

The Irish Catholic

MARY KENNY

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Irish priest's canonisation inches closer following potential miracle

Jason Osborne

A priest described as a "simple son of Ireland" may be moving closer to being declared a saint with news that Church authorities are investigating a potential miracle attributed to his intercession.

Tipperary man The Servant of God Fr Patrick Ryan ministered to those suffering with yellow fever in the US state of Tennessee in the late 19th century, often putting himself in harm's way to be with people who were suffering. Fr Ryan eventually succumbed to the disease himself.

Attending his recent memorial Mass and re-entombment at the Basilica of St Peter and Paul was Teresa Shramko, who believes the intercession of Fr Ryan has seen her son begin to recover from life-threatening injuries following a fall out of a second-story window in April.

Ms Shramko's son has begun to talk and is learning to walk again after coming out of a medically-induced coma, and she believes the recovery to be miraculous.

She recalled how when her son Joseph had an accident "we immediately thought of Fr Patrick Ryan.

"I don't really know why he came to me. We asked our rosary [group] to pray for Joseph... They do an intercession through Fr Patrick Ryan every Wednesday for him. We just kept asking for prayers and prayers," she said.

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Celebrating exam success...



Students from Blessed Trinity College in Belfast after receiving their examination results. See pages 18-21.

'I have people lighting candles and saying Mass', says Irish woman trapped in Kabul

Ruadhán Jones

An Irish woman in Kabul is poised to leave the Afghanistan capital when the airport reopens, saying her family is "really worried" for her safety.

Aoife MacManus, from Co. Meath, has been in the Afghan city for two years working in the primary education sector. She is one of a small number of Irish citizens still in Afghanistan and trying to flee from the Taliban.

Ms MacManus was in contact with her family back in Ireland, saying that "They're really worried. They've been worried for the last couple of weeks.

"I have people lighting candles and saying Mass and all kinds of things. What can I say? I'm not in a normal situation," she told the PA news agency.

There were horrifying scenes on Monday at Kabul Airport as Afghans rushed onto the tarmac of the capital's airport as thousands tried to escape the country.

Ms MacManus said uncertainty was driving some of the fears: "There is a sense of panic and fear all over the city. It's the fear of the worst expectations."

She hopes she will be able to leave soon, once the security situation at the airport has settled down.

JASON OSBORNE

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It's not that easy being a mother

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Scandals shouldn't deter us from the Christian life PAGE 10



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

'Trailblazer' Nano Nagle deserves national recognition, says new exhibition's creator

Ruadhán Jones

As a new exhibition on the founder of the Presentation Sisters opens in Cork, one of the co-creators said Venerable Nano Nagle is "unfairly overlooked" today.

The Irish nun "dedicated her adult life trying to educate as many children as she could, to give them the best chance at having a better life", Jessie Castle said.

Ms Castle, who along with historian Gillian O'Brien wrote the 'Changing Habits' exhibition in the Nano Nagle centre, Cork, called the nun a "trailblazer".

"She made a huge contribution both as a religious and non-religious woman," Ms Castle continued. "She deserves

national recognition, as a particularly outstanding woman in the period she lived.

"Look at the number of schools and convent schools that came from that first one in Cork – it's really remarkable that this came from the work of one woman."

Ms Castle described Nano Nagle as a "strong-willed" and "independent" woman, who used her wealth for the benefit of the poor.

"She was well educated and from a wealthy family, so she had some confidence in what she was doing," she continued. "But she wasn't typical of a woman of that era or class."

"She was extremely outspoken and independent, and decided to use her

wealth for good causes, especially education."

Using her own money, Nano Nagle built two convents and founded the Presentation order specifically to educate poorer children.

"She worked, she used money for what she decided to use it for, she had her own house on Douglas Street, her own affairs and effectively her own business," Ms Castle explained.

"Even when things didn't go right, she got on with it. Even when she ran out of money, she worked her contacts, she begged and borrowed to carry on."

For more information on the Changing Habits exhibition, visit <https://nanonagleplace.ie/nanoevents/changing-habits-250-years-of-covent-life/>

New deacon on path to priesthood



Newly-ordained Deacon Barry White (centre) is pictured with Bishop of Meath Dr Tom Deenihan (left) and Fr Declan Hurley VG following his diaconate ordination on Saturday 14 August in St Mary's Church, Navan. Deacon White is one of three seminarians studying for priesthood in the diocese of Meath at present.

Online prayers offered for Irish-American Cardinal Burke

Jason Osborne

Prayers are pouring in from all over the world for Irish-American Cardinal Raymond Burke, who was admitted to hospital late last week with Covid-19.

The cardinal, who is of Irish heritage with ancestors from Cork and Tipperary, revealed via his Twitter account last week that he had tested positive for Covid-19.

"Praised be Jesus Christ! I wish to inform you that I have recently tested positive for the Covid-19 virus. Thanks be to God, I am resting comfortably and receiving excellent medical care. Please pray for me as I begin my recovery. Let us trust

in Divine Providence. God bless you," Cardinal Burke tweeted.

This was followed days later by an update that he had been admitted to hospital with the virus and was being assisted by a ventilator.

"Doctors are encouraged by his progress. He faithfully prayed the rosary for those suffering from the virus. On this Vigil of the Assumption, let us now pray the rosary for him," the update read.

The Faithful have taken to the internet to share their support and prayers for the cardinal, with prominent figures such as pro-life activist Lila Rose and Catholic professor and columnist Chad Pecknold adding their voices.

Irish priest's canonisation inches closer following potential miracle

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These prayers are what brought about her son's recovery, Ms Shramko told local newspaper *The East Tennessee Catholic*.

Speaking at the memorial Mass, Bishop Richard Stika referred to Fr Ryan as a "simple son of Ireland" and praised his apostolic courage insisting that his "Irish smile of kindness" saw many people through the yellow fever epidemic.

Born near Nenagh, Co. Tipperary in 1844, Fr Ryan travelled to the US, becoming pastor of Sts Peter and Paul Par-

ish in Chattanooga. Locals say that even today, he is remembered fondly and with great pride in the parish.

Fr Ryan carries the title 'Servant of God' indicating that he is on the first step in the canonisation process. The alleged miracle will now be further investigated by Church authorities, and if it is judged that Fr Ryan displayed heroic virtue he will be declared 'Venerable'. After the confirmation of a miracle, he would be declared 'Blessed' – the stage just before canonisation when a holy person is declared a saint by the Church.

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Hollywood star surrenders to God... and a miracle followed

Staff reporter

The Catholic actor who portrays Jesus in the hit crowd-funded series *The Chosen* has revealed how handing his life over to providence lifted a weight from his mind.

The show now has 250 million views online, but it is success that Jonathan Roumie does not take for granted.

He met the Pope at the Vatican last week and revealed that several years ago, before the show, he was living in Los Angeles and says he had "pretty much hit rock-bottom in a lot of ways: emotionally, financially, spiritually".

Despite "juggling six or seven jobs", Mr Roumie was in debt, his bank account was overdrawn, he "had no food" and wasn't sure how he'd pay his upcoming bills.

Desperate, he turned to the prayers of his Catholic childhood.

"I'm going to leave all of these anxieties, all of these worries, all of these problems that I have. I'm going to leave them with you and I'm not going to worry about it and I'm just going to trust you to take care of it," he prayed.

That very day, Mr Roumie says he "literally received a financial miracle in my life" when three unexpected cheques came in the mail. It allowed him to right his financial position. God, however he believes, was not done: three months later the actor landed his role as star of *The Chosen*. It still makes him marvel.

"I scratch my head every day and thank God for everything he's given me. I take nothing for granted and am grateful to be here," he said.

Mr Roumie described meeting Pope Francis at the Vatican last week as a childhood dream realised.

Catholic actor Jonathan Roumie, who plays Christ in the series *The Chosen*, is pictured in a scene depicting the Sermon on the Mount. Photo: CNS



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Joy and confidence of Ireland's young Catholics a sign of hope, bishops say

Ruadhán Jones

After young people gathered for Youth 2000's hybrid summer festival, the bishops praised the "great hope" their enthusiastic return brings.

The festival, which took place from August 13-15, was an occasion of "joy and energy", said Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross.

"The physical gathering, particularly the healing service on the

Saturday night – there was just a beautiful atmosphere you can't capture online," he told *The Irish Catholic*.

He added that he heard many people "speaking of the new people they met and the connections they made at the festival".

Hope

Bishop Gavin believes it is a sign of hope to see the next generation, which will carry the flame of faith

forward, returning in this way.

"There's great hope, energy and joy, and for me as a bishop, I want to give them my encouragement and support, so they can support each other," he continued. "They are the 'now' of the Church.

"They witness their faith, and have the confidence to witness their faith – that comes from gathering together with other young people.

"It's through good witness that other people come to know them.

If you see people living with joy and enthusiasm, that's how the faith becomes attractive to other people."

Encouraging

The bishop finished, saying that he found it an "uplifting and encouraging" experience, to see "young people gathering with such energy".

Meanwhile, Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin, who cele-

brated Mass in Naas, said that "our young people have been starved of these gatherings, and they were delighted to be back".

"It took place on the feast day of St Maximilian Kolbe, and I presented St Maximilian Kolbe to them as a model of sanctity, courage and trust in God," he continued.

"I encouraged them to ask where can we find these models today? Where are the saints today?"

Famed actor prepares to play Padre Pio

Staff reporter

Actor Shia LaBeouf has been cast as Padre Pio for a film which will focus on the life of the Italian saint. Veteran actor Willem Dafoe is also set to receive a role in the movie.

A former Disney Channel star, Mr LaBeouf, 35, recently appeared in a video with a group of Franciscans, as he spends time with them in preparation for his role in the movie.

"I'm completely immersed in something way bigger than myself," Mr LaBeouf says in the video.

"I don't know if I've ever met a group of men as immersed in anything in my life," he says of the Franciscans, continuing, "it's super-attractive to see people give themselves to something so divine".

"It's heart-warming to know that there's a brotherhood like this that exists. I've been met with nothing but grace since I've been here."

Mr LaBeouf said that those involved in the production of the movie, under the direction of Abel Ferrara, are looking to get an "as close to accurate" depiction of what it's like to be a friar as possible.

Showing the human side of the saintly life is an important goal of the film, Mr LaBeouf said, explaining that they're looking to get as close to the "tangible, tactile relationship that this man had with Christ and in bringing the Good News to the world".



AIB closures ailing communities in the North

Jason Osborne

Parishes and communities in the North are at a loss following recent bank closures, according to Fr Kevin Mullan of Drumquin in Co. Tyrone.

The priest's laments come after AIB recently announced the closure of more than half of its 15 Northern Irish branches, which leaves some communities far from another alternative.

Asked how it affects parishes, he replied "there's a security risk now, isn't there? You're storing money until you get a chance to take it away".

His main concern is the loss of community, however, as he said the bank "was a lovely meeting place for people" and that "it helped the community".

"It was very thoughtless to close our bank," he said.

"AIB, or First Trust before them, were part of Omagh for decades. We were all reared on that bank. They've been trying recently just to discourage people from coming to the bank," Fr Mullan said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Galway clerical appointments

Bishop of Galway and Kilmacduagh and Apostolic Administrator of Kilfenora Brendan Kelly has made the following Diocesan Appointments for 2021:

Fr Patrick Dean Callanan, Administrator, Kilbeacanty Parish is to retire. Fr Conor Cunningham, PP, Lisdoonvarna Parish is to go on sabbatical with a return to ministry in 2022.

Fr Martin Whelan, Diocesan Secretary, and Curate, Galway Cathedral to be Diocesan Advisor for Post-Primary Religious Education and Chaplain to Coláiste Muire Máthair, in addition to continuing as Diocesan Secretary.

Fr Robert McNamara, Administrator of Craughwell Parish to be PP of Lisdoonvarna Parish, while Fr Michael King, Curate of Gort Parish to be Administrator of Kilbeacanty/Peterswell parish while remaining as Curate

for Gort parish and priest-in-charge in Beagh.

Fr Richard Flanagan, Administrator, Ballyvaughan Parish to be Parish Priest of Ballyvaughan Parish and Vicar Forane of the Kilfenora Deanery.

Fr John Gerard Acton, newly-ordained is to be Curate at Galway Cathedral.

These appointments are effective from 12.00 noon on Friday 3rd September 2021.

MSCs to livestream annual novena

The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart have announced that this year's novena to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart will be streamed online live from the Sacred Heart Church on the Western Road, Cork.

It will take place from Tuesday August 31 to Wednesday September 8 and will be led by Armagh Archdiocesan priest Fr Paul Clayton-Lea.

This year's theme will be 'hope of the hopeless' and organisers believe it will help people look to the future with renewed hope.

Those who wish to take part in the novena can do so by visiting www.mscommissions.ie, where they can watch the daily novena Masses at 10am and 7.30pm, with a day of healing on Thursday, September 7.

Anyone who would like to submit their personal intentions for remembrance in the novena can do so via phone to 021.454.5704 or by email at info@mscommissions.ie

Expert to review abortion laws three years after referendum

An independent expert is to be appointed to review Ireland's abortion laws three years after the Eight Amendment was repealed, paving the way for legalised abortion.

The *Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018* provides for a review of the legislation three years after its implementation.

The Department of Health has said an independent expert will make a series of recommendations to Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly.

A three-pronged approach will be taken, looking at the experience of women as well as service providers, with a public consultation also planned.

"The review is being progressed this year. At this stage it is anticipated that the review will take a three-part approach to reviewing the operation of the Act, with strands focus-

ing on service users, service providers and a public consultation," said a department spokeswoman.

"Research to inform the service user and service provider strands will be commissioned and carried out independently and a public consultation will be held."

Dying wishes of missionary priest honoured

Fr Gus Hurley's two last wishes of dying at the family home in West Cork and being buried in Glasgow were fulfilled by his family, who were determined to see them through.

Fr Hurley, 92, was born and grew up in Cork, before heading to Glasgow in 1952, where he was appointed to St Augustine's in Milton. He was diagnosed four years ago with prostate cancer, which finally resulted in his death.

Fr Hurley's nephew, John, and niece, Rose, travelled to Glasgow in the midst of the summer of 2020 and the pandemic to bring Fr Hurley home, where he died in the same room his mother had died in.

Celibates – even involuntary ones – can live deeply meaningful lives

For centuries, numberless men and women have lived lives of involuntary celibacy: they have never found a partner with whom to settle down. The Irish were, traditionally, cautious about marriage – often because so many farms were small and inheritance was uncertain – so they lost their opportunity to find a spouse. There were many lonely bachelor farmers who found themselves alone in old age, simply through the circumstances of life.

Marry

In Britain, and in France, two world wars deprived many women of the chance to marry. Sweethearts and boyfriends had been lost in the wars, and there was a horrible phrase used, by officialdom, about such singletons: ‘surplus women’.

And there have always been plenty of individuals who were simply unlucky in love. The one they yearned for rebuffed their hand.

Yet many of those who were ‘involuntarily celibate’



Mary Kenny

led lives of fulfilment and usefulness. They were busy in their work, volunteered for charitable societies, were helpful in the local community and often supportive as bachelor uncles and spinster aunts to extended families. Their single status could be lonesome, but it could also give them the freedom to pursue hobbies and interests of their choosing. Even the bachelor farmers could be philosophical, perceiving that marriage has its burdens too.

How depressing it is, now, to learn that ‘incel’ – involun-

tarily celibate – has come to mean a misogynistic online group of men who have blamed women in a hateful way for their single status. Jake Davison, the 22-year-old who killed five people in Plymouth, including his own mother and a three-year-old child, identified himself as part of this ‘incel’ movement.

Anger

He had never had a girlfriend, and felt uncontrollable anger that everyone else seemed to be enjoying some rapturous relationship – while he was

friendless and sexually alone. His fury was fed by these ‘incel’ groups online. It was evident he was mentally unbalanced, and the authorities should never have allowed him to hold a permit for a shotgun – his licence had been taken away and then, catastrophically, restored. (It has also been suggested that bodybuilding steroids contributed to his mental troubles.)

All these elements must be factors in this terrible slaying, but so, I think, must the sexualised aspect of modern society. Sexual images are pervasive and ubiquitous in contemporary culture – drama, stories, advertising, magazines, books – and an alienated loner with a disjointed perspective could easily get to feel that that the world, and especially women, hate and rebuff him and are the cause of his misery.

In truth, many couples struggle with their relationships, while there are plenty of celibates who may not have chosen their condition, but live, and have lived, decent and even serene lives.

Painting a pitiful picture



Some years ago, the war photographer Don McCullin told me: “Nobody ever conquers Afghanistan. The terrain is impossible.” It was, he said, the worst, the most difficult country he had ever worked in. Child mortality was wretchedly high; it was difficult for anyone to survive in such rugged conditions.

The British suffered defeat in three Afghan wars from 1839 to 1919; subsequently the Russians and now the Americans, backed by its Allies.

The most poignant image of Afghanistan is surely Lady Butler’s *The Remnants of an Army* which portrayed the defeat of 1842, with a single British soldier, the surgeon William Brydon, on an exhausted and dying horse, as the last survivor of an Afghan defeat.

Elizabeth Butler – born Thompson – was a much-admired military painter, the sister of the Catholic poet Alice Meynell, and herself a Catholic. She was the mother of six children and yet pursued her vocation as a painter, encouraged by the men in her family. She died at Gormanston Castle in Co. Meath in 1933, aged 86. Her great achievement was that she highlighted the pathos of war, not just military glory.

Everyone would want to support those in need in Afghanistan, including Christians who will feel vulnerable, and women and girls, who fear the Taliban rule. But history plainly shows that western powers going into Afghanistan has always ended pitifully – as Elizabeth Butler’s painting shows.

● RTE has been made aware, I think, that its screening of *The 8th* leaves a gap in the market for balance: this film was partly funded by the George Soros Foundation, which has campaigned for abortion worldwide. Now is the time for an enterprising group of documentary filmmakers to get together and make a film which gives a thoughtful, sensitive and well-told other side of the story. RTE can hardly refuse a screening.

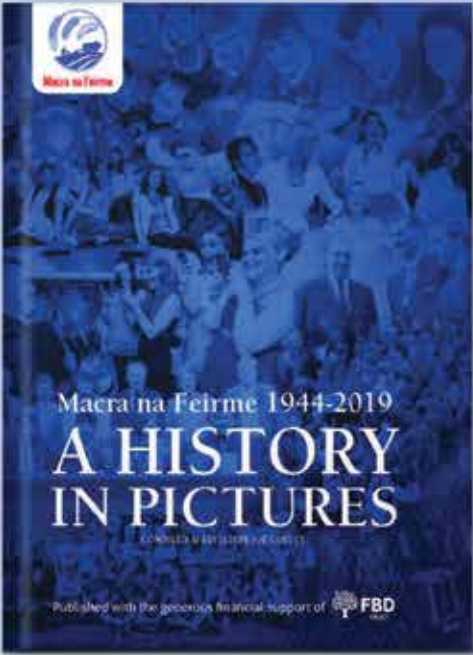
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Bishop McKeown criticises 'fairy-tale reporting' of Derry sectarian bonfire

Ruadhán Jones

The Bishop's comments come after the Press Association (PA) reported that a sectarian bonfire in Derry City is "held annually to mark the Catholic Feast of the Assumption".

The bonfire on Lecky Road, in the Bog-side, was due to be lit August 15, coinciding with the Catholic Church's celebration of the Assumption.

The Bishop of Derry Dr Donal McKeown called PA's reporting "tendentious", adding that "for whatever reason, it gives a completely wrong understanding of what's happening".

In response to a question whether PA should release a clarification, the bishop told *The Irish Catholic* that "if you want to be a journalist, you have to be able to refer to the facts and not some kind of a fairy-tale".

"My understanding is it commemorates the outbreak of the troubles in Derry Bog-side on August 12, 1969," Bishop McKeown explained. "It has nothing to do with a religious festival."

"This bonfire has gone on every year, it has no connection with August 15 and apes Loyalist bonfires. Bonfires are not a major element on nationalist side, the August 15 bonfire is a Derry phenomenon, very localised," he finished.

In a statement, Bishop McKeown also criticised the inclusion of a banner referring to Constable Ronan Kerr, who was murdered 10 years ago.

The Catholic PSNI officer was killed when dissident republicans fitted a booby-trap bomb to his car in 2011.

"Such an action is offensive to the family of Constable Kerr and an affront to many both in the local community and further afield," the bishop said in his August 16 statement.

"Every society needs an accountable police service. I encourage everyone to work together so that our police service is representative of the community it serves."

The bonfire also referenced PSNI chief constable Simon Byrne, whose name featured alongside the letters 'RIP'.

The names of other individuals were displayed on the pyre of pallets, alongside union flags and flags representing loyal orders.

Mayo priest rejoices in midst of Dublin parish after team's success



Fr Murtagh

Staff reporter

Mayo-born Fr Michael Murtagh was "thrilled" by his county's win over Dublin in the All-Ireland semi-final, which he attended in Croke Park.

Based in the Dublin parish of Ballyroan, Fr Murtagh admits to a bit of banter with parishioners before and after the game.

"I've two bears in the church," Fr Murtagh explained. "I got a bear wearing a Mayo shirt first and put it in the church to give them pause for thought."

"Two days later, didn't a parishioner come in and say, that's not fair you need another bear."

"They came back with a bear wearing a Dublin shirt!"

After the game, Fr Murtagh joked that he placed the Mayo bear on a seat while leaving the Dublin bear "lying prostrate before him".

Mayo's win on Saturday was the first time they had beaten Dublin since 2012 and offers them a chance to win their first football title since 1951.

"I'm proud as punch, just thrilled," said Fr Murtagh, who attended the game. "The atmosphere was wonderful. Hopefully we've put an old ghost to bed."

Fr Murtagh wasn't alive when Mayo last won an All-Ireland, and is determined to attend the final against either Kerry or Tyrone.

Plaque to 'remarkable' Irish bishop unveiled in Ethiopia

Staff reporter

A plaque in memory of the late bishop of Derry Edward Daly has been unveiled at a hospital in Ethiopia to mark the fifth anniversary of his death.

Unveiled by the Children in Crossfire charity – which Bishop Daly supported strongly – the plaque was placed in St Luke's Hospital, Wolisso, Ethiopia.

Crossfire's founder, Derry man Richard Moore, called the bishop a "remarkable man". "So many people in Derry and the wider

diocese hold Bishop Edward Daly close to our hearts because of the pastoral care and compassion that exemplified his long ministry," Mr Moore said.

"He was a truly remarkable man who made an invaluable contribution to life here in the most challenging of times."

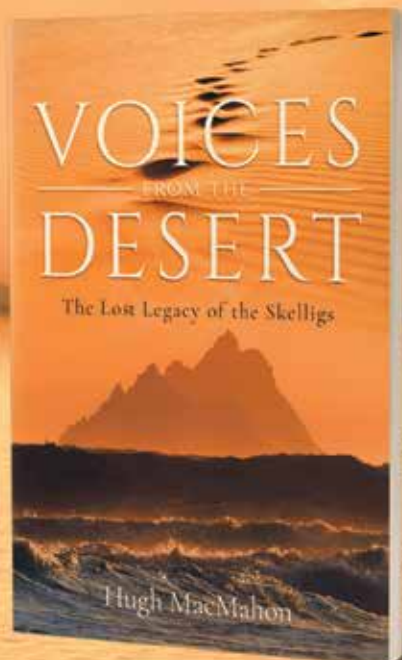
"Bishop Daly was also a great friend of Children in Crossfire, especially our international programme work."

"We are privileged to have benefited from his kindness and felt it was timely on his fifth anniversary to recognise that support."

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Niamh Uí Bhriain

The View



Assisted suicide bill rejection is good news: but there's more to be done



So first, the good news: the bill seeking to legalise assisted suicide in Ireland has been comprehensively rejected by the Oireachtas Justice Committee. This is a significant victory for the protection of vulnerable, sick and elderly people - who are among those endangered when it becomes culturally and medically acceptable to assist a person to take their own lives.

The opposition of medical practitioners to the assisted suicide proposal was widespread, staunch and representative. More than 2,500 healthcare professionals signed a public letter rejecting the bill, and a wide range of leading medical professional representative bodies and associations also strongly opposed the measure, including the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland, the Irish Society of Physicians in Geriatric Medicine, and the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland. In contrast, just over a hundred medics signed a submission supporting assisted suicide.

The Oireachtas committee is recommending that the issue be sent to a special committee to review and examine the whole area of assisted suicide, but it looks certain that the current bill will not now be supported by the Dáil.

As the committee pointed out, the bill had serious tech-

nical issues in several sections, and it lacked "sufficient safeguards to protect against undue pressure being put on vulnerable people to avail of assisted dying". They also found that sections of the proposed legislation "contained serious flaws that could potentially render them vulnerable to challenge before the courts".

“The Oireachtas committee is recommending that the issue be sent to a special committee to review and examine the whole area of assisted suicide”

These findings should of course raise serious and obvious questions which should be put to every TD - including a clutch from Fine Gael and four from Fianna Fáil with Health Minister Stephen Donnelly among them - who were tripping over each other to support the assisted suicide bill before it reached committee, no doubt on the basis that it would make them look marvellously progressive in the eyes of the media.

Read

Did they even read the bill? (The same question could be asked of its sponsor Gino Kenny TD, who, in a debate on Newstalk with David Quinn seemed pretty clueless about what was actually in the proposal.) And why did so many TDs blithely ignore the urgent submissions and letters sent to them from palliative care experts who warned them of the dangers of the draft legislation? When 88% of palliative care consultants oppose a measure, TDs, you imagine, would take note. But not the current bunch of 'progressives' in Dáil Éireann, it seems. They should be held accountable for their actions.

The Justice Committee said it had issued an open call for written submissions on the topic "to increase the participation of civil society and reflect their views on the topic, in so far as possible".

They acknowledged that over 1,400 submissions were received from various stakeholders, on both an individual and organisational level by the deadline on January 22, 2021 - and that a significant number of submissions from medical bodies opposed the bill.

It was noted that many of the submissions from rights bodies and individuals and others addressed the issue of the most vulnerable being made to feel a burden. Studies

from Oregon and Washington in the United States, for example, show that between 51% and 54% of people who ended their lives by assisted suicide said they feared being a burden on family, friends or other caregivers.

Resources

The need for more resources for palliative care was also a major concern raised, as was the effect on normalising suicide and negatively impacting on campaigns seeking to address suicidality.

The committee also drew attention to submissions from supporters of Life Institute (of which I am a director), whose number merited a separate summary in the report. They drew attention to our contention that assisted suicide was increasingly being seen

globally as a means to cutting healthcare costs - and noted that we quoted a recent paper published in *The Canadian Medical Association Journal*, which claimed that millions of dollars could be saved in health care spending by 'assisting' people to die.

“Over 1,400 submissions were received from various stakeholders, on both an individual and organisational level”

Similarly, a Canadian budget report allegedly stated that CAN\$149 million (€100million) could be

'saved' on the annual cost of end-of-life care by utilising assisted suicide.

This factor in the debate now requires more of our attention. The issue of assisted suicide has been adjourned to another committee, but it hasn't gone away.

Rising medical costs, ageing and shrinking populations, and a lack of family and social supports are leading some politicians, insurers and policymakers to the (mostly) unspoken conclusion that assisted suicide is a useful means of reducing the cost of healthcare. This is the very opposite of compassion, or of 'dignity in dying'. Deliberately ending the lives of those who need our help the most should have no place in a civilised society.

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“Sections of the proposed legislation ‘contained serious flaws that could potentially render them vulnerable to challenge before the courts’”

From Knock to the world for the Assumption



A socially-distanced congregation gathered in the Basilica of Our Lady of Knock Queen of Ireland in the Co. Mayo town on Sunday for Mass for the Solemnity of the Assumption. The Mass was broadcast on RTÉ and via the Eurovision network across the continent from Ireland's national Eucharistic and Marian Shrine. Photos: Sinead Mallee.



Fr Richard Gibbons and Deacon David Irwin.



Fr Colin Rothery.



The Schola Cantorum Basilicae.



Leanne Campbell.



Refugees in Tigray.
Photos: Magdalena Wolnik.

Ethiopia – Urgent Appeal



Conn McNally

In November 2020, a devastating conflict began in the northern Ethiopian region of Tigray. The conflict saw intensive fighting between forces of the Ethiopia Federal Government and the local Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Ethiopian federal troops were joined by militias from Ethiopia's Amhara region and by troops from Eritrea who crossed the border into Tigray to fight on behalf of the Ethiopian Government. The war has taken a heavy toll on the local civilian population. Hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes, with many fleeing into neighbouring Sudan. Massacres and other human rights violations have taken place during the conflict. It has been estimated that tens of thousands of civilians, including women and children, have been killed.

“The war has taken a heavy toll on the local civilian population”

It has been alleged that a genocide was committed in Tigray. Amongst those making these allegations is the Patriarch and Catholicos of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Abune Mathias, who made these assertions in a video smuggled out of Ethiopia this May.

ACN has been told that children, and in particular orphans,

are finding it difficult to gain access to food. Electricity is spotty at best. Likewise, access to the internet is next to non-existent. This makes communication with the outside world very difficult. The conflict had also made it next to impossible for farmers to plant crops leading to food shortages. The UN has stated that around 400,000 people in Tigray have crossed the threshold into famine. The conflict has made widespread distribution of humanitarian aid next to impossible.

Ceasefire

In late June, the Ethiopian Government unilaterally declared a ceasefire and began withdrawing its troops from Tigray. The government explained that it had done so to allow farmers to plant crops to prevent a famine, while the opponents of the government claim it was because the government was locked in a war it knew it could not win. Despite the ceasefire fighting has continued in parts of the area.

The Amhara region was awarded land that had been part of Tigray, as an award by the government for providing militias. This land is claimed as being traditionally Amhara land until the 1990s. The Amhara militias will not give up this land without a fight. Both Tigrayans and Amhara people lived in this dispute area. Both groups have claimed they have been targeted in atrocities in the current conflict. Many fear that this land dispute between the Tigrayans and the Amhara may boil over into a full-scale tribal war waged on ethnic grounds. Already fighting is reported outside of Tigray in neighbouring regions.

Ethiopia is one of the most ancient Christian nations in the world. Conversion to Christianity became widespread in Ethiopia in the 4th century, although Christianity was present in Ethiopia before the 4th century. Today, almost two thirds of Ethiopia's population are Christians. Ethiopia is a vast country (the second most

populous in Africa) and there are some regions where almost everyone is a Christian and others where there are almost no Christians. The vast majority of non-Christian Ethiopians are Muslims, while there are still some who practice traditional tribal religions. Around 70% of Ethiopian Christians are members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. The remaining Christians are either Catholics or Pentecostal Protestants who are locally called P'ent'ay. Around 96% of Tigray's population are Christians.

Decline in faith

ACN spoke with an Ethiopian Catholic priest in Tigray. He is convinced that part of the region's problems is related to a decline in faith. In recent times the people have begun to forget God. The priest explains

what happens when we turn from God:

“When we put God out of our lives, death comes in and that is exactly what is happening now. It is a totally different path. We need to turn to the true God who loved us and gave himself for us.”

“Massacres and other human rights violations have taken place during the conflict”

The priest that we talked to and other Catholic priests and religious in Tigray are hoping to carry out a new mission of healing and evangelisation. With so many hurt and damaged people in the region there is a great need for the healing of the Gospel Message. ACN

is determined to support the Church in Tigray in its mission to bring healing, reconciliation, forgiveness, and evangelisation in these most difficult of circumstances. ACN also hopes to help the Church rebuild facilities damaged in the conflict.

We cannot help the Church in Tigray in its mission without your help. Please keep the people of Tigray and the surrounding regions in your prayers. If you would like to help us gift the Tigrayan people healing and reconciliation and also rekindle the Faith in the region, please consider supporting our Ethiopian Appeal.

❗ If you would like to learn about ACN and our Ethiopia Appeal, please visit our website at the link below.

www.acnireland.org/ethiopia-appeal



Crucifix in an
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Irish Catholic 2021



We cannot allow scandals to deter us from the Christian life

Catholics need a constant reminder that the grace of God is greater than our sin, writes

David Quinn

Sometimes we need to remind ourselves why we are Catholics. We are Catholics because we believe Catholicism is true. We are not Catholics because all Catholics behave well, or because the Church is or is not in good standing at any given point in time. We should not give up on being Catholics because some Catholics behave abominably, or terrible things have been carried out in the name of the Church. To repeat; we are Catholics because we believe our religion is true.

I say this because the Vatican once again finds itself mired in scandal, and hardly for the first time in its history. There have been plenty of corrupt cardinals, and indeed, a few corrupt popes, down the ages.

This time, a senior Vatican official, Cardinal Angelo Becciu, once a close associate of Pope Francis, faces trial in the Vatican itself. He was Chief of Staff at the Secretariat of State from 2011 to 2018 and one of his responsibilities was the investment of Vatican funds, including monies raised from 'Peter's Pence', the collection for which takes place all over the world every year with the donations going to the Pope's favourite charitable causes.

Fraud

Dr Becciu is now among 10 officials charged by the Vatican with fraud, embezzlement, abuse of office, appropriation of funds, money laundering, among others.

At the centre of this is a disastrous property investment in London which cost the Vatican €412 million and has lost a huge amount of money.

“At various points in its history, the Vatican has been a by-word for low standards and has provided the Church's critics with plenty of ammunition”

The trial is to begin properly in October. Dr Becciu is the most senior Vatican official in centuries to face trial inside the Vatican itself, which is a State in its own right, with its own laws.

He denies any wrong-doing. Another Vatican official is also implicated in scandal. More low-ranking than Dr Becciu, the scandal itself is worse because it involves allegations of the sexual abuse of seminarians.



Too often the Vatican has become a byword for corruption. Photo: CNS.

The accused cleric is Argentine bishop, Gustavo Zanchetta, who had been working as an assessor at the Vatican's Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See, another financial role.

He has also been accused of fraud and mismanagement of funds. Like Dr Becciu, he denies all the allegations.

Nonetheless, the charges are another blow to the reputation of the Vatican, and the Church overall, especially when they are added to the terrible sex abuse scandals that have rocked the Church from top to bottom for several decades now.

One of the reasons Pope Benedict abdicated from his office, is reportedly that he felt he was not the man to clean up the Vatican, that a stronger, younger person needed to do it.

Struggling

Pope Francis is now finding how big the problem is, and he is also struggling to get on top of it.

All of this will be disappointing for ordinary Catholics. They want to be able to look up to the leadership of the Church, and hope that they will be an example to other organisations, but a lot of the time the opposite is the case. That can lead to cynicism, disillusionment, low morale, and sometimes loss of faith.

“We should not give up on being Catholics because some Catholics behave abominably, or terrible things have been carried out in the name of the Church”

Unfortunately, at various points in its history, the Vatican has been a by-word for low standards and has provided the Church's critics with plenty of ammunition.

Remind

This is why we sometimes need to remind ourselves why we are Catholics because if Catholicism is true, then we can no more give up on it, then we can give up on our own country because it has let us down. In fact, far less so, because a country embodies far less important truths than religion.

When we attend Mass each week, or each day as the case may be, we are remembering events that took place in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago. That is a remarkable fact even on its own terms. We remember the Last Supper and the death and resurrection of Jesus.

We believe in God. We do not believe that nothing made everything, as atheists do, and which always seems to me to take far more faith than believing in God.

If God exists, then that is by far and away the single more important fact there is. Everything else pales into insignificance compared with it.

If God exists, all the scandals in the world cannot alter this fact one iota.

If God exists, then we must orientate our lives towards him. Nothing else makes sense, and again all the scandals in the world should not deter us from our goal.

If God exists and we are made in his Image, then orientating ourselves towards him makes the greatest sense of all because we are orientating ourselves towards our Creator in accordance with our design.

We also believe that God provided us with the perfect example and guide to life in his Son, Jesus Christ.

“Pope Francis is now finding how big the problem is, and he is also struggling to get on top of it”

In fact, the history of the Church, and humankind in general, is proof of the Christian view that sin is endemic in human affairs, it is ineradicable, we cannot ultimately save ourselves from its effects and its consequences and therefore we need a Saviour. That Saviour is Jesus Christ.

Again, not all the scandals in the world can detract from this fact one iota. Indeed, they reinforce it and

at any one time we must hope that within the Church the grace of God is stronger than our sins.

Fortunately, in many parts of the Church and in the lives of countless individual Christians this is, indeed, the case.

Across the world, Catholic organisations run 5,000 hospitals, 16,000 health clinics and tens of thousands of schools giving help and sustenance and education to tens of millions who would otherwise have no-one to turn to.

Kindness

Countless Christians carry out small and big acts of kindness and compassion in their own families and neighbourhoods, sometimes by joining organisations like St Vincent de Paul, and often simply by dropping into a lonely neighbour or standing by a particularly difficult family member.

As George Eliot puts it in *Middlemarch*: “...for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.”

We know there is scandal in the world and in the Church, but still we must live out our Christian lives as best we can and know that that those who have “lived faithfully a hidden life” prevail in the end, because ultimately, we live in a just order of creation with a just Creator, no matter how it may feel at times.

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Shared joy as Youth 2000's



Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry with volunteers.



Ruadhán Jones

The annual retreat for young Catholics took place in 10 different locations across Ireland, with a higher turnout than expected, Youth 2000's national leader has said.

Peter Sands said the hybrid-festival, mixing in-person and online gatherings, "went very well, we were extremely blessed. Attendance was very good, higher than expected, online as well as in person".

"Joy was the overriding feeling, everyone was delighted to be back, delighted to be able to meet

safely, to gather and be together," he told *The Irish Catholic*. "It was wonderful to invite people to a meeting not on Zoom."

The main talks were given by a Cistercian monk from Bethlehem Abbey in Co. Antrim Fr Aelred Magee OCSO.

The festival took place at the weekend, August 13-15, and Mr Sands said the feedback they received was "exceptionally positive".

"To quote one young girl, she said it was 'absolutely amazing after the year we've had to meet other young people who are in love with Jesus'," Mr Sands finished.

Naas



Volunteers at Naas.



Bishop Denis Nulty in Naas



festival returned in-person



Ballybay



Fr Aelred Magee OCSO who gave the talks.

Cork



Taste and see that the Lord is good

This is the fifth and final Sunday when the Gospel reading is taken from John Chapter Six. It began with the multiplication of the loaves and fishes to feed the hunger of the physical body. This was a sign to move on to the second bread: Jesus was the bread come down from heaven to feed the interior hungers of spirit and mind. "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry; whoever believes in me will never thirst."

The third bread had not yet been given to the people but Jesus spoke in the future tense. "I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world." This teaching is so important that it is expressed seven times, the sacred number, in slightly varied ways.

“Do the parents realise what receiving the Lord in the Eucharist is really about?”

How could he give his flesh to eat and his blood to drink? Jesus explained that it would be after his resurrection that they would comprehend his new embodiment in the consecrated bread and wine. "Does this upset you? What if you should see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh has nothing to offer." In this context the spirit means the knowledge that is drawn from faith in the words of Jesus, whereas the flesh means knowledge based on natural evidence. A scientific analysis on the bread before consecration would show no difference to an analysis after the consecration of the bread.

Many walked away

When many of his followers turned their backs and walked away from Jesus, he did not call them back to say that this bread was only symbolic. No, he meant it in reality. "This is my body...this is my blood."

He asked the apostles if they too wanted to walk away. It was Peter, the future Pope, the rock of the Church, who answered, "Lord, who shall we go



The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



to? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe." But there was one apostle who had doubts. This is the first reference to the betrayal of Judas. It was when Judas was given the bread at the Last Supper that he turned his back and walked into the dark.

Where do we stand today?

When all the regulations on social distancing are lifted, soon please God, how many will return to Mass? The routine of Sunday worship has been broken. Huge numbers of people followed Mass online, which was great but did not have the reception of Holy Communion. How many hunger and thirst for the Blessed Eucharist? How important is it?

At the moment the debate is ongoing about the celebration of First Holy Communion. The fear is not so much about what happens in the church, as this can be controlled, but about the partying after leaving the church. First Communion has become a huge social event about a rite of passage. The meal in the hotel, the bouncy castle and

so on. Will the parents bring the child to Mass next Sunday and the Sunday afterwards?

The future Pope Francis, while Archbishop of Buenos Aires, was very friendly with Rabbi Abraham Skorka. They shared a regular dialogue on matters of religion, later published in a book, *On Heaven and Earth*. One matter they had in common was that the bigger the social side of religious celebration became, the lesser was the spiritual significance. So, it is not just a Catholic problem.

“First Communion has become a huge social event about a rite of passage”

The exaggerated social celebration of First Communion is not being followed up by regular Mass attendance afterwards. Do the parents realise what receiving the Lord in the Eucharist is really about? Is it time to consider other options? Perhaps change from the entire class receiving on the same day, letting it be a family decision rather

than part of the school year. Let each parish have a First Communion team to prepare the parents and child before they approach the altar as a family at Mass, not necessarily on a Sunday. It is likely that there would be families who would not avail of this system and the child would not receive Communion. But if these families are not bringing their children to Mass under the present system, would anything be lost?

Bread for the journey of life

Here's a little story about a poor family during the Great Famine taking the emigration boat to cross the Atlantic for the chance of a better life. They gathered what money they could and prepared for the three-week voyage with food that could last, dry bread and salted fish. They were able to get water on board but looked with envy at the passengers heading for their meals which smelled well. Their children were sick of this unappetising bread and salty fish. "Daddy, why can't we get dinner with the other people?" "We are a poor family and we will need all the money we have when we reach America". It was some days later that a family they had befriended pointed out to them that their tickets entitled them to the meals on board!

It is a story about people who are struggling spir-

itally, not realising that in Baptism they had received the ticket to the greatest source of spiritual nourishment, Jesus, the bread of life.

Elijah's Bread

The prophet Elijah fell prey to despair, thinking that the pagan rulers had won the battle for souls. Elijah lay under a furze bush and fell asleep. An angel woke him up and gave

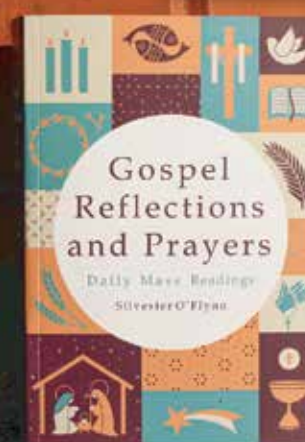
him a hot scone and water. And in the strength of this food, he walked for forty days and forty nights until he reached the holy mountain where he encountered God. My good mother had an extraordinary love of the Eucharist. At the age of 103, the last words she uttered were, "Are we going to Mass?" Then she fell into a deep sleep.

Prayer

Lord, to whom shall we go for you have the message of eternal life. And you are the bread of life to sustain us on our journey. Strengthen our belief in your presence in the Eucharist. Make yourself known to those who have strayed away from you. All who come to you shall not hunger and all who believe in you shall not thirst.

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Christian apologist Simon Edwards brings all his legal training to bear in defending the rationality of Christianity when it's put on trial, writes **Jason Osborne**

Former lawyer and now writer and speaker at The Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics (OCCA), Simon Edwards is taking aim at the myth that Christianity somehow runs against reason or intelligence with his new book, *The Sanity of Belief: Why faith makes sense*.

The book is quite unlike others that argue in favour of faith, in that Mr Edwards brings his lawyer's mind to the foray.

"My mum said that I would always end up becoming a lawyer because I would never take any assertion on face value," Mr Edwards tells *The Irish Catholic*.

"I would always ask for it to be backed up with reason or evidence, particularly if it was an assertion that involved me changing anything about myself."

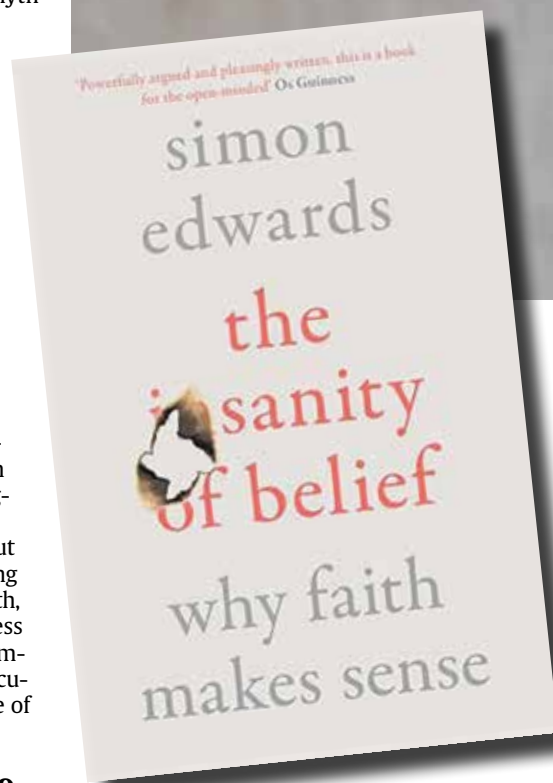
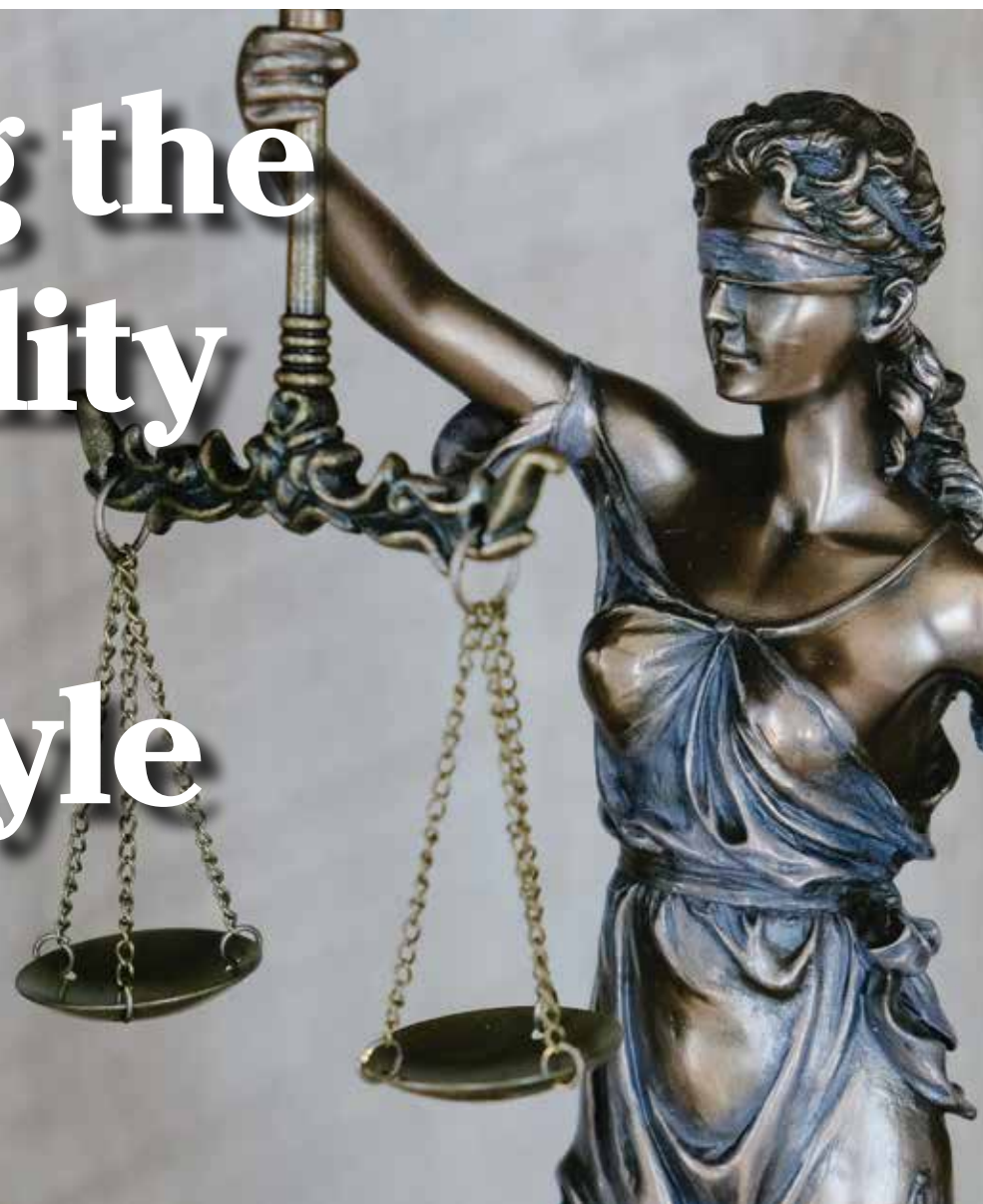
The idea for the book came out of his own experiences of grappling with life's big questions in his youth, and he displays a keen awareness that others frequently find themselves in the position he once occupied – confused about the nature of the world and our place in it.

“Sometimes people ask me, ‘Oh, you’re a Christian and a lawyer by background, lawyers are interested in proof, can you prove Christianity?’”

"I actually wrote it for my younger, teenage self. I'm from Australia, and I grew up in an ordinary, happy, Australian non-religious family background, so we never talked about God or religion or the meaning of life or anything like that" he explains, continuing, "It's not that those subjects were taboo, it's just that we never talked about them."

"But when I was a teenager, I was really into sport. I was playing cricket, tennis, rugby and athletics, but then I had a knee injury and the doctor said I had to stop all sports for a long time, months and months, for the injury to heal.

Proving the rationality of faith legal-style



ness. I remember thinking to myself, if that's true, it's sad, and it seems to render life somewhat meaningless. I remember thinking it's a bit like a video game, where no matter how well you play this game, it's just the same end result every time, blank screen, you lose.

"And so something in me said, 'Not only does that feel sad and render life meaningless, it doesn't feel true. It doesn't feel like that's the true story.'"

"So suddenly, I had more time on my hands than I knew what to do with. That meant I actually had time to think," he laughs.

Moment

"I just clearly remember the moment, actually as a 14/15 year old, standing in the school playground at lunchtime and wondering to myself, and bear in mind, I'm on this cusp between childhood and adulthood, this middle-stage, I just remember thinking to myself, is it true that we live for 80 or 90 years, if we're lucky, and then we die and that's it? Game over. Whatever you've loved, whatever you've achieved, whatever you are just inevitably dissipates into nothing-

In keeping with the coincidental way in which God often operates, Mr Edwards found himself sitting through religious classes at the same time as these questions began to assail him, and he tuned in to the narrative that was on offer.

"At the same time, at the school that I went to, we were forced to sit in religious education classes. In these classes, I started learning for the first time about a different story, one that says that we're not here by accident, we're here on purpose, because somebody, God, wanted us to be here. And he really loves us. And this world that we're in, it's not the way that it should be, it's broken...the reason for that is that we're separated from God and his love, we're out of relationship with

him, but he sent Jesus into the world to reconnect us back to God.

“When it comes to the rationality of Christianity, it's not just Christian faith that's on trial, it's every worldview that attempts to explain this marvellous world that we find without us and within us”

"So, basically I started hearing the Gospel 101, Christianity 101, and something in my heart leapt, and it was almost this intuitive sense, a feeling that this was the true story. It really captivated my heart," he says.

Being the critical mind that his mother pegged him as, he didn't accept any of this immediately, but availed of all the books on theology and philosophy that his school's library contained.

"Over time, I came to the intellectual conviction that Christianity made far and away the best sense of the world around me and also the world within me. The world around me with its overwhelming impression of order and design, but also the world within me.

"The fact that I had these longings for something more than a physical world could offer – what you'd call 'spiritual longings'. The fact that I really believed there was such a thing as right and wrong, good and evil, that I did have a sense that there was more to this life than it being a random combination of time plus matter plus chance."

Reading

In the course of his reading, he concluded that the big difference between Christianity and the other great traditions of the world is that the humbling nature of the Christian story is something that no human would have developed – quite unlike other religions which see man 'earn' or work his way up to salvation.

"One of the biggest things as I looked at the different religions and compared was that all the other religions seemed to be saying that if I thought the right thoughts and felt the right feelings and did the right religious practices, I could work my way up to nirvana, heaven, salvation, God, whatever was the goal of that religion" he explains.

"But one of them stood out in saying, actually, you're helpless, there's nothing you can do to get there, but God has come down to rescue you. I was very competitive as a young man, and I realised that that really smelled of not being a human-invented religion, because as humans we want to earn it. We want to compete for it. We want to win it for ourselves. But this didn't feel like a man-made religion at all, so it had that ring of truth. So anyway, long story short, I came to the intellectual conviction that Christianity is true."

“From where I sit as a Christian, it's true that who we are matters, what we do matters, and what we experience is real”

“The prevailing atheism in many circles today is sorely lacking in Mr Edwards opinion, because it involves denying so many aspects of human experience”

because I'd come to understand just how much Jesus loved me, and I'd also fallen in love with Jesus through that process, so for me it was a no-brainer. I really wanted to give my life to him and I did that.”

It was his own journey that inspired Mr Edwards to write his new book, convinced as he was that others need help finding their way out of “a cultural moment where the metanarrative is that faith in God is irrational, irrelevant, and possibly even immoral”.

“All the other religions seemed to be saying that if I thought the right thoughts and felt the right feelings and did the right religious practices, I could work my way up to nirvana”

“It's really difficult for people who are trying to work out what life is all about to take Christian faith seriously as a viable option. So, I've written a book to help them see that you don't have to leave your brain at the door to be a Christian, and that trusting in Jesus is the most sensible, rational, and wonderful thing that you could possibly do with your life. And that when you look at the world through the lens of Christianity, it makes sense of our rationality, it makes sense of science, but it also makes sense of the non-physical realities of human experience, which are meaning, value, goodness, truth, love and hope in the midst of suffering,” he says.

His legal background and the critical skills it honed in him are perfectly suited to the task of rigorously conveying the ‘Good News’ to an often-sceptical population.

“I've found many helpful parallels with legal thinking about reason and evidence and thinking about reason and evidence for Christian faith. Because often those who study philosophy get caught up in questions about whether they even exist, or whether the people in the class around them really exist, but reasoning and rationality in the legal world is very much a real world rationality,” he laughs.

“And so, you know, sometimes people ask me, ‘Oh, you're a Christian and a lawyer by background, lawyers are interested in proof, can you prove

Christianity?’ I say to them, it depends what you mean by proof. I can prove to you that two plus two equals four, but that sort of proof doesn't exist in the real world. Proof from a legal perspective simply means the establishment of a fact by the use of evidence. And the way that lawyers reason, it's really a process where you look at all the alternative explanations for the evidence presented to the court, and you ask which of the alternative explanations best fits the evidence.

“That's very similar to my journey to the Christian faith. I looked at all the alternative explanations for this incredible world that we live in. Because the reality is there's something rather than nothing – the universe. There didn't have to be, and it turns out this universe has an overwhelming impression of order and design, and it's filled with beings like us who have conscious awareness and enjoy love and music and mathematics.”

Rationality

“Basically, when it comes to the rationality of Christianity, it's not just Christian faith that's on trial, it's every worldview that attempts to explain this marvellous world that we find without us and within us. And so that includes atheism, it includes Christian faith, it includes Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, etc. For me, as I looked at all the alternative worldviews and did very much what a lawyer or a judge does in a court of law, looked for which has the strongest explanatory power of the evidence, the evidence being everything around us and within us. For me, it was like Christianity was the key, the only key, that fitted this complex lock that we call the universe, and in doing so, unlocked the meaning behind everything.”

His experience is reminiscent of one of the greatest Christian apologists of the 20th Century, a man he cites as an influence on his own thought; C.S. Lewis. Lewis argued that he believed in Christianity in the same way that he believed in the sun's rising – not only because he sees it, but because by it, he sees everything else. Mr Edwards wholeheartedly agrees, his faith making perfect sense of the world around and within him.

The prevailing atheism in many circles today is sorely lacking in Mr Edwards' opinion, because it involves denying so many aspects of human experience.

“Atheism for example, it does not explain the complexity of human experience. Atheistic naturalism, to

be more specific, the idea that there is no supernatural dimension to reality. That everything boils down to mindless unguided laws operating on mindless atoms. Atheism's method of explanation is what I call ‘nothing-buttery’.

“It's actually a famous legal term as well, nothing-buttery. It reduces meaning, value, goodness, truth to ‘nothing but’ unguided laws and mindless atoms. Nothing but chemistry and biochemistry and biology. A human being is nothing but meat and bones and chemicals. And that does not fit with our lived experience... what I discovered is that Christian faith allows us to embrace the totality of our lived experience and accords with our deepest intuitions, whereas atheistic naturalism runs against our deepest intuitions.”

“Over time, I came to the intellectual conviction that Christianity made far and away the best sense of the world around me and also the world within me”

The sense that there must be more to life than mere matter is one that is espoused by many of the people Mr Edwards now interacts with through his apologetic work, no matter where they're coming from.

“I remember speaking to a group of investment bankers and consultants in Canary Wharf for a week about the big questions of life, you know, why are we here, how should we live, why should we worry about integrity in the workplace, how should we think about money – all of these sort of questions.

“But one of the common refrains that came from the people is this deep sense that, even though all these people were outwardly very successful, had very good jobs, well-paying, etc., almost all of them had this deep and abiding sense that there must be something more to life than what they were experiencing. Something more than the material trappings of wealth and success can possibly bring.”

What they're looking for, he feels, is meaning.

We can experience short-term happiness without meaning, he says, but we cannot sustain it.

Meaning

“In order for meaning to be true, the following things need to be true. That who we are matters, which is a question of value. That what we do matters, which is a question of goodness and morality. That what we experience is real, which is a question of truth. That our relationships are meaningful, which is a question of love. And that we can have hope for the future, even in the midst of suffering, sickness and death.

“From where I sit as a Christian, it's true that who we are matters, what we do matters, and what we experience is real, and our relationships are meaningful and full of love and that can have hope for the future. So, Christian faith makes sense of meaning because it makes sense of value and goodness and truth and love and hope.”

His work is bearing fruit, his experience being that most people simply need to hear the Good News. Despite living in a lingering Christian culture, many have never heard the Gospel message conveyed as it should be.

“As I share these things with people, the difference it makes is that I've seen lots of people over the course of the last few years not only seriously considering Christian faith for the first time, but actually becoming Christians. And for me, that's been just marvellous. For them, it's like fresh good news, because they've never heard it before.”



However, Christianity is about more than intellectual conviction, and the salvific personal relationship with Christ came later by way of another coincidence.

“And then it was a few weeks later that I actually made a personal heart, volitional commitment to following Jesus. It's funny the way it happened – I was in the school playground and this student from Malaysia had this little green booklet in his hand and I said, ‘Oh, what's that?’ And he said, ‘Here, have it,’ and then he walked away. I thought that's strange behaviour, and it ended up being a little book explaining the Gospel.”

Gospel

“So I read that and I took it home. It was just a basic Gospel presentation – God made everything, sin has separated us from God, God sent Jesus into the world to bridge that gap, and you have a choice... it was made very clear to me that Christianity wasn't merely an intellectual nod to the Christian truths, but actually there was a personal commitment that I needed to make. But by that stage, it was one that I was all too ready to make,

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Sacred Heart College, Omagh



Students, staff and parents were among those celebrating GCSE and A level success at Catholic schools across the North. If you would like to have your school featured, please send pictures to news@irishcatholic.ie



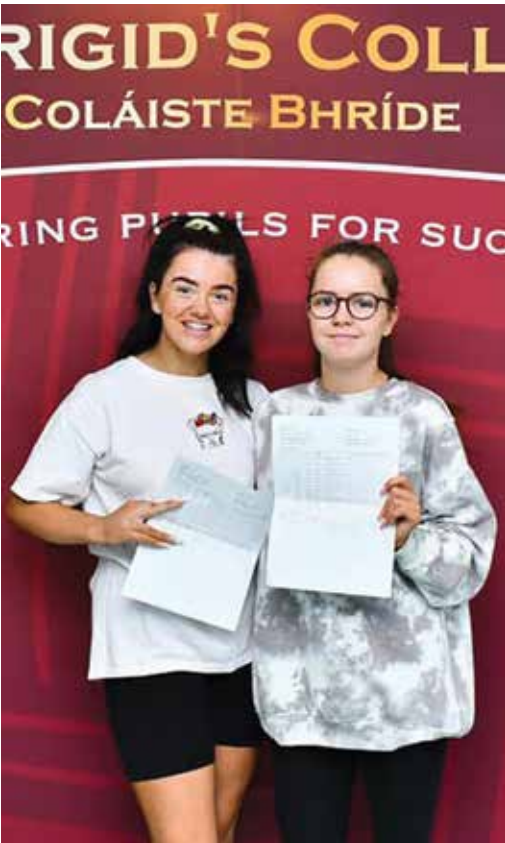
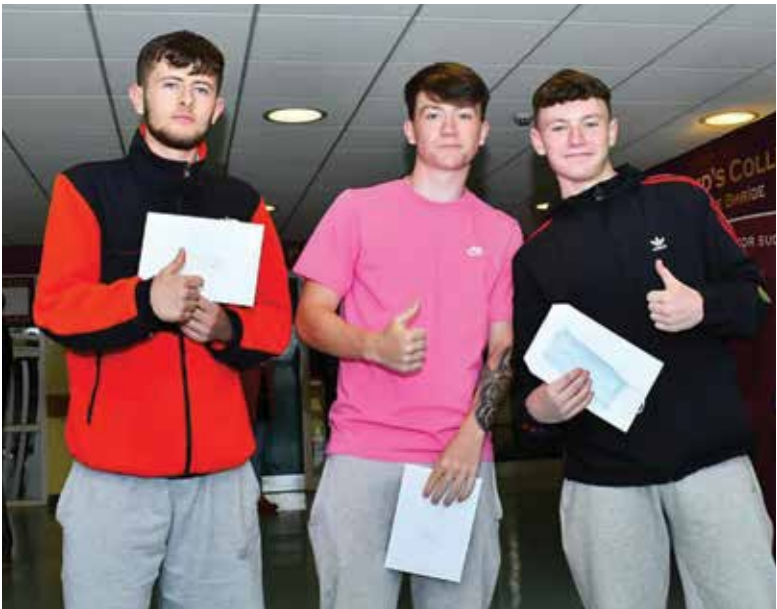
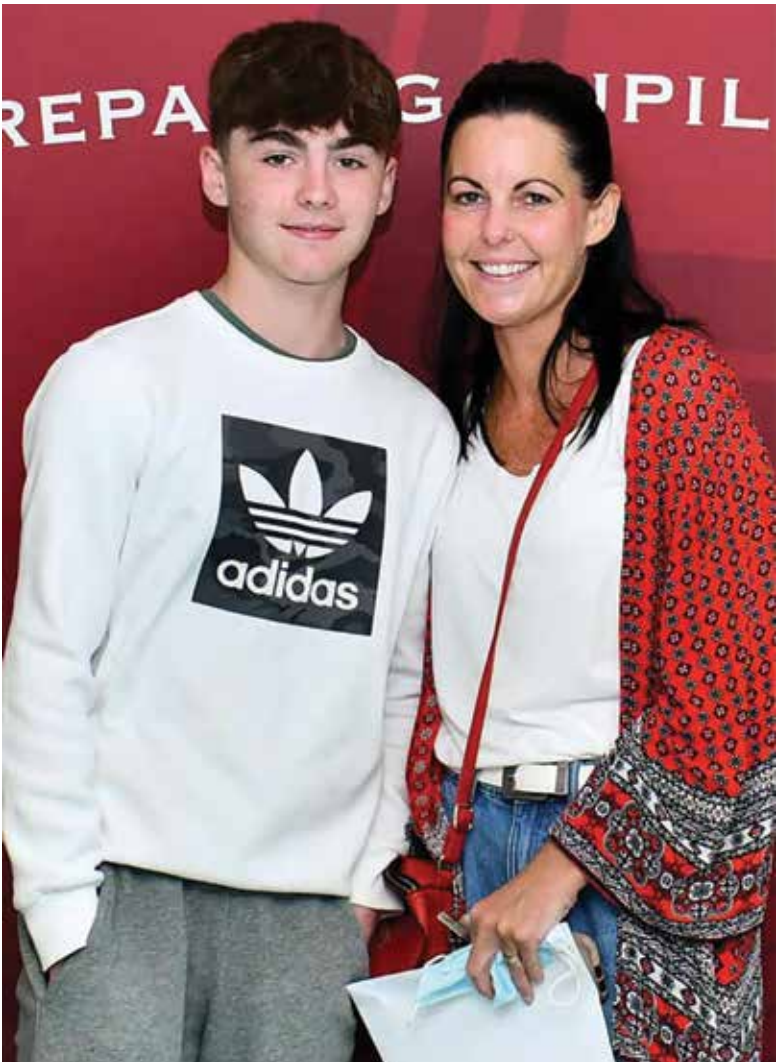
St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel



Blessed Trinity College, Belfast



St Brigid's College, Derry



Out&About

Following in Patrick's footsteps...



DOWN: Pilgrims on St Patrick's Way in Co. Down after participating in part of the pilgrimage in canoes.



KERRY: Mass was celebrated at Holy Cross Church Tralee at the weekend in honour of St Dominic. Preacher and celebrant was Fr Eamon O'Driscoll OFM Killarney Friary, sitting from left Bro. Pat Lynch OFM (Guardian of Franciscan's, Killarney), Fr Eamonn O'Driscoll (preacher and celebrant of Mass), Fr Tadhg Fitzgerald PP, St John's Church Tralee and Fr Joe O'Brien OP, Prior of Holy Cross Church, Tralee. Back from left Fr David McGovern OP (Holy Cross), Fr Padraig Walsh PP Our Lady and St Brendan's Church, Tralee and Fr Matthew Farrell OP (Holy Cross). Photo: John Cleary



SLIGO: Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey after blessing a statue of St Nathy in the parish of Achonry. Dr Dempsey is pictured with Anthony Benson who was the inspiration behind the project and his sister Mary.

IN SHORT

Concern as almost half of soccer shirts feature betting companies

Just under half of Premier League shirt sponsors are betting companies this season, research shows, prompting concern that clubs aren't taking gambling-related harms seriously.

Research by CARE released as the 2021-22 season kicks off shows nine out of 20 teams have a betting ad on their strip, the same proportion as in 2018.

The study also found that a total of 19 clubs partner with betting firms in some way, meaning ads will appear on official channels such as websites and stadium noticeboards, if not on strips.

Leicester City has the most gambling sponsors this season with four separate betting

partners followed by Spurs, which has three. Only one club in the Premier League, Norwich City, appears to have no official links to betting firms, after scrapping BK8 as its main sponsor in June.

Responding to the news, CARE's Chief Communications Officer James Mildred said: "The continued prevalence of gambling-related advertising in the Premier League is dispiriting. There is growing concern about the level of problem gambling in the UK, fuelled by an industry that bombards sports viewers relentlessly with offers, without due warning of the risks. Football clubs are fully aware of this problem, yet many seem to be doing little to curb those responsible.

"The presence of ads on shirts sends a message that gambling is harmless fun. For many thousands of families blighted by addiction, this couldn't be further from the truth.

"Premier League bosses should follow the lead of their contemporaries in the Champi-

onship who have broadly moved away from including betting companies as main club sponsors. It's time bosses truly stepped up for vulnerable fans by showing betting companies the red card," he said.

The news comes after a reported rise in gambling-related harms during the coronavirus pandemic. A study in May this year suggested that online gambling soared in 2020, with regular gamblers more than six times more likely to gamble online.

CARE is a Christian charity providing resources and helping to bring Christian insight and experience to matters of public policy and practical caring initiatives.

Aontú in bid to get spouses access to maternity hospitals

Aontú has submitted the Maternity Care (Covid-19) Bill 2021 to the Dail's Bill Office. If enacted, it would ensure that mothers receiv-

ing maternity care could be accompanied in hospital during childbirth and on occasions prior and subsequent to the birth by their spouses.

Aontú leader Peadar Tóibín TD stated: "We submitted this bill due to the ongoing difficulties experienced by mothers and fathers at some maternity hospitals.

"In some hospitals mothers are going into emergency presentations on their own. This is hugely distressing. In some hospitals fathers can only attend when the mother is in the labour ward. This means that the early stages of labour which can last for many many hours has to be done on their own.

"Some mothers have to go to daunting appointments on the health of their babies on their own. This puts serious pressure on mothers and their partners. This can have significant mental health effects on mothers especially when the life of the child is in danger," he said.

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



KILKENNY: Dr Denis Nulty, apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Ossory pictured following Mass in St David's Church, Listerlin where he presented benemerenti medals to Ann Doherty, Kitty Cummins and Rita Dooley who between them have given 101 years of voluntary service in the sacristies of Rosbercon parish. They are joined by Fr Dan Cavanagh, PP.



DUBLIN: A plaque was recently unveiled to mark the first World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly at the Church of Our Lady Help of Christians, Navan Road, Dublin 7. The picture includes Fr John O Brian, Kitty Flynn, Lily Carberry and Mary Cotter from the Catholic Grandparents Association.

KILDARE: Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty presenting the first perpetual trophy to Fr Micheál Murphy of Mountmellick parish for winning the diocesan golf tournament held at Athy Golf Club.



LEITRIM: Fr Seán Kelly OFM pictured with two of the Poor Clare Sisters in Drumshanbo celebrating the feastday of St Clare.



ANTRIM: Fr Pat O'Connor CSsR, a member of the Redemptorist community at Clonard Monastery in Belfast who recently celebrated his 80th birthday.

Events

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



World Report

IN BRIEF

Lima archbishop proposes replacing priests with laity as pastors

● The Archbishop of Lima last month presented his proposal to replace priests with lay people in parishes in the Peruvian capital. Archbishop Carlos Gustavo Castillo Mattasoglio said during a July 21 conference that he is asking the Vatican for permission for lay persons to be given the administration of parishes.

The archbishop said that “there is a philosophy of the simple daily life of the people that we have to take up again”.

“I think that, as a Church, we are going to have to work hard to provide a Church closer to the people with greater equality,” he continued.

Prayers asked for nun kidnapped in Mali in 2017

● An initiative that works to highlight persecution of Christians released last Friday a video seeking prayers for Sister Gloria Cecilia Nárvaez Argoti, a missionary who was abducted in Mali in February 2017.

“This exemplary religious wasn’t the one chosen to be kidnapped but she saved the life of one of the younger

sisters of her community by offering herself in exchange for her,” says the August 6 video from Project Wake Up, an initiative of the EUK Mamie Foundation.

“In the different videos and notes released by her kidnappers, the sister asks for prayers for her release and to remain unshakable in her faith.”

Catholic Church in Thailand converts facilities into field hospitals for Covid-19 patients

● Catholic dioceses and parishes in Thailand, which continues to witness a surge in Covid-19 cases, have been converting church facilities into field hospitals and isolation centres.

The Archdiocese of Bangkok in the financial capital of the Southeast Asian country has turned over to the government a Catholic school that has been converted into a 630-bed field hospital on August 6.

“The more humanity suffers, the more we need love, mercy and sharing,” said Cardinal Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovithavanich, Archbishop of Bangkok, in a report on Catholic news site LiCAS.

Pope calls to end labour exploitation in printing industry

● People must have the courage to openly denounce injustice and the “perverse inner workings of exploitation” that harm human dignity, Pope Francis said.

“For a Christian, every form of exploitation is a sin,” the Pope told an Italian author in a letter published August 12. The Pope’s comments came after the author, Maurizio Maggiani, published an open letter addressed to

Pope Francis August 1, a few days after Italian authorities arrested 11 people connected with a large printing company on charges of exploitation, extortion, kidnapping and other accusations following a yearlong investigation.

Police found migrant workers were being hired legally through an agency, BM Services, which then subcontracted the workers to Grafica Veneta, the printing house.

Christian couple granted asylum in Europe after years on death row in Pakistan

● A Christian couple who spent seven years on death row in Pakistan on false blasphemy charges has been granted asylum in a European country.

According to human rights organisation ADF International, Shagufta Kausar and Shafqat Emmanuel arrived in Europe this week after their death sentence was overturned by the Lahore High Court in early June.

The parents of four children said they are “so relieved to finally be free” and are happy to be reunited with their children after a very difficult eight years.

Greek archbishop: Changes might be needed to prepare for future disasters

As a wave of wildfires devastated parts of Greece, a Catholic archbishop said different policies might be needed to help prevent recurrences.

“We must be much more sensitive and careful when it comes to ecology and preparedness – we don’t have many forests in Greece anyway, and much of what we have is now destroyed,” said Archbishop Josif Printezis of Naxos-Andros-Tinos-Mykonos, secretary-general of the Catholic bishops’ conference.

“No central or local government could ever be fully prepared for such events. But we should be more responsible, with more planes and equipment, and stricter regulations about house-building and access for emergency services,” he told Catholic News Service.

Firefighting teams from across Europe, assisted by water-bombing helicopters, struggled to control wildfires wreaking havoc in Greece’s Peloponnese and Attica regions, as well as on Evia, the country’s second-largest island, northeast of Athens.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis apologised for government failures and confirmed August 12 the blazes had inflicted the worst ecological catastrophe in decades; he urged opposition cooperation in seeking “bold solutions”.

Archbishop Printezis told CNS information was still being collected about damage to Catholic parishes, adding that he had been able to see and smell the mainland blazes from his residence on the Aegean island of Tinos, 70 miles from the fires.



People board a ferry during evacuation as a wildfire burns on the Greek island of Evia. Photo: CNS.

Plan

Meanwhile, Caritas, the church’s charitable organisation, said it was preparing a plan to help fire victims, in cooperation with municipal authorities and Catholic charities abroad.

“From the first moments of this latest tragedy, we’ve watched with concern, agony and pain, focusing our prayers on the victims and the destruction of creation, while congratulating those working to extinguish the fires,” the organisation said August 11.

“Having experience of emergencies, we know there are many initiatives for meeting immediate needs at the

beginning, whereas social interest then decreases and the victims are left almost alone. This is where Caritas wishes to act.”

Hundreds of homes and properties have been reported gutted by nearly 600 fires, fuelled by strong winds, parched vegetation and heatwaves of 113 degrees, leaving at least 200,000 acres of land scorched. Some estimate the affected areas are much wider.

Archbishop Printezis said many fire victims had no home insurance and little social security and would depend entirely on the government and Red Cross for food, water and shelter.

He added that the Catholic Church was working closely with Caritas branches in other countries and would count on Western help once the full damage was assessed.

“We also work well with the Orthodox Church when it comes to social needs, such as during past fires and earthquakes – in this sense, the crisis could bring us together and help force through improvements,” said the archbishop.

The Greek Orthodox Church appealed to its bishops to make schools, monasteries and parish centres available to the destitute and pledged help with rebuilding and reforestation.

English bishop calls for prayers after man murders five before killing self

An English bishop called on Catholics of his diocese to pray for the victims of a shooting spree in which a 3-year-old girl and four others were murdered.

Bishop Mark O’Toole of Plymouth, a diocese that covers the southwest corner of England, described the August 12 massacre as “terrible.”

“It is with a deep sense of shock and sadness that we heard the news of the terrible shooting in our beloved city,”

Bishop O’Toole said in an August 13 statement. “I offer my support and prayers for all those who were killed, and for their loved ones at this tragic time.”

“Let us pray in our churches this weekend for all those affected and for the people of Plymouth,” the bishop added.

The gunman has been identified as Jake Davison, 22, a body builder and apprentice crane driver.

In a shooting spree lasting just six

minutes, he kicked open the door of a house in Plymouth and used a rifle to murder one of the occupants, said to be related to him, and to injure two others.

He then shot dead the child and her male relative and injured a man and a woman who were nearby, before killing a man walking through a park and a woman who was standing outside a hair salon. He ended his spree by using the rifle to take his own life.

Catholic faith of potential Angela Merkel successor’s aide attacked

An anti-Catholic video targeting the election campaign of a potential successor to Angela Merkel has drawn criticism from bishops and politicians in Germany amid growing concerns about a wider erosion of religious

freedom in an increasingly secular Europe.

The video was published online and shown at an election event of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in early August. It depicts Armin Laschet, the Christian Demo-

cratic Union’s candidate to succeed Chancellor Angela Merkel, as a Russian Matryoshka doll that “hides” several other dolls inside.

“Whoever votes for Armin Laschet and the CDU, votes for ... ultra-Catholic Laschet

confidants for whom sex before marriage is a taboo,” an ominous voice-over tells viewers, while a further Russian doll, bearing the face of a close aide to Mr Laschet, is revealed from inside the bigger doll.



Edited by Jason Osborne
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Blessed are those who mourn



Coffins of victims are carried during a mass burial for victims in Colombo, Sri Lanka, two days after a string of suicide bomb attacks on churches and luxury hotels across the island in this file photo. Photo: CNS.

Sri Lankan official requests special trial for Easter bombing suspects

The attorney general of Sri Lanka has requested the chief justice appoint a special trial-at-bar to hear cases against 25 suspects accused of involvement in the 2019 Easter attacks that killed 279 people, including 37 foreign nationals in three cities.

The 23,270 charges filed include conspiracy, preparation, aiding and abetting, collection of explosives and weapons, murder and attempted murder, reported ucanews.com.

It said Attorney General Sanjay Rajaratnam sent indictments to Chief Justice Jayantha Jayasuriya seeking the appointment of a trial-at-bar,

which involves a hearing with three judges.

Hariguptha Rohanadheera, director general of legal affairs at the presidential secretariat, responded to a letter from Sri Lankan Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith and said the cases could be filed by mid-September. The cardinal and bishops had written to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa urging action over the bombings.

Rohanadheera said the president had ordered government officials to find those responsible for the attacks that hit three churches during Mass as well as some luxury hotels.

The bishops warned they would be forced to work for

action through alternative ways if justice was not served. They questioned whether the cases to be filed against suspects included those who masterminded the attacks, ucanews.com reported.

"We are faced with the puzzle as to why and for what reason those in authority are delaying or neglecting their duty in implementing the recommendations of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry, which has cost the public millions of rupees," said the letter.

Bishops, civil rights activists and opposition parties have expressed concern over the investigation process.

Father Cyril Gamini Fernando, former director of the National Catholic Centre for Social Communications, said there was serious suspicion that the relevant agencies were not carrying out their duties properly in connection with the investigations.

Josephin Ranasinghe, a local Catholic, said the victims had watched the drama unfold for more than two years with no satisfactory outcome.

"More than two years have passed, some culprits have been arrested and some have suddenly been released. Meanwhile, different stories come through the media," she told ucanews.com.

Cardinal injured and priest dead after earthquake in Haiti

Cardinal Chibly Langlois, Bishop of Les Cayes and president of Haiti's Bishops' Conference, has been injured, while a Catholic priest died early in the morning of August 14 after a 7.2 intensity earthquake shook Haiti.

Speaking to *ACI Prensa*, Akim Kikonda, Director for Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Haiti, said that Cardinal Langlois "is hurt, but his life is not in danger". Cardinal Langlois, 62, was created the first Haitian cardinal by

Pope Francis February 22, 2014.

"CRS has spoken with the priestly residence in Les Cayes and we have reports that the house has been severely damaged. Unfortunately, we were informed of three fatalities, one priest and two employees," Mr Kikonda said.

Mr Kikonda also reported to *ACI Prensa* that "all of CRS personnel are safe and sound, but unfortunately one of our employees' wife died and his

baby is gravely injured".

Mr Kikonda said that the local public hospital has been overwhelmed by the number of emergencies, and is turning away most of the injured.

"We are currently evaluating the extent of the damage... Once we have a full evaluation of the injured, dead and affected, we will proceed to provide emergency services, especially to the poorest and most vulnerable people."

Vatican roundup

Inventors of CRISPR gene editing appointed to Pontifical Academy of Sciences

● Pope Francis has appointed the co-inventors of the CRISPR genome editing technology to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

Jennifer Doudna and Emmanuelle Charpentier, who discovered CRISPR fewer than ten years ago, were appointed to the Vatican's scientific academy consecutively August 10-11.

Their discovery sparked research into new treatments for cancer and other diseases, earning the two female scientists the 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, but it also poses a host of bioethical questions.

CRISPR is the simplest technology to date for editing human DNA. It allows scientists to use an enzyme called Cas9 to "cut and paste" gene sequences.

This has been applied to experimental treatments for sickle cell anemia and certain cancers, but has also raised bioethical concerns, including its application in "designer babies."

The existence of these gene altering therapies raises a question of how much modification and enhancement is permissible. The ability to edit genomes could also be used for purposes other than medical treatment. A number of human traits could be enhanced or changed, such as vision, intelligence, or abilities.

Cardinal Parolin praises Chinese Catholics' witness of faith

● Cardinal Pietro Parolin recently praised Chinese Catholics', when he was interviewed last week by *La Voce del Nordest*, a web magazine based in Trentino, where the Vatican's Secretary of State was holidaying.

"We are always in dialogue," he said of the Vatican's relationship with China, recalling the historic agreement signed with Beijing in 2018 and renewed for two more years in 2020. The pandemic, Cardinal Parolin noted, "has also affected this sphere," making the discussions more difficult.

"However," he continued, "we hope to be able to resume the meetings as soon as possible, and to deal with the many other issues that are on the table and that concern the life of the Catholic Church in China."

The Secretary of State expressed not only closeness in prayer with the Catholics of the Asian country, but also admiration: "We are proud of the witness of faith they give. We hope that they will always be good citizens and good Catholics," and that "they will also express this twin dimension in their concrete life."

Archbishop Henryk Hoser, papal envoy to Medjugorje, has died

● Archbishop Henryk Hoser, the apostolic visitor of Medjugorje, has died at the age of 78.

The archbishop died in a hospital in Warsaw on August 13 after a long and serious illness, according to an announcement by the Polish bishops' conference.

Archbishop Hoser served as the bishop of Warszawa-Praga in Poland from 2008 to 2017 before Pope Francis entrusted him with overseeing the pastoral situation of Medjugorje, the site of alleged Marian apparitions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in February 2017.

The Polish prelate was a trained physician, a missionary in Africa for more than two decades, and led the bioethics team for the Polish bishops' conference.

Pope Francis sent him to Medjugorje as a special envoy of the Holy See in 2017.

Two months after his appointment as special envoy, Archbishop Hoser told members of the press that the site bore many genuine expressions of faith, and many vocations were found there. However, he clarified that the final determination of the apparition's authenticity remains to be seen.



Letter from Rome



Carol Glatz

It was quite fitting for a Catholic actor and a Christian director of a new streaming series on the life of Jesus to meet Pope Francis on the feast of St Clare of Assisi, patron saint of televisions and screens.

Jonathan Roumie, who portrays Jesus, and Dallas Jenkins, the series' director, creator and co-writer, were in Rome as part of an effort to expand the global reach and revenue of the multi-season, crowd-funded series, *The Chosen*. They sat down with a small group of reporters, including Catholic News Service, a few hours after the audience.

Mr Jenkins said he told the Pope, "I'm a Protestant, but I'm making a show about Jesus that people of all faiths appreciate." The Pope pointed to the bearded, wavy-haired Mr Roumie next to him, asking astutely, "Is he Jesus?"

After Mr Jenkins said, "Yes," the Pope decided to poke some fun, asking Mr Jenkins, "Are you Judas?" sparking a round of laughter.

But, in all seriousness, Mr Jenkins and Mr Roumie have said in multiple interviews, the last thing they are aiming for is to betray the beauty and truth of Jesus.

"I do want people, when they are done watching the show, to feel like they know and love Jesus more or at least want to know and love him more," Mr Jenkins told reporters.

“From a strictly artistic perspective, that is not really good drama, you need to see change, you want to see a character arc”

The problem with most renditions of biblical accounts, he said, is that a two- or three-hour film is not a lot of time to do a deep-dive into the characters, backstories, motives, conflicts and context connected with biblical events.

Not only do the characters often come across as "stiff" on screen, he said, "you go from miracle to miracle, Bible verse to Bible verse, and you never get to know anybody Jesus actually impacted."

"From a strictly artistic perspective, that is not really good drama, you need to see change, you want to see a character arc."

The Chosen was going to be different, Mr Jenkins said, by looking at Jesus through the eyes of those he chose and changed, and to imagine what their lives and personalities were like and why they made the choices they did.

Follow me: New media entertainment sets the stage for new evangelisation



Catholic actor Jonathan Roumie and director Dallas Jenkins of the series *The Chosen*, share a light moment with Pope Francis during his general audience in the Vatican's Paul VI hall. Photo: CNS/Guglielmo Mangiapane, Reuters.

The finale of season two dropped mid-July and the plan is to make a seven-season show, giving writers and actors the time to fully explore and create "a collection of personal human moments," he said.

Chilean Fr Felipe Herrera-Espaliat, a journalist and officer of the Vatican's Dicastery for Communication, told Catholic News Service that the series' approach reminds him of the way St Ignatius of Loyola encouraged people to read the Bible and "create the scene in your mind," activate all the senses and engage one's feelings.

Get involved

The reason, he said, is to "get involved so you can take the place of one of the people that is in that scene. I think that's what they are doing [with the series], and that helps a lot," because it prepares people for a deeper relationship with and understanding of the Word of God by becoming "part of that scene."

"That is how literature and art works, you become a part of this, you are a witness of what is happening," he said. Seeing Scripture from various human perspectives "does not change the eternal truth of the Word of God, but helps you to live that Word and to incarnate it in your own life."

“I’m a Protestant, but I’m making a show about Jesus that people of all faiths appreciate”

Mr Roumie told reporters meeting the Pope was "a childhood dream realised."

After years of struggling for success in LA's film industry, his Catholic faith was strengthened after he hit "the lowest point of my life" three years ago, he said. He decided to just "surrender" and give up trying to control every outcome and just let God lead the way.

“Mr Jenkins and Mr Roumie have said in multiple interviews, the last thing they are aiming for is to betray the beauty and truth of Jesus”

Soon after, Mr Jenkins gave him a call about the possibility of the new series; Mr Roumie had already worked with Mr Jenkins, portraying Jesus in a few short films with limited audiences. Those projects were good "practice runs," Mr Roumie said, and doing *The Chosen* "has deepened my walk with Christ."

When he's on camera, it's like the wristband: "What would Jesus do?"

"For me it's trying to heighten the emotional experience that we have as humans," he said, and imagine,

"How might Christ have experienced joy and happiness and sadness and anger and solitude?"

He also tries to extend God's qualities of love, mercy and compassion to others on set and in his own life, he said, "so that if I'm recreating it in a scene, it's organic, it's real, it's based in truth, it's not fake."

Feedback

Viewer feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, said Neal Harmon, co-founder and CEO of Angel Studios, the series' distributor. The show has high marks from film critics on RottenTomatoes.com, with 100% "freshness" and a five-star average rating from thousands of users.

The series opened as the largest crowd-funded media project ever, collecting more than \$10million (£8.5million) from more than 19,000 people to make the first season. It has more than 250 million views on the app, where people can watch for free and people can 'pay it forward,' donating money to keep the show free for future episodes. There are an additional ten million views of season one on the show's YouTube channel, which has 1.3 million subscribers.

Mr Harmon said funding for production comes from sales of DVDs, Blu-ray Discs, partnerships, merchandise and licenses, for example,

with the online streaming service, Peacock.

The studio backed *The Chosen* and helped it crowd-fund, he said, because it wanted a TV show with "high production quality like Hollywood but without Hollywood's purse strings."

The app (thechosen.tv/app) is available in more than 180 countries, and the series offers subtitles in more than 50 languages and voiceovers in nine, including Arabic, Hindi and Mandarin Chinese, he said.

"The traditional Hollywood movie has a certain set of languages that it goes to, based off of profitability, and *The Chosen* has kind of been the opposite of that" by responding to donors' requests for which languages be made available, he said.

“A two- or three-hour film is not a lot of time to do a deep-dive into the characters, backstories, motives, conflicts and context connected with biblical events”

But Mr Harmon said sometimes people still react to hearing about the show with an eye roll, thinking, "Another show about Jesus, another history show..." and they don't think it's going to be what it ends up being when they watch."

Incredible

Fr Herrera-Espaliat told CNS the series is "an incredible production" of high professional quality and a big investment by so many people who want to see the Bible brought to life on a screen.

"Entertainment can be a very good way to reach people," he said. "Many people don't have Bibles, or they have a Bible and they never open it, so maybe the only way they will have first access to the word of God will be through these kinds of productions."

He said people should explore the series with "an open spirit and a very mature Christian point of view in order to understand that this is not the Word of God" and nothing can substitute the Word of God.

It's important to "have critical thought" and encourage quality content, otherwise viewers will be stuck with "low budget," dubious products that may just be pushing an agenda, he said.

But whenever there are "good translations of the Word of God into the audio-visual world, I think it's a step forward," said Fr Herrera-Espaliat.

The series is "not pretending to be the last word or the exact interpretation of the Bible," he said, and it can be "a very good door" to help people encounter Christ.



The Faithful still long to practice their faith free from harassment, writes **Elise Ann Allen**

For Iraqis, the first week of August 2014 will forever be etched into their memory as the start of one of the worst episodes of religious and ethnic persecution the country has ever seen when the so-called Islamic State overtook the Plain of Nineveh.

Hundreds of thousands of Christians, Yazidis, and even moderate Muslims who did not share ISIS's extremist interpretation of Islam were forced to either flee their homes and villages or pay an exorbitant tax to escape death.

During ISIS's three-year rule, they killed swaths who refused or failed to live up to their strict code, they looted Christian and Yazidi homes, and they burned these homes and countless churches and ancient monasteries to the ground.

The Plain of Nineveh was liberated in 2017; however, four years later, citizens – and minorities in particular – face many of the same questions they had when ISIS was still at large.

"Years after the end of this nightmare, with the vigour of the Iraqis and the help of the international community, Christians are still recalling this memory with pain and bitterness," Iraqi Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako, Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans, said in a statement.

“Cardinal Sako urged lawmakers to work for ‘a state of citizenship’ which applies its laws ‘to everyone without exception’”

"This is an extrapolation of the reality of the situation, showing the fears of minorities and seeking the hope of sticking to the land and roots," he said, noting that even seven years after ISIS, these fears have not gone away.

"Christians face fear and anxiety about the future, especially in the face of suspicious indicators," he said, cit-

Seven years after ISIS invasion Iraqis face an uncertain future



A woman takes a photo as Pope Francis celebrates Mass at Franso Hariri Stadium in Irbil, Iraq in March. Photo: CNS/Paul Haring.

ing "attempts at demographic change in their areas" and the failure of successive governments, "despite having money, to address the destruction of the infrastructure of their towns," as among these indicators.

Ruins

Churches, schools, homes, and other properties remain in ruins, unemployment is widespread, and many are unable to provide basic necessities.

"Had it not been for the Church that accompanied them in their physical, human, and spiritual displacement, built their homes, and helped them not lose hope for the future, none of them would remain in Iraq," Cardinal Sako said.

With this still being the status quo almost a decade later, the cardinal issued an appeal to the central government "to seriously consider whether it really wants Christians and other minorities to remain in Iraq."

If so, he said the government needs to prove it "through actions, not speeches," and he urged Iraqi leaders to restore to minorities "their rights and property, because if the situation remains as it is, their future is toward immigration."

When Pope Francis made his historic March 5-8 visit to Iraq, marking the first time a Pope had ever travelled to the country, it was seen as a strong sign of support to the local Christian population, and a great moment of hope.

Several significant steps were taken by the government both during and in the lead up to that trip to assure Christians and other minorities of their importance to the fabric of Iraqi society, such as the declaration in December 2020 of Christmas as an annual national holiday.

During Francis' visit, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi announced that March 6 – the day on which Pope Francis met with top Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani – would be a national day of tolerance and coexistence.

In the days following Francis' trip, Iraqi President Barham Salih ratified a new law benefitting Yazidi survivors

of the 2014-2017 ISIS genocide.

However, despite the much-needed reinforcement the Pope's trip offered, the underlying problems for minority citizens have not gone away, and tough questions still remain for those grappling over whether they have a future in Iraq, or whether the time has come to move abroad.

Suggestions

To this end, Cardinal Sako in his statement offered several suggestions he believes will help ensure the survival of Iraq as a whole, but especially its minorities.

Among those suggestions was the establishment of "a real and strong

state" characterised by factors such as "adherence to the law, respect for public money, the development of state institutions, hard work in terms of welfare."

Cardinal Sako urged lawmakers to work for "a state of citizenship" which applies its laws "to everyone without exception, and respects every citizen as they deserve, without regard to his religion and race, but only because they are an Iraqi citizen."

"This is a radical remedy for the decline in values through official, civic, educational, cultural, and media institutions, and the pulpits of mosques and churches," he said.

Another factor the patriarch said was key is the formation of a strong and united army, which acts "under a unified command" and is loyal not to one ethnic or religious group or another, but "to Iraq and the Iraqis."

“Christians face fear and anxiety about the future, especially in the face of suspicious indicators”

"This is the biggest challenge," he said, insisting that Iraq's justice system must also be strengthened so that the corrupt are held to account, "regardless of their rank," and that public money siphoned off by those lining their own pockets is returned.

Private matter

There must also be an end to religious sectarianism, he said, arguing, as he has in the past, that the state must consider religion "as a private matter between man and his God, with the right to practice religious rites freely and safely."

Cardinal Sako also said extremism and fundamentalist terrorism must be more intentionally combatted by making more efforts in "preventing hate speech, criminalising and holding accountable those who adopt and promote it, renewing education curricula, and spreading a culture of freedom, reason, enlightenment, and difference, through field work on the ground."

As a Catholic patriarch, Cardinal Sako voiced his support for all religious communities in Iraq, and stressed that his appeal is not just addressed to local leaders, "but I am speaking through international platforms," in hopes that the international community will listen and help Iraq to achieve the stability its citizens still so desperately need.



Cardinal Louis Sako.
Photo: CNS.

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Letters

Letter of the week

Changing emphasis from material to spiritual

Dear Editor, I have read with much interest the article regarding bishops giving the green light for celebration of the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation [IC 05/08/2021].

This is a praiseworthy and needed concern on the part of the seven bishops. I congratulate them and thank them for their courageous leadership at this difficult and confusing time.

It is so very sad that we are the only country in Europe that are so controlled and restricted by guidelines from the Government. It is obvious that so much of this needs further reflection and investigation.

In spite of all this, we can use this interference as an opportunity to educate and to help parents and families to come to a much greater appreciation

and understanding of these two special sacraments. In the last years, some have placed too much emphasis on the social aspects – parties, dress, money etc... instead of the great graces and blessings that are important to the young.

Maybe this time of waiting will help us all to re-evaluate the mysterious significance of these sacraments. I do realise there are many who deeply appreciate these moments of grace who stress reception of these sacraments above all other happenings. I know of good parents who refuse to allow their children to receive presents or money on these occasions. These parents ask family and friends to give a religious gift instead, for example a children's Bible, rosary beads, holy pictures etc... Home, school and parish have a golden oppor-

tunity to change the emphasis from material presents to spiritual ones.

Some, at first, may find this hard to accept, but we do need the balance when it comes to celebration – keeping the real meaning of the sacraments in mind will help us achieve this balance.

Celebrations are good and young people need to learn the reason for these celebrations – we celebrate the great gift of the Lord Jesus in Holy Communion and the Holy Spirit in Confirmation.

I ask Our Lady, to help us and to guide us as we seek to express our faith, hope and love in a reverent, prayerful, joyful way.

*Yours etc.,
Sr Susan Evangelist
Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal*

The time is surely right for ACP to engage parishioners

Dear Editor, The Association of Catholic Priests is at it again: its leadership is complaining again about our bishops.

Starting with a newspaper article and sound leadership from Bishop Kevin Doran, the issue of timings for First Communions and Confirmations has been part of our daily news. Archbishop Farrell's decision to allow his priests to arrive at a decision in consultation with their pastoral councils also hit the headlines.

The Association of Catholic Priests wants sacramental preparation taken from schools and placed firmly in parishes. In respect of preparing young people for the sacraments are Irish ACP clergy unable to take a lead in their parishes and create teams of catechists? What is preventing them? What they are asking for is already the norm in most English parishes. As a former school principal, for over fifty years, I observed ever increasing numbers of empowered English clergy and parishes working together in the establishment and



training of teams of parish catechists. In almost all English dioceses Confirmation preparation is the sole preserve of parishes. The time is surely right for ACP

clergy to get to work on activating parishioners.

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

Congratulations for defence of sacraments

Dear Editor, Archbishop Dermot Farrell deserves our warmest congratulations and gratitude for his outspoken, defiant and fulsome defence of permitting baptisms, Holy Communion and Confirmation, contrary to Government recommendations.

Bishop Kevin Doran of Sligo deserves great credit too, for being the bishop who initially led the charge to reinstate these ceremonies. The whole debacle received

a lot of publicity in newspapers and radio. Missing from the whole debate was the importance to the Catholic Faith which these sacraments, most especially Holy Communion, are. I felt that a great opportunity to highlight their spiritual importance was missed, most especially Holy Communion. Down through the centuries, many miracles involving the consecrated Host turning into human flesh have been

recorded. Most recently, two such miracles occurred in two different dioceses in Poland, with the first ever such miracle occurring in Lanciano, Italy, where Longinus, the centurion, who pierced Christ's side on Calvary with the spear, was from. There is a very rich and scientifically proven tradition attached to these miracles to show that the consecrated Host is truly the body and blood of Christ, and not some 'holy bread'

which is the current fashionable tradition being taught to our children. I know that Bishop Doran, the main organiser of the Eucharistic Congress in the RDS in 2012, had a whole area given over to large pictures depicting these miracles at that congress. I feel it is an important aspect of the Catholic Faith which is neglected.

*Yours etc.,
Pat Mullin,
Dublin 9*

Wanton interference by civil authority in Church matters

Dear Editor, In the current public health emergency, it is right and proper for the Government to regulate how many people may undertake public worship in a church, what social distancing guidelines must be met and whether masks must be worn. Beyond that, the form of worship, specifically what sacraments may be celebrated, is completely outside the secular powers remit.

It is astonishing that the civil authorities felt free to restrict precisely that. I

can only think this hubris is due either to an anti-Catholic bias or it is an example of familiarity breeding contempt: because the officials in question have some tangential connection to Catholic practice or some memory of it, perhaps from childhood, they feel licensed to meddle.

Bishop Kevin Doran, et al., deserve commendation for showing leadership in asserting the hierarchy's authority over the internal devotional practices in

churches, within the framework of the above referenced external guidelines.

I am becoming alarmed that the vision for Church/State separation advocated by some secularists is the absolute retreat of the Church from the public square combined with the wanton interference by civil authority in private Church matters.

*Yours etc.,
Colm Fitzpatrick
Castleknock, Dublin 15*

facebook community

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

Many Irish Catholics fear ridicule for expressing their faith – Primate

He is dead right. The liberal left have taken over and say "treat everyone equally and everyone can have an opinion but only as long as you agree with our viewpoint". –

Eamonn Breen

He is absolutely right. The groupthink in Irish media has a lot to answer for. – **Patricia Shearer**

Catholic family driven from east Belfast home

Is this bigotry ever going to end. We are all the same regardless of our beliefs and we all bleed the same colour of blood. It's time to accept and live beside each other as Christian brothers and sisters regardless of religious beliefs. God help us all. – **Madeleine Campbell**

17 Christians killed every day in Nigeria in first half of 2021

Largely ignored in press and dismissed in western and European populations. – **Caroline Hendron**

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

Rethinking our traditional rules for the priesthood

Dear Editor, While in an ideal world many young men would respond to the call to be a priest and be willing to make a lifelong commitment to a vow of celibacy. But the reality is that there are very few such vocations in Ireland. However, there are many people who do feel called to minister in different ways. The success of the permanent diaconate has been once such positive for our Church. Over the next decade if things do not change, we will have very few priests under the age of 65. Perhaps the Holy Spirit is actively involved in challenging us all to rethink our traditional rules for the priesthood.

*Yours etc.,
Frank Browne,
Templeogue, Dublin 16*

A Chinese Christopher perhaps?

Dear Editor, The engrossing article by Fr Rolheiser on page 30 of your July 29 [IC 29/07/2021] issue was aptly illustrated by a fine imaginative old picture of St Christopher with the infant Jesus on his shoulders.

But I found my reading further enriched by linking it up with a real-life picture on the previous page. This was a photograph taken a mere week earlier of a young man, gently and intently carrying a baby through a badly flooded road in Zhengzhou, China. A Chinese Christopher perhaps?

*Yours etc.,
Fred O'Callaghan
Blackrock, Co. Dublin*

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Around the world



▲ **ITALY:** Migrants look out of a window of a rescue ship as it arrives in Trapani, on the island of Sicily. Photos: CNS.

◀ **AFGHANISTAN:** Taliban fighters stand with their weapons on a street in Kabul on Sunday. During his Angelus address, Pope Francis expressed his concern for Afghanistan amid the Taliban's control of the country.



UNITED STATES: A man in Salem, Oregon, accepts ice water during a heatwave.



NIGERIA: A family is pictured sitting near a damaged home after an attack by suspected members of the Islamist Boko Haram insurgency in Bulabulin.



HAITI: Members of a rescue and protection team clean debris from a house in Les Cayes, following a magnitude 7.2 earthquake.



ITALY: A firefighting airplane drops water on a wildfire at the Monte Catillo nature reserve in Tivoli. Locals were evacuated from small communities near Rome when a wildfire broke out as the Italian capital faced temperatures of around 37 degrees Celsius.

Without meeting for Mass, our community would eventually fall apart

What is the Eucharist? What is supposed to happen when we gather to celebrate the ritual that Jesus gave us at the Last Supper and asked us to perpetuate until his return? Is this meant to be a family meal or a re-enactment of Jesus' sacrificial death? Is it meant to look like the old Latin Mass or like it looks in most churches today?

“What is supposed to happen when we gather to celebrate the ritual that Jesus gave us at the Last Supper and asked us to perpetuate until his return?”

There are no simple answers to these questions because there is no one theology (to the exclusion of all others) of the Eucharist, even in the New Testament. Rather there are various theologies of the Eucharist, complementary to be sure, but each emphasising different aspects of a reality that is too rich to capture in a single concept. What is the Eucharist?

In essence, the Eucharist is a reality with these interpenetrating dimensions:

1. The Eucharist is God's physical embrace of us. Without the Eucharist, as Andre Dubus



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

- asserts, God becomes a monologue. The Eucharist is where God touches us physically. It is the place where God is still taking on physical flesh.
2. The Eucharist is a meal we share together. The Last Supper was many things, but it was also a meal, a time of human fellowship, a celebration at table. So too for the Eucharist, it is many things, but it is also a table for a family to gather around, where joy can be shared and where it is safe to break down in sorrow.
 3. The Eucharist is an intensification of our union with each other inside the Body of Christ. As disciples of Jesus, we too constitute the Body of Christ. At a Eucharist, not just the bread and wine are meant to be changed into the body and blood of Christ, so too we, the people. That is why St Augustine, when giving out communion, would sometimes say, “Receive what you are.”
 4. The Eucharist is a sacrifice. It is a making memorial (*Zik-karon*) of the saving event of Jesus' death. In short, it is the Christian Passover supper. The Eucharistic prayer does not just ask God to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, it also asks God to make the saving event of Jesus' death available for us to participate within today.
 5. The Eucharist is the new manna. Just as God fed his people in the desert with manna each day, so now, daily, God feeds his people with bread from heaven. (This motif is particularly strong in John's Gospel.)
 6. The Eucharist is a vigil act. Jesus told us to celebrate the Eucharist so as to wait for his return. We celebrate Eucharist as a vigil. As Gerhard Lohfink puts

it: “The early apostolic communities cannot be understood outside of the matrix of intense expectation. They were communities imminently awaiting Christ's return. They gathered in Eucharist, among other reasons, to foster and sustain this awareness, namely, that they were living in wait, waiting for Christ's return.” At the Eucharist, we meet with each other in vigil to stay awake for Jesus' return.

“The Eucharist is an intensification of our union with each other inside the Body of Christ”

7. The Eucharist is a washing of each other's feet. The Gospel of John does not mention bread and wine at the Last Supper; instead, where the other Evangelists and St Paul highlight Jesus changing the bread and wine into his body and blood, John substitutes a basin and towel for the bread and wine. Why? Among other reasons, to teach that this kind of hum-

ble action towards each other, washing each other's feet, is one of the major meanings of the Eucharist.

8. The Eucharist is a prayer for the world, making Christ's flesh food for the life of the world. It is a prayer for God's help for the whole world. Akin to a ‘Quaker silence’, it brings the helplessness of the world to God and asks God to do for it what it cannot do for itself –bring about peace and justice.
9. The Eucharist is a Sacrament of reconciliation and forgiveness. We go to Eucharist to have our sins forgiven, to be as sinners at table with Jesus.
10. Finally, the Eucharist is the ultimate religious ritual through which we sustain ourselves in faith, discipleship, and community. We gather for Eucharist in order to stay alive. A Eucharist gathering is analogous to an Alcoholics' Anonymous meeting. We gather because without this regular ritual gathering, our faith, discipleship, and community would eventually fall apart. In the words of Ronald Knox, the Eucharist is our one great act of fidelity to Jesus. Truth be told, we are not ever really faithful to the Gospels; we don't love our enemies and don't turn the other cheek, but we are faithful in one major way, we keep the Eucharist going – and that single act is going to save us.

“The Eucharist is a prayer for the world, making Christ's flesh food for the life of the world”

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, August 19, 2021

Personal Profile

From the home of the 'fighting Irish' to Ireland itself

Page 34



Avoiding overworking at home



The line between work and personal life blurred throughout the pandemic for many, with bedrooms, kitchens and living rooms slipping in and out of 'office-mode' during the days of the week (and sometimes the weekend). As the world cautiously emerges from a state of oscillating lockdowns and re-openings, or seems to be anyway, it will be interesting to see how our work lives are affected.

It's generally thought that the pandemic did the average worker few favours in terms of working hours – new studies seem to indicate that workers are putting in more hours on average per week. The workday bleeds into the evening and weekend more frequently, apparently to little financial benefit.



The World Health Organisation says working longer and longer hours is killing hundreds of thousands each year, writes

Jason Osborne

Couple this with social media posts and advertising campaigns exhorting a "rise and grind", "hustle harder" mentality, complaints about the gradual encroachment of work over all of those areas of life that we once held to be ours are increasingly understandable.

Concerns

Concerns about overworking are not frivolous or overly sensitive things, but real and concrete.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said that working long hours poses an occupational health risk that kills hundreds of thousands of people each year.

In a study published earlier this year, the World Health Organisation said people working 55 hours or more each week face an estimated 35% higher risk of stroke and a 17% higher risk of dying of heart disease, compared to people who adhere to the widely accepted standard of

working 35 to 40 hours a week.

The global study revealed that in 2016, 488 million people were exposed to the risks of working long hours. In all, it said, more than 745,000 people died that year of overwork that resulted in stroke and heart disease.

"In a first global analysis of the loss of life and health associated with working long hours, WHO and ILO [International Labour Organisation] estimate that, in 2016, 398,000 people died from stroke and 347,000 from heart disease as a result of having worked at least 55 hours a week. Between 2000 and 2016, the number of deaths from heart disease due to working long hours increased by 42%, and from stroke by 19%," the news release that accompanied the study read.

A name we've all become

familiar with over the course of the past unfortunate year and a half, WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said that "no job is worth the risk of stroke or heart disease," as he called on governments, businesses and workers to find ways to protect workers' health.

Longer

However, as mentioned, the pandemic has accelerated the trends forcing workers into longer and longer hours, the director-general commenting on that at the time, too.

"The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly changed the way many people work," Dr Ghebreyesus said.

"Teleworking has become the norm in many industries, often

» Continued on Page 33

Family News



AND EVENTS

BRONZE HANDLE SUGGESTS

'LIONS USED' IN ROMAN

BRITAIN EXECUTIONS

- An unearthed bronze key handle suggests lions were used in executions in Roman Britain, archaeologists have said.
- The handle, which shows a "Barbarian" grappling with a lion, was excavated from under a Roman town house, off Great Central Street in Leicester. It also shows figures of four boys cowering in terror.
- Excavation leader Dr Gavin Speed, from the University of Leicester said nothing quite like it had been found "anywhere in the Roman Empire before".
- "When first found, it appeared as an indistinguishable bronze object, but after we carefully cleaned off the soil remarkably we revealed several small faces looking back at us, it was absolutely astounding," Dr Speed said.
- The object was found by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) in 2017, then studied at King's College London and the findings have now been published in the journal *Britannia*.
- Co-author Dr John Pearce, from King's College, said: "This unique object gives us our most detailed representation of this form of execution found in Roman Britain."

TIKTOK NAMED AS THE MOST DOWNLOADED APP OF 2020

- TikTok was the world's most downloaded app in 2020 as it took the top spot from Facebook Messenger, according to digital analytics company App Annie.
- The Chinese video-sharing platform is the only app not owned by Facebook to make the global top five of downloads.
- In its home country, TikTok's owner ByteDance also holds the top spot with the Chinese language video app Douyin.
- TikTok's continued popularity emerged even after former US President Donald Trump tried to ban it in America.
- Facebook-owned apps have held the top spot since the survey started in 2018 and the company still dominated the chart.
- Mark Zuckerberg's social media giant accounted for the rest of the top five with Facebook's flagship app as well as WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook Messenger all making an appearance.

AUSTRALIAN OLYMPIANS FACE 28-DAY QUARANTINE

- Rules meaning some Australian Olympians are having to quarantine for 28 days after returning to their country from Tokyo have been described as "cruel", the BBC has reported.
- Athletes returning via Sydney to the state of South Australia are facing an extra two-week quarantine.
- That is on top of the two weeks already required for all overseas arrivals.
- The AOC said: "While other countries are celebrating the return of their athletes, we are subjecting ours to the most cruel and uncaring treatment."
- They added: "They are being punished for proudly representing their country with distinction at the Olympic Games."
- 16 members of the Australian Olympic team are already quarantining in Sydney, the capital of New South Wales.
- The government of South Australia said "the high risk of the Delta strain of Covid-19 in NSW" is the reason for the additional requirements, for which the AOC has had an exemption request turned down.

Meditation can cure our blindness



While walking one day, Jesus caught sight of a person who had been blind from birth. We can be confident that just as Jesus didn't ignore him neither will he ignore us. The Lord considers us worthy of his attention. While this person had been blind from birth, the parable nonetheless speaks to all of us. Meditation reveals to each of us our own unique forms of blindness.

There are various kinds of blindness. For instance, it may be physical, resulting from serious illness or age obscuring one's vision and this can often be cured. Take that caused by cataracts; it can be cured when a surgeon removes its cause. But those Jesus encounters aren't cured by surgical skill but only by the power of God. And we too can be healed of our blindness. Jesus said: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." So, all who are blind are able to gain sight through Jesus.

“Even when we are not blinded, we may still, as they say, ‘turn a blind eye on things’”

Of course, physical blindness is just one form of blindness. We are all blind in so many ways that we are not even aware of. We grow up in a family and a society and culture where things are done and always have been done in a certain way. And because that is the container within which we grew, we often don't see any alternative way of doing things. I grew up in a family of ten children (nine boys and one girl) so there were 12 of

Mindful living

Dr Noel Keating



us in all sitting down to every meal. We always had a cup of tea after dinner and there were family 'rules' about making the tea. That task fell to the first person to finish their dinner! We didn't have a large commercial tea-pot as one might in a community hall, just a regular tea pot. That meant that one pot of tea was never enough, so there was a second rule: Whoever made the tea had to refill the kettle and boil it immediately, so that when the first pot was emptied, it could be refilled again, quickly. That requirement was beaten into us – not physically, but metaphorically – and not alone do I still do it, but at least one of my 40-year-old offspring does too!

Example

This is a very simple example of how we develop ways of doing things and of seeing the world that may have been helpful once, but which can distort reality when they are no longer appropriate. As we grow into adulthood we become unconsciously blinded by such conditioning, and also by our prejudices, by our fears, by our desires, by our needs, even by our preoccupations.

Even when we are not blinded, we may still, as they say, 'turn a blind eye on

things'. Things that it would be inconvenient to notice, things that might get in the way of our egoic desire for power, prestige and possessions. In that way, we blind ourselves to the needs of others, to a better, more just way of being.

Healed

The person Jesus healed received more than just physical sight. Jesus' touch not only heals but enlightens. He teaches us that God, who created us, can heal and enlighten us. We too are to discover that in Christ we will be able to see clearly. We will see that everything that happens to us is an opportunity to draw closer to God by love and willingness. Meditation helps us to discover this for ourselves as it reveals our blindness to us.



Some years ago, I wrote a short prayer which I sometimes say before or after meditation and throughout the day. It goes as follows:

Abba, Amma, Open my heart,

So your Word may find a home in me.

Jesus, Lord, I am blind;

Make me aware that I may see.

Holy Spirit, awaken me,
So as you wish I may be.

This simple prayer captures our deepest intention in meditation. We choose to sit still and silent in God's presence, leaving ourselves open to a graced encounter in the hope that it will transform us; that we might become more open to what God asks of us as we go about our ordinary, everyday lives. Meditation helps to open our hearts and keeps them open so that we become ever more willing and ever less wilful.

“We are all blind in so many ways that we are not even aware of”

It is good to acknowledge our blindness to ourselves and to meditate every day so that we may see more clearly and respond in life as we are called to do. Meditation helps us to see our every action and reaction as something we do in and with God. We sit in silent faith believing that doing so will open our eyes to God's loving presence in all aspects of our lives and in everyone we encounter.

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

» Continued from Page 31



blurring the boundaries between home and work. In addition, many businesses have been forced to scale back or shut down operations to save money, and people who are still on the payroll end up working longer hours.”

“It’s a healthy thing to take your lunch break as often as possible, and healthier still to get up from your desk to do so”

With all of these factors conspiring against workers, what can be done to ensure that a healthy balance is struck? Quite a lot, actually. As many workplaces are still operating under pandemic conditions, these tips will be oriented towards those still working from home, although they can certainly be modified to keep any form of work in check!

Set boundaries

If you have the space in your home, devote somewhere specifically to work, and furnish it as though it were your office (insofar as you can). This already creates a distinction in your mind between 'work' and 'home', no matter how subtle.

Setting a boundary in space is useful, but setting one in time is useful, too. Get serious about starting at your start time, and finishing at your end time, if at all possible. The tendency will always be there for most to start earlier and finish later, but if it's the case that your health is at stake, it can wait.

Be honest about what you can handle

I suspect the majority of over-work-ers are simply doing their best to do a good day's work – leading many to bite off more than they can chew. If you're feeling the pressure, there's no harm in saying 'no' to additional tasks when necessary. In fact, it may well be better for everyone. Taking on more than you can handle may lead to a task being done poorly, late or not at all. If the option is there to pass it along to someone who's better positioned to do it, let it go.

A useful skill not only for work, but for life, offering a gracious but firm 'no' can save you a lot of trouble and heartache further down the line.

Take a set lunch break

It's all about setting the boundaries. It's a healthy thing to take your lunch break as often as possible, and health-



ier still to get up from your desk to do so. If possible, eat away from your desk and get some fresh air, giving your mind and body the break they need from your labours. You get better work done after a good rest than after an exhausting slog, anyway.

“Setting a boundary in space is useful, but setting one in time is useful, too”

Turn off and put away work devices at the end of the day

This tip is of especial importance in these most unique of days. Late emails, texts or calls are a real siren song back to the desk. You're well within your rights to turn them off and put them away at the end of the workday, that you might rest without fear of interruption.

Make good use of your downtime

You're much more likely to feel well-rested at work if your personal time is well-spent. Those free minutes and hours you find in evenings and at the weekend should be truly leisurely. Scrolling Facebook or Instagram after a day of staring at a laptop is unlikely to slow your racing mind in the same way that a walk, read, good meal or trip to the cinema will. Make sure that your leisure time is leisurely, rather than wasted.

Faith
— IN THE —
family



Christina Malone

It is not that easy being a mother

While on holiday my four-year-old developed a very bad habit of whinging. If you have children, you might know it can be hard to ignore. My nine-year-old started to develop an attitude that makes you wonder what is going in her little head and my eight-year-old has her own little world of worms and butterflies. You might wonder why am I sharing those things because over the past years I started to ask myself different kind of faith questions:

Do you think, Jesus was whinging at some stage in his life and more importantly do you think Mary ever got cross with Jesus? Do you think he had to go to timeout? I wonder how Mary reacted when Jesus did not do as she told him to. The human part of the Holy Family with Mary in the midst of it all. Like all mothers are, most of the time. (and yes fathers too!)

Mary, the mother of God;
Mary, the blessed Mother; Mary,
the ever Virgin Mary; the chosen
One Mary - Our Lady.

Way too often I find myself in the church staring at Mary and wondering...What is motherhood all about? I mean, did Mary ever have a moment when she did not know what to do? Did she call on Elizabeth, her cousin for help? Or what to say? I have sat in front of Mary often wondering, reflecting and sometimes crying. It is not that easy being a mother. It is not that easy trying to get it right all the time. I remember asking my children how do you think Mary reacted when Jesus went missing and they did not know where he was. And Jesus being smart giving them a hard time by saying where else would I be?

Untouchable

Mary, in my youth, was a saint that was up there, untouchable, unreachable and very holy. Over the years, especially since I have become a mother myself I wonder how did she manage the human, earthy Jesus? Never mind the heart-breaking end by standing at the foot of

the cross. I like to think of Mary as a mentor. One to look up to, get to know, to love and be challenged by. I prefer Mary as a mentor rather than the images I grew up with.

First of all, she did not have to worry about the name of her first born. No naming after, no hurt feelings. She knew it was a boy.

She knew he was not going to be 'normal'. We do not know too much about the teenage Jesus or what happened in between birth and death. It does not say

if he had any tantrums or what kind of teenage dreams he might have had. But I guess his mum was always by his side. His first miracle is with his mum present – Mary, nearly pointing the finger at her son, the wine has run out. Do something my son. She doesn't ask him to sort out the embarrassment rather than leaving it to him to act. Jesus referring to his mother as woman. Not a kind of response I would envision to hear from a daughter or a son at any stage of my life.



Overwhelmed

I wonder how much did Mary know about her son? I wonder did she have moments where she felt overwhelmed or wondering what is going to happen to her beloved son. What did it mean to her being the mother of the chosen one? I am not sure, but over the years I try to take Mary off her high throne (undoubtable where she belongs) but Mary has to become real, as a mother with all the emotions attached to it. Let it be the worries about the bedtime, the first steps, his friends, his passion, his challenges. I often find myself having deep conversation with Mary asking her – what would you do?

On August 15, we celebrated Mary's Assumption. This day we rightly celebrate Our Lady, the mother of God, the ever Virgin. Mary, the chosen one, that dared to say 'yes' to the Lord by becoming the mother of his Son. But in the midst of it all I am asking you today, if you imagine Mary as a friend of yours, another mother, another parent what would you like to ask her?

From the home of the 'fighting Irish' to Ireland itself

Personal Profile



Jason Osborne

The past year and a half have been challenging for everyone, but particularly for those away from home and whose work is affected by the drastic reduction in international travel. Robert Black, 26, from Long Island, New York is one of these, as both an American and the Project Manager for undergraduate academics for the University of Notre Dame, based here in Dublin.

Despite this, things are looking up, with students of the famed university set to return to Ireland soon. As well as this, Robert has taken solace in the Catholic community Dublin boasts, being a "cradle Catholic" himself.

“My job is not to ensure that all 50 or all 70 students are attending Mass weekly, if they are Catholic”

"I am what they would call a cradle Catholic, so baptised on New Year's day, two months old. We would be at Mass every Sunday, from every age. There was no aversion ever to having us at Mass. Normally front row, because we were always getting in just as the entrance hymn was ending or just as the priest was saying the opening prayer," he laughs as he tells The Irish Catholic.

Pew

"So yeah, a lot of Sundays spent in the first pew. Church was always seen as part of our community, and I was really lucky growing up in a town where so many of my classmates and peers and neighbours



would have all gone to the same church. The church was the centre-piece of that community."

From a closely connected Catholic community at home, he moved to another as he grew up and went on to attend Notre Dame.

"Yeah, so I think we always talk about Catholicism at Notre Dame as a 'Hot Catholicism' [active Catholicism], so I think the thing to remember about the American church is that it's still a 'big tent' church in a way that maybe the Church in Ireland isn't anymore, or European churches in general aren't," he explains.

"It's just not a big-tent church anymore, it is a minority practice.

But in America, certainly at Notre Dame, I believe it's a slight majority of students are actually practicing, and when I say practicing, I mean going to Mass probably once a month at a minimum."

Environment

Despite this being the environment at the university, tending to the flame of faith in yourself, as always in this life, requires an active choice.

"So it was really interesting going in, because you do go into that university environment having – choice is probably too strong a word – but you don't have that familial structure where the tradition is that you go to Mass every

Sunday, so you do have that freedom not to," he says.

Still, the Notre Dame campus presents a marked change in some ways from the wider cultural setting of the day, Robert explaining that the Catholic heritage is something that the university is "proud of".

"I think it's [Catholic heritage] not something that they shy away from. I think that certainly the dorm Mass tradition is something that is something that they're proud of, something that we're proud of.

“Tending to the flame of faith in yourself, as always in this life, requires an active choice”

"It's something that we view as important to community-building, and I think that element of, that kind of ecumenism of having people who are not practicing Catholics at Mass and being up front and open about the celebration of the Eucharist and what that means and who should and who shouldn't receive, obviously, but I think that the fact that the church doors are open for everyone regardless of their religious background is an important part of centring the church in the community, if that makes sense. It is open for everyone."

Why leave such a tightly-knit community? In a sense, it was always on the cards for Robert, being drawn to Ireland long before he moved here for work.

"I did a semester myself here while I was a student, and I also worked here for a few summers. I had done Irish dance since I was really young, competed and did all that kind of stuff. And so, there was always that cultural element that I always felt kind of connected to, and I think here in Ireland, what's kind of rich about that tradition is that it's really preserved these days in more rural parts of the country, rural Ulster and then on the West Coast.

"When I was here, I was always taking opportunities to get out of

Dublin into the country and be in parish halls dancing or listening to traditional music, so there was a really rich cultural connection that always was drawing me back," he says.

Pastoral needs

Getting the job here he'd longed for with the university, Robert now looks after the academic and pastoral needs of the students in his charge – a work his faith informs.

"I had an interview for another job that was in a pastoral space a couple of years ago and I was asked a similar question about how faith informs your work, especially in a world where I think we're very cognisant of the Faith perhaps not holding the same weight that it used to...it seems to me that our role as faith-filled individuals is not to be yanking on people's leashes and trying to lead them to the oasis, but to be the example of your faith that you would want people to see, and want people to think about when they think about the Faith. And so I think that was what's guides me in this role.

“I was really lucky growing up in a town where so many of my classmates and peers and neighbours would have all gone to the same church”

"My job is not to ensure that all 50 or all 70 students are attending Mass weekly, if they are Catholic, if they're not Catholic...my role is to be the best example of a Catholic that I can be, and hopefully then God can use me in that capacity," he says, emphasising the importance of

"When you force people to try and see God in a certain place – they're very unlikely to see him the way you do. And so, I think you have to be cautious with those efforts," he adds.

Guided and surrounded by faith, it's likely his students and Ireland will benefit from his time here.

Sweet Treats

Kiley Britten



Lemon posset with raspberry cream

Take advantage of the last days of the summer season with this deceptively easy dessert. It can make for a final summer soiree or even to brighten a dreary day. Make sure to make it with plenty of time to spare, as the posset needs six hours in the fridge to set.

Ingredients for the posset

- 300 ml double cream
- 2 lemons
- 85g sugar

Ingredients for the raspberry cream

- 100g raspberries (fresh or frozen)
- 30g sugar
- 2tbsp water
- 100ml whipping cream

Instructions:

- 1- Zest and juice lemons.
- 2- Pour double cream into a saucepan along with the sugar and most of the lemon zest (save

some zest for decorating – put it in the fridge otherwise the zest will dry out).

- 3- Bring ingredients in the pot to a boil. Once the mixture reaches the boiling point, turn down the heat and start stirring (a wooden spoon is best if you have one). The mixture might bubble up and threaten to come out of the pot, but the easy fix for this is to remove the pot off the heat, stir it about until it calms down, and return the pot back to the heat. Continue simmering and stirring the mix for about three minutes.
- 4- Remove pan from heat and allow to cool for another two minutes or so. Gently stir in the lemon juice.
- 5- Pour posset into prepared glasses, then leave to cool down before placing in the fridge for 6 hours or until set. Alternatively, you can place the glasses directly into the fridge, but you may cause your fridge to become humid from the condensation that a hot mixture creates when

placed in a cold environment.

6- While waiting to put the glasses in the fridge, start your raspberry jam to mix into the cream on top. Place raspberries, sugar, and water into a pot. If you use frozen raspberries, use slightly less than the 2tbsp of water.

7- Heat raspberries on a medium heat, stirring occasionally. Your jam is done once the sugar is melted and a lot of the water has evaporated – it should look runnier than a proper jam.

8- Once finished, set aside or in the fridge along with the posset.

9- When posset is set, whip up the cream into quite stiff peaks. Take your raspberry jam and fold it into the cream as evenly as you can – though it doesn't matter if it is a bit streaky, it tastes just as delicious.

10- Pipe or spoon your raspberry cream on top of your posset, decorate with lemon zest and some spare raspberries, and enjoy your delectable treat!





TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



No shortage of dark crime for a summer evening

Confession: I've developed a taste for dark thrillers – with plenty on Netflix, while Channel 4 has their *Walter Presents* series, where they show the first episode of a series on live television and then the full series online via All 4.

Dark

Stockholm Requiem (All Four) is one that is pretty dark, starting as it does with a two-parter, *Unwanted*, about the kidnapping and murder of children – rather grim and unsavoury. Religion figures in that a religious anti-abortionist, wouldn't you know, is a suspect. Sinister pro-lifers make for handy scapegoats. Yet in another way it has a pro-life message. Women regret abortions, it's seen as an ongoing deep down pain. The explicit message is 'love them all', and one woman seems sad that she didn't, as she effectively admits to having an abortion, and now is having difficulty having any more children. There are hints too of sheltered religious families not showing compassion. In another two-part story, *Bloodline*, a priest and his wife are killed in an apparent murder-suicide, but of course in cop shows, things are not always what they seem. At least the priest (Lutheran I think) is involved in charity work as are his daughters,



Jasmine Sendar in *Floodland*.

though there are suspicions of dodgy dealings in the charity, and credibly the sense that the couple were so involved in their charity work that they didn't give their own children the attention they needed. Another minister, a woman, is upset and speaks of "her wife", ticking the diversity box and going nowhere with it. As the series went on there were many moral dilemmas, but there was also an understanding of the fragility of human nature that was

endearing. A regular chat in a taxi between the two main characters served as a motif for reflection and continuity through the series.

Thriller

Floodland (All Four) is another dark thriller series, this time based in Belgium and the Netherlands as police tackle human trafficking and their personal demons both sides of the border. The lead character is Tara Dessel (Jasmine Sendar), an insomniac

detective with issues who has the knack of annoying just about everyone else in her dogged pursuit of the trafficking network and the murders that follow in its wake. She partners with a police psychologist Bert Dewulf (Koen de Bouw) who has his own troubles at home and in his private practice. So many police characters have damaged home lives, caused it seems by the all engrossing demands of their professions. Maybe there should be a celibacy rule for detectives? At one stage a young migrant is discovered to be pregnant and we get a touching scene where she is delighted to see her baby on an ultrasound. Tara immediately says she should have an abortion, but the girl wants to keep the baby and the psychologist seems to support her in that choice. As in so many television dramas I've seen the message is that there ought to be the choice, but keeping the baby is the better choice – not exactly the pro-life position, but perhaps heading in the right direction. Nevertheless it's hard to recommend the show. There are some skewed values, and while acceptably gritty it's occasionally grotty as well, with some unsavoury scenes.

Drama

I've been catching up on **Hinterland** (Netflix) an older

PICK OF THE WEEK

NEW! PILGRIM, THE - THE SOLDIER

EWTV Sunday August 22, 7am, also Monday August 23, 9.30pm

Drama: A pious pilgrim helps a soldier suffering from PTSD repent for a crime he committed, and discovers the grace of God is greater than any sin.

SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC One Sunday August 22, 1.15pm

Claire McCollum explores stories of fossils, faith and science along the Jurassic Coast of Devon and Dorset and the first *Songs of Praise* congregation in more than 18 months sings favourite hymns.

FILM: SILENCE

BBC 4 Thursday Aug 26, 10.05pm

Martin Scorsese explores faith under pressure among missionaries in 17th Century Japan. Challenging, violent and not at all uplifting.

drama that I missed on live television. Again child abuse figures, but not so much of the clerical kind, though one clergyman does have regrets about not speaking out about his suspicions relating to a care home, while another minister is anything but religious in his home life. It's a strange show, sometimes classified as 'Welsh noir', but it has a certain hypnotic effect, especially if you binge watch. Dialogue is sparse – often characters just give each other knowing looks instead of speaking, as if they're telepathic. There's an inordinate amount of driving around the Welsh countryside, and as is often the case, once the new

detective arrives in town the body count goes up – only once is he even suspected of contributing. It's relatively free of 'adult content' or bad language, but the crimes are violent and there are way too many instances of suicide, perhaps to the point of irresponsibility. At one stage it seemed that many of the criminals cornered by the detective (DCI Matthias, played by a glum Richard Armstrong) ended up killing themselves or trying to at the end – disconcerting to say the least.

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Pat O'Kelly



Music

A welcome celebration of Handel in Dublin

Congratulations to our period instrument Irish Baroque Orchestra (IBO), currently celebrating its silver jubilee. As part of its anniversary programmes the ensemble presents a short *Dublin HandelFest* online over the coming weekend – August 20 to 22 – centred in and around Dublin Castle.

Beginning with the pastoral *Acis and Galatea* in St Patrick's Hall tomorrow (Friday) evening, the *HandelFest* moves out into the open on Saturday afternoon when IBO's musical director, Peter Whelan, leads a digital tour of significant buildings and locations familiar to Handel when in Dublin between November 1741 and August 1742.



Clarecastle tenor Dean Power

En route from Christ Church Cathedral to Dublin Castle, there will be stops at Smock Alley and other places

including some 'less salubrious back lanes of the inner city'. I understand Maestro Whelan will reveal fascinating anecdotes and stories of Handel's Dublin sojourn.

Climax

While the composer's reputation in the capital climaxed with performances of *Messiah* at the Fishamble Street Musick Hall, when some of the proceeds from its charity première released 142 persons from prison on their debts being settled to the satisfaction of their creditors, several other Handel works, not least the already popular *Acis and Galatea*, were heard during his visit.

The pastoral, which the composer described as "a little opera", underwent a number

of revisions following its first performance in the summer of 1718 at Cannons, the magnificent country house in Middlesex of the Duke of Chandos.

Based on a tale from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the plot is relatively uncomplicated. The mortal Acis and semi-divine Galatea are in love. However, their hopes of tranquil bliss are dashed by the arrival of giant Polyphemus. Desiring Galatea for himself, he dispatches his unfortunate rival but, using her magical powers, Galatea ensures Acis' immortality by turning him into a fountain! Really? Well, it is opera after all and the music is marvellous.

Conducted by Peter Whelan, tomorrow's IBO concert performance has Clarecastle tenor Dean Power,

currently a member of the Bavarian State Opera, with Lancastrian soprano and baroque opera specialist Julia Doyle in the title roles. Polyphemus will be sung by UK bass-baritone Edward Grint, who has undertaken the part in a number of European locations.

Conclusion

HandelFest concludes in the Chapel Royal on Sunday evening when Kilkenny's master of music Malcolm Proud plays three of Handel's harpsichord Suites, including the E major that ends with the famous *Harmonious Blacksmith* variations. Malcolm Proud also delves into the keyboard repositories of Handel contemporaries – JS Bach and Jean-Philippe

Rameau, whom Handel held in great respect.

Like the best mustard, Rameau (1683-1764) came from Dijon where his father, Jean, was organist in a number of churches. Initially his son's music teacher, Jean hoped the lad would pursue a career in law. However, intent on a musical path, Rameau junior studied for a short while in Milan. Returning to France he held various organist posts in Avignon, Clermont, Dijon and Paris.

Malcolm Proud's homage to Rameau is devoted to his ten-movement Suite in E minor, which comes from his *Pièces de Clavecin* of 1724. Further information/booking can be found on www.dublinhandelfest.com

BookReviews

Summer series:

‘Saints and Beasts’ III

Irish saints are, of course, not the only ones to have curious associations with birds and animals. Two remarkable instances are the lives of the Northumbrian St Cuthbert, and the even more remarkable legend of the Father of the Church, St Jerome. These are worth contrasting with our Irish saints.

St Cuthbert and the otters

The noted Scottish writer Gavin Maxwell was famous for his books about the otters that lived with him in his West Highland retreat. His own intimate experience of otters and their ways allowed him to have a special insight into the legends recorded about St Cuthbert.

The saint is today the patron saint of otters, and also of the eider duck, from which came the moulted feathers that were once collected to stuff eiderdowns, the ancestors of duvets. Mr Maxwell was able to read more into the legend of Cuthbert and the otters than his hagiographers could, based on an eyewitness account of the saint's ‘conversation’ with these usually shy creatures.

Passage

He quotes in his own book this passage from Helen Waddell's *Beasts and Saints* (Constable, 1934). Helen Waddell, author of the *Desert Fathers* and *The Wandering Scholars*, was intellectually and spiritually in tune with the mentality of the Middle Ages. Her text, quoted below, is largely drawn from the Venerable

Bede, Cuthbert's prime biographer in the seventh century.

“It was [Cuthbert's] way for the most part to wander in those places and to preach in those remote hamlets, perched on steep rugged mountain sides, where other men would have a dread of going, and whose poverty and rude ignorance gave no welcome to any scholar...Often for a whole week, sometimes for two or three, and even for a full month, he would not return home, but would abide in the mountains, and call these simple folk to heavenly things by his word and his ways...”

“The saint is today the patron saint of otters, and also of the eider duck”

“(He was, moreover, easily entreated, and came to stay at the abbey of Coldingham on a cliff above the sea.)”

“As was his habit, at night while other men took their rest, he would go out to pray; and after long vigils kept far into the night, he would come home when the hour of com-

mon prayer drew near. One night, a brother of this same monastery saw him go silently out, and stealthily followed on his track, to see where he was going or what he would do. And so he went out from the monastery and, his spy following him, went down to the sea, above which the monastery was built: and wading into the depths till the waves swelled up to his neck and arms, kept his vigil through the dark with chanting voiced like the sea. As the twilight of dawn drew near, he waded back up the beach, and kneeling there, again began to pray: and as he prayed, straight from the depths of the sea came two four-footed beasts which are called by the common people otters. These, prostrate before him on the sand, began to busy themselves warming his feet with pantings, and trying to dry them with their fur; and when this good office was rendered, and they had his benediction they slipped back again beneath their native waters. He himself returned home, and sang the hymns of the office with the brethren at the appointed hour. But the brother who had stood watching him from the cliffs was seized with such panic that he could hardly make his way home, tottering on his feet: and early in the morning came to him and fell at his feet, begging forgiveness with his tears for his foolish attempt, never doubting but that his behaviour of the night was known and discovered.

Truth

“To whom Cuthbert: ‘What ails you, my brother? What have you done? Have you been out and about to try to come at the



St Cuthbert praying on the beach with the otters, by a modern artist.

truth of this night wandering of mine? I forgive you, on this one condition: that you promise to tell no man what you saw, until my death.’

“And the promise given, he blessed the brother and absolved him alike of the fault and the annoyance his foolish

boldness had given: and the brother kept silence on the piece of valour that he had seen, until after the saint's death, when he took pains to tell it to many.” [Bede, *The Life of St Cuthbert*, ch. X]

Mr Maxwell's thoughts about this episode and his

interpretation of what happened are very enlightening.

“Now it is apparent to me that whatever other saintly virtues St Cuthbert possessed he well merited canonisation by reason of his forbearance alone. I know all about being dried



Coldingham Beach in Scotland where St Cuthbert encountered the otters

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.

Peter Costello



An otter at play with sea weed

by otters. I have been dried by them more times than I care to remember. Like everything else about otters, it takes place the wrong way round, so to speak. When one plays ball with a puppy, one throws the ball and the puppy fetches it back and then one throws it again; it is all comparatively restful and orderly. But when one plays ball with an otter the situation gets out of hand from the start; it is the otter who throws the ball – to a remarkable distance – and the human who fetches it. With the human who at the beginning is not trained to this the otter is fairly patient, but persistent and obstinate refusal meets with reprisals. The same upside-down situation obtains when being dried by otters. The otter emerges tempestuously from the sea or the river or the bath, as the case may be, carrying about half a gallon of water in its fur, and sets about drying you with a positively terrifying zeal and enthusiasm. Every inch of you requires, in the view of a conscientious otter, careful attention. The otter uses its back as the principal towel, and lies upon it while executing a series of vigorous, eel-like wriggles. In a surprisingly short space of time the otter is quite dry except for the last four inches of its tail, and the human being is soaking wet except for nothing. It is no use going to change one's clothes; in a few minutes the otter will come rampaging out of the water again intent upon its mission of drying people.

Doubt

"I have but little doubt what the good brother of Cold-

ingham monastery really saw. St Cuthbert had been praying at the water's edge, not, as the brother thought (it was, one must bear in mind, night, and the light was poor) up to his neck in the waves; and it was entirely the condition of the saint's clothing after he had been dried by the otters that led the observer to deduce some kind of sub-marine devotion. Clearly, too, it was an absolution rather than a simple benediction that the now shivering and bedraggled saint bestowed upon his tormentors. In the light of my interpretation St Cuthbert's injunction to silence falls neatly into place, for he could not know of the brother's misapprehension, and not even a saint enjoys being laughed at in this kind of misfortune."

(From *Ring of Bright Water*, by Gavin Maxwell (London: Longmans, 1960).

Gavin Maxwell was famous for his books about the otters that lived with him in his West Highland retreat"

This episode in Cuthbert's long active life illustrates once again the essential sympathy that the true saints have not just for the birds and animals but for the whole of creation. These saints never lost sight of the fact that for the true Christian it is God not man who is the master of creation.

All too many people, even some high-ranking clergy in the Church, all too often lose sight of this fact.

St Jerome and his lion

St Jerome (c. 342-420 AD) is one of the most important figures in the early centuries of the Church. He was responsible for the creation of a Latin version of the Bible derived in the case of the Old Testament from the Hiver version rather than the Septuagint (the version in the current use among the Jews). This version called the Vulgate dominates the scriptures of the Church down to the recent centuries, when a more scholarly approach was adopted. But this great man was also famous for his relations with animals, notably with a lion.

Jerome had had a varied career before he became a convert, then a priest and eventually thanks to his scholarship a cardinal. He moved from Western Europe to Bethlehem, where he worked on his Bible translation.

"On a day towards even Jerome sat with his brethren for to hear the holy lesson, and a lion came halting suddenly in to the monastery, and when the brethren saw him, anon they fled, and Jerome came against him as he should come against his guest, and then the lion showed to him his foot being hurt. Then he called his brethren, and commanded them to wash his feet and diligently to seek and search for the wound. And that done, the plant of the foot of the lion was sore hurt and pricked with a thorn. Then this holy man put thereto diligent cure, and healed him, and he abode ever after as a tame beast with them."

[*The Golden Legend* by Jacobus Voragine (1275), ch. 146, translated into English and printed by William Caxton, 1483.]

Pious

The lion was the subject of other pious legends which are also detailed in *The Golden Legend*. This story was read as an instance of the saint's humble love of all animals, which derived from his experiences as a hermit in the Syrian desert.

But reading it today it also has a significance drawn from the fact of natural history, like St Cuthbert's otters.

Jerome may well have known more about lions than his later hagiographers and commentators. Col. Jim Corbett, the author of that classic book *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*

(London: Oxford University Press, 1946), explains how it is that some tigers, usually an animal that stays well away from humans, turn into man-eaters.

"A man-eating tiger is a tiger that has been compelled, stress of circumstances beyond its control, to a diet alien to it. The stress of circumstances is, in cases out of ten, wounds, and in the tenth case old age. The wound that has caused a particular tiger to take to man-eating might be the result of a carelessly fired shot and failure to follow up and recover the wounded or be the result of the tiger having lost its temper killing a porcupine."

Porcupine

The tiger which encountered the porcupine had lost an eye and had got some fifty quills, varying in length from one to nine inches, embedded in the arms and under the pad of the right foreleg. So what the legend simply describes as a 'thorn' might well have had a serious outcome.

Jerome had had a varied career before he became a convert"

By the way, the lion of St Jerome was not - despite what Renaissance painters might lead us to believe - the familiar African lion to be seen in the wild and in so many zoos. It was in fact the Asiatic lion, a smaller creature with a different kind of mane and carriage. (One can be seen, if I remember rightly, among the preserved higher mammals on the second floor of



St Jerome treating the lion for its injured foot.



The arrival of the lion, as imagined by a Renaissance artist

the Natural History Museum in Merrion Square in Dublin (when it is open).

Today the Asiatic lion is restricted to the Forest of Gir, a nature reserve in the Indian State of Gujarat. However in earlier times it was found in Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Persia and across much of south Asia. They were well known in Palestine; with many place names derived from them, and there are many allusions to them in the Old Testament. Lions would have been found in the canebrakes along the river Jordan flowing into the Dead Sea to the

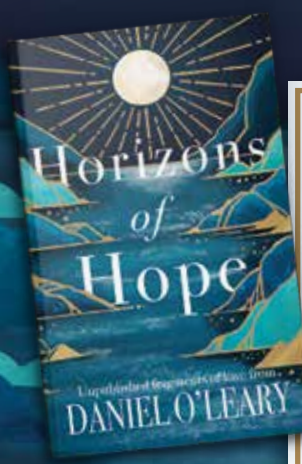
east of Bethlehem, which is where St Gerasimus, in the Orthodox traditions, is said to have encountered his lion. But it would seem more likely that Jerome's lion came down from the then heavily forested Judaeon Mountains to the west of the town. Today these forests are gone and with them the lions.

The lion features in very many medieval and early modern images of St Jerome, especially at work in his study. It was a potent symbol of the kindly, intimate association possible between wild beasts and those of a saintly character.

➔ Next week: 'St Francis of Assisi and the wolf of Gubbio'

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Trócaire

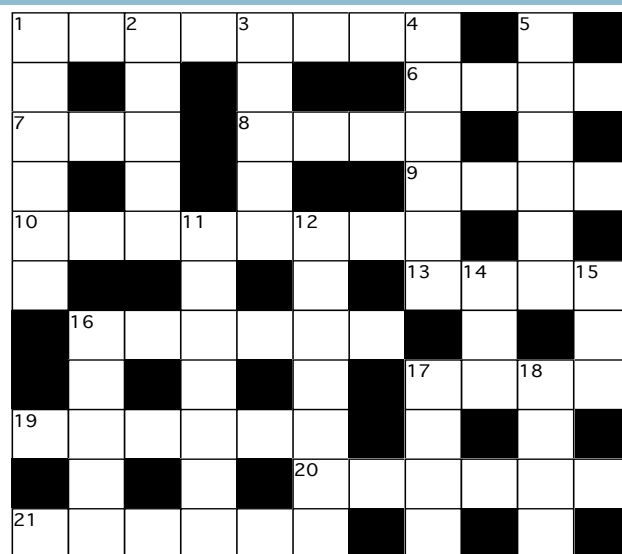
It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call **Grace Kelly** on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives.

Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

Crossword Junior

Gordius 396



Across

- 1 Rays of brightness from our star (8)
- 6 Tidy (4)
- 7 An animal's foot (3)
- 8 "The boy was ____ 11 years"
- 9 Covered a cake with sweetness (4)
- 10 Coming from the country where you'll find the pyramids (8)
- 13 A baby of this animal is called a kid (4)
- 16 In this position, you may win a silver medal (6)
- 17 Jump over a rope (4)
- 19 This person rides waves on a board for sport (6)
- 20 You use it to rub things out (6)
- 21 Cut some bread, for example (6)

Down

- 1 The last meal before bed (6)
- 2 City in Co Down (5)
- 3 It pumps blood around your body (5)
- 4 "I like a story with a happy ____" (6)
- 5 Use it to take photographs (6)
- 11 The largest ocean in the world (7)
- 12 Paid no attention to (7)
- 14 Tree which gives us acorns (3)
- 15 Spinning toy (3)
- 16 A pirate's flag shows a ____ and crossbones (5)
- 17 You wash yourself with this and water (4)
- 18 A thought (4)

SOLUTIONS, AUGUST 12

GORDIUS NO. 520

Across – 1 Ebb 3 Prearranged 8 Athens 9 Sleeping giant 11 Stick insect 13 Weeds 15 Indiana 16 Touched 20 Yeast 21 Diner 23 Vodka 24 Adequate 25 Almost 26 Mathematics 27 Did

Down – 1 Evangelised 2 Beheaded 3 Pinot Grigio 4 Assayed 5 Areas 7 Dog 12 Kind-hearted 13 Wendy 14 Sport 17 Hardwood 18 Tangent 22 Rouse 23 Volts 24 Aim

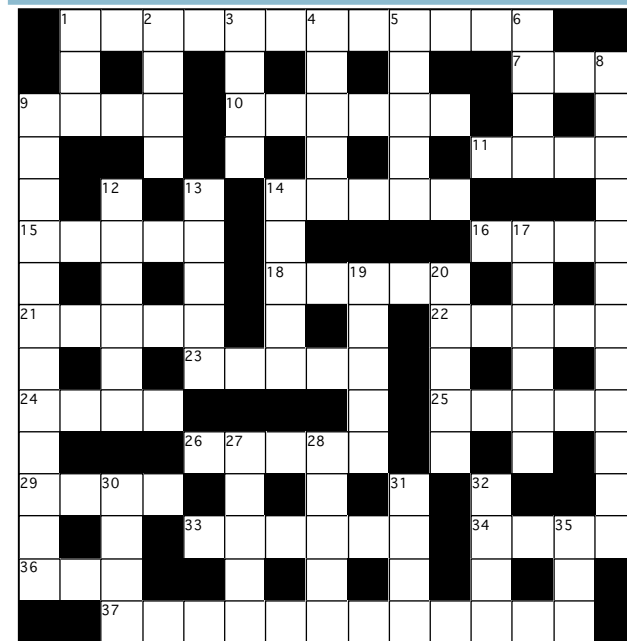
CHILDREN'S No. 395

Across – 1 Ancestor 7 Train 8 India 9 Opinion 10 Imp 11 Ant 12 Greater 15 Take 17 Needle 20 Church 21 Fawn

Down – 1 Astronaut 2 Chariot 3 Singing 4 Onion 5 Sharper 6 Admitted 13 Ranch 14 Bear 16 Ash 18 Elf 19 Law

Crossword

Gordius 521



Across

- 1 The maniac let Jay out to find sharpshooting frontierswoman Martha Jane Cannary (8,4)
- 7 Male sheep (3)
- 9 Item of cutlery (4)
- 10 My wish is thwarted by caprice (6)
- 11 Mock, taunt (4)
- 14 Sterling coin of small value (5)
- 15 Mindless, silly (5)
- 16 Speak to God (4)
- 18 Motorists have to pay them - that rings a bell! (5)
- 21 Small statue seen in some gardens (5)
- 22 Material made from flax (5)
- 23 Weathered, or out of practice (5)
- 24 In Greek mythology, the ship in which 5 down sailed (4)
- 25 Stringed instrument (5)
- 26 Jovial (5)
- 29 Name adopted by Gabrielle Chanel, fashion great (4)
- 33 Bram, writer of 'Dracula' (6)
- 34 Wheels spin on this, confusing Alex (4)
- 36 Angling stick (3)
- 37 It can carry astronauts into orbit again and again (5,7)

Down

- 1 Sound like a dove (3)
- 2 & 6d Might a reek lie around

this one of America's Great bodies of water? (4,4)

- 3 Cuts grass (4)
- 4 Clan (5)
- 5 He upset Jonas by searching for the Golden Fleece (5)
- 6 See 2 down
- 8 Do this and you may repent at leisure, according to the adage (5,2,5)
- 9 The crockery being thrown has travelled through space! (6,6)
- 12 Asian garment (6)
- 13 Illness characterised by high temperature (5)
- 14 Walkways (5)
- 17 Payment demanded by kidnappers (6)
- 19 Area where a motorist can pull in to rest, etc (3-2)
- 20 Human who is owned by another (5)
- 27 Device which facilitates the pouring of a measure of spirits (5)
- 28 Is partial to some Somali kestrels (5)
- 30 Bounders (4)
- 31 An official language of Pakistan (4)
- 32 Grain used in brewing (4)
- 35 Munster river (3)

Sudoku Corner

396

Easy

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 9 | | | | | 5 | 1 | 8 |
| 1 | | | 3 | | 5 | | | 6 |
| 5 | | 2 | 9 | | | 3 | | |
| | 1 | | | 7 | | 2 | 3 | |
| | | | 5 | | 8 | | | |
| | 6 | 4 | | 1 | | | 5 | |
| | | 1 | | | 2 | 6 | | 5 |
| 2 | | | 1 | | 6 | | | 3 |
| 6 | 5 | 9 | | | | | 7 | 2 |

Hard

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 6 | 9 | | | 8 | | |
| | | | | 5 | 2 | | | |
| 9 | | | | 8 | | | 3 | |
| | 2 | 9 | 1 | | | | | 7 |
| | 3 | | | | | | 5 | |
| 6 | | | | | 5 | 3 | 9 | |
| | 9 | | | 6 | | | | 1 |
| | | | 7 | 1 | | | | |
| | | 8 | | | 9 | 5 | 7 | |

Last week's Easy 395

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 4 |
| 4 | 7 | 2 | 9 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 6 |
| 6 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| 5 | 2 | 9 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 7 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 1 |
| 3 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 2 |
| 1 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 7 | 2 | 6 | 5 |
| 9 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| 2 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 9 |

Last week's Hard 395

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 9 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 3 |
| 3 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 5 |
| 8 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 1 |
| 6 | 4 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 8 |
| 5 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 2 |
| 7 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 5 | 9 |
| 9 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| 4 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 7 |
| 2 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 6 |

Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter



Priests are defenceless against slanders told with glee

I HAD A BOUT of cellulitis this summer, a sore dose. I don't know where it came from, though my doctor speculated that an insect bite under the skin on my foot probably caused the infection. I have often had cellulitis in the past, so I know the solution: rest with feet elevated, and antibiotics (and moisturising my feet regularly, the doctor added). I was fortunate that this bout coincided with that week of extreme heat in July, in which sitting down with feet elevated might have been my lot anyway — though the cellulitis copper-fastened that decision.

From relative health on a Sunday, by Monday I was reduced to hobbling around with a stick, unable to stand. Bar stools were procured for Mass, one at each of the key spots, and ministers of the word and Eucharist were recruited to carry the load with me.

Spectacle

Most priests are probably like me: we hate causing a spectacle. We hate drawing attention to ourselves and away from people whom we know have far graver problems. We hate the distraction, from the message we are trying to share, to our own situation. But



the bottom line is that someone attending a Mass I celebrated in July might summarise the Mass not with tidbits from the homily or pearls from the altar, but with the one sentence summary: "Fr Bernard has a sore foot!" And that would never be the message I would want people to bring home with them. I would imagine many priests know what I mean and how unwelcome it is to be the unwitting centre of attention.

Having said all that, a physical ailment is easier to cope with for a priest than the psychological assaults that come the way of priests in parish ministry. An example: a friend of mine met a 'man in a pub', who proceeded

to tell my friend what a terrible priest I was, how stubborn and unsympathetic. The trouble was that the instances quoted by the aforementioned man were each of them untrue and unjust, though this did not stop him from continuing to share them. Maybe he didn't want the truth to get in the way of a good story.

Rumours

Priests in parishes are defenceless against slanders, rumours, stories told with malice and glee. Sometimes these tales pass us by, fortunately; other times we have friends who try to inform and defend, in which case we are fortunate. And the shadow of the cross falls into every life.

Physical ailments are unfortunate and can distract from the Good News we are trying to share, but they never wound us as deeply as the stories put out by those who don't like us.

All of this is a long way of asking prayers for your priest, asking you to encourage and support him. Your care may bring forth a harvest of vocations to serve the Lord into the future (because only a happy and supported priest will encourage others to share his life).

● Earlier this summer, I took to avoiding Garda checkpoints, due to a lack of up-to-date discs on the windscreen (all now rectified, thank God!). A colleague told me a story that encouraged me. A parishioner of his was stopped by the guards after some dangerous overtaking, and was asked for her licence. Not only could she not produce one, but she had to admit to never having one, in over 50 years of driving. That must have meant a lot of checkpoints avoided in half a century (and it put my dilemma into perspective!). People can be so funny.

Sign of the times

Pandemic arrangements for Mass pose a big problem for people used to receiving Holy Communion on the tongue. Government guidelines preclude this manner of receiving, and churches wishing to keep people safe follow the official advice. However, some will not agree. I have heard of one church which keeps a special set of tweezers in the sacristy press, for giving Communion in the sacristy after Mass. Using this, the priest transfers a host from the ciborium lid to the tongue, hopefully avoiding cross-contamination: a sign of the lengths to which some priests will go to, to satisfy the (sometimes scrupulous) flock.



The Pope with a Lebanese flag at his 4 August audience, at which he appealed for the people of Lebanon.



The Little Way Association MILLIONS STARVING IN MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

Your help is urgently needed

Economic and social problems are afflicting Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. Political problems have been exacerbated by covid, such that many are poverty-stricken. In

his audience of 4 August, the Pope said: "Today I would also appeal to the international community to offer Lebanon concrete assistance, not only with words but with concrete actions in undertaking a journey of resurrection." More than 80% of Syria's population live in poverty. Four fifths of Yemeni people need humanitarian aid. Cardinal Bechara Rai of Lebanon says his country is host to two million refugees in addition to the four million population. Brother Hailegabriel Meleku, OFM Cap, writes: "The Capuchin brothers and students of Kobbo mission, Ethiopia, evacuated the mission to save their lives. Many people are displaced, some killed. There is no telephone line, no water, no electricity, no transport in the town. There is a shortage of food and everything. The war is causing many bad consequences in the country. Kindly keep our mission in your prayers."

Please will you help?

The Little Way Association is in touch with the hierarchy and missionaries in these afflicted countries. Every penny or cent of your donation will go WITHOUT DEDUCTION to the church working to help the destitute in this region. Please send whatever you can today.



"Jesus wills that we give alms to Him as to one poor and needy. He puts Himself as it were at our mercy; He will take nothing but what we give Him from our heart, and the very least trifle is precious in His sight." ~ **St Therese**

HAITI EARTHQUAKE EMERGENCY APPEAL

Thousands of injured and homeless people urgently need help

Your donation, large or small, to The Little Way Association's appeal for the earthquake victims in Haiti will be sent direct, without deduction, to provide emergency kits, food, shelter, water, sanitation and medical supplies for the thousands of injured and homeless people.

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