

The Irish Catholic

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Galway parish priest calls for calm over direct provision row

Chai Brady

The parish priest of Oughterard in Galway has called for calm among a Galway community protesting the potential opening of a direct provision centre in their town.

Local protests began last week after concerns that a hotel just outside the town was being converted into a direct provision centre.

Fr Michael Connolly PP told *The Irish Catholic* that there was a lot of "fear" in the community. He said: "My job here now is to really help people, there's a lot of emotion at the moment, so the first thing is you want to get people more calm, rational and speaking in a more reflective and respectful tone."

"The first thing is I acknowledge now the strong emotions being stirred on certain matters, regards to a lack of consultation, local resources, but I think the biggest thing is the direct provision centre itself: forcing people to sit in a psychological damaging environment for years on end."

Protestors

A crowd of about 1,000 protestors gathered outside the parish church's grounds over the weekend while Fr Connolly was not there, who said he had given no authorisation for the gathering in that location.

He said: "I wasn't present in the parish. It came across in a poor light. I'm here now and I want to know exactly what's going on with people."

This comes as Justice Minister Charlie Flanagan asked residents to "step back" and allow for

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Praying at the ploughing



Young people enjoy the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin's stand at the Ploughing Championships. One of the initiatives spearheaded by Bishop Denis Nulty is 'Prayer at the Ploughing' which invites people to vote for their favourite prayer. The theme of the Church presence at this year's festival is 'Digging Deeper – Rooting for Christ', a continuation of Bishop Nulty's campaign exploring new ways for people to understand their faith.

MARY KENNY

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Managing Editor: Michael Kelly, editor@irishcatholic.ie

Assistant Editor: Greg Daly, greg@irishcatholic.ie

Northern Correspondent: Martin O'Brien, martin@irishcatholic.ie

Multimedia Journalists: Chai Brady, chai@irishcatholic.ie

Colm Fitzpatrick, colm@irishcatholic.ie

Newsroom: news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026

Books Editor: Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie

Layout: Declan Moroney

Advertising: advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874094

Accounts: accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874020

Magnificat: magnificat@irishcatholic.ie

Office hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
9.30am–5.30pm

Shop: shop@irishcatholic.ie

Managing Director: Garry O'Sullivan

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When we create God in our own image and likeness

An elderly priest – long since gone to his reward – once recounted a story to me about his time as an ecclesiastical inspector. What we now call a religious education advisor, his job was to tour schools ensuring that children were properly prepared for the reception of the sacraments.

On the whole my priest raconteur spoke glowingly about how hard the teachers worked to impart the Faith to the young people. Though on more than one occasion, he recalls the anxious anticipation of a teacher when the priest would ask a question of a pupil who had, perhaps, not been as assiduous as he or she might have been in paying attention in religion class.

“We can become cranky, overly-defensive and preachy with the wider society where many people choose to live their lives as if God doesn't exist”

He told me of one particular episode when he asked a question of a boy who evidently didn't know the answer but instead moved the conversation on to the dog the boy had noticed in the priest's car. “What's your dog called, Father?” the lad enquired. An old-hand, the priest knew when someone was trying to divert him so not to be out done he said to the boy: “Did Jesus have a dog, Tommy?” Quick as a flash the boy replied, “Oh, no Father”. Surprised by the speed of the reply, the priest pressed the boy about how he knew with such certainty.

“If Jesus had a dog, Father, it would've been there at Calvary – and the Bible doesn't mention that,” he said.



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

The boys understanding of canine fidelity and his belief that a dog would not have abandoned the Lord at the darkest hour impressed the priest and the teacher breathed a sigh of relief.

Rigour

In introducing his *Jesus of Nazareth* trilogy some years ago, Benedict XVI reminded readers that in essence Christianity is little more than friendship with God. It wasn't that Benedict – one of the foremost minds in Europe – was dismissing intellectual rigour, he was pointing to the fact that rigour can sometimes lead us away from a Faith experience with the Risen Christ to an arid dogmatism that becomes obsessed with formulations and proofs.

In the proclamation of the Gospel, goodness always comes before truth and beauty for it is in simple acts of kindness and charity that one sees the Faith vividly lived. Goodness, of course, is not exclusive to Christians so in any kerygmatic sense beauty and truth are the obvious next steps.

It is often hard to live this evangelical key in a culture that is often deaf to the more difficult tenets of the Christian faith. We can become cranky, overly-defensive and preachy with the wider society where many people choose to live their lives as if God doesn't exist. But, it is in moments like this – moments of exile – where Christians must strive even harder

to show the face of Christ to a jaded world.

Speaking at the weekend, Pope Francis told pilgrims in St Peter's Square that often we are tempted “to believe in a God who is more rigorous than merciful, who defeats evil with power rather than forgiveness.

“But it's not so,” the Pontiff said, “God saves with love, not force – he proposes, not imposes”.

“In the proclamation of the Gospel, goodness always comes before truth and beauty for it is in simple acts of kindness and charity that one sees the Faith vividly lived”

The God revealed to us in Jesus Christ is not a God of vengeance who punishes his people. He is not a capricious judge indifferent to human suffering, he is a God who became human and accompanies us through life.

In our impatience with our own weaknesses and a sinful world, we cannot lose sight of this.

Only the God who reveals himself to us will attract a world that often appears indifferent. An image of God fashioned by our own prejudices and obsessions will only seek to further alienate people.



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Priest call for calm over centre plans

» Continued from Page 1

the selection of new direct provision centres for asylum seekers.

However, he added that no decision has been made whether the hotel would be used for this purpose, and that the State ensures education and healthcare provision for residents when decisions are made where to locate direct provision centres.

Calling for “calm, respect-

ful, reasonable language”, Fr Connolly added: “From the very beginning of our Church, from the beginning of our society in Ireland, we've been welcoming the poor and the stranger... we are a welcoming people.

“As a parish priest I'm here in a supporting role, an encouraging role, so I can help all local inhabitants even those that are not practicing or who are non-baptised.”

What do you think?



Let us know by writing to:

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

Free primary education a 'myth' – Catholic schools chief

Greg Daly

Free primary school education has largely become a myth in modern Ireland, the head of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association has said.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Seamus Mulconry said that "in primary schools, free education is substantially a myth". He said his social media observation that the State was, in practice, ignoring its constitutional duties is "absolutely true".

"Does anyone know which Minister announced the end of free primary education? It's in the Constitution the State shall provide for free Primary Education, just seems to be ignored in practice," he wrote on Twitter.

Running costs

Building on comments made to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills, where he explained that Irish parents pay €46 million every year to subsidise the basic running costs of schools. Mr Mulconry told this newspaper that this is taking an immense toll on principals and that as a bare minimum the Government should restore the annual capitation grant for schools to its pre-2010 amount of €200 per year.

"The overall picture we're getting is that principals are under increasing strain through lack of resources, and there is an urgent need to restore the capitation grants to stop the ship sinking," he said. "It won't solve all the problems but it's an important step to stop the ship from sinking entirely."

Stressing that a restoration of the grant is necessary to reduce pressure on principals, since a failure to do so will lead in time to a degradation of Irish education, Mr Mulconry said the State has the capacity to turn the situation around.

"If we were given the overspend from health for two years we would revolutionise primary education, starting at principals focused on teaching and learning, which is what they need to be doing and schools the same way," he said.

As an example of the pressures

on modern schools, he pointed to how schools have not been provided with resources to enable them roll out a new programme based on learning through play.

Materials

"We all agree learning through play has an important role to play, but they have provided zero resources to practice it in schools: nothing has been given and for materials schools are reduced to begging for toys off parents," he said.

"I'm getting sick of the fact that

the health budget is sucking all the money out of the public purse, and education is being left behind," he continued.

"Primary education is the foundation, and if you don't get it right it's very hard to fix it afterwards. If you do get it right you have a very solid foundation. Even if a person wanders off the track later on they can come back on – once a person can read and write the educational door is always open and they can always come back."

See Pages 14-15.

Racism has no place amongst Catholics – Bishop Leahy

Staff reporter

Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy has slammed people who think of themselves as "faithful Christians" while espousing sinful racism views. He warned that "racism and intolerance should have no place in Irish society".

In his homily at Our Lady Help of Christians church in Milford, Limerick to celebrate the centenary of Salesians in Ireland, Bishop Leahy said that the Salesians were people of joy and open to welcoming others and that everyone in society today needs to live that example.

"In a rapidly changing Ireland, we all have to work together to respect everyone and that means a complete avoidance of the use of offensive language. It means building up of relationships at local level so that everyone can feel welcome wherever we gather," he said.

Persecution

Bishop Leahy said that Catholics always have to "remember that some of those who come to Ireland have escaped from very dangerous situations, including religious persecution."

"On top of the trauma of losing their homes, their jobs and often their families, they now face the challenge of being strangers here, of starting again without a network, where language, the education system, customs and culture are quite different," he said.

Bishop Leahy recalled how the hierarchy had recently spoken about "the rising number of incidents of racism and xenophobia carried out on social media, in quiet conversations or by open verbal onslaughts and sometimes by those who consider themselves faithful Christians".

Twins welcomed to the 'family of families'



Two pairs of twins, Lauren and Callum Ging and Hailee and Olivia Fernandez-Carter are welcomed into Mountmellick parish community in Laois over the weekend.

JOE WALSH TOURS | AUTUMN PILGRIMAGES 2019



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Farmers support age restrictions on pornography – poll

Chai Brady

Farmers are heavily in favour of age-restrictions on pornography, with only 3% believing there should be free access.

An *Irish Examiner*/ICMSA poll of farmers and farming families found that 72% believe strongly there should be age restrictions, with 14% slightly agreeing.

Support for the restriction was similar across all age groups, peaking among people aged 45-54 at 90%.

Speaking to *The Irish Examiner*, Kate Dawson, researcher in the School of Psychology at NUI Galway and the Unesco Child and Family Research Centre explained some issues implementing age restrictions.

Regulation

Even if some of the major sites were regulated, she said: "To circumvent age restrictions, under-18s could dig a little deeper to find unregulated sites, and inadvertently be brought websites that host more extreme or even entirely illegal material."

The poll also found that 72% of farming families believe that tech giants have a negative effect on Irish society, with 43% of them strongly agreeing.

Just 11% of respondents disagreed that social media giants have a negative impact. According to the poll, 79% of those aged over 65 were the most likely to distrust companies such as Google and Facebook and believe they have a negative impact on society.

Even people aged under 35 were sceptical, with 68% believing they are not a positive force.

Waterford penal-times church re-opens



Staff reporter

An Irish Church that existed in the penal times has been re-opened in Waterford, with a new footpath to it blessed by Bishop Phonsie Cullinan.

Mass was celebrated in St Patrick's Church on Jenkin's Lane

throughout the 18th Century when Catholics suffered severe persecution. The earliest Mass recorded there happened in 1704.

A large number of faithful attended, with Bishop Cullinan leading the faithful in prayer in the Old Chapel, before the blessing of

the new laneway took place outside.

Blessed Edmund Rice, founder of the Christian and Presentation Brothers, often attended St Patrick's as a young merchant.

Cllr Pat Fitzgerald shared his delight at the reopening of St Patrick's saying: "My mother

brought me here as a child and I always felt that there was something missing from the city when I passed by and these gates were closed. It is a historic gem in the middle of the city that reminds us all where we came from."

'Incredible response' to Passionist priest's stolen oils

Greg Daly

A prominent Northern priest has spoken of being moved by "an incredible response" after he revealed that the holy oil container he had used since his ordination was stolen over the weekend.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Passionist Fr Gary Donegan, who became a household name when helping shield schoolchildren from loyalist mobs during 2001's Holy Cross Ardoynce dispute, described how his Mass kit was stolen from his car while

he was in Dublin for the All-Ireland football finals replay and had stayed overnight to watch the Fermanagh ladies team play in the junior final.

Upsetting

"There was a lot of stuff gone, because basically my car is my home because I do a lot of travelling," he said. "A lot of the things that are gone are annoying and upsetting, but the fact is that in the glove compartment was a little bag, and in it I carry the rite of anointing which would

have been used for years and years."

Explaining that the bag contained the text of the rite of anointing, rosary beads, a pyx for carrying Communion hosts, a stole, and some Vicks to protect his nose if at a "rough scene", as well as a relic of St Charles of Mount Argus, Fr Donegan said its most treasured content was a holy oil stock given to him as an ordination present 28 years ago.

"It was a wee leatherette thing, and had been every-

where in the last 28 years. I had anointed my grandparents with it, my little nephew baby Michael who had died, I had climbed the tower of Holy Cross after a young man had hung himself and anointed him from it up there," he said, describing using it when anointing young men who had died in road accidents and it riots.

Touched

"It was basically everywhere with me," he said, describing how he had been touched by

how within a few hours over 2,500 people had read a post about it on Facebook by his friend Brian McKee, with kind words from such individuals as Fr Liam Lawton and one-time Dublin footballer Ger Brennan.

Commenting on how he had since had an opportunity to talk about it on RTÉ's Live-line, he said, "It's ironic that I could get seven minutes talking about anointing and sacred stuff on prime-time radio, so some good came out of it."

Signing up for a new habit



Glenstal Abbey in Limerick celebrate the First Profession of Bro. Justin.

Happy mams mean happy families – research

Mothers have a vital role in children's mental health and families staying together, new research suggests.

According to a study by the UK's Marriage Foundation in conjunction with Lincoln University, a mother's happiness is nearly twice as important as a father's when it comes to family life and the chances of a couple staying together.

The findings are based on the Millennium Cohort Study, which tracked 13,000 married and cohabiting couples, starting nine months after the birth of their child in 2000-1.

Happy mothers were

more likely to have children who remained mentally well, to remain close to their teenage daughters, and more likely to have a stable relationship with partner, the study found, while fathers' happiness had no bearing on their children's mental health.

"Despite all the social changes of the last 50 years, whether we like it or not, there is an ingredient for keeping the whole family happy, which is only available from the mother or mother figure," Marriage Foundation founder Sir Paul Coleridge said.

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Facing up to acceptance in small hours insomnia



Mary Kenny

You think about strange things when you wake up with a bout of insomnia at 3am. One of those small-hours anxiety I've had is that my driving licence expires in eight months' time. And I'm worrying whether it will be renewed. Will I pass the tests for older drivers, of alertness and awareness, and will my eyesight be judged good enough?

I tell myself that millions throughout the poorer world have no transport, let alone a driving licence. Millions, even in the developed world, live without a car, and the environmental campaigners tell us we should use private vehicles far less.

Yet the motor car has represented, for me, as for many women, a sense of independence. Even if only for short distances, the



Newly-elected leader of the Liberal Democrats, Jo Swinson.

LibDems have to answer a big question

Jo Swinson, the 39-year-old leader of the Liberal Democrats in Britain, inherits the mantle of the greatest friend Ireland ever had at Westminster, William Gladstone, a committed Christian.

But will the LibDems even allow committed Christians in the future? The party whips are vetting applicants for conformity on LBQT rights and abortion.

David Alton – the best friend the pro-life movement has at Westminster – may well be in a minority of one in his newly-revived party.

car means not having to summon taxis, wait for infrequent buses, or ask for lifts.

Public transport

In cities, more young people are choosing not to drive – because public transport in cities has been steadily improving. In some European cities, public transport is superb. But in outlying towns, or in the country, a car can seem a necessity.

I stayed in a part of rural France

last month where you could scarcely survive without a car. There was no public transport and taxi services were patchy.

This, it was explained to me, was why the *gilets jaunes* had been on the warpath: their diesel-run cars had become ruinously expensive.

So I worry about the possibility of not having my licence renewed.

But you know what? We have to hope for the best, but accept what we cannot change.

If I lose my licence – well, here's an opportunity to practice acceptance, and offer it up!

The other side of the coin is that I now really appreciate the pleasure of getting behind the wheel, and having that independence of movement while I can.

You don't miss the water until the well runs dry, they say: but the thought that the well might run dry surely turns our thoughts to an appreciation of water.

Male savagery is no play thing

New productions of *The Playboy of the Western World* are part of the theatrical cycle and this great Irish classic will be again at the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin next week.

It is a drama written with much poetry by J.M. Synge (who died of tuberculosis in 1909, aged 38). Yet I remain a little uncomfortable with the storyline.

Christy Mahon claims that he has murdered his father, and that immediately makes him some kind of hero. The girls of the village flock around him, while Pegeen Mike and the predatory Widow Quin battle for his favours, which delights Christy so much that he reflects: "Wasn't I a foolish fellow not to kill my father in years gone by?"

Admittedly, Pegeen Mike's official fiancé, Shawn, is a bit of a drip, and Pegeen flatters the patricide Christy as "a fine lad with the great savagery to destroy your da". There's more in that vein, although in the end Christy is not the macho man he seems.

As a classic, the *Playboy* deserves regular revivals, yet at a time when there are claims that "toxic masculinity" is the cause of domestic violence, a story in which women dote on men of "great savagery" does prompt questions.



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Climate strikes inadequate compared to concrete action – principals

Chai Brady

Catholic schools must take concrete action in tackling climate change, not just engage in protests, according to Irish principals.

The climate strike organised on September 20 is a continuation of strikes aimed to raise awareness of human impacts on the environment and the need for sustainable practices. Schoolchildren have been at the forefront of these strikes around the world.

Although the idea of the strike can make “everybody stop and ask what’s going on”

according to Principal Carmel Dunn of Hollybush Primary School in Derry, “there has to be follow-on from that”.

“Striking isn’t enough if you’re not also following through with proactive initiatives within school,” said Mrs Dunn.

“I don’t necessarily always think a strike is the right way forward, I think if we gather the children together, not so much as a strike, but an event to raise awareness of the damage that climate change is doing. Then each school... take a small project that heightens the awareness of children about what we can

do to try and in some way mitigate against the damage of climate change.”

Commitment

Mrs Carmel describes Hollybush as an eco-friendly school which has biomass heating and solar panels. They recycle, compost, keep chickens and have a wildlife garden, an orchard and vegetable beds. The school was the first in the North of Ireland to win the Ashden award in 2013, which acknowledged their commitment to sustainability.

According to a letter sent to parents seen by this paper, Principal Bernadette Fitzger-

ald of St Joseph’s College in Dublin noted that students were using social media to organise attending “a range of climate related events”.

The letter reads: “Students and staff in St Joseph’s College have made a collective effort over the last number of years to live more sustainably and promote greater care for the earth. Given that these protest marches are likely to be a recurring feature into the future, it is important that the school adopts a safe, sustainable and educational response going forward.”

The school instead decided to arrange a climate change

related activity in the school on the date of the protest led by their Green School Committee. Instead they will focus on promoting sustainable living, waste prevention, proper recycling and “ways to reduce our carbon footprint”.

Regarding schoolchildren striking John Curtis, the General Secretary of the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) who represent voluntary secondary schools in the south, said that they “have advised schools to engage with student councils and parents’ associations at local level on the issue”.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Faith groups discuss role in promoting peace in NI

Faith-based groups across Northern Ireland are taking part in ‘Good Relations Week’ demonstrating the unique role religious groups and leaders can play when it comes to promoting peace.

It began on Monday, September 16, with over 200 events across Northern Ireland included, such as exhibitions, discussions, performances, seminars and tours.

Under the theme ‘People Making Change for Peace’, events will cover issues including cultural diversity, dealing with the past, faith, sport, education, young people and language.

Marking International Day of Peace, representatives of the four main churches will meet with local church leaders from North Belfast at The Duncannon on the Antrim Road on Friday September 20 for an event called Blessed are the Peacemakers which will be marked by a tree planting ceremony and a symposium will explore the challenges and barriers to peacemaking – as well as the biblical imperative.

Rural homeless figure rises among ‘absence of supports’

The Peter McVerry Trust highlighted the growth of homelessness in rural Ireland during the Ploughing Championships this week. Their report sets out five actions to tackle the issues, saying the number of homeless adults in rural counties rose to over 1,000 for the first time in May 2019. As of July 2019 there were 1,400 homeless people in rural Ireland.

Pat Doyle, CEO of Peter McVerry Trust said that different strategies must be used for rural locations, due to dispersed locations and “and the absence of appropriate supports in terms of mental health and addiction services”.

He added: “Among our five recommendations is the need to have a distinct rural homelessness strategy that takes into consideration the different ways in which we have to tackle more dispersed locations and the absence of appropriate supports in terms of mental health and addiction services.”

Global mission to be theme of top cardinal’s AMRI address

Greg Daly

A top Vatican cardinal is to address Irish religious next month on the Church’s missionary role in the wider world.

Ghanaian Cardinal Peter Turkson, the first head of the Holy See’s new ‘super-dicastery’, the Office for Promoting Integral Human Development, will speak on the theme of ‘Mission Today in Our Common Home’ at the Autumn conference of AMRI, the Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland.

As head of the Office for Promoting Integral Human Development, Cardinal Turkson is responsible for spearheading the Church’s responses to climate change, the mass movements of people, and people trafficking. Widely touted in 2013 as a possible

successor to Pope Benedict XVI, he was largely responsible for the first draft of Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si’: On Care for our Common Home*.

The cardinal will headline the conference which will also include speakers tackling related issues such as people trafficking, migrants and refugees, climate justice, and homelessness, while leadership teams will present their contemporary missions and workshops will be centred on *Laudato Si’*, dialogue with Irish society and the whole area of loss and grief.

AMRI will follow the October 3 conference in Dublin’s Emmaus Conference Centre with a joint symposium with World Missions Ireland in Thurles on October 12 entitled ‘Crossing the Others: The Changing Face of World Mission’.

Four new novices in Cork



Four new novices, Bro. Bruno Mary Kelleher, Bro. Nathan Peer, Bro. Mark Murphy and Bro. Laurence Augustine Rigney, join the Dominicans and receive their habits over the weekend in Cork, on the Feast Day of the Irish Province, the Exaltation of the Cross.

RTÉ Cork closure plans ‘calculated’ move by Dublin

Reforms to RTÉ should not come at a cost to the national broadcaster’s regional public service role, Senator Rónán Mullen has said. Responding to statements that RTÉ is considering selling its Cork Leaside studio, the independ-

ent senator said this looked like “a calculated act of limited self-preservation for a model of operations that is already excessively Dublin-centric”.

Adding that “there is already a significant disparity in how the regions beyond

Dublin are served”, Senator Mullen agreed that difficult structural changes are inevitable for RTÉ, but said any changes should maintain the current cost-effective and publicly engaging regional presence.

IC to embark on next Holy Land pilgrimage

Staff reporter

Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin will lead a special Christian Solidarity Pilgrimage to the Holy Land from February 16, 2020 for eight nights.

Visiting Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem and the other sites associated with the life of Jesus, the trip will be a unique opportunity to experience the Holy Land with experienced guides.

Co-ordinated by *The Irish Catholic*, the trip puts a special focus on reaching out to the minority Christian community in the region.

Price is €1,540pps which includes dinner, bed and breakfast for eight nights, all coach transfers and admission to all sites.

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Field Hospitals: Irish charities are answering the Pope’s challenge to “go where the people suffer”: Pages 18-23



Martin Mansergh

The View



City and county libraries, along with other cultural bodies, make a vital contribution to public education, not least in remembering and deepening understanding of important anniversaries.

The relatively new Lexicon on the seafront in Dún Laoghaire is hosting two exhibitions at the present time, co-sponsored by the Peruvian and the Polish Embassies respectively. Both use the relatively economical but effective technique of illustrated explanatory panels, with text that distils and incorporates some of the latest knowledge on the subject. Not involving much in the way of physical artefacts, the panels are easily reproduced, and can be exhibited in more than one venue or one country at the same time, as well as being easy to move around.

The first exhibition concerns a native of Dún Laoghaire from an Ulster family, and is entitled 'Crossing Borders, Forging Republics: Roger Casement and his Experience in Peru'. Casement was a long-established member of the British Consular Service, who investigated and reported to the Foreign Office on gross humanitarian abuse of native workers in the rubber plantations.

On the first occasion, it was the Congo in 1904, which resulted in their owner King Leopold II of the Belgians having to surrender them as his personal demesne to the Belgian state.

Some years later, in 1910-11 he investigated similar activities on the borders of Peru in 1910-11 in the upper reaches of the Amazon Basin, which were ultimately the responsibility of a company quoted on the London Stock Exchange, where the victims were members of the Putumayo tribe. His officially published report contributed, according to the Exhibition, to the subsequent collapse of the Amazon rubber trade.

Report

It should be highlighted that Casement arranged for a copy of his report to be sent to Rome. A year later in June 1912, Pope Pius X issued a strongly worded encyclical *Lacrimabili Statu* on the Indians of South America addressed to the archbishops and bishops

Casement and the Amazon and the 'lust of lucre'



Roger Casement.

of Latin America, saying that "when we consider the crimes and outrages still committed against them, our heart is filled with horror".

He asked "what can be so cruel and barbarous as to scourge men and brand them with hot iron, often for most trivial causes, often for a mere lust of cruelty" in turn derived from "the lust of lucre".

“Some six million Poles died during the war, of which three million were Jews”

Given that these things happened far from the seats of power, he urged his episcopal brethren "to give special care and thought to this cause", and he enjoined on them to remember that Christian charity "holds all men, without distinction of nation or colour, as true brethren". They should condemn any form of enslavement, as his predecessor Pope Benedict XIV had done in 1741.

The detailed accounts of Casement's mission have been edited in two volumes by Angus Mitchell, the second one published by the Irish Manuscripts Commission. In a letter to his friend, the historian Alice Stopford Green, he confessed that he was looking at all this "with the eyes of another race – of a people once hunted themselves", and at a people "whose instinct of life was not of something to be

eternally appraised at 'its market price'".

In 1913, after his retirement, he was indignant at severe hardship that he found in Connemara, and at the lack of interest in the so-called 'United Kingdom', and wishing that "something could be done to remove the stain of this enduring Irish Putumayo from our native land".

Casement's idealism led him to seek succour from Germany as war broke out. Although he was executed in 1916 and his reputation cynically and gratuitously disfigured, he nevertheless remains one of the most important architects of the independence movement.

The one element that jars a little is a photograph of the Casement champion Dr Herbert Mackey with Captain Otto Walter, who landed Casement at Banna Strand, but who was earlier said to be responsible for firing the torpedo that sank the Lusitania in 1915. What is not said is that there was a large loss of life, and that it nearly brought the US into the war at that point.

Despots

The second exhibition at the Lexicon, 'Fighting and Suffering: Polish Citizens during World War II', marks the 80th anniversary of the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, the immediate cause of the outbreak of war. Poland disappeared from the map of Europe following three partitions between 1772-95, sponsored to their eternal shame by 'enlightened despots' so-called in Prussia,

Russia, and Austria, but was reconstituted at the end of World War I, when those defeated empires were broken up. The western allies, Britain and France, provided no material help to the Poles, while the Soviet Union, having previously been staunchly anti-fascist, joined in the carve-up, while helping itself with German agreement in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939 to the Baltic States, which were extinguished for 50 years.

While an estimated 70,000 Poles died fighting the Germans in the five weeks of war, the Soviets massacred tens of thousands from the Polish élite in 1940 at Katyn, something long

denied, and embarrassingly uncovered by the Germans, when the Soviet Union, having been invaded, was on the Allied side.

“Casement's idealism led him to seek succour from Germany as war broke out”

According to the Exhibition, some six million Poles died during the war, of which three million were Jews. The Warsaw ghetto uprising was brutally put down by the Germans, without hindrance from advancing Soviet troops in 1944.

The Polish Government in exile in England supplied military manpower to the allied effort, and reminded people by poster that they were 'the First to Fight'.

At the end of the war Poland fell into the Soviet sphere of influence, and was communist-ruled till 1989.

However, the strong position of the Catholic Church, the election of a Polish Pope John Paul II in 1978 and the Gdansk strikes which brought Lech Walesa to prominence led to Poland playing a key role in the unraveling of the Soviet bloc. Current authoritarian tendencies are regrettable, but should be corrected, if at all possible, without creating ruptures.

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Doctrine not politics will split the Church

The Pope has to be careful to give equal attention to the legitimate political concerns of all Catholics, writes **David Quinn**

It is now over a year since Pope Francis visited Ireland. There has been remarkably little interest in that fact and almost no commentary about it. That's not a good sign. On the contrary, it seems to indicate that the visit had little impact.

As we know, the crowds that attended the final day Mass in Phoenix Park were disappointingly small. Between 130,000 and 300,000 turned up. It was a very wet day, of course, and there had been lots of newspaper headlines beforehand about long walks and even of outbreaks of disease and temporary morgues.

I couldn't go that day for family reasons, so I went to Mass in my local church. The congregation seemed about normal size. If people were at their usual Sunday Mass,



Massgoers wait for the closing Mass of the Pope's visit at Phoenix Park in Dublin last year. Photo: CNS

it meant they weren't going to Phoenix Park. Maybe we have become spoiled.

The same certainly cannot be said of the Catholics of Madagascar. When the Pope said Mass there recently, almost a million attended despite poor weather, poor public transportation and the fact that many hadn't eaten since the previous afternoon because they simply couldn't afford to buy food on the way.

This is now the difference

between Catholicism (and Christianity) in developed countries and the developing countries.

While lots of African Catholics worry about keeping themselves above the bread line, we are having rows about the circumstances under which divorced and remarried Catholics can receive Holy Communion. This is not to trivialise that issue, but it is to put it in perspective.

There is even now talk in the West of a schism in the Church. On his way out to Africa, Pope Francis was asked about criticism of his papacy by some American conservatives. He said he was "honoured" by such criticism. "Criticism is always helpful", he stated.

On the way back, he was asked if he feared a schism was on the way. He responded: "There always is the schismatic option in the Church. It's a choice that the Lord leaves to human freedom. I am not afraid of schism...I pray for them not to happen, as the spiritual health of many people is at stake."

Alienated

Why would a schism happen? Some reports have focussed on the way some conservative Catholics in Europe and America are becoming alienated from the Pope because of his stance on economics, the environment and migration.

He certainly inclines towards the liberal side on all these things, that is to say, he favours redistributionist economic policies, stronger action to fight climate change, and more open borders instead of more closed borders.

There is nothing wrong with any of this, *per se*, and they are positions that are perfectly consistent with Catholicism. But a Catholic is perfectly free to back policies that favour economic growth over higher taxes (higher growth generally reduces unemployment).

“Pope Benedict often spoke about the need to care for the environment”

A Catholic can also take the view that policies to fight climate changes can't have the unintended consequence of contracting the economy and therefore driving up poverty.

With regard to immigration, he or she can conclude that this has to be at a level that is compatible with caring for the needs of the local population and not damage social cohesion.

In fact, Pope Benedict often spoke about the need to care for the environment and look after the poor. But he also spoke out strongly about the right to life and in defence of marriage. Pope Francis also does this. How-

ever, by his own admission he has de-emphasised them somewhat compared with his two immediate predecessors. A Pope has to be careful to give equal attention to the legitimate political concerns of all Catholics.

What a pope emphasises, politically speaking, will create tensions within the Church. It is a very hard balance to get right. As mentioned, the political concerns of Catholics in Africa will not always be the same as the concerns of Catholics in say, Germany. And within Germany (or Ireland for that matter) there will be Catholics more inclined to support liberal or left-wing parties and others leaning towards conservative parties.

But in the end, these issues will not provoke a schism in the Church. Schisms are caused by doctrinal issues, not public policy ones (although the two can overlap). While Pope Francis has opened up a debate about the circumstances under which divorced and remarried Catholics can receive Communion, he has been careful to go no further than this.

On the other hand, there are plenty of Catholics who do want him to go further, much further. They want him to permit married priests (not a doctrinal matter, by the way). They want him to allow women priests, artificial contraception, to overturn Church teaching on

homosexuality, and sexuality generally. And so on.

The Church in Germany has been the one hinting most broadly on the need to alter teaching on some of these matters, and the German Church has plenty of money, which makes it influential.

“There are plenty of Catholics who do want Francis to go further”

There is a concern that Francis, or a successor, might start to listen to these voices more intently. Francis certainly likes to condemn those he believes are too 'rigid'. We don't tend to hear too much equivalent criticism of those who are too 'lax'.

If a future Pope was to start altering doctrine, then we would have a schism in the Church, and as Francis says, we have had them in the past. But since the Reformation, Catholics who have gone into schism have tended to be small, splinter groups. If there was a radical overhaul of core doctrines such as the ones listed above, we could expect to witness something much bigger.

Fortunately, we are not close to anything like this yet, and it certainly won't be caused by the 'political' stances Francis takes.

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The fact that we now live in a society highly ideologised by social media and rogue journalism makes inevitable that we must ask of each encounter “is this person friend or foe?”, writes **John Waters**

When you stand up to be counted on what have become the era's most ideologically-mobilised questions, you find yourself encountering disfavour almost every place you go. A certain coolness in a shop assistant, a muttered epithet by a passer-by that you convince yourself you're not quite sure you heard right – these are just a couple of the symptoms of a condition that gradually puts you on high alert all the time.

No doubt, this leads to over-defensiveness and misreading of signs, but it also allows one to avoid blundering in with an affable word only to be met by a chill sufficient to facilitate a multiple tooth extraction.

In the past couple of years, I have had occasion to present numerous times at hospitals as a patient or out-patient. Here, when this same syndrome rears its head, it is obviously decidedly more worrying than in the great outdoors.

Friend or foe

The fact that we now live in a society highly ideologised by social media and rogue journalism makes inevitable that, on encountering someone in a medical context for the first time, a question will unaided formulate itself to the effect: is this person a friend or a foe? Until recently, such musings would have been self-evidently unworthy.

In other professional contexts, it is increasingly taken for granted that practitioners have a right to be partisan with regard to matters that previously they had a professional

Friends and foes and the culture of death



responsibility to remain at least outwardly neutral on. Judges, for example, are now widely discussed in terms of whether they are ‘progressive’ or ‘conservative’, even though the role of a judge is to be neither – to be, in fact, disinterested, to have no personal view, or at least none that is publicly detectable.

A judge used to be a trained practitioner in the adoption of objective positions, in sifting facts and principles in a manner all but impossible for someone without such training. Before long, such judges will be a distant memory, as the outcomes of contentious issues become a matter of headcounts rather than judicious deliberation.

“We are already beginning to look away from old people’s frailty, and therefore their humanity”

As a sometime patient, I feel I already detect signs of a similar shift in the medical profession. This should strike everyone, even the most ideological among us, as disturbing.

There is what I detect as a distantly related phenomenon that, as someone who has twice been seriously ill over the past couple of years, I have observed in conversations with people who have become aware of my infirmity. This I identify as a tendency to glide over illness, to ask after one's health only perfunctorily, and always in a manner as to suggest that it would be preferable for one to provide

assurances that things are at least improving.

Sometimes the syndrome takes the form of someone hastening to assure you that you've ‘never looked better’, or to pooh-pooh the idea that you could have been as ill as has been claimed. The net effect is to imply that illness is something that threatens to come between us, that it is the duty of the sick person, in the interests of sensitivity, to pretend to be well.

“The net effect is to imply that illness is something that threatens to come between us”

And there is a further related syndrome that I have begun to notice more or less simultaneously, which sometimes strikes me in hospitals when I am waiting to be seen or scanned or x-rayed. I would call it a premonition rather than a mere intuition or feeling. It is, to coin a phrase, triggered by the sight of a gurney being pushed along a corridor carrying an elderly person to an operating theatre or scanning room.

Support

A decade ago, such a sight would have been unremarkable, carrying no ominous portent. Now, however, the duck having been broken on the phenomenon of legalised death-by-doctor, one finds oneself involuntarily asking: how much longer will such sights be seen? For how much longer will our society continue to support the right of an elderly person to live out his or her days for as long as God and nature decree, and avail

of the medical care our society offers those whom it considers worth preserving?

My sense is that our culture is already preparing us for this next phase, by ‘training’ us to see sickness as a form of self-

indulgence and the old as a separate category of the human. And, because the old are increasingly hidden away from everyday society – in purpose-built ‘nursing homes’ – when we happen upon such a person, we are

already beginning to look away from their frailty, and therefore their humanity.

I cannot predict exactly how all these signs will continue to converge and unfold, but already I can feel a change in the air that tells me that, by the time I myself become elderly (not far into the future), even some of my fellow geriatrics will have been recruited to the mission of breaking down our last taboos in this regard. I also sense that, should I persist in my tendency to oppose what is called progress, our mysterious new culture of death will find ways of ensuring that I become the enemy of my death-desiring fellows.

John Waters will speak on the issue ‘Society, professionalism and the doctor-patient relationship: investigating integrity and trust in ideological public spaces’ at the 5th Annual Conference of the Irish Catholic Doctors Learning Network in the Emmaus Retreat Centre in Swords, Co. Dublin, on October 5.

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Ireland is at the mercy of a Quangocracy

The cost of the National Children's Hospital – coming in at a touch over €3billion – has been a source of some frustration to voters over the last year. The cost of the national broadband plan, another €3billion, has infuriated others. When you point out to people that the Government has managed to almost double health spending, while, at the same time, tripling waiting lists, they shake their heads, and wonder how it is possible.

But what if I told you that, during a housing crisis, the Government spends more than twice as much money subsidising non-governmental organisations and lobby groups than it does on building houses?

The budget for the Department of Housing in 2019 is €2.4billion. This represents an increase of over €700m on the previous year as Fine Gael desperately tries to get ahead of the housing situation. Also, this year, the State will provide €5billion to various charities and lobby groups, some of which provide services to the State, but many of whom exist primarily to lobby the Government on political issues.

I'm speaking here about groups like the National Women's Council, a feminist lobby group that campaigns on issues like abortion and equal pay and provides no services at all to the public. Another example is Pavee Point, which campaigns, and regularly appears in the media, on behalf of travellers. Its most prominent recent achievement was securing a recognition that travellers are not ethnically the same as the rest of us, a policy it is now using in order to lobby for yet more funding for traveller groups. There are too many others to list here, but you can probably think of a few yourself.

No public service

This Government promised, when it came to office, to have a "bonfire of the quangos", saying that it would get rid of many hundreds of these organisations that exist to provide no public service other than to appear on the radio calling for something or other. And yet, not only have none been abolished, but we spend more on them than ever before. Why is this?

Well, primarily, it's because of the vital role these organisations play in our politics. The media love them, the government loves them, and most importantly of all, they provide vital jobs and cash for the public relations industry that props

Government-funded lobby groups crowd out the ordinary citizen from the decision-making process writes **John McGuirk**



An artist's impression of the completed National Children's Hospital in Dublin.

up so many of our politicians.

Here's how it works. Journalism, these days, is a poorly-paid profession, especially for the newer, younger recruits who fill so many newsrooms. The fastest way to dramatically improve your income, if you are in journalism, is to leave the profession and join a charity or a lobby group, working in communications. When you go for your interview, it is important that you have shown interest in the area the lobby group works in, so young journalists will often work very hard to cultivate a relationship with these groups, promoting their stories and giving them space in the media.

This increases the influence of the lobby group, and in turn increases the employability of the journalist.

These groups are also vital for politicians. What better news story can you get, when you make a decision or an intervention

in a debate, than 'Lobby group welcomes Minister's decision' or 'Lobby group welcomes politician's comments'.

The media absolutely loves them, because they provide a constant flow of news. When stuck, you can always run another story about how the Women's Council says more needs to be done on equal pay for women.

Cutting services

These groups have become so powerful now that any attempt to cut their funding is dangerous, because it will be met with a news story about how six human rights organisations condemn a 'devastating' cut in funding for children's disability groups, or whatever. Whether the group concerned actually provides any services doesn't matter – if you're not cutting services, you'll be accused of 'weakening the voice' of 'the most vulnerable'.

The other thing about these groups is that they hunt in packs. How many times do you hear one or other of them on the airwaves saying things like "our campaign is supported by over 50 human rights organisations"? Well, of course it is. All for one, and one for all.

“The HSE set up a campaign group to lobby the HSE on smoking laws”

The biggest problem, though, is that they crowd out the ordinary citizen from the decision-making process. Nearly all of these groups come from a left-wing perspective. There is no Government-funded lobby group for taxpayer rights. There is no Government funded taxpayer group opposed to abortion – but plenty in favour. There is no Government funded lobby group for people concerned

about immigration – but plenty out there to campaign for migrant rights.

Five billion euro, all poured into this industry. It clogs the airwaves from morning until evening, dictating the terms of the public debate.

It provides a whole array of left-wing political activists with jobs. We even have absurd situations where the Government creates organisations to lobby itself – for example, the HSE set up a campaign group to lobby the HSE on smoking laws. Apparently, they needed to pay someone to tell them to do what they wanted to do already.

Fine Gael promised to do away with all this, but it's been a completely broken promise. Instead, when you turn on your radio, you'll hear more and more voices demanding more and more money, or action, on their pet issue. Most of the time, you'll be paying for it.

We're all being taken for mugs. The Children's hospital is a scandal. But Ireland's Quangocracy? That's a disgrace.

“The fastest way to dramatically improve your income, if you are in journalism, is to leave the profession and join a charity or a lobby group, working in communications”

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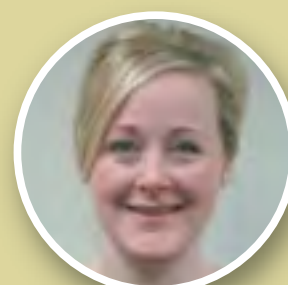
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Fifteen seminarians have begun their formation and academic programme for 2019 – 2020,” began the press release last week from the Catholic Communications Office (CCO) in Maynooth. “The new students are currently in formation in Saint Patrick’s College, Maynooth and the Pontifical Beda College, Rome; with a number beginning their propaedeutic programme in other locations in Ireland and abroad. This brings to 68 the total number studying for the priesthood for Irish dioceses.”

So far, so apparently clear, but for anybody who has paid attention to vocation numbers in the Church in Ireland over the past few years, this statement should have immediately invited questions.

Last year, after all, the bishops’ spokespeople began their press release on men beginning formation for diocesan priesthood in 2018-2019 by announcing that 17 men had begun formation, with five beginning formation at Maynooth, four beginning formation at the Neocatechumenate Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Dundalk, and eight beginning propaedeutic years – pre-seminary years not unlike the novitiates of religious orders – in Ireland and abroad.

Even a straightforward comparison of the two statements, then, should lead to some very obvious questions about the men who began a propaedeutic year last year. Are men who completed a propaedeutic year and then went on to Maynooth, say, being counted as having begun their formation this year? If not, why isn’t a total figure given for numbers beginning seminary proper? Do the 15 seminarians include pre-seminarians? If they do, why are pre-seminarians called seminarians in these statements? Is there double-counting going on?

Alarm bells

Even without grappling with such questions the most cursory comparison with press releases over previous years should be causing alarm bells to ring. Fifteen men starting in 2019, down apparently from 17 in 2018, down in turn from 19 in 2017? In Britain they talked of a ‘Benedict Bounce’ in the years following the 2010 papal visit; it can take time for seeds to germinate, but if this decline doesn’t reverse soon we’re bound to hear talk before long of Ireland’s ‘Francis Flop’.

And how many men are going to the national seminary in Maynooth this year? Last year the figure was an all-time low of five, following on from the previous year’s all-time low of six. This year, though, there’s nothing about this in the press release. Queries to the Catholic Communications Office (CCO) shed no light on the situation.

An email sent moments after the press release was received,

asking how many men were going to Maynooth, how many to the Pontifical Beda College in Rome, and how many on propaedeutic years went unanswered, leaving this newspaper unable to report the story in an accurate way; as it stood the press release invited more questions than it answered, and a ‘churnalistic’ recycling of it ahead of deadline would have been bad journalism, lazy and even misleading for Catholic readers.

A second email later that day after *The Irish Catholic* had gone to press likewise went unanswered.

It was only on the following day, after a third email had been sent, reiterating the previous day’s questions and asking for a comprehensive list by dioceses of the 68 men currently in formation, distinguishing between seminarians and propaedeutic students as appropriate, that the CCO replied.

“We have no further information for publication beyond the press release,” came the belated response from the official spokespeople for the Church in Ireland. At the time of writing there has still been no response to my prompt reply asking who the paper could contact asking for further information.

“The website for the National Vocations Office is in some ways a dispiriting place to visit, with – apparently – no news updates since May 2019”

The hierarchy’s spokespeople haven’t always been so laconic on this subject, it’s worth pointing out; it is possible, after all, to get a good sense of what the national vocations picture was like from previous years’ press releases.

Ten years ago, for instance, the CCO issued a press release declaring that 36 men were starting priesthood studies for Irish dioceses.

“36 new seminarians are to commence priesthood studies for Irish dioceses in 2009,” the release began. “26 will be based in the national seminary of St Patrick’s College, Maynooth; seven will study at St Malachy’s College, Belfast; two will study in the Beda College in Rome, whilst one candidate is entering the pre-seminary discernment year (propaedeutic year) in Valladolid, Spain.

“The new seminarians range in age from 18 to mid-40s and come from a wide variety of education and employment backgrounds,” the press release continued, before moving through the usual quotes welcoming and praising the men and then detailing where the 36 new men were coming from, diocese by diocese.

This kind of breakdown, this kind of transparency and

Banish the vocational smoke and mirrors

Clarity and honesty are urgently needed around Ireland’s low vocation numbers, writes **Greg Daly**

accountability enabling the Faithful to see the reality of Ireland’s vocations crisis, used to be the norm for the Church in Ireland. Year upon year press releases used to be issued giving diocese-by-diocese breakdowns of the number of men entering formation for the diocesan priesthood in Ireland: 26 men in 2006, 25 in 2007, 20 in 2008, 36 in 2009, 16 in 2010, 22 in 2011, 12 in 2012, 20 in 2013, 14 in 2014, and 17 in 2015.

2015’s press release began by declaring that the national seminary had welcomed 17 new seminarians for their introductory programme, and that a few weeks later four of these would head north to continue their studies at St Malachy’s College in Belfast; 13 men, by implication, were starting in Maynooth.

Of the 17 first-year seminarians, the press release revealed, three were from Dublin, three from Down & Connor, two from Killaloe, and one from each of Armagh, Cork & Ross, Derry, Galway, Ossory, Raphoe, Tuam, and Waterford & Lismore.

* * * * *

Since 2015, however, there’s been a staggering silence around how many men have entered formation for our dioceses each year. How many men are entering Maynooth? How many people complete propaedeutic years and go on to seminary proper? Which dioceses, generally speaking, do best at

helping young men hear God’s call to priesthood?

It’s worth remembering that the Church in Ireland was capable of answering these questions and sharing those answers between the clergy and laity even a few years ago, when vocational numbers, though hardly robust, were higher than they are now. If proper numbers aren’t being supplied, it’s hardly because it’s too difficult to supply them, and it’s worth remembering now that we in Ireland have since 2017 had a National Vocations Office.

The website for the National Vocations Office is in some ways a dispiriting place to visit, with – apparently – no news updates since May 2019. It’s a pale shadow of ukvocation.org, the website of the English and Welsh bishops’ National Office for Vocation, which as well as trying to encourage all types of vocations also gives an unvarnished picture of the overall vocations scene in England and Wales.

In a section headed ‘Communicate Vocation’ our neighbours’ website features sub-sections on personal testimony, video resources, schools, the 2018 Synod on Youth, the Anglo-Welsh Church’s national vocations framework and – crucially – statistics. For each of 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 it offers clear breakdowns of vocational patterns across England and Wales, whether for the permanent diaconate, the

diocesan priesthood, or religious life, with these figures further being broken down to allow for propaedeutic years and different stages of religious profession.

Equation

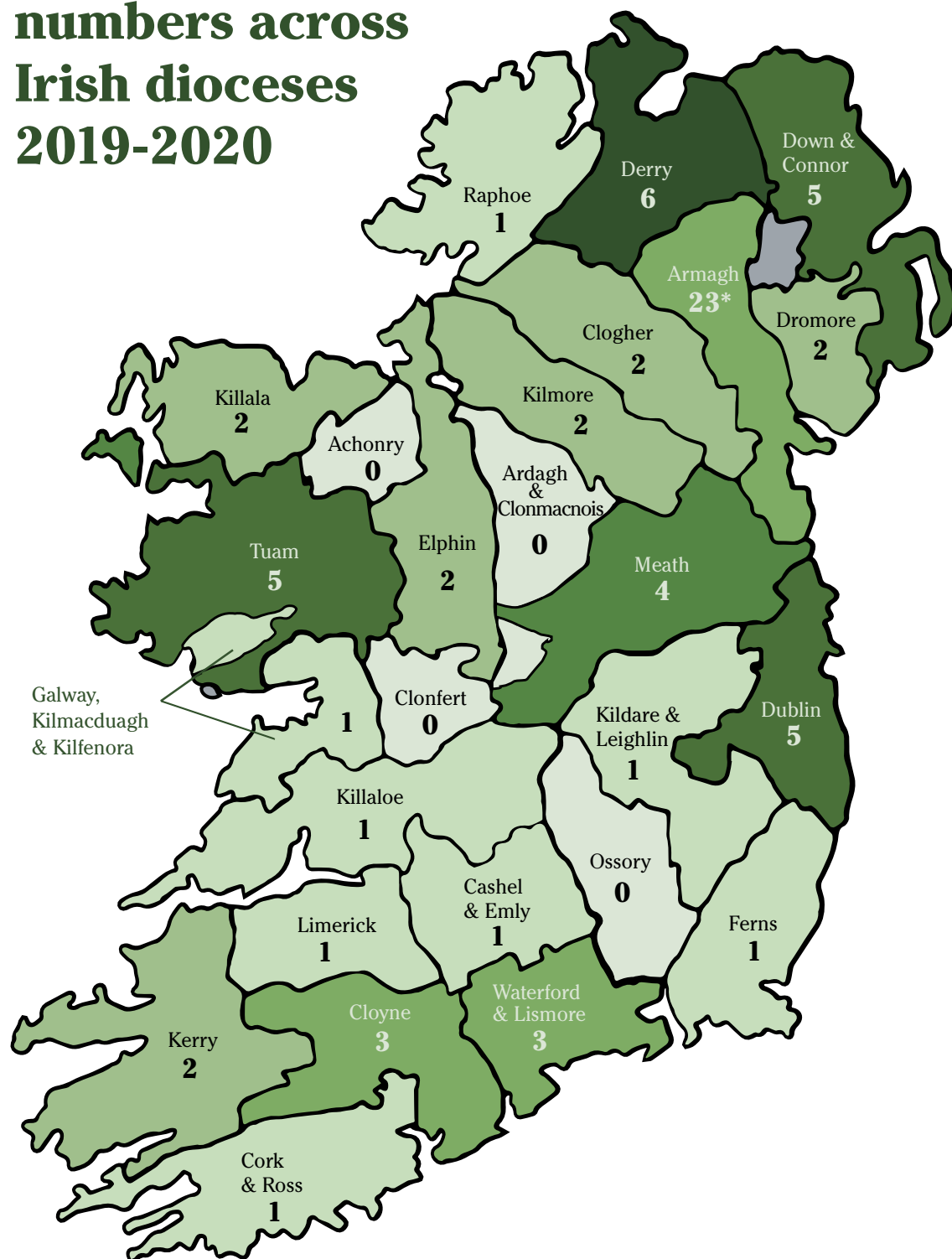
The figures normally are released around Easter, so it will be a few months before the 2019-2020 picture can be seen, but even looking at 2018 tells us a lot. Following the equation that Total Number of New Entrants = Entrants into Propaedeutic Year + (Entrants into Diocesan Seminary – Transfers from last year’s propaedeutic Year) gives an overall figure for 2018 of 27, down from 41 in 2017, up on 2016’s 25, and down on the 42, 35, 44, 33 and 46 new entries in each of the previous five years.

The 2018 figures, then, were almost the worst England and Wales had seen in eight years, but even so it looks as though they were almost double the numbers who came forward for Irish dioceses – and this despite England and Wales having a roughly comparable number of practicing Catholics to Ireland, with two dioceses alone having four men each entering formation. It seems 21 women entered religious life in England and Wales in 2018, with 16 men doing so, and 38 men began formation for the permanent diaconate.

* * * * *

The statistics include a simple

Priesthood formation numbers across Irish dioceses 2019-2020



*The 23 men in formation for the Archdiocese of Armagh includes 20 students in the Redemptoris Mater Neocatechumenate seminary in Dundalk.

bar chart showing the vocations trajectory year by year in England and Wales going back to 1986, including straightforward seminary entry figures, propaedeutic year entry figures, and – of vital importance – combined totals modified to remove duplications. They also detail the average ages of entry into seminary and propaedeutic years – 36 in both cases – and summarise things with a simple table detailing the numbers of men currently doing propaedeutic years, in seminary formation, in other formation programmes, and overall: the total is 151.

Does anybody really think the Irish Church incapable of gathering and sharing this kind of information? Granted, silo mentalities can still thrive in Ireland, where dioceses, religious

orders, and even branches of the Church's bureaucracy can jealously guard their own patches, but most observers would feel the disparate parts of the Church in Ireland have nonetheless got better at sharing information in recent years. As numbers have declined, whether in the sanctuaries or in the pews, there has been little choice.

Good stewards

Some, of course, will say this kind of outlook is 'managerial' and 'bean-counting', excessively focused on quantity and heedless of quality, or will claim that even one soul brought to God, one soul helped to hear God's call is an achievement, and there is truth in these claims, but equally they don't express anything near the whole of the truth.

After all, anybody who knows

the Parable of the Talents will know that Our Lord expects his followers to be good stewards of his gifts and his resources, and numbers are one of a very small number of objective measures for how we are looking after and nurturing his Church.

Numbers should matter to Christians, and not just because there's a book of the Bible with that name; the New Testament, rather, is full of them not least in how it maps the growth of the Church.

Acts starts by describing how the nascent Christian community in Jerusalem consisted of about 120 brethren, of whom 12 were – after the enrolling and ordination of Matthias – deemed apostles, the first priests of the Church.

About 3,000 souls were enrolled in the Church at Pentecost, and some time after, around the time that Peter and John were arrested,

the number of men in the Church reached about 5,000. With numbers continuing to grow, and with disagreements over widows not being cared for, the 12 gathered the disciples and had seven men of holiness, wisdom, and good repute picked out for them to ordain as deacons.

Remember how the Second Vatican Council taught in *Dei Verbum*, its dogmatic constitution on divine revelation, that the authors of the Scriptures "as true authors consigned to writing everything and only those things which (God) wanted". In other words, it's not an accident that the early Church recorded its growth in terms of precise numbers – even if those numbers were intended symbolically as could happen in ancient historical writing, the point remains that the inspired authors of Scripture believed that numbers matter, and who are we to say different?

Anticipating difficulties and confusion around the seminary and pre-seminary entry figures, *The Irish Catholic* last month contacted every diocese in the country, speaking with vocations directors, diocesan communications officers, and even bishops. Some figures seemed confused, and in almost all cases sources were careful to stress that these figures were provisional, since it was always possible that people expected to start in Maynooth or Spain or wherever might at the last minute think more time is needed, or decide that a priestly life is not for him.

Anybody who knows the Parable of the Talents will know that Our Lord expects his followers to be good stewards of his gifts"

Allowing for this, however, our queries established that 10 men were on the cards to begin propaedeutic years, generally in Spain, these coming from Armagh, Clogher, Cloyne, Derry, Kildare & Leighlin, and Waterford & Lismore, with two from each of Dublin and Killala.

A further five men, two from Down & Connor and one from each of Derry, Dromore and Tuam, were expected to enter seminary straight away without a propaedeutic year.

This could, one suspects, tally with the 15 men announced by the CCO as having started studies this year for the priesthood, even if most of them were pre-seminarians rather than seminarians proper.

Against this, however, it seems that two men were also lined up to start at the Redemptoris Mater seminary in Dundalk for the diocese of Armagh, taking the expected starting numbers up to 17, with two more men hopefully beginning propaedeutic years soon, but after the beginning of the year, bringing the expected numbers of new men up to 19.

Does the 15 exclude these four extra men?

What of those men who started propaedeutic formation last year? It appears that just two men are entering seminary after propaedeutic years – such, at least, was the import of conversations between journalists from this newspaper and representatives of Ireland's dioceses. Two out of eight? Is there something wrong with our propaedeutic system? Or are our problems elsewhere?

It seems, too, that a mere five men are entering Maynooth this year, just like last year's five, and down slightly on 2017's then record-breaking low of six. Sixteen men, then, have entered the national seminary in the last three years.

Questions, again, must rear their head about the future sustainability of our national seminary, which was never envisioned as a giant, empty hulk in which just a couple of dozen seminarians would rattle around.

The Church has for too long acted as though maintenance mode is possible. It's not, of course"

We talk a great game in Ireland about how ours must be a Church in missionary mode, not just maintenance mode, but obstacles – needless obstacles – to getting a transparent and accurate map of our national vocational landscape show how far we are from this. Too often it seems we're not even in maintenance mode.

Newspapers have been full of headlines in recent weeks about a Kerry parish irate that it has lost its parish priest, distraught that in future a priest might not be located in their village and would have to drive 10 minutes from Killarney in an emergency; reportedly the matter has been taken to the Bishop of Kerry, the Archbishop of Cashel & Emly, and even the Papal Nuncio, with the Holy Father next in line for an appeal.

The real issue here is that the Church has for too long acted as though maintenance mode is possible.

It's not, of course – in just 35 or so years Ireland is likely to have about a seventh as many active priests as it does now – and yet time and again parishes react with shock when the façade of sustainability finally drops, and they rather than their neighbours are seen to pay the price. In a situation when the Church, or elements in the Church, make it difficult for the Faithful to understand just how dire our vocational situation is, these shocks are going to keep coming.

If we truly want a Church fit for mission, we need to find the courage to speak up, tell the truth, and recognise that crises really can be opportunities.



Ireland's parents and principals are struggling to keep primary schools afloat, writes **Greg Daly**

If there's a silver lining in the Government's banning oversubscribed schools owned by Catholic parishes from selecting on the basis of religion, it's that it removed another distraction from the real story in Irish primary education, which is that the State is not doing its job: it is not tackling the fact that more places are needed in Irish schools, and Irish schools are seriously underfunded.

"It was a constant – underfunding was consistent all the time," says Anne Savage, who retired last week after 23 years as principal of St Kevin's National School in Glendalough.

"If you can imagine if you're running a house or anything, if you have something like money issues it colours everything else," she tells *The Irish Catholic*. "The priority of what you're supposed to be doing at school as a principle or for the school's functioning is teaching and learning, and the underfunding of it is huge."

Pointing out that before the crash Ireland's primary schools were funded by the State to the tune of €200 per pupil, but that this was cut to €170, Anne says that a long-awaited rise this year will still leave funding levels far below what they were a decade ago.

Shortage

"No school is getting enough," she says, "so therefore they have to fall back on fundraising or fundraisers, and fundraisers are your parents' association, schools, boards of management – it's a very grey area, but basically as a cohort of parents and as a school body you have to raise money, and whatever you can do you do. You can have your cake sales and your book sales and whatever you do, we've done it all."



Parents paying to keep schools open



Her own school, which typically had about 135 pupils coming from 100 families, has had to raise about €10,000 every year to cover the shortage in funding coming into the school, with, she says, schools across the country being in a similar situation.

That this should be the case might startle people familiar with how the sole economically significant right explicitly identified in the Constitution is a guarantee that primary education should be free. Article 42.3 of *Bunreacht na hÉireann* promises: "The State shall provide for free primary education and shall endeavour to supplement and give reasonable aid to private and corporate educational initiative, and, when the public good requires it, provide other education facilities or institutions with due regard, however, for the rights of parents, especially in the matter of religious and moral formation."

For the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA), representing the boards of management of more than 2,800 schools across Ireland, the effects of the Government's failure to meet its constitutional obligation could hardly be more clear.

“It's easy to see that our total last year was €39,000 and there's nothing wasteful, there's nothing flamboyant, there's no staff being taken out to dinner...”

In its pre-budget submission for Budget 2020, the CPSMA stresses the achievements of Irish schools but lays down a stark warning about what it believes Government failures will lead to, declaring that it is "gravely concerned that underfunding, administrative overload, and the continuing substitution crises are leading to cumulative system stress across the primary education system".

"If these challenges are not addressed," it continues, "then primary education will be undermined with serious consequences for both the Irish economy and Irish society."

Improved and sustained investment is needed if we are to address the challenges facing primary

education in Ireland."

Shortfalls in the capitation grant for schools, as Anne Savage says, is something that simply cannot be sustained if schools are to be run.

"These are just rough figures, but if, say for 2016-17 we as a capitation grant got in €26,000. That is to cover everything and anything," she says, explaining that in her old school such basic costs as heating, lighting, water, and such security costs as monitored alarms, exit lights and fire extinguishers came in at about €9,500, or 36% of the school's total funding.

"Now, if you take the next section, which is a bit scary – I put this down as office and administration. You're looking at phone, postage, printing, photocopying, bank charges, and insurance. That comes to €16,000," she says, explaining that the most basic running and administration costs between them therefore use up effectively the entire grant.

"We've to pay a cleaner to come into the school," she adds. "We've to pay wages and for materials, that comes to €4,500, and then anything to do with educational aids, that could be subscriptions, recruitment, anything to do with the school would be another €7-8,000, and none of that is covered in the capitation grant, wherever you draw the line."

"It's easy to see that our total last year was €39,000 and there's nothing wasteful, there's nothing flamboyant, there's no staff being

taken out to dinner, lunch or anything," she says, explaining that this is the reality of funding for schools throughout Ireland. "If you're going on percentages, 100% is used up in the basics, the heating and lighting and... the insurance, which is 20% alone," she says.

Rising insurance costs and reduced State supports have been taking a toll on Irish schools for some time, of course, with the Archdiocese of Dublin admitting last year that about 40 schools across the diocese were in serious financial trouble, with some even having had to ask parishes to bail them out.

Even without parish help the reality is that the parents of children all across Ireland are doing an immense amount – beyond their taxes, of course – to help pay for their children's basic education.

"We have to acknowledge what the parents are doing," Anne says, explaining that sometimes controversial voluntary contributions from parents are a basic part of any school's funding system. "Our voluntary contribution is not large. It's €60 for an individual, and a maximum of €100 for any family, whether with three, four, five or six children. So it's not high by these standards, and we expect quite a good uptake because it is voluntary."

Even regardless of the contributions, schools need help



€46 million.

Feeding into this shortfall was not merely the cutting of the schools' capitation grant by 15% but a rise of 4.5% in the Consumer Price Index, pushing up the running costs for schools, and changes in the nature of education nowadays which requires schools to pay for internet connectivity and information technology maintenance. Small wonder, then, that Ireland's schools are having to turn to parents and communities in lieu of constitutionally-guaranteed State support.

"While certain schools had had voluntary contributions for luxury reasons, up in Dublin particularly, the rest of us did it out of necessity after that, and it's at the stage where we're dependent on it," laments Brendan.

Original idea

"The original idea was maybe voluntary contributions towards maybe a luxury the school couldn't afford normally, like maybe an all-weather pitch or something like that, but for the last four years it's been meeting the bills when the money runs out," he says. "That's what it's been for, that's what it's been all about, and parents put huge work into it."

"We ran 10 fundraisers last year, and if we didn't have the maintenance contribution we wouldn't balance the books, and we have to balance the books: you can't run a board of management and not balance the books. And when the pressure was on a few years ago it was really, really bad," he says, declaring the €8.50 being restored to the grant this year to be "not good enough".

"At a minimum it has to go back to the €200 per pupil" he says. "At a minimum."

There is, he says, a strange inconsistency too in how grants are provided to secondary schools – which, after all, have no constitutional guarantee in how they should be provided for.

"Now we always compare it to secondary schools, where the secondary school money has gone over €300 per pupil – ours is at €179 per pupil – but a unit of electricity still costs the same," he says. "I've no problem with secondary schools getting extra funding for their extra subjects and extra materials and whatever they need, but when it comes to the basic running costs of schools they should all be funded equally and that's all I'd be comparing with."

Older schools, he says, can have real struggles in paying their bills, not least because their heating systems can be anything but efficient.

"My electricity bill is huge because they wouldn't allow me to change from electric storage heating to gas or kerosene central heating a few years ago because we were on course for amalgamation," he says. "So we have electric storage heaters, 24-hour heaters, in operation in our schools. That would be fine if electricity were the cheapest form of energy – we'd actually be in line with all the



Brendan Horan (left) lobbying Mattie McGrath TD on Budget 2020.

climate change suggestions – but electricity in itself is the dearest form of energy in a school.

"I can't turn on a heater half an hour before the children come in and have it warm the classroom – I have to turn it on 24 hours in advance. So that's going to cost money, I can't touch it on weekends, I'm dependent on the ESB timers being right, I can't even go and adjust it and tweak it to be efficient, and it means we have to pay the bills," he says.

With such expenses, he says, it can be dispiriting starting the school year and realising that the money isn't there to fund new projects or programmes.

"When you come back in September and say we cannot do this because we do not have the money, that's the worst start to any school year," he says. "When you have teachers saying 'I've a new class, I've to get new materials,' and say to him 'sorry, we won't have the money till February,' sure half the year is gone then. That's why the maintenance contribution is so important."

* * * * *

Praising parents councils and boards of management for their work – the role of such volunteers in the Irish educational system is rarely noted, and hardly ever taken into account by those who advocate a fully State-owned-and-operated education system – he says that principals themselves lose a lot of valuable time dealing with funding shortages.

"The primary focus of any school has to be teaching and learning for the children, but if quite an amount of energy is taken up in coordinating fundraising, organising fundraising, collecting fundraising, and counting fundraising, well that's going to distract from all that other work," he says.

Acknowledging that a certain amount of fundraising always needs to be done for luxury items,

he says that the need to fundraise simply to keep the show on the road has to have an impact on education more broadly.

"You might be able to have more effect if they weren't being dragged left, right and centre with non-teaching-and-learning activities," he says.

“If quite an amount of energy is taken up in coordinating fundraising, organising fundraising, collecting fundraising, and counting fundraising, that's going to distract from schoolwork”

Indeed, Anne Savage says that with more than half of Ireland's principals being teaching principals who tend to teach full-time even regardless of administration duties, having to fundraise is an "undue burden".

"But it's the reality of schools that we have to undertake it," she says. "What other publicly-employed persons have to be responsible for making sure the roof is on their buildings?"

With maintenance contributions having to be sought from the families of children in schools, Brendan says it is in effect an 'education tax', and worries that this is a sign of serious problems in Ireland's education system.

"What I'm seeing with education in general – and I would tie in secondary school and third level in this – is that access to education sadly is becoming economic related," he says. "Those that can will access it, and those that can't, won't be able to access the higher levels of it as they go along. At least with primary everyone goes to primary school, and unless you resource that fully you limit the access for those children at all other levels."

from parents, she continues.

"The parents have to pay anyway, irrespective of how they do it: they could go and have a sponsored walk and put their names on the sponsor cards," she says. "It's a moot point saying 'we don't agree with voluntary contributions' when parents have to organise books of tickets or whatever."

A lot of schools, explains Brendan Horan, principal of Cahir Boys' National School in Co. Tipperary, prefer to call voluntary contributions 'maintenance contributions'.

"Our school has a voluntary contribution of €50 – well, we call it a maintenance contribution. And that's what most schools will call it, because that's what it does," he says. "It pays the bills, because the Government money doesn't. Like there's no grant between now and December, and the biggest bills are in November, December, January and February. At least in January and February you do get the capitation, but the money is run out between June and December. That's why we run the voluntary contributions."

Schools are forced to seek such maintenance contributions to meet their costs, he explains.

"The board of management can't run the school at a deficit which means they have to look for money and this is the time of year when it comes in. Every school has to do it because of the cost," he says.

"We were cut 15% – the equivalent of €30 per head – over three years, in 2011, 2012 and 2013," he continues. "Ruairi Quinn and Michael Noonan were the ministers responsible, with Ruairi Quinn in Education and Michael Noonan in Finance, and they did it over three years. From a media and public point of view it was done quietly, and the suffering only kicked in about two years after that."

“Our school has a voluntary contribution of €50 – well, we call it a maintenance contribution. And that's what most schools will call it, because that's what it does”

National figures point to the impact of this, with the CPSMA having last year commissioned Grant Thornton to conduct an investigation of the impact of this shortfall on Ireland's primary schools. The accounting and consultancy firm analysed the financial accounts of a representative sample – one in 20 – of Ireland's Catholic primary schools from 2015 and 2016, and estimated that the total contribution of parents and local communities to schools was over

Out&About

Clonmore group walk the walk in Portugal

PORTUGAL: Fr John O'Brien with a group from Clonmore Parish who recently finished the Portuguese Way of Camino De Santiago.



◀ **CARLOW:** Bishop Denis Nulty and parishioners take part in the Annual Baby Loss Remembrance Service in the Church of the Assumption, Tynock.

▶ **FRANCE:** Mary Cusack, Teresa Cullinan, Mary, Teresa Brady and Rita Quinn enjoying the sunshine in St Bartès on the recent Elphin Diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes.



KERRY: Kerry's Bishop Ray Browne launches the book *The Pattern Day Homilies* of Kerry's former bishop William Murphy. Photo: John Cleary



DUBLIN: Nora Hawkes – a 99-year-old former school principal – stands with Joseph O'Connell and Kevin Biju from Ard Scoil Ris in Marino in Dublin airport before their departure to Lourdes as part of the annual diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes. Photo: John McElroy

Edited by Colm Fitzpatrick
colm@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



KILDARE: Bishop Denis Nulty celebrates the Bush Mass at the Clogherinkoe Mass Bush Site which attracted parishioners of all ages.



DUBLIN: Kathleen Buckley and Florence McDonnell with Tom O'Connell and Guy Acton from Blackrock College before their departure for Lourdes. Photo: John McElroy



KERRY: Bishop of Kerry Rev. Ray Browne celebrated Mass at Our Lady's Well and Grotto, Ballyheigue on Sunday, and afterwards launched the book *The Pattern Day Homilies* of the former Bishop of Kerry Rev. William Murphy. Photo: John Cleary



LOUTH: Armagh's Archbishop Eamon Martin meets with people from St Brigid's Special School in Dundalk's Diocesan Pastoral Centre. The event was organised by the diocese as part of an outreach programme to families of young people with special needs.

ARMAGH

Mass of Thanksgiving in St Patrick's Cathedral on Saturday, October 12, at 1pm to celebrate the 80th year of Apostolic Work in the archdiocese.

On Sunday, September 29, special prayers will be offered at the 5.30pm Mass in St Patrick's Cathedral to mark the 40th anniversary of the visit of Pope Saint John Paul II to Ireland.

CLARE

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

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

CORK

Rosary Rally in Cork on Saturday, September 28. Assemble at the City Library, Grand Parade at 2.00pm and proceed to St Mary's, Popes Quay for Mass to mark the beginning of the Fatima Novena.

Weekend of prayer, praise, worship and healing in Charleville Park Hotel on November 9-10. Keynote speaker is Fr Pat Collins with Sr Josephine Walsh, Msgr Finbarr O'Leary and Fr John Keane. Mir Music Ministry. Holy Mass and Confessions both days. Closing Mass will be celebrated by Bishop William Crecan.

DERRY

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

St Maria Goretti Prayer Movement: Prayer for healing for victims of abuse and reparation for the Church. First Holy Hour of prayer in the Immaculate Conception Church, Trench Road Derry at 8.15pm led by Fr Sean O'Donnell, on the third Tuesday of every month.

DUBLIN

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

FERMANAGH

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

GALWAY

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

KERRY

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

KILDARE

Christian and human development, see: www.resurrexit.ie. For more information, contact Jerry on 0876825407.

KILKENNY

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

LIMERICK

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

LOUTH

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

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

MAYO

The Pope John Paul II Award National Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine will be held on Friday, September 27, from 11am-4pm.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the Church of St Joseph and the Immaculate Conception Bohola every Wednesday from 10am until 10pm.

MEATH

Enfield Prayer Group meets every Monday evening at 7.30pm in the parish centre.

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

OFFALY

Clonmacnois prayer vigil in Cluain Chiarain prayer centre on Friday September, 20. Mass at 9pm. Adoration and prayer follows until 2.10am. Ring Dave: 085774763

A Mass to celebrate the feast of St Pio will take place in St Mary's Church, Edenderry, on Monday, September 23 at 7.30pm. After Mass one of the gloves worn by St Pio will be available for anyone who wishes to be blessed.

ROSCOMMON

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St Bride's Church, Ballintubber, every Wednesday, 7.30-8.30pm.

WEXFORD

Taizé prayer services resume on Friday, September 20 at 8pm in Good Counsel College Chapel, New Ross. They continue every first and third Friday of the month thereafter.

WICKLOW

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

Saving souls as a field-



Pope Francis kisses a baby as he visits the Zimpeto Hospital outside Maputo, Mozambique.



Children hold candles during Mass in May 12 at St Adalbert Church in the Staten Island borough of New York. Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York celebrated the liturgy for the repose of the souls of the more than 250 people killed in the Easter suicide bombings in Sri Lanka.



Chai Brady hears from Irish charities living Pope Francis' call to "go where they suffer"

The Church is a "field hospital" that cares for the sick and wounded no matter where they are, according to Pope Francis in 2016, a message that resonated with many Irish charities who continue to reach out to souls in great pain.

From children in dire need across the world to the plight of persecuted Christians, Catholic charity workers spread the message of Christ through their words and actions.

Francis has often urged all Catholics, especially priests and bishops, to get out of their churches and take the message of God to those directly in need, the marginalised and the desperate. The Pontiff did this himself while he was Archbishop of Buenos Aires in Argentina, travelling every week to the city's shanty towns.

He said: "I often say that in order for this to happen, it is necessary to go out: to go out from the churches and the parishes, to go outside and look for people where they live, where they suffer, and where they hope. I like to use the image of a field hospital to describe this 'Church that goes forth'."

"It exists where there is combat. It is not a solid structure with all the equipment where people go to receive treatment for both small and large infirmities. It is a mobile structure that offers first aid and immediate care, so that its soldiers do not die."

Persecution

Combatting Christian persecution across the globe, Aid to the Church in Need is a Catholic charity that has consistently defended the right of Christians to practice their religion no matter what position on the globe, and protects them when endangered.

Director of Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) Ireland,



Dr Michael Kinsella, told *The Irish Catholic* that the 'field hospital' Francis speaks of is a concept he believes applies to the "the fact that the world we live in is a veil of tears and that man has a fallen nature".

“It’s about enabling brighter futures and ‘nurturing our youngest around the world’”

"We're almost gripped by a paranoia around death and decay and destruction and in order to deflect or comfort ourselves we seek solace in ultimately the most destructive of habits and behaviours," Dr Kinsella says.

"The Church's purpose is the saving of souls, it is why Christ left it with us. The role of the Church is to help you get to heaven and that means that when it goes out into the world we can't guarantee

that the world will be a better place, it can't guarantee that there will be heaven on Earth, but when Christ said the Kingdom of Heaven is within you, what he's saying is that when our will is aligned with God's will, peace will come.

"The Church is a field hospital really is about tending to the spiritual and corporal needs of humanity and that's expressed most explicitly through the corporal and the spiritual works of mercy."

While ACN helps persecuted Christians by providing humanitarian care, they also offer the provision of the sacraments and pastoral care. This ensures that "no matter how dangerous the situation", both their humanitarian and transcendental needs are met, ensuring those in needs are not just seen as "rumbling bellies, they're also recognised as yearning souls".

Dr Kinsella adds: "You can dig a well, great, you can build a school, fantastic, but unless you invest that with

hospital Church



A volunteer with Make the Difference charity initiative gives a cup of soup and an *arepa* to a homeless child along a street in Caracas, Venezuela.



Displaced people fleeing violence in Iraq walk toward the Syrian border town of Elerbeh.



A Syrian refugee woman cries as she carries her baby through the mud to cross the border from Greece into Macedonia near the Greek village of Idomeni.

A member of Zion Church, which was bombed on Easter, cries as she prays at a community hall in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka, in May. Photos: CNS



the charisms of Catholic, of Christian charity, of love expressed through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and maintain them sanctified through the sacraments, ultimately it will never meet that hunger – the same way that bread alone can't meet the ultimate hunger of man."

For Julieann Moran of World Missions Ireland, the

idea of a Church as a field hospital "meant so much", as it's a Church that focuses on the wounded, sick, marginalised, alienated, whether they're physically or psychologically wounded.

Speaking of one of the four societies within World Missions Ireland that specifically caters for children in difficult or even dire situations, Ms Moran said it's about enabling

brighter futures and "nurturing our youngest around the world regardless of their background or belief".

Ireland has a long tradition of missionary work, acting as a field hospital Church, Ms Moran says, and this is reflected in the work of the Society of Missionary Children. "Immediate examples for me where Missionary Children has assisted some missionaries,

Irish and otherwise, would be the likes of Fr Shay Cullen who's working with child victims of abuse...in the Philippines.

“To follow the way of the Lord, the Church is called on to dispense its mercy”

She says one of the toughest part of life for many children around the world is that they have to grow up far too quickly. "The numbers of children that are actually having to take on the responsibility of being adults. You're talking

about children who instead of having the dreams of just being children, doing the things that children Ireland do, playing, going to school, not having the weight of the world and the responsibility that we later have as we get older.

"A perfect example again would be children maybe living with HIV themselves, with a HIV parent, caring for a parent who's sick or dying. They should have the right to be in education and just be a child, they're doing this instead."

One of their most recent projects involves helping to give Iraqi children who have become refugees in Jordan because of Christian perse-

cution the chance to have an education.

There is no doubt immense, ubiquitous suffering in this world, with Pope Francis continually calling on people to assist and help those that are in harrowing situations, as he says: "To follow the way of the Lord, the Church is called on to dispense its mercy over all those who recognise themselves as sinners, who assume responsibility for the evil they have committed, and who feel in need of forgiveness."

"The Church does not exist to condemn people, but to bring about an encounter with the visceral love of God's mercy."



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Church in Need

ACN IRELAND

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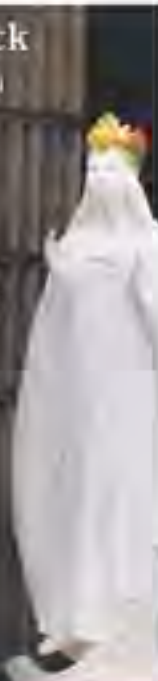
Syrian Orthodox Very Rev. Fr. (Rabban) Boutros Kassis, the patriarchal vicar to Aleppo Syrian Orthodox Church.

Prayer to Our Lady of Knock

Our Lady of Knock, Queen of Ireland, you gave hope to your people in a time of distress and comforted them in sorrow. You have inspired countless pilgrims to pray with confidence to your divine Son, remembering His promise, "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find". Help me to remember that we are all pilgrims on the road to Heaven.

Fill me with love and concern for my brothers and sisters in Christ, especially those who live with me. Comfort me when I am sick, lonely or depressed. Teach me how to take part ever more reverently in the Holy Mass. Give me a greater love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Pray for me now and at the end of my death.

AMEN



St. Patrick's Breastplate

Christ be with me,
Christ within me,
Christ behind me,
Christ before me,
Christ beside me,
Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ at my right,
Christ at my left,
Christ in quiet,
Christ in danger,
Christ in the hearts of all that love me,
Christ in the mouth of friend and stranger...

AMEN



Prayer to St. Michael

Saint Michael Archangel, defend us in battle, be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil; may God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl through the world seeking the ruin of souls.

AMEN





Aid to the
Church in Need
ACN IRELAND

Help the Church heal the World

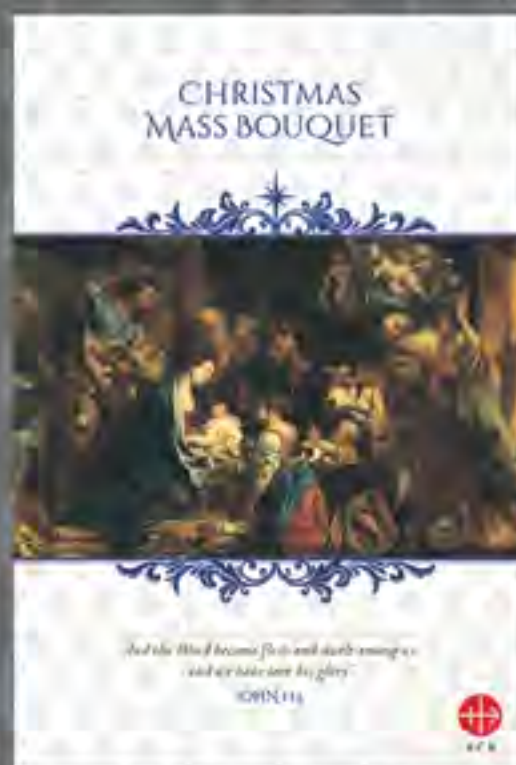
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Homelessness is a humanitarian crisis which Focus Ireland is trying to end

I am proud to say that Focus Ireland helped over 500 families to secure a home last year and to escape the nightmare of being homeless. I now sometimes feel there are no words left to describe the deepening homelessness and humanitarian crisis. Since I founded Focus Ireland in 1985 I never dreamt I would witness the situation being as out of control as it is now.

As I write this, there are now a record total of over 10,300 people homeless. It is really heart-breaking that nearly 4,000 of these are children.

The Government's response on the issue of homelessness has been that it takes time to end this crisis. These children don't have time. They are been robbed of their childhoods and damaged by every day spent homeless.

There are also many more individuals and families homeless. They often feel



Sr Stan

hopeless but we must not. It is our job to give them hope. It is our job to support them while they are homeless and to help them to find a way home.

Partnership

I am proud to say that Focus Ireland – in partnership with the State and our supporters – helped over 500 families to secure a home in 2018. As a country, we have a duty to look after all our citizens, especially those who are most vulnerable.

We must cherish all of our children equally and ensure that no child suffers from being homeless for long periods of time.

We must work towards ensuring that every child has

a place to call home. Recently our staff and volunteers put together hundreds of school packs to help the rising number of schoolchildren who are homeless as they returned to school after the holidays

We are always working hard to continue to develop realistic policy solutions to help end homelessness. We do this work through over 80 frontline services across the country and our commitment to building homes.

While the crisis is continuing, the situation would be even worse without the vital services and housing we provide.

Focus Ireland helped a record number of over 15,500 people last year who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

We now provide 1,172 homes around the country that Focus Ireland owns or manages.

This amazing work is done in partnership with the State and through the support of



our generous donors. It fills me with great pride that we are making a difference, as we really are challenging homelessness and changing lives.

While Focus Ireland works very well with the Government in delivering homes, we must also acknowledge that their overall Rebuilding Ireland strategy is not working. There are no clear plans in place to tackle family or youth homelessness.

The present policy is far too market-driven and the market never has and never will eliminate homelessness or provide homes for the people who can't afford to buy.

“I am very concerned about the Government's continued focus on the delivery of family hubs rather than permanent homes”

There needs to be a radical change in policy, and the government and local authorities must take responsibility for the provision of local authority housing. We urgently need a more ambitious strategy to tackle this issue. This includes actively building more social

housing, ensuring that bank restructuring does not come at the cost of mass homelessness, taxing those who hoard building land and protecting the rights of tenants facing eviction.

I am very concerned about the Government's continued focus on the delivery of family hubs rather than permanent homes.

Hubs

The Government admits that hubs are only a 'first response' but there is still no sign of them

delivering a long-term second plan to deal with the crisis we are facing.

We need a detailed sub strategy on family homelessness that would include a guarantee that no family would be homeless for more than six months.

This crisis must be ended.

We must continue to provide a voice for the many people and families who are voiceless.

Focus Ireland will not rest until they are heard and we must not rest until they find a home.

Ciara was just 12 years old when she became homeless.

This is the reality children like Ciara face every day. Right now, there are almost 4,000 children homeless in Ireland.

At Focus Ireland we believe no child should ever have to live without a safe place to call home but we need your help.



**Please will you give a gift today.
Call 1850 204 205 to donate.**

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“We must cherish all of our children equally and ensure that no child suffers from being homeless for long periods of time”



Can You Help Struggling Church Communities?

- World Missions Ireland is the Holy Father's official charity for overseas mission, sharing the Gospel and building the Church throughout the world
- Established almost 200 years ago, they are part of a worldwide Pontifical network, present in over 120 countries
- 40% of our Universal Church - and the men, women and children it supports - is under threat because it's too young or too poor to support itself
- It is because of the generosity of Irish Catholic readers, **just like you**, that World Missions Ireland can help:
 - Enable people to build and sustain communities of faith
 - Train future priests, sisters and catechists
 - Support vulnerable children through educational, medical and welfare projects
 - Educate the faithful about mission

To be part of this mission, in building our Church, donate what you can to World Missions Ireland - www.wmi.ie/donate or call Fiona on 01 497 2035

Help further, by remembering these communities in your prayers

Lord, our Saviour, you have said that you will require much of those to whom much is given. Grant that we who have been so richly blessed may strive together to extend to others what we so richly enjoy, to the fulfillment of your holy will and the everlasting salvation of all, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen



World Report

IN BRIEF

Priests 'unable' to comply with new Confession law

● The leader of Tasmania's Catholic Church has said priests in his archdiocese will not comply with a law that would require them to break the seal of Confession to report suspected child abuse. The law, passed last week, makes religious ministers mandatory reporters of child sexual abuse, and requires Tasmanians with knowledge of abuse to report the crime to police, or face prison time.

Archbishop Julian Porteous said that priests are "unable" to violate the seal of confession under any circumstances, according to Australia's ABC News.

"I believe the Tasmanian bill will not strengthen protections for children and vulnerable people, but it will have the opposite effect – as offenders will be less likely to come forward to confess serious sins for fear of being reported," the archbishop added.

9/11 reminds us that 'violence begets violence' – archbishop

● "The cycle of violence" that surrounded the 9/11 terror attacks shows how destructive violence can be, said Archbishop Bernardino Auza, the Vatican's permanent observer to the UN.

"The 9/11 attacks were preceded and followed by many horrendous acts of violence, proving that violence begets more violence, hatred begets more hatred, and revenge perpetuates the cycle of violence," Archbishop Auza said.

"There must be a way to stop the cycle of violence, restore the rule of law and build peaceful societies," he added. "We have institutions to govern us and implement the law. But they are never enough to stop violence, much less to build a culture of peace."

Francis explains the relic of St Peter gift to Eastern Church

● In a letter to Bartholomew I of Constantinople, Pope Francis has explained the unexpected gifting of a relic of St Peter to the leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church in June, a gesture which generated controversy among some Catholics.

The Pope wrote to the ecumenical patriarch saying the decision to give the relic was born out of prayer and intended as a sign of the

ongoing work and prayer toward visible communion between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches.

"This gesture is intended to be a confirmation of the journey that our Churches have made in drawing closer to one another: a journey at times demanding and difficult, yet one accompanied by evident signs of God's grace."

Indian Catholics appeal for help after large mob attack

● Catholics in the Archdiocese of Ranchi have appealed for help after a local Jesuit mission was brutally attacked by a large armed mob at the beginning of the month. St John Berchmans Inter College, a Jesuit school and hostel in India's Jharkhand state, was attacked by around 500 armed Hindu extremists the college's secretary Fr Thomas Kuzhiveli reported.

The attackers were armed with sticks, chains, iron bars, knives, and pistols, and beat tribal students including two who were seriously injured, he said. They seriously damaged the school's facilities.

The mob also tried to sexually harass female students, tried to prevent the transport of injured students to a hospital, destroyed and vandalised school property, stole cash, and attacked an attached hostel for tribal students.

Court acquits doctor who euthanised dementia patient

● A Netherlands court has acquitted a doctor involved in a controversial euthanasia case who had been accused of breaching the consent requirements for ending a woman's life.

A district court in The Hague issued a decision last Wednesday. Judge Mariette Renckens said the now-retired doctor – whose name was not given – did not need a final consent for the euthanasia of a 74-year-old woman because of the severity of the patient's dementia. The doctor instead relied upon a desire for euthanasia expressed four years earlier.

Cardinal Pell embarks on last avenue of appeal

Cardinal George Pell, the most senior Catholic cleric to be convicted of child sexual abuse offences, has lodged an application with Australia's High Court to appeal his guilty verdict.

The application to the country's highest court is Cardinal Pell's last avenue of appeal and comes 27 days after the Supreme Court of the Australian state of Victoria decided, in a 2-1 decision, not to overturn his conviction on one count of child rape and four counts of indecently assaulting minors. The crimes involved two 13-year-old boys, in 1986 and 1987.

According to *The Australian* newspaper, in the application for special leave to appeal, Cardinal Pell's legal team said the believability of the single witness was not sufficient for "beyond reasonable doubt." If the case is heard, it will have widespread ramifications for trials concerning sexual abuse.

Unlike his first appeal, which had a high chance of being heard, this last appeal has less certainty. The Australian High Court will decide to hear a case only if it is of national importance on a point of law or is in the inter-



Cardinal George Pell.

ests of "the administration of justice" or concerns a dispute between courts. In the 12 months ending June 30, 2018, the High Court received 456 applications for leave to appeal but heard only 56 appeals.

Hearing

A High Court justice, and possibly a panel of up to three, will be chosen from

the court's seven justices to consider the application. The justice may decide whether the court will hear the cases purely on written pleadings, or she or he may call for a short verbal hearing. If an appeal is to be heard, it is unlikely to be until 2020, said lawyers in Australia.

The appeal application came the same day as the release of a second book

about Cardinal Pell. Fallen, written by Australian journalist Lucie Morris-Marr, covers the cardinal's legal trials and purports to reveal further allegations about the cardinal and historic cases of abuse.

Lawyers representing the father of Cardinal Pell's deceased victim issued a statement this week. "Our client is beyond disappointed to hear that George Pell plans to take his legal fight to the High Court," said Lisa Flynn of Shine Lawyers. She said the continued appeals were taking a toll on her client's health, but that "hearing the news this afternoon has made him angry."

Also underway is a canon law investigation into the cardinal, once one of Pope Francis' closest advisers and who had been charged with cleaning up finances in the Vatican. That investigation will determine whether Cardinal Pell will be dismissed from the College of Cardinals and whether he will be laicised.

The Vatican press office said the process was on hold until Cardinal Pell has exhausted all his avenues of appeal in the Australian legal system.

Argentine deans protest appointment of pro-choice ombudsman

The deans of five Argentine law schools have protested the appointment of a supporter of legalised abortion as Argentina's Ombudsman for the Rights of Girls, Boys and Adolescents since "it's a clear violation of the federal juridical order".

On June 26, the Argentine House of Representatives confirmed Marisa Graham, a well-known abortion advocate in Argentina, to lead the nation's Ombudsman's Office for Boys, Girls and Adolescents.

Graham's appointment now awaits confirmation by Argentina's senate.

The signatories to a letter of

objection are the deans of the law schools of the Argentina Catholic University, the Catholic University of La Plata, the St Thomas Aquinas University of the North, the University del Salvador, and Fasta University.

Defence

Graham's "public and manifest advocacy in support of the legalisation of abortion is discriminatory with respect to countless people who would be unprotected, helpless and deprived of the defence of their most elementary rights," the deans said.

These rights are contained in the

articles of the National Constitution, the American Convention on Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Civil and Commercial Code.

The regulations recognise "that people's lives begin with conception and from that moment they are already children up to 18 years of age; that all children have the intrinsic right to life from conception and that their survival and development are to be guaranteed from that moment to the maximum extent possible, by the State and without any discrimination", they said.

New law forces priests to break 'Seal of Confession'

A law passed in the Australian state of Victoria last week

would require priests to violate the Seal of Confession if anything in the confession gave them reason to suspect occurrences of child abuse. The new law carries a sentence of up to three years in prison if a mandatory reporter does not report abuse to the

authorities.

The law adds religious leaders to the existing list of mandatory reporters. Unlike in other countries with similar laws and policies, reports of child abuse made in a sacramental context are not exempt and must be reported.

Catholic leadership in Victoria has already said they

will refuse to comply with the law.

"Personally, I'll keep the seal," said Archbishop Peter Comensoli during an August 14 interview with ABC Radio Melbourne, shortly after the bill was introduced to the Victorian parliament.

The archbishop said that the Seal of Confession and

the concept of mandatory reporting were "mutually exclusive", and that he would urge anyone who confessed to abuse to report themselves to the police.

A priest, however, is forbidden both from violating the Seal as well as ordering a penitent to turn themselves in to the authorities.



Edited by Colm Fitzpatrick
colm@irishcatholic.ie

Italian police tune up for Pope



Pope Francis greets band members during an audience with members of the Italian Prison Police in St Peter's Square at the Vatican. The Pontiff told prison guards, chaplains and officials that life sentences in prison without the possibility of parole are not the solution but a problem to be solved. Photo: CNS

Pope Francis set to visit Thailand and Japan next year

The Vatican confirmed last Friday that Pope Francis will travel to Thailand and Japan in November with stops scheduled in Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Pontiff will visit Thailand from November 20-23 in commemoration of the 350th anniversary of the Vatican Mission to Siam in 1669. He will then travel from November 23-26 to Japan, where the theme of his visit is 'Protect all life'.

In recent years, the Church has been working in Japan to respond to life issues and protect the most vulnerable. The Holy See Press Office said that the trip's motto 'protect all life' not only applies to respect for all human dignity, but also extends to the environment.

"In Japan today as well there are a pile of problems related to life and peace, in addition to the issues of

economy, environment and relations with neighbouring countries. Moreover, recovery from natural catastrophes and nuclear plant accidents remain as persisting problems," the Vatican statement said.

The papal trip to Japan has been much anticipated after Pope Francis told journalists in January he was planning to travel to the country. It has been reported that Pope Francis will meet with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the Japanese Emperor Naruhito during his visit to the country.

Persecutions

Catholics in Japan make up less than 0.5% of the country's population. Christianity was first introduced to Japan in the 16th Century by Catholic missionaries, most notably St Francis

Xavier. In the years that followed the Catholics in Japan suffered many waves of fierce persecutions with hundreds martyred, including 26 canonised saints who were executed by crucifixion in 1597 in Nagasaki.

In Thailand, the small Catholic community - representing less than 0.5% of the mostly Buddhist population - has been celebrating the 350th anniversary of the Vatican Mission to Siam with events throughout 2019.

Pope Francis will be the second Pope to visit both Japan and Thailand. St John Paul II visited Thailand in 1984 and Japan in 1981. During his visit to Japan, the former pontiff visited Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki, including a stop in the town of the Immaculata established by St Maximilian Kolbe.

India: Priest and nurse charged for apparent abuse of girl

A priest and a nurse working at a Catholic school in India's eastern state of Jharkhand have been held in custody after being charged with sexually abusing a nine-year-old girl.

Church officials in the state, where the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party runs the government, say the case was fabricated amid a hostile atmosphere generated toward the state's Christians, mostly tribal people, reported

ucanews.com.

Fr Julian Ekka, vice principal of the Jesuit-run De Nobili School in Koradih, and the nurse, Emerencia Lomga, were arrested following a complaint from the father of the alleged victim, said district Police Chief Aman Kumar.

Ucanews.com reported the two appeared in court on September 10 and were remanded into custody pending further inquiries.

They have been charged with violating several clauses of a stringent law relating to sexual offences against children. Such offences do not allow for bail.

According to police, in mid-August the fourth-grade girl was taken to the sick room after she complained of abdominal pain.

The priest and the nurse were present in the room, and police say a medical examination proved the child

had been sexually assaulted. Based on "circumstantial evidence", both were arrested after officers interviewed some staff members several weeks later, Kumar said.

Fr Jerome Sequeira, assistant provincial of Jesuits in Jamshedpur province, told ucanews.com that Jesuits had studied the case and found the "priest and the nurse innocent" and "in no way connected to the child abuse case".

Vatican roundup

The life of a bishop is full of surprises, Pope tells prelates

● New bishops need to prepare for a life filled with God's surprises, with daily plans that change at the last minute and, especially, for a life dedicated to spending time with God and with the people, Pope Francis has said.

"God surprises us and often likes to mess up our appointment books: prepare for this without fear," the Pope told about 130 bishops attending a course for bishops ordained in the past year.

Bishops exist to make tangible God's love for and closeness to his people, the Pope told them. "But one cannot communicate the closeness of God without experiencing it every day and without letting himself be infected by his tenderness."

Pope Francis told the new bishops that no matter what else is going on in their lives and ministries, they must spend time in prayer.

"Without this intimacy cultivated daily in prayer, even and especially in times of desolation and dryness, the nucleus of our episcopal ministry splits apart," he said.

Without a strong relationship to God, the sower of every good seed, a bishop's own efforts will not seem worth the effort, he said, and it will be difficult to find the patience necessary to wait for the seeds to sprout.

Catholics and Muslims pray together on 9/11 anniversary

● Catholics and Muslims prayed in Vatican City last week for the victims of the September 11 attacks and of every act of terrorism.

The prayers were a part of the first meeting of a new committee created by the United Arab Emirates for implementing the goals outlined in Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar Ahmed el-Tayeb's joint statement on human fraternity signed in Abu Dhabi on February 4.

According to the Holy See Press Office, the committee chose to meet on September 11 as "a sign of the will to build life and fraternity where

others sowed death and destruction".

Pope Francis greeted the committee members in Casa Santa Marta and gave each of them a copy of the 'Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together'.

Often referred to as the Abu Dhabi declaration, it invites "all persons who have faith in God and faith in human fraternity to unite and work together so that it may serve as a guide for future generations to advance a culture of mutual respect in the awareness of the great divine grace that makes all human beings brothers and sisters".

Francis calls for radical meeting to launch 'global alliance'

● Pope Francis has said the challenges facing humanity and the Earth are so urgent and important that he has invited world leaders, educators and young people to come to the Vatican next spring to launch a global alliance for building a new, more humane future.

"Never before has there been such need to unite our efforts in a broad educational alliance, to form mature individuals capable of overcoming division and antagonism, and to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity," he said.

The Pope launched the new initiative, called the Global Compact on Education, for the future of new generations with a video and written message released by the Vatican on September 12.

A related website, www.educationglobalcompact.org, went live the same day.

The Pope has invited representatives from the world's religions, international organisations and humanitarian groups as well as educators, economists, scientists, policymakers, people from the world of art, culture and sports, and young people themselves to the Vatican May 14, 2020.



Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

When roughly 300 Catholic leaders gather in Rome from October 6-27 to talk about the Amazon, it will be the 29th time since 1965 a Pope has convoked a Synod of Bishops. For most of that span, the body's role could have been described in the same ironic terms Bob Dole once used about the Vice Presidency: "It's indoor work, and no heavy lifting is involved."

A Synod of Bishops is merely consultative, lacking the power to do anything other than make recommendations to a Pope. Frankly, for most of its history, even that role seemed terribly anaemic, with outcomes generally determined well in advance. During the St John Paul II years, the Polish Pontiff would sit on the dais during synods with his prayer book, and the running joke was that he was actually reading the conclusions of the event before it was even over.

Of the 28 previous synods, even Catholics who pay close attention to Church affairs probably would be hard-pressed to name the dates and themes of more than, say, five. (I know bishops who actually attended some of those synods who struggle to recall what they were about or when they happened, so unmemorable were the proceedings.)

You have to give this to Pope Francis: against all odds, he's found a way to make synods really, really interesting.

Assurance

Last week, an official of Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Relations actually had to go on national television, flanked by a Catholic cardinal, to assure his countrymen that the government of President Jair Bolsonaro isn't threatened by the looming Synod on the Amazon and doesn't think the meeting violates a treaty between the Vatican and Brazil governing the Church's status in the country.

The government "recognises the historic role of the Church in Brazilian formation, and very much appreciates the active and constant choice of the Church in favour of the less fortunate", said Ambassador Kenneth da Nóbrega, an official in charge of relations with the Middle East, Africa and Europe, whose brief therefore includes the Vatican.

Nonetheless, Nóbrega conceded the government has

Against all odds, Pope Francis has made Synods of Bishops interesting



A fire burns a tract of Amazon jungle as it is cleared by a farmer in Machadinho do Oeste. The Brazilian Catholic bishops are pressuring the government to guarantee the safety of several Amazonian indigenous peoples. Photo: CNS

been concerned about language in the working document for the synod, called the *Instrumentum Laboris*, regarding the Amazon and international law, which some worried might threaten Brazil's sovereignty over the roughly 60% of the Amazon within its borders.

Obviously implied is a judgment by Brazilian officials that it actually matters what a body of bishops in concert with Francis might say about the Amazon and its international status.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was asked to open a diplomatic and institutional channel with the Holy See to ask for clarifications on these themes," he said, while denying media reports that the government is "opposed" or "dissatisfied" with the synod itself.

* * * * *

Nóbrega appeared alongside Cardinal Claudio Hummes of Brazil, a key Francis ally who'll act as the relator, or chairman, of the October synod. While Hummes thanked Nóbrega for his interest, he also expressed "surprise" over news reports that the Brazilian military

and security service are "spying" on bishops, especially in the Amazon, in the run-up to the synod.

"This surprised us greatly, because it gives a negative impression of censorship," Hummes said.

“Francis once again has managed to guarantee that the world will be watching when the curtain goes up on his fourth Synod of Bishops”

In fairness, military and security officials have denied repeatedly that they're spying on anyone, though they've acknowledged following developments regarding the synod because, they said, it raises "national security" issues.

Frankly, the idea that any government would have invested resources in spying on a Synod of Bishops in the pre-Francis era would have been almost laughable. No one would have bothered, because too little was at stake.

Of course, there's a special history in Brazil of governments leaning heavily on military support being challenged by populist bishops speaking out in defence of democracy and human rights, which lends a certain logic to the preoccupations of Bolsonaro and his advisers.

More broadly, however, Francis has made synods worth paying attention to, and not just in the Amazon.

In 2014 and 2015, he used two synods on the family to road-test what's arguably been his single most controversial ecclesiastical decision to date, which was the cautious opening to Communion for Catholics who divorce and remarry outside the Church expressed in his 2016 document *Amoris Laetitia*.

Approval

In 2018, Francis issued a document beefing up the authority of a Synod of Bishops, among other things stipulating that its final document will carry magisterial authority – meaning, it'll be part of official Church teaching – once it receives

the approval of the Pope.

This time around, the drama at the Amazon synod won't just be *ad extra*, meaning whatever it says about politics and ecology – although the fact the meeting will unfold just after a new report saying that deforestation has surged 43% over the past five years, and that a swath of forest the size of the UK is lost every year, would be enough to guarantee global attention.

However, there's also strong *ad intra* buzz around the synod, meaning ferment over its implications for internal Church policies, given the likelihood of debate over the *virī probati*, or tested married priests. Should the synod endorse an experiment with the *virī probati*, no matter how limited or geographically restricted, some critics worry it would create a slippery slope leading to the *de facto* abolition of mandatory clerical celibacy in the Latin Church.

In other words, Francis once again has managed to guarantee that the world will be watching when the curtain goes up on his fourth Synod of Bishops.

No matter what happens after it does, the fact the Pope is able to deliver an audience for an event that once packed all the sex appeal of watching paint dry can't help but seem, by itself, a sort of minor miracle.

“Frankly, the idea that any government would have invested resources in spying on a Synod of Bishops in the pre-Francis era would have been almost laughable. No one would have bothered, because too little was at stake”

John L. Allen Jr is Editor of Cruxnow.com



Elise Harris

Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Major Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, has urged those considering allowing priests in the Latin rite to marry in order to help solve a crippling shortage, to proceed with caution, saying marriage has not curbed shortages in his own rite.

With five blooming seminaries in Ukraine alone, “thanks be to God we do not lack vocations,” Shevchuk said, but noted that despite the fact that priests in his church – the largest of the 23 *sui iuris* eastern churches in full communion with Rome – have the ability to marry, the high numbers don’t appear for Greek Catholics in other countries.

“The same Church with the same way of living the priestly vocation in other countries around the world does not enjoy this quantity of vocations,” he said, noting that numbers in the United States and Canada, among others, are few.

So, the familial state does not favour the increase in vocations to the priesthood. This is our experience,” he said.

Shortage

Speaking to journalists last week, Shevchuk responded to a question on the married priesthood in light of the upcoming Synod of Bishops on the Amazon, which will reflect on whether to allow the ordination of older married men to help curb a priest shortage in the region.

Insisting that the call to the priesthood comes from God alone, Shevchuk said it is “a vocation which can neither be increased nor decreased based on the state in which this vocation is lived”, including whether the priest is married or celibate.

Priesthood, he said, is “a way of offering one’s life for the good of the Church”.

The shortage of priests, even in Ukraine, is “a challenge for everyone”, he said, insisting that while he doesn’t have “recipes” to solve the problem, what is important is to “look to the essential: that is, the vocation to the priesthood” as a call from God.

Archbishop Shevchuk said there can be other complicating factors with married priests, explaining that in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, a priest must be married before his ordination, and if his spouse dies, he is unable to remarry.

The priesthood, he said, is “a profound call by the Lord to be his priest. All the rest must be submissive to this central call”.

Offering an example, he recalled how one young man was ordained a priest, and just two months later his wife was killed in a traffic accident, meaning the man had to live the rest of his priestly life in

Isidoro Jajoy, a shaman from Colombia’s Inga tribe, blesses people in Bogota, during a preparatory meeting for the October Synod of Bishops for the Amazon. Photo: CNS



Marriage doesn’t solve the priest shortage, says head of Ukrainian Rite

celibacy.

Shevchuk said that if he could give some advice to the bishops meeting for this year’s Synod on the Amazon, it would be this: “Don’t look for easy solutions to difficult problems.”

With the priesthood as a whole in crisis, Shevchuk said the essence of the vocation in itself “must be developed”, and called for a Synod of Bishops on the priesthood in order to “understand the best way to live this vocation”.

Shevchuk spoke to journalists during a press conference after the close of the September 2-10 annual synod of bishops for the Greek Catholic Church, which this year drew some 47 Ukrainian Greek Catholic bishops from all over the world to Rome to discuss the theme, ‘Communion and unity in the life and testimony of the Ukrainian Church today’.

Identity

The synod, which took place after a two-day meeting between Ukrainian bishops and Vatican officials in July, was focused on deepening the identity of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, its unity with the Pope and the Latin rite, and it was also an occasion for bishops to again appeal for a papal visit to Ukraine.

Participants also paid a visit to

retired Pope Benedict XVI on the final day of the gathering, speaking with him at his residence in the Mater Ecclesiae monastery inside the Vatican.

Speaking to journalists, Shevchuk stressed that the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is not a “regional Church”, but universal, with members spread throughout the world, many of whom have never been to Ukraine and do not speak Ukrainian.

He underlined the importance of unity with Rome, noting that this relationship is something for which many of his predecessors gave their lives.

“Our martyrs are martyrs of unity with the Church,” he said, insisting that this be remembered in ongoing discussions. “Our communion with the Pope,” he added, is not “for convenience of politics or pragmatics”, but is “a question of our faith”.

In their meeting with Benedict XVI, which Shevchuk described as a “moment of great affection”, the retired Pontiff offered his own reflections on the importance of unity and communion with Rome to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic identity, telling the bishops that “before the divided and fragmented world, you need to be witnesses of unity”.

“He made a crown of the entire

experience we lived together,” Shevchuk said, explaining that as an Eastern Church, the “fragmentation” they experience in being dispersed throughout the world can be “an instrument which builds unity” on a larger scale, not only for Greek Catholics, but for “everyone in the Church”.

“In the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, a priest must be married before his ordination, and if his spouse dies, he is unable to remarry”

Benedict also voiced concern over the “militarisation” of the eastern borders in Europe, specifically the occupied areas of eastern Ukraine, Shevchuk said, saying it brought back “bad memories” of the Second World War for the retired Pontiff.

“Ukraine is a large country, but we are the poorest country in Europe,” Archbishop Shevchuk said, noting that this is in large part due to the conflict with Russian separatists, which so far has caused a humanitarian crisis in Europe “bigger than World War II”, as well as an ecological crisis, as much of the water in the conflict areas has

been contaminated.

“Today the whole world is trying to seek a diplomatic solution to the war, because to stop an aggressor like Russia is not easy. We know that a military solution doesn’t exist,” he said.

Referring to the repeated invitations for Pope Francis to visit Ukraine, which many of the country’s Greek Catholic bishops believe would lead to an end in violent war with Russian separatists in the country’s eastern region, Shevchuk said they extended yet another plea for a visit during the synod.

“Every time we meet the Pope, we remind him that Ukraine is waiting for him,” he said, but explained that the bishops must also evaluate the conditions under which a papal visit could take place.

In weighing these conditions, consideration must also be given to the stance of the largest ecclesial presence in Ukraine – a slot currently held by the Russian Orthodox Church, which has had a contentious relationship with Greek Catholics since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, largely due to property rights and grievances stemming from communist persecution.

Attention

Tensions heightened earlier this year when the Patriarch of Constantinople formally recognised the independence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which Moscow refuses to accept, accusing Greek Catholics of supporting the split.

“On our side, there is a great desire for this visit,” Shevchuk said, explaining that Francis’s constant attention to the poor, to the environment and his desire to bring peace “give us hope that one day we will see him among us in Ukraine”.

Elise Harris is Senior Correspondent of Cruxnow.com

“Shevchuk stressed that the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is not a ‘regional Church’, but universal, with members spread throughout the world”

Letters

Letter of the week

So much for 'short term' missalettes

Dear Editor, Chai Brady's article about missalettes (IC 05/09/19) highlights a situation which has been allowed to continue for far too long and which needs to be seriously addressed.

When the 'New Mass' in English was introduced in the late 1960s – as a result of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy from the Second Vatican Council – the Mass leaflets/missalettes were provided to encourage the 'active participation' of the members of the congregation.

They were meant to be an interim measure to help people adjust to the new way of celebrating the liturgy. Fifty years later, they are still with us! They have certainly outlived their

usefulness.

Rather than properly participating in the celebration, people are simply reading words. It is almost as if they are checking that the readers and celebrant are saying the right thing!

Fr Danny Murphy of the National Centre for Liturgy is correct in saying that missalettes "are not true aids" to the Sunday celebration. They have become a total distraction.

People are supposed to listen to the Word of God when proclaimed by the reader, not read along with them. This, of course, demands a high level of presentation by the reader.

The celebrant is robbed of choosing parts of the Mass where choice is

available, negating the possibility of preparing a particular celebration for a particular gathering of parishioners.

It is not the task of any gathering for a liturgical celebration to simply 'get through' four pages of words prepared by someone else and supposedly suitable for any gathering elsewhere. At least, the Sunday Missal allows for choice.

An improvement on the four-page missalette is the A5 edition which contains only the Gloria, Readings and Creed. This is already being used in some parishes.

*Yours etc.,
Fr Peter McLaughlin,
Derry Diocese.*

Problems with missalettes are easily overcome

Dear Editor, I was struck by the wave of negativity towards missalettes (IC 05/09/19). It is obvious that there are shortcomings with missalettes and ideally people should listen attentively to the Word of God. However, if clergy feel constrained by the published eucharistic prayers, then switch to a missalette that doesn't publish them. If the Triduum missalette curtails the choice of readings, then opt for a different one next year. These problems are easily solved.

In our parish we introduced the missalette when the new responses were introduced in 2011 and the

initiative was of great benefit. Many people find missalettes to be very useful when the church acoustics are poor, or the standard of reading is varied or if some parishioners are hard of hearing. Many people don't have the luxury of studying the readings during the week so it is their first time to hear them. Missalettes are beneficial, especially when the first and second readings are difficult. While there are disadvantages with the use of missalettes, they are also of great benefit.

I agree that there are environmental concerns and these should not be

ignored. However, there are other materials which are sent to parishes during the year which are of far less benefit. This might be a better place to start eliminating waste. We considered providing some Sunday Missals in the church only to discover that 'Cycle A' began in January and not at the start of Advent. I think the missalettes are here to stay but some discussions with the publishers might be fruitful.

*Yours etc.,
Fr Padraig Walsh PP,
Tralee,
Co. Kerry.*

A little more instruction, please

Dear Editor, Can Mass missalettes (IC 05/09/19) please include prompts to help congregations understand when it is suggested that we stand/kneel/sit at appropriate parts of the Mass?

Recently I attended Mass near Belfast where printed shaded understated prompts on the missalettes suggested kneel/stand/sit. This helped to promote common purpose within the congregations there.

Sometimes in the Dublin area it might depend not only in which church Mass is attended but even which Mass time is chosen within the same church as to when standing/kneeling/sitting is chosen.

It would surely be preferable to strive for consistency of action no matter what church or what Mass time is attended.

*Yours etc.,
Roy Brown,
Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.*



Call for inclusion of text was not accurate

Dear Editor, I would like to acknowledge the comprehensive coverage given by Chai Brady to missalettes in the Liturgy (IC 05/09/19).

On page 12 I am quoted correctly where it reads: "Commercially produced missalettes that include the texts of the readings and the full text of the Eucharistic Prayer are not true aids to the Sunday celebration."

For the sake of clarity for your readers and following several enquiries to my office, the statement on the top of page 4 that inaccurately calls for the inclusion of the texts of readings in missalettes is not mine. My stance as given on page 12 and 13 is clearly opposite.

I repeat from my written submission: "The Liturgy of

the Word is the privileged task of listening and responding to the Word of God communally, having, that is, dependence on a minister announcing that Word as the instrument of God.

"The Liturgy of the Word is not the simultaneous reading of the Word of God by individuals receiving that Word for themselves

alone. Other than for hearing and other impairments on participation, true worship aids for the Liturgy do not include the texts of the Scripture readings."

*Yours etc.,
Fr Danny Murphy,
Director,
National Centre for
Liturgy,
Maynooth,
Co. Kildare.*

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

facebook community

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

Time to be 'realistic' about what clergy can do in parish

Unfortunately some priests won't let go. We all know how over-worked our priests are. God love them, the lay people are willing to help. We just need to be asked. We need our priests to minister the Sacraments. Scary to think otherwise. – **Sheila Boyle**

Unfortunately many priests are their own worst enemies. They are overworked but still hold on to power and refuse to involve the laity except in the most mundane tasks. – **John Gillen**

Use Church land to help homeless – Fr Peter McVerry

The Church will have a lot of financial problems with falling congregations and salaries to pay for. For too long the Irish have relied on Church handouts. Let the atheistic Government sort it out. We need to pay bills for the existing churches to survive so that the faithful receive the Sacraments. – **Pamela Ryan**

While our administration is giving state land away to private developers to build houses for sale that few can afford. Get rid of the wealthy elite out of Government who it appears are looking after their own at cost to the taxpayer. – **John Jeffers**

Is it incumbent on the Church to solve the Government's problems? Why did RTÉ sell land a few years ago and keep the money, no mention of them giving up for housing. How about the Phoenix Park while we are at it, or closed army barracks, a shared responsibility? No we will just go for the easy option: the Church. Pathetic. – **Bill Houlihan**

Leadership in Kylemore Abbey

Some years ago we visited the Abbey on a Sunday afternoon. A dear nun was sitting at a desk near the bottom of the staircase using a computer. As I walked around I noticed she was playing one of those card games on her screen. I sidled up beside her and whispered: "Sister what are you doing playing the devil's cards on the Sabbath?" She turned round surprised and we both burst out laughing. Precious moment. – **Ron Crawford**

Standing up for Catholic schools

No point even discussing this issue if bishops are unprepared to take a hands-on role in their schools. Most kids are not getting any Catholic formation in schools. Parents don't take it seriously. Somebody has to make hard decisions as current model isn't working. Not much in the way of Catholic Education to stand up for right now.

– **Adam Conroy**

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

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Around the world



▲ **USA:** A man holds up a photo of a victim at the national 9/11 Memorial and Museum in New York City during ceremonies on September 11, commemorating the 18th anniversary of the terrorist attacks.

◀ **BAHAMAS:** Police search for victims in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian on the Abaco Islands in Marsh Harbour.



MEXICO: Migrants, many of whom are asylum-seekers sent back to Mexico from the US under Migrant Protection Protocols, line up for a free meal provided by volunteers at a makeshift encampment near the US port of entry at the Gateway International Bridge in Matamoros. Photos: CNS



NICARAGUA: Demonstrators take part in a protest against Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's government in Managua. With increasing concerns worldwide about human rights violations in Nicaragua, a Vatican representative has called for an immediate return to negotiations and a rollout of reforms necessary to hold "free and transparent elections" there.



VATICAN: Pope Francis exchanges gifts with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic during a private audience at the Vatican.



SOUTH AFRICA: A woman holds a sign as demonstrators gather at the World Economic Forum on Africa in Cape Town during a protest against gender-based violence. South African bishops called for action to end violence against women after a spate of killings and rapes sparked outrage in a country with one of the world's highest murder rates.



Some counsels on Faith and religion for this generation

It's no secret that today we're witnessing a massive decline in church attendance and, seemingly, a parallel loss of interest in religion. The former mindset, within which we worried, sometimes obsessively, about sin, church-going, and heaven and hell no longer holds sway for millions of people. As one parent, worried about the religious state of his children, shared with me recently, "our old religious concerns never ever darken their minds". What's to be said in the face of this?

Admittedly, I may not be the person best-suited to offer that advice. I'm over 70 years old, a spiritual writer whose main focus of research and teaching right now is on the spirituality of aging, and I'm a Catholic priest, a religious insider, who can be perceived as simply a salesman for religion and the churches.

But, despite that, here are some counsels on Faith and religion for today's generation.

● **First:** Search honestly. God's first concern is not whether you're going to church or not, but whether you are staying honest in your search for truth and meaning.

When the Apostle, Thomas, doubts the reality of the resurrection, Jesus doesn't scold him, but simply asks him to stretch out his hand and continuing searching, trusting that if he searches honestly he will eventually find the truth. The same is true for us.

Truth

All we have to do is be honest, to not lie, to acknowledge truth as it meets us. In John's Gospel,



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

Jesus sets out only one condition to come to God: be honest and never refuse to acknowledge what's true, no matter how inconvenient. But the key is to be honest! If we're honest we will eventually find meaning and that will lead us where we need to go – perhaps even to a church door somewhere. But even if it doesn't, God will find us. The mystery of Christ is bigger than we imagine.

“Don't confuse Faith with the Churches – but don't write off the Churches too quickly...”

● **Second:** Listen to what's deepest inside you. Soul is a precious commodity. Make sure you honor yours. Honour the voice inside your soul.

Deeper than the many enticing voices you hear in world inviting you in every direction is a voice inside you which, like an insatiable thirst, reminds you always of the truth of this prayer from St Augustine: you have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Stay in touch with that voice. You will hear it in your restlessness and it will, in the words of Karl Rahner, teach you something that's initially is hard to bear but eventually sets you free: in the torment of the insufficiency of

everything attainable, we eventually learn that here in this life there is no finished symphony.

● **Third:** Beware the crowd! In the Gospels the word 'crowd' is almost always pejorative.

For good reason: crowds don't have a mind and the energy of a crowd is often dangerous. So beware of what Milan Kundera calls "the great march", namely, the propensity to be led by ideology, group-think, the latest trend, the popular person or thing, the false feeling of being right because the majority of people feel that way, and the social pressures coming from both the right and the left.

Be true to yourself. Be the lonely prophet who's not afraid to be alone on the outside. Dream. Be idealistic. Protect your soul. Don't give it away cheaply.

● **Fourth:** Don't confuse Faith with the Churches – but don't write off the Churches too quickly.

When they ask those without religious affiliation today why they aren't religious invariably their answer is: "I just don't believe it anymore."

But what's the "it" which they no longer believe? What they don't believe anymore isn't in fact the truth about God, Faith and religion, but rather what they've heard about God, Faith and religion. Sort that out and you will find that you do have Faith.

Moreover, don't write off

the Churches too quickly. They have real faults; you're not wrong about that, but they're still the best GPS available to help you find your way to meaning. They're a roadmap drawn up by millions of explorers who have walked the road before you.

“In John's Gospel, Jesus sets out only one condition to come to God: be honest and never refuse to acknowledge what's true, no matter how inconvenient”

You can ignore them, but then be alert to God's gentle voice often saying: "Recalculating." God will get you home, but the Churches can help.

● **Fourth:** Don't forget about the poor. When you touch the poor, you're touching God and, as Jesus says, at the judgment day we will be judged by how we served the poor.

Give yourself away in some form of altruism, knowing, as Jesus puts it, that it's not those who say Lord, Lord, who go to heaven but those who serve others. In your search, you need to get a letter of reference from the poor.

● **Fifth:** Look among your contemporaries for a patron to inspire you. Jean Vanier, Henri Nouwen, Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day, Oscar Romero, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Simone Weil, Etty Hillesum and Dag Hammarskjöld, among others – they've all navigated your issues.

QUESTIONS of faith

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



What are guardian angels?

It's common today for religious or spiritual people to speak of guardian angels – divine entities which protect and guide somebody in their everyday lives.

The Church has no qualms about the existence of angels, which are best described as pure spirits created by God. The word 'angel' derives from the Greek *angelos* which means 'messenger', and so angels are thought to be mediators between God and humankind, communicating a divine message. It's important to note, as is a regular misconception, that the deceased do not become angels – angels are ontologically different from humans, and are created by God for specific roles.

"You have made [humans] a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour" (Ps 8:5).

Angels are mentioned frequently throughout the Old and New Testament, but perhaps the best known celestial being is the angel Gabriel who appeared to Mary to inform her about the virgin birth.

"The angel told her, 'Don't be afraid, Mary. You have found favour with God. You will become pregnant, give birth to a son, and name him Jesus.'" (Lk 1:30-31).

Individuals

Passages like this show that some angels are sent by God to interact and communicate with people in the world. However, the Church does not hold explicitly that each individual person or soul possesses a personal guardian angel. It's certainly true that individuals benefit from the power of angels during their lives, but it's not clear as to whether there is a distinct angel for each person.

"From its beginning until death, human life is surrounded by their watchful care and

intercession. Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life. Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God" (CCC 336).

There are plenty of scriptural allusions which indicate that guardian angels specific to an individual do exist such as in Matthew 18:10 or in the Book of Revelation.

This concept is more explicitly mentioned in the psalms when it reads: "No disaster can overtake you, no plague come near your tent; he has given his angels orders about you to guard you wherever you go." (Ps 91:10-11)

“The dignity of a soul is so great, that each has a guardian angel from its birth”

While Catholics are not obliged to believe in the existence of guardian angels particular to each soul, these recurrent biblical references swayed many of the Church Fathers to hold guardian angels as real. St Jerome, for example, said: "The dignity of a soul is so great, that each has a guardian angel from its birth."

Thomas Aquinas also speculated on what types of angels are sent to humankind, while other theologians held that any kind of angel could take on this guardianship role.

The study of this topic is called 'angelology', and the Church has a rich tradition of exploring what angels are and how they relate to the world around us.

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

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, September 19, 2019

Personal Profile

Finding freedom
behind bars

Page 34



Getting back on track



Most of us are taught from a young age to stand up straight and keep our shoulders back, but very often this advice falls on deaf ears. It can be more comfortable to eat dinner at the dining table or watch television in a slouched position, and the longer this behaviour continues, the more likely that it will affect your permanent posture. This problem is a worrying one, and has been exacerbated in the last decade or so given the proliferation of mobile phones. Instead of sitting up straight at home or on a bus, these addictive devices cause our backs and shoulders to slump over which over time causes immense strain. Millions of people suffer from backpain, the cause of which can often be



**Taking good care of
your back should be a
health priority, writes
Colm Fitzpatrick**

boiled down to poor posture. This has serious effects on your day-to-day living, making simple tasks extremely laborious and difficult.

While it can feel like there's no option out, backpain can be treated and while it may take time to notice significant change, it's certainly worth it. For those who have a bad posture or are suffering from unexplained back

pain, take a look at these helpful tips to get you back on track.

1. Talk to a doctor or physiotherapist

Before engaging in rigorous training, it's vital that you speak to a medical professional who can advise you on what exercises are appropriate to perform. It might be the case that you have a serious back problem

like scoliosis. This condition affects about 4 out of every 1,000 children and occurs when the spine curves or twists to the side, causing strain on the muscles of the back. By speaking to a back specialist, you'll have a much better idea of the specific problems you're facing, rather than mere vague speculation. With a prognosis, they can advise you on what to do next and may even give you an exercise regime.

2. Don't slouch on the couch

A common problem when sitting down – either at home, in a vehicle or at work – is slouching. This posture is common among children and those who have sedentary jobs. While it can feel more comfortable to slouch, over

time it can put immense strain on the back, shoulders and legs. Kicking this habit can be tough as your body has accustomed to the position, but the longer this continues, the worse the physiological pain will become. To tackle this issue, make a concerted effort to sit up straight, sitting as far back as possible against the chair with your feet flat on the ground.

3. Techno no-no

While the younger generation is especially susceptible to hunching over to look at their phones or gaming devices, older people can also fall into this trap. This is one of the most common posture problems and leads to a rounded back which is not only

» Continued on Page 33

Family News

AND EVENTS

GET THE FOOD DOWN-LOW IN WICKLOW

At a time in our history when food is readily available at supermarkets, often pre-made, it can be easy to take this vital source of survival for granted. If you want to develop a deeper connection with the food you consume, why not whisk yourself away to the mindful eating retreat at Abhainn Ri in the Wicklow Mountains? Hosted by the Byrne family, you will get the chance to taste the garden of Ireland through locally sourced foods, experience life on the farm, learn to make your own bread and butter, and immerse yourself in mindful eating for the body and soul. The two-day adventure will give you the ability to create and eat food in a mindful way that benefits your overall wellness. You will understand your own eating habits and how you can eat in a healthy way for your mind and body. To book, see: abhainn-ri.com.

NAP YOUR WAY TO A HAPPY HEART

Some households frown upon daytime napping as it's considered a lazy trait. However, those who like to catch up with some sleep in the afternoon now have science to justify their behaviour. A new study has shown that napping once or twice a week may halve the risk of heart attacks, strokes and heart failure. The findings, which appear in the journal *Heart*, found that taking 1–2 weekly naps during the day was linked with 48% lower chances of having cardiovascular complications compared with those who did not nap at all. Lead author Nadine Häusler and colleagues said: "Subjects who nap once or twice per week have a lower risk of incident [cardiovascular disease] events, while no association was found for more frequent napping or napping duration." The study is limited in that the analysis revealed no link between cardiovascular events and the duration of the naps.

CARE-FREE CAR SEAT

Parenting is difficult at the best times, but things aren't made easier when you're out and about in the car. When running errands around town with your baby, it can be a nightmare constantly having to transition from car seat to pram, especially when your new-born has finally drifted off to sleep. Enter 'Doona' and their revolutionary car seat. It transforms from car seat to stroller in seconds, meaning there is no hassle getting your child in and out of your vehicle. Unlike other products that claim to convert from one mode to another, you will not find yourself having to fuss or construct anything; even the wheels are integrated into this simple but ingenious system. This makes the school, petrol and grocery run so much more convenient not just for you but your undisturbed baby who will be none the wiser that they've been moved at all.



Finding a balance between being and doing

We all need a healthy balance between being and doing in our lives. The pace of modern life draws us into cycles of excessive doing and when that happens, the quality of our doing suffers. Of course, if we allow the pendulum to swing too far in the other direction nothing gets done! So we need to find a healthy balance between being and doing. The practice of meditation provides a bridge between being and doing. It helps us to discover our true-self and to live life more deeply and with greater authenticity.

Because we have so little experience of simply *being*, when we deliberately choose to enter that realm through meditation or mindful activities, it can at first appear to be passive, lifeless and boring. But soon we discover that it's not so much that we are doing nothing as that we are doing nothing else – we are taking care to simply *be*. The key question is what is the relationship between our doing – our activities of thinking and acting – and our state of being? Meditation changes our understanding of the relationship between them so that we discover that in fact *being* mode is a nourishing and uplifting state that is always available to you, and can be accessed even in the midst of busy daily activity.

The wisdom traditions and religions of the world tell us that we are healthiest when *being* is primary over *doing*, when our being informs and guides our doing; in other words, when all our thinking and actions are fully rooted in a state of being. We spend so much time in doing mode that we can lose track of our essential being. When this occurs we can

Mindful living

Dr Noel
Keating



easily become overwhelmed by continual thinking and activity. We become less aware, less integrated, less mindful. Our focus becomes fixed on satisfying our perceived personal needs and maintaining our conditioned lifestyle.

“We cannot arrive at this experience of being through doing, through thinking or reading; we arrive there through silence and stillness.”

So, what must we do to experience our being? We must enter into stillness and silence. In moments of stillness and silence we experience something deeper within ourselves – we might call this our true self. But the silence also mysteriously awakens us to our connectedness to others, to the world around us and the creative energy of the universe. We discover that in stillness and silence we can become free of the bonds of attachment, anxieties, and the desires of the ego. My research into the child's experience of meditation has taught me that young children discover this for themselves when they meditate.

In silence we can learn to let go of the constant distractions of the mind, even if only fleetingly when we first begin to meditate. However once we taste it, even for a moment, we recognise there is more to being human than the thinking mind allows. We come to a heart-felt understanding that meditation brings us mysteriously into communion with pure being. And, as our doing becomes more grounded in that understanding of our essential nature, we find we are becoming more peaceful, more fully aware and more fully connected with ourselves and others.

We cannot arrive at this experience of *being* through *doing*, through thinking or



reading; we arrive there through silence and stillness. All of the wisdom traditions of the world tell us that stillness represents our path back to *being*. Meditation may appear to be about pressing the pause button, putting life on hold as it were for a short period. But it is much more than that. It is deeply transformative but the change takes place at a level of consciousness deeper than ordinary self-consciousness. It is only over time that we

realise our awareness of who we are has become transfigured. Meditation teaches us that we are not our thoughts, not our emotions. It gives rise to another way of knowing, to an awareness that transcends thinking – unclouded by your thoughts, feelings and emotions. It is only by meditating that you will appreciate that you can simply *be yourself*, outside of all the labels of mother, father, son, daughter, partner, teacher, colleague, friend. You discover that none of those things defines who you are; nor does our doing define us. Our doing is not who we are.

Being comes before *doing*. The full richness of the mode of *being* is best appreciated through direct experience of meditation. As we remain faithful to our meditation we discover that the quality of our *being* mysteriously determines the quality of our *doing*. But it is important to appreciate that we cannot enter *being* mode from a *doing* mind-set. We have to let go of all expectation of achievement through meditation. *Being* mode is not devoted to achieving particular goals. In *being* mode, the focus is on *accepting* and *allowing* what is, without any immediate effort to change it.

1 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



uncomfortable but also unflattering! Constantly glaring at your mobile phones can result in a condition called 'text neck' where the neck is held in an abnormal bent position. To remedy this issue try poking your chin out when on a phone or at a computer and make sure to bring your shoulder blades in towards your spine.

4. Jump in feet first

Your back-pain issues may arise from much lower in your body than you suspected: your shoes. Depending on how you walk and if you wear down either the outside or inside of your shoe faster, you could be creating serious misalignment problems. This is known as supination and occurs when weight is placed on a specific side of the foot. How you walk affects your knees, hips and lower back meaning it's important that you do it properly. This might require that you be more conscientious of how you walk or purchasing special footwear which reduces this effect.

5. A shoulder solution

If you have bad posture, you'll probably have rounded shoulders. This is caused by looking down and forward for long periods of time throughout the day, or by not having enough upper back strength. Even gym-goers can develop this condition if they focus too heavily on chest exercises and ignore back training. To find out whether you have rounded shoulders, stand up and allow your arms to fall naturally. If your knuckles are facing forward, then it's likely you suffer from this common issue. Some suggest a corrective back brace to solve rounded shoulders but daily exercises that strengthen your back, chest and core should help.

6. Avoid mattress stress

Sleeping position can make an incredible difference for back-pain sufferers. We spend around eight hours each night sleeping, so it's important that you find a mattress

that is comfortable. Sleeping on your side or back is more helpful for back-pain so avoid lying on your stomach. It is also recommended that you sleep with a pillow, and there are specially designed ones to help with postural problems. Instead of lying on a pillow, others prefer to place a pillow underneath their knees and a small, rolled up towel on their neck for more support. Research different sleeping positions and see what works best for you.

7. Workout to work it out

It's generally advised that exercising can help with postural problems and back pain so look online or speak to an expert on what movements will work best with you. Exercises which target the back and core are ideal and there are plenty to try out. They range from simple exercises like the 'Chin Tuck' where you place two fingers on your chin, tuck your chin and move your head back, to more complex movements. When done correctly, full body workouts will improve your posture making you feel stronger and confident.

8. Good posture starts early

As the old saying goes, it's better to prevent than cure. In this vein, make sure your kids and sitting up straight with good posture in the house and while eating. In an



environment where the family can hold one another accountable for how they sit and be rewarded for doing it properly, children are more likely to adopt the correct posture. Of course, parents should lead by example and are therefore not immune to this accountability. With school now in full swing, it's also vital that your kids wear their backpacks correctly. They should keep both straps on their back at all times, and make sure they're adjusted high on the shoulders.

“A good back posture will not only help in ridding yourself of aches and strains, but also improve the quality of your life drastically.”

Although back-pain and bad posture are common ailments, this doesn't mean you are destined to suffer from them. They are preventable and with persistence, treatable, from the comfort of your own home. A good back posture will not only help in ridding yourself of aches and strains, but also improve the quality of your life drastically. Likewise, backpain when ignored can cause unbearable agony, and also lead to mental health problems like depression. By addressing the symptoms now rather than later, you will be making your first step towards holistic comfort.

If you recognise yourself as a possible sufferer, use this as your motivation to consult a medical expert and make a positive change to your back health and well-being.

Faith — IN THE — family



Bairbre Cahill

I remember when I was small, I asked my Daddy why I had a belly button. He replied that it happened when God was checking if the babies were ready for delivery to families. “God went along the line of babies” said my Daddy, “poking each one gently in the tummy and saying, ‘You’re done and you’re done!’”

It was some years before I realised there was more to it than that! In reality, my belly button was a sign of the connection between my mother and me. Through the umbilical cord my mother's body had supplied nutrients, blood and oxygen to my little developing body. I found myself thinking of that again recently at Mass.

I was standing beside our youngest, on the day I was to take him off to university. I was praying for him, prayers of strength and courage, wisdom and understanding, knowledge and right judgement as he headed off into the vibrant, exciting and somewhat daunting world of university life. An image came to my mind of the umbilical cord, but this time it was spiritual rather than physical and rather than nutrients and oxygen-rich blood it was the gifts of the Holy Spirit that my being was sending to his.

It struck me that with our four now off out in the world, working or studying, that spiritual umbilical cord is so vital. It is important that we pray for our children – and that our children know we pray for them. Our family WhatsApp group which enables us to message the whole family with a single text is busier than ever. It functions as a wonderful way to keep us up to date with what is happening in the life of each one of us. It is also a forum in which some odd questions are asked, advice is requested and many different and frequently conflicting opinions are offered.

In a way it is a technological image of that spiritual umbilical cord, giving form to the way that we nurture and look after each other even from a distance. And that sense of connection is not just important within families but also within

communities and indeed within humanity. It is easy for faith to become a private thing and to lose that community dimension. I am always struck by how much it means to people when I say I am keeping them in my prayers if I know there is something challenging going

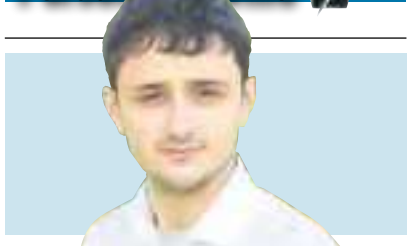


on for them. I've also noticed recently how many people sign off their phone calls with 'God bless' and this within my day to day working environment. Perhaps for some it is simply a reflex but it delights me to think that a lot of the people I encounter genuinely do want God to bless me.

On another topic entirely, I found myself very cross listening to the radio the other day. A woman was being interviewed about her collection of images of Mary. When asked was she a Catholic herself she replied, that no she was brought up a Catholic but didn't believe anything the Church taught. That isn't what made me cross. It was when she went on to talk about, “if you are one of those people who still believe, who haven't questioned anything ...”. That is when I got cross! How dare she presume that just because you or I consider ourselves Catholic we are some sort of brainless wonder, blindly following along and never facing a challenge or asking a question? There is a perception that people of faith just haven't thought about it enough to know better. I know plenty of people, strong in faith who will still say, “There are days when I don't know what I believe”. Questioning, struggling, wrestling with faith – they are all good. Let's not be afraid to be seen as people of faith with all our struggles!

Sister of Mercy behind bars

Personal Profile



Colm Fitzpatrick speaks with award-winning nun Sr Moira Keane

While nuns are usually portrayed in films as hidden away and sheltered from the outside world in convents, an Irish-born Mercy Sister has instead dedicated her life to those locked-up behind prison bars.

Earlier this year Galway woman Sr Moira Keane, who has been working with Irish prisoners through the Irish Chaplaincy in Britain, won the 'Irish in Britain's Individual Volunteer Award'.

It celebrated the life-changing work she has made in the prison system, whether it be carrying out administrative tasks or supporting staff and families.

Sr Moira's enthusiasm for helping the incarcerated began while she was studying at All Hallows College, Dublin, where she did a 'pastoral placement' at Mountjoy's women's prison.

"I just loved them, and got to know them and understand them and get them hopefully never to go out and re-offend and also to support them while they were inside and of course their families," she explains. After a year there, the then governor John Loneragan gave Sr Moira a reference to continue prison ministry, leading her to work as a prison chaplain in the north-east of England for 12 years.

Of course, her desire to support

those in need extends far back before her experience in the prison system, instead being firmly rooted in her faith as a young girl.

"My faith was a big part of my family. You said your Rosary every night and it wouldn't enter our heads not to go to Mass, and of course, we had the example of our mother and father, my father was very religious actually," Sr Moira says, adding that she wasn't impressed by the stories her older sister told her after returning from late-night dances.

"I thought I wanted to marry someone who would love me forever and I couldn't come up with anybody except to commit myself to the Lord, who even at a very young age, I knew wouldn't change his mind about loving me. It sounds unusually weird for a very young child," she explains.

While the Mercy Sisters were visiting schools in the local area, Sr Moira's name was suggested, and from that recommendation she decided to pack up her cases and travel to St Edward's Convent in London at the tender age of 15.

"Of course we had a very bad image in our mind of what life was like in England and I had a dream of praying and working and converting them all - sadly it didn't work out like that! That was my dream," she says.

Understandably, her parents were upset at this momentous decision to move from home, but Sr Moira notes that they were supportive and that if she wanted to return to Ireland after six months, her father would come over to get her. Her father never needed to do so, and 2019 marks 60 years since Sr Moira left home and joined the convent.

"Convents were difficult, very tough in those days but they were good and we had companionship, there were 30 of us in the novitiate, all similar ages and what not," she says, adding that the sisters had the support of one another and were "very happy".

As a nun, she has worked with the homeless, set up two hostels in London, and was even given an award for her innovative approach towards homelessness. She was also a catering manager in a private hospital, which had a key focus on providing work opportunities and up-skilling people.

"It's a great, great privilege. There were lots of problems along the way, a lot of blips but that's what life is about for everybody," she says.

When she retired from full-time work in Acklington and Castington

prisons, Sr Moira decided to move to Essex and with all the time she had to spare, began working with the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas.

The Irish Chaplaincy offers advice, support and friendship to Irish prisoners in England and Wales, older Irish people, Irish Travellers and Gypsies and younger people with an Irish background.

While the notion of helping prisoners can be emotionally charged especially from victims who all too often would prefer little to no respite for their offender, Sr Moira is keen to stress that prison ministry affords support to both parties.

"I would like to say, while there are chaplains in the prison and while the Irish council overseas work with prisoners, we have not forgotten their families, we have not forgotten their victim, but there are other organisations that we're in touch with who work with the victim. It's holistic," Sr Moira says, adding that Christianity and forgiveness go hand in hand. "It's very, very tough to expect people to go down that road of understanding and forgiving but we're Christians and I think maybe we have forgotten that we are followers of Christ."

While she continues her incredible work in England, Ireland remains close to Sr Moira's heart, and she prays that its Christian roots will begin growing once more.

"A lot of Irish sisters in the congregation were very distressed and sad about the route that Ireland is going and we do pray, we pray a lot, we pray a lot for the folks at home and I'm not sure we're praying for the Government, we've given up on them...!"



Sweet Treats

Laura Anderson



Cherry and almond loaf cake - a classic flavour combination

This is an old fashioned family favourite that remains ever popular. It is an essential recipe for every baker's repertoire. There is nothing better with a cup of tea in the evening with its crunchy crust and delicious buttery inside studded with sweet pops of cherry.

Ingredients

- 200g red glace cherries
- 190g butter
- 175g golden caster sugar
- 3 medium eggs
- 1 tbsp lemon zest (about 1 medium lemon)
- 1 tsp almond extract
- 200g self raising flour + 1tbsp
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 75g ground almonds
- 2 tbsp milk
- Flaked almonds for the top (optional)

Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°F/Gas mark 4. Grease and line a 900g/2 lb loaf tin. This also works well in a square or round tin if you prefer.

Prepare the cherries by first quartering them and then rinsing them in a sieve to remove any excess syrup. Using a paper towel pat them dry as best as possible. Toss them in 1tbsp of flour. All of these steps will help prevent them from sinking too much during baking. Some level of sinkage is inevitable in a cherry cake so don't panic if it happens to you, it will still taste great!

Using an electric whisk, beat the butter and sugar together on high for about two minutes until pale and creamy. Reduce speed to medium and beat in the eggs one at a time. Then add the almond extract and lemon zest. Working in parts, sieve and then fold in the flour gently until it is fully combined. Toss about two-thirds of the prepared cherries in the ground almonds and then fold these along with the milk into the mixture. Pour this into the prepared tin. Use the back of

a spoon to smooth the level the loaf. Lay the remaining cherries on top and gently poke them just under the surface. This should ensure

you will have some fruit near the top of your loaf. Sprinkle the flaked

almonds on top at this point if you are using them. Bake in the oven for about 30 mins until golden brown on top, then cover with foil to stop it browning too much and bake for a further 30-40 mins until springy to the touch and a skewer inserted into the middle of the cake comes out clean. The cooking time will vary depending on what shape tin you use. Leave to cool in the tin for about 15 mins before transferring onto a wire rack to cool fully. This cake freezes well so it's a good recipe to double up and make two at a time. It will last for a week if kept in an airtight container.



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Imbalance was a bitter pill to swallow

Well, here we go again. When allegedly liberal social change is being advanced some elements in the media oblige by pushing carefully selected personal stories, imbalanced discussions and the full panoply of media bias strategies.

It felt like the latest variation of this last week when *Liveline* (RTÉ Radio 1), with guest presenter Katie Hannon in the chair, dealt with the issue of assisted suicide. It felt like *The Softening* all over again.

On Monday we had eight callers arguing for assisted suicide, with three against. When they returned to the topic on the Tuesday I was hoping, in my innocence, for some re-balancing, but instead the show started with over 15 minutes of arguments and emotions in favour yet again, from a caller who contributed heavily to the rest of the show and got to challenge those who disagreed.

By the end of the show we had five in favour, two against, with one broadly in favour but concerned about the impact on vulnerable elderly people. In fact, I'd say if euthanasia was legalised elder abuse would reach a whole new level and, if it became acceptable, people would be feeling pressured to shuffle off and not be a burden, even if it was only themselves feeling that in their own minds.



Katie Hannon presented RTÉ Radio 1's *Liveline* last week.

The topic took up about half of Wednesday's show but by now the topic had shifted to the issue of DNR ('do not resuscitate') instructions. The emphasis was on being allowed to die as very distinct from killing, but I thought the distinction wasn't made clearly enough. One lady did however say she would have given her suffering husband 'something' if she could.

By Thursday it really felt like browbeating. This time we had a woman who favoured giving extra doses

of morphine even though it would hasten death, not quite the same as euthanasia, but also a man passionately in favour of euthanasia, but then passion and wisdom don't always coincide. The show finished with him declaring that he was going to "make arrangements for committing suicide" (not immediately), a disturbing end to a week of pressure.

Across the whole discussion I noticed how many pro-euthanasia people referred to people being put 'asleep' (a

telling euphemism) or treating people as you would an ailing animal. The frequent use of 'pro-choice' arguments or emotions was also significant. On aggregate, I counted an imbalance of 15 to 5 – how can this be fair? Is this RTÉ's idea of a balanced debate? How can this be acceptable when the Broadcasting Authority requires impartiality in matters of controversial public debate?

Ironically I discovered later that Tuesday was World Suicide Prevention Day! Sometimes *Liveline* has its pulse on the mood of the nation, sometimes it manipulates the pulse of the nation, but this time it has to get the tone deaf award of the week.

Emphasis

On Thursday, *The Pat Kenny Show* (Newstalk) covered related territory but much more positively and respon-



Rev. Kate Bottley.

PICK OF THE WEEK

THE SIMPSONS

Channel 4, Sunday, September 22, 12.30pm

Casualty Bart sells his soul to his friend Milhouse, but then feels the emptiness.

EWTN BOOKMARK

EWTN, Sunday, September 22, 5pm

George Weigel explores the Catholic Church's clash with the modern world in 'The Irony of Modern Catholic History'.

INSIDE THE VATICAN

BBC2, Friday, September 27, 9pm

Episode 2: Pope Francis appoints 14 new cardinals and a sex abuse scandal erupts just as the Pope embarks on a historic visit to Ireland.

sibly. With Pat Kenny in discussion with Dr Ursula Bates, principal psychologist at Our Lady's Hospice and Care Services, the emphasis was mainly on the importance and effectiveness of palliative care and dying with dignity, rather than assisted suicide. The distinction was clear between direct killing and pain relief that might indirectly and unintentionally hasten death and Kenny showed welcome understanding of this 'double effect'.

Care for those who are unwell is the hallmark of Lourdes, and last Sunday *Songs of Praise* (BBC1) had a moving programme on this place of healing. Rev. Kate Bottley gave some useful historical background on the shrine that she had visited as a young girl, but the emphasis was on the healing.

She spoke to Kazik Stepan, an Englishman who had

been cured of an inoperable tumour when he was 18. He was on the verge of death when friends offered Mass for him in Lourdes. His health improved and soon after he went to Lourdes himself on a stretcher and while there took his first steps. His case is currently under medical review. We got some insight into this process from Dr Alessandro de Franciscis, President of the Medical Bureau attached to the shrine.

It was great to see enthusiastic young pilgrims from the Diocese of Leeds helping the wheelchair bound and growing in their own faith, becoming, as one teen put it, "more comfortable and confident" in the faith. More of that please!

✉ boregan@hotmail.com,
boreganmedia

Film

Aubrey Malone



Elegance reigns supreme in cinematic version of *Downton*

Downton Abbey (12A)

For many moons now, people have been wondering when the Crawley family would hit the big screen. What better way to do it than with a plotline featuring a king and queen?

Michael Engler's film is based loosely on a royal visit to a Jacobean mansion called Wentworth Woodhouse that took place in 1912. Built on a 15,000-acre estate, it contained no less than 350 rooms. You won't be surprised to hear it's still believed to be the largest private residence in the UK.

Simon Jones is King George and Geraldine James Queen Mary. They descend upon the

eponymous abbey in 1927, Engler varying the date just as he has the venue. Cue much chaos among the servants. But at least it's a fine day. ("The weather proves conclusively that God is a monarchist.")

If opulence is your fancy, this is for you. A suitably sumptuous offering, it looks set to play to packed houses for those who've been hooked on the fortunes of the Crawleys and their ilk over the past eight years. Preaching to the converted, it might well spawn a franchise.

As Violet, the incorrigible Dame Maggie Smith drips acidic oneliners from Julian Fellowes' eloquent (if occasionally contrived) script. She's 84 now but time hasn't dented that incorrigible spirit.

Nobody can time an insult as biting as she.

There's everything here, including a homophobic police raid on a gay tavern. And an illegitimate birth. At times the plethora of themes seems excessive. At times they seem concessions to political correctness. It might have been better to concentrate more on less. There's even an unexpected royal pregnancy – and a slice of kleptomania.

Rivalry

In the 'downstairs' world we witness rivalry aplenty. The king's servants are sabotaged by Downton's ones. His highness' butler is a pain in the neck so that's okay. Gentlemen's gentlemen, we learn,

can be just as snifty as gentlemen. "I must go where my king needs me," says Charlie Carson (Jim Carter) triumphantly. He comes out of retirement to oversee the visit.

Tom Branson (Allen Leach) is the reformed Irish republican who's taken the king's shilling. Fellowes, in a sense, gives him centre stage. If there's a sequel I can see him developing a relationship with Lucy (Tuppence Middleton) the maid (or is she?) due to inherit the estate of Lady Bagshaw (Imelda Staunton). Lady Bagshaw carries a secret about her past.

Tom also intercepts a plot to kill the king. In the Downton world, this isn't quite as important as a broken boiler



Maggie Smith, Elizabeth McGovern, Penelope Wilton, Michelle Dockery, Jessica Brown Findlay, Laura Carmichael in a scene from *Downton Abbey*.

or an item that goes missing from a patch box on a dressing table.

Matters conclude with a ball as perforce they must. Here Lady Bagshaw reveals all to Violet. Violet, meanwhile, talks Lady Mary Talbot

(Michelle Dockery) out of wanting to sell Downton. Perish the thought! What would happen to the sequel?

Where's Robert (Hugh Bonneville) in all of this? Bumbling around the place as usual.

Very good
★★★★



BookReviews

Peter Costello



A patriot woman in Georgian Ireland

The Life and Times of Mary Ann McCracken (1770 – 1866)

by Mary McNeill,
(Irish Academic Press,
€22.95 / £19.99)

J. Anthony Gaughan

This was first published in 1960. Ever since it has been valued by historians as an excellent biography of Mary Ann McCracken and a definitive account of the United Irishmen.

Mary Ann was born in Belfast on July 8, 1770. Her father, Captain John McCracken, was a prosperous merchant. She is best known as the sister of Henry Joy McCracken, a leader in the 1798 rebellion. Following defeat at the battle of Antrim he and some of his comrades fled to the safety of the hills. Mary Ann sought them out and supplied them with money, food and clothes.

She arranged for her brother to escape to America, but on his way through Carrickfergus to board ship he was recognised and arrested. He was arraigned before a court and sentenced to be hanged. Mary Ann



Henry Joy McCracken and, left, a bust of Mary Ann McCracken from life.

accompanied him to the place of his execution. Hence the appropriate inscription on her headstone *Díleas go h-éag* ('faithful unto death').

Although Mary Ann was raised in a strictly-adhering Presbyterian family, she attended the school of David Manson, where the teaching

was heavily influenced by the ideas of the French Enlightenment and the American Revolution. Thus she was imbued with the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

Following her brother's execution, she continued to be a supporter of the United

Irishmen and assisted Thomas Russell when he visited Belfast, seeking support for the rebellion he had planned with Robert Emmet. After Emmet's rebellion broke out prematurely and was easily crushed, Mary Ann engaged a barrister and paid the costs of the defence in Russell's trial in

1803.

She was indefatigable in championing democratic freedoms and rights, including the rights of women. Maintaining a lively interest in politics, she was an admirer of Daniel O'Connell and a strong supporter of Catholic Emancipation.

“She worked tirelessly on behalf of the women and children in the poorhouse...”

A life-long agitator for the abolition of slavery, in her late 80s, she had a stand on Belfast docks, where she distributed anti-slavery leaflets to emigrants embarking for the US. It seems that to those who suggested that she should slow down from these and other philanthropic activities she replied that “it was better to wear out than to rust out”.

From the 1790s onwards Mary Ann and her sister ran a successful business manufacturing and selling muslins. She raised her brother's natural daughter who resided

with her until her marriage.

From 1814 the sisters were members of the ladies committee of the Belfast Charitable Society concerned with the welfare of the women and children in the Belfast poorhouse. The ladies committee was re-formed as a more active body in 1827 and Mary Ann became secretary.

Thereafter she worked tirelessly on behalf of the women and children in the poorhouse. She was a lifelong supporter of equality for women, particularly through education. The famine years saw her to the fore in helping the victims and the destitute sick. She spent much of her life teaching in an undenominational school.

Mary Ann died on July 26, 1866 true to the end to her guiding principle: “Is it not the duty of every person to promote the happiness of others as much as lies in their power?”

Apart from the superb portrayal of the remarkable Mary Ann McCracken, in this study the author provides a magisterial account of the commercial, physical and political developments in Belfast during her subjects' lifetime.

The true voice of an Irish poet long neglected

Discovering Thomas Moore: Ireland in 19th Century Europe

Royal Irish Academy, Academy House, 19 Dawson Street, Dublin 2. An exhibition running to Monday, December 23, 2019; opening hours: Monday-Friday, 10am-4.30pm, no booking required.

Booklet to accompany the exhibition by Sarah McCleave

(Queen's University / Erin Project / Royal Irish Academy), free.

Peter Costello

Thomas Moore, once deemed in the 19th Century to be Ireland's premier poet, suffered badly at the hand of the Irish Literary Revival (not to speak of the Irish revolution).

Joyce, for instance describes how Stephen passes “the droll statue of the national poet of Ireland” in College Street, outside Trinity College, which he thought “was a Firbolg in the borrowed cloak of a Milesian” – the very phrase betokens the studied snobbery of Irish nationalism.

Others too sneered at Moore: Frank O'Connor, Patrick Kavanagh, Austin Clarke. Efforts are made from time to time to raise Mangan to Moore's status, but these always fail.

The current display at the Royal



The Thomas Moore statue in College Street, Dublin.

Irish Academy, which will be supported by a series of lectures through October, will go a very long way to reveal the poet in his true dimensions to a younger generation and place the poet as a figure in European culture as Ireland's greatest contribution to the pan-continental Romantic era, in which the identity of modern Europe was created.

To pick up on Joyce's disdain,

Moore was no mere “man of the bags”, an earth-hauling slave. Far from being a Firbolg, he was a middle class Dublin poet in the Irish tradition, a bard wrapped in a glorious cloak of his own creation, a coat of many colours.

The items, often rare and unusual, are displayed to illustrate various aspects of the poet's career. The attractive booklet that accompanies the show has an introduction by Prof. Harry White, but is largely the work of Sarah McCleave. It emphasises Moore's overall significance in the wider cultural scene, of which his attitudes to Ireland, though well discussed here, are only a part.

“Thomas Moore's success as a writer is grounded in his profound response to his education”

His *History of Ireland* and his biography of Byron are given their due weight, but the most interesting part deals with “Moore and Orientalism” – here given a positive interpretation – opening out what will be for many a little known aspect of his work, but the one which gave him in his own day his greatest fame among lovers of poetry.

“Moore was at his most

European when writing about the orient,” Dr McCleave notes.

Lalla Rookh excited considerable interest across Europe, stimulating several translations in German, French, Italian, and Spanish before the end of the 19th Century.”

She also deals with Moore at work both as a poet and author. “Thomas Moore's success as a writer is grounded in his profound response to his education. One of a rare group of pupils to read Greek and Latin at Samuel Whyte's Academy on Grafton Street, Moore studied for a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Trinity College, graduating in 1799.”

Can it be that he was simply better educated than many of his Irish critics?

Aside from his uses of Irish sources for his work, we are shown how he handled not only oriental tales, but also the *Koran* (in George Sale's once famous version). All of this chimes in with the increasing interest these days in trying to truly understand Arab, Persian and Muslim cultures.

Moore was also a Catholic, but a man with a tolerant accepting attitude to religion, which again chimes with the feelings of many today. He is one of the rare Irish writers to take a real interest in religion, and he shows in his *Travels of an Irish Gentleman in search of Religion* – the copy of

this book displayed is from the old Redemptorist Library in St Alphonsus Church in New Orleans.

These exhibits should inspire a whole new interest among general readers in this important poet. The booklet has a two-page list of further reading, enabling the visitor to follow up on particular aspect of Moore's life, work and influence. This is a show which can be warmly recommended.

Achievements

The more one considers Moore and his wide ranging achievements the more one comes to realise that he is indeed an important figure in not just Irish literature, but in European literature. He well deserves the recognition of this status, which his countrymen have long denied him.

Joyce may have been blind to Thomas Moore's true stature; though not deaf to them for he often sang some of Moore's melodies here and in exiles. But there is no need for the modern readers, especially those with an interest in the literary history of Dublin, to be that way.

(The exhibition is supported by a series of five lunch-time lectures beginning on October 9 with ‘Re-imagining Moore’ by Prof. Harry White MRIA, School of Music, UCD. More information on these can be found at www.ria.ie, or by email at info.ria.ie.)

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.



An artists impression of street fighting in Arnhem.

A bridge too far for the Irish

A Bloody Week: The Irish At Arnhem
by Dan Harvey
(Merrion Press, €14.95/
£12.99)

Joe Carroll

Arnhem is the latest in the series of books in which Dan Harvey, a retired Irish army officer, recounts the exploits of Irish combatants in well-known battles. But the attempt to seize the bridge over the Rhine at Arnhem in September 1944 ended in defeat and heavy Allied casualties, many Irish among them.

As the author explains, Operation Market Garden was too hastily planned for a difficult terrain crossed by Dutch rivers and canals. It was the brain-child of a general with close Irish connections, Bernard Montgomery, fresh from commanding the breakout from Normandy after D-Day and the British army's thrust across northern France and into Belgium.

Final thrust

Montgomery, probably jealous of the exploits of his American rival, General George Patton, on the southern flank of the Allied advance, was impatient to make a crossing of the lower Rhine and to advance on the industrialised Ruhr Valley. This would open up a final thrust of the British forces across flat northern Germany on to Berlin itself before the Russians got there.

Market Garden was to

be the biggest airborne operation in history as 35,000 US and British paratroopers in aircraft and gliders were to be dropped behind the German lines and seize five bridges in Dutch territory.

Meanwhile, a large army under British command was to advance rapidly along a 64-mile road taking advantage of the captured bridges and culminating at the vital bridge over the Rhine at Arnhem. This bridge was to be seized by a largely British airborne force and provide the gateway into Germany.

But the British intelligence had been faulty and the paratroopers, while seizing the north end of the bridge, were quickly outnumbered and outgunned by German forces far stronger than expected.

“Montgomery later defended his decision to unleash Operation Market Garden and blamed his superiors”

The British were forced into an enclave in the western suburb of Oosterbeek and held out for nine days while fresh supplies and the reinforcements expected from the advancing army never reached them. They put up an heroic struggle graphically described by the

author drawing on his own military background.

He estimates that more than 300 Irish from north and south were involved in this desperate battle. Overall, 1,485 were killed, 6,500 taken prisoner and 2,400 escaped to fight another day.

“British intelligence had been faulty and the paratroopers, while seizing the north end of the bridge, were quickly outnumbered”

Montgomery later defended his decision to unleash Operation Market Garden and blamed his superiors (meaning General Eisenhower) for not providing the necessary resources. “I think we may be going a bridge too far,” one of Montgomery's generals commented to him as failure loomed.

An interesting Irish angle is that one of the Anglican chaplains in the Arnhem cauldron was Alan Buchanan, from Fintona, Co. Tyrone and a Trinity College graduate.

He was taken prisoner and finished the war in Stalag X1-B in Fallingb. Later, when he was 54

in 1969, he was to become the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin.



WebWatch

Greg Daly



Global media tiring of the golden shimmer behind Francis' reign

There was a brief golden period early in Francis' papacy when mainstream media looked to be trying hard to report on Catholic matters in a genuinely informed and informative way. Not in Ireland, of course, but in Boston, where John Allen was signed by bostonglobe.com and in New York, where Frank Rocca has been plying his trade at wsj.com, and even at time.com, where Elizabeth Dias did superb work on the 2014 Synod of Bishops.

The above are still doing fine work, albeit for an independent cruxnow.com and for nytimes.com in the cases of Allen and Dias, but the momentum has slipped more generally, just as squabbling amongst the Catholic commentariat has threatened to squander the gift that Francis' papacy has been.

All the more refreshing, then, to read an editorial last week at theguardian.com entitled 'The Guardian view on Pope Francis: a voice in the wilderness'. “Pope Francis remains determined to reorient the church towards the global south, where it is still growing at impressive rates, especially in Africa, and to place it on the side of the poor,” the editorial observes, in a fashion unimaginable for an Irish mainstream newspaper.

“In Mozambique and Madagascar, he has argued for reconciliation between competing factions,” it continues. “In Mauritius, he has denounced the use of the islands as a tax haven, calling it ‘an idolatrous economic model’, and appealed to the government to ‘promote an economic policy focused on people and in a position to favour a better division of income’.”

Arguments

“However little the Church seems to matter in the developed world, there is no spiritual leader making these arguments against unrestrained capitalism and environmental destruction as forcefully and to such an audience as Francis does in

Pope Francis.



the global south today.”

It's not a perfect article by any means, but nonetheless it's an encouraging piece of writing, all the more so, really, given how it followed on the heels of an absurd piece in the *Guardian's* sister paper, the *Observer*, entitled 'If there's a Cardinal Sin to be made, count on the Catholic Church'.

An offensive enough diatribe which sneers at the Scottish tour of relics of St Thérèse of Lisieux as “a grim little Vaudeville act”, it could hardly be more hackneyed or less informed, and it should provoke no shortage of eyebrow-raising in its description of Cardinal Raymond Burke as “perhaps the most powerful Catholic churchman after Pope Francis”.

* * * * *

On the cardinal, it really is well worth reading and reflecting on the wherepeteris.com post entitled 'Cardinal Burke: “This is the opinion of Pope Francis as a man”', which maps in impressive detail how the cardinal has publicly denied the teaching authority of the Pope to whom he has sworn an oath of constant obedience, such that it has become increasingly difficult to see how he retains his position as a cardinal.

Despite hysterical and incessant claims to the contrary from the Internet's Little Brothers and Sisters of Perpetual Outrage, Pope Francis is anything but a

'dictator Pope', as his indulgence of Cardinal Burke's posturing opposition to him makes very clear. Still, with some saying that Burke could – especially if deprived of the red hat – become a focus for formal schism in the Church, it is worth reading what Pope Francis has had to say in the last fortnight about the possibility of schism, which can be done by consulting vaticannews.va.

Usual cycle

In what papal biographer Austen Ivereigh –

[@austeni](https://twitter.com/austeni) on Twitter – has described as “an important development” and “a great service”, vaticannews.va published a full official translation of Pope Francis' in-flight press conference on his way home from southern Africa, accompanied by a recording of the press conference. This long-overdue move pre-empts the usual cycle of misleading stories based on snippets and badly translated off-the-cuff comments, and should prove utterly invaluable for Catholics who want to be honestly informed about Pope Francis.

* * * * *

To wrap up, it's great to see that after a three-month hiatus, riskingenchantment.com is back in play. Looking this week at freedom and moral integrity in the writings of Jane Austen, and with a handful of fascinating links, it's an edifying must.

Classifieds

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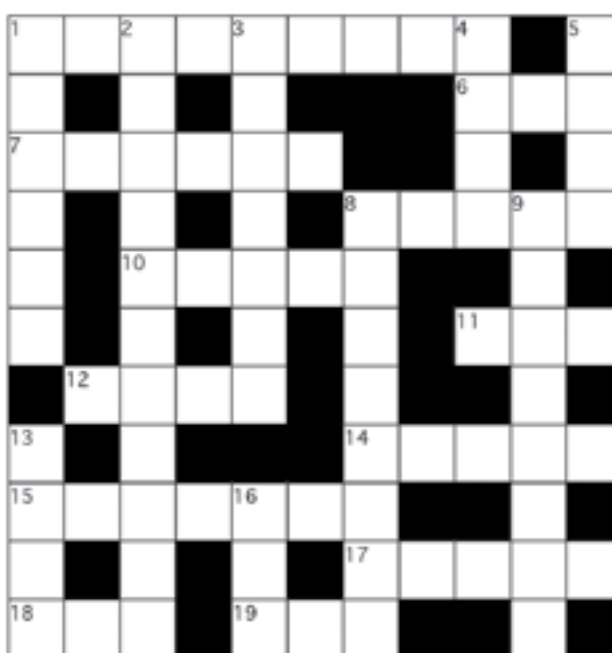
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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 300



ACROSS

- 1 The first meal of the day (9)
6 Not in (3)
7 Unlocked (6)
8 It is red on a holly bush (5)
10 Two times (5)
11 Take part in a play (3)
12 You wear it on your finger (4)
14 How a girl is related to her uncle or aunt (5)
15 What Americans call a chap who delivers letters (7)
17 Keen (5)
18 A pig lives here (3)
19 There are many battles in this (3)

DOWN

- 1 In pieces (6)
2 Put the plug in to use this power (11)
3 Holding onto, not giving away (7)
4 School trip (4)
5 Don't go (4)
8 Someone who is starting to learn how to do something (8)
9 Used the bottle bank, perhaps (8)
13 Little devils (4)
16 Cut the grass (3)

SOLUTIONS, SEPTEMBER 12

GORDIUS No. 420

Across – 1 Duck-billed platypuses 6 Ajar 10 Scuba diver
11 Misguided 12 Student 15 Leave 17 Aria 18 Look 21 Surgery
23 Tempt 24 Glen 25 Acne 26 Pivot 28 Dormant 33 Spearmint
34 Steel 35 So-so 36 Magna Carta

Down – 1 Dish 2 Courtroom 3 Bland 4 Lemon 5 Easy 7 Judea
8 Red herring 9 Our Lady 13 Ecru 14 Tangled 20 Volunteer
21 Stature 22 Ruhr 27 Veers 29 Often 30 Music 31 Mica 32 Flea

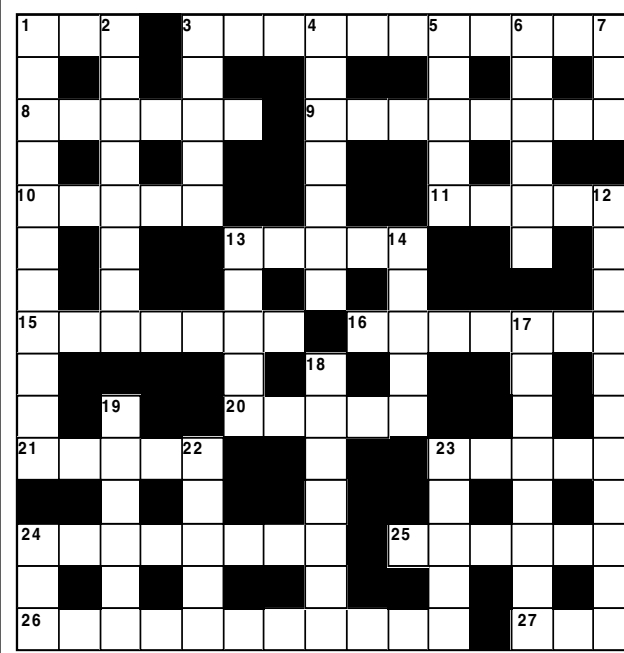
CHILDREN'S No. 299

Across – 1 Car park 7 Icing 8 Useless 9 Stain 11 Cash
14 Uniform 16 Sir 17 Muggle 18 Mexico 19 Frog 20 Desert

Down – 1 Church 2 Reels 3 Apes 4 Kiss 5 Lisa 6 Agony
10 Thoughts 12 Hurting 13 Diamond 15 Miller 16 Spear

Crossword

Gordius 421



ACROSS

1. Vehicle for Mr Morrison? (3)
3. Execution detail. (6,5)
8. The message of the fable is about a junction? Deadly! (6)
9. Person who is not part of the armed forces. (8)
10. Biblical character taken in by some Pisa accountants. (5)
11. Grumpy as three billy-goats? (5)
13. African country, capital Khartoum. (5)
15. An educational grant could be the making of us, Barry. (7)
16. A superficial cut, or a response to an itch? (7)
20. Heartbeat, as felt at the wrist, perhaps. (5)
21. Stench. (5)
23 & 24 He bore a cross taken from nosy niece, literally. (5,2,6)
25. Neither a great A nor a fine C, but magnificent nonetheless! (6)
26. With no qualms, she mixed a soft drink. (5,6)
27. Diocese. (3)

DOWN

1. Do Dracula and his ilk play cricket with these mammals?

(7,4)

2. The person telling the story. (8)
3. Unit of Swiss currency. (5)
4. Count in. (7)
5. Sharp pain felt by Gordon Sumner? (5)
6. Individual, differing from all others. (6)
7. Brown dish under nutty starters. (3)
12. Trendy. (11)
13. Drink's turned up - that could give one an edge. (5)
14. The nook is pleasant (hot inside). (5)
17. On which 'Donald and the Aliens' play their music. (8)
18. Flat, elevated area. (7)
19. Type of TV programme made by Tim's Co. (6)
22. Holy book of Islam. (5)
23. Cardinal direction. (5)
24. Valuable liquid found in the boiler. (3)

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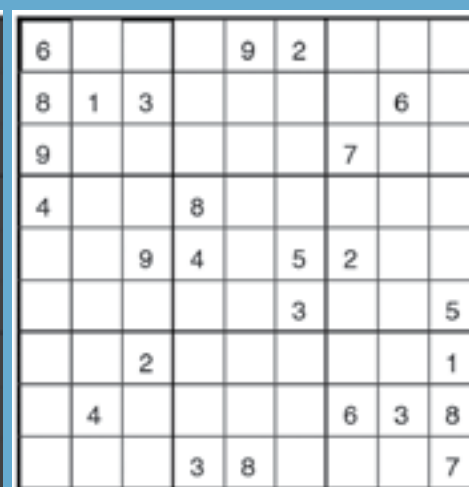
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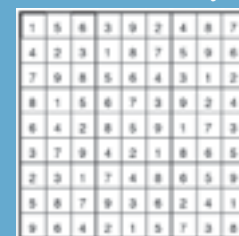
300

Easy

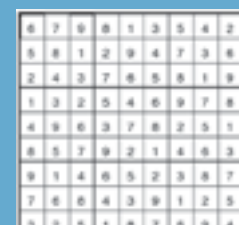
Hard



Last week's Easy 299



Last week's Hard 299



Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock



Giving witness with 'instant Christians' from the valleys

SOME MONTHS ago, I heard a request on our local radio station for a song by Max Boyce [pictured right]. The song played was familiar to me but not so the performer. I had never heard of him before and, no doubt, that says more about me than him.

In any case, I liked what I heard and found myself wanting to hear more of his music. I listened to various recordings and came to realise that Max Boyce is as much comedian as he is singer. His humour has its roots in Welsh Rugby, and I imagine the bulk of his audience comes from the rugby world. Not a soft crowd, by any stretch of the imagination!

I enjoyed what I heard and occasionally there would be a song or a ballad thrown in and they were welcome too.

Spectacular

Then I heard a song introduced and I was intrigued. He spoke about the Welsh rugby fans and how renowned they are for their singing. Male voice choirs are the order of the day and the sound produced is spectacular. Boyce acknowledges this and speaks of the pride that exists in this trait of the Welsh rugby fan.



He goes on to make the point that he wonders how God might feel about this. The origins of the male voice choir are surely found in church and the skills developed there were primarily to give glory to God at Sunday worship. He develops the point.

He says that when he was leaving Cardiff Rugby Grounds,

he was saddened to see an old church, all boarded up with broken windows and a pad-locked door. Even sadder, was the sign outside that said the building was 'For Sale'.

He wondered how God would feel about this and remembered a moment from the game when the referee was perceived to make a mistake and the fans invoked Jesus' name; not in worship but in condemnation of the decision reached. It was the only time Christ's name was mentioned and Boyce titled his song *Ten Thousand Instant Christians*.

Old hymns

It truly is a soul-searching song and, in it, he touches on key issues. He speaks of the male voice choir singing lyrics of old hymns that are only "half remembered" and he speaks of Sunday becoming Saturday and that worship is done on pitch and in stands rather than in church. He wonders how

God will react to the old church, shuttered with its "dusty Bible" and "cob-webbed covered floors" and he references a church that is now a bingo hall.

When I checked the name of the church, I found a reference that said it was once one of the biggest and best attended churches in Wales but its congregation dwindled to single numbers before it was closed and sold, only to be re-opened and developed as a bingo hall.

The song finishes to great applause but there is no laughter – as is heard in response to most of his pieces. In fairness, there shouldn't be. It's a sobering song that calls on all of us to reflect on where our church is heading. I was struck by the courage of Max Boyce to introduce this song to his performance. People expected him to be funny, upbeat and entertaining and here, he seems to offer a challenge to his audience, perhaps even to himself and, as I listened, to me!

What are we doing to stop the numbers becoming, as he puts it, "fewer now each day"? It's such a challenge – at times overwhelming but a challenge, nonetheless.

Any thoughts?

Telling the Rosary

● I wrote here one time about Dick Farrelly's song *The Isle of Innisfree* and the line in the song that speaks of a family on bended knee where "their Rosary is told". I was struck by the word 'told' and wrote a bit about that.

Since then, I've thought some more about this and the thinking is soon to be published by Messenger Publications in a booklet entitled *Telling The Rosary*. It should be available in the coming weeks and perhaps you'd consider keeping an eye out for it. In it, I try to look at the story being told through the four sets of mysteries and to offer a few prayer suggestions to accompany them.

● **JOURNEY BEGUN:** I noticed during the week that 15 men have begun studies for the priesthood. Though the number might be small, behind that number lies 15 people willing to explore the possibility that they are called to priesthood. Where the road takes them is another story, but our joy must lie in the fact they have taken the first step.

Remember them in prayer.



Pupils and staff at DeMatha school, Assam, India



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