

The Irish Catholic

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'Wake-up call' as 19% of Mass-going Catholics unsure if they'll ever return

EXCLUSIVE
Chai Brady

New research which reveals that one in five previously Mass-going Catholics may not return after the pandemic has been described as a "wake-up call".

While just four percent of people surveyed said they had no intention of returning to Mass, a further 19% of people who went to Mass regularly before restrictions indicated that they didn't know if they would ever return to Mass. Thirty six percent – more than a third – said they had already returned to attending Mass regularly.

The details are revealed in new research carried out by Amárach on behalf of The Iona Institute.

Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey told *The Irish Catholic* that "there is a concern about where we will find ourselves when – please God – things get back to normal.

"Some people might have slipped out of the habit – that means we're going to have to work all the harder to reach out to people and invite them back... The virtual liturgies were to get us over a crisis, but that can never be the norm. We have to gather

together," Bishop Dempsey said.

Fr Eamonn Conway, Professor of Theology at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick said the survey "shows that there is a felt need for community and that online liturgies are no substitute, with only 6% of those not currently attending Mass saying they are happy enough to watch Mass online instead".

However, he said that the fact that one-in-five people said they were unsure whether or not they would return to Mass is a "wake-up call" for parishes.

"We have taken for granted a lot of people who go to Mass out of habit rather than out of conviction...I think we have to step back and look at the bigger picture and ask ourselves how do we build community in a way that connects liturgy with the reality of everyday lives?"

Opportunity

Fr Conway said that there is an opportunity to see the celebration of the Mass for people as a "lived community experience, not an isolated moment in their week. People are going to consider where Mass fits into their life, and it has the potential to move people from going out of

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New band of Brothers get in the habit



New Dominican novices Bro. Philip and Bro. Desmond at back and Bro. Seán and Bro. Michael at the front received their habits in St Mary's Dominican Church, Co. Cork.

MARY KENNY

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EXTREME POVERTY
WHATEVER
IT TAKES



Michael Kelly's Editor's Comment will return in the autumn

Top Covid TD questions whether Church lockdown is legal

Jason Osborne

Independent TD Michael McNamara has raised questions concerning the legality of church lockdowns in the event of a public health emergency.

Taking note of a disparity between the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights, Mr McNamara has pointed out that “there is clearly a legal issue” about locking down on the basis of public health.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Mr McNamara – who is chairman of the Oireachtas committee on coronavirus said: “In short, the Irish Constitution, on its literal interpretation, provides very broad guarantees regarding freedom of worship, and that it can be limited only on the basis of public moral-

ity and public order. It doesn't provide for limitations on the basis of public health, unlike, for example, the European Convention on Human Rights, which provides obviously for freedom of religion as well, but provides that it can be limited on the basis of public health, public order, or public morality.”

Limitation

“Given that the European Convention provides three bases – public order, public morality and public health – one would have to assume that they're three different bases for limitation,” he said.

“If public order and public health have two different meanings in the Convention, then it's difficult to see how they could be conflated for the purposes of the Constitution. It's like they'd be assigned the same meaning,”

Mr McNamara said.

Understanding this, he acknowledges that there are clear legal questions to be asked in the event of a church lockdown on the basis of public health.

“On the plain meaning of it, there's clearly an issue with limiting worship on the basis of public health. In fairness, there's been a huge inconsistency in the regulations.”

Admitting that there's no anticipating how the courts would approach such a case, he said, “There would be very clearly a question mark over the legality or lawfulness of any restrictions on freedom of worship in Ireland based on Covid-19, and in particular, draconian restrictions. There would clearly have to be a legal question mark over them...there is clearly a legal issue.”



Patti O'Donoghue and family, including Fr Mick Cullen and Fr Paul Dunne, are pictured following the presentation of the Benemerenti Medal to Patti in recognition of her music ministry over many years in Our Lady Mother of Divine Grace church, Raheny parish, Dublin.

Principals' group welcome primary schools ending 'sibling-first' policy

Chai Brady

The Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) have said that while they support siblings attending the same school, the objective should be getting children into school “at an appropriate age”.

This comes as Catholic primary schools in the greater Dublin area are being told by the Archdiocese of Dublin to stop giving priority enrolment to siblings of pupils currently attending the school. Each school will have to update their admissions policy and have it approved by the archdiocese.

IPPN's CEO Páirc Clerking told *The Irish Catholic*: “We would support the concept of siblings attending the same school but the objective of the school admissions policy is to get all children to school at an appropriate age and ensure that they can all attend a school as close to home as possible.”

'Fair means'

Oversubscribed schools must have a “fair means” to choose pupils, he said, “so the older children are offered first and the younger children are asked to wait until the next year.”

“I would certainly be supportive of siblings and residents of the parish being on an equal footing. It wouldn't be fair if a sibling who's just barely turned four on September 1 got a place in front of a child who's living across the road from the school and is five and a half, that wouldn't be fair.”

A spokeswoman for the archdiocese said: “The diocesan policy on schools' admissions has been the same for many years and has not changed – children of the area and siblings are both in category one for admission.”

“I understand a small number of schools are updating their policies to reflect this and are in contact with our education office regarding same.”

'Wake up' call for Church

» Continued from Page 1

unquestioning habit to a place where they go out of conviction.

“It has also forced us to confront the questions of ultimate meaning that so often we suppress but that are never too far beneath the surface. For many people getting ‘back to Mass’ will come at the end of a journey in faith, not at the beginning”.

He said that “the priority is to accompany people in prayer and in discernment as they come to accept that life of its nature is fragile – and therefore precious – and can only be lived fully when we accept our creatureliness and are humble enough to permit ourselves to be sustained by the joy of God's love”.

Fr Conway said that “building community” is key in renewing the Church. “The Covid-19 crisis has exposed the illusion that we are autonomous human beings. It has forced us to realise, for better and worse, that we are all interconnected and interdependent,” he said.

Bishop Dempsey said parishes need to underline the importance of being together. “We're social beings, and the second word for Church is community – that is something we need to work on because we are made to celebrate together.”

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Shamrock Rovers player prays to St Anthony before AC Milan match

Chai Brady

Former Ireland international and current Shamrock Rovers footballer Joey O'Brien has said he will be saying a few prayers at a Dublin church before his team take on AC Milan this evening, Thursday.

Mr O'Brien said he customarily prays to St Anthony and did so over the weekend before the match in Tallaght Stadium in the Europa League.

"St Anthony is the patron saint of lost causes, but I don't think we are a lost cause in this case," Mr O'Brien told *The Times*. "It's a two-horse race, so we have a chance."

Altar

He also told a story about his time as a West Ham player in November 2012 when he found himself looking for a Catholic church in Newcastle on a Sunday.

"I found the nearest one to the team hotel using Google maps and got to Mass a bit early. I stood out like a sore thumb in my West Ham tracksuit and the priest

came down and said hello and then during the Mass he made a joke about it from the altar which everybody enjoyed," he said.

The footballer's debut for Ireland ended in a 3-0 win against Sweden in March 2006.

He has previously spoken about the importance of his Faith. After a knee injury threatened to end his career he said God helped him through that difficult time and that underpinned his recovery.

"It's a massive part of my life. I was brought up with it and I go to Mass every week," he said.

"I prayed, obviously, that He would save my career, but it was always to have the strength that even if it didn't work out, I'd always know that I'd have my faith to fall back on in life.

"It helped me in the tough times I was going through and if football ended, it was still always going to be there to help me through the rest of my life."



IC appoints two new multimedia journalists



Ruadhán Jones.



Jason Osborne.

The Irish Catholic is delighted to announce the appointment of two new journalists. Ruadhán Jones and Jason Osborne have joined the editorial department as Multimedia Journalists working across the newspaper's print, digital, video and audio output.

Mr Jones is a native of Cork and holds a bachelor's degree in film and screen media and English from University College Cork.

He recently completed a masters in journalism at TU Dublin. Mr Jones comes from a family of seven, in which his love of the Catholic Faith was instilled through regular Rosaries and Masses.

Having initially pursued a career in sport following his

studies he began writing for sports publications.

Following his masters, he began contributing regularly to the Catholic media, including *The Irish Catholic* and Radio Maria's *Breakfast Show*.

Mr Osborne – who is also 24 – and a native of Dublin holds a bachelor's degree in English and philosophy from University College Dublin.

Having returned to Faith during his college years, he undertook two years of mission with Catholic charity Pure in Heart, which saw him writing blogs, contributing to Radio Maria, and speaking in schools, before joining the team at *The Irish Catholic*.

New rules would ban Mass at level three

Ruadhán Jones

The Government's six-month Covid-19 plan, announced on Tuesday, proposes bans on all religious services except funerals and weddings for level three warnings upward.

The country is currently at a level two warning, the maximum being five, which means religious

services can take place with up to 50 people attending.

The plan recognises the need to maintain "some level of access" to religious services as part of a response to the mental strain many are experiencing.

For levels one and two, religious services will continue in their present form, while for level three upwards, services will

have to move online while places of worship will remain open.

Certain 'life events', including weddings and funerals, will be given the greatest priority when other social events are restricted.

For levels three and four, 25 mourners will be allowed to attend funerals, dropping down to 10 for level five.



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Chaplain makes scathing report about women’s prison

Chai Brady

Female inmates in Ireland’s largest women’s prison, the Dóchas Centre in Dublin, are subjected to xenophobic and threatening abuse and suffer chronic overcrowding according to a chaplain’s report.

The 2018 report, seen by the *Irish Examiner*, was scathing of the conditions inmates face.

It alleges there is overcrowding, with between 130 and 150 inmates being regularly detained in a facility designed for 105.

Complaints were made to the chaplain from women about verbal abuse, xenophobic remarks, threatening language, and pointed “exclusion/favouritism of others”. It stated it was next to impossible for the women inmates to book family visits, including with their children and there was inadequate provision of clothing for women who do not own their own clothes

Culture

The report states that it is essential that a culture is fostered within the prison community whereby a vulnerable voice can be heard.

“The women are here as punishment; they are not here to be punished, and it is crucial that this awareness be at the forefront of our work, lest we leave prisoners further traumatised than when they arrived,” it states.

President welcomes El Salvador conviction

Staff reporter

President Michael D. Higgins has welcomed a decision by a court in Spain to sentence a former Salvadoran army colonel to 133 years in prison for the murder of five Spanish Jesuit priests in the Latin American country in 1989.

Inocente Orlando Montano, 77, was found guilty of “terrorist murder”.

The killings happened during El Salvador’s civil war, when Catholic priests were often accused by the government of collaborating with left-wing paramilitaries.

The president recalled how he travelled to the country in 1982 with the overseas development agency of the Church in Ireland Tróciare. “I travelled with Ignacio Ellacuría, the Spanish-Salvadoran Jesuit priest, philosopher and theologian, throughout El Salvador, to hear from the victims of the State violence – including the relatives of the massacre of El Mozote by forces who had the support of the US government.

“The court’s verdict is an encouraging development for all those who support international law, universal jurisdiction and multilateral cooperation,” the president said.

Brutality

Mr Higgins (79) said “the verdict has done a great service not just to the people of El Salvador, but to the country’s judicial system as it continues to try to shine the light of justice on the violence and brutality that sought to desta-

bilise a fragile peace process.

“It was a great honour for me, in 2013, to visit the university where the murdered six men, their cook and her daughter lived and worked, and to pay tribute to them, their colleagues and those who worked to keep their memory alive.

“At the time, I stated that ‘the UCA Jesuits will be

remembered, not only for their tragic deaths, but also, and foremost, for their deeply felt and passionately argued philosophy which contributed so much to the development of new paradigms for Latin America’s poor,’” Mr Higgins said.

Wrongdoing

Col. Montano – who was

extradited from the US – had denied wrongdoing. However, the court found him responsible for eight murders.

But it could not convict him for the killings of three Salvadorans – the priests’ housekeeper and her teenage daughter, and a sixth Jesuit priest – because his extradition to Spain did not cover these cases.



Fr Damien Nejak, Letterkenny, practices for his Mount Errigal Rosary Climb on September 27 to fundraise for Youth Ministry at St Eunan’s Cathedral, Letterkenny.

Fresh clerical changes

Armagh, Derry and Waterford & Lismore have become the latest dioceses to announce the annual clerical changes.

In Armagh, Frs Michael Crawley, Fergus Breslan, and Peter Kerr are to retire. Fr Eamonn McCamley returns from leave to be available for supply cover.

Dean Kevin Donaghy is to be adm. Moy and adm. Eglis since Fr John Connolly is to take sabbatical leave.

Fr Emlyb McGinn becomes PP Mullaghbawn while Fr Aidan Murphy moves to St Peter’s Deogheda.

Fr Seán McCartan, currently with the defence forces, becomes priest-in residence, Collon, assisting in the Parish of Ardee and Collon.

Fr John Connolly of Moy (Clonfeacle) and adm., Eglis, is to take sabbatical leave.

Fr Cathal Deveney, adm. of Aghaloo, to be PP, Aghaloo while Fr John McKeever, adm. of Keady & Derrynoose, to be PP, Keady & Derrynoose.

Fr Brian White, AP, Keady & Derrynoose, is to be curate, Dungannon while Fr Magnus Ogbonna moved from Dundalk to be PP, Carlingford & Omeath.

Fr Michael Darko is to be curate of St Patrick’s, Dundalk while Fr Aidan McCann will move to be curate of Keady & Derrynoose with Fr Brian Slater going to Cookstown as curate. Fr Emmanuel Fasakin, is to be curate of Cathedral Parish, Armagh.

Meanwhile, in Derry Fr Edward Gallagher PP of Greencastle is also to be PP of Badoney Lower and Fr John Forbes will remain as priest-in-residence.

Fr Ciaran Hegarty, CC of Urney and Castlefin is to be administrator of the same parish while Fr Daniel McFaul will continue as CC in Cregan, but also take on the role of chaplain to Altnagelvin Hospital.

Frs Art O’Reilly and Patrick McGoldrick are to retire.

In Waterford and Lismore, Fr John Tracey is to become PP in Clonmen where Fr Brendan Crowley is retiring. Fr Michael Toomey is the new administrator of Ardfinnan, Ballybacon and Grange, and will also be administrator of the neighbouring parish of Newcastle and Fourmilewater.

Fr Garrett Desmond is moving to the neighbouring parish of Touraneena and the Nire.

Fr Tom Rogers is to be appointed as parish priest of St. John’s Parish and administrator of Ballybricken Parish.

Frs Paul Murphy, Michael Mullins, and Gerry O’Connor are to retire.



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TDs blast ‘ill-conceived’ and ‘manipulative’ assisted suicide bill

Ruadhán Jones

A number TDs have said proposers of the ‘Dying with Dignity Bill’ are “profoundly unaware of the overwhelmingly negative impact” of euthanasia laws.

The bill, proposed by People Before Profit TD Gino Kenny, seeks to legalise the practice of assisted suicide in Ireland. Independent TD Carol told *The Irish Catholic* that the bill is “manipulative” and provides no meaningful protections for the terminally ill.

“It is not evidenced-based and it is most certainly contrary to best practice within modern palliative care,” she said. “At worst the bill is a manipulative attempt to introduce euthanasia and radically alter the cul-

ture of palliative care medicine in favour of a version of personal autonomy.”

Aontú leader Peadar Tóibín said that while this is a difficult issue for many people, this bill would radically change Irish culture and law. “It [the bill] seeks to make it legal for one person to kill another,” he said in a statement.

Deputy Tóibín warned that the experience of other countries proves that, once legal, it will be “impossible to limit the further broadening of criteria for the ending of life”.

“Requests for euthanasia are extremely rare before it’s made legal but radically increase when the culture changes,” he said. “We urge the Government to assist people with living.”

Pubs and the Church – what do they have in common?

Years ago, the Vintners Association of Ireland were concerned that the Pioneer movement would exert sufficient influence on the Government to restrict the opening hours of public houses. But how gentle and civilised were the advocates of temperance in comparison to the ferocious damage being wrought by the Covid pandemic, and the nostrums of those managing it!

Dublin, birthplace of the literary pub-crawl, as tourists followed in the



Mary Kenny

footsteps of James Joyce, Brendan Behan and Patrick Kavanagh around the taverns of the city, faces another season of pub closure, to the despair of the hospitality industry.

Trade

I daresay even the most ardent abstainer must feel sorry for the families who run pubs, the many employees who earn a living from the trade, and the tourism revenue generated by the fame of the Irish pub.

Moreover, I'm not so sure that the alternative of imbibing at home is always such a great idea. We know there is an established link between domestic abuse and the home consumption of alcohol.

Strangely, there is a kind

of parallel between the pub and the church, in this respect: both are involved with congregation – the meeting-together of people. Both answer to a deep human need for community and fellowship.

“I feel the Church has lacked an energetic response to the Covid emergency”

Maybe new ways have to be explored to continue facilitating congregation. One, certainly, is to shift more activities to outdoors, since the fresh air is a known mitigation: put up more tents and marquees...and remember outdoor religious processions?

When I see a church closed because there has been a case of Covid, I can't help thinking of the circumstances in which



people of Faith attended Mass in the past: on wild rocks: in secret passageways: in tiny cabins. They risked everything.

I feel the Church has lacked an energetic response to the Covid emergency. More imaginative thinking has been needed. There has

been a distinct shortage of innovative solutions and blue-skies thinking.

It's obvious we are in for the long haul with Covid. The publicans are forming their own lobby to underline their crisis. Has the Church been somewhat less active in addressing the needs of the Faithful?

Everyone deserves a fair chance in performing arts

The British screen actress Sally Phillips is an admirable campaigner on behalf of Down Syndrome children. She has a Down Syndrome son, Olly, 16, whom she adores, and she finds it offensive that some countries, such as Iceland, have sought to expunge Down Syndrome babies from existence.

Her latest campaign has been against a nasty t-shirt seen on Amazon UK last week bearing the slogan 'Let's make Down Syndrome Extinct!' with a rear-angle picture of a Neanderthal figure against rainbow colours. Sally took her objections to Amazon, and the advertisements for the tee-shirts have been removed.

Sally believes that these horrible messages against disabled people are part of "eugenic ideas" that are "really taking hold...the idea that there is this subclass of humans and it is better if we get rid of them".



Sally Phillips and the offensive t-shirt

Alternative

An alternative t-shirt message has now been posted on-line, with a similar Neanderthal image and the slogan: 'Let's Make Hate Crime/Discrimination Extinct!'

Sally also believes that disabled actors should be cast in dramas to play disabled people – able-bodied actors have traditionally represented disabled characters, perhaps the most famous being Daniel Day-Lewis as Christy Brown in *My Left Foot*. (Day-Lewis did *Method* acting, and stayed almost permanently in a wheelchair during the filming: it irritated

his co-star Brenda Fricker that even off-set, he continued to behave as though seriously crippled.)

I don't think there can be rigid rules, in drama, about who is permitted to play what – drama is also about suspending disbelief and the power of telling a story – but surely disabled actors should be given every fair chance in the performing arts.

There was a time when dress code mattered

Finola Kennedy, the acclaimed biographer of Frank Duff, discloses in the current issue of *Studies* magazine that she was once refused Holy Communion. It happened when she was a young woman studying in Italy.

"I located the local church and went to Mass. Because the weather was scorching I wore a sleeveless summer dress. At the altar rails the priest sounded cross, even angry, and passed me by."


Two Italian women spotted Finola was *senza maniche*, and quickly covered her bare arms with a shawl.

The priest was persuaded to return and offer the Eucharist.

The Italian priest was being rather churlish, surely, but the bare arms rule seems to have been something of a Mediterranean focus.

I've often seen notices in parts of France outlining dress codes, including requests that women cover their shoulders and arms.

I don't think dress codes have ever been a big issue in Ireland, although I do remember, back in the day, a Galway cousin of mine refraining from applying lipstick before attending Holy Communion: she thought it apt for the dancehall, not the church.



PARISH PASTORAL WORKER

The Parish of St. Joseph & St. Benildus & St. Marys, in the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore, is the largest in the Diocese with a Catholic population of approximately 13,750. It is situated in the south-east of Waterford City and stretches from St Joseph & St Benildus Church on Newtown Road to St Mary's Church in Ballygunner.

The Parish is a welcoming Christian community where people feel valued and have a sense of belonging.

The Parish is now inviting applications for the position of Parish Pastoral Worker.

Applicants must have a primary degree in theology/religious education, or equivalent, as well as relevant experience.

The closing date for receipt of applications, including Curriculum Vitae, is **Friday, 2nd October 2020 at 5:00 p.m.**

Please send to liampowerwaterford@gmail.com.

Shortlisting will take place immediately thereafter. **Interviews are scheduled to take place in October 2020.**

The Job Description is available from the Parish Office at parishofficejbm@gmail.com



Donations remained strong in 2019, but the effects of Covid-19 cast a shadow over the future, writes Ruadhán Jones

On the surface of it, the annual report for 2019/20 from Trócaire is a positive one, in so far as these ever are. However, the arrival of Covid-19 hangs as a cloud over both fundraising and development goals for the aid agency of the Church in Ireland. The annual report – published on Tuesday – lists the pandemic as number one in its future risks and uncertainties.

The issues facing the nations Trócaire most frequently works with are manifold, but the contributions by the Irish public, institutional funders and grants, enabled Trócaire to serve 2.5 million people in 27 countries.

According to the report, the agency raised €64 million in the financial year 2019/20, which concluded just before the Covid-19 crisis, and spent €67 million. Of this, a “vital contribution” of €23 million was donated by the Irish public. This included €8.3 million in the 2019 Lenten collection, up 10% from 2018, and the 2019 Christmas campaign raised €2.3 million.

“As always, we are tremendously grateful for the great support we receive from the

parishioners, the clergy and bishops of Ireland, north and south. They are the lifeblood of Trócaire,” according to the agency’s Chief Executive Officer Caoimhe de Barra.

“Such support, as well as our ongoing partnership with Irish Aid, allows us to work with local partners in an effort to tackle poverty and injustice in some of the world’s poorest regions,” she said.

Resources

Of the 2.5 million people the organisation supported last year, 1.8 million people received humanitarian support, while an additional 700,000 people were supported through Trócaire’s long-term development work.

The report is broken up into a number of ‘Strategic Goals’, including human rights, equality in resources, women’s empowerment and

protection of human dignity. This work includes women’s empowerment projects, in particular educational support but also helplines and health centres to treat victims of gender based violence.

It also includes support for human rights defenders (HRD), including the training of new HRDs and the provision of legal supports – as in the case of the release last year of indigenous Human Rights Defender Abelino Chub Caal, who spent two years wrongfully imprisoned in Guatemala.

The report also details how last year saw the charity respond to natural disasters and climatic shocks. Working through their partners, Trócaire provided shelter, food and other vital equipment to 39,000 people across Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe after the devastating impact of Cyclone Idai.

However, where the report only begins to trace the outlines is the effects of the pre-eminent natural disaster, Covid-19, both on the charity and on those to whom it ministers. This is largely because the pandemic only set in during the last two months of the report period, but also because the worst effects of the pandemic may be yet to come.

“The implications of this pandemic have plunged already desperately poor people into further poverty”

Ms de Barra highlighted that “the Covid crisis has profoundly changed Trócaire’s work. Over recent months, our programmes have rapidly

shifted to helping to stop the spread of the virus in countries that lack the most basic medical infrastructure to deal with an outbreak.”

She continued, saying: “The social and economic implications of this pandemic have plunged already desperately poor people into further poverty. While our immediate response will continue for many months ahead, we are also expecting an increase in hunger in the months ahead.”

“We are also concerned about the human rights impact of Covid-19. This crisis may provide authoritarian governments with an opportunity to clamp down on human rights, target human rights defenders and push ahead with projects that violate the rights of communities. Women and girls are also at increased risk of violence due to lockdown measures. Addressing both the drivers

◀ Hala Sanak (14), who plays for Gaza’s first-ever schoolgirls’ football club, received a Gaelic football skills session on the Gaza beach with All-Ireland winner and Trócaire ambassador Oisín McConville. Photo: Garry Walsh

and impact of that violence is a priority for Trócaire.”

In other words, according to the report, coronavirus presents a threat once again, most dangerous among those already weakened or debilitated. It threatens a deterioration of human rights through increased militarisation; of access to food and water; and of support services to those already vulnerable, to name but a few.

Vulnerable

If those most vulnerable are to be helped, charities like Trocaire will continue to play a central role. However, they are themselves likely to become victim to the effects of the pandemic. In 2019, the report says, “Trócaire leadership identified a growth in the projected deficit compared to the annual budget”. In response, a number of cost-cutting measures were undertaken, including voluntary redundancies and reduced budgets.

However, the arrival of the virus during the Lenten campaign resulted in very serious impacts on fundraising. Meanwhile, economic recessions around Europe threatened institutional funding resources, which had already seen a decrease of €5 million from the previous year.

While Trócaire has been able to respond to the immediate requirements Covid-19 has presented, it is clear that the effects will linger, both for the agency and for those it serves.

Covid-19 looms large in Trócaire annual report



God’s generosity is there to see for eyes that will look

“Why be envious because I am generous?” The story of the workers in the vineyard is not about paying a fair wage (Matt 20:1-16). The parable is about envy.

Every worker got the agreed payment. The horrible aspect of envy is that it is a negative reaction to some goodness or success that another person enjoys. It is a poisonous growth that draws its energy out of something that is good and beautiful.

The workers who did only one hour received a full day’s pay. The generosity of the landowner should have been admired rather than becoming the subject of grumbling.

Envy is one of the seven deadly sins. These are vices which are like poisoned plants growing out of good soil. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* lists some

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O’Flynn OFM Cap.



of the poisoned fruits of envy. “From envy are born hatred, detraction, calumny, joy caused by the misfortune of a neighbour and displeasure caused by his prosperity.”

Quite a juicy list of badness. Envy is a root that poisons the mind and heart.

Curing the poison

One cure for envy is to appreciate what we have received and to accept that the good fortune of another person is my good fortune too, since we are all brothers and

sisters in God’s family.

Another help to counteract envy is to replace boredom with a sense of wonder. Open your eyes and ears to the wonders of God’s generosity.

Today’s First Reading tells us to turn our minds to our God who is rich in forgiving, “for my thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways not your ways - it is the Lord who speaks. Yes, the heavens are as high above earth as my thoughts are above your ways, my thoughts above your thoughts.”

Gratitude heals

A lovely way to end each day is to switch off the invasive distractions of television, radio or computer so as to allow yourself the gift of a silent space. Reflect on the day now ending. Focus on the nice moments, some glimpse of beauty in a person, in nature, in some

happening.

These are gifts from God that often go unnoticed. Focus with gratitude on one gift for each day. Gratitude is one of the most healing powers in life.

The American writer, John Shea, said that the best preparation for Heaven is the capacity for surprise. Whoever belongs to the Kingdom of God has eyes open to goodness and ears that are deaf to grumbling.

One is constantly amazed and never bored. The soul is full of wonder and praise. Why be envious when God is generous to others? “His goodness shall follow me always, to the end of my days.”

Prayers

The thoughts of God are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth. So, let us pray.

Open our eyes, Lord, to the wonders and beauty you have given to the world around us.

Expand our hearts with the ability to rejoice at the good fortune or success of others.

Remove the poison in us that causes us to speak about others in an unchristian way.

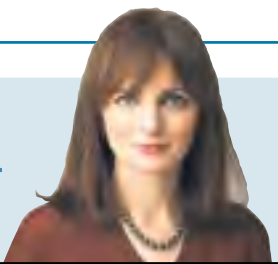
We pray for people who are seeking employment. May the door of opportunity open up for them.

(Add prayers for any local, personal or topical intention.)

O God, the giver of every good gift, we thank you for all that your generosity has given us. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

❶ Extract from Silvester O’Flynn, *Gospel Reflections and Prayers*, Columba Books.

Maria Steen
The View



When it comes to sex, the message we are being sold is clear: indulge yourself

Last week, an item was discussed on RTÉ's *Liveline*, prompted by a leaflet published by the HSE advocating that people resort to masturbation and sexual activity online during this time of social distancing.

The host, Katie Hannon, took calls from a number of people, many of whom expressed concerns at the HSE's advice. All but one were at pains to say they were not religious, nor were they prudes, while Katie was at pains to link any opposition to the leaflet with Catholic values.

One caller, Mary, described the porn industry as modern slavery. A few others expressed concern that pornography was dangerous, but ultimately conceded that it was fine for people to use it if they wanted to – it was just the young people they were concerned about. No concern was expressed for older people, who, it was believed, could make up their own minds about all this. It was widely accepted that viewing pornography is normal behaviour for adults, not meriting any moral disapproval.

Honest

One caller stood out from the rest. His name was Kevin. He introduced himself saying that he was coming from a "Jesus Christ point of view". He was honest, upfront and unapologetic. He did not try to disguise or sugar-coat his opinions, nor was he afraid of being criticised.

He presented the Catholic Church's teaching with a forthrightness and a wry wit that I for one found disarmingly charming. He was not looking to be popular (as was evidenced by the coarse and sexually aggressive comments and vitriol directed to him on Twitter). The discussion that ensued was fascinating, not least for what it revealed about the mindset of the RTÉ production team and a young female caller named Sharon.

What exactly did Kevin say to warrant such ridicule on Twitter and cause Sharon to claim that his views were "dangerous" and



another caller to label him a "dinosaur"? What he said can be summed up in the following points:

1. God made us and gave us certain rules by which to live.
2. There are consequences to our actions (including sexual activity) and at the end of our lives we will have to answer to God for them.
3. Heaven and Hell exist and which one we go to will be largely determined by our actions on Earth. Just because you do not believe in them does not mean they are not there.
4. Not having sex will not kill you.
5. Pornography changes the way men view their wives or girlfriends.
6. Virginity is something that both men and women should save for their spouse.
7. Stating a belief in Catholic values is no good unless you uphold them and live by them.

* * * * *

As against what Kevin was saying, Sharon and another caller, Dan, resorted to every trope about Catholicism from sexual abuse, to sexual repression, to intolerance to the ultimate put-down: "You're out of step with modern Ireland."

And yet, Kevin, and indeed a couple of other older callers, thought that

things were better in their day. They all survived, had happy marriages, and were content with life. Katie (having thrown in the seemingly mandatory reference to Archbishop John Charles McQuaid) was sure that things are better nowadays. But are they?

“If there is a campus epidemic relating to sexual misconduct, its perpetrators are not steeped in Catholic moral teaching”

In one exchange, Sharon – a youth worker who thinks that watching porn is normal for young people and that casual sex is good – suggested that there was abuse in the past because of the lack of sex education. In a brilliant riposte, Kevin answered: "Sorry, just to say to you: has abuse stopped? Did I miss that somewhere? Did it stop?"

During the same week, allegations of sexual harassment in UCD emerged. Minister for Higher Education, Simon Harris, fresh from the Department of Health, stated recently that there is an "epidemic" around

issues of consent and sexual harassment on campus. At the same time the HSE is publishing guidance to engage in masturbation and online activity.

More than anything, what this mindset demonstrates is a complete lack of knowledge or understanding of human nature.

The sexual urge is different between men and women – as anyone who is honest about it and has a little experience of life will attest. Unless young men learn to master their sexual urges, they pose a threat to women, to society and to their own futures.

Contrary to the assertion, often made by feminists, that marriage is about controlling women's sexuality, it is principally men's sexuality which is controlled.

All societies historically recognised that marriage was a way to channel a man's sexual energy in a constructive (rather than destructive) way and encourage him to take responsibility for his actions by caring for his wife and any children that might result from their union.

By contrast, our Government is encouraging men – young and old – to indulge their every fantasy (seemingly no matter how base) and satisfy every sexual urge that occurs to them. Have they stopped to think for a moment what this does to men? Has our Government considered the effect on women and young girls?

If there is a campus

epidemic relating to sexual misconduct, its perpetrators are not steeped in Catholic moral teaching. They are, however, steeped from an early age in pornography.

Does the HSE not take issue with the objectification of women by the porn industry, or its links to the truly dark, modern-day slave trade that is sexual trafficking?

Message

If the sexual appetite is an appetite like any other, why, in this context alone, is restraint never advocated? We are constantly berated to smoke less, drink less, avoid sugary foods. But when it comes to sex, the message is: indulge yourself. How can men be expected to exercise

restraint and responsibility that they have never been encouraged to practise?

No: modern Ireland has spoken. People like Kevin, who advocate sexual responsibility and condemn pornography, are the danger. I prefer Kevin's attitude. "I won't be running with the crowd," he said, "because there's a price to be paid for it and that only happens after we die when we have to account to the good Lord himself."

"It's not only that we have to account, he knows already, he can see, he knows what you're doing today...you can't cod him, like."

As Kevin said, nothing beats the truth.

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Church must change to meet fresh challenges – Archbishop Martin



Archbishop Diarmuid Martin ordains Fr Frank Drescher.



Fr Frank Drescher awaits his ordination and, left, gives his blessing at the end of the ceremony. Photos: John McElroy

Staff reporter

The Church will not grow through fresh strategies alone, but only when priests underline the importance of God’s love for everyone, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin has insisted.

Speaking in Dublin’s pro-cathedral on Tuesday during the ordination to the priesthood of Fr Frank Drescher, Dr Martin insisted that the Church must change to meet the needs of a changed culture while remaining true to the unchanging nature of the Gospel.

He said that the proclamation of the Gospel in contemporary culture “is a challenging task, not least in the challenging times in which we live.

“I entrust you and your life to the Lord as you begin your ministry as a priest, just as I draw near the end of my ministry as Archbishop of Dublin and indeed towards the twilight of my life,” Dr Martin said addressing Fr Drescher.

Strategies

Dr Martin – who turned 75 in April and therefore submitted his resignation to Pope Francis – admitted that he is someone “who by nature attempts to analyse and who thinks in terms of planning and strategies”.

However, he said that “the big challenge today is one for which it is more difficult to plan: that challenge is change. Change always involves



Fr Frank Drescher with Archbishop Diarmuid Martin.

an encounter with the unknowns of the future. The religious culture of Ireland is changing. The change is rapid and profound,” he said.

Asking where “men

and women immersed in the secularised culture of society find faith nourishment,” the archbishop told Fr Drescher that the Church must “do this not through routine or pre-

packaged programmes and strategies...you must be one who exudes passion not for structures and personal standing but for the God who is love,” he said.



Numbers attending Fr Drescher’s ordination were restricted because of current health regulations.

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Everyone can die with dignity without the need to deliberately end their lives



The latest push in the culture of death would normalise suicide, writes **David Quinn**

This week a new bill called the 'Dying with Dignity Bill 2020' was brought before the Dáil. It has been introduced by left-wing TD, Gino Kenny. Don't be fooled by the title. All of us want to die with dignity. This bill is about assisted suicide.

Don't be fooled either by terms like 'assisted dying'. What does this even mean? When my father died in 2015, aged 88, after a long illness, his four children wanted him to die with dignity, in the care of doctors and nurses and with the minimum of discomfort. In other words, he was receiving much assistance



in his dying days. He was fed, hydrated and received whatever medication was needed, including morphine towards the very end. But the morphine was intended to kill whatever pain he was in, not him.

The irony is that the Kenny Bill was discussed in the Dáil the very week after International Suicide Awareness Day was marked. The purpose of the day is to reduce the incidence of suicide in society, but the Kenny Bill, would authorise, mandate, make normal, a certain type of suicide.

Equally ironic was the fact that this week is Palliative Care Week.

The World Health

Organisation (WHO) defines palliative care as follows: "Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual."

Offering to end a patient's life early through a lethal drug is no part of palliative care. In fact, it is its very antithesis.

As the WHO says, palliative care "intends neither to hasten or

postpone death".

Palliative care is exactly what my father received as he succumbed to dementia and other illnesses. It is often provided in hospices, but is commonplace in many settings, including in your own home.

Support

How can you possibly mark Palliative Care Week and at the same time countenance assisted suicide?

The Kenny Bill does not have the support of the Government, but there has been precious little objection to it either and there is the possibility of a free vote being allowed. What would happen then?

Kenny pretends that his Bill is 'restrictive'. It is nothing of the kind, and as usual the media have given him only soft interviews and have not properly examined what he is proposing.

Most people who have heard about the Bill probably think it is aimed almost entirely at cancer patients nearing the end of life, but this is not the case. (Not that the Bill could be justified on this ground either).

The way it defines 'terminal illness' is extremely broad.

Here is what it says. "A person is terminally ill if that person has been diagnosed by a registered medical practitioner as having an incurable and progressive illness which cannot be reversed by treatment, and the person is likely to die as a result of that illness or complications relating thereto".

What might an "incurable and progressive illness" be? The Bill does not say, but conditions like MS, Parkinson's Disease and Motor Neuron Disease come to mind, but many others can probably be listed including forms of heart disease that will eventually end your life.

Notice as well that the definition uses the word "likely" as in "likely to die". What does "likely" mean here? Does it mean a 51% chance of dying as "a result of that illness or complication relating thereto"?

Note also that there is no stipulation a person should be within days, weeks, or even months of death.

“It signals to such people that their lives are no longer really worth living...”

As written, a person could be diagnosed with Motor Neuron Disease tomorrow and apply for assisted suicide the next day.

What this law would tell anyone with a progressive illness deemed likely to kill them is that they are a suitable candidate for suicide. It signals to such people that their lives are no longer really worth living. If we thought otherwise, we wouldn't even consider giving doctors permission to help them end their lives.

This is why almost all palliative care doctors are opposed to assisted suicide. They are the very people

who deal with those nearing the end of their lives or who are suffering from a terminal illness. If this was all about 'compassion', then why aren't these doctors supporting assisted suicide?

The reason is because they know from their own experience that everyone can die with dignity without the need to deliberately end their lives, and they are also acutely aware of the terrible signal legalising assisted suicide would give to vulnerable people.

“The bill would force palliative care doctors, among others, to cooperate with something they are deeply opposed”

Another 'safeguard' offered by the Bill is that two doctors must sign off before assisted suicide can be authorised. But this means all that is needed is for two doctors anywhere in the country to sign such a form and as many assisted suicides can take place as they see fit.

The Bill also offers scant protection for conscientious objection. A doctor doesn't have to sign an assisted suicide permission form, but must refer a patient on to a doctor who will. This is appalling. It would force palliative care doctors, among others, to cooperate with something they are deeply opposed to in principle, something they find repugnant.

Prescription

Finally, the Bill refers to the "prescription of substance or substances" to the patient aimed at ending their life. In ordinary language, such a substance is a deadly poison.

In other words, doctors will be authorised to give their patients not medication, not something aimed at curing them or relieving symptoms, but a poison directly intended to kill them.

This would totally invert the meaning of medicine. The Kenny Bill, in whatever form, must be strongly and totally rejected in the name of patient dignity and the good name of the medical profession.

**“Kevin Barry gave his young life
For the cause of liberty.
But a lad of eighteen summers,
Still there's no one can deny,
As he walked to death that morning,
He proudly held his head on high.”**

For Siofra O'Donovan, Kevin Barry was much more than a song played in the local pub. As one of his few descendants, she grew up listening to gripping tales of espionage about her ancestor and cherished details about his life and heroism that is not only celebrated by her family but by a grateful nation.

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Even when Covid-19 passes, it'll be a huge challenge to get parishes back to normal



New research which reveals that congregations could fall by as much as a quarter should serve as a wake-up call to all of us writes **Michael Kelly**

It's more than six months since restrictions were first imposed on the celebration of public Masses in a bid to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Many parishes and communities responded swiftly and with creativity. Webcams that had already been installed and had been a lifeline for parishioners living abroad to, for example, participate in funeral liturgies were now the staple for Sunday Mass. Elsewhere, platforms like Facebook Live and YouTube were utilised to ensure that the Mass was available to a new virtual congregation.

It worked admirably well for what it is, but people sitting around individually at their kitchen table is a poor substitute for the collective celebration of the Eucharist in our sacred places.

Masses

While many parishes have now had public Masses since late June, restrictions on the number of people who can attend remain in place. This has obviously affected the ability of some people to attend, but fear of Covid-19 has also been a significant factor in people choosing to stay away according to new research.

The poll – conducted by Amárach Research on behalf of

The Iona Institute – asked Catholics whether they attended Mass prior to coronavirus coming to our shores and the consequent restrictions. It found that 27% of Catholics reported that they did attend Mass regularly. This is still one of the highest rates of Mass attendance in Europe, but down from a consistent result of around a third of Catholics saying they go to Mass regularly in the past few years.

“People sitting around individually at their kitchen table is a poor substitute for the collective celebration of the Eucharist in our sacred places”

These people who reported that they were regular Massgoers before the pandemic were then asked whether or not they had returned to Mass since restrictions were lifted. The research found that 36% of those who attended pre-coronavirus are now back attending Mass regularly. While this figure may seem low, it should be borne in mind that restrictions still in place mean that many churches can only allow 50 congregants to gather for Mass.

Data

At the same time, the data reveals that most Massgoers are over the age of 65 and this is the age group that the Government insists is most vulnerable to the virus.

But, what of the almost two thirds of pre-pandemic Massgoers who are not attending?

The pollsters asked the 64% of people who reported that they have not returned to Mass why this was the case. Predictably, fear of the virus was the number one reason. However, some other interesting reasons were revealed. Fear of Covid-19 was given as the reason for 46% of people. A further 22% – also unsurpris-

“The data reveals that most Massgoers are over the age of 65 and this is the age group that the Government insists is most vulnerable to the virus”



Local parishioner Willie Carley gives the 'thumbs up!' to altar server and confirmation candidate Rory Goff who checks out 'the fogger' which is being used between Masses to sanitise the church at Glynn, Co. Wexford.

ingly – said that they were staying away because of ongoing limits on the size of congregations. A not insignificant minority – 7% – said they had simply lost the habit of going to Mass while six percent reported that they are happy enough with the experience of continuing to participate in the liturgy online.

One in five – 20% – offered another reason or said they didn't know why they were not currently going to Mass. Other reasons included people who said they didn't want to take up one of the limited places so as to exclude others (4%), the inability to attend due to parental/work responsibilities (4%) and the local church remaining closed (2%).

Perhaps more interestingly, pre-pandemic Massgoers who are not currently attending were asked whether or not they will return to the regular practice of their faith once coronavirus-related restrictions are lifted. Just 4% said they will not come back. However, a figure that is likely to prove more vexing for Church leaders is that 19% – almost one in five – of those who attended

Mass before restrictions say they do not know whether they will come back when things get back to normal.

If, for example, that was borne out in reality and those 19% of people did not return added to the four percent who said they were certain they would not come back, we could see congregations fall by as much as a quarter.

Survey

Consistently, when people are surveyed and asked why they have not become involved in a particular club or activity the response is some variation of “I wasn't asked”. This should serve as a significant wake-up call that parish communities will have to be proactive in inviting people to return. Perhaps when things do eventually settle down, parishes might consider organising a community Mass of thanksgiving. Homes could be leafleted and advertisements taken in local newspapers with a personal invitation for people to come back. As well as reaching those who were with us before the pandemic, it could even have an impact on helping people who have long since

given up going to Mass to return and be part of the congregation. A spokesperson for The Iona Institute – which commissioned the research – said that “The poll finding should act as a further wake-up call for the Church.

“While many parishes have now had public Masses since late June, restrictions on the number of people who can attend remain in place”

“On the positive side, 36% of people are back at Mass, which is probably close to the maximum because of current restrictions. It is also good that most people want to return to Mass when all this is over. But the fact that one in five Catholics who attended Mass regularly before Covid-19 don't know if they will come back and another 4% say they won't come back is obviously deeply worrying.

“The Church is clearly going to have to organise a big parish-by-parish effort and invite those people them back – the Church is nothing if it is not a community. We can't be Christians on their own,” he said.

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Everyone deserves the best care at end-of-life and in bereavement



We must count the cost of Covid-19 and invest in the future of end-of-life and bereavement care in Ireland writes Sharon Foley

We, as a nation, are still in the grip of a pandemic, unprecedented in recent living memory. Its effect was immediate and apparent. The necessary national response to Covid-19 has been – and is still – urgent and universal, affecting all aspects of our lives: personal, familial, social, psychological and economic. In a few short months it has brought about change and curtailment.

Huge sacrifices have been made and an enormous effort expended by people in essential, frontline services – particularly health and wider social care – but also transport providers, food suppliers and supermarket workers, postal workers, fire and ambulance services, public servants, Government and local authorities and in the voluntary sector, to respond to new and unknown challenges in an utterly changed landscape.

The future is still uncertain and the ongoing challenges to us all, individually and collectively, are as yet unknown.

In the midst of all of this unpredictability, one aspect of our human existence has remained constant. Dying, death and bereavement – always present – have unavoidably come to the forefront of our collective consciousness.

Since March 2020, approximately 16,500 people have died in Ireland, over 1,700 as a result of Covid-19. Continuing visiting restrictions and infection control measures across healthcare settings and the limit on numbers attending funerals are impacting on those receiving and delivering end-of-life care as well as on the grieving process for families, their extended social circles and healthcare workers.

We have also heard the distressing stories of how people were not able to visit with their relatives as they died in the past number of months.

As yet, there is no concrete commitment from the current Government to remembrance, reflection, renewal and resilience in relation to all deaths in the Covid-19 era. Lessons learned must result in real action to engage people in dialogue, to evaluate end-of-life and bereavement experiences during the pandemic emergency and the effect of the (necessary) strictures and curtailments.

No time can be lost in planning how we respond. A population-wide, whole society response, led by Government, is required.

In our Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF) pre-Budget submission published this week, we renewed

our call for a whole-of-Government strategy for end-of-life and bereavement care in Ireland. We are asking the State to invest in healthcare infrastructure and adequately support end-of-life and bereavement services to ensure, we as a nation, respond correctly and compassionately to the issues that have arisen recently in the care of the dying and bereaved.

“Huge sacrifices have been made and an enormous effort expended by people in essential, frontline services”

Embedding the best end-of-life and bereavement care in all care settings, investigating and responding to the cost of bereavement and long-overdue capital investment in infrastructure, underpin all our IHF recommendations for Budget 2021 which were sent to Government earlier this summer.

Our Submission is based on our belief that everyone deserves the best care at end of life and in bereavement – a belief shared by the people of Ireland.

Our seven key policy recommendations are:

- Develop a whole-of-Government strategy on end-of-life care
- Renew the national dialogue on death, dying and bereavement
- Plan community supports and education on bereavement
- Establish a dedicated programme of work to improve end-of-life and palliative care in nursing homes

- Enable more people to die at home or place of preference
- Facilitate dialogue and planning for end-of-life
- Introduce a new national mortuaries programme.

IHF has long advocated for a more strategic, whole-of-Government approach. As a result of Covid-19 there is a significant, possibly unique, opportunity to equip all our State services – including health and social care – to meet the challenges presented by dying, death and bereavement in the aftermath of this pandemic and to allow all our citizens to contribute to that debate.

Our health and wellbeing are intimately bound up with the State and its services, as well as wider society. So too is dying, death and bereavement. The State has no power to take away death. But, what we as citizens can legitimately expect is that the Government equips us to cope with the myriad practical, social and emotional issues that present before, during and after a death.

Demand for nurses for night care (IHF-funded) has risen over the past six months as more families dealing with the imminent death of a loved one at home needed supports during the night. The free national service allows people with non-cancer related illnesses to spend their final days at home. This year additional funding was provided for this vital service, however, the long-term commitment by the State to fund 50% of the service is still not in place.

Most adults in Ireland say they want to die at home. It's a simple vision; yet, anecdotal and scientific evidence suggests it is becoming

rarer and harder to achieve. Covid-19 has strengthened the IHF belief that more can and should be done to enable people to live and die at home.

We know many people are unprepared for end of life. We need to reignite the national conversation on death and planning ahead. IHF has been to the forefront in the development of a citizen-led tool called 'Think Ahead'. More support is required to bring the concept of thinking ahead to individuals facing end-of-life, the public and communities within Ireland, to encourage and enable them to open up conversations and plan for end-of-life. That this work is solely led by a charity is no longer acceptable. State support is needed now more than ever.

“The future is still uncertain and the ongoing challenges to us all, individually and collectively, are as yet unknown”

There is also a need to look at the possible effects of delayed or disenfranchised grief. These effects may be not only in those family members and friends directly and personally affected by death during the Covid-19 period, but also by healthcare workers at all levels, teachers and pupils, employers and employees, and the general public.

When the pandemic has subsided, we may well live in its shadow for years to come. How we, as a nation, respond to dying, death and bereavement post Covid-19 is critical.

Sharon Foley is Chief Executive Officer of the Irish Hospice Foundation. The IHF bereavement support line is on freephone 1800 80 70 77 and available Monday-Friday 10am-1pm.

“Dying, death and bereavement – always present – have unavoidably come to the forefront of our collective consciousness”

Dublin Lourdes pilgrimage goes online



Chai Brady

The Archdiocese of Dublin, along with many other dioceses, brought their yearly Lourdes pilgrimage online due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Those remembered in their first 'Virtual Pilgrimage to Lourdes', which took place last week, were people who lost their lives since the pandemic began, those who are ill, and frontline workers.

It's the second time in over half a century that there will be no Dublin diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes, due to travel restrictions.

In September 2019, almost two thousand people took part – the sick, carers, their medical teams, youth groups, students and priests and parishioners.

A statement on the archdiocese's website said: "Always a joyful, uplifting spiritual journey, it was with great sadness that the

organisers were forced to cancel plans for 2020 in April last.

"Since 1949, when it was led by Archbishop John Charles McQuaid, thousands of Dubliners have accompanied sick pilgrims to the French Marian Shrine every September. The only other time the pilgrimage did not proceed was in 1953 when Dublin pilgrims, who had made their way from Westland Row in the city centre, to Dun Laoghaire, Holyhead, Dover, Calais and Paris found they could not leave Paris due to a train strike and had no choice but turn around and make the lengthy journey home again!"

On September 8, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin began the pilgrimage with an opening Mass in St Bernadette's Church, Clogher Road. The pilgrimage took place in six different churches in the archdiocese over five days and on webcam. As numbers were restricted in each church, the wider public were invited to join live online.

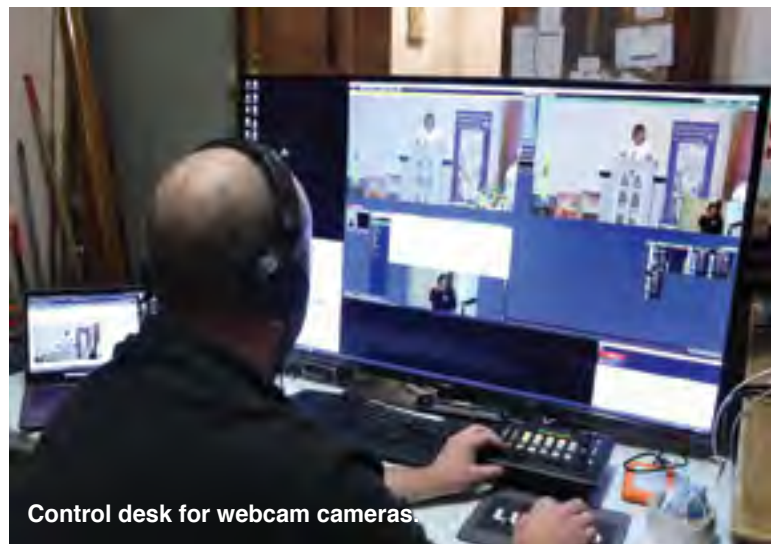
For members of the deaf community there was an ISL Interpreter at all venues through the virtual journey.

Pilgrimage Director Fr Martin Noone said they were delighted to be able to connect directly with Lourdes on the virtual pilgrimage on Saturday while Mass was taking place in Dublin, a Dublin pilgrimage candle was left at the Chapels of Light near the Lourdes Grotto by Fionnuala Brua and Caroline Traynor. Fionnuala and Caroline both live in Lourdes and have worked with JWT on previous Dublin Pilgrimages.

Fr Noone said that while it was quite extraordinary to be able to bring people together in various ways in parish communities and online for Lourdes 2020, every member of the organising team and the wider Lourdes pilgrimage community are hoping and praying they will be boarding flights once again this time next year.



Fr Martin Noone lighting a Dublin Diocesan Lourdes pilgrimage candle. Photos: John Mc Elroy.



Control desk for webcam cameras.



Aoife Parkes and Hannah Coleman from the Lourdes Folk Group singing.



Congregation during the opening mass.

Converting the challenge of priests into new opportunities for greater lay involvement



The Walsh family and friends, part of the 'Sanitising and Stewarding Team' in Monasterevin church in Kildare, are pictured cleaning after a Mass to make the church safe for parishioners during the summer.



Coronavirus has given us a glimpse of the future of the Church, and there are hopeful signs writes Bishop Brendan Leahy

One of the good surprises of this Covid-19 period has been the spirit of volunteerism. From the early months of the coronavirus pandemic to today, we have seen people volunteering for activity who otherwise might not have had. Local community initiatives sprung up all over the place involving GAA groups, meals on wheels, and simple neighbourly watchfulness.

It's been community at its best. As the Book of Ecclesiastes puts it "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow". The spirit of 'meitheal' was alive and well when we really needed it. In the midst of the darkest days, it was still a light pulling us through.

We've seen this great spirit of unity also recently in the re-opening of the churches; people stepping forward throughout parishes who, in some cases, we would not see except perhaps for the major

celebrations of the year. Yet now they are volunteering weekly for activity of all sorts, activity that is crucial right now in keeping our doors open in trying circumstances.

All of this is greatly encouraging. I see it as something of a signal of the future of 'a Church of everyone', a reassuring glimpse of the possibilities ahead for the Church.

There's no denying the stunningly rapid fall-off in numbers becoming priests and religious. The increasing profile of retiring priests casts a long shadow over the Church. We need to pray, live and speak about this. But the surprising good spirit of volunteerism during this COVID-19 crisis is a sign of hope for a renewed church for us. It is a pointer that we need to provide opportunities for people to take on more responsibility in their church locally.

A lot of trends come and go in life, but faith and spirituality are constant. They are embedded in the culture of our people. Local communities matter in terms of belonging, identity and support. And for centuries these features have been hugely linked with Church community and faith. That's deep down in us.

So, what we need to do is convert the challenge posed by a lack of priests into new opportunities for greater lay involvement. We've seen from the Covid-19 experience that is not, as we thought, a high wall to climb, but rather just a door we must walk through together.

“We've seen this great spirit of unity also recently in the re-opening of the churches”

We now see that the culture of community is present and lay people themselves can and need to be to the fore in this new moment for us all. There's always a temptation to think someone else will help out. But if we want the faith community to be present as a haven in our local area, people who have time to do

so, maybe recently retired people or stay-at-home dads or mums who might have time while their children are in school, might ask themselves if they might be able to give a hand in the day-to-day life of the parish.

I recently heard a story from a man whose brother died in an accident and he was troubled about his afterlife, where he was now. His concern was that his brother hadn't been going to Mass. But he found hope in knowing that the weekend before his brother died, there was a flash flood in his local parish and it raced through the local church building. That evening the brother was on hand, leading the clean-up. His brother's commitment to community was a link to the Church, his declaration of belonging. He lived it. Many people have that in them.

Of course, what I'm talking about is more than just about giving a hand. Pope Francis often speaks of the need today for 'pastoral conversion'. But we must start somewhere. When we hear the word 'conversion' we think of episodes like St Paul on the way to Damascus falling to the ground personally 'converted' to Jesus Christ. But Pope Francis wants us to recognise there's more to being a Christian than a personalised individual faith. We are part of a com-

munity and that community itself needs constantly to be undergoing a certain conversion in their way of doing things, reaching out, creating community.

“A lot of trends come and go in life, but faith and spirituality are constant”

When he was in Limerick, Pope John Paul II said, "there's no such thing as an ordinary lay person". We remember that in the early Church, the Church writer, Tertullian said, "when two or three gather in the name of Jesus, even if they are lay people, there's the Church". He meant that not in the sense of a laity versus clergy, but rather in the sense that a Church has a lay profile that we often forget. We focus on the clerical structures but neglect the reason they exist – to be at the service of a church with a vibrant lay profile, expressing Jesus Christ and Mary (two lay people of their time) in the world.

One final point, as we saw in the coronavirus lockdown period, there was a great increase in families gathering to watch ceremonies streamed online and take part in other prayers. It's something we should note. Families can be creative in stitching moments of prayer or moments of reflection into the weekly schedule. Let's not forget that. Covid is asking us to offer resources to families for this.

“We now see that the culture of community is present and lay people themselves can and need to be to the fore in this new moment for us all”



When we face suffering, it is easy to feel abandoned by God but it is then that we must cling to Faith writes **Niall Guinan**

This year has certainly seen its fair share of bleak moments and one of the bleakest must surely have been the RTÉ Prime Time interview with geriatrician Prof. Rónán Collins when he said that many older people are now feeling that maybe “life isn’t worth living any longer”.

It was a devastating moment that encapsulates the horrifying mental health crisis that is now afflicting the country as so many of the joys of life have been taken from us over the past six months. This is, of course, happening in a country where suicide is already rampant.

“My mother’s last words to me were to ask me to say the Rosary for her”

Mother

I lost my own mother to suicide in 2017 as years of difficulties and stress at work became too much for her. When we face such immense suffering, it is easy to feel abandoned by God and even to lose faith entirely. Every day I think about words in my mother’s last note to us, “I have no answers” and am reminded of the cry of Christ from the Cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Yet our faith does provide an answer. The psalm whose opening Christ screamed in agony from the Cross is not just a psalm about apparent divine abandonment, it is a psalm about divine faithfulness. It ends with ecstatic scenes of the afflicted eating and being satisfied, with “all of the families of the nations” coming to worship before God. In the words of St John Henry Newman, God “knows what he is about”

and he produces the greatest light out of the greatest darkness. When in the Book of Genesis, Joseph reveals himself to the cruel brothers who had caused him so much pain, he looks back on all that has happened and sees that “God meant it for good”. The worst event in history, the torture and murder of God Himself occurred on a day we call “Good” Friday.

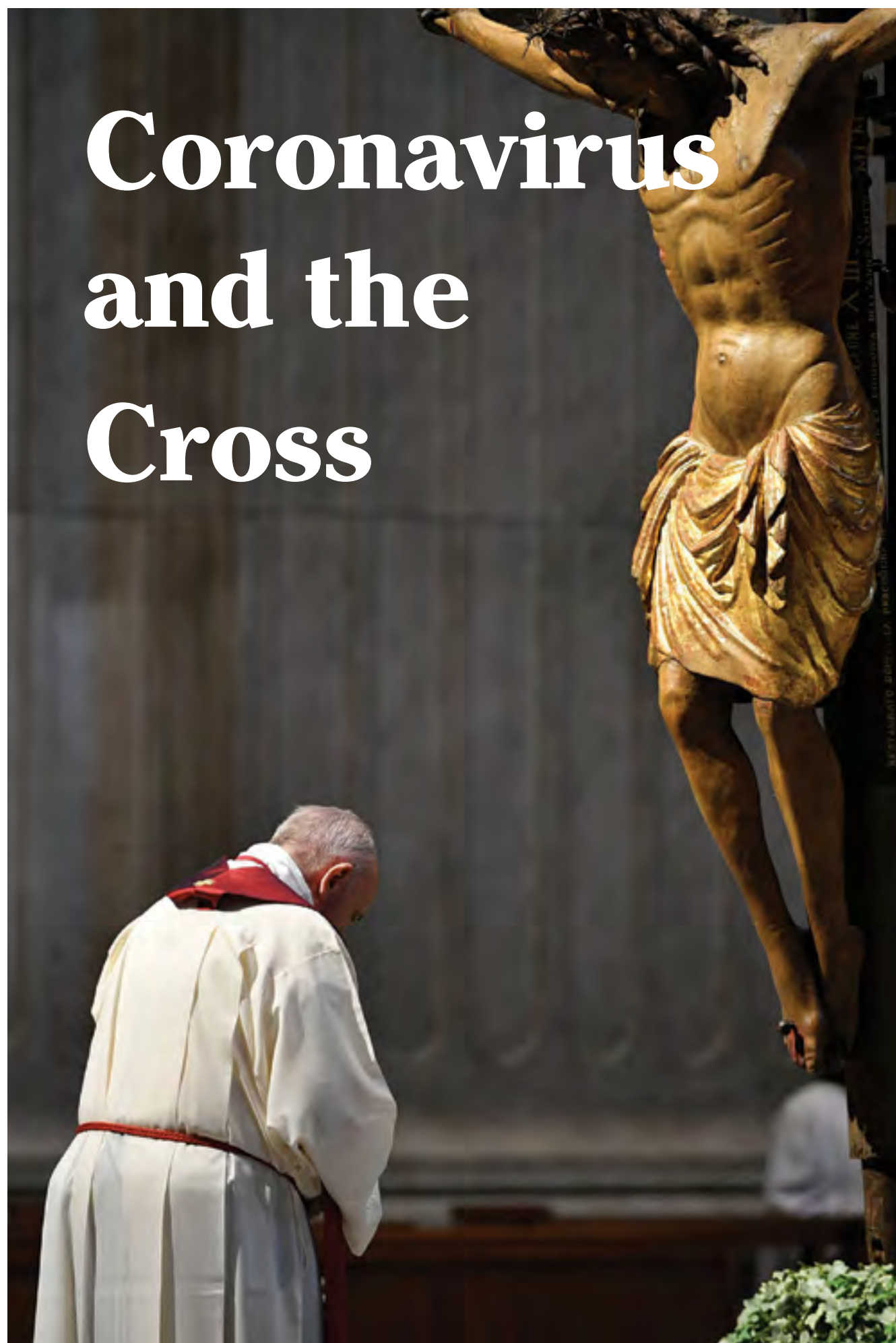
“It was a devastating moment that capsulates the horrifying mental health crisis that is now afflicting the country”

Flannery O’Connor famously said that the Catholic Faith is a Cross rather than an electric blanket. The Lord asks us to take his yoke upon us even as we labour and are heavily laden. He is calling us to take yet more burdens on ourselves in addition to our everyday sufferings. But this is the great paradox: when we accept the Cross that the Lord holds out to us, all of our other burdens are transformed. Our yokes become easy and our burdens light and we find rest for our souls by offering up our sufferings through, with, and in him who is gentle and humble in heart. We see this on Calvary, when St Luke contrasts the foolish thief who mocked Christ and asked him to do magic tricks and the wise thief who, as Venerable Fulton Sheen beautifully put it, “asked to die like a thief and steal Paradise. He knocked once, sought once, asked once, dared everything and found everything.”

Wisdom

If we have the wisdom to steal Paradise, we will one day see what Dante hoped to see: “the scattered pages of the universe bound together in one volume by Love.” We will understand the great purpose that our sufferings served in God’s loving plan, the future and the hope promised to Jeremiah long ago.

If we find our faith tested in these extraordinary times, we should remember the words of St James who points out to



us that God tests our faith in order to make us more steadfast in that faith so that, some day, we may be “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing”. St Peter too, who so easily could have fallen into the despair of Judas, tells us that our

faith, “more precious than gold” is tested by fire that it may “redound to praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ”.

My mother’s last words to me were to ask me to say the Rosary for her. How wise she was. Praying the

Rosary, we learn to see our earthly joys and sorrows in the light of the eternal glory that is promised to us. In the repetition of the prayers of the Rosary, we hear the gentle heartbeat of Mary who stands by us in our sufferings as she stood

by the Cross of her son. This prayer is a true crown, a “corona”, to give us hope that we will overcome the pain that this coronavirus is causing. I would invite anyone reading this to answer my mother’s request and to pray the Rosary for anyone who is in despair or suicidal or losing their faith at this time. Call on Mary, who prays for us all “now and at the hour of our death” with those wonderful titles, “Comfort of the Afflicted” and “Cause of our Joy.”

“We should remember the words of St James who points out to us that God tests our faith in order to make us more steadfast in that faith”

Bringing God's love to the Holy Land and beyond

Sr Bridget at Caritas Jerusalem Elderly Day Care Center, helping with the delivery of freshly cooked meals to the elderly.



Jason Osborne

From her base in the Holy Land, Sligo-native Sister Bridget Tighe is working to alleviate a destitution most of us will never know, still less experience. General Director of Caritas Jerusalem, Sr Bridget is thoroughly rooted in the Middle East. Her first encounter with the area came through a missionary trip as part of her religious order, the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Sr Bridget told of her experience.

"My first mission: I was first missioned as a sister in temporary vows to Jordan. My order had a community in Jordan, so that was my very first introduction to the Middle East. I fell in love with Jordan and learned all about the Middle East's history. Over an 18 year period, I served in Jordan for about 16 years, in two blocs," she said.

An extended beginning to a long-lasting relationship, she left to complete two degrees, before taking up a post with the University of Cambridge. Stationed there for just over a decade, she decided she needed a break, which saw her travel to Jerusalem.

Travel and service

This planted a seed in her heart, which remained in spite of weathering from further travel and service. Years later, and "more or less free," she spoke to her superior about her desire to continue serving the poor. This provided her the opportunity to return to Jerusalem, to work as part of Caritas Jerusalem.

"I lived in Gaza for three years, in charge of Caritas in Gaza, part of Caritas Jerusalem. And then, exactly three years after that, I was asked by the apostolic administrator...who came to Gaza and met me and said we're looking for a Secretary-General of Caritas. I hadn't applied for the post – I was very happy in Gaza – but what do you say if the apostolic administrator who's also Franciscan says, 'Will you do this?' So I said, 'Yes', and so here I am as Secretary General of Caritas Jerusalem since January 2018," she explains.

Caritas Jerusalem is a humanitarian organisation that represents the Catholic Church's socio-pastoral services in the Holy Land. Founded in 1967 in the wake of the Six Day War, it is a member of Caritas Internationalis, a confederation of 165 Caritas organisations operating in more than 200 countries around the world.

At the helm of Caritas Jerusalem's work, Sr Bridget was well placed to describe their operations.

"It (Caritas Jerusalem) was founded to work with people in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza. We have different departments, which are Humanitarian, Social, Health, and Development, so a whole range of things. Most of our healthcare at the moment is in Gaza. We do a lot of healthcare in Gaza – primary healthcare, we don't have a hospital, but high-quality primary healthcare. So we have primary healthcare in Gaza and a small amount in the West Bank. We also have a clinic in Taybeh, which is a Christian village. That would be health," she told.

Emphasising the fact that Caritas serves "the needy and the marginalised, regardless of religion or colour or anything else," is important to Sr Bridget, as the region is called "home" to those of many faiths and ethnic backgrounds. This work sees their aid cutting across many sectors and demographics of society.

"We do work a lot with parishes. Not only with parishes, we work also with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Palestinian authority and the authorities in Gaza. We have very good relations. So, in the West Bank first, we have quite a bit of humanitarian aid to the poor and a day-care centre for the elderly in Ramallah, and a primary healthcare centre in Taybeh."

“While someone without first-hand experience of the area may be able to imagine these issues, there are other troubles that would escape consideration unless you knew the situation”



The Mobile Medical Teams' emergency response in Gaza.

She continued, "Then we have development work which is mostly – we have a sewing and dress design centre for vocational training and we have work with farmers to reclaim their land – help them to maintain ownership of their land and to make it more productive in Area C, which is land that's in danger of being confiscated from the borders. We have things like agri-tourism and development, too."

Operations in Gaza

However, Caritas Jerusalem's operations in Gaza hold a special place in Sr Bridget's heart, having lived there for three years. Keen to articulate

the unique difficulty of the situation across the Strip, she shared:

In Gaza when Covid appeared in March, it did not spread to the community in Gaza until August. Gaza is in blockade; one cannot get into Gaza unless they have permission. You have to have permission first from the Israelis, because the Israelis control the Erez crossing, or the other way is from the Sinai peninsula into Rafah, which is very, very difficult to get to," she said.

"So, the only positive thing that I can think of for Gaza about the blockade was that for the first five or six months of the outbreak, there was no outbreak of coronavirus in the community, because the authorities in Gaza were able to catch everyone coming in, either from Israel through Erez, or from Egypt through Rafah, and everyone who came in was immediately put into quarantine for 14 days, or maybe 21 days, so there was no outbreak of coronavirus in the



The Mobile Medical Teams' emergency response in Gaza.

community until recently," she revealed.

Despite their best efforts, the coronavirus is now a lived reality in Gaza. "It was amazing how they controlled it, but eventually, somehow, it got into the community and so now it is running rife through the community in Gaza."

Sr Bridget's concern over the situation in Gaza is multiplied by the fact that she can no longer access the people herself. While travel into the Gaza Strip is difficult at the best of times, since the advent of the coronavirus, it is impossible.

“In terms of funding, Caritas, along with the other charities of the world, are stretched to their limits at the moment, a sentiment Sr Bridget echoed.”

"I can't get into Gaza. I used to go in regularly. Since I came to live in Jerusalem, I used to go back every four to six weeks, or whenever it was needed. I haven't been back since February," she said.

Fortunately, she believes the Caritas operations in Gaza have been left in safe hands. "Now luckily, our person there is doing very well," she said.

"When I left, I handed it over to the young man who was my right-hand man when I was there. He's doing extremely well, and we have a very good health consultant there, medical consultant," she confided.

Drawing attention to the fact that a mere handful of people drive the efforts in the most stricken of places would cause some to despair, but Sr Bridget explained the real difference these few make on the ground. She explained one of the major changes Caritas have made in Gaza, to the good of those living there.

"So what we were asked to do by the Ministry of Health was to have medical teams, simple medical teams, prepared to go into action if there was an outbreak in the community, and we would be assigned different areas of the Gaza Strip, whereby the Ministry of Health would co-ordinate, through a free-phone, somebody who needed, if you were in lockdown, a doctor," she said.

"If it was not thought to be coronavirus, the nearest team would go to the home of that person. We had done our emergency contingency plan, we had got PPE, we were all trained and ready, and months went on and we were not called upon but then in August when we were called upon, they were immediately ready to go into action and we currently have five mobile medical teams. They're simple teams: a doctor, a nurse, and a driver, with basic medicine, and they're assigned areas of the Gaza Strip. They go and they wait, and then when there is a call through the Ministry of Health, they go to the home of the sick person. So that's what we're doing in Gaza in response to the spread of coronavirus in the Strip."

Painting the picture of Gaza as it is, Sr Bridget said, "This is a simple thing to say, 'We have mobile teams,' but actually, the situation in Gaza... it's important for you to know this; the pandemic is all over the world, so what's different about Gaza? We have the virus in Israel, ok. In Palestine, ok. You've got the virus in Ireland, you've got it everywhere, so you know, we're all in the same boat. But we're not all in the same boat, because the situation in Gaza is desperate. They are locked into a small area, hugely overcrowded, bad housing, run-down health provision and authority, very weak healthcare, lack of good medicine, maximum 100 ICU beds for a population of two million people, more than two million. I think 50 ventilators, and some of them not

working very well, so imagine that as the situation where there's an outbreak of coronavirus."

Issues

While someone without first-hand experience of the area may be able to imagine these issues, there are other troubles that would escape consideration unless you knew the situation.

"As well as that, the people are undernourished, the majority. There's electricity at the moment, at this present time, for anything between three and four hours a day, and the people don't know whether that will come on day or night in their area. This means there's no refrigeration available. The schools and everything are closed. If there's online provision of teaching from the schools, most of the children can't access it because they have no electricity. They might not have Wi-Fi, they might not have computers, so the place is not like any place else on earth. There's other poverty on earth, but not people locked in -they cannot move. Nobody can leave Gaza."

“Identifying with the Palestinian people through her Irish roots, Sr Bridget enjoys a warm reception among the people she helps.”

Speaking to the tendency to downplay the difference a small number of people can make, Sr Bridget told this paper, "Why I'm telling you this is: when I say we have these simple, little mobile teams ready to go wherever they're called, it means a huge amount to a person locked in, locked down, in these kind of situations...If they know that if someone is sick, just a phone call and a doctor and nurse will come to them in the house."

She concluded simply, "So that's what we're doing in Gaza."

In terms of funding, Caritas, along with the other charities of the world, are stretched to their limits at the moment, a sentiment Sr Bridget echoed.

Resource

"Caritas Internationalis has sent out a major appeal to all Caritas organisations, asking for help for Lebanon. So, desperate as Gaza is, the situation in Lebanon would take precedence. If donors' funds are limited, I think they would go to Lebanon, and rightly so," she said.

The grim reality of limited resources accepted without flinching, Sr Bridget and the entirety of Caritas Jerusalem are doing all they can to aid not only the people of Gaza, but those of the West Bank and Jerusalem city itself.

"In the West Bank, when the virus hit, of course it hit them very, very badly because immediately, everything was closed down. The first outbreak was in Bethlehem, and within a few days, people who were in the hotels were bussed to the airport. Everything closed down, and so since March, there are no tourists, no pilgrims. Bethlehem, and everyone who depended on the tourist and pilgrim industry in Bethlehem, is very, very badly hit. Very badly," she related.



Describing the state of the historic Old City of Jerusalem, she said, "The Old City is so sad...the Old City is dead. The shops are closed, the streets are empty, and we're not doing much in the Old City. Lots of other people are helping, like the Latin patriarch and things, but the people, the shop owners have to pay their rents. They have to pay a very high tax, even though they have no income. Many of them will probably go out of business. It's so sad to walk through the Old City, same in Bethlehem. It's empty, whereas before it would be buzzing."

"It's not just the tourist-pilgrim industry, hotels, restaurants, it's also guides, bus drivers, it's the people who work in the hotels, it's the souvenir shops. It's the people in the factories who make the olive wood, it's the truck drivers who carry the olive wood from up the north down to Bethlehem. It goes right through society. Everyone is touched by it. It's the woman who sells sandwiches near the workshop where people come out and buy their sandwich when they're making the olive wood. It's devastating, absolutely devastating," she said.

While the situation seems more desperate than ever, Sr Bridget and her team continue with their efforts, which as she pointed out earlier, are greatly appreciated by the recipients. Through parishes and with help from government authorities, Caritas are providing educational toys to children, food coupons and hygienic items such as hand sanitiser to families, PPE to those working with the vulnerable, day-care to the elderly, and meals and company to those living alone and 'cocooning'. God's love is tenderly communicated to those in need.

Identifying with the Palestinian people through her Irish roots, Sr Bridget enjoys a warm reception among the people she helps. She shared a story about an unexpected welcome upon her arrival in Gaza.

"I was new to Gaza and I had to get residence to reside in Gaza, so I eventually got it, which I don't think there are too many that have the residence from Hamas in Gaza, but anyway, so I went and I was there with somebody, and the person was very official, and you know, straight-laced, and he was asking me things. Then he said, 'Where are you from?' I said, 'Ireland,' and he smiled. He said, 'Welcome.'"

Despite the obvious difficulties, Sr Bridget and her team at Caritas Jerusalem are committed to carrying out the task inherent in their organisation's name: Loving those in need.



Out&About

Christians by Rite



ANTRIM: An RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) reception ceremony held in St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast yesterday afternoon celebrated by Bishop Noel Treanor. Pictured is Bishop Treanor with the RCIA candidates.



LIMERICK: Fr Chris O'Donnell and Eleanor and Johanna promote their online revision for those preparing for the Sacraments of First Confession and First Holy Communion. All candidates are invited to follow their short online revision course entitled: Come to the Table of the Lord. Videos and worksheets can be accessed on www.iCatholic.ie



WEXFORD: The Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo is pictured with Fr Jim Cogley and Bishop Denis Brennan at the conclusion of the annual pilgrimage to Our Lady's Island on September 8. Archbishop Okolo was celebrant and preacher at the concluding Mass at 11am.

IN SHORT

A different format for St Gerard Majella's Novena

The Annual Solemn Novena to St Gerard Majella has for over 90 years been a highlight for the faith community in Dundalk and many surrounding counties, due to Covid-19 it will move online this year.

Speaking about the novena, Fr Noel Kehoe CSsR, Rector of St Joseph's Monastery, Dundalk, said: "Each year it attracts up to 10,000 people and is truly a celebration of hope, new life and solace. Together with the people, the Redemptorist community look forward each year to these nine days of prayer and mutual Faith.

"For the past six months, living with Coronavirus has posed great challenges and uncertainty for all, and we have attempted to remain close to people and to pray with and accompany them. As the country began to open up from lockdown, we hoped that we could find some way of hosting the annual novena with people present, even with

significantly reduced numbers.

"However, in line with government guidelines and in view of the recent rise in numbers of Covid-19 cases, the community feel that it would be very irresponsible to host a popular event like a Novena that would inevitably attract many devotees of St Gerard."

Last Christmas, St Joseph's installed a webcam, which has become an "essential part of our ministry", Fr Kehoe said, "especially to those who cannot attend church".

"Although we cannot hold a big community celebration, this facility allows us to bring this year's novena online to be streamed to your homes."

The theme of this year's novena will be 'Hope in a time of crisis' and sessions will be streamed live at the following times: 7am, 10am, 7.30pm and 9pm. Recordings of sessions can be viewed at any time.

The church will remain closed during the streaming of the Novena sessions, which

means there will be some changes to the normal parish schedule.

The public celebration of the Eucharist will take place, with the usual restriction of numbers, at 8.30am and 9.30am (Monday to Saturday), and 9.30am, 11.00am and 12.30pm on Sunday.

These Masses will not be the novena sessions and are to facilitate those who attend daily Mass. The 7.30pm weekday mass and the Saturday night vigil at 6.30pm are suspended during the Novena.

"Our church will remain open each day until 6pm for private prayer, to write petitions and to purchase candles that will be burnt outside during the nine days. Petitions can also be sent by email or through our website," Fr Kehoe explained.

"Although this will be a very different event, we invite you to join us online in solidarity and prayer. In life, St Gerard Majella had a gift of making himself present to people in time of great need, especially to children and mothers in need. His powerful

intercession continues bring comfort and blessing in our need as we celebrate the gift of life. Following his example, we turn to God with open hearts and trust as we pray for the world at this time."

Novenas have always been part of the Redemptorist mission in Dundalk since they arrived in 1876. When St Gerard was beatified in 1893, a three-day mission was preached in Dundalk, and devotion to Blessed Gerard grew significantly around Dundalk. In the 1930s, Fr John Murray introduced the nine-day solemn Novena from October 8-16. So, the annual Novena has been part of Dundalk life for nearly 90 years. It began to grow however in its current format in the 1970s.

The webcam streaming service can be accessed via www.churchservices.tv/dundalk or www.redemptoristsdundalk.ie/live-webcam

Requests for further information or interview can be sent to Fr. Noel Kehoe C.Ss.R. at nkehoe@cssr.ie, 085 2244112.

Edited by Chai Brady
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Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



DERRY: Mrs Donnelly's P7 class from St Columba's Straw in Draperstown complete some Eco Schools work in their first week back.



DUBLIN: Fr Martin Hogan rings altar bells (the church bells are not in action due to work on the church) at 3pm on September 5 for frontline workers. Fr Hogan is the moderator of Clontarf parish.



DUBLIN: Archbishop Eamon Martin is pictured with Bro. Damien Casey OFM, standing with his family, after ordaining him to the diaconate at the Franciscan Church of Immaculate Conception (Adam and Eve's) at Merchant's Quay on Our Lady's birthday.



TYRONE: Past pupil Stephen Beattie from AB Coaching visits St Ciaran's College in Ballygawley. Stephen worked with their new Year 8 pupils last week in workshops that focused on resilience and wellbeing.



DERRY: Students from St Joseph's School in Creggan complete their induction back to school.



MAYO: John and Katie Gill celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage in Westport at the beginning of this month. It was the first wedding Fr Charlie McDonnell PP has celebrated since March.

Events

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



World Report

IN BRIEF

Nigerian archbishop builds house for physically challenged girl

● Archbishop Valerian Okeke of Onitsha on Tuesday blessed and handed over a house he helped build and furnish for Adaoma Aniwetalu, a physically challenged girl in his local Church.

Speaking during a ceremony on September 8, Archbishop Okeke said the house was part of the Church's "commitment towards charity and the need to uplift the burden faced by people, especially in this pandemic".

He also announced a scholarship offer for Ms Aniwetalu, saying: "She is placed on a fully-paid scholarship together with her friend (her helper)."

"May God always guide and protect her," the archbishop added.

'We're sitting on a powder keg', says Catholic bishop after beaten youth dies

● An Italian bishop spoke this week about a "climate of violence" after a 21-year-old man was beaten to death in a town south of Rome.

"It is something endemic, something which spreads, multiplies, and infects like the Covid virus," Bishop Vincenzo Apicella of Velletri-Segni told *Vatican News*.

"And if we do not find, I don't say a vaccine, but at least some antidote, we really risk that this other pandemic will overwhelm us all," he said. "We are sitting on a powder keg that can explode at any time and in any place we find ourselves."

Willy Monteiro Duarte, an Italian whose parents are from the African island nation of Cape Verde, was beaten to death in the Italian town of Colleferro in the early hours of September 6, after reportedly running into a fight to protect a friend.

Catholic Mass will continue at San Diego Naval bases

● Mass has returned to three Naval bases in the San Diego area after the US Navy reversed a decision to end contracts with civilian priests as a cost-saving measure.

"Contrary to previous discussions, this year we will continue contracted religious ministry programs and services similar to what we've had in place previously," said Rear Adm. Bette Bolivar, the commander of Navy Region Southwest, in a statement published the evening of September 8 in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*.

Previously, three Navy bases were left without a priest after the Navy announced that contracts

with civilian priests would not be renewed.

The three bases are served by civilian Catholic priests as there are not



enough Catholic chaplains in the Navy to handle the spiritual needs of Catholics assigned to them.

Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, was pleased with the decision to continue Masses at San Diego Navy bases.

Archbishop Gänswein hospitalised 'with severe kidney problems'

● Archbishop Georg Gänswein, prefect of the papal household and personal secretary to Benedict XVI, has been hospitalised in Rome.

CNA Deutsch reported on September 11 that the 64-year-old had been admitted to hospital "with severe kidney problems".

The news agency said it learned of the development on Friday from sources close to the archbishop. It added that no further details were currently available.

In 2003, Archbishop Gänswein became personal secretary to the future Pope Benedict XVI.

He was appointed prefect of the pontifical household in 2012, continuing in the role after the resignation of Benedict XVI and the election of Pope Francis the following year.

Vatican official visits Belarus after archbishop blocked at border

A senior Vatican official arrived in Belarus for talks after the leader of the country's Catholic Church was barred from returning to his homeland.

Belarusian state media reported on September 11 that Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher was in Belarus for four days of diplomatic talks a month after the country's disputed presidential election triggered widespread protests.

The visit of the Vatican's Secretary for Relations with States would include a meeting with Vladimir Makei, the Belarusian Minister of Foreign Affairs, the foreign ministry said.

Attention

The Holy See press office confirmed that Archbishop Gallagher had travelled to Belarus. It said that he intended "to express the attention and closeness of the Holy Father to the Catholic Church and to the whole country", adding that his program would include "meetings with the civil authorities and those in charge of the Catholic Church".

The Vatican diplomat's trip to Belarus comes a week after Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz of Minsk-Mohilev was



Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher.

denied entry to his homeland. Archbishop Kondrusiewicz, a Belarusian citizen, was turned back without explanation by border guards when he attempted to return to Belarus following a trip to Poland.

Archbishop Kondrusiewicz, the president of the country's Catholic bishops' conference, had spoken out in defence of protesters after they were targeted by

police following the election in which the incumbent, Alexander Lukashenko, claimed victory with 80% of the vote.

The archbishop demanded an investigation into reports that riot police blocked the doors of a Catholic church in the capital, Minsk, while clearing away protesters from a nearby square. Earlier he had prayed outside of a prison where detained pro-

testers were reported to have been tortured.

Bishop Yuri Kasabutsky, an auxiliary bishop of Minsk-Mogilev archdiocese, said that the sudden cessation of the broadcasts showed that the authorities were attempting to "put pressure" on the Catholic Church.

Since the election, opposition leaders have been exiled or detained.

Prayer

Catholics, who are the second largest religious group in Belarus after Orthodox Christians, have been praying for Archbishop Kondrusiewicz's return to the country.

The decision to turn the archbishop away at the border meant that he was unable to lead a long-awaited celebration this week of the 600th anniversary of a Catholic parish in Zaslawye, a city north-west of Minsk.

In a message read out at the celebrations, he said: "Even when the church was closed and atheistic propaganda said that religion was the 'opium of the people', its majestic sacred architecture, visible even in ruins, spoke for itself. While on the hill, the church has called, and continues to call, man to look up to God, who is the Lord of history."

Brazilians mark annual Cry of the Excluded with demonstrations

The fight against poverty and social inequalities, as well as harsh criticism of President Jair Bolsonaro's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic dictated this year's Cry of the Excluded protests. Despite the ongoing pandemic, several cities had live demonstrations to mark the annual event, sponsored by the Brazilian bishops' conference.

"We are in difficult times. The coronavirus pandemic has already killed thousands of people; thousands of families are suffering from having lost loved ones. Unfortunately, there is

an omission on the part of the Brazilian government, unwillingness to resolve health issues," stated this year's letter to Catholics from the bishops. This year's motto was 'Enough of misery, prejudice and repression! We want work, land, housing and participation!'

Protests were held in at least 15 of the 27 Brazilian states, and many dioceses held virtual events to mark the occasion, already in its 26th year.

Protesters also participated in religious celebrations, held meetings with the homeless, distributed food

baskets and hygiene materials and planted trees.

"More than an articulation, the Cry is a process, a popular manifestation full of symbolism, which integrates people, groups, entities, churches and social movements committed to the causes of the excluded. It springs from the ground, is ecumenical and lived in the practice of popular struggles for rights," says part of the historical document about the events.

First minor basilica in Central Asia is named

The Vatican has named a church in Kazakhstan as the first minor basilica in Central Asia.

The Minor Basilica of St Joseph in Karaganda was built at the request of persecuted Catholics who had been exiled to the Kazakh Soviet Socialist

Republic by the Soviet Union.

"Our beautiful church was built 40 years ago. At that time, the Catholic people had already been deported to Kazakhstan by the Soviet Union. It was atheism, and the priests stayed in the prison and in the camps,"

Fr Evgeniy Zinkovskiy, vicar general of the Diocese of Karaganda, told *CNA*.

Fr Vladimir Dzurenda, the current rector of the Minor Basilica of St Joseph, told *CNA* that the cathedral had become a "symbol of the revival of Catholics

both in the period of the Soviet Union and in modern Kazakhstan".

"The parish of St Joseph was one of the few churches that was allowed to be built in the 70s in Kazakhstan when it was part of the Soviet Union," he added.



Edited by Jason Osborne
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New UK survey: 4% of Catholics will not return to church after pandemic

Only a small minority of British Catholics said they would not return to worship in church when the coronavirus pandemic is fully over, according to a new survey.

Just 4% of people interviewed in the study, conducted between May 19 and July 26, said they would abandon going to church when restrictions are finally lifted.

The findings of the poll of 2,500 people by Catholic Voices, a group set up in the UK in 2010 to improve communications between the church and the media, contradict the predictions of some Catholics that the Covid-19 crisis would irrevocably accelerate the decline of collective worship among the faithful.

Brenden Thompson, CEO of Catholic Voices, said he was "pleasantly surprised by many of the findings".

"Catholics miss their parishes and church buildings and seem eager to return, not just content with 'virtual church'," he said in a statement.

"Many, it seems, by and large, have backed the bishops, been grateful for the efforts of clergy to livestream, and many have even felt at times closer to God and been more prayerful than usual," he said.

Challenges

"That said, the challenges ahead are real, so if we want to capitalise on this goodwill, we need to start thinking seriously about the conversations that need to happen as more and more begin returning to parishes," he added.

The British study revealed that 93% of those interviewed worshipped by watching Mass online during lockdown via streams provided largely by dioceses and parish

churches, and that 66% appreciated the virtual services.

But 61% of those interviewed said they wished to revert to regular Mass attendance when the churches fully reopened, with 35% saying

they would worship online only occasionally at that point – if the service remained available.

"It seems that virtual worship during the lockdown has been generally well received,"

said the study, published on September 9.

"While it may remain something that some people might dip into in the future, few would stop attending church altogether," it said.

At the heart of the anguish



Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, papal almoner, is pictured exiting a tent in the informal Moria refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos. Photo: CNS

Europe should be 'ashamed' after refugee camp fire – cardinal

A cardinal said that Europe should be "ashamed" after fire devastated the continent's largest refugee camp, leaving 13,000 people without shelter.

In a September 9 interview with *Vatican Radio*, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, president of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE),

lamented the destruction of the Moria camp on the Greek island of Lesbos.

He said: "I think it's a shame for Europe because it's not only camp Moria that's on fire, but it's the identity of Europe which is on fire. People came to Europe for help in their distress and we left them on a small Greek island. Many words, but no deeds.

Europe should be ashamed because this is the result of the despair in the heart of people."

Ruin

Fire broke out at the camp, which was built to house 3,000 people, on the evening of September 8. The blaze spread quickly due to high winds and by the following

morning most of the camp was a smoking ruin.

The cause of the fire is currently unclear. Greek Migration Minister Notis Mitarachi said that the blaze "began with the asylum seekers" after quarantine was imposed following an outbreak of Covid-19. But he did not say that the fires were the result of arson.

Vatican roundup

Holy See: corruption, real danger for peace and security

● In a discourse delivered to the final meeting of the 28th Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Economic and Environmental Forum, Archbishop Charles Balvo, Apostolic Nuncio to the Czech Republic and Head of the Holy See's Delegation, underlined that "corruption is a real danger to the peace and security of our OSCE region".

The Archbishop also said: "There is reason to be concerned that the vast amount of funds released for Covid-19 pandemic recovery has already attracted criminal activities, which include the risk that those most in need of financial support will remain without the urgently necessary help."

The Archbishop said it was important to acknowledge that "corruption occurs, to varying degrees, in each of the OSCE participating States".

"Only by acknowledging the existence of corruption will we be able to fight against it," he added.

While the current pandemic is a "tremendous test" for the international community, Archbishop Balvo pointed out, it provides a real opportunity "to seek new and innovative solutions that are not divisive, politicised or partial".

'Never again to the culture of abuse', says Francis

● Pope Francis has written a prologue to a recently published book on sexual abuse in the Catholic Church entitled 'Theology and Prevention'.

"Fighting against abuse means fostering and empowering communities capable of watching and announcing that all life deserves to be respected and valued, especially those of the most defenceless who do not have the resources to make their voices heard," Pope Francis wrote in the

introduction to the book.

"In this most recent time in the Church we were challenged to face this conflict, accept it and suffer it together with the victims, their families and the entire community, to find ways that make us say: never again to the culture of abuse," the Pope said.

The book, *Theology and Prevention: A Study on Sexual Abuse in the Church*, was published in Spanish this month by Sal Terrae and edited by Fr Daniel Portillo Trevizo.

'Real, not virtual, people at the centre of education'

● Despite the world's educational system taking a battering under the Covid-19 pandemic with distance learning, the Vatican reaffirms the direct and interpersonal relationship of exchange and dialogue between teachers and students as indispensable for the learning process.

The Congregation for Catholic Education stressed the point in a letter published last Thursday. It is addressed to Catholic schools, universities and educational institutions around the world.

The letter laments that educational systems have suffered under the pandemic at both the school and academic levels under the Covid-19 lockdowns. The effectiveness of distance learning using digital platforms, the Congregation notes, has been conditioned by a marked disparity in educational and technological opportunities. Citing agencies, it said, "some 10 million children will not have access to education in the coming years, increasing the already existing educational gap".

Under Covid-19, distance learning has been necessary. Yet, it has shown that the educational environment is made up of people who meet, interacting directly and "in presence", is not simply an accessory context to the educational activity. Rather, it is the very substance of that relationship of exchange and dialogue (between teachers and learners). This, the Congregation stresses, is indispensable for the formation of the person and for a critical understanding of reality.



World Report

IN BRIEF

Tabernacle found after theft from Ontario cathedral

● The tabernacle that was stolen from the St Catherine of Alexandria Cathedral in St Catharines, Ontario was recovered on Wednesday, September 9.

A group of parishioners from the cathedral discovered the tabernacle in Centennial Park, which is located near the cathedral. The tabernacle was partially submerged in a canal, and parts of the ciborium were missing.

According to local media, the Eucharist was not found in the tabernacle, but because it was in a body of water, it may have dissolved.

Fr Donald Lizzotti, rector of the cathedral, told *CNA* that he believed the thieves had previously cased the cathedral to determine how to steal the tabernacle.

Fr Lizzotti said that the police were unable to find fingerprints and they believe the thieves had wiped the scene clean.

Preparations resume for World Youth Day in Portugal

● Preparations for the next World Youth Day have resumed after they were disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Organisers of the event in Lisbon, Portugal, restarted their work on September 5, according to *Vatican News*.

Bishop Américo Aguiar, an auxiliary bishop of Lisbon and president of the WYD Lisbon 2023 Foundation, told the website that Pope Francis was following developments.

"The Pope is very pleased, but also reassured because he is aware that the preparatory work for WYD is progressing," he said.

The Pope announced that the Portuguese capital would host the global Catholic gathering of young people at the closing Mass of the last international World Youth Day, in Panama City, on January 27, 2019.

Catholic Mass is taken off the airwaves in Belarus

● A Mass broadcast to Catholics across Belarus has disappeared from the airwaves amid political upheaval following a disputed presidential election.

The Sunday morning Mass was broadcast from the Cathedral of the Holy Name of Mary in the capital, Minsk, by the largest nationwide radio channel in Belarus.

Fr Anthony Klimantovich, the cathedral rector, said that the Mass did not appear on the radio schedule for September, the website of the Catholic Church in Belarus reported.

"Why is there no Mass



Protests continue in Minsk. on the radio? This is definitely not our fault and not for technical reasons," he said.

"Holy Mass is still celebrated in the cathedral at 8.15am every Sunday, the equipment is working properly, and the signal goes, but there is no broadcast."

Christian in Pakistan sentenced to death for blasphemy

● A Pakistani court sentenced Asif Pervaiz, a Christian, to death on charges of blasphemy.

The September 8 sentencing by a court in Lahore arose from charges that Mr Pervaiz, 37, included insulting remarks about Muhammad in a text message sent to Muhammad Saeed Khokher, his supervisor at the garment factory where he had worked.

Pakistan's state religion is Islam, and around 97% of the population is Muslim. The country's blasphemy laws impose strict punishment on those who desecrate the Quran or who defame or insult Muhammad. Although the government has never executed a person under the blasphemy laws, accusations alone have inspired mob and vigilante violence.

Mr Pervaiz was also sentenced to a fine of 50,000 Pakistani rupees (\$300), and three years' imprisonment.

China's foreign ministry: Vatican deal has been 'implemented successfully'

A spokesman for China's foreign ministry said that China's interim deal with the Vatican has been "implemented successfully".

He made the remark days before the provisional agreement signed by the Vatican and China on September 22, 2018, is due to expire.

"With the concerted efforts from both sides, the interim agreement on the appointment of bishops between China and the Vatican has been implemented successfully since it was signed around two years ago," Zhao Lijian, spokesman for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said at a press conference on September 10.

Bloomberg reported that two anonymous sources had said that the deal would be renewed in the coming weeks.

Following the agreement, and in line with the Chinese Communist Party's program of "sinicisation", state officials in different regions of China have continued to remove crosses and demolish church buildings, and underground Catholics and clergy continue to report harassment and detention.

The Chinese government spokesman went on to say that the Vatican and China had "accumulated more



mutual trust and consensus through a series of positive interactions" since the beginning of 2020, citing mutual support during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Pandemic

During the coronavirus pandemic, the state-affiliated Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Zhejiang Province's Chinese Catholic educational administration committee issued new regulations on the reopening of churches requiring Chinese "patriotism" to be added to the celebration of the liturgy.

On July 1, a National Security Law came into force in

Hong Kong that criminalises new categories of "secession", "subversion", "terrorism" and "collusion with foreign forces". Anyone convicted under the law will receive a minimum of 10 years in prison, with the possibility of a life sentence.

Cardinal Joseph Zen, emeritus Bishop of Hong Kong, has said that he has "no confidence" that the new National Security Law will respect the religious freedom of Catholics.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has mandated the "sinicisation" of all religions in China, a move which the U.S. Commission on International

Religious Freedom called "a far-reaching strategy to control, govern, and manipulate all aspects of faith into a socialist mould infused with 'Chinese characteristics'".

Since the Vatican-China deal was signed, Pope Francis has not spoken publicly about the plight of the Uyghurs or the Hong Kong protest movement.

The terms of the 2018 provisional agreement between the Holy See and China have not been released. However, it is known that the accord aimed to regularise the country's government-appointed bishops who had been out of communion with Rome.

Syro-Malabar synod urges dioceses to set up cremation facilities in India

The Synod of the Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church has recommended setting up crematoriums in dioceses amid the worsening Covid-19 pandemic.

"Though burying the dead bodies is the practice in the Church, the (Eastern-rite) canon law permits cremation in times of pandemic," said a statement from Cardinal George Alencherry, major archbishop of the Church.

The synod said remains should be buried in cemeteries.

The Covid-19 situation in India has been worsening; India, with more than

4.3 million cases, is now second after the United States.

"Burying the Covid bodies poses a serious challenge to the church in Kerala due to our high density of population and cramped cemeteries," Syro-Malabar Bishop Pauly Kannookadan of Irinjalakuda told *Catholic News Service*.

Density

Kerala state, a 360-mile strip of land on the Arabian Sea coast, has a population density three times the national average. The state has nearly 35 million people, 18% of whom are Christian.

Church cemeteries are short of burial space for Covid-19 protocols, which call for deep graves.

"I proposed (in July) cremation before burying the ashes in the church cemetery with the funeral prayers. I had to face a lot of backlash for that," Bishop Kannookadan said.

Police registered a criminal case and even arrested a Catholic for making a derogatory video against the bishop and sharing it on social media for his proposal of adopting the Hindu tradition of cremating the dead.

Rebels release missionary sisters captured in Mozambique

Two missionary sisters captured by rebels in northern Mozambique were released unharmed after 24 days, according to their congregation, the Sisters of St Joseph of Chamerby.

Sr Maria Inez Leite Ramos and Sr Eliane Costa Santana, both originally from Brazil,

were reported missing on August 11 after rebels claiming to belong to the Islamic State group captured the port town of Mocimboa da Praia. The sisters were released on September 6.

"The sisters are now staying outside of the Cabo Delgado area. They are resting

and being attended to by medical personal," their congregation said.

Bishop Luiz Lisboa of Pemba, the diocese that includes the port town, had told *Vatican News* about the sisters' disappearance in mid-August when he recounted how Pope Francis had tel-

ephoned him to offer encouragement and consolation as the Cabo Delgado province experienced increasing violence, the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic on top of a cholera outbreak, natural disasters and the displacement of tens of thousands of people.

Queueing for a living



Displaced people wait in line for food distribution on September 10 after fires broke out the previous day at the Moria refugee camp on the island of Lesbos, Greece. Photo: CNS

Drowning man saved by floating tiki bar full of priests

When Jimmy Macdonald found himself floundering in the waters of Lake George in New York next to his tipped kayak, he thought he might die.

He had been enjoying an August day on the lake with his family, meditating and taking pictures. He kept his lifejacket in the boat – he didn't think he would need it, he told *Glens Falls Living*.

But his kayak ended up drifting, and suddenly he found himself far from shore and from his wife and stepchildren. Despite the rough waters, he still thought he could make it back to shore, and so he waved on several boats that had stopped to offer help.

But when his kayak tipped and his hastily-donned lifejacket came up to his ears, Mr Macdonald knew he was in real trouble.

"I thought I was going to die. I was absolutely powerless and wished I had asked for help earlier. I was waving my hand and asked God to please help me," he said.

God answered his prayers – but not in the form of Jesus walking on water.

"And then, out of the corner of my eye, I saw the tiki boat."

Retreat

Aboard the floating bar boat were seminarians and priests of the Paulist Fathers from St Joseph's Seminary in Washington, DC. The Catholic religious community had been on retreat nearby and were taking a break on a boat rented from Tiki Tours.

A handful of the seminarians and priests helped the Tiki Tours staff hoist Mr Macdonald to safety.

Noah Ismael, one of the seminarians aboard the boat, told *NBC Washington* that it was "a movement of the Holy Spirit" that they happened upon Macdonald at the right time.

Chris Malano, another seminarian, told *WNYT* that as Paulist seminarians, they are missionaries, and "that day, that was our mission, to be present and to help someone in need".

Mr Macdonald told *WNYT* that he took the rescue as a "sign from God" that his life still has a purpose on earth.

He also added that he found the rescue funny, in an ironic sense. Macdonald is an addict in recovery who counsels others through addiction recovery.

"How funny is it that I've been sober for seven years and I get saved by a tiki bar?" he said.

Queensland law requires priests to break confessional seal

The legislature of the Australian state of Queensland has passed a law requiring priests to violate the seal of confession to report known or suspected child sex abuse.

Failure to do so can be punished with three years in prison.

Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane has said such a reporting requirement would "not make a difference

to the safety of young people" and that the bill was based on a "poor knowledge of how the sacrament actually works in practice".

Last week the Australian bishops provided the federal government with the Holy See's observations on 12 recommendations of a 2017 report on child sex abuse in the country's institutions.

In response to a recom-

mendation regarding the seal of confession and absolution, the Holy See reiterated the inviolability of the seal and that absolution cannot be conditioned on future actions in the external forum.

Obligation

Mark Ryan, the Queensland police minister and a member of the Australian Labour Party, said that "the requirement

and quite frankly the moral obligation to report concerning behaviours towards children applies to everyone in this community" and that "no one group or occupation is being singled out".

Archbishop Coleridge has also said the law would make priests "less a servant of God than an agent of the state" and raise "major questions about religious freedom".

Vatican roundup

Bangladesh Catholic hospitals treat Covid-19 patients with Pope's ventilators

● The Catholic Church of Bangladesh has expressed its gratitude to Pope Francis for donating three ventilators in the country's fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Donated through the Apostolic Nuncio, a ventilator was sent to Dhaka and the others were sent to two Catholic hospitals in Dinajpur and Jessore.

Holy See's Press Office had announced on June 26 that the Pope had donated 35 ventilators to 13 countries with fragile healthcare systems, as a gesture of his closeness and support in their fight against the Covid-19 virus.

Among the beneficiaries Haiti, Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela, Cameroon, Bangladesh, Ukraine and Zimbabwe.

Fr Kamal Corraya, Executive Director of the St John Vianney Hospital in Dhaka, which received one of the ventilators, said the Pope's gift for their intensive care unit has been a blessing. "It will be very useful for assisting coronavirus patients," he told the Vatican's *Fides* news agency.

In Bangladesh, the Catholic Church manages 12 hospitals, 78 dispensaries, six leper hospitals, 15 homes for the elderly and the disabled.

Agreement between Holy See and Burkina Faso comes into effect

● An agreement between the Holy See and the State of Burkina Faso guarantees the Church the possibility of carrying out her mission in the west African nation.

The Accord, which entered into effect on Monday, was finalised after being signed at the Vatican on July 12, 2019.

A statement released by the Holy See Press Office notes that the agreement recognises the "public legal personality of the Church and its institutions".

The Holy See and the State of Burkina Faso, "while safeguarding their own independence and autonomy, undertake to work together for the moral, spiritual and material well-being of the human person and for the promotion of the common good".

Burkina Faso is located in West Africa, and is surrounded by Mali, Niger, Benin, Togo, Ghana, and Ivory Coast. Some 20% of the population of 21 million people is Catholic.

May we turn our frontiers into spaces for mutual enrichment – Francis

● Pope Francis greeted participants of the European project 'Snapshots from the Borders' by describing their project as "a forward-thinking one". He said that through it, they are promoting a "deeper comprehension of migration", allowing European societies to "give a more human and coordinated response to the challenges of modern-day migration".

Snapshots from the Borders is a project aimed at informing European citizens about the realities surrounding migration today.

For the past three years, the organisation has been bringing voices and effective solutions from borders where hot-button issues regarding migration are a concrete reality raising awareness, sharing knowledge, encouraging participation and showing citizens that they have an important role to play.

Pope Francis went on to state that "the current migration scenario is complex and often has dramatic implications". The global interdependencies that determine migration flows should be studied and better understood, he said, adding that the many challenges affecting the world are challenges affecting everyone.

"No one can remain indifferent to the human tragedies that continue to occur in different regions of the world," he said.



Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

Watch Catholics at most parishes when it comes time for the homily at Sunday Mass, and you'll see body language and facial expressions not unlike the waiting rooms of dentists' offices and traffic court. It's a sense of anticipation, sure, but not the good kind.

Catholics actually love to gripe about boring homilies, so much so that a 2019 book titled *The Crisis of Bad Preaching* called "hollow, vacuous preaching" perhaps "the most common complaint of Catholics around the world".

It's only fair, therefore, that when we hear a good homily – one that actually "breaks open the Word", firing the mind and touching the heart – we say so. In that spirit, a tip of the cap is in order for Fr Nicola Gallucci, pastor of our neighbourhood Church of Santa Maria Regina Apostolorum here in Rome.

Fr Gallucci is a member of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, better known as the 'Pallotti Fathers' after St Vincent Pallotti, who founded the order in the mid-19th Century in an effort to respond to the misery he saw in Rome during the *fin de régime* period of the Papal States.

Pallotti priests are known for being close to the people they serve, and Fr Gallucci certainly demonstrated it on Sunday.

Mercy

The day's Gospel reading concerns mercy, containing the well-known expression from Jesus that his followers are expected to forgive not seven times but 'seventy times seven', functionally meaning 'always'.

As Fr Gallucci noted, most people have heard that statement, and things like it, over and over again, so much so that it just goes in one ear and out the other. What's been lost, he said, is the edge to the Gospel, any sense of how just how demanding and radical the Christian concept of forgiveness actually is.

Realising that just saying so wouldn't do the trick, he said he was going to give us a couple of concrete cases.

"You may not like what I have to say," he told us, smiling, "and that's fine. You can think about it, and then you can go talk to God."

He began with a recent tragedy surrounding 21-year-old Willy

A homily that brought home what it is to forgive



Pope Francis delivering a talk on the subject of forgiveness in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican in 2018, a theme which was picked up by Fr Nicola Gallucci of the Church of Santa Maria Regina Apostolorum in Rome; inset, a plaque on the Ardeatine Caves in Rome, site of a 1944 massacre by the Nazis that left 335 Romans dead.

Monteiro Duarte, a black son of immigrants from Cape Verde, beaten to death by four young men in the small town of Colleferro on the southern tip of Rome on September 6.

Fr Gallucci described how horrified Romans have been by the incident, how appalling they find the behaviour of these four young men, body-builders and martial arts enthusiasts known in their neighbourhood for being violent and hot-headed, and who apparently attacked Mr Duarte as a sort of sick recreational activity – possibly because they thought they could get away with it since he was a migrant, who are often nearly invisible in Italian society.

Then Fr Gallucci brought home his point.

"We all weep for Willy, and we're praying for him," he said. "We find what these four guys did disgusting, and many of us would probably be prepared to say they deserve the death penalty."

"But how many of us would forgive them?" he asked. "If they were to change their hearts and repent, would we be ready to forgive?"

That, Fr Gallucci said, is the demand of the Gospel – to forgive not only those who deserve it but those who absolutely don't, in the spirit of a God "who never, ever closes the door on a sinne".

* * * * *

Last Thursday marked the anniversary of the German occupation of Rome in 1943, which brought Fr Gallucci to his second case: Erich Priebke, a former Nazi SS officer and Gestapo agent who took part in the 1944 massacre at the Ardeatine Caves in Rome, the worst civilian atrocity of the Second World War.

The 335 victims were made up of 75 Jews in addition to other Romans from all walks of life, including a priest, Father Pietro Pappagallo, an outspoken anti-fascist. Their deaths came in reprisal for an attack by Italian partigiani on a column of SS troops that killed 33, in keeping with Hitler's policy in occupied territories that ten locals need to die for every one German killed by resistance forces.

After the war, Priebke escaped to Argentina using the infamous 'ratline' of Austrian Bishop Alois Hudal, living there for the next

half-century. In the mid-1990s he was finally identified and extradited to Italy, and after a lengthy legal process he was sentenced to life in prison. Less than a decade later he was given permission to serve his sentence at home, and he died in 2013.

“At the end of Mass, Fr Gallucci told us to go home and pray for the gift of mercy and forgiveness – ‘not how the world sees it...’”

By now, there are only a handful of Romans still alive who experienced the occupation, but memories of the brutality and hardship, and above all what happened at the Fosse Ardeatine, are handed down within Roman families from one generation to the next.

Knowing that, Fr Gallucci provocatively asked: "Who here didn't want to see the death penalty for Priebke?" He paused for a moment, almost daring anyone to dissent – knowing full well that

some people in the Church might well have lost family members in the massacre.

He then asked if we could also bring ourselves to forgive Priebke.

Driving home the day's message, when the moment rolled around to say the Our Father, Fr Gallucci instructed us not to pronounce the phrase "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us". Instead, he told us to insert the name of someone we have a hard time forgiving – "usually, it's somebody obvious", he said.

As we recited that line of the prayer, a quiet murmur of different names floated through the air.

At the end of Mass, Fr Gallucci told us to go home and pray for the gift of mercy and forgiveness – "not how the world sees it," he said, "but the radical Christian concept of forgiveness."

I've heard more homilies on mercy than I can remember, especially given that I covered Pope Francis' Jubilee of Mercy here in Rome. I don't know, however, that I've ever heard a priest challenge my grasp of exactly what Christianity is asking of me quite as effectively as Fr Gallucci.

It's a reminder that 'bad' is not quite the only brand of Catholic preaching, and maybe we should ... well, maybe we should forgive the duds we hear a bit more readily.

1 John L. Allen Jr is Editor of Cruxnow.com

“Fr Gallucci described how horrified Romans have been by the incident, how appalling they find the behaviour of these four young men, body-builders...who apparently attacked Mr Duarte as a sort of sick recreational activity. Then Fr Gallucci brought home his point”

Cardinal says return to public Mass 'necessary and urgent'



Inés San Martín

Calling it “necessary and urgent” to return to public Masses as soon as Covid-19 measures permit, the Vatican’s top official for liturgy has urged Catholic bishops around the world not to let religious worship be relegated to a priority level below “recreational activities” or treated as just another public gathering.

Signed by Cardinal Robert Sarah of Guinea, Prefect of the Vatican’s Congregation for Divine Worship, the letter came with the approval of Pope Francis.

Cardinal Sarah argues that although the Catholic Church should cooperate with civil authorities and adopt protocols to protect the safety of the faithful, “liturgical norms are not matters on which civil authorities can legislate, but only the competent ecclesiastical authorities”.

He also insisted that broadcast and livestreamed Masses are useful, but they’re no replacement for being physically present.

“No broadcast is equivalent to personal participation, nor can it substitute for that participation,” the cardinal wrote.

Online

Since the coronavirus pandemic broke out in March, most bishops’ conferences, following Pope Francis’ lead, closed the liturgy and other sacraments to the faithful, asking for them to be made available online and via TV and radio. Leading by example, Francis livestreamed his daily Masses from his residence at the Vatican’s Casa Santa Marta, drawing sizeable audiences on Youtube and Italian TV.

In Italy, the government of Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte greenlighted the resumption of public Masses in late May, on the advice of a technical-scientific committee that’s been overseeing the country’s response to the Covid crisis, which saw the pope end his daily livestream.

In other parts of the world, including the pontiff’s former archdiocese in Buenos Aires, Masses are still being celebrated without faithful or with extreme restrictions, which have led some critics to claim a double standard when 15 people are allowed into a grocery store but only 10 into a church.

Cardinal Sarah wrote the letter on August 15, it was approved by Pope Francis on September 3, and then sent to bishops’ conferences



Fr Reginaldo Manzotti prays during Mass with photos of his parishioners taped to the pews in the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Curitiba, Brazil, where the public have not been able to gather for the Eucharist since Covid-19 emerged. Photo: CNS

worldwide last week. The Vatican released the text of the letter Saturday.

* * * * *

The 72-year-old Guinean cardinal, often seen as a conservative stalwart in the Church, praised bishops and episcopal conferences for “listening to, and collaborating with, civil authorities and experts”, saying bishops have been “prompt to make difficult and painful decisions, even to the point of suspending the participation of the faithful in the celebration of the Eucharist for a long period”.

“As soon as is possible, we must return to the Eucharist with a purified heart, with a renewed amazement, with an increased desire to meet the Lord...”

“This congregation is deeply grateful to the bishops for their commitment and effort in trying to respond in the best possible way to an unforeseen and complex situation,” he wrote.

Cardinal Sarah, named by Pope

Francis to his present post in 2014, titled the letter ‘Let us return to the Eucharist with Joy’.

He insists that when circumstances allow, it’s “necessary and urgent to return to the normality of Christian life, which has the church building as its home and the celebration of the liturgy, especially the Eucharist, as the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; and at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows.”

“As soon as is possible,” he wrote, “we must return to the Eucharist with a purified heart, with a renewed amazement, with an increased desire to meet the Lord, to be with Him, to receive Him and to bring Him to our brothers and sisters with the witness of a life full of faith, love and hope.”

We “cannot be without the Christian community”, the cardinal added, “cannot be without the house of the Lord”, “cannot be without the Lord’s Day”.

When the only Masses available are through broadcast technologies, Cardinal Sarah says, “these transmissions...risk moving us away from a personal and intimate encounter with the incarnate God who gave himself to us not in a

virtual way, but in a real way.

“This physical contact with the Lord is vital, indispensable, irreplaceable,” he said.

* * * * *

For the most part, Pope Francis has supported the restrictive measures imposed in Italy and other parts of the world. He halted all public Masses and other events in the Vatican during the Italian lockdown, used one of his daily Masses to urge “obedience” to Covid-19 measures, and at one point even said priests who defied the restrictions were engaged in “adolescent resistance”.

“Obedience safeguards the treasure entrusted to the Church”

In his letter, Cardinal Sarah said that bishops’ conferences should give “due attention” to “hygiene and safety regulations” while avoiding the “sterilisation of gestures and rites” or “instilling, even unconsciously, fear and insecurity”.

The prelate also asked the Faithful to be obedient to the norms of the Church and to the bishops, arguing that this is a “sure

principle in order not to err”.

“In times of difficulty (e.g. wars, pandemics), bishops and episcopal conferences can give provisional norms which must be obeyed,” the cardinal wrote. “Obedience safeguards the treasure entrusted to the Church. These measures given by the bishops and episcopal conferences expire when the situation returns to normal.”

Signatory

In May, Cardinal Sarah was initially presented as a signatory of a letter penned by Italian Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, the former papal ambassador in the US who accused Pope Francis both of doctrinal error and of covering up sex abuse charges against former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick. Archbishop Viganò’s letter argued that the pandemic is being exploited in order to pave the way for a one-world government.

Cardinal Sarah quickly asked that his name be removed from the list of signatories, tweeting that while “I may share some questions or preoccupations raised regarding restrictions on fundamental freedom, I didn’t sign that petition”.

📍 Inés San Martín is a reporter for Cruxnow.com

Letters

Letter of the week

Bishop Dempsey: seizing the moment to evangelise

Dear Editor, I was delighted to read in your issue of September 3 of the episcopal ordination of Fr Paul Dempsey. Although not from New-bridge, I attended a christening in his parish church a short while back and was inspired by the way in which Fr Dempsey delivered his homily on the importance of faith in the lives of young people and the pivotal role of parenting in nurturing this great gift of love, joy and hope.

It was inspiring to see a priest unashamedly expound the 'joy of the Gospel' to what was a largely indifferent congregation at the beginning of the christening. He seized the moment to evangelise and many

would have left with something to ponder in their own faith journey.

In the article it was refreshing to see Bishop Dempsey re-emphasise the importance of the Second Vatican Council, which was not so much about modernising the Church but about unlocking the great transformative light of the Gospel and bringing that light into the world.

The unfortunate truth is that this light is not seen or felt by a vast majority in our society today as evidenced by the very low attendance at Mass and the epidemic of hopelessness, anxiety and depression amongst our young people.

The responsibility to evangelise not

only lies with the parish priest but with the laity. All baptised Christians have a responsibility to be in 'mission mode'. Our priests may need an injection of impetus from the pews to realise Bishop Dempsey's vision for the Church.

Our Church is a living and breathing organism dependent on one another rather than a church building with four walls and a sacristy. Not so much a Church with a mission but a mission with a Church. With Bishop Dempsey's episcopal ordination, I feel we are a step closer to true vision of Vatican II.

Yours etc.,
Brian O'Hanlon,
Dundalk, Co. Louth.

Artistic image of Christ is 'profound'

Dear Editor, The AI-generated image of Christ on page 3 of *The Irish Catholic* [IC10/09/2020] was striking to say the least.

There are so many different artistic representations of Christ in the world today but this image I felt really captured something many others haven't. In my opinion the warmth and holiness the image exudes is profound and a credit to the Dutch artist behind it, Bas Uterwijk.

Furthermore, the images of Christ in western Europe are generally of someone who is white which couldn't be accurate considering He was born in the Middle East.

Yours etc.,
Maureen Brady,
Cork City, Cork.



Covid-19 has brought 'epidemic of loneliness'

Dear Editor, I was quite upset to read an article in your recent edition [IC10/09/2020] which revealed that nuns have been receiving an increased number of calls from distressed and lonely people. This is of no surprise to me, this epidemic of loneliness, but it's still hard to read in black and white.

People have been suffering, many in silence,

for six months, cocooning and doing what they can to protect each other from this terrible virus. However, something has to give, the way we are living now is unnatural and will lead to huge mental health problems in the future and I know many people are struggling to cope, that's why we see these protests against the restrictions in Dublin. I don't agree with

racism or the like – it seems the protest was organised/attended by some less than savoury people – but I'd say the majority of protestors are just furious with how the Government have handled this, which I think is understandable.

I hope the new plans set out by State authorities to help us 'live with the virus' will be far better than how they have responded so far.

Many elderly people died as a result of their negligence, many more I fear may die due to fear of attending health services and mental health issues.

This cannot and should not happen, the people of Ireland deserve better than our inadequate Government.

Yours etc.,
John Ryan,
Tallaght,
Co. Dublin.

Archdiocese's redundancies 'sad' but Church will endure

Dear Editor, The article by Chai Brady entitled 'Dublin Diocese sees mass exodus of staff due to pandemic' [IC 10/09/2020] was eye opening. Although there was some criticism – by an unnamed source in the article familiar with the ongoing process in the archdiocese – of redundancies given to almost a dozen parish pastoral workers employed by them, it seems like there wasn't much of a choice.

Without a doubt the loss of parish pastoral workers anywhere is dreadful for the Church, but as a Church we must

cut our cloth by our measure. Across Ireland everyone is experiencing the financial devastation this pandemic has caused and the Archdiocese of Dublin is no exception.

In my humble opinion what the Faithful must do, both clergy and lay people, is to prepare for a smaller Church, a Church that does not shirk when it comes to preaching the Gospel and all Christ has to offer. It can't bend to populist beliefs like so many other Christian Churches have despite depleting resources and a huge decrease

in Mass attendance.

Although it is a sad time for our Church across the world due to the coronavirus pandemic, we must look to the future and work towards and hope for better times. For thousands of years Christians have lived through persecution and been on the brink of elimination in many territories but we have always endured and will do so once more, of that I am sure.

Yours etc.,
Helen Dillon,
Ringsend, Co. Dublin.

facebook community

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

The art of China's Vatican deal

The Vatican should be extremely cautious about any agreement with China. Remember if you sup with the devil, use a long spoon. – **Marion Smith**

China is obviously too big to ignore and too big to be susceptible to external pressure. The only approach possible currently involves robustly limiting the damage they can do outside their borders while acknowledging that they are masters within them. This looks broadly like the Vatican's approach. – **Charles Glenn**

President Trump says second term will 'fight' for unborn children in letter to pro-lifers

But has no problem not feeding the hungry, using capital punishment, not welcoming the stranger, and the list of pro-life failures goes on and on and on! – **Lugaid Brugha**

Well, lies or truth, he is the only one with any support for pro-life in the race for president. – **Eilish Higgins**

He promised this as a priority in 2016. Not a man to be trusted. – **Karl Noone**

There is nothing 'pro-life' with regards his attitude to the poor or to migrants. Little more than a snake oil salesman. – **Thomas O'Mahony**

What about benefits for mothers and children, that might keep women from desperation? – **Elizabeth Colette Melillo**

New EU commissioner has been outspoken on anti-Christian persecution [Mairead McGuinness]

Congratulations Mairead! A very well-deserved appointment. – **Deirdre Quinn**

I was delighted to hear this. A very able woman facing tough problems. – **Charles Glenn**

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

A year for God for girls

Dear Editor, There must be young people like me who want to learn more about Catholic spirituality, a lot of girls I meet would love to learn more about catholic spirituality and a lot of girls I meet are also searching for God.

Is there any possibly that a convent could put on a one-year course – a year for God – for women to come and search and spend the time searching for their vocation whilst helping the community?

Yours etc.,
Leonie Gallagher,
Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Around the world



▲ **USA:** Deacon Mel Tardy of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, speaks during a prayer service for racial justice. The service was aimed at young people and livestreamed to other Catholic schools in the diocese and to the public.

◀ **USA:** Jesuit Father John Piderit celebrates Mass simultaneously with three other priests on the feast of the Assumption near the steps of San Francisco's Cathedral of St Mary of the Assumption.



HONG KONG: Riot police detain a man during a protest in Hong Kong against postponed elections.



BELARUS: A protester draped in a flag of Belarus kneels in front of law enforcement officers in Minsk during a protest against presidential election results. Photos: CNS



USA: A homeless man in New York City sleeps among piles of belongings amid the coronavirus pandemic.



VATICAN: Carlo Petrini, co-founder of the *Laudato Si'* Communities, addresses Pope Francis and members of the organisation during an audience in the Paul VI audience Hall at the Vatican last week.



Moving beyond mistakes and weaknesses

The excusable doesn't need to be excused and the inexcusable cannot be excused. Michael Buckley wrote those words and they contain an important challenge. We're forever trying to make excuses for things we need not make excuses for and are forever trying to excuse the inexcusable. Neither is necessary. Or helpful.

We can learn a lesson from how Jesus dealt with those who betrayed him. A prime example is the apostle Peter, specially chosen and named the very rock of the apostolic community.

Peter was an honest man with a childlike sincerity, a deep faith and he, more than most others, grasped the deeper meaning of who Jesus was and what his teaching meant. Indeed, it was he who in response to Jesus' question ("Who do you say I am?") replied: "You are the Christ, the son of the Living God."

False conception

Yet minutes after that confession Jesus had to correct Peter's false conception of what that meant and then rebuke him for trying to deflect him from his very mission. More seriously, it was Peter who, within hours of an arrogant boast that though all others would betray Jesus, he alone would remain faithful, betrayed Jesus three times, and this in Jesus' most needy hour.

Later we are privy to the



Fr Rolheiser

conversation Jesus has with Peter *vis-à-vis* those betrayals. What's significant is that he doesn't ask Peter to explain himself, doesn't excuse Peter, and doesn't say things like: "You weren't really yourself! I can understand how anyone might be very frightened in that situation! I can empathise, I know what fear can do to you!" None of that. The excusable doesn't need to be excused and the inexcusable cannot be excused. In Peter's betrayal, as in our own betrayals, there's invariably some of both, the excusable and the inexcusable.

So what does Jesus do with Peter? He doesn't ask for an explanation, doesn't ask for an apology, doesn't tell Peter that it is okay, doesn't offer excuses for Peter and doesn't even tell Peter that he loves him. Instead he asks Peter:

“Jesus doesn't ask for an explanation, doesn't ask for an apology, doesn't tell Peter that it is okay, doesn't offer excuses for Peter and doesn't even tell Peter that he loves him. Instead he asks Peter: ‘Do you love me?’”

“Do you love me?”

Peter answers yes – and everything moves forward from there.

Everything moves forward from there. Everything can move forward following a confession of love, not least an honest confession of love in the wake of a betrayal. Apologies are necessary (because that's taking ownership of the fault and the weakness so as to lift it completely off the soul of the one who was betrayed) but excuses are not helpful. If the action was not a betrayal, no excuse is necessary; if it was, no excuse absolves it.

An excuse or an attempt at one serves two purposes, neither of them good. First, it serves to rationalise and justify, none of which is helpful to the betrayed or the betrayer. Second, it weakens

the apology and makes it less than clean and full, thus not lifting the betrayal completely off the soul of the one who has been betrayed; and, because of that, is not as helpful an expression of love as is a clear, honest acknowledgement of our betrayal and an apology which attempts no excuse for its weakness and betrayal.

“We don't move forward in relationship by telling either God or someone we have hurt: ‘You have to understand! In that situation, what else was I to do too? I didn't mean to hurt you, I was just too weak to resist!’”

What love asks of us when we are weak is an honest, non-rationalised, admission of our weakness along with a statement from the heart: “I love you!” Things can move forward from there. The past and our betrayal are not expunged, nor excused; but, in love, we can live beyond them. To expunge, excuse or rationalise is to not live in the truth; it is unfair to the one betrayed since he or she bears the consequences and scars.

Only love can move us beyond weakness and betrayal and this is an important principle not just for those instances in life when we betray and hurt a loved one, but for our understanding of life in general. We're human, not divine, and as such are beset, congenitally, body and mind, with weaknesses and inadequacies of every sort.

None of us, as St. Paul graphically says in his Epistle to the Romans, ever quite measure up. The good we want to do, we end up not doing, and the evil we want to avoid, we habitually end up doing. Some of this, of course, is understandable, excusable, just as some of it is inexcusable, save for the fact that we're humans and partially a mystery to ourselves. Either way, at the end of the day, no justification or excuses are asked for (or helpful).

We don't move forward in relationship by telling either God or someone we have hurt: “You have to understand! In that situation, what else was I to do too? I didn't mean to hurt you, I was just too weak to resist!” That's neither helpful, nor called for.

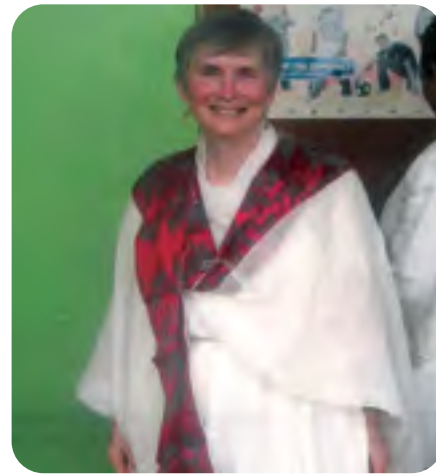
Things move forward when we, without excuses, admit weakness, and apologise for betrayal. Like Peter when asked three times by Jesus: “Do you love me?” from our hearts we need to say: “You know everything, you know that I love you.”

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, September 17, 2020

Personal Profile
Ministering medically
and spiritually
at the margins

Page 34



What to do with autumn's bounty?

Every self-respecting Irish recipe book has its own spin on apple tart. Some proclaim the wondrous effects of brown sugar, others call for no sugar at all! It's an Irish staple and for good reason – Ireland has a climate ideally suited to autumn fruits like apples and blackberries.

This year's blackberry season looks to be an especially good one as autumn arrived early, with cooler, wetter conditions setting in by mid-August. For apples, the growing season can continue into November, if we have an Indian summer that is.

The idea of cooking in-season is sometimes lost on us in a supermarket environment, where



Ruadhán Jones
explains how to
make the most of
autumn fruits

apples are available all year round. We were very fortunate growing up in that our granny had a few apple trees which we could plunder. As a result, autumn was a season of tarts and crumbles, to the point that my sister complained, "Not apple tart again!"

Over the years, we've branched out in our uses of

apples, blackberries and even the astringent sloe, also known as blackthorn. Whether you have access to an orchard, a country lane, or are simply making the most of the autumn stock on supermarket shelves, here are a few of ideas for what you can do to make the most of the autumn fruits.

Delicious desserts

Apples are wonderful in desserts. They are sweet and juicy, but with a citrus edge that makes them very versatile. The basics for nearly all apple dishes are peeling, coring, chopping; these can be time consuming, but won't distract you from your favourite show if you need some entertainment.

The place to start is with a baked apple. It's simple to prepare, easy to cook and versatile with its filling. The best way to make them is cored and stuffed full of dried fruit, spices and brown sugar, a wholesome and filling dessert. But it's so easy to adjust that any number of fillings could be invented.

The next level up, of course, is the humble apple crumble. The crispy, buttery topping is a mix of flour, butter and sugar and can be whipped up in no time. Chop up your apples and put them in a bowl with sugar suited to your taste – we often stew our apple first to save time in the oven, but if you like your apple with more crunch, you don't need to. Mix the cold butter with the flour until it resembles moist breadcrumbs and sprinkle it over the top. Voila, you have your crumble!

Once you have the basics, apple tarts – or pies as they're called in the States – are the next level up.

» Continued on Page 33

Family News

AND EVENTS

HILARIOUS HISTORIES AND FUNNY FOLKLORE

Avast there landlubbers, it's time for some pirate history. Join Hilarious Histories and Funny Folklore at their 'Hilarious Histories Family Show' in Ballyroan Library in Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin on Friday September 18 from 5.30-6.15pm for "a fun, socially distanced show, suitable for the whole family". Organisers say: "Captain Ho Ho takes you on a voyage of imagination and fun. Find out who the most feared pirate was of all time, why pirates wore eye patches, and women pirates and their crew. This show combines magic and storytelling while mixing in pirate legend and lore. An exciting show that kids will treasure." Organisers can accommodate groups of up to four people seated in a pod, they ask those interested to book for the total number of tickets they require for their group in one booking. Attendees are asked to be at the library at 5.20pm where they will be greeted by a staff member and shown to your seats. Events are carried out within government and HSE guidelines.

SECONDHAND SMOKE LEADS TO MORE HOSPITAL TIME FOR KIDS

Children exposed to tobacco smoke have higher rates of hospital admissions after visiting emergency departments or urgent care facilities, according to research from the US. The study by University of Cincinnati researchers, set to be published in October in Pediatric Research and currently available online, found that tobacco smoke exposure also increased the risk of paediatric patients having respiratory-related procedures performed while in the emergency department, as well as medications prescribed. It compared 380 children exposed to tobacco smoke with 1,140 children not exposed, matching the children in regards to age, sex, race and ethnicity, according to Ashley Merianos, an associate professor in UC's School of Human Services – who led the study. "We know that exposure to secondhand smoke is related to substantial morbidity in children. In addition to exposed children having more health care visits, I was really interested in taking a closer look at the actual resource utilisation during their visits."

ARE BABIES BORN DURING COVID-19 HYPOALLERGENIC?

A new Irish study aims to determine if babies born during the Covid-19 pandemic are more likely to go on to develop allergies. Allergic diseases, such as asthma, eczema, hay fever and food allergies have become more common over the last three decades. This is thought to be due to what is known as the 'hygiene hypothesis'. People nowadays are less exposed to infections as a result of smaller family sizes, a community focus on hygiene and the introduction of effective immunisations against serious infections. Scientists at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland's (RCSI) Department of Paediatrics and Children's Health Ireland (CHI) Temple Street want to look into this further. They aim to investigate whether lower rates of viral infections and improved air quality, which emerged as a result of lockdown, are going to make allergic conditions more or less common in children born into families who have experienced isolation and social distancing.

Lead us into that mysterious silence

We have been exploring the depth of meaning in the John Main prayer which Christian meditators say before meditation. The second sentence of the prayer reads: "Lead us into that mysterious silence where Your love is revealed to all who call." In this article I want to reflect on the phrase: 'Lead us into that mysterious silence.'

We have seen already that meditation is a practice that takes us beyond mental activity to an experiential appreciation of who we are at the deepest level of our being. James Finley is one of many people who have written much about Christian meditation. He says that in meditation "we freely choose to offer the least resistance to the tyranny of thought". Isn't that a lovely expression 'the tyranny of thought'? And he goes on to say "we open ourselves to the mystery of knowing God in ways that utterly transcend what thought can grasp or contain".

“Sometimes words help us to appreciate a deep truth, especially when expressed through poetry”

As John Main expressed it: "The beauty of the Christian vision of life is its vision of unity. It sees that all [people have] been unified in the one who is in union with the Father. He goes on to add that the central task for each person is to grow into this vision in their own personal experience.

And, so in this contemplative prayer, we ask God to lead us into that mysterious silence. We ask because we know this is not something we can achieve of our own volition. We can leave ourselves open to it through

Mindful living

Dr Noel Keating



contemplative prayer but we cannot bring it about through our own efforts. But we trust that in the stillness and silence of meditation God will lead us into a graced encounter with Silence. Pope Francis points out that "trust-filled prayer is a response of a heart open to encountering God face-to-face, where all is peaceful and the quiet voice of the Lord can be heard in the midst of silence".

And it is a deeply mysterious experience because it occurs at a level of consciousness deeper than ordinary, everyday consciousness and for that reason the experience cannot be captured in words. Whatever words we use merely point us towards it, but to apprehend the depth of the silence we must experience it for ourselves. When we first begin to practice meditation we may be hugely surprised at the amount of pointless thinking and interpretation that goes on inside our heads. And we may be almost overwhelmed by how continual and the relentless thought can be. But the more we observe our thoughts and interpretations, the more we begin to realise that they are not reality – they are merely thoughts and they can be let go.

And when we let them go we begin to encounter that which lies beneath – we begin to apprehend the deep, mysterious silence beneath the noise. I deliberately use the word appre-

hend rather than comprehend. We perceive the silence, we experience it at the level of the heart without fully understanding that experience at the level of the mind. It lies beyond the rational but it is real and deeply meaningful; it is a trans-rational heartfelt experience.

What we apprehend is that we are loved – not for our talents or our achievements, not for our ego or our performance – but that we are loved for who we truly are, that we were created as love and remain intimately connected to the ground of all being, to Reality with a capital R, to Love with a capital L, to Being with a capital B, Presence with a capital P. Thomas Merton, who was the first in our time to rediscover Christian meditation, once wrote that when we meditate we discover that "underlying the subjective experience of the individual self there is an immediate experience of Being ... [which] is totally different from the experience of self-consciousness".

He described this discovery, this growing awareness, as the discovery of our true-self. We discover the true self not through the mind but through



Thomas Merton

the heart. Sometimes words help us to appreciate a deep truth, especially when expressed through poetry. But words can only point to something – no word is ever the thing it seeks to

describe. This is especially true when it comes to describing the landscape of the spirit, of the human heart, when we try to give expression to that which is experienced in the heart and not the mind. The mysterious silence into which we are led in meditation is the ground of our being, it is who we really are. We all participate in it, uniquely, but equally. In this silence we discover that we are truly one.

“Meditation is a practice that takes us beyond mental activity to an experiential appreciation of who we are”

While in everyday life we think of ourselves as separate beings, we discover in meditation that instead we are unique manifestations of the same being. We are all beloved children of God. And when we discover that, when we truly apprehend the truth of that, our way of seeing – and therefore our way of being in the world – changes. We become kinder to ourselves and others. And, remember, kindness, like silence, is a language, a presence, which everyone understands – a language that even the deaf can hear and the blind can see.

i 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*.

» Continued from Page 31



A delicious, buttery French pastry ala Darina Allen's tarte Tatin is the pinnacle of this dish, but it's equally well served by a solid sweet pastry.

Once you have the basics, it's an easy thing to spice it up to your taste. We have taken to adding a little almond flour to ours which gives it a beautiful, melt-in-your-mouth texture. There are a number of variations, and the internet is a treasure-trove, so go wild. Equally, chefs like Darina Allen and Nigella Lawson are always reliable for a good recipe.

Simple cider

Over the years, we've branched out in our use of apples. Because we got so many, it came to a point where they would sit in boxes in our attic, going to waste. One year, I came across a basic recipe for cider and decided to give it a go.

“This year's blackberry season looks to be an especially good one as autumn arrived early”

The result was delicious, if explosive! We opened a bottle on Christmas Day and, not realising how much pressure it was under, let it gush out like champagne all over the floor. It was a learning curve and one of the first lessons was to use less pressurised bottles!

The recipe came from Darina Allen's *Forgotten Skills of Cooking*. Roughly, the method was to first grate your apples into a stainless steel bowl before covering them with water. You cover the bowl and stir once a day, every day for a week. Then you strain out the largest bits and add sugar, ginger and cinnamon. You leave it to macerate for a day and then strain it through muslin – or a similarly fine material – to get rid of the must. Then you bottle it and leave it until Christmas, when you get a sweet and gingery cider.

While Ms Allen suggest using glass bottles tightly sealed, I would advise using plastic bottles to monitor the level of pressure. Equally, storing these in an outdoor shed is advisable so that if they do leak or

the cap comes off, it won't make a mess indoors. The cider will be alcoholic, so be wary when drinking it and don't give it to children. Once you have the hang of it, it's a very enjoyable process.

Jellies and jams

Autumn provides such a variety of fruits for jellies and jams. Picking blackberries is an excellent way to get kids involved in the great outdoors, with something tangible and tasty at the end. Blackberries litter the countryside and command much of the attention, but sloes and elderberries are also common and very versatile.

If you have leftover apples, they make a wonderful accompaniment and, particularly in the case of blackberry, a necessary one. Blackberries are short in pectin, necessary for binding the jelly when it's setting, but the apples make up for the shortage and ensure a firm set.

If you're just starting out with jam-making, blackberry and apple is a good one to begin with. It's simple to make and the ingredients are readily accessible. As for equipment, the only essentials are a large, heavy based saucepan and a jelly-bag or tea towel for straining the juice from the fruit. That makes the difference between a jelly and a jam – the first has no bits, the second has.

Again, Darina Allen provides a number of excellent recipes in her book *Forgotten Skills of Cooking* which can set you on the road. In particular, I'd draw your attention to recipes for apple and elderberry jelly, and sloe jelly.

The elder tree has a long history in folklore, some say that it wards off evil, others that witches gather round them. The berry itself is small,



round and red, and makes a light, sweet jam. It can also be used for syrups and cordials, being reputed to have a good effect on digestion.

Sloe gin

The sloe is a less pleasing looking berry, lacking a gloss and coming as it does from the thorny blackthorn tree. Equally, if you were to bite them, you find them an awfully bitter and practically inedible. But when combined with enough sugar, they make a tangy jam, beautiful on sponge cakes.

“Over the years, we've branched out in our uses of apples, blackberries and even the astringent sloe, also known as blackthorn”

If you're feeling more adventurous, sloe gin is a delicious winter drink which requires little effort to make. All you need is a little patience while the sloes steep in the gin.

The only ingredients are sloes, sugar and gin:

- 450g/1lb sloes
- 225g/8oz caster sugar
- 1 litre/1¾ pint gin

For the recipe, there are four simple steps.

- 1- Prick the skin of the sloes all over with a clean needle and put in a large jar which has been sterilised in boiling water.
- 2- Pour in the sugar and the gin, seal tightly and shake well.
- 3- Store in a cool, dark cupboard – so that it keeps its colour – and shake every other day for a week. Then shake once a week for at least two months.
- 4- Strain the sloe gin through muslin into a sterilised bottle and it's ready to drink.

This being Pope Francis' 'Season of Creation', it's a good time to explore the variety of fruits on your doorstep. These ideas are only the merest glimpse of what can be done and I'd highly advise exploring cookbooks and the internet for further inspiration.

Faith — IN THE — family



Bairbre Cahill

When the issue of climate change comes up there can be a very natural reaction to step away, saying: “This has nothing to do with me, it's up to the governments, the energy producers.”

Pope Francis however sees it differently. He invites each one of us to an “ecological conversion”. Now just what does he mean by that?

Pope Francis wants us to realise that everything is connected, that we live within a web of relationships with each other, with the earth and with God. In a recent meeting with a group of ecological experts working with the French Bishops' Conference on the themes of Laudato Si' Pope Francis explained, “ecological conversion makes us see the general harmony, the correlation of everything: everything is connected, everything is related”.

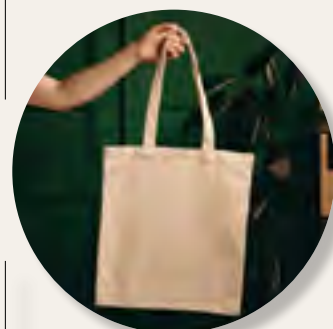
Pope Francis spoke of his own ecological conversion, tracing it back to 2007 and the Latin American Bishops' Conference in Aparecida. He was involved in editing the final document on evangelisation. The Brazilian Bishops wanted the inclusion of a reflection on the Amazon region which left Cardinal Bergoglio as he was then wondering: “What has Amazonia got to do with evangelisation?”

This was the beginning of his awareness that everything is connected, that evangelisation has to be rooted in the life experience of people and for these people the Amazon was profoundly important. It is the realisation that while little boxes may be very handy for keeping things tidy, life doesn't work that way. Life is a complex, wonderful and frequently messy web of connectedness.

When we understand this we can no longer say: “This has nothing to do with me”, regarding such things as the impact of climate change on people in poorer countries, the exploitation of the earth's resources, the loss of natural habitats and biodiversity or the pollution caused by the clothing industry. And again, are you feeling overwhelmed, that this is all too much? I get that, I really do but Pope Francis is not asking us to become weighed down by the magnitude of this but to have an awareness that how we live can contribute either to the problems or to the solutions.

Speaking recently Pope Francis acknowledged that the

Church doesn't claim to have the answers but “wants to act concretely where this is possible and above all she wants to form consciences in order to foster a profound and lasting ecological conversion which alone can respond to the important challenges we face”. Perhaps that is the question for each one of us: “Where is it possible for me to act concretely?”



Even small acts build momentum. Concrete actions take us out of our heads with theories and ideas about climate change and help us to make real, to incarnate, a better way of living.

Composting, reducing or eliminating single-use plastics, thinking more deeply about what we buy and whether we actually need to, supporting local producers, choosing a sustainable-energy electricity provider, insulating our homes, walking or cycling more – these and so many more are all concrete, positive actions. And when someone asks: “Why are you doing that?”, there is your opportunity to say: “Well it is better for the environment which means it is also better for us and for our future.” Conscience can be nurtured, conversion begun when the conversation is opened up.

In 2002 Ireland was the first country in the world to bring in a levy on plastic bags, a move which was vitally important for the environment. At the time it seems like a huge issue, a major inconvenience but sure look at us now with our stash of re-usable bags in the boot of the car! Change does and can happen. We do none of this on our own. It is God's creative Spirit who calls us forward on a path of healing and ecological conversion. The Season of Creation ends on the Feast of St Francis on October 4 but in Laudato Si' we are invited by Pope Francis to continue to reflect on our relationship with the whole of creation. For yourself, your family, your parish what positive, concrete actions will you take?

Ministering medically and spiritually at the margins

Personal Profile



Jason Osborne

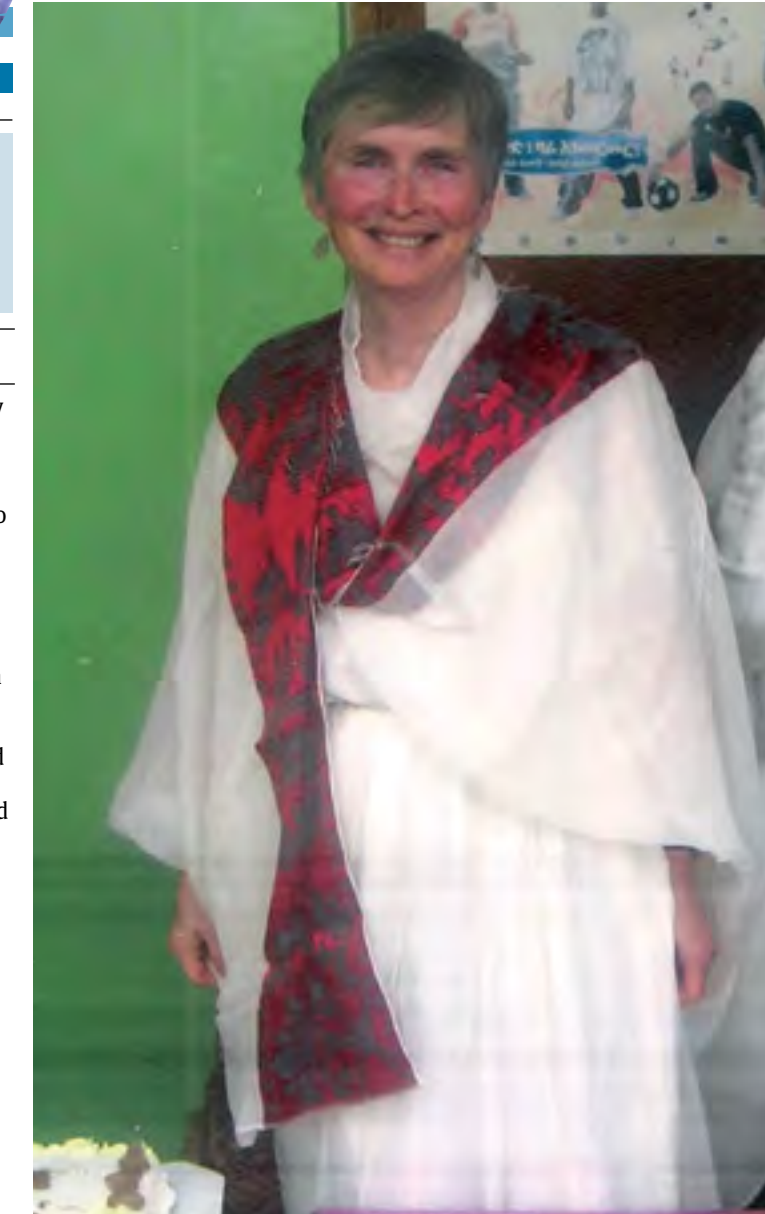
Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM) is attempting to patch the world up both physically and spiritually, and Sr Carol Breslin is one of those who applies the bandages.

Celebrating her Jubilee year with the congregation, Sr Carol's interest in healthcare was first piqued by her mother's example as she volunteered for various groups that helped children with disabilities and people suffering with cancer. Her schoolteachers inculcated an interest in other countries and cultures, and so the stage was set for her entry into ministry. She just needed an opportunity.

“Such work can be physically, emotionally, and spiritually taxing, but Sr Carol saw signs of hope among many of the world's destitute”

“The way I encountered the Medical Missionaries was that my mother went to a meeting when I was quite small, but she went to a meeting and two medical missionaries were at the meeting and they showed a film about the work, and she started getting the magazine - the MMM magazine. It was always in the house, and that sparked my interest. I was very intrigued by these women who had a very contemporary approach to religious life,” she tells *The Irish Catholic*.

They presented an alluring face to the world, one which Sr Carol would be drawn in by. “Young



women were joining and being trained and being sent overseas. I suppose there was a sense of adventure, too. That was attractive.”

Novitiate

Joining at 18 to undergo postulancy and novitiate, Sr Carol made her first profession before entering work for a time at the MMM's Boston house. Coming to Ireland in 1973 to study medicine at UCD, she worked in Drogheda for two years before also studying tropical medicine in Liver-

pool, “just to have an introduction to tropical medicine,” she shares.

From there, it was straight out into the field. She was sent to Nigeria, where she would spend the next 12 years.

“Challenging, yes,” she laughs, “a lot of it wasn't in the books.”

“In Nigeria it was mainly hospital and clinic work. A lot of general medicine and, especially in the place where I spent most of my time, we had people with Hansen's disease (Leprosy). A lot of maternity work,

and I did a lot of work with children which I enjoyed,” she says.

The MMM approach is built upon both work and prayer, with the “work coming out of the Faith, and the work informing the Faith.”

“We lived in community, and prayer was built into our day. There were certain times for prayer and Mass, but the patient always had priority. We could be called away. If someone was in need, then we responded to that need,” she says. “I think the strong prayer life is very important - to remember why we're doing it. To have a strong relationship with God, I feel that's important.”

Break

Taking a brief break after her assignment to Nigeria drew to a close, Sr Carol was assigned to Ethiopia in 1996 - this one lasting 14 years.

“The basic reason for going there is that - we were already in Ethiopia for a number of years, but we had started, in the capital, Addis Ababa, a project for people affected by HIV. When I first went, I also did some clinic work with the Little Sisters of Jesus. It was a clinic for the very poor of the city. I did that part-time for about four years, but in the meantime I took over as administrator of our MMM counselling centre for people with HIV,” she says.

However, Sr Carol is quick to point out that the work wasn't the sole province of the missionaries. “We don't do it on our own. We work with people,” she explains.

“We were working with staff who had good ideas and I felt that one of my main roles - I continued practicing medicine as kind of a side-line - but I felt my main role was to encourage the staff who had good ideas. They were the local people, they knew the people. If they had a good idea about something, we had to encourage that. Many of them were continuing their education, and we tried to facilitate their development.”

This collaboration brought about real change, with Sr Carol working alongside others to develop the

first books in Ethiopia in braille about HIV.

Hope

Such work can be physically, emotionally, and spiritually taxing, but Sr Carol saw signs of hope among many of the world's destitute. “When I first went to Ethiopia, there was no treatment,” she says, with many dying of treatable illness.

“I continued practicing medicine as kind of a side-line - but I felt my main role was to encourage the staff who had good ideas”

“While I was there, I saw the development of treatment. It came in gradually...this treatment came in for HIV, for AIDS, it was literally like the Resurrection. People who had been dying now were gradually - the treatment was working. They were able to get back to work, they were able to take care of their families, children were going back to school. I was there for a whole development, between a time of what seems like hopelessness, I mean, we could give them spiritual consolation and we were helping people to die, but that's very, very draining for staff. But then we saw the treatment coming in and it took on a whole new perspective,” she remembers.

“That's what gives me hope and that's...to me, God is working through that. That's very much a faith-based approach. God gives us our talents to use, to affect healing.”

Now working in communications for the MMM, Sr Carol delights in their freedom to interact with communities. Many of the institutions she worked in have since been handed over to the governments of various countries, leaving MMM “free to do our work,” in Sr Carol's words. Just the work the world needs in the time of the coronavirus.

Sweet Treats

Laura Anderson



Nothing as great as a cherry and almond loaf cake

This is an old-fashioned family favourite that remains ever popular. It is an essential recipe for every baker's repertoire. There is nothing better with a cup of tea in the evening with its crunchy crust and delicious buttery inside studded with sweet pops of cherry.

Ingredients

For the crumble

- 200g red glace cherries
- 190g butter
- 175g golden caster sugar
- 3 medium eggs
- 1 tbsp lemon zest (about 1 medium lemon)
- 1 tsp almond extract
- 200g self raising flour + 1tbsp
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 75g ground almonds
- 2 tbsp milk
- Flaked almonds for the top (optional)

Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°F Fan/Gas mark 4. Grease and line a 900g/2 lb loaf tin. This also works well in a square or round tin if you prefer. Prepare the cherries by first quartering them and then rinsing them in a sieve to remove any excess syrup. Using a paper towel pat them dry as best as possible. Toss them in 1tbsp of flour. All of these steps will help prevent them from sinking too much during baking. Some level of sinkage is inevitable in a cherry cake so don't panic if it happens to you, it will still taste great!

Using an electric whisk, beat the butter and sugar together on high for about two minutes until pale and creamy. Reduce speed to medium and beat in the eggs one at a time. Then add the almond extract and lemon zest. Working in parts, sieve and then fold in the flour gently until it is fully combined. Toss about two-thirds of the prepared cherries in the ground almonds and then fold these along

with the milk into the mixture. Pour this into the prepared tin. Use the back of a spoon to smooth the level the loaf. Lay the remaining cherries on top and gently poke them just under the surface. This should ensure you will have some fruit near the top of your loaf. Sprinkle the flaked almonds on top at this point if you are using them. Bake in the oven for about 30 mins until golden brown on top, then cover with foil to stop it browning too much and bake for a further 30-40 mins until springy to the touch and a skewer inserted into the middle of the cake comes out clean. The

cooking time will vary depending on what shape tin you use. Leave to cool in the tin for about 15 mins before transferring onto a wire rack to cool fully. This cake freezes well so it's a good recipe to double up and make two at a time. It will last for a week if kept in an airtight container.



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Classic arguments that we've heard before

What have *déjà vu* and doublethink got in common? I got a strong sense of both in the media last week.

Mostly it was in relation to the assisted suicide debate that kicked off during the week as Gino Kenny TD intends to introduce a Dying with Dignity Bill. On three **Drivetime** programmes (RTÉ Radio One), I got a feeling of *déjà vu* as the pro-choice play-book was reactivated. We got references to choice and bodily autonomy, genuinely sad personal stories nudging us in a particular direction, the endorsements by celebrities, the euphemistic language, the promises of restrictive measures, the burden of having to travel for a 'service' that's legal elsewhere.

And then there's the doublethink. In Orwell's 1984 universe, the loyal Party followers were made capable of holding two opposite viewpoints at the same time. And so, after voting in a children's rights article into the Constitution, we followed by voting against our children's right to be born soon after. Likewise, how crass was it that this bill was promoted the same week as World Suicide Prevention Day?

Proposal

On Wednesday's show, Barry Lenihan presented a report which, in my opinion, was



Mary Wilson presented her final Drivetime (RTÉ Radio One) last week.

loaded in favour of the proposal. There was much referencing of the support of cancer campaigner Vicky Phelan and her "powerful contribution", with little sense of any opposition.

There was an interview with Gino Kenny, who was obviously in support of his bill. His "safeguards" included oversight by two medics and a cooling off period (sound familiar?). He said it would be highly restricted and regulated, and wasn't challenged on that.

Then we heard from Fianna Fáil TD Malcolm Byrne who favoured a free vote on such life issues, but he talked about being influenced by the story of Marie Fleming (previously at the centre of an assisted suicide case) and the "eloquent testimony" of

Vicky Phelan. Lenihan referenced four EU countries that allowed it, but not the countries that didn't.

On Thursday we heard from Gail O'Rourke, previously charged and acquitted in relation to a case of assisted suicide. Lest anyone think I'm concocting connections, she referenced the changes in relation to same sex marriage and abortion as precedents.

The interview was largely sympathetic and unchallenging. Mary Wilson said that the bill "quite strictly" provided for assisted dying – a value judgement and quite debatable.

By contrast, at the end there was her perfunctory acknowledgement that "there will be people who worry".

O'Rourke rejected this slippery slope argument cit-

ing previous divorce and abortion concerns – has she even noticed the drastic rise in abortion figures just one year into liberalisation?

Presenter Mary Wilson showed awareness of the requirement for balance, careful to point out that there would be a different perspective on the Friday.

'Safeguards'

That was an interview with palliative care consultant Dr Feargal Twomey. I found it a much more challenging interview with lots of interruptions on Wilson's part. And she started with a questionable statement that there were "very strict guidelines" and "safeguards" in the bill. Dr Twomey disagreed, finding the bill dangerous and flawed.

He feared for the vulnerable, the disabled, those who could be pressurised. He feared the broadening of the term "terminal illness", and pointed out how in some countries assisted dying or euthanasia had been extended to those who were blind, deaf, depressed or just tired of life.

Comparing the Thursday and Friday interviews it was a classic case of emotion vs reason, the personal story vs the rational argument.

This was Mary Wilson's last show after 14 years on *Drivetime* and she bid a gracious farewell, acknowledging the support of colleagues

PICK OF THE WEEK

NIGHT OF THE PROPHET

EWTN, Sunday, September 20, 9pm

Through the eyes of a Roman journalist, a dramatisation of Padre Pio, who is unveiled as a man of purity and Christian charity.

RTÉ INVESTIGATES

RTÉ One, Monday, September 21, 9.35pm

Whistle-blowers: Fighting to be Heard – an exploration of the role of whistle-blowers in society.

BEYOND BELIEF

BBC Two, Friday (night), September 25, 3.45am

Louis Theroux explores how some people's most fervent beliefs can bring them into conflict with mainstream society. Expect the fringes, and irony!



Andrea Gilligan.

and audience.

With so much negativity towards death, illness, the disability and aging in some quarters it was good to see some strong positivity in that area on **Love Your Family Garden** (UTV, Tuesday) a series in which presenter Alan

Titchmarsh creates imaginative gardens for families who are coping with all sorts of challenges. It was a fine antidote to some modern trends.

Finally, Andrea Gilligan, new in the role, has been a lively and cheerful presenter on **Lunchtime Live** (Newstalk). During the week she featured an item about gender reveal parties – those weird and often lavish events when parents reveal the gender of their unborn child. Strange indeed, but at least it does suggest that after all there are just two genders, and that, believe it or not, what's in the womb is actually a baby! Now there's a reveal.

✉ boregan@hotmail.com,
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Music

RTÉ NSO's return to concert shows things are looking up!

While my late friend and revered music critic of the *Irish Independent*, Mary MacGoris, maintained danger lurked around every corner, I believe things are looking up. As Fred Astaire sang in the Gershwin brothers film *A Damsel in Distress*, "bitter was my cup/but no more will I be the mourner/for I've certainly turned the corner/oh, things are looking up".

Another hit number was *Nice Work if You Can Get It*, in which Astaire had a dance routine playing a drum kit! Sadly George Gershwin died from a brain tumour shortly before the film opened in November 1937.

But why do I feel "things are looking up"? Well, for one the RTÉ NSO has returned to



David Brophy.

the National Concert Hall for a series of 7pm Friday events. Without an audience and having its players limited to 37, the concerts are being streamed live on www.rte.ie/

culture and broadcast on RTÉ Lyric FM.

Under David Brophy, last week's programme opened with Mendelssohn's effervescent overture *The Midsummer Night's Dream* and ended with Beethoven's genial *4th Symphony*.

Dating from 1806 and dedicated to Silesian Count Franz von Oppersdorff, the symphony was first performed at the Viennese palace of another patron, Prince Franz Lobkowitz. The public première came on April 13, 1808. Squashed between the epic *3rd* and *5th Symphonies*, the piece really doesn't get the airings it deserves.

Last week's soloist was the NSO's ever mellifluous principal flautist Caitríona Ryan

in Mozart's *K 314 Concerto*. Whatever about the composer disliking the flute – "an instrument I cannot bear" – he certainly wrote beautifully for it.

Advances

The centrepiece of tomorrow's (Friday, September 18) programme is Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto* written a few weeks before the composer's death on December 5, 1791. He originally intended the work for basset horn and its virtuoso player Anton Stadler, but advances in the clarinet's design changed Mozart's mind. Tomorrow's soloist in the resultant masterpiece is John Finucane, under conductor Gavin Maloney.

The rest of the programme

has Bartók's engaging *Romanian Folk Dances* and Mendelssohn's *Italian Symphony*. Completed in January 1833 following the composer's sojourn in Italy, the work was first performed in a London Philharmonic Society concert in March that year. Particularly appreciated in England, Mendelssohn was Queen Victoria's favourite pianist and composer.

Next week's concert (Friday, September 25) brings a change of scene with David Brophy conducting a number of works by Irish composers past (Arthur Duff and Micheál Ó Súilleabháin) and present (Dublin's John Kinsella and Belfast's Neil Martin).

The flute soloist in Ó Súilleabháin's *Oileán* will be ver-

satile Mark Redmond who changes to uilleann pipes for Ó Súilleabháin's *Bean Dubh an Gleanna* and Martin's arrangements of the traditional *The Fairy Queen* and *The Humours of Ballyloughlin*.

Away from the capital in another Beethoven 250th celebration, Finghin Collins plays the *Op 57 Appassionata Sonata* and the last two-movement *Op 111* in St Mary's Church, New Ross on Sunday, September 27 at 3pm. Young Cork pianist Ellen Jansson opens the afternoon recital with the *Op 2 No.3 Sonata* but, with audience restrictions, it may already be a case of 'returns only'. Booking at St Michael's Theatre on 051 421244.

Pat O'Kelly





BookReviews

Peter Costello



Recent books in brief

Alert, Aware, Attentive. Advent Reflections

by John Cullen
(Messenger Publications,
€4.95/£4.50)

From a background of service in Ireland and Kenya, John Cullen brings us some ideas about Advent. As the editor of *Intercom* he is a practised hand at communication. His little book will be an aid to many as Advent comes down on us to attend to the inner nature of things.

Near the end of this little pamphlet there is this insight: "Advent offers us a space in the tent of our hearts to connect the dots of ordinary goodness. These are the everyday Gospel signals of people who combine humanity, humour and holiness. In every parish and family we are blessed, anointed and graced by people who witness to a quiet presence of faithful love. They reflect God's love – which never leaves us."



Sacred Space: Advent & Christmas 2021

by the Irish Jesuits/
Sacred Space
(Messenger Publications,
€4.95/£4.50)

The annual week-by-week collections of prayers and reflections will have, I suspect, a special relevance this year, these being uncertain times for everyone. The frustrated hopes of things 'returning to normal' pervade the thoughts of all.

Yet the present days concentrate the mind too, and in Advent this year more than ever people's hopes for themselves and for everyone will have more importance than ever. But the promise of Christmas can be summed up in a few words: "Sometimes I wonder what I might say if I were to meet you in person, Lord. I think I might say, 'thank you', because you are always there for me."



Pathways to a Decision with Ignatius of Loyola

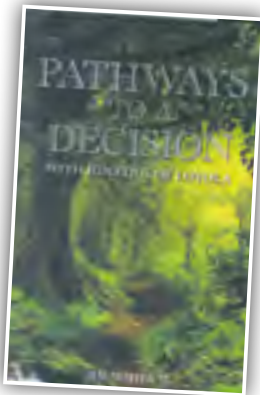
by Jim Maher SJ
(Messenger Publications
€14.95/£13.95)

Jim Maher spent his career as a Jesuit teaching and working with the young people at the Crescent College Comprehensive in Limerick, especially those in their last years there. These days with so much to learn, many issues are never given the time they need. One of these must be just how to learn to make what is the right decision for us. I suspect many blunder along, going with the flow, and hardly pausing to think about the wholeness of things.

However, in his new book, through a series of 10 chapters, he shows how the ideas of St Ignatius, the Ignatian way, can be applied to our everyday lives. His cover shows a path through a wood that brings to mind Robert Frost's poem, by showing here at hand the path is clear, put further on the outcome is less clear.

In an uncomplicated way Maher tries to show just how, in a variety of life situations, such moments of decision, so important for both life and faith, can be made with greater confidence. It means taking time away from the hurly-burly.

In an odd way all this time of lockdown and restrictions will paradoxically provide many anxious people with that period of retreat, allowing them to redirect their lives into a more meaningful way for the future.



Revealing the truth

Digging Up Armageddon: The Search for the Lost City of Solomon

by Eric H. Cline
(Princeton University Press,
£30.00/\$35.00)

Peter Costello

'Armageddon' is a word that puts the fear of God in many people today. It is all very well having fears about the end of the world, the now fashionable 'End Times', when one is 12 – those came of reading too much about St Malachi and Nostradamus. But today especially among Evangelicals, Bible Christians, and some very traditional Catholics, end time prophecy has made talk of Armageddon's looming proximity a commonplace for some.

Yet all of this modern anxiety depends, not on the Old Testament, or even very much on the New Testament. These fears derive from a passage in Apocalypse / Revelations XVI:16. Now the visions of John of Patmos are documents notoriously difficult to interpret, and over even recent times the identity of, say, the Anti-Christ has shifted from Napoleon, to Napoleon III, to the Kaiser, then to Hitler, and later to others.

Understandably there were many early Christians, when the canon of the Bible was being confirmed, who felt the Apocalypse/Revelations should be rejected as canonical.

The site of that last battle between good and evil at Armageddon had usually been identified with the Tel Megiddo, now in Israel. In this new book leading American archaeologist Eric H. Cline relates the efforts of



archaeologists, mainly from the Chicago Oriental Institute to excavate the mound layer one layer at a time in search of a supposed the 'city of Solomon'.

Since the middle of the 19th Century many have hoped that archaeology as it developed as a discipline would 'confirm the Bible'. But today we have learnt to wary of such a simplistic outlook, and conflicting, indeed discordant, theories about the Biblical people and places have developed.

This book is, for anyone interested in how archaeology is done, a fascinating read. It

reveals from well documented archives at Chicago Oriental Institute what other writers had passed over in silence. Sir Leonard Woolley, Sir Mortimer Wheeler, Geoffrey Bobby, C.W. Ceram all wished to present archaeology in the light of science rather than personal rivalry. But this book casts a spotlight on the psychology of the of the archaeologist themselves and the institutions they worked with, and in a detail which I suspect would dismay have such earlier giants of popular writing about the subject.

So detailed is his account of

those involved that the book reads better than many a modern novel. It is truly and exciting read.

“Armageddon resonated with so many people in America that it was thought it would attract newspaper attention”

The idea of excavating the

Thomas Cromwell: the master servant

Thomas Cromwell: A Life
by Diarmaid MacCulloch
(Allen Lane, £22.50)

J. Anthony Gaughan

Hillary Mantel's inspired trilogy of novels beginning with *Wolf Hall* has prompted a lively interest in Thomas Cromwell, best known as Henry VIII's consummate 'fixer'. Her brilliant recreation of life in the 16th century remains in the demesne of fiction.

Diarmaid MacCulloch's *Life* is an altogether different genre. Based on an enormous Thomas Cromwell archive, it is a work of profound historical scholarship. As Mantel's trilogy still occupies a main place in bookshops, Diarmaid MacCulloch's very different account (though commented on here) is worth

another look at from a slightly different point of view.

Cromwell was born at Putney, London, ca 1485. His father was described as a yeoman and a brewer who was no stranger to the courts. Seemingly because of his father's brutality, at an early age Cromwell travelled to Italy, where he served in the French army. By 1510 he was in Antwerp in Belgium prospering in the cloth trade.

Service

In 1522 Cromwell was back in England and had entered Cardinal Wolsey's service. He studied law and acted as his master's solicitor. In 1523 he sat in parliament. Two years later Wolsey employed him to dissolve some lesser monasteries. On their property the cardinal

established colleges at Ipswich and Oxford.

Notwithstanding the fact that he had become the cardinal's closest adviser and associate, Cromwell skilfully avoided being affected by the former's fall from grace in 1529.

From 1530 onwards, Cromwell worked his way up in the royal favour until he reached the inner circle of the king's confidential advisers. There followed public appointments: master of the rolls in 1534 and lord privy seal in 1536. Thereafter he was in complete control of the government, though he remained careful to pretend to be acting on the king's authority. On behalf of his master he completed the dissolution of the monasteries and the break from Rome.

In 1536 Cromwell was appointed the king's viceroy in spirituals, that is his deputy as head of the Church. He ordered that every parish should possess an English Bible and he attacked excesses in the practice of pilgrimages and 'image worship'. Thus he came to be associated with a radical policy of reform and the Reformation.

“Initially, historians depicted Cromwell as consumed with Protestant zeal”

Cromwell's exercise of absolute power created numerous powerful enemies. They per-

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.

about Armageddon



The ongoing excavations at Tel Megiddo (left) and, above, authro Eric Cline at work in the field.

hill of Megiddo came from the famous James H. Breasted. The name Armageddon resonated with so many people in America that it was thought it would attract newspaper attention, and make for good publicity for the Oriental Institute in an area dominated by the British, Germans and French.

The first great claim that the team had uncovered 'the stables of Solomon' helped raise funds as well as the popular profile of archaeology. Would it have been that easy: it is now thought the stables were not stables and did not belong to the time of Solomon.

The dig was well in hand when

it came as a surprise to Chicago to discover that they had been paying rent to a local leader who had no right to it.

A large part of the hill belonged to a Mrs Rosamond Templeton, a eccentric British widow with curious beliefs.

Comment

Cline mentions but with no close comment that she was the granddaughter of Robert Dale Owen, a name one well known to students of fringe religions and mystical movements from the 1840s onwards for a century; here we are most certainly navigating the

wilder shores of theology and Biblical prophecy.

But this aspect of the prophetic role of Armageddon is one which Cline passes over in silence. And rightly so, as it does not belong to archaeology but it has more to do with the social and psychological history of religion in modern times that with archaeology and Biblical scholarship.

The mystico-social history of Armageddon remains to be written. But in the meantime this splendid book will enthral anyone at all concerned with Biblical archaeology and its controversies. It is not exactly a sensational read,

but is certainly a deeply human one, which great many more readers than its publishers expect to will greatly enjoy.

At the Tel Megiddo the work still goes on, lead now by local archaeologists such as Israel Finkelstein. Solomon's city has still not been uncovered, but the end of the research is still nowhere in sight.

But with Armageddon less a pressing burden now than it once was, there is time enough to get to the bottom of the hill. The work, like all work of investigation anywhere, still goes on.



Ulster's great Irish writer

In a Harbour Green: Celebrating Benedict Kiely
ed. by George O'Brien
(Irish Academic Press, €19.95)

Peter Costello

In the hurry and bustle of modern Irish literature, Ben Kiely belongs seemingly to another world. This may well be because he was one of that generation of writers whose normal route to writing was through journalism and broadcasting.

The broad rich Ulster tones of his voice belonged even further back in time, to the realm of the seanachie. As a broadcaster and journalist he came in immediate contact with his audience by word of mouth.

His last years were marked by the Troubles in the North to which he gave a memorable expression in his deeply felt novel *Proxopera*. That book showed he was still in touch with his people.

Essays

In this collection of essays and appreciations to mark the centenary of his birth, Tom O'Grady writes of those last years. But in pieces by 11 other friends admirers and compatriots nearly every aspect of his life and career are covered.

A plaque now at long last marks his last home in Donnybrook. But Ben was the sort of man who wherever you set him down in Ireland would begin to relate a story, an ancient tale, a poem, or a memory of days now gone, but brought alive by his powers as raconteur.

This was a fast-fading world that provided the depth to his own published stories.

By now it is clear that his reputation will survive when other names have faded completely. It only remains for an Irish publishing industry that neglected him alive, to keep his books in print for another generation to read.

of Henry VIII

suaded the king that he was a heretic and a traitor. He was arrested, condemned without a hearing and executed on July 28, 1540.

In his administration of Ireland Cromwell's chief client was his friend Sir Anthony St Leger. He was head of the St Leger family, which had settled in the vicinity of Doneraile in North Cork.

As the king's commissioner, St Leger in 1537 concluded agreements with three Gaelic lords, whose lands bordered territories of the English Lordship, the 'Pale'. They offered to submit to the sovereignty of the Tudor Crown in return for titles of nobility. Thus the kingdom of Ireland was established in 1541 and Henry was made Rex (king). Prior to that time, kings of England had been styled *Dominus* (lord) of Ireland. Sir Anthony St Leger became

Lord Deputy of Ireland and held this post until 1556.

Initially, historians depicted Cromwell as consumed with Protestant zeal. Later he was viewed as having had no religion at all. MacCulloch subscribes to neither of these assessments. For him Cromwell had a Faith even if it was not very ardent and liable to be subordinated to political considerations.

As Cromwell once told some Lutheran envoy's that on the whole he was of their mind in matters of religion, but "as the world now stood, he would believe even as his master, the king, believed".

With regard to Cromwell's moral character it can be said that, while he was just as ruthless as his notorious master, he was not quite as bloodthirsty!



Thomas Cromwell.

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Advertorial

Be part of the Miracle | China Church Solidarity

I have been visiting China since 1979 and working systematically there since 2000. In 2014, we were able to open an Augustinian Sisters' Active contemplative Monastery (pictures below). I unhesitatingly call this a wonder and a miracle in the context of Communist China. The foundation of this monastery can be sourced to many, including the prayers and financial support of many in Ireland and Britain, but in a special way to the extraordinary faith of two people: the Mother Foundress, Sr Mary, who with her family lived through all the oppression of the '50's and '60's in China and the positive response of an elderly bishop despite his suffering during the same period.

I once asked Sr Mary's Bishop how was it possible for him to say yes when asked to sponsor

this Contemplative Monastery in his diocese in such difficulties for Christians in China. His reply was profound: "When Sister Mary told me her story and the dream of her contemplative vocation, my twenty years in prison, ten of these in solitary confinement, flashed to memory, painful as they were. But in a moment I saw the point of it all. It was a grace that allowed me to recognise and understand her call to initiate a contemplative monastery, as that was the only option available to me while in prison – Contemplation."

The Monastery was formally opened in 2014. However, permission to open the Monastery was given by the government with a BIG CONDITION, namely, that a Nursing Home for the Aged would be attached to the monastery. This was acceptable

to the sisters and would constitute the "active" part of their mission.

We expect the cost of the nursing home to be about one million, nine hundred thousand US dollars. The Catholics of China have collected \$500,000 to date and now I'm seeking support outside of China to raise another \$1,000,000.

I am most grateful for your generosity to us over the past twenty year which has helped strengthen the Church of China in its mission of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. Please continue to support the mission of the Monastery with your prayers. If you wish to support with a donation, please return the coupon on the lower left or donate via Paypal on our website: www.ccschina.co.uk.



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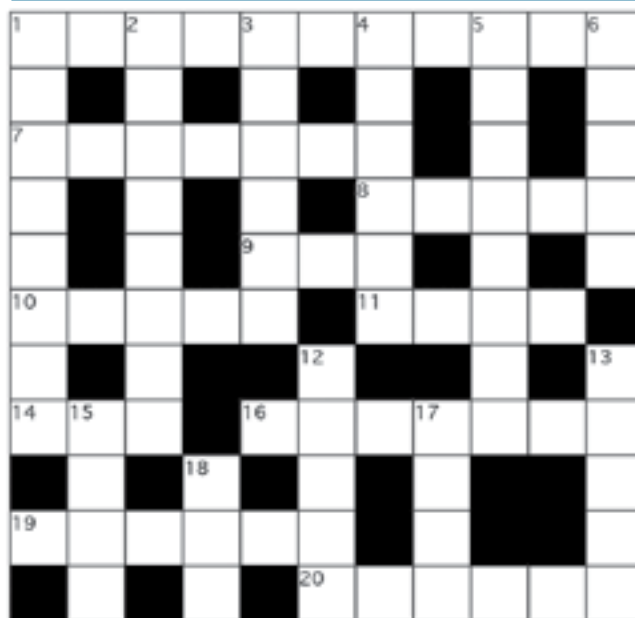
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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 350



Across

- 1 Hang out the washing on this to dry (11)
 7 Good for nothing (7)
 8 What numbers add up to (5)
 9 How old you are (3)
 10 Thoughts (5)
 11 They followed the Pied Piper (4)
 14 Took a seat (3)
 16 Pantomime hero with a magic lamp (7)
 19 The capital city of Greece (6)
 20 Seat you'll find on a bicycle or put on a horse (6)

Ulster (8)

- 2 People who are _____ do as they are told (8)
 3 Fierce and wild African dogs (6)
 4 She has the same parents as you (6)
 5 Copied (8)
 6 With time to spare (5)
 12 A group of schoolchildren (5)
 13 Statue of a funny little person you might see in a garden (5)
 15 Plays a part in a play or movie (4)
 17 No longer living (4)
 18 Farmyard bird (3)

- 1 There are nine _____ in

SOLUTIONS, SEPTEMBER 10

GORDIUS No. 472

Across - 1 Ego 3 Law and order 8 Antics 9 Remained 10 Camel
 11 Shell 13 Froth 16 Small ad 20 Lunar module 21 Drums
 23 Swing 24 Jeweller 26 Mother Goose 27 Ear

Down - 1 Emancipated 2 Optimist 3 Local 4 Apricot jam 5 Orals
 6 Dante's Inferno 7 Red Admiral 12 Landing gear 13 Flail 14 Homer
 17 Latitude 19 Outwit 22 Solve 23 Stone Her

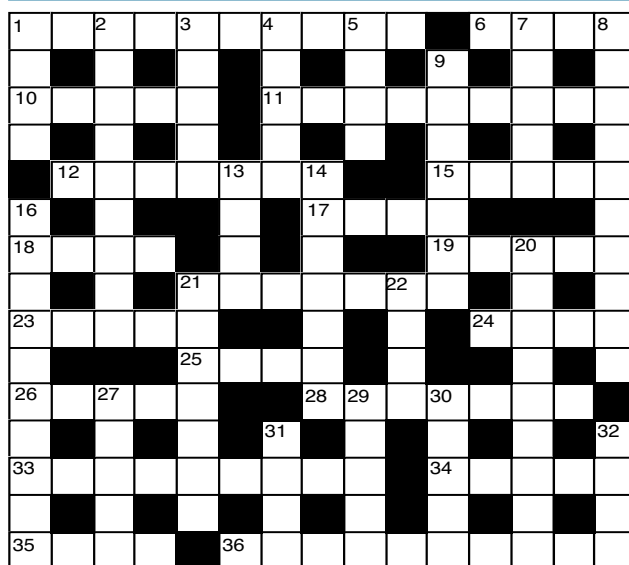
CHILDREN'S No. 349

Across - 1 Escalator 6 Amazed 7 Head 8 Internet 11 Egg 13 April
 14 Yacht 16 Ill 18 Title 19 Nap 20 Drummer

Down - 1 Examination 2 Chapter 3 Adding 4 Ought 5 Blade
 9 Related 10 Egypt 12 Scream 15 Tower 17 Lip

Crossword

Gordius 473



Across

- 1 No sage guys can disperse to Jewish places of worship (10)
 6 The highest male voice (4)
 10 Historic German pistol (5)
 11 & 33a Ten years of Marian prayer? There's a mystery involved there!
 1,6,2,3,6
 12 Is present (7)
 15 Make 'The Scream' painter Edvard chomp noisily (5)
 17 She's divine to hear about (4)
 18 The world's longest river (4)
 19 Group of insects (5)
 21 Cross the street illegally, especially in the USA (7)
 23 Shadow made as a rumba plays (5)
 24 Henry VIII's Catherine was, on average, right (4)
 25 Close by (4)
 26 Branch of Islam setting up no-nonsense initiatives initially (5)
 28 Verses of poetry (7)
 33 See 11 across
 34 Chaim is confused about an Old testament prophet (5)
 35 Right, is the cardinal to get up? (4)
 36 Miler Roger's stair rails (10)
Down
 1 Old sailor found in a cellar? (4)
 2 Entertainment venue suitable

for playing golf after dark? (9)

- 3 Furze or whin (5)
 4 & 16d Disturbingly, Ron quits raiding on finding Tomas de Torquemada's title (5,10)
 5 Not an odd part of the Seventies (4)
 7 A late morning makes an alternative fact popular (3-2)
 8 One was finally scoring as Germany got on the Euro, by the look of it! (3,3,4)
 9 Ask Mags to break out breathing equipment (3,4)
 13 Ms Barnacle married James Joyce (4)
 14 Light falls of rain (7)
 16 See 4 down
 20 A fall of snow and rocks (9)
 21 Toss a jar in to the caretaker (7)
 22 Molten rock from a volcano (4)
 27 Requirements (5)
 29 See how fitting it is when there's a chance to score in rugby! (3,2)
 30 Such appellations as men may have (5)
 31 Indonesia's most populous island (4)
 32 In which units to measure electrical resistance (4)



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— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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Sudoku Corner

350

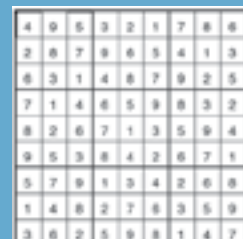
Easy



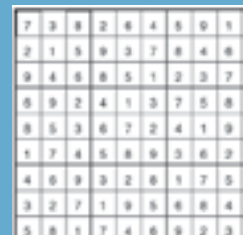
Hard



Last week's Easy 349



Last week's Hard 349



Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter



Don't fear for tomorrow when today is for the living

My summer holidays in Ireland included a visit to a rural pub/restaurant, where a family function was taking place. This event, maybe a christening or possibly a quiet second marriage, was attended by a large number of children, running all over the premises and annoying hoary old celibates like me.

Sensing my annoyance, one child stopped right in front of me and intoned: "Hello, old person!" This surely was a moment of truth.

A visit to a classmate revealed he had had a similar experience. Making his way into a swimming pool, he found his way blocked by young GAA types sitting on the gangway massaging their aching calves. Their team-mate noted my classmate's frustration and shouted to his colleagues: "Leave the granddad through!"

Elders

How did this happen! It seems like only yesterday that we were fresh-faced young priests, being told by our elders that it's a sure sign of age when the priests and policemen start looking young. Now we know the feeling: how come there are so many teenaged gardaí!



I am 60 years of age. My birthday happened in the heart of lockdown last spring, so denial is a possibility.

Raucous parties were out, but the parish did what parishes do best, making sure I knew that my birthday was not forgotten, and almost overpowering me with cards and mementoes.

Everyone here now knows I am 60; there's no denying it.

It seems such a big age. In my

heart, I feel I might be in my 30s, 40 even – but 60, surely not! On the other hand, I am conscious of contemporaries who have not made it this far. Six of us were ordained for Cork & Ross in 1984. Three have already gone to heaven, mostly prematurely, from cancer; Bob Harrison in 1996 at the age of 38, Sean O'Driscoll in 2013 not much over 50, Jim Davern just a couple of years back.

I am also conscious that the

boys and girls I was in school with are all thinking of retirement; many in fact have crossed over that threshold. And here I am contemplating another 15 years in active parish ministry, maybe at a slacker pace, but on call '24/7' nonetheless.

Tension

There is a tension in life between seeing the glass as half full or half empty. I am acutely aware of the tension just now. On the one hand, my life is more than half over. The energetic years are surely behind, the best years maybe?

On the other hand, the glass is half full. Happiness seems to grow with age.

People's annoying criticisms sting less, their expectations intrude hardly at all.

I am a happy 60-year-old. I am happy to live today, to give it my all, to be a pastor who prays, preaches and writes, but also a reader, walker and relax-er. Being an only child, I am not harassed by demanding family connections, but instead surrounded by good friends and blessed with health. I enjoy today.

Tomorrow...who knows?

What happens if things go wrong?

On my summer holidays in Ireland, I went to the church nearest my hotel for Sunday Mass and luckily found a seat. Everything was excellent: stewards, sanitisation and mask-wearing. The priest preached well and ministers served superbly. But no one took my contact details, even though they were taken everywhere else I travelled – even in McDonalds!

So if there was outbreak of Covid-19 there, no one could contact me to alert me.

I'm told few churches take these details and wonder: why not? It may not be legally required, but is it not 'best practice', part of our 'duty of care'?

Birth of a new Church?

● Something remarkable is happening: a new Church is being born in Irish parishes. The Covid-19 committee here has become the best pastoral council a parish could want, responding to pastoral needs, and safely.

People who couldn't brave it to church needed Holy Communion: let's buy pyxes, they said, and make them available. I might buy two, they got ten! People take a pyx on a long-term loan, and suddenly Communion is brought from Mass to people under-nourished by mere spiritual Communion. Older people who would not be eucharistic ministers in a million years see the need and volunteer. Praise God!



Patients in the waiting room of the Spiritan Health Care Centre, Borana, Ethiopia, whom you can help by funding medicines and other supplies.



PLEASE HELP THE LITTLE WAY TO PROVIDE MEDICINE FOR CLINICS IN DEPRIVED AREAS

The Little Way Association has been asked to help support a clinic in Ethiopia. Fr Kenneth Iwunna CSSp of the Spiritan Health Care Centre, Borana, writes:

"When the religious sisters who were running our clinic had to leave in 2015, our bishop agreed to pay the staff's salaries. However, I am asking your kind supporters to provide funds for the medicine and supplies that we need to keep the clinic functional." The centre helps the Dhadim people, who are poor farmers. They suffer from Aids, tuberculosis and other diseases. Fr Iwunna adds: "Most of them cannot afford to pay for their hospital bills, so many times, we give them free medical treatment and those who can afford to pay, they pay little. The clinic is the only one in this vicinity."

The covid crisis is making matters worse for people in already-deprived areas, so projects like the Spiritan Health Care Centre need our help more than ever.

Your kind gift will be gratefully received and forwarded without deduction to provide urgently needed medicines for clinics in deprived areas.

Every penny or cent of your gift goes to missionaries without deduction.



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