

The Irish Catholic

PRESENT DANGER

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WE'RE ONE HUMANITY

No one is safe until everyone is safe, say Trócaire Page 27



MARIA STEEN

Mass is offered to God, with or without a congregation Page 7



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GAA stars call to rally round isolated religious

'They've cared for us, now it's our turn' – Mickey Harte

Chai Brady

Prominent GAA figures have made calls to help older priests and religious who may be isolated and in need of spiritual and practical assistance after all those over 70 were ordered to be 'cocooned' in a bid to save them from coronavirus.

Dublin GAA footballing legend Bernard Brogan appealed to his more than 100,000 followers on Twitter urging people to help a community of religious sisters who were isolated in Cork.

He wrote: "SOS Help needed SOS, I got a call in relation to a house of elderly nuns in Cork City who are in need of care assistant or nurse, local health authorities don't have resources to help. Please contact for details." The sisters in question are now receiving the help they need.

All-Ireland winning Tyrone GAA manager Mickey Harte commended his Dublin rival and others who are reaching out to help people through the pandemic.

Mr Harte told *The Irish Catholic* that "it's good that people like Bernard Brogan, who have a platform that people will be reading and seeing, that he would advocate for people that may be

isolated in all of this".

Mr Harte highlighted the need for people also to look out for elderly priests, saying: "They have cared and served us well for many, many years. The way it is now many of our priests are of a higher age bracket, so we have to be very aware."

"They're in the same category of dependence as many others at this stage because of the limitations place on them through regulation. So, both practically and spiritually we need to connect with them for sure."

Prayer

He highlighted prayer as another way of connecting with priests aside from phone calls, social media and other supports such as doing their shopping.

"The medium of prayer has always been there and will connect you with your priest now too so I think it would be very good to take time out and think of them in our prayers," Mr Harte said.

"Even if it's not a social media connection, FaceTime and WhatsApp and all these new ways people keep in touch with each other, I always believe there's great connection through prayer anyway."

» Continued on Page 2



Dublin GAA legend Bernard Brogan whose appeal to help nuns in Cork was answered and, inset, Mickey Harte.



A heartfelt 'thank you'

This is a time of unparalleled challenge in our lifetimes for our parishes and Faith communities as we struggle to find new ways of being present to one another during this pandemic.

The creativity has been profoundly moving and inspiring and an example of just what we can do when our backs are up against the wall and we cannot come together for public Masses.

This has been a huge challenge for *The Irish Catholic* as many of our readers get the newspaper through after daily Mass or through their local church.

I have been humbled by the Herculean effort that priests, parish workers, promoters, pastoral workers and parishioners have put in to ensure that *The Irish Catholic* is available to readers in the church porch, stocked in local newsagents or distributed in other creative ways.

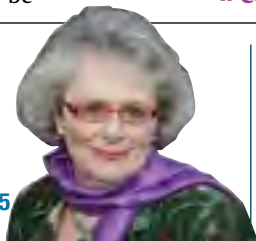
I passionately believe that a vibrant Catholic newspaper can help act as a glue for our communities of Faith. We are all working from self-isolation to try to meet this massive challenge and, rest assured, we will continue to be there to do our bit to publish a strong and relevant newspaper – both in print and online – to keep parishioners informed, inspired and hopeful with up-to-the minute news, interesting features and faith formation.

From the bottom of my heart – thank you.

– Michael Kelly, Managing Editor

MARY KENNY

A personal view – are the rules disproportionate? PAGE 5



DOORS WIDE OPEN

Museums are closed but their riches can be seen online PAGES 18 & 19



DAVID QUINN

This time of suffering could also be a time of grace PAGE 8



"God help our people who are homeless during COVID-19..."

Right now MQI's frontline staff are doing a hero's work daily to help people who are homeless during COVID-19, the coronavirus crisis.

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MQI

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The medal-winning parish secretary keeping the Faith

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Not a time of God's judgement, but of our own judgement

I was honoured to have been asked by RTE on Friday to offer the commentary and English language translation for the Pope's Extraordinary Moment of Prayer in Rome.

It was a powerful and moving ceremony. Few who watched it will ever forget the image of the solitary figure of the elderly Pontiff dressed in white making his way to the platform in the pouring rain in an eerily empty square.

Or the profundity of the moment when Pope Francis faced the world and offered the Eucharistic Benediction – never was I more conscious of the sense that this was a blessing *Urbi et Orbi* to the city and to the world.

Homily

The Pope's homily – in which he drew on the lack of Faith of the disciples when the boat is sinking to illustrate Christ's abiding presence – was both simple and challenging. He constantly repeated the words of the Lord in the

Gospel of Mark: 'Why are you afraid? Have you no Faith?'

Our Faith is weak and we are fearful. How could one not be frightened by the silent killer that is coronavirus stalking our communities? Yet, as the Pope pointed out, the strength of Faith frees us from fear and gives us hope.

“How many are praying, offering and interceding for the good of all? Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons”

We do not know when this pestilence will pass. But we do know that Christ is there in the midst of it

and he will not abandon his people.

We can see the presence of Jesus in transforming our question from 'why has God done this to us?' to 'how can we discover new ways of knowing God and loving one another in this challenge?'

Go back to the scriptures. Every crisis in the history of the Israelites – the loss of the Temple, the loss of the monarchy – eventually led to a new deeper relationship with God. It was when the Jewish people thought that they had lost everything that they re-discovered God. Their prayers of pleading changed their hearts, and they found a new intimacy with their Lord.

The coronavirus is a challenge and a call to us – a call to conversion and a call to put our relationship

with God at the centre of our lives. The Pope on Friday addressed God in his meditation and said: "You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a time of choosing."

"It is not the time of your judgement, but of our judgement: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others."

"How many are praying, offering and interceding for the good of all? Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons," the Pope said.

Our Faith which has fed and sustained our ancestors through countless trials will not fail us. Be not afraid!

'It's our turn to care for them'

» Continued from Page 1

Deliberately pray for them; that they will be well through all of this," he said.

Meanwhile, Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe said that "a lot of priests over 70 are still very active and for them not to be available to do the basic services, that's quite a restraint on them."

"One of the big things I'm dealing with is priests in their 80s, trying to encourage them to stay at home and comply with that regulation for their own sake because they're so active and so much out there," he said.

Dr Monahan called on the Faithful "to renew the effort of community", and to look out for people who are currently cocooning and care for them.

"Make sure they're not only medically well but have basic supplies and that they feel that they could stay in and not have to go out, they can't do that unless people are going to facilitate them to do that," he said.

Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy said that as far as regulations allow "it's good for people to check in with the priest that everything is okay, or the religious

community as the case may be, because religious communities to can be quite isolated in their own way".

"The great thing about parish is in some ways parishioners come to the fore at a crisis so much and I absolutely know they'll be great support to one another and all people who are cocooned. Equally the priests who are not, and the other people who are not, will do their best, leaving messages on walls, or on gates or on hall doors, little chores that can help," Bishop Leahy said.

See Pages 16 & 17.

Support Irish



Reaching 19,000 Youth

Missionaries

As many fellow Irish might relate, for my whole life my faith has been there, but it was just something that I could list off rather than something I was passionate about, like I would say I was Catholic the same way I would say I have black hair. Then through a family friend I was invited to do NET. I can honestly say now after finishing my year that is was the best year of my life. NET helped me make my faith SO much stronger than it's ever been, and it's really helped me improve as a man of God.

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Use ‘different’ Easter to deepen Faith – bishop

Chai Brady

The Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin has said although Holy Week and Easter will no doubt be different this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it can still be marked at home in a “profound” way.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Bishop Denis Nulty said: “We all realise and accept that Holy Week and Easter will be very different this year, but nonetheless profound I think in their simplicity. It’s an opportunity for us to bring Holy Week into our homes.”

Bishop Nulty suggested on Holy Thursday that people place a bowl, jug and a towel on the table and also watch the Holy Week ceremonies via webcam.

The idea is “to remind of us of those at the frontline of service against the coronavirus, all the people in healthcare”.

Reminder

“It is to remind us of service and those that are serving us at this time, that’s on Holy Thursday. I think that would be such an important moment, simply just a reverent moment, that would replace the washing of the feet in every house,” he said.

“I’m also suggesting that no

matter where we are, Jesus is always never distant from us, he’s always with us and on Good Friday again let’s find the crucifix somewhere in our house at home, let’s rediscover that and put that back on the kitchen table.”

He added there should be no kissing of the cross for the sake of hygiene, particularly in this time of an ongoing pandemic, saying it will be simply for “reverence”.

New life

“Let’s follow the Stations of the Cross. I encourage all our churches where possible to offer the Stations of the Cross sometime on the webcam during the day on Good Friday,” Dr Nulty said.

For the Easter Vigil, he advised, people should get out their Holy Water font if they have one.

“We will have no water obviously because of the whole Holy Water issue, but at least it reminds us of what will be the great Easter story of resurrection and new life,” he said.

This is due to the Government mandated coronavirus regulations which meant churches had to empty all Holy Water fonts – brought in to contain the spread of the virus.

The Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin is also currently working on a resource for families to help them pray during Holy Week at home.



Fr Niall Howard (left) and Bishop Emeritus Bill Murphy pictured in St Mary’s Cathedral in Killarney as Easter Triduum approaches and churches continue Mass and prayers during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. Photo: Valerie O’Sullivan

Irish Capuchin’s Lockdown poem goes viral on web

Róise McGagh

Since being posted three weeks ago, the poem *Lockdown* by Bro. Richard Hendrick OFM Cap has received 45,000 shares on Facebook and 500,000 on Twitter.

Bro. Richard, the Vocation Director at the Capuchin Friary in Raheny, said people of

all religions have been getting in touch with him and he is inundated with emails about the poem of hope.

“It’s people saying thank you; people saying the poem was extremely helpful; people for who it has opened a door to come back to their faith, and finding inspiration in their Faith who were

unaware that this was something that would move them in such a way.”

The poem, since it was posted on March 13, has been translated into 13 different languages and animated and made into a video. It has also been shared by two infamous self-help authors, Tim Ferriss and Tara Brach, and by

movie star Alec Baldwin and Arianna Huffington on the *Huffington Post* in the US.

“If it wasn’t to do with such a difficult and negative circumstance, it would be truly a gift. But I’m very aware of the fact that it’s people who are vulnerable and in isolation and pain but they’re finding something in this poem

that allows them to recognise that the human being can transcend the most difficult of experiences and find compassion and the presence of god in really difficult times,” said Bro. Richard.

A regular poet, he will continue to write as it goes “hand in hand with prayer” for him.

“God help our people who are homeless during COVID-19...”



This is an urgent appeal to the faithful readers of the *Irish Catholic*:

Right now MQI staff are working tirelessly at the frontlines to **help people who are homeless and alone in Ireland during COVID-19, the coronavirus outbreak.**

To continue providing **vital food and healthcare to men and women who are homeless on our streets**, many who are already in heartbreakingly fragile condition, we need your help.

Please give what you can now on mqi.ie/donate. Or call 01 524 0139. It’s not too late! Help MQI’s frontline heroes to protect some of the most vulnerable people among us during the coronavirus. Thank you for caring, and God bless you.



Merchants Quay Ireland
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Attitudes towards ‘nonsensical’ religion is racism, says chaplain

Aron Hegarty

A new form of racism exists in contemporary society which deems all religious beliefs, teachings and practices as “nonsensical”, according to a university chaplain.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr Alan Hilliard, chaplain of TU Dublin Bolton Street Campus, says a new era of people being condemned for their faith is emerging.

“Today we are entering into a new form of religious racism,” he says.

“People maybe aren’t really respected or understood for their religious viewpoints and that’s a very new era in racism in that people who prioritise the rationalisation of the mind, as a result of the Enlightenment, and anything that is religious is nonsensical, and that is a new form of racism.”

Fr Hilliard was addressing the issue of racism for ‘International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination’ on March 21.

The annual occasion, he says, is there to remind us that the whole history of the world has been an evolution of racist episodes between people, family, religions, gender and nationalities.

He points to past Irish struggles, where we were initially subjected to racism as immigrants in America and the UK, and how at times Irish people could be racist towards other groups.

“In order to climb up the ladder,” says Fr Hilliard, “sometimes people have to stand on the backs of others, which is a form of racism.”

On being asked why he felt people would be racist towards others, he responds: “I think when you hear people being racist, you have always got to ask ‘why?’”

“And it is usually because some people want to step up the ladder by standing on backs of others and that’s not really the way Christians are asked to be in today’s world.”

See Page 12.

Pro Life Campaign seeks volunteers to help isolated elderly

The Pro Life Campaign in Ireland has launched an outreach initiative to support older members of the community this week.

The Outreach project, unveiled on March 31, calls on volunteers to participate and help those feeling isolated and alone during the coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis.

“Given the limitations to the work that can be done in terms of activities and events, we are launching a number of projects in the coming days that we invite you to be part of,” says Eilís Mulroy of the Pro Life Campaign.

“We are assembling a team of volunteers who are committed to dedicating some of their time to reach out to members of our movement, who are feeling vulnerable and would appreciate a phone call, in case they need assistance of some kind or simply someone to talk to.”



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A blessing from Ardmore



Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, Phonsie Cullinan, celebrates Mass on the ancient monastic site of St Declan in Ardmore, Co. Waterford assisted by Conor Singleton and Daniel Rochford from Holy Family Missions. The bishop later blessed the whole diocese and brought the Blessed Sacrament through the streets of Dungarvan town.

Pro-life groups welcome BBC’s admission of impartiality failure

Chai Brady

Pro-life groups have welcomed the BBC’s decision to uphold a complaint against itself in relation to coverage of abortion.

A viewer made the complaint after the BBC failed to provide both sides of a debate when reporting on the House of Commons vote to impose abortion in the North.

Bernadette Smyth of Precious Life welcomed the decision saying: “We are hopeful that this will set a precedent for press and media organisations to uphold the standards required for ethical, balanced and fair coverage.”

“As a tax-payer funded private broadcaster, the BBC has a very serious responsibility towards the members of the UK public – many thousands of whom are pro-life and feel enormously frustrated by biased and unfair coverage.”

Mrs Smyth added: “As an organisation in receipt of public funds, the BBC has a duty and obligation to be impartial and fair its reporting, especially in such a huge social issue as abortion.”

The conclusion of the BBC’s investigation of the complaint found that although absence of an opponent of the changes would not necessarily have resulted in bias, achieving “due impartiality” would have required elements of challenge in the two interviews with supporters which were absent in the bulletin.

This comes as the new abortion framework, decided on in Westminster while Stormont was suspended, was introduced to the North on Tuesday.

The framework allows for unrestricted access to abortion in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy; abortion on mental health grounds up until

week 24 of pregnancy; abortion for ‘serious disability’ up to birth and limited conscientious protections for some healthcare workers.

Marion Woods of Both Lives Matter criticised the new framework saying: “The law may have changed but our position hasn’t and both lives in pregnancy will always matter. These are bad laws created through a bad process and in time, the Northern Ireland Assembly can and should

restore lost protections and introduce new laws and policies fit for the 21st Century.

“Rather than continue down this path which dehumanises us as women and our preborn children, we must strive to create something truly humane; a new society where every life matters and all life is enabled, and women aren’t told they need to choose between their life and wellbeing and their own child,” she added.

‘No more than 10 people at funerals’

A maximum of 10 people will be allowed to attend the funeral services of loved ones, so long as social distancing is applied, according to the Irish Government.

The Government says members, preferably immediate family, of the deceased can attend in places of worship and at the graveside, but may be restricted in smaller, enclosed spaces. Department of the Taoiseach senior official Liz Canavan clarified the Government advice on attendance at funerals, burials and cremations on March 31 at the daily briefing on the State’s response to the coronavirus (Covid-19).

Ms Canavan said that further guidance is being developed by the health service and would be published shortly.

Were you involved in pro-life campaigning, activism or work in the 1980s and 1990s?

I would love to speak to you about your memories.

I am an historian researching the history of the pro-life movement in Ireland. The voices of men and women who took part in pro-life activism have been left out of the historical narrative and there is no balanced account of their work. It is really important that the experiences of people who took part in this work are recorded, especially for future generations.

If you are interested in taking part in an oral history interview with me or would like more information, please email

L.e.kelly@strath.ac.uk, or write to: Dr Laura Kelly, School of Humanities, University of Strathclyde, Level 4, Lord Hope Building, 141 St James Road, Glasgow G4 0LT, Scotland.

Interviews can be anonymous if you wish and your memories will be treated with the utmost sensitivity and respect.

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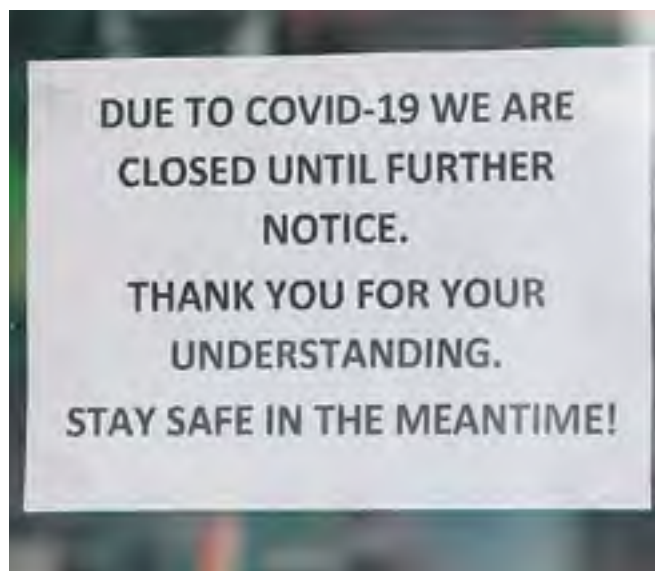
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A personal view – are the rules disproportionate?



Mary Kenny



What does it mean to be pro-life? To me it means defending human life from conception until the natural end of life; not deliberating taking human life, unless in extreme cases of self-defence. If a mad axeman is coming towards you with homicidal intent, you would be reasonably entitled to defend yourself, and those around you.

But being pro-life doesn't – in my view – mean preserving human life at all costs. Life must come to a natural end. We must all face that. And this leads me to dissent, somewhat, from the majority attitude in managing this Coronavirus emergency.

Lockdown

In Britain, as in Ireland, everyday existence is now in total lockdown. High streets are in ghost towns. Businesses are closed, and many will never again re-open. All places of sport, recreation and leisure, let alone churches or locations of culture and learning are shut. Draconian regulations are put in place restricting contact and movement.

Restricting contact is sensible, when faced with

an infection which is highly contagious.

But let me bring in another source of guidance here: St Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas, in considering whether a war was 'just' or not, stressed the concept of 'proportionality'. An action

had to be 'proportionate' to be just.

And though many will disagree with me, I ask if the approach to managing the virus has been disproportionate – and maybe therefore unjust.

In Britain, a range

of voices – from the commentator Peter Hitchens to historian Sir Max Hastings to the former Justice of the Supreme Court, Jonathan Sumptio – have asked whether it is proportionate to wreck the economy, saddle future generations with enormous debt, cause other illnesses to be ignored or sidelined, prompt mental health stress and hugely increase state power in order to halt an infection which most people will experience with only quite mild symptoms?

Lord Sumption has called the lockdown approach "collective hysteria" which exaggerates the threat to life. He points out that most people recover; those who do not are often already very ill or fragile.

These dissenters are accused of being willing to throw the old, the vulnerable and the already unwell to the wolves, and of putting Mammon before humanity. Human life should be the number one

priority, to be protected at all costs.

In one sense, it's nice to see so many people cherishing human life.

“I don't consider it proportionate for society to go into total lockdown to protect my health”

But if vast numbers of people all over Western Europe are reduced to pauperism, if countless small family businesses are ruined, if pensions fall off a cliff, if abortion figures leap dramatically – as they will if there is a serious depression – will these factors not also harm human life?

Churches could close permanently, unable to be sustained by an impoverished population which has perhaps felt abandoned by the lockdown.

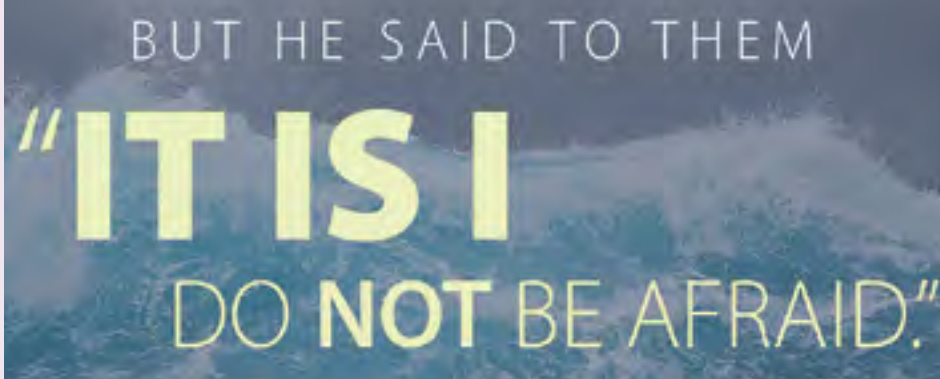
Therefore, it seems to me to be proportionate to

take some risks in managing this emergency. Sweden has done so: cafés, bars, shops and other places of public congregation have remained open. There are no draconian regulations – the Swedish government says it trusts people to practice voluntary self-distancing, using common sense, not coercion.

Their rates of fatality from the coronavirus (Covid-19) are half that of neighbouring Norway, which has taken the lockdown approach.

I may well get the virus – I'm in the age frame, and the vulnerable bracket too, with a respiratory condition. But I don't consider it proportionate for society to go into total lockdown to protect my health. Yes, I'm self-isolating, wearing a face-mask and trying to behave responsibly. But I am deeply worried about what the consequences of these extraordinary and compulsory measures may be.

● Perhaps now is the time we should have an imaginary billboard before our eyes, with that line from John 6:20, so beloved of St Pope John Paul II...



Brónach – a mother of saints



For these exceptional times, I'm examining some of the early Irish saints (drawn on Pádraig Ó Riain's immense and scholarly *Dictionary of Irish Saints*). This week, Brónach of Kilbroney.

Brónach is a Co. Down saint, dating from soon after St Patrick's conversion of Ireland. She was the daughter of Mileac, who was said to have shared Patrick's slavery.

She was also the mother of three saints: Caolán of Nendrum, Damhnad of Tedavnet and Fursa of Killursa.

Some sources in Kildare claim that Brónach was a subject of St Brigid.

A traditional legend in Armagh also links her to Baile na Cille, now Ballykeel in the parish of Forkhill, South Armagh.

A clog bán – a white bell – which was probably a relic of the saint was discovered in the ruins of Kilbroney church, near Rostrevor. Brónach's feast day is April 2.



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Homeless charity plans to continue offering homeless food services

Staff reporter

A Dublin-based charity has vowed that it will continue to carry its food services for the most vulnerable despite the coronavirus. However, while Merchants Quay Ireland said it will still offer urgent essentials at its Riverbank base as take-away, all other activities such as hot showers, counselling and contact work must be restricted.

The homeless drop-in centre has also offered access to the old 'Tea Rooms' on Cook Street to hand out food at the door since last week and caters for up to 80 people a day. "They would be the people who are living on the streets," says chef Dave Kinsella of those the centre serves. "For whatever their reason, they're not in a 24-hour hostel. They're sleeping rough outside at night."

He added: "The people coming are here because they have absolutely nowhere else to go, and without this they'd be completely lost."

Isolated

"I'm isolated from the rest of the crew because of infection control and hygiene. I'm here in the main kitchen where I always was, making the sandwiches and putting them together with a

bottle of water and a piece of fruit, maybe some chocolate or biscuits."

Kinsella continued: "What I miss is being able to give a nod and a smile to the clients, that interaction. But we're trying our best to give people their fair share."

The GP and nursing services in Riverbank will continue to operate and medical services may be supplemented as the situation develops.

Frontline

Marguerite Kilduff, a nurse who continues to work on the frontline, says their clients are "scared" in this "tough, challenging time".

"Wound care is more difficult because it takes longer," said Kilduff.

"We're constantly sterilising surfaces and washing hands. Homeless people can't keep up with the news as the rest of us can."

"They don't know how bad it has become and they're shocked by the social distancing, because they're not used to it."

She added: "What they used to know is now completely changed for them. It's made them very, very scared."

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Keep Church buildings open for sanctuary – priest

Aron Hegarty

Priests have stressed the need for the Church to remain present to people, including – where possible – keeping churches open as a place of sanctuary for those seeking to "reconnect" with faith and home.

Fr Cathal Geraghty of the Clonfert Diocese is one of several clergy calling for church buildings to remain open as a symbol of sanctuary in a period of "uncertainty".

"We want to keep the cathedral [in Loughrea] open for as long as possible because people need sanctuary, and if

they can't find sanctuary at their churches then they will be even more despondent," he told *The Irish Catholic*.

"In a time of uncertainty, people want to reconnect with their own roots and would like to be at home if they are abroad, and they would aim to connect to that through watching our Masses on the webcam...one of the comments from an email we got recently reads 'it is lovely to see the sanctuary and the cathedral, it links me up with home'," he said.

Similarly, Fr Patrick Dunne of Raphoe said many of the churches in his diocese are using the webcam and Face-

book to connect people to their parish.

"That's had a huge impact where people are connecting more with their parishes," Fr Dunne said about livestreaming daily Masses. "I do feel that people want to have that connection with their parishes and there's a large following of people, who are away from home who are following their parishes online on social media," he said.

Online viewing

Fr Francis Judge of Killala Diocese says an audience of around 600 watch weekend Mass in his parish via the webcam and the numbers

are increasing each week. "A lot of new people join every week because more and more people hear about it," he said of the increase in online viewing figures.

"We have people as far away as America that hear about it."

"They find it helpful and they like to be in tune with their own parish...families are gathering and watching Mass online together," adds Fr Judge.

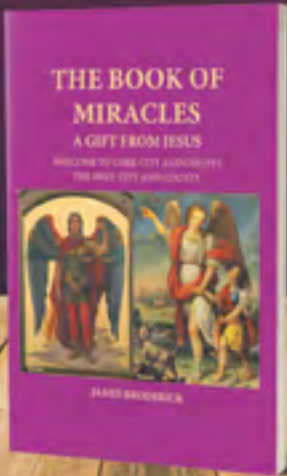
"There's so many reflections and prayers being shared by young people than there would have been before," he said.



Thus far and no farther...for now

A parishioner venerates the Blessed Sacrament from outside a locked church in the Diocese of Killaloe after the decision was made to shut all churches in the diocese as a precaution against the coronavirus (Covid-19).

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Helpline for elderly receives more than 1,100 calls after cocooning measures introduced

Róise McGagh

ALONE's Covid-19 helpline for older people received over 1,100 on Saturday calls following the introduction of the cocooning measures.

Seán Moynihan, ALONE CEO said: "This is an incredibly difficult time for all of us but particularly older people and especially those who live alone."

The charity commended the practical support being offered by Local Authorities. Mr Moynihan urged communities and

families to offer support to older people who need it, and assured older people that staying at home does not mean they will be alone.

The National Helpline operating in collaboration with the Department of Health and the HSE in total has received 5,500 calls and expect the daily number of calls to remain high. They are encouraging older people who need advice to call their helpline, 0818 222 024 open 8am-8pm, seven days a week.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Accord can counsel by phone

Accord is to offer phone support to anyone experiencing relationship distress as well as to those whose counselling sessions were suspended due to Covid-19.

Mary Johnston, Accord's specialist in counselling marriage and relationships, said: "Members of the public experiencing relationship distress will be able to call and receive a call back from an experienced marriage and relationships counsellor."

Ms Johnston recommends to keep a routine: "It is also important to realise that your partner is as stressed and frustrated and worried as you are. Talking and listening to one another about your concerns at this time may be helpful."

Contact Accord on info@accord.ie or call (01) 505 3112/086 777 7138.

More than 4,000 candle requests to Knock

In the last week more than 4,000 requests were made for candles to be lit by Knock Shrine sacristans. Knock opened a 'Light a Candle Online' facility allowing people request a candle online and have a real candle lit for them in the Shrine outdoor candelabra. They have also been hosting two daily Masses since public Masses were cancelled; Wednesday, March 25 saw the conclusion of their National Novena that began on St Patrick's Day.

Maria Steen
The View



Every Mass is offered in the name of the Church, with or without a congregation

Pope Francis' recent *Urbi et Orbi* address was the most poignant moment of his pontificate. There was something profoundly moving about the emptiness of St Peter's Square. Next to a crucifix that witnessed the defeat of a plague in Rome in 1522, Christ's Vicar stood alone in the rain and, in the darkening evening, implored God to come to our aid once more.

Across Ireland and the world, priests, in solitude, are doing the same. The Mass is being celebrated in empty churches. Priests are reciting a liturgy that invites responses from a congregation that is not there. And though it seems strange to us, it underlines the fact that the value of the Mass does not depend on us, nor on our participation. Rather, it is the other way around. It is we who depend on the Mass.

Oftentimes, we can be tempted into thinking that the mark of a 'good Mass' is the quality of the homily, readers, choir or the size of the congregation. But these days remind us of the true purpose of the Mass: to adore God as our creator, to thank him for his favours, to atone for our sins and to ask God for his blessing. In other words, the Mass is directed towards God, not towards us.

Benefit

While ordinarily we are required, under pain of mortal sin, to assist at Mass on Sunday, this is not to make the Mass efficacious, but rather for the benefit that we derive from it, and in recognition of the eternal debt we owe to Christ for redeeming us by dying once and for all on Calvary. In these days, when the obligation to assist at Mass has been lifted, it is the priest who continues to adore God, to thank him, to atone and to ask his blessing on our behalf. The Mass, even when celebrated in private, remains as important as ever. More than a century ago, confirmation of this fact came from a surprising source. In the late 19th and early 20th Centuries,



the Irish secular courts were confronted with the question of whether a bequest of money for the saying of Masses could be 'charitable' within the meaning of the law, when the Masses were to be celebrated in private. The answer depended on whether a private Mass could confer a 'public benefit'. Initially, the courts said that it could not.

Charitable gift

In 1876, the Irish Court of Exchequer Chamber decided the case of Attorney-General vs Delaney. It held that a bequest to Dr Delaney, the Bishop of Cork, to have Masses said for the repose of the souls of the donor and her deceased relatives, was not a valid charitable gift.

The court was led by the Chief Baron of the Exchequer, Christopher Palles. Palles, who would go on to become the longest-serving judge in Irish legal history, is a fascinating figure in his own right. He was educated at Trinity College and went on to enjoy a stellar career at the Bar and then on the Bench. That much would have been unexceptional in his day. What was unusual about Palles was that he was a Catholic, and a devout Catholic at that.

He lived in the house (still standing) at the junction of Leeson Street and Fitzwilliam Place in

“The element of charity, in its most extensive, indeed its truest sense...is piety to God”

Dublin, in which he had his own private oratory. Yet in Delaney's case he accepted that the requirement of 'public benefit' necessary to make a bequest charitable was missing in the case of private Masses. It could come only from the 'edification' of a congregation.

In 1906, the issue arose again in the case of O'Hanlon vs Logue, in which the Irish Court of Appeal overturned the decision in Delaney's case. Palles, who was again a member of the court, gave a lengthy judgment explaining why his opinion had changed. He said: "The element of charity, in its most extensive, indeed its truest sense...is piety to God. There is no doubt that, according to the Roman Catholic faith, each

celebration of the Mass involves the most perfect act of charity."

In his concurring judgment, the Lord Chancellor, Sir Samuel Walker, said: "It is settled by authority which binds us that where there is a direction to celebrate Mass in public, the gift is a valid charitable one; but what makes it charitable is the performance of an act of the Church of the most solemn kind, which results in benefit to the whole body of the Faithful, and the results of that benefit cannot depend upon the presence or absence of a congregation."

“Let us now give thanks for the thousands of loyal priests who, in our country and around the world, continue to celebrate the Mass”

The holy sacrifice of the Mass is offered to God; its efficacy is undiminished by the fact that we are physically absent. This aspect of our Faith is perhaps most obvious in the liturgy of the traditional Latin Mass, in which the priest only rarely turns

towards the congregation (if present). He is the leader of the Faithful assembled, representing the people of God, with all oriented in the same direction: their gaze fixed on the altar and towards God.

Let us now give thanks for the thousands of loyal priests who, in our country and around the world, continue to celebrate the Mass as the most perfect act of charity, for the benefit of the whole body of the Faithful.

Cynical eyes might have perceived Pope Francis as a frail, old man, speaking to no-one. But when he carried the Blessed Sacrament into the Roman night to confer a benediction upon the city and the world, the eyes of Faith saw the beauty,

salvific power and healing strength that the Eucharist, administered by God's chosen men, brings to the world.

In 1876, Bishop Delaney gave this evidence to the court, which did not carry the day then, but did so 30 years later, and ever after: "The Mass is a true and real sacrifice offered to God by the priest, not in his own person only, but in the name of the Church whose minister he is. Every Mass, on whatsoever occasion said, is offered to God in the name of the Church to propitiate his anger, to return thanks for his benefits and to bring down his blessings upon the whole world."

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How will the Church in Ireland be situated when all this is over?

With public Masses suspended, we find ourselves in unprecedented times. How many previously regular Massgoers will revert to their pre-crisis levels of attendance? That's only one of the questions to be considered in this present moment.

The immediate task is, of course, to save lives. We must also try to ensure that people's livelihoods are not wrecked over the long-term because that would also extract a tremendous toll. Marriages would be destroyed, mental health problems escalate, our ability to fund a decent healthcare service into the future compromised.

The Church itself has always been in the business of saving lives. An eye-opening article for me was written by a Chinese writer, William Huang, for the online Catholic magazine *Mercatornet.com*. He showed how modern China's network of hospitals rests on a foundation originally laid down by Christian missionaries in the 19th Century.

Indeed, the very first hospital in Wuhan, the city in China from which this pandemic originated, was founded by an Italian bishop, a Franciscan named Eustachius Zanoli.

Outbreak

All around the world, hospitals that were originally Christian, or are still Christian, are responding to this disease outbreak. The Church alone runs 5,500 hospitals worldwide, and about 16,000 health clinics, most of them in the developing world. As Catholics, we can be very proud of this. Our outreach to the sick reaches back 2,000 years. The modern hospital system grew out of Christianity. We cannot assume it would have developed on its own. If it was an inevitable development, then why did so many cultures not have one in place before the arrival of Christianity?

But the first concern of the Church is for souls. This seems like an old-fashioned thing to say, but above all else the Church is concerned with how each of one us stands in relation to God. The Church must be a good shepherd in season and out of season. Above all, it must be a good shepherd when the wolf is at the gate, or worse, among the flock, as this one is.

It must protect our physical well-being, and also our spiritual well-being, ensuring we do not lose faith or hope.

In a strange way, this crisis could act as a moment of grace as well as of suffering, writes **David Quinn**



This is why Pope Francis has said that if the Church abandons people now, at this hour of crisis, then the people will abandon it.

Fortunately, in Italy, priests appear to be stepping up to the mark. They are risking their lives for their parishioners. As at last week, 60 priests had died in northern Italy. Some of these will have picked up the virus in the same way as everyone else – by unknowingly having contact with an infected person.

“If priests and religious and lay Catholic volunteers who are not medics stepped back, the cost would not be in lives, but in spiritual welfare”

But others will have been infected while bringing the last sacraments to sick and dying people, knowing the risk they were taking.

We are all called to be like Christ. But the priest in particular stands as an icon of Christ, willing to lay down his life for others,

as Christ did. This is the biggest demand we can ever make of anyone. It cannot even be a demand, or an expectation for that matter. It is extraordinary that priests and religious – both female and male – as well as laity would deliberately risk their lives for others voluntarily.

Nurses and doctors are doing the same thing, of course, including my own wife, who is a nurse. Without them, the whole battle against this blight would fail. But if priests and religious and lay Catholic volunteers who are not medics stepped back, the cost would not be in lives, but in spiritual welfare, and that cannot be overestimated.

Those priests and religious and lay people, including lay chaplains, are taking risks for the sake of the spiritual well-being of their fellow Catholics.

That is what is happening in Italy but what is happening here? At the time of writing, it might be too early to say. We are not at the same critical stage as Italy and, God willing, never will be, because northern Italy has particular reasons why it is so bad (such as a much older population, intergenerational living, large



Men in Bergamo, Italy, transport a coffin of a coronavirus disease victim – to date more than 60 priests in the country have died having tested positive with Covid-19.



Pope Francis leads Benediction during a prayer service in the portico of an empty St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. Photos: CNS

numbers living in apartment blocks, poor local air quality, many smokers, very strong trade links with Wuhan), but things will get worse here and then we will see what the Church in Ireland is really made of.

“We see the strange sight of priests and bishops preaching to deliberately empty churches”

For example, as of now, are bishops and priests already quietly visiting dying people in the hospitals to bring them the Last Rites?

The churches are closed, as we know. People cannot attend Mass. This is unprecedented. There appears to be no record of churches ever before shutting up so systematically in a pandemic in the long ages of the Church.

Priests, as we know, are using the internet to reach their parishioners through conducting online Masses. We see the strange sight of priests and bishops preaching to deliberately empty

churches in hope that they are reaching many at home.

We witnessed the moving sight of bishops such as Eamon Martin and Phonsie Cullinan carrying the Eucharist through the empty streets of their towns. Parish priests should consider following suit. Perhaps many already are.

As for ordinary Catholics, what are we doing? Are we praying, studying the bible, reading the great spiritual writers?

In a strange way, this crisis could act as a moment of grace as well as of suffering, as a time when we realise what really matters in life. The Church can help us come to this realisation, as can our own private prayers and meditation.

The Bible says: “Be still and know that I am God.” Right now we are being forced to be still.

Depending on how the Church responds in the coming weeks, people will return to Mass. Indeed, perhaps we might even see an increase in number if there is a sufficient realisation that it is the Ultimate Things that really count. Certainly we can pray for that. God will rarely give what we do not pray for in earnest.

Finding God in the coronavirus



In the streets and towns of Ireland, these days have taken on a real Lenten feeling of desolation, writes **Fr. Jeremy Corley**

One cold morning a few weeks ago, just before receiving the ashes on my forehead, I heard the traditional Ash Wednesday reading from the prophet Joel: "Proclaim a solemn assembly. Call the people together. Between vestibule and altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, lament. Let them say: spare your people, Lord."

Just as in other years, I then understood it as a call to spiritual renewal during the season of Lent. But as I think back on it now, this reading has a special poignancy. Faced with a virus for which there is no known medical cure, we turn to God in prayer: "Spare your people, Lord."

Desolation

In the streets and towns of Ireland, these days have taken on a real Lenten feeling of desolation. Indeed, all over the world, millions of people are affected. Vast cities in China have been almost entirely closed down, and many European towns have empty streets. In Italy, more than 60 priests have already died from the coronavirus.

This pandemic has made us think again about our human abilities and limits. A recent report declared that a planned international space probe to Mars is now being postponed by at least two years because of the virus. In previous years, we could send astronauts to the moon, but now you can hardly buy a plane ticket to fly from Dublin to Rome.

Some universities advertise their courses with



Job and His Friends, 1869, by Ilya Repin.

the slogan 'limitless,' and indeed the possibilities for students can often seem unlimited. But the coronavirus forces us to face up to the stubborn limits of our creaturely state. As Pope Francis reminded us in his ecological document, *Laudato Si'*: "We are not God. The Earth was here before us."

Some ecologists have accused our Western culture of being 'anthropocentric'. As a species, we human beings give so much attention to our desires and needs that we often forget the needs of the other creatures with whom we share the planet.

Because of the difficulties involved in simply surviving, people in past ages were probably much more aware of the fragility of life. Ancient religious texts dwelt on these issues with a directness that can sometimes make us uncomfortable today.

The Book of Job reflects on the limits facing human beings. Understandably, Job in his suffering is so caught up in his personal pain, that he cannot think about the vast world beyond him. He blames God for not attending to his pressing personal needs, but ignores the fact that God has to look after the whole cosmos.

Before the end of the book, God asks Job: "Who has cut a channel for the torrents of rain, and a way for the thunderbolt, to

bring rain on a land where no one lives, on the desert which is empty of human life, to satisfy the waste and desolate land, and to make the ground put forth grass?"

The world has uninhabited wildernesses with dry expanses of sand. Yet when God sends rain, suddenly the desert blooms with lovely wild flowers that are normally dormant. On some occasions, no human beings will witness this beautiful sight, and yet it is one small part of God's providential organising of the cosmos.

“We can learn from Job’s initial attitude of acceptance of his suffering: ‘Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?’”

At the end of the Book of Job, God does not give him any rational explanation for his pain. Job does not discover why he has suffered this anguish. Ultimately, the problem of suffering does not find an answer in the book.

Today we may also find it hard to understand why God allows so many people to be

afflicted by the coronavirus. But perhaps we can learn from Job's initial attitude of acceptance of his suffering: "Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?"

Moreover, we can learn from Job's first response to his affliction: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Perhaps we can also be consoled by the conclusion of the story, when God restores Job to health and blesses him after his suffering is over. Job does not finish by gaining all the answers, but he has an encounter with God, and that is enough for him.

The Ash Wednesday reading from the prophet Joel has a hopeful ending: "Then the Lord, jealous on behalf of his land, took pity on his people." In other words, God listened to the heartfelt prayers for mercy, and restored his people.

We believe that the pain of Lent leads to the joy of Easter. It is possible that this year the Lenten situation of the virus may extend longer than 40 days. But we pray in hope that the coronavirus will subside, and God will grant us his gift of new life.

i Fr. Jeremy Corley is a priest of the diocese of Portsmouth, England, ordained in 1987. After five years of parish work, he undertook a doctorate in biblical studies at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. and since 2011 has taught scripture at St Patrick's College Maynooth. He is currently he is president of the Irish Biblical Association.

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Searching for our breath



Perhaps the one traditional trait that is left to some of us is that we know how to endure, writes **Pól Ó Muirí**

We have been here before. Writing in his diary in 1961, the poet Seán Ó Ríordáin notes: “An fliú sa chathair agus, de réir na dtuairiscí, ar fud na tíre.” Flu in the city and, according to reports, throughout the country. He writes that he is frightened, that two people from his office have caught it and that pain in the bones and a high temperature are symptoms. The last line is bleak: “Go sábhála Dia sinn, tá deireadh an domhain buailte linn” – God help us all, the end of the world is upon us.

If that line seems dramatic, it was because Ó Ríordáin (1916–1977) suffered from serious ill health throughout his life. He had contracted tuberculosis as a young man; a disease which his own doctors told him in later life that they did not think he would survive. Indeed, it is estimated in the year that Ó Ríordáin was born almost 10,000 people died of TB. It claimed many lives over many years and was a scourge to many generations of Irish people.

For someone of Ó Ríordáin’s generation the treatment involved being sent away to a sanatorium. Ó Ríordáin notes in his diary that the patient was sent to the sanatorium not to recover but to protect others in the community. (Can we call that, in these distressing days of Covid-19, ‘self-isolation’?)

Sanatorium

Ó Ríordáin’s biographer, Seán Ó Coileáin, writes in his biography of the poet, *Seán Ó Ríordáin: Beatha agus Saothar (An Clóchomhar)* that Ó Ríordáin entered the sanatorium for the first time on April 1, 1938. He was 21 years old. Ó Coileáin marks the date as the time that Ó Ríordáin was made into “a professional patient”. The young man did not live from that day forth but rather endured a kind of “living death” and never truly escaped from the effects of the disease. He was “baptised a leper from the first day he landed amongst his fellow patients”.

Ó Ríordáin recalls how visitors would decline to take a cigarette



Tuberculin testing army recruits. Photo: National BCG committee annual report 1960

from a patient, such was their fear of contracting TB. The world outside, he wrote, was full of people who were healthy and hard whereas he and his company “melted away” in front of your eyes.

The dark shadow of the disease never left him and there are constant references to illness in extracts from his diary in *Anamlón Bliana (Cló Iar-Chonnacht)*, edited brilliantly by Tadhg Ó Dúshláine. He writes of spitting up blood, of weak lungs, of depression and, perhaps most frighteningly: “Táim ag lorg m’anáilach” (I am searching for my breath).

That was in 1956 and even after all these years, you can feel the desperate struggle for air in those very, very simple words. Something as natural as breathing challenges him. Needless to say, those words are now being repeated throughout the world, in many different languages: “Táim ag lorg m’anáilach.”

Ó Coileáin notes that every year in the sanatorium was the same for Ó Ríordáin; that days and weeks melted into one another while time was counted and ground out.

We are all in the sanatorium now with Ó Ríordáin, it seems; we are all locked up in our own homes, watching the clock, grinding out the hours, waiting, hoping to avoid that disease which we cannot see. Whatever about sharing a cigarette, we are no longer allowed to drink a pint together.

“Yes, we will all mix amongst one another again. There will be – Go sábhála Dia sinn – days of sun and light once more. The scent of flowers will fill the air again...”



Seán Ó Ríordáin.

Ó Ríordáin notes in one entry: “Sanatorium. Daoine ag paidreoireacht go gruama” (a sanatorium. People praying despondently). Sometimes, he writes, he becomes depressed and fearful; there is no joy in anything, no life. And yet, bit by bit, life breaks out.

An entry from June 1951 lifts the heart: “Is é seo an tráth den bhliain is ansa liom. This is my favourite time of the year. Sun, light. I have my white shirt on. One should always wear white shirts in the summer. The delightful smell of flowers is everywhere. The summer nights are wonderful. It is a fine thing to have an opportunity to say prayers.”

He wrote poetry of course, poetry that is read throughout Ireland, north and south. He is read by secondary and university students and his work has kept, and keeps, many an academic thinking and mediating. The big poems are well known and have big lines that fall out of distant memory: “Raghaidh mé síos i measc na ndaoine...I will go down amongst the people...”

Yes, we will all mix amongst one another again. There will be – Go sábhála Dia sinn – days of sun and light once more. The scent of flowers will fill the air again. And,

yet, what has happened and what may yet happen, will change us forever.

The sanatorium is now part of our being. The false riches of the Celtic Tiger have been stripped away to nothing; the promise of immortality that is to be found in the next development or deal has been shown to be a lie: “An fliú sa chathair agus, de réir na dtuairiscí, ar fud na tíre.”

“Ó Ríordáin remembers a patient from Limerick who had a great fondness for the fags failing to find a smoke. ‘Who cares,’ he says, ‘as long as we have our health’”

Still, we are Irish and perhaps the one traditional trait that is left to some of us is that we know how to endure. Cigarettes were much coveted in the sanatorium, this being the time that people did not realise that damage that cigarettes caused. Ó Ríordáin remembers a patient from Limerick who had a great fondness for the fags failing to find a smoke. “Who cares,” he says, “as long as we have our health.”

Who cares, indeed, as long as we have our health?

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Religion won't die but racism will always exist, says priest



Greater tolerance is being mistaken for a change in society's values, writes **Aron Hegarty**

The role of religion in society has often been questioned in modern times with some even calling for it to be done away with altogether.

However, in times of crisis like what we are experiencing with the present coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, its importance now and in the future cannot be understated.

Fr Alan Hilliard of the Archdiocese of Dublin tells *The Irish Catholic* he feels neither religion, nor religious belief, is going away anytime soon.

"Religion is never going to die," he says. "Some people would like it to go that way, but religious belief is never going to die."

"There are some who don't want us around and they might think there's a superiority in following an aggressive form of secularism."

"There is that intolerance in certain quarters, but in academic quarters all the sociologists, like Jürgen Habermas, recognised the importance of religion within society."

"Habermas said 'it makes a difference whether we speak with one another or about one another'."

"One of the reasons we find it difficult to talk about faith these days is because we don't know what we believe, and it's only in the culture of encounter that we have to 'dig deep' into what we truly believe."

Solidarity

Dublin priest Fr Hilliard says sociologists, such as Émile Durkheim, believe that the future lies in "cheerful solidarity" and religion, he feels, still has a part to play.

"If you were to go back into the whole work of sociology, a lot of people felt religion would disappear and secularism would take a hold of society, and that religion would be knocked back into the annals of history," Fr Hilliard says.

"There was an intolerance or impatience as to why it [religion] was still hanging around and a lot



of people wanted to see all forms of religion taken off the agenda.

"The whole debate is either secularism or religion, which is an unhealthy debate similar to the type that goes on in Europe between right-wing or left-wing; it's either one or the other."

On being asked if he thinks there could ever be complete acceptance of one another, Fr Hilliard replies: "I don't think you can have a society where one is intolerant of the other."

"The whole purpose of the world is to be tolerant and pluralist nowadays. I think what people are trying to create in the world is a pluralist society where people value each other's opinions."

"You would always have those who would be aggressive in wanting to make the world as they want it to be, but that's not the future."

He continues: "There's always going to be a problem in society where people don't get a fair 'crack of the whip' as you can see with all the debates going on about migration."

"There is that feeling that

some are racist in their tenure, identifying people with certain qualities to let in, and in the way visas and passports are given out."

Although Fr Hilliard says there will always be "racist constructs" in society, he says the intolerance shown by students is teaching us to be more "accepting".

"I am very impressed with many of the young students through their sense of supporting and caring for one another as well as their tolerance for duplicity and fairness."

Open-minded

Fr Hilliard believes there is greater tolerance, as opposed to less racism, in society today and finds younger generations "inspiring" because they are more open-minded about difference in others.

"I find students have a very high tolerance and low rate of racism," he says.

"I find them

quite inspiring to be around. I find that they would be watching out for things like xenophobia and they would be very intolerant of any form of racism."

"That comes from the awareness they would have of sexuality, and the way its lived, and would be very supportive of one another and of differences in one another. I find that quite inspiring among them."

He adds: "There is much greater tolerance among younger generations towards others

because I think that's more instinctively part of who they are and they are less afraid of difference."

The role of religion in society, according to Fr Hilliard, is to bring us back to our moral access.

However, in a time where religious faith and

“The whole purpose of the world is to be tolerant and pluralist nowadays. I think what people are trying to create in the world is a pluralist society where people value each other's opinions”

belief are under constant scrutiny, he warns of the dawning of a challenging "new era" for religion.

"I think we are at the age of a Second Reformation," he says. "The comparisons between the First Reformation with the invention of the printing press and this, with the evolution of the internet, is changing how people are seeing, hearing and doing things."

"What happened out of the First Reformation was a counter-Reformation and we have to find a way of a counter-reform. We need to find a way that we can hold on to the value and importance of religious faith and belief."

Religion, admits Fr Hilliard, is in "decline" but he thinks the impact of Covid-19 may "recreate" religious faith and belief in people.

"The whole purpose of religion is to find a place in the society in which it dwells," he says.

"Even the early Christian Church had to do that in Rome. We have occupied a space in cultured society for the last century in Ireland and its being burnt out, but that doesn't mean we haven't got a purpose; it means we have to find a new way of being."

"The challenge for the leadership of the Church is to find out how religious faith can exist in this new world in which we live."



“Religion, admits Fr Hilliard, is in ‘decline’ but he thinks the impact of Covid-19 may ‘recreate’ religious faith and belief in people. ‘The whole purpose of religion is to find a place in the society in which it dwells’”

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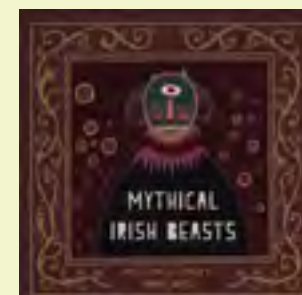


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Róisín McGagh shines a spotlight on the issue of mental health within the Irish prison system

Prisons in Ireland abide by the mission 'Providing safe and secure custody, dignity of care and rehabilitation to prisoners for safer communities'.

Rehabilitation is 'the action of restoring someone to health or normal life through training and therapy after imprisonment, addiction, or illness'.

It was recently highlighted in Northern Ireland that the lives of prisoners in Northern Ireland were at risk after they left custody. There were 23 deaths in custody and the same amount within two weeks of release between 2014 and 2019.

Within the last six years, the same time period, 60 people have died while in the custody of the Irish Prison Service (IPS) – a similar percentage of the prison population.

Between 2014 and 2017 around eight people passed away within a month of being released from prison, with the rest of the figures yet to be released. The coroner reports are not yet available for all of 2018 and 2019, however it can be inferred from 2014 to 2017 of the 36 people that died in custody, around 17 of them were subject to poor mental health or suicidal thoughts.

Self-harm

The Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) has been campaigning, particularly over the last two years, for improved access to mental health facilities. In January 2020 they released a guide, *Women in Prison: Mental health and well-being in response to the high levels of poor mental health among women in prison*. Rates of self-harm range from 7% to 15% for males and up to 27% for females.

People in prison have been shown to have a disproportionately high rate of poor mental health and research suggests that around one in seven prisoners have a serious mental health problem.

Often people with chronic mental health issues end up in the prison system due to a lack



The silent

Mental health remains one of the biggest issues in Irish Prisons

of access to mental health services in the community. The mental health services in Ireland have been criticised for not providing adequate care for people who need help, especially those who are suicidal.

Several reports found that the Health Service Executives (HSE) movement on implementation on the 2006 strategy for mental health services in Ireland 'A Vision for Change' was "slow and inconsistent". The lack of mental health services available is made up for my voluntary groups such as Pieta House, Samaritans and Aware, to name but a few.

They recommend additional intensive care rehabilitation units for those recovering from mental illness which has not yet been implemented after 14 years.

The IPRT included establishing

a cross-departmental task force on mental health and imprisonment as one of their five recommendations for the incoming 2020 government that would allow them to "invest in health and housing, not prison spaces". Their Progress in the Penal System (PIPS) 2019 report found that there are "approximately 300 people with severe mental illness in Irish prisons, with an average 20-30 people awaiting transfer to receive treatment in the Central Mental Hospital at any given time".

In an interview with *The Irish Catholic*, Michelle Martyn, the Senior Research and Policy Project Manager with the IPRT said: "The access to psychology services (in Irish prisons) is quite limited, there's a waiting list of 614 people. In terms of addiction counselling there is, the latest figures say about 314 are waiting for treatment from

counselling services in prisons. There is one addiction counsellor for 300 people in Cloverhill Prison so services are quite restricted for access.

"There's 19.8 full-time addiction counsellors across the state and so the ratio example of Cloverhill is probably the worst, 1 to 431," Ms Martyn said.

Report

Last year a report from the *Irish Times* revealed that the chaplaincy in Cloverhill told the Minister of State at the Department of Health Jim Daly: "The State is failing people who are mentally ill by knowingly relying on the existence of Cloverhill Prison to incarcerate them, rather than addressing their particular needs in other, more appropriate ways."

In the same report, the

chaplaincy at Wheatfield Prison highlighted the use of long-term isolation for prisoners who caused trouble. The length of time spent in isolation in Irish prisons is not published.

"We don't know the length of time people are spending in safety observation cells, if someone is a risk to themselves, they may be placed in a safety observation cells. We don't know the time that someone could be there, we don't know the length of time someone could be in solitary confinement," says Ms Martyn. "You don't know if it's 10 days or 200 days."

* * * * *

Safety observation cells are designed to accommodate prisoners who require frequent observation for medical reasons or because they were a danger to themselves. They are meant to be

“The State is failing people who are mentally ill by knowingly relying on the existence of Cloverhill Prison to incarcerate them, rather than addressing their particular needs in other, more appropriate ways”

killer

accommodation – over half the prison population were accommodated in single cells in 2017 and still are as of January 2020. Of those who engaged in self harm, 44% were in protection and the remaining 44% were in general population accommodation.

Approximately one in six of these incidents were deemed to have a high degree of suicidal intent.

“Once someone comes into prison their mental health needs will be assessed and they might be diverted into a potential mental hospital,” says Ms Martyn. However, the Central Mental Hospital (CMH) in June 2019 was operating at 100% of its capacity, with admissions “systematically triaged according to the level of therapeutic security required and the urgency of clinical need”. If a person is not immediately diverted into mental health services, the average wait time for a transfer from prison to the CMH is 120.86 days – a range of between seven and 504 days.

* * * * *

This year the CMH is due to be relocated to a new forensic mental health facility in Portrane. It will still only have a maximum capacity of 170 patients which according to the IPRT “will not meet demand based on the current and persistent number of prisoners awaiting transfer”.

“Suicide comes up a lot in some of the death in custody reports by the inspector of prisons. Particularly for those on remand, they usually have higher health needs,” said Ms Martyn.

“Some problems such as giving prisoners access to sports have been solved before by community projects”

There are many factors that would be detrimental to someone’s mental health in the prison environment, overcrowding, sharing a cell or the often-restricted regimes said Michelle, “all of that would exacerbate any mental health issues”.

“It’s been an issue for a number of years but having access to education being able to go to the gym being able to go to workshops it’s all very important for anybody’s mental health.”

A government report by the Inter-Agency Group for a Fairer and Safer Ireland 2018, reported concerns about the impact of the current housing crisis on people coming out of prison alongside access to mental health programmes and drug treatment programmes, income support on release, work activation programmes and other issues.

In recent years the number of people who enter into Irish prisons who declared they had no fixed abode has steadily increased. In 2014 there were 265 prisoners with no fixed abode and in 2018 it almost doubled to 502. Some of these figures account for people who have lost their rented private accommodation due to their committal to prison.

In 2018, the IPS Resettlement Service helped 414 prisoners make an application for social housing and worked alongside local authorities to provide details of housing requirements before their release. Up until the end of October 2019 the Resettlement Service had submitted 303 applications for social housing.

“Around 70% of prisoners have addiction issues. And obviously addiction is often a symptom of social exclusion and these issues could be addressed prior to prison,” says Ms Martyn. This is around 85% for women.

She said that there is little in the way of support after a person leaves prison: “In terms of support upon release there’s organisations like PACE who would support people in terms of housing but in terms of counselling I don’t think there’s anything specifically for people coming out of prison, so there could be a lot more continuity of care. Even preparation prior to release and awareness of services.”

Counselling

In terms of counselling and addiction services there could be involvement from the communities in which the prisons are situated. Some problems such as giving prisoners access to sports have been solved before by community projects. “I think that there needs

the large amount of people with mental illness in the IPS that shouldn’t be there. The CPT visited Ireland again in 2019 and their findings will be released at some point this year.

The UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) highlighted the need to employ additional personnel in terms of psychology and counselling services within Irish Prisons in 2017.

“If more people were diverted from the prison system and toward the mental health services they needed it would also reduce the frequency with which Irish prisons are overcrowded”

There was also a review done on the psychology services which was commissioned by the IPS in 2015 which showed the Irish standard ratio of psychology services was one psychologist per 220 prisoners in comparison to the international standard ratio of around one for every 150 or 160.

“We would be Advocating in terms of having a high level task force between different agencies like the Department of Health, the Irish Prison Service the Department of Justice and Equality and other stakeholders,” said Ms Martyn in response to how this mental health crisis within the prisons system could possibly be managed.

If more people were diverted from the prison system and toward the mental health services

checked at least every 15 minutes. In many of the Deaths in Custody reports it was shown that these cells were often not supervised in accordance with this rule, with sometimes over an hour between checks.

After an inquest with a verdict of suicide in 2019 which investigated the death of a man who passed away four hours after he had been committed to Cork Prison the IPS was urged to keep its nursing committal forms under review. The 15-minute checks were not being carried out. Following this the IPS created a new policy where ordinary observations changed to every three hours so resources could be directed to those on special observations or those ‘at risk’.

As of January 2020, five prisoners were accommodated in Safety Observation Cells and 8 prisoners were accommodated in Close Supervision Cells (to accommodate prisoners who were a danger to others in the prison or who were disruptive in the opinion of management).

Census figures also show that 75 people were being held in solitary confinement in January 2020, on 22- and 23-hour restricted regimes.

The Self-harm in Irish Prisons 2017 report the number of incidents of self-harm among the general prison population and the number of people that are on restrictive regimes. Over the year there were 223 episodes of self-harm recorded involving 138 prisoners.

The average age was 32 and 80% of the cases were males. Three-quarters of the incidents involved someone in single cell

Michelle Martyn.



Cloverhill Prison.

to be some kind of change in attitude, a change in public opinion. And I suppose that’s about public education but also there are some very good community projects going on where the community is involved for example the bohemian foundation go into Mountjoy Prison and they’d be involved in sports and different programs like that,” said Ms Martyn.

There has been little research in recent years in terms of the characteristics of people who go to prison. However, previously research would have highlighted the link between crime and economic deprivation and people coming from particular communities; the link between crime and social exclusion.

The EU Commission for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) in their 2015 report on Ireland highlighted

they needed it would also reduce the frequency with which Irish prisons are overcrowded. Overcrowding has been a prevalent issue in many prisons in 2020 already, in particular the women’s prisons, Dóchas, Limerick female prison as well as Limerick male prison, Castlerea and Arbour Hill prisons. Limerick male is currently at 101% capacity with the rest listed between 82% and 97% capacity.

“It’s [mental health] probably one of the biggest issues in the prison system,” said Michelle.

In order for the IPS to be a system of rehabilitation there would have to be provisions for restoring prisoners to health, particularly to their full mental health through training and therapy after imprisonment.

Pray the Rosary and 'keep says GAA legend Mickey



Tyrone football manager Mickey Harte speaks to **Chai Brady** about prayer, Mass, social media, safety and sport during the coronavirus pandemic

Going to Mass and praying with a congregation in a church was not always something Irish Catholics could take for granted, but once again the Rosary can be an anchor to the Faith for people who find themselves physically separated from the Sacraments, according to Tyrone's Gaelic football manager Mickey Harte.

The coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has continued to wreak havoc around the world, with religious services being severely disrupted in a fluid and quite unpredictable situation. Mr Harte says he is following all guidelines given by government health experts, but adds that there is also a need for prayer.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Mr Harte said he believes dispensation from Sunday obligation and many other steps taken by the Church to stop the spread of the virus were necessary and in times like these "there's a lot to be gained" from prayer, and that it could bring a quicker resolution to the world's crisis.

"I think the Rosary is something that I hold in high esteem because my father, God rest him, said it every day in the house here when we were growing up as children and it actually is a very important prayer for the Faith in Ireland," Mr Harte says.

"At a time, when people couldn't go to Mass under pain of death, the Rosary kept the Faith alive. Maybe now we can't get to Mass for a different reason, it's a different pain of death perhaps, but we



Mickey Harte working with his Tyrone team.

can't get to Mass so why not bring the Rosary back in to become the focal and central prayer of our lives.

"I think there's a lot to be gained by that sense of prayer again. We do all we can practically by all means but if we call on God to intervene in his own time in his own way, who knows how quickly we can get to a better place."

Social media

There are many ways to stay in touch with loved ones despite the need for isolation. Mr Harte has been using social media to keep in contact with the outside world, even though he wouldn't describe himself as someone who is very technologically savvy.

He says: "I'm not big into social media myself but I'm in a WhatsApp group, I don't use Facebook or any of these modern-day youthful things but there's plenty of WhatsApp groups and it's a nice way of sending messages on to people.

"I suppose even if people decide that at a certain hour one night as many of us as possible will say the Rosary, that gives us a real connection, people feel they're saying the Rosary at the same time as others. We can actually go on the WhatsApp video call and say the Rosary as a couple of members of our family."

This can also be done with

a number of people at once, he says, so a group could continue to pray together despite not being able to meet like many prayer groups normally would. "We should really be working with all those things," he adds.

"I'm part of a wee WhatsApp group that has been going for a number of years now and there was a nice little message going through about the Divine Mercy Chaplet," Mr Harte says.

"The story was that so many people have died in Italy, and died alone because their family and friends couldn't be with them and the staff in the hospitals where overwhelmed, so they really had no presence with them when they were dying.

"So, we were asked as a group to say a Divine Mercy Chaplet for somebody who is dying of the coronavirus and has nobody with them. I think it's a good idea, I think the more people who buy into that concept or that idea then spiritually there could be somebody present to people who are dying."

Social media isn't the only way to stay connected with the Church. Hundreds of thousands of people are tuning into Sunday Mass online. *The Irish Catholic* revealed last week that a third of people watching television in Ireland on Sunday (March 22) at 11am were watching Mass on RTÉ, according to their Head

of Religious Programmes. In total 160,400 people tuned in to the Mass celebrated by Fr Gabriel Kinahan, four times more viewers than RTÉ would generally get for Sunday morning Mass.

Providers of webcams and streaming services for churches have said they have been inundated with calls from local churches enquiring about getting their Mass online.

“It wouldn't make sense to 'throw a blanket rule across' and close all churches”

Mr Harte said that although it's fairly well known that there are webcams in many churches, people of an older generation should be made aware that even if their church doesn't have a webcam they can tap into another church's live-streamed Mass.

"I have the privilege of watching Mass in St Mary's in Creggan in Derry with Fr Daniel McFaul, he always celebrates a lovely Mass, so I had the pleasure of tuning in to that and it's a great way to feel that you can still be present at Mass, because we're getting

the vibes through of what's going on and we're hearing the readings and you're getting the chance to have a spiritual communion," Mr Harte said.

"The congregation is just spread out in a different way. You are part of a congregation, even though you're not side by side with them, you're tuned in to the same Mass in the end so it is definitely a great way of a congregation being at Mass yet adhering to the safety regulations that need to be in place at this time. This is what modern technology is about, it can be very good and bring us wonderful things and it can be quite the opposite."

Most churches are still open to the public so they can light a candle or visit for private prayer as long not too many people gather and are able to stay the prescribed distance of two meters apart.

Mr Harte said he doesn't think it would make sense to "throw a blanket rule across" and close all churches unless it was mandated by health authorities, as there are many that wouldn't get much footfall, making it easier to follow advice.

"It's a bit of a dilemma. People like to go and light candles and that, but if that's [closing] what it requires, that's what it requires, it's definitely one that has to be thought about a lot.

"If it's possible to adhere to all the rules and regulations, that they're not in close proximity to other people, if they're doing the proper washing of their hands, sanitising their hands, if they're wearing those gloves that medical people wear. All of those things.

"I think if people are going to do that, they should be aware of taking every, every precaution they've been asked to do and if they do that then perhaps you know, done in the proper fashion there's some scope for that."

Tyrone manager for 17 years with three All-Ireland's in the bag, it's well-known Mr Harte is deeply passionate about Gaelic football. Despite this he says the coronavirus outbreak has brought

a new sense of urgency that completely side-lines all sporting events.

"I think it really puts everything in perspective," Mr Harte says, "before this came along sport in many ways for people...there was this sense of life and death, not literally so, but they almost treated it as such."

"Now we've come to understand it's not. It's very important, it means a lot to people and we give it our heart and soul when we're at it, but this paints a different picture. Sport is very irrelevant really."

Expanding on that sentiment he said everybody's life is important, "every life is sacred, maybe that's the message we're getting".

"We do everything we can to save lives and appreciate the sacredness of every life. So sport takes a very secondary place to all of that. Yes we miss it and it's something that's become a way of life for many people, both those who partake in it and those who support it and watch it and enjoy it, either at events or on television, but you know I think the most important thing now is to remember that we need to get as many people through this."

Appreciation

Last week, both in Northern Ireland and the Republic, people paid tribute to front-line staff in the NHS and HSE, thanking them for putting themselves in danger of contracting the virus to care for patients day in, day out.

Mr Harte says these workers must be appreciated and listened to. "The people we must think of most is the health workers and the people who are on the front line here," he says, "because they're pleading with the general public to please do the right thing.

"We need to really send that message home because they're at the forefront of the worst of this, and we believe we haven't seen the worst of it yet. Not only because of this disease, but the health services in any country are under pressure at the moment anyway.

"They don't seem to be as well-resourced as they ought to have been and so they're under stress and all that still has to be dealt with and this virus has landed an enormous workload.



“We were asked as a group to say a Divine Mercy Chaplet for somebody who is dying of the coronavirus and has nobody with them. I think it's a good idea”

Faith alive' Harte

"So, we have to really listen to those people who are at the front line. I think that really has to be emphasised, they're pleading with us. They're putting their lives at risk to help others and they're the people that best know that if we don't do the right things now then it will be even out of their control to do the best they can because they'll just be overwhelmed.

"It's vital that people play their part, it's vital that we do the right things, it's vital that we self-isolate and that we stay at home where possible and that we wash the hands thoroughly and avoid contact. That will upset us of course for a while, we love to meet our family and friends, we love to meet our grandchildren and all of that, but in the interest of the long term we have to out that on hold for now."

Living with his wife, Mr Harte says sometimes his grandchildren drop by and they chat at a safe distance through the window. He says thankfully his children do their shopping and leave it outside the door for them, adding: "We're blessed that we have each other and we have a family that are sort of doing the necessities for us, which means we don't have to be in close contact with anybody that there's any risk to. We thank God for that.

"I suppose we're learning to just spend the days in a different way and I suppose do loads of jobs about the house that you thought you never had the time to do before. There's plenty of good things to do and there's prayerful things to do and there's learning I suppose to live in a new way if you like, maybe the way of old where time and the present moment is the best thing we have, and the only thing we have, and maybe we'll get a chance to really come and appreciate that. It's about the now, it's about this minute, it's about this time in our lives."

“This situation can bring out the worst in people, but it can bring out the best in them too”

Without a doubt, he says, there is a lot of community help for people who don't

have the same support base, who are alone and are in a vulnerable position.

"I know particularly the GAA community is always good at that and people are always looking out. This is the good thing about this, as people say it brings out the worst in people in certain ways but it brings out the best in people too," Mr Harte says.

People are realising that "it's not just about me, it's about other people", he continues.

"Communities are coming together, they are aware of people who live alone, they are aware of what it's like to be isolated, really literally isolated, with nobody in the house with you."

Mr Harte says there's lots of people putting food bags together and delivering them to people, phoning them, and calling at their door and asking if they are OK.

“We should have great hope again that we will come out the other side of this and maybe be a lot wiser for it”

"These good neighbourly things are very much in Vogue at the moment and maybe it's another gift that we've forgotten about from old," he says.

Mr Harte says his hope is for everyone to get through his pandemic and stay ahead of it.

"People will lose their lives, but if we can say that people did listen to what they were told, that people did the right thing and because of that we averted the worst of this, then that will be a great lesson to all of us.

"We should have great hope again that we will come out the other side of this and maybe be a lot wiser for it and maybe look at life through a different lens.

"Hopefully we'll keep the community sense, and that sense of valuing other people into the future and rather than just in a time of crisis, that we have the ethos within ourselves and say: 'Let's be a community, let's live to help each other.'"



Mickey Harte. Photo: Oliver McVeigh/Sportsfile

Going back to the roots of



Last Supper from the Beatty Rosarium, Simon Bening, Bruges (Belgium), 1540-1545, CBL W 099 f.28. © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin



Resurrection, Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Ethiopia, 18th century, CBL W 912. © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin



A unique collection of texts helps bring the Christ's passion to life, writes Aron Hegarty

An Irish museum forced to close its doors due to the coronavirus (Covid-19) is looking to bring the past to life again this Easter by opening itself to the online realm.

Although the pandemic is currently keeping buildings shut until further notice, the Chester Beatty museum and library is embracing and inviting viewers to see more of its collection via the worldwide web.

Dr Jill Unkel, curator of the Western Collection at Chester Beatty, told *The Irish Catholic* how one can unlock the museum's hidden treasures online.

"There are a number of things that people can see without actually having to leave their home," she says of the museum's virtual sphere.

"When people go to our website [www.chesterbeatty.ie], they can go along the top of the page where they will see a number of tabs and one of them is 'Exhibitions' and the other one is 'Collections'.

"Under 'Collections' you can see a number of highlighted themes, which the curators have put together, or you can search the online collection where we have around 3,000 objects which have been fully digitised and can be viewed in high resolution."

Formerly known as the Chester Beatty Library, the Chester Beatty was established in Dublin in 1950 to house the collections of Sir Alfred Chester Beatty (1875 – 1968), a successful American mining engineer, collector and philanthropist.

Today the museum, which is based on the grounds of Dublin Castle, is also used a research library for scholars from all over the world.

Collections

The facility opened in February 2000 on the 125th anniversary of Sir Beatty's birth and was named European Museum of the Year in 2002. The museum's collections are displayed in two main galleries: the 'Sacred Traditions' and the 'Arts of the Book'.

Both displays exhibit manuscripts, miniature paintings,



John 19:25-28, Gospel of John, Dishna (Egypt), ca 200 AD, CBL BP XIX. © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

prints, drawings, rare books and some decorative arts from the Persian, Islamic, East Asian and Western Collections.

Despite the building being forced to shut its doors to the public physically until April 20 due to the coronavirus outbreak, Dr Unkel sees opportunity in being able to reach out to an online audience.

"Online you can get to be much closer to things," she says of the benefits in viewing the museum's collection on the internet.

"You can zoom in to see without any glass panel and abbreviations are much easier to find and identify. We have been trying to push and explore ways to expand our online exhibitions anyway before the coronavirus came about.

"At the moment, because the gallery is not directly open to the public, we are going to do are best to portray the collection online, so people can see things that they wouldn't normally have been on display had they gone to the building as well as things which aren't on display at the moment.

She continues: "We have quite

a large collection and we only ever have 1-2% of the collection on display at any one point and, on top of that, our material is much more delicate and can't be out for extended periods of time. Nothing in our collection is ever kept out permanently and we have to rotate the materials to maintain and preserve the integrity of them.

Dr Unkel's own Western Collection contains a board range of material of both Biblical and non-Biblical papyri which dates from the 3rd Century BC all the way up to the 20th Century.

Drawings

The Collection houses many illuminated manuscripts, rare books and Old Master prints and drawings.

For instance, it covers all Christian and biblical texts written in Armenian, Church Slavonic, Coptic, Ge'ez, Greek, Latin and Syriac from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds.

The papyrus collection, featuring P45 and P46, are some of the earliest surviving Christian artefacts, and also include some

“Because the gallery is not directly open to the public, we are going to do are best to portray the collection online, so people can see things that they wouldn't normally have been on display”

the Gospel this Easter



The Entombment, Engraved Passion, Albrecht Dürer, Germany, 1512, CBL Wep 0108. © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

of the oldest and most important biblical manuscripts in the world.

For example, the oldest manuscript of Paul's letters (dated ca AD 200), the oldest surviving copy of all four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles in one codex, and portions of the Book of Revelation dating to the 3rd Century are among the most important manuscripts in the collection.

"We have 11 Old Testament and New Testament manuscripts acquired in the 1930s which are all written in Greek, all written on papyrus and these are the Biblical items from our collection which have been given the most attention by scholars and the public," says Dr Unkel.

"There are two New Testament texts in particular – the Revelation and the four Gospels and Acts manuscripts – which are all handwritten and date from the 3rd Century, get a lot of attention. The Gospels and Acts manuscripts especially are what people come to see and are really interested in."

She adds: "The dating of it in the 3rd Century when it was discovered changed the understanding of how Biblical scholars thought about the

evolution of their Canon because the New Testament texts had been brought together earlier, whereas previously it had been thought that the four Gospels had been brought together later."

* * * * *

At this time of year, coming up to Easter, the Chester Beatty would usually have a lot of visitors looking at the Biblical papyri. For example, 7,942 visitors attended the museum between April 15 and 21 last year (2019) which represented an increase on the 2018 figure of 6,355.

Despite this year's exhibition being moved online due to the pandemic, Dr Unkel says there will still be plenty of interest in viewing the collection on the web. "We have tons of material that deals with Easter in both the Biblical papyri and later European and Latin manuscripts," says Dr Unkel.

"A lot of illustrations would relate to the Passion, the Crucifixion, the tortures that happened beforehand, the Resurrection, so we want to push a lot of those images so people can see the variety of ways these have been interpreted across cultures and across time.



Crucifixion from the Coëtivy Hours, Dunois Master, Paris, 1443-1445, CBL W 082 f. 61. © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

"The Biblical papyrus collection is always something people come to see as they are one of the main things that people know about. Some people come as a sort of pilgrimage to see these really early texts because they are really interesting as historical objects.

She adds: "We have a small fragment from P66 which is from the Gospel of John and is a small story of Jesus, along with Mary and John, on the Crucifixion and what makes it really interesting is that there is imagery and a small abbreviation which refers to 'cross', 'crucifix' or 'crucify'."

The Chester Beatty can be viewed from one's computer or mobile phone, allowing viewers to walk through a virtual museum, see galleries and visit current temporary exhibitions"

Trinity College Dublin graduate Dr Unkel, who grew up a Catholic, has been in her present role at the museum since 2013 and says her

job is not to "re-establish" original texts but to look at "how it can be seen".

"I have come from an academic background of Medieval and Christian iconography," she says of her connection to the subjects in the field area of the Western Collection she oversees.

"However, I'm not a technical critic trying to re-establish the original text of the New Testament as written by the authors. I come at it from a more visual analysis and perspective.

"I look at how, as a book, it can be seen; how people can understand scripts if they don't read the language in order to know what they are looking at."

On the museum's website, visitors can take virtual tours in 3D, see digital collections and explore learning resources, which are useful for children and parents.

In addition, for teachers, the museum's collection offer students wonderful learning opportunities in a number of key curricula areas from art history to world faiths, geography, history, languages and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and maths).

The Chester Beatty can be viewed from one's computer or

mobile phone, allowing viewers to walk through a virtual museum, see galleries and visit current temporary exhibitions.

Online Resources include the museum's art, the work they do and the history of its founder Sir Alfred Chester Beatty.

One can also discover the museum's world of art and culture on their mobile phone, by downloading the free Chester Beatty Museum Guide app.

The app features audio tours of the museum's collection and galleries, including virtual 3D walkthroughs of the museum and online browsing of its world-renowned treasures.

Audio guides are available in a variety of languages: English, Irish, German, French, Spanish and Italian.

"The Chester Beatty is one of the 'premier sources for scholarship' in both the Old and New Testaments"

"We are trying to make up for not being physically accessible by moving more of our collection online," she says of the museum offering virtual walkthroughs of all their exhibitions and spaces.

"There would have been events held but these have since been postponed or cancelled, so we are hoping to extend our online presence and focus more on the stories behind the objects which people might find interesting.

"The goal would be to try do some themed stories online and keep with the idea of what's currently going on."

According to its website, the Chester Beatty is one of the "premier sources for scholarship" in both the Old and New Testaments and is home to one of the most significant collections of Western, Islamic and East & South-East Asian artefacts.

* * * * *

Described by Lonely Planet as "not just the best museum in Ireland but one of the best in Europe", the Chester Beatty contains a number of priceless historical objects.

Furthermore, its collection of papyri is one of the most extensive in the world, which is what Dr Unkel feels makes it "unique" and appealing to culturally-diverse communities in Ireland.

"The Chester Beatty is really important in Ireland for being one of the few places has materials from outside of the country and outside of Europe," she says.

"It is a unique place for local communities to see things which are beyond their culture, and I think it is really important for people to see things that they didn't know about, not just things they already do know of."

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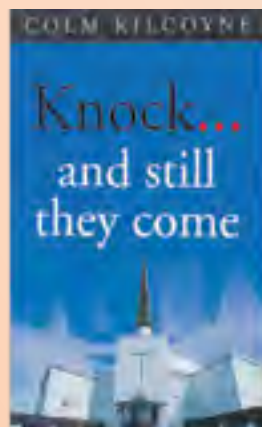
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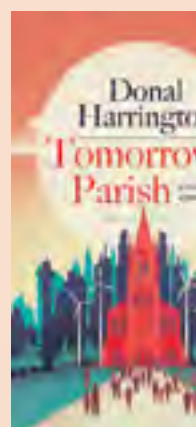
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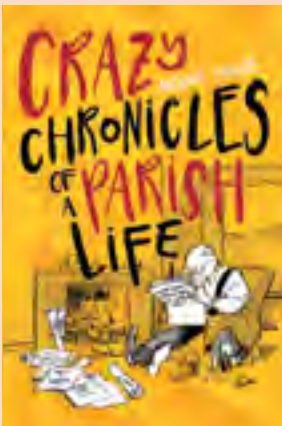
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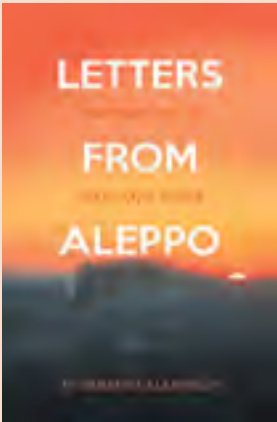
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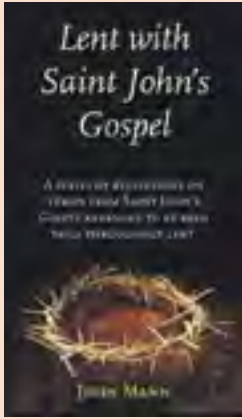
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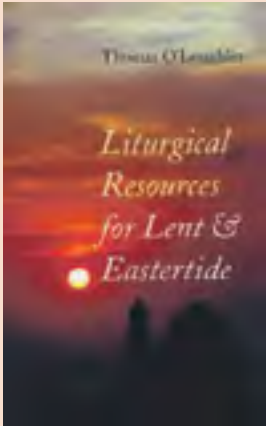
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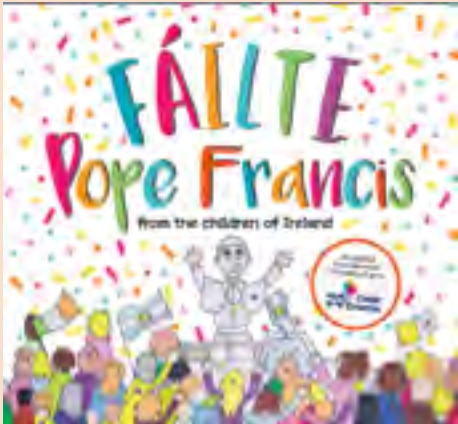
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Edited by Mags Gargan



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Out&About

Speak, Lord, your servants are listening



DUBLIN: Mass by webcam in St Brigid's church in Cabinteely. No congregation, three priests, the sacristan, reader, a musician and a lay parish official were in attendance.



ARMAGH: Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All-Ireland is pictured blessing a car and residents in Armagh.



CLARE: Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe celebrates Mass for the Solemnity of the Annunciation, Benediction and Consecration to The Immaculate Heart of Mary in Ennis Cathedral.



WESTMEATH: A sign supporting frontline health workers in their battle against the coronavirus (Covid-19) set up by St Stephen's church in Tyrrellspass.



MEATH: Kildare native Louise Coghlan with her grandmother Nancy Stewart (106) from Clonard, Co. Meath. Louise is encouraging people to say a few prayers for someone who may need them while washing your hands. In a recent Facebook video which received hundreds of thousands of views her grandmother Nancy said: "Stay calm and stay at home, wash your hands well and trust in God that everything will be alright. I am saying lots of prayers for everyone and once we keep our Faith that everything will be alright, I'm sure it will be."

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



ARMAGH: Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All-Ireland Eamon Martin is pictured bringing the Blessed Sacrament to the people of Armagh. He prayed for the protection of the people of the city and diocese during the coronavirus crisis.



CORK: Sr Alphonsus O'Brien of the Presentation Sisters, Bandon, is pictured on her 103rd birthday, March 24. She received a WhatsApp video greeting from Bishop Fintan Gavin of the Diocese of Cork and Ross. Planned celebrations had to be cancelled due to Covid-19.



KERRY: Charlotte O'Halloran, a Leaving Cert student from Tralee, sings with some of the online Masses from St Brendan's Church in Tralee and also for the Radio Kerry Mass on Sunday mornings at 9.30am. She is pictured in the radio studio.

IN SHORT

Clane parish projects messages of hope on church

The Parish of Clane, Co. Kildare, in the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin has been projecting visual messages of hope onto the front of their church building each evening as a way to creatively reach out to people during the coronavirus pandemic.

Three images are projected onto the Church of St Patrick and St Brigid which is on the main street in Clane so people driving past can see them and know that their parish is reaching out to them at this



time.

The messages are: 'Walk humbly with your God', 'Act justly' and 'Love tenderly'.

The images go live from 7.30pm to 11.30pm each evening when they stand out best in the darkness. It is hoped to keep them displayed for a week but this will be kept under review.

Commenting on the initiative, Fr Paul O'Boyle PP of Clane and Rathcoffey, said: "In this time of great challenge for our parishioners we wanted to do something to let them know that we are thinking of them and praying for them."

"While we are bringing Masses and other prayers to our parishioners online these days, we wanted to do something more creative. "I hope that these messages will let people know that we are with them at this time in prayer and solidarity."

CLARE

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

CORK

Medjugorje prayer meeting in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament every Wednesday night at 8pm in Holy Trinity Church, Fr Matthew Quay. Prayers for healing first Wednesday of every month.

A Pro-life Mass is held on the last Friday of every month at the Poor Clares Monastery, College Road, at 7.30pm.

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, at 8.15pm led by Fr Sean O'Donnell on the third Tuesday of every month.

DONEGAL

Holy Face of Jesus prayer meeting: The oratory St Mary's Buncrana, Tuesdays following Rosary after 10am Mass. Contact: 085 252 5612.

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.

Adoration Hour for Healing during Lent in St Laurence O'Toole Church, Seville Place, Dublin 1 at 8pm every Tuesday in Lent. Periods of silence, reflective music, individual prayers for healing all in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament www.northwallparish.ie.

FERMANAGH

A Mass to St Peregrine for all the sick is prayed each Tuesday evening in St Patrick's Church, Derrygonnelly, at 7.30pm: 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 Ardert Retreat Centre.

KILDARE

Praying, reading and sharing the following Sunday's Gospel in Resurrexit, Kilmeague, every Wednesday from 8-9.30pm. See www.resurrexit.ie for details, or ring 087-6825407.

KILKENNY

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

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Church of the Assumption, Urlingford, every first and third

● In the current Covid-19 crisis, readers are advised to check with local organisers to ensure events will take place. If organisers have put in place alternative arrangements, please email us the details and we will publish same.

Friday, from 2.30-5.30pm.

LOUTH

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.

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 Ballymascannon, Dundalk) every Wednesday evening at 7.30pm. Contact 00353 863623361 from the North of Ireland or 0863623361 from the Republic of Ireland.

MAYO

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 afternoon from 2.30-3.30pm in the Oratory, Enfield, for Adoration, Rosary, Chaplet and petitions. Also once per month a Lay Apostle meeting. However, all meetings are presently suspended because of the coronavirus threat.

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

Dunshaughlin & Culmullen parish. Sunday Mass live on Facebook (@Dunshaughlin.Culmullen.Parish), 12noon. All welcome.

ROSCOMMON

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

Eucharistic Adoration takes place in Drumboylan Church on the first Friday of the month from 9am-11pm.

WESTMEATH

Holy Face of Jesus prayer meeting: La Verna retreat centre beside private hospital Ballinderry, Mullingar. Thursdays at 7.30pm. Contact: 085 2525 612

WEXFORD

Taizé prayer services every first and third Friday at 8pm in Good Counsel College Chapel, New Ross.

WICKLOW

The Glencree Parish Group hold a special Mass for healing in St Kevin's Church, Glencree on the first Saturday of the month.



World Report

IN BRIEF

Indonesia Holy Week celebrations go online due to coronavirus

● Several dioceses in Indonesia are to hold Holy Week celebrations in churches without congregations as coronavirus (Covid-19) cases continue to rise in the country.

The celebrations of Holy Week, daily Masses and Sunday Masses will now be live-streamed online or broadcast on radio instead.

The Jakarta Archdiocese, which had previously cancelled all Church activities until April 3, has now extended its Covid-19 emergency period to April 30.

"All Church activities involving crowds are called off," said Fr Samuel Pengestu, the archdiocese's vicar general, last week.

Semarang Archdiocese in Central Java, Bogor Diocese in West Java and Lantut Diocese in East Tenggara have also cancelled public attendance at churches.

Peru parish hosts rooftop Holy Hour for home confined faithful

● St Anthony of Padua parish in Lima held a rooftop exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for parishioners from the church's rooftop last week.

The exposition started with music with a nearby restaurant joining in by providing lighting and equipment, so all neighbours in the high-rise surround buildings could experience the hour of adoration.

Fr Enrique Díaz said the neighbours came to their windows and balconies and many knelt before the Blessed Sacrament.

"It was beautiful," he said, adding "it was very well received by all the people in the neighbouring buildings."

The country is currently under a nationwide stay-at-home order.

First bishop coronavirus death was Ethiopia missionary

● An Italian bishop of a missionary region of Ethiopia is the first Catholic bishop known to have died of the global coronavirus pandemic last week.

Bishop Angelo Moreschi, 67, was the leader of Ethiopia's Apostolic Vicariate of Gambella, a missionary region of 25,000 Catholics in the western part of the country where he had been

a missionary since 1991.

Bishop Moreschi was renowned in Ethiopia for his pastoral ministry to the service of young people and the poor.

In the local dialect, he was afforded the title 'Abba', meaning 'Father'.

A member of the Salesians of Don Bosco religious order, Moreschi died on March 25 in Brescia.

Only bishop of Mongolian ethnicity dies, aged 101

● Bishop Giuseppe Ma Zhongmu Tegusbeleg, the only Mongolian bishop, has died at the age of 101 last week.

Bishop Ma was an unofficial bishop, not recognised by the Chinese state, who considered him a priest. For the Holy See, he was the bishop of Ningxia Diocese.

Bishop Ma retired in 2005 and lived as a pastor in his hometown parish of Chengchuan (Inner Mongolia).

According to the obituary of his diocese, Bishop Ma translated the Roman *Missa* into Mongolian and submitted it to the Vatican for approval. However, the translation was never approved.

Catholic leaders in US state praise abolition of death penalty

● Colorado has become the 22nd US state to abolish the death penalty and the third since Pope Francis revised the Catholic Catechism in August 2018. The decision, made last week, was welcomed by the Catholic bishops of Colorado who oppose the "erasing or taking away" of one's life.

Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy of the Catholic Mobilizing Network (CMN) hailed the action as "a critical step toward respecting the dignity of human life".

Similarly, the Colorado Catholic Conference commended the state's lawmakers for signing the "historic piece of legislation".

At present, there are 28 US states that can deliver a death sentence, 10 of these have not delivered one in over a decade.

Cardinal makes Marian vow to save Sri Lanka from coronavirus

A cardinal in Sri Lanka says he will make a vow to Our Lady this week to save his country from the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, Archbishop of Colombo, has promised the Faithful that he will hold televised prayers and make a special plea to Our Lady of Lanka at the National Basilica in Ragama on April 3.

"I will be making a special vow to Our Lady of Lanka (Mother Mary) to protect our country from coronavirus at 11am on April 3," said Cardinal Ranjith after a televised Mass on March 29.

"So, when your church rings the bell at 11am, you as a family go to the sacred place of your home where you have your daily prayers and silently pray to join with me in that moment."

Healing

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka has called on all Catholics to observe a day of fasting and prayer on April 3 to protect and heal all people in all countries and to rid the world of this devastating virus.

"We pray that the Blessed Mother will help us to get over these problems of the



coronavirus, not only in our country but also the whole world," added Cardinal Ranjith.

Mary Cecilia, 58, a member of Sacred Heart of Jesus in Negombo whose son has been working in Verona in virus-stricken Italy, said families would join Cardinal Ranjith in his vow.

"Our families are suffering

from the worst tragedy and we live with fear in our day-to-day lives when we hear the news from Italy. We all pray to God," she said.

The Sri Lanka Air Force has built a 15-room facility to keep suspected coronavirus patients under observation. The army operates 45 quarantine centers. Nearly 3,500 people including 31 foreign-

ers have been under quarantine.

Caritas Sethsarana, the social arm of the Church in Colombo Archdiocese, is distributing dry ration parcels among needy families during curfew time.

Curfew

Sri Lanka reported its first death from the coronavirus on March 28 with six districts identified as high-risk areas, prompting a curfew to continue until further notice. The country's airports are closed for arrivals of flights until April 7.

The Church cancelled public Masses and other services from March 15 because of a rapid rise in Covid-19 cases. The decision came in the middle of the Lenten season that features common gatherings such as the Way of the Cross, Lenten pilgrimages, group prayer services, Holy Hour and passion plays.

Cardinal Ranjith announced that Holy Week services on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday will be closed to the public but will be broadcast on radio and television.

South Africa Bishop seeks to find the root cause of femicide

A bishop in South Africa has highlighted the need to identify the root cause of violence against women in order to overcome the societal challenge facing the country.

Bishop Sithembale Sipuka of Mthatha, president of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, was speaking last week about the alarming rates of gender-based killings targeting women and girls in the country.

"In my view we need to get to the root cause of femicide so that we know what we are addressing," he said.

"There are a lot of speculations about [femicide], but I wish somebody

could do a true analytic study on it."

South Africa has experienced considerably higher levels of femicide in recent times, with the 2017/18 statistics by Africa Check showing every three hours, a woman is murdered in the country.

Problems

According to Bishop Sipuka, whatever the reasons for the violence against women, it is wrong and it is not the way to solve problems. "Culturally, men are meant to protect rather than to victimise," he said.

"From the Christian point of view, men should take the model of St

Joseph who protected the vulnerable members of his family and provided for them."

As a way forward, Bishop Sipuka said the South African Council of Churches are planning to hold a gathering to speak against violence targeting women.

He also noted that a collective effort from the various Christian denominations is needed to win this fight. "If the Catholic Church as the minority in South Africa stands alone, we will not succeed. We will collaborate with other Churches and see what we can do together to mobilise men and to speak to them."

Indian Church group feeds destitute during lockdown

A Catholic media group in India has initiated a campaign to feed the poor as a government-imposed lockdown has forced hundreds living on the streets to go hungry.

The 'feed a stomach' campaign, which was started by internet telecast Atmadarshan (soul light) TV based in

Indore city, was launched to provide food to the homeless in the area.

"We are distributing food packets to 50 poor people on the streets daily," said Fr Anand Chirayath, director of the channel.

India has approximately 1.77 million homeless people

living on the streets, mostly begging or doing odd jobs for food.

However, last week's countrywide lockdown has left them hungry, the priest said.

"This has created a serious survival problem for the thousands of abandoned who are dependent on alms for their

sustenance," he said.

Fr Chirayath said the initiative had received a positive response from the public.

"Many have come forward to help. Our attempt has also prompted some others to express a desire to engage in similar activities in their areas."



Edited by Aron Hegarty
aron@irishcatholic.ie

En tus brazos amorosos, Dios



Fr Marcos Rad conducts a burial service as municipal workers wearing protective gear lower the coffin of a coronavirus victim into the ground at a cemetery in Vitoria, Spain. Photo: CNS

Catholic numbers are increasing worldwide, says research data

The number of Catholics are increasing worldwide as well as permanent bishops and deacons, but priests, seminarians and religious figures are decreasing, according to recent statistics.

These findings were released by the Churches' Central Statistics Office, which drafts the Pontifical Yearbook 2020 and the *Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae* 2018, last week.

Between the years 2013 and 2018, there was an increase of about 6% of Catholics worldwide, which went from almost 1,254 to 1,329 million, an increase of 75 million people.

Of the total number of Catholics, 48% live in America, 21.5% in Europe and 11.1% in Asia, where there was an increase from 10.9% to 11.1%

In the same period (2013-18), the number of bishops grew by more than

3.9% from 5,173 to 5,377. There was a marked increase in Oceania (4.6%), followed by America and Asia (both with 4% and 5%), Europe (4.1%) and Africa (1.4%).

However, the number of priests fell, decreasing by 0.3% in that five-year time frame.

In America, the number of priests is stationary, there are about 123,000, while in Europe and Oceania there are drops of more than 7% and just over 1% respectively.

Seminarians

Across the five years, there has been a growth in the number of Asian clergy from 14.8% to 16.5% and African clergy from 10.1% to 11.5%, while for the European clergy there has been a dramatic decline from 44.3% to 41.3%.

The number of seminarians is also in decline from 118,251 in 2013 to 115,880 in 2018 – a decrease of 2%.

On the other hand, the number of permanent deacons is growing from 43,195 in 2013 to 47,504 in 2018 – an increase of 10%.

The number of consecrated religious men continues to decline (8%), with the figure passing from over 55,000 in 2013 to less than 51,000 in 2018.

Even for professed religious women there is a strong downward trend with a 7.5% contraction. The total number of professed religious women, decreased from almost 694,000 in 2013 to less than 642,000 five years later.

As of 2018, Catholics made up just under 18% of the world's population.

Philippine clergy rally Faithful to pray for 'frontline' workers

Bishops in the Philippines have joined civil authorities in inviting the faithful to pray for doctors and health workers who are "on the frontline" fighting against the coronavirus (Covid-19).

President Rodrigo Duterte declared the fourth week of March 'National Prayer Week' to spiritually unite Filipinos of all faiths and religions amid the threat of Covid-19.

"Let us pray for the

strength and endurance of our outstanding frontline medical professionals and health professionals, and staff dealing with the current threat of the virus, and for all Filipinos who work tirelessly to protect our communities by sacrificing their lives at the service of the country," he said.

Bishop Ruperto Santos, head of the Balanga Diocese, urged all priests and religions to pray for all those who are

trying to prevent the spread of the virus.

Intercession

"We implore our Lord through the intercession of Saint Joseph, patron saint of workers, to protect them and keep them away from any harm," he said.

The Bishop of Caloocan, Pablo Virgilio David, the vice president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the

Philippines (CBCP), called for prayers and invited the faithful to become "warriors of prayer".

"It does not matter whether you are a Muslim, Buddhist, Catholic or Protestant, you can join in praying fervently that God will protect those who put their lives in danger to protect us from this devastating plague," he said.

Vatican roundup

Easter liturgies cannot be postponed, says the Vatican

● The liturgies of Holy Week and Easter cannot be moved, according to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments. While conferences and meetings can be postponed due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the congregation said these liturgies could not be cancelled in guidelines issued last week.

"Easter is at the heart of the entire liturgical year and is not simply one feast among others," read the 'Decree in the Time of Covid-19'.

"The Easter triduum is celebrated over the arc of three days, which is preceded by Lent and crowned by Pentecost and, therefore, cannot be transferred to another time."

The decree was signed by Cardinal Robert Sarah, prefect of the congregation, and by secretary Archbishop Arthur Roche.

The chrisem Mass, they said, is not formally part of the Triduum and therefore a bishop can decide to postpone its celebration.

Where public Masses have been cancelled, the bishops, in agreement with their bishops' conference, may ensure that Holy Week liturgies are celebrated in churches.

The decree stated that the faithful should be advised of the times for the celebrations, so they could pray at home at the same time.

Cardinal Piacenza: indulgences 'mantle of mercy' in hour of crisis

● The Cardinal Major Penitentiary Mauro Piacenza says the new Indulgences granted in favour of the sick and their caregivers during the coronavirus (Covid-19) published last week are a "mantle of mercy".

Speaking to the *Vatican News*, Cardinal Piacenza says the Decree is a "remission before God" which grants special indulgences to those suffering from the virus.

"The extraordinary nature of these times demands extraordinary measures to help," he says. "For this reason, the Penitentiary, acting in the service of the Pope and with his authority,

has issued the decree on indulgences." A plenary indulgence is offered to all people suffering from the coronavirus.

On being asked of the conditions for receiving the grant of the indulgence, Cardinal Piacenza says they were "very simple".

"The sick and their caregivers are asked to unite themselves spiritually, wherever possible through the media, to the celebration of the Mass or the recitation of the Rosary or the Stations of the Cross. If this is not possible, they are asked to recite the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and an invocation to Mary."

Christians join Jews and Muslims in common Jerusalem prayer

● The leaders of the three Abrahamic religions prayed together in Jerusalem last week amid the global coronavirus pandemic.

The initiative, taken by the Mayor of the Holy City, took place at Jerusalem City Hall and saw the presence of representatives of other faiths, including Druze and Bahai.

Speaking to *Vatican Radio*, the Franciscan Custodian of the Holy Land, Fr Francesco Patton, explained that every religion was to recite a prayer according to its own tradition.

"We will be together to pray to the Almighty God that this pandemic may stop," Fr Patton said.

"It is important in itself because we are all believers with the same roots; and thanks to this same root we can express with faith and with confidence our prayer to God the Almighty."

The city's Church of the Holy Sepulchre has been closed, meaning Easter celebrations there will take place behind closed doors.



Letter from Rome



Christopher White

The belief that Catholic social thought requires valuing human life and dignity over economic concerns during this coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis was the widespread consensus among Catholic leaders during a recent US online forum.

The range of voices included a small business owner, healthcare professionals, a policy expert and a priest – all of whom met virtually last week for an online dialogue on Catholic Social Thought and the Coronavirus Crisis, organised by Georgetown University's Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life.

"This is a moral test for us," said John Carr, director of Georgetown's Initiative and moderator of the panel. "The scale of suffering and death and tensions and division and isolation is just overwhelming and a test like this reveals who we are, what we believe, and what type of society we're becoming."

Carr said that the traditions of our Faith are being turned upside down at the moment, noting that honouring the Sabbath means staying at home and honouring your father and mother may mean keeping your distance in order to stem the spread of the coronavirus.

Fr Myles Sheehan, who is both a Jesuit priest and physician, turned to Ignatius of Loyola who said that love is shown in deeds, not words, emphasizing that social distancing is one concrete way of loving one's neighbour. He also highlighted those on the front lines who are putting their own health at risk for the sake of the community, such as healthcare workers and grocery store clerks who still show up for work to provide essential services.

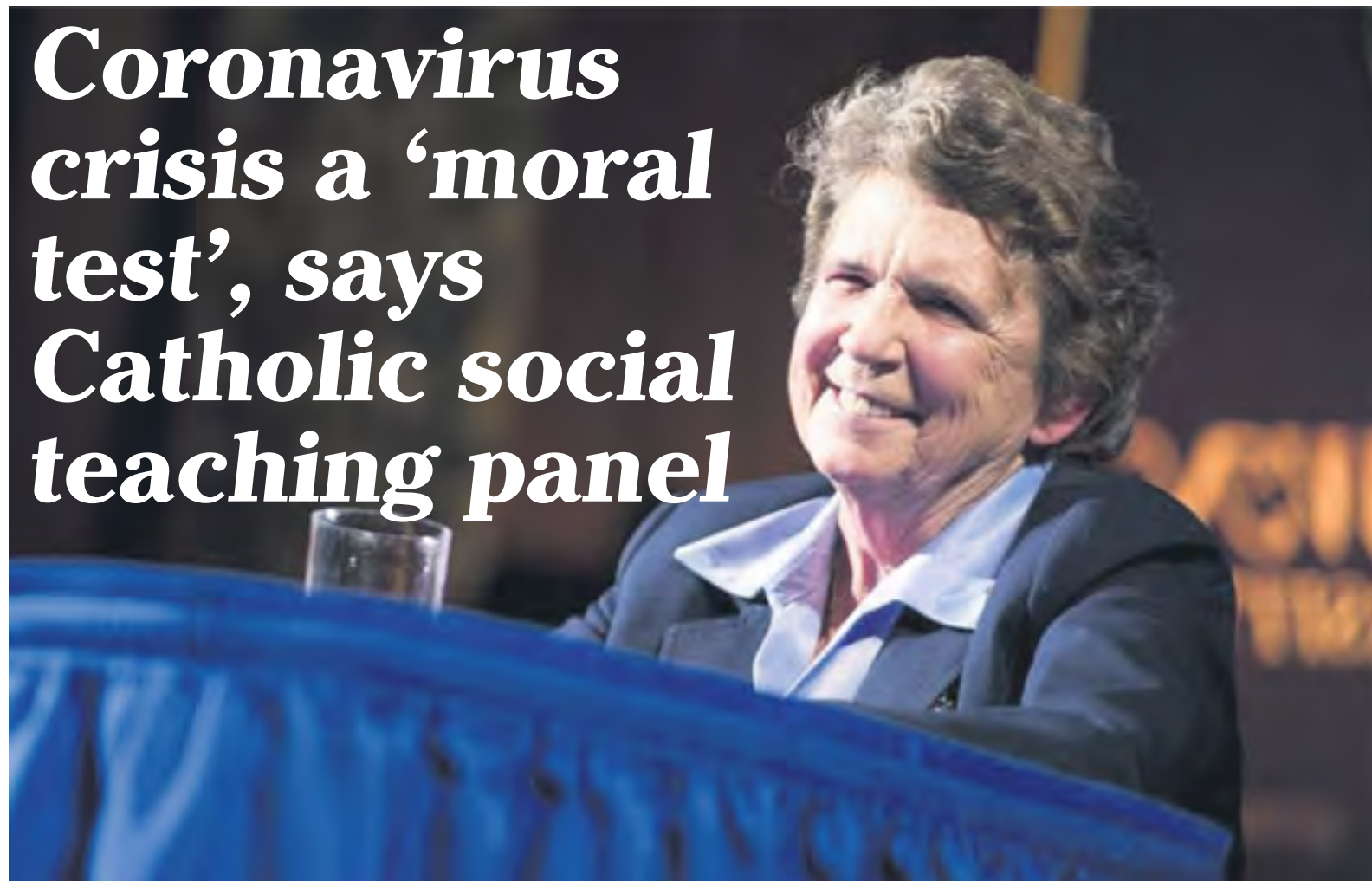
"We need to look at our communities with respect for the individual and ways that we can balance that and a time like this certainly stresses it," he said of the tensions created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sacrifices

Even so, despite these sacrifices for the sake of the common good, panelist Sr Carol Keehan D.C., a nurse and former president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association, said that the US is fortunate that there are "echoes" of Catholic social thought in the founding documents of the country.

In particular, she said it will help to ensure that the poor and the marginalised are "not left out or are the least in line" during this pandemic.

Coronavirus crisis a 'moral test', says Catholic social teaching panel



Sr Carol Keehan, a Daughter of Charity, who is president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association, speaks at dialogue of Catholic women leaders at Georgetown University, Washington DC. Photo: CNS

“While the US may be a diverse and pluralistic nation, ‘we have to use moral language’ in making a case for the common good and that Catholic social thought is particularly useful for that”

Reyna Guardado, a Salvadoran immigrant and co-owner of a family restaurant in Maryland, provided a first-hand testimonial of that, speaking of the hardships she and her family have faced in recent weeks of making the difficult decision to lay off workers – but also of the support she has received from the community through a crowd funding campaign which has allowed them to rehire four workers that have families to support so that the restaurant can in turn deliver meals for delivery and takeout.

John Monahan, the senior advisor for global health to the president of Georgetown University who worked with Health and Human Services during the H1N1 pandemic, said that while the US may be a diverse and pluralistic nation, "we have to use moral language" in making a case for the common good and that Catholic social thought is particularly useful for that.

"If we're constraining individual freedom and rights on behalf of doing something that is going to benefit the public good or benefit people you'll never know - there are 300 million people in this

country and seven billion people on Earth," he noted. "If we take steps to mitigate, those steps are going to save lives that we don't know."

Monahan specifically highlighted the notion of solidarity and gave the example of discussions and eventual decisions that were made during the last pandemic where that principle came into particular focus when President Barack Obama decided that if a vaccine became available, the US would share 10% with the World Health Organisation for benefit of low income countries.

He said that it's very possible that the US will soon once more face similar decisions regarding

antivirals, diagnostics, or perhaps an eventual vaccine to fight the coronavirus and that the principles of Catholic social teaching are useful in answering the question "how much are willing to share?"

“We can't win this thing unless we have a sense that all seven billion of us have a threat from this virus”

While the participants were all positive about the use of the Church's social teaching, they warned of challenging times ahead,

both at the macro and micro levels.

Keehan and Sheehan both warned that healthcare workers are still in need of basic supplies such as facemasks, while Guardado wondered what will happen to the undocumented workers who won't receive support from the recent economic stimulus package that was passed by Congress.

The panelists also highlighted that broad structural changes are needed, especially when it comes to the way the US healthcare system operates, but also emphasized that local action is needed to, with multiple speakers suggesting that healthy Catholics e-mail their local parishes to find out if elderly parishioners need help getting groceries or support with their basic utilities.

"We can't win this thing unless we have a sense that all seven billion of us have a threat from this virus," said Monahan.

Closing out the 90-minute discussion, Carr told the more than 500 people who tuned in via Facebook Live, that Pope Francis epitomises Catholic social teaching, especially through his metaphor of rejecting the throwaway culture, which reduces life – from the elderly, the unborn, to the environment – as disposable.

"We're staring it in the face right now," he said. "We would do worse than to follow the message of Catholic social teaching and the example of Pope Francis."

i Christopher White is a National Correspondent for Cruxnow





Twal Umande (48) and Bahati Imulali (20) accessing Trócaire water points to prevent the spread of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
Photo: Garry Walsh

None of us are safe until all of us are safe

Today, as the world joins together to battle the coronavirus (Covid-19), we are reminded how connected we are. We are one human family who share God's earth together. We have the same hopes. Today, we face the same fear.

But this fear can be overcome by us acting together, in solidarity and in love. In the weeks ahead, as we face the coronavirus in our own communities, Trócaire's teams will face it in some of the poorest communities in the world. They will face it in conflict zones where people live together in crowded camps. They will face it in communities already ravaged with hunger. These are places with little healthcare and few resources; places sadly ill-equipped to deal with the challenges that lie ahead.

Trócaire's Lent activities may be cancelled but we still rely massively on the support of our clergy and parishioners as the needs overseas are greater than ever.

Battlegrounds

The two key battlegrounds against the coronavirus – China and Europe – are well-resourced but even they have been stretched to their limits dealing with its devastating consequences. We are now seeing the virus rapidly spread to countries who lack even the most basic resources to fight this crisis.

Covid-19 is now present



Caoimhe de Barra

in over 40 countries in Africa, including some – Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo – that are amongst the poorest places on Earth. The big fear is that the virus is being under-reported. Some places have no reported cases but that may be because they have no ability to test.

Poor countries are vulnerable at multiple levels – there may not be a functioning state to warn people how to protect themselves; many do not have the systems to detect the virus; most do not have a functioning health service to respond to a mass outbreak of illness.

Poverty also makes individuals more vulnerable. If you are living through a drought in somewhere like Malawi or Kenya, you may only be eating once a day. You

may have HIV or be malnourished. Your immune system is going to be compromised.

We are told how hand washing is one of the best protections against Covid-19, but three quarters of sub-Saharan Africa's 645 million people don't have the facilities at home to wash their hands with soap and water. People have said they are being advised to wash their hands and they ask – 'with what?'

“There are currently coronavirus cases in many of the countries where Trócaire supports people”

The other key protection is social distancing. In conflict-affected countries, people are often living together in very crowded camps where the virus could take hold very easily. A staggering 84% of refugees are living in developing countries. How do you stop a virus taking hold in a refugee camp? The

“Three quarters of sub-Saharan Africa's 645 million people don't have the facilities at home to wash their hands with soap and water...”

reality is that refugees are often living in overcrowded camps, that are starved of resources. So even accessing enough detergent and clean water to keep people healthy in normal times is a huge challenge.

There are currently coronavirus cases in many of the countries where Trócaire supports people. Trying to contain the spread of the virus in these countries is going to be a mammoth task for our teams in the weeks and months ahead. Our most affected region so far is the Middle East. The number of cases in Lebanon, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories have been growing day by day, followed by further recent cases in Gaza and Syria – areas which are already suffering from conflict.

Outbreaks

Elsewhere, in Central America, Guatemala and Honduras are in lockdown. In Africa, cases have been reported in countries including Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe, where Trócaire has ongoing programmes.

Trócaire has experience combatting disease outbreaks and we can help to tackle this pandemic.

During the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014-15, our teams in Sierra Leone delivered

vital services to affected communities, helping to save thousands of lives. Today, we continue to counter the spread of Ebola in DRC, where over 2,200 people have died from the disease in the last 18 months. DRC had its last new case of Ebola a month ago. We are winning the fight against Ebola and we can win this new fight against Covid-19.

What makes Covid-19 different to other response work is that it is not isolated to one region or country. When Ebola struck West Africa, the world could mobilise in response. Were coronavirus to spread across the entire African continent – and at a time when Europe and America are struggling to contain their own crises – African countries will have to rely only on their own scarce resources.

Elders and Church leaders have an important role to play. Governments and international organisations are not always trusted. When Ebola struck, rumours spread that governments and international aid agencies were to blame. In some cases, medics were attacked. That is why engaging with community elders and Church leaders is so important.

They have the trust of the people. Failing to engage them has very serious consequences – if they are not informed of the facts, they can spread the wrong information.

Agencies such as Trócaire will respond to the Coronavirus crisis while also trying to maintain other life-saving programmes. The virus also presents challenges to our work in Ireland. Organisations around Ireland are trying to deal with this risk in a sensible and appropriate way. Trócaire is no different.

Protection

We have cancelled all staff travel and all face-to-face events here in Ireland planned around our annual Lenten campaign. This will impact our crucial fundraising, but the most important thing today is stopping the spread of this virus and protecting each other.

This crisis has highlighted how interconnected our world and our lives are. The global community is rallying together. The people who are least able to fight the virus are going to be the hardest hit. In the weeks and months ahead, we must be prepared to stand with people who are largely defenceless against the threat they face.

May we, as children of the light, continue to express solidarity with the work Trócaire and others are doing in the developing world at this time of unprecedented crisis. Let us show our love for each other and for mothers and families around the world, who face conflict, poverty and disease. As Dr Mike Ryan of the World Health Organisation recently said, 'None of us are safe until all of us are safe'.

i Caoimhe de Barra is CEO of Trócaire.

Letters

Letter of the week

Time to re-learn, revisit Ten Commandments

Dear Editor, Many wonderful, good and necessary efforts are being made at this time of crisis, this time of the Covid-19 virus. I thank God for all this, but I wish to add another much needed and very essential effort – a wake-up call; a call to conversion – a call back to the Ten Commandments.

These commandments are God's 10 rules or directions in peaceful, happy living, in joy, in fullness of life and love. They need to be revisited, re-learned and re-lived. They are as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago. Do we hear them mentioned? Do we hear them preached? Do we see them written

down? The commandments appear again and again in the Bible.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd wants to lead us back to God, the Father, and I hope and pray we follow his Word, teachings, guidance and direction. This may be a difficult time for us all, but I believe Romans 8:28 – proof good will come out of all of this for we have so many good people trying to do their best as they live quietly and prayerfully day by day.

Pope Francis tell us “never stop loving”. Much love is being displayed now. God is the source of love – may he give us strength to keep helping one another and keep believing the

word of St Augustine: “God only permits suffering to bring a greater good.”

May we have the wisdom and peace we need to learn from Scripture, from the lives of the saints and from so many good people, past and present.

May we hear the words of John's Gospel: “Let not your hearts be troubled.” (John 14:1)

Let's keep up the good work of prayer and action at this time of crisis and let's remember words of wisdom: “This too shall pass.”

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

A vaccine must be shared worldwide for free

Dear Editor, We are in a moment of history akin to the World War I story where opposing soldiers came out of their trenches and shared cigarettes and photos. Then at dawn they went back to war and an opportunity was lost.

The world is at war against a common enemy and we must unite to

defeat it. This will mean removing all sanctions.

When a vaccine/antidote is developed, which it will be, it must be shared and produced by all the major pharmaceutical companies by government edict if necessary and provided free to every country in the world, particularly developing countries.

Regardless of the economic conditions this must be subsidised by developed countries, including Ireland.

We must do this for two reasons. Firstly, and preferably, because it's the right thing to do. Secondly, because it's our best defence against a constant pandemic recurrence.

Unfortunately, the greatest threat to this new world order lives in The White House and doesn't seem to have a concept of ‘sharing’ and ‘unselfishness’ and basic human respect except to the dollar.

*Yours etc.,
Pat Conneely,
Glasnevin, Dublin.*

Young people must act ‘inspirationally’

Dear Editor, Us older people remember how important our peers were to us as teenagers and as young adults. We were each other's protectors and standard setters. We lived in each other's shadows and found inspiration from one another. Those are universal and lasting realities for the young of every era.

But now is different. These are not normal times. As W.B. Yeats said: “Everything is changed, changed utterly.” A terrible pandemic is raging all around.

Please, young people, do not congregate. Please do not disregard the advice that is for everybody. Please do not bring the disease home to your worried parents and lovely grandparents.

You are our hope for many tomorrows. You are our future leaders. We need you at your present best. You can and must be our inspiration during these trying times.

*Yours etc.,
Michael Gleeson,
Mayor of Killarney Municipal District,
Killarney, Co. Kerry.*



God is not a formula

Dear Editor, Firstly, I must congratulate you and your reporters on a wonderful and informative newspaper that has always been a pleasure to read. Despite this ongoing pandemic I'm impressed *The Irish Catholic* continues to bring us much-needed news and analysis. The article causing me to pen this letter was about sacrilegious (as Fr Pat Collins puts it) chain prayers that I have increasingly been seeing [IC 26/03/2020].

Fortunately I haven't been giving them any of my time and ignore them, but I know of many people who feel compelled to recite the certain prayer a certain number of times and then send

it on to a certain number of people to avoid some looming catastrophe that will befall their loved ones. Fair play to Fr Pat for calling this vile practice out for what it is, evil, and an insult to God.

I will continue praying, as is necessary, for all those on the frontlines who are battling this virus, those who have contracted it and those who are in fear of have been affected by it.

Chain prayers reduce God down to a formula and this is not the God whom we Christians love.

*Yours etc.,
Bill Graham,
Cherrywood, Co. Dublin.*

Cling to God in times of suffering

Dear Editor, David Quinn's article [IC 26/03/2020] was inspiring and was lovely to read. Worldly suffering has long been a difficult topic to broach with believers even, never mind atheists!

Fear can be disabling, as he says, and there is much fear abound as we hurtle through the pandemic which brings with it so much uncertainty, twists and turns. But now is not the time to question our Faith, but cling to it more strongly than ever, God will help us through this.

*Yours etc.,
Mary Dunne,
Drogheda, Co. Louth.*

facebook community

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

Editor Michael Kelly tackles ‘chain prayers’

Michael, this needed to be said! I've received these requests from so many – it's a form of control and I've resisted, but with difficulty, as I love most of those who've sent them. – **Irene Fenton**

I'm very glad Michael has posted this message. I'm never happy receiving these circular prayers with their implied threats or promises. Listen to Michael's advice.

– **Martin O'Flaherty**

Thank you so much for that message. I don't like those chain messages. We will all keep praying.

– **Caroline Ennis**

Thank you for posting this message I was getting those sent to me but ignoring them. – **Jacinta Newell**

Crisis helps parishes reach unchurched

Full support for our brave parishes! It's time to reconquer our beloved country to Our Lord Jesus Christ. It's time to erase all the abominations made up by our depraved politicians, with so many cowards tacit approval. Sweet Lord Jesus, ‘*parle, commande, règne!*’ – **Rose Donnelly**

Pro-life campaigners have criticised plans to offer unrestricted abortion up to 12 weeks of pregnancy in the North

MPs put in another ‘essential’ days work at Westminster – inviting death to the doors of many very soon. So much for preservation of life and protection of the vulnerable. – **Michael Dorman**

Of course! Why wouldn't the British abortion cartel target Irish babies? – **Elizabeth Rose**

Is there not enough death without abortion? – **Kathleen Smith**

Teacher college must reverse bioethics course decision

It puzzles me why Mary Immaculate College still haven't provided a reason as to why the submitted programme for the proposed course (Certificate in Christian Ethics in Healthcare) was rejected. Why did authorities there see fit to dismiss the request for professional training of hospital chaplains and healthcare professionals in the area of complex healthcare dilemmas? – **Louise Nolan**

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



BRAZIL: Fr Reginaldo Manzotti prays during Mass with photos of his parishioners taped to the pews in the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Curitiba last week.



BULGARIA: A park security guard feeds a squirrel in Sofia during the coronavirus pandemic. Photos: CNS



USA: A US soldier in New York carries paper towels to sanitise and disinfect religious buildings.



GERMANY: Restorer Luke Jonathan Koeppel and Birgitta Falk, an official of the cathedral in Aachen, assemble the shrine with the relics of St Corona.



HAITI: Abby Belt, a Maryknoll lay missionary, poses with children while assisting at the Jesus-Mary School in Gros Morne.



HOLY LAND: A man passes food through a hole in the locked front door of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem's Old City.



The sudden dispelling of an illusion

We don't much like the word 'disillusionment'. Normally we think of it as a negative, something pejorative, and not as something that does us a favour. And yet disillusionment is a positive, it means the dispelling of an illusion and illusions, unless we need one as a temporary tonic, are not good for us. They keep us from the truth, from reality.

There are many, many negatives to the current coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic that's wreaking a deadly havoc across the planet. But there's one positive: against every form of resistance we can muster, it's dispelling the illusion that we are in control of our lives and that, by our own efforts, we can make ourselves invulnerable. That lesson has come upon us uninvited.

This unforeseen and unwelcome virus is teaching us that, no matter our sophistication, intelligence, wealth, health or status, we're all vulnerable, we're all at the mercy of a thousand contingencies over which we have little control. No amount of denial will change that.

Narrowness

Granted, at one level of our consciousness we're always aware of our vulnerability. But sometimes, after we have walked a dangerous ledge for a long time, we forget the peril and are no



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

longer aware of the narrowness of the plank upon which we're walking. Then too our sense of our vulnerability to a hundred million dangers is, like our sense of mortality, normally pretty abstract and not very real. We all know that like everyone else we are going to die one day; but normally this doesn't weigh very heavily on our consciousness. We live instead with the sense that we're not going to die just yet.

Our own deaths aren't really real to us. They are not yet an imminent threat but only a distant, abstract reality.

Generally, such too is the vagueness of our sense of vulnerability. Yes, we know abstractly that we are vulnerable, but generally we feel pretty secure. But as this virus spreads, consumes our newscasts and

brings our normal lives to a halt, our sense of vulnerability is no longer a vague, abstract threat. We're now much more aware that we all live at the mercies of a million contingencies, most over which we have little control.

However, to our defense, our innate sense that we're in control and can safeguard our own safety and security should not be too-hastily and too-harshly judged. We can't help it. It's the way we're built.

We're instinctually geared to hate our weaknesses, our vulnerability, our limitations and our awareness of our own poverty and are instinctually geared to want to feel secure, in control, independent, invulnerable and self-sufficient.

That's a mercy of grace and nature because it helps save us

from despondency and helps us to live with a (needed) healthy pride.

But it's also an illusion; perhaps one that we need for long periods in our lives but also one that in moments of clarity and lucidity we're meant dispel so as to acknowledge before God and to ourselves that we're interdependent, not self-sufficient, and not ultimately in control.

Whatever else about this virus, it's bringing us a moment of clarity and lucidity, even if this is far from welcome.

“Illusions aren't easy to dispel, and for good reasons. We cling to them by instinct and we generally need them to get through life”

We were given the same lesson, in effect, with the downing of the Twin Towers in New York City on September 11, 2001. In witnessing this single, tragic incident we went from feeling safe and invulnerable to knowing that we are not able, despite everything we have achieved, to ensure our own safety and safety of our loved ones.

A lot of people relearned the meaning of prayer that day. A lot of us are relearning the meaning of prayer as we sit quarantined at home during this coronavirus.

Richard Rohr suggests that the passage from childhood to

adulthood requires an initiation into a number of necessary life-truths. One of these can be summarised this way: you are not in control! If that is true, and it is, then this coronavirus is helping initiate us all into a more mature adulthood. We are becoming more conscious of an important truth.

However, we may not see any divine intent in this. Every fundamentalist voice that suggests that God sent this virus to each us a lesson is dangerously wrong and is an insult to true faith.

Still we need to hear God's voice inside of it. God is speaking all the time but mostly we aren't listening; this sort of thing helps serve as God's microphone to a deaf world.

Illusions aren't easy to dispel, and for good reasons. We cling to them by instinct and we generally need them to get through life. For this reason, Socrates, in his wisdom, once wrote that “there is nothing that requires as gentle a treatment as the removal of an illusion”.

Anything other than gentleness only makes us more resistant.

This coronavirus is anything but gentle. But inside all of its harshness perhaps we might feel a gentle nudge that we help us dispel the illusion that we are in control.

“As this virus spreads, consumes our newscasts and brings our normal lives to a halt, our sense of vulnerability is no longer a vague, abstract threat”

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, April 2, 2020

Personal Profile

More like a parish manager: Thérèse O'Donoghue

Page 34



Why kids should read



Can you recall the smell of that perfectly flat, untouched paper, the cracking of a stiff spine, and the feeling of excitement after reading the blurb of a new book you have been dying to get stuck into?

Not everyone relates to books in the same way, or has fond memories of reading as a child and this is more likely to be the case the nearer you are to Generation Z. However, for some readers, there might be a special place in your heart for the fiction author that accompanied you through your formative years.

International Children's Book Day (ICBD) is today (April 2). Since 1967, every year on the day of, or around Hans Christian Andersen's birthday ICBD is



Róise McGagh writes about just how important reading is, and how you can encourage your kids to pick up a book.

celebrated with the aim of bringing attention to children's books and inspiring a love of reading in young people.

This is an ideal time to take that inspiration, while everyone is shut up indoors together, and get in some quiet time during the day specifically for indulging in a good book.

Elaina Ryan, CEO of Children's Books Ireland (CBI) explains to *The Irish Catholic* just how beneficial reading is for children.

"Schoolwork is one part of reading, but from our point of view it's much more than that. It's about the imagination and the potential to escape," she says, explaining how children can often find characters in books that they can relate to and are then able to explore difficult topics that they might be facing into in a safe way.

A lot of kids might be finding it difficult to be stuck inside all the time, or possibly worried

about how the current pandemic could affect their loved ones. Reading can be a safe escape from that, and it can also lead them to a new positive perspective.

"So, if children are feeling anxious, if they're feeling lonely, if they're feeling sad about the way that things are - they may be missing family and friends and they're out of whack with their routine - they can find a book where somebody else is feeling like that."

"I think that capacity to empathise comes from reading fiction; you're putting yourself in someone else's shoes.

"They say the books are windows and mirrors; you can look in on somebody else's life, but you can also see yourself reflected in there," says Elaina.

CBI have reading lists on their website with different themes - one of them being mental wellbeing.

The National Literacy Trust in the UK found that children who read more are three times more likely to have higher levels of mental wellbeing than children who are less inclined to read - which is a massive difference.

The 2018 report was based on their eighth Annual Literacy Survey of 49,047 young people aged 8 to 18 in the UK.

"The positive side of this awful, awful pandemic is that there are so many resources out there for children and parents and they can actually be overwhelming - but a lot of them are on screen," says Elaina.

» Continued on Page 33

Family News

AND EVENTS

WEBINAR YOUR WAY TO THROUGH ISOLATION

Just because you can't go anywhere, doesn't mean that there is nothing to do. In this digital age, the world is at our fingertips. So if you're feeling well and happen to have some time off this is a great opportunity to learn some new things.

Webinars are basically online lectures, that are held over Zoom, or a similar video and screen streaming interactive online platforms. There are groups and pages on Facebook where people post their upcoming webinars from all over the world. Since you're not geographically limited, you can tune into a webinar from anywhere. There are ones focused on online teaching skills, business trends, technology or pretty much any topic you can think of. If you can't find something to suit your needs, try searching (for example) 'gardening webinar' and you should be able to find at the very least a webinar or class that has been recorded and is available to watch.

A HOT BATH A DAY KEEPS THE DOCTOR AWAY

Ending the day with a warm bath could lower your risk of heart disease and stroke, a new study has found.

Published on March 24 in the journal *Heart*, a subsidiary to the *British Medical Journal*, it found that a hot bath every day is associated with a lowered risk of heart disease by 28%, and a 26% lowered risk of stroke. The researchers said this is likely because taking a bath is associated with lowering your blood pressure.

For 20 years the researchers tracked the bathing habits and cardiovascular disease risk of over 61,000 Japanese adults.

"We found that frequent tub bathing was significantly associated with a lower risk of hypertension, suggesting that a beneficial effect of tub bathing on risk of (cardiovascular disease) may be in part due to a reduced risk of developing hypertension."

DISNEY PLUS

After a long wait since its US debut in November, Disney Plus, has come to Ireland. The timing is pretty perfect too.

The new streaming service is basically similar to Netflix but it has everything from not just Disney but Marvel, Pixar and 20th Century Fox. It comes at Disney Plus costs €6.99 a month or €69.99 for a year. You can have four people streaming from the same account at once and you can also do unlimited downloads across ten different devices. One account can have seven profiles and there are also tailored profiles for children.

They have over 600 episodes of *The Simpsons* and *Star Wars* content available on the streaming site as Disney rivals Netflix and Amazon Prime. Streaming services are blowing up in the US, with NBC following suit and working on a platform for its many shows; including *Friends*. Disney had begun to pull its productions off services like Netflix when it announced its plans to create Disney Plus.

In this dark cloud there are silver linings

This monthly column is focused on the benefits of meditation for adults and children alike. The practical benefits have been demonstrated beyond doubt through scientific research over recent decades. The regular practice of meditation gives rise to physical, psychological, emotional and cognitive benefits.

For this reason, meditation is now regarded as a beneficial intervention for many health and mental-health conditions. That, on its own, is reason enough to take up the practice.

However, given the hectic pace of modern life, not many families have considered introducing meditation as a family practice. But right now, because of the threat posed by the coronavirus (Covid-19), our typical lifestyle has been altered, suddenly and dramatically. The need for social distancing has had the effect of isolating family units, so that whole families are now spending much more time than normal in each other's company. That presents an opportunity for doing things together that families might not otherwise have considered.

Over recent years many schools have introduced meditation as a means of promoting wellbeing. The Meditation with Children Project – an initiative of Christian Meditation Ireland – has seen over 50,000 children across Irish primary schools introduced to the practice of meditation. In over 220 primary schools all across Ireland, the whole school falls silent at least twice each week as they all meditate together in silence. While whole-school meditation creates a palpable sense of community, it is ultimately a deeply personal practice which mysteriously changes, for the better, the consciousness

Mindful living

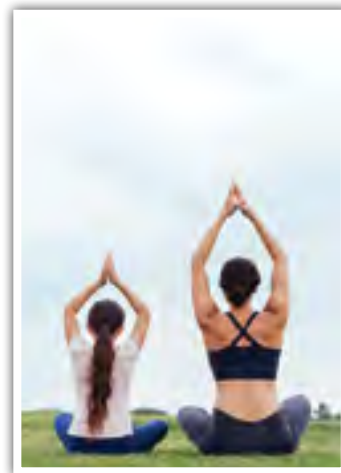
Dr Noel Keating



and mind-set of those who meditate. Now that schools are unexpectedly closed for the foreseeable future, if your child has been meditating in school, why not ask him or her now to teach the whole family to meditate? If you speak to your child about meditation, you may be surprised at their capacity to describe in their own words how it has benefitted them. My research in recent years has shown that children are able to give rich metaphorical description to both the practical benefits and deeper fruits of meditation. But remember that any such description will be in language appropriate to their age and cognitive development, so you will have to listen carefully to the undercurrent of what they actually say. And you will have to bear in mind that language can only point to the deeper fruits – no words are adequate to describe rich personal spiritual experience.

All of the wisdom and religious traditions of the world say that meditation promotes human flourishing; that it deepens our sense of self-identity, our understanding of who we really are beyond the ego. Meditation deepens our awareness of our transcendent nature – one might say that it teaches us that we are the song that God sings. Through the

regular practice of meditation, we discover such insights – not as moments of bliss while we meditate – but through the traces our unconscious spiritual experience leaves behind. And although we experience such insights as being too self-evident to doubt, nonetheless they remain incomprehensible to the rational mind and defy description in words – in prose at least. As Heidegger observed, poetry is language in service of the unsayable and the vocation of the poet is to evoke the holy. The Irish Bishops' Conference, in the booklet *A Reflection on Mindfulness: Rediscovering the Christian Tradition of Meditation and Contemplation* (Veritas: 2018) reminds us that Christian meditation is 'intended to be a movement beyond mental activity about one's relationship with the Divine, to communion with the Divine, through Christ'



You can't satisfy your hunger by reading the menu in the window of a restaurant nor can you taste honey by licking the word in a dictionary. Likewise, the only way to appreciate meditation is to practice it. So why not take up the practice now at home as a family? Explain that meditation is about being

still in body and mind in God's presence – not thinking about God or about anything – simply being. When we attempt to do that we find that thoughts arise in our minds unbidden and typically we get caught up in them. But in meditation we choose to let them go by bringing our attention to a word. It can be any word but the Christian tradition recommends the word Maranatha, said as if it were four separate words Ma – Ra – Na – Tha. Although we will be distracted often throughout our meditation, we simply return again and again to our word.

As you grow in meditation, you will come to understand that while your thoughts and preoccupations keep getting in the way, what's in the way is, in fact, the way. Even though you may repeatedly get caught up in your thoughts, you will also discover you have the determination and discipline to return to your sacred word, over and over again. You will come to appreciate that at the deepest level of your being that, in between the thoughts and beyond ordinary self-consciousness, your unconscious experience is one of communion with the Source of all being. And that mysterious experience will change you.

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

» Continued from Page 31



Neuroscience research from Millward Brown and Bangor University shows that paper-based content is better connected to memory in our brains than electronic content. While a book on a screen is better than no book at all, it's important to be able to disconnect from the news, TV, the constant flow of social media and take some time for internal reflection.

A bedtime story is brilliant for winding down before going to sleep and can be a great routine to get into. Not only is it good for engaging kids in books and helping them mellow out but it can also be comforting to hear a parent read. And it's not just for small children, it has been shown that reading to a child for 20 minutes a day can significantly impact their vocabulary, and how they perform in school.

"Don't consider reading as a school activity, because I understand parents will have things sent home and they need to do paired reading, or they need their child to read aloud to them. I would say separate all those things and if you want to read a book to them as a comfort to them at bedtime do that," says Elaina.

Borrow Box is the app run by Irish libraries and at the minute while they are closed due to Coronavirus (Covid-19), anyone can sign up for a library card for free online, without having to confirm your proof of address. You get a temporary library number and you can set up a library PIN with which you can access the online collection.

There are also a lot of independent Irish bookshops that are still operating online. Books Upstairs, Columba Books, The Gutter Bookshop in Dublin are open and Kennys Bookshop and Art Galleries in Galway is doing free delivery.

People in the UK have been stockpiling books for a stint in isolation, with the sales of fiction having recently risen by a third and children's education rising by 234% to one of the highest levels on record.

Waterstones saw their sales online increase by 400% in a week.

"What we're seeing is family members are sending books to the kids in their life that they can't see at the moment," says Elaina.

Reading at bedtime is one way to get kids interested in books but how can parents nurture a love for reading?

Elaina advises to let them read what they want, "If parents have the means to order a book for a child that they have chosen themselves, that's massively powerful," she says. So instead of trying to suggest titles you loved as a child upstairs or forcing your child to read a classic or something educational, which might not be their taste, let them decide.

Letting them read for pleasure and allowing it to be separated from school and from English homework means it is something fun that they want to do. Even if they want to go for a picture book despite being able to read independently, or if they want to have a look at the paper despite being too young to understand it you want them to feel like it's enjoyable instead of something they feel obliged to do.

"We don't want this to be the broccoli of their day," says Elaina. She has two daughters herself aged two and four, but they like to have a look at the paper. She



understandably has a large selection of picture books at home and says sometimes she is surprised at what they pick out: "There's stuff that I would have assumed would be too sophisticated for them or that wouldn't appeal and they pick it up and they love it and other stuff that I've bought for them, they don't like and that's okay too."

Something else that can have a big impact on motivating kids to read is seeing their parents do it. Most kids aren't aware that their parents are readers because they do it when they're gone to bed. Even leaving your own book around the house can help. Children often model their behaviour off of their parents so if you're on your phone or watching Netflix a lot, they will do the same.

The O'Brien Press are running a Design-a-Cover Competition with CBI, where kids re-design the cover of Gordon Snell's The Supermarket Ghost, first published in 2007. The competition closes on May 1 and the winner will actually get their cover printed on the published book.

CBI also have a writing competition for third to sixth class pupils with RTÉ Junior for their We Love Books podcast. The 10 shortlisted children will get to record their story, which will be included on a podcast episode among books and other goodies.

Laureate na nÓg Sarah Crossan is doing Instagram live sessions with poetry prompts; Sarah Webb is doing creative online classes with Museum of Literature Ireland; Oliver Jeffers is doing daily readings of his books on Instagram; Chris Haughton is reading picture books on Facebook every evening; Chris Judge has made his Lonely Beast apps free to download and his colouring book of girls and sports is also free to download from the 42.ie and publishers Futa Fata are doing a Scéal an Lae as Gaeilge on their Facebook page. There are plenty of ways and resources now available to get your kids reading.

Faith — IN THE — family



Bairbre Cahill

We had great plans for sacramental preparation in the parish this year some of which came to fruition and some of which we have had to set aside. We had planned three evenings during Lent for the parents of children preparing for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion and anyone else in the parish who wanted to come along. Having listened to parents, we planned three evenings, Exploring Reconciliation, Exploring the Mass and Exploring Prayer. We only got as far as the first one before it became clear that we couldn't continue to gather people together.

When it comes to working with parents it is really important to have an understanding of Adult Learning. We didn't want to simply pour information out on this group of adults as if they were empty vessels. We understood that we needed to connect with their own experience, explore catechetical and theological ideas in the language of everyday life and support parents in feeling confident to talk to their own children about reconciliation, Eucharist and prayer.

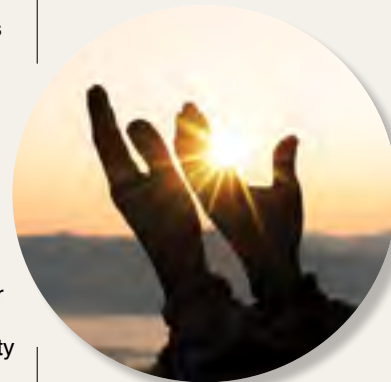
For the evening on Exploring Reconciliation we wanted to put the idea of sacramental reconciliation into a wider context, exploring why reconciliation is important in our lives. We invited Richard Moore, founder of the Charity Children in Crossfire to come and talk about his own life experience. We knew that Richard would be able to lift the idea of reconciliation out of theory and plant it firmly in everyday life.

When Richard was a young boy aged just ten he was shot with a rubber bullet and blinded by a British soldier while making his way home from school. Listening to Richard talk about those days, with images of Derry in the Troubles playing in the background, was powerful. There was a quality of listening, engagement and empathy that reflected how deeply those present were impacted by Richard's story. Richard's resilience, his capacity to rebuild his life, the faith of his family, his determination not to be limited by his blindness and the founding of his charity Children in Crossfire were awe inspiring.

And then came more – in 2006 Richard met Charles,

the soldier who had shot him. Not only did he meet him, he actually became and remains friends with this man. To quote Richard himself, he says

"Meeting him helped me appreciate what forgiveness actually means to me. I felt a sense of euphoria. I said, 'I forgive you and I have always forgiven you. I have no hatred towards you' I felt that was seismic. I was sharing that emotion with the person I needed to share it with."



This is what reconciliation is about – acknowledging pain, being open, speaking honestly and being prepared to forgive and be forgiven. It was clear to all of us listening that it was Richard's freedom from hatred, his capacity for forgiveness which enabled him to live with such generosity, courage and joy. If he had nurtured bitterness and resentment one can only imagine how that could have warped and limited his life.

We may not face the challenges Richard faced in life but we all experience the need for reconciliation. The sacrament of reconciliation gives us an opportunity to reflect on what is fractured and broken in our lives. God's desire is to liberate us from all that makes our lives small, negative and selfish. Reconciliation is a sacrament of healing of ourselves, our relationships, our families and our communities. It offers us an opportunity to make a new start, to set out on the journey together again.

In these strange days of isolation and social distancing we might reflect on what that journey might look like in the future. We have been reminded in a powerful way that we are one body, throughout the world and that we have a responsibility to care for one another. Understanding and living out of that call to reconciliation will enable us to move forward with hope.

More like a parish manager: Thérèse O'Donoghue

Personal Profile



Róise McGagh

Fr Gerry and his dog Missy called to Therese O'Donoghue, the Parish Secretary in Booterstown one afternoon in July 2019.

"I thought that I knew everything that goes on in the parish," says Thérèse before that moment. He was holding an official looking envelope and informed her she was to be awarded the Benemerenti Medal.

After 20 years of working in the parish, Thérèse got her award of thanks for her service to the Catholic Church on December 29, 2019 at the 11am Mass on the Feast of the Holy Family.

"The Mass was very special and Fr Gerry presented it to me but Msgr Conway was on the altar as well, he's our retired parish priest, our Pastor Emeritus, and it's he who would have asked me would I like to work here in the first place years ago."

Thérèse studied French and History in university and went on to work for Banque Nationale de Paris (BNP), a French bank in Dublin. She says that her training there was very helpful for what she is doing now, being secretary, she often has to use her background in finance.

She was already involved in parish life before she took up her current position. Since Thérèse started there have been a lot of changes to Catholicism in Ireland and in particular in her parish: "When I started then there were three priests, so my job was changed a lot because there's only one active priest now."



Thérèse says she is more like a parish manager than a secretary and a lot of work goes into managing the many voluntary groups that work in Booterstown. She manages bookings, making rosters, bank payments and preparing for ceremonies to name a few tasks.

"No two days are the same, you get different inquiries every day."

Thérèse says while there are still plenty of baptisms and funerals, she has noticed that there are less weddings than there were when she started.

When Thérèse was younger her family all went to Mass in her then parish of Merrion Road in Our Lady Queen of Peace church: "My parents would have instilled Christian values in us and I just think as a family our faith is always important to us," she says there was less of an opportunity to be involved in the parish when she

was younger and it wasn't until the 80's that laity really began to play a big role.

"The laity were encouraged as the number of Priests had diminished. This really is the hour of the laity," she says, explaining that priests at the minute want to help with the coronavirus but many of them fall into the vulnerable health category.

"My faith has always meant a lot to me and actually now that talking about the award retrospectively, I can actually see how important our Faith is to us and particularly the ministry of web cam now," she says. Fr Gerry has been broadcasting mass at 10am every day and the morning of the interview he prayed in particular for a parishioner who used to organise the cleaning of the church over the web cam, she was turning 90.

Thérèse says under normal circumstances they have tea on a Thursday anyways and they would

have had cake that day and made a 'big fuss'.

"Things like that give a great sense of community," she says. This sense of community and belonging is something she feels is very important, "it's a parish with a lovely atmosphere and people do remark on that sense of community and I think it's because the church is small".

“He was holding an official looking envelope and informed her she was to be awarded the Benemerenti Medal.”

Thérèse says the church web cam has been important in helping people feel less isolated and more connected with the Church.

Her own children, despite two being abroad, still keep up to date

on the parish through Facebook, she says: "They had very happy memories of being involved as altar servers and in the children's choir."

She says it is strange that the parish is so quiet at the minute. "There are two primary schools in the parish, and we don't realise how much light a school brings."

Usually at this time she would be busy with preparing for Confirmation and for penance and First Communions.

The renovated parish centre is something Thérèse also feels gives a sense of community to Booterstown parish. "It's great for the community to have somewhere to meet, we have the Thursday morning teas, coffees where people come in after Mass, we have a knitting and stitching group, a Men's shed has just started to meet, there are classes in pilates, yoga, stretch chair exercises for seniors," she says.

She says older people love to see young people coming to Mass but it can be difficult to get them engaged. She feels when encouraging them that often young children remember their grandparents going to Mass or saying the Rosary "they understand the concept and the importance of faith. Even to have that example, they remember it later on. It's kind of like putting down good roots and even if they might not practice it necessarily, they appreciate it."

Thérèse was 'humbled' and 'overwhelmed' to receive the Benemerenti Award, "I felt privileged. I love my job, I love my work I could also say that while I'm working and I'm an employee you couldn't do this job you couldn't run a parish without all the volunteers."

There are 30 volunteer groups in the parish and Thérèse says she couldn't do it without them.

Sweet Treats

Laura Anderson



Hot Cross Buns – a classic Easter bake

These might be easy to buy, but why not try to make your own this Easter, you won't regret it! They are crunchy and golden on the outside but wonderfully soft on the inside. If that doesn't sound indulgent enough, they are then coated in cinnamon sugar. A definite crowd pleaser!

Ingredients

Makes about 12 hot cross buns

For the buns:

- 500g strong white bread flour
- 75g caster sugar
- 5g salt
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp mixed spice
- 2 x 7g sachets fast-action dried yeast
- 50g unsalted butter
- 300ml full-fat milk
- 1 medium egg, beaten
- 100g sultanas

- 50g mixed peel
- 1 red apple
- 50g apricot jam, to glaze

For the crosses:

- 75g plain flour
- 80ml water

To begin, heat the milk in a small saucepan until it's steaming then add the butter. Stir to ensure the butter is melted and then set the saucepan aside for 10 minutes or until it is lukewarm. Meanwhile, put the bread flour, sugar, salt, spices and yeast into a large bowl. Keep the salt and the yeast on opposite sides of the bowl. Make a well in the centre and add half the warm milk and butter and the beaten egg. Bring the mixture together using your hands and then gradually add the rest of the milk until a sticky dough forms. You may not need all the milk.

Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead for 5-10 mins until the dough is smooth and elastic. Shape into a ball and place into a lightly oiled



bowl. Cover with cling film or a clean tea towel and leave to rest until doubled in size and your finger leaves a dent when pressed into it (1-1½ hours).

Peel, core and finely chop the apple. With the dough still in the bowl add the sultanas, mixed peel and apple. Bring together and knead into the dough on a lightly floured surface making sure to evenly distribute the fruit then leave to rest in a covered bowl as before for another hour or until doubled in size.

Line two baking trays with parchment paper. Knock back the dough by punching it flat on a lightly floured surface and then divide and shape into 12 equal smooth balls. Place onto the baking trays, spacing them evenly about 1 inch apart. Cover lightly with cling film or a tea towel and leave to prove again until doubled in size (45 mins -1 hour).

Pre-heat oven to 220°C/200°C Fan/Gas mark 6. For the crosses mix the flour with the water to make a thick paste and spoon this into a piping bag with a small nozzle. When the buns are ready, pipe lines across each row to make crosses. Bake for 12-15 minutes until golden brown. Gently heat the apricot jam and while the buns are still warm brush it on top to glaze them. Leave to cool.

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Time for pleasant distractions to go viral

Anything that provides calm, relative normality or even distraction in these troubling times is welcome.

Gardening surely ticks all these boxes, so I was glad to watch **Gardeners' World** (BBC2) on Friday. Recently returned for a new season, presenter Monty Don exuded calm and enthusiasm and it was almost a virus-free zone – he did mention how important gardening was for wellbeing at the moment and how they'd concentrate on just one main garden per week for now.

On Wednesday nights TG 4 is repeating another marvellous show, **Garraí Glas**. The emphasis here is on herbs, ancient natural cures, and home produce. We get to meet impressive enthusiasts – last week there was Nancy Murray from West Cork who was a lady of many talents – she grew vegetables for shows though wasn't that keen on eating some of them.

We saw her excellent craft-work along with stacks of trophies and pictures of the Sacred Heart. In her impish way she warned against telling lies – that would land you in Purgatory, she said, and you'd want to avoid that "at all costs"! Presenter Síle Ní Chonaonaigh is an engaging presenter and the background music, the best of acoustic folk, has me reaching for my Shazam App.



The participants in BBC TV's *Pilgrimage: Road to Istanbul*.

New streaming service Disney Plus was launched last week, rather timely considering the situation. I love the range of Pixar shorts, some featuring characters from films like *Toy Story*, *The Incredibles* and *Up*, while other are very funny one-offs, many with a gentle message of accepting difference and avoiding bullying – check out the likes of *Float*, *Bao*, *For the Birds* and *Doug's Special Mission*.

All the major Disney films are there. I particularly loved *Mary Poppins Returns* which exceeded my expectations. It was faithful to the spirit of the original, featured beautiful cinematography and some fine new music, with

snatches of the original score at key moments. Check out the songs *The Place Where Lost Things Go* and *Lovely London Sky*.

While there's a huge range of family-friendly material on the service, it can't always be assumed that everything is suitable for younger children. Some of their modern films can be edgier than in the past and there can be politically correct agendas that Christian parents might not be happy with.

Expedition

Back on regular TV, the three-part **Pilgrimage: Road to Istanbul** (BBC2) started last Friday night. Like the previous expedition to Rome, this fea-

tures a group of celebrities (of course!) following an ancient military trail that originally went from Istanbul to Vienna. Around 10 years ago it was developed as a peace walk to promote tolerance between faiths and cultures.

The celebrities, travelling sections of the route from Belgrade to Istanbul, were the usual gender/race/religion balanced group. Pauline McLynn (Mrs Doyle from *Father Ted*) was brought up Catholic and now identified as "a secular person". Journalist Adrian Chiles was a Catholic convert, drawn to the Church, after a friend asked him to come to Mass with him.

Former politician Edwina Currie came from a Jewish family, her heritage was important to her but she wasn't a person of much religious faith.

Broadcaster Mim Shaikh was a young Muslim with "an



Monty Don.

PICK OF THE WEEK

MASS FOR PSALM SUNDAY

RTÉ1, Palm Sunday, April 4, 11am

The Rev. Prof. Michael Mullaney, President of St Patrick's College, Maynooth, celebrates Mass in the Kairos chapel studio, Maynooth, with music from Celine Byrne, accompanied by Ronan Murray.

MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

RTÉ1 and RTÉ Radio 1 Extra/LW252/Digital Radio (radio at 7 pm), Holy Thursday, April 9, 4.40pm

Fr Ray Kelly, parish priest of Oldcastle, Co. Meath, celebrates Mass of the Last Supper in the Kairos chapel studio, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.

THE LEAP OF FAITH

RTÉ Radio 1, Good Friday, April 10, 10pm

Michael Comyn asks whether and how the Easter story continues to resonate with people in today's Ireland.

undeniable belief in God" and critical of extremism. Fatima Whitbread, former javelin champion, was brought up in care homes, was brought regularly to Sunday School and continued to value her religious faith.

It is a challenging walk but for TV presenter Amar Latif it was particularly so as he was blind and he was graciously guided by the others.

Finally Dom Joly, the inevitable comedian, who described himself as a "rebel idiot", was the most avowedly atheistic of the group. He respected those with a religious faith, was even jealous of them and seemed to dislike religion in general but found he got on well with religious people when he met them.

Programmes like this are becoming a bit formulaic

but, while there were bland moments, it was amiable enough. I particularly liked the theological discussions at meal times – the table fellowship was mighty!

The Serbian scenery was beautiful and the sacred places visited were striking, especially the Manastira monastery with the protective fortress and the distinctive Orthodox ceremony for the feast day of the birth of Our Lady.

For some participants in the show this is a religious pilgrimage, for some it's more of a secular pilgrimage – or is that a contradiction in terms?

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Film

Aubrey Malone



Groundhog Day of torture for bewildered US couple

Vivarium (15A)

Like all great science fiction films, suspension of disbelief is key to the immersion in the plot that's demanded here – and richly achieved. We enter the seventh circle of hell and accept it because, hey, that's just the way things are.

So when Tom and Gemma, a house-seeking couple, are led into a newly-built estate filled with identikit green houses by a creepy estate agent and find themselves stuck there when he disappears, you're in that world with them, totally accepting the absurdity.

And, let's face it, everything seems a bit absurd in these days of Covid-19, doesn't it?

Yes, there's shock. Yes, there's bewilderment. But there also seems to be a kind of resignation to the weirdness on their part. That makes it all so captivating.

Not once do they talk about people they know. In fact we don't get to find out if there are any. We see Gemma, a teacher, with her class at the beginning but the lion's share of the action happens in the demonic 'No. 9' – the house they're consigned to without any hope of getting out. It becomes their universe.

What kind of sick game is being played on them? Things take an even weirder turn when they find a baby in a box outside their door. "Raise the child," a message says, "and be released."



Jesse Eisenberg and Imogen Poots star in *Vivarium*.

Excellent
★★★★★

Easier said than done. It's a mutant. Within 98 days it's become a young boy, a precocious lad who torments them by imitating their voices, screaming when he doesn't get what he wants. And look-

ing ominously like the creepy estate agent as he gazes fascinatingly at abstract designs on a TV set.

Then he becomes a man – presumably within a further 98 days...

Vivarium isn't easy viewing. It turns into a horror film in the last quarter. But if you allow yourself to be sucked into its dystopian vortex you won't want it to end. Stanley Kubrick would have been proud of it, or David Cronenberg.

Sanitised houses

Jesse Eisenberg and Imogen Poots are the ordinary couple pitchforked into the extraordinary world director Lorcan Finnegan presents us with. For 90 minutes we look at rows of sanitised houses, storybook skies and a billiard table lawn that Tom uproots as he tries to tunnel his way to freedom.

It took an ingenious mind to dream all this up. It put me

in mind of everything from *The Box* to *Suburbicon* to Trond Fausa's equally surreal *The Bothersome Man*. Finnegan never takes his foot off the gas. He makes abnormality the new normal.

There are no apocalypses here, no catharses. Just the Stygian descent into a Groundhog Day of torture.

Like the ill-fated protagonists, we're consigned to a perverse Garden of Eden, an endless hall of mirrors, a repeating decimal, a barrage of Russian dolls proclaiming, like the Jean-Paul Sartre of 'Huis clos'...no exit.

The film, for those interested, has received an online release across various digital platforms.



Some wise advice for the crisis

Coping with Coronavirus: How to stay calm and protect your mental health. A psychological toolkit by Dr Brendan Kelly (Merrion Press, eBook €0.99; audio book in preparation)

Dr Kelly, professor of psychiatry at Trinity College, suggested this book to his publisher and within five days he had a text prepared, and a week later they had the eBook edition read to launch, at a remarkably low, almost give-away price.

His admirable aim is to give people under lockdown clear and practical advice on how to stay calm and protect their mental health.

We are all going through this. For the first weeks, coping with the newness of the situation kept us

alert. But as time pass we are all affected by the enclosed conditions, fears rise, irritations erupt and strains and stresses appear.

His aim is to aid us all to cope with these. Most GPs are dealing with those who require testing. That alone is a full time job. Other appointments are hard to get. So his advice, couched in basic terms that will make it available to all, will be of immense value.

"The anxiety associated with the coronavirus crisis is real," he says, "rather than imaginary. The good news is that, just as we are capable of finding sophisticated ways to make ourselves more anxious, we are equally good at finding sophisticated ways to manage our mental health, once we put our minds to it. Anxiety-management techniques help hugely once they are modified to suit the new situation that we face."

Dr Kelly's author royalties will be donated to medical charities assisting with the global response to coronavirus. We should all at this time aim to support the caring communities in our society. **P.C.**



Essential insights of a great apologist

Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis (William Collins, £12.99/€18.19)

J. Anthony Gaughan

This is a famous book of apologetics which is splendid to see back again in the shops. *Mere Christianity* is a collection of three books: *Broadcast Talks* (1942), *Christian Behaviour* (1943) and *Beyond Personality* (1944). These in turn were printed versions of a series of talks on Christian Faith delivered on the BBC in the mid-1940s by C.S. Lewis (1896-1963).

Lewis was a fellow and tutor in English Literature at Oxford University and later a professor at Cambridge University. Best-known for his novels and science fiction, he was one of the most influential apologists for Christianity in his life-time. But these essays and the reflections they contain were the result of a period of all-out war and national solidarity, to which the BBC was giving voice.

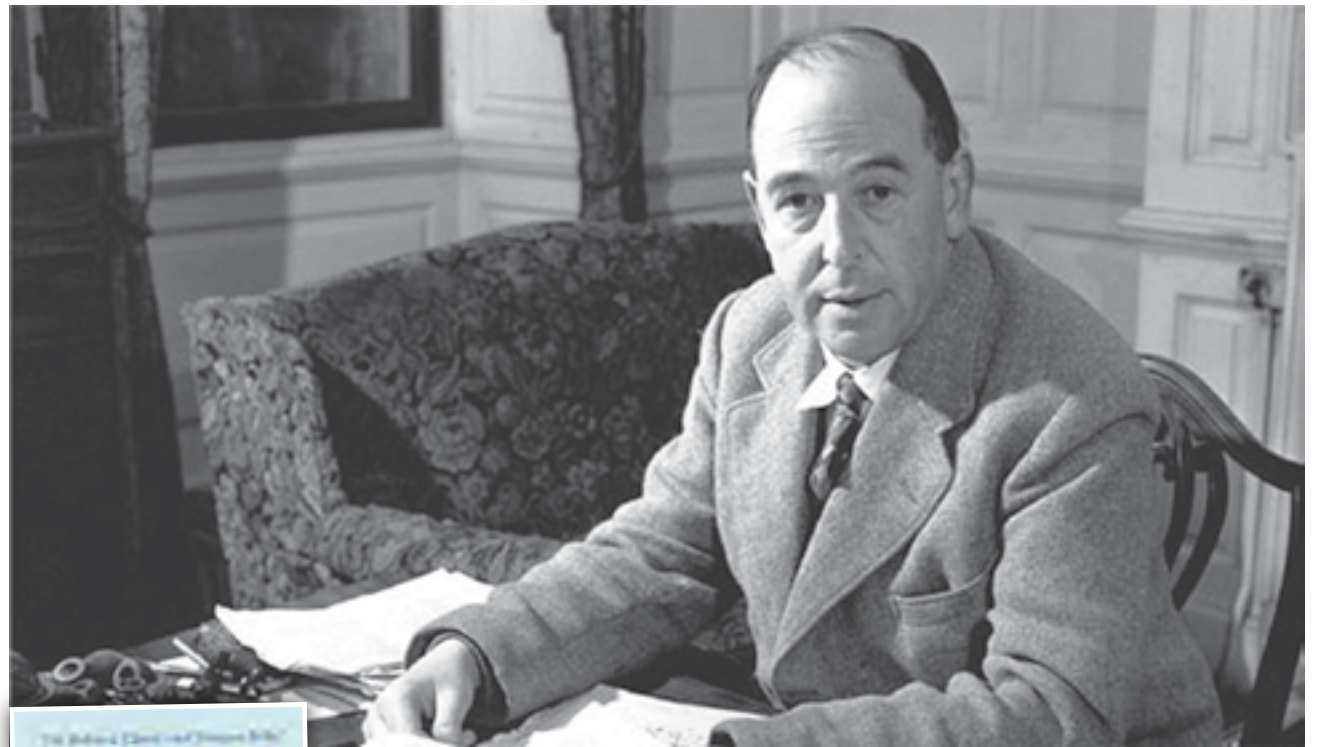
This reissue is well worth reading in our present time of crisis. Though Lewis's name is well known to countless millions for the *Narnia* novels, his writings as an apologist are, I think, now less well known on the same scale to a younger generation of readers.

Carnage

Lewis survived the carnage in the trenches in World War I. In 1940 when the bombing of Britain began, he served as an air-raid warden and gave lectures to the airmen of the Royal Air Force, the heroes of the legendary Battle of Britain.

In his talks on the BBC, his highlighting the decency, fairness and sheer goodness promoted by Christianity reminded the air-men, the servicemen and women at the front, and his fellow-citizens at the home front, of the values they were defending.

Lewis' treatment of Christianity is comprehensive. Beginning with the Christian's clear distinction between right and wrong, good and evil, as based on the dictates of the Natural Law, he discusses the traditional Christian doctrines and moral imperatives. He treats sin and forgiveness in the context of



C.S. Lewis.



the great virtues of faith, hope and charity.

Next he ruminates on the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. All aspects of human behaviour come under his gaze. There are sections on social morality, morality and psychoanalysis, sexual morality and Christian marriage.

"I do not think it my place to take a firm line about pains, dangers and expenses from which I am protected..."

Claiming no greater authority than the experience of a committed layman of the Church of England, Lewis sets out to freshen-up the message of Christianity and he succeeds to a large extent.

He exhibits eminent common-sense in so doing. On birth-control he writes: "I have said nothing about birth-control. I am not a woman nor even a married man, nor am I a priest. I do not think it my place to take a firm line about pains, dangers and expenses from which I am protected; and having no pastoral office which obliges me to do so."

Divorce

On divorce he is pragmatic. While firmly defending the unity and indissolubility of Christian marriage, he writes: "There ought to be two distinct kinds of marriage: one governed by the State with rules enforced on all citizens, the other governed by the

Church with rules enforced by her on her own members'.

The tone of Lewis's treatment of his subject is influenced by his conviction that love, mercy and forgiveness are at the very heart of the Christian message.

"All of us now – worldwide – like the war-weary British in the 1940s are living in a period of foreboding and uncertainty"

But he does remind his listeners and readers that "from those to whom much is given

much is expected". For him 'mere Christianity' is not a philosophy or a theology that may be considered, argued and put away in a book on a shelf. It is a way of life. He stresses that in fact it is a radical way of life.

All of us now – worldwide – like the war-weary British in the 1940s are living in a period of foreboding and uncertainty. Man, the pinnacle of evolution, is on the run before a tiny virus. It is a time for some serious reading and reflection.

What better book is there to read than C.S. Lewis's classic on Christian belief to remind us of the truly important things in life?



C.S. Lewis with his wife, Joy.

Readers should note that *The Irish Catholic* circulates throughout the island of Ireland and the book prices listed are the retail price recommended by the Irish or British publishers, in either euros or sterling, as a general indication of what purchasers may expect to pay.

The importance of Ireland's early saints



Early Irish Saints
by John J. Ó Ríordáin
Columba Books, €12.99

Peter Costello

When people talk in general about the saints of early Christian Ireland, that is those three or four centuries after St Patrick, they often emphasise their travels across Europe, adding in as an extra measure some comments on the relevance of this to the later missionary work of so many Irish priests in different parts of the world.

Undoubtedly such travels are very important for the history of European civilisation, and for the development of the modern world.

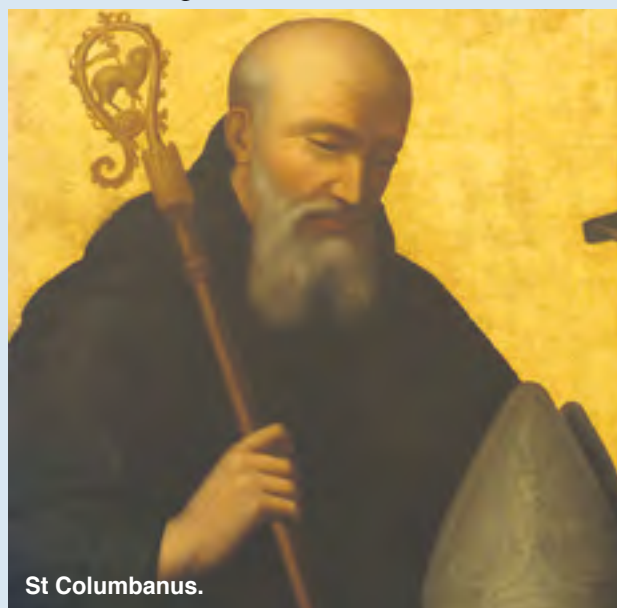
But, in contrast, I have often thought that there was another side to these saints. As well those who suffered the 'white martyrdom of exile', there were those who stayed at home in Ireland.

Local traditions

As often as not it is these saints who are important in local traditions all over the country. We often find ruined churches, small shrines, wells, and modern places of pardon and pilgrimage connected with them. Where indeed would many Irish parishes be if they were not well grounded in the ancient traditions associated with a local founding saint?

I was delighted to find that Fr Ó Ríordáin is of much the same mind in this little book, the reissue of which at such a reasonable price is to warmly welcome.

A Redemptorist priest by calling, John J. Ó Ríordáin is a man deeply engaged with



St Columbanus.

local life and its traditions, as his many other books reveal. His own native place, he says, is "Kiskeam at the eastern edge of Sliabh Luachra on the Cork side of the county bounds with Kerry", and what could be more local than that.

We often forget that our modern parishes are a creation of the Middle Ages. Like our counties, they are a formal structure of rule imposed after the Norman and English came. For the Irish before then there were no parishes, there were only the scattered places connected with the saints.

“These essays will make far more agreeable reading than, say, the more austere treatments by Pádraig Ó Riain and other scholars... we must have both kinds, of course”

Take for instance the lovely cover of this book, which is graced with a very fine reproduction of an engraving of an incident in the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*.

This was a legend widely known all across Europe, a legend that influenced even the thinking of Columbus. But go down to Kerry, where the saint was born at Annagh near Tralee, or out to Ballydavid Head, where it slopes down to the sea from Mount Brandon, and one realises in full the close association of saint and

place, despite those travels.

(Whoever wrote the tale of his voyages, if not the saint himself, was familiar with Arctic volcanoes and icebergs as well as the lush tropic feel of the southern reaches of Florida.)

St Brendan, so well known and still so much discussed, is one of the fourteen saints he writes about in these essays. He begins with St Patrick, Brigit and Columcille, and concludes with St Columbanus and St Gall. But in between he deals with saints all of whom have close links with individual places, like St Kevin with Glendalough.

His essays are brief epitomes of their lives and their legend. Certainly for an ordinary reader wishing to have some grasp of who these people were and what they achieved, his essays will make far more agreeable reading than, say, the more austere treatments by Pádraig Ó Riain and other scholars.

We must have both kinds, of course; but this little book will open up for many, especially younger readers, a cloudy part of the history of the Church in Ireland.

Here are miracles and wonders certainly, but also courage and learning, piety and charity, all in good measure.

These are the people that literally created out of nothing so many settlements across Ireland that survive to this day that they can rightly be seen as the original nation builders.

The World of Books

By the books editor

More scandal strikes the Museum of the Bible

Back in January, Steve Green, the billionaire founder with his family of the Museum of the Bible in Washington DC, issued a book he had co-authored. It is called *This Beautiful Book* (Zondervan, £18.99), one of a series he is devoting to his main interest in life (outside of his business), the Bible.

"The Bible's collection of history, poetry, genealogy lists, and mystifying prophecies often prove puzzling to readers," he remarks. "And when this text is read in pieces, we're left with only a half-impression of the vibrant mosaic."

His book highlights the thematic threads woven throughout the ancient writings and shows his readers a new way to engage with Scripture as a whole.

He invites his readers to step back from the individual stories of the Bible and consider the Bible as a whole.

He claims that the insights were gained from first-hand experiences in leading and developing the first world-class Bible museum.

How embarrassing, then, that the Museum of the Bible has been hit by another criminal scandal. Last year the board revealed that some of the items that the museum had bought had in fact been inappropriately removed and sold from the collection of *Oxyrhynchus papyri* discovered back in the 1890s in Oxford (see *The Irish Catholic*, November 7, 2019).

The new scandal involves the much more famous 'Dead Sea Scrolls'. This has become a vague term to refer to items not from the site at Qumran or the caves nearby, but merely picked up in the district.

Mere fragments

Unlike the original Dead Sea Scrolls these are mere fragments, with no provenance at all; they were useless for scientific research in any case. Sixteen were bought – all are fakes.

And not good fakes either, an analytic science lab engaged to review them has now found. The forger used a scholarly edition of the Bible from the 1930s – on one fragment copying as part of the fake inscription was an 'a' which indicated a footnote in the printed text!

Why were these faults not noted at the time? Steve Green, it seems, like many evangelicals, distrusts academics and

scientists, seeing them as "adversarial"; that is to say, they don't always agree with his firm held ideas.

In his book, Steven Green says that we know the Bible can be accurate about history because in the days of the patriarchs people live so long. Methuselah lived for 960 years (Genesis 5:27). And his memory alone would have supported an exact knowledge of the 1656 years since Adam. This notion leaves one a little stunned, but then the book is not aimed at carping literary critics.

On the value of his own book, Steven Green concludes: "A truly captivating experience, this book will instil in you a deep appreciation for Scripture and its profound connection to your own life story."

“Whatever Steve Green's book is, it is no substitute for the Bible as a whole, it is not even a sort of Reader's Digest book version”

And all of this in a mere 224 pages, from Genesis to the Apocalypse. My copy of the Douay version of the Bible takes some 1631 pages.

What is provided by the enthusiastic Steve Green is not any kind of version of the Bible, but an essay in evangelical enthusiasm that skates over all difficulties with untroubled faith in human judgement.

He recalls that he went to see the musical *Les Misérables*. He found it very confusing. To get a better idea of it he went home to watch the film version. Then he saw it as a story. It never struck him he should turn to the 1,900-odd pages in French that it took Victor Hugo to tell his tale.

Steve Green wanted to grasp Hugo's plot, or what he calls "the story". But it is not the mere story, but how it is told that makes a book. It is the manner of telling that is essential, whether for Agatha Christie or the authors of Genesis.

So whatever Steve Green's book is, it is no substitute for the Bible as a whole, it is not even a sort of *Reader's Digest* book version. To read the Bible you have to read the Bible book by book, all 73 of them, if need be.

I imagine, though, that the Bible Steve Green uses every day as a good evangelical, has only 66. But that is another story.



Steve Green speaking at the Museum of the Bible.

Leisure time

Please pray for the beatification of

Little Nellie of Holy God

"May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls proposing Nellie as their model"

— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

Crossword Junior

Gordius 326



ACROSS

- 1 'King Arthur and the Knights of the _____' (5,5)
5 Bold (7)
6 You may transport goods in this vehicle (3)
8 Make a speech, have a conversation (4)
9 City where the 2012 Olympics were held (6)
12 The opposite of 'no' (3)
14 Green part of a plant (4)
16 The main city in a country (7)
17 If you brought someone breakfast in bed, you might carry it on this (4)
18 The pie was tasty, and it was in lovely, flaky _____ (6)

DOWN

- 1 The sound a mobile phone makes when a call is coming in (4,4)
2 Regularly, most of the time (7)
3 You find them at the bottom of adding sums that have been done (6)
4 Was alive, dwelt (5)
7 Lady who is a member of a religious order (3)
10 You use them when sewing and darning (7)
11 A high-up member of the army (7)
13 Containing nothing (5)
15 Halt (4)
16 Automobile (3)

SOLUTIONS, MARCH 26

GORDIUS No. 448

Across – 1 Tailor-made 6 Skin 10 Booth 11 Celebrant
12 Ocarina 15 Idaho 17 Visa 18 Troy 19 Threw 21 Granite
23 Assay 24 Clad 25 Mute swan 26 Ibsen 28 Ragtime
33 Snowstorm 34 Endow 35 Yale 36 Heptathlon

Down – 1 Toby 2 Iron Cross 3 Other 4 Macon 5 Dill 7 Koala
8 Nationwide 9 Obviate 13 Igor Stravinsky 14 Avenger 20 Role model 21 Gymnast 22 Tang 27 Stool 29 Admit 30 Theft 31 Bole

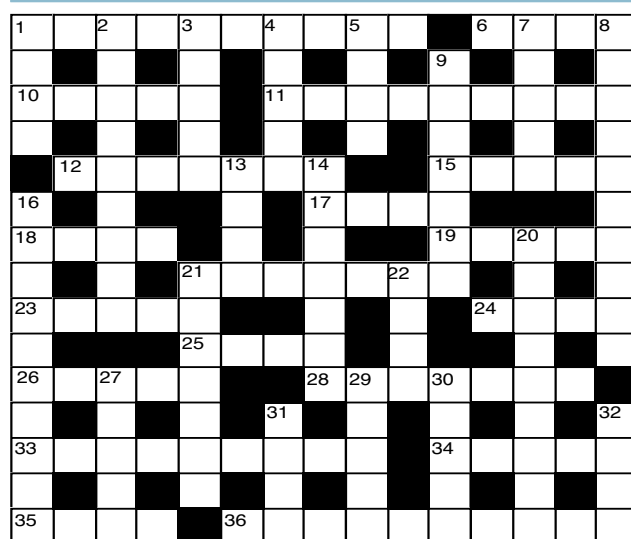
CHILDREN'S No. 325

Across – 1 Cat food 4 Cub 7 Icicle 8 Hare 9 Book 11 Duck
13 Record 15 – Atom 16 Later 18 Less 20 Shy 21 Ski 22 Sang
23 Leash

Down – 1 Climb 2 Tailor 3 Overcoat 5 Break 6 Cheddar
10 Kells 12 Clothes 14 Atlas 17 Evil 19 Sun

Crossword

Gordius 449



ACROSS

- 1 The script can hide dramatic work (10)
6 Some holy Islamic ascetics initially formed this sect (4)
10 Moved little by little; moved sideways (5)
11 Have a late morning; then hang on to be ready for an ambush (3,2,4)
12 Tankard (4,3)
15 An examination of one's business records by accountants or tax officers (5)
17 Got the ring; got married; was in debt (4)
18 Part of the axe has always felt tough at first (4)
19 Banish to another country (5)
21 Amaze (7)
23 I leave the loo to make a tenancy ad (2,3)
24 Legionnaire's hat made from a broken pike (4)
25 Surname of Victor, author of 'Notre Dame de Paris' (4)
26 Run away with an eastern gait (5)
28 Historically, communist Leon runs Kentucky (7)
33 After drinks, he (the bachelor) is the making of a city founded by Abraham (9)
34 & 13d Missa identifies a Tridentine sacrifice (5,4)
35 Kiss a fish? How revealing is that! (1-3)
36 Esprit de corps provided

by Rovers Rum or Athletic Armagnac? (4,6)

DOWN

- 1 The great Greek god turns up at a canal town (4)
2 Sorry (9)
3 Duck starters eaten in delightful, elegant restaurants (5)
4 Being upset, Paul swallows one rice dish (5)
5 See 22 down
7 Noticed the sound of a herd being stampeded (5)
8 Is hesitant? Confused? Quite the opposite! (10)
9 Forcefully encroached (7)
13 See 34 across
14 Attempt to score in snooker, but lose it, totally (2,2,3)
16 One who speaks too much can cause many a mad character to use fists! (10)
20 The creakiest sort of denizen of the rink? (3,6)
21 Looks like the unbeliever gets two articles first (7)
22 & 5d One must stay in this lawless district, it seems (2-2,4)
27 Tosca, perhaps (5)
29 The kingdom of the true thousand (5)
30 Lit up, as a bulb may become (5)
31 Bazaar (4)
32 Gee, Mr King Cole is an insect! (4)

Sudoku Corner

326

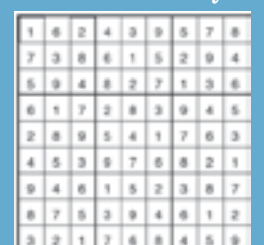
Easy



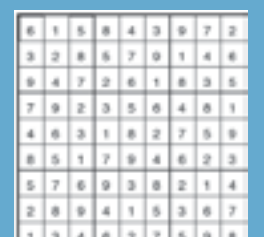
Hard



Last week's Easy 325



Last week's Hard 325



The social value of social media

IT'S ALL VERY ironic, isn't it? For years, right-minded people, I among them, have condemned the way in which social media was taking over our society. And yet here we are, in a virtual lockdown, utterly impotent but for the same social media.

I have been both a denouncer and one deserving of denunciation. I have often advocated screen-free meals, when families sit down together with no screen in sight, not even parents'. I have raised eyes to heaven when a mobile phone rings during Mass (though all the while wondering, "Is it mine?"). And I have prominently displayed a fridge magnet with the folksy message "Put away dat feckin' phone" (a sign invariably pointed to when I am the culprit).

Temptation

Because, yes, I am also a social media fan. My smartphone is rarely off, though I have resisted the temptation of viewing emails on it, for fear it would make me 'never off duty'. And Facebook is in my life for years. I realise it is addictive – that's why I give it up for Lent, only breaking for St Patrick's Day.

However, that was the day on



which my Lenten fast ended in 2020, as Facebook now provides some distraction from the blanket coronavirus (Covid-19) coverage.

Despite parish reservations about social media, we do have three things going for us here in Newcestown & Farnivane. We have a parish text service to which over a quarter of parishioners have signed up. GDPR requirements have taught us that people can only have their numbers added when they request this themselves. This service delivers church and parish news (lately, mainly cancellation of church services) but also news of parish events and of the loss of parishioners to death, and requests for prayers and support.

We have had a parish website for years (www.murraghtemplemartin.com), now mainly a storehouse for parish rotas and for an archive

of the most recent newsletters. This latter has proved very useful lately, as with the churches closed, we have no longer any means of distributing a printed newsletter, however the website archive keeps parishioners in touch.

Those who read the newsletter there are invited to print out two copies (if they have a printer, many people don't) and give at least one to neighbours who may not have internet technology.

The parish Facebook page has really proved its worth since the virus closed our churches and made public Masses impossible.

Every Sunday morning now, I clear my kitchen table and position my iPad at the top of a small stepladder before streaming the Sunday Mass live, with the help of a Minister of the Word who reads via Facetime from the other side of the parish.

Mass is on the parish Facebook page ('Murragh and Templemartin'); it's at 10.30am every Sunday morning, and posted thereafter – some view it at a time that suits them better.

Feel free to pray the 30-minute Mass with me there. And witness the humbled priest, denouncer of social media no more.

A pandemic prayer

May we who are merely inconvenienced

remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home

remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.

May we who can care for our children when their schools close

remember those who have no options.

May we who are taking precautions to protect ourselves

remember those who are risking themselves to protect and save others.

May we who have to cancel our trips

remember those that have no place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money

remember those who have no

margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home

remember those who have no home.

We ask you, Lord, to bless those we remember in this way

With your unequalled love and protection.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,

Let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbours.

Amen.

– Originally from Fr Larry Tensi (St Columban Parish, Cincinnati) supplemented by an Uibh Laoire parishioner in Inchigeela, Co. Cork.



Please give Lenten alms for poor children

Countless missionaries throughout the world ask The Little Way Association for help to feed, clothe and house deprived children. They tell us of orphaned children left alone with no one to love or care for them, and of street children, totally abandoned, hungry and homeless, experiencing much anguish and hardship during their most tender years. Many of these children's future depends upon whether a missionary can find sufficient funds to care for them.

Shocking as the facts of child poverty are, things would be even worse were it not for the generosity of people like yourself.

Could you save the life of one child by giving alms this Lent? Simple measures such as providing a proper diet could avoid many tragic deaths.

Your Lenten gift will be gratefully received and sent WITHOUT DEDUCTION to the missions, to enable a missionary priest or sister to carry the love, care and compassion of Christ to a deprived, abandoned or orphaned child.

EVERY EURO YOU SEND WILL BE VERY GRATEFULLY RECEIVED AND FORWARDED WITHOUT DEDUCTION.



In 1893, St Therese of Lisieux wrote to her sister Celine:

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

The three pillars of Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

The Catechism says: **"Giving alms to the poor is a witness to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God."**

In Lent, we can serve Christ and help the destitute with our almsgiving.

The Little Way Association uses the world's network of missionaries to help those in the direst need. Priests, Sisters and Brothers work in some of the world's poorest areas and in political trouble-spots. Our policy is never to deduct anything from donations earmarked for the relief of poverty or for missionary work.

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