings

A papal envoy to Ukraine has denounced the bombing of a paediatric hospital in the city of Mariupol.

Vatican Cardinal Michael Czerny, who was at the border between Hungary and Ukraine when he received the news, said: "Bombing and hospital: these two words in the same sentence already make you shudder."

Cardinal Czerny referred to the response of Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, who described the March 9 bombardment of a maternity and children's hospital in the city in south-eastern Ukraine as "unacceptable."

According to the Mariupol city council, a Russian airstrike killed at least three people, including a child, and wounded at least 17 doctors, children, and pregnant women.

"Cardinal Parolin is right; it's unacceptable. We must stop these attacks on civilians," Cardinal Czerny said.

Cardinal Czerny, who was born in the then Czechoslovakia before his family moved to Canada, is the interim prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

He and Cardinal Konrad Krajewski were sent last week to Ukraine by Pope Francis.

Cardinal Krajewski, who is in charge of the Pope's charitable efforts, visited the western Ukrainian city of



Cardinal Michael Czerny, interim president of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, is pictured with Caritas workers as he gives a blessing during a visit with Ukrainian refugees in Barabás, Hungary. Photo: CNS

Lviv after first stopping in his native Poland.

Both cardinals are visiting Ukraine to help refugees fleeing the conflict. The UN refugee agency estimates that more than 2.3 million Ukrainians have fled the country in the two weeks since Russia invaded on February 24.

Cardinal Krajewski, the papal almoner, told Vatican News on March 9 that he was in Lviv.

"Here, every five minutes I see refugees arriving from the eastern part of Kyiv," the cardinal said. "They are mostly

women with children. Some want to enter Poland, they want to stay close to the border, but there are those who have moved here to Lviv — there is no war here yet, even though it is very dangerous — and they are waiting for liberation, they are waiting to return."

Lviv "is where large amounts of aid from the European community arrive via Poland. Everything is unloaded in large warehouses, and from here the trucks leave for Kyiv, for Odesa, for the south of the country," he said.

Cardinal Krajewski added that, fortunately, "all this aid is still reaching its destination, despite the bombings".

The Pope's charity office has also helped pay for fuel for trucks bringing humanitarian aid into Ukraine, the papal almoner said.

"Wherever there is a bit of space, everything is occupied by refugees who pray, who have hope, who really thank the European community that is bringing them so many donations, that is close to them, that prays for them," he noted.

Court to hear challenge to UK Down syndrome abortion law

The Court of Appeal will hear a case challenging a UK law that allows abortion up to birth for disability after the High Court rejected the case last year.

The High Court in London ruled in September 2021 that the law allowing abortion up to birth for disability was not discriminatory.

The challenge was brought by Heidi Crowter, a 26-year-old woman with Down syndrome, and Maire Lea-Wilson, a 33-year-old mother whose son has Down syndrome.

After last September's verdict, Ms Crowter and Ms Lea-Wilson appealed the decision, and on March 8, the Court of Appeal announced that it would hear the challenge.

"I hope we win. People shouldn't be treated differently because of their disabilities, it's downright discrimination," Ms Crowter said.

Ms Lea-Wilson said: "I am thrilled to hear that the case will be heard by the Court of Appeal, and I hope that this will be the time that we all stand up

for equality.

"I have two sons that I love and value equally, but the law does not value them equally. This is wrong and so we want to try and change that."

Section 1(1)(d) of the UK's Abortion Act 1967 permits abortion up to birth if "there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped".

Air strike damages convent as Myanmar conflict continues

The Myanmar conflict's destruction continued early March 10, when a military aircraft attack on a town in the east of the country caused severe damage to a Catholic convent's roof, ceiling, and windows.

Two Myanmar military air-

craft hit the Sisters of Reparation convent, which serves as a retirement home and hospital for aging nuns. The convent is in DOUNGANKHA village in Demoso township in the eastern state of Kayah, a green and mountainous region which borders Thailand.

The convent is next to Our Lady, Queen of Peace Catholic Church, which itself was damaged in a June 2021 artillery barrage, the Hong Kong-based Catholic media service UCA News reports.

On March 8, an airstrike caused severe damage to Our

Lady of Fatima Church in Saun Du La village, which is also in Demoso township.

Since fighting began in May 2021, eight Catholic churches in Kayah's Diocese of Loikaw have been hit by artillery shelling or airstrikes.



Edited by Jason Osborne
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Blessed are the peace makers



A person is detained by police during an anti-war protest in Moscow after Russia invaded Ukraine. The sign reads "No war". Photo: CNS

Fr Jacques Hamel murder trial sees four convicted

Four men accused of terrorist conspiracy after the murder of the French Catholic priest Father Jacques Hamel in 2016 have been convicted.

"Justice is done," Archbishop Dominique Lebrun of Rouen said after the verdict on March 9. "[The court] has discerned the good from the bad as much as possible, it has judged and for the good of society, for the good of the men present in the dock."

The trial against four people on charges of terrorist conspiracy in Fr Hamel's murder began on February 14.

The 85-year-old priest was killed in a terrorist attack

while he offered Mass in the church of Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray, in the northern French archdiocese of Rouen, on July 26, 2016.

Four people were held hostage during the attack, which also left one elderly Massgoer seriously injured.

The two 19-year-old men who stabbed Fr Hamel and injured a second man were killed by police as they left the church. The four men convicted on March 9 were accused of criminal association with the attackers.

Three of the men convicted received between eight and 13 years in prison.

A life sentence was given to a fourth man, a known Islamic State recruiter who was tried in absentia.

A lawyer for the man injured in the 2016 assault said that there was a feeling of "spirituality" in the courtroom during the three-week trial.

He said that relatives of victims held hands with defendants and the injured man expressed his forgiveness, the Associated Press reported.

Three of the defendants also reportedly asked for forgiveness during the trial.

Archbishop Lebrun said that "silence will follow the

verdict".

"I will have to digest what I have heard, to meditate on it," he said. "Evil is terrifying. To pervert the relationship to God to the point of killing in his name has shaken me and challenged me deeply. Am I certain that I and my community are faithful to our God of love, justice, and peace? This question is my mission."

The archbishop thanked Fr Hamel's family and the other victims of the attack for having chosen "life and the opposite of hatred, that is to say, forgiveness or the hope of forgiveness".

Nordic bishops: German 'Synodal Way' fills us with worry

Nordic Catholic bishops have issued an open letter expressing alarm at the direction of the German 'Synodal Way'.

In the March 9 letter, they cautioned against "capitulation to the Zeitgeist" and "impoverishment of the content of our faith," reported CNA Deutsch.

While acknowledging the challenges facing the Catholic Church in Germany, they said that "the orientation, method, and content of the Synodal Path of the Church in Germany fill us with worry."

The Synodal Way is a multi-year process addressing the way power is exercised in the Church, sexual morality, the priesthood, and the role of women in the wake of a devastating clerical abuse crisis in Germany.

The Nordic bishops published their letter after Synodal Way participants voted in favour of draft texts calling for the abolition of priestly celibacy in the Latin Church, the ordination of women priests, same-sex blessings, and changes

to Catholic teaching on homosexuality.

"Throughout the world, a number of Catholics ask questions about the lifestyle and formation of priests, the role of women in the Church, the range of views on human sexuality, etc," the Nordic bishops wrote.

"In the legitimate search for answers to the questions of our time, we must nonetheless respect boundaries set by topics that stand for unchangeable aspects of the Church's teaching."

Vatican roundup

Cardinal Krajewski in Ukraine 'with the logic of the Gospel'

● "I am not a diplomat. I came here with the logic of the Gospel. That's what Jesus would do. He was always on the side of the people who were suffering. The Holy Father also uses this logic of the Gospel."

This is what the Pope's official Almoner or almsgiver, Cardinal Konrad Krajewski told reporters on Thursday in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, where he is expressing the closeness of Pope Francis for the suffering people.

The 58-year-old cardinal who heads the Office of Papal Charities, the Holy See's department charged with exercising charity to the poor in the name of the Pope, said it was important to be present in the "tormented nation" stressing "presence is the first name of love". Besides providing moral support and sharing our faith with the people he said, "we also carry the hope of getting out of this terrible situation".

On being asked whether it is possible to talk about negotiations while hospitals are being bombed, Cardinal Krajewski said he was not a diplomat but was there with the "logic of love" just as Jesus would have done.

Cardinal Parolin calls for end to fighting in call with Russia's Lavrov

● The Director of the Holy See Press Office, Matteo Bruni, confirmed Cardinal Parolin's phone conversation with Sergei Lavrov.

"The Cardinal conveyed Pope Francis' deep concern for the ongoing war in Ukraine and reaffirmed what the Pope said last Sunday at the Angelus. In particular, he reiterated his call for an end to armed attacks, for humanitarian corridors to be secured for civilians and rescuers, and for negotiation instead of armed violence."

Concluding the phone call, Cardinal Parolin reaffirmed the Holy See's willingness "to do everything possible to put itself at the service of this peace".

News of the talks was

also reported by the Interfax news agency, citing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

"The parties expressed hope that the next round of talks between Moscow and Kyiv will take place soon and that an agreement will be reached on key issues," with the aim of ceasing hostilities, Russian sources said.

Minister Lavrov's entourage explained that the minister informed Cardinal Parolin "about Russian motivation regarding the causes and objectives of the special military operation conducted in Ukraine."

During the Angelus, Pope Francis had remarked that the ongoing conflict in Ukraine was not a military operation, but rather a war.

Pope tells WYD 2023, 'Take courage and strive ahead!'

● Pope Francis has sent a video message in Spanish to young people involved in preparations for World Youth Day 2023, which will take place from 1-6 August in Lisbon, Portugal.

The Pope said he looks forward to meeting young people for the celebrations just as they do in gathering together from around the globe for the international celebrations.

The Pope acknowledged the difficult context that we are living today, coming out of the pandemic crisis and now faced with a new war crisis.

Despite these great challenges, he encouraged the volunteers to use all their creative energy to ensure that WYD 2023 will be a youthful, joyful, lively, and memorable experience for all, offering the joyful hope that faith in God brings.



Letter from Rome



Elise Ann Allen

Bishop shot in South Sudan returns ready to work for peace

Bishop-elect Christian Carlassare, who was shot in a grisly attack at his residence shortly after his appointment as the new bishop of Rumbek, has recovered and is preparing to return to his diocese with forgiveness and a desire to work for peace in his troubled adoptive nation.

A Comboni missionary, Fr Carlassare, 44, will be ordained a bishop March 25, on the Catholic feast of the Assumption, in the cathedral of Rumbek.

His ordination was originally set for May 23 2021; however, on April 26, shortly after his arrival in Rumbek, he was attacked by two gunmen who entered his compound just after midnight and shot him in the legs.

His injuries required at least six surgeries and almost a year to heal, receiving treatment in Juba, the Kenyan capital of Nairobi, and his native Italy.

Speaking to *Nigrizia*, the official magazine of the Comboni missionary order, Fr Carlassare said that he has reconciled with what happened and is ready to offer "true forgiveness from the heart".

"Unfortunately, evil always finds space. To err is human. But no one is condemned to remain in wrongdoing. As Christians, we are all called to conversion and to sanctity of life," he said, saying he is looking to the future with confidence.

"I know I'm not alone. And I feel deep solidarity with many people who ask to have a pastor who takes care of the people who live in abandonment. I return with the desire to put myself at the service of this Church and to walk the journey with the people," he said.

Fr Carlassare said he has lived the past year as a sabbatical, dedicating himself to rehab and a reflection on what happened "in light of the Gospel and of the call I received in the Church for the mission".

“My hope is to operate as a humble son of the Church and a worthy son of the people God entrusts to me”

"Last year's attack made me reflect on the fragility of my own life, as well as that of every strategy and program; and on how important it is that I live everyday life with courage and generosity," he said, saying he wants his daily life to be spent listening to and serving the people around him.

What happened last April "will help to purify and make space for the work of God," he said, noting



Italian-born Bishop-designate Christian Carlassare, who was shot by gunmen in Rumbek, South Sudan, speaks from a hospital in Nairobi, Kenya, in a video message posted April 28, 2021, on Twitter. In his video message, the bishop-designate encouraged forgiveness and reconciliation. Photo: CNS.

that God's work is often most visible when accompanied by the cross. "So, I seem to be able to glimpse God's care and presence in what happened for the greater good of the mission and the Church of Rumbek," he said.

"It will be a difficult journey and I pray for my conversion and availability as well as that of all people of goodwill who have great hopes, as well as those who have allowed themselves to be led by a closed and divisive mentality," he said, adding, "Our conversion is a miracle that is always possible."

Concerns

Asked what concerns he has heading back to his diocese after the attack, Fr Carlassare said he now has the awareness that he is no longer in control of his life, but that he is being led "by a people to assume this ministry for the good of the community".

Having spent 17 years of joys and difficulties as a missionary in South Sudan, arriving a year after his priestly ordination in 2003, Fr Carlassare said he feels that he has been

"fully adopted" by the country with his appointment as a bishop.

"My hope is to operate as a humble son of the Church and a worthy son of the people God entrusts to me, a people who want to live in peaceful coexistence after the independence was achieved in 2011, but who still struggle to achieve peace due to the many divisions," he said.

White bishop

Some people "will see me as a 'white' bishop. And I know that I am. However, I feel no different from my sheep: We have the same eyes, the same hands, the same feet, and the same heart," he said, insisting that what divides people "is not the colour of the skin, but the inability to open one's heart and show one's appreciation for different cultures that do not deny the humanity of each one".

Unity, he said, "comes when we learn to set our relationships on due consideration and mutual acceptance".

Ever since he was attacked last year, it was rumoured that the assault was ethnically motivated, given that

Rumbek is an area belonging primarily to the Dinka tribe, and Fr Carlassare before his appointment there had spent 10 years working closely with the Nuer tribe, which is traditionally the sworn enemy of the Dinka.

Fr Carlassare's appointment ruffled feathers, as many Dinka tribe members believed that Fr John Mathiang – who had led the Rumbek diocese as Diocesan Coordinator since December 2013, after the previous bishop, also a Comboni missionary, passed away – should have been named bishop.

In June of last year police arrested six suspects believed to be responsible for the attack, one of whom was Fr Mathiang.

“Unity, he said, ‘comes when we learn to set our relationships on due consideration and mutual acceptance’”

A trial for Fr Mathiang and five others began last month in Juba, and is being followed closely by national and regional ecclesial authorities. Lake State authorities have reportedly arrested more than 20 people in connection with the incident since last year.

Fr Carlassare said there are "innumerable" challenges that await him in South Sudan, most of which are tied to ongoing violence and the ease

of access to weapons in the country.

"The population is very polarised, frustrated, and divided: there must be a great effort to promote relaxation, listening, and reconciliation; and to overcome a deeply rooted hostile dynamic," he said.

Poverty

At the social level, poverty is also a major concern, he said, not because the country lacks resources, but "because the population has very limited access to these, as well as to basic services," which is where the Church steps in to provide concrete help to "those who try to raise their heads".

He praised the educational commitment of the Church in South Sudan, as well as its efforts in health-care, saying international support in this regard is generous, but "over time we will have to work to give local foundation to these interventions so that they are increasingly sustainable".

"My concern is that Christ is at the centre of all the work of the Church because he is the beginning and the fulfilment of a true process of humanisation of individuals and of society," Fr Carlassare said.

He spoke of the many expressions of solidarity he received from the Vatican, his fellow bishops, the local Church of Rumbek, and the South Sudanese government after last year's attack, saying he will continue to count on this support in the future, "when it is even more needed".

“Last year's attack made me reflect on the fragility of my own life, as well as that of every strategy and program”

Ukrainian refugees find some respite from horrors of war in Hungary



Ukrainian refugees are pictured at the Caritas Hungary refugee center in Barabás, Hungary, March 10. Photo: CNS



Junno Arocho Esteves

As millions of Ukrainian refugees continue to flee the ongoing violence of Russian aggression, many have found some comfort in neighbouring Hungary thanks to the efforts of Caritas.

Arriving in the border town of Barabás, refugees are immediately taken to the charitable organisation's makeshift refugee centre, where they are given shelter, a hot meal and much needed rest after a harrowing journey.

In general, "we are hosting between 300-400 people" daily since the start of the war, said Balint Vadasz, Caritas Hungary's head of emergency response.

Crossed

Since the Russian attack began at the end of February, some 2,000 refugees have crossed the border into Barabás. According to the UN Refugee Agency, as of March 9, more than 214,000 people have fled Ukraine to Hungary.

"Here we are trying to help them to move forward, to plan their future and, if necessary, to trans-

“Arriving in the border town of Barabás, refugees are immediately taken to the charitable organisation's makeshift refugee centre”

port them to the central train station, where they can travel for free in Hungary," Vadasz told *Catholic News Service* March 10.

At the refugee centre, new arrivals laid down and rested on cots set up in a hall for them. Nearby, tables were laden with sandwiches, beverages, cookies as well as toys and plush animals for the kids.

“Here we are trying to help them to move forward, to plan their future and, if necessary, to transport them to the central train station”

The walls are decorated with dozens of pictures drawn by the many children who have passed through the refugee centre. The drawings feature butterflies, flowers and families holding hands. Yet, many of the pictures also revealed the children's longing for their homeland, shown in drawings of hearts coloured with the blue and yellow of the Ukrainian flag.

Some of the 62 refugees that arrived the morning of March 10 were napping, exhausted from their ordeal while children talked excitedly as they snacked on sweets, drew in colouring books or played games.

Their parents, however, looked on with concern and uncertainty about the future. A young father stared blankly at his son playing with a toy while a mother at the other end of the hall looked through her phone as her baby slept peacefully on a cot.

"It's really hard to see these people, to see that pain," Bettina Vig, a Caritas volunteer, told CNS. "But I think they still don't yet realise their situation."

Vig said she hoped Russia's attack on Ukraine would "stop as soon as possible and that they realise they are wasting lives".

Son

Another volunteer, Ditta Krajcovicz, recalled one woman, who arrived with her small son at the centre, and said she had had only had three hours to pack their lives in a small backpack before Russian bombs started to fall.

"It was really hard to see how they were like," Krajcovicz told CNS. "They had no sadness in their faces but still, you could see it in their eyes; they don't know what is happening or where they would go. They just had three hours to pack one backpack. That was pretty tough for me" to see.

“Vig said she hoped Russia's attack on Ukraine would 'stop as soon as possible and that they realise they are wasting lives'”

Gasz Mihaly, who began volunteering a week earlier and helps in between his university studies, said he was inspired by the spirit of service in his family, many of whom are doctors.

On his first day at the refugee centre, he received a Facebook message from a Ukrainian man living in the United Arab Emirates who wanted to know if Mihaly could get him a ride to one of the towns along the Hungary-Ukraine border.

The man, he said, planned to fly to Hungary and enter Ukraine to fight against the Russians.

"That really touched me. He had a safe and beautiful life in the Emirates and came back to fight in the war. I thought that if I were in his position, I wouldn't be able to do that."

Yet for Mihaly, the heart-wrenching stories of some of the people fleeing to Hungary left a lasting impression.

"There was a guy who came by, dressed in a tie and a very beautiful suit," he recalled. "He came up to me, very shy, and said, 'I'm sorry, I don't have money to go to Budapest. Can you take me to the train station?'"

No hope

Others, Mihaly said, arrived in Barabás with no hope of ever returning to their homeland.

"There was someone who came here today and said that he would not return to Ukraine because all that he had there was destroyed by the bombings. So now, he has to start a new life and he is over 50 years old," he said.

Despite the sorrow and despair he continues to witness at the refugee centre, Mihaly told CNS that he still holds onto hope for peace in Ukraine.

"I really think that the war will end soon and everyone who wants can go back," he said. "And they will have the opportunity and the help of the West to rebuild their homes and rebuild their society."

Letters

Letter of the week

Prayers needed for Vladimir Putin and Russia

Dear Editor, Leaflets headed 'A Prayer for Ukraine' are being distributed around our churches, but I think they are misleading. The Catholic Church is a universal Church, so surely we should be praying for both Ukraine and Russia.

God has no favourites. He loves us all and we should be following his example. In a war situation there are no winners, so you can be sure there are plenty

of bereaved families in Russia as well as Ukraine, so they must not be forgotten in our prayers.

Also, the prayer asks for prayers for world leaders. That's fine, but why not be specific and pray for Vladimir Putin, who is seemingly the warmonger in this case. Surely he needs our prayers as much, if not more, than the Ukraine victims.

Finally, the prayer asks that "peace and justice become a reality for the people of Ukraine". Add Russia to that line, as there is surely just as much, if not more, need for peace and justice to reign there.

Yours sincerely,
Sean Ryan

Dundrum, Dublin 16

Rude and hurtful comments on Ireland's neutrality

Dear Editor, In *The Irish Catholic* edition of March 3, you allowed Fr Seamus Murphy SJ to splatter his very rude and hurtful comments to 'us Christians' who believe that all wars should be opposed and that Ireland as an independent nation can play a vital role in preventing further war and bloodshed and the annihilation of even more innocent civilians.

How dare he and how dare *The Irish Catholic* allow this man, this academic, this priest flaunt his anger to vilify the good Christians and non-Christians etc. regarding their wishes and efforts to stop the war in Ukraine and indeed war everywhere!

Shame on him and shame on *The Irish Catholic* for giving him a free hand to voice his insults without even giving another opposing opinion!

Yours etc.,
Seán Dunne
Cork City, Cork



Illuminating the Faith and making it secure

Dear Editor, May I request the editor to allow me one last comment on the issue of Church teaching?

I'm not sure there's any evidence that the Church, by council, encyclical, or decree ever adopted St Augustine's theological justification regarding coercion of the Donatists. There has been a historical problem relating to certain Church-state relationships characterised by instances of the state using the Church for its purposes and the Church using the state as an instrument of salvation. The teaching, sanctifying and governance ministry

of priests and bishops are subject to temptations which now and then result in practices ruled by a spirit inferior to the nature of the Church. But it is a mistake to regard such erroneous practices as expressions of Church teaching. Misinterpretations also occur on the subject of the 'Hierarchy' of truths. As Fr Vincent Twomey observed, Vatican II introduced this concept to direct theologians in ecumenical dialogue to give priority to the central or foundational tenets of the Faith where agreement would be most likely before moving on to

the areas of disagreement. It did not intend that any of the lesser truths can be discarded by priests and bishops exercising their pastoral responsibilities to the Faithful. The dual command of love summarises all the commandments, the minutest of which must be held and taught by the disciple of Christ, (Mt 5, 19). Dogmas of Faith illuminate the faith and make it secure. Striving to be faithful enables intellect and heart to welcome the light shed by the dogmas.

Yours etc.,
Neil Bray
Cappamore, Co. Limerick

Many years of wholesome reading

Dear Editor, The article on the Loreto Sisters [The Irish Catholic – February 17, 2022] by Jason Osborne was very informative, great women. Also the article on the Catholic cold war with the world made for very interesting reading [The Irish Catholic – February 10, 2022]. May I say your journalists provide extremely interesting reporting. Each one of them in their views give a lot of insight. Keep up the good work. It is the only paper I buy and has been for many years, wholesome reading.

Yours etc.,
Josephine Clarke
Dundrum, Dublin

A 'flawed' review of book on Donald Trump

Dear Editor, I generally enjoy the 'Book Reviews' section of *The Irish Catholic*. However, I was astounded at what was on offer in Frank Littons review of a book called *The Tyranny of Merit*, in the issue of January 20, 2022.

The review, and the book itself presumably, was essentially one long prejudiced rant against Donald Trump. It wasn't surprising to learn that the author was based in Harvard University, a hotbed of arrogant liberal fundamentalism. The thesis was basically a condescending put down of the "plebs" who dared to vote for Mr Trump.

Given the author's background this was hardly surprising (indeed Mr Sandel would probably not have gained employment in Harvard had he not espoused such views). Nevertheless one expected a degree of impartiality, professional balance, from the book reviewer.

Donald Trump promoted more Catholics to prominent judicial positions than any previous president including of course Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court. This was accompanied by sinister anti-Catholic rhetoric from

many of her opponents in the Democrats and media.

One was rather surprised to read such a review in *The Irish Catholic*. Mr Trump's other great achievement was of course engaging in zero military conflicts, unlike his Democrat predecessors. Needless to say, such positives were ignored by both the books writer and reviewer.

In summary, a flawed book and most definitely a flawed review.

Yours etc.,
Eric Conway
Navan, Co. Meath

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

Openness to other faiths in synod, but 'special emphasis' on Baptised Christians

Hopefully both ecumenical and interfaith cooperation will be emphasised. – **Declan McSweeney**

Synod journey or no synod journey there still won't be any progress in Irish parishes to bring the young people and the people on the margins into the Catholic Church, this so called synod journey will go on for years, another generation of children and youth lost to the Church and attendance at Mass. I give up. – **Noeleen Moffatt**

Sinn Féin's appalling attitude to being pregnant is a problem beyond politics

Well that's not surprising when you see the effort of McDonald and O'Neil jointly promoting and pushing nationwide one of the most savage abortion campaigns in the world. Given half a chance Sinn Féin will provide an abortion clinic in every town (for convenience). Then they can turn their attention to their next big project 'euthanasia' or as they and other fake Humanists prefer to call it 'Dying with dignity'. Their politicians and representatives have the gall to offend and insult people by talking and preaching about human rights. – **Jim Rowe**

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

Mass is being tampered with

Dear Editor, Many funeral Masses are now streamed all over the world. This is a blessing for those who are unable to attend. However, the downside is that the structure of Mass is tampered with. We now have a eulogy that goes unchecked in duration and content, also, the bringing up of items, personal mementos, such as grandad's walking stick, daily tabloid, and favourite beverage.

Then the task of allotting chores to the 14 grandchildren (whose families are inactive Catholics).

During Mass you will not receive a response to the prayers for obvious reasons. And the song (not hymns) will be requested by family, without any prior consultation with the celebrant eg., recently at Mass I listened to 'Galway bay', 'She moved through the fair' and 'Fields of gold' – not a hymn on the Eucharist or to Our Lady. Indeed the same pertains to wedding Masses.

Bishops of Ireland, you have let your priests and people down in this sphere, sat on the fence for decades and did nothing.

If there was a vote like *Dancing with the Stars* I would give you four out of ten.

Yours etc.,
Paddy Sheedy
Lissycasey, Co. Claret

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



▲ **ROMANIA:** People from Ukraine arrive by ferry in Isaccea, March 9, after fleeing from Russia's invasion. Photos: CNS.

◀ **BRAZIL:** Ukrainian descendants and members of the 'Cossack brotherhood' pray the rosary inside São Josafat Ukrainian Catholic Church in Prudentópolis.



GERMANY: Volunteers assist people fleeing the Russian war in Ukraine at Berlin's central station, March 9.



BOLIVIA: A priest blesses a mural in memory of femicide victims on International Women's Day in Cochabamba, March 8.



UKRAINE: A Jewish representative participates in a prayer service in the Latin-rite cathedral of Lviv, March 10.



USA: Volunteers sort through donated items outside the parish hall of St Joseph Church Mayfield, Kentucky, in early March, weeks after a tornado ripped through the town.



Lenten ashes speak language of the soul

We enter the season of Lent by putting ashes on our foreheads. What's symbolised here? Perhaps the heart understands better than the head because more people go to church on Ash Wednesday than on any other day of the year, including Christmas. The queues to receive the ashes in many churches are endless. Why? Why are the ashes so popular?

Their popularity, I suspect, comes from the fact that, as a symbol, ashes are blunt, primal, archetypal, and speak the language of the soul.

“Everyone knew that this was a natural thing, that ashes do an important work in the soul”

Something inside of us knows exactly why we take the ashes. No doctor of any kind needs to explain this. Ashes are dust, soil, humus; humanity and humility come from these. Ashes have always been a major symbol inside all religions. To put on ashes, to sit in ashes, is to say publicly and to yourself that you are in a penitential mode, that this is not “ordinary time” for you. Smudging oneself with ashes says that this is not a season of celebration for you, that some important work is going on inside you, and that you are, metaphorically and really, in the cinders of a dead fire, waiting for something fuller in your life.



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

Roots

All of this has deep roots. There's something innate in the human soul that understands that, every so often, one must descend, be smudged, lose one's luster, and wait for ashes to do their silent work. All ancient traditions, be they religious or mythical, abound with stories of having to sit in the ashes. For example, we all know the story of Cinderella. This is a centuries-old, wisdom-tale that speaks about the value of ashes in life. The name Cinderella itself speaks to this. Literally, the name Cinderella means, “the young girl who sits in the cinders, the ashes”. Moreover, as the tale makes plain, before the glass slipper is placed on her foot, before wearing the beautiful gown, before going to the ball, before dancing with the prince, and before marrying him, there

must first be a period of sitting in the cinders, of being humbled, of waiting patiently, while you are being readied for a sublime joy and consummation. In the story of Cinderella we can see a spirituality of lent.

“Something inside of us knows exactly why we take the ashes. No doctor of any kind needs to explain this”

Native American traditions too have always had an important place for ashes. In some Indigenous communities, there was the concept that occasionally someone would have to spend time in the ashes. Nobody knew why a specific person was called at a particular moment to sit in

the ashes, but everyone knew that this was a natural thing, that ashes do an important work in the soul, and that eventually that person would return to his or her regular life and be better for having spent time in the ashes.

Example

To offer one example: Certain native communities used to live in what they called longhouses. A longhouse was the communal building, in effect, the house for the whole community. A longhouse was long, rectangular, with large sloping sides, with the center of the roof open so that this could function as a natural chimney. Fires were kept burning, both for cooking and for warmth, along the entire center of the longhouse. People gathered there, near the fires, to cook, eat, and socialise, but they slept away from the fires, under the roofs that sloped down either side of the open center. Every so often, a man or a woman for reasons they didn't have to explain, would cease adhering to the normal routine. Instead he or she would become silent, sit just off the

fire in the ashes, eat very sparingly, not social, not go outside, not wash, and not go to bed with the others, but simply sit in the cinders.

Today we would probably diagnose this as clinical depression and rush that person off for professional help. For their part, they didn't panic. They saw this as perfectly normal, something most everyone was called upon to do at one time or another. They simply let the person sit there in the ashes until one day he or she got up, washed the ashes off, and began again to live a regular life. The belief was that the ashes, that period of silent sitting, had done some important, unseen work inside of the person. You sit in the ashes for healing.

Wisdom

The Church taps into these deep wells of wisdom when it puts ashes on our foreheads at the beginning of Lent. Lent is a season for each of us to sit in the ashes, to spend our time, like Cinderella, working and sitting among the ashes, grieving some of the things we've done wrong, refraining from the dance, refraining from the banquet, refusing to do business as usual, but rather waiting in patience as some silent growth takes place within us. Lent is a time to be still so that the ashes can do their work.

And, we need not understand exactly what the ashes are doing. They have a long history of being very patient with us.

“All ancient traditions, be they religious or mythical, abound with stories of having to sit in the ashes”

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, March 17, 2022

Personal Profile

Encouraging others to go and preach the Gospel

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Dealing with grief in the workplace



Grief is a terrible thing. Writing more succinctly about it than I can, C.S. Lewis said that no one ever told him that it felt so much like fear:

"I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. The same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep on swallowing...At other times it feels like being mildly drunk, or concussed. There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me. I find it hard to take in what anyone says. Or perhaps, hard to want to take it in. It is so uninteresting. Yet I want the others to be about me. I dread the moments when the house is empty. If only they would talk to one another and not to me."

As such, it's no surprise that figuring out how to accompany



The Irish Hospice Foundation is providing information and resources on supporting people through grief in the workplace, writes Jason Osborne

people, both employers and employees, through grief in the workplace is receiving more vital attention than ever before, and the Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF) has been leading the way in this.

They recently announced that they've developed four e-learning courses for managers and staff to support people who are grieving in the workplace, while providing aside from this useful supports and resources on their website for any and all to access. From a guide

for employers on responding to suicide, to how you can support a colleague who's grieving, there's a lot there with which you can educate yourself on how to try and ease somebody's burden in your workplace.

A recent survey by the IHF suggested that there has been an "unprecedented" impact on all those who have been bereaved, for whatever reason, and on all those who care for the dying, be they professional, family or friends,

since early 2020 (the advent of the pandemic). As such, the launch of their courses is particularly timely, especially when the large-scale recent return to the workplace is considered.

Breffi McGuinness, the national bereavement development specialist with the IHF said in a statement, "Providing appropriate support to staff who are bereaved is a key element of staff wellbeing."

"Grief is never easy, and it is normal to feel uncomfortable around death. Yet, there are things we can do that can make a real difference to people in the workplace who are bereaved. Helping managers and staff to respond with compassion and competence are key to fostering good communication and a supportive environment in any organisation. 'Grief in

the Workplace' provides practical guidance on how these steps can be achieved."

The IHF suite of 'Grief in the Workplace' resources provides supports for:

- Managers on how to respond to a bereaved staff member.
- Employees who are grieving after the death of a loved one.
- HR professionals on how to develop bereavement policies.
- CEOs, HR and senior managers on responding to suicide in the workplace.

With further modules planned for the future, it's likely to prove a valuable resource in creating a better atmosphere for staff wellbeing. However, beyond these e-learning courses, there's useful information at your fingertips for

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Family News

AND EVENTS

WRECK OF SHACKLETON'S SHIP FOUND OFF ANTARCTICA

The wreckage of polar explorer Ernest Shackleton's ship 'Endurance', which was crushed by Antarctic ice and sank some 3,000m to the ocean floor more than a century ago, has been found, a team searching for it has said.

The three-masted sailing ship was lost in November 1915 during Shackleton's failed attempt to make the first land crossing of Antarctica.

Previous attempts to locate the 144ft-long wooden wreck, whose location was logged by its captain Frank Worsley, had failed due to the hostile conditions of the ice-covered Weddell Sea under which it lies.

However, the Endurance22 mission, organised by the Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust and using advanced underwater vehicles called Sabertooths fitted with high-definition cameras and scanners, tracked the vessel's remains down.

Footage showed the ship in a remarkably good condition, with its name clearly visible on the stern.

PIG GRUNTS REVEAL THEIR EMOTIONS

Using thousands of acoustic recordings gathered throughout the lives of pigs, from their births to deaths, an international team of researchers is the first in the world to translate pig grunts into actual emotions across an extended number of conditions and life stages.

Is a pig grunt worth a thousand words? Perhaps so. In a new study, an international team of researchers from Denmark, Switzerland, France, Germany, Norway and the Czech Republic have translated pig grunts into emotions. The findings have been published in *Scientific Reports*.

Using more than 7000 audio recordings of pigs, the researchers designed an algorithm that can decode whether an individual pig is experiencing a positive emotion ('happy' or 'excited'), a negative one ('scared' or 'stressed') or somewhere in between.

The recordings were collected in a wide range of situations encountered by commercial pigs, both positive and negative, from when they are born until their deaths.

FITBIT RECALLS 1.7M SMARTWATCHES DUE TO BURN RISK

Fitbit has recalled 1.7 million of its Ionic smartwatches used for tracking steps and other activity due to the risk of batteries overheating and burning wearers.

The US Consumer Product Safety Commission said in a recall notice that it received slightly more than 100 reports of Ionic wearers being burned by the smartwatches.

A handful of those burns were reported to be second-degree or third-degree.

"Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled Ionic smartwatches," the commission urged.

About a million Ionic smartwatches have been sold in the US and another 693,000 or so outside the country, according to the notice.

Fitbit is offering refunds for the recalled smartwatches, which the company had manufactured in Taiwan but stopped producing in 2020.

Ukraine and Veronica's Veil

Laura Freeman who leads the World Community for Christian Meditation spoke recently about the sickening invasion of Ukraine.

He said: "It's a really dark time for the world and we have to approach it with as much faith and hope and love as possible. The way forward is going to be difficult and unclear, but day by day, moment by moment, if we keep returning to our heart, that feeling of nausea that accompanies irrationality – cruelty, dishonesty and destruction of good relations and of decent negotiation and decent conversation... can be transformed."

And then he posed a very challenging question asking: "What is the link between meditation and this kind of world event?"

Power of meditation

His question has challenged me to explore what can we say about our contemplative understanding of the power of meditation not merely in our own lives but on this broader stage. How can our practice of letting go, of sitting in silence, alone or as part of a group, open and vulnerable to love, how can that impact on such an awful situation? Thinking about it I recalled a talk from James Finley on his podcast 'Turning to the Mystics'. In a bonus episode for Holy Week 2020, he reflected on Veronica's Veil and I think it addresses this question very well.

The Stations of the Cross recall the passion of Christ over 14 stations. Each of these stations, bar one, draws on a scene described in the Gospels. The one exception is the sixth station, which is Veronica's Veil. It describes how Jesus is carrying the cross on the way to his crucifixion; the crowds are lining the streets, and Veronica is there, just one of the crowd. Some are laughing and jeering; others are there out of mere curiosity or because such executions were public events. Jesus' distraught disciples were surely there too and Veronica seems to have been one of them.

As she witnesses Jesus's suffering, she is moved by compassion to offer him solace so she steps out

Mindful living

Dr Noel Keating



of the crowd to wipe his brow, to wipe away the blood, sweat and tears from his face. She probably did so at considerable risk to herself, both from the Roman soldiers and from the baying crowd.

She offers Jesus the only thing she felt she could in that moment, which was her veil. Finley asks us to imagine that single moment when Jesus buries his face in the veil which she held up perhaps held in the open palms of her hand, as a parent might do with a child.

Finley writes: "There's this kind of primal moment where Jesus takes her veil, and he closes his eyes and lowers his face into her veil. And in that moment, the softness of her veil is the only solace he can find in a world turned harsh. At a deeper level, the solace he finds is her compassion for him... [Imagine, as might be shown in a movie in slow motion] that in the moment Jesus closes his eyes to lower his face into the veil, in closing his eyes and lowering his face, the world around him disappears. She disappears. Everyone disappears... [We can reflect] that in that moment, Jesus, without going anywhere, descends down into the deep, infinite, tender mercy of God, the Father, sustaining him in that moment."

I'm sure all of us can recall incidents when we were deeply touched to watch the compassionate action of another person. Seeing, for example, how caring the people of Poland, and elsewhere, have been to those fleeing Ukraine, now refugees. Ordinary, everyday people like ourselves were moved to respond, to offer transport, or accommodation, or both, to people who were fleeing the vicious,

inhuman, unprovoked attack. And I think so many watching scenes like that on television were moved by their compassion to do something themselves. Compassion, like love, is infectious.

And so James Finley writes that such a moment, as experienced by Jesus through Veronica's Veil, although it was a simple, single, limited gesture of compassion from her was nonetheless experienced by him as the solace of God the Father. And we can understand how this solace may have re-awakened Jesus to the sustaining depths of the oceanic, never-ending tender love of God. Indeed that simple gesture of compassion most likely touched all who witnessed it, awakening them too. And it can do likewise for all of us who reflect on it at a time like this in our own lives.

Compassion

And it is over in a moment as Jesus is forced to move on. If we weren't paying attention we might have missed it. The legend tells us that when Veronica recovered her senses she realised Jesus's face was imprinted on her veil. But Finley asks us to consider as a metaphor that the imprinted face is a symbol of her compassion, her face in the



world. He asks us to consider that every time we respond with compassion "it is your face and my face on the fabric of existence in troubled times", reminding us that we too are permeated by this solace and love that sustains us in the dramas of our lives, of our time. In other words, we can see the veil as a metaphor for the solace of faith in the midst of unresolved matters.

When you sit in meditation with the intention of grounding yourself in Love, your face, your

true-self is imprinted on the fabric of the circumstances in which you find yourself. Those circumstances may be filled with all kinds of suffering, the fabric of your life may be bloody and torn, but that same fabric is the fabric in which this encounter is incurring in the depths of our hearts.

I tell children that meditation makes them kinder; because in meditation we become deeply conscious – albeit at a level of consciousness deeper than ordinary self-consciousness – that despite the differences and division we can see on the surface, even when they hurt us deeply – we are nonetheless united at the deepest level of our being. At the level of the true-self, we are one.

And it isn't just that when we rise from our meditation we go out into the world a little more kindly. But just as importantly, as we sit in meditation with a trusting heart, we know at a very deep level that through the very act of meditation, the solace of the veil is mysteriously permeated throughout the whole world, touching people in ways that we can never understand intellectually.

We discover that meditation, indeed all prayer, is a ministry of compassion that interiorly touches minds and hearts around the world. And so our commitment to meditation, to opening ourselves to the compassionate love of God is itself an act of courage, an act of faith, bringing solidarity and compassion into the world.

After 40 years in the education sector Noel Keating was awarded a PhD for his research into the child's experience of meditation and its spiritual fruits. Noel now leads, in a voluntary capacity, a project which offers free in-service to primary schools who may wish to consider introducing meditation as a whole-school practice. Noel is author of Meditation with Children: A Resource for Teachers and Parents.

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learning more about grief in the workplace and how to deal with it.

Research

A 2018 survey conducted by Amarach on behalf of the IHF found that being treated with compassion by an employer was identified as the most important support for employees who are bereaved (75%). Meanwhile, found to be more important on the whole than “hard supports” like flexible working hours and extra leave entitlements were “soft supports”, like compassionate treatment and acknowledgement of the loss.

“It’s easy to see, then, how seriously bereavement support ought to be taken in the workplace”

More than half of the respondents said they’d feel less committed to their jobs if they weren’t appropriately supported following a bereavement, while inadequate support was also found to have implications for morale and absenteeism, with 46% inclined to take more sick days if they weren’t suitably supported, and 45% saying they’d feel disgruntled and talk to other employees about it.

Almost a third of respondents (32%) said they’d think about leaving their job in such a scenario, while almost a quarter of respondents (24%) said they would leave their job if not appropriately supported.

It’s easy to see, then, how seriously bereavement support ought to be taken in the workplace. Aside from the common-sense humanity of better treatment, it has practical ramifications for the workings of a given organisation.

How to support a colleague

As mentioned, the IHF has many useful resources online to be perused by those interested, including information about how grief affects people in the workplace and how better you might support them. Some of their suggestions are as follows:

- Acknowledge the person’s loss – even though you may feel uncomfortable and might not know exactly what to say, it’s better to acknowledge your colleague’s loss than to say nothing. Even more important than words are your concern and compassion.
- Follow the bereaved’s lead – even though you may think you know what they’re going through, let them be your guide. It’s better to check in first and allow them to tell you how they’re doing.
- Ask the bereaved person how best you can support them or be of assistance.
- Listen – it’s hard to know what you can really do for a person dealing with grief, but taking the time and making the space to listen to them really makes a difference.
- Practical help – ask your col-



league if there’s anything you can help them with, from sharing their workload, to childminding (if you’re close enough), to simply going out for a coffee together.

- Find out what other bereavement supports are available in your workplace or locally, and if the bereaved colleague asks about these, you can inform them of what’s available.

Behaviours to avoid:

- Avoiding the person who’s grieving and acting as though nothing has happened – something significant has happened, and it’s better to be open about it.
- Minimising the loss – minimising the death with casual or flippant remarks doesn’t help the bereaved. You don’t know the significance of the death for this person and it’s better not to assume.
- Making a fuss – most bereaved people want to be treated normally, rather than fussed over and made to stand out. It’s best for them to respect their wishes in this regard.
- Expecting them to ‘return to normal’ – people never really “go back to normal” after a death, because normal included the person who has died. It’s more realistic to adapt to their “new normal”.

Navigating grief in the workplace will always be a difficult task, no matter how much information or training you have. Still, brushing up is a way of showing you care. The IHF’s bereavement and loss hub is a helpful resource in this regard at www.hospicefoundation.ie, while their bereavement support line is available Monday to Friday, 10am-1pm at 1800 80 70 77.

Faith — IN THE — family



Christina Malone

This was supposed to be a happy family gathering. My granny turned 98 at the end of February. Like most years we travelled to Germany to visit her and celebrate another milestone in her life. I love what Pope Francis says about grandparents: “... because they have the strength and are of the age to carry history ahead; the former, because they are a living memory.”

I am trying to give my children the chance to create memories with their great granny.

My granny loves sharing stories from the olden days (my children even call my childhood the olden days). When you reach my granny’s age time is limited and I often heard myself saying in recent weeks I felt cheated by Covid because it took nearly two years away from me to create those memories with granny. However, 2022 was going to be different. The schools’ midterm break gave the great opportunity to travel and create those memories. It was a trip that none of us will ever forget.

When we landed in Germany, we stayed with my cousin for a night. The following day we hit the motorway. Four hours is normal for ‘us’ Germans. Thanks to the motorways it doesn’t feel that long. We got into the car, put on the seat belt, turned on the radio to sing and to be entertained: but there it was:

Russia invaded Ukraine. War in Europe.

Too late to turn it off. My children heard it. They did not understand what it meant but they knew by my reaction it wasn’t good.

Immediately I thought about my 98 old granny, who had already talked about Putin being as dangerous as Hitler, but this weekend was supposed to be to celebrate her life not to talk about war – again.

I grew up with the Americans stationed in the neighbouring village. I remember the days when the British soldiers left the camps in Osnabruck in 2008, I took part in the debate during the football world cup in Germany

2006, was it ok to raise the German flag? Can ‘we’ celebrate being Germans knowing the history we had? Now February 2022 the war is back and my granny is heartbroken. How can this be happening again? In Europe?

The conversations with my granny were difficult.

Her own memories of the Second World War came back.

She talked a lot about those years of war. Her brother-in-law that just disappeared when he cycled over to visit family members. They

never found out what happened. They presumed he was shot. All those uncertain times and the hard times after the war. Re-building towns, communities, families for years to come.

I was not able to keep this news away from the children and even my five-year-old cried, “mummy I don’t want war”. All I could do is to hold him. There were no words. At Mass that weekend the priest lit a peace light. Since then, every night we pray for those people of Ukraine. Every day I am thinking about those men that are fighting, those families sitting in bunkers, houses destroyed, lives lost. Before it gets too overwhelming to comprehend, I am thinking about my granny’s birthday and her words: yes, there is war, yes, there are people dying right now, but for a moment let us celebrate. Let us forget about the bad news and enjoy each other’s company. That’s what we did for a while before we went back into our houses and listened to the radio: four civilians were killed last night.

Back to reality. There is war in Europe. It can be overwhelming and it hurts to see those pictures. Everyone is wondering these days what can we do?

My two girls turned to their great-granny and asked her what kept her going, when she was upset and alone during the war. She looked at them and said: “Prayer.”

She added: It does not stop the war but it helps to get through it.

Encouraging others to go and preach the Gospel

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

Sr Stephanie O'Brien IBVM traces her vocation to her days as a schoolgirl in a Loreto school in Cavan. Two missionary sisters heading to India gave a talk to Sr Stephanie's class, saying that they were going to "sacrifice their life to save the world".

"This little 12-year-old wanted to do the same," Sr Stephanie tells me, recalling the day. "I thought it was a wonderful thing to do. Now, in the teenage years that followed I had different ideas and thoughts, but when it came to my final year in school, the idea of mission came back and there were 11 Loreto missionaries from Cavan in India at the time."

“One story that always stays with me is from just at the beginning of the time that we were having African sisters”

The idea of missionary work was always put before the girls, Sr Stephanie explains. While she liked all the normal things a teenager would like to do, for her, "there was something more, there was something growing in me".

"I joined Loreto really to be a missionary, and I wanted to go to India."



Sr Stephanie O'Brien (right) on mission in Africa.

Of course, when it came to the time to go on mission, I was sent to Africa. I'm very happy that did happen, because I had 44 wonderful years in East Africa," Sr Stephanie says.

"In my old age then, in my 60s I was sent on a mission to India for a couple of years part-time. So I did get my wish to go to India. It was wonderful, to experience the two different countries, India and Bangladesh, for a little while. I was very, very lucky that I got to experience those cultures and the richness that was there."

Sr Stephanie's time in Africa can be roughly broken into three periods, she says. When she first arrived, she spent her time teaching African history and religion.

"It was wonderful to teach in

that situation, where we had people of all faiths, Muslims, traditional African religions, as well as the different Christian churches. That was the first era if you like. I learned a lot during that time, from the culture and from the people. Rather than saving the world, I think Africa saved me," Sr Stephanie says.

"One story that always stays with me is from just at the beginning of the time that we were having African sisters. I used to go home with one of them, she was a good friend of mine and she brought me home frequently. Her mother didn't speak any Swahili or the tribal language.

"I was learning Swahili at the time, which is a kind of umbrella language. I said to my friend one time, tell your mother I'm so sorry that I can't speak

with her. And her answer I've never forgotten. 'Tell her [Sr Stephanie], she comes to my home, she eats my food. If that's not talking, what is?'"

After spending the 1970s and 80s teaching, Sr Stephanie's role changed to training young women who were joining the Loreto order. This involved a "very intense" spiritual formation programme. She worked full-time at that for 11 years, and a few more part-time. Then, in 2002, she started working in the area of spirituality, beginning with the Jesuits.

"At the time it was mostly priests and religious, and I began asking who does this for lay people," Sr Stephanie remembers. "I got an opportunity of building up something that had already started in lay faith development. That was the third kind of era in my experience in East Africa.

"It was wonderful, again working with people of different religions. We did retreat work, training people to do retreats in daily life, doing a bit of scripture, theology, spirituality. We had many, many groups of people. Prison chaplains, retreats for people on death row in the women's prison, teachers - a whole variety of people."

India

After her time in Africa, Sr Stephanie worked part-time in India helping with formation of young people joining the order there. Then, in 2015, she returned to Ireland, which she says was "a difficult transition".

"I had gone out when I was very young and the people I knew were all there. It was a difficult transition. You go out full of enthusiasm and you're young. When you come back, it's more difficult to get to know people and I've been very lucky really," Sr Stephanie says.

"I had health issues so that took over for a couple of years, but thank God after treatment I got going again. I think God hasn't finished with me yet."

I'm very lucky to be here in the diocese of Ferns, to be part of the diocesan pastoral council and involved with some training programmes for laity again.

"We're hoping to enable them to lead in different areas of Church ministry. The model of Church I experienced in Africa, the small Christian community, is very much in harmony with what Bishop Ger Nash has in mind for the diocese. It's really exciting, the possibilities and the beginnings that are being made here. I feel that there's a great enthusiasm, I have experienced great welcome from the priests I deal with."

“In Ireland, we can say people have gone away from God, but faith is strong”

Sr Stephanie believes that the Church in Ireland could draw on the example of the Church in Africa, as we engage in our own synodal process.

"We can learn from how the Church in Africa listens to the people and the experience in the basic Christian community, where people took responsibility for issues of justice, for catechesis in the community, for health issues, for welfare of the community, closely linked to the parish as the centre of that work," Sr Stephanie explains. "And also how they study the Scriptures and use them to reflect on life, the richness of the Scriptures to help people understand what was happening in their lives, and how important our experiences are."

"In Ireland, we can say people have gone away from God, but faith is strong. People may not be practising in the same way they did in the past... but I've seen nothing but good in people, and I have experienced faith. And where there's goodness, God is."

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

Sweet Treats

Kiley Britten



Irish whiskey trifle: perfect for St Patrick's Day

This trifle is perfect for St Patrick's Day as it is full of delicious custard, fruit, and of course, Irish whiskey! The beauty of this particular trifle is that you can make everything from scratch yourself if you have the time, or you can buy everything pre-made, skip to Step 3, and simply assemble, refrigerate and enjoy! Serves four.

Ingredients

For Sponge:

- 200g butter, softened
- 150g sugar
- 2 eggs
- 100g self-raising flour
- ½ tsp baking powder
- 1 tbsp milk

For Custard:

- 100ml double cream
- 350ml whole milk
- 2 egg yolks
- 1 ½ tsp. cornflour

- 75g sugar
- ½ tsp vanilla extract

For Assembly:

- 3 oz. sherry
- 2 oz. Irish whiskey
- Raspberry jam
- 150ml Whipping cream
- Raspberries to top

Instructions

1. Make the sponge first. Preheat the oven to 190°C and grease a round cake tin. Place the butter and sugar in a bowl and beat together until fluffy. Add in the eggs, flour, baking powder and milk. Beat the ingredients together until the batter is smooth. Spoon the batter into the cake tin and bake in the oven for 15-18 minutes (make sure to check the centre for done-ness!). Place on a rack to cool.
2. Next, make the custard. In a large saucepan, heat the double cream and the milk to just before boiling. While that is heating up, whisk together the



yolks, cornflour, sugar, and vanilla together in a heat-proof bowl. When the milk mixture has heated up, pour it over the yolk and sugar mix, whisking the entire time. Give the pan a rinse and quick dry, then place the custard mixture back into the pan and on the stove over a medium heat. Stir the mixture until it is thick, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside.

3. Finally, it is time to assemble. Cut the sponge into nice squares or fingers. Spread the jam over the sponge and place about half into the bottom of your trifle bowl. Pour over half the sherry and half the whiskey. Spread half of the custard on top of the jammy sponge. Repeat another layer of sponge, jam, alcohol, and custard. Whip the cream to your favourite consistency, then spoon over the trifle. It is best to leave the trifle in the fridge for at least an hour before topping with some raspberries and serving.



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



An historic address by Ukraine's President Zelenskyy

Very often TV series from the 80s don't date very well but a select few are as engaging and relevant as ever.

Yes, Prime Minister, currently on repeat (BBC Four, Wednesdays and Saturdays), is as fresh as ever – the political satire still bites sharply. Last week's episode 'The Bishop's Gambit' is one of the funniest. Very specific to the UK and its Church of England, Jim Hacker (Paul Eddington) the eager-to-please PM has to appoint a new bishop. He is torn between a genuinely religious candidate who has conservative social views, and a liberal who is probably an atheist but whose politics are left leaning and don't sit easily with the Government. The quips come thick and fast and I can imagine Anglican clergy and Christians more broadly saying 'ouch' as the barbs hit their target, but the barbs surely compete with the laughs.

Gems

There are so many quotable gems. At one stage the Permanent Secretary Sir Humphrey (Nigel Hawthorne) says: "Bishops tend to live long lives, apparently the Lord is not all that keen for them to join him." The PM suggests letting the Holy Spirit decide which candidate is deserving, but Humphrey is doubtful. Assistant Bernard (Derek Fowlds)



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

says: "No one is confident that the Holy Ghost would understand what makes a good Church of England bishop."

I'm not sure that many would agree with Sir Humphrey's claim that "Theology is a device for enabling agnostics to stay within the church!"

The PM's wife is a churchgoer and she has sound advice: "I'd prefer you to choose a man of God."

Hacker responds: "I was offered one of them. But he wants to turn the Church of England into a religious movement." The best joke I thought was Humphrey's reference to a candidate who had been waiting for very long to become a bishop: "Long time no See."

Real world

Back in the real world, the Ukraine war goes on relentlessly and painfully.

President Zelenskyy's address on Tuesday to the British House of Parliament had a historical sense to it – enhanced for me by the fact that I managed to watch it live. He captured the existential nature of the crisis by quoting Shakespeare – "to be or not to be". But he wasn't content just to reflect and raise rhetorical questions – he had a definite answer – "to be!"

Speaker Lindsay Hoyle was dignified and wished him well "Our prayers are with you". Ironically, as I watched this, the scrolling headlines at the bottom of the screen told of a report that found the previous speaker John Bercow, to be a serial bully. Bercow thought the process was unjust. He came out fighting and defended himself robustly on various outlets, including Sky News, and underwent a thorough grilling on **Iain Dale** (LBC, Tuesday). The story would have got a lot more traction and probably dominated the news and current affairs cycle if it hadn't been for the war in general and Zelenskyy's address in particular.

That afternoon on **Mariella Frostrup** (Times Radio, Tuesday) *Sunday Times* journalist Louise Callaghan gave a comprehensive report from Ukrainian city Odessa. She told a story about a Ukrainian who went into a church to pray, but

PICK OF THE WEEK

EURO EXPRESS

EWTN Monday March 21, 9.30pm and Wednesday March 23, 6am

A conversation with Ryan Christopher and Lois McLatchie of ADF International, a faith-based legal advocacy organisation that defends the sanctity of life, religious freedom, and marriage and family.

MASS

EWTN Friday March 25, 6pm

Solemn Mass of the Annunciation, live from Nazareth.

AMAZING GRACE

BBC Four Friday March 25, 10pm

Movie featuring Aretha Franklin recording the most successful gospel album of all time, *Amazing Grace*. Crafted from footage originally captured in 1972.

left his rifle at 'reception'. It is striking how many of the Ukrainians, including Zelenskyy, make religious references – their faith seems so important to them, as of course is their country. Combining love of country with love of faith can be touching and admirable, but a mix of religion and nationalism can be toxic too.

Sudan

Apart from Ukraine, Sudan is one of the most dangerous places and on **Newstalk Breakfast** (Wednesday) David Quinn spoke of retired nuns working in such conditions to educate the next generation. It was in the context of his sense that religious sisters were the last group of women that it was felt ok in Ireland to caricature and demonise.

He instanced some very offensive posters appearing recently. While not denying the abuses in the likes of Magdalen homes he felt the narrative 'completely obscured' the good work they had done for centuries. He wanted to redress the balance and give 'the positive side of the ledger'. Interviewer Ciara Kelly didn't seem very impartial to me. Instead of a question she declared that the influence of the Church was "largely negative on women". Later she accepted that the Church did "good works as perhaps well as bad work". Note "perhaps".

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Film

Aubrey Malone



The Power of the Dog tipped to dominate oscars

The Hollywood Academy likes to 'big up' a given film each year. People are saying Jane Campion's *The Power of the Dog* is going to sweep the boards this year.

Will Smith is expected to win best actor for *King Richard* but let's remember what happened to Chadwick Boseman last year. He was unbeatable and lost. Could Benedict Cumberbatch sneak up on the blind side for his performance in *The Power of the Dog*? It's unlikely.

Ms Campion is the runaway favourite to win best director for the film. She'll probably pick up an extra gong for co-writing the screenplay.

It will probably win best film as well if *Belfast* doesn't spring a surprise. Strangely enough, in past years the

best director and best film gongs haven't always gone to the same people. I've never understood this. How can a film be good if the director isn't responsible? Did it make itself?

Irish hopes hang with Kenneth Branagh to nab best director for *Belfast*. He's a rank outsider. Ciaran Hinds has been nominated as best supporting actor for the film. He's also a long shot.

Supporting actress

Ireland's third Oscar hope, Kerry's Jessie Buckley, is even less likely to win best supporting actress for *The Lost Daughter*. I love Ms Buckley but this was one of the most boring films I've ever seen. There's less to it than meets the eye.



Belfast would be a surprise Oscar winner.

Olivia Colman wanders around a Greek island for two hours looking demented. Did she harm her daughter? Does Ms Buckley remind her of her?

There was far too much angst in this for me. We're as wise at the end as at the beginning.

Ms Colman, bizarrely, has been nominated as best

actress for it. Her performance wore me out. Maybe that's not her fault. It's Maggie Gyllenhaal's. She directed the film. Maggie – stick to acting. Please.

Ms Colman is likely to lose to Jessica Chastain for her role as televangelist Tammy Faye Bakker in *The Eyes of Tammy Faye*. Or Nicole Kidman for *Being the Ricardos*.

Coincidental

Ms Buckley will probably lose to Ariana DeBose for *West Side Story*. Coincidentally, Rita Moreno won a best supporting actress Oscar for playing the same character (Anita) in the original film in 1961.

Here's a trivia question for you: Has this ever happened before? The answer is yes.

Bing Crosby won an Oscar for playing Fr Chuck O'Malley in *Going My Way* in 1944. He was nominated for playing the same character the following year in *The Bells of St. Mary's*.

Paul Newman was nominated for playing Eddie Felson in *The Hustler* in 1961. He won for playing Felson in Martin Scorsese's *Hustler* sequel *The Colour of Money* in 1986.

Marlon Brando won an Oscar for playing Don Corleone in *The Godfather* in 1972. Two years later Robert De Niro got a best supporting actor award for his role as the young Corleone in *The Godfather: Part II*.

That's what we love about the Oscars. They're a bit crazy. Hollywood.

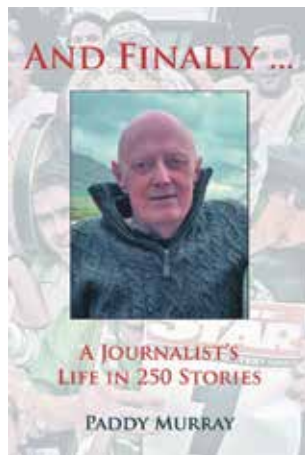


BookReviews

Peter Costello



The heroic life and fine words of a Dublin journo



'And Finally...': A Journalist's Life in 250 Stories
Paddy Murray
(Liffey Press, €14.95)

Seán Ryan

The late Paddy Murray (who died last month) spent 46 years at the coalface of Dublin journalism, producing from a rich vein of Irish life the golden ore of stories which earned him the 'Young Journalist of the Year' award in 1975 and 'Popular Columnist of the Year' in 2016, so he had plenty of material to draw on for this collection of pieces from the whole length of his career.

Written in a light, very readable style, Paddy's love of humour, music and sport also figure prominently, alongside plenty of big names he has met and interviewed along the way. In places too there are quite serious pieces. The result is a book which can be heartily recommended.

The product of devout daily Mass-going parents, Tom and Maureen, and with an older brother, Donal, who is a former Bishop of Limerick, it is no surprise that stories of Catholicism pervade the book, which he says was "inspired by the courage of Fr Tony Coote." Fr Tony's battle was against motor neuron disease, while Paddy's was against lymphoma.

Habit

In a very honest account of his life, the author lays bare his habit for 'messing' at school and college, with an almost total lack of interest in studying. "By fifth year in Blackrock College, I must have been an utter nightmare," he confesses. "I disrupted classes. I was always in trouble."

"Seamus Grace was our English teacher, a gentle kind of man. We knew he had spent some years working

with the Legion of Mary abroad. A devout man. He loved English – and chess. And he passed on his love for those subjects to his students.

"One day he gave us an essay to be written over the weekend. The title was *The Agony of Waiting* and I took to the task with gusto, writing about how the Manchester United players behaved as they waited to take to the pitch for the 1968 European Cup final at Wembley. I was liberal with my use of language. I didn't quite stretch to the 'f' word, but I didn't stop far short.

Essays

"When Mr Grace came into the classroom the day after we had handed up our essays, he threw mine down in front of me and said: 'Read that out loud.' I was shocked. I thought this would go beyond suspension and I might be expelled. And there were a few gasps at the colourful language. And utter silence when I finished. And then Mr Grace said: 'That, gentlemen, is how to write an essay.'

"I was so astonished that, at least in that one class, I changed my behaviour. It started me on the course which saw me get honours in English in the Leaving Cert," he writes.

Years later it dawned on Paddy that "the essay wasn't that good at all, but Seamus Grace saw a little rebel, a teenager who was on the verge of destroying his life, and thought that, maybe, a little praise instead of punishment might go a long way."

A saving grace, surely, which led to Paddy making a successful career from essay-writing. Many of his best are included here, including a sterling defence of his brother, Bishop Donal who, after a particularly nasty campaign by some journalists, resigned following the Murphy Report.

"A good man has been vilified," he wrote. "A man whose heart is filled with compassion, who has devoted his life to God and to those less fortunate than himself, who has, by his own admission, occasionally failed, has been scapegoated by those who should and do know better."

He wrote that in the *Sunday World*, which received hundreds of emails in response. All but three supported Donal.

The Irish who made it across the Atlantic

Irish lives in America
Edited by Liz Evers and Níav Gallagher
(Royal Irish Academy, €19.95/£18/\$25)

Felix M. Larkin

On this day every year Irish thoughts turn without fail to our relatives and friends in the United States. In reciprocation, President Joe Biden has this year issued a special proclamation from the White House declaring March 2022 as Irish-American heritage month. This compact book explores that heritage.

“The book may possibly be intended to boost Irish-American identity”

The book gathers together entries from the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* for some 50 Irish-Americans, all of them first-generation immigrants. Eighteen are women. The earliest subject is James Logan, public servant and scientist in pre-independence America, born in Co. Armagh in 1674; the latest is actress Maureen O'Hara – born in Dublin in 1920, died in 2015 and buried in the fabled Arlington National Cemetery outside Washington, D.C.

Published

All the entries, except two, have been previously published and – like every other entry in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* – are available to read for free on the website of the Royal Irish Academy, the pub-

lisher of this book. In these circumstances, the *raison d'être* of the book is not immediately obvious.

The book may possibly be intended to boost Irish-American identity, not now as strong as it once was. The fact that the present Irish ambassador to the United States, Daniel Mulhall, has contributed a foreword to it seems to confirm that. If so, the book is a very incomplete survey of Irish-American lives – no JFK, no Grace Kelly and no other Irish-American of the second or subsequent generations. The rule for inclusion in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* is that one must have been born in Ireland and/or had a career in Ireland. The fact that this book is derived from the dictionary limits its scope.

Foreword

As Ambassador Mulhall points out in his foreword, the outstanding Irish-American in the book is Thomas Francis Meagher – memorialised as 'Meagher of the Sword'. He notes that Meagher was "an important figure on both sides of the Atlantic".

Another important figure on both sides of the Atlantic was Meagher's contemporary and fellow Young Irelander, John Mitchel. Mitchel is not, however, included. Have we disowned him because he defended slavery and supported the Confederacy during the American Civil War? Has the Royal Irish Academy succumbed to the 'cancel culture' phenomenon?

Another discreet omission is 'Boss' Croker of Tammany Hall, born in Co. Cork in 1841. He is also someone



New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan poses for a photo prior to celebrating the St Patrick's Day Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral in New York City in 2021. Photo: CNS

we are loath to claim as an archetypal Irish-American.

Omission

A surprising omission is John Hughes, born in Co. Tyrone and the first Archbishop of New York, who founded St Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue (one of the greatest churches in Christendom, and my favourite) and who, in addition, was

sent by President Abraham Lincoln as an envoy to Paris and Rome during the American Civil War to promote the Union cause. There are, in fact, only two Catholic religious personages in the book: Fr Patrick Payton, the 'Rosary priest'; and Sr Anthony (née Mary O'Connell, from Co. Limerick), known as 'the Florence Nightingale of America' for her work in

“The book gathers together entries from the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* for some 50 Irish-Americans, all of them first-generation immigrants”

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.



field hospitals during the Civil War.

“The earliest subject is James Logan, public servant and scientist in pre-independence America”

Most of those that one would expect to find in this book are, of course, in it. Examples are: James Hoban, architect of the White House; journalists Mathew Carey and John Boyle O'Reilly; Annie Moore, the first immigrant to land on Ellis Island; 'Mother' Jones, labour activist; Maeve Bren-

nan, writer and columnist with *The New Yorker*; and tenor John McCormack, who annoyed some of his fans by becoming a naturalised American citizen in 1919.

Obscure

Of the more obscure people featured in the book, perhaps the most intriguing is Margaret Maher who worked as a domestic servant for the wealthy but eccentric Dickinson family in Amherst, Massachusetts, and is credited with preserving the poems of the eldest daughter of the family, Emily Dickinson, after her death in 1886. Maher refused to burn them as Emily had instructed.

Curiously, two of the women who appear in the book were included in a set of stamps issued by An Post in 2020 honouring 'pioneering Irish women'. One was Maureen O'Hara; the other was Carmel Snow, a native of Dalkey, Co. Dublin, and editor of *Harper's Bazaar* in New York from 1935 to 1957. Her entry records "her love of a three-martini lunch", illustrating how fully she had embraced the mores of her adopted country.

One imagines that this book will provide our Government ministers with an agreeable gift for presentation to local dignitaries in the scattered US cities they visit for St Patrick's Day celebrations this year.

Creation caught on the wing

Young Gainsborough: Rediscovered Landscape Drawings
Curated by Ann Hodge
Runs to 12 June 2022; Print Gallery, National Gallery of Ireland | free admission
(This exhibition has been organised in collaboration with the Royal Collection Trust, the York Museums Trust, the National Gallery of Ireland and Nottingham Castle.)

Peter Costello

Thomas Gainsborough was hugely productive of drawings, so it might be thought that the items in this show are hardly remarkable. But these twenty five items from his earlier years come with a fascinating back story.

In 1873 Queen Victoria acquired the drawings from the dispersal of the collection of Sir Edward Landseer, famous for his animal pictures and sculptures who had been a great favourite and friend of the queen and the late prince consort. These creations were then thought to be by Landseer himself, and his name was stamped on the cover made for them.

But more recently an astute piece of detective work in 2017, by art historian Lindsay Stainton (previously assistant keeper of prints and drawings at the British Museum) identified one of the drawings as a preliminary study for Gainsborough's very celebrated landscape painting from his early 20s, *Cornard Wood* (c.1748), leading to the immediate reattribution of the set to Gainsborough.

The 20 drawings have now come to Dublin and they make an exhibition that should not be missed.

Portraits

For many people Gainsborough is known for his portraits. These were very literally his means to live. What he truly preferred was to draw and paint landscape - a painting such as *Mr and Mrs Andrews* seems in its stiffness



Cornard Wood, by Thomas Gainsborough.

an unhappy compromise for the artist.

Beyond man in nature as conceived by Rousseau, he was moreover absorbed (as were the later Romantics and Neo-Romantics in England) by the particularity of particular things.

“Any young person interested at all in art will be surprised and delighted by what is on display here”

A sentence by the painter John Piper read many years ago has long lodged in my memory: “Romantic art deals with the particulate. The particularisation of Bewick about a bird's wing, of Turner about a waterfall or a hill town, of Rossetti about Elizabeth Siddall, is the result of a vision that can see in these things something significant beyond the ordinary significance, when the moment seems to contain the whole world; and, when the moment is past carries over some comment on life or experience beside the comment on appearances.”

That seems to me a remark of great significance for many people. These drawings - especially those in the first room - reveal this. These trees might seem to

be idealised expressions of trees, but they are not, they are particular, singular trees.

Now these drawings being studies may seem 'unfinished', but in reality they aren't. The individual trees in the wooded landscape are all very carefully and quickly delineated. He manages to see both the woods and the trees.

They manage, I thought, in a remarkable way to capture the creativity of the artists pencil at work, to record creation on the wing. There is a lot to see in them.

Prominence

Cornard Wood which hangs in prominence on the back wall of the print room is a wonderful thing, and an amazing thing for so young an artist, and has long been admired. But these drawings too are admirable.

Any young person interested at all in art will be surprised and delighted by what is on display here. This is an exhibition, small and selected though it is, which provides lasting insights into the vision of the young Gainsborough. His delight in nature and drawing contrasts so sadly with the darker moments of his later life.

(Lindsay Stainton is the author of *Landscape into Art* (British Museum Press) and many other books on aspects of art history.)



Trees beside a path winding into the distance, Thomas Gainsborough.

Leisure time

The Gift Of A Lifetime

Be there for others after you're gone.

A gift in your will to Irish Hospice Foundation is a meaningful way to help ensure no-one faces death or bereavement without the care and support they need.

Email Anna Sadlier at anna.sadlier@hospicefoundation.ie or call 01 679 3188

www.hospicefoundation.ie





Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services



Your heart for the homeless

Merchants Quay Ireland reaches out with kindness to people living on our streets, sleeping in doorways, suffering and alone.

Your legacy, of any amount, can enfold the most vulnerable and lonely in wrap-around supports. You may wish to keep the details confidential. But we want to give you this little wooden keepsake, made by a client, for you.

This is your heart for the homeless and those on the road to recovery.

To receive your little wooden heart and information on remembering

Merchants Quay Ireland in your will, ring Emma Murphy, Legacies Manager at 01-524 0965 or email emma.murphy@mqi.ie

Please pray for the beatification of

Little Nellie of Holy God

“May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls proposing Nellie as their model”

– Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

Will the MSC Missions

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart bring hope to the poorest people living in over 48 countries worldwide.

Please help us with a gift in your Will

Contact:
MSC Missions Office, PO Box 23 Western Road, Cork.
Tel: 021-4545704 Email: info@mscmisions.ie


www.mscmissions.ie

When you remember Trócaire in your Will, you bring hope to people living in the world's poorest places

It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call Grace Kelly on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives.

Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.



Crossword Junior

Gordius 424



Across

1 Farming (11)
7 Truthfulness (7)
9 Take careful ____ if you want to hit the target (3)
11 A firefighter will point this at a fire to put it out (4)
12 This sign of the Zodiac is sometimes called the Lion (3)
14 You might spread it on your bread (3)
15 Walking lamely (7)
18 Place in a desert where there's water (5)
19 Cuts with an axe (5)
20 Seem (6)
21 You may get a puncture in this (4)
22 A set-up of trains and tracks (7)

Down

1 Large island off the coast of Mayo (6)
2 Kidnappers want it to be paid (6)
3 Money (4)
4 Creates an egg (4)
5 The initials of a country across the Atlantic (11)
6 Large type of tree (3)
8 It's bigger than a village and smaller than a city (4)
10 Not real; made-up (9)
13 What you get when you add forty and forty (6)
16 You might put salt and ____ on your dinner (6)
17 It was written by Matthew, Mark, Luke or John (6)

SOLUTIONS, MARCH 10

GORDIUS NO. 549

Across – 1 Fed 3 Snow leopard 8 Rescue 9 Lyricist 10 In-off 11 Mirth 13 Cubit 15 Notable 16 Obadiah 20 Cuffs 21 Slums 23 Frown 24 Rhetoric 25 Uffizi 26 Trustworthy 27 Gag

Down – 1 Forgiveness 2 Discount 3 Smurf 4 Wallaby 5 Opium 6 Apiary 7 Dot 12 High-ranking officer 13 Colic 14 Tubes 17 Ignoring 19 Bureau 22. Stout 23 Fifty 24 Rat

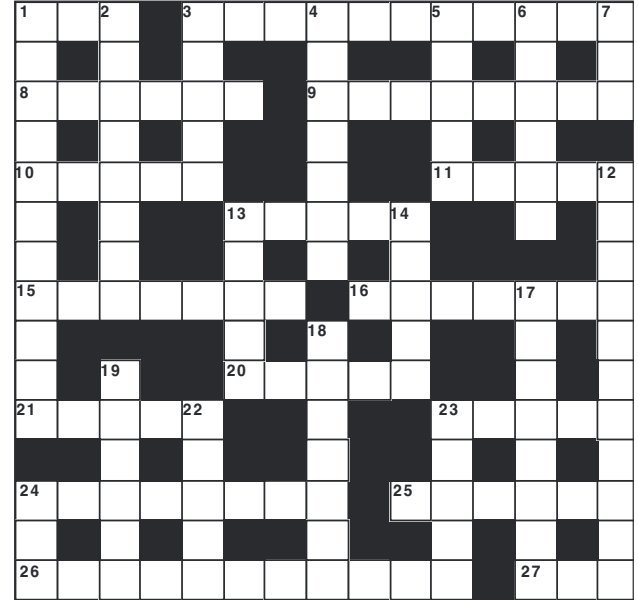
CHILDREN'S No. 423

Across – 1 Magic beans 6 Carpenter 8 Egg 9 Airmail 10 Son 12 Cry 14 Ogre 15 Jeer 16 Fawn 17 Ending 18 Fresh

Down – 1 Microscope 2 German 3 Cherry 4 Entrance 5 Eighteenth 7 Relay race 11 Begin 13 Ref 15 Jog

Crossword

Gordius 550



Across

1 Nickname of US political figure Dwight Eisenhower (3)
3 Chemical element named for The USA's Golden State (11)
8 Ten years (6)
9 Shortly before the Angelus, does it equate to odds of five to three? (3,2,3)
10 & 12d One might transact spiky aid for Ireland's national holiday (5,8,3)
11 Tidy up with a brush (5)
13 Brittle stone used by Primitive Man to make fire (5)
15 Indemnified different ruins, Ed? (7)
16 Satan's angelic name (7)
20 Injury caused by electricity (5)
21 Egyptian president assassinated in 1981 (5)
23 Fracture (5)
24 Fig diets transformed a drink after dinner (8)
25 Nut used to make marzipan (6)
26 Single-humped camels

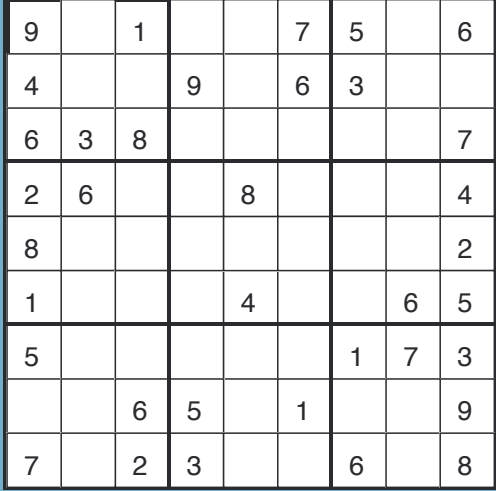
Down

11 Hardworking (11)
2 Works of art created by cutting with acid (8)
3 Trainee officer (5)
4 Antiphon sung as the priest approaches the altar (7)
5 Commercial local tax (5)
6 Published - when one is taken to court? (6)
7 Blend ingredients together (3)
12 See 10 across
13 Runs away (5)
14 Part of a tree belong to an elephant? (5)
17 Morning (8)
18 This could be nice for an evergreen tree (7)
19 In part of Canada, Giovanni gives musical instruction (6)
22 Sample for flavour (5)
23 Invoices (5)
24 He's one's father, whatever view you have on him (3)

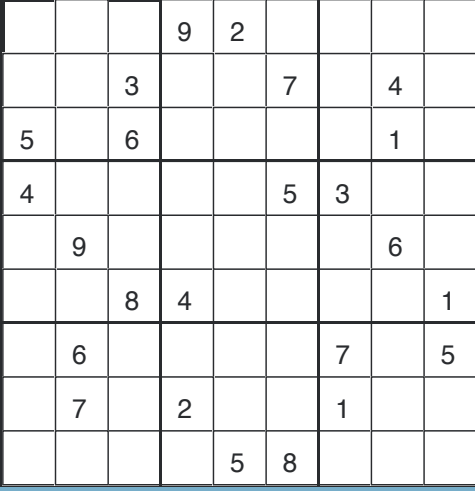
Sudoku Corner

424

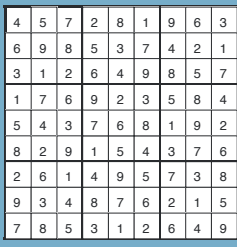
Easy



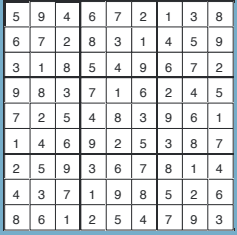
Hard



Last week's Easy 423



Last week's Hard 423



Notebook**Fr Conor McDonough**

‘Crown them with honour and glory’

AMONG THE MANY photos from Ukraine to have had major global impact in recent days was one set of wedding photos. On March 6, Lesya Ivashchenko and Valeriy Filimonov were married outdoors on the outskirts of Kyiv. The bride held a bouquet and wore a veil, but there was no white dress: both Lesya and Valeriy are civilian volunteers in the Ukrainian Armed Forces, and they were wearing combat fatigues.

One of the photos of the wedding was widely misunderstood by Western media. It showed a helmet being held above the head of the bride. Some media outlets captioned this with the ‘explanation’ – entirely invented – that the helmet was being held up to protect the bride’s veil. In fact, this was something far more significant.

Wedding

In many Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic weddings, the couple are often crowned with real crowns. And as they’re placed on their heads the priest speaks words drawn from Psalm 8: “O Lord, our God, crown them with glory and honour”. The couple marrying in combat fatigues couldn’t get crowns, of course, so they used helmets instead.



This practice has deep roots in the sacrament of Baptism. In that Sacrament the newly Baptised child is anointed, as biblical kings were, with the oil of chrism, all of which

signifies the royal dignity of the baptised child.

No matter their background, social circumstances, or achievements, each of the baptised shares

in Christ’s kingship, each is called to live as a king, a queen. Does this mean lording it over others? Absolutely not. It’s a matter of living in freedom and with dignity. The opposite of a king is a slave, and those who live in Christ are called to abandon the slavery of sin and fear. Because Christ has conquered death, we have nothing to fear, and that fearless confidence is an expression of our royal dignity in Christ.

Identity

When a baptised couple is married, they choose to live out this royal identity in a lifelong covenant, so that their home, where they rule, becomes a place of freedom and dig-

nity, a place where the kingship of God is honoured, and where children and guests are welcomed with kindly hospitality.

This is the calling of all who are married in Christ, whether they live in free and open societies, or in totalitarian regimes. With great effort and the help of God, it is possible for Christian homes to be oases of peace in violent societies, refuges of cheer and good humour in joyless societies, and havens of justice in societies where injustice dominates.

This is why I was so moved to see the photos of Lesya and Valeriy being crowned, even as columns of Russian military vehicles were slowly progressing to Kyiv. Putin will eventually lose the crown of political power, but there are other crowns, crowns of glory and honour, which endure into eternity.

A silent unity of hands

The great Orthodox theologian, Alexander Schmemmann, spoke beautifully about the significance of the crowning of a married couple: “Behind [the window of each home] there is a little world going on... This is what the marriage crowns express: that here is the beginning of a small kingdom which can be something like the true Kingdom. The chance will be lost, perhaps even in one night; but at this moment it is still an open possibility. Yet even when it has been lost, and lost again a thousand times, still if two people stay together, they are in a real sense king and queen to each other. And after 40 odd years, Adam can still turn and see Eve standing beside him, in a unity with himself

which in some small way at least proclaims the love of God’s Kingdom. In movies and magazines the ‘icon’ of marriage is always a youthful couple. But once, in the light and warmth of an autumn afternoon, I saw on the bench of a public square, in a poor Parisian suburb, an old and poor couple. They were sitting hand in hand, in silence, enjoying the pale light, the last warmth of the season. In silence: all words had been said, all passion exhausted, all storms at peace. The whole life was behind—yet all of it was now present, in this silence, in this light, in this warmth, in this silent unity of hands. Present—and ready for eternity, ripe for joy. This to me remains the vision of marriage.”



Little Way Sisters providing refugees with food, medicines and accommodation, and bringing them the love, care and compassion of Christ.



PLEASE HELP TYPHOON VICTIMS IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Montfort Missionaries have written to The Little Way Association appealing for urgent help for the victims of typhoon Odette which hit the Philippines in December 2021.

The Fathers have been sheltering homeless victims, and urgently need funds to continue feeding the homeless families, to repair the community’s own properties and to build the people new houses.

Fr Norwyn Baydo SMM writes: “The typhoon made landfall in different provinces. Our community in Minglanilla have opened their house to twenty families, though our own building was itself damaged by the typhoon. On Kinatarran island, our house was used as an evacuation site for 10 families. The community members are all safe and are serving the people in providing shelter and for their needs.

“I’m asking on behalf of the victims for financial help to support our relief operation and also for the rebuilding of their houses. Please help us to continue our relief work. God bless you.”

Funds sent to The Little Way Association for the homeless are conveyed to religious such as the Montfort Missionaries without deduction of any kind. Please be generous and particularly remember the families with small children.

Typhoon Odette left families in the Philippines homeless and destitute. You can enable missionaries to help rebuild the victims’ lives.



“It is love alone that matters.”
- St Therese

MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS

The Little Way Association regularly receives appeals from bishops and religious superiors on the Missions for Mass stipends and intentions for their poor priests. Such payments help them to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Also, the poor and deprived people, whom the clergy serve so faithfully, often turn to their priests for assistance. Thus, your stipends are gratefully received and your intentions are faithfully honoured at Holy Mass.

We like to send a minimum of €5 or more for each Mass. Our benefactors will be glad to know that a Mass is offered each day for their intentions.

WELLS NEEDED

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

Can you help provide a well?

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466
www.littlewayassociation.com

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

€..... **PHILIPPINES TYPHOON APPEAL**
€..... **HUNGRY, SICK & DEPRIVED**
€..... **WELLS AND CLEAN WATER**
€..... **MASS OFFERINGS**
(Please state no. of Masses _____)
€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

To donate online go to
www.littlewayassociation.com

**DONATIONS FOR THE
MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT
DEDUCTION FOR ANY
EXPENSES.**