

# The Irish Catholic

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# Ireland is a 'haven' for human trafficking Irish religious warn

Ruadhán Jones

Ireland is a "haven" for human traffickers, with a "huge number" of them exploiting women, children and men, Irish religious working with survivors have warned. Serious concern has also been expressed at the failure of authorities to identify victims of child trafficking.

Sr Eilis Coe RSC warned that there is a "huge demand" for the buying and selling of victims of trafficking in Ireland. She is part of a coalition of religious congregations stepping up pressure on the Government to act on the issue after stinging criticism from international bodies.

If there was no demand, there would be no supply, Sr Eilis insisted, warning that human trafficking is becoming indigenous now because "we want it".

"There is a section of our population unfortunately that wants this," she said referring to buyers of sex with trafficked persons and unscrupulous employers who exploit people who have been trafficked.

Sr Eilis, a member of Act to Prevent Trafficking (APT) also warned that anecdotal evidence suggests groups of people in Ireland are even trafficking their own children, "selling them on the streets of Dublin" for exploitation.

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## 'A cheerful heart is the best medicine...'



Mrs Rena Kelly and her two great-grandchildren Roan (left) and Ben Clifford hold the Benemerenti Medal, recently bestowed on Mrs Kelly by Fr Kieran O'Brien Adm. St Mary's Cathedral, Killarney. Mrs Kelly received the medal, sanctioned by Pope Francis, for years of service to the cathedral. Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan.

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## Ireland is a 'haven' for human trafficking Irish religious warn

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"It is in every sector and section of the population - and so... we have to tackle it, we just have to, for the sake of those children."

Sr Eilis added that the whole of society has to change to tackle the "huge number of people buying and using and exploiting women and children and men in our country".

She called for a nationwide awareness campaign, saying that "doctors, teachers, nurses [and] the general population, need more training in this because there is vast ignorance of the problem".

Sr Eilis was speaking during a conference organised by the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles and the Society of African Missions on the latest Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, released last month by the US State Department.

Although Ireland was moved off a watchlist on failures around human trafficking, it has still failed to retain the 'tier one' status on tackling the issue that it lost

almost five years ago.

Mary Crilly of the Sexual Violence Centre Cork warned that this is "a bad report" for the State.

"I am living in a sex traffickers' haven in Ireland," she insisted saying "this isn't a criticism - this is a reality."

"The bottom line is that it [the Government] needs to do better, that's really it," she continued.

Although the report acknowledged the addition of a specialist prosecution team and a Garda unit, Ms Crilly was critical of the resources offered, saying they are not directed to where they are most needed.

Meanwhile, Ann Mara of MECPATHS, which works to protect children from trafficking, said her organisation has "very serious concerns" that in the last two years, no child victims of trafficking have been identified in the Republic.

"If we compare our statistics here in Ireland - our child victims - globally one third



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

# Door-to-door sisters aims to relieve pressured priests

**Jason Osborne**

Religious sisters with a charism of carrying out door-to-door visitations have recently arrived in Ireland from the US, providing encouragement and support to already-busy priests.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Sister Theresa Marie of the Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate said that their experience so far has been "very encouraging" and that it's been "a lot of support" to beleaguered parish priests.

"The bishops were the ones who initially contacted our Mother General and invited us to come over. And then we said we could come for a short-term mission, but we weren't able to open a house yet because unfortunately we don't have the number of sisters we would need. So then the bishops put Mother in contact with a priest in each diocese and so we worked with the priests.

"That is our charism, to work with the parish priest," Sr Theresa Marie said.



Archbishop Eamon Martin is pictured with sisters of the Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate and members of NET ministries at the recent Youth 2000 summer festival.

The Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate were founded in New York City in 1920, with the mission of combining a contemplative prayer life with missionary visitation to parish families, and religious instruction.

The foundress, Mother Mary Teresa Tallon's, parents came from Ireland, which Sr Theresa Marie said makes Ireland feel like their "spiritual home".

The sisters arrived July 15, with two currently based in Armagh and another two based in Navan, Co. Meath. Sr Theresa Marie said they're undertaking a three-month temporary mission, which they hope will become permanent in future as their numbers grow.

"We definitely see a lot of opportunity for reaching out to people and from the response that people have that it would

be a welcome ministry in Ireland. There's so many possibilities, so much opportunity that I think it's going to be hard to leave at the end of the three months," Sr Theresa Marie said.

"We'll definitely be carrying the intentions of our mission here in our hearts with us and praise God, if we're able to return again, I'd be happy to be part of the group that's sent."

## NI parties that 'foment confrontation' also responsible for sectarian bonfire

**Chai Brady**

Sectarianism is more widespread than the actions of a few young people and political parties who "foment confrontation as a political weapon" bear their share of responsibility, Bishop Donal

McKeown of Derry has said.

His comments come in the wake of a controversial bonfire in Derry in which poppy wreaths, Union flags and an image of the Queen was burnt. The annual event in Derry's Bogside took place on Monday night.

Speaking on *Good Morning Ulster* on Tuesday, Bishop McKeown said sectarianism is like an iceberg "just because there's a little tip there that we like to condemn, doesn't mean there is not a huge underbelly of other sectarian attitudes... that perhaps big tribalism parties like to benefit from".

Bishop McKeown said it is the responsibility of everyone to build a shared future. "That means being honest about where sectarianism actually

benefits tribalism on the part of large political parties, that's tough for me to say, but I'm angry this morning if we only condemn a few young people and actually miss the point that sectarianism is much more widespread than we want to admit," he said.

He added that those "who foment confrontation as a political weapon bear a part of the responsibility for what happened at the bonfire last night and all other events over the weekend".

## Bishops welcome publication of national synodal synthesis

**Staff reporter**

The bishops of Ireland welcomed Tuesday the publication of the National Synthesis of the Synodal Process on [www.synod.ie](http://www.synod.ie), while inviting "the whole people of God in this country to study its findings carefully and prayerfully".

The National Synthesis has been forwarded to Rome as part of the worldwide synodal process launched by Pope Francis in October 2021 and which will culminate in the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome in 2023.

Speaking during a Mass for the Knock Novena, during which the National Synthesis was published, Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh Michael Router expressed thanks to the "thousands of people" who took part nationwide in the consultation process.

"I pray that this relaunching of the synodal way will help people to realise that we are all part of a community of sinners walking together on the road, supporting and helping each other as we strive to live as Jesus Christ wants us to," Dr Router said.

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of all victims of trafficking identified are children," Ms Mara said.

"When we look across the water to the UK, 46% of all of their victims are children.

Up North, it's 16%. And here in the Republic we're saying 0% are children, and that is hugely, hugely concerning," she warned.

❶ See pages 16-17

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# Mother reveals how Padre Pio aided daughter's cancer fight



Roseanna Ruane.

## Chai Brady

The mother of 2020 Late Late Toy Show star Saoirse Ruane who was diagnosed twice with life-threatening tumours, said she feels a strong connection to Padre Pio after praying to him before her daughter's major surgery.

Roseanna Ruane spoke of hearing Saoirse's diagnosis of Osteosarcoma and subsequent treatments more than two years ago, and then finding out in April of this year that her daughter's tumour was now in

her lung.

Speaking at Knock Novena this week, she said: "It all came back, the shock, the depression, the feeling of again grieving the life we thought we knew. What I thought I knew was not the case anymore

"Which then makes you question so much more, my beliefs, my faith, what I thought I knew. I was so cross with God at one stage. We hadn't fallen out, but I wondered why he let all of this sadness happen, to someone so young with her whole life ahead of her."

Mrs Ruane said she soon

realised that it wasn't God. "It isn't any one person, God is there to guide us in troubled times, he is there for comfort, to listen, to heal and most importantly teach us something very important, to be grateful," she said.

Mrs Ruane's speech was on 'The Power of Prayer in Difficult Times', which received a standing ovation. She lives in Athenry, Co. Galway with her husband Ollie and daughters Saoirse, now aged 10, and Farrah-Rose (3).

On the night before Saoirse's surgery this year Padre Pio's

glove was brought to her. Mrs Ruane said: "We blessed Saoirse with the glove and prayed to Padre Pio... Now more than ever I feel a stronger connection to Padre Pio. So strong in fact that I have made a promise to bring Saoirse to visit his resting place in San Giovanni when she's able."

She added: "I have seen first-hand how the country and further afield came together and prayed for Saoirse and I ask you to continue to keep her in your prayers as she travels her long road to recovery."

## Love of Christ helps Loah cope with fame

### Ruadhán Jones

World renowned Irish-Sierra Leonean musician Loah has opened up about how Christ's love helps her cope with pressures of publicity.

The singer-songwriter was raised Catholic but

fell away, telling *The Sunday Independent* that she realised she couldn't go through life without a raft, and turned back to Christ.

"It was a really physical, embodied, deep aligning experience, where I was like, 'this feels like absolute truth

again. This is right,'" Loah said.

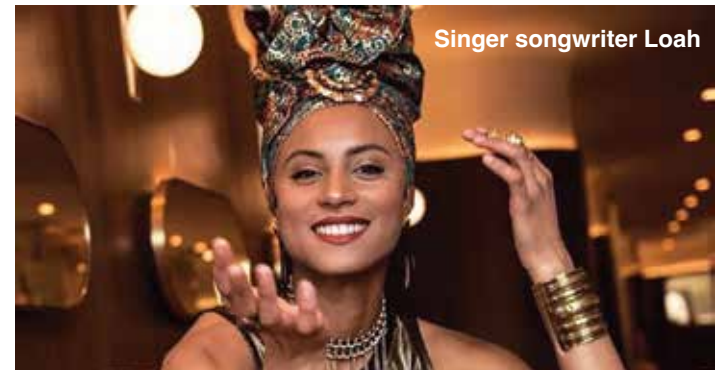
### Prayer group

She revealed that she has joined a prayer group, which meets to see how "we can apply biblical principles to our lives".

"I was really starting to

live from this space of, 'my gosh, if I really believe this – that I'm so loved, by the divine creator – why would I ever care what anyone thinks of me,'" Loah said.

"Like 'why would I ever trust an opinion other than the one of that who made me?'"



Singer songwriter Loah

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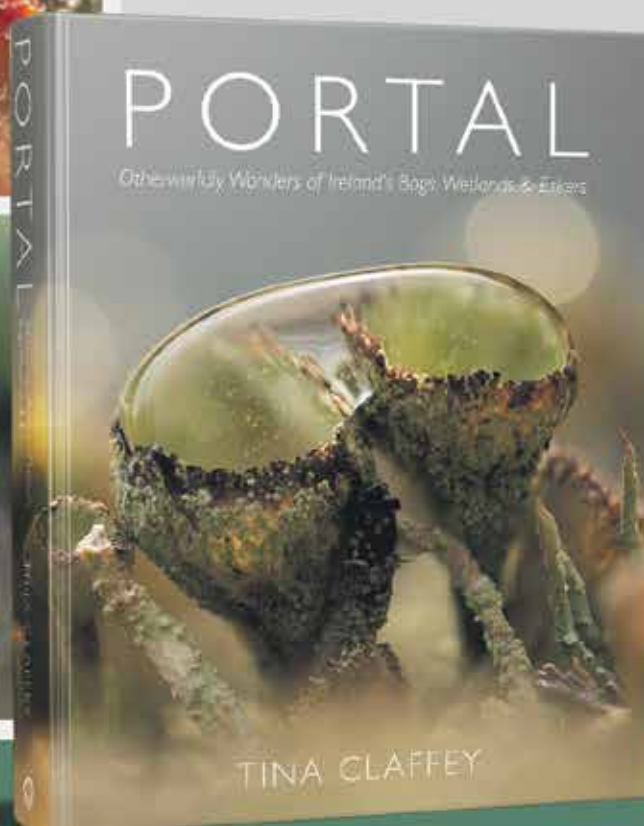
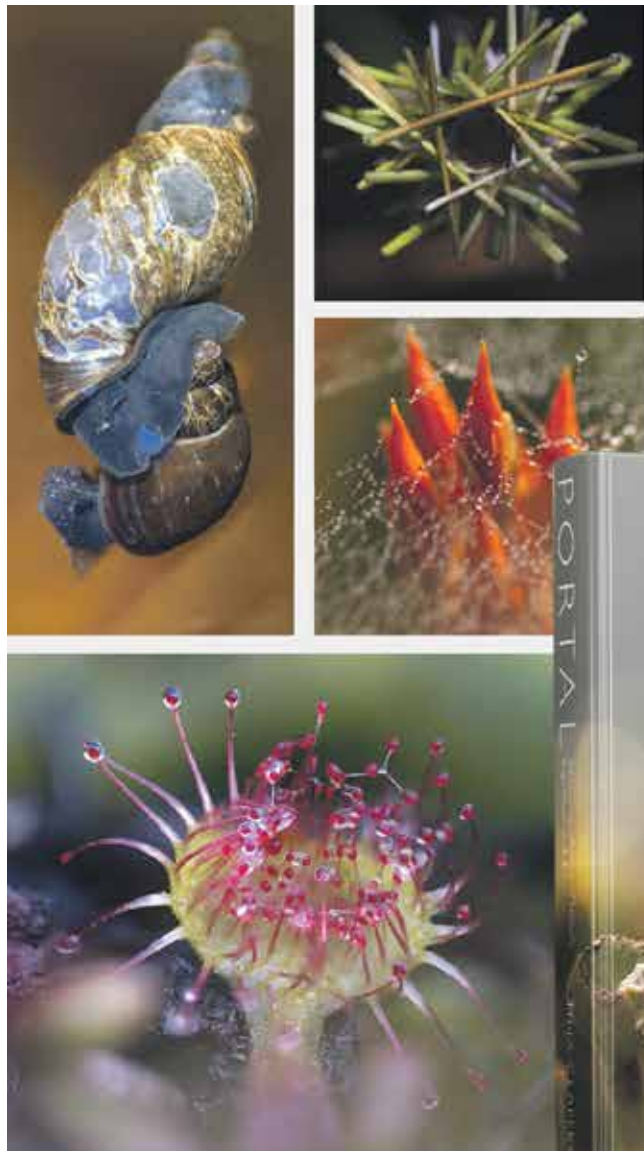
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# Irish Govt question Lebanon on detention of archbishop

Chai Brady

The Irish Government has raised the issue of the detention of an archbishop by Lebanese authorities while he was returning from Israel following a routine visit to his Episcopal See.

Archbishop Moussa El-Hage of Haifa and the Holy Land was detained last month while bringing \$460,000 (€451,000) in aid from the Lebanese diaspora in Israel to family members in Lebanon.

He was arrested on the orders of a military court before being interrogated for 12 hours. After

being released at midnight, he was stripped of his passport, mobile phone, the money and medicine.

Following a query from Carol Nolan TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney said on the issue: "Religious leaders, such as Archbishop El-Hage, play an important role in Lebanon where the political system relies on tolerance, inclusivity and religious freedom. Officials from my department have raised the issue with the Lebanese authorities."

Mr Coveney went on to say the general situation is "extremely worrying".

"The devastating explosions in Beirut on August 4, 2020, the pan-

dem and grain shortages from the invasion of Ukraine have exacerbated a severe economic crisis. I have visited Lebanon on several occasions as minister, most recently in May, and have witnessed first-hand the scale of the challenges facing the country. We have consistently called on the political leadership in Lebanon to urgently implement necessary reforms to address these challenges," he added.

The banking system in Lebanon has collapsed, which means many people have no access to money saved in their accounts. This had led to an increased reliance on financial aid delivered from abroad.

The US bishops issued a statement on Friday condemning the archbishop's "arbitrary detention and interrogation", dubbing it a "cause for alarm".

They expressed solidarity with the Maronite bishops, adding: "We also pray for the protection of the Church in Lebanon and its charitable work as it comes under increasing pressure."

The Lebanese judge who was in charge of the case, Fadi Akiki, reportedly claimed that the money came from "collaborators" in Israel, with which Lebanon has no diplomatic relations.

In an interview with *L'Orient-Le*

*Jour*, Archbishop El-Hage said he had been providing aid for 10 years, and "since the explosion of the port on August 4, 2020 and the economic collapse, the amounts have increased because the need has become greater".

"Every person in the occupied territories who wanted to send money to his family in Lebanon came to the parish to give me the envelope. Those who arrested me claim that this money is for the families of the Israeli agents and are trying to punish me. They are not [Israeli] agents, but the Lebanese who fled to Israel," he said.

## Bishops to discuss letter from youth on liberal reform

Ruadhán Jones

A letter from over 500 young Catholics challenging the synod on a perceived desire among young people for liberal reform is on the agenda for the next meeting of the Irish bishops' conference.

Oisín Bridges, one of the letter's

organisers, said it is a "great sign" of leadership, to take on board the views of young people and their faith.

"We're very happy," Mr Bridges told *The Irish Catholic*.

"It's a great sign that something like that can be recognised so promptly and it's a real sign of leadership to take onboard the young people and their faith."

The letter raised concerns regarding calls arising in diocesan reports for changing Church teaching on human sexuality, marriage and women priests.

"As young faithful Catholics we fully accept and joyfully embrace Church teaching and practice, and do not wish for Church teaching to be changed or reformulated," the letter reads.

More than 500 young, commit-

ted Catholics signed the letter in the space of a week, before it was sent to the Irish bishops.

"The letter was a grass roots movement passed on from individual to individual," Mr Bridges said.

"It just goes to show how many young Catholics are embracing the Church's teaching."

## Weekday Latin Mass in Cork set to end in September

Staff reporter

The daily celebration of the Traditional Latin Mass (TLM) in Cork City is coming to an end in September, when the clerical changes for Cork and

Ross come into effect.

The TLM is currently celebrated daily in St Peter's and Paul's Church in the centre of the city, but the parish priest Fr Patrick McCarthy has been appointed to a new position

as chaplain to the Mercy Hospital.

*The Irish Catholic* understands that from September 10, he will be available to celebrate Mass in the Extraordinary Form once a week on

Sundays.

Members of the TLM community in Cork said the change is "tough" and will have "a hard effect" on those who used to attend regularly.

Elsewhere around the

country, little has changed in the celebration of the TLM since the release of Pope Francis' letter, *Traditionis Custodes*, in July 2021, which regulated the practise of the Latin Mass.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Dominican chant workshop during National Heritage Week

A workshop during National Heritage Week aims to enlighten minds regarding medieval Dominican chant.

Participants will learn how to sing a selection of chants that would have been sung in Sligo Abbey in the middle ages.

At the end of the workshop, there will be the opportunity to sing these chants in their original setting of the Abbey.

The event will be led by lecturer in Chant and Ritual Song at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick, Dr Eleanor Giraud.

The workshop is due to take place August 21, from 2pm-4pm at Sligo Abbey.

#### Cork MSC's announce novena to Our Lady

The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Cork have announced the dates for their annual novena to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, taking place August 31-September 8.

The theme for the novena is 'Mary, Mother of Compassion' and there will be two Novena Masses daily, morning and evening, which will also be streamed live on [www.mscmissions.ie](http://www.mscmissions.ie) for those who can't join in person.

Reconciliation will be led by Fr Tom Mulcahy MSC on Friday, September 2, followed by a special reflection on Mary and suffering by Fr John Fitzgerald MSC on Monday, September 5, and the annual Day of Healing on Tuesday, September 6.

### The Lord's work is never done...



Crosshaven Parish priest Fr Patrick Stevenson walks along the strand before sunrise collecting bottles, cans and other litter which have been discarded by visitors to Myrtleville beach, Co. Cork, August 10. Photo: David Creedon.

# Rushdie – how it began

**W**hen the news broke about the shocking, homicidal attack on the author Salman Rushdie in New York state, my mind went back to early 1989, soon after his controversial book *The Satanic Verses* was published.

## London

It was, as I recall, a Sunday afternoon, and we were taking our ease in our London flat in Kensington after a leisurely lunch. We had some guests as well as the family around the table.

Suddenly, there was a commotion in the street – the sound of a vehement crowd walking down Holland Park Avenue, which links Notting Hill Gate with Shepherd's Bush. The noise of this crowd was so particularly angry and sharp, that I descended into the street to see what was happening.



**Mary Kenny**

The demonstrators, marching along the avenue, were young men of Pakistani appearance, carrying banners calling for 'death to Rushdie' as a Satanic blasphemer. The rage of these people was palpable, and frightening. The other noticeable aspect was that they looked, I thought, rather poor, and cheaply dressed. I remember with great vividness the exceptional fury, and even a sort of distress on their puny faces.

One of our guests was an espionage writer, Alan Williams, son of the playwright Emyln Williams, and he knew the background. "The Islamic world is about to take its vengeance on us all," he said.

"Blaspheming the name of the Prophet Mohammed is the ultimate offence among Muslims." The book had been publicly burned in Bradford. Alan wondered if the passage about the prophet was entirely necessary.

## Islamic anger

And that marked the start of an Islamic anger which has been directed against western targets, and those perceived as blasphemers, often leading to ever more extremism. Iran issued a fatwa against Salman Rushdie in February 1989, and you could say he has lived under that threat ever since. In the meantime, we have

had 9/11, and many other atrocities such as Manchester Arena and the Bataclan massacres.

**“Could someone have intervened to calm the anger and distress?”**

These have been terrible events, and many innocent lives have been lost, and injuries sustained. Homicide is a grave sin, and freedom of speech is a pillar of a civilised society. But I wonder if the sorrowful saga of suffering could have been prevented? Could someone have intervened to calm the anger and distress? Can some wise counsel, even now, do something to try, try and try again to prevent what Sean O'Casey called 'this murdering hate'?

## A gender neutral St Joan?

St Joan of Arc is to be portrayed as a gender-neutral character at Shakespeare's Globe theatre in London, in a play starting next week. *I, Joan* will run for two months, and St Joan will use the gender-neutral pronoun 'them' and 'they'. The Globe describes the drama as "alive, queer and full of hope".

Those who have most strongly objected are not, so far, religious organisations, but feminists, who feel that a young woman of historical renown is being deprived of the entitlement of being a female.

However, Joan is such an icon – in the literal and figurative meaning – that she has been claimed by all sorts of factions. In France, she was a symbol of the French Resistance during the Second World War, even for communists: she was also a symbol of the anti-resistance movements. She is seen as a religious figure, an emblem of both feminism and femininity, and a political leader who ejected the English out of France. To paraphrase St Paul, she is all things to all people, and being claimed by everyone is a true sign of greatness.

Whatever the new play is



Joan of Arc.

like, it will surely never surpass George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*, which is truly inspirational. GBS was an Irish Protestant who became an atheist, and yet you wonder if the Holy Spirit inspired his wonderful play, in which he portrays Joan with such a natural freshness: the miracle of a teenage peasant girl who leads an army and shows a man how to be a king.

Joan has been played by many great actresses, including Ingrid Bergman and Jean Seberg: and in her time, Galway's Siobhán McKenna was said to be among the greatest of all.

● Monday – being August 15 – the Feast of the Assumption was beautifully celebrated in Italy, according to friends who live in Umbria, about 40 kilometres from Rome. Exquisite moving tableaux, with lights and flowers, are put up to Our Lady all around the local lakeside, and the whole community takes part.

The Assumption is a public holiday in Italy, as well as a religious feast. Italy is, constitutionally, a secular republic, yet it seems entirely comfortable being aligned with traditions of faith. How sad that in contrast, the Irish Republic seems to want to distance itself, as much as possible, from these traditions celebrated in peace, joy and beauty.

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# Re-building the Church...

The findings of the largest consultation process ever undertaken in the Church in Ireland – part of the synodal pathway – were sent to Rome this week. Here *The Irish Catholic* presents a summary of the 15 major themes of the report.

## Abuse as part of the story of the Church

The scale of abuse within the Church has created a huge sense of loss which infused the responses in our consultation. This sense of loss coupled with continuing anger was expressed by survivors themselves and their families, lay Faithful who have become estranged from the Church because of it, and many good priests and religious who also feel betrayed. Alongside the enormous amount of good work on safeguarding, we need to continue our efforts to provide times and spaces for lamentation, to grieve this shared loss. The contributions about abuse, therefore, represent a call for penance and for atonement at a national level...Enormous gratitude to survi-

vors for their engagement was expressed by many involved in the consultation process for the synod. There was a palpable sense that despite many efforts by the Church, a 'reckoning' had not yet taken place, and the synodal process generated a clear imperative to place this issue at the heart of any Church renewal and reform. A submission noted: *We welcome, indeed rejoice in, the synodal path as one of dialogue and journeying with others.* Another submission specifically linked this insight to the legacy of abuse: *We must pledge ourselves to journey with survivors, to meet with them, preferably in small groups where dialogue is possible and opens us to the presence of the Spirit.*

## Lay ministry

On the one hand, some respondents see that carrying out the mission of the Church is largely the responsibility of the clergy, while others recognise a call for greater participation of laypeople in the life of the Church.

However, there are challenges. These include the perceived passivity of the parish community or wider Church when it comes to lay ministry. There was an overarching thread evident throughout the consultation that the gifts of lay people were under-utilised by the Church.

A submission from returned missionaries who had worked overseas highlighted that much was learned from working with lay colleagues in the various

communities in which they served. *We had no option but to trust and train lay leaders who gladly undertook the various ministries. In retrospect, it is clear that it was the actual shortage of ordained ministers that enabled the laity to take their God-given role.*

While many efforts have been made to enhance the role of laypeople in ministry, much remains to be done to encourage, support and provide a training dedicated to enabling lay people in their calling to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ in their faith communities. A call for such training was evident in much of the consultation. It was also acknowledged that while we often speak of an aging clergy we also have an aging laity.

**“Participants expressed much appreciation for our priests. Their dedication, hard work, presence and pastoral care was frequently acknowledged...”**



Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh blesses delegates during a prayer walk at a pre-synodal assembly at Clonmacnoise Monastery. Photo: CNS/Clodagh Kilcoyne, Reuters

## Co-responsible leadership

Adult faith development, resources for lay ministries and collaborative decision-making was flagged as poor or non-existent. Clergy acknowledged that in many contexts they are too tired and weary to engage in these developments. However, they are aware that with education and formation, laity could and should be more involved in co-responsible leadership.

Some still feel that the laity should not have a voice in the decision making of the Church/parish; that this is primarily the 'priest's role'. They are happy to be 'volunteers' and just help where needed rather than be actively involved in leadership. Others, however, are more than ready to be involved in charting the way forward, especially through the synodal process.

## Clergy

Participants expressed much appreciation for our priests. Their dedication, hard work, presence and pastoral care was frequently acknowledged...Many recognised that they are over-worked and often feel burdened by the weight of governance and administration...There is a lot of concern expressed for our ageing clergy. The role of the priest is valued and will continue to play an essential part in communities of faith. Some participants were concerned that some younger priests are very traditional and rigid in their thinking and may not have the requisite skills for co-responsible leadership.

There were calls from both young and older participants for optional celibacy, married priests, female priests, and

## Sense of belonging

Some respondents were happy with the sense of belonging and companionship they felt within the Church but many more articulated the view that the Church was not as welcoming for those who may be on the margins of society or who feel excluded because of their sexual orientation.

It was stressed that the Church is at its very best when it is close to people's lives, speaking a language that people understand, and connecting with people amidst their daily struggles. Regarding language itself, some felt that the Irish language and the local customs that surround the language, were not afforded adequate attention in Church circles. Sadly, the view that nothing happens outside of Mass

and that much more could be done to develop a sense of community through regular social events and other liturgical services, emerged repeatedly.

Coupled to this desire for improving fraternal and communal bonds was a sense that better communication methods need to be adopted to assist this process. One diocesan submission offered a helpful caveat: *Technology was very useful, yet the internet is no substitute for human contact.*

If the Church is to become an inclusive one where all marginalised people feel a sense of belonging, then we must take stock of who is missing and discern how they can be welcomed. As one submission noted: *Personal invitation is key.*

the return of those who had left the priesthood to marry. Clericalism in all its forms was frequently associated with hurt and abuse of power...Some declared that the structures of the Church are not inclusive but patriarchal, hierarchical, and feudal. There was concern expressed that many priests are resistant to change; that they feel they don't have anything further to learn and view the local parish as 'my parish' not 'our parish'.

There was a sense that the permanent diaconate has been welcomed but is not always understood. A new model for the selection of bishops was also sought and a number of participants indicated that it ought to include a wider participation of the People of God.

## The role of women

This was mentioned in almost every submission received. In those responses there was a call for women to be given equal treatment within the Church structures in terms of leadership and decision-making. As one submission states: *Women have a special place in the Church but not an equal place.* Many women remarked that they are not prepared to be considered second class citizens anymore and many are leaving the Church. They feel that even though their contribution over the years has been invaluable, it has been taken for granted.

Several of the submissions called for the ordination of women to the permanent diaconate and the priest-

hood. Their exclusion from the diaconate is regarded as particularly hurtful. Some women felt that *yet another layer was added to exclude them.* Many young people cannot understand the Church's position on women. Because of the disconnect between the Church's view of women and the role of women in wider society today, the Church is perceived as patriarchal and by some, as misogynistic.

The issue of women and gender-based violence was also raised and a call to *challenge systemic gender inequalities to ensure women's voices are heard and that they have the opportunity to be leaders and take part in decision making forums.*

## Adult faith formation

The synodal process highlighted the serious weaknesses in adult faith development in Ireland. Many of the submissions reported that people found it hard to engage with the questions, the concepts and the language relating to communion and mission. There is a felt need among many respondents for safe and dynamic spaces where people can come together to talk deeply about their faith and increase their knowledge of it. One submission stated: *Our spiritual growth is stunted. As adult members of the Church, we are not sufficiently grounded in our faith, and do not have the confidence in speaking about our love of God.*

One submission outlined that there is a crisis in transmission of faith, rather than a crisis of faith and that we are unsure about how to evangelise in the modern world. This problem can only be addressed with the deployment of significant resources into programmes for those who wish to deepen their own faith, spirituality and understanding of scripture at a personal or academic level. Many of the courses available are very expensive, and therefore inaccessible to those who are on low incomes or social welfare. Some felt that if we invested half as many resources into the training and formation of people as we do into buildings, we could dramatically improve the life of the Church in Ireland today.

## LGBTQI+

There was a clear, overwhelming call for the full inclusion of LGBTQI+ people in the Church, expressed by all ages and particularly by the young and by members of the LGBTQI+ community themselves.

This inclusion would in the first instance involve less judgemental language in Church teaching, following the compassionate approach of Pope Francis which has been transformative and is appreciated, again, by young people in particular.

Some called for a change in Church teaching, asking if the Church is sufficiently mindful of developments with regard to human sexuality and the lived reality of LGBTQI+ couples. Others expressed a concern that a change in the Church's teaching would be simply conforming to secular stand-

ards and contemporary culture. Likewise, it was urged that we not treat the LGBTQI+ community in isolation from other marginalised groups.

There were calls from an LGBTQI+ focus group for an apology from the Church. This submission suggested that even though the Church rarely condemns gay people these days, it indirectly creates an atmosphere where physical, psychological and emotional abuse of gay people is tolerated and even encouraged. Indeed, the visceral clarity of this particular focus group gave life to the rather more tentative and generalised positions on inclusion offered elsewhere, pointing to the value of hearing directly the voices of the excluded or disaffected.

## Sexuality and relationships

It was evident that sexuality, sexual ethics, and relationship issues informed people's decisions in relation to Mass attendance, reception of the Eucharist and many other aspects of Church life.

There were requests for re-examinations of Church teaching and a revision of its understanding of human sexuality in light of recent scientific and sociological research.

For the divorced and remarried, the Church's 'rules and regulations' were seen as draconian. Some divorced and separated people believed they could not receive the Eucharist even though they had not entered second relationships. Others described their exclusion by priests from any active role in the parish because of their status. It was stated that some priests avoided the strict implementation of the teaching regarding those in second unions receiving the Eucharist, and while this was appreciated it was also seen as *turning a blind eye to the reality.*

Another group who identified as feeling excluded from the life of the Church was single parents. It was felt that all parents who wish to bring up their children in the Church should experience welcome and support, and that greater creativity in ministry to families is needed. There are other minority, yet strong, voices that believe the Church, rooted in the Catholic Tradition, should not conform to secular standards when it comes to questions regarding gender, sexuality, and relationships.

## Youth

The issue of youth and the question of how the Church might engage with them, emerged universally...Multiple dioceses and organisations noted the *absence of young people in parish communities* and many submissions articulated a view that other youth organisations provide a home for young people that is more welcoming than that in parishes.

There was an openness and honesty in responses from young people. They identified with faith and with the Gospel message and what we are called to as Church. One response clearly conveyed the sentiments expressed by so many: the one thing we, as young people, look for is sincerity. In many instances it was felt that the Church lacked this, or indeed pas-

toral awareness of the significant challenges faced by young people today. One notable example given was the mental health crisis faced by many young people.

Many young people were critical of the Church regarding the role of women, clerical celibacy and its handling of the abuse crisis. A significant number disagreed with the Church's teaching on sexuality and the Church's position on sex was considered as a barrier...On the other hand, some young people said that, for them, the Church's teaching on sexuality is a welcome challenge.

Young people feel significant pressure from their peers and wider society when they express their faith and engage with Church.

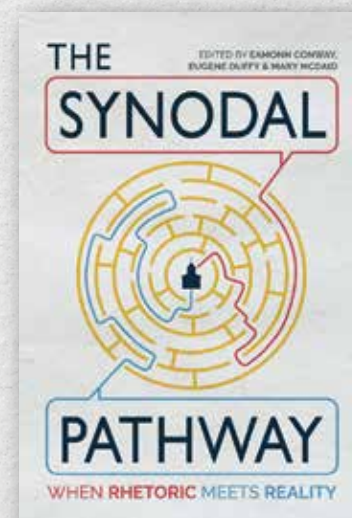
## Education and catechesis

The sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation were identified as key moments in the life of the family and the Church. There is a wide consensus in the diocesan submissions, which was also confirmed at the national pre-synodal assembly, that a more prayerful, catechetical and scriptural formation is needed at parish level in order to accompany people before, during, and after these important sacramental moments. Parishes are struggling to accompany young people and their families in their faith development. It is acknowledged that *the actual faith community will need to educate and lead our children in the faith*, which suggests that a strategy, with particular focus on catechetical accompaniment, is required at parish level for young people and their parents.



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## Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic greatly impacted religion and faith in different ways – gathering and expressing faith in physical places of worship was restricted, especially at parish level. The closure of churches and curtailment of ministry during lockdowns represented a marked shift in the life of the Church during this period. This shift generated deep feelings of isolation, abandonment, pain and hurt, especially amongst the elderly and those on their own as well as palpable sorrow to grieving families, arising from the restrictions on Church liturgies and pastoral care at this time.

Many felt that Covid-19 accelerated an already steep decline in Church practice and general engagement. Others remarked that it prompted a new vision for restructuring and re-thinking what it means to be a Church. It necessitated alternative liturgical and ritual responses as liturgical life moved to digital platforms. Some Catholics engaged fully with this possibility. Online communication has generated new possibilities for formation and training. Many participants mentioned that during the pandemic they missed ‘gathering’ and ‘socialising’ when going to Mass.

More positively, prayer in the home and appreciation of the family as the domestic church grew. Families slowed down and became more present to each other. A healthier work-life balance emerged as people enjoyed creation and were more aware of the need to protect the environment.



## Liturgy

There is a sense that funerals and special occasions are celebrated extremely well, but there is a need for more creative and engaging liturgies to connect with families and young people. Some feel the Church's liturgies are boring, monotonous, jaded and flat; that they no longer speak to people's lives. There was a desire expressed by respondents for the full participation of the laity throughout the liturgy; and for a wider more diverse group of people, including women, to take part. A minority view seeks a return of the Latin Mass and pre-Vatican II celebrations.

There was concern that the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation are seen solely through the

lens of the school and a desire that those presenting for the sacraments would participate in the whole life of the Church.

Homilies were frequently described as being too long, ill prepared, irrelevant, monotonous and not always connected to life. Church language in the liturgy is seen as archaic, non-inclusive and hard to understand, particularly the language in the Old Testament readings and liturgical prayers.

The power of prayer was very much valued, as well as the presence of music and song. Some participants felt a great sense of love for our devotional practices and others talked about the power of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

## Culture

Dramatic economic and social change was seen to have had a profound impact on the structures and processes of the Church, its place within Irish society, and thus on the perceived capacity for participation and mission.

The pressures of commercialisation and consumerism, the rise of individualism, pressure on time for family and community and a secularist mindset reflected in dominant media, are all heard in the submissions. The Church increasingly finds itself pushed to the margins of popular culture which it struggles to understand or to find language with which to be understood. It was felt that the Church's proclaimed concern to foster communion and participation is overshadowed by the wider society's focus on inclusion, transparency and accountability.

The submissions highlight the morale-sapping effect of negative media treatment of the Church, while recognising the invaluable service of independent media in exposing abuse and failures of accountability within the Church.

Despite these pressures, it was felt that there are strong reasons to engage with the wider culture so that Catholics can highlight the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth...Catholic social teaching calls the Church to highlight the cries from the margins. Many submissions recognised that this will require a fresh approach to popular culture, including a new relationship with the traditional media and the new communication channels whose power was highlighted during the Covid-19 crisis.

## Family

The Church is seen as a family of families; families are the natural framework within which faith is transmitted, nurtured and practised and from which a Christian identity emerges; and families are the appropriate framework for accompaniment and evangelisation.

The Church needs to recognise the changing reality of families over the life cycle, and the challenges and burdens which they face. These burdens are often carried in silence and without external support, particularly in cases where families are coping with members who have a disability, dementia, addiction or other challenges.

In recognising the diversity and validity of family types, frequent mention was also made of the importance of those who are

single and whose needs and capacities are sometimes overlooked in the shaping of pastoral priorities.

Accompaniment of families requires a more creative and considered response by the Church. The focus of parish life on the sacraments of initiation is too centred on children and reliant on schools. Parishes should focus more on parents, guardians and grandparents, while a shift away from the celebrations of a single day to an ongoing relationship based on invitation would be more appropriate and likely, more effective.

The central role of family life requires acknowledgement of the importance of the domestic church in its own terms, an importance which was highlighted during the Covid restrictions on communal gatherings.

# What was missing...

“Conscious that the Holy Spirit also speaks in silence and absence, it is important that we consider what the Holy Spirit is saying to us through the silence around significant issues,” the document says. It was noted that following issues did not emerge in a significant way:

## The wider ecumenical and inter-faith context

The deepening of ecumenical relationships in recent years on the island of Ireland has been a source of great hope to many in the Christian community, as a contribution to overcoming the legacy of our divided past. Similarly, the development of spaces for inter-faith dialogue and cooperation has helped protect the place of religious faith in an increasingly secular and multicultural Ireland...It was notable, however, that there were few references to ecumenism

and inter-faith relations in the submissions from dioceses and other groups, suggesting a need for investment in this area to ensure that the very positive experience at national leadership level is replicated in the local context.

## Environment

Despite the Church's concern for the care of our common home, the main submission regarding environmental issues came from the *Laudato Si'* Working Group with only nominal mention across the diocesan syntheses.

## Social justice

It was recognised that the Church has a life-giving vision for the world in its social teaching and that the Church has the potential to be a force for the common good in our society...It is noteworthy that although Irish society is preoccu-

pied with issues surrounding social justice, for example, homelessness, immigration, poverty, housing etc., the synodal conversations only occasionally drew out reflection and comment on these issues. When spoken of, there was a sense that the Church needed to re-orientate itself to the genuine hardships that people face and to be attentive to the social difficulties that exist in Northern Ireland as a result of the legacy of the troubles.

## The sacramental life of the Church

Whilst there was a strong focus on participation in and renewal of the celebration of the Eucharist there was little mention of the other sacraments and their importance for Christian discipleship and a personal and communal relationship with Jesus Christ. In reading the various syntheses and submissions it seems that faith is often more implied than expressed explicitly. However, it may be that in Ireland faith is often medi-

ated institutionally and thus, there can be a focus on structures rather than relationship. The question also emerges whether many Irish Catholics are ‘sacramentalised but not evangelised’.

## Missionary outreach of the Church

Over the past two centuries the Catholic Church in Ireland has played a significant part in the modern missionary movement of the universal Church. Today, there is still a strong cohort of Irish missionaries working on mission. Equally, there are laity networks throughout the country supporting today's missionary activity...Socio-economic and cultural factors may have contributed to the silence and to the absence of those who could speak meaningfully on some of these issues. This points to the Church's difficulty in engaging with all sectors of society. Is it possible that many people see these important issues as separate from their faith?

# 'Sacramentalised but not evangelised'



Most Irish Catholics feel woefully ill-equipped to share their faith, but the desire they have to do so is heartening writes **Michael Kelly**

**“O**ur spiritual growth is stunted. As adult members of the Church, we are not sufficiently grounded in our faith, and do not have the confidence in speaking about our love of God,” so read one submission to the synodal pathway articulated in the synthesis from the Church in Ireland sent to the Vatican this week.

**“Thousands of pages have been written about, whatever the greatness, the inadequacies of what passed for traditional Irish Catholicism”**

The piercing need for serious adult faith development is ever-present in the 27-page document.

“The synodal process highlighted the serious weaknesses in adult faith development in Ireland. Many of the submissions reported that people found it hard to engage with the questions, the concepts and the language relating to communion and mission,” the document bringing together the reports of the 26 dioceses says bluntly.

At one level, you might scratch your head and wonder how the Church in Ireland – once amongst the strongest in the world and most dominant institution in Irish society – squandered the opportunity to evangelise a captive audience. Thousands of pages have been written about, whatever the greatness, the inadequacies of what passed for traditional Irish Catholicism. That is important, but no amount of looking at past weaknesses will build a Church that is fit for mission.

In that regard, the document is forward-looking and heartening. “There is a felt need among many respondents for safe and dynamic spaces where people can come together to talk deeply about their faith and increase their knowledge of it,” the summarisers say.

The fact is that many Catholics in the pews are not deluded about their lack of formation, they have a faith that sees them through good times

and bad and are keen to ensure it is built on a solid foundation.

“This problem can only be addressed with the deployment of significant resources into programmes for those who wish to deepen their own faith, spirituality and understanding of Scripture at a personal or academic level.

“Some felt that if we invested half as many resources into the training and formation of people as we do into buildings, we could dramatically improve the life of the Church in Ireland today,” the synthesis asserts.

Isn't that the truth – and as the Church becomes institutionally smaller and contracts physically, the clarion call from the synod process is to invest in building faith rather than infrastructure.

Mass attendance is – of course – not everything, but if we believe that Christ instituted the sacraments as instruments of real nourishment and that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life, then whether people come together to worship or not on a Sunday morning is a real test of the vitality of our parishes.

But, there is a sense in the synod report that in a culture that is post-Catholic in many ways the Sunday Eucharist may not be the initial encounter.

“There was also a sense,” the report notes, “that in the future, people may not be reached through liturgy, so a prior step is required in relation to encountering Jesus on a personal level”.

As well as what was said in the gatherings, the synod synthesisers have done the Church in Ireland a great service by identifying what was absent from the discussions.

“Conscious that the Holy Spirit also speaks in silence and absence, it is important that we consider what the Holy Spirit is saying to us through the silence around significant issues and the absence of certain people and groups from the process,” the report says.

## Renewal

A fascinating insight is that “whilst there was a strong focus on participation in and renewal of the celebration of the Eucharist there was little mention of the other sacraments and their importance for Christian discipleship and a personal and communal relationship with Jesus Christ.

“In reading the various syntheses and submissions it seems that faith is often more implied than expressed explicitly. However, it may be that in Ireland faith is often mediated institutionally and thus, there can be a focus on structures rather than relationship.

“The question also emerges whether many Irish Catholics are ‘sacramentalised but not evangelised’,” the report asks.

It's a question that gets to the heart of any authentic renewal of the faith life of communities with declining numbers of clergy and a background where most people under the age of 60 think that the only Catholic form of worship that exists is Mass.

The Irish bishops have been true to their commitment to send a report to Rome that would not shy away from the controversial or so-called ‘hot button’ issues. They are in the document aplenty – but gone is some of the headier language in diocesan reports



Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh leads delegates on a prayer walk at a pre-synodal assembly at Clonmacnoise Monastery, Co. Offaly, in June 2022. Photo: (CNS photo/Clodagh Kilcoyne, Reuters)

that seemed to suggest God was calling people to change Church teaching. The national synthesis is a more sober document, but nonetheless blunt.

“Many young people cannot understand the Church's position on women. Because of the disconnect between the Church's view of women and the role of women in wider society today, the Church is perceived as patriarchal and by some, as misogynistic,” it says.

“There was a clear, overwhelming call for the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in the Church, expressed by all ages and particularly by the young and by members of the LGBTQ+ community themselves.

“Some called for a change in Church teaching, asking if the Church is sufficiently mindful of developments with regard to human sexuality and the lived reality of LGBTQ+ couples,” the document notes.

The role of women was evidently a persistent theme in the discussions at parish and diocesan level. “Several of the submissions called for the ordination of women to the permanent diaconate and the priesthood. Their exclusion from the diaconate is regarded as particularly hurtful,” according to the synthesis.

But, others sounded a note of caution on the push for change. “Others expressed a concern that a change in the Church's teaching would be simply conforming to secular standards and contemporary culture.

“There are other minority, yet strong, voices that believe the Church, rooted in the Catholic Tradition, should not conform to secular standards when it comes to questions regarding gender, sexuality, and relationships. For others, the Church has no credibility in modern society as long as discrimination on the grounds of gender or sexuality exists,” the doc-

ument says.

Unsurprisingly, the issue of youth and the question of how the Church might engage with them, emerged universally across the synodal process.

“Multiple dioceses and organisations noted the absence of young people in parish communities and many submissions articulated a view that other youth organisations provide a home for young people that is more welcoming than that in parishes.

**“A significant number disagreed with the Church's teaching on sexuality and the Church's position on sex was considered as a barrier to participation by some young people”**

“There was an openness and honesty in responses from young people. They identified with faith and with the Gospel message and what we are called to as Church. One response clearly conveyed the sentiments expressed by so many: the one thing we, as young people, look for is sincerity. In many instances it was felt that the Church lacked this, or indeed pastoral awareness of the significant challenges faced by young people today. One notable example given was the mental health crisis faced by many young people,” it says.

Younger participants gave voice to a faultline that is emerging almost universally in the synodal discussions: “Many young people were critical of the Church regarding the role of women, clerical celibacy and its handling of the abuse crisis. A significant number disagreed with the Church's teaching on sexuality and the Church's

position on sex was considered as a barrier to participation by some young people.

“On the other hand, some young people said that, for them, the Church's teaching on sexuality is a welcome challenge,” it says articulating the opposing view.

## Contemporary

The report is not starry-eyed about the prevailing mood in contemporary Ireland. “It is an open question to what extent a secular liberal mindset is open to receiving the values it needs from engagement by the Church, or whether it possesses its own belief system that has little room for dissension. Ireland offers a particular moment in this encounter, with a modern society whose culture is still capable of a Christian sensibility and of affording space for the transcendent, but which has roundly rejected the model of Church which shaped its past”.

Most participants appeared to have relished the opportunity to be heard. “Those engaged in the synodal process called for unity in diversity, which does not entail a bland uniformity or avoidance of conflict but an ability to ‘endure conflict’.

“Let us keep talking and the Holy Spirit will reveal the path,” one participant said optimistically.

Organisers are acutely aware that this will not be easy. “There is a challenge to sustain the encounter and the participative nature of synodality, grounded in respectful listening, for long enough to arrive at the point where specific decisions are discerned to be necessary, given the risk that such decision points are inevitably difficult for those of a contrary disposition,” the document notes frankly.

# Rushdie attack exposes liberal doubts about free speech



A vile act has prompted almost no debate at all about radical Islam and its threat to the values of the West, writes **David Quinn**

**A**lmost all societies have a concept of 'blasphemy', which broadly speaking means to mock the most deeply held beliefs and values of a society. Historically speaking, those beliefs and values were religious in character. The greatest blasphemy is against God himself.

The second commandment says, 'you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain'. It means you should not use God's name trivially. It should be treated with respect. Much worse than that is to curse God, or mock Him, or cause others to ridicule or despise him.

**“Jesus was accused of blasphemy. In the view of his accusers, he was claiming the prerogatives of God, and therefore should be put to death”**

Why is this considered so bad? It's because it is wrong in itself to mock the one who made us and to whom we owe worship. But mocking him leads others to do the same, undermines the moral foundation of society and imperils our souls.

For these reasons, blasphemy has been considered an extremely grave offence, historically speaking. Most societies have banned blasphemy and have often had very serious punishments for it, including death.

Jesus was accused of blasphemy. In the view of his accusers, he was claiming the prerogatives of God, and therefore should be put to death. If Jesus was not who he claimed to be, then he was certainly guilty of blasphemy from the point of view

of the religious leaders of the time, and indeed, to this day. If he was not God, then he was blaspheming against God.

Ireland had blasphemy laws until a few years ago. They were almost never used, but a referendum was held to remove the offence from the constitution and it was successfully passed. The proposal to remove it was almost completely unopposed. Society has changed so much it just didn't seem worth it.

But this is a very far cry from the past when we would have regarded the mockery of God as something that simply could not be tolerated out of respect for God, to protect the moral foundations of society, and to guard people's souls.

## Controversy

This is all by way of background to explaining the controversy around author, Salman Rushdie, who was stabbed multiple times on stage at (ironically) a pro-free speech event in New York last weekend.

Sir Salman is most famously the writer of *The Satanic Verses*, the book which caused Iran's then spiritual leader, Ayatollah Khomeini to issue a 'fatwa' (religious edict) against him in 1989, the year after the novel's publication.

The fatwa called on "all brave Muslims" to put to death Mr Rushdie, and anyone else connected with the publication of the book.

They were to be killed "without delay, so that no one will dare insult the sacred beliefs of Muslims henceforth." Furthermore, "whoever is killed in this cause will be a martyr".

What exactly was the offence the book was supposed to have committed? In the eyes of many Muslims, it mocked some of their most revered figures, including Mohammed himself.

The name of the Angel Gabriel was used for a film star, for example, while the prostitutes in a brothel were named after the wives of Mohammed.

When the fatwa was issued there was enormous worldwide controversy, and Mr Rushdie, as well as others connected with the book, went into hiding.

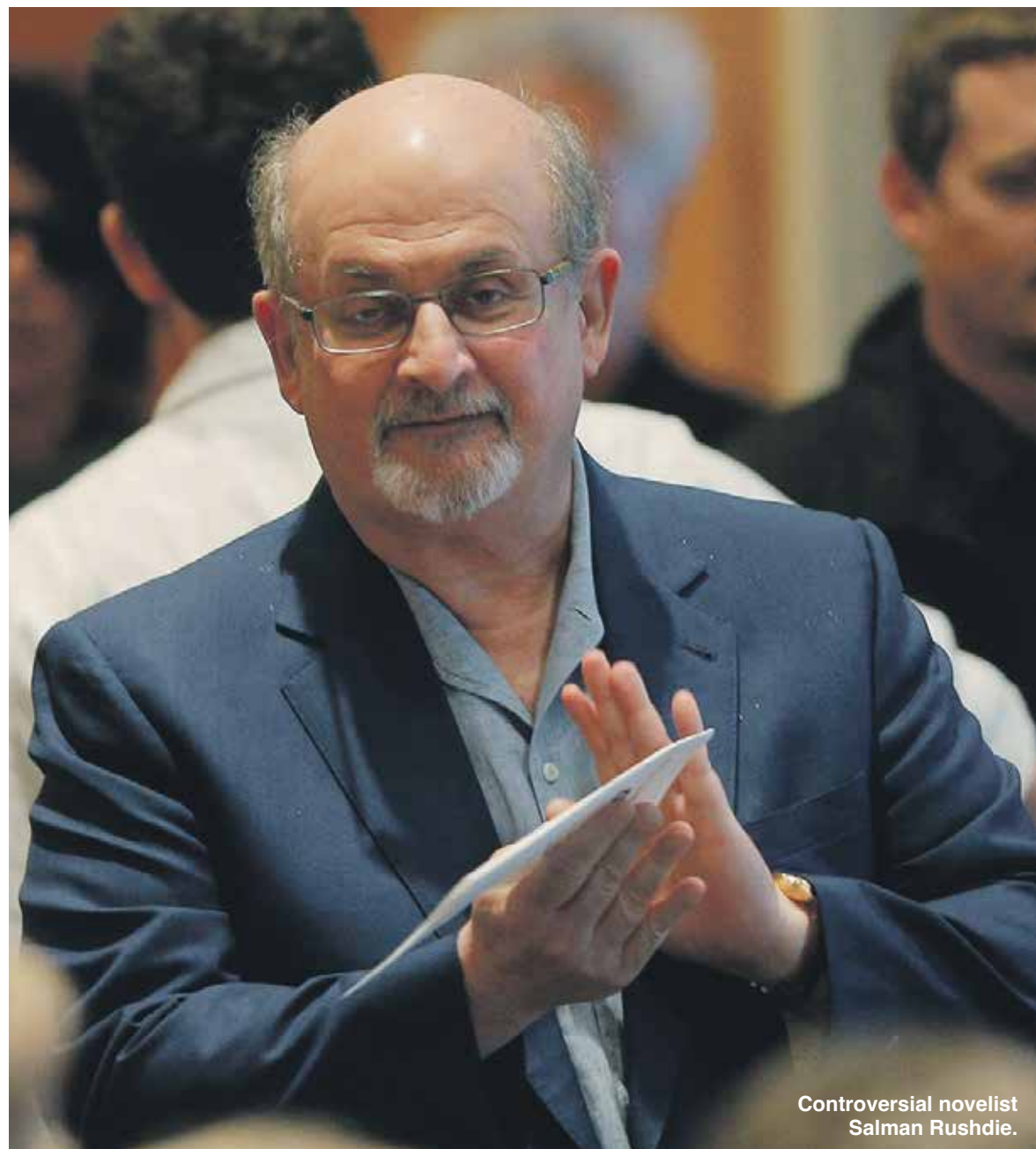
The Japanese translator of his novel died under mysterious circumstances in 1991, while translators from Italy and Norway were also attacked.

The whole episode turned into a debate about free speech, and while you might imagine that everyone in the West defended the principle, and Rushdie himself, it was not so.

The spy writer, John Le Carre, advised him to "withdraw his book until a calmer time has come".

Feminist Germaine Greer described him as an "egomaniac". The renowned scholar, George Steiner, said Rushdie had been "looking for trouble".

Even back then, liberal commitment to free speech was equivocal. If Christianity had been Mr Rushdie's target, and the Pope urged Christians



Controversial novelist  
Salman Rushdie.

to kill him, the Pope could well have been arrested for inciting the Faithful to murder, and the attacks on Christianity as a religion of intolerance would have been unrelenting.

**“One wonders how someone like Salman Rushdie would fare under such a law?”**

But Islam is regarded a minority religion and therefore liberals tend to treat it with kid gloves. They do not want the general public turning against Muslims. There is something laudable about this at one level, but it also means they do not defend free speech to the extent you might think, especially given that it is supposed to be a liberal core value.

Christians themselves can hardly claim to have been defenders of free speech, historically speaking. On the contrary, we have been inclined to limit it in the name of public morals. Today, we rarely even protest if

a clearly blasphemous movie or play arrives in town. This might not even be out of principle, but more that we have lost cultural confidence.

Notably, while the attempted killing of Mr Rushdie has attracted much sympathy for the writer, it has prompted almost no debate at all about radical Islam and its threat to the values of the West. We still seem scared to address the topic, probably out of the same fear that existed in 1989 about criticising a minority religion. We are still policing our own speech.

Indeed, it has become worse in the meantime. What sometimes gets called 'political correctness' has grown stronger. Not alone are we more careful about saying anything that might offend a minority group, you can lose your career or reputation for saying the 'wrong' thing. New 'hate crime' laws are being passed in various countries, including Ireland, that could mean prison for saying something deemed sufficiently 'offensive' or 'hateful'. One wonders how someone like Salman Rushdie would fare under such a law?

An argument can be made that

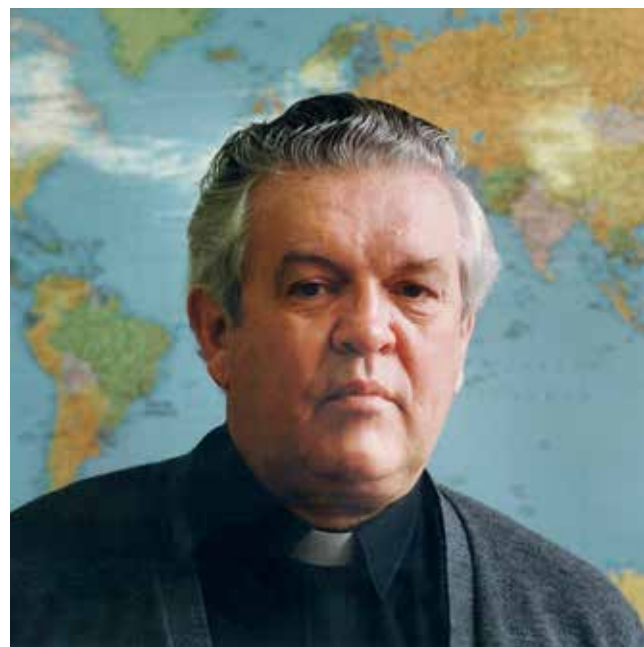
Mr Rushdie would have been wiser, from a pragmatic point of view, not to publish his book, but once it appeared, and once the fatwa was issued, he should have been unequivocally defended by all of his fellow writers and from right across the political spectrum.

On this occasion, the attack has been condemned, but there has been a mysterious silence about the attacker, and while the 1989 fatwa has been widely publicised, we are still not having an honest discussion about the fact that radical Islam remains one of the biggest threats to free speech in the West today.

## Liberals

Possibly the reason is that liberals do not believe in free speech as much as they think. They have higher values, 'tolerance' for instance, which they think are more important. In their minds, offending minorities is the new blasphemy. In other words, they are not as different from some Christians as they like to believe because they, too, think free speech should sometimes be limited in the name of public morals.

# “A legacy of *incredible* humanitarian significance”



Fr. Aengus Finucane.

## Fr. Finucane's legacy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## The devastation of climate change

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

People like Yona Lambiki and his family.

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



Crops destroyed by Cyclone Idai.

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

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

## Help for now and the future

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

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

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



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

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

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

providing support for years – possibly decades – to come.

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

## Will Fr. Finucane inspire you too?

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

How? By leaving Concern a gift in your Will.

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

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

– Dominic MacSorley, CEO, Concern Worldwide

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## An Irish effort

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

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

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

With his commitment and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



# Ukrainians welcomed to the bishop's house

## Ruadhán Jones

A reception was held at Bishop's House, John's Hill, in the diocese of Waterford and Lismore July 28 for the Ukrainian Community in Waterford City and County.

It was organised by Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan,

the Red Cross and Little Nellie's Baby Bank.

The crowd gathered in thanksgiving for their safe arrival in Ireland and in prayer for the millions still living through the war.

There was an exchange of traditional music between the Ukrainian and Irish contingent present.



Bishop of Waterford and Lismore Phonsie Cullinan is pictured with Ukrainian families and volunteers from the Red Cross and Little Nellie's Baby Bank at the reception at Bishop's House, July 28. Photos: John Power.



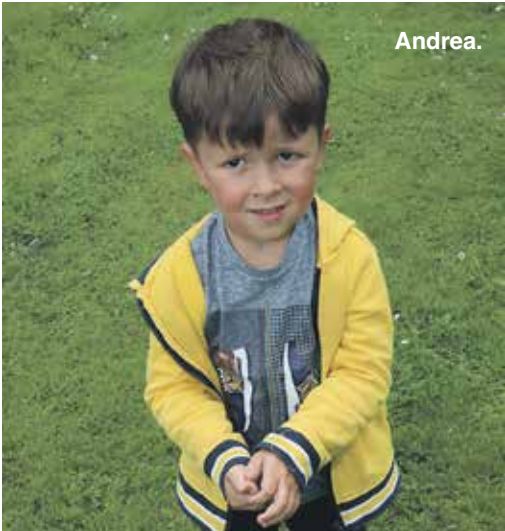
Enjoying the reception were Evelina, Anna and Lena.



Igor with Red Cross volunteer Vicki Butler.



Zena.



# The Irish Catholic

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# Youth 2000 summer festival back with a bang

**Ruadhán Jones**

Youth 2000 held their annual summer festival in person again for the first time in three years.

Hundreds of young people attended the celebration of faith in Clongowes Wood College, Co. Kildare, which centred on Jesus in the Eucharist.

"It was such a blessing to

see so many young people and so much faith," said Youth 2000 in a statement.

Fr John Walsh OP was the main speaker, and many men and women religious attended the festival, held for the first time since Covid-19 struck in 2020.

You can find out about upcoming Youth 2000 retreats and social events by visiting [www.youth2000.ie](http://www.youth2000.ie).



Fr John Walsh OP delivering a talk at the Youth 2000 summer festival, which took place in Clongowes Wood College, August 11-14. Photos: Denver Saldanha and Gareth Quigley.



Fr Gabriel having fun at the Youth 2000 summer festival.



Taking time to make new friends and catching up with old ones.



There was an opportunity for all to receive the Sacrament of Confession.



Joy was in the air at the festival.



# ‘We’re living in a sex traffickers haven’



Despite Ireland rising in the human trafficking watchlist, we have a lot to do, **Ruadhán Jones** hears

**T**his year, for the first time since 2017, Ireland has risen in the annual *Trafficking in Persons* report's ranking, from Tier 2 Watchlist to Tier 2. And yet, the report, conducted by the State Department in the US, is still a bad one, according to participants in a conference organised by Irish religious orders.

**“Ms Crilly was even more critical of the report, saying that the resources given to the Gardaí are ‘very slim’ because they are spread across an array of issues”**

“I am living in a sex traffickers haven in Ireland,” said Mary Crilly of Sexual Violence Centre Cork. “This isn’t a criticism, this is a reality.” However, it’s a reality that most people in Ireland are unaware of. “It’s still hidden, we need to own up to it and say, this is happening... and allow victims to come forward,” Ms Crilly added.

The new TIP’s report “is a bad report” for Ireland, Ms Crilly said. Despite the rise in our ranking, Ireland is still worse off than in 2013, when we sat at Tier 1.

“The bottom line is that it needs to do better, that’s really it,” according to Ms Crilly. “I know this report calls for accommodation, which is needed, but what’s being called for is accommodation for maybe 10 women. I wish we could get that in place so we could move on to what else we really need to do to identify and acknowledge it. Everybody gets reports that are bad, it’s a bad report, so let’s change it and do something about it, treat it like that.”

Mary Crilly was one of four participants in a symposium organised by two religious orders in Ireland, the Sisters of Our



Activists take part in a ‘Walk for Freedom’ in 2018 to protest human trafficking in Berlin. Photo: CNS.

Lady of Apostles and the Society of African Missions. The other panellists for the online discussion were: Ann Mara, Education Manager at MECPATHS; David Lohan, author of *At Freedom’s Crossroads: Making Sense of Modern Slavery and Open Secrets: An Irish Perspective on Trafficking and Witchcraft*; and Sr Eilis Coe RSC, member of Renate and Act to Prevent Trafficking (APT).

The TIP’s report is broken into three sections, prosecution, protection and prevention, and the panellists went through it section by section. Ireland has a poor record on prosecution; prior to June 2021, there were no convictions for human trafficking in the previous seven years, despite 500 victims being identified.

After June, two traffickers were convicted under the amended criminal justice sexual offences act, which David Lohan said was a significant development. He noted that the TIP’s report commended Ireland for some elements of its prosecution, such as the director of public prosecution having

a specialist team, and the Irish Government creating a police unit for dealing with matters relating to trafficking.

“However the TIPs report came back to the matter of judicial training and it noted deficits and it noted particularly that there were no specialised judges in this country dealing with cases relating to human trafficking,” Mr Lohan finished.

## Critical

Ms Crilly was even more critical of the report, saying that the resources given to the Gardaí are “very slim” because they are spread across an array of issues, including sexual assault, rape and domestic violence.

“I think with regard to the legislation around prostitution, it isn’t adhered to,” Ms Crilly continued. “I mean, I see very few brothels getting raided and that kind of stuff, where you probably would come across people who are being trafficked.”

“So I think it’s as basic as that. I think that’s where we’ve got to

come back to, back to basics... Because you know, in my head, I see the seven or eight women we’ve seen in the [Sexual Violence] Centre who just by chance have come to us because somebody in a hospital or another kind of unit came across them because they’re being sent for tests.

“I wish we’d look at it in a black and white way... I’m not criticising the guards I think they do great. I’m certainly not criticising the Department of Justice but resources are not put into really what’s needed outside of identifying people and supports.”

However, Ireland’s experience is not unique. Mr Lohan pointed out that prosecuting cases of human trafficking is acknowledged globally as being difficult, with cultural elements like west African folk magic called ‘Juju’ making it harder. He is hopeful that Ireland’s first conviction under the new laws will set a precedent.

“People can look back and say again, this is something that happens, this is a real problem... I hope that those who would seek

to use similar approaches in the future would bear this in mind as well – Ireland is not as safe as it was for them, there isn’t as much impunity,” Mr Lohan said.

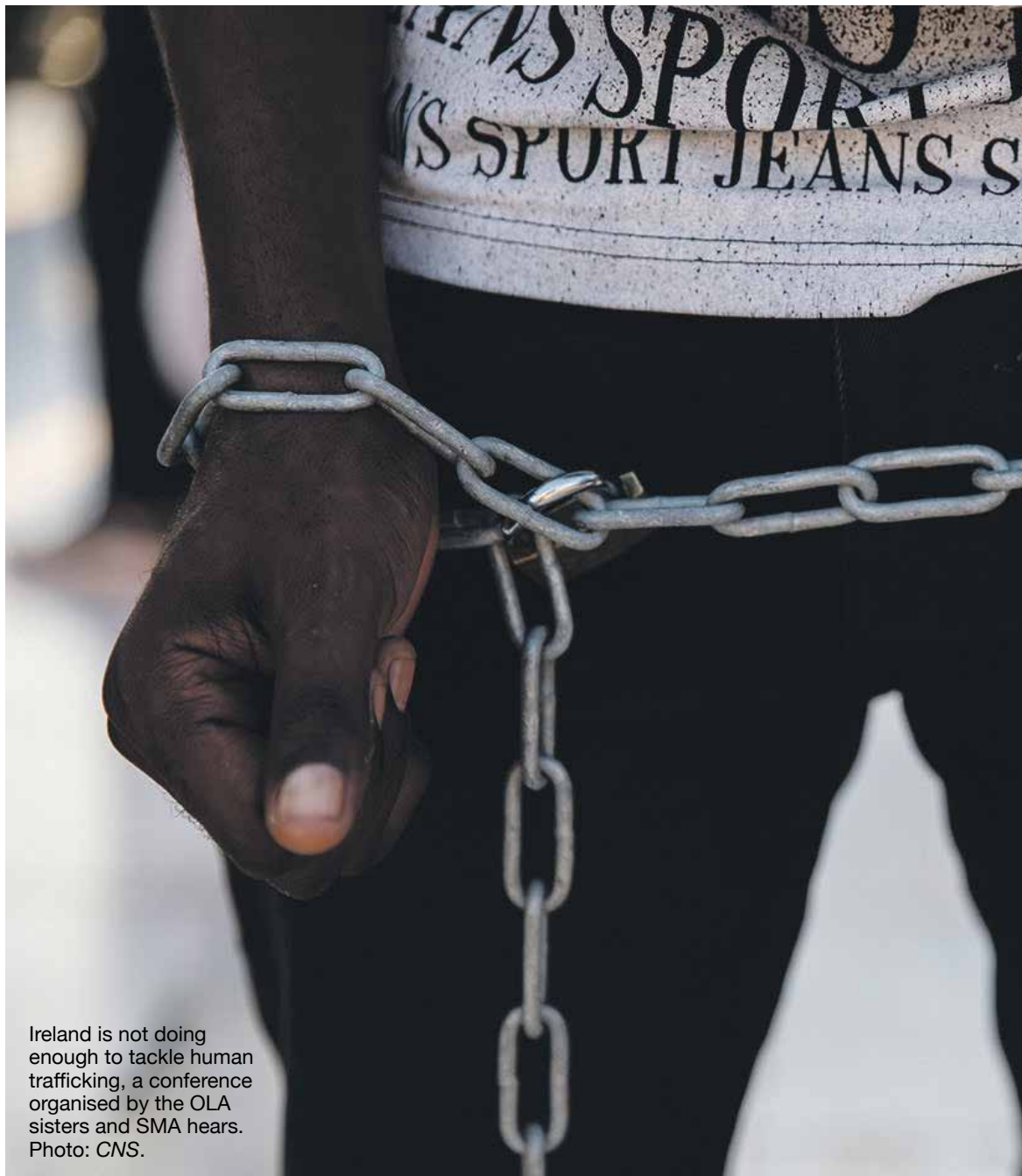
**“The fear that silences the women a lot of the times, it’s incredible but it’s very real”**

He, like Ms Crilly, pointed to the deficits in training and specialisation in this area, and the importance of training was a recurring theme during the discussions. Sr Eilis Coe RSC argued that training is “absolutely essential”, saying particular cultural differences, like the belief in ‘Juju’, are not easily understood.

“I’ve heard women myself talking about the effect this [Juju] has on them and the very real fear they have,” Sr Coe said. “We have language translators, people who go into court with women or when they’re being interviewed.

“But we need also something like cultural translators, to have a cultural person there to say that in this lady’s culture if somebody says to you, ‘Are you still alive?’ that amounts to, ‘You’ll soon be dead’. The fear that silences the women a lot of the times, it’s incredible but it’s very real.”

**“Ireland has a poor record on prosecution; prior to June 2021, there were no convictions for human trafficking in the previous seven years, despite 500 victims being identified”**



Ireland is not doing enough to tackle human trafficking, a conference organised by the OLA sisters and SMA hears. Photo: CNS.

However, just training the judiciary is not enough if we want to tackle the issue at its root, Sr Coe continued: "Doctors, teachers, nurses, the general population, need more training in this. Because there is vast ignorance of the problem, I think."

### Prevention

Sr Coe's comments tie in with the other two areas covered in the report, prevention and identification. Ann Mara of MECPATHS, which works to protect children from being trafficked, said her charity have "very serious concerns" that in the last two years, no child victims of trafficking have been identified in the State.

"And that's not to say they're not there, they absolutely are," Ms Mara continued. "And we're hearing it every day from front line professionals who are working at grassroots level with these children who are exhibiting clear indicators of trafficking and they're not being identified formally by the state."

"And if we compare our statistics here in Ireland, our child victims, globally one third of all victims of trafficking identified are children. When we look across the water to the UK, 46% of all of their victims are children. Up North, it's 16%. And here in the Republic we're saying 0% children and that's hugely, hugely concerning."

According to Sr Coe, anecdotal

evidence suggests this is "not true in any sense", that there are groups of people in Ireland trafficking their own children.

**“Doctors, teachers, nurses, the general population, need more training in this. Because there is vast ignorance of the problem, I think”**

"They're selling them on the streets of Dublin," Sr Coe added. "They're selling their children as sex objects on the streets of Dublin. And you know, what can you do about it? Who is going to enforce that, who is going to track that down if the child's parents are on the street putting their hand out for money for the men to take the child, down the lane, abuse the child and come back?"

Stories such as this are why she is so keen on training everybody, Sr Coe said, as these children may be sitting in schools. Teachers "should know that a child sitting in front of them has possibly had a horrendous night or weekend and need to be aware of it and not be afraid to say

this is indigenous now in Ireland.

"It's in every sector and section of the population. And so without completely giving up, we have to tackle it, we just have to, for the sake of those children."

### Identification

The failure of any identification is a significant issue, Ms Crilly said, because if you can't identify people, you can't protect them. She reflected on an experience she



Sr Eilis Coe RSC, one of the participants in a panel discussion, said there is "vast ignorance" of human trafficking in Ireland.

**“Despite the difficulties facing Ireland with regard to identifying and protecting victims, and prosecuting traffickers, Ms Crilly says that we can't give up”**

had giving a talk on trafficking to young people in East Cork.

"They were horrified, they couldn't believe it," she said. "Trafficking is horrible, but it still happens out there. I don't have everything [that was said in the TIP's report] on the tips of my fingers, but I do have everything told to me about the women who were trafficked and their feelings and what they went through and how hard they found it."

"Even one woman we were trying to find accommodation, nearly everywhere we went in the city she froze because she remembered being in a different apartment or a different place."

Issues with identification are not helped by an imbalance in funding and attention. A lot of the resources are Dublin centric, despite the fact that "the majority of those trafficked are trafficked outside of Dublin".

"For the past 20 years, when we started campaigning against sex trafficking, we haven't received any funding, we apply all the time," Ms Crilly said. "We don't receive funding to support the victims of trafficking, we don't do enough, which I think is the first thing we have to do."

**“Ann Mara weighed in on the area of awareness raising, commenting that the TIPs report says Ireland is maintaining ‘modest efforts’ in the area of prevention”**

The power to effect change in Ireland doesn't rest with one person or group, Ms Crilly said, but with the whole of society. The power "is with the politicians, it's with the Department of Justice, it's with ministers, with everybody out there to recognise in nail bars, in hairdressers, in where you're going – trying to keep an open mind that it's happening".

Sr Coe said that she had hope that times were changing, that the new generation were growing up with a different mentality "and more aware which is why we're now concentrating on the secondary schools, to generate a different climate in the schools."

"Awareness raising, we're not

doing enough at all. It's piecemeal and patchwork, it has to be a whole national thing, on radio every day, this is happening in Ireland. It needs much more involvement of civil society, not just the people who are already converted."

Ann Mara weighed in on the area of awareness raising, commenting that the TIPs report says Ireland is maintaining "modest efforts" in the area of prevention.

"I thought that was actually a very nice way of putting that they're not doing nearly enough," Ms Mara continued. "... as much as they were trying to highlight some of the efforts, there are a long list of things we're not doing."

"Education is absolutely key in preventing this crime taking place. I think again when it comes to children, the fact of the matter is that TUSLA has taken in almost 400 unaccompanied minors since January of this year, which is unprecedented. They'd usually bring in about 100 minors each year. They are dealing with a huge amount of pressure on their systems."

### Stop human trafficking

Ultimately, said Sr Coe, the one thing that will stop human trafficking is when the demand stops. "If there's no demand, there's no supply. There is a huge demand. We want it. There's a section of our population unfortunately that wants this."

"The point is there are a huge number of people buying and using and exploiting women and children and men in our country. And that is a whole society change that has to happen. And that's not easy."

Despite the difficulties facing Ireland with regard to identifying and protecting victims, and prosecuting traffickers, Ms Crilly says that we can't give up.

"One thing I would like to say is and I know sometimes for anybody watching it can feel overwhelming," she began. "But what I'm saying is there are things we can do, we are doing things. We wouldn't have been sitting around talking like this ten years ago."

"Ok sometimes I want to kick down a wall, and all I'm doing is a small chip in the wall. But it's a chip in the wall and I think if society takes ownership of it, then there will be changes. They can join groups like us, go to MECPATHS to get training, to raise awareness. That's what's going to make a difference."

# The surprisingly moral universe of *Breaking Bad* and *Better Call Saul*



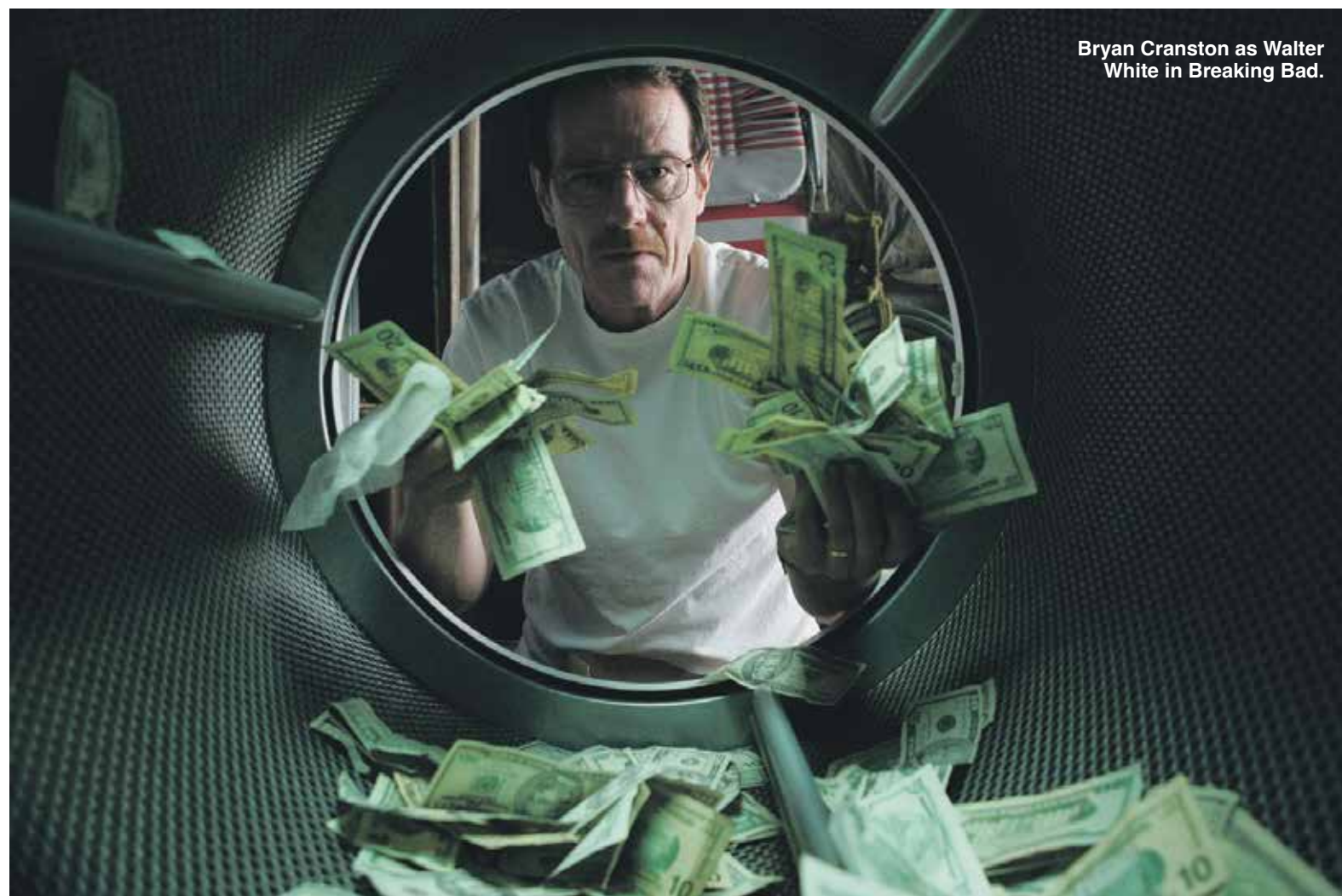
The characters of *Breaking Bad* and *Better Call Saul* inhabit a universe that Catholics will already be familiar with, writes **Jason Osborne**

**M**y wife and I have been hooked in recent months by legal drama and crime series *Better Call Saul* as we raced to catch up in time for its ending this week. Just as with *Breaking Bad*, which ran from 2008-2013, viewers were treated to a near-perfectly crafted morality play, focusing ultimately on the life, (bad) choices and fate of the plucky, fresh-faced lawyer Jimmy McGill. What most occupied our minds with regards both *Breaking Bad* and *Better Call Saul*, though, was the remarkably clear way in which immoral, but relatable, characters were used to portray a very moral universe.

**“The progression of the five season arc sees an initially sympathetic character transform into a spiritually-dead catalyst of chaos”**

Much of the shows' underlying philosophy was expressed by creator Vince Gilligan in a 2011 interview. Mr Gilligan said he was raised Catholic before adding, “I’m pretty much agnostic at this point in my life. But I find atheism just as hard to get my head around as I find fundamental Christianity. Because if there is no such thing as cosmic justice, what is the point of being good?”

He further stated his philosophy, and that of his shows, in an interview with *The New York Times*, when he said “I feel some sort of need for biblical atonement, or justice, or something. I like to believe there is some comeuppance, that karma kicks in at some point, even if it takes years or decades to happen. My girlfriend says this great thing that’s become



Bryan Cranston as Walter White in *Breaking Bad*.

my philosophy as well. ‘I want to believe there’s a heaven. But I can’t not believe there’s a hell.’”

With these words, Mr Gilligan accurately describes the kind of world his characters inhabit. While the show is ostensibly set in and around Albuquerque, New Mexico, the real drama takes place in the great arena of heaven and hell, as the various characters either fall prey to their soul’s wounds and to sin, or as they strive for virtue.

## Premises

A look at the premises and the protagonists should serve to clarify the situation. As some readers will already be aware, the original series *Breaking Bad* follows the genius but unfulfilled chemistry teacher Walter White, who receives a terminal cancer diagnosis on his 50th birthday. Shaken out of the existential stupor he’s been shown to have been living in, Walter puts his chemical expertise to what he tells himself is good use – making the highly addictive, dangerous and illegal drug methamphetamine in order to secure his family’s financial future.

The progression of the five season arc sees an initially sympathetic character transform into a spiritually-dead catalyst of chaos. He goes from a shy, passive man eking out a basic living, to a destructive, malignant agent, lying, stealing, threatening and indeed killing along the way. What is the key that allowed this transformation to take place? Pride is unavoidably left holding the blame.

A key scene of Catholic interest early on sees Walter forswear the drug trade after a disastrous initial attempt to break into it. During this abstention, a wealthy friend and former business partner of Walter’s learns of the illness and offers out of compassion a prestigious job and payment for his treatment. Walter refuses, angrily berating his wife who let slip his secret, and gets back in touch with his meth-partner in order to earn himself the \$90,000 that he needs. It’s all downhill morally for Walter from there, with bad choice after bad choice in service of pride undergirded by bitterness and resentment leading him over five seasons to the “comeuppance” that Mr Gilligan spoke of above.

**“What both shows depict so perfectly is the hardening of the heart that Scripture speaks of when we reject our call to open up to God and to others”**

This pattern of semi-compulsion into bad choices via vices is deepened and refined in the prequel, *Better Call Saul*. Jimmy McGill is a lawyer with a past as a low-level con-man that’s gotten him into trouble. Bailed out and given a second chance by a self-made but distant brother whose respect Jimmy craves, their relationship goes from bad to worse as the show pro-

gresses. Each blow to the relationship is a blow to Jimmy, who eventually adopts the persona of the criminal lawyer, Saul Goodman, as he both indulges in his conniving vices and flees from his past.

## Scripture

What both shows depict so perfectly is the hardening of the heart that Scripture speaks of when we reject our call to open up to God and to others. In different ways, Walter and Jimmy are given the perfect opportunities to tell those around them how they’re doing, and work with them on figuring out sustainable solutions going forward. However, both men choose to retreat into personas – Walter becoming the feared drug lord Heisenberg, Jimmy the criminal lawyer Saul – and back those personas even as we’re shown the spiritual death they’re undergoing.

A key motif in the latter stages of both shows is an inability to look at yourself as you’re corrupted morally. In the final season of *Breaking Bad*, Walter is shown as being unable to look at himself in the mirror on a number of occasions, while in *Better Call Saul*, Jimmy comes to look upon his old Saul Goodman advertisements in horror. The viewer is never left in doubt about the precarious existential position the characters have gotten themselves into, even as they continue to plunge themselves headlong into it – often dragging those they claim to love with them.

It’s a masterclass in presenting the harrowing descent of the human being into a hell of their own making.

What use is this, you might ask? While fear of hell isn’t the highest motivation to the good life, it’s certainly a motivation, and one that when used well, as is done here, can speak to a world that has forgotten its existence.

**“They tell us that the desires of our heart aren’t always good, and that sometimes we need to do the hard thing in order to do the right thing”**

A show that develops its characters realistically and makes them relatable, without yielding on its punches as they suffer the consequences, does its viewers a valuable service, bypassing what people perceive as the off-putting trappings of religion to deliver a religious message straight to their hearts.

Cautionary tales like these, in which the characters get what they want and find it severely lacking, are to be commended in a world where religions have been knocked from their authoritative perch. They tell us that the desires of our heart aren’t always good, and that sometimes we need to do the hard thing in order to do the right thing – simple lessons, yes, but ones we’re direly close to forgetting.

# Out&About

## Music to our ears...



**DUBLIN:** Fr Paul Kenny is pictured with members of the Irish Church Music Association having finished recording the RTÉ Mass, August 7.



**DUBLIN:** Homelessness charity Dublin Simon launched their annual Simon Home Run, taking place October 1, with a bit of help from local sports stars in Phoenix Park, August 4. Visit [dubsimon.ie](http://dubsimon.ie) to sign up.



**CAVAN:** James Cunningham and Miriam Keane are pictured with the Cunningham family on the occasion of their wedding in Kingscourt, August 6.

## IN SHORT

### Synod not about giving space for loud voices – Bishop McKeown

The synodal process is not about giving space for loud voices, it's for people attuned to the Spirit, Bishop Donal McKeown has said.

Speaking in his homily August 7, the bishop of Derry said we “commit ourselves to journeying in hope”, trusting that we are not “randomly choosing in the dark”.

“The synodal process is not about giving space for loud voices,” Dr McKeown continued. “It is where prayerful people will be attuned to the voice of God’s Holy Spirit and leaving behind any alluring false security of what suits us.”

Reflecting on the readings for the day, Bishop McKeown said that faith “broadens our horizons” and bursts the bubble of our self-contained world.

The modern world does not have a coherent understanding of life and death, Dr McKeown said, but Jesus offers a “realistic and positive vision of what it means to be human”.

### Plaque erected to much loved priest

A much loved priest in the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore was remembered at a Cemetery Mass in the Parish of Touraneena on August 2.

After the Mass, Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan along with Fr Garrett Desmond blessed a plaque donated by local undertaker David Kiely in Dungarvan in the presence of Fr Connie Kelleher’s sisters, other family members and some of his friends.

Fr Kelleher was PP Touraneena and The Nire

from July 1996 up to the time of his untimely death in March 2020.

Covid-19 arrived in Ireland just after his death meaning that while parishioners and former parishioners could attend his funeral, it was not possible to attend his month’s mind and his first anniversary Mass as much of the country was in lockdown at the time.

Fr Kelleher, who spent almost 50 years serving as a priest, took a great interest in the young people in the areas he served as a priest and it was fitting that the last job he did as a priest was to distribute ashes on Ash Wednesday in late February 2020 to the children of Saint Mary’s Touraneena National School.



**CORK:** Every year on the Feast of St Dominic a Franciscan preaches at Mass in a Dominican Church and on the Feast of St Francis, a Dominican preaches. This year Fr Dermot Lynch OFM Cap. was the preacher in St Mary's Dominican Church, Popes Quay. He is pictured with Fr Maurice Colgan OP, prior, August 1.



**CORK:** Fr Lynch and Fr Colgan pictured with parishioners after Mass at St Mary's, August 1.



**KILDARE:** Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty welcomes Mark and Anne O'Leary and Rosemary and Brendan Gavin from Teams of Our Lady Ireland to chat about how the lay movement can support couples and families, August 6.



**MEXICO:** Fr Conor McDonough OP of the Irish Dominicans is pictured at the order's general chapter in Tultenango, Mexico. Fr McDonough (second from left) listens to Fr Tuan, from Vietnam, and gets ready to translate into French for Fr Elvis, from the Ivory Coast.



**GALWAY:** Fr Michéal McGreal SJ directs operations at Máméan as the annual pilgrimage took place Sunday, August 7.



**DUBLIN:** Bro. Kevin Crowley is pictured receiving a cheque for €2,505 for the Capuchin Day Centre from Dianne Sutton, Mary Griffin and Eimear Brown at King's Inn Park.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**LOUTH:** Men take part in a rosary rally in Carlingford, one of a number that took place across Ireland August 6.



**DUBLIN:** Hollywood star Russell Crowe is pictured in costume as Fr Gabriel Amorth for the film *The Pope's Exorcist*, which is being filmed in Dublin.



**WATERFORD:** Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan and Fr Garrett Desmond are pictured after blessing a plaque to Fr Connie Kelleher, in the presence of Fr Kelleher's sister and family in Touraneena, August 2. Photo: Michael Long.



**DONEGAL:** Fr Pat Ward is pictured with Danielle Meehan Sailor and Liam Carthy who married in St Cróne's Church on Arranmore, August 5.

## ARMAGH

As part of the Charles Wood Summer School, there will be a Sung Mass in St Malachy's Church on Thursday August 25 at 7.30pm and in St Patrick's Cathedral on Sunday August 28 at 11am.

## CLARE

The Killaloe diocesan pilgrimage to Scattery Island takes place August 28 from 2:30-5pm.

After a two year absence the Novena at Our Lady's Well, Dromelihiy, Cree, takes place this year from August 15 to 23. See Ennisparish.com for more information.

## CORK

The adoration chapel at St Colman's Cathedral is open each week, on Wednesdays from 11am until 9pm, and on Thursdays and Fridays from 11am until 6pm.

Moycullen artist Sara Kyne is showing her collection of oil paintings, entitled "People for Others", in the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne from Tuesday August 9 to Sunday August 28.

## DERRY

Derry diocese is holding its annual 'Come and See' weekend for anyone interested in studying for the diocesan priesthood. The retreat takes place August 26-28. For information and reservation, please contact the Diocesan Vocations Director Fr Pat O'Hagan at pgoh2111@gmail.com or email the National Vocations Office: info@vocations.ie.

## DONEGAL

The Raphoe diocesan pilgrimage to Knock Shrine will take place on Saturday August 20.

## DOWN

Eucharistic Adoration in St Patrick's Church, Downpatrick, will resume on Friday September 2 at 11am until 7:30pm.

## DUBLIN

Donnybrook parish are running a four-week book club meeting on Tuesday mornings (August 9, 16, 23 and 30), in the Parish Pastoral Centre after 10am Mass. They will read *Let us Dream – The Path to*

*a Better Future* by Pope Francis. If you would like to participate, contact the parish office.

Legion of Mary Centenary concert takes place September 3 in St Patrick's Cathedral. Featuring Celine Byrne, the Dublin Concert Band and many more. Begins 8pm, ticks cost €20 or €30. Visit Eventbrite.ie or contact 087 230 5946.

Catholic Ireland: A proud legacy or a shameful debacle? To mark the release of her new book *The Way We Were: Catholic Ireland Since 1922* this autumn, journalist Mary Kenny has invited *The Irish Times* journalist Derek Scally for a discussion on the legacy of Catholic Ireland. Moderating this discussion is renowned journalist Sean O'Rourke. Takes place September 7 in Hodges Figgis, Dawson St, beginning at 6pm.

## GALWAY

A Youth 2000 prayer gathering for young Catholics (aged 18-35) takes place in the Church of St Oliver Plunkett, Renmore on Fridays at 8:15pm. For more information, contact Maire on 0851482076

## KILKENNY

A prayer group meets in Troyscourt every Monday at 7.30pm.

## LONGFORD

The diocesan pilgrimage to Knock takes place Sunday September 4 with ceremonies beginning at 2.30pm.

Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Mel's Cathedral from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 8pm to 12 midnight Monday to Saturday in the Oratory at the side of the Presbytery.

## MAYO

Knock International Eucharistic and Marian Shrine will host a family day on Sunday August 21, where children and families can join in a range of fun activities in the beautiful grounds of Knock Shrine.

## MONAGHAN

A Clogher diocesan day in Lough Derg takes place Saturday August 20. Parishioners and their friends from across the diocese are invited to take part in this 1-day pilgrimage. Boats available from 9.15am.

## OFFALY

Clonmacnoise pattern day takes place Sunday, September 11. The pattern begins at 2.45pm with Mass at 3pm.

## TIPPERARY

The Celtic Brothers (formerly known as The Willoughby Brothers) in Concert on Friday September 30, in the Cathedral of the Assumption, Thurles. Tickets now available in the Parish Office, Cathedral Street and Bookworm, Liberty Square. Ticket donation: €30.00. All proceeds towards the cathedral 'Raise the Roof' project.

## WATERFORD

'Jesus, My Lord' - a day of prayer, thanksgiving and healing - takes place Sunday, September 11 in the Rhu Glenn Hotel, Slieverue with guest speaker Fr Pat Collins. Runs from 10am to 6pm with Mass at 12 O'clock. Contact Tom 087 2701311/ Síle 086 8590394.

A study group on the *Theology of the Body* called 'Discovering God's Masterplan for your life!' begins Mondays 7.30-9pm, September 12 - November 14. It includes prayer, discussion, tea/coffee. Venue: Foyer of Charity, Dunmore East, Waterford, X91 FC65. Registration essential, contact: hellywilliams@gmail.com

## WESTMEATH

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the Cathedral of Christ the King from 2:30pm-7pm Monday-Friday.

## WEXFORD

St Aidan's Cathedral Enniscorthy's parish pilgrimage to Our Lady's Island takes place Monday August 29 at 8pm. The bus is subsidised by the parish so the cost is €5 per person.



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A celebration of Daniel O'Leary's unrelenting conviction that life itself is God's love eternally unfolding before us. Featuring a collection of notes found on Daniel's laptop after his death.



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Angela Hanley

What happens when theologians are asked to obey rather than discover? This book is Fr Fagan's story which covers his thoughts on issues of conscience and sexual morality as well as his Vatican censure.



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### Already Within

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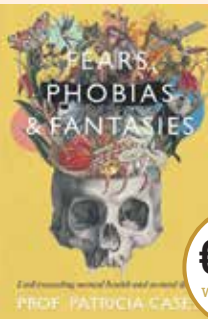


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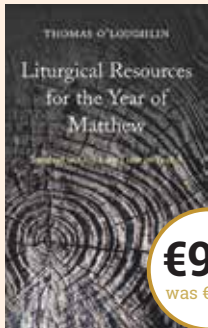


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# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Fatima shrine falling into ruin

● The Shrine of the Apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima in Pontevedra, Spain, is in a dilapidated state. The place where Our Lady called for the first Saturday devotion needs urgent reconstruction work to avoid total ruin.

"It's a shame that such a special place is in this state," said Fr Luis Manuel Romero, the delegate of the Spanish Bishops' Conference for the Shrine of the Apparitions of Pontevedra.

To address the situation, the Spanish Bishops' Conference has acquired ownership of the place, which until a year ago was owned by the World Apostolate of Fatima in Spain.

Fr Romero told ACI Prensa that it is hoped the first phase of the restoration work "will be completed in October".

### Indian cardinal denies shielding bishop charged with fathering child

● Indian Cardinal Oswald Gracias adamantly denied allegations that he attempted to arrange for a fake paternity test for a scandal-plagued bishop accused of secretly fathering a child, among other charges.

In a video statement posted on the Archdiocese of Bombay's YouTube channel, Cardinal Gracias said that a 2020 recording of a telephone conversation

with Bishop Kannikass Antony William of Mysore had been "mischievously edited" to give the impression that the cardinal had tried to cover up the scandal.

The recording in question, originally posted by the website Church Militant, had been circulating on social media among Indian Catholics, according to various news accounts.

### Poll finds pro-life stance unpopular in Church in Germany

● According to a new representative poll, 58% of German Catholics do not like "the fact that the Pope and the Church speak out against abortions".

The Catholic weekly newspaper Die Tagespost commissioned the survey from the opinion research institute INSA Consulere, reported CNA Deutsch.

"Among Lutheran respondents, the opinion picture is even clearer: 67% do not support the position of the Pope and the Church on the protection of life," the Tagespost reported on August 8.

The Catholic Church teaches that abortion is a grave evil and is never acceptable at any stage of pregnancy.

### Canada sees 32% increase in assisted suicide and euthanasia in a year

● According to the latest report on Medical Assistance in Dying from Health Canada, 10,064 Canadians ended their lives by assisted suicide or euthanasia in 2021. This figure represents 3.3% of all deaths in Canada and is an increase of 32.4% from the 2020 figures.

A total of 31,664 people

have ended their lives by assisted suicide or euthanasia in Canada since legislation making it legal was passed in 2016.

17.3% of people cited "isolation or loneliness" as a reason for wanting to die. In 35.7% of cases, patients believed that they were a "burden on family, friends or caregivers".

### US archbishop apologises for harms caused by nuclear weapons industry

● A New Mexico archbishop whose archdiocese is home to two major federal nuclear weapons research facilities and an Air Force base apologised for the atomic bombings of Japan and to Indigenous New Mexicans, uranium miners and scientists suffering from ill health related to the nuclear weapons industry.

Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe said the time has come for the world to fervently work to undertake the long process to achieve nuclear disarmament.

He made the comments in a homily during a Mass August 9 marking the 77th anniversary of the bombing of Nagasaki, Japan.

## Fire at Cairo Coptic church kills dozens

A fire ripped through a packed Coptic Orthodox church during morning services in Egypt's capital on Sunday, quickly filling it with thick black smoke and killing 41 worshippers, including at least 15 children.

Several trapped congregants jumped from upper floors of the Martyr Abu Sefein church to try to escape the intense flames, witnesses said. "Suffocation, suffocation, all of them dead," said a distraught witness, who only gave a partial name, Abu Bishoy.

Sixteen people were injured, including four policemen involved in the rescue effort.

The cause of the blaze at the church in the working-class neighbourhood of Imbaba was not immediately known. An initial investigation pointed to an electrical short-circuit, according to a police statement.

Weeping families waited outside for word about relatives who were inside the church and at nearby hospitals where the victims were taken. Footage from the scene circulated online showed burned furniture, including wooden tables and chairs. Firefighters were seen putting out the blaze while others carried victims to ambulances.

Witnesses said there were many children inside the four-story building, which



Damage done to the Coptic church's interior in Cairo, Egypt. Photo: Twitter.

had two day care facilities.

"There are children, we didn't know how to get to them," said Abu Bishoy. "And we don't know whose son this is, or whose daughter that is. Is this possible?"

A total of 15 children were killed in the fire, according to *Copts United*, a news website focusing on Christian news.

A list of victims obtained by *The Associated Press* said 20 bodies, including 10 children, were taken to the Imbaba public hospital. Three were siblings, twins

aged 5 and a 3-year-old, it said. The church bishop, Abdul Masih Bakhit, was also among the dead at the hospital morgue.

Twenty-one bodies were taken to other hospitals.

Mousa Ibrahim, a spokesman for the Coptic Orthodox Church, told the AP that 5-year-old triplets, their mother, grandmother and an aunt were among those killed.

Witness Emad Hanna said a church worker managed to get some children out of the church day care facilities.

"We went upstairs and found people dead. And we started to see from outside that the smoke was getting bigger, and people want to jump from the upper floor," Hanna said.

"We found the children," some dead, some alive, he added.

The country's health minister blamed the smoke and a stampede as people attempted to flee the fire for causing the fatalities. It was one of the worst fire tragedies in Egypt in recent years.

## Five-day trial set for Cardinal Joseph Zen

Cardinal Joseph Zen is set to stand trial next month, along with four other people, in connection to his role as a trustee of a pro-democracy legal fund. It appears he has not been indicted under Hong Kong's national security law, which would have carried with it much more serious penalties.

Cardinal Zen, 90, is the bishop emeritus of Hong Kong and an outspoken advocate for religious freedom and democracy, and a sharp critic of the Vatican's 2018 agreement with Beijing on the appointment of bishops.

Hong Kong authorities arrested the cardinal on May 11, and he was reportedly released on bail from Chai Wan Police Station later that day. At the time it appeared he would be charged under Hong Kong's national security law, the

Beijing-imposed measure which criminalises broad definitions of sedition and collusion with foreign forces. Cardinal Zen was arrested alongside several other prominent pro-democracy figures, including lawyer Margaret Ng and singer-activist Denise Ho.

All were later charged in connection with a failure to register the 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund, which helped pro-democracy protesters to pay their legal fees until it dissolved itself in October 2021. The defendants' lawyers are arguing that they had the right to associate under Hong Kong's Basic Law — essentially the constitution.

In addition to Cardinal Zen, Ms Ho, and Ms Ng, cultural studies scholar Hui Po-keung and ex-legislator Cyd Ho are accused of failing to apply for local soci-

ety registration for the fund between July 16, 2019, and October 31, 2021, the *Hong Kong Free Press* reported. All the defendants have pleaded not guilty; Cyd Ho is already jailed for a different charge.

The September 19-23 trial will be conducted in Chinese with the closing arguments in English, *HKFP* reported. Without the national security law indictment, the defendants could face only a fine.

Cardinal Zen offered Mass after his court appearance in May and prayed for Catholics in mainland China who are facing persecution. "Martyrdom is normal in our Church," Cardinal Zen said. "We may not have to do that, but we may have to bear some pain and steel ourselves for our loyalty to our faith."

## Nigerian officials arrest six linked to Pentecost attacks

Nigerian officials identified six suspects arrested in connection with the June 5 attack that killed 40 people at St Francis Catholic Church in Owo.

Maj. Gen. Jimmy Akpor, defence department spokesman, said all were linked to

the Islamic State West Africa Province group.

He said the arrests were made through a joint effort of military and defence officials. Maj. Gen. Akpor said a preliminary investigation showed that "Idris Abdulma-

lik Omeiza was the mastermind of the terror attack on the Catholic Church in Owo as well as the attack on a police station" in Kogi state June 23. In the second attack, a police officer was killed and weapons were stolen. Omeiza is

sometimes known as Bin Malik.

Police also arrested Momoh Otohu Abubakar, Aliyu Yusuf Itopa and Auwal Ishaq Onimisi for the Owo attack, in which attackers sneaked into a Pentecost Mass with explosives.



Edited by Jason Osborne  
jason@irishcatholic.ie

## St Edith Stein, pray for us...



Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and Archbishop Marek Jedraszewski of Krakow, Poland, attend ceremonies commemorating the 80th anniversary of the martyrdom of St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, also known as St Edith Stein, at the Auschwitz Nazi concentration camp in Oswiecim, Poland, August 9.

# Germany denies refuge to Christian convert from Iran

The European Court of Human Rights has dismissed the case of an Iranian convert to Christianity, who is appealing his deportation from Germany back to Iran, on the grounds of religious freedom.

Campaigners fear that the court's decision means that the 44 year-old, will likely face prison or death, on account of his religious conversion.

Hassan – whose name has been changed to protect his identity and is recorded only as “H.H.” in public records – is a cabinet maker who applied for asylum in 2018 and is currently residing in Germany where he can freely practice his faith.

After he, his wife and his family converted to Christianity, security forces in Iran stormed their house confiscated their books, computer, passports and Bible. He then fled to Germany with his family via Turkey.

In a statement released August 11, Lidia Rieder, Legal Officer at ADF International, warned that Iran was one of the most dangerous places in the world for Christians. She said: “No one should be persecuted for their faith. Iran is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for Christians, and converts are particularly at risk. In the last year, religious persecution has

greatly worsened. So-called ‘religious deviants’ can be given prison sentences, national security charges are continuously used to target religious minorities. The courts in Germany must take this into account when processing asylum applications.”

Hassan's conversion to Christianity was inspired by the witness of his brother-in-law who was imprisoned for his practicing his Christian faith and subsequently killed. His brother-in-law's wife was also abused.

“My wife's brother had become a different person by becoming a Christian. We wanted to see if we would

get this feeling when we became Christians,” H.H. said in his application to the German authorities.

But the Greifswald Administrative Court, which heard Hassan's case after it was rejected by the German authorities, said it was “not particularly likely” that a Muslim would convert to Christianity given what had happened to his brother-in-law and his wife, following their conversions.

Last week, the European Court of Human Rights then refused to hear arguments in Hassan's defence, which campaigners claim leave him at significant risk of deportation.

## UN: finds Myanmar junta committing ‘crimes against humanity’

Myanmar's military junta has committed crimes against humanity amid ongoing conflicts in the country following the coup last year, said a new report by the United Nations.

The UN Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar said in its annual report August 9 that sexual and gender-based crimes, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, and crimes against children have been perpetrated systematically by members of the security forces and armed groups.

Since starting operations three years ago, the IIMM has collected more than 3 million pieces of information from almost 200 sources; these include interview statements, documentation, videos, photographs, geospatial imagery and social media material, reported ucanews.com.

“There are ample indications that since the military seized power in February 2021, crimes have been committed in Myanmar on a scale and in a manner that constitutes a widespread

and systematic attack against a civilian population, and the nature of potential criminality is also expanding,” the report said.

It said this includes the execution of four pro-democracy activists July 25, after the report was prepared.

“Perpetrators of these crimes need to know that they cannot continue to act with impunity. We are collecting and preserving the evidence so that they will one day be held to account,” said Nicholas Koumjian, head of the IIMM.

## Vatican roundup

### Desire for eternal youth is ‘delusional,’ Pope says

● The passing of time in one's life is meant to be lived as a God-given grace and not a meaningless pursuit to preserve one's youthfulness, Pope Francis said.

Men and women are “apprentices of life” who amid trials and tribulations “learn to appreciate God's gift, honouring the responsibility of sharing it and making it bear fruit for everyone,” the Pope said August 10 during his weekly general audience.

“The conceit of stopping time – of wanting eternal youth, unlimited well-being, absolute power – is not only impossible, it is delusional,” he said.

The Pope continued his series of talks on old age and reflected on Jesus' farewell to his disciples during the Last Supper, in which he promised to “prepare a place” for them.

The time of life that remains for the disciples, the Pope said, mirrors that of old age, which is “the fitting time for the moving and joyful witness of expectation” for one's true destination: “a place at the table with God, in the world of God”.

### Oldest member of College of Cardinals dies at 98

● The oldest member of the College of Cardinals, Cardinal Jozef Tomko, died in Rome at the age of 98. The late cardinal had been hospitalised since the end of June after a fall, and he suffered further complications from Covid-19.

He returned to his Vatican apartment August 6 for continued care and died early August 8.

In a telegram with his condolences published by the Vatican later the same day, Pope Francis praised “this esteemed and wise brother who, sustained by deep faith and great foresight, served the Gospel and the Church with humility and self-sacrifice.”

The Pope praised the late cardinal for his long

and fruitful service and for his devotion and witness, exemplified by his praying the rosary every evening in St Peter's Square.

A funeral Mass was celebrated in St Peter's Basilica August 11, and his remains will be buried at St Elisabeth Cathedral in Košice, Slovakia.

He served nearly 16 years as the head of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, which was responsible for coordinating Church activities in mission territories, especially Africa and Asia.

After he retired in 2001, at the age of 77, he was appointed president of the Pontifical Committee for the International Eucharistic Congresses, until retiring in 2007.

### Pope tells youths ‘don't be afraid to make mistakes’

● Christians must never give in to fear when evangelising, especially when reaching out to those in need in the digital space, Pope Francis said.

“Do not be afraid to make mistakes,” the Pope said in a video message sent August 6 to participants of Hechos 29, a youth conference in Monterrey, Mexico, on evangelisation in the digital age.

“I never tire of repeating that I prefer a Church that is wounded because it goes out to the existential peripheries of the world, rather than a Church that is sick because it remains closed up in its own little securities,” Pope Francis said.

According to its website, the August 5-6 conference is “an international meeting of digital evangelisers that seeks to awaken in all participants (the desire) to become and to build up the Church.”

In his message, the Pope greeted the young men and women attending Hechos 29 and said the meeting was “an important initiative for missionary work in digital environments”.



# Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

**B**y now, Pope Francis has denied that he's on the brink of resigning so often that it's virtually become part of his verbal "Greatest Hits" collection, akin to his rhetoric on the evils of clericalism or the dignity of migrants.

Although he's 85 and suffering from acute pain in the right knee related to osteoarthritis, Francis just wrapped up a gruelling week-long trip to Canada, and he's preparing for a consistory to create new cardinals later this month, followed by two days of intense meetings with all the cardinals of the world.

**“Granted, Francis is a remarkably robust and energetic octogenarian, but even so, he's arguably operating on borrowed time”**

In between he's heading to L'Aquila in central Italy on August 28. In September he's already committed to beatifying Pope John Paul I on the 4th and traveling to Kazakhstan the 13th to the 15th – and all that is if he doesn't go to Kyiv first, for possibly the most high-wire act of his entire papacy.

In other words, this doesn't feel like a pope getting ready to quit.

Still, by common consensus, we're closer to the end of this papacy than the beginning. Pope John Paul II died at 84 and Benedict XVI resigned at 85. Indeed, over the last 100 years, covering eight papacies, the average age at which a papal reign ended was 78.

Granted, Francis is a remarkably robust and energetic octogenarian, but even so, he's arguably operating on borrowed time.

Vatican-watchers know all this, meaning that preparations for when the time comes are already well underway. As we speak, executives from the world's major TV networks are shutting in and out of Rome, finalising contracts for locations and personnel for whenever the “big show” occurs, and journalists are dusting off both their papal obituaries and their handicapping lists of *papabili*, meaning possible papal candidates.

All that may seem a bit gruesome, but it's the nature of the business.

As we enter the *fin de régime* dynamics, here's a brief guide as to what to expect.

First, we're in for a period of over-interpretation of every hiccup on the health front. Anybody who was around for the late John Paul years will remember how it works:

## A guide to navigating ‘election season’ in the Catholic Church



Students in the US canvass a hall looking over information on 12 potential candidates for the next pope so they can cast their own vote during a mock election. Photo: CNS.

**“Cardinal Matteo Zuppi of Bologna, for example, is widely considered today a presumptive front-runner among ‘continuity’ candidates, meaning cardinals who would continue the Pope Francis agenda”**

Whenever the Pope appears strong in public, pundits will sneer at predictions of his demise; whenever he seems weak, or has to cancel an event, those predictions will make a triumphant comeback.

### Politics

Such reactions, of course, are fuelled in part by politics. Fans of the current Pope don't want him to go, and they'll lash out at anyone suggesting the end is near. Critics will be eager to believe any rumour of an impending exit.

For whatever it's worth, here's the truth: The Vatican is exceptionally guarded when it comes to releasing information about the Pope's health, clinging to the quaint notion that even a pontiff is entitled to privacy. As a result, we won't get any detailed updates about the Pope's condition, whatever treatment he may be receiving, or the assessments of his own medical team. For example, there was no official medical bul-

letin after Francis underwent colon surgery last year, so we don't actually know what doctors concluded about his long-term prospects.

We do know that Francis, like all of us, is in a long-term trajectory towards the end, but how long that may unfold is anyone's guess. In the meantime, probably the best perspective is not to get too carried away by his ups and downs.

Second, we're also entering the “Iowa Caucuses” phase of Vatican coverage, in which absolutely everything done by someone identified as a papal contender will be seen through the lens of electoral dynamics.

Cardinal Matteo Zuppi of Bologna, for example, is widely considered today a presumptive front-runner among “continuity” candidates, meaning cardinals who would continue the Pope Francis agenda. He's also now president of the Italian bishops' conference, in a country heading toward snap elections on

September 25, so everything he says and does will be evaluated as a statement not just about Italy and its vicissitudes, but also what kind of pope he'd make.

Similarly, Cardinal Péter Erdo of Budapest is seen as a leading “alternative” candidate, meaning a more conservative figure who would mark a break with Francis. From now until the time comes, anything Cardinal Erdo says or does – for instance, on Hungary's ever-contentious immigration debate – will take on outsized importance in the informal papal sweepstakes.

**“All that will draw saturation coverage, making it seem like we're witnessing the invasion of Normandy or the Kennedy assassination”**

On this front, it's probably worth remembering that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar – bishops sometimes have to act as bishops, without necessarily intending it as part of an electoral platform.

Third, we're in for a boom cycle of Vatican coverage by major media outlets, because every big event in

Rome now will be seen as a dress rehearsal.

By that rule of thumb, circle August 27-30 on your calendars. Francis is not only creating new cardinals, meaning members of the electoral college who will pick his successor, but he's also traveling to the tomb of the last pope to voluntarily resign before Benedict XVI, Celestine V, and he's meeting with all the cardinals, meaning that every potential candidate will be on display in the same place and at the same time.

### Saturation coverage

All that will draw saturation coverage, making it seem like we're witnessing the invasion of Normandy or the Kennedy assassination.

In other words, folks, whether it's premature or not, election season is upon us in the Catholic Church. Just like the John Paul years, we may actually go through several cycles before the time actually comes, but complaining about it is a bit like grouching about the weather – like it or not, here it is.

**i** John L. Allen Jr is Editor of *CruxNow.com*

# Experts draft proposed laws on status of a retired pope



Carol Glatz

**P**ope Francis' plans to visit the central Italian city of L'Aquila and its basilica August 28 fuelled speculation of a possible announcement of his resignation, which he has firmly denied.

L'Aquila's basilica is the burial place of St Celestine V, who issued a decree declaring the right of a pope to voluntarily resign, and then he did so in 1294. It was also where – on top of Pope Celestine's glass casket – then-Pope Benedict XVI left his woolen pallium he had worn during his installation Mass – a gesture many wondered had been a sign of his resignation to come four years later.

**“Dr Boni is a professor of canon law at the University of Bologna's prestigious ‘Alma Mater Studiorum’”**

In the more than 700 years that have passed since St Celestine established this legal precedent, the right of a pope to resign remains ensured in Church law.

The law is not very detailed, saying only that the decision must be made freely and “duly manifested,” and no one needs to formally accept a pope's resignation for it to be valid.

That means nothing in canon law covers the legal status of the bishop of Rome who resigns from his office: What is his title, name, place of residence and means of support? What is his relationship with his successor, his role, responsibilities and powers in the Church? And how is his funeral and burial to be carried out? These are just some of the questions canon lawyers would like answers to as part of their task of avoiding confusion, promoting unity and protecting the dignity and rights of a retired pope in the wings.

One canon lawyer and consultor of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts said the “obvious symbolism” of visiting L'Aquila would be the perfect opportunity for the Pope to finally promulgate legislation needed to fill many gaps regarding a pope who resigns.

The canonist, Geraldina Boni, told Catholic News Service, “It is no longer inconceivable for a pope to resign, with this door having been ‘opened,’ as Francis himself has said several times.”

However, “this situation must be regulated” along with what to do when a pope is unable to govern the



Pope Benedict XVI views the casket of St Celestine V, a 13th-century pope who resigned in this 2009 file photo. Photo: CNS

universal Church when he is completely, permanently and irreversibly impeded or impaired because of a debilitating illness or other conditions, she said in an email response to questions in early August.

Dr Boni is a professor of canon law at the University of Bologna's prestigious “Alma Mater Studiorum”. She and other canonists launched a project in 2021 to draft legislative proposals that could be studied and discussed on an online platform with the aim of presenting the suggestions to “the supreme legislator,” the Pope, for his consideration.

## Apostolic constitution

The proposed norms can be found at [progettocanonico.sederomana.com](http://progettocanonico.sederomana.com) with a proposed “apostolic constitution” to regulate an entirely impeded Roman See and one on the legal status or “canonical condition of the bishop of Rome who resigned his office”.

The Church owes tremendous gratitude to the shepherd who, “moved by faith and love for Jesus Christ, decided to accept and carry out, maybe for many years, the hard and difficult burden of the Roman pontificate,” the proposal on resignations says.

Therefore, it says, “rather than binding prescriptions drawn out of the canonical legislation, these provisions mainly include some appropriate orientations that will have to be applied with caution,” and they are

intended to be “especially respectful of the personal dignity” of the retired pope.

Many of the suggestions mirror the approaches most often taken by retired Pope Benedict, who had to trailblaze a path forward when he stepped down.

For example, the proposal says “the manifestation of the resignation must preferably be put into writing and ordinarily presented in a consistory of the College of Cardinals or in another way that makes it publicly knowable”.

**“But the biggest departure in the proposal from what Pope Benedict has done regards the retired pope's title”**

Also, “the name of the one who resigned can be the same that he used during his office,” he “may use the white cassock that Roman pontiffs usually wear” and he may reside where he chooses, including Vatican City. The papal “fisherman's ring” and the seal used to issue papal documents must also be destroyed, the proposal says.

But the biggest departure in the proposal from what Pope Benedict has done regards the retired pope's title.

Instead of “pope emeritus,” the proposal says the retired pontiff “receives the title of bishop emeritus of Rome” and he “uses the ring that every bishop must wear.” Some photos of the retired pope show him wearing his gold cardinal's ring.

“The bishop emeritus of Rome does not assume or regain the dignity of cardinal nor the functions that are attached to it,” the proposal says, adding, “however, in liturgical and canonical matters the bishop emeritus of Rome has the privileges and faculties attributed to cardinals.”

The title, “pope emeritus,” has been a point of debate for some canonists, including Cardinal-designate Gianfranco Ghirlanda, a Jesuit theologian and canon lawyer who will be one of four new cardinals aged 80 or over Pope Francis will elevate August 27 as a symbolic honour to thank him for his service to the Church.

## Congress

At a two-day congress on the historical and canonical aspects of a papal resignation, held in L'Aquila last December, Cardinal-designate Ghirlanda said, “Having two people with the title of ‘pope,’ even if one added ‘emeritus,’ it cannot be said that this might not generate confusion in public opinion.”

The idea of more than one pope at one time “dangerously mixes up the precise meaning of the Petrine min-

istry, which is that of being a sign of unity of the Church, therefore, one sign of unity of the Church,” he said in his talk.

He said retired Pope Benedict has a “deeply spiritual and mystical” understanding of his papal election in that one may resign from the office and continue to “carry out a function that is also part of the Petrine ministry,” such as a dedication to prayer.

Even though he believes the retired pope did not intend to be making some kind of “dogmatic or canonical” statement with his title, the cardinal-designate said a canon lawyer has to look at “the practical consequences of a theoretical statement: What does this imply? What really happens?”

Theoretical assertions “cannot be valid,” he said, if they contradict “the purpose for which one has an institution in the Church, particularly institutions of divine right,” he said. Such assertions “must be corrected or at least interpreted in such a way that they do not create misunderstandings and misinterpretations with serious repercussions for the life of the Church.”

“The title ‘former Roman pontiff’ or ‘former supreme pontiff’ could also have been given” to indicate the person who resigned is no longer pope, he said.

Dr Boni told CNS, “We will see if the work done by us university professors has been considered – even in criticising it or departing from it – by the eventual drafters of any papal legislation.”

“Certainly the wide debate that has built up on the issue has helped dismantle a taboo that had no reason to exist,” she said.

**“Many of the suggestions mirror the approaches most often taken by retired Pope Benedict, who had to trailblaze a path forward when he stepped down”**

# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Catholics unwittingly being divided into camps

**Dear Editor,** While it is encouraging to read the front-page article [*The Irish Catholic* – August 4, 2022] and applause is certainly well deserved, it was truly heartening to see an effort to voice support for our bishops and priests who really are “bombarded with the notion that everything needs to change”. But, can it be considered that such terms, ‘young’ vs ‘old’ don’t sow unity amongst us? We have unwittingly allowed ourselves be divided into camps – young Catholic, old Catholic, committed Catholic, liberal, orthodox or traditional Catholic, the labels are innumerable and to what purpose? Or, to whose purpose? Some things do need to change.

The Church in Ireland is too long in defence mode, labels don’t help. We are constantly defending ourselves against commentaries, drive-time debates and now synodal fronts that, yes, might very well seek to undermine or ridicule the teachings that we know to be true, but ultimately are of no real threat to her.

It should not matter what position ‘young, faithful (committed) Catholics’ are voicing. That’s not where our true mission is found nor the encounters to be made between God and man. It’s time for us to get out of defence, out of the politics and get behind the real mission left to the Church, which we seem to have lost sight of here in

Ireland. We ‘young Catholics’ need to get active and stuck into one of the real battles facing the Church in Ireland – bringing young and old to truly encounter God and have an intimate relationship with him; forming the Faithful sitting in the pews each week, building fruitful, life-giving communities in our parishes, the list goes on.

Surely then we will see true, fruitful results not only in a synod but in dynamic, faithful people and parishes around the country? That mission is universal, young and old alike.

Yours etc.,  
**C. de Fréine**  
Balla, Co. Mayo

### Commending ‘outstanding’ coverage of Korean martyrs

**Dear Editor,** I must commend you on your outstanding coverage [*The Irish Catholic* – July 28, 2022] of the Irish martyrs who have been put forward for sainthood by the South Korean Episcopal Commission.

The several articles about these exemplary clerics, their Irish roots, and their work with the Faithful in Korea prompted much discussion in our household which includes children, teenagers, and young adults. Clearly the sacrifices of these priests have already borne fruit in South Korea. May their witness also contribute to conversion in North Korea and to a renaissance in the Catholic Ireland that shaped them in the first place.

Yours etc.,  
**Jennifer Mooney**  
Lifford, Co. Donegal



### Church must be better explained, not changed

**Dear Editor,** It was wonderful to read in [*The Irish Catholic* – August 4, 2022] about the response of more than 500 young people to the synodal consultation who were “fully and joyfully” accepting Church teaching and practice.

It seems to me that the Church needs to be better explained not changed.

Fr Andrew Mc Mahon’s recent article [*The Irish Catholic* – July 21, 2022] was also a breath of fresh air. The majority of Mass-goers are not very interested in being consulted. It could be that the whole process of consultation is mainly aspirational. And the loudest voices that will be heard are not really the voices of the Faithful.

There is a notice about the synod in our church in pastel colours, written in baby lettering, with the words ‘communion, participation mission’.

Yes. I’m sure these words may inspire some people and I might be the only one who finds these words like synodality, pathways etc., mind-dumbing, even

soporific.

I can’t help wondering if words like death, judgement, hell and heaven were used instead would it cause a bit of a stir?

Or wake up the fire?

Yours etc.,  
**Brid Ní Rinn,**  
Corrachoill, Co. Kildare

### Pope warns against remaining huddled as a group of purists

**Dear Editor,** The young Catholic group that are challenging the ‘liberal reform agenda, [*The Irish Catholic* – August 4, 2022] are calling, prior to the synodal meeting of Church leaders in Rome next year, for no change in doctrine, teaching or practices. It might be useful for all groups with concerns, to review Pope Francis’ most recent book *Let us Dream*, in which he refers to the ‘Synodal Process’, that he has instigated. He warns against the ‘isolated conscience’, where people can separate themselves away

and remain huddled as a group of purists, rather than listening to all voices.

Pope Francis stresses the need for fraternity over individualism, and states, that what the Church needs most from its members, is a charitable openness to each other, so that we can remain part of the one people of God and so in humility, be open to the graces and actions of God.

Yours etc.,  
**Deacon Frank Browne,**  
Rathfarnham, Dublin 16.

### Approaching the centenary of Michael Collins’ death

**Dear Editor,** As a medical student in Dublin in the early 1980s I was taught by Dr Eamonn De Valera, a son of Dev. One day he told us how his father had reacted when he heard that Michael Collins had been killed. He went off into a room to be on his own and said the Rosary prayer. I am reminded of that detail now that we are approaching the centenary of Michael Collins’ death on August 22.

Yours etc.,  
**D.P. Logan**  
Mohill, Co. Leitrim.

## facebook community

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

### Priestly celibacy not reason for abuse crisis – report

Absolutely true. There are similar levels of abuse in all Churches, and many non-religious organisations around the world the media simply refuse to highlight it. – **Chonail Ni Emma**

Not a revolutionary insight, of course. Studies confirmed that two decades ago. But important to have it confirmed. – **Günther Simmermacher**

### Majority of rent increase notices invalid, housing charity warns

It’s like watching a cowboy movie were the bandits go and look for more rent off the people and if they don’t get it they shoot them and that’s the way our society is gone. Their money is God. They have lost their beliefs. – **John Long**

### Prayer is the key for Gilbert O’Sullivan

A man of soul and a classic pianist. – **Kevin Cooney**

Thank God that Christianity is alive and well in a good section of the entertainment business. – **Rosemarie Downey**

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

### Young people deserve best possible guidance

**Dear Editor,** I support the message in the article ‘Young Catholic group challenges synod on liberal reform agenda’ [*The Irish Catholic* – August 4, 2022]. Young people are the future and they deserve the best possible guidance. The liberal agenda is not in the best interest of the future of the Catholic Church!

Yours etc.,  
**Mary Marcolin**  
Saratoga Springs, New York, USA

### Voices of youth must be ‘strongly supported’

**Dear Editor,** Congratulations to Maria Bridges and all young women and men for their courage and belief expressed in the article in *The Irish Catholic* on August 4. It is uplifting to hear comments like these in the present climate. Let’s hope their views will be listened to and appreciated by the bishops and clergy, and not ignored but strongly supported.

Yours etc.,  
**Josephine Clarke**  
Dublin 16

## 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.

# Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, August 18, 2022

## Personal Profile

Bringing the  
Faith to life  
through music

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## The secrets of ageless ageing



**I**wondered about a milestone that would herald crossing the line between being middle-aged and becoming an older woman. For me, it was wearing reading glasses in public for the first time. I vividly remember discovering that I couldn't read the newspaper anymore without some serious squinting.

For most people this is usually around the age of forty-five. I bought a cheap pair of magnifying glasses and only used them for reading newspapers and books; however, menus began to be a problem too, so I went for an eye test and the good news was my long-range vision is



**Dr Karen Ward shares tips to help ease the ageing process in her chapter on physicality from her new book, *The Secret of Ageless Ageing***

excellent but my short range had deteriorated, so I'm described as long-sighted. It really helped me to talk to others close in age to discover they were experiencing something similar. I keenly felt the sense that there was no turning back once I started to wear glasses in public. It was a visible sign of ageing that was irreversible. I knew, though, that

eventually I would have to wear them socially. Finally, the great day arrived and we went to dinner with friends.

When we reached the time to peruse the menus, with great fanfare I reached into my bag and pulled out my funky leopard-print reading glasses. Instead of this being a big deal, a hilarious farce ensued as the other couple

asked could they use them as well since they were also having trouble reading the small print. We all shared my glasses, making me feel part of this new phase of life rather than different and alone.

### Tips to try

Try and wait as long as possible before having to get glasses by making sure to use good lighting for reading and exercising your eyes. A simple way to exercise your eyes is by visualising a large clock in front of you. While keeping your head straight, move your eyes only (not your neck or head) around the clock stopping at each five-minute point for a

few seconds. Then do the same anticlockwise. It will feel a little strange at first as the muscles of your eyes have probably not been worked out for a while since we are so used to turning our heads rather than moving our eyes. When the time comes, don't be too proud to invest in a good pair of glasses that suit your face.

You can always try out an inexpensive pair of magnifying glasses from a chemist shop first to see the strength that you need. Eye tests are not expensive and many opticians reduce the cost of them if you buy glasses there too. Eventually you may even consider laser eye surgery, which

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## Family News



## AND EVENTS

## ENGLISH CAR THIEF FOUND STUFFED INSIDE GIANT TEDDY

A car thief who hid inside a giant teddy bear has been jailed for nine months, PA reports. Joshua Dobson, 18, from Spotland, Rochdale, was wanted by police for stealing a car and not paying for fuel.

Officers searched for him at an address in Rochdale.

Mr Dobson was nowhere to be seen, until the officers noticed that a large teddy bear was breathing.

When they opened it up, they found the teenager hiding inside.

In a statement on Facebook, GMP Rochdale said that Mr Dobson had been "stuffed behind bars".

"He's now stuffed behind bars after being sentenced last week for theft of a motor vehicle, driving while disqualified, and making off from a petrol station without payment," the force said.

"Hopefully he has a bearable time inside..."

## SPACE TELESCOPE IMAGE A LOAD OF SAUSAGE

A red ball of spicy fire with luminous patches glowing menacingly against a black background.

This, prominent French scientist Etienne Klein declared, was the latest astonishing picture taken by the James Webb Space Telescope of Proxima Centauri, the closest star to our sun.

Fellow Twitter users marvelled at the details on the picture purportedly taken by the telescope, which has thrilled the world with images of distant galaxies going back to the birth of the universe.

"This level of detail... A new world is revealed every day," he gushed.

But in fact, as Mr Klein later revealed, the picture was not of the intriguing star just over four light-years from the sun but a far more modest slice of the lip-sizzling Spanish sausage chorizo.

"According to contemporary cosmology, no object belonging to Spanish charcuterie exists anywhere but on Earth," he said.

## NOWHERE ON EARTH WHERE RAINWATER IS SAFE TO DRINK – STUDY

Rainwater everywhere on the planet is unsafe to drink due to levels of toxic chemicals known as PFAS that exceed the latest guidelines, according to a new study by Stockholm University scientists.

Commonly known as 'forever chemicals' because they disintegrate extremely slowly, PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) were initially found in packaging, shampoo or makeup but have spread to the entire environment, including water and air.

"There is nowhere on Earth where the rain would be safe to drink, according to the measurements that we have taken," Ian Cousins, a professor at the university and the lead author of the study published in Environmental Science and Technology, said.

A compilation of the data since 2010 that his team studied showed that "even in Antarctica or the Tibetan plateau, the levels in the rainwater are above the drinking water guidelines that the US EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) proposed", he said.

## Debunked ideas about depression



Depression affects about 10% of Irish adults with over 400,000 people estimated to be taking antidepressants. The discovery of drugs to treat low mood emerged only in the 1950's and by chance, after an antihistamine and anti-TB medication were observed to have positive effects on mental health. What both shared in common was their effect on blocking the uptake by neurones of the secreted chemical 'serotonin' making more available in the brain. This spawned more research that led in the 1960's to the 'serotonin theory of depression', supported by a small number of studies showing lower levels of serotonin in the blood and cerebrospinal fluid of depressed patients. However, the 'chemical imbalance theory' of depression has had its sceptics over the decades and it would be overly simplistic to deduct that by implication there is a "chemical cure". Nonetheless, in the 1990's the serotonin hypothesis was re-invigorated after the drug Prozac (fluoxetine) came to market – it works by increasing serotonin in the brain.

**Some antidepressants also alter other chemicals in the brain besides serotonin, yet are very affective"**

Despite this, just last month a highly publicised journal article reviewed the evidence and effectively debunked this theory. It found no difference in serotonin levels in blood or brain fluid in depressed patients nor any variation in genetic variants linked to serotonin. Furthermore, experimental studies that depleted serotonin levels did not result in depression. In fact, some cynics have argued that it was

## Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



more of an advertising pitch by drug companies than a scientific paradigm. However, in truth most psychiatrists are not surprised and regard depression as being a complex syndrome with both psychological and biological roots – the relative importance of which varies between individuals.

Firstly, most drugs take up to several weeks to work despite having quick effects neurochemically, suggesting other mechanisms at play. Some antidepressants also alter other chemicals in the brain besides serotonin, yet are very affective. Indeed, the exact mechanism of action for some drugs including general anaesthetics remains an enigma. While in about 90% of cases, there are psychosocial factors that may trigger depression it may also occur in individuals with no obvious risk factors. That antidepressants can work is not in question, but the exact mechanism by which they do and in which patients they are most effective are still areas of research. Importantly, if antidepressants are stopped patients can not only experience a relapse of their depression but also withdrawal symptoms.

A recent article in the *British Medical Journal* looked at 232 trials of antidepressants including more than 73,000 patients and found that they worked better than placebo in only about 15%. However, two thirds of patients

in the placebo arm also got some response! In fact in trials, the benefit of drugs over placebo is modest and for some patients the 'placebo effect' may be more important. Of course, there is no doubt that antidepressants can be helpful and even life-saving in depression. However, for some individuals addressing psychosocial triggers and using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) may be more beneficial.

So how does depression manifest in most people? Depression is a syndrome where people have low mood but also other features that can include: loss of interest or enjoyment, reduced energy, lethargy, feelings of helplessness, ideas of self-harm, early morning waking or excessive sleep and reduced appetite. However, some people may have a 'case level' or



'subsyndromal' depression where only some of the features are present.

Common risk factors for depression include bereavement, loneliness, financial distress, physical disability and chronic pain. A change in a life circumstance can result in an 'adjustment reaction' that can precipitate depression and other factors like alcohol misuse can exacerbate the problem. Undoubtedly, for some individuals, genetics plays a significant role, especially when there is a family history of bipolar affective disorder. Furthermore, some personality types are more prone to depression.

Antidepressant medications are also used to treat anxiety in adults even in the absence of depression, though both often co-exist. Typically, when prescribed, antidepressants are usually used for a period of 6 months with the need for ongoing treatment, then re-assessed. Depending on the circumstances and the risk of relapse, therapy may be used for much longer periods and even lifelong. Furthermore, in patients where there is no response initially, other antidepressants are usually tried. Indeed, some individuals are on two antidepressants or other drugs that augment their effect.

**“Lastly, do make sure if you are feeling down and it's significantly impacting on your life, to go to your GP and get advice”**

Finally, for resistant cases of severe depression, electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) can be used which works by inducing seizures in the brain in a highly controlled setting. While invented in Italy in the 1930's, it may seem primitive, but is proven to be very effective for some patients, though side effects such as memory loss may occur.

Lastly, do make sure if you are feeling down and it's significantly impacting on your life, to go to your GP and get advice.

**i** Dr Kevin McCarroll is a Consultant Physician in Geriatric Medicine, St James's Hospital, Dublin.

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Dr Karen Ward with her book, *The Secrets of Ageless Ageing*.

is becoming more affordable now.

### Research on Ageing

Dean Ornish, the well-known American doctor who founded the Preventive Medicine Research Institute, did some very interesting research on ageing and disease. He worked with Elizabeth Blackburn, one of the three American scientists who won the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for their study of telomeres, which are the body's markers of age.

### “Is this the elusive quest for longevity we have been looking for? Is it as simple as looking after ourselves holistically?”

Telomerase enzymes increase the lifespan of our chromosomes and cells, which subsequently increase our overall lifespan. He did a test with ageing men with prostate problems. After three months teaching them the importance of self-care by eating healthy, doing moderate exercise and relaxation techniques like yoga and meditation each day he saw a 30% increase in their telomerase.

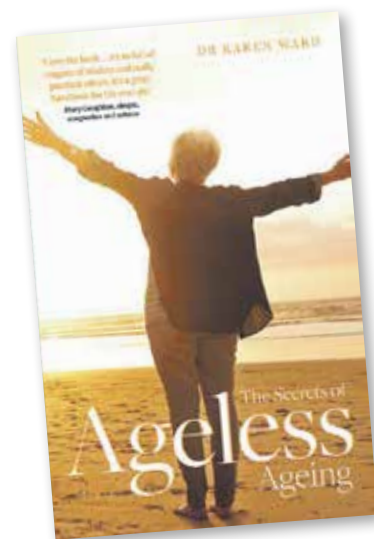
Is this the elusive quest for longevity we have been looking for? Is it as simple as looking after ourselves holistically? Research conducted in Ireland chiefly by Professor Rose Anne Kenny of Trinity College Dublin, known as TILDA (The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing), followed 9,000 adults for twelve years covering all

aspects of life including sex, food, genetics and childhood experience, friendships and finance.

The key findings to be as young as you feel were to: continually work on relationships and friendships; have a good laugh; de-stress daily; exercise; have a cold shower every morning; prepare for bed an hour beforehand; start yoga; eat within an eight-hour window. All of these were found to lead to a more positive attitude.

### Tips to try

Start a checklist to see if you eat healthy five days a week, exercise for an hour three or four times a week, and have regular relaxation periods daily. While food and exercise are important, sleep is vital too. Prepare wisely by pottering around beforehand rather than browsing your phone or laptop in bed, as this is not conducive to the brain gently shutting down for a restful slumber. The more we look after our bod-



ies, the easier it is to maintain good health and reap the benefits. This is not that hard to do and indeed to maintain but it does take consistency and effort.

### Words of wisdom

Name: Gina Mackey  
Country of origin: Ireland  
Country of habitation: England  
Age: Fifty-six  
Occupation: Harpist and vocalist, wife and working mother of three girls.

### 1. What do you wish you had done or started earlier in your life?

I wish that I had studied music at university and got a music degree. This possibly would have given me a greater understanding and joy for my art and the gifts that I have been given. I started triathlon training at the age of forty-five and I can't believe it's taken me this long to discover the joys of open water swimming in lakes.

### 2. What are you delighted you did or started earlier in your life?

I am delighted that I took the opportunity to travel around the world with my work when I was younger and without the responsibilities that I have now with family and home life. Sport and fitness was an important part of growing up and this now gives me a terrific sense of holistic well-being. I am thrilled to say my children have embraced this love of sporting activities as they grow up.

## Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



Sometimes it snows in the Sahara and sometimes Ireland has a heatwave. Much as those who inhabit the desert don't have snow shovels, the Irish are ill-prepared for the heat. Our tarmac quickly turns to treacle. Ice-creams melt and drip down children's t-shirts. Our skin burns instantly to a crisp. One thing doesn't change though: we continue to complain about the weather. We switch seamlessly from complaining about the rain to complaining about the heat.

Fortunately, our family had recently been through a heatwave while on holiday in France, and so we were already acclimatised and fairly well-prepared as temperatures headed towards 30 degrees. The shorts, hats and sandals had already been broken out. Our sunscreen supplies were adequate. Salad recipes were in active circulation. The habit of spending the hottest part of the day indoors had been normalised, even amongst the more recalcitrant children.

For days on end now, it has been a joy to wake in the morning, confident that upon drawing back the curtains, you will be met with blue skies. Each morning, the sun rises golden over the blue sea, to reign uninterrupted over a hot day before settling slowly, and turning the western sky a burning red. Then the stars emerge one by one, to decorate the balmy dusk.

The older kids have certainly made the most of the fine weather. They've been in and on the water every day, doing everything

from kayaking to windsurfing, swimming and fishing. It's wonderful to see them really engage with the sea as an element. They are becoming at home in it, they understand its ways, its tides and its many moods. They know the creatures that live on its shores and beneath its surface too, thanks to their interest in snorkelling. The warm weather has made the beach become a home from home for the family. The younger kids are engaged in the water too, happily building sandcastles, paddling or splashing about.

Sadly, a summer heatwave does not dissolve the demands of work. We adults are often stuck indoors on the very best days of summer, looking at a computer screen, with that feeling of missing out. Still, even on those work days, I usually manage a swim in the evenings. An immersion in the Atlantic always leaves you energised.

Yet even as the summer peaks around us, and the Cork coast resembles the Mediterranean, the nights are already drawing in. There will be more beauty to come, as autumn arrives. The kids' return to school is just a couple of weeks away now. But I dare not mention it. They are in the deep summer time, when they live in the moment, and have forgotten that there is even such a thing as school. They are free, and thriving in their freedom, and going from one fun thing to the next. There are only so many childhood summers, and this is turning out to be a beautiful one for the kids.



# Bringing the Faith to life through music

## Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

**M**usic and the Faith have been a part of Marcella Walsh's life from a very young age. It began with singing grace around the dinner table as a child, and continues today as director of music at Queen's University Belfast's Catholic chaplaincy and as a professional opera singer.

Marcella's family were always involved in the Faith, both within the family and in the diocese. "From a young age I always remember us holding hands and singing grace around the dinner table," she recalls.

**“Marcella became a regular singer at Mass and adoration, with larger faith events coming her way in time”**

Through her teenage years, Marcella grew closer to the Faith and music continued to play a big role. "It was really through my music, through singing in the church and the various programmes I was involved in like the pioneers and the other friend groups that developed – it was



Marcella Walsh, director of Queen's University Belfast's chaplaincy choir, meets Pope Francis.

through music my faith grew and deepened."

Marcella became a regular singer at Mass and adoration, with larger faith events coming her way in time. She got involved in the diocese of Down and Connor's folk groups, which she says was a spring board to go deeper into her faith.

"I really discovered how my faith could come alive through music, then making connections with other singers and growing in friendship," Marcella tells me. "I would have sung in choirs with my mum and on my own then as well. We created a little music group and toured around to different parishes in my teenage years."

Marcella found music and the friendships that grew out of it continued to help her in her faith life, as well as offering her a chance to travel: "One thing leads to another, once you're heard at one event, one priest hears you or another group of people and you're invited to sing – for example, I sang at the Redemptorist youth forum, in Germany. It was taking me all

over the world.

"Of course then the opera, I was singing both opera and liturgical music. They were working very much hand in hand. The lead organist that plays with me in the Queen's university chaplaincy, we've been playing together for 17 years. We played together for five years in our teenage years in St John's in Belfast, and from there we've developed this beautiful musical duo and partnership."

### Integral role

Queen's University Belfast, where Marcella studied and now works, played an integral role both in developing her music career and her faith. She came to QUB as an undergraduate and in third year was president of the musical society. That opened "wonderful doors" for her, Marcella says, as she received the student of the year award and won a place at the Royal Irish Academy for Music to conduct her postgraduate studies.

The Catholic chaplaincy at QUB also played an important role for her. "It was a great addition to my

faith at the time and really helped my formation," Marcella says. "It was great especially for those key moments throughout the year, the Advent season, the Lent season – that really helped."

Now that she is director of the chaplaincy's choir, called Canticle, Marcella hopes to give back some of what she received. It's quite a pastoral role, she explains.

**“Music and the Faith were both integral parts of Marcella's life that found their origin point in her family”**

"We're helping to form the young students that come in, helping them to use music to find their faith and open things out, to grow up. And to have a safe space to have great conversation, to open up a real opportunity to engage with their faith, and to be part of the Sunday liturgy at 8pm.

"Wonderful friendships have come out of that. We have members of the choir who are going to be sharing accommodation together this year."

One of the highlights among many this year for Canticle was a trip to Rome where the students received an audience with Pope Francis, getting to sing for him.

"That trip really cemented a lot of those friendships, we really got to know one another," she says. "And meeting Pope Francis was incredible, especially when he asked us to do a second piece!"

Music and the Faith were both integral parts of Marcella's life that found their origin point in her family. She began by singing at her mother's knee, but didn't stop there. When she joined the Royal

Irish Academy of Music, she came under the mentorship of Veronica 'Ronnie' Dunne.

"She was an absolute legend, Irish opera singer, soprano, and real national treasure," Marcella enthuses. "She just passed away last year, she was 94 or 95. Her international singing competition is just taking place now in the national concert hall. I would have gone to China and things as part of that. She was a real mentor of mine, she really taught me the intricacies of opera, how to create sound, *bel canto* – beautiful singing."

Marcella works professionally as an opera singer. Before Covid-19 hit, she spent seven years with Scottish opera, but then the pandemic brought her home.

"Northern Ireland opera has now invited me to sing in *La Traviata*, so it's worked out so well to have the director of music post at chaplaincy," Marcella says. "It's really a passion of mine to share the liturgical knowledge with other young singers and really create a programme for young musicians and singers, to be liturgical musicians of the 21st century."

"To actually be able to have all the skills, the knowledge that's required – and to put the hard work in to become beautiful performers. But also to engage with the text they're singing, to engage with sacred Scripture."

"And I'm really passionate about catechetics, it's so important our young people are well catechised, that they understand and their faith becomes real for them. It has practical implications for their lives. That's really a huge part of my work at chaplaincy, not just to create beautiful music but actually to bring the Lord into the every day in our music."

**Do you know someone who we should profile? Send an email to [ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie)**

## Living Laudato Si'

Jane Mellett



## Preparing for the Season of Creation this year

**I**n the month of September, the world's 2.2 billion Christians are invited to celebrate the Season of Creation which runs from the World Day of Prayer for Creation on September 1 to the Feast of St Francis of Assisi (October 4). This ecumenical season invites Christians to pray with and for creation, to reflect on what is happening to our world at present, and to discern where they are being called to act in their own lives and in their parish communities. The theme this year is 'Listen to the Voice of Creation' and takes the story of Moses and the burning bush as its inspiration: "I have heard their cry... I know their sufferings... Come, now! I will send you... I will be with you" (Ex 3: 1-12).

Today, the prevalence of unnatural fires are a sign of the devastating effects that climate change has on the most vulnerable of our planet. Creation cries out as forests burn, animals flee, and people are forced to migrate. Record temperatures across the

world this year have shown us that climate change is affecting all regions and all systems and will make parts of the world uninhabitable for human beings. On the contrary, the fire that called to Moses as he tended the flock on Mt Horeb did not destroy the bush. This flame of the Spirit revealed God's presence, affirmed that God heard the cries of all who suffered and promised to be with them and us as we follow in faith to work for justice, to work for a more sustainable world.

In this Season of Creation, this symbol of God's Spirit calls us to listen to the voice of creation, to listen to the voices of those who suffer the impacts of climate change, to listen to the voices of those who hold generational wisdom about how to live more simply, with gratitude and within the limits of the land. These are the voices of the Earth. The global Christian family is called to awaken to the urgent need to heal our relationships with creation and

with each other and to encourage our parish communities to do the same, "for we know that things can change!" (*Laudato Si'*, 13).

A poem I came across recently, *Walk, Don't Run* by Rob Bell, sums up the theme of this year's season for me:

"[Moses] takes off his sandals.

Not because the ground has suddenly become holy,

but because he's just now becoming aware that the ground has been holy the whole time."

Every parish can do something to care more deeply for our common home. For everything you need to help celebrate this Season of Creation such as liturgical resources, colourful brochures, beautiful reflections, suggestions for achievable actions please go to [www.catholicbishops.ie](http://www.catholicbishops.ie) and search 'Season of Creation 2022'. These resources are also available from Trocaire's parish resource page. For support feel free to contact [jane.mellett@trocaire.org](mailto:jane.mellett@trocaire.org).

Jane Mellett is the *Laudato Si'* Officer with Trócaire



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## The minefield of discussing gender

**H**ow does one wade into the transgender debate? Or even dip toes in the water without getting them bitten off?

A few preliminary questions I struggle with – how is it that when certain activists disagree with you they immediately accuse you of having a phobia? No, it's just a contrary opinion! How come when someone identifies as a race they were not born into (e.g. check out 'trans-black') they get vilified and ridiculed, accused of racial or cultural appropriation but you never hear of 'gender appropriation'? Where is the boy who cried "The Emperor has no clothes"? Has he been silenced, cancelled or sent off for re-education?

### Excesses

The kickback against the excesses of transgender activism has been gaining force – last week we had the controversy about troubling practices at the Tavistock Clinic in London, Irish children being sent there still, and the decision by the IRFU not to allow those biological men who identify as women to play in the women's game. The latter issue sparked an item (unfortunately not a debate) on **The Pat Kenny**



**Show** (Newstalk, Thursday). The IRFU wouldn't provide a spokesperson so it was just Pat Kenny and a calm and articulate Matt Kennedy of *BelongTo* speaking on behalf of Trans Equality Together. Mr Kenny quoted wads of the comprehensive scientific research cited by the IRFU and it sounded convincing about the considerable physical advantages of those born male. I think common sense would have told us that anyway, though Mr Kennedy made what seemed to me a weak effort to discredit the research ("undressed limitations with the research relied upon... isn't encapsulating of best

practice in a policy context"). Predictably it wasn't long into the debate that he pulled and played the 'transphobic' card. Not only that, he thought the move would be de-humanising and not recognising the personhood of the individual. I doubt that – there is no debate as to personhood, or indeed to biological sex, but rather to 'gender' and what people nowadays conceive that to be. He feared the IRFU move would set a "dangerous precedent" and would "target a marginalised community".

### Advantages

Pat Kenny rightly raised the issue of parents' concerns

if their young girls were to be playing against those with the advantages of being born male and had transitioned post-puberty. He raised an important question – "does inclusion trump safety or does safety trump inclusion?" Mr Kennedy thought they should be in tandem (which begs a lot of questions) and didn't like a "hypothesised idea of safety" eroding the principles of inclusion. Hmm...

### Concerns

Earlier in the week, on the **Nine O'Clock News** (RTÉ One, Tuesday) we heard the concerns of Dr Paul Moran, a psychiatrist working with the National Gender services, which treats people over 16 – "even before 2019 that there were problems with the quality of the work being done by the Tavistock with Irish children". The HSE are still sending Irish children for 'treatment' there, and I wasn't too impressed or reassured by the HSE defence of this approach given by National Clinical Director for Integrated Care within the HSE Dr Siobhán Ni Bhriain: "The service has not been deemed not safe... we will continue to refer while Tavistock is still open, we will monitor extremely closely and we have for quite a number of years been exploring other options".

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### SUNDAY MORNING LIVE

**BBC One Sunday August 21, 10am**

Back after a short break - topical magazine programme with moral, ethical and faith issues.

#### MASS

**RTÉ One Sunday August 21, 11am**

Msgr La Flynn, Prior of Lough Derg, celebrates Mass in the RTÉ studios. The Lough Derg Music Ministry Team is led by Msgr Joe McGuinness.

#### HOPE – OUR LADY OF KNOCK

**EWTV Sunday August 21, 9pm, also Monday August 22, 10.30am**

A historical docudrama that covers the events leading up to and following the apparition of the Blessed Mother at Knock in 1879.

#### The Secrets She Keeps

(RTÉ One, Tuesdays, BBC One Saturdays) is a gripping Australian thriller series now into its second season. It tells the story of a disturbed woman guilty of the kidnapping and manslaughter of children. Sympathy for her is garnered somewhat by the fact that she was abused as a young girl (by a religious elder, wouldn't you know) and had a baby taken from her. But she is clever and manipulative and in this second series has contrived to become pregnant in prison, much to the embarrassment of the prison authorities who immediately want her to have an abortion. They

won't let her see an ultrasound scan of the baby, but a kindly prison nurse passes it on anyway. So far she is refusing the termination – she now has her longed for baby and hopes this will guarantee her a place in a low security facility.

However engaging the plot, the characters are short of likeable – the married ones are having affairs but at least these are shown as destructive, with secrets that eat away inside.

As usual the children end up as collateral damage.

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# Film

Aubrey Malone



## Forgiveness, revenge, jealousy and retribution

"Jesus forgave those who crucified him."

This is the mantra underlying Francois Ozon's achingly beautiful *Frantz* (Alibris). Shot partly in monochrome and partly in colour, it has an air of elegant leisureliness. It tells the story of a Parisian soldier from World War I (Pierre Niney) who's consumed with guilt after shooting a German in a trench.

In an attempt to seek forgiveness from the dead man's family he visits Germany after the war is over, becoming friendly with his fiancée (Paula Beer). It's asking a lot of her to forgive him even though it was a war situation. Their relationship is fraught.

She doesn't tell her parents about his revelation. They

grow to like him so much they say they'd be happy for her to marry him.

It's an impossible love but handled with much delicacy. The violin music score and the painterly quality of the images accentuate the film's power. It moves with a languorous pace through the various parameters of the characters' emotions. It's all the more evocative for that.

"Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought." That phrase came back to me in almost every frame of this beautifully shot paean to peaceful coexistence between bellicose nations in the aftermath of a global conflict.

Beer's face is gorgeously attuned to the period. Niney



A still from 2016 film *Frantz*.

is suitably fragile and perfectly conveys the awkward – and presumptuous – request he imposes on the seriously bereaved Beer. It's a film that

will remain in your mind long after you've seen it.

Jealousy is the motive behind *The Roommate* (Amazon), an edgy thriller about a

deranged young girl (Leighton Meester) who shares a college room with the innocent Minka Kelly. After inveigling her way into a friendship with her she proceeds to do everything she can to wreck her life and her relationship with her boyfriend (Cam Gigandet). It's a fairly standard formula but the tension is ramped up nicely by director Christian E. Christian, leading to a nail-biting climax.

You can do a lot of things with a hypodermic as the unscrupulous title character of *The Paramedic* (Netflix) demonstrates in this dark Spanish thriller. He loses the use of his legs in an ambulance accident early on, afterwards engaging in a vengeful crusade against his girlfriend after she leaves

him. He then exacts similar violence on her new *beau*, a former colleague of his. This is tough viewing with some high voltage *schadenfreude* from a seriously disturbed individual. The final twist is sweet. Revenge is a dish best served cold.

I'd seen *The Crossing Guard* (Amazon) before but forgot just how good it was. Jack Nicholson plays a character who swears revenge on a man who was responsible for the death of his daughter in a hit-and-run.

It's directed by Sean Penn. At the beginning the driver of the car that killed Nicholson's daughter is being released from prison. It begins with anger and ends with a kind of tenuous peace. Result? Catharsis.

# Get your focus right...

**J**esus was on his way to Jerusalem. Last Sunday, we heard him say that he had come to bring fire to the earth and that he would have to plunge into the sea of suffering, a prospect that caused him great distress. Somebody came up to him and asked, "Sir, will there be only a few saved?" (Luke 13:22-30). It's very likely that the questioner was a Jew who believed that only Jews had any chance of getting to heaven. Many of us grew up convinced that only Catholics would be saved. Others say that only those who have the experience of being born again will be saved, or that they are already saved. At the end of today's Gospel, Jesus gives his answer to the questioner. Salvation will not be limited to one race or one religion. People will come from east and west, north and south to take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. And, surprise, surprise, many who are now considered to be last will in fact be first, whereas those who now think they are first will be last in the race.

**“Try your best to enter by the narrow door, because, I tell you many will try to enter and will not succeed”**

What can we do about it? The advice of Jesus was, "Try to enter by the narrow door." The narrow door does not mean being narrow-minded. It means being focused: having a clear idea of where you want to go and how you plan to get there. Be like the free-taker, the archer or the golfer who has to focus on the target. The archer shuts one eye in order to eliminate distractions. The old Greek word for sin means missing the target. As a less than mediocre golfer, on the sixth hole where I play, I am haunted by a copse of trees on the left of the fairway. I change my stance, or my grip or the club I use but invariably the ball lands among

## The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



the trees. If only I could discipline myself to eliminate distracting thoughts and commit myself fully to where I want to go! If you don't aim to go somewhere you will end up going anywhere, and there is no guarantee that this will be a good place. Nowadays we meet people who want to be spiritual but not religious; to believe but not to belong; or to use God but not to listen to God. The target of life demands commitment.

**“Three fruits relate to our relationship with God: love, joy and peace”**

The permissive culture of today resents being subjected to rules and dogmas. Don't put in on my freedom. It is my right to choose. As a result of permissiveness, people have taken their focus off the target of salvation. Life has become a succession of disconnected moments with no big picture to frame all together. There is no backbone to life and all hope can collapse in the face of a single crisis. It is significant that in this permissive age we hear of boredom, inertia, depression, chemical dependence and suicide. One moment of crisis and everything collapses. Faith gives us the big picture of where we have come from, where we are going, and how to get there. We have come from God our Creator and life is a journey of returning to God. Jesus once called himself the door. Focus on his way and enter by the narrow door. As we heard last Sunday, "Fix your eyes on Jesus, the beginner of our faith and the one who leads it to perfection".

## Maintained

Our theology teacher of years ago, Fr David, wrote to Carl Jung, the famous psychoanalyst, asking

him if he still maintained what he had once written, that among his patients in the second half of life, not one of them reached healing without sorting out one's relationship with the higher power. Fr David showed us Jung's reply stating that all those years later his conviction was even stronger. This letter was written a few months before he died.

## Narrow door

"Try your best to enter by the narrow door, because, I tell you many will try to enter and will not succeed." If you are asked by a street preacher if you are saved, the right answer refers to past, present and future. In the past my salvation has been won by Jesus Christ my Saviour. In the present, as the Gospel recommends, I am trying to be a faithful follower, trying to enter by the narrow door. As regards the future, my hope is to hear his invitation welcoming me to what today's Gospel calls the feast in the kingdom of God. Elsewhere, Jesus linked that heavenly invitation to the practical works of charity: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, giving a cup of water, visiting the sick - because the way we treat other people is the real test of true faith. The Letter of St James is very clear on this, "as a body without a spirit is dead, so is faith without good deeds" (James 2:26). St John's Letter asks how can we love God whom we have never seen if we do not love the people that we do see.

**“Nowadays we meet people who want to be spiritual but not religious: to believe but not to belong”**

How can you judge if you have entered through the narrow door of discipleship? One good way is to ask if you are producing the fruits of the Spirit more than the fruits of self-

## Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people. Enkindle within us the fire of your love.

Direct us in the journey of life. Help us to keep our lives focused on our eternal salvation.



The saints in heaven as linked by prayer with their fellow Christians on earth.

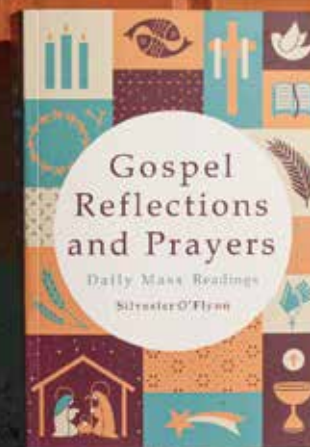
indulgence. Paul's Letter to the Galatians (5:22) has a list of nine fruits.

Three fruits relate to our relationship with God: love, joy and peace. A Spirit-filled relationship with other people can be seen in patience, kindness and goodness.

The final three fruits are signs of a strong inner life: trustfulness, gentleness (particularly being gentle with yourself) and self-control. These beautiful virtues are a living proof that a person is cooperating with the Holy Spirit in a life that is focused on the narrow door to salvation.

## More of Fr Silvester's Gospel Reflections

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# One God, one guidance system, and one road for us all

**A**t the end of the day, all of us, believers and non-believers, pious and impious, share one common humanity and all end up on the same road. This has many implications.

It's no secret that today religious practice is plummeting radically everywhere in the secular world. Those who are opting out don't all look the same, nor go by the same name. Some are atheists, explicitly denying the existence of God. Others are agnostics, open to accepting the existence of God but remaining undecided.

**“All of us know people who are in one or several of these categories and are anxious about them”**

Others self-define as ‘nones’; asked what faith they belong to they respond by saying none. There are those who define themselves as ‘dones’, done with religion and done with church. Then there are the procrastinators, persons who know that someday they will have to deal with the religious question, but, like St Augustine, keep saying, eventually I need to do this, but not yet! Finally, there's that huge group who define themselves as spiritual-but-not-religious, saying they believe in God but not in institutionalised religion.

All of us know people who are in one or several of these categories



**Fr Rolheiser**

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and are anxious about them. What can we do, if anything, to nudge these people towards faith, religion, and church? What will happen if they die in this state? Where does God stand in the face of this?

I suspect that God doesn't much share our anxiety here, not that God sees this as perfectly healthy (humans are human!), but rather that God has a larger perspective on it, is infinitely loving, and is long-suffering in patience while tolerating our choices. Why? What's God's larger perspective here?

First, the fact that our faith already baptises those we love. Gabriel Marcel once famously stated: “To say to someone ‘I love you’ is to say, ‘you will never be lost’.”

## Unity

As Christians, we understand this in terms of our unity inside the Body of Christ. Our love for someone links

him or her to us, and since we are part of the Body of Christ, he or she too is linked to the Body of Christ, and to touch Christ is to touch grace. Thanks to the marvels of the Incarnation, every sincere Christian can say, “my heaven includes this or that particular person whom I love”. We used to call this “Baptism by desire”, except that in this instance the desire for “Baptism” is on our part, but still equally efficacious.

**“To say to someone ‘I love you’ is to say, ‘you will never be lost’”**

Next, we need to recognise that God loves these persons more than we do and is more solicitous for their happiness and salvation than we are. God loves everyone individually and passionately and works in ways to ensure that

nobody gets lost. Moreover, God is tricky! As good Christian apologists have always pointed out, God has his own schemes, loving traps, and means to lead persons to faith.

## Patient

Moreover, God is infinitely patient. If we bracket piety for a moment, we might profitably compare God to a GPS (Global Positioning System) given how infinitely patient and yet persistent a GPS is in giving us directions. A GPS is built with the presumption that it will frequently not be obeyed and that it will have to make the necessary adjustments. We are all familiar with how this works.

We are driving towards a destination and the GPS tells us that in order to get there we need to make a right turn at the next intersection. However, we ignore its instruction and drive straight through the intersection. There is a brief silence and then the GPS, taking into account the fact that we ignored its original directive, says, ‘recalculating’ and gives us a new instruction vis-à-vis getting to our destination. And, it will repeat this cycle endlessly. A GPS, limitless in its patience, keeps ‘recalculating’, and keeps giving us a

new instruction until we get to our destination. It never gives up on us.

God is the same. We have an intended destination and God gives us constant instructions along the way. Religion and the Church are an excellent GPS. However, they can be ignored and frequently are. But, God's response is never one of anger nor of a final impatience. Like a trusted GPS, God is forever saying ‘recalculating’ and giving us new instructions predicated on our failure to accept the previous instruction. Eventually, no matter our number of wrong turns and dead ends, God will get us home.

**“We have an intended destination and God gives us constant instructions along the way”**

One last thing. Ultimately, God is the only game in town, in that no matter how many false roads we take and how many good roads we ignore, we all end up on the one, same, last, final road. All of us: atheists, agnostics, nones, dones, searchers, procrastinators, those who don't believe in institutionalised religion, the indifferent, the belligerent, the angry, the bitter, and the wounded, end up on the same road heading towards the same destination – death. However, the good news is that this last road, for all of us, the pious and the impious alike, leads to God.

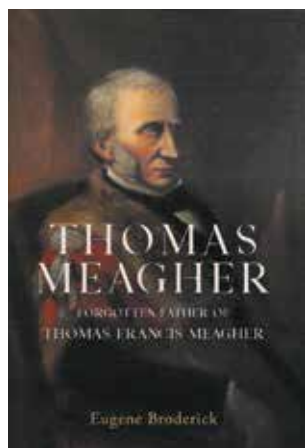
**“It's no secret that today religious practice is plummeting radically everywhere in the secular world”**

# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## Remarkable light on a forgotten figure in Waterford's history



### Thomas Meagher: Forgotten Father of Thomas Francis Meagher

by Eugene Broderick  
(Irish Academic Press, €29.95/£27.99)

J. Anthony Gaughan

Thomas Meagher was described by Daniel O'Connell as "one of the best men that ever lived". Yet he is only generally remembered as the father of Thomas Francis Meagher, the Young Irelander and later a Brigadier General in the US army of the Union. However, Thomas was a very significant historical figure in his own right.

Thomas was born in Newfoundland in Canada in 1789. His family had emigrated to that place to avail of the riches of its legendary fishing grounds. The family flourished. Initially in the retail business, Thomas' father later was a ship-owner and active in the transatlantic trade. He transferred his family and the family business to Waterford City in 1817.

### Environment

Thomas fitted easily into his new environment in Waterford and quickly emerged as the most active member of the family's firm. In addition, between 1819 and 1825 he became an acknowledged leader of Waterford's Catholic community.

In his pursuit of religious equality through the campaign for Catholic emancipation he was committed to constitutional and legal methods and the leader-

ship of Daniel O'Connell. He was ever confident in his assertion of the rights of his co-religionists to equal treatment under the law and was a vocal defender of his faith and Church.

The 1826 general election in Waterford was a struggle between the entrenched opponents of Catholic emancipation and the increasingly assertive Catholic Association. Thomas was secretary of the Association in Waterford and had a major role in the defeat of Lord George Beresford, representative of the religious and political establishment.

### Election

In the aftermath of the election, with others, he established the Waterford Protecting Association to assist the tenants who were evicted for not voting for the landlords' candidate. In 1829 his growing stature in the community was evinced when he was selected to act both as secretary and treasurer on a committee to present a memorial to Patrick Kelly, Bishop of Waterford and Lismore.

Following the enactment of the Irish Poor Law in 1838, Thomas served on the Board of Guardians supervising the local workhouse. In nominating him to the Board Fr John Sheehan stated that he was "influenced by a long acquaintance with the gentleman in question and with his charitable disposition and numerous acts of charity and beneficence".

Thomas stood and was successful in the election to Waterford Corporation in 1842 and was elected mayor by his fellow-electors, thus becoming the first Catholic to hold this office since the seventeenth century. During the Famine (1845-8) he was a tireless member of the various local committees, attempting to assist the poor, the destitute, the ill and the dying.

Thomas served as MP for Waterford City from 1847 to 1857. Entering the House of Commons as an O'Connellite Repealer, he remained a life-long loyal supporter of the 'Liberator'.

## Summer excursions to places of faith – Part 2: Britain

Peter Costello

Irish people desire most, it seems, to fly over Britain to reach Lourdes, Fatima, and Medjugorje. While well understanding their motives, I feel that by this choice they miss many interesting experiences, and narrowly restrict their contacts with places of faith over the past two millennia, engaging places which in many ways have perhaps done more to sustain Christianity in Europe.

One of the regions they certainly neglect is Britain next door and the shrines and holy places of Scotland, Wales, and England. This week I want to briefly explore a small selection of these.

### Iona

The name of this little Scottish island is well known of course, because of the connection with St Columcille, also known as Columba. But I suspect few enough people outside of Ulster visit it. But then how many people in the South make an effort to visit the Royal Irish Academy where they can see gratis

in all its lonely, tourist-free, uncrowded glory, the early medieval manuscript connected with him, *The Cathach* or *Battle Book of St Columcille*.

The island itself requires a complicated journey to visit it. In the saint's time it lay on the sea routes along the west coast of Europe which carried trade and culture back and forth along the extended sea board from Norway to North Africa for some four millennia – though for an Ulsterman like the saint it as merely a hop across the channel from Dál Riada.

Today one has to drive north from Glasgow to Oban, where the local ferry takes you across to Mull, and another long drive west though a desolate valley to reach Fionnport.

From there a small ferry carries one across the channel to Iona. On a brilliant August

day as I first saw it years ago the water was crystal clear thanks to the bright sun reflecting off the white sand of the sea bed. One felt one was in effect floating in the air and being carried over to some special place, as in a legend. It was a magical experience, if one can say that of a visit to a sacred Christian place.

The abbey buildings seen today are the result of modern restoration by a Church of Scotland group, but it is surrounded by the cemetery that holds the remains of some 62 kings, 48 Scottish, eight Norwegian, four Irish and two French. The saint's grave lies nearby the abbey; but the place to see is the beach across the island where Columcille and his 12 followers landed, for there one can look out over a landscape almost unchanged since 563AD. Altogether one well worth the journey.

### Walsingham

In stark contrast is the Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham in Norfolk, which always seems to have visitors. It became a major place of pilgrimage after 1061 – before the Norman Conquest. According to the tradition, an Anglo-Saxon lady Richeldis de Faverches, was granted a vision of the Blessed Virgin, in which she was instructed to erect there a replica of the Holy House at Nazareth – making the place akin to Loretto. When first opened it housed a carved figure of Mary with the child Jesus on her lap (similar to those polychrome figures in our National Museum). Walsingham, previously merely a little village in rural Norfolk, became one of the country's most important places of devotion, much visited today by pilgrims from

**“The abbey buildings seen today are the result of modern restoration by a Church of Scotland group**

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



The White Strand, Iona, by Samuel Peploe (c. 1924)

Europe. And it remained important down to the Reformation.

This once famous place was quite neglected until 1922 when another Anglo-Catholic association revived it. It was recognised as the National Shrine of Our Lady by the English Catholic hierarchy too.

Today it also attracts a number of traditional-minded Roman Catholics, along with Orthodox and Methodist devotees. Visitors today can buy a little cast pilgrim's badge, though at the moment I cannot find mine in the desk drawer where I keep such things.

It would be wise for those who dislike crowds to avoid August, and perhaps Easter, but May might be the right month to experience the special appeal of the place, with such strong echoes of medieval faith.

### Glastonbury

Claiming roots much further back in time, Glastonbury holds a primacy of place as the earliest Christian survival in England which most scholars doubt. St Joseph of Arimathea, who came there, it is said, at



Ruins of Glastonbury Abbey in springtime.

some date in the 60s AD, bringing with him two small vials which carried the actual blood of Jesus. They have not survived, but it was also claimed that the oldest church in England built by the saint's own hands stood there till it was destroyed in later times. It was made of simple wattle and clay daub, a detail which for many adds some credibility to the whole legend.

### “The story of Westminster Abbey encompasses all the great movements in Christian life in England”

(Before believing all that you are told locally readers should consult R.F. Treharne's critical work, *The Glastonbury Legends* (Cresset Press, 1967), or if you have access to a college library Dr J. Armitage Robinson's *Two Glastonbury Legends: King Arthur and Joseph of Arimathea* (Cambridge University Press, 1926). From both of these books readers will learn about the origin, development and diffusion of the medieval hagiographical accounts.)

Today the town is the haunt of numerous New Age movements and shops, which will provide both amusement and information. It is indeed a place devoted to the value of beliefs of all kinds. But this is to overlook the fact that this small place in the West country was truly a place much visited in the middle ages, and which still preserves remains of some very moving Christian establishments, illustrating the long, lingering, but lasting nature of religious faith localised on such places.

As I say, I think it is strange that more Irish people do not visit places in England such as Westminster Abbey and Canterbury Cathedral (to which Dublin was so long subsidiary at the time of the Norman invasion).

The story of Westminster Abbey encompasses all the great movements in Christian life in England. It remains the place of all great state events, such as coronations, nowadays supervised by the Chief Marshal of England, the Duke of Norfolk, a Catholic.

The place is the last resting place of many of England's great and good, not all of them even Christians by any means. In contrast, however, to the eclectic Europeanism of Iona, only 16 monarchs are buried here, rather less than Iona's 62. Which seems to suggest that in the eyes of the Catholic middle ages Iona was the more important place.



St Edward's tomb in Westminster Abbey

However one of these is St Edward the Confessor, whose tomb is the most magnificent aspect of the Abbey. But there are those who might say that the massacre of the cheering Saxon crowds by the troops of William the Conqueror at his coronation very effectively symbolises the often tyrannical rule from the English throne.

### St Thomas Becket's tomb in Canterbury Cathedral

St Edmund was a confessor, he did not suffer martyrdom. St Thomas of Becket was a true martyr, struck down on the altar of his Cathedral by three knights on a mission to please Henry II, the effective conqueror of Ireland.

His tomb became the largest and most significant shrine for the ordinary peo-



The ruins of Glastonbury Abbey, with the Tor in the distance, painted in 18th Century.

ple of England and for many others too across Europe. The nature of the pilgrimage has been itself enshrined in Geoffrey Chaucer's great epic *The Canterbury Tales* which began to circulate around 1400. The shrine too is the setting for Eliot's verse drama *Murder in the Cathedral*.

### “St Thomas of Becket was a true martyr, struck down on the altar of his Cathedral by three knights on a mission to please Henry II”

It has to be admitted that the cathedral is undoubtedly one of England most important visitor sights, along with Windsor Castle. However, Evensong on a summer evening is a lightly attended event and a very moving ceremony properly reminding all visitors that the place is not an amusement park, but is indeed a place of ancient faith which still finds expression there.

### The London Oratory

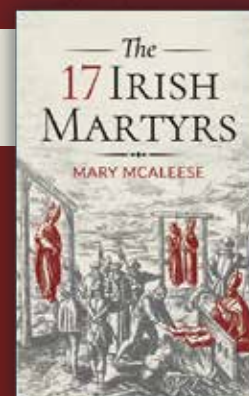
Though created by the Oratorian Order of St Philip Neri, the London Oratory owes its origin, not to St John Henry Newman, but to funding by the many followers and admirers of the writer and preacher Fr Frederick Faber in 1852.

The Oratory is renowned for its music, and it has also maintained a regular Latin Mass. But in some ways it echoes Iona. Columcille was a missionary priest attempting to bring the Gospel to the pagans of a Northern European wilderness. Newman's life was devoted to defending and maintaining that faith in an age where the wilderness had become an intellectual one. Perhaps for some travellers this might not be the place to end a British pilgrimage, but the place to begin, ending rather at Iona, where perhaps the nature of faith in creation can be better experienced.

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Part 3 - Europe

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— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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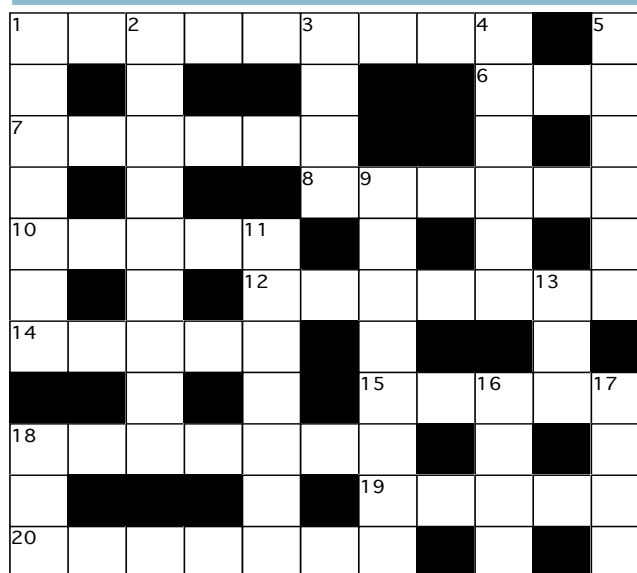
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One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

## Crossword Junior

Gordius 446



### Across

- 1 Pupils travel in this (6,3)
- 6 Hatchet (3)
- 7 Open with a key (6)
- 8 = is an \_\_\_\_\_ sign (6)
- 10 This sign of the zodiac is usually first in the list; it means 'the ram' (5)
- 12 Poor labourer in history (7)
- 14 Run away to get married (5)
- 15 Relaxes, takes a break (5)
- 18 A home for honey-making insects (7)
- 19 This river flows through Belfast (5)
- 20 You use them when sew-

### Down

- 1 A 'banger' you fry or grill (7)
- 2 A golfer's perfect score (4-2-3)
- 3 'What would you \_\_\_\_\_ for your birthday?' (4)
- 4 It's in Africa - the world's largest desert (6)
- 5 A collection of cups, saucers and side plates (3,3)
- 9 Arguments (8)
- 11 Different, because it is better than ordinary (7)
- 13 An acorn, perhaps (3)
- 16 Write your name (4)
- 17 \_\_\_\_\_ and daughters (4)
- 18 Cup cake; scone (3)

## SOLUTIONS, AUGUST 11

GORDIUS NO. 571

**Across** — 1 Clean slate 6 Anna 10 Among 11 Candlemas 12 Currant 13 Nadir 17 Raki 18 Toil 19 Cecil 21 Carpark 23 Panda 24 Inca 25 Poke 26 Eyots 28 Damsons 33 Swallowed 34 Horse 35 Nook 36 Smart bombs

**Down** — 1 Cran 2 Evolution 3 Niger 4 Lucan 5 Tank 7 Nomad 8 Australian 9 Old Nick 13 Abba 14 Trapped 16 Stephenson 20 Conundrum 21 Capsule 22 Room 27 Otago 29 Alder 30 Sahib 31 Swam 32 Lens

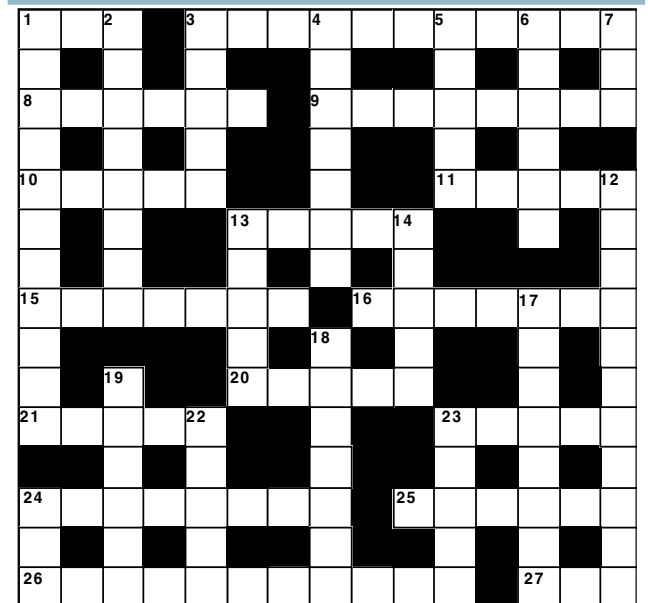
CHILDREN'S No. 445

**Across** — 1 Blue whale 7 Nil 8 Animals 9 Ocean 10 Keeps 11 Venice 12 Ski 13 Reel 14 Knight 17 Nectar 18 Wrong

**Down** — 1 Blackberry 2 United 3 Wraps 4 Also 5 Entering 6 Glance 11 Viking 12 Sligo 15 Inch 16 Hear

## Crossword

Gordius 572



### Across

- 1 Slang word for a police officer (3)
- 3 Some radical test - it's so prudish! (6-5)
- 8 More inquisitive (6)
- 9 This act is top of the bill (4,4)
- 10 Urge forward (5)
- 11 & 1d In which the size (volume) of an object may be quantified (5,11)
- 13 Deciduous tree with distinctive bark (5)
- 15 Treachery (7)
- 16 Star sign during which winter begins (7)
- 20 Takeaway sign (5)
- 21 Wetland (5)
- 23 The sound of a pager (5)
- 24 & 25 Parish occasion in which the graves in a graveyard are blessed (8,6)
- 26 Bribes (11)
- 27 No score (3)

### Down

- 1 See 11 across
- 2 Put off to another time (8)
- 3 The olfactory sense (5)

### 4 Joyless (7)

- 5 The words of a song (5)
- 6 As plump as rock'n'roll singer Checker? (6)
- 7 Noise (3)
- 12 What gives leaves their green colour (11)
- 13 Brush used for travel by witches (5)
- 14 Hews, chops at roughly (5)
- 17 How one poisoned the Greek sea god (8)
- 18 Derived pleasure (7)
- 19 Road surfacing material (6)
- 22 On which rugby, for example, is played (5)
- 23 Sad music (5)
- 24 Male swan (3)

## Sudoku Corner

446

### Easy

	1		7	4	2		9	6
	4				6			
2						1	4	
1		4	5			3		2
7				6	4	9		8
			8	1				
	6	9						
		7				5	3	
			3	8				

### Hard

2		8	6					
1		6	2					3
	9			7				
	2		7					
	4	3				7	5	
					9		3	
				4			1	
5					1	2		4
					8	5		7

### Last week's Easy 445

3	8	2	4	9	5	7	1	6
4	9	7	1	6	2	5	8	3
1	5	6	7	3	8	4	2	9
5	2	4	8	1	9	3	6	7
6	3	1	2	7	4	8	9	5
9	7	8	6	5	3	1	4	2
8	4	9	3	2	7	6	5	1
7	1	5	9	4	6	2	3	8
2	6	3	5	8	1	9	7	4

### Last week's Hard 445

1	7	9	5	8	3	2	4	6
5	2	6	7	1	4	8	3	9
3	8	4	9	6	2	1	7	5
7	1	8	3	5	9	4	6	2
4	3	5	2	7	6	9	8	1
6	9	2	1	4	8	3	5	7
2	6	3	4	9	5	7	1	8
8	4	7	6	2	1	5	9	3
9	5	1	8	3	7	6	2	4

## Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter



# Uncertain future for Sacrament of the Sick in parish

**I WAS MOBBED** in the churchyard after Mass on the August bank holiday. We had just celebrated the Sacrament of the Sick during Mass, and there was just one question on everyone's lips: "Would this be the last such Mass in Newcestown?"

When I arrived in the parish in 2012, a lovely tradition was handed on to me: the annual celebration of anointing at Mass in the parish hall on February 11 (Our Lady of Lourdes). The advantage of celebrating in the hall lay in convenient access, flexibility of seating and the ease with which a priest could move through the assembly, anointing all who sought the Sacrament.

Added to this was the social element provided by the cuppa afterwards, all organised by the pastoral council.

## Celebration

To this annual celebration were added three others, on the May, August and October bank holidays, days when anyone who wished could come to Mass (in the church) and lifts could be easily organised – days on which no one is in a rush. All these elements made a bank holiday



an attractive day for anointing ceremonies.

For all these celebrations, an open invitation was given: anyone with a serious ailment of body, mind or spirit could come along, 'no questions asked'. This open policy meant those going through cancer treatment that no one knew of could be anointed, as could those afflicted by the hidden menace of depression or those experiencing the increasing limitations of old age.

Over the years, I noticed that sick calls to those in immediate danger of death diminished. The

fact that anyone with a threatening illness could come with ease to a quarterly celebration of the Sacrament of the Sick meant that fewer found themselves facing death un-prepared, sacramentally. The association of the Sacrament with healing rather than death helped too; people could expect and did indeed recover when they were anointed.

## Disappointment

And now, people asked, was all this to end? Anticipating the disappointment, I made a number of points during Mass. Any priest could anoint, I insisted, so there was no reason not to ask for a communal celebration of the Sacrament. The second and much more important point was that it is Christ who heals in this Sacrament, irrespective of who

administers it. Before Covid I had a policy of maximum touch, going to each person for the laying of hands as well as with the holy oil; Covid reduced this to one encounter for anointing. But no matter what approach was followed, it was important for people to know that Christ was the one whose power was displayed in this Sacrament, not any human intermediary.

The question everyone asked on the August bank holiday was simple: was that 'it'? Would the Sacrament be celebrated no more, now that I was to be moved in September and not replaced by a new pastor? This remains a question for the five Co-PPs who will take my place. People are unsure that all will continue as was – as am I.

## A good car or a small plane

My letter of appointment arrived at the end of July, ending my ministry in Newcestown and Farnivane. I am now to be a co-parish priest in five parishes in the western half of the (former) 'Diocese of Ross': Aughadown, Castlehaven, Kilmacabea, Rath and the Islands, and Skibbereen. These five parishes will have two other Co-PPs, namely Fr John Heinhold SPS, the moderator of the 'family of parishes' and Fr Terry O'Brien MSC. I'll be living in Union Hall, in quite a nice house, though parishioners here tell me what I'll need will be a good car or a small plane!

## Wording of the oath of fidelity

One novel feature of life in Cork and Ross is the oath of fidelity now required of us co-PPs, something I did not have to make before. The form of words provided seems more strongly guided by canon law than 'pastorale'. I can picture some civil servant in a back office in Rome composing it, someone with little experience of the 'smell of the sheep', as Pope Francis puts it – where we pastors try to "bandage the wounded and make the weak strong". I have no objection to taking the oath, but the form of words disheartens me. Words matter.



## PLEASE HELP MANY ABANDONED ELDERLY MEN AND WOMEN IN PERU



Sr Elsa Reyes Mejia, of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, has written to The Little Way Association from the region of Cusco in Peru appealing for funds. "We arrived in the parish of San Pedro in 2018", Sr Elsa tells us, "and soon found, during our pastoral work, that many elderly people are living alone and abandoned, their children having moved to the city or gone abroad for work or study. The local community gave us a 6,000 sq. m. plot of land and since then we have been raising funds for the building of a large Home for many lonely aged people. Some organisations have helped us and we trust in God that the Home will gradually be built."

"Many die alone, having no one to care for them. We take Holy Communion to many, and sometimes food. The cost of the Home is fairly high, and we still need much financial help. We are confident The Little Way Association will assist us."

**Please send whatever you can for this special project.**

**The Little Way Association will send your gift, without deduction, to the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception for this much-needed Home for the abandoned elderly in Peru.**



*"A word or a smile is often enough to put fresh life in a despondent soul."*  
~ St Therese

## WELLS NEEDED

Missionaries constantly appeal to The Little Way for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean water, the lack of which causes much illness and many medical needs. On average, women in Africa and Asia walk around three hours every day to fetch water, often in scorching heat.

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