

The Irish Catholic

MARY KENNY

So much for our
'universal' attitude
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**ALL CHANGE
IN CHURCH**

The sacraments are
back...but expect
new ways Page 16



BREDA O'BRIEN

American Catholics
face a terrible choice
in election Page 7



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Derry woman a 'saint for the new millennium'



New mural unveiled as devotion to Sr Clare grows

Ruadhán Jones

An Irish nun who died while helping children flee an earthquake in Ecuador has been hailed as a saint for a new generation of young Catholics as devotion to her continues to spread.

A new shrine to Sr Clare Crockett was unveiled in her native Derry at the weekend and many local people say they have started praying for her intercession.

Máire McAteer of Youth 2000 predicted that Sr Clare will be a "saint for the new millennium".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Ms McAteer said that while Sr Clare is a saint "with a small 's'" at the moment, hopes are high that she will be canonised one day.

"Pope St John Paul II, when he came to Ireland, called us to be the saints of the new millennium," said Ms McAteer. "She's on the road to

sanctity. She had great charity in her heart, giving her life completely to the service of humanity and to God."

Intercession

Sr Clare died in 2016 and soon after her death young people began praying to her and seeking her intercession.

"She's so attractive to young people," Ms McAteer said. "She was a young woman herself, so full of joy."

"Her motto – 'all or nothing' – that speaks to the heart of young people. That's what they want, they are full of enthusiasm and they want to give it all."

Local saints such as Sr Clare will be important for reviving Irish Catholicism, Ms McAteer believes. She said that she thinks that young people in particular "can identify with her and to see one of our own live a life of holiness, it makes

» Continued on Page 2

Best foot forward...



John McCarthy from Co. Limerick blesses his two-month-old son Patrick in the water as pilgrims and visitors flocked to Tubrid Holy Well, Millstreet, Co. Cork on Saturday for the annual pattern day. The well is famous for its gushing springs and has been a place of pilgrimage for the people of Duhallow for centuries. See page 10. Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan

LETTER FROM ROME

Going to Mass in Italy starts to get back to normal...almost **PAGE 5**



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Look beyond the collar and see the man who is the priest **PAGE 34**



DAVID QUINN

The culture of death now has its sights on newborns **PAGE 8**



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Light up the room with a lemon tart!

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Fr Ron Rolheiser

Pornography on the web is world's biggest addiction

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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
Newsroom: news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026
Books Editor: Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie
Advertising: advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874094
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ENDING EXTREME POVERTY WHATEVER IT TAKES



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

Irish missionary tells of 'cautious' church re-opening in South Africa

Chai Brady

An Irish missionary priest who has served in Africa for more than 40 years has said that people are hopeful as churches in South Africa, which had been badly hit by Covid-19, begin to re-open.

Fr Seán Mullin CSSp, originally from Kilconly near Tuam in Co. Galway, is a school and hospital chaplain but is also involved in pastoral ministry.

Writing to *The Irish Catholic*, he said that most of the cases in South Africa are in several areas including Durban, where he is based. He said that initially both Cape provinces "were hardest hit, with health services struggling".

"Although permission has been given for places of worship to re-open, with strict protocols in place and with numbers capped at 50, most churches are moving very

cautiously," Fr Mullin said.

"Quite a number of parishes continue to livestream their Masses; like services in other parts of the world, these can be seen from across the globe. I recently met a family who told me that the Mass they now enjoy on a Sunday morning comes all the way from Portlaoise!"

"The re-opening of schools was a hotly debated issue here as elsewhere; eventually most schools have re-opened on a phased, class-by-class basis," he said.

There was well over half a million cases of Covid-19 in South Africa and almost 12,000 deaths as this newspaper went to print.

The pandemic has hit many South Africans – already struggling to make ends meet – particularly hard. Fr Mullin said: "In a country with 30% unemployment, President Cyril Ramaphosa has for-

mally addressed the nation, seeking to strike a delicate balance between the health of the people and the phased re-opening of the economy.

"A delegation visiting from the World Health Organization (WHO), led by Irishman Dr Michael Ryan, seems happy with how government has been handling the pandemic particularly the fact that it started screening and testing at least one week before some other countries did. At the outset, the government had imposed a very strict lockdown which was enforced by the police and army, a very difficult task especially in the many overcrowded townships where social distancing and the shortage of water for handwashing were very challenging."

He added: "Let us hope and pray for better times ahead as we try to come to terms with the 'new normal'."

Celebrations in Castleblaney



There were celebrations in Castleblaney at the weekend as Fr Adrian Walshe was installed as parish priest of Muckno and of Aughnamullan East Parish by Bishop of Clogher Larry Duffy. Here Fr Walshe is pictured with his sister Sheila, niece and nephew, Bishop Duffy, Fr Stephen Duffy, brother-in-law Ollie and sacristan Michael Murphy.

Secular world very quick to hunt heretics – bishop

Staff reporter

Christians must resist the temptation to be harsh and judgemental, Bishop Donal McKeown has said.

Speaking at the weekend, he likened some of the secular behaviour in modern Ireland to that of the religious hypocrites at the time of Christ.

"Our secular world is very prone to precisely that Pharisaic desire to label people as believers or heretics when it comes to the new orthodoxies about sexuality, immigration or wealth.

"The last thing that Jesus' followers should be doing is adding to the fragmentation and antagonism. In fact, both Jesus and St Paul were condemned for going not merely to the pure but to the pagans.

"The uncomfortable mercy of Jesus for the outsider is more important than the false security of human certainty," Bishop McKeown said.

He warned that "the holiness and effectiveness of the Church's witness is measured not just in time spent in church but in how our prayer life sends us out to venture into alien territory".

"Faith affects our heads, our hearts and our hands. God so loved the world that he sent his only Son.

"A Faith that is overburdened with building walls to exclude others is less than authentic. Jesus calls me to examine my own conscience and not just to judge that of others," Bishop McKeown said.

Saint for a new millennium

» Continued from Page 1
you think well, that's possible for us".

"We have so many Irish saints over the generations, but to have new saints of this generation is so important," she added.

Meanwhile, Carmelite Fr Stephen Quinn said he also believes that holy examples like Sr Clare are vital for re-evangelising Ireland's young people. "The Church in Ireland still works on the basis of words – but I don't think that works anymore, especially in the case of young people," he said. "It has to work in terms of vision. You have to be able

to show them what it means to follow Christ, and Sr Clare does that."

Fr Quinn devotes a regular Mass to Sr Clare and says that a number of reported miracles have been attributed to her intercession, including possibly curing a case of coronavirus. "There was a young Derry man, he was suffering from Covid-19 and several times his family had been told he was dying," according to Fr Quinn.

"They kept up a vigil to Sr Clare the whole time and he came through. His wife claimed Sr Clare had given them a miracle," Fr Quinn said.

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Tennis star turns student of the Bible over lockdown

Ruadhán Jones

Former world No.1 **Serena Williams** has revealed in an interview that she has used the Covid-19 lockdown to study the Bible, having previously described Faith as her secret weapon.

In an interview on her return to tennis following the restrictions, Ms Williams said the virus gave her the time to reflect on the scriptures.

“A lot of my time off, I’ve been studying the Bible,” Williams said in a Zoom call with ESPN. “And I feel like the main thing is really believing in God’s kingdom.”

The tennis star also said that she believes the Bible holds the key to overcoming racial prejudice in the face of increased tension in the US over the treatment of African Americans – particularly by the police.

She said: “Personally, I think after, well, over 400 years of having black people treated a certain way, to expect change – and it hasn’t happened in that long – I feel like it’s going to take a long time. Ultimately I think the only thing that can fix it is what I believe.”

Ms Williams has previously thanked God for blessing her throughout her career, crediting him for her success.

“I was down and out and he helped me today and I just said prayers, not to win but to be strong and to be healthy and in the end – I was able to come through so I have to give the glory to him first and foremost,” she said.


Her Faith has also helped her through dark periods in her life and following the death of her sister, she said she devoted more time to her faith.

“I tried to develop a better relationship with God,” she told *The New York Times* in an interview. “You have a strong solid foundation, the Bible says, you won’t crack, but the man who built his house in the sand, his house went down spiritually. I have a really strong foundation. That’s how I was raised.”



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Roscommon parish criticises 'uncooperative' Massgoers

Staff reporter

The "downright rude and uncooperative" behaviour of a small number of Massgoers in Carrick-on-Shannon has been criticised amid ongoing Covid-19 restrictions.

A note in the parish bulletin reads that the overall response "of our parishioners has been very positive. It has also enabled us to join with different families from our parish in celebrating anniversary Masses."

However, as the numbers of parishioners attending grew, volunteers had to manage the number of people in attendance and this led to issues. "It is a major disappointment to learn that a small number of people have been downright rude and uncooperative with our volunteers," the bulletin states.

"We will now have to closely monitor our numbers attending and if we deem it necessary, we may have to introduce a ticketing system as we don't wish to have to turn people away," it notes.

Nuns receive unexpected fruits after apple theft

Ruadhán Jones

Following the "frustrating" theft from their orchard, the sisters of the Priory of St Benedict in Co. Cork were delighted with the unexpected good that came of it.

The priory in Cobh is home to an order of contemplative nuns, who welcome the public to their chapel and Bible Garden. But the sisters recently discovered that ten wheelbarrow loads of apples had been stolen by some unwanted visitors from their orchard, and reached out to the local community for support. The sisters rely on the apples to make products that they sell to fund their community.

"I was advised by the gardaí to enquire locally if anyone had seen anything," the

prioress, Mother Catherine told *The Irish Catholic*. "Our friends around the monastery were indignant that someone would steal our apples...one of them contacted a TD and he contacted the Office of Public Works (OPW) and managed to get them on board to replace the apples."

Workers from a nearby OPW site packed apples into boxes and delivered 30 of them to the sisters to make up for their loss.

Donations

But the unexpected benefits didn't end there as more donations followed after the story spread.

"Over a few apples, it's astonishing. It shows how God works in mysterious ways," according to Mother Catherine.

"The whole of Ireland now knows that there's a monastery in Cobh, which they didn't realise before," said Mother Catherine. "A lot of people have been asking for prayers and sending in contributions to our apple fund. We got some apples from Keeling's in Dublin. There's been a very generous response."

Mother Catherine hopes that it would be a small sign of the good God can make from evil in these difficult times.

"I was just really happy, at a time when everybody is struggling and things are so unstable, to be able just in this small kind of way to say that God can bring good out of evil," she said.



Sisters of the Priory of St Benedict in Co. Cork with some of the apples donated following the theft of their own crop from the priory's orchard.

Archbishop Neary: Mary offers hope in midst of pandemic

Jason Osborne

The example of the Mother of God should offer hope in the midst of the pandemic to people worried about the future, Archbishop Michael Neary has said.

Speaking at Knock Shrine on the Solemnity of the Assumption at the weekend, Fr Neary reflected on "the uncertainty which is brought about by Covid-19, the fear about employment and the economic situation".

"Hopelessness is preva-

lent and powerful in so many areas. We have experienced a loss of the structured reliable world that gave meaning and coherence and we find ourselves in a context where the most treasured and trusted symbols of faith and hope are disregarded and trivialised," he said.

Turning to the comfort that the feast offers, the archbishop urged the faithful to trust in hope as "an anti-dote to this mentality".

"All of us who are followers of Jesus and companions

of Mary on our Faith journey share her destiny. The glimpse of future glory, which we get on this feast, should inspire within us a profound attitude of comfort and hope," he said.

On the Marian feast, Dr Neary suggested that people turn to Mary as she "urges us not to abandon our ideals, as we struggle for consolation, meaning and hope".

He said the commemoration of the Assumption is a reminder of the "significance of hope" as we cope with the challenges confronting society.

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So much for having a ‘universal’ outlook

I have friends who are on holiday in Italy at the moment, and they are having a wonderful time. Access to the historic monuments is spaced and well-arranged. Pompeii is as awesome as ever and Naples as full of life and charm as it always was. The lakes are fabulous (even if the Med is inclined to be polluted). The Italians, as ever, are the most charming and warm-hearted people, and this being August, the Marian feasts are beautifully observed.

Italy is on a ‘green’ list of countries to visit – that is to say, it is deemed to be safe from disproportionate risks of Covid-19 contagion – or as safe as anything in life can reasonably be expected to be. Italy is also at the heart and centre of our civilisation.

Therefore, my sympathies are inclined towards Michael Cawley, Chairman of Failte Ireland, who has been named and shamed – and effectively made to resign – because he went on a pre-booked family holiday to Italy.

“An individual in charge of a country’s tourism does need to go to other countries to research how they manage their tourism”

It is not illegal to travel to Italy, and the Department of Foreign Affairs’ advice not to do so unless ‘essential’ is not backed by the force of law. It is simply advice.

I would say there is quite a strong argument that a man with a very responsible job might justifiably consider a holiday ‘essential’ for himself and his family.



Mary Kenny

Moreover, an individual in charge of a country’s tourism does need to go to other countries to research how they manage their tourism. It is part of his job.

Mr Cawley chose to fall on his sword when he got the call from the Minister for Tourism, Catherine Martin, telling him she was “disappointed”, the way teachers used to tell some of us they were “disappointed” with our behaviour this term. Wag finger!

Independence

Independent TD Michael McNamara showed an ability to think independently by suggesting that Ireland

was entering a “period of hysteria” by anathemising Michael Cawley.

Yes, some people will think that Mr Cawley showed poor judgement in going abroad at this time; and many individuals who are themselves subject to restrictions resent others who seem to avail of, or take, more liberties. Opinions will differ.

Yet I feel that some people will only be satisfied when Ireland shuts off all contact with the outside world, like 17th Century Japan. The very opposite principle, incidentally, of the sense of universality that has always been part of the Catholic Church’s values.

● Joe Biden [pictured], the Democratic candidate to be the next President of the US, is 77 years old, but as *Financial Times* commentator Janan Ganesh quipped in smart-aleck mode: “Biden is not 77 the way Mick Jagger is 77.”

Indeed not. Mr Biden’s age is a concern to his supporters because he sometimes seems rather forgetful and absent-minded. (I can relate! I seem to misplace my reading glasses several times a day – thankfully, I’m not running for office.)

Mr Biden’s cognitive condition means that effectively, people expect the real Presidential power to be transferred to his running-mate, Kamala Harris. And one of the first organisations to congratulate Ms Harris was Planned Parenthood, the American abortion providers, who announced that they were ‘thrilled’ at Kamala Harris’s nomination, and very pleased that she was pledged to ensure greater access to abortion when she gets to the White House.

Just so we know where she stands.



Glad I don’t have to keep this house in order

The Bible warns us against covetousness, and unfortunately, reading all about Harry and Meghan’s new home in Santa Barbara, California puts me in serious danger of this transgression against the Ten Commandments.

Why can’t I have a nine-bedroom, 16-bathroom house costing \$14.65m in beautiful Montecito, with a pool, tennis court, teahouse, children’s cottage, library, office, spa, sauna, gym, theatre, wine cellar and

peerless rose gardens?

Poring over the details of the estate constitutes, surely, what Maeve Binchy used to call “property porn”.

Then I remind myself that there is always a serpent in Eden, and with the lure of fabulous dwellings comes the accompanying responsibilities. Imagine having to clean 16 bathrooms – or even employing someone to do so! Imagine having to invest so much time and energy

in taking care of such a mansion and its estate.

And imagine the \$6.5m mortgage repayments annually! Not to mention the ferocious inspections by the US tax man – the famously zealous IRS who extracts every cent possible?

And so my covetousness is more usually dampened down by considering the worries and responsibilities that go with acquisitions, rather than the promptings of virtue.



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No room in Church for intolerance warns archbishop

Jason Osborne

Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin [pictured] has warned that there must be no place within the Church for "narrowness and bitterness".

He said that Catholics down the ages "have seen believers build barriers of narrowness and bitterness, when they think they are simply being zealous in defending the message of Jesus".

Speaking at Mass in Dublin's Pro-Cathedral at the weekend he lamented what he described as a "growing polarisation" within the Church, saying that there are some who feel they are "zealously defending" the Church, while being intolerant and disrespectful towards those with whom they disagree.



"Hatred and intolerance can never foster goodness and love. Hate language can never be reconciled with the teaching of Jesus," he explained to the Faithful present.

He insisted that there are valuable lessons for believers from the past. "Where in its history intolerance had spread within the Church, these have not been moments of nobility in Church history but the opposite."

"Wherever intolerance has entered into a dominant role in society, society has been impoverished and undermined," he said.

Dr Martin warned: "When believers and indeed Church communities become narrow minded and judgemental, they leave people marginalised and unloved with their

hope blunted and their dignity broken," he said.

This comes on the heels of what he described as "examples of growing racism and intolerant language here in our own country".

Stories

The archbishop was speaking of a recent incident which saw a young woman, Xuedan (Shelley) Xiong, being allegedly racially abused before she was pushed by a group of young people into the Royal Canal in Dublin.

The archbishop said he was "scared" when he hears "stories of racist intolerance by groups of young people".

He said that the Catholic community must take the lead in tackling intolerance saying it "must be a Church where people are welcomed, respected and cherished even in their difference".

Clogher announces clerical changes

Staff reporter

Bishop Larry Duffy of Clogher has announced a fresh round of parish appointments due to come in to effect early next month.

Msgr Richard Mohan PP, Clones will become pastor emeritus (PE) Clones, residing at Aghadrumsee. Fr Peter

Corrigan PP, Killeevan-Currin-Aghabog will remain as PE Killeevan-Currin-Aghabog. Fr John Halton PP, Tempo (Pobal) to become PE, Tempo (Pobal).

Msgr Peter O'Reilly PP VG Enniskillen will also become PP, Tempo (Pobal) while Fr Jim Moore PP, Fintona (Donacavey) will become PP Clones and also to be PP Killeevan-Currin-Aghabog. Meanwhile,

Canon Pat McEntee PP, Dro-more will also be PP Fintona (Donacavey) while Fr Kevin Connolly CC, Clones will move to Fintona as curate.

Bishop Duffy expressed his thanks to the clergy of the diocese for their "generous service to the people of God" and willingness to adapt during the Covid-19 pandemic.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Cycle Against Suicide aims to raise funds

● Underlining the fact that one person dies of suicide in Ireland every day, campaigners are hoping to raise awareness in the lead up to World Suicide Prevention Day on September 10. Cycle Against Suicide are inviting people in communities across Ireland to become Bike4Life champions to join with them and cycle a million kilometres in solidarity, to help create a culture where suicide and mental health stigma are replaced by empathy, understanding and accessible help.

Full details are available on: <http://www.cycleagainstsuiticide.com/bike4life-the-mkm-challenge/>

Bishop announces Raphoe clergy changes

● Bishop Alan McGuckian has announced three new clergy changes in the Raphoe diocese. East Donegal priest Fr Niall Coll will be returning to the diocese after 19 years teaching in St Mary's University, Belfast. He will be taking up the role as parish priest of Drumholm (Ballintra) from September 11.

Other clergy appointments for Glenswilly: Msgr Kevin Gillespie, Administrator at St Eunan's Cathedral, Letterkenny will also be Administrator of Glenswilly and Temple Douglas. Fr Jonathan Flood, Chaplain at St Eunan's College Letterkenny will also be Curate in Glenswilly starting September 4.

Uncertainty over closures of Sisters of Charity-owned nursing homes

Ruadhán Jones

Two nursing homes owned by the Sisters of Charity were closed suddenly, taking staff, residents and the nuns themselves by surprise, sources say.

The closure of Dublin nursing homes St Monica's and St Mary's and convalescent home Caritas was due to economic constraints.

The sisters released a statement saying they "are very concerned about what has emerged in these three independent companies".

The statement points out that the homes were set up as independent companies to provide "professional management to take over from the ageing sisters to run the establishments professionally and with the best advice into the future".

Board

A number of sisters sat on the independent boards, with two sisters on the board of St Mary's, one sister on the board of St Monica's and two sisters on the board of Caritas.

It is claimed that those sisters felt bound by confidentiality from discussing goings on at their particular board with the congregation's leadership or with those sisters who sat on the boards of the other two companies.

The statement continued, adding that "the congregation is very disappointed to learn that there may not be enough funds to pay statutory redundancy to the staff".

The Labour Court ruled that the congregation should offer workers in the three homes public sector-scale redundancy payments.

The sisters have made no response as yet to the ruling. The congregation this week referred *The Irish Catholic* to a Dublin-based public relations firm.



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Breda O'Brien

The View



The US election poses yet another difficult choice for Catholics. Yes, Joe Biden plays on his Catholic heritage to the extent that he has featured his 2016 meeting with Pope Francis in campaign advertisements.

However, in that same video, he also talked about meeting a group of nuns the same day, "lovely women" who reminded him of all his Catholic schooling had given them. That would be very touching, except that Biden approved of violating the consciences of the Little Sisters of the Poor by forcing them to pay for contraceptive coverage for their employees. He still holds that position.

Abortion is not the only moral test for a candidate but it is an essential one. And Mr Biden's record on abortion is abysmal. He has clung to the 'personally opposed but cannot legislate for other's choices' line for a very long time, the Pontius Pilate approach to politics.

Kamala Harris is his choice of running mate and she has a perfect 100% rating from Planned Parenthood. Along with other groups, Planned Parenthood has issued a warning to media outlets from a newly-formed organisation called We Have Her Back. Ostensibly, the aim is to prevent sexist and racist coverage of women candidates.

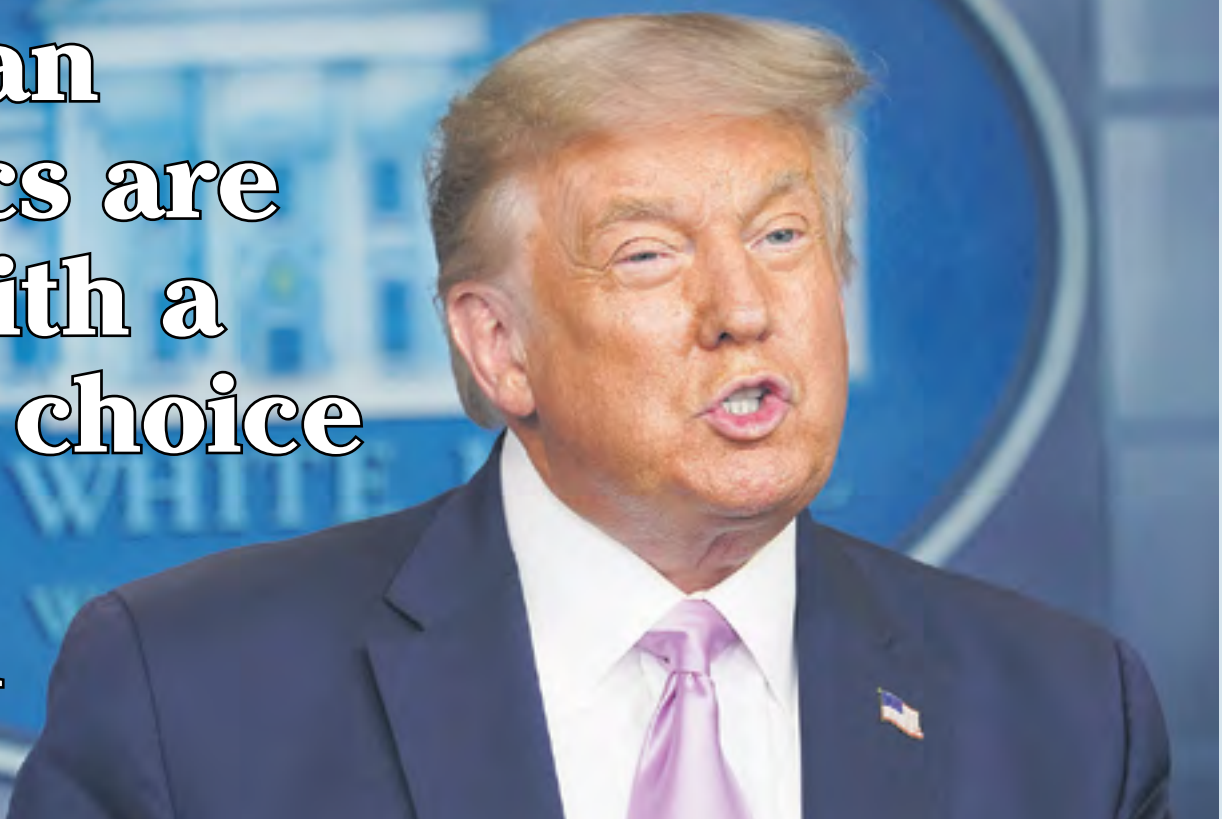
Valerie Jarrett, former senior advisor to Barack Obama and Cecile Richards, former president of Planned Parenthood, are two of the signatories. It is true that women are subjected to greater scrutiny than men when it comes to looks and likeability, whatever the latter is.

This is wrong. But there is also something odd about a group like We Have Her Back declaring "we will be watching you" to a media which quite often is already terrified of being out of step with the current zeitgeist.

Erratic

Mind you, there was no such backing for Sarah Palin from the same kind of people, and not because she was erratic and controversial. (The We Have Her Back group was formed to defend Democratic women candidates before Kamala Harris was announced and would have defended any Democratic female VP candidate.) Cecile Richards wrote a *Huffington Post* blog in 2012 about John McCain's

American Catholics are faced with a terrible choice in the election



choice of running mate. She declared: "Women voting for McCain-Palin is like chickens voting for Col. Sanders. This is not a risk we can afford to take." Not so much 'we have her back' as we will stab in the back any woman who does not share our views but we will unquestioningly support any woman who is pro-choice, no matter what her other failings.

Then there is Donald Trump and Mike Pence. No-one should write off 'the Donald' even though at the moment his chances are looking poor. However, Ronald Reagan was 77 when he retired from the presidency. Joe Biden is already older than that. If Mr Biden is elected, he will be 82 at the end of his first term and it is unlikely that he will run again. Will fear of a Kamala Harris presidency in four years work to Mr Trump's advantage? Who knows?

“The President's attitudes towards women are repellent and his bullying ways sully everything that he touches”

If it does, for most voters it will not be racism or sexism that motivates them but disagreement with what Kamala Harris stands for.

On the one hand, you have Mr Trump, who is publicly pro-life but

whose attitudes towards women are repellent and whose bullying ways sully everything that he touches. On the other hand, you have Mr Biden and Ms Harris, who have no concern for justice for human beings before birth and who as alleged left-wing candidates pose no threat to the worst ravages of capitalism.

Just as in Ireland, US voters are often reluctant to look beyond the dominant parties even when those parties have repeatedly given them many reasons not to trust them.

Candidate

There is one tiny party whose candidate is not even on the ballot in many states, although some states allow voters to write in the candidate of their choice. It is the American Solidarity Party (ASP) and their candidate, Brian Carroll, an Evangelical Christian, is completely in tune with Catholic teaching on everything from abortion to the environment.

A cynic might say that a candidate with no hope of election can be as Utopian as he or she pleases but reading his website, it is so refreshing to see someone asking questions like: Who is my neighbour? How can we help the most vulnerable? How can we reduce inequality in US society?

Amar Patel, vice-chair of the American Solidarity Party, whose parents emigrated to the US from India in the 1960s, is his running mate. People will

see voting for this pair as wasting a vote, but if enough people voted for them, the big behemoths would have

to pay attention.

Of course, a media truly interested in challenging the *status quo* would at least

highlight the difference that the ASP represented, but what are the chances of that?

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The culture of death now has its sights on newborns



More and more doctors will be willing to end a life deliberately and doctors who disagree will be driven out, writes **David Quinn**

Eight years ago, during the furore following the death in a Galway hospital of Savita Halappanavar, the



then bishop of Kilmore, Leo O'Reilly, warned that introducing abortion legislation even in a limited way would be "a first step on the road to a culture of death".

Then Minister for Communications, Pat Rabbitte,

described the language as "strident".

Bishop O'Reilly told RTÉ: "This would be a radical change in the culture of life that we have had here in this country – and let's not make any mistake about it – it would be an irrevocable

change, there would not be any going back.

"And that, we believe, would be the first step on the way to what Pope St John Paul has called a culture of death," he said.

Dr O'Reilly insisted that even if the intention is to have very limited abortion, it inevitably leads to a more liberal regime.

Events have since fully vindicated what he had to say. Almost as soon as the ink was dry on Ireland's first piece of abortion legislation in mid-2013, the way was being paved for a referendum to delete the Eighth Amendment from the Constitution. The only thing that delayed it until 2018 was the marriage referendum of 2015. They wanted to get that out of the way first, followed by a further softening up of public opinion.

Arguments

Today, we have one of the most permissive abortion regimes in Europe, and in its first year of operation, as we learnt recently, 6,666 terminations took place in the country. If that is not the culture of death, then what is?

In the run-up to the 2018 referendum, Bishop Kevin Doran warned that if we repealed the Eighth Amendment, we would then move on to euthanasia and assisted suicide.

He said: "I am convinced

that if we concede any ground on abortion, the very same arguments which are now being used to justify abortion will be used to justify ending the lives of frail elderly people and people with significant disability. This is the final frontier. If we cross it, there will be no easy way back."

Bishop Doran was accused of scaremongering.

But in 2015, even before we repealed the pro-life amendment, John Halligan TD (now retired) introduced a Private Members Bill to the Dáil that would have paved the way for assisted suicide if passed.

An Oireachtas committee considered the matter of assisted suicide a couple of years later. Another left-wing TD, Gino Kenny, has now take up the Halligan Bill.

We can see that both Bishop O'Reilly and Bishop Doran were entirely correct.

It's worth looking back at *Evangelium Vitae*, published in 1995, to see what it said about the 'culture of death'.

“In Belgium, pro-life doctors have clearly been all but driven out of working with unborn and newborn infants”

Introducing the term, Pope St John Paul, said it obscures the right to life and is "actively fostered by powerful cultural, economic and political currents which encourage an idea of society excessively concerned with efficiency. Looking at the situation from this point of view, it is possible to speak in a certain sense of a war of the powerful against the weak: a life which would require greater acceptance, love and care is considered useless, or held to be an intolerable burden, and is therefore rejected in one way or another. A person who, because of illness, handicap or, more simply, just by existing, compromises the well-being or life-style of those who are more favoured

tends to be looked upon as an enemy to be resisted or eliminated. In this way a kind of 'conspiracy against life' is unleashed."

Liberal societies places such an extreme emphasis on personal freedom that we think we have a right, in the name of that freedom, to dispose of anything we consider burdensome including the unborn, our marriages, and now, increasingly, our own lives and those of others who are very old or infirm.

Belgium has had abortion for a long time now, in addition to euthanasia and assisted suicide which are becoming more commonplace and the law permitting them ever more permissive.

New poll

Now a new poll of doctors working in neo-natal units in Belgium's Flanders province has revealed that 89% of them would support a law allowing them to kill newborn babies found to have severe disabilities, including those which are non-life threatening. Presumably this includes Down syndrome.

In Belgium, pro-life doctors have clearly been all but driven out of working with unborn and newborn infants.

The ones left do not believe in the inviolability of all human life. They do not believe that the first duty of a doctor is do no harm. They believe it is alright to take an innocent life in certain circumstances, when that life is considered 'burdensome' by someone.

This is horrific and it is exactly what happens when the culture of death strengthens its grip. More and more doctors working in the fields of obstetrics and gynaecology and end-of-life care will be willing to end a life deliberately and doctors who believe it is always wrong to do so will be driven out, and so things will become ever worse.

What is notable is that, as it has strengthened its grip here in Ireland, no-one who attacked Bishops Doran and O'Reilly a few years ago has thought to come forward and say the two men were right, and they were wrong. I'm not sure what it would take for those who are 'pro-choice' to come forward and say things are going too far. Nothing, I suspect.

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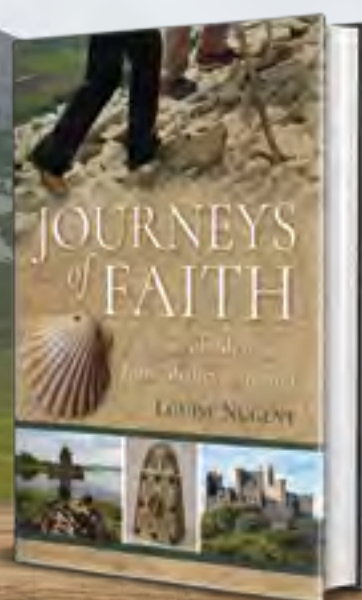
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Pattern Day at Tubrid Well



Pilgrims and visitors flocked to Tubrid Well, Millstreet, Co. Cork on Saturday for the annual Pattern day. The well is famous for its gushing springs and has been a place of pilgrimage for the people of Duhallow for centuries. The well is 12 metres in diameter and is said to be the second largest well in Britain and Ireland. Local lore recounts if a pilgrim catches a glimpse of a fish in the well a favour will be granted. Photos: Valerie O'Sullivan



A promise: the powers of evil will never conquer this Church

Today's Gospel (Matthew 16:13-20) is a story of new names. In the Bible a new name meant a new mission. First of all, Jesus asked the disciples: "Who do people say I am?" Names of former heroes were recalled. "But who do you say I am?" Simon Peter spoke up. "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

This was the first time that Jesus was given the new name, Christ. It is a name meaning the Anointed One.

To the Jews this meant the promised Messiah. In the Old Testament people were anointed unto three important roles of leadership, as prophet, priest and king. A prophet's role was to reveal God's presence and action in our lives. A priest was to mediate between people and God through leading their worship. A king was anointed to serve the people with responsibility and care. Now, all three roles are found in the one

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



person, Jesus, so he is called the Christ, the Anointed One.

Christened

Our naming day was at our baptism. In addition to our name, immediately after baptism with water, we were anointed with chrism to signify our union with Christ as our prophet, priest and king.

In a word, we were Christened, that is Christ-ened. As prophets we seek to recognise God's presence in our lives. We share in the priesthood of Christ by taking part at Mass in glorifying the Father through Jesus, with him and in him.

We share in the kingship of

Christ by working for a world guided by God's law in respect for life, in justice and sharing of the world's resources. If we live up to the grace of Baptism we will be the salt of the earth and light of the world.

This moment of recognition of Jesus as the Christ came to Simon Peter as a wonderful gift of Faith bestowed by God. Nothing shows up the shallowness of Faith so much as the careless use of these sacred names, Jesus the Christ.

Naming Peter

After Simon, son of Jonah, identified Jesus with the new name of Christ, it was the turn of Simon to receive his new name which would express his new role. Jesus recognised that the very special faith of Simon was a special gift of God.

"It was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. So now I say to you: you

are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church."

Peter means a rock. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had spoken of building a house on solid rock. The first foundation rock of the house of the Church would be Peter. He alone is promised the keys of the kingdom. Keys represent authority.

Then Jesus looked to the future: "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it." In other words, the powers of evil will never conquer this Church. Never! What a wonderful promise! After the resurrection, the Risen Lord returned to appoint Peter as the new shepherd of the flock: "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep." Peter now represents Christ the Good Shepherd, leading the flock.

Prayers

Enlightened and encouraged by

the light of the Gospel, we pray for Pope Francis, the successor of St Peter as the Bishop of Rome: as Peter was blessed in his Faith, so may his successor guide the Church with divine wisdom.

Lord, protect your Church and never allow the forces of evil to infiltrate the community of believers.

The names Jesus and Christ are sacred names. May we never use these names irreverently.

Peter received the grace of a deep faith in Jesus. May we also grow in our personal relationship with God. (Add prayers for any local, personal or topical intention)

God our Father, graciously listen to the prayers we offer in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

i Extract from Silvester O'Flynn, Gospel Reflections and Prayers, Columba Books.

Pope Francis: 'What am I leaving behind? What did I do?'



Photo: Jeffrey Bruno / Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license.

Pope stresses importance of reflecting on your 'final farewell'

Everyone would do well to reflect on their "final farewell" from earthly life said Pope Francis during a morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae.

"It will do us good," he added. "What am I leaving behind? What did I do?"

"What did I do?"

Pope Francis isn't talking about your career, or even your family. He's asking you to contemplate the difference you've made.

One way to ensure you're always doing some good is to support charities.

"How marvellous it would be if, at the end of the day, each of us could say: today I have performed an act of charity towards others!" – Pope Francis

And it's clear many people do already generously give to causes close to their hearts. The Irish Catholic's own research shows 97% of readers regularly donate to charity.

However, with so many different charities carrying out so much good work, choosing one to support is certainly not an easy decision to make.

"Poverty in the world is a scandal. In a world where there is so much wealth, so many resources to feed everyone, it is unfathomable that there are so many hungry children, that there are so many children without an education, so many poor persons." – Pope Francis.

One charity fighting poverty is Ireland's own Concern Worldwide. In fact they state their mission is to: End extreme poverty – whatever it takes.

Concern was founded in 1968 by John and Kay O'Loughlin-Kennedy – in response to the famine in the breakaway province of Biafra in Nigeria.

On Friday 6th September 1968 the MV Columcille set sail from Dublin to Sao Tome – a Portuguese island off the coast of Nigeria.

The 600 tonne ship was full of vital supplies of powdered food, medicines and other life saving items for the people suffering the horrific famine in Biafra. This single shipment was only the start of an aid mission which became one flight every day over the next 11 months.

Since then Concern has helped transform lives in 48 of the world's poorest countries, including:

- Rwanda, 1994: Concern was one of the first Irish charities to respond to the Rwandan Genocide.
- Haiti, 2010: Within 1 year of the earthquake, Concern had helped over 1,000,000

people in the country.

- Syria, 2013 – present: Concern's emergency programmes meet the urgent needs of people displaced by war.
- Nepal, 2015: After the severe earthquake, Concern provided non food items, kits and material for make-shift accommodation, repaired 14,500 homes and helped almost 80,000 people.
- 2020: As the COVID-19 outbreak continues to spread globally, our teams are mobilising to support the most vulnerable.

As you can see, no matter what the crisis, Concern always helps those in the most desperate need no matter how hard they are to reach.

Last year they responded to 102 different emergencies. And helped an incredible 27.4 million people around the world.

"What am I leaving behind?"

When Pope Francis asked this at the Domus Sanctae Marthae Mass, many may have been wondering about the impact their own lives will have. Perhaps you are too.

One thing you can leave behind is a life changing gift to your preferred charity in your Will. This ensures your legacy lives on, while supporting the charity you care for and helping save lives long into the future.

Just as Fiona from Co. Louth has for Concern. Here she explains why: *"I have two children and if they were in need, I would hope that somebody, somewhere would reach out to help them. With my legacy, I will be that person for somebody's loved ones – you could be too."*

If you join Fiona and leave a gift to Concern, your legacy can help end hunger, for good. And will help people like Nala*.

Nala lived with her mother and two brothers in a camp for displaced people in Mogadishu, Somalia. Her mother was pregnant with Nala when she and her sons fled their village which was attacked. Even in the safety of the camp, Nala's mother struggled to find food for herself and her children. So Nala never gained weight properly.

At nine months old she was barely bigger than a newborn. Fortunately this was when the family came to a Concern supported nutrition centre.

Nala was diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition and fading fast. She was immediately given therapeutic food sachets.

As you can see after a few months of receiving help, Nala was thriving.



Photo: Jennifer Nolan / Concern Worldwide.

When admitted to a Concern supported health centre in Mogadishu, nine month old Nala was extremely malnourished – and so lethargic she couldn't open her eyes.



Photo: Mohamed Abdurahab / Concern Worldwide.

Nala a few months later after receiving therapeutic food sachets.

"Charity is at the heart of the Church, it is the reason for its action, the soul of its mission." – Pope Francis

By leaving a gift in your Will to Concern, you won't just be giving food to those who desperately need it. Your gift also gives people the seeds, tools and skills to grow their own healthy crops.

Just as our supporters did for Elisabeth. She lives with her husband and their six children in central Burundi.

Elisabeth used to struggle to provide just one meal a day for the family. And could rarely afford the fresh vegetables essential for her children's healthy development.



Photo: Darren Vaughan / Concern Worldwide.

Elisabeth's 12-year-old son, Egide, helping at his family's kitchen garden

Concern gave her the tools, training, seeds and compost she needed to cultivate her own home garden.

Now she prepares well balanced meals of sweet potatoes, beans, rice, maize, cassava, tomatoes and aubergines.

It's people like you, leaving Concern a gift in their Will, who have helped save Nala, Elisabeth and their families.

To discover about how a gift in your Will can help end hunger:

- ✓ When natural disaster strikes
- ✓ When conflict threatens lives
- ✓ When poverty prevents progress

Please request your complimentary copy of 'A World Without Hunger' – Concern's legacy booklet.

Inside you'll discover how others who were desperately

in need have been helped by gifts left in the Wills of people just like you.

The booklet also answers many of the common questions people have about leaving a gift in their Will. And explains how to start the process. Naturally, requesting your free booklet does not oblige you to support Concern in any way or do anything else.

"I am proud to know that even when I am gone, by including Concern in my Will, my support will continue to help save lives." – Colm O'Byrne, Co. Galway.

* Name changed for security reasons.

To receive your free, no obligation booklet – in complete confidence – please contact Concern's Legacy Manager, Siobhán O'Connor. Call **01 417 8020**, email **siobhan.oconnor@concern.net**, or visit **www.concern.net/bequest**

CONCERN
worldwide

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WHATEVER IT TAKES**



Out&About

Paws for prayer on Irish camino

DOWN: Pilgrims enjoy St Patrick's Way in Downpatrick, which some call the 'Camino of Ireland'.



CLARE: Jowita is pictured after being confirmed into the Faith in Shannon parish.



MAYO: Carmelite Lourdes Blue Ties from Kinsale, Castlebar and Kildare mark Carmelite Sunday at Knock Shrine.

INSHORT

NI Charities urged to apply for emergency funding

The Covid-19 Charities Fund reopened on August 3 and is being administered on behalf of the Department for Communities by The National Lottery Community Fund.

It will provide financial support to charities which have lost income due to the impact of Covid-19 and are unable to cover unavoidable costs until September 30, 2020.

A diverse range of charities have already received funding ranging from £1,000 to £75,000 in the initial tranche with an average

request for £21,000 financial assistance.

During a visit to Blackie River Community Group in west Belfast, which was successful in the first funding round, Communities Minister Carál Ní Chuilín urged all eligible charities to apply to the funding programme, which will be open for three weeks.

She explained: "Blackie River Community Group was one of the successful applicants of the first round of the Covid-19 Charities Fund. I have seen how this funding from the Department for Communities will be used to enable them to continue to provide vital support for the community."

"It is really important that we help those who helped us during this global pandemic

and I am delighted to be launching the second round of the Covid-19 Charities Fund.

"Reopening for a further three weeks will ensure more groups have the opportunity to apply and I would encourage all organisations including small and grassroots groups to apply to the fund. Over a third of applications to date have been for less than £10,000 so this fund is for all charities of all sizes facing different levels of financial hardship."

The programme will provide up to £75,000 for eligible organisations and the amount of funding required to cover immediate costs and prevent short term closure will vary for each organisation.

Organisations wishing to avail of the funding programme must meet a number of eligibility points. Help is available to make an application. Further information can be found on the Department's website at www.communities-ni.gov.uk/covid-19-charities-fund

Remembering Limerick only 20th Century martyr

The Diocese of Limerick's 20th Century martyr who died violently on the missions in China was remembered recently on the 91st anniversary of his death with a memorial Mass at St Joseph's Church Galway.

Edited by Chai Brady
chai@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



KILKENNY: Bishop Denis Nulty of the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin [not pictured] baptised his goddaughters' fourth child Padraig Michael in Jenkinstown in the Diocese of Ossory. Baby Padraig is pictured with the rest of the family Michelle and Nicky and Aisling, Conor and Ava.



LAOIS: Baby Fiadh is baptised in Abbeyleix parish.



LAOIS: Olan is baptised in Abbeyleix parish.



GALWAY: A memorial Mass in St Joseph's Church for the first Columban missionary to be martyred was celebrated by Fr Gerry Neylon, SSC. Also pictured are Carmel and John Leonard. They're pictured beside the ordination picture of Fr Timothy Leonard who was martyred in China in 1929.



LAOIS: Erin is baptised in Abbeyleix parish.



DUBLIN: Fr Peter O'Connor thanks volunteer sacristan Maurice for doing "a great job" cleaning their incense thurible in Ballyroan parish.

It was celebrated by fellow Columban Fr Gerry Neylon. Fr Timothy Leonard was the first of 24 Columban martyrs to lose their lives on the missions. He was taken captive on July 15, 1929 while celebrating early morning Mass in his church in Nang Feng.

He was taken from the altar by communist bandits and was killed. He was stabbed and partially beheaded. His crime was "practising religion".

He was brought up on a farm in Ballysimon, Co. Limerick. After his ordination at Maynooth in 1918 for the Diocese of Limerick he joined the newly-formed Maynooth mission to

China (now Columban Missionaries). He was in the first group to go to China in 1920, led by the founder Fr Edward Galvin (later to become Bishop Galvin).

He served for nine years in two provinces – Hanyang and Jiangsi – returning home in 1924 on promotional work. During this visit he was warned of the dangers of working amongst the communists in China by the parish priest of Athea, County Limerick, Fr Fenton.

His response was "what is it but a bad quarter of an hour and then think of the reward".

Fr Leonard's cousin, John Leonard,

told *The Irish Catholic*: "Like Saints Peter and Paul he was prepared to die for his Saviour. His zeal for spreading the Gospel of Christ was boundless.

"It has emerged from research recently conducted by myself [his cousin John M. Leonard] that his funeral cortege in 1929 brought the city of Nan Feng to a standstill with 10,000 people lining the streets which were cleared of all market stalls.

"Timothy Peter Leonard, priest of the diocese of Limerick and Columban father, won the crown of formal martyrdom by dying for his Faith. He remains the only Limerick diocesan martyr of the 20th Century."

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.



Mural unveiled

Fr Stephen Quinn
OCD addressing
the gathering as the
mural was unveiled
in Derry. Photos:
Gerry Temple



Ruadhán Jones

A mural dedicated to Sr Clare Crockett has been unveiled in her native Derry as local devotion grows to the inspiring woman described as a “witness of Christ”.

Sr Clare was killed in an earthquake while helping to shield children at an orphanage in Ecuador.

The mural, which was blessed by Fr Stephen Quinn OCD of Termonbacca Monastery on Sunday, depicts the face of Sr Clare and includes a prayer for her intercession.

Fr Quinn told *The Irish Catholic* he hopes that the “outstanding” mural will become a focal point to draw attention to Sr Clare’s powerful witness.

“Everything we do is about awareness, reminding people of the witness and message of Sr Clare,” he says. “So often in the North, the murals are about history, glorifying things that came out of the past – this mural is about the future.”

The mural is located in Brandywell in the city where Sr Clare grew up and where a strong local devotion has emerged.

The funds for the mural were raised through selling candles with her face on them – over 1,000 were sold in just the first 24 hours.

“There is a strong local devotion building,” said Fr Quinn. “We tried this candle thing and it just took off. We sold 6,000 of them, no bother. In less than six weeks we got enough money to pay for the mural to be done.”



to 'witness of Christ' Sr Clare



Celebrating the sacraments after lockdown



Banned under lockdown, we can now return to the sacraments but not as we knew them writes Ruadhán Jones

Typically, almost 17,000 children are confirmed every year in the Archdiocese of Dublin alone. Only a minute percentage of these have been able to take place thus far. Similarly, during lockdown thousands of weddings were cancelled around the country. Typically half of all weddings in Ireland are Catholic.

With continuing uncertainty regarding attendance and numbers, it's likely that this trend won't change soon. And with three counties under a fresh lockdown, uncertainty continues for parishioners there. However, a number of parishes have announced their plans to plough on with Confirmations and Communion, and wedding bells are ringing again, but with numbers in line with the Government guidelines.

“The traditional, large-scale celebrations will be pared back this year and likely for the foreseeable future”

So, while Phase 4 has been delayed, preparations continue for all those whose confirmations, communions, baptisms and weddings had been postponed. If you're a parent or a (hopeful) future spouse – perhaps even a potential communicant – how can you prepare yourself or your child for the upcoming sacrament?

Check Government guidelines

I think we all get it at this point – the situation is fluid, volatile, liable to change quickly or for proposed changes to be revoked. As such, it's wise to keep up as best you can with the changing guidelines direct from the source. Gov.ie is where official Government guidance is posted and is your best source for the official line.

While not essential to preparing for the Sacraments themselves, it is important if you want to know when you'll have them and how many friends and family can attend. As it stands, Phase 4 has been delayed due to a rise in the R-number.



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

That means the proposed increase to 100 people indoors and 500 for outdoor gatherings has been postponed until at least August 31. For Churches there is a bit of leeway depending on size, but the base number is currently set at 50 for indoor gatherings and 100 for outdoor.

Keep in touch with your parish/diocese

Approaches to preparing for sacraments will differ between parishes and diocese, so a good place to start is with your diocesan website to see what they recommend. For example, the diocese of Limerick currently had an online registration system for Communion and Confirmation.

A number of dioceses, including the dioceses of Limerick and Clogher, are aiming to conduct the sacraments between August and October, while ceremonies have already taken place in Down and Connor.

Many dioceses have given parishes the final say, with the caveat not to rush through the sacraments in order to get them done. Speaking to Catholicireland.net, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin even said that he was willing to consider giving priests the authority to confirm people.

Archbishop Martin suggests that this could be an indication of the future, when “the celebration

of Confirmation will be very much the responsibility of each parish and not simply of the school.

“The current pandemic will be an interesting occasion for us to come to understand exactly the level of responsibility that will be falling on parishes in the future and the need to build up teams of volunteer catechists in each parish.”

Regardless of where or when the sacraments take place, it is clear that social distancing norms will affect the number of people receiving the sacraments/in attendance. Not all churches will be able to host 50 people, while some will be able to take more; not all parishes are open yet either, which is another thing to take into consideration.

The long and the short of it, then, is to keep lines of communication with your parish open.

Take time to prepare

Dioceses and parishes are aware of the challenges facing parents, children and couples preparing to receive the various sacraments. Speaking about the sacraments of Communion and Confirmation, Bishop Leahy of Limerick said: “Schools traditionally have played a key role in the scheduling of, and preparation of children for, the celebration of the sacraments.

“I am very grateful to all the teachers who have done tremendous work in this regard.

But now circumstances demand we do things a little differently. Hopefully the new experience will be no less sacred or special for your child.”

Under normal conditions, schools or marriage preparation courses would have been centres of learning. Now, it falls back on the parent or individual themselves. Fortunately, there are plenty of online resources that can help prepare and this could be a part of the general revival of the ‘domestic Church’.

“So, while Phase 4 has been delayed, preparations continue for all those whose confirmations, communions, baptisms and weddings had been postponed”

The following list of materials is not exhaustive, nor is it an official list. You should check with your parish to confirm if they will accept them as sufficient, particularly in the instance of marriage preparation. Courses are taking place again in person in certain parts of the country which would be more advisable.

For confirmation and communion:

- iCatholic ‘Preparing for Confirmation’ series, produced for the Catechetics Council of the Irish Bishops Conference (<https://www.icatholic.ie/come-holy-spirit-episode-1/>).
- Veritas’ growinlove.ie are offering their primary school material for both communion and confirmation free for parents.
- Dynamiccatholic.com offers courses for communion, confirmation and wedding preparation. It has been recommended by a number of dioceses, though it is advised to seek confirmation from your diocese before proceeding.

Less fuss, more faith/fun

The traditional, large-scale celebrations will be pared back this year and likely for the foreseeable future. While it is a disappointment not to be able to celebrate the sacraments with the same pomp and circumstance of previous years, there are always possibilities within the disappointment.

Any of the sacraments mark important milestones within our lives, signifying our commitment to the faith and to each other. It is a good idea then to find ways to focus our minds and hearts on the event itself and not on the trappings.

It is perhaps an opportunity for us to grow in appreciation of the sacraments and their significance.

“Regardless of where or when the sacraments take place, it is clear that social distancing norms will affect the number of people receiving the sacraments/in attendance”



The Irish Spirit

August 20th, 2020
Issue No. 12

Celtic Christians

The welcoming spirit shared
through the centuries

Praying with Sr Stan
Through a modern Book of Hours

CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENTS

Fr Daniel O'Leary's reflections

PLUS GEMS FROM FR BRIAN D'ARCY'S

GOLD COLLECTION AND MORE...

The Celtic Spirit: Hospitality and Heroes *by Grace Clunie*

The offering and receiving of hospitality was one of the centrally important aspects of Celtic community. Feasting and hospitality marked many aspects of daily life – for example, welcoming visitors, honouring heroes and celebrating festivals.

God bless the poor,
God bless the sick,
God bless our human race.
God bless our food,
God bless our drink,
All homes, O God, embrace

Van De Weyer.

From the book *The Celtic Spirit and Literature*

Repeatedly, in the old mythologies, when hospitality is not respected, bad things happen. To refuse hospitality, in whatever circumstances, was worse by far than the strongest geis. Cúchulainn was compelled to accept their hospitality.

Underlying all of this was a mindset of welcome and genuine hospitality as a mark of respect for a person. It was a way of honouring a person and it has remained part of the identity and psyche of the Irish until this day. Ancient classical sources, describing the Celtic and Gaulish peoples, also make much of this aspect – the hospitality of the Celtic Spirit and their love of feasting. For example, Strabo (c. 64 bc–ad 21) wrote of the Celtic peoples:

Their houses are large and circular, built of planks and wickerwork, the roof being a dome of heavy thatch. They have such enormous flocks of sheep and herds of swine that they afford a plenteous supply of Sagi and of salt meat, not only to Rome but to most parts of Italy (Ó Duinn, 2000, p. 28).

The practice of hospitality was also an integral part of Celtic Christianity. It was rooted in a scripture from the Letter to the Hebrews: Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some have entertained angels unawares. This was a reference to the Old Testament story of Abraham and Sarah's encounter with three angels, to whom they extended the usual gracious hospitality for strangers, and then later discovered that they were messengers of God.

Hospitality was also a centrally important part of the ministry of Jesus himself. Much of his ministry and parable stories centred on hospitality as a symbol of the love and acceptance of God. For example, in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man's sin is his failure to acknowledge and offer hospitality to the one who sat at his gate in terrible need. After death Lazarus is welcomed into the heavenly realm but the rich man is turned away. Another example is the meeting between Jesus and the despised tax collector;

Zacchaeus. Being small of stature, Zacchaeus hides in the branches of a sycamore tree to get a glimpse of Jesus as he passes by in the crowd below. But Jesus stops right under the tree, gazes directly into the eyes of Zacchaeus and says: 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today'. It is a miracle of hospitality.

So, in this great tradition – both of hospitality at the heart of Celtic society and at the heart of Christian devotion – the Celtic monastic settlements were places of refuge and hospitality for the poor and the needy. They had an open door to welcome strangers. They fed the poor – it is said that St Columba's monastery in Derry fed up to a thousand people every day. They offered refuge to fugitives from justice, giving them some months of respite to prepare their case against their accuser. This also allowed a 'cooling period', hopefully enabling a more measured and just outcome. They also offered medical help to the ill – for in those ancient times finding help in times of sickness and pain was not as easy. To this day at Glendalough, in the mountains of County Wicklow, visitors can still see the ruins of this Celtic monastic way of living and the old infirmaries where the sick were treated. It was their way of identifying with the words of Christ: 'Whatever you do, to the least of these your brothers and sisters, you do to me'. In other words, hospitality is about recognising the sacredness in the other – no matter how humble they may be – because in Christ's perspective, the more humble the person, the more they need welcome and kindness.

At the heart of this practice of hospitality within Celtic Christianity was an understanding that within each person resides the sacred soul. Rooted in the opening chapter of Genesis where God says, 'Let us make humankind in our image', both male and female are made in the Divine image and to offer hospitality is to recognise the sacredness of another.

A contemporary writer in the Celtic tradition, John Philip Newell, puts it like this: At the beginning of the Hebrew Scriptures, the book of Genesis describes humanity as made in

the 'image' and 'likeness' of God... Everything else that is said about us in the scriptures needs to be read in the light of this starting point. The image of God is at the core of our being.

In the history of the world there have been many occasions when attempts have been made to 'remove the golden thread' – from an individual or from a race of people. For example, the treatment by the Nazi regime of the Jewish people, gypsy people and those of a homosexual orientation in the years of the Second World War in Europe. By reducing these peoples to 'inhuman' status they gave themselves carte blanche to do whatever they liked to them. In our day it continues in holocausts and injustices – especially to those vulnerable peoples who have no voice of influence and are therefore silenced and exploited.

“To the Celtic Christians, Christ was the ultimate hero, the one who left God's realm to follow the sacred call”

In contrast, this practice of hospitality, a treasure of sacred wisdom from ancient Celtic peoples and from the life of Jesus and the practices of Celtic monasticism, speaks of a different way that seeks the sacred – the golden thread – in the other.

In a world that is increasingly multicultural in its identity, hospitality speaks to us of the welcome and the open heart. An acceptance of others for who they are, rather than prejudging people based on labels of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation and all the other labels we attach to people nowadays. Hospitality is a way of living and relating to others which understands that beneath all the labels is the common humanity that we all share – the sacred soul.

Hospitality as a way of living is beautifully represented by Mother Theresa of Calcutta who, when asked how she sustained her compassion for her work among the poor of Calcutta, is quoted as saying: 'I see Jesus in every person. I say: This is sick Jesus I must feed him. This is poor Jesus, I must

help him'. In the same way, hospitality, in the Celtic Spirit, is the practice of an open and non-judgmental heart in our encounters with others. It is about treating others as if they were Christ himself.

Nevertheless, it must also be said that it takes courage to have an open heart. Because, no doubt, sooner or later someone will abuse your hospitality and when that happens it takes courage not to shut down your open heart. Indeed hospitality is also a journey of risk and courage that requires a foundation of compassion and wisdom; and this is a further step in exploring the concept of hospitality within the ethos of the Celtic Spirit: hospitality as a courageous journey.

There is a lovely expression of hospitality to the self in Celtic spirituality that speaks of coming home to the hearth of your own soul. To be rooted in this deep homecoming of self-acceptance, love and embrace, is the ultimate homecoming.

For many people, though, this journey of hospitality to the self takes a lifetime for all sorts of reasons. Sometimes there can be many obstacles which stand in the way of that ultimate homecoming of personal love and self-acceptance. Such obstacles may be connected with childhood years, the family, schools, churches or other social institutions; influences and experiences that may have instilled self-dissatisfaction, even self-repulsion.

The journey to the homecoming of personal hospitality may also be inhibited by adolescent experiences or career choices made and lives lived to please others instead of following the call of our own gifts and talents. So for most of us, to come home to the hearth of our own souls requires a lifetime's journey of self-discovery, eventually leading to self-acceptance and self-embrace – coming home to the hearth of your own soul. This is a journey that often requires great courage because it may require letting go of ideas, people or experiences that no longer serve us in any positive and health-giving way.

It could be said that the word 'hero' may seem a bit remote to many people. Like the word 'saint', it's hard to see ourselves as either a saint or a hero. Yet in the way of Celtic storytelling, each person is the hero or heroine of their own life story.

The Bible is also full of such heroic journeys. Abraham and Sarah, who 'went out not knowing where they were going'; Jonah, who tried to ignore the Call – and ended up in a perilous place; Mary, mother of Jesus, who heard the call and accepted it in humility, though not knowing where it would lead. It is this 'unknown' aspect of the heroic journey that requires courage to take the first step out of the familiar place. The heroic journey is about having the courage to listen to your heart and to follow its call.



“So, in this great tradition – both of hospitality at the heart of Celtic society and at the heart of Christian devotion – the Celtic monastic settlements were places of refuge and hospitality for the poor and the needy”

To the Celtic Christians, Christ was the ultimate hero, the one who left God's realm to follow the sacred call. With his disciples, he went through a time of testing in his confrontation with the religious authorities of his day. He suffered alone the supreme ordeal – crucifixion – and achieved the treasure – returning from the dead. Through this heroic journey Christ achieved the treasure of salvation for the whole earth.

In terms of the Celtic Spirit, the heroic journey speaks to us more personally and profoundly of the ultimate journey to find our own particular destiny and to come home to ourselves. In this sense the heroic cycle has the potential to be a source of inspiration and insight for all of us because it's at the heart of everyone's life. All of us encounter challenges, difficulties and times of trouble as we go through life. Our supreme ordeal may be physical or mental illness, divorce, bereavement, rejection, abuse or a multitude of other difficult life experiences. Yet these suffering experiences are the dark caves that offer us real treasure – the treasure of compassion, wisdom and understanding. As Henri Nouwen states, true


healers are wounded healers – and the hero of the heroic journey carries his wounds.

People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's what we're really seeking. I think that what we're seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances with our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive.

The fire of the soul and the rapture of being alive is the music of the Celtic Spirit – the music that calls to us from the otherworld of our authentic souls:

Years later, when Oisín was an old, old man,
And when all the other Fianna were dead,
He was asked by St Patrick
What was the music that Finn and the Fianna loved
best to hear.
Remembering those days
And the sunburnt companions who were long
gone,
He told the holy man
That the best music was
The music of what happened.






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Beautiful Sacraments

They celebrate the divine presence already in our hearts



From the book *Treasured and Transformed*
by Daniel O'Leary

It is common, unfortunately, for preachers to talk about the sacraments in terms of offering grace to graceless people. This presumes, to a greater or lesser extent, that those who do not belong to the sacramental life of the church are without grace. There is a hollow ring to that supposition. It carries no echo, except that of sadness or self-doubt, within people's spirit. In such a proclamation there is no good news. And this, in turn, contributes to the phenomenon of the faithful departing from our communities. These are the people who have given up on formal religion but who long for an authentic spirituality. They have given up because they see no relevance between their lives and their religious practices, between nature and grace. Instead of finding inspiration, strength and empowerment, they experience confusion and irrelevance.

Grace does not designate a 'supernatural' area standing above and beyond created nature: it refers, instead, to that significant ground of all being which circumscribes and supports the horizon and depth of everyday experience. The liturgy is rich with expressions of this truth. The Eucharistic Prayers and the Prefaces, the form of our sacramental celebrations, the prayers of the Roman Ritual, all point to the universal presence of God in and around everything, as the fountain, source and sustainer of creation, 'of all life and holiness'.

Grace is the innate capacity each one possesses to relate, forgive, encounter suffering, create, invent, imagine, endure, explore – indeed to do anything which is a positive option for love and growth. Grace is the context and potential transformation bound up in every moment of being and becoming, in every desire and achievement of authentic self-

“Grace is the innate capacity each one possesses to relate, forgive, encounter suffering, create, invent, imagine, endure, explore – indeed to do anything which is a positive option for love and growth”

realisation. While we are obliged to believe in the absolute giftedness of grace, we can affirm too, with equal force, in the words of the brilliant theologian, Piet Fransen, that 'grace sets our deepest humanity free, precisely because it restores our most authentic humanity to us and by this means, humanises us to an eminent degree ... Properly speaking, we do not receive grace; we do not possess it as something foreign to us, or as something entering into us from the outside; for we are our grace. As Caesar wisely observes in Thornton Wilder's *Ides of March*: "I seem to have known all my life, but have refused to acknowledge, that all love is one, and that the very mind with which I ask these questions is awakened, sustained and instructed only by love".'

Sacraments of what happens

Whether we use the word 'sacrament' in terms of Jesus Christ, of the Church or of the individual rites that vary between traditions, we are talking about celebrations of ordinary and extraordinary life, about validating the authenticity of human experience and about the individual and communal need for purification, discernment and transformation in the vicissitudes of our fragile existence. The first step towards a deeper understanding of sacraments is to see them in the context of a world already permeated and filled with God's presence.

The art is to enable people to become what they already are. The phrase 'Receive who you are' accompanied the offering of the holy bread at the Communion of the Mass in the early years of Christianity. You are the Body of Christ. Grace is orientated to our humanity in its fullness. God's basic gift to people is the lives they live and the good earth from which they make their living.

Instead of superficially perceiving those 'outside the church' as somehow unfinished or incomplete, or even nameless or neutral, or worse still, as blind and lost, perhaps, following the sensitivity of Jesus to all that his Father has created, our church will, one day, find its very meaning and mission in proclaiming the essential holiness of all people, the sacred heart of all creation. Is God diminished when God's family is sanctified? Does the church lose when the world grows more truly healthy? Is not the very work of the Spirit to reveal the innate worthiness and beauty of matter? Is it not only in the arena of the life of the world that sin and evil can be encountered and transcended?

The Vatican Council's document *The Church in the Modern World* makes it clear that in the past we overemphasised the notion of two distinct worlds, one sacred and one profane. Gregory Baum, a peritus at the Council, expresses, in *Man Becoming*, his special insight in this way: 'The radical distinction

between the sacred and the profane has been overcome in the person of Christ. In Christ it is revealed that the locus of the divine is the human. In him it is made manifest that God speaks in and through the words and gestures of people. The Christian way of worship, therefore, can no longer consist in sacred rites by which people are severed from the ordinary circumstances of their lives. Christian liturgy is, rather, the celebration of the deepest dimension of human life, which is God's self-communication to people. Liturgy unites people more closely to their daily lives. Worship remembers and celebrates the marvellous things God works in the lives of people, purifies and intensifies these gifts, makes people more sensitive to the Word and Spirit present in their secular lives. The sacraments of Christ enable people to celebrate the deepest dimension of their lives, namely, God's gift of God's self, in a way that renders the dimension more powerful.'

I never cease to be amazed at such glimpses into the meaning of revelation. And whenever we share it with others, the reaction is similar. After talks, workshops and presentations about such an understanding of the mystery of incarnation, invariably there will be those who say something like, 'What you have said is not new. We have always known it in our hearts. We have never doubted the sacredness of our lives, of our childbearing and our daily work, of our struggles to survive and grow, of our efforts to forgive and start again. Our hearts have always told us that these are holy tasks. All that's new is that now we have heard it said.' What a deep transformation it would trigger off around the Christian world were this good news to be proclaimed wherever the people are gathered around the table of the Lord.

Sacraments celebrate our lives

And so we understand the individual sacraments as privileged moments of ultimate meaning, as windows of deep disclosure, as holy X-rays that reveal the true condition of a person's or a community's inner, spiritual health. Leaving aside an often misleading or even damaging and dualistic catechesis about the sacraments, what they basically do is to take the earthly realities of our human existence – birth, reconciliation, sickness, love, the need to worship, commitment, death – and to the eyes of faith they show forth the deeper meaning hidden within, the silent activity of the Spirit, gradually sanctifying and redeeming every aspect of daily life until the time when God will be 'all in all'. In his famous *Christ the Sacrament*, Schillebeeckx reminds us that whatever is lived out in an everyday manner outside the sacraments, grows to its full maturity within them. The anonymity of everyday living is removed by the telling power of Christ's symbolic action in and through his Church. Therefore, the sacraments cannot be isolated from the organic unity of whole, human, persevering Christian life.

To be sacramentally literate, according to spiritual writer Fr Hugh Lavery, we would move beyond the constraints of time, space, numbers and immediacy. While always relying on the tangible elements of the earth for their matter and form, the essence of sacrament, whether as applied to the Saviour, to the Church, or to baptism or Eucharist, is to point away from itself, as Jesus did, to move out into a wider field of reality, to embrace within its symbolism that which could otherwise never be brought home.

Where reconciliation is concerned, for instance, there is the vital need to remember that we are all, always, forgiven for everything by virtue of the one and only sacrifice of Jesus Christ in his Passover. If anything is 'left over' to complete the mystery, as St Paul implies, it is that we forgive each other, always and everywhere, as we solemnly pray in the 'Our Father' before receiving Holy Communion at Mass. The



sacrament of reconciliation is not about begging for 'another' divine forgiveness, a 'second' type of atonement between Church and penitent, between God and sinner. Nor is it a holier, more divine reconciliation, above and beyond human forgiveness. Not everyone is aware of this, namely the true significance and necessity of the communal celebration of this sacrament.

What is celebrated is the forgiving presence of the indwelling Blessed Trinity in each human being. This is first expressed and shared in whatever ways are appropriate to the people concerned. It may be within a community, a family, a friendship or within one human heart. What is important to believe is that wherever and whenever it happens, there, and only there, is the event of grace, the power of the Spirit, the infinite and complete energy of God. Nothing else is needed. At that moment the Godhead is fully fleshed, the incarnation continues, the once-for-all paschal mystery is made present, the Holy Spirit is audible and tangible. There is no need for a two-tier hierarchy of forgiveness – one human, one divine. And yet, throughout Christian countries, Churches, parishes and schools, our liturgical preaching and sacramental catechesis often convey a confusing double-decker kind of approach to grace and nature, to the human and the divine.

Again, the sacraments do not confer a grace that was absent. Sacraments proclaim and enable us to own a love that is already present to us. A sacrament celebrates the Lord's giving, certainly. But his giving is not confined to the sacrament. What we need to focus on within the sacrament is our taking the love of God home with us, with a fresh awareness of that love. And that new awareness is the substance of the grace of the sacrament. Before reading another informative summary from Kiesling's *Paradigms of Sacramentality*, it will help to know that a 'paradigm' is an example which holds within it the essence of meaning, against which concepts can be examined and understood – a kind of fine example, a sure model.

A final note on sacramentality

Kiesling writes, 'Baptism as incorporation into the Christian community is a paradigm of the sacramentality of all entrance into human community – family, city, nation, labour union, political party, school, bridge club. Confirmation is a model of all commitment to worthy human associations, causes and ideals. Penance is paradigmatic of all human reconciliation, whether between members of families or of other communities, between proponents of opposing ideas of government.

'Further, anointing the sick is paradigmatic of the sacramentality of all care of the bodily and mentally ill, the economically and culturally deprived, the downtrodden, the rejected. Ordination is paradigmatic of the sacramentality of all human responsibility for the welfare of others, especially their

common welfare, of all human leadership and government, whether in the narrow circle of the family or the wide circle of international life. The Eucharist is paradigmatic of the sacramentality of all self-sacrifice for others and for the causes of justice, love, freedom and truth. It is paradigmatic of the sacramentality of every meal which people share and of all human sharing, whether economic, cultural or spiritual. Marriage is paradigmatic of the sacramentality of every human encounter, every human friendship, every human love. It is paradigmatic too of the banalities of daily social life of every kind. The Word of God (in the sense of the Bible, the oral traditions behind it, and the words of God's spokespeople behind them) may be added to this list as paradigmatic of the sacramentality of all human speech and communication.'

Unless we are aware of the sacramental nature of all reality and of the fact that our whole Christian life is worship, we cannot fully appreciate the constantly revealing mystery of the Incarnation, of the church and of the individual sacraments. What has been said up to now is that the world and all it contains is created out of the extravagant and unconditional love we call God. The breathtaking mystery of creation, past and present, is an incredibly beautiful sign of compassion, communicated to people, and reflecting the wisdom and loveliness of God. This, in itself, already makes the world holy and sacred. And then, this presence of the Spirit and the Word which were there from the beginning, as St John (and the sacraments) reminds us, is fleshed in Jesus Christ, consecrating again from within, a nature and an earthly reality that was sorely in need of salvation. 'Make ready for Christ,' shouts Thomas Merton, 'whose smile, like lightning, sets free the song of everlasting glory that now sleeps, in your paper flesh, like dynamite.'



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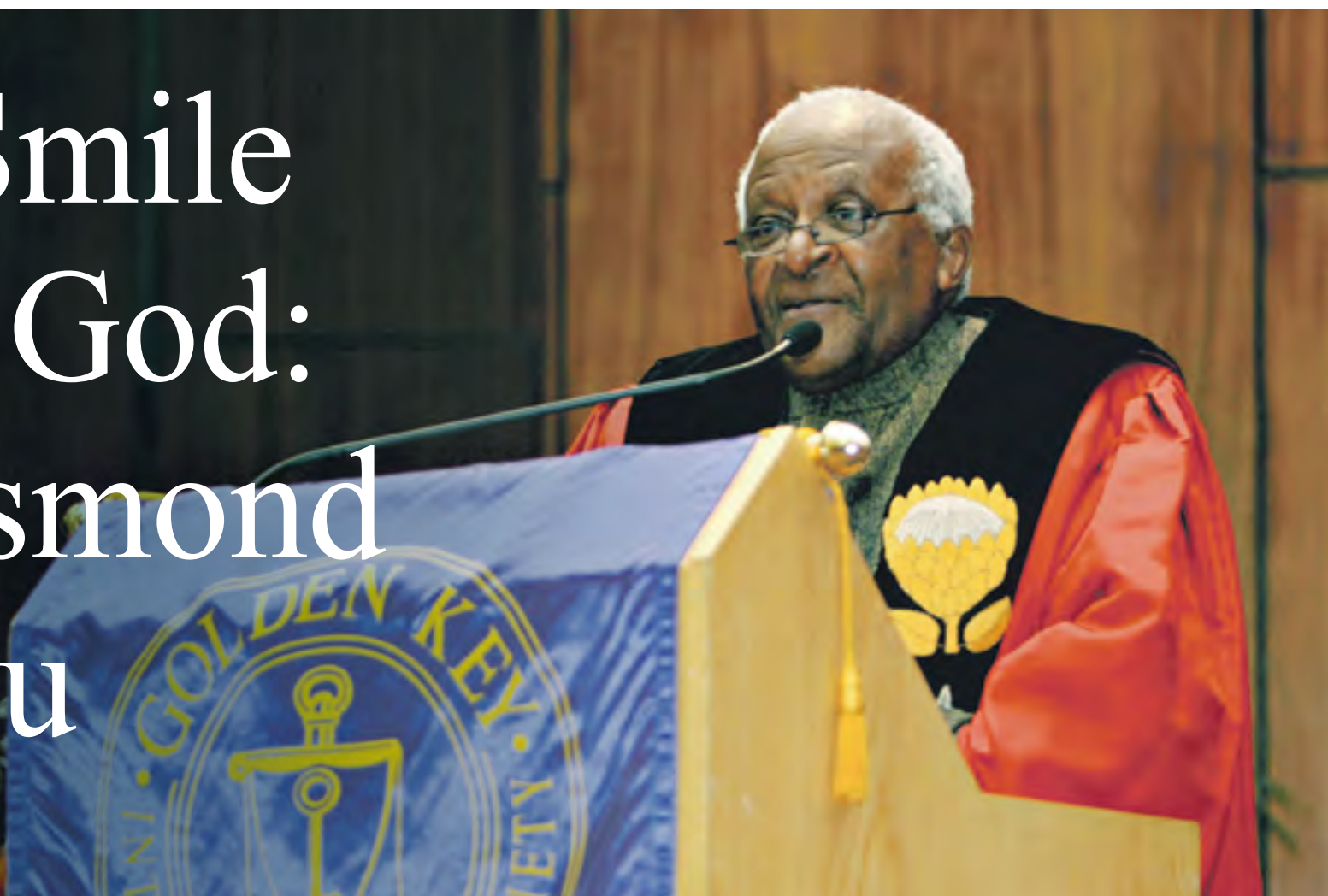
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A Smile for God: Desmond Tutu



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

The late Pope John Paul I was known as the 'smiling Pope'. Desmond Tutu is the laughing archbishop – a man who wears his humanity on his sleeve. When I was a boy, one of my favourite songs was 'What A Beautiful Noise' by Neil Diamond. To anyone lucky enough to meet him, the beautiful noise will always be the sound of Desmond Tutu's great heartfelt laugh – a sound resonant with warmth, sincerity and humanity. It is a shock to find how relaxed the former Nobel Peace Prize winner is, even though as one of the best-known faces in the world he is constantly in demand.

Although Desmond Tutu is clearly shaped by his life in South Africa, he has a wide number of contacts with Ireland. The Troubles in Northern Ireland and the efforts to find reconciliation afterwards mirrors the struggle in his country to find peace after the bitter divisions of the apartheid regime.

"For far too long we in South Africa, as in the North of Ireland, have been defined in terms of what we are against. Surely the time has come for us to be defined more by what we are for. This raises two crucial questions: What values do we witness to? How do we give witness?"

"In this perspective the Church does not in any way diminish its vocation to confess and preach Christ when it recognises that the mystery of his salvation offers an embrace of healing mercy in which everyone has a place. On the contrary, it acknowledges that in the many paths that people follow in search of happiness and good, there is a common aspiration, written in hearts and in consciences by the Creator of the world, which is the aspiration for peace. My vision is for a dialogue between the religious traditions where each should without giving up their difference seek to realise their shared hope. They should stand shoulder-to-shoulder with one another and commit themselves to

"The Ireland of the 1840s was a vision of hell - the years of a tragedy beyond belief when over a million people on this tiny island died from famine"

justice and peace for the good of all. Thus they can be a blessing to one another and the world."

I discovered upon meeting him that Archbishop Tutu has a surprisingly in-depth knowledge of Irish history. A particular area of fascination for him is the Irish famine.

"The Ireland of the 1840s was a vision of hell - the years of a tragedy beyond belief when over a million people on this tiny island died from famine. Nothing prepared people for it. Nothing could prepare anyone for the sight and smell of death on a massive scale - bundles of corpses where once there had been life.

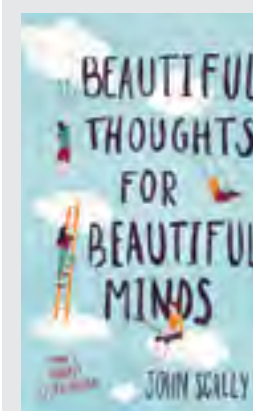
I think this is a major reason why so many Irish people have worked to help the poor in the developing world as either missionaries or aid workers. I think because of their own experience of famine the Irish people have such an obvious sympathy for the needy and the poor in the developing world. I think Irish Christians feel the need to be in solidarity with the poor because they have such devotion to the Eucharist. Sharing the bread and wine symbolises the bond of love which unites us all in God's spirit and in that way creates an authentic community."

Desmond Tutu admires many people. One of his heroines is a little surprising:

"I have a great devotion to Thérèse of Lisieux. In her whole life she fought for a 'higher way', a deeper intimacy with God and a faith that challenged others to put God first. As I am not part of the Catholic tradition I think my interest in her indicates that she has an ecumenical appeal.

"At the centre of her spirituality is prayer. C.S. Lewis is back in vogue now following the cinematic treatment of his *Chronicles of Narnia*. In his play *Shadowlands* Lewis wrote: 'That's not why I pray, Harry. I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God, it changes me.'

"I think that is part of Thérèse's appeal to us today. She encourages us to grasp the significance of retracting into oneself for inner peace, to seek solitude, silence and waiting, to be with God. It can't have been easy to reach such a prominent position in the Church at a time when women were often seen rather than heard."



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by John Scally

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MATINS – PRE DAWN
SUNDAY PRIME

*Your word is a lamp for my steps
and a light for my path.*
– Psalm 119: 105

Listening to
divine whisperings
new life
new insights
a new reality

Listening to the stillness
before dawn breaks

**Your will is my heritage, forever the joy
of my heart.**

LAUDS – DAWN
SUNDAY LAUDS

*My God You are my light and salvation.
Whom need I fear?*
– Psalm 27: 1

Dawn

new life
a genesis
a new beginning
a resurrection
a promise

as darkness moves
into light

a time

to give thanks
for the gifts of life

The Lord is the strength of my life.

PRIME – EARLY MORNING
SUNDAY PRIME

*For You alone are my hope Lord;
I have trusted You from my youth.*
– Psalm 71:5

Early Morning

pregnant with
hope
goodness
courage
seeds of new beginnings

**My life is an example to many, because
You have been my strength and
protection.**

TERCE – MID MORNING
SUNDAY TERCE

*O praise the Lord, all you nations;
acclaim Him, all you peoples!
Strong is God’s love for us;
the Lord is faithful forever.*
– Psalm 117: 1-2

Mid-morning
A time to
bless

a word
a smile
a kindness
a prayer

in blessing
my life is blessed

With humble heart I bless You, Lord.

SEXT – NOON
SUNDAY SEXT

*Alleluia!
Open to me the gates of holiness:
I will enter and give thanks.
This is the Lord’s own gate,
where the just may enter.
I will thank You for You have answered
and You are my saviour.*
– Psalm 118: 19–21

Midday –
angelus bells

an ancient Christian tradition
calling us to pray
to pray for peace.

– we pause to pray
pray for peace

**In You, O Lord, I have set my soul;
in silence and peace.**

NONES – AFTERNOON
SUNDAY NONES

*How great is the goodness, Lord,
that You keep for those who fear You,
that You show to those who trust You
in the sight of all.*
– Psalm 31: 19

Aware of the
impermanence
transitoriness
and limitations
of this life

Aware of the
permanence
timelessness
and mystery
of eternal life

**You, O Lord, are my rock, my
stronghold.**

VESPERS – EVENING
SUNDAY VESPERS

*I will praise You, Lord my God, with all my heart
and glorify Your name forever,
for Your love to me has been great,
You have saved me from the depths of the
grave.*
– Psalm 86: 12-13

Evening descends
light fades
day closes in
as silence falls
on the world

Setting aside our day
with serenity

The Lord gives grace and glory.

COMPLINE – NIGHT
SUNDAY COMPLINE

*If I should walk in the valley of darkness,
No evil would I fear.
You are there with your crook and your staff;
with these You give me comfort.*
– Psalm 23: 4

Receptivity
a condition of the night
entrusting the day with gratitude

**Only goodness and faithful love will
pursue me all the days of my life.**



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THE GIFT OF HAPPINESS

Learning to live joyfully is a formidable challenge. We are all trying to learn this difficult art, and some of us are better at it than others. Cardinal Newman once wrote, 'I do not fear that I may have to die. I fear that I have never lived.'

The resurrection of Jesus lights our path, as does the promise of eternal life. We should be happy, render others happy and not wait for a better world. We should be grateful for every moment in life.

Is it possible to take such advice seriously? Can we simply decide to be happy? There are some who find the idea absurd. There is so much suffering in the world that we could question whether one even has the right to pursue the goal of happiness. Yet God made us for happiness.

God waits patiently for us to understand that happiness is possible, even in the midst of pain and sorrow. Parallel to the river of sorrow flows the river of joy.

Translating this level of faith into action takes effort and imagination, but it can be done. Here are some ideas to help you on our spiritual journey:

Look at the people you meet today with gratitude in your heart. Each of them is God's child and we are called to love them.

Be grateful to God for all the food you eat today. Take the initiative and make one phone call or write one letter today as a way of telling someone that you care.

Practise some kindness today; smile more often than usual. Give a compliment today; point out the good in others.

Forgive those who have offended you. If you want to understand God's gift of happiness and joy, you must first believe in him, not the other way around.

Believe deeply and, in a leap of faith, joy will surely come to you.

SLOW ME DOWN, LORD

Slow me down, Lord.
Ease the pounding of my heart by the quieting of my mind.
Steady my hurried pace with a vision of the eternal reach of time.
Give me, amid the confusion of the day,
The calmness of the everlasting hills.
Break the tensions of my nerves and muscles
With the soothing music of the singing streams that live in my memory.
Help me to know the magical, restoring power of sleep.
Teach me the art of taking minute vacations,
Of slowing down to look at a flower;
To chat with a friend, to pat a dog,
To read a few lines from a good book.
Slow me down, Lord, and inspire me
To send my roots deep into the soil of life's enduring values
That I may grow towards the stars of my greater destiny.

GOD'S LOVE IN CREATION

Francis of Assisi saw God's love in creation. He talked about Brother Sun and Sister Moon. What he thought centuries ago has become fashionable today. He said everyone has a dignity because everyone is a child of God.

THE THREE GIFTS

There was a mother who had three very successful sons. They decided to make her birthday very special for her. The first one was a builder so he bought a huge mansion for his mother. There were nine bedrooms in it, twelve bathrooms, garages and God knows what else. The second son thought he would buy her a top-of-the-range Mercedes. The third son knew his mother was religious so he decided to get her something special. He travelled the world and eventually found a rare and wonderful parrot that could repeat random verses from the Bible.

A month later they visited her and each wanted to know how his gift had been received. The mother said to the first one, 'Well, the house was beautiful, but I have discovered I can only sleep in one room at a time. And all these rooms have to be cleaned. My little old house could be done in half an hour. I wish I were back in my old house.' To the second son who bought the Mercedes, she said, 'It is a beautiful car and it is very comfortable. But I'm afraid I'll scratch it. I was far more comfortable in my old banger.' To the third son she said, 'I have to say it was a wonderful present, because that little bird you bought me was the tastiest bit of chicken I have ever eaten in my life.'



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Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

For all intents and purposes, as a liturgical matter Italy's coronavirus pandemic is over as of the weekend.

Beginning on Sunday, family members and friends are no longer required to observe social distancing when they come to church, and churches are once again able to have choirs at Mass and the assembly can sing.

In other words, the sound of music is back.

In addition, large churches that can safely accommodate more than 200 people, which has been the cap up to now, can do so.

Those decisions came from Italy's Minister of the Interior, upon the advice of the Technical-Scientific Committee that's been guiding the country's response to the coronavirus, and in response to a series of questions posed by the Italian bishops' conference.

Aside from the requirement of wearing masks and the still-empty fonts of holy water at the entryways, going to Mass is now pretty much like it was before all this happened – with the exception of the minor miracle that Italians actually have learned how to form an orderly line for the reception of communion, which is literal proof that God can write straight with crooked lines.

Restrictions

What's also apparently over, though no one's quite said so out loud, is the Church/state debate that the now-expired government restrictions created when they were first imposed in March.

In effect, the Italian situation is a classic example of nothing succeeding like success.

Italy went into a nationwide lockdown on March 8, and as part of the quarantine, public Masses were suspended throughout the country. The Italian bishops conference decreed the shutdown, and although technically a conference has no authority under Canon Law to compel individual bishops to obey its dictates, not a single Italian bishop defied the order.

At the time, the decision stirred considerable debate in Italian Catholic circles, especially among more conservative and tradition-minded figures. Some insisted that the Italian constitution guarantees freedom of religion, so the government had no business telling the Church to suspend Masses.

A woman arriving at a Rome airport from Romania takes a voluntary coronavirus test as part of increased precautions taken for foreign arrivals in Italy. Photo: CNS



Going to Mass in Italy starts to get back to normal...almost

Further, critics argued, the bishops were making the fatal mistake of capitulating to the idea that the Mass is not an 'essential service', such as grocery stores, pharmacies and even tobacco shops, all of which remained open.

In a March 13 letter to priest friends in Rome, even one of Pope Francis' personal secretaries, Fr Yoannis Lahzi Gaid, voiced that sort of anxiety. "I think of the people who will certainly abandon the Church, when this nightmare is over, because the Church abandoned them when they were in need," he wrote. (Gaid left his position as a papal secretary on August 1, though he continues as a member of a committee created in 2019 to oversee implementation of a document on human fraternity signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar in Abu Dhabi.)

Had the restrictions imposed by Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte failed, if they had come to be seen as excessive or pointless, no doubt those critics would be seizing the moment right now to drive their point home, shouting

from the rooftops to claim vindication.

Instead, however, all one hears is a grand silence.

“Parish communities are equipping themselves and scrupulously respecting the rules to carry out celebrations in safety”

That, of course, is because Italy today is being touted as a global model in its containment of the coronavirus. As infection rates in the US continue to mount, and as some other European countries are being forced back into lockdowns, Italy remains stable and relatively open, with credit going largely to the sweeping restrictions imposed early in the game by Mr Conte and his advisors.

As part of Italy's effort to keep the curve flat, the government recently imposed mandatory testing on arrivals from four European nations – Greece, Spain,

Croatia and Malta – where things aren't under control. Some Italian regions have gone further, either banning outright or imposing quarantines on arrivals from those nations and others.

Italy's success story has become a matter of national pride. As opposed to the US, where wearing a mask in public is a politically divisive gesture, here it's almost akin to carrying the Italian flag, something that unites people in a sense of shared sacrifice and purpose.

Wise pastors

Pari passu, bishops who, not so long ago were being accused of spinelessness for going along with the government restrictions, now seem like wise pastors. Many bishops are holding up the Church's compliance with anti-Covid measures as a model for the rest of society.

"Parish communities are equipping themselves and scrupulously respecting the rules to carry out celebrations in safety," said Bishop Douglas Regattieri of the Diocese of Cesena-Sarsina.

"Here too, parishes are setting a good example in the face of behavior that doesn't always conform to the norms," Dr Regattieri said.

Of course, the issues raised by the Church/state debate back in March and April don't directly depend on the outcome of the anti-coronavirus campaign. There are difficult constitutional and theological questions about the extent to which a government can, or should, exert control over the Church's internal life, regardless of the effect of those measures.

Moreover, just because these particular controls now appear to have been justified doesn't mean that future efforts to curtail the Church's activities always will be.

In all likelihood, examining these issues, at least here in Italy, will be delayed by the fact that everyone's basically satisfied with how things shook out, but sooner or later a day of reckoning probably will come.

Yet for now, the Italian bishops – who once had to be told by Pope Francis to back down, at a moment when they appeared poised to defy the shutdown – can now bask in the glow of perceived success.

That may be the residue of little more than good luck, but for most bishops here, that's probably enough.

John L. Allen Jr is Editor of CruxNow.com

“Critics argued, the bishops were making the fatal mistake of capitulating to the idea that the Mass is not an ‘essential service’, such as grocery stores, pharmacies and even tobacco shops, all of which remained open”



World Report

IN BRIEF

After election in Belarus, Catholic leaders urge restraint, dialogue

● Catholic leaders have urged dialogue and restraint in Belarus amid violent street clashes following a contested presidential election on August 9.

"The two sides clearly have to talk if this dangerous situation isn't to deteriorate," said Fr Yuri Sanko, spokesman for the Belarusian bishops' conference. "Although it isn't for us to specify what's needed to defuse the tension, we'll keep on appealing for every spoken word to be considered carefully to avoid making matters worse."

The Minsk-based priest spoke to *Catholic News Service* after two days of violence between protesters and security forces left thousands injured and arrested.

US governor set to sign bill that bans dismemberment abortions

● Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts [pictured] has praised the August 13 passage of a bill by the state Legislature to ban a second-trimester abortion procedure that removes the foetus in pieces, and he is expected to sign it.

When state Senator Suzanne Geist first introduced the bill, she called it "a brutal and unthinkable abortion method" that has no place in modern medicine and is a horrible practice in our society. Co-sponsors of the measure and Nebraska pro-life leaders called it "gruesome," "barbaric," "inhumane" and "immoral."

"This legislation protects unborn children from the brutality of being torn apart limb by limb, and we look forward to Gov. Pete Ricketts signing it," said Carol Tobias, president of National Right to Life.



Covid-19 awakens Kenyan rural parishes' social ministry

● In the collection baskets, priests in rural Kenya have been counting a dollar or two – or even five – which congregations have been giving to boost the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a significant way, the parishioners have responded to the Church's call for help, delivering bags of foods and other essentials items such as masks and sanitisers to priests. The support is meant

for the less fortunate, in the villages, towns and cities, as part of Catholic social ministry.

The priests say the pandemic has re-awakened social ministry in rural parishes, in a visible shift from the traditional focus on liturgical activities. The giving is little by little, but priests say it is vital. For example, a bag of corn can meet the food needs for a family for months.

Church charities in Britain seek extra government funds as recession hits

● The Catholic Church asked the British government to give extra cash to religious charities to prevent them from going bust as the country crashed officially into a recession.

In a letter to Oliver Dowden, secretary of state for digital, culture, media and sport, church leaders warned that Catholic charities faced "a perfect storm" financially, and many could be forced to close down.

They requested that the 'gift aid' scheme, under which the government supports charities by augmenting private donations with an additional 25 pence for every £1 private donors declare on taxes, be extended immediately to a higher rate.

Even an extra 8p per £1 would help to offset losses of hundreds of thousands of pounds incurred by Catholic dioceses and Catholic charities since the lockdown began in March, the leaders suggested.

Aid official tells of shocking conditions in eastern Ukraine

A senior Catholic aid worker said humanitarian conditions are deteriorating in eastern Ukraine and urged Western governments and Churches not to forget the continuing six-year conflict.

"We thought we'd overcome war in Europe, but a whole growing generation here now knows only war – teenagers who look like teenagers everywhere, but will tell you how they routinely hide in cellars to escape gunfire," said Andrij Waskowycz, president of Caritas in Ukraine.

He said with multiple world crises, officials of the Catholic charitable agency did not expect attention to stay focused on Ukraine, "but it's crucial European countries, institutions and churches continue showing solidarity with the Ukrainian people in its suffering".

Waskowycz told *Catholic News Service* that Caritas was active in the 290-mile buffer zone between the two sides, taking food, home care and medical services especially to elderly people "abandoned without help".

However, he added that supplies had been disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and drinking water was also running short because of infrastructure damage.

"Eastern Ukraine now has the highest concentration of



People continue to protest in eastern Ukraine.

old people in a conflict zone, with all the physical and mental health consequences," Waskowycz said. "It's also one of the world's most mine-contaminated areas, with land mines still being sown widely before the cease-fire. With transportation deteriorating during the coronavirus, most people see little hope of change."

Aid

"Caritas is trying to deliver humanitarian aid to both sides, but this is very difficult since we cannot cross the contact line and have to rely on trucks from the United Nations and Red Cross," he added.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe reported continuing violations of the July 27 cease-fire between Ukrainian government and rebel forces. The cease-fire had raised hopes for reviving a 2015 peace plan, which would restore Ukrainian control over separatist-held Donetsk and Luhansk in return for self-rule.

However, Waskowycz said OSCE monitors had reported 257 cease-fire violations up to August 11.

More than 14,000 soldiers and civilians have died from fighting and shelling in eastern Ukraine since 2014, according to the United Nations.

In a July report, the UN Office for Coordinating Humanitarian Affairs confirmed basic services remained severely disrupted in eastern Ukraine, raising the number of people in need to 3.8 million, close to a tenth of the country's population.

Fr Igor Yatsiv, information director of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, told *CNS* his church had prayed for peace throughout the war, but believed any accord "must be based on justice and reparations, not mass killing".

"We are asking God for peace, and we've cautious hopes it will come," Bishop Pavlo Honcharuk of Kharkiv-Zaporizhia said.

After blasts, Lebanese mobilise to pick up the pieces – physical and mental

Church bells and the Muslim call to prayer sounded on August 11 to mark a minute of silence for those who perished in the explosion devastating much of Beirut and its port a week earlier.

The port, badly damaged by a deadly explosion of 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate, resumed partial operations.

But the same cannot be said for the many in Beirut suffering wounds from flying glass and trauma and others trying to pick up the pieces

of destroyed homes, businesses, and livelihoods. Some 300,000 people have been left homeless and more than 160 have been killed in the massive blast.

The Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul reported that one of their members, Sr Sophie Khosrovian, died from her injuries. Beirut is the order's provincial centre for the Middle East, and it is located less than a mile from the site of the blast.

The blast badly damaged several neighbourhoods in East Beirut where mainly Christians reside.

Caritas Lebanon has so far aided 35,000 Lebanese affected by the tragedy, providing medical and psychological support, despite its own offices being damaged.

The agency opened tents in strategic areas of Beirut "to reach out to the biggest number of people in need" and its army of volunteers is also going door-to-door to ensure that "help is delivered to people really in need", said Caritas Lebanon director Rita Rhayem.

Mauritius cardinal praises outpouring of solidarity after oil spill

Cardinal Maurice Piat of Port-Louis, Mauritius, has praised public responses to an oil spill that devastated the island's coastline, as one prominent lay Catholic demanded "honest information" about the disaster.

"Numerous families are afflicted by a pestilential and

persistent odor – fishermen and all those living from the sea are suffering particularly, while ecological treasures in our coastal bays and islets are gravely damaged," said Cardinal Piat.

"Amid the pain shared by so many, I salute the beautiful outpouring of active and

enterprising solidarity now showing itself in a bid to save what might still be saved."

The 79-year-old cardinal issued the message as desperate efforts continued to contain oil from the Japanese bulk carrier, MV Wakashio, which ran aground on a coral reef off Pointe d'Esny.

Martine Lajoie, assistant chief editor of the church's *La Vie Catholique* weekly, told *Catholic News Service*: "This ship ran aground in the worst possible place...it's an ecological catastrophe. But Mauritius is facing another crisis as well, when those running the country are not trusted."



Edited by Jason Osborne
jason@irishcatholic.ie

'You shall not defile the land in which you live...'



A volunteer attempts to clean spilled oil at the Mahebourg Waterfront in Riviere des Creoles, Mauritius. Photo: CNS

Fr James Martin to speak at Democratic convention

Jesuit Fr James Martin will deliver an invocation at the Democratic National Convention this week where former Vice President Joe Biden will accept his party's formal nomination for president of the United States.

Fr Martin, an editor-at-large at *America Magazine* and one of the most well-known American priests on social media, will also be joined by a rabbi and an imam. All three will offer prayers on the final night of the convention, August 20, when Mr Biden is scheduled to speak.

In an interview with National Catholic Reporter (NCR), Fr Martin stressed that his role at the convention will not be political in nature.

"I was honoured to be asked," said Fr Martin. "Normally I shy away from anything overtly political, but it's hard to turn down a request to pray."

"Plus, I knew that Cardinal Dolan, whom I respect, had offered prayers during the last presidential election and, for good measure, I asked my Jesuit superiors, who approved," he continued.

Prayers

Cardinal Dolan, the archbishop of New York, offered closing prayers at both the Democratic and Republican conventions in 2012, and, in 2016, offered a prayer at the inauguration for President Donald Trump.

"I hope that my prayer to respect the dignity of all life — the unborn, the young Black person, the LGBTQ teen, the migrant — will help people find a way to build a more welcoming nation," he told NCR via email.

Fr Martin has become closely

associated with promoting LGBTQ inclusion within the Church in recent years following the publication of his 2017 book, *Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBTQ Community Can Enter into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity*.

The book has sparked controversy among conservative Catholics. But it was endorsed by a number of high-ranking church officials, and Fr Martin was a Vatican approved speaker at the 2018 World Meeting of Families in Dublin, Ireland.

Fr Martin, who is also a consultant to the Vatican's Secretariat for Communications, was received in a private audience with Pope Francis in 2019 where the two discussed his work as a Catholic ally of the LGBTQ community.

Church to plant 400,000 trees in Bangladesh

Church leaders in Bangladesh have launched a campaign to plant 400,000 trees across the country to mark the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis' environmental encyclical *Laudato Si'*, the golden jubilee of the country's independence and the birth centenary of the nation's founding leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Bishops led by Cardinal Patrick D'Rozario of Dhaka Archdiocese inaugurated the program at the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB) centre in the capital on August 14 in the presence of a limited number of clergy, religious and lay representatives due to government-mandated Covid-19

health regulations.

The prelates planted three fruit saplings at the CBCB premises and called on Catholics in eight dioceses and parishes to follow suit within two years.

"We love the nation and we hold the father of the nation in high respect.

"Every Catholic in the

country needs to plant a tree to express love for the country and honour for our founding leader.

"We will mostly plant fruit trees, but also trees that can produce wood in the future," Cardinal D'Rozario, head of the committee, said in his speech.

Vatican roundup

Pope baptises conjoined twins separated by Vatican's Bambino Gesù Hospital

● Two conjoined twins successfully separated in June by surgeons at the Vatican-owned Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital have recently been baptised by Pope Francis.

The Baptism of babies Ervina and Prefina at the Pope's residence of Casa Santa Marta, was announced by Central African Republic politician, Antoinette Montaigne.

The mother of the twins, Hermine Nzotto, expressed her gratitude to the Holy Father in a letter in which she recounts her life as a "peasant girl of the forest", born in a village 100 km from Bangui, Central African Republic, where on June 29, 2018 (the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul), her twins were born with fused skulls.

In Bangui in 2015, Francis launched his Jubilee Year of Mercy opening the Holy Door of the cathedral.

"That my daughters have been baptised by His Holiness," she said in her letter, "confirms to me that God is truly close to the end."

Francis asks Mary 'Mother of Hope' to intercede for Nigeria's persecuted Christians

● Pope Francis prayed Saturday for the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, "Mother of Hope", for Nigeria's persecuted Christians and for peace in conflicts in Africa.

"Today I would like to pray in particular for the population of the northern region of Nigeria, victims of violence and terrorist attacks," Pope Francis said in his Angelus address on August 15.

"The Virgin Mary, whom we contemplate today in heavenly glory, is the 'Mother of Hope'," he said. "Let us invoke her intercession for all the situations in the world that are most in need of hope:

hope for peace, for justice, hope for a dignified life."

More than 600 Christians in Nigeria have been killed in 2020 so far, according to a report on May 15 by the Nigerian human rights organization, International Society for Civil Liberties, and the Rule of Law (Intersociety). The same report found that up to 12,000 Christians have been killed in Nigeria since June 2015.

Christians in Nigeria have been beheaded and set on fire, farms set ablaze, and priests and seminarians have been targeted for kidnapping and ransom.

PAV: Choosing abortion being confined ever more to private sphere

● New guidelines for chemically-induced abortion published by Italy's Ministry of Health last week "will certainly not" change people's minds "on what remains one of the most painfully lacerating questions in bioethics", says the Pontifical Academy for Life (PAV), in a note released on Friday.

Previous guidelines restricted the use of abortion-inducing drugs up to the seventh week of pregnancy, and required women to be cared for in a hospital when taking the drug. The new guidelines allow the use of the so-called "abortion pill" up to the ninth week of pregnancy, and no longer require a hospital stay.

"The step being taken," the Pontifical Academy of Life emphasises, "beyond the obviously fundamental evaluation of efficaciousness and the safety of the woman, seems to go in the direction of an ever stronger confinement to the private sphere of an act of such huge emotional, social and moral relevance."

The PAV insists that the search for a model in society by which "new life and its conception, as well as families, are accompanied and sustained" must not be renounced. Such accompaniment and support "are the litmus test of an attentive and sensitive society that knows how to wisely and far-sightedly build its own future".

Letters

Letter of the week

'Disgusting' behaviour outside Croke Park

Dear Editor, I am sure I am not the only one who was very pleased and deeply moved to see the celebration of Eid al-Adha in Croke Park. Because of Covid-19 only about 150 people could take part.

I was impressed by the reverence of the Muslims present including little children. It was wonderful to see the two Archbishops, Diarmuid Martin and Michael Jackson, and the Jewish

Rabbi taking part and welcoming our Muslim community and helping them to feel at home. It was also wonderful to see Sheikh Umar al Qadri. This man has consistently condemned Islamic extremism and violence.

The truly shocking part of the occasion was the Islamophobic gang outside Croke Park who shouted abuse and nasty name calling at Archbishop Martin as he came out. Between the

name calling and verbal abuse these people recited the Rosary. I found their behaviour disgusting and there was nothing Christian about it. If that was representative of the Catholic Church, I would be totally ashamed to be a Catholic. Thankfully it doesn't represent the Church I belong to.

*Yours etc.,
Anthony Redmond,
Drimnagh, Co. Dublin.*

Christians 'share much with Muslims'

Dear Editor, The recent protest by a small group against the attendance of Archbishop Diarmuid Martin at a Muslim celebration of Eid al-Adha is so misguided. As Fr Michael Sullivan wrote in your last edition [IC 06/08/2020], we share much with Muslims, in terms of our Faith in a loving God, while we still disagree on aspects of that Faith.

Perhaps those rushing to judge Archbishop Martin might undertake some study of both the Vatican II documents, where it clearly states that the Church has a high regard for Muslims who worship the one almighty God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth and the Quran, that states that Muslims should respect other faiths.

It is an irony that the protesters failed to appreciate that the celebration Eid al-Adha honours the willingness of Ibrahim (Abraham) to sacrifice his son Ismael as an act of obedience to God, has a biblical reference.

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



Compassion exists only for the 'woke'

Dear Editor, Reading a recent article about the hypocrisy of the "inconsistent criticism" on social media regarding journalists who spoke out about a picture circulating of a Sinn Féin senator wearing speedos and a Pope Francis t-shirt from the World Meeting of Families in Dublin [IC 06/08/2020], I was not in any way surprised. For some reason when a pro-life person is

targeted online, their images shared and criticised relentlessly, it's fair game.

However, when it's someone the media deem 'woke' or has 'acceptable' opinions, suddenly a cohort of individuals grow a moral compass and defend the person from online abuse.

Such is the case of Gavin Boyne, who thankfully spoke to your paper about the double standards he

experienced because of his stance on the abortion referendum.

The resounding message is that if you're pro-life you are not worth defending, even worse, you deserve the abuse you receive regardless of how personal and vitriolic. In fact, some journalists even feel it's their duty to join in the hateful scrum and to publicise it even further, opening the floor for more

condemnation.

Strange they can see the humanity in some but not others.

It's a morality solely based on group-think and social trends that is led by a hegemony of weak individuals whose desires are to remain relevant, popular and in power.

*Yours etc.,
John O'Brien,
Newbridge, Co. Kildare.*

Christians have lost their awareness of the Devil

Dear Editor, The natural world is filled with clues as to the true nature of things and God speaks through them when we pause and listen.

I was watching a brilliant documentary about the Serengeti and the seasonal migration of animals. It showed the various predators as they stalked the herds of antelope and buffalo. Predators have different techniques but what is common to all is they always target the youngest and weakest.

One distinct advantage the herd has though is instinctive 'situational awareness'. They know the lions are in the Savanna; that the crocodiles are waiting at the water's edge and so can

be prepared for the inevitable attack. They lose a small proportion of the herd. As humans we have lost our situational awareness, even as Christians. Not in relation to animal attacks but in the conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil.

It proceeds in much the same way but with a more insidious intention. The youngest and weakest are led away from the security of the praying Church community, into pastures that seem inviting. The Devil cannot make Hell look attractive so he makes the route look exciting. There is no quick kill as with a lion attack, it's a gradual elimination of beliefs, the end of any prayer-life

and even without moral corruption and ruin, the generations which follow are then automatically in the bag too. It's a lot easier to protect in the beginning, than try to recover the lost further down the road.

We tend to think of ourselves as the top of the food chain on earth, which in the natural world we are; but remember that Jesus refers to us as sheep... mostly lost and the only defence we have against our enemy is the rest of the flock, the shepherd and to listen to His voice.

*Yours etc.,
Stephen Clarke,
Manila, Philippines.*

facebook community

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

Will Ireland follow Scotland in its hate crime stance?

I have no doubt that this will be framed by the far left and the LGBTQ crew and will go a long way to suppressing free speech. Any speech contrary to the current mantra will be deemed 'hate speech'. No doubt the Catholic Church will be singled out because of its stance on abortion and homosexuality. – **Peter Killeen**

Hopefully it will address the hate and bigotry towards Catholicism! – **Sheelagh Cooney**

Hate is hate whether directed against Catholics, Jews, LGBT people or anyone else. – **Jim Duffy**

Surely then the proposed law would itself be a 'hate crime'? – **Terri Reilly**

'Diversity' is now the religion of official Ireland

During the Reformation in England that came from the top, the pleb greeted each other with 'keep the Faith', then you knew you were speaking to a fellow Catholic. As long as the Irish held their language they held their Faith, that's why the English establishment tried so hard to smash it! – **Kevin Cooney**

Let's battle on to the end of the road alone with God if we have to keep the Faith. – **Peter McNamee**

Typical David Quinn nonsense and overreaction. If diversity is the new religion why are the vast, vast majority of school still Catholic-ethos and Catholic-managed and where are the rights of non-Catholic children and their families who must attend them and teachers who must work in them? – **Fintan McCutcheon**

The priest bringing Christ to the prisons [Fr Stephen McBrearty]

Priests and Samaritans do great work in prisons. – **Brian Curran**

Fr Stephen is without doubt a very caring and compassionate man. His dedication to prisoners in NI deserves to be recognised. – **Brid Ní Mhaolín**

I have seen him at work, brilliant man. – **Sadie Logan**

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:** Children wearing protective masks pray at Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of the Holy Family in Nairobi. Priests in rural parishes say the coronavirus pandemic has reversed a trend: now, people in rural areas are donating whatever they can to help those in cities.

▲ **USA:** People wearing facemasks walk by outdoor restaurants in New York city as the coronavirus pandemic rolls on. Photos: CNS



VATICAN: Pope Francis offers a blessing from a window overlooking St Peter's Square at the Vatican during his Angelus on the feast of the Assumption of Mary, August 15.



USA: An armed far-right militia member in Stone Mountain, Georgia, fist-bumps a police officer in riot gear as various militia groups stage rallied at a Confederate memorial.



ANGOLA Dominican Missionary Sisters of the Rosary are seen on a construction site in Lubango, Angola. The religious order received a grant of \$99,990 (€84,214) from The Papal Foundation to build a combined elementary and middle school.



Internet pornography

...by far and away, the biggest addiction in the whole world



The ancient Greeks had gods and goddesses for everything, including a goddess of Shame called Aidos. Shame for them meant much more than it normally means to us. In their mind, shame brought with it modesty, respect and a certain needed reticence before things that should remain private and hidden.

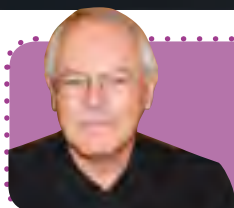
The goddess of shame instructed you as to when you were supposed to turn your eyes away from things too intimate to be seen. Shame, as they understood it, contained a modesty and reverence you were supposed to feel in the presence of anything sacred or when you were receiving a gift or when making love.

Stunning beauty

They had an intriguing myth undergirding this: Aphrodite, the goddess of love, is born out of the sea; but, as she rises above the waves in her stunning beauty, her nakedness is shielded by three deities: Aidos, the goddess of shame; Eros, the god of love; and Horai, the goddess of propriety. They protect her naked body with love, propriety and shame.

For the ancient Greeks, this was a religious truth, one which taught that without these three deities of protection the naked body should not be seen. When nakedness (of any kind) is not protected by these deities, it is unfairly exposed and dishonoured.

I cite this myth to make a case against pornography since today



Fr Rolheiser

it is too-naïvely accepted in the culture and its real harm is mostly unrecognised.

Let me begin this way. First, internet pornography is today, far and away, the biggest addiction in the whole world. No credible analyst or critic will deny that.

“Those who protest that sex is beautiful and there should be nothing wrong in seeing it are, in fact, half right”

Like all addictions, it's also deadly. Yet, more and more we see our society become casual and even indifferent to it.

Pornography is everywhere, is often seen as harmless and it's not uncommon to see mainstream sitcoms on television speak of someone's porn collection as they

might speak of his collection of toy airplanes.

Beyond that, we have more people positively challenging those who speak out against pornography. I've had colleagues, Christian theologians, say: “Why are we so uptight about seeing sex? Sex is the most beautiful thing God left us, why can't it be seen?”

Why can't it be seen? We might begin with Carl Jung's statement that one of our greatest naïveties is that we believe that energy is friendly and is always something we can control. It isn't. Energy is imperialistic, it wants to take us over and control us. Once it takes hold of us, it can be hard to turn off. That's one of the reasons why pornography is so dangerous. Its energy takes hold like a 'demonic' possession.

But pornography is not only dangerous, it's also wrong, badly wrong. Those who protest that sex

is beautiful and there should be nothing wrong in seeing it are, in fact, half right; sex is beautiful... but its energy and nakedness are so powerful that it should not be seen, at least not without the deities of love, propriety, and shame in attendance.

As Christians, we don't believe in a pantheon of gods and goddesses, we believe in only one God; but that God contains all other deities, including Aphrodite, Aidos, Eros and Horai (beauty, shame, love, and propriety).

Moreover that God is always shielded from our look, shrouded, hidden, not to be approached except in reverence, and for a reason. Our Faith tells us, no one can look at God and live.

“There's why the world of art makes a distinction between being naked and being nude, and why the former is degrading while the latter is beautiful”

That's why pornography is wrong. It isn't wrong because sex isn't beautiful, but rather because sex is so powerful as to carry some of the very energy and power of the divine. That's also why pornography is so powerfully addictive – and so harmful. Sex is beautiful but its naked beauty, like the naked body of Aphrodite

arising out of the sea, may only be looked at when it's properly attended by love and propriety and protected by shame.

In the end, all sins are sins of irreverence and that irreverence always contains some impropriety, disrespect and shamelessness. Pornography is a sin of irreverence. Metaphorically, it is standing before the burning bush with our shoes on as we watch Aphrodite arise naked out of the sea without being accompanied by love and propriety without shame shielding our eyes from her nakedness.

There's why the world of art makes a distinction between being naked and being nude, and why the former is degrading while the latter is beautiful. The difference? Being naked is being unhealthily exposed, exhibited, shown, peeked at, in a way that violates intimacy and dignity.

Conversely, being seen nude is to have your nakedness properly attended to by love and propriety and shielded by shame so that your very vulnerability helps reveal your beauty.

Pornography degrades both those who indulge in it and those unhealthily exposed in it. It is wrong from both a human view and the view of Faith. From the human view, Aphrodite's naked body needs to have divine shields. From the view of Faith, we believe that no one can look at the face of God and live.

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, August 20, 2020

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Hidden victims of domestic abuse



Lockdown brought issues of domestic violence to the fore, with social distancing measures restricting victim's access to help, support and refuge. Consequently, Gardaí and abuse helplines reported increases of between 25-33% over the lockdown period.

The majority of domestic violence victims are women and one in five women in Ireland experience domestic abuse. As a result, when we think of domestic violence, we tend to think of a man being abusive to a woman – we don't necessarily think of women being abusive to men.

But as Andrea McDermott of Men's Aid Ireland told



Men are often forgotten victims of domestic violence writes Ruadhán Jones

The Irish Catholic, domestic violence against men is also common, with one in seven men experience domestic abuse. As with other domestic abuse charities, Men's Aid noted a significant increase in the number of calls they were receiving, in some cases between 100-150% per day.

"We've gone from maybe 15 calls a day to 25, to 30," Ms McDermott explains. "Overall, we saw a 33-40% increase – we've had over 2000 calls since the lockdown in March."

The lockdown period was hard on all victims of abuse, men and women alike. Due to social distancing measures, access to

friends and family was severely reduced and the possibility of escaping in emergency situations was similarly affected.

"For men, there are no safe beds or refuge centres in Ireland," Andrea explains. "So what men will do in order to get out of the situation is go to a friend's house or to a family member for a night to let things settle down and come back to the house the next day. During lockdown they couldn't do that due to social distancing."

A number of men called Men's Aid's helplines from cars and parks, any place they could escape to in order to make contact. "There was literally

nowhere else for them to go," Andrea says.

Underreported violence

Though 1 in 7 men experience domestic violence and despite the increase in calls over lockdown, it is largely unreported as only 5% of men come forward. "That means that 95% of men who experience abuse don't report it, that's a significant figure," says Ms McDermott.

One reason is that men don't talk about their relationships as frequently as women and so these issues don't come out. But the main one is the stigma attached to male vulnerability.

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Family News

AND EVENTS

TIME TO GO AND PLAY WITH LEGO

Not many people haven't heard of Lego, and with good reason! The age-old toy that never seems to go out of fashion will be centre stage at a family fun event in Galway next month. 'LimBrick City' will bring their Brick Expo on tour and visit Galway on September 27. Organisers say activities include workshops by 'Bricks 4 Kidz', viewing custom models and official sets on display, Lego play areas, face painting, speed build competitions, master builder competitions, a Lego colouring area and treasure hunts. They also say there will be competitions, raffles, vendors selling Lego figures, Lego sets, Lego Jewellery and lots more. There will be a sensory play area and safe zone. The event takes place in the Galway Bay Hotel from 11am-5pm. Ticket prices are: Adults €10, Children €4. The Early Bird Family Ticket is €20 (two adults, three children), while the normal Family Ticket is €25 (two adults, three children). More info can be found by emailing limerickafols@gmail.com

PESTER POWER CAN PROMOTE HEALTH EATING

Lessons about food and nutrition in the classroom may lead to children pushing their parents into making healthier choices at home. A US study found that while shopping and at home parents were being influenced by their children who had taken on board health lessons in class. The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and Louisiana Tech University researchers focused on schoolchildren that took weekly healthy eating classes in school for a year and then interviewed their parents. "We asked parents how often they experience pester power. And we also asked them about their dietary habits before and after the intervention – their intake of fruits and vegetables, their intake of nutrient poor foods, and also their parenting behaviours that support healthy diets for their children," lead researcher Dr Taren Swindle said. "The more pester power that parents were exposed to from their children, the greater we saw changes in the desired direction for intake of fruits and vegetables and also supportive parenting practices."

MARIJUANA USE WHILE PREGNANT LINKED TO AUTISM IN CHILDREN

Women who use marijuana during pregnancy are 1.51 times more likely to have a child with autism according to a new study. Published in the journal Nature, researchers from Ottawa Hospital looked at data regarding 500,000 births over a period of five years from 2012 which. Researchers found that 2,200 women said they used marijuana while they were pregnant without mixing it with any other drug or tobacco. The study states it found "an association between maternal cannabis use in pregnancy and the incidence of autism spectrum disorder in the offspring". "The incidence of autism spectrum disorder diagnosis was 4.00 per 1,000 person-years among children with exposure compared to 2.42 among unexposed children, and the fully adjusted hazard ratio was 1.51."

The silent presence

We have been exploring the John Main prayer which many people recite before their daily meditation. The prayer begins: Heavenly Father, open our hearts to the silent presence of the Spirit of your Son. In this article, I'd like to reflect on the phrase 'to the silent presence of the Spirit of your Son'.

We are asking that our hearts be open to the silent presence of the Spirit. We are not seeking a talking presence or a mental experience but a silent presence. This clarifies and names our intention in meditation which is to simply be in God's presence, open and vulnerable to being transformed by the experience.

My granddaughter is three years old now and I can't tell you how many times over the last three years that she has sat on my lap, alert but resting, both of us gazing out at the garden and watching the birds feeding in the early morning light. On many of those occasions, not a word was spoken but there was deep communion between us. Love is a universal language that can be understood in silence – even by children, perhaps especially by children. Love can be experienced without being expressed in words.

“We are asking that our hearts be open to the silent presence of the Spirit”

Have you ever sat with a friend who was feeling low? Or perhaps your friend sat with you when you were suffering from some heavy loss or heartbreak. What is needed at such times is not words but a loving presence; a sense of being loved and supported, of being held by love. At times like those, words are

Mindful living

Dr Noel Keating



neither needed nor sufficient. A silent, loving presence is all that is required.

Although meditation is in part about letting go, letting go of thoughts and images, letting go of desires and emotional reactions, although meditation is about letting go it is not about absence. We let go of those things to make room for something else, to allow love to enter the space we have cleared by letting go. This understanding is captured beautifully in the poem 'Come Home to Yourself' from the book Mesiter Eckhart's Book of Secrets by Jon Sweeny and Mark Burrows. The poem reads:

If you want to discover the truth about God,
don't strive for things that lie beyond you.
Draw your thoughts inward to the centre, and
seek to become one and simple in your soul.
Let go of all that distracts you, all you desire,
and come home to yourself, and when you do,
you'll become the truth you first sought.

Meditation is about being open to the mysterious presence of Love in our hearts, a mysterious presence that awakens us to a new kind of knowledge – the wisdom of the heart. This kind of knowing opens a gateway to our innate spirituality – it awakens and

then deepens our desire to discover who we truly are at the depths of our being – who we are in God and who God is in us.

Meditation then is a practice, a daily practice in which we set aside our everyday concerns and preoccupations, we set aside all of the things that bother or delight the ego, we let go of our egoic identity, our public face as it were and we simply allow ourselves to be. In letting go of those things we also let go of all that we cling to, including religious belief and non-belief, including doctrine and dogma. For our period of meditation, we let go of all of those mental categories and we allow ourselves to experience reality in practice; we allow reality to penetrate our heart.

As we meditate together, having left our masks, as it were, at the door, we experience that are all equal in the meditation space. We leave our cleverness, our foolishness, our diverse gifts and our various shortcomings – we leave them all outside the meditation room as we move into our inner space. And we discover that, mysteriously, we share this



inner space with one another. We discover that through the practice of meditation, not by thinking about it. I know that I am using words now – however badly – to try to describe this

truth but, like learning the joy of riding a bicycle, it is a truth that you can only discover ultimately through practice. In meditation we discover that the silent presence our opening prayer speaks of is rooted in us and that we are rooted in it. In fact, it is who we really are. This truth is captured imaginatively and joyfully in another poem, A Horse in the Meadow, from Mesiter Eckhart's Book of Secrets: Have you seen how a horse, On a summer's afternoon In a wide green meadow Gallops and dances and springs About in the sun and wind? This is just how God delights In pouring God's self into you. Just like this.

“Meditation is in part about letting go, letting go of thoughts and images, letting go of desires and emotional reactions”

I invite you now to spend some time in the stillness and silence of meditation where you can begin to experience that truth for yourself.

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

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"I think it's back to the stigma again," Ms McDermott says. "You know, men are supposed to repel violence, men are supposed to be the ones in the home. Men are supposed to be stronger."

These stigma often prevent men from coming forward, as these signs of weakness leave them feeling unmanned and emasculated. It becomes a vicious circle – the abuser says the victim is worthless and the victim begins to feel that way. To admit the abuse seems like admitting the abuser is right.

“The lockdown period was hard on all victims of abuse, men and women alike”

Ms McDermott believes that it's important to break down the stigma regarding male vulnerability, especially in relation to domestic violence.

"It's really about getting rid of that stigma that domestic violence is only a man being violent against a woman," she says. "A lot of times they don't realise it's happening. Many times they just want it to change, believing that one day it'll stop."

It is one of the reasons that Men's Aid was established, to provide a resource for men to come to terms with their experience. "It's to let men and family members know that they can call us at any time, that's what we're here for, to support them, to give them as much help as possible."

The types of abuse

Physical violence is most commonly associated with domestic abuse, but it can take a number of different forms, including psychological and emotional abuse. For men suffering abuse, it often takes the form of the latter two. A large proportion of the people who call Men's Aid report emotional abuse, Ms McDermott says.

"The first thing they'll talk about is the constant emotional abuse, the put downs – you're a useless father, you don't earn enough money, who else would have you, if you leave no one else will take you. That kind of thing daily and it really affects their mental health."

Men also suffer from physical abuse, but Ms McDermott explains that they are typically reluctant to talk about it. The focus instead on wanting their partner to change and to help her so that she will stop.

"They don't want to leave the relationship, all they want is someone to help her, to make her stop doing this," Ms McDermott says. "You might say is there violence and they'll say, 'aw, no not really'. By the end of the call, they might say, 'well, she has slapped me a few times, or she's hit me with an object, or she throws things at me or I have had a black eye'."

Ms McDermott also points out that domestic abuse isn't just between spouses, it can also be instances of "family violence". Family Violence is where the perpetrator is a member of your family who you reside with, i.e. adult child to parents, adult sibling, parent to adult child, or IPV (Intimate Partner Violence, regardless of whether the couple are married, reside together or have children).

Signs to look out for

Domestic abuse takes quite a toll on the mental and physical health of its victims, but that doesn't necessarily make it easy to recognise for friends and family. By its nature, it is often private or deliberately hidden – but as regards violence against men, there are a few things to be aware of.

"We'll get a parent calling us who say, since they met this person, they've changed, they're no longer going to family events," Ms McDermott says. "They have to answer the phone 10-20 times when they're with family members or they've stopped going out and meeting them all together. Maybe they've lost weight... they may have become very withdrawn or gone into themselves."

These can all be signs of domestic abuse, particularly when taken together. More obvious signs, such as cuts and bruising, public verbal, emotional or psychological abuse, such as put-downs and shouting.



"It's about keeping an eye on if they completely change when they meet somebody," says Ms McDermott.

What you can do

There are two perspectives to consider this question from: the victim's; and the victim's friends and family. For the victim's support network, as it were, the main advice is to provide support and not to try and sort things out yourself.

"I would definitely suggest that you do not tackle the partner," says Ms McDermott. "What can happen if you go talk to them is that the person being abused will get it even worse."

Ms McDermott also advises not to tell the victim to simply "get out of the relationship". There are many reasons that someone will stay in an abusive relationship, such as concern for their children or perhaps because they're in love.

“It's really about getting rid of that stigma that domestic violence is only a man being violent against a woman”

"When somebody opens up to you, believe them, listen to them, let them know that you're there for them, give them whatever information you can," says Ms McDermott. "All you can do is be there for them, hope that they'll come to you and that they'll do something about it." For victims, Ms McDermott advises talking to someone and having a contingency plan should the situation deteriorate. "Sometimes just talking is enough for somebody to get the ball rolling," Ms McDermott says. "We would talk to them about making a safety plan, if they needed to escape the house, that they'd have the Garda number on speed-dial or they have left a spare set of car keys with the neighbour next door. They need to make themselves and their children a priority."

Men's Aid Ireland, formerly Amen, is a dedicated national service supporting men and their families experiencing domestic violence. They operate a number of services, including helplines, outreach centres and counselling services. They can be contacted on 01-554 3811 or by email Hello@mensaid.ie.

Faith — IN THE — family



Bairbre Cahill

I have just spent a very interesting afternoon with a very diverse group of people, over 350 of them! Amongst the countries represented in our group are Kenya, Peru, USA, Uganda, India, Australia, Nigeria, Philippines, Burundi, Vietnam, Pakistan, Britain, Nicaragua and Ireland! We are doing online training as Laudato Si' Animators with the Global Catholic Climate Movement.

The aim of the training is to become more familiar with the writings of Pope Francis in Laudato Si' and then try to increase awareness of Pope Francis' message and the need for climate action in our own communities.

The first week focused on the science of climate change. I struggled a little with the technical and scientific details of it but what really had an impact upon me was an input by Joanna Sustento from the Philippines. In the super typhoon Haiyan in 2013 Joanna lost her mother, father, brother, sister-in-law and three-year-old nephew. The bodies of her father and nephew were never found.

As Joanna so powerfully said, in the Philippines they don't have the luxury of denying or debating climate change; they are living - and dying - with the reality of it. I am conscious, listening to the experience of people from around the world, that here in Ireland we are experiencing relatively minor effects of climate change. We have had flooding and more storms but nothing in comparison to many developing countries. That doesn't mean we can ignore the reality for others.

In the second week Fr Joshtrum Kureethadam from the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development spoke to us about how our faith and Catholic Social Teaching invite and indeed urge us to engage with these challenging issues of "the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor". What I find so energising about all of this is the very clear statement, coming from Pope Francis and echoed by Fr Joshtrum that our lives as Christians are intimately connected with the well-being of each other and of creation.

We are invited to personal and communal conversion. Pope Francis is clear: "Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or secondary aspect of our Christian experience."

(Laudato Si' 217). We are invited to contemplate the Word of God in scripture and the Word of God in creation, to give glory to God, to work for justice, to engage in dialogue. God calls each of us in a personal way, according to our gifts and our circumstances. We each have a part to play.



But that conversion – that realisation that the way we live, the way we construct society, the way we consume and use the earth's resources is contributing to the climate crisis – also needs to be communal. How as family, and as parish, do we respond to the challenges? How do we begin? That is a question I put to Amy Woolam Echerria International Coordinator for Justice and Peace with the Missionary Society of St Columba who was our speaker today. Amy suggested that we don't begin with any big plan. Just gather a group of interested people and begin with a simple question, "Can you remember a time or a place where you felt particularly connected to the natural world?"

The Season of Creation is happening from 1 September to 4 October. Throughout the month long celebrations the world's 2.2 million Christians are invited to come together to care for our common home. You can find great resources for parishes on the website seasonofcreation.org – a Laudato Si' Mass, Holy Hour and Adoration liturgies, prayer resources and more. Trócaire also have resources on trocaire.org for parishes and families. We may not be gathering as much in our parishes at the moment but we could explore many of these ideas around our kitchen tables. Change can begin at home. These past months have given many of us the opportunity to reconnect with nature. We have planted the seed of conversion – now let's help it grow.

Transforming the way we see the Church

Personal Profile



Jason Osborne

Fr John Bracken is the parish priest of Holy Cross Church, Dundrum, but much of his ministry is devoted to helping people look beyond his office, and that of the other clergy. "It's one of my great annoyances, that people "see" the priest. I mean, obviously there's a difference, but there's not a difference in the person."

"A wider vision of the Church goes hand-in-hand with an experience of suffering"

Fr John's awareness of the necessity for an expanded notion of "Church" springs from his own life path, and the experiences that shaped him and his path through life. Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr John shared the genesis of his priestly role:

"I grew up in Beaumont and after leaving school in 1989, I went into college to study for Business Administration. I was an altar server growing up and my parents would be involved in the parish. I then got involved in the St Vincent de Paul for a little while, but then, during that year at college, I was very taken hearing the call. The call to explore priesthood. And I was in a Carmelite parish so I discerned between Carmelite and diocesan priesthood, but I chose to go into Clonliffe in 1989. Seven years of formation, finished with two years working as a deacon in

Ballymun Parish - Holy Spirit in Ballymun."

During this time, Fr John worked a stint in St Patrick's Institution, a juvenile detention facility in north Dublin. The chaplain, Fr Liam, made a deep impression on him as they worked side by side.

Prison

"It was his way of being with the lads in the prison, and also his sense of liturgy, and just learning,

you know? It was a tough experience, but good experience."

However, despite the value of this ministry, his most formative experience was still to come. "I got sick about three years after I was ordained. I became ill with depression. I spent four months in Saint John of God Hospital, which actually was the best formation that ever happened to me," he says.

"Certainly, for me that experience was dark, but certainly it helped me to find a whole part of

myself that I hadn't really discovered, and that came out of being broken," Fr John admits.

"There were remarkable people there, but also the remarkable Willie Nugent. He's dead years now at this stage, he was a Holy Ghost Priest, but he was the most amazing person I ever came across. I just found a whole different side to myself, a creativity. Also, while I was sick, rather than despairing - well there was despairing - but it was the remarkable support you received from people. And how people, kind of, form and shape us too."

Transformative

This transformative season of life sent Fr John back out into the world with a greater understanding of the role of the priest, and the role we each have to play in each other's lives. Fr John makes this point in a way that seems tangential initially as he explains, "I mean, we're all the same...if I went Hoovering the church tomorrow, someone might stop me and say, "Fr, you're not to - I'll Hoover." Because her perception is that it shouldn't be me who's Hoovering, you know?"

This relates back to one of his greatest struggles in the Church today, which is helping people to understand what and who exactly the Church is. Fr John's own experiences and struggles helped him to see everyone as standing on the same level in life and warned him of the dangers of clericalism. He shares an anecdote to reinforce this point:

"One of the greatest challenges is how people see or define what "Church" is. By that I mean, I remember back five or six years ago when Pope Francis was doing this engagement around the families. Asking families in local parishes - there were certain questions you were asked to work out with a group and see what the response was. And one woman, she stands out, I still remember she was talking about the Church and I remember saying, "What do you mean by "the Church?" And she says, "You guys!" It's so easy - you hear the language

we use today about the Church and it does become very clerical. It's always the bishops or the priests. Even in your own newspaper, for this kind of article - have you done many women? Have you done many non-priests? Because it's how we define Church. So I, more and more, try to say, "the Church community", because it brings it back to people. Whereas if I say to nine or ten people in my church, "Who's the Church?", they'll say, "It's the building," or "It's you," or "It's the bishops"".

"Fr John's awareness of the necessity for an expanded notion of "Church" springs from his own life path"

A wider vision of the Church goes hand-in-hand with an experience of suffering. Through his own battles, Fr John has found it easier to relate to the people that his parish nets have caught.

Experience

"I wouldn't hide my experience. You know, I think it's very important that people hear public figures because, like, in a church like Holy Cross Dundrum, at least 20 or 30% of people have experienced issues with their own mental health, and certainly a higher percentage when you include family. It's so important for people to see that people can journey through it and get well, and also, there's an understanding - people sometimes sense something and they come to you for conversation or just because they, kind of, sense something from you," he explains.

This shared sense of understanding lies at the root of Fr John's ministry and compels him to share a vision of the Church and the Gospel that truly has a place for everyone.

Sweet Treats

Laura Anderson



Light up the room with a lemon tart

This week's sweet treat is a timeless classic - its bright yellow colour makes it the perfect centrepiece for your table. If you're tight on time the pastry can be made in advance and kept in the fridge for up to three days.

Ingredients

For the pastry:

- 180g plain flour
- 55g icing sugar
- 115g cold butter, cubed.
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 egg, beaten

For the lemon filling:

- 5 eggs.
- 125ml double cream
- 200g caster sugar
- 75 ml lemon juice
- 2 tbsp lemon zest

Make the pastry by beating the butter and sugar together until pale and creamy. Gradually add the

egg, beating the mixture until it's incorporated. Then add the flour and salt and mix until it just starts to come together. If your mixture is too dry or too sticky add a small amount of water or flour respectively until the right consistency is reached.

Using your hands gather the mixture into a ball and flatten slightly before wrapping it in cling film and placing it in the fridge to chill for 45 mins.

Once ready, roll the dough out onto a lightly floured surface in a circle about 1½ inches bigger than the base of your tin. Gently roll the pastry over your rolling pin and unroll it over your loose bottomed tart tin.

If there are any tears at this point simply press together the edges to seal again.

Softly press the pastry into the bottom edge and flutes of the tart tin. Cut off excess pastry by rolling the rolling pin over the top of the tin. Lightly prick the base of the pastry all over with a fork, then cover and place in the freezer for 30 mins, this will help

prevent shrinking. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 190°C/Gas 6/Fan 170°C.

Foil

Next, uncover the pastry case and line with foil then fill with baking beans. Blind bake for 12 minutes, then remove foil and beans and bake for a further 20 minutes. A good tip if you have time is to brush the base of the case with egg yolk and return to the oven for two minutes to create a seal and prevent a soggy bottom! Reduce the oven temperature to 170°C/Gas 3/Fan 150°C. Allow the case to cool while you make the filling.

Whisk all the ingredients for the filling together, except for the lemon zest. Pass the mixture through a sieve, then stir in the zest. Three quarter fill the pastry case with the filling then place on the oven shelf and fill to the top. Bake for 30-35 mins until just set. Leave the tart to cool before removing it from the tin and dust with icing sugar. Can be served warm or cold.



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Archbishop's musical talent well hidden!

With such grim material in the news and current affairs programmes these days, it's welcome when they are followed by something lighter.

I enjoyed **Des's Island Discs** (RTÉ Radio One) last Tuesday after *Drivetime* when Des Cahill's guest was Archbishop Eamon Martin. I knew the Archbishop was a fine singer, but learned on the show that he also played trombone – the last instrument left when he arrived late for practice! His choice of music was eclectic – *Tuxedo Junction* by Glenn Miller, *You've Got a Friend* sung by James Taylor and *The Prayer* sung by Andrea Bocelli and Celine Dion.

He spoke of growing up in Derry during 'the Troubles' – generally his family made him feel safe despite the violence but there were scary moments as well. Though he lived through it as a young boy he learned a lot from the book *Children of the Troubles* by Joe Duffy and Freya McClements.

He valued friendships and was convinced of the crucial importance of education, fondly remembering his time as a pupil, teacher and eventually President of St Columb's College in Derry, which boasts many outstanding past students, including the recently deceased John Hume.



Zoe Kazan featured in *The Plot Against America* (Sky Atlantic/Now TV).

He told of his surprise at being called to the Papal Nuncio's house to learn of his appointment as Coadjutor Bishop of Armagh.

I was glad to hear him say such positive things about young people – he found them to be people of Faith though many weren't attending church as regularly as previous generations. I'd love to hear a longer interview where this dichotomy could be teased out at greater length, but light good humour was the dominant tone here.

There was plenty of good humour when Seán Fletcher interviewed TV and radio presenter Adrian Chiles on **Sunday Morning Live** (BBC

One). Chiles had converted to Catholicism in his 40s. His father thought he'd lost his mind but his mother thought it was "sweet" as her own mother had originally been Christian.

No direction

The elements of his journey to Faith included a sense of gratitude that had no direction – who do you thank for good things? When a friend invited him to Mass he felt at home there, felt that he was with people like himself. He found that Faith made him more mindful and was helpful in times of anxiety. Fletcher recalled the story of Chiles going to 46 different Masses

one Lent. He gave off a fungum kind of vibe and wasn't a man of great expectations – playfully he wondered if he'd make it home alive from the interview!

Whatever about 46 Masses, the annual **Eurovision Mass for the Feast of the Assumption** (RTÉ One, Saturday) was a reminder of the Christian heritage of Europe. It was good to see it coming from a real church – the amazing cathedral in Mechelen, Flanders. There was of course social distancing, a small congregation and lots of masks but it was progress.

Most of it was in Dutch, with some English, French and German, but *The Irish Catholic* Editor Michael Kelly was on hand with English translation. The music was minimal – just organ and cantor but it enhanced the Mass, as it always should, wasn't distracting and added to the solemnity of the occasion.

Elements of ritual also featured in the unsettling US TV drama series **The Plot Against America** (Sky Atlantic/Now TV). I was expecting a tense political thriller, and it was that but so much more. It imagined an alternate reality where famous aviator Charles Lindbergh became President, America stayed out of World War II and the country slowly descended into fascism and anti-Semitism.

The main focus was on a

PICK OF THE WEEK

SUNDAY SEQUENCE

BBC Radio Ulster, Sunday, August 23, 8.30am

Topical religious and ethical issues with a Northern Ireland flavour.

SAINT ROSE OF LIMA

EWTN, Sunday, August 23, 9pm

The Faith journey of Isabel Flores de Oliva, whose great love for God and neighbour would lead to her canonisation as St Rose of Lima. An EWTN original movie.

THE SCIENCE BEFORE SCIENCE

EWTN, Tuesday (night), August 25, 2.30am

Physicist Dr Anthony Rizzi explains why moral and cultural decay results when science severs itself from good philosophy.



Adrian Chiles.

Jewish family – some saw what was coming, some protested, some adapted and the children observed in confusion and fear. And the fear was palpable and almost unbearable as it moved through the last few episodes.

Zoe Kazan gave an outstanding performance as Bess, the wife of hot-headed

Herman, while Winona Ryder was excellent as Evelyn her naive sister who marries a Rabbi (John Turturo, intense and magnetic as always) who co-operates with the authorities in supposedly voluntary re-locations of Jews to the rural heartland – he thinks this "absorption" is best for his community.

The drama has some unsubtle anti-Trump messages for today, and at times pursues a simplistic 'Democrats good Republicans bad' narrative. This was adult drama, with plenty of gratuitous bad language and some 'adult content' – relatively mild by modern standards (low bar!).

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

Music

Pat O'Kelly



Alas, not even the 'Emperor' can escape from the virus...

One might not think Beethoven could fall victim to Covid-19 but in a way he has. With the closure of our concert venues live performances of his music have either been postponed or abandoned. Unfortunate really as this year celebrates the 250th anniversary of his birth.

At the time of writing, the National String Quartet Foundation (NSQF) is still hoping to commemorate the occasion with recitals of his quartets across the country scheduled between mid-September and mid-December.

This ambitious undertaking is organised by NSQF artistic director Christopher Marwood with many of the musicians Irish-born or based. Keeping fingers



Ludwig van Beethoven.

crossed, all will go according to plan with Beethoven being especially remembered.

The 16 quartets fall into what has been termed Bee-

ethoven's early, middle and late periods. The first six, published in 1801, were written when he was already well established as an eminent pianist and with his compositions showing his distinct musical personality as well as his penchant for innovation. That being so, his *Op 18* quartets owe a great deal to the foundations laid by Haydn and Mozart.

Patron

Beethoven dedicated the set to his music-enthusiast patron, Prince Joseph Lobkowitz (1772-1816). Pleased with the result, he endowed Beethoven with an annual stipend. The quartets were premièred at the Prince's palace in Vienna by a group

of young players led by Ignaz Schuppanzigh (1776-1830), who would become synonymous with Beethoven's quartets over the ensuing years.

Because of his corpulent figure, the composer liked to call the violinist 'Falstaff' and wrote a short and amusing choral piece about him in 1801. Entitled *Lob auf den Dicken* (*In Praise of the Fat One*), the first line runs 'Schuppanzigh is a rogue'.

Completed in 1806, Beethoven's next three quartets were commissioned by Count Andrey Kyrilovich Razumovsky (1752-1836). He was Russia's diplomatic representative in Vienna from 1792 and one of the chief negotiators during the Congress of Vienna that resettled Europe

in 1814. Beethoven's relationship with Razumovsky was unique among those of his aristocratic patrons and his friendship with the Count remained cordial and undisturbed.

Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony* of 1803 brought a radical change to the musical landscape of the period. Symphonic goalposts had been widened to an extraordinary degree and when he accepted Razumovsky's commission for the three *Op 59* quartets Beethoven's response redefined the scale and ethos of that particular medium as well. The shock of the new surprised many of his contemporaries, among them his indefatigable allies – the members of the Schup-

panzigh Quartet.

However, the strongest reaction came from Italian violinist Felix Radicati, who was well known to the composer. He chided Beethoven with the comment: "Surely you don't consider these works to be music?" Beethoven's dismissive answer had a prophetic ring: "Oh, they are not for you, but for a later age."

Schuppanzigh also railed against the difficulty of the music, conceived by Beethoven for skilled professionals, but the composer retorted gruffly: "Does he really suppose I think of his puling little fiddle when the spirit speaks to me and I write something?"

More on Beethoven's quartets another time.



Dom Boylan's Irish classic of

As an occasional continuation of our series 'Lockdown Reading', this week we are publishing an appreciation of a book once very well known, but now neglected...

Seán Ryan

Literature can generally be broken down to two forms – the easy-reading form encompassing the popular chic-lit, page-turner form, which high brows mightn't even concede to be literature; and the more thoughtful form, where every word needs to be read and sometimes re-read, in order to be sure you have grasped its full meaning.

Of the latter form, books of theology surely occupy a prime space, as they try to unravel in a human way, the mystery of God. In these days of lockdown and cocooning, a book on theology can make a good companion. After all, there are only so many newspaper articles you can read on Covid-19, but a good book of theology can be life-changing and a welcome companion in dark days.

Such is certainly the case with Dom Eugene Boylan's book, *This Tremendous Lover*, which I first came across when a new edition was issued in paperback in the 1960s and still find myself referring to 60 years later.

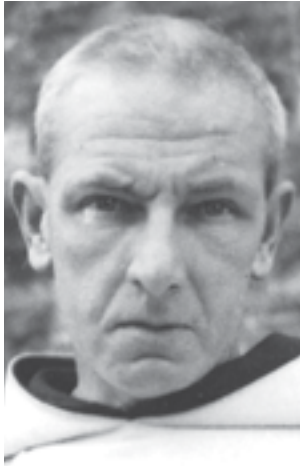
Uplifting message

First published, as one of their first books by the Mercier Press in Cork in 1945, it was two decades old by the time I came on it. It was regarded even then as a great spiritual classic and it doesn't disappoint, with its uplifting message about Christ's love for each one of us.

When people speak of having a relationship with God, they sometimes forget that God, through Christ, already has an individual relationship with each one of us. It's a fantastic thought, something so great and mysterious that it can make your head spin when you meditate on it.

For instance, take the issue of forgiveness and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I heard a priest explain one day that, even as a person takes their first step to repentance, Christ has already forgiven their sins.

Such is his relationship with us, that his eagerness takes over in those crucial matters. How sad, then, to see how few avail of this sacrament nowadays, denying Christ that intimate relationship which he craves.



Dom Eugene Boylan.

It is in the Eucharist, of course, where we see Christ's love for us in action in a special way. Dom Eugene's message, which I have always regarded as the most profound thought I ever read, was that, no matter how much we might desire to receive Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, his desire to come to us is such that our human minds can't even begin to comprehend it.

“With God, love is not a group thing... no, it's personal. His love for us is a personal love...”

To try to put some perspective on that, think of a time in your life when you felt so holy and full of love for your Saviour that you couldn't wait to receive Our Lord in the Eucharist.

Then consider that his love for you – and his desire to come to you – is infinitely greater than that.

As a concept, it's worthy of regular meditation – and still you won't get near to a proper appreciation of it.

Personal love

With God, love is not a group thing (as, for example, the whole human race). No, it's personal. His love for us is a personal love. Dom Eugene's book is worth reading for that insight alone, but there are many more treasures to be found in its pages.

Now that you have the time to bring your full attention to it, *This Tremendous Lover* is a book worth keeping on your bedside locker. Its enlightened contents make a welcome antidote to the grim news in our daily newspapers.

In St Brendan's Kerry with Richard Hayward in 1945

**Summer outings
(No.5 of six)**

Peter Costello

Today Richard Hayward's long series of books, over seven of them, all dealing with his journeys into the four provinces and into the mind and imaginations of his countrymen, north and south, are out of print and long forgotten.

An Ulster man of many parts, he died in 1964. In writing his circuit of Kerry 20 years before, it was inevitable that Hayward should have something to say about St Brendan – Brendan the Navigator, as he was called by Dr George Little in another Irish book published, by chance, in 1945.

Dr Little was intent on exploring the seafaring ways of the Kerry saint, along the west coast of Ireland, through the remote and misty Northern islands, and on to...wherever it was that the “promised land of the saints” was found by the saint and his family of monks.

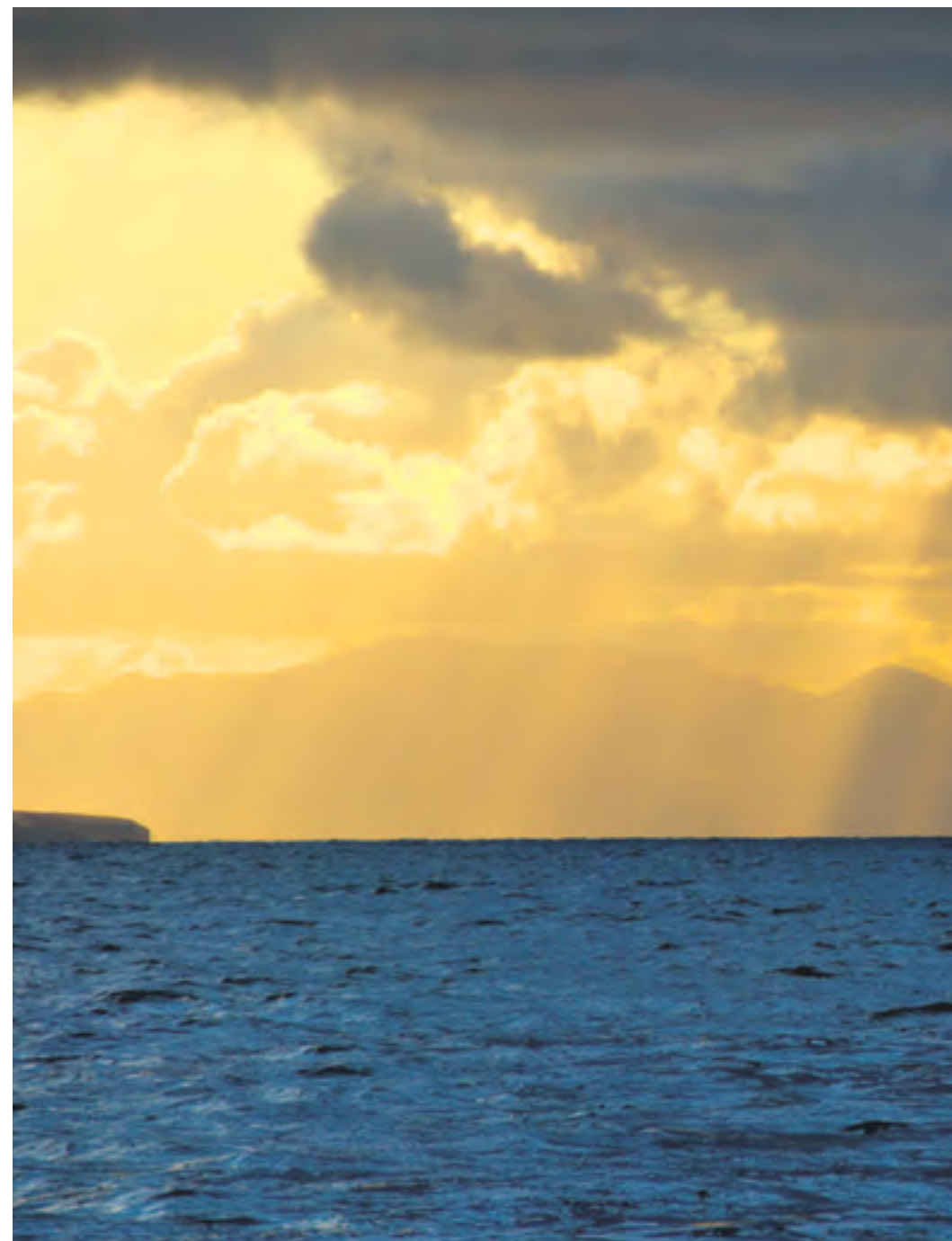
Dr Little showed that for the voyage to that land across the ocean, according to Irish legend, he used not any kind of curragh, but a sturdy wooden ship of which he had a model made by John Featherstone.

Holy places

Mount Brandon is one of the holy places of Ireland, a huge monster of a mountain, over 3,000 feet high and eight miles long from Brandon Point to that defile near Ballybrack which we saw from Kilmalkedar.

Five miles wide it is from Brandon Head to the Owenmore River and known by its present name only since the 7th Century, up till which time it was called Sliabh Diadche.

St Brendan founded a monastery here in the middle of the 6th Century and



the fame of his settlement was to give his name to the mountain for evermore and to make the place one of holy pilgrimage.

“He founded several monasteries... and evangelised many districts in Brittany, England, Scotland and the Western Isles”

May 16 is St Brendan's Day and it is on that day the pilgrims climb to the summit, where the little oratory of the saint still stands, and perform the rounds of the penitential stations which lie just below it.

Two altars are there also

and many ruined *clochauns* which were associated with the ancient foundation.

But the greatest pilgrimage of modern times took place on June 28, in the year 1868, when over 20,000 pilgrims gathered under the guidance of the great Dr Moriarty and literally covered the immense crown of the sacred hill in their devotional exercises.

* * * * *

St Brendan was born near Tralee in the year 483 and was buried 94 years later in his most celebrated foundation, the Celtic Monastery of Clonfert in the County Galway.

He was baptised by St Ere, the spiritual father of all the saints of Kerry, at the Wether's Well near Ardfert, and drew up a monastic rule which survived until the Anglo-Norman invasion, but

which is now lost.

He founded several monasteries apart from those of Clonfert, Brandon and Ardfert, and evangelised many districts in Brittany, England, Scotland and the Western Isles, but perhaps his chief fame now centres in the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, a wonder tale that seems to have been on the shelves of every monastic and secular library in Europe long before the invention of printing.

A French version of this celebrated work was made by an Anglo-Norman bard before English versification had been introduced by Robert of Leicester, Gower and Chaucer, and from this translation a wider currency than ever was given to the amazing exploits of the Irish saint.

From St Brendan's description of the unknown land in

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.

spiritual literature



Brandon Head looms up from the sea to Heaven above, the two realms of St Brendan's life. Photo: Peter Hurford at Oceanic

which he dwelt for several years, later scholars asserted that it was America, and it is significant that the early Scandinavian voyagers knew America as *Irland It Mikla* and that Lief Erikson, who lived in Massachusetts long before Christopher Columbus was born, spoke of legends and strange stories that were told in that far land about "an Irish man of God and of the sea" and about "the promised land of Brendan".

Guidance

The Arabian geographer, Abdullah Mohammed Edrisi, wrote a book in the 12th Century in which he referred to *Irland It Mikla* as 'Great Ireland', which recalls the fact that many of the very strange happenings set down by St Brendan are almost exact parallels of similar adventures in

The Arabian Nights.

It is recorded that Brendan had been praying for some days on the summit of Brandon, seeking heavenly guidance to those Isles of the Blest which he believed lay out on the rim of the western ocean, when the Angel of the Lord appeared and directed him in the details of this voyage which was to bring him the title of The Navigator.

He was about 60 years of age at the time and was absent from Ireland for seven years, his little fleet consisting of "three vessels ribbed within, covered with the hides of oxen tanned with oak-bark, with the joints tarred and food in plenty for 70 days" – in other words, of three currachs, frail craft indeed to brave the stormy hazards of an Atlantic crossing.

“His little fleet consisting of ‘three vessels ribbed within, covered with the hides of oxen tanned with oak-bark, with the joints tarred and food in plenty for 70 days’”

And if the whole story is inextricably mixed up with folklore and legend and was compiled centuries after the death of St Brendan, it is unlikely that it is not based in some way on actual happenings and that the title of Navigator was not well earned.

It is an interesting footnote that Iceland was visited by Irish missionaries before the time of the Norsemen and that many Irish personal names still persist in that northern land.

i Edited from *In the Kingdom of Kerry*, by Richard Hayward, drawings by Theo. J. Gracey (Dundalk: William Tempest, 1945).

Next time: an Englishman climbs Croagh Patrick on the eve of war.

The burdened warden of Sligo's post-Famine poor

John Ferrall: master of Sligo workhouse, 1852-66
by Fergus O'Ferrall
(Four Courts Press, €9.95/£6.95)

J Anthony Gaughan

This is a valuable account of the life and times of the master of a workhouse. It is a work of pietas. The author indicates that John Ferrall was the brother of his great-grandfather.

To care for the sick and indigent, known as 'paupers', workhouses were built in Ireland from 1840 onwards. They were designed by George Wilkinson and included a school for the children accommodated in the workhouse and a chapel for divine worship. Twenty-eight were built in Connacht with the one at Sligo opening its doors in 1841.

Appalling conditions

Mortality in the workhouse was high because of the impoverished circumstances and condition of those admitted and the appalling conditions of those institutions. During the Famine years the mortality rate in them was horrific. In the allocation of food, which was just at subsistence level, a distinction was drawn between the able-bodied, the infirm, children, infants and the sick. Those considered to be able-bodied were expected to work.

The Poor-Law Guardians, who supervised the workhouses, were also empowered to arrange the emigration of 'deadweight paupers' – single mothers, deserted wives and orphan children.

John Ferrall was born into a Church of Ireland farming-family in Ballymacormack, Co. Longford, on September 1, 1814. He secured a position as a teacher in the Protestant school at Moydow, near Longford Town, in 1836. A few years later he was appointed clerk to the Moydow Famine Relief Society which was established to bring relief to the Famine victims.

The object of the Society was to appeal to landlords and landholders to contribute to a fund to relieve "the labouring poor in their alarming situation". As clerk, John was responsible for the distribution of meal and tickets for public works employment.

John next served as the master in the workhouse in New Ross in Co Wexford in 1848. At that

time it was over-whelmed by the conditions created by the Famine and had acquired such a bad reputation that rather than enter it people travelled to Waterford or Dungarvan. Within a year he was dismissed – his dismissal was contrived it seems by the inmates who organised a riot to get rid of him because they claimed he "was too watchful".

John was elected as master of Sligo workhouse along with his wife as matron in February 1852. With the return of near normal conditions he set about his multiple responsibilities.

These included "the admission, registration and enforcing discipline on paupers" as well as overseeing their employment, clothing, cleanliness and health.

He was also responsible for the workhouse account books, daily diet books as well as the proper ordering and reception of all provisions to the workhouse. Furthermore he was responsible for the staff employed by the Board of Guardians and for the maintenance of the buildings under the control of the Guardians.

“Ferrall was forced to resign in December 1863. Within a year he was re-appointed”

The day-to-day running of Sligo workhouse was discussed at weekly meetings of the supervisory Board of Guardians. These discussions were recorded in the local press. Complaints about the master from disgruntled members of the staff were invariably given an extensive airing in the press.

As a result of on-going disputes with members of the staff, Ferrall was forced to resign in December 1863. Within a year, however, he was re-appointed. Eventually he finally left the service on his appointment as a rate collector in Sligo in August 1866. He emigrated to the US in 1873, where he died in 1892.

Historians have not been kind to the masters of the workhouses. However, as is evinced by this sympathetic but fair biography, they had to face unprecedented and well-nigh insuperable challenges even in the times apart from the Famine years.



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Advertorial

Be part of the Miracle | China Church Solidarity

I have been visiting China since 1979 and working systematically there since 2000. In 2014, we were able to open an Augustinian Sisters' Active contemplative Monastery (pictures below). I unhesitatingly call this a wonder and a miracle in the context of Communist China. The foundation of this monastery can be sourced to many, including the prayers and financial support of many in Ireland and Britain, but in a special way to the extraordinary faith of two people: the Mother Foundress, Sr Mary, who with her family lived through all the oppression of the '50's and '60's in China and the positive response of an elderly bishop despite his suffering during the same period.

I once asked Sr Mary's Bishop how was it possible for him to say yes when asked to sponsor

this Contemplative Monastery in his diocese in such difficulties for Christians in China. His reply was profound: "When Sister Mary told me her story and the dream of her contemplative vocation, my twenty years in prison, ten of these in solitary confinement, flashed to memory, painful as they were. But in a moment I saw the point of it all. It was a grace that allowed me to recognise and understand her call to initiate a contemplative monastery, as that was the only option available to me while in prison – Contemplation."

The Monastery was formally opened in 2014. However, permission to open the Monastery was given by the government with a BIG CONDITION, namely, that a Nursing Home for the Aged would be attached to the monastery. This was acceptable

to the sisters and would constitute the "active" part of their mission.

We expect the cost of the nursing home to be about one million, nine hundred thousand US dollars. The Catholics of China have collected \$500,000 to date and now I'm seeking support outside of China to raise another \$1,000,000.

I am most grateful for your generosity to us over the past twenty year which has helped strengthen the Church of China in its mission of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. Please continue to support the mission of the Monastery with your prayers. If you wish to support with a donation, please return the coupon on the lower left or donate via Paypal on our website: www.ccschina.co.uk.



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Leisure time

Please pray for the beatification of

Little Nellie of Holy God

“May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls proposing Nellie as their model”

– Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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Crossword Junior

Gordius 346



Across

- 1 Huge fighting boat (10)
- 7 Staying in a tent (7)
- 8 Fish that looks a bit like a snake (3)
- 9 A soldier will say this to an officer (3)
- 10 Tall African animal (7)
- 14 The part of a plant that is under the ground (4)
- 16 A famous tennis tournament is played in this club in London (9)
- 17 "It doesn't matter which of the two you use - _____ will do" (6)
- 18 Collect (6)

the water when you swim in this way (10)

- 2 The day after today (8)
- 3 Not telling the truth (5)
- 4 You add it to sweeten something (5)
- 5 Frozen water (3)
- 6 The colour of the sky on a nice day (4)
- 11 The Titanic sank when it hit one (7)
- 12 Try (7)
- 13 Noah built the Ark to save the animals from the _____ (5)
- 15 Hold on _____, don't let go! (5)

Down

- 1 You are looking up out of

SOLUTIONS, AUGUST 13

GORDIUS No. 468

Across – 1 Cream cracker 7 Opt 9 Hype 10 Excise duty 11 Peel 14 Croak 15 Roomy 16 Cart 18 Laces 21 Frame 22 Lucre 23 Spend 24 Head 25 Cover 26 Scare 33 Burden 34 Cash 36 Gel 37 Double whammy

Down – 1 Cry 2 Ever 3 Meet 4 Racer 5 Costa Dorada 6 Rope 8 Tell the truth 9 Hair of the dog 13 Byres 14 Chloe 17 Alcove 19 Cadge 20 Slice 27 Crumb 28 Ridge 30 Told 31 Ankh 32 Scam 35 Shy

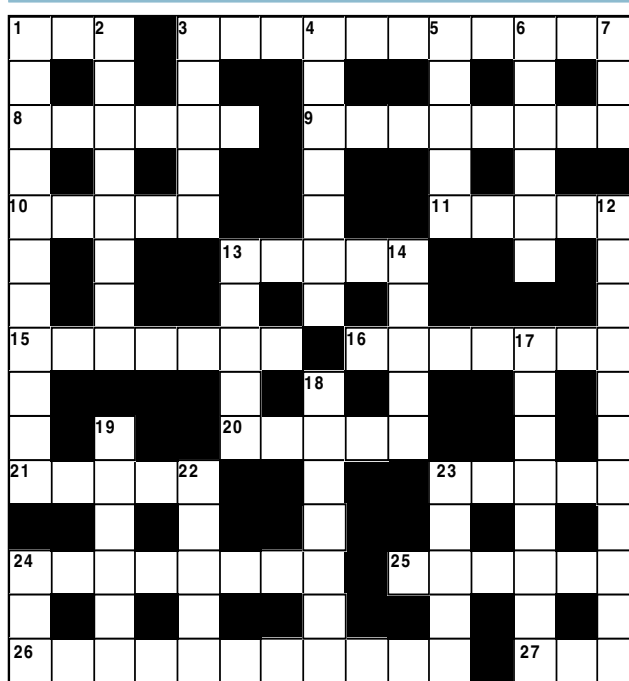
CHILDREN'S No. 345

Across – 1 Jelly babies 6 Newest 9 Eighty 11 Animal 13 Errand 14 Year 17 Ale 18 Canvas 20 Grid 21 Pedals 22 Minute

Down – 1 January 2 Law 3 Yes 4 Banger 5 Stay 7 Elm 8 Telescope 10 Tentacle 12 Italian 15 Ear 16 Red 19 Nods 20 Gum

Crossword

Gordius 469



Across

- 1 A short sleep is your best bet (3)
- 3 Lust for power written about in the LA memo (again) (11)
- 8 Cloud of interstellar gas and dust (6)
- 9 & 10 Administrative mistake - by a priest? (8,5)
- 11 Give up (5)
- 13 Star sign of those born in late August or early September (5)
- 15 How to increase the output of a gleaner (7)
- 16 The bachelor finds many a song in this part of Germany (7)
- 20 & 22d Eponymous heroine of a novel by RD Blackmore (5,5)
- 21 Spherical (5)
- 23 Upsetting Noah, I created some Asian capital (5)
- 24 Assume control when a piece of filming is finished? (4,4)
- 25 & 14d The forty-fourth president of the USA (6,5)
- 26 How Grant prayed for an outdoor hooley! (6,5)
- 27 Ignited (3)

Down

- 1 One lacking faith will be seen

around eleven, Robin (3-8)

- 2 Merry-go-round for adults! (3,5)
- 3 Grinding tooth (5)
- 4 Sport involving bows and arrows (7)
- 5 To wed that contrary woman is about right (5)
- 6 In the USA, a five-cent coin (6)
- 7 Everyone is in the valley (3)
- 12 The ideal pair of candidates to give you a voucher for a reverie? (5,6)
- 13 Overnight watchful attendance (5)
- 14 See 25 across
- 17 Precipitation (8)
- 18 African country involved in a rare tie (7)
- 19 What American golfers call a sand-trap (6)
- 22 See 20 across
- 23 Had ye an exhilarating workout? (5)
- 24 Get up, sheep! (3)

Sudoku Corner

346

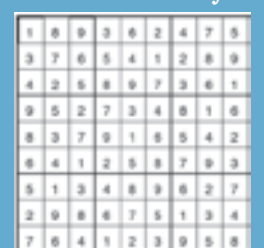
Easy



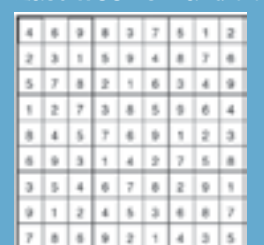
Hard



Last week's Easy 345



Last week's Hard 345



Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter

IT CAN BE VERY HARD to involve young married people in the life of the parish. It's understandable – they haven't a minute to themselves, between driving their children to GAA training, matches, piano lessons, pony-riding, Comhaltas...you get the picture. Young parents, anxious to give their children every opportunity, seem to be forever on the road, taxiing their children here and there. (Or they were up to lockdown, things may be different now.)

I was delighted when Patricia agreed to read at Sunday Mass, even though she and her husband had three young children. A few years ago, illness knocked her off the rota for a bit, but she bounced back – until this summer. Her cancer returned, and she emailed me to call to her home and celebrate the Sacrament of the Sick with her.

Perspective

The next week, she took her family for a few days to the west of Ireland and arranged a day in the following week for me to visit. On the Monday of that week, she clarified that it would be the Last Rites she would be seeking.

I called on the Wednesday. The reading at Morning Prayer that day seemed to give an interesting perspective (from the Book of

The Lord gave, the Lord has taken back



Job, chapter one), so I brought my breviary along and shared the reading, having celebrated the Sacrament of the Sick and given a sliver of a host as *Viaticum*: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, naked I shall return. The Lord gave, the Lord has taken back. Blessed be the name of the Lord!”

If we take happiness from God’s hand, must we not take sorrow too?”

The reading, while sad, just seemed to fit, as readings sometimes can, often when you least expect it.

Call

I got the call I didn’t expect the next morning, to say she had died

● I am grateful to the Covid-19 support team in the parish where I work for their thoroughness, because I hear so many stories of laxity elsewhere: churches packed for Mass with no limitations on entry, often with well over the Government’s limit of 50 people in smaller churches, Communion lines unregulated – and little sanitisation. It’s true that the Covid-19 adaptations are challenging, but the safety of believers must be paramount.

I wouldn’t want any church to feature as a ‘virus hotspot’ on the news, partly because of the spotlight that would fall then on every church, safe or not. Including ours!

in the night. Her life in this world ended just before dawn, at the end of the day when I shared those last Sacraments with her. The food for the journey home, *Viaticum*, was even more relevant than I had expected.

The wake in her home was a tremendously sad affair on those beautiful July days. Her cortege to the parish church ahead of her funeral Mass was just gorgeous, though heartbreaking; hundreds lined the road, many bearing roses, the beautiful summer flower. And after the Mass that just 50 could attend, she was laid to rest next to the church where she had often read God’s Word.

I like the symbolism of the baptismal garment laid on a coffin, which in this instance was placed on Patricia’s coffin by her husband and children. I don’t always add a cross and Bible, but on this day, I had no hesitation in placing the Sunday lectionary there, the book of God’s Word from which she had often read. And Job’s words formed the central message of my homily. I hope it helps, I hope over time it will bring healing.

Your prayers for Patricia’s husband and children will be very much appreciated.

Tell your priest to get packing!

August is ‘staycationing’ month in 2020, when people who would often travel abroad, go instead to a different part of our lovely country to relax. They complain about the prices, but they also have a lot of fun.

August would need to be priests’ time to get away too. We face a long and possibly bleak winter, for which those in parish ministry need to be strong and refreshed.

Priests entitled to three Sundays off should be sent away by their parishes for at least one weekend – parishioners should unselfishly insist on it. Reader, that’s your challenge for this week!

9 771393 683088



PLEASE HELP DISPLACED FAMILIES HIT BY UGANDA FLOODS

Amidst the worldwide covid crisis, other human disasters persist. Sr Mary Clare Busingye of the Little Sisters of St Francis of Assisi, Tororo, Uganda, writes to The Little Way Association: “We had very heavy rains that caused flood and displaced people in Fungwe village. Most houses fell and gardens for growing food were submerged in water. Almost all that families owned was lost. About 250 families are now living in classrooms in our primary school where women, children and men are all mixed up. For bedding they sleep on mats. Each family prepares their meal under trees. They have not been given the help required. The main activity at the moment is fishing. The major challenge are the vulnerable women and children. We have tried to help but we cannot continue because of our own financial challenges. I am earnestly requesting for your financial help.”

Your kind donation will help the villagers of Fungwe and others who are presently suffering. The current epidemic means that many countries’ infrastructure is compromised.



**MISSIONARIES
NEED YOUR MASS
OFFERINGS**

Your Mass offerings help to provide the missionary priest’s maintenance and assist him to extend the Kingdom of God upon earth.

We like to send a missionary a minimum of €6 or more for each Mass.

WELLS NEEDED

Missionaries constantly appeal to The Little Way for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean water, the lack of which causes much illness and many medical needs. On average, women in Africa and Asia walk around three hours every day to fetch water, often in scorching heat.

Can you help provide a well?

Your kind gift will be forwarded intact and gratefully received.

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466
www.littlewayassociation.com

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

€..... **HUNGRY, SICK AND NEEDY FAMILIES**

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(Please state number)

€..... **WELLS AND CLEAN WATER**

€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss) (Block letters please)

Address

tinyurl.com/lwadonations

DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.

IC/08/20