

# The Irish Catholic

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## Parishes criticise Govt 'mean spirited' tax on Church candles

Ruadhán Jones

The Government's decision to apply VAT to devotional candles used for personal prayer is "mean spirited" and will have a significant effect on churches that have struggled during the pandemic, parishes have warned.

Msgr John Byrne of Portlaoise parish called the timing "really unfortunate", as parishioners are facing unprecedented rises in the cost of living and churches are experiencing extra running and maintenance costs, particularly the dramatic rise in the cost of fuel.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Msgr Byrne said the added income for the exchequer won't "mean a whole lot to the State in terms of what they collect this way. But it will mean a lot to the individual churches and parishes."

"I would see it as being a bit mean-spirited really not to exempt devotional candles from this 23% VAT."

"It contributes maybe to an idea that we're [Catholics] out of favour and under-attack," Msgr Byrne finished.

He called on the Government to reconsider their decision, in light of the "very serious effort that has

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### 'Getting in on the Sister Act...'



Members of the Sister Adorers of the Royal Heart of Christ the King Sovereign Priest enjoy a walk on Bettystown beach, Co. Meath. The sisters are based in Ardee, Co. Louth. Photo: Dave Stanley.

**MICHAEL KELLY**

Respect for the dead is a vital value

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# Rituals around death remain a huge part of who we are

**R**espect and reverence for the dead is the mark of a great people," a priest of my childhood acquaintance – long since gone to God – often remarked. I never really understood what it meant as a child, and looking back death was very present and open in the community where I grew up in west Tyrone.

As early as I can remember, I accompanied my parents to wakes. Not the sort of wakes one often finds in funeral homes in some larger urban areas today, but wakes in the traditional sense where the community comes together in the late residence of the deceased. The only thing as constant as the flow of mourners is the cups of tea and plates of sandwiches. For a short three-day period, the entire parish wraps its arms around the grieving family and prays with and for them.

### Friend

I was thinking about it recently when a friend of mine who had been raised in Britain, now in his mid-30s, said he had never seen a dead body. Seeing a deceased person at a wake has never been something that has been alien to me, or indeed, I suspect, most Irish people.

As an altar boy, I also served many funeral Masses be it infant

deaths, people who took their own lives, those killed in 'the Troubles', car accidents and older people after a very long and happy life.

Traditionally, Irish people have not shielded children from the reality of death. This is not some morbid or macabre obsession, but more an understanding that death is real and brings pain and leaves a void. Of course, we all want to protect children from the reality of this loss – but how do you explain to the six- and seven-year-olds who cheerfully said goodbye to Miss Murphy in Durrow National School at home-time on Wednesday that she would never be coming back to school?

**"I also served many funeral Masses be it infant deaths, people who took their own lives, those killed in 'the Troubles', car accidents and older people after a very long and happy life"**

The appalling murder of Ashling Murphy has become a focus for national grief and mourning. The dignified presence of her parents, brother, sister and boyfriend at prayer vigils in her memory have made us all reflect on the almost unbearable cross that they will forever carry. The beautiful smiling photographs of Ashling brimming with potential, her whole life ahead of her, speak of the inherent unfairness in what happened. All people can do is gather in prayerful solidarity and be present for the family.

### Summed up

Fr Michael Meade summed it up at the funeral Mass on Tuesday when he said: "together we grieve, we pray, we hurt – this is the heavy price we pay for

## Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



love – we gather as a family of faith, to be with, to support by our prayer and our presence, those whose darkness is deep, whose pain is raw and fierce.

"Kathleen and Ray, Cathal, Amy and her boyfriend, Ryan – you have been robbed of your most precious gift – a gift that gave only joy and love, fun and laughter to many beyond your family," Fr Meade said.

It was a heartbreakingly poignant sight on Tuesday morning to see Miss Murphy's class line the route as her funeral cortege made its way through the roads and byways that she knew so well. It was a movingly appropriate tribute to their fallen teacher, who they will never forget. It would be wrong to exclude them from the grief and cathartic mourning.

### Resilience

Many have spoken of the sense of resilience that Ashling's loved ones are deriving from the support they are receiving as they struggle to come to terms with the heaviest of burdens. It was something referred to by Bishop Tom Deenihan in his words at the funeral: "If there is a chink of light to last week's darkness it must be the outpouring of support and sympathy that we have all seen."

"It was manifested at the various vigils, it was

manifested by those who assisted here, at the family home and in Durrow school over the past few days by those who quietly and discreetly provided refreshments, stewarding and whatever help that they could. Community is important and community works. Community is needed to overcome evils such as this and community will be needed here in the weeks ahead," Bishop Deenihan said.

**"The appalling murder of Ashling Murphy has become a focus for national grief and mourning"**

As the Murphys close the door to their home in the knowledge that Ashling will never again darken that same door, they need our prayers more than ever as they struggle to come to terms with a tragedy to which there are no easy answers.

May she rest in peace and rise in glory, and may God strengthen and sustain all who mourn Ashling.

**i To join Friends of The Irish Catholic and support Catholic journalism, please phone the office on 01 6874094 for more information or to make a contribution.**

# Parishes criticise 'mean spirited' tax on Church candles

» **Continued from Page 1** been made by parishes all over the country to keep services available to the people [during the pandemic]... churches have been a place of sanctuary".

A Dublin based priest warned that the move will put up basic costs for churches that are already "just about breaking even".

The Covid-19 pandemic has undermined Church revenue, while energy costs have "gone up hugely", Fr Richard O'Dwyer SJ of St Francis Xavier Church of Gardiner Street told this paper, adding that the change to the VAT

rate came as a surprise.

"Most churches don't have vast incomes, particularly for smaller parish churches...gas has gone up hugely, it's five-fold for ourselves. They add up, these small things," Fr O'Dwyer explained.

The Government's decision comes as a worldwide shortage of wax has already led to price hikes of up to 40%, Desmond Wisely of Wisely Ecclesiastical Supplies told *The Irish Catholic*.

"Churches have been hit already with a massive hike in candles this year especially. To add on another hike, I feel so aggrieved by it," Mr Wisely said.

Meanwhile, Kerry TD Michael Healy-Rae accused the Government of "another subtle attack...on the values that Catholics hold dear to their hearts", adding that the Church should "agitate for an exemption".

However, a spokesperson for the Department of Finance told *The Irish Catholic* that the exemption cannot be "extended or reintroduced after they have been removed" due to EU rules.

As of January 1, this year, all candles are subject to VAT at 23%, overruling a long-term exemption for white, cylindrical candles, a type typically used in churches.

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# Ashling Murphy: 'In life she cherished the Gospels'

**Chai Brady**

Ashling Murphy was remembered for her great faith, talents and the love she brought to her friends and family at her funeral on Tuesday in St Brigid's Church in Mount Bolus, Co. Offaly.

Parish priest of Kilcormac and Killoughey Fr Michael Meade said of Ms Murphy, "in life she cherished the Gospels", and that the issues raised "since this horrible act of violence invaded all our lives will, we pray, continue to evolve and bring the change we need so much, to simply give and show respect".

The 23-year-old was murdered on Wednesday, January 12, on the banks of the Grand Canal in Tullamore.

**“At moments like this, our faith in Jesus Christ and in his Resurrection come to our aid”**

The teacher, musician and camogie player was described as a "most precious gift" to her family and boyfriend, who gave "joy and love, fun and laughter to many beyond your family".

A fiddle, a family picture, a Kilcormac/Killoughey camogie jersey, a school book and her photo were included as symbols of Ms Murphy's life.

Before the prayers of commendation, Bishop Tom Deenihan of the Diocese of Meath said: "A deprived act of violence which deprived a kind, talented, loved and admired young woman of her life has since united the country in grief and support."

He said that the crime has also asked questions of ourselves and of society. "It has questioned our attitudes and, particularly, our attitudes towards women and it has questioned our values and our morality," he said.

"Whether those questions will be addressed or passed over remains to be seen but we cannot allow such violence and disregard for both human life and bodily integrity take root in our time and culture".

Ms Murphy's parents Raymond and Kathleen, her sister Amy, brother Cathal and boyfriend Ryan were among the chief mourners at the Mass. The funeral was also attended by President Michael D. Higgins, his wife Sabina and Taoiseach Micheál Martin.

Bishop Deenihan also offered sympathies to Ashling's pupils and the staff at Durrow National School. If there is a "chink of light to last week's darkness", he said, it was manifested in the various vigils, those who assisted at the family home and in Durrow school and others who offered whatever help they could.

"Today, we bury Ashling as we must. We bury a woman who lived the short years given to her to the full, who developed her talents, who reached out to others, who made a difference, who



Schoolchildren from Ashling Murphy's class hold photographs of her and red roses outside St Brigid's Church, Mountbolus, Co Offaly. Photo: PA Images

brought happiness and who was loved," he said.

Dr Deenihan added: "At moments like this, our faith in Jesus Christ and in his Resurrection come to

our aid. Death is not the end, the grave is not our final destiny.

"May Ashling's memory be a consolation and may she rise in glory."

**“A fiddle, a family picture, a Kilcormac/Killoughey camogie jersey, a school book and her photo were included as symbols of Ms Murphy's life”**

## New postulator named for Irish sainthood cause

**Jason Osborne**

The Congregation of Holy Cross has appointed Valentina Culurgioni to be the new postulator for the sainthood cause of Holy Cross Father Patrick Peyton.

Born in Co. Mayo in 1909, Fr Peyton, was most well known as the "rosary priest", and famously coined the phrase, "The family that prays together, stays together".

Fr Peyton was also a media pioneer and was declared 'Venerable' by Pope Francis in 2017, which means that he is a person of virtue who is "worthy of emulation by the Faithful".

The next stage in the process is beatification, after which he would be referred to as 'Blessed'.

The congregation announced January 12 that Ms Culurgioni succeeds Andrea Ambrosi, a civil and canon lawyer in Rome, who retired as postulator, with the Vatican Congregation for Saints' Causes granting Ms Culurgioni the mandate to serve as the postulator.

"We are so pleased with the appointment of Valentina Culurgioni as postulator of Fr Peyton's cause," Holy Cross Fr Wilfred Raymond, president of Holy Cross Family Ministries, said.

"Valentina is a woman of intelligence, talent and devout faith. She

brings much to this important role."

Fr Peyton's parents instilled a devotion to the rosary in him at a young age and following his emigration to America and subsequent severe illness as a seminarian, his parents turned to the rosary.

"Stricken with tuberculosis," Fr Raymond, said, "He prayed his rosary to the Blessed Mother and made a miraculous recovery. From that moment, he promised to spend the rest of his life on a special mission for Mary, bringing millions of families around the world together to pray the rosary just as his family did every evening."

## Middle East Christians focus of unity week

**Staff reporter**

Christian Churches in the Middle East face a "perilous type of existence" which has highlighted the need for them to work together, an Irish priest has said ahead of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU) 2022.

The WPCU runs from January 18-25 on the theme 'We saw his star in the

East'. It was prepared by the Christians of the Middle East this year.

Fr Martin Browne OSB, a Benedictine monk based at Glenstal Abbey, Co. Limerick is a member of the international group tasked by the Vatican and the World Council of Churches with assisting in the preparation of texts for the week.

He said: "What they prepared comes from their context of being in the region

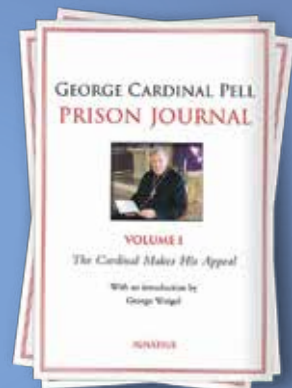
where Jesus lived but also being from a part of the world where Christianity is in danger in some ways.

"When you are very strong and confident in your independent little silo, it might not seem as urgent to consider Christian unity, but when you're in a very precarious and sometimes perilous type of existence that naturally makes it easier to reach out to work together."

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# Don't eliminate single-sex schools, says law professor

**Ruadhán Jones**

Well-known law professor and political commentator Larry Donnelly has opposed calls to "eliminate" single-sex schools from Ireland, calling for freedom of choice.

Mr Donnelly – who attended a single-sex secondary school in Boston – told *The Irish Catholic* that an

"awful lot of" of young boys and girls "can benefit greatly from single-sex education".

Acknowledging his position isn't "hard and fast", Mr Donnelly defended the experience of students who attend single-sex schools against the "nuclear option" of totally ending or phasing out single-sex education.

"I wouldn't eliminate it

because I think an awful lot of us who went to single sex schools – I went to a single sex secondary school – had a great experience there, and wouldn't trade it for anything," he said.

One size doesn't fit all, the NUI Galway lecturer continued, adding that "at the time I was entering into secondary school, the single sex schools

were a much more attractive option for me for a whole range of reasons.

"Again, the experience I had of going to the Jesuit high school in Boston was an amazing educational experience there and I wouldn't trade that for the world. It being single sex was definitely a big part of its character."

His comments come as

a Co. Cork-based principal called for an end to single-sex schooling in order to tackle gender-based violence against women.

Colm O'Connor, a principal at an Educate Together school and a member of the Educate Together board, wrote in *The Irish Examiner* that "segregating students is dehumanising and prevents the develop-

ment of empathy and shared understanding.

"I firmly believe that having conversations on consent, body image, violence, and sexuality will have limited impact if students are segregated according to sex and cannot look each other in the eye or hear each other's voices as equal human beings," Mr O'Connor wrote.

## NI Ombudsman report on loyalist murders 'damning'

**Chai Brady**

Following the discovery of "collusive behaviour" in the North between members of the RUC, the UDR and paramilitary loyalist group the North Antrim UDA, an Irish priest has said the Police

Ombudsman's report was "damning".

Fermanagh-based Fr Joe McVeigh said the findings of Operation Greenwich, which looked at 19 murders carried out by the group between 1989 and 1993, was not surprising.

"We believed it within the

nationalist Catholic community, we believed that there was a lot of collusion happening," Fr McVeigh said, "I use to hear people describe to me the threats they received, that they would be killed, by police or by the UDR in particular."

"We didn't know who was

going to be next, it could have been me, it could have been my neighbours, it could have been anybody. That's what the aim was, to instil fear in the whole Catholic, nationalist community," he said.

The murders were all carried out in the north west.

Regarding the level of "collusive behaviour" uncovered, Police Ombudsman Marie Anderson said: "When you're close to the detail of all this you need to stand back... the human story that is told is part of my job. Shocked? I think the phrase I would use is numbed."

## New website launched for national synod

**Staff reporter**

A new website, synod.ie has been launched to support engagement with the national synodal pathway for the Church in Ireland.

The website provides information about the synodal pathway and the timeline for the work, as well as making available a variety of resources to support engagement.

Welcoming the publication of the website and resources Primate of All Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin said: "This website builds on the important work that

has begun at diocesan and national levels, as well as in a variety of other settings, to take up the invitation from Pope Francis to think about what it means to be a synodal Church. I encourage everyone to use the resources provided to make bring their perspective to this important work."

Dr Nicola Brady, chair of the steering committee said: "The initial response to the announcement of the synodal pathway by the Irish bishops has been very encouraging... We hope that this website will be a helpful resource to those who wish to engage with the process as it develops."

## Tánaiste tours Maynooth



Tánaiste Leo Varadkar TD is pictured with Fr Michael Mullaney, President of St Patrick's College, Maynooth, as the Tánaiste toured the St Patrick's campus, January 14.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Capuchins to leave Carlow in summer 2022

The closure of the Capuchin friary on Dublin Street in Carlow Town during summer 2022 is "greeted across the town with great sadness," according to Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin.

The Capuchins opened their friary in Carlow in 1978, and "have been close to the heartbeat of Carlow for 44 years," Bishop Nulty said, continuing, "Carlow town will be the poorer for their going, but much the richer for their having been here."


"While the history of the Capuchin foundation in Carlow and in the diocese is relatively short, for us the people, it seems as if they have always been part of the fabric of the town for a long time," he said.

### Catholic school wins BT Young Scientist Development Award

Students Jona Garcia, Claudine Mulihano and Iman Shittu, of St Louis Secondary School in Co. Louth claimed the Science for Development Award at the BT Young Scientist and Technologist Exhibition this year.

Presented by the Minister for Overseas Development Aid and Diaspora, Colm Brophy TD, he said, "I would like to congratulate this year's deserved winners... Their project, a food refrigeration system driven by sunlight and saltwater, is climate smart and can help improve the food security of communities with limited, or no, access to electricity."

Each year, the Irish Aid/Self Help Africa Science for Development Award goes to the Young Scientist project which best addresses challenges facing people in developing countries.



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# The problem isn't 'men' as a collective - the problem is evil...

**T**he murder of Ashling Murphy was so atrocious, so shocking, so extremely distressing in every way that it was understandable that, immediately, both politicians and people sought to apply blame.

Some specific individual is to blame – the person who carried out this brutal and unspeakable crime – but in the immediate aftermath, since there was no named culprit, no one to stand accused in a court of law, a group was pinpointed. And that group was 'men'.

**“The number of indictable assaults rose seven-fold over these years and a similar trend was found for homicide”**

Social media – as well as mainstream media – was full of angry accusations against men, against 'gender-based violence', against 'toxic masculinity', and against the 'misogyny' which some people saw as the cause of this dreadful event. Men should be 'called out' for their attitudes to women, it was said.

'Gender-based violence' is to be deplored – as is any violence – and misogyny is mean-spirited and unpleasant. But we simply do not know if 'misogyny' has specific links with murder. A brutal and evil deed is not the same as a negative attitude.

Casual misogyny was more common 50 years ago than it is now. Jokes



**Mary Kenny**



**The late Ashling Murphy.**

about women as daft drivers, or bossy mothers-in-law, or nagging wives were run-of-the-mill: but the crime and murder rate were way lower than they later became.

## Crime

A report from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) which measured crime in Ireland between 1951 and 1980 concluded

that crime had risen exponentially over these decades, and that included “a substantial increase for offences against the person. The number of indictable assaults rose seven-fold over these years and a similar trend was found for homicide”.

Between 1951 and 1960, there were 59 murders in the Republic – that is an

average of 3.5 per million. Between 1961 and 1970, this had increased to 72 murders (4.5 per million); between 1971 and 1980, there were 195 murders (8.1 per million); between 1981 and 1990, the number was 219 (8.4 per million) and between 1991 and 2000, there were 334 such homicides (12.0 per million).

**“Recently, Ireland’s rate of homicide against women, has been lower than Norway’s, New Zealand’s and Canada’s”**

Homicides in Ireland continued to increase from 2000, reaching a peak in 2007, with 152 murders in that year alone. Thankfully, they have since been declin-

ing, overall, and in 2019 had decreased to 55. Recently, Ireland’s rate of homicide against women, has been lower than Norway’s, New Zealand’s and Canada’s.

## Grief and sorrow

But every life lost matters, and is a source of grief and sorrow. And every killing is an evil action.

Yes, males are more likely to kill than females – and men are as likely to be victims of other men as are women. But that doesn’t mean it’s right to accuse the entire male sex of being culpable of ‘gender-based violence’.

Women have fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, boyfriends, even the occasional eccentric uncle who might make a joke about a woman’s ability to drive a truck (just as women express exasperation with men’s failings), who are still entirely gentle people.

At the heart of this terri-

ble tragedy is the problem of evil. Philosophers and moral theologians have wrestled with evil for centuries, and asked how a loving God can permit such evil to exist. We have free will, and evil things are done.

**“But a particular deed has a particular perpetrator: and though it’s understandable to reach for collective guilt, it cannot be just”**

Sometimes, in the case of murder, the cause can be insanity, and lawyers have probed whether an offender is ‘mad or bad’.

But a particular deed has a particular perpetrator: and though it’s understandable to reach for collective guilt, it cannot be just.

## A New Beginning for an Ancient Order



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Artist's Impression, Kylemore Abbey New Monastery



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## Between East and West

The Russians believe that Ukraine is, or should be, within their sphere of influence. Ukrainians want to affirm their independence. Some western nations think Ukraine should be included with “the west”, is entitled to be part of NATO, and maybe even the EU.

I wonder if more commentators understood the role of religion in culture, they would find it easier to unpack all this. Ukraine’s religious background explains exactly where it stands: divided.

Eastern Ukraine is Orthodox, like Russia. Western Ukraine is linked to the Latin Rite through the Uniate Church. So, this vast country is both part of the roots of Russian culture, and at the same time, it has been aligned with western Europe – notably Poland.

Unfortunately, literacy about religion isn’t always widespread. My husband Richard West specialised in Balkan history and language and he always tried to elucidate this: the division between Serbia and Croa-

tian was mainly religious. Serbia was Orthodox and looked towards the Eastern Orthodox rites (and used the Cyrillic alphabet) while Croatia, like Slovenia was Latin Catholic.

Some secularists think there should be less religion taught in schools. Surely there is a case for teaching more about faith traditions, which are wholly relevant to conflicts, dilemmas and cultural complications here with us right now.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Administrator appointed for Ardagh and Clonmacnoise

A new diocesan administrator, Fr Tom Healy, has been appointed for the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise following Archbishop Francis Duffy's installation as the new Archbishop of Tuam.

Fr Healy PP of Edgeworthstown in Co. Longford will administer the day-to-day affairs of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise until a new bishop is appointed. He will continue in his role as parish priest of Edgeworthstown.

Following his appointment, he asked for "your kind support and prayers in the time ahead".

Fr Healy attended Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth and was ordained for the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise on June 8, 1986.

### Make conscious effort to pray for vocations – Bishop Cullinan

Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan has called on parishes to make a "conscious effort" to pray for vocations in 2022.

The chair of the bishops' council for vocations is asking people to pray for vocations at 4pm each day for the next year.

"We are asking individuals and parishes to make an extraordinary effort to pray for vocations to the priesthood," Bishop Cullinan said January 17.

"Prayer is the very breath of our Faith", Bishop Cullinan continued. He quoted Pope Francis, saying "no vocation is born of itself or lives for itself. A vocation flows from the heart of God and blossoms in the good soil of faithful people".

### Jesuit redress scheme for abuse victims of Fr Joseph Marmion

The Jesuits have launched a redress scheme for men abused as boys by Fr Joseph Marmion at three Jesuit colleges in Ireland.

The scheme is voluntary, and offers €75,000 or more, depending on the severity of the abuse suffered.

However, in accepting an award, the claimant forfeits their right to pursue legal action against the order.

Fr Marmion, who died in 2000, is believed to have abused dozens of boys at Belvedere College in Dublin, Clongowes Wood College in Kildare and at Crescent College in Limerick.

### Late RTÉ broadcaster honoured by archbishop

The former Archbishop of Tuam has described RTÉ's former Western Editor, Jim Fahy, who died following a short illness over the weekend, as the "respected voice of the west of Ireland".

Mr Fahy (75) was the station's longest serving regional correspondent.

Serving Bishop Michael Neary said: "While his work brought him to many parts of the world, and while Jim reported on all the big and important occasions and events, still he never neglected to cover the stories of local importance. Jim brought each story to public attention with characteristic thoroughness, objectivity and professionalism."

# The most overlooked of drugs



## The destructive nature of pornography is completely ignored in modern Ireland, writes Jason Osborne

The recent atrocious murder of Ashling Murphy has sparked intense national debate about the treatment of women in Ireland, and a concurrent discussion about the perceived flawed state of modern masculinity. Leaving aside the merits or deficiencies of this argument, one topic has been conspicuously absent: pornography.

The primary attitude to pornography today is that it's a private matter, for the individual to dabble in or not as they please. However, many outlets and bodies recommend it as healthy, with health officials even recommending it during the earliest months of lockdown as preferable to having sex with someone you don't live with, in an effort to stem the spread of Covid-19.

New forms of media have made it more widespread and more eas-

ily accessible than ever before, too; social media giants are often powerless to stop the flow of explicit content onto their sites, while other websites such as OnlyFans allow users to share explicit images and videos with their 'fans' for money, with some of the website's top earners raking in tens of millions of euro. Overall, while it's still a matter of tacit acceptance in many circles, pornography is by and large not considered problematic in Ireland today.

**“Research into the harmful effects of pornography has found that it is corrosive on every level of human experience”**

What the current state of affairs fails to take into account is the ever-growing and increasingly-damning body of research about the ills of pornography along nearly every metric, personal and social.

### Wrong

The Church has always taught that pornography is wrong. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states in paragraph 2354: "Pornography consists in removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties. It offends against chastity because it perverts the conjugal act, the intimate giving of spouses to each other. It does grave injury to the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, the public), since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others. It

immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world. It is a grave offense. Civil authorities should prevent the production and distribution of pornographic materials."

While the Church captures the unchanging essence of the problem here, it hasn't always had access to the compelling research that's available in bulk today to back up its arguments.

Research into the harmful effects of pornography has found that it is corrosive on every level of human experience: the individual, in private relationships and in the wider world of human society. With regards to the individual level, it's been found to affect the brain's neurochemistry, with recent research showing that addictions to harmful substances like tobacco and other drugs have striking similarities to pornography addiction on a neural level. Frequent porn use and exposure often result in compulsive behaviour and cravings, which also often escalates as users become desensitised to what they're viewing, leading them to watch more extreme forms than before in order to generate the same response.

Another disturbing physiological discovery of late is porn-induced erectile dysfunction, which is being uncovered in otherwise healthy young men. As the catechism alludes to above, the immersion in the unreal and fantastical world of pornography often results in a sort of disappointment with reality, such that, as author Naomi Wolf once quipped, "real women are just bad porn" for frequent users.

If the individual effects aren't bad enough, research into the

effects of pornography on relationships and social dynamics has found that porn can result in an increased likelihood of cheating, poorer relationship quality, and the normalisation of sexual objectification, among many, many other detrimental outcomes.

### Arguments

Regardless of the merits or deficiencies of arguments about the current state of masculinity in Ireland, any discussion that doesn't take the pervasive and corrupting effect of modern, ubiquitous porn use into account is severely lacking. While the specific figures fluctuate depending on which study you look at, all are in agreement that the vast majority of men have viewed pornography at least once, with another large majority watching it regularly.

**“As the catechism alludes to above, the immersion in the unreal and fantastical world of pornography often results in a sort of disappointment with reality”**

To think that this sort of behaviour isn't going to result in adverse relations between the sexes in Ireland is to engage in wishful thinking, and anyone who claims to be in favour of protecting and respecting women must speak out against this scourge. The fact that it has rarely raised its head in the current discourse is a testament to our societal unwillingness to exchange comfort and pleasure for truth and goodness.



# “A legacy of *incredible* humanitarian significance”



Fr. Aengus Finucane.

The Irish Catholic looks at a rich and varied life lived in the service of others and of God.

**F**r. Finucane was ordained as a Holy Ghost Priest in 1958. In his first assignment in Uli, Nigeria, Fr. Finucane found himself involved in the bitter civil war between Nigeria and Biafra.

Following Biafra's attempt to secede, this widespread conflict had displaced millions. What's more, there was a blockade of food, medicine and basic necessities by the Nigerian authorities.

*At the height of the crisis in the summer of 1968, it was estimated 6,000 children died every week.*

## An Irish effort

In response to the Biafrans' terrible plight, Concern Worldwide – originally called Africa Concern – was founded and began raising awareness and funds to help those suffering.

On 6th September 1968, the 600 tonne, Columcille set sail for Sao Tome – a Portuguese island close to West Africa. The cost of chartering the ship and its vital cargo of powdered food and medicines was all paid for with donations from the people of Ireland.

To circumvent the blockade, the supplies were then flown from Sao Tome to Biafra overnight. The following day in Uli, Fr. Finucane was among the Holy Ghost priests who would help distribute the life saving supplies.

With his commitment and

that of the Irish public and priests, this operation grew into one flight a day for 11 months.

Fr. Finucane was deeply committed to helping the poorest of the poor. So after leaving Biafra, in 1972 he became Concern's Field Director in Bangladesh after its war of independence from Pakistan – the war had left millions in desperate need of food.

The period after Fr. Finucane's time in Bangladesh was particularly testing. In Thailand's Kampuchea refugee camps he saw the desperation of Cambodians who had fled the Khmer Rouge's genocide.

And in Uganda the horror of HIV in Kampala, where even in the best hospitals one third of the children born were HIV positive.

Fr. Finucane worked tirelessly to alleviate suffering, and recognised his responsibility to help the poor and underprivileged.

Concern appointed Fr. Finucane as its Chief Executive in 1981.

During his 16 years as the head of the charity he was 'on the ground' during many of the world's worst disasters. These included the 1983-1985 famine in Ethiopia and the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

Relinquishing his post in 1997, Fr. Finucane became Honorary President of Concern Worldwide US. He held this post until his death on 6th October 2009.

## Fr. Finucane's legacy

Fr. Finucane is the cornerstone behind much of what Concern has become today. It was he who expanded its aid work into 11 countries and dramatically increased its fundraising.

Tom Arnold – Concern's CEO from 2001 to 2013 – says: *“There can be few Irish people of his generation, or of any other generation, who have contributed as much to improving the lives of so much of humanity.”*

*“He inspired a whole generation of Concern overseas volunteers.”*

Fr. Finucane continues to inspire as his legacy still influences Concern 12 years after his death.

**“Do as much as you can, as well as you can, for as many as you can, for as long as you can.”**  
– Fr. Aengus Finucane

In 2020 Concern worked in 23 countries, responding to 78 different emergencies, helping 36.9 million of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.

Concern's vision, mission and work continues to strive to end extreme poverty, whatever it takes. The charity believes that no-one should live in fear of not having enough food.

## The devastation of climate change

Today one of the primary causes of acute food insecurity are weather extremes.

Climate change is increasing hunger levels and pushing even more people to the brink of famine. With multiple famines predicted, there are currently 41 million people teetering on the edge of starvation.

Extreme weather caused by climate change is having a devastating effect on the most vulnerable people in the world's poorest countries.

And these calamitous weather conditions are now more frequent and varied. No sooner has one disaster struck than another arrives. People don't have enough food for months, sometimes years on end.

In Malawi droughts, floods and strong weather patterns are a regular occurrence – placing huge stress

on land and crop production resulting in food shortages and hunger.

These weather extremes affect an already vulnerable population where 80% source their livelihoods from the land, 71% live below the poverty line and an estimated 20% are living in extreme poverty.

People like Yona Lambiki and his family.

Yona, a farmer, lives in Nkhambaza village with his wife and five children. He was always able to support his family with the crops and food he grew providing them with a healthy balanced diet. Any excess was sold, with some of the money used to pay for his children's schooling. But two years ago everything changed ...



Crops destroyed by Cyclone Idai.

In March 2019 Cyclone Idai caused devastating floods and loss of life in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The floods completely destroyed crops just weeks away from harvest – food people were relying on for survival.

Although his house wasn't affected, like thousands of others, the crops Yona was about to harvest were completely washed away. There was nothing for his family to eat, let alone any to sell.

## Help for now and the future

But thanks to Concern's generous donors and Yona's hard work he is now able to look after his family again.

Yona immediately received a vital cash transfer from Concern. With this he bought food and other basic necessities his family needed to be safe and free from hunger.

Yona received seeds including maize, tomatoes, beans, three bundles of sweet potato vines and other vegetables to grow so he could, once again, support his family. He also received, fertilizer and a hoe to help him grow his crops. As well as five goats for milk and manure.



Photo: Jason Kennedy / Concern Worldwide.

**“I would really love to meet everyone that is behind this support so I could thank them in person.”** – Yona Lambiki

Like other families in his community, Yona planted the seeds he received in his home garden. What they harvest is used to feed their families, any excess is sold to improve their livelihoods.

But Concern do far more than simply give communities plants, seeds and tools. They provide training in Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) to ensure long term, inter-generational support.

providing support for years – possibly decades – to come.

On speaking about the people who support Concern and make our work possible, he said, *“I'm so very happy with the support I have received from Concern. My life and family's life is healthy and can afford everything we could not afford before. I'm so happy and thankful to Concern.”*

## Will Fr. Finucane inspire you too?

There's a way you, just like Fr. Finucane, can leave the world a better place. And help improve the lives of families like Yona's both now and for future generations.

How? By leaving Concern a gift in your Will.

When you leave a gift, your legacy lives on – helping for years to come.

*“I know that this is a very personal decision. But I assure you, gifts in Wills have had a phenomenal impact in reducing extreme poverty, hunger and suffering around the world. Today, as the catastrophic combination of conflict, climate change and COVID-19 have plunged so many people into the grip of crisis, your gift will help us to be there in their time of need.”*

– Dominic MacSorley, CEO, Concern Worldwide

Gifts in Wills are a vital source of funding for Concern.

Your legacy will help families like Yona's reverse the many struggles caused by Climate Change ...

... will provide the tools and knowledge they need to not just survive but help themselves – a gift from you they can pass down for generations.

To find out more about how a legacy gives a safe, secure future, please request your complimentary copy of 'A World Without Hunger' – Concern's legacy booklet.

You'll learn of others who desperately needed help, and how legacies from people just like you have done so much.

There are also answers to common questions people ask about leaving a gift in their Will. And explains how to get started.

Requesting your free booklet does not oblige you to do anything else.

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 write to 52-55 Lower Camden Street, Dublin 2





## Nuala O'Loan

### The View



# The perfect storm where people feel entitled to malign, torment and even destroy others

**I**t can be hard to remember a time when there was no social media, when communication was verbal, or written on pieces of paper which were then dispatched to places far and near. With such means of interaction a responsibility normally attached to how we interacted with others. Any untruth, any calumny or detraction, any libel or slander could very often be traced back to the teller. Anonymous letters and scrawled offensive graffiti, like malicious gossip, carried with them a sense of the disreputable at the very least.

All that has changed with the rapid development of virtual communication, of the internet with all its locations, blogs, social media sites. It has a language all of its own, and with it has come the attrition of the sense that people can be made responsible for what they say, and for some at least, there has grown a sense of their entitlement to say anything, no matter how untrue, hurtful or damaging, without even having to consider the consequences, which may be far-reaching and long lasting.

**“We are evolving a society which has abandoned very many of our cultural and religious norms”**

Accompanying this has been the development of a culture, the consequences of which are probably best epitomised by the case of JK Rowling - a brilliant writer who captured the hearts and minds of a generation of children and many adults. I remember the excitement generated by the forthcoming publication of her 'next' book, each wonderfully entitled like *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, suggesting mystery and adventure to come. Like Roald Dahl she spoke to children's minds in a way which few writers do. Her books became films, generated the 'Harry Potter industry', brought fame and untold wealth to people. She wrote the first books, living in pov-



erty, using a cafe for warmth and a congenial place to work. She has become a role model for many. She is a philanthropist.

Now however, in this wonderful new 'woke' world of ours she is being 'cancelled', treated by some as a pariah. One whose views and talents are not worthy of recognition. Her crime? She said that women are women, that transgender women are not actually women. For this very mild true statement she has been excluded by many. She is not alone.

#### Generation

We have now a generation for whom, in many situations, truth is subjective, never objective, never absolute. If I am born a man, yet say I am a woman, then I am a woman. I don't have to have had gender corrective surgery, or be on drugs to suppress the gender with which I was born. I

am a woman if I say so, and should therefore be granted access to women only facilities and even women only prisons. Newly defined language encapsulates much of this change: those mothers who breastfeed their babies are no longer to be described thus. Now they are 'parents' who 'chestfeed'. People may choose their personal pronouns, announcing that in future the word 'he' or 'she' will no longer apply and 'they' must be used instead. Singularity or plurality is no longer an issue. To fail to use the 'correct' pronoun at work can sometimes even lead to disciplinary action. Babies are given names which do not indicate that they are little boys or little girls, and are brought up in a gender neutral environment, with the expectation that at some stage they will decide what and who they are. Parents have the right to bring their

children up as they will, provided they do not harm the child, but what will be the consequences of growing up in this world of uncertainties which may not, in the end, present as simple freedoms.

**“We recognised the value of fundamental truths which provided the infrastructure for our existence as a society”**

We are evolving a society which has abandoned very many of our cultural and religious norms. We used to accept and feel the need to protect the right to life, freedom of belief, expression, thought and opinion. We recognised the value of fundamental truths which provided the infrastructure for

our existence as a society: the practices which generated trust among us, and which enabled us to coexist, for the most part in a relatively peaceful society.

Now, if we do not follow this 'woke' line, we are to be shunned, treated as if we do not exist, as if our thoughts and values have no merit, just as attempts have been made to 'cancel' JK Rowling and so many others. As this ugly denial of the right even to an opinion is expressed by adults, so children follow, and cyber bullying is now a major cause of distress to children. Teenagers can be destroyed by relentless trolling by their peers, leading even to suicide because the world has become such an ugly place for them, and they have no control at all over how they are treated.

Add to this the freedom generated by the anonymity enabled by the internet, by

sites such as Twitter and TikTok, and we have the perfect storm within which there are those who feel entitled to malign, torment and even destroy others, and do so. They even attack the dead who cannot defend themselves, and whose families are left to cope with vile and untrue allegations, even as they continue to grieve.

#### The law

The law has been slow to catch up, to protect our fundamental human and legal rights in this context, though it is beginning to happen.

We saw the recent disgusting and terrible online attack on Diane Dodds at the anniversary of the death of Nigel and Diane's little son, Andrew. At least the police are investigating that. We have seen too how, rarely, someone can pursue their attacker in the court and win damages.

**“Add to this the freedom generated by the anonymity enabled by the internet, by sites such as Twitter and TikTok”**

As this cruel and destructive activity becomes more prevalent, surely it is up to each of us to do what we can to stop it. To be attacked in this way can be exhausting, distressing and so damaging. To deny another person the right to speak freely and with respect is to deny their basic human rights. To exclude them because of their thoughts is to be totalitarian. To suggest that young people are incapable of making reasoned arguments against those with whom they disagree, and must be protected from such situations, rather than working their way to a clear understanding of what they believe and why they believe it, is to deprive them of one of the ways in which they will learn to think profoundly and to reason logically.

In a world which is becoming increasingly intolerant and authoritarian the right of freedom of speech is a jewel which we should treasure.

**“We have now a generation for whom, in many situations, truth is subjective, never objective, never absolute”**



# The Irish Catholic

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# A parish bridging the divide between old and new



The local Syro-Malabar community prepares for a procession.



The parish of Johnstown/Walterstown is both struggling with and solving Church problems of the present age, writes **Jason Osborne**

**S**ituated in the diocese of Meath, the wider world is coming closer to the parish of Johnstown/Walterstown's door day by day. Urbanisation is increasing, as is the area's population, a stark contrast from recent decades.

First encountered about 20 minutes from the M50 Blanchardstown exit, and close by to the Hill of Tara, the parish straddles old and new. A rural parish until the 1980s, with about 300 homes, it now has about 4,000 homes and around 12,000 souls, with new housing developments in the pipeline. This picture of a parish in transition is painted for me by parish priest, Fr Michael Cahill.

Ministering to the parish for about nine years, Fr Cahill tells *The Irish Catholic* about the space Johnstown/Walterstown parish occupies in the Irish parochial landscape.

"Many of those who set up home here give their address as Navan, and only discover they are in fact in Johnstown parish when they want to arrange a wedding, christening or funeral and are directed to the busy parish office at the Parochial

House. A mere five minutes from Navan with its magnificent St Mary's church, though a separate parish, Johnstown is well supported by the four priests of our 'sister' parish."

## Community

"The two churches of the parish, the Nativity of Our Lady at Johnstown and the Assumption at Walterstown were built in the 1840s to serve a much smaller and homogenous farming community and must now meet the needs of a typical modern, diverse and varied population from across the globe who have made their home and life here," Fr Cahill tells.

As Fr Cahill says, the nature of the parish's demographics has changed dramatically over time. A recent development has been the growth of the Syro-Malabar Eastern Catholic Church in the parish, which is based in Kerala, India. Arriving to the parish before Fr Cahill, he says its adherents have asked for nothing, and given everything.

"Well, I've been nine years in the parish and some of them were here before me, but the number has

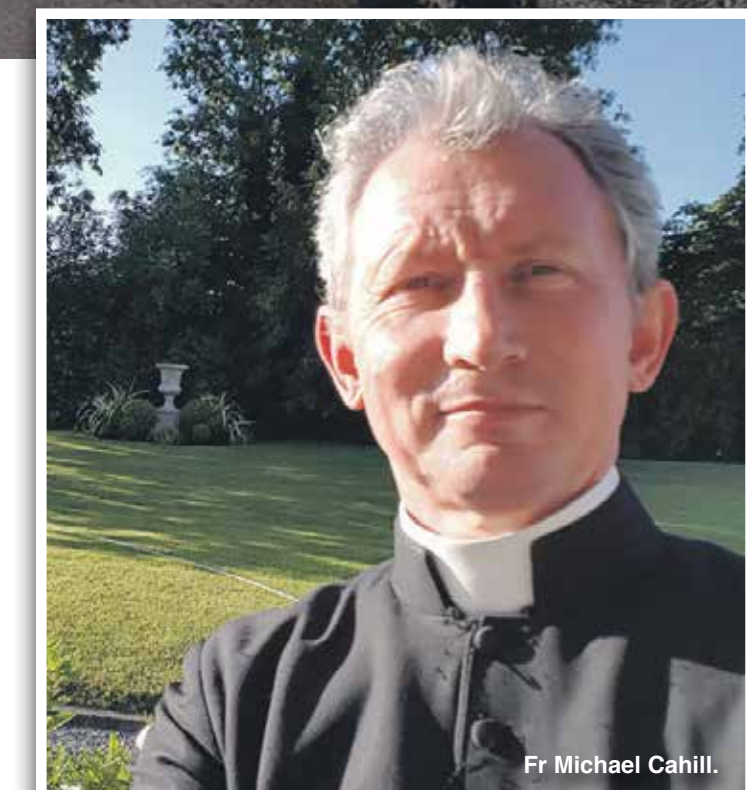
grown now to, I think it's around 35 families we have now. It's interesting, because they very particularly – I don't even know if the word is integrate – but they participate in all parish events," he says.

"They're at daily Mass. There wouldn't be a Mass in the parish without them. They're all from Kerala, of course. There wouldn't be a Mass in the parish that wasn't represented by them....But then they also keep their own traditions in the parish. Their liturgy is in Malayalam, and twice a month they have a Mass with their own priest who comes from Dublin. So they don't in any sense want to be separate or apart from Johnstown parish," Fr Cahill says, adding, "They ask nothing, they only give".

**“This expression of Catholicism has much to teach the Church in Ireland, Fr Cahill believes, sharing examples of their service and sacramentality”**

A bright, colourful take on the liturgy and Church life that certainly differs from the Irish image of old, Fr Cahill explains the life the Syro-Malabar Catholics bring to the parish.

"It's very exuberant and colourful in the sense that they don't keep their faith to themselves. Maybe it's because they've had to assert them-



Fr Michael Cahill.

selves in India, you know, they'd be a tiny minority in Kerala. It's colourful both in respect of how they dress, and their liturgical colour seems to be pink....a man in the church one day said to me – I was sitting in the back seat, and he sat for about half an hour.

"Their liturgy is sung, and it's quite uplifting and lively. He said to me, 'Is this Catholic?' And I said to him, 'It's actually more Catholic than you might think'," he laughs,

explaining, "They've had the Faith since St Thomas, so 400 years before St Patrick, they had the Faith."

## Catholicism

This expression of Catholicism has much to teach the Church in Ireland, Fr Cahill believes, sharing examples of their service and sacramentality.

"There's Mass tomorrow and their bishop is coming for it, he's the bishop for the diaspora in Europe. They'll be here this evening for about



Fr Cahill takes part in a Syro-Malabar procession.



two hours, setting up their PA and their flowers and you name it. We'll have the Mass tomorrow, I'll join them, and then they'll have some kind of social event afterwards.

"They do it all themselves. They really, you know – they ask nothing of the parish, and they simply want to contribute. The greatest contribution though, I think, is their witness to family life. They have that vital connection that they practice the Faith sacramentally, but they also follow it up with catechising their young people and prayer in the home. I visit their homes, and their homes are like an Irish home was in the 1960s with religious images and so forth," he says.

### “The four parish weekend Masses are notable for the good representation of families and people of all ages”

The Syro-Malabar community only adds to the busy life of the parish, Fr Cahill explaining that the area's rapid population growth has been accompanied by an exponential rise in the parish's activity.

"Like many other parishes there is the 'congregation' and the wider 'parish', i.e., those who attend church regularly and all those who live within the parish boundaries. In addition to the stable, core group who comprise the regular congregation, the parish strives to serve the occasional and never-ending needs of everyone in the territory of the parish, all of whom have a claim on the pastoral care of the parish and the Church," Fr Cahill says.

"The parish is blessed to have a daily presence of about 50 at morning Mass, where all the needs, cares and concerns of the whole parish are brought to the altar. The rosary is prayed publicly each morning before Mass and every evening at the Grotto. The four parish weekend Masses are notable for the good representation of families and people of all ages.

"The weekends are hectic. Just a month ago the parish had First Holy Communion with two First Com-

munion Masses on Friday, two on Saturday morning, followed by the usual two Vigil Masses, then two Sunday Masses followed by christenings.

"Last year was epic, with 48 hours notice of lockdown, the parish and school rallied to put in place an impromptu First Communion schedule on October 6 2020 with six Masses on the hour from 12noon to 7pm, with an hour's break from 4-5pm! The ceremony was much simplified and shortened but there was no loss of a sense of celebration and occasion. From this we have a template for future celebrations of First Communion with less fuss and more focus on prayer and praise," he explains.

### Worship

With a growing population, the parish has an average of 100 christenings a year, Fr Cahill shares, adding that it's "a valuable point of contact and an opportunity to draw families into the life of faith and worship in the parish".

Both churches in the parish are blessed with adult choirs who "raise the roof on Sundays," Walterstown also having a children's choir with 26 members and committed parents, directed by Eileen Murphy.

"The choir has an 'Entente Musi-

cale' with the parish of Etampes in the diocese of Evry, southwest of Paris, whose pastor Fr John McLellan hails from Walterstown," Fr Cahill says.

"In 2019 there was a bi-lateral exchange as the choirs visited each other's parishes, sang at Mass and gave a number of other performances, while hosted by their respective families."

### “Fr Cahill says that they had been about to launch an adult praesidium of the Legion of Mary, right as Covid struck in March 2020”

While parish life is busy, it's not without its difficulties and struggles – ones which are faced by parishes around Ireland, and around the wider western world. Engaging young people and formatting the parish for interacting with the world of the 21st Century are at the top of the list when it comes to the Church's difficulties today, both globally and locally. Asked whether the parish has any youth ministry or outreach, Fr Cahill responds:

## “A parish like so many, straddling the vastly different world it's come from with the one it's entering, Johnstown/Walterstown parish could be pointing the way forward with its blend of old and new, local and global”

"Unfortunately not. We're very limited, I mean, this sounds like an excuse, but we're limited in our facilities in that, unlike a lot of parishes that have property and buildings and homes, because this was a tiny parish 30 years ago, we have two churches, a parochial house and that's it."

### Young people

"We don't have so much as a meeting room. There isn't a venue in town for a youth group. The number of young people is obviously immense. I do both schools, obviously. We'd have an average of 140 a year for Confirmation, so I'm able to accompany them up to Confirmation by going in and supplementing the programme, Grow in Love, with talking to the kids every week. Unfortunately, I would say that once they leave primary school, they go to as many as 10 secondary schools, and we don't have access to them as a group thereafter."

Musing that the parish needs a curate, full-time catechist or youth-worker, Fr Cahill says there's certainly demand for one, but the realities are preventing it from being fulfilled at the moment.

"I meet the kids in the supermarket here and they're hanging around the supermarkets....and they're friendly and well-disposed and they'd shout, 'How are you, Fr?', or whatever, but there's nothing more in that sense sadly that the parish is doing for them or can do. I would say probably it's a priority. I've often thought of a NET Ministries thing, but we're very strapped for cash in the parish and NET Ministries is an expensive proposition."

Of course, as everywhere, Covid-19 hit the parish hard, disrupting plans and changing the way aspects of community life function. Fr Cahill says that they had been about to launch an adult praesidium of the Legion of Mary, right as Covid struck in March 2020. As such, the focus is

currently on getting the parish pastoral council in-line with diocesan norms – a task which may face all dioceses in the long-run.

"There wasn't one [a pastoral council] before my time and it actually took a good while before setting it up, so we set it up in 2019. I suppose during Covid, we met once or twice, but it sort of morphed a little bit into a Covid committee. It has been very helpful and supportive, but I think the issue with the pastoral council is, we're working on it in Meath at the moment, but the pastoral council in every parish should be an objective reality," he says.

### “Fr Cahill recognises that a community effort is the only way forward for parishes in Ireland, a point that was emphasised by one of his parishioners recently”

"It shouldn't simply be a group set up by the priest for his own, as it were, outlook. It should be something that has its own integrity. So what we're actually doing in Meath at the moment is, all the deaneries are asked then to look at their pastoral councils – make sure we have one – and then to see can we bring out norms for pastoral councils that would cover every parish so that, if a priest moves into a parish, he knows what he's dealing with with his pastoral council because it's the same as he dealt with in the last one, apart from the difference in personalities shall we say."

Being against the idea of a "one-man parish", Fr Cahill recognises that a community effort is the only way forward for parishes in Ireland, a point that was emphasised by one of his parishioners recently.

"I remember one Covid meeting we had, and we talked about, as ludicrously as many as 24 points of things that could go wrong, and it was nearly at the end of the meeting that somebody said to me, 'You know, Fr, there's one thing you haven't put on that list. Point 25,' and I said, 'What's that?' She said, 'If you get sick,'" he laughs.

"So in other words, the parish – I mean, I know the priest is essential to the understanding of parish, but all it takes is one man down in any of our parishes now, and it means that we don't necessarily have people who can just run with it and keep things going, and you know that's something we're going to have to do in the future."

A parish like so many, straddling the vastly different world it's come from with the one it's entering, Johnstown/Walterstown parish could be pointing the way forward with its blend of old and new, local and global.



Fr Cahill bringing Easter eggs to Walterstown children's choir during Easter 2021.



# The Gospels are not pious fiction

**T**he Gospel according to Luke will be read at Sunday Mass this year. Today's Gospel might well be called 'introductions'. In two separate extracts we have Luke's introduction to his writing (Luke 1: 1-4), followed by his introduction to the public ministry of Jesus (Luke 4:14-21).

In classical style he addresses his writing to Theophilus, a name meaning a friend of God. We can take it as addressed to all friends of God. His stated purpose is to show how well founded is the Christian message of salvation. He indicates three stages in the development of a Gospel. Firstly, everything is based on events that happened. The Gospels are not pious fiction but the stories are grounded on historical people, facts and teaching. The second stage was the handing down of these facts by the people who remembered them, treasured them and used them as the light of life for the follower of the Lord. The third stage saw the writing of these memories in a cohesive form known as an *evangelium*, translated as a Gospel, meaning the Good News.

## Bakers

The four evangelists are like four bakers who set about baking cakes. All went to the same shop which Luke called the events that have taken place among us. Will we get four identical cakes from the one shop? Most unlikely, because each baker will have a different recipe. Matthew, Mark and Luke have a great deal in common but John seems to take for granted what the others have already written, so he shopped from very different shelves.

One hugely significant factor was the pastoral situation of the local community in which the writer lived. Each writer set out to answer the needs and questions of their local community.

Like the opening bars of a great symphony, the first words that each evangelist puts on the lips of Jesus announce the major theme of that particular Gospel. Matthew and Mark quote Jesus announcing the coming of the kingdom of God. Luke's first words from Jesus are about the Holy Spirit. He takes a reading from the scroll of Isaiah. "The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour." Luke is the evangelist of the Holy Spirit. Even in the infancy narrative, the Spirit was already active in

## The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



Mary, Elizabeth, Zechariah and Simeon. John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptise people with the Spirit and with fire. The Spirit descended on Jesus after his Baptism. And we read in today's Gospel: "Jesus, with the power of the Spirit in him, returned to Galilee." Luke's second writing, the Acts of the Apostles, might well be called the Acts of the Holy Spirit in the early Church. Anointed by the Holy Spirit, Jesus will liberate people from captivity to sin and enable them to see with new sight.

**“The four evangelists are like four bakers who set about baking cakes”**

After reading from the prophet Isaiah, Jesus rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the assistant. Then he said to the people: "This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen". This is a very important statement. The word of God is not intended to be a document about past history but it is a living word to guide us each new day. Jesus told parables about seeds and growing things. The word of God is a seed, but a seed does not achieve its purpose unless it is taken out of the paper packet and planted in the earth. That is why Jesus took what was contained in the paper scroll, put the paper aside and planted the seed in "today even as you listen". Several times, Luke highlights the presence of God today. "Today is born to you a Saviour...we have seen strange things today...salvation has come to this house today". And to the repentant thief on Calvary, "Today you will be with me in paradise." Many of us can remember when the reading of the Gospel at Mass was introduced thus: "At that time". The purpose of a homily is to move on from that time to this time. What God did in the past helps us to see what God can do today.

## Problems

We hear a lot about the problems and faults of today. But one of the great graces of recent years has been the popularisation of meditation on the Sacred Scriptures. Here is a plan to follow. Begin by asking the Holy Spirit to guide you. Read the text several times, slowly and reverently.



The 'Floating Bible' is seen on a display inside the Coptic Orthodox Church of the Virgin Mary in the Maadi suburb of Cairo. The Bible was found floating in the Nile River outside the church on March 12, 1976. Photo: CNS

Underline a word or sentence that strikes you. Move on then to pondering on the word. Why did you underline that word? Does it cheer you or disturb you? Console you or challenge you to improve? Puzzle you or enlighten you? If you find that nothing here touches you in any way, perhaps you should ask yourself why you are not moved. Try to complete this sentence in one word or phrase: "In this reading, God is..."

The next step is to talk to God in the light or darkness of your experience. This is prayer.

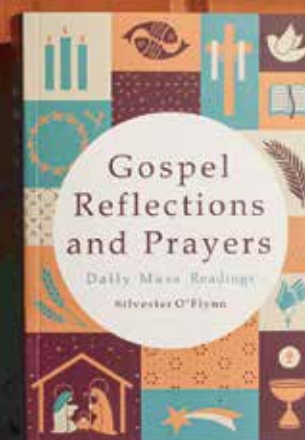
## Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for the Gospel of Luke guiding us this year. May we have the experience of the two disciples as you walked with them on the road to Emmaus. May our hearts burn within us as you open the Scriptures for us. May we recognise you in the breaking of bread in the Eucharist. Enlightened by your word, and nourished by the sacred bread, may we be witnesses to others of your presence with us today.

The fruit of this scripture-based prayer over a period of time is contemplation. Contemplation is a word that comes from the Greek word for a measuring rod. Temperature measures heat, temperament measures character, a template measures the design of a plan. Contemplation makes one more aware of what God is saying, in calling you, consoling, challenging, inviting. A person's life is thus designed and measured by God's word. "This text is fulfilled today even as you listen."

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# The merciless nature of cancel culture



We are now being asked to reject the whole of our histories for not matching the standards of the present, writes **David Quinn**

If you ran an opinion poll and asked people if they understand what is meant by 'cancel culture', how many would say 'yes', and of those who did, how many would mean it?

## Terms

It is one of those terms we hear bandied about a lot, but without a clear definition. But we are all familiar with it in one way or another because we have all heard about cases of people being sacked for saying the 'wrong' thing, or for having views no longer considered acceptable. We see historical figures being attacked, and their statues even torn down because we consider them objectionable by current standards.

Pope Francis in his annual address to the diplomatic corps attached to the Holy



Pope Francis arrives for an annual meeting with diplomats accredited to the Holy See, at the Vatican on January 10, 2022. Photo: Vatican Media.

See made a direct reference to "cancel culture" that attracted quite a lot of headlines.

He was referring to the diminishing effectiveness of international organisations in resolving global challenges. The members of these organisations, he said, often disagree about their aims, and when they do agree on them, they are often secondary to the true purposes they were established to pursue.

These agendas, he said, "are increasingly dictated by a mindset that rejects the natural foundations of humanity and the cultural roots that constitute the identity of many peoples."

What can he have meant by this? Perhaps by natural foundations he meant natural law? On various occasions, Pope Francis has criticised gender ideology which says there are no real differences between the sexes and that there are many different 'genders', not just male and female. You can be 'gender-fluid', for instance, in that your gender identity is not fixed, or 'gender non-binary', because you do not identify as either

male or female.

Gender ideology is almost unknown outside of the West. It is totally alien to most cultures, who believe we are born male and female, and that is that. We cannot 'change sex', even if an official form says otherwise and there is no such thing as a 'pregnant man'.

**“He didn't give any examples, but international aid agencies increasingly attach strings to aid”**

When international organisations come along and try to impose this view on cultures where it is completely out of place, the Pope calls it 'ideological colonisation', and this is a term he uses in his address to the diplomatic corps.

He told the assembled diplomats: "As I have stated on other occasions, I consider this a form of ideological colonisation, one that leaves no room for freedom of

expression and is now taking the form of the 'cancel culture' invading many circles and public institutions."

## Reducing corruption

He didn't give any examples, but international aid agencies increasingly attach strings to aid. Some of these are acceptable, those aimed at reducing corruption, for example. But when aid is made conditional on making abortion more available, or introducing gender ideology, that is a different matter entirely.

Does 'cancel culture' exist in Ireland? Certainly, it does. Pro-life campaigner, Katie Ascough, was hounded out of her job as head of the UCD branch of the Unions of Students of Ireland a few years ago after a campaign of vicious vilification.

George Hook was demoted from his daily show at Newstalk to a weekly one after a poorly judged comment that women should not go into the rooms of strange men unaccompanied.

Atheist and scientist, Richard Dawkins, had an invitation to speak to a debating society at TCD cancelled because he made 'offensive' remarks about Islam.

These are the public cancellations we know about. But behind the scenes, decisions must be made all the time that certain people are never to be invited onto certain TV and radio shows because of their views. It is notable, for example, how rarely pro-life voices are heard on RTÉ anymore. Evidently the station has decided that the one third of the electorate who voted to

keep the Eighth Amendment are not to be represented anymore. RTÉ did not take that attitude when the pro-choice side lost two-to-one in 1983.

What books never get published because the author is deemed unacceptable, or because there is now a bias in favour of authors from minority backgrounds?

**“What he means here is that we are now inclined to cancel the whole of our histories for not matching the standards of the present”**

In Britain, even JK Rowling, author of the Harry Potter novels, has been targeted because she is critical of aspects of gender ideology. This makes her a 'transphobe' in the eyes of some.

When the 20th anniversary of the release of the first Harry Potter movie took place recently and a programme was aired to mark the event, Rowling featured only in old footage. She was not interviewed along with the cast of the movie. She has been deemed unacceptable.

If a young JK Rowling (who is liberal on almost all issues) was starting off today, and her views on trans-ideology was known, would the Harry Potter books have ever seen the light of day?

Pope Francis went on to say: "A kind of dangerous 'one-track thinking' [*pensée unique*] is taking shape, one constrained to deny history

or, worse yet, to rewrite it in terms of present-day categories, whereas any historical situation must be interpreted in the light of a hermeneutics of that particular time, not that of today."

What he means here is that we are now inclined to cancel the whole of our histories for not matching the standards of the present. In Britain, there is a campaign to transform Winston Churchill from a hero into a villain because he was such a strong believer in the British Empire and had racist (and indeed eugenicist) views that were typical of his time.

But cancelling him would mean overlooking his greatest achievement, namely standing up to Hitler before and during World War II and rejecting the hyper-racist ideology of Nazism.

In Ireland, it is commonly the Catholic Church that is attacked. The whole of Catholic history on the island is reduced to the worst episodes and almost the entire Christian legacy rejected and condemned.

It is a horrible, simplistic and cartoonish way to approach history and ultimately those who advocate it will fall victim to it because no doubt many of the heroes of today will be tomorrow's villains when values change again.

It is also merciless towards human nature. We are flawed, fallible and sinful. We all need forgiveness for the things we get wrong. We should be judged in the round. The biggest problem with cancel culture is that it doesn't know the meaning of forgiveness or mercy.

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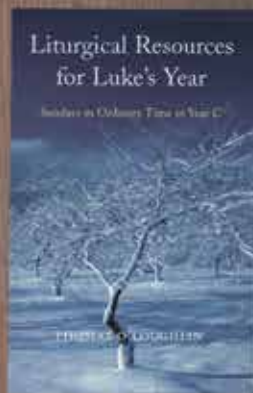


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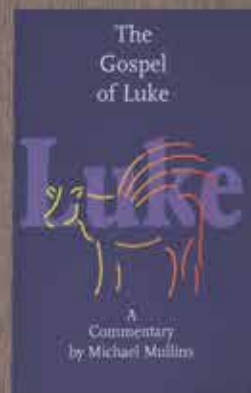


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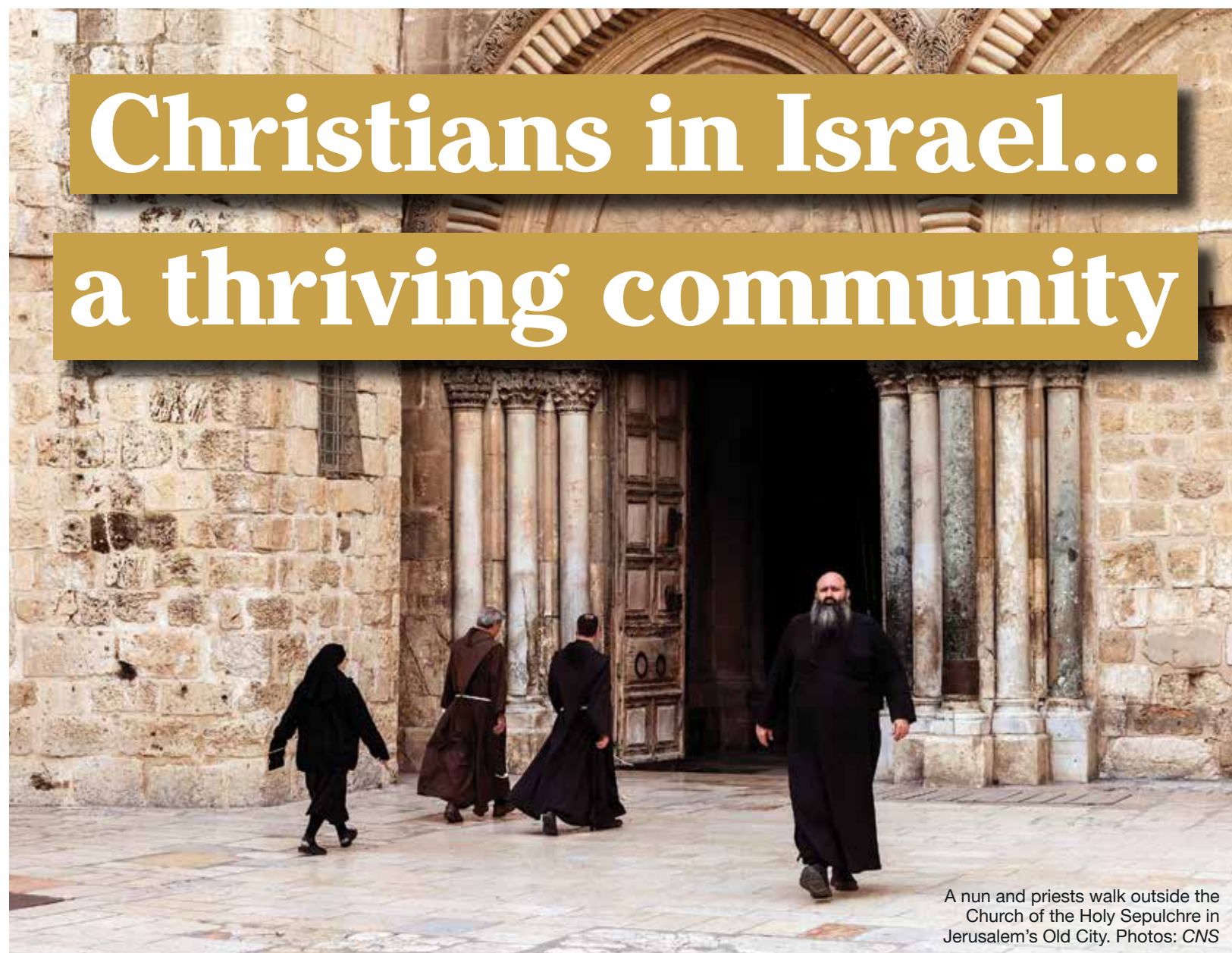


The only place in the Middle East where Christians truly flourish is in the Jewish state, writes **Lironne Bar Sadeh**

**A**s is their unfortunate habit each Christmas, this year, too, the Anglican archbishops Justin Welby of Canterbury and Hosan Naoum of Jerusalem ascribed a “steady stream of Palestinian Christians leaving the Holy Land” to settler activities and the attacks by Jewish extremists on holy sites and churches. What these gentlemen fail to mention is that the term ‘Holy Land’ refers to the territory covering the modern State of Israel, the Palestinian territories, western Jordan, and parts of southern Lebanon and southwestern Syria. This is evident in the New Testament, the Quran, Jerome’s Fourth Century map and even the Madaba mosaic.

**“Pope Benedict XVI, at the conclusion of his 2009 visit to Israel, called Judaism and Christianity two branches of the same tree”**

And if they are leaving these other countries by droves, it is not due to conditions in Israel. In fact, Israel’s Christian population is growing by the numbers. Throughout this entire region, and the Middle East in general, the only place where Christians truly thrive is in the State of Israel, under Israeli rule and with Israeli endorsement. And why should it be otherwise? Israel’s Christian community is the best educated, the most economi-



A nun and priests walk outside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem’s Old City. Photos: CNS

cally viable and the closest in cultural affinity to Jewish values and concepts.

### Reception

At his New Year’s reception for leaders of the Churches in Israel, President Isaac Herzog declared that he was “wholeheartedly committed to preserving absolute freedom of religion and worship for members of all faiths in this Holy Land”.

“We are all children of the Almighty God, the same God,” the president said. “And we all dream of a better world by filling it with peace, kindness, charity and mercy. We can do this together, united by our common values rather than dividing the world with differences.”

Pope Benedict XVI, at the conclusion of his 2009 visit to Israel, called Judaism and Christianity two branches of the same tree. According to the now Pope emeritus, “St Paul describes in his Letter to the Romans how the Church of the Gentiles is like

a wild olive shoot, grafted onto the cultivated olive tree which is the People of the Covenant (cf. Romans 11:17-24). We are nourished from the same spiritual roots. We meet as brothers, brothers who...now are firmly committed to building bridges of lasting friendship.”

**“Arab Christian women in Israel have the highest education rates in the country”**

And, indeed, whereas Christians are indeed fleeing Syria, the Palestinian territories on the West Bank and Gaza, and Hezbollah-governed Lebanon, their numbers in Israel continue to grow and flourish. Arab Christian women in Israel have the highest education rates in the country, according to a report published this year by the Central Bureau of Statistics. More than

53% of Israel’s Christian population continue towards a university degree – 6% higher than the national average – and the community boasts the lowest unemployment rate in the country.

Although merely 1.9% of the total population, living primarily in Nazareth, Haifa and Jerusalem, their numbers grow steadily. In

Bethlehem, on the other hand, where the Christian population grew steadily between 1967 (20%) – following the Six Day War – and 1995 (60% of the total population), the year the city was transferred to the Palestinian Authority (PA), their numbers have dwindled under Palestinian rule dramatically and now represent a mere 16% – even

lower than during Ottoman rule.

### Cooperation

In fact, in Bethlehem, in 1971, cooperation between the military forces in the city and the mayor’s office were such that Mayor Elias Bandak, fearing a return to the victimisation of Christians by the pre-war Jordanian rule, asked that

**“Throughout this entire region, and the Middle East in general, the only place where Christians truly thrive is in the State of Israel”**



Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, waves as he arrives through an Israeli checkpoint to attend Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem this year.



Israel annex Bethlehem – a request that was refused outright due to what Israel immediately realised would cause an outcry from around the world, especially from official Christian quarters. His fears were realised in 2002, when Palestinian terrorists took refuge and hostages in the Church of Nativity.

### Prodigious

Throughout the Middle East, and the Muslim world in general, the list of churches converted to mosques is prodigious. The most famous examples are the immense Hagia Sophia and the Church of the Holy Saviour in Chora – both in Istanbul, John the Baptist's in Lebanon, the Cathedral of Saint Helena and several other churches in Syria, Egypt, Iraq and more. Only in Israel are churches protected, and governed by international Church entities – as are mosques governed by the Islamic WAQF. Cases of vandalism are immediately prosecuted, much swifter than – in many cases – cases of vandalism of synagogues and Jewish cemeteries in the western world. As in other advanced countries, their status is protected under the law, and they are independent of tax-payments and other civil ordinances.

**“Throughout the Middle East, and the Muslim world in general, the list of churches converted to mosques is prodigious”**

Attacks upon synagogues in major European and American cities are often left unprosecuted, and even Ireland, with its miniscule Jewish population, has seen some attacks directed at the Dublin Synagogue. In fact, Ireland has no laws against hate crimes, other than the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Acts, though a new hate crime bill has been proposed. Unlike the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Republic is one of the few countries not to have yet signed on to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism, a fact that leaves local Palestinian organisations and their Irish political supporters free to accuse the State of Israel of the most heinous crimes possible without proof and without threat of legal redress.

Thus, for example, Israel – a state with Muslim Arab members of government and parliament, in which mixed marriages are

normative – is accused of being an apartheid state, a country built by Holocaust survivors and which was voted into existence by a world that had refused to accept Jewish refugees (including Ireland) thereby consigning them to the ashes is accused of committing genocide, and so forth.

This would be merely ironic, were it not for the fact that Israel recently discovered Church-backed NGOs financing and abetting terrorist organisations. Prosecution of these entities drew widespread condemnation from within the Irish NGO community as well as from some organisations that profess to represent this country's Christian population. It would seem that Israel's efforts to protect and nourish its Christian population are – in some vocal quarters – unappreciated. Objections to the classification of these NGOs as terrorist organisations only began to subside when several other countries, that are party to classified Israeli data, followed Israel's advice and ceased funding these organisations.

### Words

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” says the prologue to St John's Gospel (John 1:1–18). Words are important – they comprise the basic element by which we communicate. Their meanings are holy for they represent a currency without which communication becomes meaningless – hopeless. When the President of Israel claims that holy places are sacrosanct, this is a national utterance. When the Pope claims that Jews and Christians are brothers, it becomes a tenet.

**“Although merely 1.9% of the total population, living primarily in Nazareth, Haifa and Jerusalem, their numbers grow steadily”**

When speakers use words to delineate a lie, they undermine the only tools we have to convey meaning. Speakers such as these need to be constantly called out – indeed vilified – for denying the rest of us and future generations a means of honest and, indeed, effective communication. Any failure to do so can be tragic.

✉ *Lironne Bar Sadeh is Ambassador of Israel to Ireland.*

# Reaching Out: Reflection on a life – Fr Michael Bingham SJ

Fr Frainc Mac Brádaigh SJ

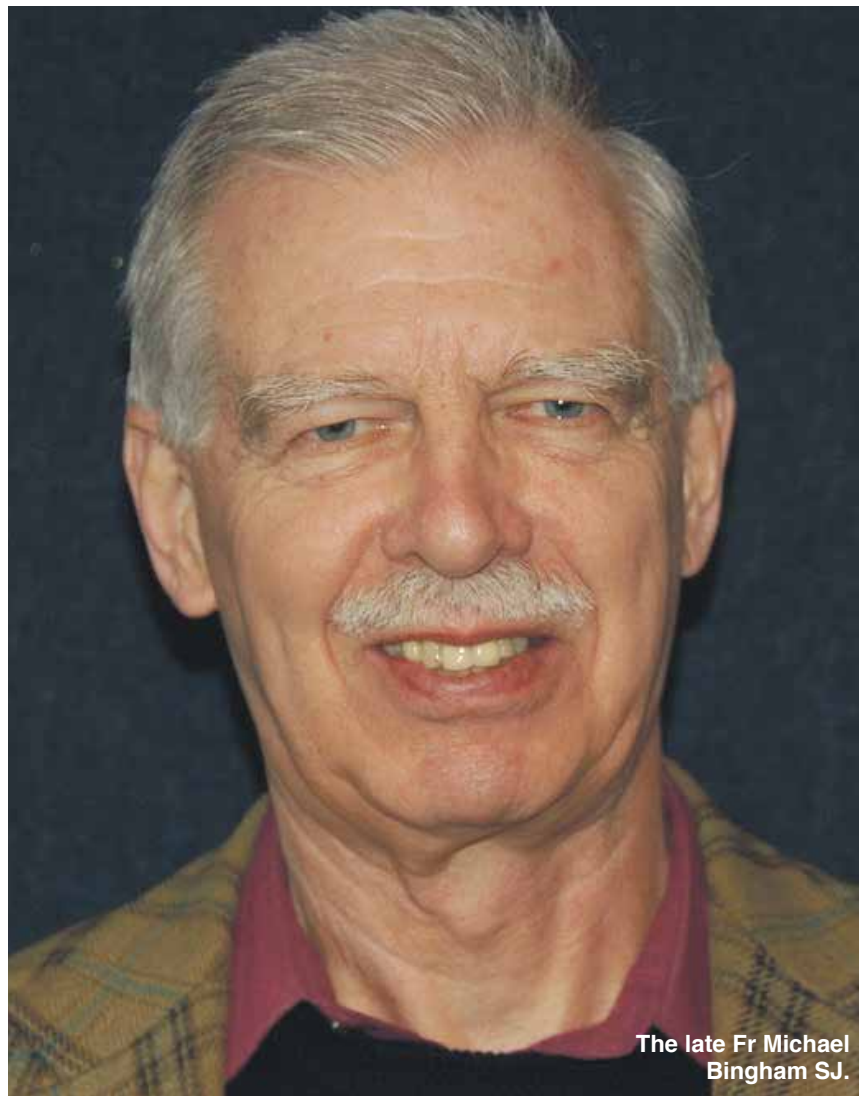
**T**o say that Michael lived a very full life would be both an understatement and to miss the point. Well educated with five masters, one each in English, Reconciliation studies, and drugs and addictions and two in theology would only highlight his desire to understand but miss the point of why, for what purpose? It wasn't just to satisfy his curiosity.

**“The subsequent frustration of being once again refused an open prison visit with his young prisoner friend where both had to suffer the indignity of talking to each other behind a perspex screen, were all borne with dignity”**

Gaining a deep appreciation of graceful English expression and of literature in that language, developing an understanding of his beloved classical music and a competence in playing the cello, acquiring a love and appreciation of the beauty of nature, these virtues were part of the man and were to be shared in order to enrich and enliven our lives. Living with Native American people in Canada, nine years spent with the people in the Barrios of Colombia, 14 more living and working with those who were apparently superfluous to the national enterprise in inner-city Liverpool, and 23 more with community in Portadown, as well as hearing the stories of prisoners and ex-prisoners in Britain, Ireland or Toronto were not experiences had in order to be a tourist of others suffering.

Nor were the long days spent in courtrooms, listening to endless cases against young offenders, the speeches of their solicitors, the prosecuting counsels and the judgements handed down by magistrates and judges. They had a deeper human purpose. As had the long journeys across the North to visit or help settle a young person into longed for accommodation, found by others for them in a strange area far away from friends and family. The often-repeated frustration of attempted prison visits where the drug dog sat for no apparent reason, indicating that Michael had come in contact with a proscribed substance and might be suspected of carrying drugs did not have a totally negative effect on him. The subsequent frustration of being once again refused an open prison visit with his young prisoner friend where both had to suffer the indignity of talking to each other behind a perspex screen, were all borne with dignity.

All these lived experiences brought Michael a deep appreciation of the beauty of our life in our common home, an understanding of the depth of the suffering, sometimes involved, its underlying causes and the difficulties involved for any of us in change and moving forward. They also brought an understanding of how powerlessness is experienced, an appreciation of the



The late Fr Michael Bingham SJ.

**“Jesuits have developed four preferences for our work in recent years: showing a way to God, walking with the least well off and the young to help create a hope filled future and cherishing our common home”**

difficulty for some of even envisioning a different life and the monumental effort required. The result was not to hinder his own efforts to accompany and empower the person but it only encouraged further study, reflection and contemplation of human life in our modern 21st Century world so that he could accompany others in a more fully human way.

### Celebration of life

At a funeral celebration of life, I like to bow before the remains because this is where Jesus has lived, in Michael's case for 81 years. Jesus is the way that Michael followed and walked himself. Michael had a great sense of direction. He knew all the back roads, all the areas of undiscovered beauty in this northern part of our island. He loved driving at speed in his old Passat, not least because of the comfort of heated seats and a powerful engine. And still, no matter how well he knew the way it took him in new and unsuspected directions to open up panoramas of yet undiscovered beauty and fragility.

He could get quite angry at what he saw as injustice but always used that anger to move him to do something about it, peaceably. It was, as always, a

matter of reaching out. Time and again it has been said he could always see the good in others, he was all give and had a heart of gold.

Jesuits have developed four preferences for our work in recent years: showing a way to God, walking with the least well off and the young to help create a hope filled future and cherishing our common home. Michael walked the walk and did talk the talk with young people, often lost for words, and on their behalf with court and other authorities. His input was regularly appreciated by magistrates and judges. People young and old across our community, in Liverpool and in Latin America, but particularly the young in trouble helped him discover God, the Father of Jesus who, as Michael wrote “always believes in us long before we ever ‘believe in’ him – or even name him, and long before we believe in ourselves.” And his hope is that we would discover our good God as we walk the way together and begin to believe in ourselves as God does.

*Fr Michael Bingham SJ died on January 12, 2022. Fr Mac Brádaigh was a confrère for many years in the Jesuit community in Portadown, Co. Armagh.*



# It's good to talk - but robust and



Pope Francis during a synod meeting at the Vatican.



No amount of talking and listening to each other will help the Church if those talking are uninformed or misinformed about matters of faith and morals, writes **Dr John Murray**

**N**o doubt the Church needs to improve its internal and external communication. And the synodal process, at diocesan, national,

and global level might help to achieve this.

## Teaching

The Church has never been perfect in its practice of teaching, but in the last few decades things have been particularly bad. Many Catholics have little or no knowledge of the Faith, and what they think they know is often fragmentary or distorted or just plain wrong. Hours of chatting, even if well-organised and well-intentioned, will not improve this situation, no matter how good the participants are at expressing their thoughts and emotions, and at listening. It might lead to some improvements and reform, however, if honest communication uncovers the deficit in doctrinal teaching and challenges teachers in the Church to respond. ('Teachers' here refers not only to bishops and priests and deacons, but also to the many laypeople who are called to teach the Faith.) I rather think that this is not what radical dissenting Catholics hope for – they are hoping that all the synodal chatting will create the impression that substantial change in teach-

ings and practices is possible and necessary. "Why else are we discussing everything? Doesn't the majority want and need such changes?" Thus, they will exert pressure on Church authorities to make changes. Or perhaps even try to change the whole structure of authority in the Church.

**“Hours of chatting, even if well-organised and well-intentioned, will not improve this situation, no matter how good the participants are at expressing their thoughts and emotions”**

One area of great difficulty is of course marriage and sexual ethics. Unfortunately, this is an area where there has been little or no real teaching done at the ground level in the Church. For example, almost none of my university students over recent decades has ever heard a detailed

presentation and explanation of the Church's teachings, even after years in Catholic schools and parishes. (And these are students who have chosen to do a third-level course that prepares them to teach religious education in second-level schools!) I do what I can to teach them how to know and understand the arguments for and against the various teachings of the Christian tradition regarding marriage and sexual ethics, by engaging in intellectual and scholarly study. It's a lot of work for the students and for me, but it has to be done if we are to gain and share an informed and sound understanding. For example, if one wishes to know what Jesus taught about marriage, surely a foundational matter in Christian ethics and the Gospel, it would do little good for the students to sit around and chat amongst themselves about this if none of them knows the Gospels and the New Testament adequately. (Almost no-one knows the Gospels adequately on this matter, by the way. I'd recommend starting with Mark chapters seven and 10.) You have to actually go and read



Campaigners for women's ordination protest at the Vatican. Photos: CNS

the Bible – and also know how to interpret it correctly – if you are to make progress on the issue. For Catholics, this will entail knowing how to read the Bible with intelligent faith, in harmony with Sacred Tradition and Church teaching. Sound philosophy and theology, relevant scripture scholarship, and experience and science may be helpful too, but they cannot substitute for Catholic Faith. This is so

even in the area of ethics, not to mention in areas that are almost exclusively matters of Catholic faith.

## Matter of faith

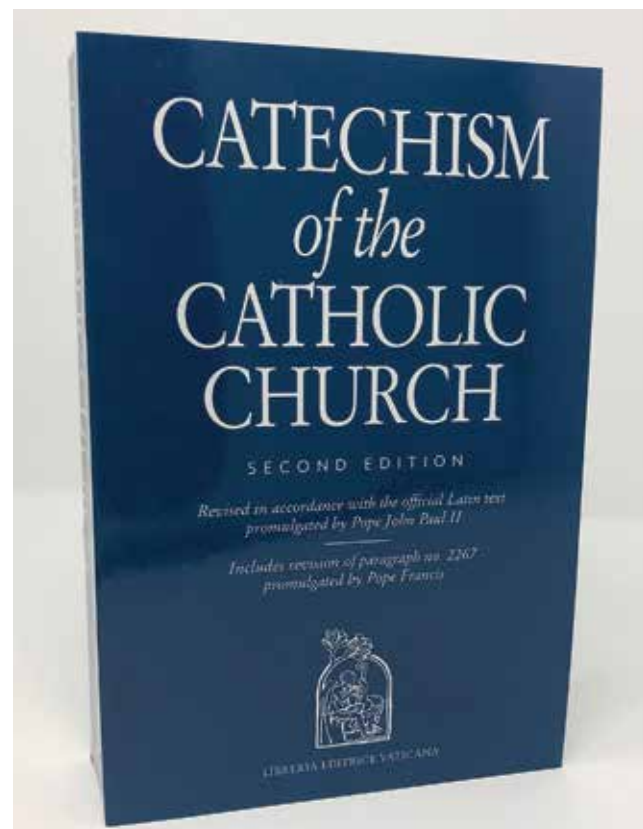
Whether women can be ordained is a good example of such a matter of faith. It all comes down to whether you believe the Church has the divine authority to decide on this question or not. Indeed, knowing whether *anyone*



# intelligent teaching is needed too



A group of pilgrims who presented a 'Faith Manifesto' to Pope Francis are pictured during the Pope's general audience at the Vatican on January 5. The document, signed by around 6,000 people in Germany and other European countries, criticises the demands of the German Synodal Path and calls for reform to take place within the unity of the universal Church.



The Catechism of the Catholic Church contains a distilled version of the teaching of the Church.

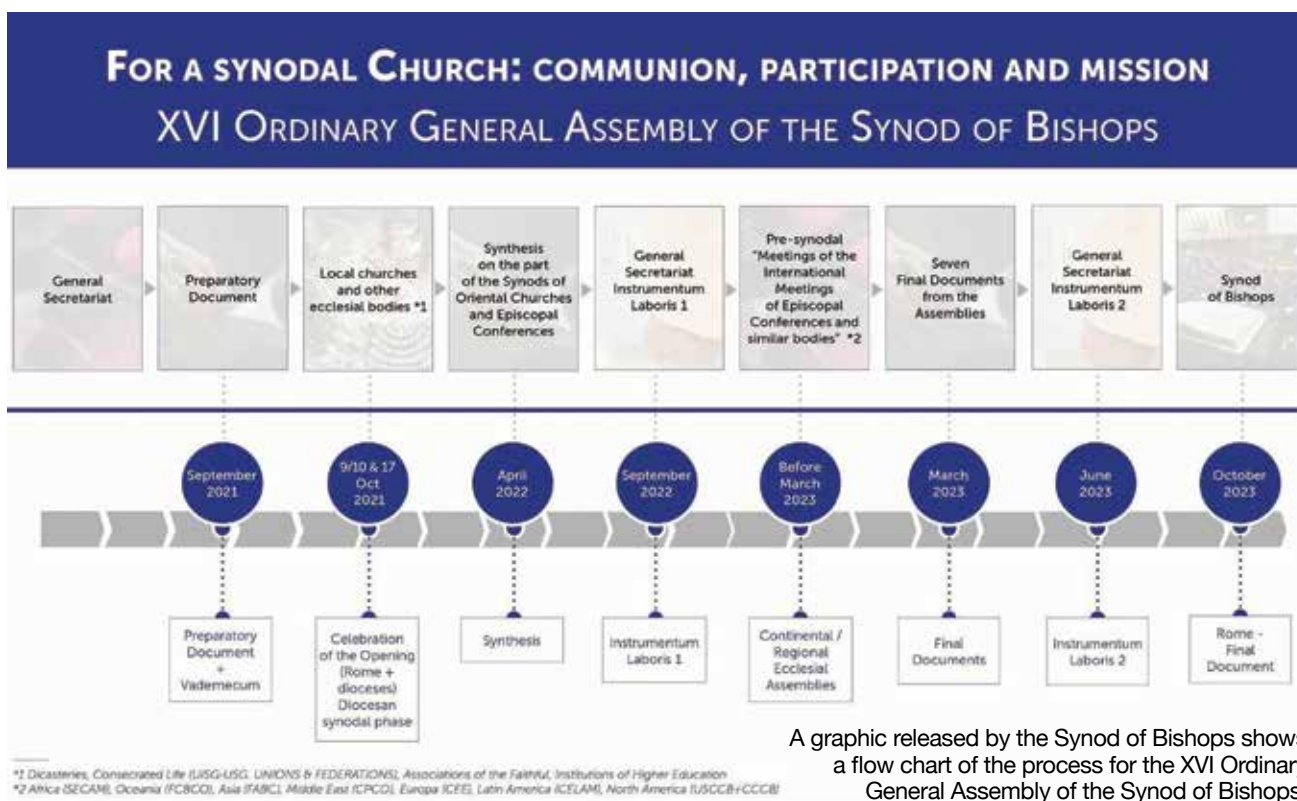
**“I cannot point to any *natural* ability or achievement or skill that the priest has and I don't, which enables him to forgive your sins”**

can be ordained as a priest is entirely dependent on faith. I'm a layman with a doctorate in theology. But even with a good level of theological knowledge, and even if I were more virtuous and cooperated with God's grace more fully, I'd never be able to forgive you your sins. But a Catholic priest can do this (and other things, but let's focus on this for now). So, how do I know this? I cannot point to any *natural* ability or achievement or skill that the priest has and I don't, which enables him to forgive your sins.

**“Whether women can be ordained is a good example of such a matter of faith”**

We cannot do any interview or experiment to discover some psychological or physiological difference between the priest and me that makes him a priest and me not a priest. A sceptic might argue that there are no priests at all, except as a mere social or conventional category. A Protes-

tant critic might argue that Scripture is either inconclusive or dead set against an ordained priesthood as claimed by the Catholic Church. What are we to say to the sceptic or Protestant? If we say that we believe in the priesthood because we accept the combined testimony of Scripture, Tradition and Church teaching on the matter, (which provides the only adequate foundation for this belief), then how can we say in the next breath that the same Tradition and magisterium has gotten Scripture and the Sacrament of Holy Orders substantially wrong in excluding women from ordination? Either we believe that the Church has correctly understood and interpreted Jesus' actions and words and intentions, and we commit to that; or we consider the matter to be a merely human invention and interpretation, one that is constantly open to reform because it is only human. But if we opt for the latter, for following our personal opinion in each article of faith, we reduce Catholicism to Protestantism, to what St John Henry Newman called mere 'pri-



A graphic released by the Synod of Bishops shows a flow chart of the process for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

vate judgement'. And if, to hold on to some semblance of Catholic identity, we say we fully accept (only) infallibly defined dogmas, and assert that this teaching on women's ordination is not an infallible definition, then our Catholic faith will be a very reduced 'faith'. It would be like accepting only those laws of the land that have been ratified by a unanimous judgement of the Supreme Court. That won't work.

## Consensus

Consensus is important and so is 'the sense of the Faithful' (*sensus fidelium*). If we think that 'the Catholic faith' is constituted by

whatever happens at a particular moment to be the consensus of baptised people in a diocese, a nation, or even internationally, then a talking shop might be useful in determining this consensus. But that kind of thinking is wrong. Such a consensus is simply not an accurate understanding of what 'the Catholic Faith' is – at least not if you have an accurate knowledge and understanding of Catholicism. And no-one has this knowledge without sound teaching and study.

**①** Dr John Murray is assistant professor of moral theology and Christian ethics at Dublin City University (DCU).



The official logo for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. Originally scheduled for 2022, the synod will take place in October 2023 to allow for broader consultation at the diocesan, national and regional levels.



# Joyful Filipino Catholics celebrate Santo Niño in Dublin

The Filipino Catholic community gathered in St Joseph's Church on Berkeley Road in Dublin for the feast of Santo Niño on Sunday.

The feast is extremely popular in the Philippines and draws crowds of millions every year.

The Santo Niño de Cebu is an icon of the Child Jesus. It was given by Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan to Cebu's Queen Juana in 1521. For Filipinos, it is a symbol of Christianity's arrival in the country 500 years ago.



The congregation in St Joseph's Church on Berkeley Road, Dublin. Photos: Chai Brady.



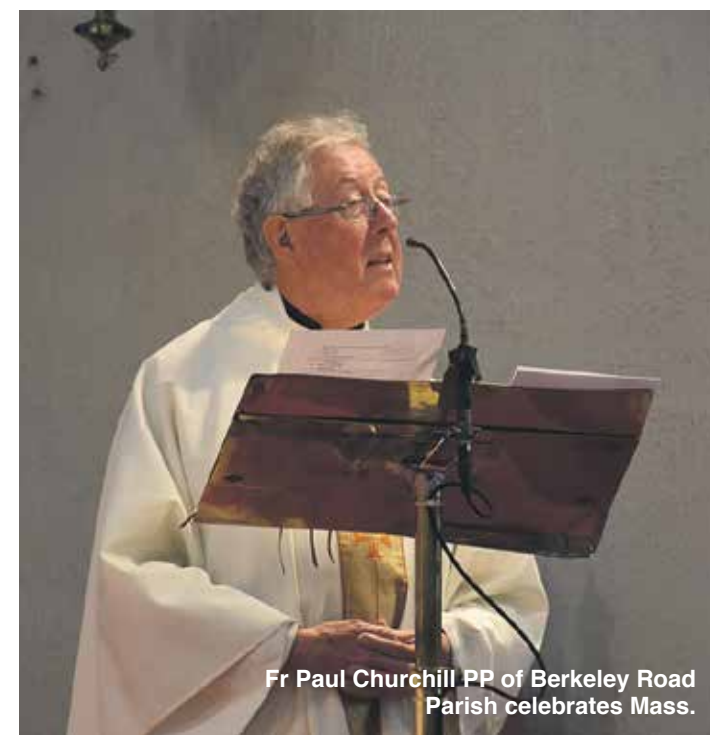
The faithful in procession with Santo Niño at the front.





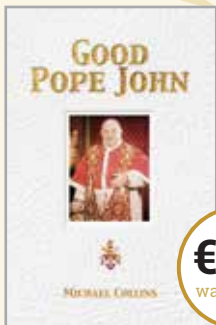


The Santo Niño statue is carried to the front of the Church.



Fr Paul Churchill PP of Berkeley Road Parish celebrates Mass.





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**Good Pope John**  
Michael Collins

Pope John endeared himself to Catholics and non-Catholics alike with his wisdom and sense of humour. In *Good Pope John*, Michael Collins traces the life and times of this remarkable man.



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A study on the phenomenon of Luther and his effects on church and society, Lyons leads to the conclusion that issues which existed back then are endemic to Christianity in every century.



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**Acts of the Apostles**  
Michael Mullins

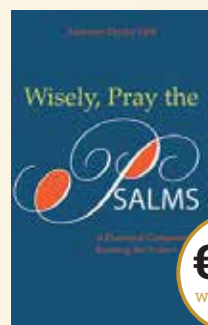
At a time when many people are taking a serious interest in the Scriptures to deepen their spiritual understanding, this commentary on the Acts of the Apostles serves as an ideal guide.



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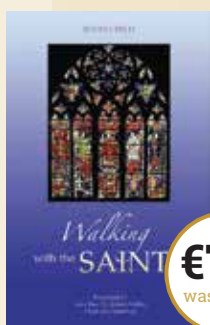
A prayerful companion to reading the psalms divided into three sections: reflection on the prayers as a whole, psalm verses with individual reflections and deep insight into particular themes.



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*The Ignatian Workout* presents a daily program of 'workouts' to achieve spiritual fitness that shows us how to recognize and respond to a God who is already at work in us.



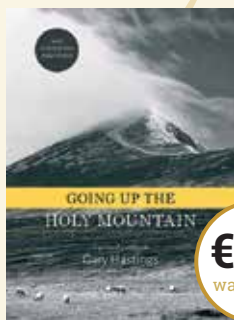
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**Walking with the Saints**  
Jenny Child

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**Blessed Among Women**  
Peter de Rosa

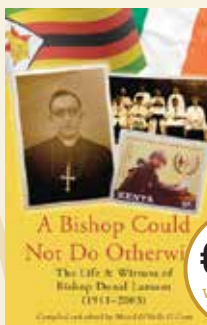
A wonderful collection for all who share a devotion to Mary filled with favourite poems and prayers displayed in tandem with information and stories about the Virgin.



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**An Ignatian Pathway**  
Paul Coutinho SJ

In *An Ignatian Pathway*, Paul Coutinho, SJ has collected more than 100 excerpts culled from all four weeks of the Spiritual Exercises, the Autobiography of St Ignatius Loyola and his Spiritual Journal.



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**A Bishop Could Do Not Otherwise**  
Míceál O'Neill

An intimate view of the life of Bishop Donal Lamont who became a champion of human rights, the voice of mission at the Second Vatican Council and a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize.



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**A Tale of Two Cities**  
John Hall

It's an old city rivalry that comes to life in photographer John Hall's book about Dublin and Cork. Experience the best each city has to offer including monuments and breath-taking river shots.



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**Joyce County**  
Ray Burke

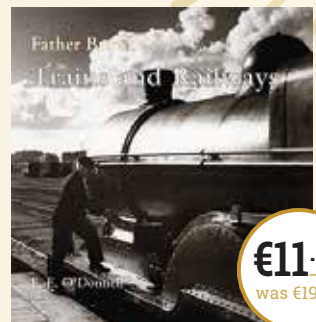
Written in an accessible style for the general reader rather than the Joycean specialist, this book contains considerable new information on Joyce and his wife and muse, Nora.



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Featuring wonderful letters and drawings from the children of Ireland to Pope Francis, this book is a wonderful reminder of the last papal visit.



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# Out&About

## Turning the sod



**CORK:** Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin and Abina Tattan officially turned the sod for the construction of a new primary school, Scoil an Athar Tadhg, in Carraig na bhFear, January 11. Mrs Tattan and her family donated an additional three quarters of an acre to complete the new site. Mrs Tattan's grandchildren (from left) Ben O'Leary, Eamonn Tattan, Evan O'Leary, Abbie O'Leary and Padraig Tattan. Photo: Brian Loughheed.



**DUBLIN:** Fr Michael Murtagh PP Ballyroan Parish, Rathfarnham presents flowers to Eileen Goodwin who has been a parish reader for 55 years.



**DUBLIN:** Pictured here at the Sacred Heart Convent, Blackrock is Sr Christine Hawkins who recently celebrated her 100th birthday. A special Mass was said in the convent chapel officiated by Fr Colin Doocey to mark the occasion. Photo: John O'Brien.

## IN SHORT

### Richer countries must address 'stark' vaccine inequality

There is a "real need" to address the "stark and worrying" contrast between the level of vaccination in Ireland and the developing world, an aid worker returning from Africa said.

Gavin Douglas of Concern Worldwide saw first-hand the roll out of an EU-funded vaccination programme in Sierra Leone and Liberia, where fully vaccinated rates are about 5% and 20% respectively.

"The contrast between Ireland and a country like Sierra Leone when it comes

to Covid-19 protection is stark and very worrying," Mr Douglas said.

There is a "real need" for wealthier nations to help poorer parts of the world to get better protected against Covid-19.

"The connection between us and them is very real and we see that today with how Omicron has spread to our own neighbourhoods across Ireland," he said.

"Landing in Dublin was like arriving in a totally different world. We are easily two years ahead of them as we try to get a third booster dose and as we begin to vaccinate children over five years old."

We must remember these countries have "very fragile" health systems and "have struggled with even having enough masks and medical oxygen equipment", he added.

### 'Urgent need' for one-bedroom housing, says McVerry Trust

There is an "urgent need" for one bedroom homes for people affected by homelessness according to the Peter McVerry Trust, as the number of people in homelessness rose to 9,099 in the last week of November 2021.

Pat Doyle CEO of the trust expressed disappointment that "the number of people in need of emergency accommodation continued to rise and we now see the figures above 9,000".

Mr Doyle said the trust continues to "ramp up" delivery of new social housing

opportunities to provide pathways out of homelessness for young people.

However, Mr Doyle warned that "we urgently need to secure more one-bedroom homes for people impacted by homelessness". He appealed "to the owners of vacant or derelict properties to contact us to see how we can re-use those properties for social housing."

"We would also encourage the developers who are progressing small scale apartment schemes which contain one and two-bedroom apartments to make contact with us to see if we can acquire some of those units for social housing to help people exit homelessness," Mr Doyle finished.



Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in  
advance of publication



**MAYO:** Fr Charlie McDonnell PP Westport is pictured with Irish journalist Charlie Bird, his wife Claire with their dog Tiger and Inspector Denis Harrington, January 7.

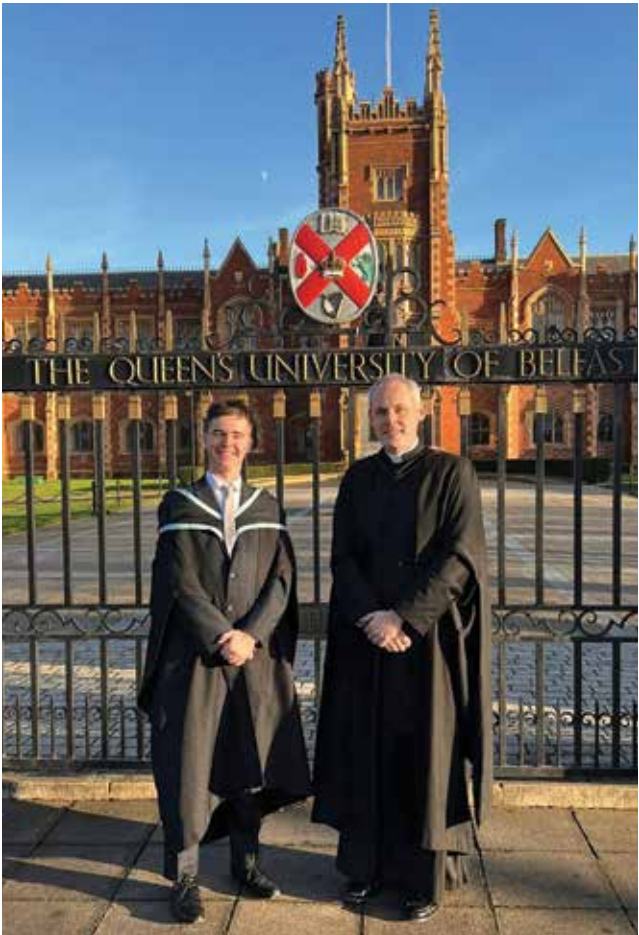


**◀ DUBLIN:** Three wise women Sr Lucy, Sr Maura and Sr Gabrielle of the Redemptoristines in Drumcondra celebrate the feast of Epiphany in style, January 6.

**▼ MEATH:** Clodagh, Caoimhe, Carla, Hannah and Rebecca of Loreto College Navan prepare for interviews at the BT Young Scientist Exhibition, taking place virtually this year, January 12.



**WESTMEATH:** Loreto College Mullingar wished their students Caoimhe, Katie and Emily the best of luck with their project "Fetch Your Pet" in the BT Young Scientist Exhibition, January 12.



**DOWN:** Queens University Belfast law graduate and member of the QUB Catholic chaplaincy Domhnall Lynam is pictured with Fr Dominic McGrattan. Domhnall is currently participating in the Study USA programme at DeSales University in Pennsylvania and took the opportunity over Christmas to take the customary graduation pictures.



**Events**

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





# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Archbishop calls for prayers for Myanmar

● Archbishop Marco Tin Win of Mandalay has urged Catholics in Myanmar to hold special prayers for the nation facing “the crisis of Covid-19, hunger, civil wars and torture.”

Ucanews.com reported the prelate has designated every Saturday evening for one hour of eucharistic adoration and the first Sunday of every month for Mass with the intention of peace.

Archbishop Tin Win is the only Catholic leader to openly lend moral support to pro-democracy protesters; he stood with them on a street in Mandalay after the February 2021 coup.

The archbishop has called on Catholics to not lose hope and to have a deep faith in God amid the fear, anxiety and hopelessness gripping their nation, ucanews.com reported.

### Pope's music library contains nearly 2,000 CDs

● Pope Francis' music library contains nearly 2,000 CDs and 19 vinyl records, according to the Vatican cardinal who is curating the collection.

While it is mostly made up of classical music, it also includes: an old album of Édith Piaf's greatest hits; Argentine tango tunes, especially by Astor Piazzolla; and a 25-disc collection of Elvis Presley's Gospel songs, said Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, president

of the Pontifical Council for Culture.

In an interview with the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, Cardinal Ravasi said he was not at all surprised when he saw images of Pope Francis walking out of a Rome music store with an album tucked under his arm.

“In fact, I can't wait to find out what it is. I hope he sends it to me soon,” the cardinal said.

### Austria's Catholic Church reports decline in membership

● The Catholic Church in Austria reported a decline in membership and a rise in income.

New statistics published January 12 showed that the number of Catholics in Austria fell in 2021 by around 1.6%, from 4.91 million in 2020 to 4.83 million on December 31, 2021.

The Central European country, located to the south of Germany, has an overall population of almost 9 million.

A total of 72,055 people formally left the Church in Austria in 2021, compared to 58,727 in 2020 and 67,794 in 2019.

CNA Deutsch reported that the Church also released financial figures for the year 2020.

They showed that Austrian dioceses received €484 million from the obligatory Church Contribution in 2020, compared to €481 million in 2019.

Registered Catholics in Austria pay around 1.1% of their taxable income to their local diocese, amounting to 75% of the Church's annual revenue

### Vatican sends condolences for death of European Parliament president

● Pope Francis has sent condolences for the death of European Parliament President David Sassoli, who died last week at the age of 65.

Mr Sassoli, a former Italian television journalist who became a member of the European Parliament in 2009, died in a hospital in Aviano, Italy on the morning of January 11, according to his spokesman, Roberto Guilio.

He had been hospitalised in Italy since December 26 due to “a disfunction of the immune system,” Mr Guilio wrote.

A Vatican message addressed to Mr Sassoli's wife, Alessandra Vittorini, expressed the Pope's spiritual closeness to the family, mentioning the parliamentarian's two children, Livia and Giulio, by name.

## Kazakh bishops' official says Catholics 'shocked' by January riots

A Kazakh Church leader said Catholics were left “shocked and disorientated” when early January riots shattered Kazakhstan's image as an oasis of peace and stability.

“I've never known such ill-will and aggression here – after so many years of excellent cooperation between faiths, and between the Catholic Church and the government,” said Father Peter Pytlovani, secretary-general of the bishops' conference, based in the capital, Nur-Sultan, formerly Astana.

“This is why everyone is so shocked. Just as we were marking the 30th anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence, everything we'd gained in peace and dialogue was suddenly overturned and ruined. It's reminded us we must not only celebrate our richness in unity and mutual understanding, but also make greater efforts to protect it,” Fr Pytlovani told *Catholic News Service* January 14.

The violence that erupted January 2 was the worst since Kazakhstan's 1991 secession from the Soviet Union. During the riots, at least 160 were killed and more than 700 injured, mostly in Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city. The riots were triggered by fuel price hikes.

Fr Pytlovani told CNS while conditions were almost normal in the capital, tighter police and army restrictions were being applied in Almaty, where many buildings had been looted and burned.



Belarusian servicemen take part in a ceremony in Almaty, January 13, marking the beginning of the withdrawal of peacekeeping troops of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation from Kazakhstan. Photo CNS.

“We were not aware of any aggression against places of worship, whether Catholic or belonging to other confessions, and our own churches are open again now for personal prayer, subject to coronavirus measures,” Fr Pytlovani said.

“We're still seeking information about injuries to Church members. But no religious communities appear to have suffered significant damage, either materially or personally.”

Kazakhstan's Interior Ministry confirmed January 10 that around 8,000 people had been detained, mainly in the

south and west, and it warned lethal force would be used to prevent any return to the disorder.

The same day, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev branded the unrest an attempted coup and said a ban on gatherings would also remain in place for at least 10 days.

In a January 9 Angelus message, Pope Francis voiced “deep concern” about the violence and entrusted Kazakhstan to Mary's intercession. He said he hoped social harmony would be “restored as soon as possible through a search for dialogue, justice

and the common good”.

Meanwhile, the Kazakh bishops said Catholics would remain “united in prayer” with Pope Francis, “for the repose of the souls of those killed,” adding in a January 10 website statement that priests were called on to “continue praying for an early resolution of the current situation and the reestablishment of peace and prosperity”.

Fr Pytlovani said that amid speculation, Church leaders awaited clarification of who was behind the unrest and whether outside forces were involved.

## Astronaut talks with Catholic school students while orbiting Earth

Crisscrossing above the Seattle region at approximately 17,000 mph aboard the International Space Station, NASA astronaut Mark Vande Hei took live questions from students at Seattle Nativity School.

“How has being in space affected your view of God?” asked one eighth grader at the Jesuit middle school.

Mr Vande Hei paused. This was not the usual inquiry. Then he answered: “It has made me feel like God's really complicated. Human beings have worked really hard to understand God and our

relationship with God. I think I'm much more accepting of the wide variety of ways human beings experience God,” he said.

Students at the middle school had the privilege of talking to an astronaut in orbit thanks to a live video and audio link orchestrated by NASA and Mr Vande Hei's connection to Jesuit Father Jeffrey McDougall, president of the 75-student school focused on a STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education.

Growing up, Fr McDougall played football with Mr Vande Hei, a classmate at Benilde-St Margaret's High School in Minnesota and he would often brag to his students that he knew an astronaut – one on the International Space Station, no less.

Word that Fr McDougall was telling his students about Mr Vande Hei spread and the priest said he started getting emails from NASA. The way the priest tells it, Mr Vande Hei said, “If he's talking about me, I should talk to them myself”.

## Catholic nun who secretly baptised babies under communism dies at 92

An Albanian nun who inspired Pope Francis with her courageous faith under communist persecution has died at the age of 92.

Sister Marije Kaleta risked her life to bring Holy Communion to the sick and dying under the regime

of dictator Enver Hoxha, whose communist government destroyed churches and martyred Catholics in its effort to create an atheist state.

Albania is a country of 2.8 million people on south-eastern Europe's Balkan

Peninsula, bordered by Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Greece. It was under communist rule from the 1940s to 1992.

In a meeting with Pope Francis in Albania in 2014, the Stigmatine sister shared the story of how

she baptised babies in secret during this time of persecution.

Pope Francis was so moved by Sr Kaleta's story that he mentioned it in a homily four years later as “a beautiful example of the Church as a mother”.





Edited by Jason Osborne  
jason@irishcatholic.ie

## He will wipe away every tear



Indigenous leader Vice Cacique Sucupira of the Pataxo-Hahahae tribe reacts after observing flooding following heavy rains in São Joaquim de Bicas, Brazil, January 12. Photo CNS.

# Nigerian cardinal responds after gunmen kill 200 people

After gangs of gunmen killed at least 200 people in Nigeria's Zamfara State last week, Cardinal John Onaiyekan said that things must change.

The Nigerian cardinal explained that over the past five years armed bandits have terrorised north-western Nigeria, causing a great deal of damage.

"They attack farmers' fields, kill farmers and no one says anything. And then they started with kidnappings," Cardinal Onaiyekan said in an interview in Italian with *Vatican News* published on January 10.

In the most recent incident, gangs of bandits on motorbikes attacked nine villages over the course of

three days, causing at least 200 deaths, according to local authorities.

"We all weep for these victims," Cardinal Onaiyekan said.

Around 10,000 people are estimated to have been displaced by this month's violence.

The release of 30 abducted students also made headlines over the weekend of January 8-9. The students had been held in captivity for seven months.

"There are still many victims of kidnappings, and their parents and relatives have no way of paying what is requested. And the government believes it cannot do anything," Cardinal Onaiyekan said.

The 77-year-old archbishop emeritus of Abuja, the country's capital city, said that it was "unacceptable" that armed bandits were still holding hundreds of children and teachers for ransom.

"The government says it cannot identify precisely where these bandits are and where they take their victims. Some children kidnapped from schools have been missing for more than a year, some girls for seven," he said.

More than 1,400 children were abducted in Nigeria last year, according to the United Nations.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres condemned the "appalling attacks" in

Nigeria in a statement on January 10.

"I urge the Nigerian authorities to spare no effort in bringing those responsible for these heinous crimes to justice," Mr Guterres said.

The US State Department removed Nigeria from its list of countries with the most egregious religious freedom violations in November — prompting an outcry among human rights advocates.

For Cardinal Onaiyekan, the only way to change the situation is with "a government that helps us to rebuild our unity and national coexistence."

"Of course, we also need prayer," he added.

## Vatican mandates Covid-19 vaccines or recovery for employees

The Vatican has updated its rules to stem the spread of Covid-19 and will require all its employees to be vaccinated against the virus or prove they have recently recovered from the disease.

Also, starting January 10, nonessential work-related travel is temporarily suspended, masking outdoors is required, high-filtering FFP2 masks must be worn

indoors and quarantine rules for those who have had contact with a positive case are adjusted with no isolation required for those who are fully and recently vaccinated, including with the booster. The Vatican made the announcement January 12.

Mirroring restrictions recently put into place by Italy, the Vatican will now

require the "super green pass" for: all employees, interns and external collaborators; visitors to the Vatican Museums, gardens and the apostolic palace in Castel Gandolfo; people taking part in conferences, seminars and other events, which also will have a reduced capacity of 35%; and individuals wishing to eat inside, such as in a Vatican cafeteria.

## Vatican roundup

### Vatican announces motto of Jubilee Year 2025

● Preparations are already underway in Rome for the 2025 Jubilee, a special year of grace and pilgrimage in the Catholic Church.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella met with Pope Francis this month to discuss the motto for the jubilee.

In a video published by Vatican News on January 13, Archbishop Fisichella revealed that the motto approved by the Pope "can be summed up in two words: Pilgrims of Hope".

The 2025 Jubilee will be the Church's first ordinary jubilee since St John Paul II led The Great Jubilee of 2000. The Jubilee of Mercy opened by Pope Francis in 2015 was an extraordinary jubilee.

Archbishop Fisichella leads the Vatican dicastery entrusted with the event's organisation, the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation.

"There is so much work to be done," he said.

The 2025 Jubilee will include the opening of the Holy Door in St Peter's Basilica. Pilgrims who pass through the door — which is only opened during Jubilee years, ordinarily every 25 years or when a Pope calls for an extraordinary Jubilee — can receive a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions.

### Pope Francis: Urgent need for 'spiritual fatherhood' today

● Pope Francis has said in a new interview that there is a great need for "spiritual fatherhood" today.

"The faith we have received is always found through a relationship with someone," the Pope said in an interview published in the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, on January 13.

"There is a great urgency, in this historical moment, for meaningful relationships that we could define as spiritual fatherhood," he said.

Pope Francis underlined that a "spiritual relationship is one of those relationships that we have to rediscover with renewed effort," noting that it is distinct from a "psychological or therapeutic" program.

The Pope said that at this time in history, many young people have "the inability to make big life decisions" and are "afraid to decide, to choose, to take a risk".

He added that it is not only up to priests to provide much-needed spiritual accompaniment, but that there are many good lay men and women with valuable experiences to share.

"Christian faith is not something that can be learned from books or by simple reasoning. Instead, it is an existential journey that passes through our relationships. Our experience of faith thus always arises from somebody's witness," the Pope said.

### New Covid-19 rules for visitors to Vatican Museums

● Visitors to the Vatican Museums must show a pass certifying full vaccination or recovery from Covid-19 and wear medical-grade masks under new measures announced on Wednesday.

A decree issued on January 5 by Archbishop Fernando Vérgez Alzaga, president of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State, said that every visitor to the museum must present a super green pass and wear an FFP2 mask, the European equivalent of an N95.

The rules, introduced in light of "the worsening of the emergency health situation," went into effect on January 10 and are due to expire February 28.

The ordinance, also signed by Sister Raffaella Petrini, secretary general of the Vatican's governorate, brings the Vatican City State's norms into line with those of Italy.

The Italian government passed a decree in December requiring citizens to be either vaccinated or show proof of recovery from Covid-19 to visit museums or other tourist sites.





# Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

**W**hen Italy recently celebrated a state funeral for David Sassoli, the President of the European Parliament who died unexpectedly from Legionnaire's disease on January 11, the Mass was held in Rome's Basilica of St Mary of the Angels and attended by the President of the Republic, Sergio Mattarella, Prime Minister Mario Draghi, European President Ursula von der Leyen, and virtually the continent's entire power structure.

For such an august occasion, one might have expected the funeral Mass to be celebrated by the President of the Italian bishops' conference, Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti, or perhaps the Pope's Vicar of Rome, Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, or even the Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

Instead, the main celebrant was Cardinal Matteo Zuppi of Bologna – which, for the record, wasn't even Mr Sassoli's real hometown, since he was born in Florence in 1956.

Yet the funeral was, in a sense, also a celebration of Bologna and its legacy, with the lifelong friendship between Mr Sassoli and Cardinal Zuppi representing the two sides of that cultural coin, the political and the ecclesiastical.

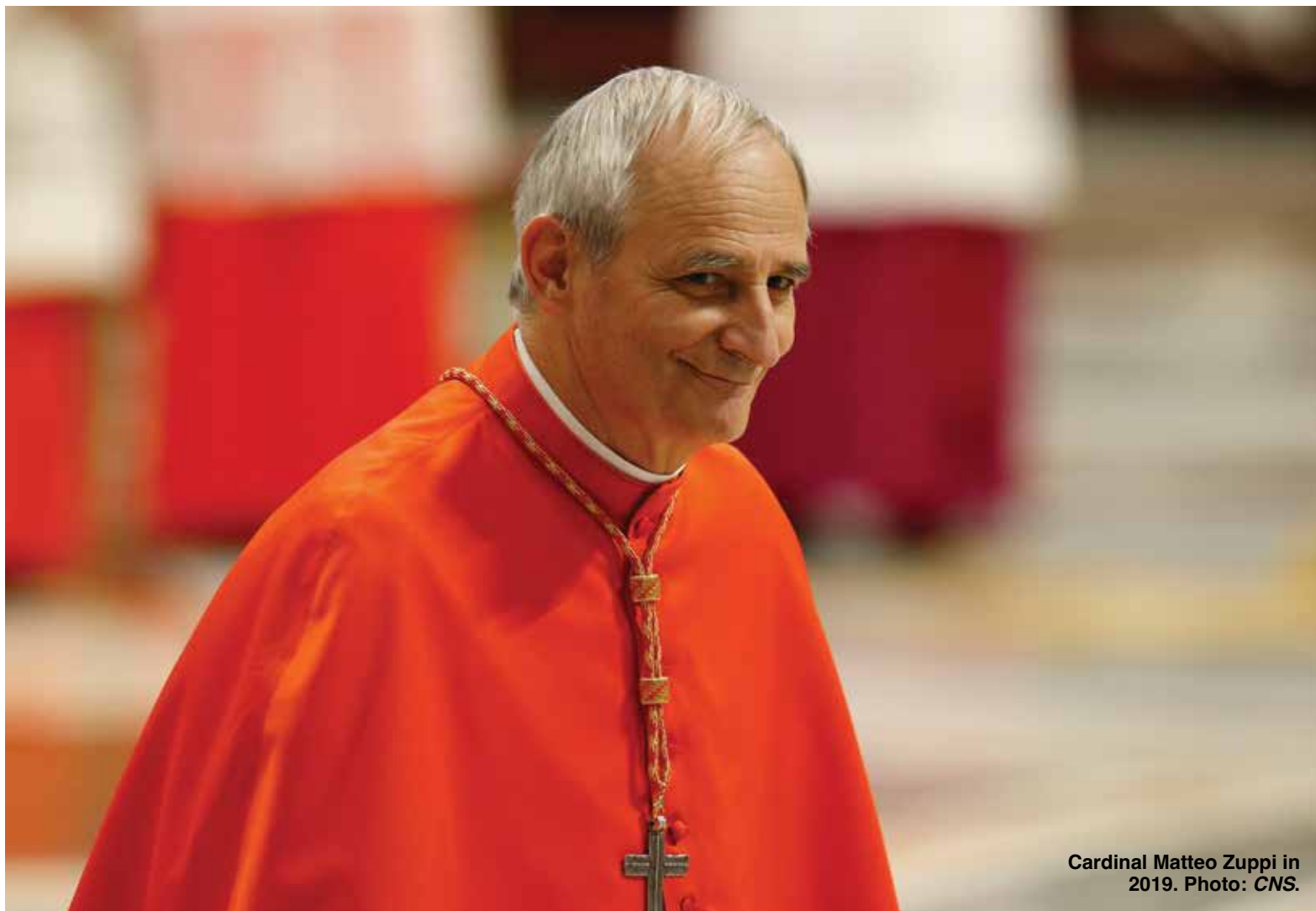
## Architecture

Classically, in Italian argot Bologna is known as "*Bologna rossa, dotta e grassa*" – "red, learned and fat," an homage to the city's red brick architecture, its famed university and its equally celebrated cuisine, respectively. Yet "*Bologna rossa*" is also very much invoked as a reference to the city's politics, since it's long been a fulcrum for Italy's progressive energies.

**“After Vatican II, Bologna also became home to the ‘Bologna School,’ a system of interpretation of the council which emphasised the ‘spirit’ of the council”**

The future European leader and the future cardinal became friends decades ago, when they attended the same Roman high school, the *Liceo Virgilio* on the city's *Via Giulia*, which was also attended by the slightly older Andrea Riccardi, founder of the Community of Sant'Egidio to

## Friendship between cardinal and politician cemented comeback of ‘Bologna school’



Cardinal Matteo Zuppi in 2019. Photo: CNS.

**“The future European leader and the future cardinal became friends decades ago, when they attended the same Roman high school”**

which Cardinal Zuppi would also later belong.

Mr Sassoli once said of his old friend Cardinal Zuppi, “He was a year older, and famous because he was in a group that worked on the city's peripheries with the poor. [The reference was to the nascent Sant'Egidio movement.] He was thin, really thin, with an old leather bag over his shoulder, and a thick burgundy sweater instead of a coat ... He was the kid with a smile, and I never saw him without a smile. Even physically, he showed real pleasure in meeting people.”

Although Cardinal Zuppi and Mr Riccardi are both Romans and Mr Sassoli was a Tuscan, all three grew up under the shadow of Bologna because it was the centre of an intellectual and cultural current in Italian Catholicism associated with the late Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro, who led the city during the years of the Second Vatican Council in the mid-1960s and was associated with a centre-

left, reform-oriented, social justice brand of Catholicism.

## Interpretation

After Vatican II, Bologna also became home to the “Bologna School,” a system of interpretation of the council which emphasised the “spirit” of the council, styling the progressive reformers as the heroes and the conservative minority at the council as the enemies of progress. Its architects were figures such as Giuseppe Dossetti, a priest and politician, and Giuseppe Alberigo, a Church historian, along with Mr Alberigo's protégé, historian and essayist Alberto Melloni.

This was the air the young Mr Sassoli and Cardinal Zuppi breathed. Both became regular visitors to Bologna; in fact, Mr Sassoli's last visit to the city was in September, for an event called the “G20 of the Faiths” organized by Mr Melloni and attended by Cardinal Zuppi.

Mr Sassoli carried the centre-left, progressive and humanitarian

vision of the Bologna school initially into his journalistic career, which is how he rose to fame in Italy, and then into politics. Cardinal Zuppi followed the same trajectory into ecclesiastical life, becoming active in Sant'Egidio circles.

**“Mr Sassoli carried the centre-left, progressive and humanitarian vision of the Bologna school initially into his journalistic career”**

During the Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict years, many considered the Bologna school essentially dead, surpassed by the new winds blowing under pontiffs with a different ecclesiastical and political orientation – more focused on Catholic identity than the “signs of the times,” and more

congenial to the centre-right than to the left.

## Revived

Yet its fortunes have revived under Pope Francis, so when the pontiff sent Cardinal Zuppi to Bologna in October 2015, it was widely perceived as a coronation of both the Lecaro legacy and the “Bologna school,” since Cardinal Zuppi is a prominent scion of both.

At the moment, it's considered entirely plausible that when Cardinal Bassetti steps down as president of the powerful Italian bishops' conference at the end of the May when he turns 80, the 66-year-old Cardinal Zuppi could be selected as his successor. If so, it could set up Cardinal Zuppi not merely to exercise greater national and international influence, but also to get some consideration as a possible successor to someone else too – i.e., Francis himself.

In the meantime, Mr Sassoli's political success and Cardinal Zuppi's continuing ecclesiastical rise are proof positive that in both the civil and the sacred, no movement is ever really dead – given the right circumstances, it can always stage a comeback, bigger and bolder than ever.



# For Pope, jobs are about more than a wage



Cindy Wooden

For more than 130 years, popes have considered work, the treatment of workers and the creation of jobs to be a religious and moral issue.

And while Pope Francis has not written an encyclical dedicated to labour like Pope Leo XIII did in 1891 and St John Paul II did in 1981, he has ensured that workers and their jobs stay at the centre of the Church's concern.

At his weekly general audience January 12, Pope Francis asked visitors and pilgrims to join him in a moment of silent prayer for men and women who are "desperate because they cannot find work".

While headlines in the United States continue to look at how some businesses are scrambling to find new hires and how the Covid-19 pandemic led many people to reduce their hours in search of a better work-life balance or gave them the power to demand better pay and working conditions, the experience is far from universal, and Pope Francis knows that.

The US Department of Labour's Bureau of Labor Statistics reported January 7 that the unemployment rate in the United

States was 3.9%. In contrast, the Italian government's National Statistical Institute reported January 10 that Italy had an employment rate of 9.2%. The same day, Eurostat, the European Union's statistics office, reported an unemployment rate across the EU of 7.2%, but noted that in Spain the rate was 14.1% and Greece was experiencing a 13.4% unemployment rate. Italy had the third-highest percentage of people ready to work and actively seeking a job, but without success.

In his series of general audience talks about St Joseph, Pope Francis gave a quick primer on why work itself is a religious topic and why the Church's concern extends beyond charity for those without work.

## Sanctification

"Work is an essential component of human life, and even of the path of sanctification," the Pope said January 12. "Work is not only a means of earning a living, it is also a place where we express ourselves, feel useful and learn the great lesson of concreteness, which helps keep the spiritual life from becoming spiritualism."

Work, he said, "is a way of expressing our personality, which is relational by its nature. And, too, work is a way to express our creativity; each one of us works in

our own way, with our own style: the same work but with different styles".

And that was not the Pope's only comment about the dignity and importance of work that day.

**“The absence of work is therefore not merely an affront to dignity and self-determination as well as creativity but also frustrates social dialogue and exchange”**

The Vatican Covid-19 Commission and Deloitte, a multinational professional services network, gathered academics and leaders in the fields of business, finance and development economics January 12 to discuss "Preparing the future, building a sustainable, inclusive, regenerative economy."

In a message to participants, Pope Francis asked them to bypass "declarations of intent or messages about grand principles," and instead "to make concrete commitments, to do your part so that the economy and finance are at the service of people and our Mother Earth."

"May your measures of success not be profits, expansion and

short-term and shortest-term returns," he said. "Instead, may the measure be the number of people who move out of extreme poverty, who can work decently. Is it so difficult to assure the conditions whereby everyone can contribute to transforming the world with their work?"

## Social dialogue

His words illustrated a point made by Anna Rowlands, professor of Catholic social thought and practice at the University of Durham, England, in her new book on Catholic social teaching, *Towards a Politics of Communion*.

St John Paul's 1981 encyclical on work, *Laborem Exercens*, Prof. Rowlands wrote, "extended rather than simply repeated" the teaching of Pope Leo XIII in his 1891 encyclical on labour and capital, particularly on the fundamental points that "work is made for the human person and not the human person for work, and that labour always has a value and priority over capital".

One of the ways Pope Francis builds on the teaching of his predecessors, she said, is in developing the relationship between work and "social dialogue". In other words, "work is the key to how we become involved in a meaningful social dialogue. The absence of work is

therefore not merely an affront to dignity and self-determination as well as creativity but also frustrates social dialogue and exchange."

"Work is a religious issue because we are social creatures, hard-wired to communicate, exchange, labour and shape the world around us," Prof. Rowlands told Catholic News Service January 13.

**“Work gives us a sense of shared responsibility for the development of the world, and ultimately, for our life as a people”**

"In an important sense, we become who we are through what we do," she said. "We seek ways to contribute, plan for the future and encounter those who are not ourselves. We also live in a world where, for many, paid work is simply a necessity, therefore the condition of that work – that it is meaningful, dignified, fairly paid, non-exploitative – is vital."

In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis had insisted: "In a genuinely developed society, work is an essential dimension of social life, for it is not only a means of earning one's daily bread, but also of personal growth, the building of healthy relationships, self-expression and the exchange of gifts. Work gives us a sense of shared responsibility for the development of the world, and ultimately, for our life as a people."

Work brings people together.

**“The same day, Eurostat, the European Union's statistics office, reported an unemployment rate across the EU of 7.2%, but noted that in Spain the rate was 14.1% and Greece was experiencing a 13.4% unemployment rate”**



# Letters

## Letter of the week

### A microcosm of the universal Church

**Dear Editor,** One evening recently I stopped for a while in a small village in the evening dusk. There wasn't a single person to be seen on the village streets. All were in the comfort of their homes facilitated by the companionship and love of their families or so I imagined. I went into the local church which was in almost darkness, lit only by the well-lit crib on one side of the altar with the silhouette of a lone figure sitting facing the crib, a few pews down from it, whom I was to learn was the local parish priest. I contrasted what I imagined was his isolation and loneliness with, what again I imagined to be, the companionship shared by the rest of the

villagers in the warmth and comfort of their own homes.

As I exited the Church and went through the empty village the two contrasting images, provoked by my diverse imaginings, would not leave me but began to disturb me as my romanticisation of them disappeared and the word "synodality" came into my mind but there was no instant or immediate mental concept that came to me with the word. Instead the word challenged me to re-address my mental imaginings, from the two images.

In my mind and in my being I now knew that the priest was not alone but was within the embrace of the sacred, and in one with it, in watching over his

domestic Church found in each of the houses of the village and its surrounds. Within every house there were all the emotions, challenges and loneliness of the human condition which depended on the fire of the sacred for fulfilment, meaning and eternal companionship.

The little village suddenly became for me a microcosm of the universal Church, watched over by God's presence through the giftedness of ordination, reaching out in constant affirmation of God's own people and his domestic Church, which perpetually renews itself through affirmation.

*Yours etc.,  
John Lupton Snr  
Roscrea, Co. Tipperary.*

### Praying alcohol pricing law works

**Dear Editor,** The newly introduced minimum unit pricing of alcohol could be seen as a positive step in the long run, in terms of making it less available for younger people who may not have the monetary means to buy large quantities of cheap, strong alcohol anymore. Hopefully it will lead to less people becoming addicted to alcohol, which of course has been a blight on Ireland.

However, for those who are currently addicted to alcohol who have families, this could lead to them spending more money on alcohol and less on essentials such as food, electricity and more. This could increase the suffering of families who are already struggling to make ends meet with an addict in the house.

The end result remains to be seen, we must hope and pray it is positive in the long run.

*Yours etc.,  
Mark O'Donnell  
Cork City, Cork*



### Church in Ireland caving to secularist agenda

**Dear Editor,** We will soon have 'Catholic schools week' again when we will hear lofty words about the Catholic ethos being promoted in our schools. The test of these words is the effort that school boards make to keep out secularist sex education programmes which will be pushed on them.

But I see now that some schools are welcoming programmes that are openly sup-

portive of the LGBT agenda, recognising such behaviour as one other alternative lifestyle to be accepted as normal. They do this under the pretext of combating the bullying of such people, but it is clear that they see nothing wrong with an orientation which is disordered and which leads to behaviour which is intrinsically immoral.

I am against all bullying for whatever reason and would

want to see such people helped to grow emotionally in a way that is healthy and chaste for the sake of their well-being in this life and their immortal souls in the next. But this can only be done by truthful instruction in Catholic teaching on sexuality. Hence, if Catholic school boards fail to do this all talk about our Catholic ethos will be mere empty rhetoric.

I note also that many Catho-

lic schools re-opened on January 6, the feast of the Epiphany, a holy day of obligation, which shows a total disregard of the mystery being celebrated on that day.

These happenings convince me that the Church in Ireland is caving in to the secularist agenda on many fronts.

*Yours etc.,  
Fr Richard O'Connor  
Rome, Italy*

### We can't get forever to repent

**Dear Editor,** Is the pandemic calamity God's warning to repent or perish and to save us from worse to come?

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus told us that unless sinners repent, they will perish and to illustrate this Gospel, Jesus told the parable about bearing fruit, that tells us we can't get forever to repent. Our faith must bear good fruit. It must manifest itself through our good deeds with ever increasing commitment to services of God.

Sin exists in large amounts and is legalised all over the world and Jesus tells

in Mark's Gospel that it is from our hearts that evil intentions emerge – fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly – and Jesus tells us all these evil things come from within and make us unclean.

The Message of Fatima from Blessed Virgin Mary to save the world from war, famine, exile or plague, said the people would have to turn back from sin and go back to God and prayer. All sin is self-destructive.

Prayer to St Michael Archangel:

Defend us in the hour of conflict; be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God restrain him, we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, thrust Satan down into hell and with him all the other evil spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls. Amen.

*Yours etc.,  
Bridget Sherlock,  
Mitchelstown, Co. Cork*

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

### Church outreach is vital, but has to face a painful truth

I'd encourage everyone to take a Masters in Theology at their local seminary. – **Conor Donnelly**

Are we even surprised? We don't do catechesis in this country any more. Schools don't teach the faith, parents don't teach the faith, priests in the pulpit (at the lectern) don't teach the faith. Where are people supposed to learn it? Something has gone seriously wrong since Vatican II. – **Kevin Bell**

Every word you say is true. The faith is not being passed on to people on all levels. Some parents cannot teach their children the truths of our religion as they have not learned them themselves. – **Mary Kelly**

So true, so important that we have ongoing faith development. – **Frank Browne**

For far too long we have infantilised our members, to the extent that they are no longer equipped to rely on their faith in moments and occasions of difficulty in life as adults. – **Ian Evans**

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

### Time the US had its chastity belt

**Dear Editor,** America already has its 'Rust Belt', 'Bible Belt' and 'Sun Belt'. With the various alleged sexual shenanigans happenings in both Hollywood and New York, perhaps it's time the US had its Chastity Belt!

*Yours etc.,  
Brid Fitzpatrick,  
Terenure, Dublin 6W*

### Ignoring the finger-wagging

**Dear Editor,** The Adoptive Rights Alliance sees fit to do a lot of finger-wagging at former adoption practices but it is a 'Together For Yes' organisation who saw fit to legalise abortion in 2018. I just ignore all their sermonising.

*Yours etc.,  
Colm O'Connor  
Goatstown, Dublin 14*

### Letters to the Editor

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

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

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



# Around the world



▲ **USA:** People in New York City protest the expiration of an eviction moratorium, January 14. Photos: CNS.

◀ **VATICAN:** Pope Francis greets clerics as he meets Spanish bishops during their *ad limina* visits to report on the state of their dioceses, at the Vatican January 14.



**UKRAINE:** A member of the Ukrainian armed forces stands guard at combat positions near the line of separation from Russian-backed rebels near Horlivka, January 9.



**BOLIVIA:** A man holds a sign in protest of vaccinations during a march against Covid-19 restrictions, amid a spike of infections in the country, in Cochabamba.



**THAILAND:** A volunteer in personal protective equipment takes swab samples from a homeless man for a rapid antigen test in Bangkok, January 13.



**ITALY:** A nun takes part in a candlelight procession on Italy's Giglio Island January 13, to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Costa Concordia cruise ship disaster.



# Theology and spirituality – writing about it or writing it

In the world of the arts, they make a distinction between persons who create an artifact, an artist, a sculptor, or a novelist, and persons who write about artists and their works. We have novelists and literary critics, artists and art critics, and both are important. Critics keep art and literature from bad form, sentimentality, vulgarity, and kitsch; but it's the artists and novelists who produce the substance; without them critical assessment has no function.

For example, the book *The Diary of Anne Frank* is a masterpiece. Countless books and articles have been written about it, but these are not the masterpiece, the substance, the artifact that so deeply touched the soul of millions. They are commentaries about the artifact. Of course, sometimes a person can be both, a novelist and a literary critic, an artist and an art critic, still the distinction holds. These are separate crafts and separate disciplines.

**“We have infinitely more books written about theology than we have books that are actual theology”**

That same distinction holds true within the area of theology and spirituality, though it is often not recognised. Some people write theology and others write about theology, just as some people write spirituality and others write about spirituality. Right now, I'm writ-



**Fr Rolheiser**

[www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com)

ing about theology and spirituality rather than actually doing theology or spirituality.

## Popular

Perhaps an example can help. Henri Nouwen was one of the most popular spiritual writers in the past 70 years. Nouwen wrote spirituality; he never wrote about it, he wrote it. He was not a critic; he wrote spiritual texts. Many people, including myself, have written about Nouwen, about his life, his works, and why he influenced so many people. Strictly speaking, that's writing about spirituality as opposed to writing spirituality as Nouwen did. Truth be told, we don't have an abundance of spiritual writers today the caliber of Nouwen. What we do have, particularly at an academic level, is an abundance of critical writings about spirituality.

I offered the example of a contemporary spirituality writer, Henri

Nouwen, but the distinction is perhaps even clearer when we look at classical spiritual writers. We have in fact created a certain 'canon' of spirituality writers whom we deem as classics: the Desert Fathers and Mothers, the Pseudo-Dionysius, Julian of Norwich, Nicholas of Cusa, Francis of Assisi, Dominic, Ignatius, John of the Cross, Theresa of Avila, Francis de Sales, Vincent de Paul, and Therese of Lisieux, among others. None of these wrote works of criticism per se, they wrote spirituality. Countless books have been written about each of them, critically assessing their works. As valuable as these books are, they are in the end not spirituality books, but books about spirituality.

## Theology

The same is true for theology. We have infinitely more books written about theology than we have books that are actual theology. The word 'theology' comes from two Greek

words, Theos (God) and logos (word). Hence, in essence, theology is 'words about God'. Most theology books and courses on theology contain some 'words about God', but these are generally dwarfed by 'words about words about God'.

**“Critics define the rules of the game and hold the players to the rule; but art, theology, and spirituality are the game. Games need to be refereed or they quickly degenerate”**

This is not a criticism, but a clarification. I have taught and written in the area of theology and spirituality for nearly 50 years and am blissfully unaware of this distinction most of the time, mainly because we need both and the two simply flow in and out of each other. However, there is a point where it becomes important not to confuse or conflate the critical assessment of an artifact with the artifact itself, and in our case to recognise that writing about theol-

ogy and spirituality is not the same thing as actually doing theology and doing spirituality. Why? Why highlight this distinction?

## Artist

Because we need the artist and the critic to speak to different places inside of us and we need to recognise (explicitly at times) where we need to be fed or guided. The artist speaks to the soul with one kind of intent, namely, to inspire, to inflame, to deepen, to bring new insight, and to move us affectively. The critic speaks with a different intent: to guide, to keep us balanced, sane, robust, clear-headed, and within the bounds of decency, community, proper aesthetics, and orthodoxy. Both are important. One saves the other from unbridled sentimentality and the other saves the other from simply being an empty exercise. In a vast over-simplification, we might put it this way. Critics define the rules of the game and hold the players to the rule; but art, theology, and spirituality are the game. Games need to be refereed or they quickly degenerate.

In our Churches today there is often a tension between those who are trying to create new insight, generate new enthusiasm, and speak more affectively to the soul, and those who are guarding the castles of academia, orthodoxy, liturgy, and good taste. Academic theology is often in tension with devotional life, liturgists are often in tension with pastors, and popular spiritual writers are often in tension with critics. One or the other may irritate us, but each is ultimately a friend.

**“Nouwen wrote spirituality; he never wrote about it, he wrote it. He was not a critic; he wrote spiritual texts”**



# Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, January 20, 2022

## Personal Profile

Following  
faithfully God's  
call to more

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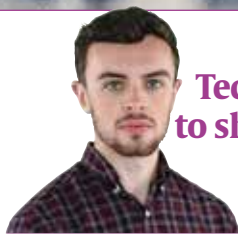


## Young scientists turning their hands at topical issues

**A**s with last year's exhibition, this year's BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition is again set against a backdrop highlighting the importance of science and technology to our modern world: the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Speaking at the opening of the three-day online event last week, President Michael D. Higgins said science requires a changing of perspective, "perhaps even a paradigm shift, so it may help with best effect for all in the solving of the great social challenges of our times".

Particularly during a global pandemic and public health emergency in Ireland, "the Young Scientist Awards have an importance in gaining an ever-more necessary awareness of the world's dependence on science and technology,"



**The BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition continues to showcase bright minds tackling society's toughest problems, writes Jason Osborne**

President Higgins said.

The 58th staging of the contest opened with 550 projects qualifying for the final stages, which would see around 1,038 students representing 219 schools by displaying their projects at the exhibition. This year, there were more than 1,440 entries from more than 2,000 schools across the island of Ireland.

A grand contest which grew from small beginnings, the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition began taking shape when

two UCD physics researchers, Rev. Dr Tom Burke and Dr Tony Scott, came across the concept of 'Science Fairs' while conducting research in New Mexico, America, in 1963.

They decided that the hands-on approach would be beneficial in the Irish context, and so the exhibition was born. The first competition was hosted in 1965 in the Round Room of the Mansion House in Dublin and saw 230 entries. The first winner was John Monaghan, who recently retired

as Chief Executive Officer of Avigen, a US biotech company.

The success of the first event resulted in the exhibition being moved to the much larger RDS in year two and it has remained there until the advent of the pandemic, which has seen the event go online. What hasn't changed is the challenge posed to young minds by an opportunity to tackle the world's pressing problems, and showcase their solutions and the results of their research.

### Relevant research

Student projects are categorised into one of four groups: Biological and Ecological, Social and Behavioural Sciences, Chemical, Physical and Mathematical Sciences and Technology, and the research covers as wide a variety of topics as can be imagined.

As might be expected, the omnipresent Coronavirus and its many effects features in a large number of the entries, with projects tackling every aspect of the pandemic. 'Did deaths in my local area increase in 2020 due to Coronavirus? The maths of Covid-19' is a project helmed by Lead Student Conor Quigley of Oatlands College in Stillorgan, Co. Dublin, which sought to provide a "detailed analysis by gender of deaths in 26 of my local areas of Dublin to investigate increase in 2020 (with Coronavirus) over 2019 (without virus)".

This project falls into the 'Chemical, Physical & Mathematical Sciences' category, alongside such offerings as 'How would using non-Euclidean paper moulded

» Continued on Page 33



## Family News



## AND EVENTS

## PEOPLE SPENDING CLOSE TO A THIRD OF WAKING LIVES ON PHONES

An analysis of trends in mobile phone usage has found that people in mobile-first markets spend close to a third of their waking hours using their phones.

The report, from analytics firm App Annie, concluded that across the top ten markets analysed, the average user spent four hours and 48 minutes using their mobile phones every day.

This is a 30% increase from the figures reported in 2019.

The countries with the highest mobile usage were Brazil, Indonesia and South Korea, where users spent more than five hours on average on mobile apps.

Ireland was not included in the analysis. Figures for the UK show usage rose from three hours daily in 2019 to four hours last year.

Globally, the shift to mobile continues, with huge surges in mobile app downloads, particularly in developing markets.

## COOKS REJOICE AS 'TEARLESS' ONIONS TO GO ON SALE IN UK

Cooks are to be able to buy "tearless" onions for the first time when they go on sale in the UK from next week.

The Sunion onion is perfect for those with sensitive eyes as well as cooking in the kitchen with children, British supermarket chain Waitrose has said.

Their mild flavour makes them perfect for use in cooking while they can also be used raw in a salad, the firm added.

The onions are the invention of Rick Watson, a plant breeder working for the German chemical company BASF.

He began working on the innovation in the late 1980s, using natural techniques rather than genetic modification to create the unique variety.

The brand said it took more than 30 years of breeding less pungent varieties of onion to find a variety where the vapours released in chopping are not powerful enough to bring tears to the eye.

## 'SEA DRAGON' FOSSIL FOUND IN ENGLAND

Scientists have hailed one of the "greatest finds" in British palaeontological history after the largest fossilised remains of a prehistoric "sea dragon" were discovered in the midlands.

The ichthyosaur, approximately 180 million years old with a skeleton measuring around 10 metres in length and a skull weighing approximately one tonne, is the largest and most complete fossil of its kind ever found in the UK.

It was discovered by Joe Davis of Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust during a routine draining of a lagoon island at Rutland Water in February 2021.

The first ichthyosaurs, which are called sea dragons because they tend to have very large teeth and eyes, were discovered by fossil hunter and palaeontologist Mary Anning in the early 19th century.

## Meditation and being loved



**W**e all want to be loved. My youngest granddaughter has been staying with us for some time now and has grown increasingly close and loving. She will often tenderly stroke my arm when I'm playing with her or reading a story. And, just before she leaves for crèche each morning, she used to come and give me a loving hug. But that has now changed and become a little game with her!

Now, before her daddy brings her to school, she will give her mammy a kiss. I might get down on my knees with my arms spread wide waiting for my hug and, with a glint in her eye, she will wriggle past me and over to her granny to give her a hug – eyeing me all the while. And if I remain where I am she will wriggle past me again, with an even stronger glint in her eyes and a smile on her lips, and walk past me out the doorway to the hall. It has become a game she plays to make a point of not hugging me! She isn't angry with me – we haven't fallen out, she is just playing a game in her own mind, 'playing difficult to get' somehow; this may well be a theme she will return to in her teenage years with boys her own age!

I tell this story to illustrate that love temporarily withheld is not love denied. I 'know' that she loves me because of how we get on at all other times – we play together, read together and go for walks together. So I have a deep knowledge, perhaps we might call it 'faith', that she loves me just as I love her. Strange as it may seem, when she plays this game with me it makes me love her all the more!

I tell this story too because there are times in our lives where we fail to directly experience God's love for us. One of the great fruits of

## Mindful living

Dr Noel Keating



meditation is that it helps us to apprehend who we are at the deepest level of our being; we experience ourselves as deeply loved by God who is pure being. We become consciously aware of the silent presence of God within us. This comes to us as heart-knowledge rather than intellectual knowledge which is why John Main often said that meditation moves the centre of gravity of our consciousness from the head to the heart.

**“When this happens in meditation it may feel as if we are gently resting in the arms of God, being held gently and lovingly”**

As our experience of meditation deepens through daily practice, our faith that we are intimately loved by God deepens and we find that we are becoming a channel, a conduit of God's love for the world. Sometimes that may give us a warm feeling of the kind we get when we are hugged unconditionally by a child or our bare arm is stroked lovingly, almost imperceptibly as we

read a child a story, yet the child more than likely has no conscious awareness that they are doing so. When this happens in meditation it may feel as if we are gently resting in the arms of God, being held gently and lovingly.

But there are other times in meditation where we are more aware of an absence rather than the presence of God. This can happen on days when our time in contemplation feels dry and empty and we struggle to remain faithful to reciting our sacred word. This can be especially challenging if we are experiencing stress in our working or family lives at the same time. It's as if God too has absented herself and removed a level of comfort and support when we need it most.

But since my granddaughter has been paying this game with me, I have come to see that perhaps God is being playful too! My knowledge,



my absolute faith, that my granddaughter loves me helps me to see such an experience of love withheld in meditation as God playing with me, avoiding my loving grasp, but with a wicked glint of joy in her eye as she does so!

Thomas Keating wrote that “The chief thing that separates us from God is the thought that we are separated from God. If we get rid of that thought, our troubles will be greatly

reduced”. Meditation teaches us that our experience of God's presence within us is real and can be trusted; when we do so it activates our capacity to perceive the divine in everyone else and everything else. And then we too become a portal through which God pours love into the world.

As I reflect on this I am reminded by the love poem *With That Moon Language* by the Sufi mystic, Hafiz. It goes as follows:

Admit something:  
Everyone you see, you say to them, “Love me.”

Of course you do not do this out loud, otherwise.

Someone would call the cops.

Still, though, think about this, this great pull in us to connect.

Why not become the one who lives with a

Full moon in each eye that is always saying,

With that sweet moon language, what every other eye in

This world is dying to hear?

Why not, indeed? Let meditation awaken your heart and make you a more contemplative, loving and kinder person.

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



» Continued from Page 31



from a pseudosphere transform origami tessellations?' from Alois Plissonneau of St Andrew's College in Dublin. Such lofty topics go far over this writer's head, but speak to the high standard Irish students are soaring to.

## “The students sought to see if there is a pattern to the spread of hazel in the Burren in order to prevent further encroachment”

Another prominent topic in many of the entries is the big push for environmentally friendly and sustainable solutions, in keeping with the present age's heightened awareness of ecological issues. Cian Ó Cadhla of Ard Scoil Na Mara presents his project in the online exhibition: 'Rewilding Ireland – Could Glenveagh National Park sustain a Grey Wolf population?' Employing population modelling and environmental data, Mr Ó Cadhla seeks to answer whether grey wolves could be reintroduced, following the shooting of the last one in Ireland in 1786. Using a mathematical model, Mr Ó Cadhla came to the conclusion that with a management regime, Glenveagh National Park could sustain a grey wolf population, which would keep the deer in check, bringing “many ecological benefits” to the park.

Also keeping an eye on the country's national parks are Mary Immaculate Secondary School, Lisdoonvarna students Kim Forde and Ella Campbell with their project, 'Predicting the spread of hazel scrub in the Burren'. The students sought to see if there is a pattern to the spread of hazel in the

Burren in order to prevent further encroachment.

Identifying the spread of hazel over the grasslands of the Burren as a threat to its rare plants, Ms Forde and Ms Campbell tried to find out the spread of new hazel from existing strands of hazel. They found that shallow soil made it difficult for hazel to grow, thus protecting other plant species in the Burren.

## Social and behavioural questions

On social and behavioural questions, students exhibited an interest in the societal questions raised by Covid-19, showing particular interest in attitudes towards vaccines and news surrounding the pandemic.

Patrician Presentation, Co. Tipperary students Maryann Fitzgerald and Amy Morrissey questioned how pets helped people cope throughout the pandemic, studying the benefits of keeping pets on mental and physical health, and pet therapy to human health and well being.

Noticing a general decrease in the level of mental health throughout the pandemic, the students noticed people purchased pets to help them-



selves cope with the stress. A sharp rise in the price of pets alerted them to this trend, implying a rise in demand. Both having purchased pets during the pandemic, they have a first-hand understanding of the benefits pets confer on pet-owners.

Conducting a survey of 100 people covering many demographics, as well as a heart rate and blood pressure test on people interacting with animals, the young women observed a noticeably positive impact on the physical and mental health of those interacting with animals. As a result of their research, the school principal is now considering the introduction of animals to the school once a month as a general mood-booster for students feeling pandemic blues.

## Technology

Technology's role in our modern lives featured prominently too, being put to work by students all over the country in solving a range of everyday problems. Noah Hill of St Finian's College, Co. Westmeath debuted his 'Ball or Nothing' project, which sought to help retrieve lost sliotars, using an RF transmitter/receiver and an Arduino nano. His project was born out of the “frustrating number” of balls he's lost over the years, in the hope of providing a solution to the problem going forward.

Embedding electronics in the sliotar, the sliotar becomes detectable after having been lost to the eye. Mr Hill says in the future he'd like to mass-produce the product, which will save many students many hours of bother – searching through nettles fruitlessly for disappeared balls.

The variety and intelligence on display among the projects is a sight to behold, and is available for all to see at [btyoungscientist.com](http://btyoungscientist.com).

# Faith — IN THE — family



Christina Malone

“Happy New Year” I said to a parishioner coming out of church. Seeing his reaction, I added; “It is only a few days old, I presume we are still ok wishing each other a Happy New Year.” He stopped, looked at me and replied. “Oh yeah. Many returns.”

I had to smile about this short encounter. I love the new year, the new beginnings, new plans, new dreams, new opportunities and hopefully more blessings than challenges but I noticed some people reacted strangely when I wished them a happy new year even in the first week of January.

During the second week I met a friend. I was full of enthusiasm wishing her a happy new year. She did not share my energy but asked me how I was getting on with my New Year's resolutions. I smiled and said wonderful. The secret is: For 2022 I decided to not go with the traditional New Year's resolutions like losing weight, drinking less or the more Christian ones like praying daily, making an effort to go for daily Mass. This year I decided I am just going to be kind to me (and others of course). Thanks to my children.

The past two years have been hard for everybody. Everyone has been affected by Covid, whether it was because we had to self-isolate, watch Mass online, celebrate birthdays without friends and family or not being able to visit and welcome friends and family. Many of us also had to bury loved ones during these months of restrictions.

I still remember the Italian novelist Francesca Melandri writing her experience in a letter to fellow Europeans entitled 'From your future' in March 2020. At that time Ireland only had a handful of cases.

We watched those Italians clapping for their medical staff and singing operas from their balconies. At the time the Italians were the only European country in lockdown.

Francesca Melandri described wonderfully and tragically the stages of her lockdown experience. She wrote that at the beginning it felt unreal and somehow she felt privileged to finally be able to spend time at home with the family.

'Funny' WhatsApp pictures

were shared, Zoom and online table quizzes took over her social life and many started baking, painting, renovating, cooking and more.

And you will eat, a lot, she wrote. That momentum of baking, painting and working from home become a new reality and with that the frustration and helplessness start. Home schooling began. Reading her letter in March 2020 I did not fully understand it. Reading

it again 22 months later I realised that Francesca indeed wrote a letter from the future to many European countries – as only a few weeks later Ireland and many other countries found themselves in lockdowns. And like the Italians many of us went outside at some stage and clapped our hands for the frontline workers.

January 2022, Covid is still here. The new normal has not yet started to feel joyful. And that's why I decided enough is enough. Life is too short and currently for many still way too complicated to “do” what we used to do for New Year resolutions like running, less drinking, healthier food. The pandemic has changed each and every one of us in different ways. When I asked my children (9, 8 and 5) about their New Year's resolutions I wondered if they understood my question. The reason being all three said they could be kinder to others and help others. At first I laughed saying no that was not a real New Year's resolution but then I thought about it and I think that is exactly what we need. Be kind to each other.

Jesus said to us: “Love your neighbour as much as you love yourself.”

The second part is for many the biggest challenge. I am not talking about arrogance but the acceptance that we are loved by God. We are created in his image. No ifs and buts, just as we are. I am talking about confidence, being proud of ourselves, giving ourselves the credit we deserve and after 22 months living with Covid we deserve to be kind to ourselves. Even in the midst of Covid, burn-outs are happening. People are tired. And because of this I decided to join my children in their New Year's resolutions: Be kinder to each other, help others and most importantly be kind to myself. Will you join me too?





# Following faithfully God's call to more

## Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

**S**r Eileen O'Connell OP made her final profession in December last year. Her path to religious life came almost as a surprise to her. She had a general sense that she was being called to more, and faithfully following it, she came to the Dominican sisters, Cabra.

The Faith was important to Sr Eileen growing up, she says, adding that "we were always a family that prayed together, we always said the rosary. I always went to Mass, went to parish talks and retreats. I continued that for myself, as opposed to 'because your parents are bringing you' type of thing. I was committed to it for myself".

**“Meanwhile, my aunt and uncle had spent years leading retreats to the Holy Land, and always saying to me, ‘you have to come someday’”**

There was never a time that she fell away from the Faith, although a lot her generation did so: "I never broke away from it, I never lost my sense of the importance of God or practising my faith. That never went, and I'm thankful to God for that," Sr Eileen explains.

As time went on, she developed a sense that there was something more; she had Faith, but also a feeling that she didn't understand it

completely.

"I got to the stage where I wanted to get more involved in my parish," Sr Eileen begins. "Not because I had any particular vocation to religious life, I didn't. I just wanted to get more involved in my parish and I wanted to have more of an understanding of what I believed."

"I started volunteering, spending time with one of the sisters in the parish... I just helped her out with things. Meanwhile, my aunt

and uncle had spent years leading retreats to the Holy Land, and always saying to me, 'you have to come someday'. And I'd always say, yeah, of course I'll come someday, thinking: it's not going to be now."

"Then one year, I really suddenly felt, this is the year I have to go. I rearranged my holidays at work so that I could go. While I was there, I had a very strong sense that God was calling me to something without a clue in the world what that was."



Sr Eileen O'Connell OP.

Sr Eileen spoke to a priest accompanying the pilgrims, a good friend of hers, who advised her to spend time "saying yes to everything that seems practical and sensible and possible, nothing off the wall. Maybe sometime you'll figure out what that sense of call is leading you to".

"I did that, started doing more things again in the parish," she says. "I got involved in a lot of other things, but still with no idea what this 'more' I felt I was being called to was. Then, one evening - I was studying childcare at that stage, I had gone back to college again - but one evening on my way to class, I felt I had to find out about Dominican sisters. To me it was that clear and that precise."

**“Sr Eileen recently started a two-year part-time masters on chaplaincy ministry at Dublin City University, with an eye to working in outreach to third-level students”**

Sr Eileen spent some time thinking and praying, saying to herself "no that's really not what I'm looking for and I really know nothing about Dominican sisters". She knew there were friars, having spent time in the Dominican retreat centre in Ennismore, Co. Cork.

"I didn't know at that stage that there were sisters that were Dominicans. Fairly quickly I made contact with them by email. Then I met one of the sisters for what felt like a very short meeting and I don't know what we talked about, but I left thinking I need to meet this woman again because I need to keep trying to figure out what this is."

"I met her a few times and I requested to begin a pre-novitiate, which was spent remaining in your

own job and home, just having community stays with the convent, getting to know the sisters. Coming toward the end of that I wrote my letter and requested to begin the novitiate and was accepted, thank God. Then I moved into the community, the novitiate house. I did my two-year novitiate and kept going. There was something right about it."

Sr Eileen recently started a two-year part-time masters on chaplaincy ministry at Dublin City University, with an eye to working in outreach to third-level students.

"It's an interesting course, it's a mixture of practical and academic, a lot of focus on reflecting on your practical and pastoral skills. The group is very diverse. They're a broad range of ages, experiences, backgrounds."

"They're working in various different areas: primary schools, secondary schools, addiction centres and more. It's a really rich mixture of people. A lot of the learning is our own conversations with each other as part of the course. So far it has been a very good experience."

The course is important to do, Sr Eileen explains, as, having experience working with young people already, she knows "you need to be trained and ready for whatever they bring to you".

"I find I can relate well with young adults. I suppose it's an area I can contribute to. I also think it is an important arena for Dominicans to be involved in, it's true to our roots. I became more aware that you need to have training when dealing with people. You never know what's going to walk in the door, what issues a person brings. I felt it was very important to have the piece of paper, you won't be employed without it. But it's largely because I don't want to walk into something without the ability to know what I'm doing."

**Do you know someone who we should profile? Send an email to [ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie)**

## Sweet Treats

Kiley Britten



## Bailey's chocolate cheesecake

**T**his is one of my favourite recipes to make, since it is another easy-to-make-yet-delicious recipe. One thing which makes this recipe excellent is that it is completely customisable. You can use whatever combination of chocolate you prefer, whether it be all dark or all milk. You could even use up some of that Christmas chocolate! The amount of Bailey's you put in is entirely up to you, and you might even want to use low fat cream cheese for a lighter version - however you customise this recipe, I guarantee that it will be delicious! I served mine with some fresh blueberries, but any fresh berry would be delicious with this cheesecake.

### Ingredients

- 170g plain digestives
- 150g butter
- Fresh fruit or crème fraîche to serve
- 225g milk chocolate
- 225g dark chocolate
- 2tbsp caster sugar

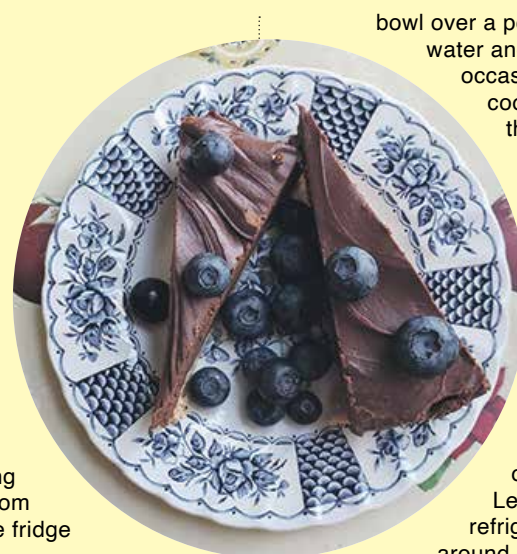
- 12oz/340g cream cheese
- 10oz/280g double cream
- 3-5tbsp Bailey's liqueur

### Instructions

1. Line the base of an 8-inch springform cake tin with baking paper and a bit of oil. Crush the digestives up using a food processor, or place in a plastic bag and crush with a rolling pin. You want the digestives to be quite finely crushed, whichever method you choose.
2. Pour the melted butter into the crumbled cookies and mix until the crumbs are clumping together. Press this into the bottom of the cake tin and place into the fridge to set for about an hour.
3. Put the chocolate into a heatproof

bowl over a pot of simmering water and let it melt, stirring occasionally. Set aside to cool down a bit. Whip the cream cheese and sugar together until smooth, then fold in the cream. Fold in the melted chocolate until everything is incorporated, then stir in the Bailey's.

4. Spoon the mixture into the cake tin and smooth out the surface. Leave to chill in the refrigerator until set, around 6 hours. Serve with fresh berries and crème fraîche.







# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## This week, we needed something uplifting on the box

So much of what's on TV is aggravation and conflict ridden so it's great when you find something calming and uplifting.

**Monty Don's Adriatic Gardens** (BBC Two, Fridays) is not just about gardening – there is history, spirituality and a host of interesting characters. Monty Don's visit to the area started in Venice, where we saw some small but beautiful hidden gardens. Many were monastic in origin and some were still cultivated by religious communities, though much reduced in numbers. One garden was modelled on the stages of the spiritual journey outlined by St Teresa of Avila. As he travelled from Italy to Croatia we were reminded of the wars there in the 1990s that caused so much destruction. We saw one cathedral in Dubrovnik still marked by bullet holes – a reminder of what had happened and a salutary warning for the future. The locals gardened primarily for food to feed themselves but as they left behind the legacy of communism and war more attention was paid to gardening for pleasure and beauty.

### Drone footage

It was beautifully filmed, and rarely has sweeping drone footage been so artistically employed. Don was so enthusiastic about the place,



Young Sheldon returned for a fifth season.

full of reverence, respect and awe. At one point we visited olive groves – one olive tree was around four metres wide and was estimated to be about 2,000 years old – it may have started growing in the time of Jesus! On a more humorous note, the Renaissance Cathedral of St James in Šibenik was festooned on the outer walls with a variety of gargoyles – thought to be the faces of those who refused to pay towards the

cost of the cathedral!

On another humorous note **Young Sheldon** (RTÉ One, Friday) returned for a fifth season last week. It's a funny and endearing sitcom with many deft human touches, though with an ambiguous attitude to religious faith. In last week's episode George, the father, had too much to drink and mildly flirted with the woman next door whose husband had done a run-

ner. Before things got out of hand, he had a heart attack and the family rows that carried forward from the last series were all forgotten as everyone rallied round. When he recovered daughter Missy thanked God but Sheldon thanked modern medicine. Perhaps that is the main fault of the show – the tiresome and outdated pitting of science against religion – curious in our fluid times when anything binary is frowned upon.

Sheldon was puzzled that he didn't get punished for his misdeed of running away from home. He wondered how, in the absence of a divine being (as he sees it), morality and societal rules were to be maintained. He sought advice from his grandmother – with typical directness his opening line was: "you're the least moral person I know!" She didn't seem to get her punishment either, so Sheldon further wondered – where's the incentive to be moral? There was a respectful ending as the narrator, the adult Sheldon (from *The Big Bang Theory*) – reflected on where people get their comfort – some, like his mother Mary, get it from a higher power as we see her asking God to protect her family, others seek refuge in fictitious worlds (Sheldon is a big *Star Trek* fan), still others rely on lighter fluid and matches – we see Missy burning a

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### SERVICE

**RTÉ One Sunday January 23, 11am**

Representatives of the 14 member Churches of the Dublin Council of Churches join together in a Service to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, in the Divine Word Chapel, Maynooth.

#### YOU ARE NOT ALONE: THE PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT IN A CANCEL CULTURE

**EWTN Sunday January 23, 9pm**

A round table discussion of the challenges facing the pro-life movement in the current cancel culture environment. Hosted by Kevin Dunn.

#### EVERYBODY LOVES RAYMOND: THE SISTER

**Channel 4 Monday January 24, 8.30am**

Touching episode when Debra's hippy sister shows up unexpectedly and announces that she's decided to become a nun.

copybook on which she had artistically written the name of the boyfriend who had been guilty of two timings. Nice!

### Murder

Finally, what dominated Irish news and current affairs last week was the shocking murder of Ashling Murphy in Tullamore. The evening **News** (RTÉ One, Friday) covered the impressive vigils, and I don't doubt for one minute the sincerity of the thoughts, prayers and gestures that were offered. These were most relevant for her family, school and community, but I couldn't help feeling that some activists were latching onto the grief for ideological reasons. And so we heard much about 'patriarchy', 'misogyny',

'toxic masculinity' and the like – important issues but that discussion could have waited respectfully.

And maybe it was too soon to deal with it on the **Late Late Show** (RTÉ One Friday). I thought presenter Ryan Tubridy hit the wrong notes when he spoke of 'the repeal generation' – how was that even relevant? To me it felt like a snub for those young people who voted against repeal, and those young living unborn children whose lives and potential were snuffed out as a result of Repeal.

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# Film

Aubrey Malone



## Carnivals, missing people, ill-fated soldiers, expensive remakes

The neo-noir thriller *Nightmare Alley* is a remake of a 1947 film starring Tyrone Power in one of his favourite roles. This version is directed by Guillermo del Toro – of *The Shape of Water* fame. Leonardo DiCaprio was initially cast in the power role but dropped out amidst financial squabbles. He's replaced by another A-lister, Bradley Cooper.

Beginning in 1939, it has Cooper as a ruthlessly ambitious carnival employee who hooks up with a corrupt psychologist (Cate Blanchett). The supporting cast reads like the main players from any other film: Toni Collette, Willem Dafoe, Rooney Mara, Mary Steenbergen, David Strathairn.

Carnival performers are treated more like performing

seals than people here. They're exploited for their ability to shock as much as entertain. The cruel vagaries of such an environment are unpicked by del Toro as he charts the rise and fall of Cooper.

It's a dazzlingly graphic world with a venal underbelly. Think *Elmer Gantry* directed by Shakespeare with a topping of Greek tragedy and you'll have some idea what to expect from this melodramatic smorgasbord.

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*Doineann* is a moody thriller that tells the story of the disappearance of a woman and her baby on a remote Irish island. Her husband (Peter Coonan) is depending on the island's retired policeman to find them before a storm hits



Rooney Mara and Bradley Cooper in a scene from *Nightmare Alley*.

the island. 'Doineann' is Irish for 'stormy weather'.

\*\*\*

Charles Monroe King was an African-American soldier

killed by a bomb in Baghdad in 2006. Before he died he compiled the eponymous journal for his yet-to-be-born son telling him how he wanted him to grow up. His

widow, a reporter with the *New York Times*, wrote a memoir based on their relationship. Parts of this feature here.

Starring Michael B. Jordan and Chanté Adams as the woosome twosome, it's a gentle love story directed by Denzel Washington. Expect old-fashioned messages about respect and decency that thankfully don't become cloying.

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*Sing 2* is a sequel to an animated 2016 film about a koala bear and other animals singing to save a theatre from closure. This has the same "follow your dream" theme – and the voices of Matthew McConaughey, Reese Witherspoon and Bono.

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Kenneth Branagh's *Death on the Nile* can't make up its mind if it's a remake of a 1978 film of the same name starring Peter Ustinov or a sequel to Branagh's *Murder on the Orient Express* from 2017. A lavish affair that cost Disney plc a staggering \$90 million, its most controversial feature is the casting of Armie Hammer. He was facing a string of sex abuse allegations when it was shot but it was too late to replace him.

After the recent second stabs at *Cyrano* and *Scream*, that makes it four re-treads/reboots/sequels in a month. Is it not time to call a moratorium on these big budget reiterations? Old wine in new bottles is fine but not old wine in equally old but astronomically-priced bottles.



# BookReviews

## Seán Ó Ríordáin: a major Irish poet mislaid



Seán Ó Ríordáin in his last illness-haunted years.

### Apathy Is out: Selected Poems of Seán Ó Ríordáin

with translations by Greg Delanty (Bloodaxe/Clólar-Chonnacht, £12.99/€15.00)

#### Desmond Egan

Seán Ó Ríordáin (1916-1977) was arguably the finest Irish-language poet of modern times. Soon after starting to work as a clerk in Cork city, he was diagnosed with TB (which had killed his father). It dogged him for the rest of his life, much of which was spent in hospital. His grappling with illness and his valiant attempts to find understanding and acceptance gave rise to some wonderful poetry.

His faith as a Catholic proved centrally important; in some respects, he could be compared to Hopkins who also grappled for belief as against a feeling of being 'time's eunuch'.

Ó Ríordáin's poetry was marked by a sophisticated awareness of the literature of other countries and by the new approach of the best modernist writers, including Pound and Eliot. Ó Ríordáin only published four collections, one of them posthumous and - no doubt because of his ill-health - much of his later work tended towards short lyrical epiphanies.

He was an intense Catholic (a description which I heard Peter Kavanagh use of his brother Patrick, and which is echoed in a recent memoir). As with Hopkins and Kavanagh, Ó Ríordáin's belief is central to his vision.

#### Translation

This, of course, does not preclude that doubt and questioning which Paul Tillich goes so far as to label the very condition of sincere belief. One must begin by saluting any presentation of Ó Ríordáin's poetry in its original Irish. Mr Delanty is clearly an admirer, anxious to spread the good news. But what of the English versions he offers in this dual-language collection? I do not know the translator who, we are told, has lived in the USA for the past 30 years, where he teaches, and who states plainly in his preface that "my Irish is poor" and necessitated his asking another Irish poet "to help me understand the poems".

I take no pleasure in saying that these translations do poor service to Ó Ríordáin. I even question the policy of the co-publishers in allowing a selection of haphazard versions into print.

Sadly, they do little to defend a great legacy. They lack authority. They even lack the kind of scholarly investigation which one might expect. A distinguished Irish poet told me that he had "sweated blood translating Ó Ríordáin, and drank the icy waters of depression in trying to get to the bottom of his poems".

#### Dilettante

It is very disappointing that *Apathy Is Out* shows little sign of such involvement, and more of a dilettantism often noticeable where translations from Irish are concerned. Take, at random, *The Blind Man in the Studio*. The original is not without a sly knowingness: the poet as painter dealing with the complexity of the everyday. The English version we are offered misses the tone, the wit and even the very meaning of the original. One crucial line: "Is bhí an uirlis ann"/"And the instrument was available" is not even translated: the line simply omitted. The 'river' surprisingly and challengingly mentioned in the poem becomes a 'bank'. The English grammar is not impressive either: 'on to' should be 'onto' ('on' here is not part of the verb 'eased').

Mr Delanty's version tries to do, with a casualness of tone, in 15 lines

what took Ó Ríordáin 16. This is shoddy work, suggestive of a careless approach to the words of a master at distilling experience into terse, evocative, lines: a poem demeaned rather than revered. Unfortunately and sadly, a pattern has been set. *The Cure* provides another example of slapdash translation. Why does it start, "I was caught up in" for the simple Irish 'caitheas': "I spent (time)"? The next line disregards the metaphor of blood-clouds in favour of an easy alliteration: "clouds clotted the sky". Like clotted cream, then?

And so it goes. "Ag suirí le": "flirting with/dabbling in" is translated "court-ing". And the ending couplet - "Do thomas an fhuil ins an salachar/ Sin príomhlegheas an daoscair ar phéin" - literally, "I lowered the blood (mentioned in line 2) into the dirt/That's the first remedy of vulgarity for pain" - is rendered, "I lowered myself in the usual way/the sole handy remedy for pain". 'Handy'!

In *The Sin*, "réal na gealaí"/"the six-penny moon" becomes a shilling - a small mistake, but one indicative of a disconnectedness which typifies these translations.

A similar flippancy ruins Mr Delanty's version of one of Ó Ríordáin's greatest poems, *Oileán Agus Oileán Eile*. This fine sequence deals with the loss of the spirituality of St Finbarr and his monks (the remains of whose monastic settlement is on Gougane Barra - the 'other' island of the title being modern Ireland).

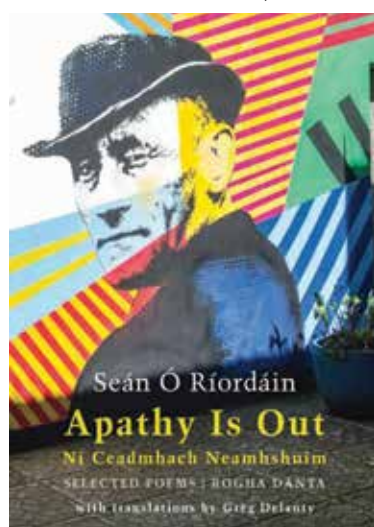
A contrast is offered with the simple ignorance of an Englishman out fishing. The protagonist of the poem - emblematic of contemporary Ireland - is not exempted from similar ignorance, hence that devastating conclusion, "I'll head off, hiding the truth, like everyone/Go chattering my way through life" (my version).

#### Vision

Underlying the poem is a profound Catholic belief so central to Ó Ríordáin's vision. Comparison between this version and that of Muiris Ó Ríordáin, in *An Crann Faoi Bláth* (Wolfhound, 1991), is instructive at least in its understanding of the theme. Seán Ó Ríordáin's poetry is especially difficult to translate; this is why a straightforward and erudite, even a literal version of the words would have been useful. What we get here lacks even that tone of voice which any good translation should have and which derives from humility in the face of a work of art.

Unfortunately this publication offers just another sad - and subsidised - example of the slapdash, self-indulgent casualness which is too often the lot of Irish-language poetry in translation. *Apathy Is In* would have been a more accurate title: the apathy of the publishers surely not excepted. And great art beaten down.

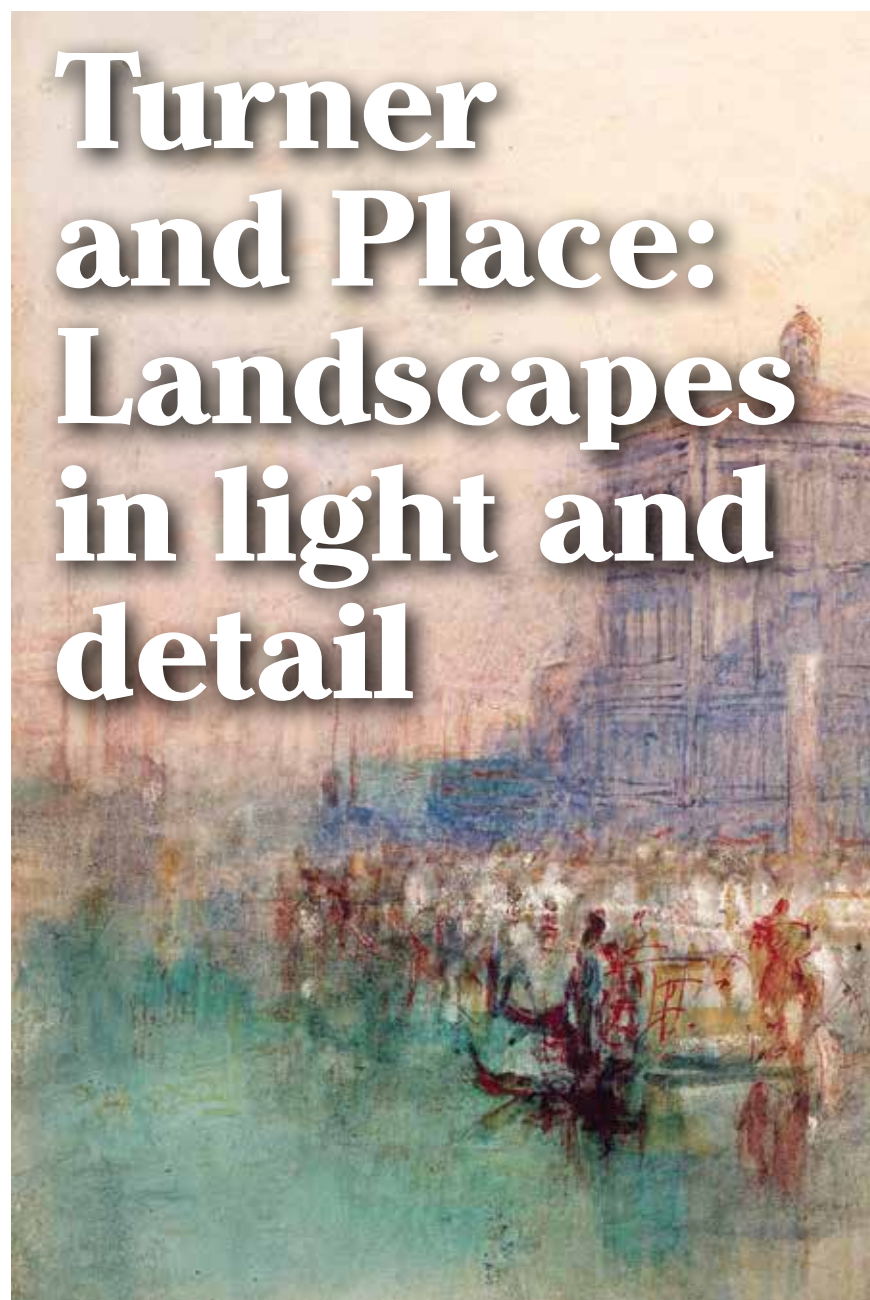
Poet Desmond Egan's recent prose publication is *Hopeful Hopkins* (Goldsmith Press).



Peter Costello



## Turner and Place: Landscapes in light and detail



An exhibition curated by Niamh MacNally at the National Gallery of Ireland, Merrion Square, to January 31, 2022

Print Gallery | Admission free (book your free entry ticket in advance)

#### Peter Costello

The National Gallery's remarkable holding of watercolours by the English genius Joseph Mallord William Turner is shown only in January.

In 1900, at the very end of the Victorian era, the Gallery received a bequest of 31 watercolours and drawings by J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851) from the English collector Henry Vaughan.

Vaughan stipulated in his will that the watercolours be exhibited every year, free of charge, for the month of January, when the natural light is at its weakest. Since 1901, the gallery has conscientiously displayed the watercolours in this restricted way.

#### Topographical

This year the second gallery of the print gallery is filled with a group of topographical drawings by the English artist Francis Place (1647-1728). These make a striking contrast to the Turners.

Place visited Ireland in the summer of 1698. His are purely topographical drawings, but of great historical interest as records of scene and site, offering the curator says "a rare glimpse of 17th Century Ireland".

Place's are the earliest known depictions of the cities of Dublin, Drogheda, Kilkenny and Waterford in the gallery collection. Here we can detect the ruin which overlay much of the battle scared post-Cromwellian, post-Williamite country. They make a contrast to the all too often promoted civilised Georgian views in the 18th Century.

“His are purely topographical drawings, but of great historical interest as records of scene and site”

The period that followed saw the restoration of a real sense of beauty with emergence of the picturesque that evolved into the romantic treatments of landscape. (This 19th style in the middle of the last century saw the revival of the British neo-romantic movement of John Piper and others, which represents, some think, a last



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.



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *Storm at the Mouth of the Grand Canal, Venice*, c.1840 (photo © National Gallery of Ireland, NGI.2426; image courtesy of NGI)

flourish of a style deeply imbued with a true love of and an almost religious engagement with the environment).

Sui generis

Turner has always been an artist *sui generis*. In a canvas such as *Rain, Steam and Speed* he evokes what might be seen as an epitome of the industrial age confronting nature without a factory in sight! But the

watercolours on show here are moments of time caught in flight, as evanescent as a morning mist; they too are truly magical.

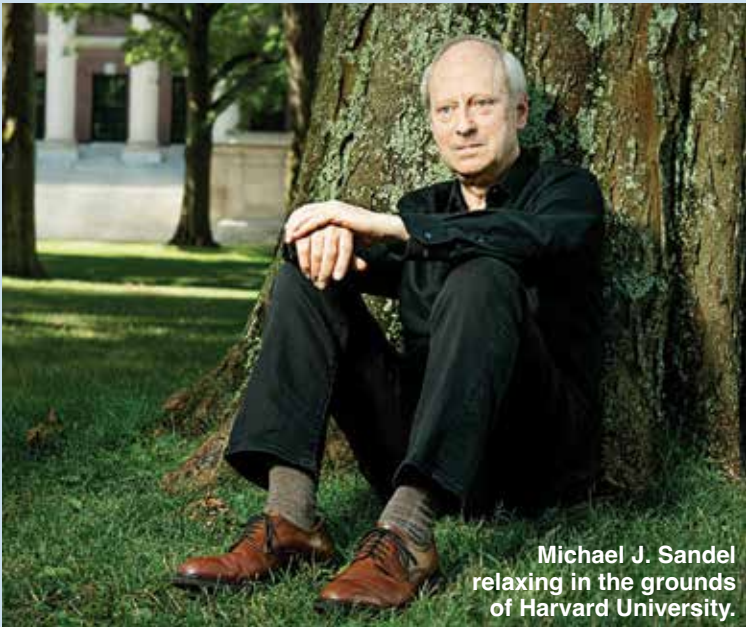
As they can only be seen once a year by the term of their donation to the gallery at the end of the Victorian era, the annual selection, mounted always in January, should be visited almost as an obligation, come hail, rain or sleet one might almost say.

This dual show, so full of remarkable images, in such contrasting styles, can be visited online, but the experience is not at all the same as seeing them in person, especially what exhibition curator Niamh MacNally calls “this exquisite collection of light-filled watercolours by Turner”. *Carpe diem*.



Storm at the Mouth of the Grand Canal, Venice

A politics without merit



Michael J. Sandel relaxing in the grounds of Harvard University.

The Tyranny of Merit. What's become of the Common Good?

by Michael J. Sandel (Penguin Random House, €25.00/£20.00)

Frank Litton

*Oh let us love our occupations, bless the squire and his relations, live upon our daily rations, and always know our proper stations*, so the servants were taught to sing. Democracy put paid to that.

Aristocratic society, once considered the natural order, is no more. The inequalities in power, wealth, and prestige – inevitable consequences of complicated divisions of labour – remain and require new justification. The dominant rationale is now ‘meritocracy.’

Michael J. Sandel, professor of political philosophy at Harvard University, scrutinises the concept revealing its limitations and dire consequences. His skill for bringing complex ideas to life in discussing matters of high concern, that has won him an international reputation, is fully deployed.

The theologian, philosopher and translator of *The New Testament*, David Bentley Hart provides this concise and accurate picture of former US president Donald Trump: “impossibly stupid, cruel, graceless, racist, sociopathic, an openly fascist buffoon – a confident man known for his conscienceless rapacity, a serial business failure, a ridiculous creature of ‘reality’ television, an inarticulate and functionally illiterate dunce, an inexhaustibly overflowing cesspool of spite. [Roland in Moonlight, Brooklyn, NY: Angelico Press, 2021, p228]. This is the man who was elected president of the United States: surely a matter of high concern.

Defects

Prof. Sandel shows how defects in the meritocratic ideal go a considerable way in accounting for the rise of Mr Trump. The meritocratic ideal has never been achieved. The competition for the prestigious, best-paid, most powerful positions has never been open to all. Prof. Sandel documents these failings. He argues that even if they could

be remedied and a level playing field established, serious problems would remain.

We all need to be recognised, our value acknowledged. In a meritocratic society, what social esteem can those who fail, who remain at the bottom of the ladder expect? The gap between the well-educated in well-paid jobs and the uneducated widens.

While the former enjoy the benefits of globalisation, the latter pay its costs. They have less and less chance of a decent job sufficient to support a family in a thriving community. It is hardly surprising that the left-behind support a politician who gives voice to their resentment at those in charge who look down on them from their ‘merited’ positions with disdain and indifference to their plight.

Inequalities

The inequalities that divide democratic societies have been contained by a sense that despite all our conflicting interests we are ‘all in this together’. There is a common good which all citizens are obliged to serve. Prof. Sandel argues that the version of the common good rooted in the liberal democratic tradition that came to full flower with neoliberalism, exacerbates the dysfunctions of meritocracy.

He distinguishes two versions of the common good. The consumption common good presents us as consumers, individuals apart from other individuals with whom we do business motivated by narrow self-interest. It asserts rights rather than define duties; it brings autonomy into the foreground as the realities of our interdependencies fade out of the picture. Its idea of fairness is meritocracy, and of success, wealth. It supposes the market will deliver the common good.

The productive common good draws us into discussion of our interdependencies and our obligation to work for the flourishing of all citizens. It finds its idea of justice in what contributes to that flourishing; success is measured by those contributions.

Prof. Sandel makes a powerful case for the importance of the productive common good. We need to put it centre stage, displacing the consumption common good to the margins.



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

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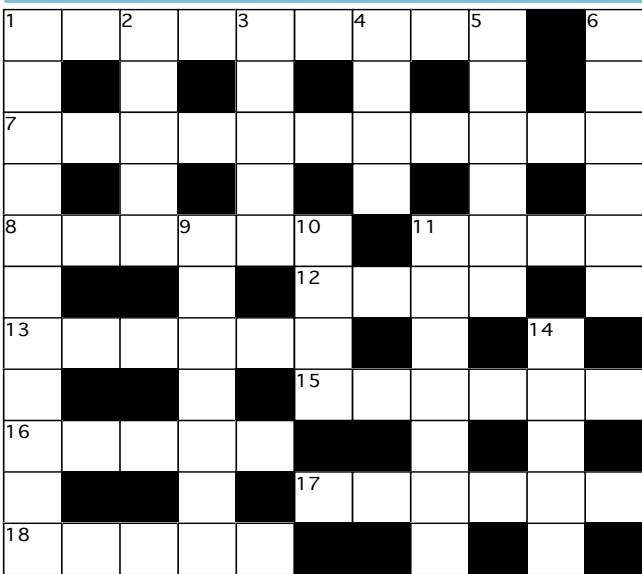
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Crossword Junior

Children's 416



Across

- 1 Put food on this for our feathered friends (4,5)
- 7 Ketchup you might put on a burger (6,5)
- 8 Not as difficult (6)
- 11 You slide on the snow on this (4)
- 12 Mountain range where France, Switzerland and Italy meet (4)
- 13 Large area of trees (6)
- 15 Arabian adventurer who went on many voyages (6)
- 16 It's either the finger that is beside your thumb or a list you'll find at the back of a book (5)
- 17 They may have spokes in them (6)

- 18 Connacht county whose gaelic teams play in black and white (5)

Down

- 1 Caterpillars may develop into these (11)
- 2 Slopes at doors to make it easier to get in (5)
- 3 The name of a book or film (5)
- 4 The head of a company (4)
- 5 = is an \_\_\_\_\_ sign (6)
- 6 There is a song called 'The \_\_\_\_\_ of Athenry' (6)
- 9 The Titanic sank when it hit one (7)
- 10 They followed the Pied Piper (4)
- 11 Breed of dog (7)
- 14 Dogs wag them when they are happy (5)

SOLUTIONS, DECEMBER 14

GORDIUS NO. 541

- Across - 1 Mashed potato 7 Hop 9 Gnow 10 Violin 11 Dodo 14 Ceres 15 Drops 16 Goya 18 Debts 21 Three 22 Hitch 23 Worse 24 News 25 Timid 26 Scald 29 Baby 33 Mammal 34 Hell 36 Gin 37 Orchestra pit

- Down - 1 Men 2 Sews 3 Envy 4 Prove 5 Thine 6 Ohio 8 Pro Cathedral 9 Gladstone bag 12 Borrow 13 Askew 14 Cedar 17 On time 19 Bleed 20 Shots 27 Coach 28 Lamps 30 Bono 31 Blur 32 Chop 35 Let

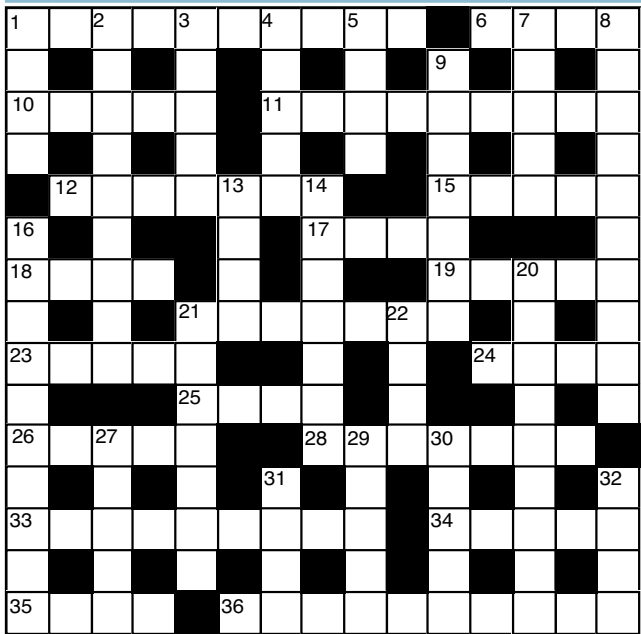
CHILDREN'S No. 415

- Across - 1 Gladiators 6 Raffle 7 Idea 8 All 9 Goliath 12 Jar 13 Yap 15 Lagan 18 Lets 19 College 20 Edge 21 Hardest

- Down - 1 Germany 2 Awful 3 Illegal 4 Original 5 Sweet 10 Oranges 11 Hamster 14 Aroma 16 Needs 17 Glad

Crossword

Gordius 542



Across

- 1 Scornfully, the delivery is redirected (10)
- 6 Amphibian (4)
- 10 Type of lizard (5)
- 11 Americans call it a candy store (9)
- 12 Tailless feline (4,3)
- 15 Tale with a moral (5)
- 17 Fifty percent (4)
- 18 Periphery (4)
- 19 Joint in the arm (5)
- 21 Treat often bought at the cinema (7)
- 23 Fisherman's basket (5)
- 24 Ballpoint pen (4)
- 25 Pain (4)
- 26 What's Bob at, confusing the one in charge of the monastery? (5)
- 28 Does it have holes for handle and spout, like a strange coat? Yes (3,4)
- 33 Pirate (9)
- 34 Fractured (5)
- 35 Potential danger (4)
- 36 Elected assembly (10)

Down

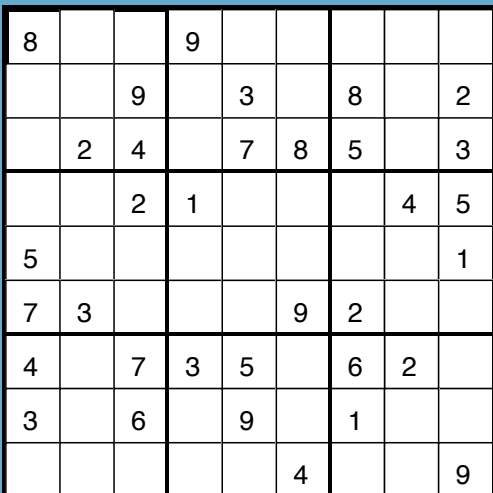
- 1 Uses a spade for some lodgings (4)

- 2 Four-sided geometric figure (9)
- 3 Sitting Bull was a chief of this Native American people (5)
- 4 Panorama, view (5)
- 5 Vegetable symbolic of Wales (4)
- 7 Restoration to wellness, in short (5)
- 8 Head out for lumber, one hears; it's what Noah used when building the Ark (6,4)
- 9 Make more rigid (7)
- 13 Hello - or good-bye - in Italian (4)
- 14 Dense area of bushes (7)
- 16 The charm ebbed out of a place to sleep (10)
- 20 Archaic name for sulfur (9)
- 21 Flat, elevated area (7)
- 22 Hear about a South American bird (4)
- 27 Male rabbits or dollars (5)
- 29 Sign up (5)
- 30 Hooded snake (5)
- 31 A type of Greek cheese (4)
- 32 Abandoned? That's not right! (4)

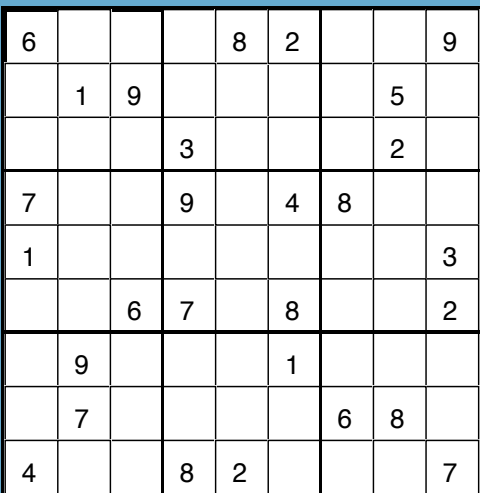
Sudoku Corner

416

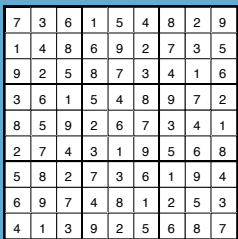
Easy



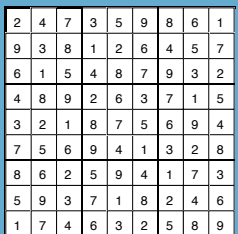
Hard



Last week's Easy 415



Last week's Hard 415





## Notebook

Fr Conor McDonough



# Aaron of Dublin: a forebear of today's Irish Jews

**ON A JUNE EVENING** in 1963, as Pope John XXIII lay dying, a strange sight appeared in St Peter's Square: the chief rabbi of Rome, with a crowd of Roman Jews, gathering with their Catholic fellow citizens to honour Pope John. During his papacy he had made several important gestures of friendship towards Judaism, and the council he convened was working on a new document – *Nostra Aetate* – which would mark a new chapter in Catholic-Jewish relations, focused on 'the spiritual heritage common to Christians and Jews' (*Nostra Aetate* 4).

## Enthusiasm

John Paul II carried on this outreach with particular enthusiasm, having many Jews among his childhood friends. In 1986 he became the first modern Pope to visit the synagogue of Rome, famously declaring, "With Judaism we have a relationship which we do not have with any other religion. You are our dearly beloved brothers, and in a certain way, it could be said that you are our elder brothers". Many onlookers wept as he embraced the chief rabbi of Rome, and applauded his denunciation of the Church's role in past persecution of Jews.



What about the Jews of Ireland? It has always been a small community, from the first recorded presence here, in 1079, down to the present day. Very often the history of this tiny community is difficult to trace, but from the 17th and 18th Centuries there is one figure who emerges with surprising clarity: Aaron ben Moses, known otherwise as Aaron of Dublin.

He was born in Poland around 1635, and he turns up as rabbi in Dublin's earliest known synagogue, located either off Dame Street, or on what is now Crane Street.

Apart from leading worship, we know he was a skilled Hebrew scribe too, and he produced books for Jewish communities in England, as well as for non-Jewish patrons. One English antiquarian asked Aaron on one occasion to write for him a few lines of Hebrew,

together with musical notation, and those lines survive in the antiquarian's notebook, now in the British Library.

Marsh's Library contains a text he wrote: some blessings from the Books of Deuteronomy and Numbers, as well as a prayer in Hebrew for the reigning sovereign, Queen Anne.

## Correspondence

Some of his correspondence survives too, in Hebrew and Yiddish, including a letter sent to him when he was living in Dublin.

Most interestingly, there's evidence of Aaron's work as a matchmaker! In an article on Dublin's Jews, Sr Katherine Butler produced evidence that, "on 13 Shevat 5463,

that is 30 January 1703, Rabbi Judah Leib, of Lissa in Poland, temporarily resident in London, asked him to arrange a match between Hena, a maiden of London and Moses ben Feybush, a young Jew of Dublin". It's easy to imagine the importance of this matchmaking work for such a tiny community. We can imagine Rabbi Aaron's contacts in the Jewish world being greatly appreciated by the young Jews of Dublin!

And he certainly did have contacts. He was respected throughout the Jewish world in these islands. When he died in 1715, several English synagogues honoured him with eulogies in their memorial books, and he was occasionally given the epithet "holy". The Memorial Book of the synagogue in Portsmouth

described him as one "who fixed times for study and devoted his soul and spirit to the service of his Creator and whose soul went forth in purity and holiness".

We have no idea whether Aaron had any contact with the Catholic minority in Dublin, then experiencing the intense persecution which Jews often experienced elsewhere in Europe. We might expect that Dublin's Catholics and Dublin's Jews would have looked askance at one another, but – who knows? – maybe these two marginalised communities experienced at times a certain fraternity.

What is certainly true is that we Catholics, in communion with Sts John XXIII and St John Paul II, can recognise Aaron of Dublin and his community not only as the forebears of today's Irish Jews, but also as our own elder brothers in the faith of Abraham.

## The blight of anti-Semitism

*Nostra Aetate* is one of the gems of the Second Vatican Council, and it really is worth reflecting once more on its words, particularly as anti-Semitism continues to blight our world, as seen this week in Texas: "In her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone... We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to his brothers and sisters in humanity are so linked together that Scripture says: 'He who does not love does not know God' (1 John 4:8)."



## COULD YOU HELP TO SAVE A POOR HELPLESS CHILD

The Little Way Association receives numerous requests from missionaries throughout the world asking for help to feed, support and educate needy, deprived children. Due to COVID-19 they are faced with many sufferings. They tell us of orphaned children left alone with no one to love or care for them, of families so poor that they cannot afford to send their children to school, and of street children, totally abandoned, hungry and homeless, experiencing much anguish and hardship during their most tender years. The whole future of these children often depends upon whether a missionary can find sufficient funds to care for them.

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**Thank you, and may God reward your generosity.**



It was St Therese's vocation to be **"love in the heart of the Church, and to assist priests, missionaries and the entire Church"**, and this has been the continuing inspiration of The Little Way Association. Ever since St Therese's death on 30th September 1897, countless priests and missionaries have given witness to the extraordinary way in which she has helped them. Let us pray for the fulfilment of her desire that the Gospel message would be spread throughout the world.

**We wish all our friends and benefactors a very happy and peaceful New Year**

May St Therese reward you in a special way for the sacrifices you make to support our work, and may she obtain all the blessings and graces you need for 2022.

**Daily Mass for your intentions**

You and your intentions are remembered in a special Mass offered in the Missions for all Little Way benefactors and friends.