

The Irish Catholic

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Joy as Irish return to Mass

Michael Kelly

Priests and parishioners across Ireland have expressed joy at being able to return to Mass after more than 100 days without the sacraments. Many parishes opened early on Monday to welcome back congregations, and other churches will do so this week and next.

Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy said: "It's a time to return with gratitude in our hearts for the gift that churches, sacraments and our local communities are for us.

"I am really grateful for all that has gone on in parishes over the past weeks getting ready," he said.

"It is good news that we can resume public celebrations in our churches. Our first reaction to this positive development is one of delight. It is wonderful that we can be back in our churches celebrating the sacraments with one another," Bishop Leahy said.

Speaking in Armagh, Archbishop Eamon Martin said: "It is such a joy to gather physically for Mass".

Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin described the re-opening as a "great moment in Church life".

In Derry, Bishop Donal McKeown welcomed the returning pointing out that "The opening of our church buildings is about letting people in – so that God's grace can pour out again over our hurting community and over those who thirst to hear the prophetic voice that speaks of God's audacious dream for us".

Bishop of Clogher Larry Duffy said that "the past few months have been very challenging and stressful for us all.

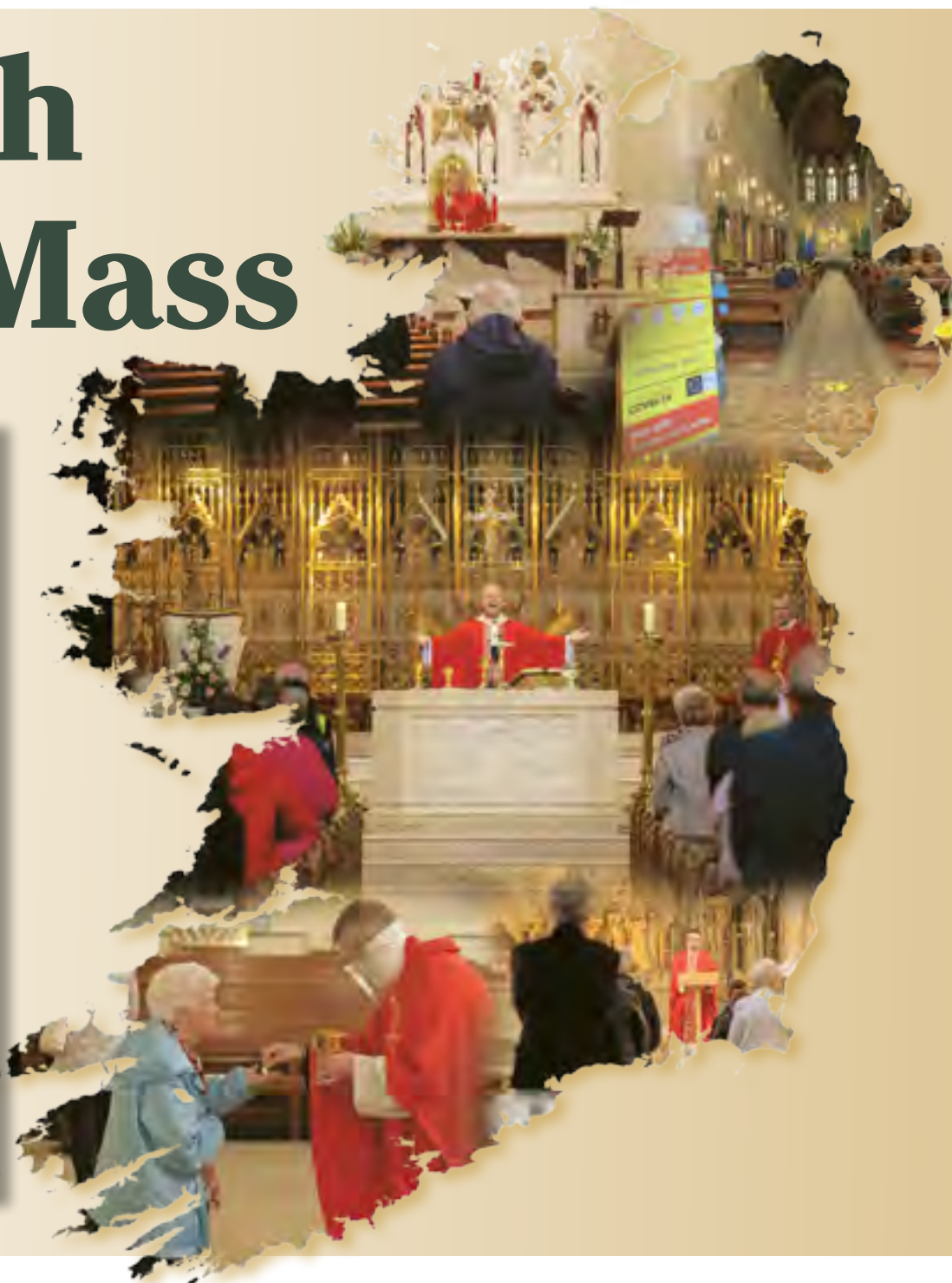
"As priests we were ordained to celebrate the Sacraments with and for the People of God. These last few months have forced us to celebrate in empty churches, and many of our priests were also cocooning and unable to celebrate publicly.

"These months have been difficult for the faithful who have had to endure lockdown and lack of access to the sacraments," he said.

In Kildare and Leighlin, Bishop Denis Nulty said: "This is a day deeply longed for by priests and people.

"Thank you to the super teams in every parish that have prepared so well for this day," he said.

See pages 8-13



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Managing Editor: Michael Kelly, editor@irishcatholic.ie
Northern Correspondent: Martin O'Brien, martin@irishcatholic.ie
Multimedia Journalists: Chai Brady, chai@irishcatholic.ie
Aron Hegarty, aron@irishcatholic.ie
Newsroom: news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026
Books Editor: Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie
Advertising: advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874094
Accounts: accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874020
Magnificat: magnificat@irishcatholic.ie
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As we return to Mass, we need to reflect on the Church that is to come

After 107 days, I was overwhelmed to be able to attend Mass on Monday [pictured]. The joy was palpable after the long Lent and Eucharistic famine we have been living. Coronavirus is still very much with us, and we must continue to approach the Celebration of the Eucharist with caution. I'm also conscious of the Catholics who still feel too vulnerable to return to the public celebration of the sacraments, but Monday, June 29 was a day of great joy in parishes all across the country (see Pages 8–13).

Lockdown has caused us to reflect deeply on our model of the Church. It has also shone a light on some of the systemic weaknesses in the Church in Ireland both theological and practical.

Online

For example, I have seen many people say that the celebration of Mass online is just as good as being really present. Others have observed that spiritual Communion gives them a real share in the Eucharist. Neither, of course, are true. The very fact of the Mass, obviously, contributes to the sanctification of the whole world – but it is not a private spiritual practice, it is the prayer of the whole Church: the source and summit of the Christian life.

While the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains optional due to the pandemic, the Mass

can never become something that we can take or leave as the mood takes us.

On a practical level (which has real theological consequences) cocooning has given us a glimpse into the not-too-distant future. Five years from now, most of the priests who are cocooning or shielding will have left the stage. Most will be retired and we will have more-and-more priestless parishes. Clergy from other parts of the world are already filling the gaps and ensuring that our parishes continue to have regular Masses.

But, eventually Nigeria, India and Romania will need their own priests. Missionary priests will continue to play their part in the Church in Ireland, but we cannot rely on their generosity as a long-

Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



Mass in St Andrew's Church in Dublin city centre on Monday.

term strategy.

The bishop-elect of Kilmore Fr Martin Hayes is a man who has spent a lot of time and energy reflecting on the Church that is to come (see Page 6).

“It is too soon to say what the long-term effects will be on the Church in Ireland”

This will inevitably and correctly involve co-responsibility between people and priests. In fact, some of the obvious systemic weaknesses that have been exposed by coronavirus are the direct consequence of our failure to understand and implement the call to conversion that is the Second

Vatican Council. By virtue of baptism, laypeople have a responsibility for the Church.

This is not to dismiss priests to being sacramental functionaries, their role in the governance of the Church is vital – but increasingly governance will have to be exercised with laypeople taking more and more responsibility.

The role of Bishop-elect Hayes and other Church leaders is to facilitate courageous conversations about the future.

We are still in the midst of Covid-19, and it is too soon to say what the long-term effects will be on the Church in Ireland.

But what we do know is that we are fast running out of priests. Some have interpreted this as the work of the Holy Spirit. But this strikes me as bad discernment as if God would engineer a situation where many of his people cannot be nourished by the sacraments.

As we prepare for the future, prayer and work for priestly vocations must continue to be central to our thinking – but we must also listen attentively to what God is asking of us in the midst of the vocations crisis and the more common phenomenon of priestless parishes.

Students taking their sporting chance



Students, pictured with teachers Mr Moriarty and Mr Dickson of Christian Brothers Grammar School Omagh, return to school to collect their Sports Studies and Leavers tops during the summer.

Liverpool takes title, but for manager Klopp, Jesus is still top



Staff reporter

The Red Army may have ended a silverware famine by being crowned Premier League champs at the weekend, but Liverpool manager Jürgen Klopp took it all in his stride.

He has revealed that he is devout and the Christian Faith has helped him to deal with both success and failure on and off the pitch.

“Jesus Christ is the most important person in history. For me, this is an easy answer,” he said when asked in an interview with a German magazine.

He went on to explain why he believes in Christ. “This person comes into the world, and has a clear mission, which is not easy to accomplish at all.

“In the end [of his life], he took all the

sins on himself and was nailed on a cross.

“This is why Jesus’ death on the Cross was the greatest act that has ever been achieved, because it changed everything. We don’t have to do it [paying for our sins] and this is a huge comfort,” he added.

Mr Klopp said that his Christian faith gives him a strong sense that everything will work out for the good.

“When I look at me and my life – and I take time for that every day – then I feel I am in sensationally good hands,” he said.

The manager said he wished that more people could discover that God has a plan for their life. “I find it a pity if other people lack this sense of security – although they don’t know it, of course, because otherwise they would probably look for it.”

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Congratulations mixed with criticism as new Government formed – Aontú

Ruadhán Jones

Aontú leader Peadar Tóibín TD offered congratulations to the new Taoiseach and ministers, but criticised generalities and indecision in the Programme for Government (PfG).

Speaking in the Dáil, Mr Tóibín congratulated Taoiseach Micheál Martin on his appointment and said that he and his ministers “have been given offers so much opportunity for you and if used correctly for the country”.



Mr Tóibín [pictured] continued, criticising the Government’s programme for being “oblivious to the economic tidal wave that is currently hitting this country”.

“This State will have a budget deficit of €30 billion this year. That fact has been absent from every speech given in this chamber today.”

Referring back to 1916 and independence, Mr Tóibín said: “If we could remove the largest empire that world has ever seen from most of this country 100 years ago, then, we this generation can build a prosperous, united, fair Ireland based on liberty, equality and fraternity.

“But it’s clear to me this won’t be done by a political class made up of career politics and personal ambition.”

I believe in a ‘merciful God’ says Seán O’Rourke

Ruadhán Jones

Famous Irish presenter Seán O’Rourke said his Faith is important to him and that he believes in the hereafter, including Hell.

Speaking to Ivan Yates, Mr O’Rourke explained that both his parents were “practising Catholics and quite devout”.

O’Rourke went to Mass every weekend during college and still believes Faith is an important part of his life.

“I’m not manic about it,” he said, “but it is important, and I do believe in the hereafter.”

O’Rourke said that he still believes in a connection with those who have passed on: “I would occasionally say to my

More than 7,000 Irish abortions carried out new stats reveal

Ruadhán Jones

A total of 6,666 abortions were carried out in the Republic in 2019, according to figures released by the Department of Health.

Niamh Uí Bhriain of the Life Institute described the figures as “shocking and tragic”.

She told *The Irish Catholic*: “It’s tragic to see this first report, it’s tragic to see that 6,666 babies have lost their lives. Behind each one of these figures lies the story of a real woman and a real baby whose life has been ended”.

A further 375 Irish women travelled to Britain for abortions, bringing the total figure to 7,041.

“It is evident from the report that

98% of abortions were social abortions. That’s heart-breaking because surely we can offer these women a better option?,” she said.

“It is a shame and a stain on Ireland, that we have gone down this road.”

Ms Uí Bhriain criticised the paucity of information in the report, but believes the figures still show the Pro-life movement were telling the truth.

Increase

“We were told in the referendum that we wouldn’t see an increase in the number of Irish women having abortions,” she said, “but that has been shown to be one more lie. We’re seeing here that the number of abortions has doubled and we know from other countries that this will

rise inexorably.”

“I think this will make people realise that Pro-life campaigners were telling the truth.”

Of the 6,666 abortions in Ireland, 6,542 were listed as ‘early pregnancies’, meaning that they were carried out before 12 weeks without restriction.

A further 100 abortions took place due to a ‘condition likely to lead to death of foetus’, while just 21 took place due to a ‘risk of life or health’ to the mother and three due to a ‘risk to life or health in an emergency’.

Abortions took place in all 26 counties in the Republic of Ireland, with Dublin recording the highest figure of 2,493 abortions, according to the woman’s home address.

Writing her way to success



Orlaith from St Mary’s Grammar School in Magherafelt, Co. Derry, was congratulated for her success in the Life Advocate Awards Essay Competition.

Don’t deny disabled people the sacraments, says Vatican

Ruadhán Jones

The Church’s sacraments are a gift and cannot be denied to disabled people, according to new Church guidelines for catechesis.

Irish theologian Liam Waldron, who has long campaigned on this topic, was “delighted” by the announcement.

“I welcome this greatly,” he said. “It has been a long time coming and a lot of us have been working very hard over the years, including people with disabilities themselves.

“It shows that people

with disabilities are not just an afterthought, they’re not just the concern of a particular group. These guidelines show that the people with disabilities are core/central to the life of the Church, they are seen as our brothers and sisters and are heralds of the Gospel.”

Evangelisers

“The Pope and council are showing they are concerned with people with disabilities as evangelisers themselves.”

The guidelines from the Vatican state that “[t]he sacraments are gifts of God

and the liturgy, which even before being understood rationally, ask to be lived: therefore, no one can deny the sacraments to people with disabilities.”

Calling people with disabilities an “opportunity for growth” for the Church, the Vatican said that their presence can help Catholics to “overcome cultural prejudices.”

“People with intellectual disabilities live the relationship with God in the immediacy of their situation and it is necessary and dignified to accompany them in the life of Faith,” they said.

Derry bishop wins award for ‘dedication to peace’

Chai Brady

The bishop of Derry diocese, Donal McKeown, was among more than 30 people recognised in this year’s Lambeth Awards which were announced this week by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The awards acknowledge “outstanding contributions to the Church and wider society”. In total, 32 awards were announced to people from fields including evangelism, the religious life, safeguarding, ecumenism, theology and interfaith relations.

Bishop McKeown, along with the former Col bishop of Derry and Raphoe Ken Good, were each given a Langton Award for Community Service.

Tension

Bishop McKeown’s citation said his award was “for his exceptional and sustained dedication to the cause of peace and social cohesion in an environment of traditional interdenominational tension”.

The awards are usually presented at a ceremony at Lambeth Palace, but this year’s ceremony was cancelled because of Covid-19.

Bishop McKeown said the award would serve as an encouragement to Church and wider civic society.

“It is a privilege to receive this Award along with Bishop Ken,” Bishop McKeown said. “He laboured long and faithfully in this corner of the Lord’s vineyard. Anything I have done in my few years here was built on the foundations that others had laid before my arrival.

“As the disciples on the road to Emmaus discovered, the Truth can be encountered by those who walk together. Ken and I sought to walk together as a symbol of the pilgrim Church, making space for Christ to make our hearts burn within us.

“Community is built by good relationships – and by emphasising our long, shared history rather than our more recent divided past. Along with the other main Churches in the area, we tried to look at the common heritage of St Columba. That enabled us all to look together at some of the recent contentious centenaries so that our young people could face the future with hope rather than fear.”

Shouldn't Marie Stopes fall too?

Back in the 1990s, I seem to remember Irish students marching in favour of abortion rights, and carrying banners with the name and number of a London clinic – that of Marie Stopes International. The Marie Stopes name was being advertised, in effect, as a symbol of a 'feminist' cause of freedom. This, I think, would not be acceptable today, as movements associated with Black Lives Matter are growing aware of the legacy of Marie Stopes – she was a committed racist and a remorseless eugenicist.

Universities are already removing the name of Francis Galton from their buildings and laboratories, and his statues are being removed. Galton, a half-cousin of Charles Darwin, was a brilliant Victorian polymath, and the father of modern statistics. He invented modern methods of measuring everything by stats and percentages. He was also one of the fathers of eugenics – the belief that people of 'superior' breeding should be encouraged to reproduce,



Mary Kenny



A Black Lives Matter protestor makes his point.

while those deemed 'inferior' should be stopped from doing so. His theory applied to both race and class.

Unmentionable
Galton's name is increasingly considered unmentionable. He is, in the parlance of today, being 'cancelled'.

Marie Stopes, the famous pioneer of birth control (1880-1958), was an enthusiastic follower of Galton's theories of eugenics, and they drove her campaigns for the reduction of births among 'lesser

breeds', while encouraging procreation among an elite. She became obsessed with these ideas which went to the nuttiest of extremes. She rejected her own daughter-in-law, Mary, because Mary wore glasses – Stopes considered myopia a sign of being 'dysgenic', or having 'bad genes'. She was horrified at the idea that any descendent of hers might be 'contaminated' by 'a disease of the eyes' such as short-sightedness – a crime against eugenic health.

She approved of Adolf Hitler's policies – especially since the Third Reich embarked on its genocidal policies by the deliberate killing of disabled children – and sent the Fuehrer a collection of her poetry, along with a fan-letter.

“Let the public be exposed to much more information”

Stopes considered Catholics, blacks and Jews, among others, to be 'a curse'. So if the Black Lives Matter movement – who have spray-painted and daubed other scientists who had eugenic leanings – surely Marie Stopes, racist and eugenicist, will be a prime target for eradication?

Personally, I don't agree with the culture of 'cancelling' historical characters and eradicating their identity. Much better to widen the discussion, enhance the knowledge, bring more debate and information into the open.

Sometimes it is appropriate to remove a statue or memorial to a historical character, but it should be done in an orderly way by authorities who have a mandate to do it. So I don't agree with 'cancelling' either Francis Galton or his disciple Marie Stopes.

Instead, let the public be exposed to much more information about their lives and their ideas. Let it be known just what Marie Stopes stood for.

But I wouldn't be surprised if Marie Stopes International thought it wise to change their name, and disassociate from their founder. There'll be no more banners from Irish students supporting Dr Stopes.

My outdoor wish is outfoxed!

There's a beguiling Jewish tradition called Sukkot – on one night during the year, you undertake to sleep in the open air, under the stars. As the nights grow balmier, I am tempted to obtain a tent and sleep one night in the garden just for the experience of it.

'Sukkot' is sometimes called the 'Festival of Shelter', and, I've been told by Jewish friends, the idea is to make participants think about those who have no shelter. But I suppose there is also an element of being close to nature and the rhythm of the earth. I did sleep in the open air when visiting Egypt in 2011, and it certainly was amazing to see the canopy of stars over the desert sky.

I don't mind garden creepy-crawlies, but I am slightly nervous of being joined by an urban fox, who saunters around the locality as if he owns the place...

It's about parents and teachers, not eugenics

Incidentally, apart from being unethical, the eugenic ideas that Galton *et al.* promulgated were not, actually, 'scientific', there are too many variables involved in human inheritance to guarantee any prevailing characteristic.

Even in animal husbandry, breeding is never an exact science: if you could predictably breed a horse to win every race, then there would be no rich bookies!

Thankfully, human beings have a God-given uniqueness which produces endless surprises, not eugenic certainty.

Modest stock
Take the examples of Britain two female Prime Ministers, Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May. Researchers have scoured their family backgrounds to find 'superior' genes to explain their achievement, but have discovered that both came from long lines of modest stock. All four of Mrs May's grandparents were domestic servants.

These female achievers owed nothing to eugenics,



Theresa May. but much to devoted parents, enlightened teachers and, in both cases, a Church background which underlined duty and conscientiousness.

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Future Church 'about increased involvement of lay people' says bishop-elect

Ruadhán Jones

The newly-appointed Bishop of Kilmore has insisted that laypeople must play an increasingly important role in decision-making.

Bishop-elect Martin Hayes said the Church of the future will see more lay involvement and co-responsibility between priests and the laity.

Speaking on his appointment as Bishop of Kilmore, Bishop-elect Hayes said his brief "will be to listen, learn and draw upon my recent experience of pastoral planning".

"I am aware of the time invested in pastoral planning in Kilmore," said Fr Hayes (60), "and the efforts to respond in changing times with a mission that can be effective and relevant."

"My hope and prayer is that we can work together here in Kilmore with the help of the good Lord to nurture the faith and continue to ensure a place of welcome and hospitality for all."

Vision

Fr Hayes hoped the diocese could carry out Pope Francis vision of the Church as 'a field-hospital', especially as we emerge from the impact of the pandemic.

"May we be a refuge of healing and encouragement with space for all who are searching for meaning," said Bishop-elect Hayes.

A number of bishops offered a warm welcome to Bishop-elect Hayes, including Archbishop Eamon Martin.

"I offer my sincere congratulations and prayerful support to Bishop-elect Hayes on what is a joyous day for him, his family, friends and for the



Newly appointed Bishop-elect Martin Hayes at the Mass in St Patrick and St Felim Cathedral, Cavan; below, some of the congregation respecting social distancing.



faithful of the 35 parishes of Kilmore," Archbishop Eamon said.

"Fr Hayes' considerable pastoral experience and inter-

est in youth, vocation, marriage and family issues will be of great benefit not only to his leadership and pastoral care in the Diocese of Kilmore, but



Fr Martin Hayes being congratulated at Mass in St Patrick and St Felim Cathedral where his appointment was announced as the new Bishop of Kilmore and, below, meeting parishioners after the ceremony. Photos: John McElroy



will also bring fresh ideas and insights to our discussions at the bishops' conference."

Bishop-elect Hayes has a great deal of pastoral experi-

ence, being appointed in 2017 to the position of Director of Pastoral Planning & Development in the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly.

He undertook two 'Listening Process' with 46 parishes in 2017/18, as well as taking part in the 'Gathering of Parishes' in 2019.

'Come to me all who labour and I will give you rest'

"I bless you, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, for hiding these things from the learned and clever and revealing them to mere children."

It's easy to return thanks when things are going well and we are aware of God's favours but it takes great Faith to give thanks when matters are not going smoothly.

The context of today's Gospel (Matthew 11:25-30) is the sadness Jesus felt when people who witnessed his healing miracles refused to repent. Yet, at this disappointing moment, Jesus found a reason for giving thanks.

There were other people who took his teaching to heart with

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



childlike trust.

He thanked the Father for these trusting, unsophisticated people.

Come to me

After thanking the Father, Jesus then opened his arms inviting people to come to him. This is surely one of the most comforting passages of the bible. "Come to

me all you who labour and are burdened and I will give you rest." His plan is simple – let us share the burden by shouldering this together.

He takes the example of two farm animals harnessed together to pull a heavy load. In those days the harness, or yoke, was made of wood.

It was very carefully shaped to the measurements of the animals' necks and shoulders.

If the two pulling the load are out of step the yoke cuts into the shoulders. But, pull together in harmony and the burden is light.

"Learn from me," said Jesus.

Come at my pace. I am gentle and humble of heart. Gentleness will not force the pace. Humility will not seek to dominate. Come at my pace. We will share the burden and you will find rest for your soul.

Hand it over

The plan of rehabilitation in the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous might well have been developed from the invitation of Jesus. Step 1 is the acceptance that there is a problem gone out of control. There is a burden which can no longer be shouldered alone.

The problem is then handed over to the higher power: "Come to me. I

am gentle and humble of heart."

The pace set by Jesus is to be gentle and humble of heart. You too will have to be gentle with yourself in dealing with your past. You too will have to be humble and totally honest about yourself. It is the truth that will set you free. You will find peace.

There is no burden that cannot be carried when we combine with Jesus.

"Be still and know that I am God." (Extract from Silvester O'Flynn, *Gospel Reflections and Prayers*, Columba Press.)

Breda O'Brien

The View



The post-pandemic Church can be an enriching place, even at a ‘distance’

This column is being written as we begin to be able to return to worship the Risen Lord as a real and not just a virtual community. What a shame the Government has flip-flopped so often on numbers.

Of course, not everybody will be able to or should return. People with medical conditions which render them particularly vulnerable to the dreaded Covid-19, or their carers, should continue to exercise prudence and caution.

However, the return is being marked by many with a profound *Deo gratias* and a new awareness of how precious the gift of the Eucharist really is, a gift which should never be taken for granted.

It is a moment of opportunity and challenge. Some parishes have developed a stronger sense of community during lockdown. It was exemplified by Fr Dominic Zwierzychowski OMI, a Polish priest serving in Inchicore.

He described how a “huge and very vocal group of community” had grown from online interactions. That is wonderful.

Lockdown

Some priests worried that the lockdown made parishioners more passive, watching ‘Father’ take centre stage. I suspect that many laypeople did not experience live-streamed Masses as focused on ‘Father’, but on the Eucharist.

While deeply appreciative of the ways in which priests and parishes adapted to the online world, it was being fed by the Word and feeling solidarity with others deprived of the Eucharist, which attracted many laypeople.

Much of that new expertise will be invaluable in building community after the return to worship in churches.

Recently, Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities (FADICA) – a US organisation focused on leveraging Catholic



philanthropy – brought out a report on parish vitality. It is called ‘Open Wide the Doors to Christ: A Study of Catholic Social Innovation for Parish Vitality’, by Marti R. Jewell And Mark Mogilka. FADICA studied successful parishes to see what makes them tick. It mentions eight key factors:

- innovation;
- excellent pastors;
- leadership teams;
- an holistic, compelling vision;
- prioritising the Sunday worship experience;
- fostering spiritual growth and maturity;
- living the Faith in service and;
- utilising online communication tools.

For many people, the parish website is the first moment of encounter with a parish. If it is lively and attractive, giving testimony to the many activities going on in the parish, it

can be a valuable tool of evangelisation.

The internet can also provide invaluable opportunities for adult education. People who cannot commit to six Tuesdays in-a-row could commit to clicking on educational material when it suits them. If such offerings are paired with regular, perhaps monthly, real-world interaction, they could really foster community.

“Where would we have been in the pandemic without our immigrant nurses and doctors?”

In some ways, the FADICA report is frustrating, because it offers glimpses rather than a roadmap (a phrase

admittedly over-used during the pandemic) as to how to become a vital parish.

For example, there are lots of tantalising sentences like this: “An example of this is a parish in Silicon Valley whose leaders ‘heard’ deep loneliness in the very young IT population of their town and responded with an outreach by young adults.” My immediate response was, what kind of outreach? How did they get in contact with these deeply lonely IT professionals?

There are other aspects which do not necessarily apply to Ireland, such as the necessity for acknowledging and including Hispanic communities. If, however, you substituted immigrant and asylum-seeking communities, it becomes much more relevant.

Where would we have been in the pandemic without our immigrant nurses and doctors? I always

find it deeply moving when I visit a hospital which still has a chapel, and find healthcare personnel in prayer there. More often than not, the people praying there are either new Irish or immigrants.

Their Faith offers a tremendous witness.

“There are many people who want to be audience members, coming to church for individualistic reasons rather than hoping to be involved”

Welcome and hospitality are words used again and again and, in fact, emerged as the most significant factor for parishes where parishioners feel that there

is vitality. We will need volunteers for the next while to supervise numbers and social distancing. Could that be extended into a ministry where, rather than acting as quasi-bouncers, it is an opportunity to welcome newcomers and incorporate them into the life of the parish?

Of course, there are many people who want to be audience members, coming to church for individualistic reasons rather than hoping to be involved, much less involved in service. However, there are many others longing for a real commitment.

One really positive aspect of the report is the way it respects practices like Eucharistic adoration, which it says many young adults want, but also social justice outreach, which it also says is particularly attractive to young adults. So often we have unnecessary divisions and suspicions between factions in the Church. We need to cop on. The biggest threat is a secularising, homogenising culture, and we all need to support each other in providing a rich, varied and vital alternative to that.

“For many people, the parish website is the first moment of encounter with a parish. If it is lively and attractive, giving testimony to the many activities going on in the parish, it can be a valuable tool of evangelisation”



ANTRIM: Bishop of Down and Connor, Noel Treanor celebrates Mass under strict social distancing in St Peter's Cathedral, west Belfast on Monday. Photo: Kelvin Boyes



CARLOW: Lillian O'Brien, Anne McDarby, Sylwia Rygielska and Philip Lawlor attend the first public Mass since lockdown in Carlow Cathedral.



CAVAN: The Gogarty family attend the first public morning Mass in Kingscourt parish, Cavan on Monday. Photo: Gerard McCormack

There was delight among Christians across the country this week as people went to Mass for the first time in more than three months.

Since lockdown, when many churches closed completely, people have been watching Mass online and there have been major strides in bringing the celebration of Mass into people's home through technology.

No doubt there will be many vulnerable people who decide to stay away a while longer and will continue to avail of online Mass due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Parishes have made gargantuan efforts to adhere to strict rules around gathering for Mass to keep people safe and allow them to feel comfortable once again celebrating the sacrament in person; welcoming the faithful back with open arms.

Joy for Faithful as churches reopen and Sacraments resume



ARMAGH: Socially distancing and sanitising (above and below) was observed by parishioners as Archbishop Eamon Martin celebrated the first public Mass since the Covid-19 lockdown in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh on Monday. Photos: Liam McArdle





Eamon Martin, the Archbishop of Armagh and the Primate of All Ireland, celebrating Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh during the Feast of Ss Peter & Paul as lockdown measures were eased allowing places of worship to reopen on Monday, June 29.



ARMAGH: Archbishop Eamon Martin blessing the congregation in St Patrick's Cathedral. Photo: Liam McBurney



DERRY: Mass in St Eugene's Cathedral in Derry on Monday, June 29. Photo: Stephen Latimer



ANTRIM: Bishop of Down and Connor, Noel Treanor celebrated Mass in St Peter's Cathedral, west Belfast on Monday. Photo: Kelvin Boyes



DERRY: Mass in St Eugene's Cathedral in Derry on Monday, June 29. Photo: Stephen Latimer



CAVAN: Fr Martin Hayes speaks to the congregation as he was appointed as the new Bishop of Kilmore at mass in Cavan Cathedral on Monday morning. See also Page 6. Photo: Lorraine Teevan



DUBLIN: Parishioners in Priorswood parish in Dublin congregate for public Mass on June 29. Photo: Damien Eagers



DUBLIN: Fr Bryan Shortall distributes Communion for the first time in Priorswood parish since lockdown began. Photo: Damien Eagers



ANTRIM: Bishop of Down and Connor, Noel Treanor celebrates Mass under strict social distancing in St Peter's Cathedral, west Belfast on Monday. Photo: Kelvin Boyes/Press Eye



CAVAN: Gabriel and Conor Patterson are among the first people to attend Mass in Kingscourt, Co. Cavan. Photo: Gerard McCormack



CORK: Celebration of 10am Mass in Cobh on Monday, June 29, concelebrated by Fr Aquin Casey and Fr Tom McDermott.



KERRY: [also below] Celebrating the first public Mass at St John's Church, Tralee following the easing of the lockdown. Photo: John Cleary



KERRY: Alannah Blennerhassett and Ciarán Hanlon, both from Tralee, pictured for first Mass at St John's Church, Tralee. Photo: John Cleary





DUBLIN: [also below] Fr Enda Cunningham celebrating Mass in St Andrew's Church, Westland Row, Dublin, on Monday. Photo: Chai Brady



KERRY: Sheila Goulding, church usher, helps as Fr Kieran O'Brien Adm. Killarney parish, celebrates Mass with 40 parishioners at the Church of the Resurrection on Monday. Photo: Valerie O' Sullivan



MAYO: Sacristans Declan Elwood and James O'Brien, Fr Richard Gibbons PP, Rector Knock Shrine, Una Nolan, Director of Music, Nicola Mitchell, Youth Ministry as public Mass was celebrated on Monday. Photos: Sinead Mallee



MAYO: Fr Richard Gibbons PP, Rector Knock Shrine, celebrating Mass.



MAYO: Una Nolan, director of music, at Monday's public Mass at Knock Shrine.



DUBLIN: Veronica Lane receives Communion from Fr Enda Cunningham in St Andrew's Church, Westland Row, Dublin. Photo: Chai Brady



KERRY: Fr Kieran O'Brien Adm. Killarney parish, celebrates Mass with 40 parishioners at the Church of the Resurrection on Monday. Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan



WATERFORD: Bishop Phonsie Cullinan of the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore opens the church doors to parishioners for Mass on Monday.



LAOIS: Parishioners receive Communion at Portlaoise parish for the first time in months.



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



MAYO: Mark, Margie, Tom, Adrian and Billy Phillips from Ballyhaunis after attending the first Mass following re-opening of Knock Parish Church on Monday. Photo: Sinead Mallee



WICKLOW: A socially-distanced congregation gathered for the first public Mass on Monday, June 29 at St Patrick's Church, Wicklow town. When Fr Donal Roche Adm. entered to begin Mass there was a long, spontaneous round of applause for all that the priests of the parish have done to sustain faith online and on radio during the pandemic. Photo: Susanna Braswell



MAYO: Mass in St Brigid's Church, Rosslare. Photo: Fr James Murphy



DERRY: Mass in St Eugene's Cathedral in Derry on Monday, June 29. Photo: Stephen Latimer



MAYO: The Jackson family from Lackagh, Co. Galway with JK Loughlin from Claregalway visiting Knock on Monday. Photo: Sinead Mallee



LAOIS: A parishioner prays during Mass in Portlaoise on Monday. Photo: Agnes Sasiada



WATERFORD: Bishop Phonsie Cullinan celebrates Mass for the first time since lockdown.



MAYO: Fr Richard Gibbons celebrating Mass at Knock Shrine on Monday.



DUBLIN: Fr Kieran McDermott prepares to greet parishioners for public Mass at Dublin's Pro Cathedral on the morning of June 29.



Out&About

Corpus Christi in Tralee



KERRY: The Faithful take part in the Corpus Christi procession in Tralee.



KERRY: Priests and laity take part in the Corpus Christi celebrations in Tralee.



LAOIS: Fr Tommy O'Shea, with spade in hand, marks his Diamond Jubilee in Ballylinan.

IN SHORT

Mary's Meals releases new film *Love Reaches Everywhere*

Mary's Meals, the charity that delivers food through schools, has teamed up with Hollywood star Gerard Butler to release the new film *Love Reaches Everywhere*, which follows the actor and producer as he travels to Liberia and Haiti with the charity's founder, Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, to see the charity's work.

Filmed before the Covid-19 crisis, *Love Reaches Everywhere* shows the desperate need for food in school for some of the most vulnerable children in the world. These

children continue to need support even though Covid-19 has closed many of their traditional places of education, according to Mr MacFarlane-Barrow, who said: "We are in a time of unprecedented global crisis that is impacting the way people around the world are living, working and being educated. Children are especially vulnerable and at risk in this situation and there is a significant danger that they are forgotten amid the fear and confusion of this new world."

"As a charity that is committed to feeding children in some of the world's poorest communities, it is more important than ever for Mary's Meals to keep its promise and support those children by delivering food to them in their communities and homes,

which are their new places of education.

"By sharing his experiences with Mary's Meals through this film, Gerry is helping us to shine a spotlight on the children we feed and ensure their voices aren't lost."

Gerard, who has starred in films such as *300*, *Angel Has Fallen* and *P.S. I Love You* was able to meet some of the staff of Mary's Meals. In the film, Gerard says: "Going on this journey hit me from so many different angles – emotional, spiritual and physical. I make movies about heroes, but often they're in big, over-the-top settings...and then you go to Liberia and Haiti and you see that the teachers in the schools are heroes, and the kids are all heroes that come here on empty stomachs every day to get an education.

"Every meal served by Mary's Meals is a piece of charity and a little piece of love. And that all passes down into the families and communities and gives that sense of hope. It's the difference between a kid saying, 'I want to survive tomorrow' and 'I want to be a doctor'."

The film is available to view for free on www.marysmeals.ie

New canon appointed for Clogher

Bishop Larry Duffy of Clogher has appointed Fr Owen Joe McEneaney PP, Ballybay (Tullycorbet) to be a member of the Diocesan Chapter of Canons.

Edited by Chai Brady
chai@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



ANTRIM: West Belfast pensioner Margaret Mallon (83) logged on for the first session of this year's annual Clonard Novena. Photo: Mal McCann

▶ **ANTRIM:** Parishioners light candles at Clonard Monastery in Belfast during the annual novena, which would normally attract thousands of people to West Belfast to pray but due to the Covid-19 pandemic attendance was limited. Photo: Mal McCann



DUBLIN: Grace Lenny, Juliette Kelleher and Aoife Lynn won top prize in the Intermediate Category of the Student Enterprise Programme National Finals, an initiative of the Local Enterprise Offices. Representing St Loreto College, Stephen's Green they came up with the 'Aim It Board', which is based on a basketball hoop and backboard and helps to teach users about angles, physics and encourages physical activity. Photo: Mark Stedman

A native of Raferagh in Carrickmacross parish, Canon McEaney has been the parish priest of Tullycorbet since October 2017, having previously been Prior of Lough Derg and administrator of Pettigo and, before that, administrator of Monaghan and Rackwallace (cathedral parish).

The Diocesan Chapter is made up of canons who are appointed by the bishop to carry out functions that are entrusted to it by Canon Law or by the bishop.

The 12 members of the Diocesan Chapter also fulfil the role of College of Consultors in the Diocese of Clogher, thereby acting as senior advisers to the

bishop and, in the event of a vacant See, electing a Diocesan Administrator when required to do so.

Pilgrims worldwide answer Knock's call on Corpus Christi

Pilgrims around the world answered Rector of Knock Shrine Fr Richard Gibbons' call to set up a small altar in the doorways of their homes on the feast of Corpus Christi.

Fr Gibbons made the call during virtual Masses on www.knockshrine.ie Knock Shrine received photos from all four corners of the world. The parish

of Knock has just over 900 homes and in a display of unity and community spirit, the streets of the village were lined with altars.

As the annual Corpus Christi procession could not take place, Fr Gibbons blessed the parish from the gates of Knock Shrine following Benediction after the 3pm online Mass on the day.

As the day progressed, it became clear that viewers throughout the country and all over the world had also answered the call and had set up altars in places such as Milwaukee, Philadelphia, New South Wales, Canada and Florida.



ANTRIM: An altar set up in Belfast. Fr Richard Gibbons PP and Rector of Knock Shrine encouraged people who join the shrine for online Masses to set up a small altar at their doorways on the feast of Corpus Christi.



DERRY: Following the encouragement of Fr Richard Gibbons of Knock Shrine an altar is set up in Derry for the feast of Corpus Christi.



WICKLOW: Áine Egan, Dublin Diocesan Pastoral Worker and Carmel O'Neill from Blessington parish gave an Eco Justice talk in the parish via webcam, part of a weekly service for children. 47 families join in from home every week for prayer and talks on various topics and music.

Events

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

The Church and the fight against racism



Protests in Atlanta. Photo: CNS



We cannot expect perfection from all of those who went before us writes David Quinn

You'll have noticed in the last few weeks that statues of certain historical figures are under attack and have even being pulled down because of an association between those figures and racism. The most dramatic example took place in Bristol when the statue of Edward Colston was pulled down by a crowd and thrown into the nearby harbour. Colston, who lived mainly in the 17th Century, had made a fortune from the slave trade.

What sparked this off was the killing of African American, George Floyd by a policeman last month, sparking international outrage and huge street protests and sometimes violence.

Colston certainly deserved to have his statue taken down, but it should have happened after a vote by the town council following a public consultation.

Figures

In any case, Catholic historical figures are also being targeted. For

example, a statue of the Spanish 18th century missionary, recently canonised by Pope Francis, Fr Junipero Serra, was vandalised in San Francisco and one was torn down in Los Angeles.

Fr Serra sought to convert native Americans who were sometimes herded on to mission stations, kept there against their will and at times subjected to beatings. Defenders of Fr Serra say he did a great deal to protect native Americans from Spanish soldiers and colonisers. For native Americans, life was often far more dangerous away from the mission stations than on them.

“The question is, what should the Church do, and how should it approach the issue of race?”

The archbishop of Los Angeles, Archbishop José Gómez, defended St Junipero. He said: “He preached God’s compassion, fought for the dignity of women and the rights of America’s native peoples, and he was probably the first person in the Americas to make a moral case against capital punishment.”

Now we see depictions of Jesus as a white man are under attack. Jesus was, of course, Jewish and Middle Eastern by ethnicity and most likely dark skinned. Is it therefore in some way racist to

depict him as white? This is the question now being asked.

But if you go to other countries, you will see Jesus portrayed as black, or Chinese, or Fijian. This is what the Church calls ‘inculturation’, that is, presenting Jesus, and other Christian figures and symbols in ways that people in other cultures can relate to, so long as those figures and symbols do not lose their true meaning in the process

Skin Colour

The skin colour of Jesus was, of course, irrelevant, and if portraying him in such a way that he can be most related to by the people of a given culture makes it more likely that they will become Christians, there is nothing wrong with that in itself, up to a point.

However, the sudden debate about the skin colour of Jesus or the appropriateness of leaving in place the statues of historical figures – whether saints or otherwise – who are associated with the West’s colonial past, shows how sensitive the issue of race and history has become again.

The question is, what should the Church do, and how should it approach the issue of race? In a way, this is a little easier for Irish people. We were not a colonial power, even if some Irish people did serve in the British colonies and in the Southern parts of the United States during the era of slavery.

But as a nation, we do not carry the same guilt as those Western

countries that did have empires because we were ourselves ruled by a colonial power and never had a chance to colonise anyone. We gain Independence in 1922 precisely because the colonial era was starting to wind down.

Perhaps some might like to attack the vast Irish missionary effort as a form of ‘cultural imperialism’, but on this basis, no-one should ever seek to convert anyone to their beliefs. If you speak to (say) Nigerian Christians living in Ireland, many are very grateful to Irish priests and nuns for introducing them to Christianity and for providing them with an education.

Convert

Today, there is a massive effort to convert the entire planet to the values of Western liberalism and individualism. Is this wrong in itself? No. It depends on how it is carried out.

The Church, as a very old institution, is inextricably caught up in the controversies involving Western civilisation itself. Western civilisation is now presented as a long history of racist bigotry and oppression. Every historical figure is being assessed and precious few will be found who didn’t have racist attitudes of some sort, to a greater or lesser extent. This includes some Church figures.

But it also includes very many figures of the Enlightenment who were decidedly anti-Christian. Racist

attitudes gained huge added impetus with the rise of scientific rationalism and Social Darwinism (‘survival of the fittest’, natural selection etc) in the 19th century and for several decades into the 20th.

Almost all ‘respectable’ people believed in eugenics at one point, namely the belief that ‘good breeding’ would lead to a better, fitter, human race, and that ranked non-whites lower than whites, and among whites, often ranked the Irish low down.

“Western civilisation is now presented as a long history of racist bigotry and oppression”

Today, of course, eugenics is still practiced in that children with genetic and other abnormalities are frequently aborted before they are even born.

The Church has been a consistent opponent of eugenics.

For its part the Church must, of course, do what it can to eradicate racism in all parts of the world where it has influence, including in its own ranks. But it should be careful about adopting a puritanical attitude towards previous eras. Almost no-one from the past passes muster compared with present attitudes. We must realise that as values change, many figures of today won’t pass muster in the future either.

In the final analysis, we have to exercise a little mercy and not demand perfection from all who went before us. Judge not, lest you be judged, should act as something of a guide in this.

“The most dramatic example took place in Bristol when the statue of Edward Colston was pulled down by a crowd and thrown into the nearby harbour”

The Irish Spirit

Month July 2nd, 2020
Issue No. 8

Faith and Coronavirus

An exclusive excerpt from Fr Pat Collins' new
book Holistic Healing.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Mindful Meditations
from Sr Stan

Martina Lehane Sheehan
on forgiveness and strengthening
the sensitive soul

Also, discover places where you told us you find God and more!

Bridges

From the book *Becoming the Presence of God*
by Michael Ford

The city of Bruges near the coast of Belgium is renowned for its striking churches, convents and *Godshuizen*, houses of God hidden away behind walls and grouped around neat courtyard gardens. The 'Venice of the North' is also famed for its meandering canals and pathways over them – which is hardly surprising, for Bruges (or Brugge) means 'bridges'.

One cold January day, I found myself ambling along those winding streets. After legging it around museums and peering in shops laden with bargain carousels, I made a right turn and was soon crossing a large arched bridge and moving into another world of tall bare poplars and white-facaded houses. I had discovered the Beguinage of the Vineyard (Begijnhof Ten Wijngaarde), founded in the thirteenth century during the reign of Margaret of Constantinople.

The Beguines were a movement of lay women contemplatives in northern Europe, whose very presence challenged ecclesiastical and secular forces of medieval society. They aroused suspicion and hatred as well as accusations of heresy because they were deemed to be dangerous free spirits. Some were even burned at the stake, while others took refuge in the cloistered life. But the message of the Beguines was simply to love God, our neighbour and ourselves. They inspire us to have the courage to be ourselves – to share our stories and proclaim the uniqueness of our callings as we follow the way of love.

There was no single style or pattern of Beguine life. In the early days, most of the women were scattered in different parts of a town or city, coming together daily at particular churches or chapels for Mass. In the Low Countries, such as Belgium, Beguines were often granted land on which to build their own communities and were, in a sense, bridges between the lay and religious worlds. They lived peaceful lives and originally earned their living with looms. They did not take vows but followed strict precepts under the direction of a mistress who guarded the independence of the Beguinage. Despite their lack of a common rule or residence, the unregulated nature of the Beguines' life tended not to meet with clerical approbation and, like many pioneering spirits, they suffered a great deal.

Later, a community of Benedictine sisters was established at the Beguinage in Bruges to continue the tradition of contemplative living. There, at the monastery door, we met a sister, who had entered the order when she was twenty-five. 'I am eighty this year and then I can go,' she smiled. A serene and joyful person, she had been educated, I discovered, in



Bruges, Belgium

the same county as me, and had even been to the cathedral where I had been made a deacon. After speaking about the vocation of 'spreading holiness' in the world, which is very much the heart of becoming the divine presence for others, she took us into a private chapel and invited us to pray with her before the Blessed Sacrament: 'This is a place where you can pray. I find it easy here.' She was right. It was a moment out of time. But as we sunk into the silence, the nun's mobile phone started ringing with a cool tune and, much to her amused embarrassment, she had to fish it out from a pocket in her habit to answer the call from a fellow monastic. Spirituality and humanity are never far apart in the contemplative life. Humour bridges them.

I came to realise in Bruges that, if we are to become the presence of God in the world, we have to offer ourselves as bridges. But bridges can be uncomfortable places because people walk over them. They also need forms of support. The secrets of our calling are often much nearer to us than we know.

Months after the visit to Bruges, I was rereading my journals and reminding myself what my spiritual companion, a nun in a religious order, had said to me several years ago about my dual place in Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism: 'Your vocation is both traditions – to be a bridge. When I think of your essence it is free spirit' For over thirty years, I had tried to live out of that vision, galvanised by the vision of Brother Roger, who had discovered his identity as a Christian by

reconciling within himself the faith of his spiritual origins and the mystery of the Catholic faith. He felt that if believers could make the unity of Christ's body their 'passionate concern', many connecting roads would be built.

Cyprian Consiglio, the Camaldolese monk and musician who has united West and East in his spiritual practice, goes further: in his understanding of contemplation as a call to everyone, he speaks of universal wisdom as being the bridge between different religions. 'There is such a sense of relief when people who have left Christianity for another contemplative tradition discover not only that Christianity has its own mystical tradition and its own mystical understanding of the Gospel but also that they can integrate into their Christianity the treasure they have found in the other tradition.' Pointing out that bridges go two ways, he continues: 'They not only can help us understand someone else's tradition in a new light; they may also be able to help those from another tradition understand Christianity in a new light as they find in the Christian tradition resonances of their own spiritual theology.'

“I came to realise in Bruges that, if we are to become the presence of God in the world, we have to offer ourselves as bridges. But bridges can be uncomfortable places because people walk over them. They also need forms of support



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Happiness is having enough



From the book *An Astonishing Secret*
by Daniel O'Leary

More than once the Pope speaks of the central place of 'a contemplative lifestyle' in our 'Christian spirituality'. He sees the practice of contemplation – whether in the mode of still, silent sitting, or in the context of a deeper, more mindful way of acting and contributing – as a non-negotiable basis for acquiring any real wisdom. We must have a contemplative dimension to our lives, a real surrender of our hearts to the peace, power and passion of the Gracious Mystery. It is here, during that meditative way of seeing and being, that the spiritual dimension of our lives is refined and nourished. It blesses us with the 'magnanimity' so beloved of the Pope, 'expanding the horizons of our hearts and minds' in our praying and presence, gracing us with an ability to hold and absorb seeming contradictions, and therefore a step towards transformation. We become more loving. We see things more lovingly. Those around us become more loving.

Richard Rohr keeps pointing out that God is already here, all about us, within us and AS us – the very source, ground and fulfilment of our being. But, subject to the limitations of the human condition, we struggle to believe the truth about ourselves. That is why we meditate – that we might awaken to God's presence within us, within everything. In meditation we open ourselves to the realisation that our very being, and the being of everyone and everything IS the way God lives in our world. God is always loving us into being, holding us in our fragile being by every blessed breath we take, such that our very presence is the manifested presence of God. We meditate that we might awaken to this universal mystery, not just in our stillness, but in every moment of our lives. The Pope knows that this 'graced seeing' changes everything – especially

the way we look at our world, making us realise why we should be trying to save it. 'We are created,' wrote St John Chrysostom, 'to be manifestations of God's beauty'. There is no other way for God to be present, to be known to be loved. Only through Creation. 'If humankind could have known God without the world, God would not have created the world,' said Meister Eckhart in the 13th century.

When we see our planet as beautiful, beloved and broken, when we catch glimpses of our Earth-Mother and Earth-family struggling desperately in their sublime but seriously damaged bodies, a whole new tenderness and compassion fills our hearts, urging us to listen to the Pope and to do what he is begging us to do. And little by little we come to that point of blessedness and freedom and insight in which we can say, along with St Paul, 'For me to live is Christ' (Phil 1:21). That means, for me to live is to experience in the midst of this world, with all its shadows and lights, something of that unity and intimacy with our incarnate God; it means that the world is no longer just a neutral passing place on our trek to heaven, but the very home that is God's home too, constantly needing our cooperation for its recovery to a lasting health and wholeness from its current damaged beauty. 'We settle into the concrete immediacy of our breath and our bodily being. We do not fly off to another realm of being. We enter into the meaning of Incarnation; "the mind of Christ" becomes known to us in the flesh and blood of the earth, and of ourselves.'

The Pope is aware of our 'obsession with consumption'. He outlines some of the practical aspects of ecological conversion, the change in our lifestyle as well-off people. He suggests taking seriously to heart 'the ancient lesson, found in the Bible and in many religious traditions, the conviction

“We must have a contemplative dimension to our lives, a real surrender of our hearts to the peace, power and passion of the Gracious Mystery. It is here”

that "less is more". He pleads with us to discern the excessiveness in our lives today, our congenital drive towards acquiring more, often in a mindless kind of greed. Ronald Rolheiser writes that 'when excess enters, enjoyment departs, as does freedom. Compulsion sets in ... Excess is a substitute for enjoyment.' We grow by subtraction. The Pope offers practical guidelines. What do we buy? How do we vote? Do we burn coal, oil, gas? Are we working to reduce the 'ecological debt', our 'carbon footprint'?

He calls for a return to that simplicity that allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to live

in the Now, to be grateful for the opportunities that life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and 'not to succumb to sadness for what we lack'. He is well aware of the existential power of human greed, of the drive towards a selfish acquisition and accumulation of things, of 'the dynamic of dominion' and control, of the compulsion to pleasure and the good life. He thus provides a spiritual depth and context for the often shallow values we follow. He insists on our recognition, in the prayers we say, of the intimate, beating, incarnate heart of a surrendered God at the core of Creation and of our lives.



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Coronavirus a call to conversion



Exclusive excerpt from *Holistic Healing, A Christian Approach* by Pat Collins

Postmodernism maintains that the human mind cannot know absolute truth, so at best all truth is probable, partial, and provisional. Writing in par. 91 of his encyclical *Faith and Reason*, St John Paul II observed, “the time of certainties is irrevocably past, and the human being must now learn to live in a horizon of total absence of meaning, where everything is provisional and ephemeral. In their destructive critiques of every certitude, several authors have failed to make crucial distinctions and have called into question the certitudes of faith.”

It is not surprising therefore that in our secular society many citizens fail to acknowledge God’s ultimate authority in the realm of morality. In this regard one is reminded of what Judges 21:25 says, “In those days there was no king in Israel [no ultimate authority]. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” Aldous Huxley, acted as spokesman for those who, in our post-truth society, espouse ethical relativism when he wrote in the mid twentieth century, “I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; and consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics. He is also concerned to prove that there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do. For myself, as no doubt for most of my

friends, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom. The supporters of this system claimed that it embodied the meaning - the Christian meaning, they insisted - of the world. There was one admirably simple method of confuting these people and justifying ourselves in our erotic revolt: we would deny that the world had any meaning whatever.” It strikes me that this relativist mentality is implicit in the worldview of those who argue for the legitimacy of such things as sex outside marriage, same sex marriage, abortion, and euthanasia.

In my opinion, we have to understand the tribulations we are currently enduring within this wider moral and religious context. Paradoxically, from a theological point of view, it could be said that current tribulations are at once a painful consequence of modern society’s wilful forgetfulness of God, and a mercy in so far as God allows us to be disciplined by painful events, such as the current pandemic, as a way of calling those who are contrite to repentance. It is as if Jesus is saying to the people of our time, “Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat” (Lk 22:31). The Lord has allowed Satan to do so for a good purpose, by means of the painful health and economic crises we are currently enduring. As Heb 12:11 says,



“Some people will mistakenly interpret the coronavirus as the beginning of the apocalypse, the end times spoken about in scripture. While it is an intimation of the great tribulation, that time has not yet come”

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” It is my guess that the current tribulation will be met by mixed reactions, as was the bubonic plague in the fourteenth century.

Some people will turn away from God in an angry resentful way believing that there is no deity, or that God is heartless and has ignored them in their time of need. As a

result, they may be inclined to eat drink and be merry, believing in a rather despairing way that they are, “without hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12).

Others will be like the Egyptians of old who as Wisdom 17:12-13; 15 tells us were overwhelmed by irrational fears, “Fear is nothing but the failure to use the help that reason gives. When you lack the confidence to rely on reason, you give in to the fears caused by ignorance...as they surrendered themselves to



“In the meantime as long as the current pandemic continues, individuals and groups of believers can pray, not only for the conversion of sinners, but they can also witness to the divine mercy by praying with faith for the healing of people who are afflicted by coronavirus.”

the sudden, unexpected fear that came over them.” No wonder the poet W.H. Auden referred to the contemporary era as “the Age of Anxiety.”

Some people will mistakenly interpret the coronavirus as the beginning of the apocalypse, the end times spoken about in scripture. While it is an intimation of the great tribulation, that time has not yet come.

Others, however, may be like the prodigal son who, humbled by his tribulations, came to his senses and decided to return to his father and his Jewish origins, values and beliefs. Like him, many modern men and women may respond consciously or unconsciously to the words, “Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Is 55:6-7).

I'm sure there will be a minority of believers, who will be so trusting in God, that no matter what happens, they will praise God in an unconditional way as they anticipate the blessings to come. In Hab 3:17-19, there are

verses which express their hope filled attitude, “Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on high places.”

Prayer for Ireland

Lord we thank you for the countless blessings you have poured out on our country in the past. We praise you for the way in which your grace found expression in many generous and loving lives. We are grateful for the prosperity we have enjoyed. However, we regret, that the flame of the Spirit has sometimes been quenched by an idolatrous pursuit of power, pleasure, popularity and possessions. We confess Lord, that many of us have gone astray, and selfishly rewritten the commandments to suit ourselves. We believe that you came to cast fire on the earth and we long for you to renew your wonders in our day as by a new Pentecost. Help us to fan the embers of our smouldering faith into a lively flame, especially by means of regular periods of scripture reading, personal and family prayer, together with acts of self-denial. Mary mother of Jesus, we entrust Ireland to your motherly care. In the past our people remained faithful to your Son in times of persecution. We pray now that we may also remain faithful in times of tribulation. Amen.

Conclusion

If people fail to hear and respond to God's voice in and through current events, I suspect that, even though those trying events will eventually come to an end, they will only be succeeded by even greater tribulations in the future. God will continue to knock on the door of the hearts of those who are no longer mindful of the divine presence or purposes, in the hope that they will finally undergo a change of mind which will lead them to accept that the truth is not a proposition but rather a person the person of Jesus (cf. Jn 14:6) and that we should avoid doing what is evil in God's eyes (cf. Ps 51:4).

The question is, will people have to experience an even more devastating tribulation, before they realise that the current pandemic and its economic aftermath is a dress rehearsal for the advent of the Antichrist and the great tribulation (cf. Rev 7:14) which will precede the second coming of Jesus. If we are anxious about what is happening in the world, at the present time, we should be even more preoccupied by the second coming of Jesus when all the living and the dead will have to stand before the judgement seat of God. Those who are in the state of grace will enter eternal glory and those who are not, will depart to a state of eternal alienation from God, their true selves and from others. That will be the greatest catastrophe of all, one which we all need to guard against.

In the meantime as long as the current pandemic continues, individuals and groups of believers can pray, not only for the conversion of sinners, but they can also witness to the divine mercy by praying with faith for the healing of people who are afflicted by coronavirus.

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Mindfulness for July

From the book *Mindful Meditations for Every Day*
by Sr Stan

Mindful Waiting
When waiting, bring your attention to your breathing.
If you notice any impatience bring your attention back
to your breathing in the present moment.
Feel the contact of your feet in your shoes on the floor.
Feel the rise and fall of your abdomen.

-
- DAY 1.**
Our incomplete nature yearns and springs towards its own perfection and we cannot rest until we find the true source of that perfection.
- DAY 2.**
Deep within each of us there is a fountain of love; the greatest gift we can offer another is to reveal to them that hidden reservoir of love.
- DAY 3.**
The heart stands at the centre of my being, where I am at one with myself, at one with others and at one with the pure spirit of God.
- DAY 4.**
When we open up to people their ability to love, we are doing the work of God; we are freeing people in a way they didn't know.
- DAY 5.**
We have an infinite capacity for love; God's love within us remains undeveloped if we don't use it.
- DAY 6.**
Human love as we know it is a glimpse of the eternal love of God. True love is heartbreaking, breathtaking; it is God's love made visible on earth.
- DAY 7.**
Through love, we can reach and see beyond ourselves, connecting us to the rest of the world and freeing us from ourselves.
- DAY 8.**
Each day I am shaped and reshaped by my reception of the relationships, events and experiences of the day.
- DAY 9.**
Behind my ordinary daily life lies an extraordinary mystery unexplored, extraordinary potential unrealised, extraordinary beauty unknown.
- DAY 10.**
We stand at the edge of our unknown selves. We must stand aside and let the unknown, unloved stranger in us emerge.
-

Intellectual wellbeing

Love Life. A holistic understanding of ageing
By Catherine McCann

There is a need to be more consciously aware of intellectual wellbeing as ageing progresses. A big problem for some people as they age is a narrowing of interest, which can result in one's world becoming very small. This is both unhealthy and sad when, with some foresight, it could have been prevented.

Except in a minority of persons, who are suffering from dementia, the intellect remains intact. Memory may drop somewhat particularly regarding names of people and places. An inability to recall recent events in detail may also be noticed in an older person. However the more important powers of the intellect, such as the ability to make judgements, to be reflective, to have an opinion, to learn new knowledge, to be creative, remain alive. Reaction time may minimally slow down but most people remain alert, especially if that extra moment is allowed for and particularly when taking in new information or trying to work out a problem. Maintaining, and more positively developing, a sense of intellectual alertness can be achieved in many ways and some suggestions are explored here under three headings: stimulating activities, setting goals, enlarging vision.

Stimulating activities

As with our physical self, it is important to 'stretch' our intellect, to include 'mental jerks' in our daily routine. There are endless ways of stimulating mental alertness: reading, study, entertainment, conversation, crosswords, bridge, chess and quiz programmes. In recent years more older people are going to universities. Degree courses of all kinds, some using the facilities of online methods of study, are possibilities open to mature students.

Watching endless TV is undesirable. A survey in England showed that the average number of viewing hours per week for those of 65 was 39 hours. It is unlikely that all this time was stimulating. In fact, too much unselected TV watching can have a deadening effect. Such a practice is a habit that can develop out of boredom and a lack of creativity in developing new interests. Interests that have an intellectual component are particularly helpful for intellectual wellbeing. Having the courage to try out new things is desirable, as well as having the persistence to try again if these fail. It is important not to narrow our interests too much in one area no matter how absorbing that might be. For example, if our sole interest is reading, or watching sporting programmes on TV and eyesight fails, the result can be devastating. The same applies to listening to music, if we become deaf.

A particular sport or craft may become the sole focus in our life, but if mobility is reduced or hand dexterity is diminished so as to interfere with such activities, we can become very despondent without alternative interests. Keeping in touch with key world affairs can have a broadening effect and can be an antidote to our personal inner world becoming small or impoverished.

Being creative, possibly unleashing this side of ourselves for the first time, can be a great source of enrichment and joy. Doing things for others is an excellent form of stimulation.

Setting Goals

Passivity is one of the enemies of intellectual wellbeing. Keeping our power of choice, ability to make decisions, holding with



confidence our opinions, as well as taking control of our life are all abilities to be held onto as we age. Intellectual energy, which includes thought-out strategies for ourselves, averts the likelihood of moving into a drifting-along type of existence. Effort is required to set goals for the future, be it for the day, the week, the month or even years ahead. Some people find this comes naturally; others may have to work more consciously at it. In summary, having a sense of purpose in life is crucial and contributes directly to the level of wellbeing we experience.

Enlarging vision

One of the gifts of the older years is having the time to realise, maybe only partially, some of the dreams of earlier years. We can also indulge the opportunity to dream afresh or rediscover dreams that have laid dormant deep within ourselves. Letting ourselves dream then gradually giving meaning to that dream by grounding some aspect of it into reality can be personally enriching. It can also surprise us. Important aspects of ourselves lie in our deepest desires, and unearthing this part of us can be liberating.

Keeping in touch with new thinking is helped by keeping in tune with current affairs. Contact with children and youth can also be enlivening and keep us open to the 'new'. A closed mentality limits intellectual wellbeing and can often result in discontent and unhappiness. Constantly trying to enlarge vision allows for a broadening of our thinking and this in turn inevitably becomes a 'freeing' experience. The pathway that brings us closer to the truth, which is intellectual fulfilment, comes through a combination of stimulation, dreaming and reflection. This journey or process is endless since there is always more to discover.



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Gifts in Unexpected Places

Breakthroughs from Breakdowns

From *Surprised by Fire* by Martina Lehané Sheehan

I really don't know how to define forgiveness, because just when we think we have forgiven, our hearts can freeze over again. However, when we hold the painful story in compassion, something softens and we let go a little; we even sometimes manage to see the other through the eyes of compassion. In contrast, when we choose not to forgive, we remain attached to our identity as 'the one who has been wronged'; we identify with being hurt to such a degree that we victimise ourselves. We become wounded over and over again as we replay the hurts in our mind. We may vacillate between blaming the other, or blaming ourselves, none of which brings freedom. Instead of engaging in mind games where we try to bolster ourselves, or endlessly try to justify our actions to ourselves, we can acknowledge the pain and begin to let go of the denial employed by our minds. Letting go is not a defeat, neither is it a condoning – rather it is dropping the fist, giving up the insistence that there must be a payback or a day of reckoning. This does not mean we are then freed from experiencing the pain or other residual feelings. Nevertheless, forgiveness may be the single greatest gift we can give ourselves; it is the decision to stop pouring toxic fuel into the engine of that which automates our lives.

Retribution or reconciliation

We often think that the hurt in our hearts can be resolved only by facing and having it out with the person who has hurt us, but this is not always possible, or even wise. Sometimes we will create further hurt for ourselves if the other person is not willing really to listen. It is especially difficult to forgive when the other person has closed any door to dialogue. In such a situation, you may have to release the relationship rather than try to restore it. You may have to accept that the other may continue to be in discord with you, and you may not be able to change that. Letting go of expectations for reconciliation is not easy, but is preferable to using up energy in continually planning and rehearsing all the things you might 'one day' say to someone. Eventually, you have to acknowledge that it is in fact your own life that is on hold for as long as you stay stuck at the scene of the crime. We might argue about why the other person 'deserves' our forgiveness

“We often think that the hurt in our hearts can be resolved only by facing and having it out with the person who has hurt us, but this is not always possible, or even wise”

when it is they who have done the hurting. We often think that by withholding our forgiveness we are somehow 'winning'. However, the act of forgiving is a gift to ourselves; it is a releasing of ourselves from unhealthy baggage.

Releasing yourself – the sensitive soul

Are you one of us? We are the ones who can feel tired from just breathing. We could say it was because we are so busy, so indispensable, but the truth is, it is because we are so sensitive. If you are one of us, you will identify with some of the following. Our psyches are like rabbits, always on the alert, always 'full on', able to pick up all sorts of atmospheric vibes and passing vibrations. We easily, and frequently, skirt the edges of adrenalin burnout, and we soak up whatever 'lands' on us on any given day. Our minds are always playing chess games; negotiating the next move to stay ahead of the pain. We are all used up at the end of the day, yet we continue to 'work' through the night, mentally processing those residual energies left over from the day. However, before you get out the violins and lament for us, we do have some good stuff. For example, we are very empathetic and can appreciate nuances that are often lost on the more hardy folk. We can astutely reveal you to yourself. If you are sensitive, you probably tend to over-absorb the pain of others, which can make it difficult for you to flourish in your own life. People may be drawn to you for your perception and giftedness, but may unknowingly hang their baggage on the invisible 'hook' that your empathy offers. The sensitive person, therefore, will have to learn to hand back (with love – always with love) whatever does not belong to them.


Who is doing what to whom?

If you are the sensitive type, you will internalise other people's transference to the degree that you can end up feeling as if there is something wrong with you. Let's say there is somebody

who is envious of you: if you are sensitive, you will pick it up atmospherically and then feel bad that you are making them feel bad! Phew! The result of this may be that you downplay yourself in an attempt to make them feel less envious. Now you are both entangled! Other people's thoughts and judgments can stick like Velcro. For example, when someone else is in bad mood, you might assume it has something to do with you; you feel you have done something wrong – again! Is it any wonder that you can feel like the world is just asking too much of you? Yes, it is – because you are allowing it. Ouch!

Do you find that when you declutter your house, you often find things belonging to others, things that need to be given back to their rightful owners? Well, likewise, with your psyche, you may discover that you are cluttered with dramas that, putting it bluntly, are none of your business! You might discover there are quite a few uninvited lodgers sitting in your solar plexus.

Perhaps we all need to do a bit of detoxing and a bit of housekeeping every now and then! Through the process of letting go, forgiving and handing back what does not belong, we honour the glorious temple of our being.




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Persistence

From the book *Beautiful Thoughts for Beautiful Minds*
by John Scally

It is said that courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgement that something else is more important than fear. If we turn away from a challenge once, it is so much easier to do the same again the next time, and the next. Showing some courage in less serious difficulties is often the best training for the major crises. Courage is like a muscle. It is strengthened with use.



Once upon a time there was a young prince who was meandering around distant lands looking for adventure. He came to a town which was near a pass into a fertile valley. The prince was taken aback by the poverty in the town and inquired why the people did not move into the valley. The locals told him that they couldn't because a dragon was guarding the pass and that they were all afraid of him. As princes so often do in stories like this, the prince decided that he was going to solve the problem irrespective of his own personal safety.

The next day was cold, wet and windy. He woke long before dawn, dragged from sleep by rain pounding on the roof. The atmosphere outside was menacing, and a steadily strengthening wind did nothing to help. It made the trees roar, and it whistled through the gravestones, an agitated, unsettling sound that made the robin on his windowsill more jittery.

With a brave smile but with a knot in his stomach, the prince made his way to the pass. With his sword waving he reached his destination. To his great surprise all he could see was a tiny little dragon, who was only the size of his boot.

"Where's your father?" asked the prince. The dragon said, "I live here on my own."

"But how can a tiny little beast like you so terrify the local people?"

"Because of my name."

"What's your name?"

"What Might Happen?"

From a distance, what might happen is a terrifying prospect but by having the courage to confront the dragons we learn that we may be better able to cope with them than we could ever have imagined.



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Where I find God

A couple of weeks back, we asked you to tell us where you find God in your daily life. Thank you for all of your wonderful submissions. We enjoyed going through them and seeing where inspiration found you. We've included a few of our favourites below.



Joseph Doyle

I find God where He finds me...in listening to and pondering His life-giving Word...in looking up to the skies where He manifests His infinite creativity by day and by night...in the shared experience of life and love with brothers and sisters everywhere and with all created life...in wonderment and thanksgiving for our human and diverse giftedness and for the gift to us of His Divine Son and our Saviour, Jesus Christ, immanent and transcendent, departed yet abiding.. and for the Son's and our Most Holy Mother, peerless and immaculate Queen, co-redemptrix, mediatrix and advocate who wishes also to be the Mother of All, the Lady of All Nations, that she may bestow grace, redemption and peace upon all who ask her and grant true peace to the world.

Kevin McGeeney

Situated in Fuerty, Co. Roscommon, this beautiful marble grotto commemorates the 1954 Marian year. It has been a source of inspiration for me over the last 52 years of my life. As a child I was amazed by it and now as an adult this sacred space offers me a source of inner tranquillity in the midst of the hurried life I lead. It grounds me in peacefulness. The feminine gentleness and strength of Mary gives me wisdom. I find courage to explore the hidden depths of my own spiritual life and be thankful.



Aideen Madden

I find God in the mystery of the sky, the beauty of the sea and the majesty of mountains. I find Him in the great and small silences of life. I find Him in prayer. I find Him in saints' lives. I find Him in the work of inspiring artists and writers. I find Him in His gifts of music and a sense of humour to humanity. I find God in kind people. I see Him in the gentleness of young children. I encounter Him especially in suffering people. I find God in His Great Gift of Himself in the Eucharist.





Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

This week I participated in a panel discussion here in Rome to present a new book by a friend and colleague, Edward Pentin, titled *The Next Pope: The Leading Cardinal Candidates*, to be published by Sophia Press on August 4.

As I said that night, the book reflects a fairly conservative view on the state of the Church. Whatever one makes of that perspective, however, it's well-informed and well-researched, and there's much to learn about the 19 cardinals Mr Pentin presents as *papabili*, meaning possible future Popes.

For now, I'll stay out of the weeds about specific candidates. For the record, I find most of Mr Pentin's selections plausible, a few debatable and a couple just silly, but we can leave that discussion for another day. Here, I want to address three common objections that arise anytime the conversation turns to the next Pope.

I heard them when I published my book *Conclave under St John Paul II* 20 years ago, they're being said today about Mr Pentin's book, and they'll surface again whenever someone else does something similar. To cut to the chase, they're all bunk.

First, it's often objected that to speculate about a future Pope while the current Pope is still alive is disrespectful and disloyal, even tantamount to a political attack on the Pope's leadership. Of course, it could be all of these things, depending on who's doing it and why, but in principle it doesn't have to be any of the above.

If you believe the direction of the Catholic Church matters, no single figure has more impact on setting a direction than the Pope, and therefore the choice of who occupies the office is monumentally important. The last thing you want is for the cardinals who will make that choice – and the lone certainty here is that one day, they will have to make it – to be poorly informed about their alternatives.

Information

I can report that the cardinals I know who've participated in a conclave were hungry for as much information as they could acquire, because they realised this was probably the single most important decision they'd ever make. They took the process seriously, and



Retired Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Pope Francis meets new cardinals at the retired Pope's residence after a consistory at the Vatican. Photo: CNS

Three bogus objections to thinking about the next Pope

they were grateful for reliable background or perspective that could inform their deliberations. That's likely to be all the more true next time, given that so many of today's cardinals don't know one another well.

People often ask: "Yeah, but why now? Why not wait until the papacy is nearing the end?" The answer is, unlike an American presidency, we have no idea when a given papacy may end, and waiting for the *fin du régime* may be too late for the sort of meticulous research and analysis that actually would be helpful.

Second, there's the standard refrain that speculating about the next Pope is futile, since nobody knows what's going to happen. Many cite the old Italian saw, "he who enters a conclave as a Pope exits a cardinal" to accent the unpredictability of the process.

Again, obviously it's true that surprises are always possible. It's worth nothing, however, that of the

last six papal elections, the clear pre-conclave favourite won twice – Paul VI and Benedict XVI – while 'B list' figures, mentioned as more remote possibilities, won another two times – John Paul I and Francis. Only in two cases did real dark horse candidates prevail, with John XXIII and John Paul II.

“The bottom line: in principle, reflection on the choices awaiting cardinals during the next conclave is not only legitimate but essential”

The real point, however, is that if we were to take the possibility of surprise as a reason not to think about the future, there would be no crop forecasts, no economic projections, no models for the progression of a disease – for that matter, there wouldn't even be

weather reports.

Sure, expert predictions can be wildly wrong. But as Dwight Eisenhower famously put it: "In preparing for battle, I've always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable."

The more carefully the Church has thought about a looming crossroads, the better prepared it will be to adapt when the unexpected occurs.

Objection

Finally, there's the pious objection that talking about a conclave in human terms – politics, rival camps, clashing perspectives and priorities, and so on – betrays a deficit of faith, because the Church believes the selection of a Pope occurs under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In truth, it's the failure to factor in those human elements that betokens a lack of faith, or at least understanding of the faith, because we're Catholics, not Docetists.

The Catholic understanding, as famously articulated by St Thomas Aquinas, is *gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit*, meaning "grace does not eliminate nature but perfects it".

In other words, the fact there's a divine element to the life of the Church, including a conclave, doesn't make it any less human, and therefore the normal dynamics of institutional sociology and political science apply here too. To pretend otherwise is a prescription for all sorts of mischief, not just in thinking about papal elections but virtually everything.

The bottom line: in principle, reflection on the choices awaiting cardinals during the next conclave is not only legitimate but essential.

Of course, if a given contribution to that discussion is ill-informed, polemical or sloppy, it can be a distraction, but assuming it's reasonably well-researched and responsible, then it's a vital public service, and the journalists, researchers and other observers who produce such works shouldn't have to face bogus blowback for the mere fact of having done so.

None of this tells you who the next Pope will be. It does, however, at least confirm you're not doing anything wrong by wondering.

John L. Allen is editor of *Crux*. com

“Unlike an American presidency, we have no idea when a given papacy may end, and waiting for the *fin du régime* may be too late for the sort of meticulous research and analysis that actually would be helpful”



World Report

IN BRIEF

Archbishop says truth of saint's ministry is in love of indigenous

● Los Angeles Archbishop Jose Gomez has asked Catholics of the archdiocese to invoke the intercession of St Junipero Serra "for this nation that he helped to found".

"In this hour of trial in our nation, when once again we are confronting America's shameful legacy of racism, I invite you to join me in observing St Junipero's feast day, July 1, as a day of prayer, fasting and charity," Archbishop Gomez said in an open letter to Catholics, in Spanish and English.

He addresses the recent controversies in California surrounding public monuments to St Junipero Serra, "the Apostle of California".

On June 19 a statue of the saint in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park was toppled and desecrated. A Serra statue in the plaza outside Nuestra Senora Reina de los Angeles in downtown Los Angeles also was torn down.

The nation may reach a consensus not to honour historical figures, Archbishop Gomez said, but "elected officials cannot abdicate their responsibilities by turning these decisions over to small groups of protesters, allowing them to vandalise public monuments".

Kenya to demolish Catholic hospital to reclaim forest land

● St Mary's Mission Hospital is one of the structures marked for demolition in a Kenyan government move to repossess illegally acquired Ngong forest land.

Since 2017, the hospital has been run by the Assumption Sisters of Nairobi, who won a six-year legal battle over its control. Before that, it was run by former Maryknoll Fr William Fryda.

"The issue of the hospital having been built on public forest land came up about five years ago, but since the matter was in court, it could not be resolved then. I think the church and the nuns are aware of it," Fr Joachim Omollo Ouko, an Apostle of Jesus priest who is familiar with the facility, told *Catholic News Service*.

On June 26, Keriako Tobiko [pictured], Kenya's secretary for



the environment, said the government would repossess all land held by illegal developers inside the forest where the hospital stands. "Except the areas that were lawfully degasettled, all other parcels of this forest whether people have titles or not, whether they have built structures for business or residential houses, will be reclaimed," said Tobiko.

Pope asks prayers for Syria, Yemen, Ukraine

● With the coronavirus pandemic continuing, Pope Francis has asked people to also remember the ongoing crises in Syria and Yemen, and he offered prayers to the thousands of people in western Ukraine suffering the effects of violent flooding.

After reciting the Angelus prayer on Sunday with visitors in St Peter's Square, the Pope noted that the European Union and the United Nations were to hold their fourth conference on "supporting the future of Syria and the region".

Because of the pandemic, the conference was to be held virtually.

A statement from the EU said that "with the conflict entering its 10th year, the situation in Syria and the region remains highly critical: the dire humanitarian situation, with millions of Syrians internally displaced and having sought refuge in Syria's neighbouring countries, is now being further compounded by the consequences of Covid-19 pandemic".

Pope Francis asked Catholics to "pray for this important meeting, so that it may improve the dramatic situation of the Syrian people and neighbouring peoples, particularly Lebanon, in the context of serious socio-political and economic crises that have been made even more difficult by the pandemic".

Nigeria facing 'calculated' genocide of Christians

The US should appoint a special envoy for Nigeria and the Lake Chad region to "focus like a laser beam" on the attacks by Boko Haram and other Islamic militants, according to one of the main architects of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

Former Congressman Frank Wolf said such a move was necessary to stop a genocide of Christians in the region.

Mr Wolf was speaking to journalists during a press call on the situation in Nigeria sponsored by In Defence of Christians, a Washington DC-based human rights group.

Nigeria has had over 50,000 people killed since 2009 due to the Boko Haram insurgency, which has also displaced over two million people. More recently, the Islamic State in West Africa Province, which broke away from Boko Haram in 2016, has increased activity in the region.

In the country's 'Middle Belt' – where the Muslim



Christians hold signs as they march on the streets of Abuja during prayer and penance for peace and security in Nigeria in Abuja.

North meets the Christian South – Muslim Fulani bands have killed thousands of Christians.

During the call, Anglican Archbishop Benjamin Argak Kwashi of Jos described the attacks on Christians in the country.

"This thing is systematic; it is planned; it is calculated," he said.

The archbishop said Boko Haram has almost succeeded in uprooting the Christian community in northeastern Nigeria, and added it is "very clear that their intention is to Islamize Nigeria."

However, he said the government is ignoring the problem.

"Every time we have raised our voices to say to the gov-

ernments that this is going on, they always produced a political narrative to say that it is farmers' and herders' clashes. That narrative is an evil narrative of cover up because honest people will be sleeping in their homes at night that will be massacred, but it will be said to be a clash. That is far from the truth," Kwashi said. "These killings are specifically in Christian villages."

Destruction

Dr Gregory Stanton, chairman of Genocide Watch, said these attacks meet the definition of genocide: "It is the intentional destruction in whole or in part of a religious group."

"This is not a conflict. These Christian villagers – these farmers – have no conflict with the Fulani. The Fulani now arrive with truckloads of fighters, maybe a hundred of their fighters, and they simply massacre a Christian village. They leave the Muslim village nearby completely alone," Dr Stanton said.

Don't 'blackmail' kids into coming to church, archbishop says

Although he said "I would never go to war" over the proper age to administer the sacrament of Confirmation, Archbishop Rino Fisichella has said too often it seems that the Sacrament is delayed to "blackmail" young people into continuing to come to church.

The archbishop, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelisation, made the comment on June 25 at the Vatican presentation of the updated *Directory for Catechesis*.

In his prepared remarks, he said the directory hoped to promote "a 'pastoral conversion' in order to free catechesis from some chokeholds that prevent its effectiveness".

The first "chokehold," he said, was treating catechesis as if it were a school subject with information a teacher imparts to students according to a fixed

calendar and with a fixed text.

Instead, the directory insists catechesis is the process of leading a person to a personal relationship with Jesus in the Church community and to a life lived visibly with Christian values, particularly through works of mercy and charity.

The second "chokehold," he said, "is the mentality by which catechesis becomes the condition for receiving a particular sacrament of initiation, with a consequent void opening up once initiation has ended".

Exploitation

Related to that, he said, "is the exploitation of a Sacrament in the name of pastoral strategy, so that – for example – the timeframe for Confirmation is dictated by the need not to lose the small

flock of young people remaining in the parish rather than by the significance which the sacrament possesses of itself in the economy of the Christian life".

Asked by a reporter to elaborate, Archbishop Fisichella said setting an age for Confirmation is a decision the Vatican has left up to bishops and, besides, it is a "lost battle" that can never be won.

The archbishop said he was confirmed at the age of seven; early in the morning he received his First Communion and later that morning the bishop came to confirm his class. In addition, he noted, many of the Eastern Catholic churches have preserved the tradition of administering all the Sacraments of Initiation – Baptism, Chrismation (Confirmation) and Eucharist – to infants all at once.

UAE sends aid to Peru as part of Catholic-Muslim cooperation

An ongoing dialogue between Catholic and Muslim educators took a very concrete turn on June 25 when the United Arab Emirates sent a plane carrying 50 tons of humanitarian aid to a Peruvian city overwhelmed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to *Vatican News*, the plane carried masks,

gloves, medical oxygen and food aid that will be distributed by the Apostolic Vicariate of Iquitos in the Peruvian Amazon.

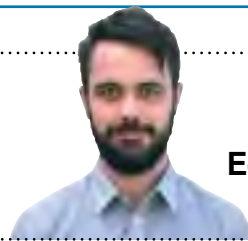
Iquitos, a city of close to half a million people, is the capital of the Loreto region. According to the Peruvian health ministry, as of June 16, the region had 7,781 cases of

Covid-19 and 316 people had died.

Msgr Guy-Real Thivierge, secretary-general of the Pontifical Foundation Gravissimum Educationis, told *Vatican News* that the shipment of aid to Peru is the result of collaboration between the Vatican and the United Arab Emirates follow-

ing Pope Francis' visit to Abu Dhabi in 2019.

The foundation, which promotes education, and its dialogue partners in the UAE were scheduled to hold a seminar in the spring, but the pandemic forced its cancellation. So, Msgr Thivierge said, they designed a joint project instead.



Edited by Chai Brady
chai@irishcatholic.ie

Breath of life



A worker wearing a mask at a Baghdad factory inspects refilled oxygen cylinders before delivering them to area hospitals treating patients infected with the coronavirus. Photo: CNS

Abuse allegations against late bishop found to be 'credible'

The US Diocese of Springfield has released a report submitted by retired Superior Court Judge Peter Velis documenting his investigation into a claim of sexual abuse by the late Bishop Christopher Weldon and his finding the claim "to be unequivocally credible".

The report also covers how the diocese handled this complaint and opportunities for improvement on handling future abuse allegations.

The full report was released on June 24 on the diocesan website, www.diospringfield.org, concurrent with a news briefing presented by Mr Velis and Archbishop Mitchell Rozanski.

Bishop Weldon, a native of the archdiocese of New York, was installed as the fourth bishop of the Springfield Diocese in 1950, and served until his retirement in the autumn of 1977. He died in 1982, aged 76.

Allegations of sexual abuse by Bishop Weldon, dating back to the early 1960s, were first related to diocesan

staff members in 2014, and in July 2019, Mr Velis was appointed by the diocese to explore and investigate these allegations. The decision to engage the services of Mr Velis came after it was determined that Pope Francis' recently promulgated '*motu proprio* *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (You are the Light of the World) on addressing abuse allegations made against bishops would likely not apply to deceased bishops.

Investigation

The appointment of Mr Velis to this investigation also was preceded by disagreements between the alleged victim, diocesan employees and the Diocesan Review Board regarding the complaint and how it was handled. In the executive summary of his report, Mr Velis was critical of the diocese's handling of the complaint against Bishop Weldon.

"It was clear in my examination that the process included an inexplicable modification and manipulation of the

reports received by and acted on by the Diocesan Review Board," he continued. "Additionally, the complaint process was compromised in that mandatory reporters failed in their duties to report the allegations to prosecutorial authorities."

Regarding the conclusions reached through his investigation, Mr Velis wrote: "I conducted an intensive and in-depth investigation. Concomitant with it was a haunting consciousness of Bishop Weldon's inability to refute the complainant's allegations. Consequently, I conducted the process in the light most favourable to him."

Despite what he termed the "unsavoury" nature of the report's subject matter, Mr Velis, who is Greek Orthodox, said: "I came to have the highest respect for the Roman Catholic Church."

Using the "highest standard" of "beyond a reasonable doubt", Mr Velis said, "I stand by the findings as indisputable truth".

Italian financier at heart of Vatican scandal appeals to court

According to a recent report in *Corriere della Sera*, Italy's paper of record, an Italian financier now based in London named Raffele Mincione has filed two civil suits against the Vatican's Secretariat of State before Britain's High Court of Justice, both related to a now-infamous land deal in London's Chelsea neighbourhood he brokered in 2013.

That €200 million deal,

which the Secretariat of State originally financed in part out of proceeds from the annual 'Peter's Pence' collection, was to buy half of a former Harrod's warehouse originally slated for conversion into luxury apartments.

Relationship

Five years later, after the Secretariat of State soured on its relationship with Mr Min-

cione, it brought in another Italian financier named Gianluigi Torzi to help them buy the rest of the property outright, reportedly spending about another €150 million.

Over the last several months, allegations of swindling, corruption and extortion have surrounded the London affair.

To date, at least seven Vatican officials have either

resigned or been dismissed, and at the moment both Mr Mincione and Mr Torzi, along with two former officials of the Secretariat of State, Italian layman Fabrizio Tirabassi and Msgr Alberto Perlasca, are all facing possible criminal charges by a Vatican tribunal.

From the start, Mr Mincione has insisted he did nothing wrong and that the property was a good investment.

Vatican roundup

Pope says world needs fewer complainers

● Some people always will want to destroy unity and stifle prophets, Pope Francis said on the feast of Sts Peter and Paul. And yet, Jesus challenges everyone to be – like Peter – a rock for building a renewed Church and renewed humanity, and – like Paul – a missionary who brings the Gospel to others, he said during a Mass in St Peter's Basilica on Monday.

People also need to complain less and pray more, especially for those who govern, the Pope said.

People must ask themselves whether they "simply talk and do nothing" because God wants people to pray and "be mindful of those who do not think as we do, those who have slammed the door in our face, those whom we find it hard to forgive."

The feast day celebration in St Peter's was markedly different from other years because of ongoing restrictions in place to stem the spread of Covid-19. Normally archbishops appointed over the course of the previous year would have been invited to concelebrate the feast day Mass with the Pope and watch as he blessed their palliums, woolen bands worn around their shoulders.

Instead, a congregation of about 90 people attended the Mass concelebrated by the Pope, nine of the 11 cardinal-bishops resident in Rome and the archpriest of St Peter's Basilica, Cardinal Angelo Comastri.

While the actual imposition of the pallium was to take place in each archbishop's archdiocese, Pope Francis did place a pallium on Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, the new dean of the College of Cardinals.

No true love without the Cross – Francis

● True love is not defined by preserving one's personal interests but by willingness to sacrifice oneself for the good of others, Pope Francis has said.

To follow Christ's call to take up the Cross and follow him, Christians must take the same path he did "without looking for shortcuts", the Pope said on June 28 before praying the Angelus with pilgrims in St Peter's Square.

"There is no true love without the Cross, that is, without a personal price to pay," he said. "And when borne with Jesus, the Cross is not scary because he is always at our side to sup-

port us in the hour of the most difficult trial, to give us strength and courage. Nor is it necessary to get agitated to preserve one's own life through fearful or egotistical behaviour."

In his address, the Pope reflected on the Sunday Gospel reading from St Matthew, in which Jesus tells his disciples that whoever loves father, mother, son or daughter "more than me is not worthy of me."

Whoever "does not take up his Cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it," Jesus said.

Rome diocese to resume pilgrimage schedule, starting with Lourdes

● Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, the papal vicar of Rome who spent 10 days in a hospital with Covid-19, will lead a diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes, France, in August.

The trip – August 24-27 – is scheduled to mark the resumption of diocesan-sponsored pilgrimages, which were halted because of the pandemic and its travel restrictions. With some exceptions and many precautions, travel among European countries resumed on June 15.

Cardinal De Donatis and four of the diocese's five auxiliary bishops will lead the group to the Marian shrine.

An August pilgrimage to Lourdes is a Rome diocesan tradition; the 2020 edition will include, as usual, catechesis, Masses and processions. But it also will include everyone wearing face masks and observing social distancing, *Roma Sette*, the diocesan newspaper, reported on June 26.

Letters

Letter of the week

Thanking clergy for work during lockdown

Dear Editor, As the dioceses and parishes prepare to open up their churches and cathedrals again, albeit in restricted measures, I am sure many would join with me in thanking the many priests, bishops, religious, deacons and faithful who continued to minister to us during the weeks of lockdown.

Through their creative usage of modern technology, we were able to

participate in very wide programmes of support on offer throughout the dioceses – daily Mass, various liturgies, meditative Rosaries, Gospel sharing, 'pilgrimages', 'retreats', all night vigils and much more.

It was striking how the ministers of the liturgies could create an intimacy with their 'virtual' congregations.

May we who have benefited so much through the nourishment that

was streamed to us during these past months of lockdown now offer our support to our parishes and dioceses as they plan to address the challenges that the easing of lockdown will now present.

Yours etc.,

John Colgan,

Newcastle, Co. Down.

'Bowled over' by newspaper

Dear Editor, I never read *The Irish Catholic* before. I was told there was an article on Carlo Acutis so I bought it in Rathgar church this morning.

My God I have been bowled over by it.

There's hours of reading and all my favourites are there, St Therese Padre Pio, etc. and even Pierre Giorgio Frassati.

I am a daily Massgoer in Good Shepherd church, Churchtown. I will definitely buy your paper from now on. So keep up the good work.

Yours etc.,

Anna Lyons,

Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin.



Mater Dei survey proved to be 'very enlightening'

Dear Editor, It was very interesting to read an article in your paper regarding Mater Dei's research into the affect of coronavirus [IC 28/06/2020]. Perhaps the most interesting discovery was that two-thirds of people felt their faith was strengthened during this pandemic. At the same time in times of crisis people who may have been brought up Catholic but are not practicing most certainly

turn to Jesus Christ.

In a country that is becoming more sceptical and even outright hostile to religion it would be interesting to see how many people turned to God for hope. There is not much hope to be found in a world that has become seduced by greed, sex and material possessions, when a crisis of this magnitude strikes who else is there to

turn to when asking for support?

We must remember that only through Christ can we be truly happy and even when terrible things happen, He will never abandon us because there is a greater plan at work for all of our lives.

Yours etc.,

Brendan O'Leary,

Belfast, Co. Antrim.

Praise for Archbishop Diarmuid's reaction to crises

Dear Editor, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin has done sterling work behind the scenes to give Irish Catholics a voice by expressing their needs and wishes to Government.

On your front page [IC 25/06/2020] you revealed important correspondence between the archbishop and Government that

everyone needed to see and I applaud you for that. The archbishop has received – like many of our hierarchy – much criticism, seeing him weigh in like this in a political context shows him in a hugely positive, and impressive, light.

Furthermore, Archbishop Martin's response to the Covid-19 pandemic has been

admirable overall, just like his response to the abuse crisis. He has said on many occasions that he feels it's time for new blood in his position and although I would tend to agree I think the Church will have lost an important figure who has shown his mettle when it comes to crisis management.

He has recently turned

75 and I would hope that whoever is chosen to take over one of the most important, if not the most important, position for the Church in Ireland they will be just as good in trying situations. God bless the archbishop.

Yours etc.,

Jim Carroll,

Newbridge, Co. Kildare.

Government 'totally' out of touch with the Church

Dear Editor, It's sad to think that the Government is so totally out of touch with religion that the hierarchy have to inform them of the very obvious effects the restrictions have on Catholics in our country.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin seemingly had to spell out to Government what effect the lockdown was having on people of faith, reported in your most recent paper [IC 28/06/2020].

Perhaps it's naïve to think that the people elected by the majority Catholic population would be aware of how not being able to go to church for Mass,

Confession, Baptisms, etc, has severely hurt people of Faith throughout this pandemic.

Of course, the restrictions due to Covid-19 have been put in place to save lives and as Christians we believe life is sacred. What does not make sense is the blanket restrictions that have not just affected people of faith but a myriad of businesses and individuals that in retrospect were ill thought out in my opinion. Why only now are facemasks being made mandatory? Why weren't nursing homes made a priority?

There are so many questions that should be asked that are not being

asked by a media that's very cosy with the Government. No, our politicians have not 'played a blinder', we have a huge death rate when considering the size of our population and have the largest percentage of Covid-19 infections among health staff in the world according to the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation.

I hope we can learn from our mistakes and not forget the contribution our clergy have made in this difficult time.

Yours etc.,

Francis Kavanagh,

Templeogue, Co. Dublin.

facebook community

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

50-person limit in churches is 'without logic' says Peadar Tóibín

We have spent the past few weeks planning for two-meter social distancing restrictions in our church now to be told that the goalposts are being changed again. It doesn't seem to follow any logical path. – **Padraig Carbury**

The social distancing overrides the occupancy in many cases. The foolishness of starting the discussion with occupancy created a new wave of confusion. Confined space creates a petri dish of significant size. Most Church communities don't have the liability insurance to cover the cost of the potential infection rates. – **Lugaid Brughá**

The whole approach to this is without logic. This was just a way to stick up two fingers at the Church. – **Adam Conroy**

It should be proportionate with the size of the Church.

– **Ann Kelly**

A form of Christianity that is risk-averse is doomed to fail

Sadly for the most part, he is right. Most bishops, priests and laity don't want to speak the truth because it costs us something...friends, family, business, perhaps jobs, our standing in the community. – **Siobhan Mallen**

Sometimes for the good of all, especially in this era of the coronavirus, decisions have to be made for the good of all!

– **Cynthia Neary**

100% correct David. If the Church diverts from core teaching it is finished. What has sustained it is its adherence to the core principles of Christianity, irrespective of secular culture. – **Mary Duggan Murphy**

Queue for confession 'into the streets'

It was wonderful to be able to go to confession – and to see the queue! (socially distanced). – **Emma O'Broin**

So nice to see. Please God our younger generation will return to our churches again and thank him for everything – **Myra Grennan**

Files reveal archbishop's steady work for return to public Masses

I was surprised that he went against the liberal groupthink media so strongly delighted to hear it. – **Catherine Rose**

It was a pity that he did not lead in a visible way. So many of his flock felt betrayed and let down by him. Even if he had given some powerful online sermons it would have made some difference. But the silence was deafening.

– **Deirdre Nic Eanruig**

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



▲ **KENYA:** Sr Grace Njau, a member of the Missionary Sisters of Precious Blood, is helped with food and hygienic items in a collection for poor and needy families in Nairobi.

◀ **UKRAINE:** Rescuers evacuate a local resident and his dog from a flooded area in Chernivtsi. During his June 28 Angelus at the Vatican, Pope Francis asked people to remember the people in Ukraine suffering the effects of flooding.



INDONESIA: The Faithful celebrate Mass in Banyuwangi during the coronavirus pandemic.



MEXICO: Rubble surrounds a damaged church in the town of San Juan Ozolotepec, two days after an earthquake on June 25. The quake struck as Covid-19 cases are increasing and people are wary of going to the hospital.



VATICAN: Pope Francis holds the Book of the Gospels as he celebrates Mass marking the feast of Ss Peter and Paul in St Peter's Basilica on June 29. Photos: CNS



FRANCE: People wearing protective face masks climb the stairs of the Eiffel Tower in Paris after it reopened on June 25 following the relaxation of restrictions during the pandemic.



Praying when we don't know how

He taught us how to pray while not knowing how to pray – that's a comment sometimes made about Henri Nouwen.

It seems almost contradictory to say that. How can someone teach us to pray when he himself doesn't know how? Well, two complexities conspired together here. Henri Nouwen was a unique mixture of weakness, honesty, complexity and faith. That also describes prayer, this side of eternity. Nouwen simply shared, humbly and honestly, his own struggles with prayer and in seeing his struggles the rest of us learned a lot about how prayer is precisely this strange mixture of weakness, honesty, complexity and faith.

Complex

Prayer, as we know, has classically been defined as 'the lifting of mind and heart to God', and given that our minds and hearts are pathologically complex, so too will be our prayer. It will give voice not just to our faith but also to our doubt. Moreover, in the Epistle to the Romans, St Paul tells us that when we do not know how to pray, God's Spirit, in groans too deep for words, prays through us. I suspect that we don't always recognise all the forms that takes, how God sometimes prays through our groans and our weaknesses.



Fr Rolheiser

The renowned preacher Frederick Buechner, speaks of something he calls "crippled prayers that are hidden inside our minor blasphemes" and are uttered through clenched teeth: "God help us!" "Jesus Christ!" "For God's sake!" These are prayers? Why not? If prayer is lifting mind and heart to God, isn't this what's in our mind and heart at that moment? Isn't there a brutal honesty in this?

Jacques Loew, one of the founders of the Worker-Priest movement in France, shares how, while working in a factory, he would sometimes be working with a group men loading heavy bags onto a truck. Occasionally one of the men would accidentally drop one of the bags which would split open leaving a mess and a

mini-blaspheme would spring forth from the man's lips. Loew, partly seriously and partly in jest, points out that while the man was not exactly saying the Lord's Prayer, he was invoking the name of God in real honesty.

“Prayer is rarely unadulterated altruistic praise issuing forth from a focused attention that's grounded in gratitude”

So, is this in fact a genuine modality of prayer or is this taking the Lord's name in vain? Is this something we should be confessing as a sin rather than claiming as a prayer?

“The commandment to not take the name of God in vain has little to do with those mini-blasphemes that slip out between clenched teeth when we drop a bag of groceries, jam a finger painfully or get caught in a frustrating traffic jam...”

The commandment to not take the name of God in vain has little to do with those mini-blasphemes that slip out between clenched teeth when we drop a bag of groceries, jam a finger painfully or get caught in a frustrating traffic jam. What we utter then may well be aesthetically offensive, in bad taste, and disrespectful enough of others so that some sin lies within it, but that's not taking the name of God in vain.

Indeed, there's nothing false about it at all. In some ways it's the opposite of what the commandment has in mind.

We tend to think of prayer far too piously. It is rarely unadulterated altruistic praise issuing forth from a focused attention that's grounded in gratitude and in an awareness of God. Most of the time our prayer is a very adulterated reality – and all the more honest and powerful because of that.

For instance, one of our great struggles with prayer is that it's not easy to trust that prayer makes a difference. We watch the evening newscasts, see the entrenched polarisation, bitterness, hatred, self-interest, and hardness of heart that are seemingly everywhere, and we lose heart. How do we find the heart to pray in the face of this? What, inside of our prayer, is going to change any of this?

While it is normal to feel this way, we need this important

reminder: prayer is most important and most powerful precisely when we feel it is most hopeless – and we are most helpless.

Why is this true? It's true because it's only when we are finally empty of ourselves, empty of our own plans and our own strength that we're in fact ready to let God's vision and strength flow into the world through us. Prior to feeling this helplessness and hopelessness, we are still identifying God's power too much with the power of health, politics, and economics we see in our world; and are identifying hope with the optimism we feel when the news looks a little better on a given night.

If the news looks good, we have hope; if not, why pray? But we need to pray because we trust in God's strength and promise, not because the newscasts on a given night offer a bit more promise.

Helplessness

The less promise our newscasts offer and the more they make us aware of our personal helplessness, the more urgent and honest is our prayer.

We need to pray precisely because we are helpless and precisely because it does seem hopeless. Inside of that we can pray with honesty, perhaps even through clenched teeth.

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, July 2, 2020

Personal Profile

Music and faith
two poles of life for
Piano Man Tom

Page 34



Lockdown disturbing your sleep?



We've all heard how important good hygiene is to combat the coronavirus. Even before that, no doubt, the practice of washing your hands after going outside and always brushing your teeth would have been ingrained by parents and teachers.

But have you ever considered that you need to look after your sleep hygiene? Or even that such a thing exists! I hadn't until recently, but over the course of the lockdown I've become more aware of just how important it is if you want to sleep well.

Sleep hygiene is, quite simply, a set of habits or practices that can help maximise your sleep.



Weird dreams and disturbed sleep have been frequent complaints during lockdown, so now's the time to consider your sleep hygiene writes Ruadhán Jones

In principle, it really isn't much different from dental hygiene or taking care of your hair; in practice, it can be more complex.

Why sleep hygiene matters

There is a close relationship between our mental health and sleep. Poor sleep can be a symptom of poor mental health,

and some believe it can be the cause as well. When we don't get enough sleep, it can affect our mood and our concentration, causing irritability, tiredness and agitation.

We often don't get as much sleep as we like, and this can be frustrating. However, this is quite normal, and we can quickly revert back to our usual sleep cycle. But if our

sleep is continually disrupted, it may suggest that there is an underlying issue.

Stress and anxiety can both lead to sleeping issues, making it harder for us to relax and clear our minds. Given the nature of our present situation, it's unsurprising that for many of us our sleep has been disturbed. The simple truth is we're in a stressful situation and the less sleep we get the more susceptible we are to stress.

While we can't change the fact of our stressful situation, by looking after our sleep hygiene we can at least give ourselves the best possible chance of responding well to it.

The basics

Most people need between 5-9 hours of sleep a night. The ideal amount is 8, but this varies from person to person. For example, a teenager is going to need more sleep than an adult, so letting them sleep in might not be a bad thing (nudge nudge, wink wink).

In order to get a regular amount of sleep, you need a regular sleep schedule. When we were working or going to school, this was facilitated by our daily routines. We got up and went to bed at roughly the same time each day because work and school started had consistent start times.

» Continued on Page 33

Family News

AND EVENTS

GETTING ACTIVE AT KILRUDDERY ESTATE

Getting the family outside the house to enjoy fun activities outdoors is certainly on many people's minds after weeks of lockdown. It can become very easy to fall into a habit of staying in and cocooning from the world. Alive Outside has just launched Family Fun Activities in Killruddery Estate, Bray, Co. Wicklow for every Saturday and Sunday in July. The 'Family Fun Package' costs €120 for up to 6 people and lasts approximately 3.5 hours. It includes the following three activities: archery, bushcraft/outdoor survival skills, water sports including kayaking, water jump and splashdown slide. It is suitable for ages seven upwards. There is a minimum of four people and a maximum of six. For families of seven or more, they can email info@aliveoutside.ie. Tickets available for time slots from 9.15am-16.45pm. Reservations can be made online to enjoy activities as a family at: <https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/family-fun-activities-tickets-110811187244?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

REGULAR VAPING CAN LEAD TO LUNG INJURY

A US study has found that teens who regularly vape THC were more likely to develop e-cigarette or vaping product use-associated lung injury (EVALI). The findings, published in the Journal of Pediatric Pulmonology, also suggests teens with mental health conditions were at the greatest risk for vaping. Emerging evidence has shown that reusable, pod-based e-cigarettes contain nearly 60% more nicotine than cigarettes, making them more addictive than smoking. These vaping devices, popular among teens, allows users to add flavours or chemicals such as THC – a compound in marijuana – to refillable cartridges. "This is especially concerning because we know that this population is especially susceptible to addiction and substance abuse," said Dr Fariba Rezaee, a co-author on the study and a paediatric pulmonologist at Cleveland Clinic Children's.

CHILDREN FACE INDIRECT THREATS FROM COVID-19

While children and teenagers appear to be less likely to be afflicted with severe Covid-19, new research is warning of a number of indirect consequences the pandemic is having on their physical and mental health. From delays in seeking proper care for illness unrelated to Covid-19 to a heightened risk of family violence, countries' pandemic response measures have taken a substantial toll on the well-being of children around the world. That's according to a new study published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ) on Thursday, by researchers from The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) in Toronto and the University of Exeter in the UK. The authors analysed data from around the world on the pandemic's effect on children's physical, social, and mental health and found indirect consequences that are both immediate and long-term. Dr Peter Gill, one of the study's authors and a clinician-investigator in the Division of Paediatric Medicine at SickKids, said reduced access to healthcare during the pandemic can result in potential adverse effects on children's physical health.

Growing evidence vitamin D defends against Covid-19

The search for therapies for Covid-19 has led scientists to explore an array of drugs ranging from expensive anti-virals and anti-inflammatories to anti-malarials (hydroxychloroquine) and even anti-helminthics (use to treat parasitic worms). Despite this, the potential role of something much more simple – 'vitamin D' in either helping to prevent infection or reduce severity has got lots of attention in the last two months. Indeed, there has been over 50 peer reviewed articles published on the topic of 'vitamin D and Covid-19' and while evidence strongly supports a role, it still remains circumstantial.

“Poorer vitamin D status in several European countries has also been associated with a higher incidence of Covid-19 and greater mortality”

But how might vitamin D affect Covid-19? In some ways, the designation of vitamin D as the fourth 'vitamin' at the turn of the last century was a bit of a misnomer. Traditionally, vitamins were substances obtained in the diet that were important for maintaining certain aspects of health. However, vitamin D is unique in that apart from our diet or taking supplements, about 80-90% is produced by our skin after exposure to sunlight.

Not only that, vitamin D is a hormone that appears to act all over the body. Its main role is in promoting adequate absorption of calcium from the gut and thereby maintaining normal bone health. It also appears to be important in muscle function

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



and indeed supplementing some older adults who are deficient reduces falls risk. However, the discovery of the 'vitamin D receptor' in most organs suggests a role well beyond musculoskeletal health. Indeed, there has been an increasing body of evidence that strongly supports a positive affect of vitamin D on the immune system.

As we are reliant on sun exposure for a lot of our vitamin D, cocooning in older adults is very likely to have impacted on levels. Indeed, based on the TILDA study, nearly 15% of older Irish adults are already deficient rising to 20% in the winter. Taking this into account, it is estimated that 27% of the over 70s who were cocooning may be deficient. Importantly, while this is not good for their bones it might also have an affect on other health outcomes such as Covid-19.

Vitamin D appears to affect the immune system in a number of ways. For example, it has been shown to promote the production of a number of anti-bacterial proteins in the lining of the respiratory tract. It also has an effect on immune cells (T cells) that are involved in the production of several inflammatory cytokines.

In particular, vitamin D deficiency is associated with increased levels of the cytokines

IL-6 and TNF which are elevated in Covid-19 and predict more severe disease. Importantly, vitamin D has also been shown to decrease the production of these very chemicals thereby having a potential role in counteracting the 'cytokine storm' due to Covid-19. In some in vitro and in vivo models, vitamin D has also been shown to slow the replication of viruses.

But what about real world clinical studies of vitamin D? In one analysis involving 21,000 people, low vitamin D status was associated with a 64% increased risk of pneumonia. Furthermore, in a pooled analysis of 25 studies where 10,933 subjects were supplemented with vitamin D, there was a 12% reduction in colds, flus and chest infections with greater benefit identified in those with the lowest levels.



Poorer vitamin D status in several European countries has also been associated with a higher incidence of Covid-19 and greater mortality. However, trying to tease apart other co-associated factors that might in part account for this is difficult. Notably, in England and Wales black people who have higher rates of vitamin D deficiency were four times more likely to die from Covid-19 though whether this was a

factor is unclear. Nonetheless, public health bodies in the UK are now conducting a rapid evidence review of vitamin D in the context of Covid-19.

“Vitamin D is unique in that apart from our diet or taking supplements, about 80-90% is produced by our skin after exposure to sunlight”

So, what food contains vitamin D? It is found in fortified milk and breakfast cereals but other sources in the diet are limited with small amounts in eggs and meat. Oily fish including salmon and also mushrooms are good sources. However, in most people dietary intake alone cannot make up for lack of sun exposure. On the other hand about 10-15 minutes of sun a few times a week from late March to September will allow you to make lots of vitamin D. Those who have more pigmented skin will however required exposure for a little longer.

But how much vitamin D should be taken to prevent deficiency? Recommendations vary but during the winter it is sensible to take about 400 IU daily and up to 600-800 IU daily all year round in higher risk groups – especially those who are frail with limited sun exposure. In some cases, it may be appropriate to check a vitamin D level to guide dosing and response to treatment.

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

» Continued from Page 31



As with all our other routines, lockdown has upended what was normal, with mixed results. For some, it means the no endless commutes through rush hour and so extra time in bed. For others, it means late nights and long mornings, formless days that seem to blend into each other.

If you want a place to start, then, set yourself up with a regular sleep schedule. It will help set up a rhythm of sleep, one which your body clock can settle into. That doesn't mean necessarily returning to your previous routine – for many of us, commutes, shift work and social lives often meant routines which didn't suit us.

“Stress and anxiety can both lead to sleeping issues, making it harder for us to relax and clear our minds.”

Perhaps now is the time to discover if you really are a night owl, or if you've secretly been a morning person in denial.

Avoid unnecessary stimulation

You all know what I'm going to say – staring at screens stimulates our eyes and brains and makes it harder to fall asleep. For many of us, checking the phone one last time or watching a bit of TV is the way we unwind.

Unfortunately, it can have the reverse of our intended effect, activating our minds and making it more difficult to calm them down. While this is not always the case, if you are finding yourself struggling to sleep, try avoiding screens for an hour before bedtime.

Other stimulants, in particular caffeine, should be avoided. Caffeine can be found in drinks like coffee, tea, fizzy drinks, and energy drinks. It can stay in the system for hours and it is advised to avoid it from 2pm onwards.

While not a stimulant, in fact the opposite in some ways, alcohol can affect your sleep negatively. If you are drinking, then it is advised to stop at least a few hours before going

to bed. Similarly, eating late or at inconsistent times is not good for your sleep. Your digestive system takes time to process what you've eaten, and your body might not feel like it's ready to sleep.

Caught napping

It's often thought that naps are bad for you, but that's not always the case. Much like snacking, if we overdo it, it will affect our sleep. But a good nap can help improve your mood; it can improve memory; it helps reduce feelings of tiredness; and it can reduce blood pressure.

But what does a “good” nap look like? The key is not to nap too long. Try to keep your nap to 20 minutes tops – anything more can leave you feeling groggy, but 20 minutes is enough to help you feel reenergised.

You may wake up tired, or feel the day dragging on. A temptation can arise to sneak a quick nap in the morning or after dinner. But it's best to avoid this if you can. The optimum nap window is between 2-3pm because it's not so close to bedtime that it will affect your sleep and many people feel tired after lunch.

Process the day

The main thing to focus on before sleeping is to relax your mind so that it's prepared to switch off, like cooling down after a run. Especially at this time, low-lying stresses can come to the surface and send our mind into overdrive.

Try to process the day's thoughts and feelings and then let go of them. If it helps, write things down



or talk about them with someone you trust. Reading in bed can also focus your mind and empty it of the day's worries.

Equally deep breathing exercises or meditation can be a means of stilling the mind and relaxing the body. I like to pray before I go to sleep, whether it be a Rosary or night prayer, offering up my worries and reflecting on the happenings of the day.

“Perhaps now is the time to discover if you really are a night owl, or if you've secretly been a morning person in denial”

In order to give your mind and body the best chance to relax, make sure your bedroom is a comfortable temperature – if it's too hot or too cold, it may make it more difficult for you to sleep.

How our days affect our nights

If you're into sports, playing that is, you'll know how important all aspects of your life are to that one specific area. You'll also know how important that one specific area is to all aspects of your life.

At the top level, you will scrutinise everything – your diet, your mental health, your fitness (strength, flexibility, mobility, etc.). Your commitment to excellence in one area of life leads you to excellence in others.

That's how it is with sleep. A good night's sleep offers so much to us, but it can be affected by many other areas of our life, from what we eat and when, to how active we are and how many naps we take.

Begin with your routines immediately before bed and then start branching out. The evening period is still the most important to your sleep hygiene, so it's best to focus your attention here.

For everyone, the impacts will be different, but it's important to take a holistic approach for the best results.

For more information, visit <https://www2.hse.ie/healthy-you/shake-off-the-sleep-monster.html>

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



We sat huddled by the fire as the rain lashed relentlessly against the windows. My wife was treating one child for mild hypothermia and another for sunburn. We were, of course, on a traditional Irish summer holiday.

The most accurate predictor of rainfall in June is the scheduling of the school holidays. It is an iron meteorological rule that, the very day that school ends, the weather breaks. This year, weeks of sunshine and even drought through April, May and early June were replaced by glowering clouds rolling in from the Atlantic on the day the schools closed.

Yet, for the kids, rain does not stop play. When we arrived at our holiday cottage, they had no hesitation running down to the beach for a “walk”, which gradually became a paddle, then a wade, and then fully clad swim as they were drawn delightedly ever-further out into the waves. It amazes me to see the magnetic attraction children have to the sea. Our youngest even converses with it, as though it were a living being, as she plays in the waves.

Thankfully, the caprice of the Irish climate can be ameliorated by modern materials. Good raincoats, waterproof shoes, wellies and wetsuits are the tools that make the Irish outdoors more comfortably accessible. We had brought a canoe and a dinghy to the beachside holiday cottage we had rented. The kids were all fitted out in new wetsuits, which I hoped would encourage them to spend hours in the water, enabling them to become stronger swimmers.

The older kids have had swimming lessons, and could manage a few lengths of a swimming pool, but I really hoped that they could take the leap towards becoming able sea swimmers. Upon their first immersion in their new wetsuits, they were like neoprene-clad ducks to water. Within hours, they were swimming over 100 meters along the beach, then graduating to 200 meters. They took huge delight in their new abilities and, on midsummer's even, they begged me to take them for an evening swim. We had the beach to ourselves as the summer dusk began to wrap around us.

It was beautiful to watch the two older children swimming so strongly in the silence of that evening. Yet there's always a slightly poignant feeling when you see your children take another leap forward, towards greater ability and independence. Each such leap, is somehow a step away from you as a parent. They no longer need to be held by me in the water, as they once did. It is a reminder that in less than ten years, they will no longer need us at all. The clothing of childhood thus slips away, piece by piece, to eventually reveal a fully-formed adult.



Yet for now, they remain children. They emerged from the sea brimfull of childish delight, describing the new feeling of how their bodies “just know how to swim” and saying “my arms and legs just do it automatically!” After all those years of driving to lessons in humid chlorinated pools, they had finally become swimmers. Even walking back up the path to the cottage, my daughter exclaimed: “My arms just want to keep swimming!”

The next day, they relished the challenge of learning how to right a capsized canoe, as well as learning knots and how to understand the weather and the tides. I remember, as a child their age, first learning such things and developing a love of the sea that never left me. I glimpse in them again that childhood passion which led to my developing skills as a skipper and instructor, which brought me as far as the Mediterranean, the Caribbean and Hawaii. It brought me along the mountainous seas of southwest Ireland, where I found many important things. For the sea is an element which reminds us of our vulnerability and our mortality. And in its beauties, it can reveal to us the sublime, and the divine.

Music and faith two poles of life for Piano Man Tom

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

Music and faith are the two passions of Tom Conroy's life, who believes firmly in St Augustine's teaching "he who sings, prays twice".

Though as a child, Tom wasn't too interested in music, it was something that was always in the background.

"Music is in my family – all of them play, my mother, my sister, my grandparents," Tom explains. "It was always there in the background and eventually it came out, it flourished."

By the time he was a teenager, Tom knew that music was his passion: "What I wanted to do in life was to share music with the world," he says.

"I started doing piano lessons, doing composition lessons. From there it just became a career – I started teaching and performing."

"Tom has been using his time under lockdown productively, taking advantage of the time off to write and record musical compositions"

"I always say to people when they ask me, I didn't choose music, music chose me – it was my calling."

Tom is now resident pianist at Ballyfin Demesne Hotel, Co Laois and has travelled the world as an entertainer with Holland America Cruise Lines, as well as writing his own music.



Tom feels that St Pedro is someone "people can get behind, especially young people".

"We need to inspire young people. He's the patron saint of altar servers and people considering Church life – I was drawn to him. Maybe he spoke to me!"

Tom has been using his time under lockdown productively, taking advantage of the time off to write and record musical compositions, including an album of Christian piano solos.

"I always say to people when they ask me, I didn't choose music, music chose me – it was my calling"

"The lockdown has helped get these things done, I'm usually busy with other things," he says. "Like this piano CD, I composed that during lockdown. I just sat down and picked some of my favourite hymns, ones that resonate with people."

"I chose world famous ones, but also ones which speak to me. Like 'Broken For Me', many won't know that, but it's special to me."

"There's no singing on it, so people can listen to it, just close your eyes and let mind wander or pray or sit in silence – there's nothing to distract you."

"A couple of priests have said to me they play it before masses and it's great, because it's there in the background, nice and prayerful and relaxing."

"There's that saying, 'he who sings, prays twice,'" says Tom. "When I watch a Mass without music, it feels a bit empty, though still a spiritual experience."

"It's extremely important. Especially with Covid-19, I've been watching masses on webcams and most have a singer and it really adds to it. I watched the one in Knock and they've a beautiful singer."

"We're going to miss the choirs to be honest, won't have them for a long time it seems."

Tom's passion for music has also been a way for him to express his faith, an aspect of his life also ingrained in him by his family.

"When I was younger, it was always there – my mother always brought me to church, and she has very deep faith," he says. "I come from a very big family and she brought us all to church and planted the seed."

"As I became an adult then, I really found great comfort in the Church. I've also made so many great friends. It's a real community, a great place to meet lovely people."

"It's very important to me, I conduct a number of faith choirs and almost every day I go to the Church

on my own, just to pray, just for some quiet time."

Tom has composed five Mass settings, four of which have been performed live on RTÉ and can be found on YouTube.

"When, I'm composing liturgical music, my faith and God are the inspiration," he says. "But also sharing the music with people and bringing happiness to other people."

"I'm the director of a few church choirs and, when they perform the music I've composed, I can see the joy it brings them. That inspires me."

Tom's fifth Mass setting is for the Philippines, dedicated to the Filipino saint Pedro Calungsod, and results from Tom's travels.

"When I performed on cruise ships, a lot of the staff were from the Philippines and made some great friends," he says. "I thought I'd like to write something for them someday."

"And to be honest I'd love to go the Philippines someday and to help teach the music, so possibly, someday, that might happen."

"It's called the mass for St Pedro Calungsod. He's a saint from the Philippines."

"I decided to write the Mass setting for the Philippines, but I needed a theme, something to focus on. So I looked up the national saints, and I was drawn to his story."

Living Laudato Si'

Jane Mellet



Covid-19 highlights fragility of our world

These have been extraordinary months across the world. Slowly and cautiously we are emerging from the Covid-19 restrictions and it is vitally important that we do not get complacent. The virus has not gone away and each of us are responsible for ensuring that we protect ourselves and each other as we go about our daily activities. Covid-19 has highlighted the fragility of our world and the fragility of the systems within which we live. It is in the midst of this reality that Pope Francis announced a Laudato Si' Anniversary Year which will run from May 2020 to May 2021 in the hope that it will truly be a 'jubilee' moment for our world.

This is a watershed moment and Pope Francis is someone who is leading the way globally, urging us to restart 'greener'. Last month, the Vatican announced the Laudato Si' Goals (or LSG's) which call for schools, universities, parishes, bishops' conferences, congregations,

basically all Church institutions to find new life giving ways to Live Laudato Si' over the next seven years. It highlights seven targets which families, parishes and groups can strive for in order to achieve total sustainability in the next decade. The LSGs include targets on reaching total carbon neutrality, defending all forms of life, living simpler lifestyles, promoting more ecological centred liturgical celebrations, educational spaces for Laudato Si' and also divestment from the fossil fuel industry. Pope Francis is calling the Church to lead the way in order to protect God's creation, to mobilise the world's 1.2 billion Catholics. Over the next few months, we will explore these LSGs here and consider ways in which we might achieve them. You can find the full text of the Vatican document here: <http://www.humandevlopment.va/content/dam/sviluppoumano/documenti/LAUDATO%20SI'%20Special%20Anniversary%20Year%20Plans.pdf>



We all have our own gifts and talents and must use these in whatever way we feel we are called to. Not everyone is comfortable on a climate protest, not everyone is comfortable writing to their local politicians, but some people are very comfortable in those spaces. For others, their passion might be more contemplative or liturgical. In Laudato Si' we are reminded that 'we need everybody' in all walks of life to do what they can, where they are, to live Laudato Si'.

So, as we begin this Laudato Si' Year, how are you being called to walk more gently on this earth and how might you help others to do the same? "All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents." (Laudato Si', 14)

The Season of Creation is approaching on September 1. Now is the time to reflect and plan for how your parish will celebrate this season which runs until October 4! You can start gathering ideas by checking out www.seasonofcreation.org

Jane Mellett is the Laudato Si' officer with Trócaire.

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Not so much a political peace deal as a truce

So we have, finally, a new Government. It's often said that if you don't like a Government you can vote them out in the next election. Well, living through the last few months, you'd be forgiven for wondering about that.

As described by presenter Justin McCarthy on last Monday's **Morning Ireland** (RTÉ Radio 1), the events surrounding the creation of the Government last weekend were somewhat "surreal". While I find it difficult to rustle up any enthusiasm for the new administration those media images of the TDs "spaced out" (as political correspondent Paul Cunningham put it) for social distancing in the huge Convention Centre were historic and iconic.

The sight on last Sunday's news programmes of the new Cabinet standing in formation two metres apart looked downright weird, but I suspect these images will feature prominently in historical and political programmes for years to come. Also on that programme it was heralded by McCarthy as "the end of civil war hostilities", but it may only be a truce.

Last Monday was historic also for the re-opening of churches for religious services, though the news coverage I saw concentrated almost entirely on the opening of businesses. But that was not the case on last Friday's **The**



Party leaders and TDs 'spaced out' in Dublin's Convention Centre prior to the election of Micheál Martin (standing) as Taoiseach, as seen on RTÉ1 on Saturday.

Leap of Faith (RTÉ Radio 1), reaching the end of its happily extended run. Fittingly the final show of the season involved people of various religious faiths looking back over their pandemic experiences.

Challenging

Fr Paddy Byrne from Laois found life challenging in lockdown. With all diary events cancelled, he had to slow down from fifth gear to second. He found his ministry "equivocated to misery" as he presided over so many sad funerals, some of them Covid

related. He found communities creative at these times, e.g. forming distanced guards of honour along funeral routes. He was delighted that churches were re-opening as he was conscious of the collective nature of liturgy.

Midwife Aparna Shukla, a Hindu, found that her love of God and of the universe kept her going during lockdown and she finished her slot with a Hindu prayer. Rabbi Zalman Lent was seeing the light at the end of the tunnel with synagogues re-opening and he finished with a 'Wayfarer's Prayer'.

Claire Dawson was a Baha'i and spoke of the virtual spaces created during lockdown for collective daily worship as well as the renewed persecution of Baha'i adherents, especially in Iran.

Imam Shaykh Dr Umar Al Qadri, was thankful that his family had survived Covid-19, but his thoughts and prayers were with those bereaved. While mosques will have less capacity due to distancing, they will have more services. He felt for would-be pilgrims disappointed that planned trips to Mecca won't take place, but stressed the value of good intention.

Rev. Gillian Wharton of the Church of Ireland spoke movingly about her lockdown work with dying patients and their loved ones.

Sikh Dr Jasbir Singh Puri, a retired anaesthetist, had been involved in online Sunday prayer services and had re-registered with the Medical Council in case they needed his services in the



Rev. Gillian Wharton.

PICK OF THE WEEK

QUEST FOR SHAKESPEARE

EWTN, Sunday, July 5, 9am and Friday, July 10, 5.30pm

A look at the evidence for Shakespeare's Catholicism and his Catholic upbringing.

MARIA GORETTI

EWTN, Sunday, July 5, 9pm

New exploration of the life of St Maria Goretti, one of the youngest saints in the history of the Church.

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

RTÉ2, Monday, July 6, 7pm

Peggy manipulates William into joining the church choir to keep him engaged in Catholicism. Sometimes warm and sometimes jaundiced.

fight against the virus. Fiona English, described as a "spiritualist", was interested in "non-denominational faith". She missed friends and family, but also valued the free time – she regarded time as sacred and something we give away easily. She didn't want to rush back to normality and thought we should be kind to ourselves as we had gone through a type of collective trauma.

Buddhist Rev. Myozan Kodo Kilroy felt we had rediscovered simplicity, that lockdown was like a three-month retreat. He finished with a prayer for humanity.

Ideally we would have had a discussion amongst the participants but groups chatting in the studio will have to wait. I'd like also to have heard more about the lessons we can learn and how we can move on to a better normal in the coming months.

Such concerns also featured on last weekend's **Sunday Morning Live** (BBC1) when the focus was on what environmental lessons we could learn. Pope Francis' concerns for "our common home" was referenced prominently, while Bishop Richard Cheetham of the Church of England saw an opportunity for us to "re-set and re-think" our treatment of the planet.

One contributor, Fatima Ibrahim of Green New Deal UK, suggested that "normal" was a crisis situation for many people.

Maybe, we can make 'the new normal' something better – now there's a job for the incoming Government.

i boregan@hotmail.com,
[@boreganmedia](https://twitter.com/boreganmedia)



Aubrey Malone

Film

Winter Sleep should please all...even the PC brigade

With cinemas still closed because of lockdown restrictions, websites continue to provide for those of us with a hunger for good movies.

One of the most powerful ones I got was *Winter Sleep*, an epic from Nuri Bilge Ceylan about the problems encountered by a landlord in a small Turkish village after the son of one of his tenants throws a stone at his van and breaks a window. It's beautifully shot, with echoes of everyone from Chekhov to Dostoevsky in the script.

You might also like to check out another epic, *The Place Behind the Pines*. This starts out being about a drifter (Ryan Gosling). He robs banks to support his child. Later it turns into a film about the

policeman who shoots him, Bradley Cooper. It's a masterpiece from that great director Derek Cianfrance. He also made *The Light Between Oceans*.

Reign Over Me is a lovely film about the friendship between a troubled young man (Adam Sandler) and his former college room-mate, Don Cheadle. If, like me, you think of Sandler as a trivial actor, this film will make you totally revise that view – he's phenomenal here.

Maybe also buy a copy of *Gone with the Wind*, at least if you can get your hands on one. You're probably aware of the moves to have this removed from a streaming service on the grounds of racism in the wake of the deaths



Melisa Sozen in *Winter Sleep*, a film by the Turkish director Nuri Bilge Ceylan.

of George Floyd and Rayshard Brooks.

I'm totally in favour of everything the Black Lives Mat-

ter movement has done up to now but we have to draw the line at this kind of censorship. To me it totally mis-

understands the difference between depicting something and condoning it. *Gone With the Wind* opened our eyes to a time when racism was common practice. As such it serves as a caution to us not to let society slip into such patterns again.

Restrictive

I feel the same about the #MeToo movement and their demands to ban certain films, they've gone too far. Someone said recently that if you smile at a woman in a bar today you nearly need to be calling your lawyer. If society becomes too restrictive, women themselves will be the losers. An ineradicable gap will open up between the sexes that's been created by fear.

The latest piece of insanity to emerge from the politically correct brigade has been the temporary removal from television of an episode of *Fawlty Towers* that was deemed offensive to Germans. As John Cleese pointed out, the programme was making fun of racists, not Germans.

Did he need to say that? Was it not obvious? Many politically correct people lack a basic intelligence about the subtleties of satire. Actually this wasn't subtle – it was screamingly obvious.

If we start cutting *Fawlty Towers*, where do we stop? Should we ban *The Quiet Man* because of its stage-Irishry? How about censoring *Mary Poppins* because it pokes fun at chimney sweeps?



BookReviews

Peter Costello



Jesus Through Muslim Eyes

by Richard Shumack
(SPCK, £12.99)

Peter Costello

The other day, before I started on *Jesus Through Muslim Eyes*, I read in a 1957 book of travels through North Africa from Tunis to Cairo that in Beja, a remote village near the Libyan-Tunisian border, the mosque was dedicated to Jesus Christ.

It surprised the author (the late Richard Carrington) and it surprised me.

Yet how well it illustrates the gulf of culture and comprehension that lies between Islam and Christianity, for it is impossible to imagine that a church anywhere would ever be dedicated in the name of God to the name of Prophet Mohammed.

To fully understand what Muslims believe about Jesus, a writer needs to be clear about what Christians believe about the person and nature of Jesus – as the history of Christianity only too clearly reveals that has often been a conflicted matter, and still is.

Academic

Dr Shumack is an Australian academic who is the director of a centre for the Study of Islam in Sydney Australia, and a well-known writer, teacher and media contributor.

His approach promises much, for he begins with a section of chapters on the theme of getting to know the Muslim Jesus in which he dis-

cusses how much was known of Jesus in Arabia in the later 6th and early 7th Century (I add these dates to aid the reader, for the book is chary of dates, making it often difficult to know to what historical period the author's comments relate).

Jesus, of course appears in the Qur'an as the son of Mary, and in Muslim tradition as the "pious servant of God", the Good Teacher of Sufic mysticism and the Yeshua of the present day Muslim – who may, in fact, know very little of Jesus outside of Islamic teaching.

“He finds at the end that Muslims and Christians are not on the same roads. But that the true road is the Christian one”

The author says less than is needed for understanding on the career of the Prophet as a well-travelled and religiously-minded man, who was in constant contact with Jews and various groups of Christians in the wealthy cities of the 'Incense Coast' – what is now the Yemen.

He says, for instance, that the Gospels were only translated into Arabic at a late date; but Hebrew, Syriac and Greek were widely spoken and written in the Middle East.

The position of modern Muslims is that what we

Islamic views of Jesus explored



know of Jesus, the historical figure and his teachings, was in some way 'corrupted' from the purity of an earlier tradition. The author speaks of a 'conspiracy theory' but this is bit much. Despite what he says the texts of the Bible and the Gospels have been edited,

being derived as they were from earlier oral records.

A second section deals with this process of corruption which in fact tells us more about Christian attitudes than Muslim ones. Indeed through the book he writes as if there were a completely standard-

ised Islam and Christianity.

But as we are aware of in Muslim history, and deeply conscious of in Christianity, people have little difficulty in creating very divergent views from the Bible and the Gospels, and treating them as if they were 'the real Christianity'.

He then turns to locating Jesus in religious culture, concluding that from what even Islamic teachers say, the Jesus of Islam is in reality the Jesus of Christianity.

He finds at the end that Muslims and Christians are not on the same roads. But

A hidden treasure of Dublin architecture in the city's heart

The Museum Building of Trinity College: A Model of Victorian Craftsmanship
by Christine Casey and Patrick Wyse Jackson
(Four Courts Press, €45)

Christopher Moriarty

Now is a fitting time to browse an extraordinary book about an extraordinary building.

Created in 1857, the Museum Building of Trinity College, Dublin has been a familiar object to generations of staff and students. Less well known to other Dubliners, it does form a backdrop to College Park, but most of the outsiders who congregate there are more interested in the sporting activities in progress than in architectural marvels.

Monument

Last autumn Christine Casey, Dublin's foremost architectural historian, together with Patrick Wyse Jackson, a Professor of Geology who has worked in and loved the building for half a cen-

tury, brought out a book about the museum, so well-written and beautiful that it provides an intellectual and pictorial monument of the same order of distinction as its subject.

Designed by two of Ireland's greatest 19th-Century architects, Thomas Deane and Benjamin Woodward, it is a splendidly flamboyant conception.

“This totally fascinating book will entertain and enlighten”

Inspired to some degree by palaces of Renaissance Italy, it is opulent and colourful making a dramatic contrast with the strictly classical buildings which defined 18th-Century Dublin.

If this book were simply a well-illustrated and scholarly description of the architecture, it would be a work of great interest. It does that part very well – but with a wealth of parallel chapters

by various specialists describing aspects which seldom appear in architectural books.

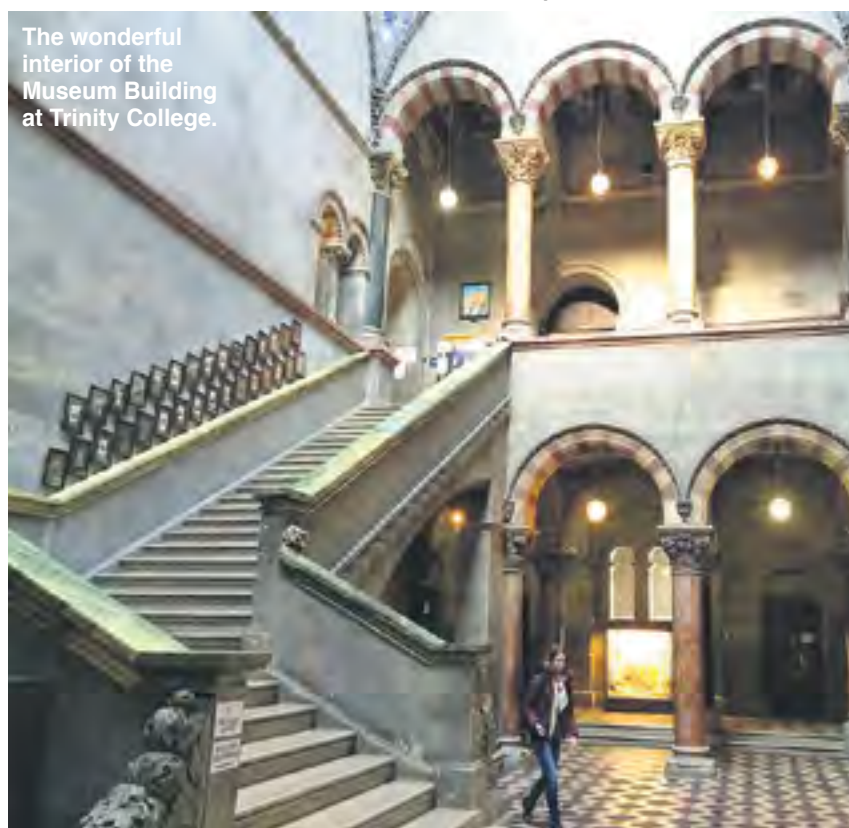
The inspiration of Deane and Woodward in planning the building and its influence on many that would follow are obvious inclusions.

But the editors use the book as a vehicle to introduce studies of such related topics as the development of the marble quarrying industry in Ireland, and the story of the granite of west Wicklow which plays a great part in Dublin's architecture.

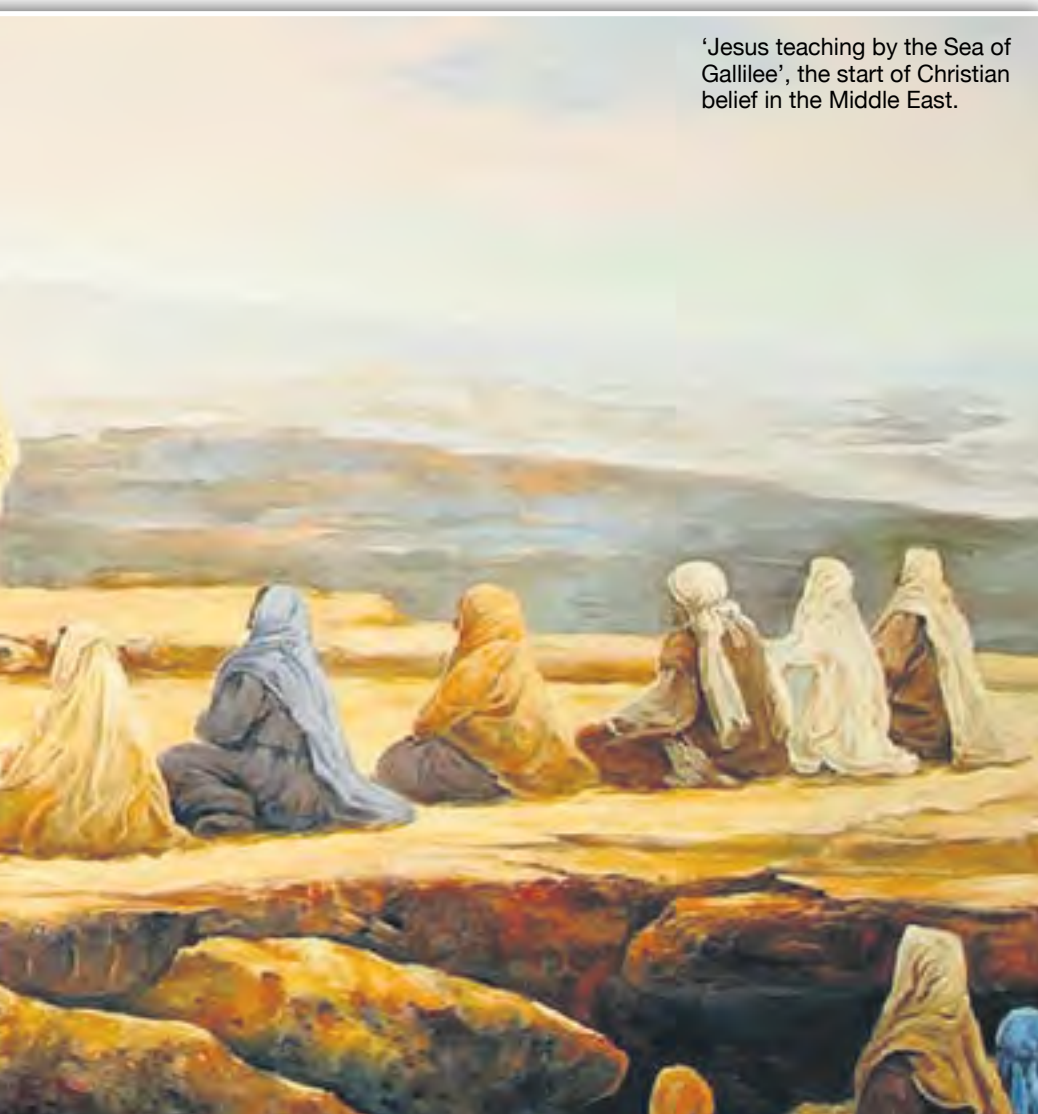
There is extensive treatment of the ways and means of carving the innumerable decorations that grace the building and which in themselves present a galaxy of sculptures of birds, beasts and flowers.

This totally fascinating book will entertain and enlighten while we are confined to home and encourage the reader to go out and take a first, or at least a new look, at one of Dublin's least known gems.

The wonderful interior of the Museum Building at Trinity College.



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.



'Jesus teaching by the Sea of Galilee', the start of Christian belief in the Middle East.

that the true road is the Christian one. His argument may perhaps persuade some readers, but one would want to be told a great deal more about the view of Shia and Sunni and indeed Sufis before the true complexity of Islamic thought and teaching can be

compared with a basic evangelical Christianity.

Large view

Prof. Sumac has written an interesting book, and one which many will be interested in reading, if only for the opportunity of saying

every second page, "well up to a certain point..." But it suggests, however, a large view which he does not allude to.

Christians need perhaps to adopt that larger view to grasp a little more clearly what lies behind other beliefs.

There's nothing rotten about this wonderful book for children

Really Rotten Rhymes
poems by Gabriel Fitzmaurice,
illustrations by Alice Coleman
(Mercier Press, €14.99/£13.99)

Peter Costello

This is a book filled with the rude vitality of childhood, with equal measures of both qualities. It makes a wonderful read for those who have children still around them, or can remember anything at all of their own early years. This is true family life, naughty bits included. The Bard of Moyvane is to be congratulated on a creative hit.

This reissue of what is by way of being an Irish children's classic is newly illustrated with very appropriate pictures. But it is the poems themselves that are really the guts of the book, which is indeed taken up largely with those rude things and thoughts with which

children of all generations have loved to shock their parents, though not perhaps their grandparents. Mother may protest, but granny can remember when mother too was less than 10, and not the all-wise *persona* she now claims to be.



I can only recommend parents to buy the book, regardless of the fact that it appeals to that 'adults keep out' place that is so special to every child.

There is nothing twee or sentimental here at all; the voice is right on the button, albeit the belly button, for a lot of the time.

I love the whole thing. It is well informed by poet Fitzmaurice's own experiences as teacher, grandfather, parent and (one imagines) child – though that must have been in some remote period, ancient enough to be called 'the olden days'.

Mainly About Books

By the books editor

A first contact with American culture

The current protests in the US and the Black Lives Matter campaign that has spread to other countries take my mind back a good way to what was, in effect, my first true contact with American culture.

This was on a flight to New York (where a further flight would take me on to Chicago). This was also my very first flight, which added to its memorability. In those days there was more room on airplanes, with three comfortable seats in a row, and space to spread one's self.

Beside me sat an American couple who must have been in their 60s. They were, in the ordinary American way, pleasantly chatty. The woman asked about the book I was reading on the flight – *A Land* by Jaquetta Hawkes, a book about the continuities of British prehistory – I was then on my way to an American university to study anthropology and archaeology. She looked at this, but it did not seem to be her kind of book, nor did it interest her husband.

However, in the course of the flight I had a sudden introduction (beyond what I already knew from *Huckleberry Finn*) to American culture.

My new acquaintance turned out a judge, but he was also it transpired part owner of a casino and nightclub in Las Vegas. He presented me with a sloganised keyring, and said that when I came to Las Vegas I should be sure and look them up.

Now, as even then, I knew that the businesses in the fabled desert city were largely owned by Mormons and the Mafia, this struck my Irish innocence as a very strange conjunction.

Casino

As little more than a schoolboy, I had not much experience of judges. Indeed, the only one I knew was Judge Durcan, the father of the poet Paul Durcan, who on occasion would drive me and Paul and his younger sister to our schools. I could not imagine Judge Durcan owning a casino – indeed I would have thought it impossible for a judge in Ireland to own such a thing.

But I was to learn that what was thought inappropriate in Europe was thought quite the normal thing in the USA.

However, this was not the only departure from the civilised norm of my native Ireland.

We got talking as one did in the 1960s about the racial protests; on that I got an earful and a half. The judge told me that African Americans – though he did not use that word in those days (and I doubt if *The Irish Catholic* would actually print the terms he did use) – were bereft of any trace of civilisation.

I mumbled something about the beauty of Benin bronzes, and what about...now, I was told, if the medieval Africans could cast bronze, they learnt the skill from white men, the source of all civilisations.

“I was good mannered enough, in those days, not to argue over-vehemently and promised that when in due course I did get to Los Vegas I would be sure to call in”

Nowadays I suppose I might suggest to him that Africa was the birth place of humanity, that its traditions, myths and philosophies are the oldest known; that it was a continent whose cultures were immeasurably ancient, but whose people had managed to preserve their environment unsullied from prehistory with thriving herds of animals for instance, only to have it virtually destroyed in little more than a century by white Europeans intent on 'development', for the benefit of Europeans – and Americans. But that would not I think have gone down well.

I was good mannered enough, in those days, not to argue over-vehemently and promised that when in due course I did get to Las Vegas I would be sure to call in.

This was the start of my education into the reality of life in America.

I quickly learned that great as America was in so many things, she was also, as Michael Harrington had so recently told us all in *The Other America*, a place of darkness for many of its people.

But the views of a Catholic socialist such as Harrington would (I expect) have been shrugged off by that other epitome of American civilisation, my friend the casino owing judge. He had very distinct views about whether Black Lives Mattered.



Classifieds

The deadline for advertising in the classifieds is 10.30am, the Friday before publication. Contact the Classified Team on 01 687 4094 or email advertising@irishcatholic.ie

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Merchants Quay Ireland reaches out with kindness to people living on our streets, sleeping in doorways, suffering and alone. Your legacy, of any amount, can enfold the most vulnerable and lonely in wrap-around supports. You may wish to keep the details confidential. But we want to give you this little wooden keepsake, made by a client, for you. This is your heart for the homeless and those on the road to recovery.

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Leisure time

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"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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Missionaries of the Sacred Heart bring hope to the poorest people living in over 48 countries worldwide.

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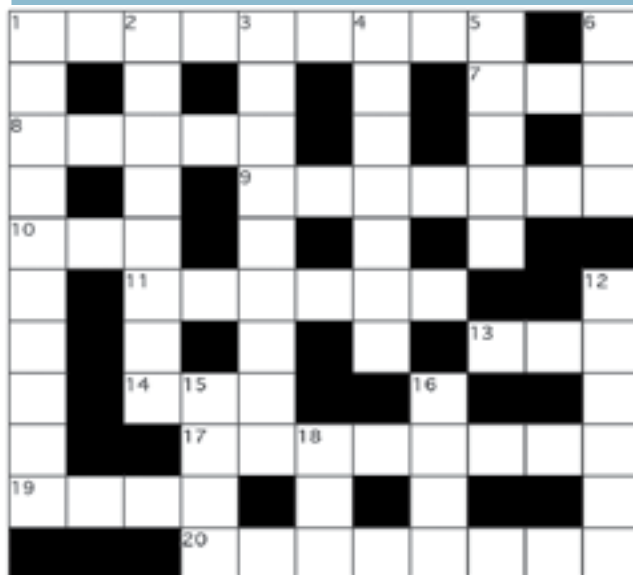
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One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

Crossword Junior

Gordius 339



Across

- 1 Cleaning the dishes (7,2)
- 7 Sick (3)
- 8 This person often works in a hospital (5)
- 9 In this, we learn about the past (7)
- 10 A soldier will say this to an officer (3)
- 11 Twelve of these make one foot (6)
- 13 No score (3)
- 14 A female sheep (3)
- 17 Two lines of hair on your forehead (8)
- 19 Boy's name that means 'Christmas' (4)
- 20 The sound of people enjoying a joke (8)

Down

- 1 Glass part of a car (10)
- 2 Something you didn't expect (8)
- 3 Sport played on a rink with a puck (3-6)
- 4 Gripped, took hold of (7)
- 5 Person who flies a plane (5)
- 6 Take part in a game (4)
- 12 Nearer (6)
- 15 You can get water from this (4)
- 16 This has a curved shape (4)
- 18 Australian bird that can't fly (3)

SOLUTIONS, JUNE 25

GORDIUS No. 461

Across – 1 Lavatories 6 Ursa Minor 11 Mayflower 12 Bassoon
15 Sedan 17 Orca 18 Exit 19 Nasal 21 Hoarded 23 Rumba
24 Lion 25 Clam 28 Placate 33 Grenadier 34 Moans 35 Dame
Edna 36 Cold turkey

Down – 1 Lime 2 Vandalism 3 Tyres 4 Romeo 5 Enya 7 Rowed
8 Adrenaline 9 Alas and alack 13 Oslo 14 No trump 16 Rearranged
20 Saint Mark 21 Hacksaw 27 Abeam 29 Lured 30 Cymru
31 Filo 32 Espy

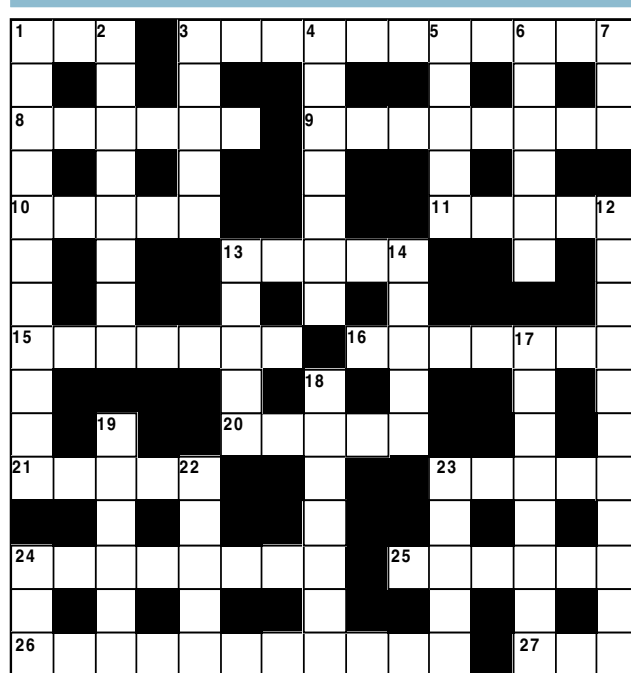
CHILDREN'S No. 338

Across – 1 Strawberry 7 Obstacle 8 Alarm 11 Aladdin 13 Seller
14 Sail 16 Aims 17 Brain 18 Domino 19 Hotels

Down – 1 Slovakia 2 Rascals 3 Reel 4 Year 6 Aid 7 Lane 9 Atlas
10 Marathon 12 Islands 15 Amaze 17 Boo

Crossword

Gordius 462



Across

- 1 Feel badly, seeing one is surrounded by gore (3)
- 3 Was this relation Adam's second grandchild? (5,6)
- 8 Thurible (6)
- 9 Walked falteringly, swayed as if about to fall (8)
- 10 Ancient Celtic priest (5)
- 11 Irate Christian symbol (5)
- 13 & 19d The symbol of victory in The US Masters (5,6)
- 15 & 24a One might have an appetite for such Oriental deduction (7, 8)
- 16 Untamed mustangs - from Denver? (7)
- 20 Imperial weight measure (5)
- 21 Antelope from an eastern country (5)
- 23 No longer fashionable; dated (5)
- 24 See 15 across
- 25 Would it suit to take the waters here, Desmond? (6)
- 26 Informal social gathering (3-8)
- 27 Mr Keane will have rice or yoghurt starters (3)

Down

- 1 Thus will the coy see an ecclesiastic area (11)
- 2 Pasta whose name means

'little tongues' (8)

- 3 Liberated (5)
- 4 Came to rest when the badger's home was in front (7)
- 5 & 14d The cheek of a drink dispenser to name this part of the body! (5,5)
- 6 Grief (6)
- 7 Agreeable companion of Wynken and Blynken (3)
- 12 The sly lens sees strangely - in a word, idiotically (11)
- 13 Great enthusiasm (5)
- 14 See 5 down
- 17 Would curs dare to upset one who fought in the Holy Land? (8)
- 18 One who will make sense of statistics (7)
- 19 See 13 across
- 22 Young Malfoy is Harry Potter's chief rival at school (5)
- 23 This kind of musician often wears a kilt (5)
- 24 Starts twisting and gyrating in a chasing game (3)

Sudoku Corner

339

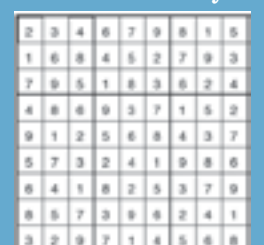
Easy



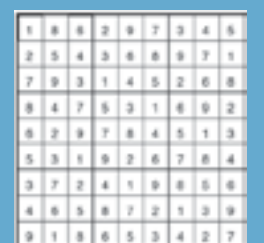
Hard



Last week's Easy 338



Last week's Hard 338



Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock



Together and with God's help we will get through this

In recent days I have found myself awake quite a bit when ordinarily sleep would have overtaken me. Thanks be to God; I sleep easily and well as a rule. You might or might not wonder or care why my sleep has been broken but I need to fill this page, so I am going to tell you anyway!

It is to do with this weekend really and the few days that have gone before, but mostly this weekend. I am worried about our return to church.

On this Sunday, many people will have returned to weekend Masses in churches and parishes all over Ireland. Ours is one such parish with four churches that serve as spiritual home to good and decent people. I am wondering how it will go.

Dispensers

Like many, I have spent weeks looking at empty seats and imagining what two metres distance between people looks like. I have helped and been helped to cordon off seats, put markers on floors, install sanitising dispensers and, all the while wonder how is this all going to work out.

Someone recently asked me



"what phases you?" and the answer came easily: "All of this uncertainty."

Like everyone else, I want our country to get back to normal – not this 'new normal' people speak about, but real normal where we are not afraid. I want us to say "God bless you" when someone sneezes and not feel they have launched a nuclear attack on us.

I want all ages to feel free about coming and going, visiting, laughing, being family and friends without restrictions or endless precautions.

This weekend is a step in that direction but a very small step and I am worried about the 51st person at the door of one of the

churches in the parish who is told: "The church is full, sorry."

Clicking a mouse is one thing, making the physical effort to be in church is another

There is nothing in me that wants to leave anyone on the doorstep of a church, and I fear what this might do to people. I have tried to encourage people to consider coming to Mass on different days during the week and to spread out the attendance in that way. Until this weekend, there is no way of knowing how this is going to work out and that has

been part of the restlessness I felt.

Another part of the restlessness, is around wondering will some people choose not to come back at all? Maybe they feel, they have managed fine without Mass or Church and that troubles me too. People are Church, churches were built by and for people and it is truly only when they are together, parish is fully alive. I am worried about this too and wonder where we will be as the story unfolds.

There has been a huge uptake on webcam Masses and, thankfully I have benefited and been kept sane through that presence with on average of 2,000 views of Sunday Masses and views in the hundreds of weekday Masses, but clicking a mouse is one thing, making the physical effort to be in church is another. I see both continuing but...well you know what I am saying at this stage, I am worried about this.

So, what do I do with the worry? Hand it over to God, it remains his Church and his people and at days' end, he is there for us.

Ah, I sleep well most of the time. These days will pass. We can, we will and we must, get through this.

Wash your hands and just start once again!

I was chatting with a doctor recently about PPE. He told me how important it is and crucial that correct care is taken, not least in its removal and disposal.

Then he told me about someone training them in using it and this was the bit I liked. He said the man said to them: "If you are taking it off and make a mistake – just wash your hands and start again."

Such simple advice and it goes beyond PPE, I think, to so many situations in life.

If we make a mistake, no, when we make a mistake, wash our hands, and start again.



YOUR GIFT WILL HELP PROVIDE FOOD FOR THE POOR AND MARGINALISED

The Little Way Association has received many urgent appeals from missionaries asking for help for desperately poor families and for sick and needy people who are struggling in the midst of the present covid-19 crisis.

Sr Bernadu Mary from the Franciscan Sisters of Immaculate Heart of Mary, Pondicherry, India, writes: "The situation is very grave here for migrant workers, small vendors, daily wage earners and people affected by diseases. (We have people living with leprosy, and 1st and 2nd generation families). The stigma and the type of work – scavaging and begging – they have been engaged in, make them more vulnerable to cope with the disease. Please enable us to help the families affected by leprosy."

Families are battling against hunger

Heidi Caluori of Arco in Sao Paulo, Brazil, writes: "The people from the slums are the hardest hit by the virus. Not being able to work anymore means people do not receive a salary and have no money to buy food. Families are battling against hunger. We want to continue to distribute food to the people in the surrounding slums. We need your donations!"

Every cent that you send for our "hungry, sick and deprived" fund will go intact to those who look after the very poor

Mass is offered daily for all our supporters' intentions. Thank you so much for your prayers and your continued practical support.



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