

The Irish Catholic

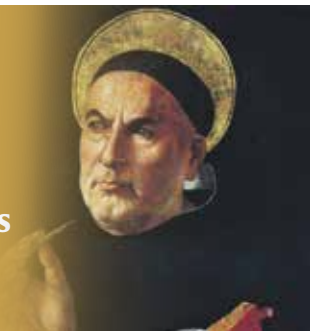
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State failing vulnerable children as Ireland not 'learning from the past'

Ruadhán Jones

The man tasked with transforming the Church's approach to child protection has warned that Irish society will continue to fail vulnerable children unless we learn lessons from past mishandling of abuse.

Ian Elliott, who as head of the National Board for Safeguarding Children, was credited with transforming the culture of accountability around abuse and ensuring gold standard safeguarding rules – was speaking after a senior judge warned that the State is not taking seriously the needs of children in care. Another report revealed that children in State care are allegedly being routinely removed from care homes and taken to hotels to be abused by gangs of men.

Mr Elliott also warned that focusing too much on the past can lead to a situation where current abuses are not faced head-on. "We're slow learners – slow at learning lessons from the past," he said insisting this was true "not just at an institutional level, but also at a society level as well."

"It's really important that we do that [learn from past mishandling] and we continue to apply ourselves to try to learn from the mistakes that have been made previously and make sure they don't happen again".

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The hope of the Holy Land...



Catholic children in Jerusalem's Old City enjoyed a welcome respite from the heat with an ice cream while participating in the summer camp organised by the Our Lady of the Annunciation Charitable Association. The group has worked to help Christians build a sustainable future in the holy city since 1950. Christians today make up about 16.7% of the population of the Old City, but fewer than 2% of the wider city of Jerusalem.

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

Demand mandate in NI to teach abortion in school ends – charity

Chai Brady

Updated regulations which force schools in the North to toe the line on how they teach children about abortion have been described as a “very serious restriction” against religious liberty.

Based in Belfast, Liam Gibson, who is the Legal and Policy officer for SPUC (Society for the Protection of Unborn Children) told *The Irish Catholic* the pro-life charity has sent out 30,000 postcards asking people to sign their names voicing their opposition to the amendment to current law, which was intro-

duced from Westminster in the absence of a functioning Stormont.

Mr Gibson said they are asking that people “demand” the recent RSE regulations are withdrawn, which “mandate abortion is taught as a ‘right’, and that there is information provided on how to get an abortion for children in schools”.

“It’s forbidden to promote any view other than that, it’s a very serious restriction on the ability for Catholic schools to teach children what the Catholic Church says about abortion, that it is morally wrong, that it is the taking of an innocent human life. That

is illegal,” he insisted.

“We’re asking this is withdrawn and to allow schools to teach according to the basic principal that parents have a right to have their children educated according to their own religious convictions and that’s recognised in international law, both in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights.”

The Relationships and Sexuality Education (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 2023 was introduced last month.

In relation to the changes, the British government stated: “They will make age-

appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion, a compulsory component of curriculum for adolescents”.

However, it was stated the Department of Education “will also be under a statutory duty to make regulations about the circumstances in which at the request of a parent, a pupil may be excused from receiving that education, or specified elements of that education”.

Mary Immaculate College tight lipped over staff concerns

Ruadhán Jones

Senior management at Mary Immaculate College (MIC) have remained tight lipped over staff concerns about a suspended recruitment process.

The college has refused to respond to repeated queries from *The Irish Catholic* as staff said they were “frustrated” that they had little opportunity for input into the recruitment process for a new head of theology.

Staff morale is at an “all time low”, some sources said, after MIC cancelled the third round of interviews for the headship and suspended the recruitment process in the first week of July.

Over the past two weeks, this paper sought response

from MIC President Prof. Eugene Wall, asking if he would address staff concerns and also if staff were given an opportunity for input into the process. The college refused to respond.

Meanwhile, no investigator has been appointed as yet to investigate three formal complaints against the recruitment process for the role of head of theology.

There were “substantive

issues” with the process, including the shortlisting for interviews, sources said, with three complainants formally contacting the college towards the end of June.

The department of theol-

ogy has now been without a head for a year, with three rounds of interviews, the first of which commenced in September 2022, failing to find a suitable candidate.

Cashel and Emly priest dies aged 67

Staff reporter

Fr Nicholas (Jim) Irwin has been remembered as a “great support” and a “wonderful person” following his death last week.

Following an illness, Fr Irwin, PP of Gortnahoe/Glengooile, Co. Tipperary, died peacefully surrounded by family.

Offering his condolences Fr Seamus Bohan PP of Tynagh, Loughrea, Co. Galway said: “Sincere sympathy to the Irwin family on the death of Fr Jim... May God reward Fr Jim for his priestly life and ministry and his witness and bravery during his ill health. May he now rest in the happiness and peace of heaven. I am remembering Fr Jim in my masses and prayers. I pray that God will bless and comfort his mother and his family at this sad time for you all.”

Caroline Dunne and the staff of Ballysloe NS said: “Sincere sympathy to the Irwin family on the death of Fr Jim Irwin. He was a great support to our school community, especially during the preparations for communions and confirmations. May he rest in peace.”

The wonder of God's creation



The Redemptoristine Sisters, Dublin, admire the growth of sunflowers on the convent grounds. Pictured are the community's prioress Sr Gabrielle, Sr Máire Bríd, Sr Deirdra and Sr Lucy.

State failing vulnerable children as Ireland not ‘learning from the past’

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Mr Elliot called for closer cooperation, collaboration and open communication across State care systems “to make sure that knowledge is shared appropriately to protect children and eliminate risk”.

It was revealed this week that Judge Dermot Simms warned of an “unprecedented crisis” in State services for vulnerable children.

“Systemic failures” across Tusla, the gardaí, the Department of Education, the HSE and the Prison Service are undermining front-line efforts, Judge Simms said.

At the same time, a study by University College Dub-

lin (UCD) found that girls in care were “being coerced or enticed to provide sex acts to multiple men” in exchange for gifts.

The report expressed fears that sexual exploitation of children is going “under the radar” in Ireland.

Leading childcare expert Shane Dunphy told *The Irish Catholic* this week that one of the reasons people can miss contemporary abuse is that they are “welded” to an idea that abuse is a “Church thing and in the past”. The Church and abuse being in the past are “welded together in people’s minds”, he insisted. “People do think that is where the bad stuff is going to happen [Church settings]. So it comes as a surprise that this stuff” can

go on in other settings, like sports, the scouts and State care.

“People think that they can trust Tusla, because it is meant to be the front line of child protection. The idea that you would have grooming gangs in some way supported by people whose job it is to look after children who are so vulnerable who have probably experienced abuse themselves is a shocking one,” said Mr Dunphy.

The former social worker called for an independent body to be set up to oversee the care system, saying it is “never a good thing” when institutions like Tusla police themselves.

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Ireland must use 'moral authority' to speak up for persecuted Christians

Ruadhán Jones

Ireland must use its "moral authority" to speak up for persecuted Christians, politicians have said, urging the Tánaiste to raise the issue at September's UN Assembly.

Ireland must lend its voice to calls to end Christian persecution, the former Minister for Foreign Affairs Charlie Flannigan told *The Irish Catholic*.

His comments come after representatives of Church in Chains, an Irish

charity fighting Christian persecution, told an Oireachtas committee that hundreds of millions of Christians are at risk of violence.

Mr Flannigan commended their "very important message", adding that he wrote to Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin "urging him to lend his voice at the foreign affairs council in Brussels and at the UN in September" to support persecuted Christians.

Ireland must do more

to raise awareness of the issue, the Fine Gael TD said, adding that we are a recognised "moral authority" on the global stage.

His views were echoed by Senator Joe O'Reilly, who also commended Church in Chains' appearance before the Committee for Foreign Affairs.

"We haven't been doing enough" to raise awareness of this "huge international problem", said Mr O'Reilly.

He pointed to the legacy of Ireland's missionaries, as well as our own experi-

ence of Christian persecution, saying that "we should make an issue of it".

As a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Mr O'Reilly committed to raising the subject at their meeting in the autumn.

Christian persecution is a "breach of the UN convention and of all human rights and civilised behaviour", Mr O'Reilly told the Dáil committee on July 4. "At school, we liked to believe that the persecution of Christians ended with the acceptance of religion by the Roman Empire. Unfortunately and tragically, that is not the case and it continues to this day."

Speaking to this paper, he said Ireland must assert itself on the issue, highlighting the situation for Christians in Syria and the Holy Land.

Call in ambassadors of countries persecuting Christians charity urges

Staff reporter

An Irish charity has urged the Government to call ambassadors of countries where persecution of Christians is prevalent before an Oireachtas committee and challenge them on their record on religious freedom.

Church in Chains, a charity that fights Christian persecution, said politicians should call the ambassadors of China, India, Iran, Nigeria and Pakistan to attend the Committee for Foreign Affairs.

The charity's director David Turner urged politicians to speak to the ambassadors about "the lack of religious freedom and the attitudes of the governments" of those countries towards Christian persecution.

More than 200 million Christians in 60 countries across the world face persecution and violence, the charity told politicians on

July 4.

The Government must "make good its oft-stated commitment to prioritising freedom of religion or belief in our foreign policy by recognising... the wide body of evidence showing Christians as the most persecuted religious group worldwide", Mr Turner continued.

Persecution of Christians must be "explicitly condemned", he said, adding "our Government has not yet done that".

Church in Chains also recommended setting up a dedicated refugee path with an annual quota for Christians persecuted for their faith.

"We know from past experience that sometimes Christians who face persecution are not able to access the UN system in the countries from which they are seeking to flee," the charity's director said.

Ukrainian Catholics in Ireland make move to new calendar



Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski is pictured with children of the Ukrainian Catholic community in Ireland in Our Lady of Consolation Church, Donnycarney, Dublin, on July 16.

Staff reporter

From this September on Ukrainian Greek Catholics in Ireland will celebrate Christmas, Easter and other major feasts on the same day as western Churches, it was announced on Sunday, July 16.

Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski, who has responsibility for Ukrainian Catholics in Ireland and the UK, said

he will support "our local churches in Ireland to switch from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar" on September 1, the beginning of the liturgical year for Eastern Christians.

The move comes after consultation with clergy and laity and was met with "great enthusiasm", Bishop Nowakowski told *The Irish Catholic*.

The change brings Ireland in line with practice in other parts of the west, such as North America, and comes

following a special meeting of all Ukrainian Greek Catholic bishops in Ukraine, the bishop explained.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic is an autonomous Eastern Catholic Church based in Ukraine, in full communion with Rome.

Ireland has one Ukrainian Catholic parish and four clergy, with Fr Vasyl Kornitsky heading the chaplaincy in Dublin.

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19 religious orders to attend World Youth Day

Chai Brady

Representatives of 19 religious orders from across Ireland will be attending World Youth Day (WYD) in Lisbon from August 2-6, according to the Association of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI). They will be part of the approximately 1,400 pilgrims who have signed up so far.

For the first time AMRI will lead a group of 40 young adults to the "joyous" event. This comprises of 10

nationalities, a combination of priests, religious sisters, missionaries studying and working in Ireland, and young adults from Dublin City University's inter-faith chaplaincy.

National pilgrimage coordinator, Gerard Gallagher of AMRI said: "It will be a very joyous occasion and a privilege to join with tens of thousands of young people from around the world to greet Pope Francis and be inspired by his deep faith and vision for peace, justice and care for our Earth."

AMRI is also assisting a further 200 young pilgrims from religious orders and congregations and their youth groups to attend WYD.

Many of these groups and their congregational leaders have collaborated in a series of 'pastoral preparations' online and in person meeting and praying in various churches around Dublin. The groups have also collaborated on safeguarding training, visa applications, registration of clergy and social media teams.

AMRI will lead a catechesis on August 2 and will also take part in the official evening prayer hosted by Ireland at 6pm, which will be led by Archbishop Francis Duffy of Tuam. Overall 12 Irish bishops are expected to attend.

Charlene Duff, travelling with the AMRI DCU young people's group, will carry the Irish flag at the opening ceremony, at which Pope Francis will be present. The theme for WYD is 'Mary arose and went with haste' (Luke 1:39).

Achonry develops seminarian sharing plan with Nigerian diocese

Jason Osborne

The relationship between Achonry diocese and Nigeria's Ogoja diocese has been strengthened following Bishop Paul Dempsey's recent trip to the African nation, during which a seminarian scholarship plan was agreed upon by the two dioceses.

Scholarships are now open to seminarians in the south-eastern Nigerian diocese to complete their studies in Ireland, after which they would commit to a period of pastoral work in Achonry diocese.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Bishop Dempsey said that seminarians have already applied for the scholarship, with two having received it.

It's not a "solution" to the vocation crisis, Bishop Dempsey said, but is an

opportunity to "enrich" the diocese.

We're "trying to be a little more creative and imaginative ourselves to bring the seminarians across," Bishop Dempsey said.

"I think the important thing for the seminarians coming to us is the sense of inculturation, that they get an experience of the Church in Ireland before they make a commitment around ordination."

The Church in Ireland has much to gain from the Church in Nigeria, Bishop Dempsey said, after having observed the levels of community and youth engagement with the Church there.

"That was very striking when I was there – the life, the energy, the love for the Church, the importance and centrality of the Church in people's lives," Bishop Dempsey said.

Diocese of Dromore extends redress scheme by 6 months

Staff reporter

The Diocese of Dromore has decided to extend its redress scheme for victims of sexual abuse for a further six months, until March 29, 2024.

The scheme was established in September 2021 and focuses on those who suffered sexual abuse by members of the clergy under the authority of the diocese. It aims to offer a faster process towards awarding compensation rather than a litigation process.

In the 21 months since it was established more than 25 applicants have applied and more than 90% have had their applications considered by an

independent panel. The initial assessment on average is 33 days after an application is received. Over 90% of applicants have accepted the panel awards offered.

Awards have been made which cross the full range of the scheme. Where applicants have been legally represented their solicitors have also been paid their costs in accordance with the terms of the scheme (including where applicable costs incurred in prior litigation).

The speed with which the scheme responds to the majority of applications acknowledges the criticism often raised by victims and survivors of abuse

that the civil claims process is too slow.

A statement from the Diocese of Dromore read: "The diocese continues to listen to the voices of victims and survivors and to also have regard to actions being taken in other jurisdictions to respond to those who have been abused. In addition to the financial support all applicants to the scheme are invited to access pastoral support should they wish to receive the same, as well as to request to meet with Archbishop Eamon Martin and to seek support for counselling from Towards Healing Counselling and Support Service."

Irish bishops sign charter committing to promote patron Saint Columbanus

Ruadhán Jones

A number of Irish bishops have signed up to a charter that commits them to promoting one of Ireland's

patron saints, St Columbanus.

Bishop Michael Duignan, Bishop Donal McKewen and Bishop Denis Nulty were among those who signed the 'Columban Charter of Partnership' in St Gallen, Switzerland on Columbanus Day this month.

The signing was "a public declaration of our intention to promote pilgrimage, cultural and scientific activities relating to St Columbanus", said Bishop Nulty.

Countries committed to the charter include Ireland, Britain, France, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Austria, Liechtenstein and Italy.

A new pilgrimage trail, the Columban Way, is being developed across the island of Ireland. The way goes through six counties in the South, starting on the Wexford-Carlow border, and ends in Bangor, Co. Down.

St Columbanus was a 6th Century Irish saint, who established a number of significant monastic communities across Europe.

He set off on what is known today as the *Via Columban* from Bangor, travelling across Western and Central Europe.

On the road to World Youth Day...



Bishop Tom Deenihan and Bishop emeritus Michael Smith are pictured with World Youth Day 2023 pilgrims who gathered at the ancestral home of St Oliver Plunkett in Oldcastle on Sunday July 16 to invoke a blessing on their journey to Lisbon and their participation in WYD2023. The group leaders include Fr Mark English, Fr Kevin Heery, Fr Fergal Cummins and Sr Kelly Francis from the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal.

Sex and money...the two big temptations

Sex and money: two of the major temptations that lure men and women into a fall. Perhaps previous generations might have said – two of the weapons used by the devil to entrap humans into the error of their ways. Interestingly, the phrase ‘struggling with his demons’ is still very much in use.

On both sides of the Irish Sea, the national broadcasters have been entangled with scandals involving the weakness of the flesh and the corrupting effects money can have.

On the Irish side, the saga around Ryan Tubridy and RTÉ has been well and truly aired, and it won't be over for some time. And it's all about money: how the national broadcaster – once an upright arm of the Irish Civil Service emblemised by such honourable figures as Ciarán MacMathúna and Seán MacRéamoinn – could have become embroiled in a tangle of financial cupidity. The loss of trust has been immense.

Controversy

On the British side of the water, the controversy was focused on that other source of transgression – sex and sexuality. For days, speculation was rife – including on BBC broadcasts – that a top TV star was involved in an alleged sexual misdemeanour. Speculation was so open that various perfectly innocent broadcasters, such as Jeremy Vine and



Mary Kenny

Nicky Campbell, felt the need to announce “it isn't me”, as they received public disapprobation and verbal abuse.

Eventually, it was announced – by his wife Vicky Flind – that the figure at the centre of a sexual allegation was Huw Edwards, one of the BBC's highest-paid presenter (salary: £439k/€511k) and the man entrusted with the most solemn occasions, such as the funeral of the late Queen Elizabeth. It was reported that Mr Edwards, a father of five, had paid £35,000 to a young person for compromising photographs. The young person's parents made the complaint, which the young person themselves described as “rubbish”.

Much ado followed, and much discussion on whether a public man's alleged private sins were his own. The police established there was no crime to investigate, since the young person was over 18. Huw Edwards was taken off air, and has been com-

mitted to hospital for mental health problems.

Critics

Critics said the BBC should have investigated rumours sooner: even if no crime has been committed, there is a public interest when a scandal occurs, or is alleged. It was pointed out that other BBC figures had fallen from grace because of improper and criminal sexual involvement with young people – Rolf Harris, the notorious Jimmy Savile, the presenter Stuart Hall.

Mr Edwards' alleged offence is not of the same measure: but it is still a matter of great distress to his family, and it is unlikely his career will recover.

The threads are still untangling, and a TV documentary is in the making.

We are told not to be judgemental of individuals, and that is surely right. Those in high places have much temptation put their way. But it is certain that money and sex are indeed temptations which lure, and then destroy.

“Even if no crime has been committed, there is a public interest when a scandal occurs, or is alleged”



Under fire over allegations, Huw Edwards. Photo: BBC

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● It's been widely noted that the Vatican condemned the erotic song *Je t'aime – moi non plus* which the late Jane Birkin recorded with her lover, Serge Gainsbourg, in 1969. But the BBC condemned it, too, banning it from the airwaves.

The BBC used to ban quite a lot of things it considered immoral or indecorous. Libby Purves, a veteran of BBC radio, found a few treasures

among the corporation's archive. It banned Ella Fitzgerald singing *Bewitched*, because of the line “I'll worship the trousers that cling to him”. It banned a song called *Honky-Tonk Angel* as they suspected the ‘angel’ in question to be a prostitute.

And it banned a number called *Minnie the Moocher* because it contained a line they considered “disrespectful

to royalty” – the words being: “The King of Sweden gave her things/She wasn't needin'.” Actually, it was an allusion to drugs and nothing to do with the Scandinavian monarch!

Back in 1958, Radio Éireann banned Maurice Chevalier singing *Thank Heaven for Little Girls*, from the movie *Gigi*. It was thought somewhat paedophilic. Could certainly be heard that way.

Acknowledging grannies and grandpas

Pope Francis has designated this weekend of July 23 as ‘World Day for Grandparents’. It's nice for him to acknowledge grannies and grandpas, who are more numerous today than they have ever been. Because most of us are leading longer lives, more children have living grandparents.

Grandparents often play a crucial role not only in childcare, but in providing a background context for transmitting values and a key link in a family network. When Mikhail Gorbachev was asked how the Orthodox faith survived among the Russian people, despite decades of Soviet atheistic propaganda

he replied: “It was the grandmothers. They passed on religion.”

In fact, Pope Francis has named this Sunday a world day “for Grandparents and the Elderly”: an inclusive note, even if some 50-year-old grandmas I know mightn't wish to be bracketed with “the elderly”!

Schoolchildren can't be forced to attend State sex-ed classes

Chai Brady

A charity that represents Catholic schools has highlighted that parents have a right to withdraw schoolchildren fully or in-part from any new sex education classes for secondary schools.

Regarding the draft Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) curriculum, the Catholic Education Partnership (CEP) expressed disap-

pointment "the spiritual aspect of wellbeing has been neglected" as well as the document's focus on "privilege status".

The CEP's statement highlighted several concerns following the opening of the consultation process on the curriculum – which includes Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) – by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

The draft programme aims to teach about 'white privilege' and 'male privilege' in relation to 'allyship', in order "to support individuals from minority identity groups". It would also teach about 'LGBTQI+' identities, which it states include "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex".

Chief Executive of CEP, Alan Hynes also said despite concerns about spiritual wellbeing educa-

tion, they are confident the NCCA "will recognise the importance of this element at all levels of SPHE, as it already is in the specifications for primary and the junior-cycle post-primary. CEP believes that a consistency of approach across all levels is advisable".

The CEP understand what is trying to be achieved "with the inclusion of 'allyship' and 'privileged status'".

However, Mr Hynes

said: "Within Catholic schools, we believe that the ethical question of justice among peoples is better served by ideas grounded in the solidarity we owe to others as fellow brothers and sisters, arising from our common humanity... It is disappointing not to see European values reflected in the document, but it reflects the general research bias of the NCCA towards the Anglosphere, often ignoring our EU partners and other sources, in this case taking inspiration from the particular social and historical context of North America.

"Catholic schools look forward to engaging with this specification through a Catholic lens, encouraging respectful dialogue

and encounter with other points of view, informed at all times as to the essential dignity of all persons, created as we all are in the image and likeness of God."

The CEP encouraged parents, students, teachers, school management, and other stakeholders in education to participate in the consultation process.

In addition to noting that parents can withdraw children from SPHE classes, the CEP said students who are 18 can determine their own participation and that the charity – along with other Catholic bodies – will engage with the Department of Education to secure the necessary supports to assist schools in meeting this entitlement.

Hospitals with chapels exempt from 'safe zones' bill says TD

Ruadhán Jones

A bill to introduce 'safe access zones' around abortion providers appears to exempt hospitals with chapels within the building, TD Michael McNamara has said.

The bill, which bans pro-life prayer and demonstration around abortion providers, may exempt the National Maternity Hospital

on Holles Street and St Vincent's University Hospital, according to Mr McNamara.

A section of the 'Health (Termination of Pregnancy Services) (Safe Access Zones) Bill 2023' exempts places of worship, meaning a building used for the purpose of religious worship, the independent TD pointed out.

"I do not know whether the Minister [for Health] is aware of it, but there is

a chapel in the National Maternity Hospital just across from us on Merrion Square, so it is a place of worship," said Mr McNamara.

"The chapel is located in the building, since the hospital is one building. There is the exemption straight away.

"There is a church in the maternity hospital in Limerick where Masses are said weekly, as they are in

Holles Street."

For a prosecution, the building outside which a person disseminates information or prays must not be used for public worship, he said.

Mr McNamara called the bill "a nonsense", redundant and a "tokenistic effort to be involved in some kind of a culture war that, thankfully, is unnecessary in this State as of now".

Arsonist 'could have killed me' -Aontú rep

Staff reporter

An Aontú member who was targeted in a believed sectarian arson attack said it "could have killed me".

The car of Sharon Loughran, who is based in Newry, Co. Down, was set alight at about 3.15am on July 12.

Ms Loughran said she was awoken to the sound of "an inferno" and looked out her window to see her car, which was parked in her driveway, "consumed by flames".

"The heat was so much that the fascia, pipes, electrics, and widows to my house have all been dam-

aged by melting. My house is significantly damaged. I don't have electricity and can't use the water," Ms Loughran said.

"This was a horrendous action that very easily could have set my house on fire also. The arsonist that set this fire could have killed me. That this would happen to any one in 2023 is incredible. I cannot for the life of me understand why they are targeting me. I had no involvement in politics before joining Aontú. I am paediatric nurse in Daisy Hill Hospital. I love my job and I am delighted to work for both communities," she added.

Western dioceses prepare for Lisbon...



World Youth Day pilgrims from the dioceses of Galway, Clonfert and Elphin gather on July 16 with Bishop Michael Duignan, Fr John Gerard Acton and the Poor Clare Sisters in Galway as they prepare for their pilgrimage to Lisbon and Fatima in two weeks' time for World Youth Day.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Memorial Mass to be held for Clare estate

A memorial Mass for a Co. Clare estate will be celebrated on July 28, with an exhibition opening in Clare Museum, Ennis.

Mass for St Michael's Villas, built in Ennis in the early 1950s, will be celebrated by Fr Tom Ryan, a native of the area.

A choir has been established to sing during Mass and afterwards will give a recital of a song by St Michael's native Mike Hanrahan.

This celebration is to honour the legacy and memory of the first residents of the Villas and to salute the current vibrant community living there now, a spokesperson for Ennis parish said.

It's been said that if your name is held in the hearts of others, you will never truly die.

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Niamh Uí Bhriain

The View



Would they care more if the nuns could be blamed?

The appalling abuse of girls by gangs of predatory men, or Tusla's failure to protect vulnerable children in their care, makes for uncomfortable reading. That's understandable. We'd all rather talk about the weather or RTÉ's latest payments shenanigans.

But there comes a point when it is incumbent on those in authority to take action – and on all of us to demand that action is taken.

A judge is telling us that Ireland's childcare services is in an “unprecedented crisis”, and a report has revealed that appalling and sometimes terrifying abuses of young girls are happening, yet the response of the establishment and the media seems entirely muted.

The Child Law Project shows that Judge Dermot Simms was so concerned about what he had been told in his court that he sent a detailed letter, accompanied by related documents, about the crisis facing the child and family agency.

The judge said that a lack of foster care and residential placements, and a shortage of qualified staff, meant the State was likely failing in its duty of care towards some children.

Concerning

This is very worrying, but what is perhaps even more concerning is the revelation in an explosive paper published last month that our most vulnerable girls are being sexually exploited by “gangs of predatory men” while in the care of Tusla.

The disturbing revelations were made in a scoping report called Protecting against Predators which outlined what is happening to children – because that's what these girls are – at the hands of sick, evil men.

It reported numerous cases where girls in the care of the State were “being coerced or enticed

to provide sex acts to multiple men in exchange for a variety of goods” including clothes and jewellery.

Predatory gangs of men would identify residences where girls and sometimes boys in care are being accommodated – and would wait around accommodation centres, even going so far as to wait in hotel lobbies where under-age girls were staying while in State care.

The report expressed fears that sexual exploitation of children is going “under the radar” in Ireland.

It's like something from a dystopian novel where order has broken down and no one is accountable.

But it's Ireland in 2023, where our politicians are too busy virtue signalling about ‘hate speech’ or some other such nonsense to do something about the large scale rape of children in care.

“Hanging around hotel lobbies? Why didn't the Gardai arrest them? Why the helplessness in the face of organised sexual exploitation of children?”

As has happened in other jurisdictions, it's clear that these men work together to groom vulnerable young girls, who are often led to believe they are in a romantic relationship before then being exploited and abused by large numbers of men.

Why has the Justice Minister – and the Minister for Children – not made this a top priority?

And the story just keeps getting worse. Tusla knows this is happening and is apparently acting as if it is powerless to stop it.

When accommodation is not available for



children in care, they are brought to stay in hotels as a temporary measure. That leads to men “hanging around hotel lobbies to sexually exploit children that they knew were being accommodated there as a temporary State care solution,” the report says.

Hanging around hotel lobbies? Why didn't the Gardai arrest them? Why the helplessness in the face of organised sexual exploitation of children?

I had to read another section of the report twice to take it in. Underage girls, one interviewee said, are out all night and coming back “in very poor shape” having being raped or sexually assaulted and given drugs.

Terrifying

Another terrifying situation was described where the men were “banging on the doors, banging on the windows and absolutely everything to try to get into the place. So, it became a real danger and a flashpoint for everybody.”

That is a system in crisis. Whatever Tusla is doing, it is not acting in loco parentis.

“More than 1,400 girls were raped, threatened, beaten, and sexually exploited by grooming gangs in Rotherham in Britain, an investigation found”

There's a real danger posed to our most vulnerable citizens by having the Government wholly occupied with tackling imaginary criminals like pro-lifers praying for pregnant women, or people using the wrong pronoun, instead of facing the unspeakable horror of the sexual exploitation of children.

Have the Gardai or Tusla (or anyone at all) identified a pattern in who these gangs are, and whether parallels can be drawn to gangs in other jurisdictions who

co-ordinated the mass rape and sexual exploitation of young girls and children? More than 1,400 girls were raped, threatened, beaten, and sexually exploited by grooming gangs in Rotherham in Britain, an investigation found. The authorities failed to act for decades (yes, decades), sometimes in cases where the girls actually went to the police only to have their complaints dismissed.

Fear

A House of Commons committee found that the “fear of being seen as racist may have hindered the detection of and intervention in abuse”.

It struck me this week, as I read what Judge Dermot Simms had to say, that there is a correlation between media coverage of an issue and the growth of public concern regarding same. Yet, we're not seeing the kind of in depth or sustained coverage of this appalling situation that is surely warranted.

Why is that? Why is it less fashionable to cover these issues than to bang

on endlessly about some imaginary crisis regarding, say, Catholic patronage in schools – something the media strongly opposes but which doesn't seem an issue of concern for most parents?

“Do we only react to abuses decades too late when generations of harm have been done?”

Would the media care more about the girls being targeted by gangs of predatory men if the nuns could be blamed? Do we only react to abuses decades too late when generations of harm have been done?

Judge Simms said this week that there was a likelihood that the State would face claims in the future because of its failure regarding its duty of care to children.

It shouldn't have to come to that for our supposedly progressive State to take action.

Devil in the detail over future of Limerick college



Without properly-formed teachers, Catholic schools are that in name only, writes **Ruadhán Jones**

Over the coming months, the outcome of deliberations in Mary Immaculate College (MIC) will have far-reaching consequences for Catholic education in Ireland.

As it stands, MIC is one of the last – if not the last – third level Catholic college that is entirely publicly funded.

At the start of this year, there were three, but already St Angela's College, Sligo, has been gifted to the State, while a similar process appears likely for St Patrick's College Carlow soon.

The loss of Ireland's last publicly funded Catholic college would be a set-back for any Church plans to safeguard Catholic education at primary and secondary level.

Without dedicated colleges providing Catholic ethos teacher training, it would be a moot point if we have any Catholic schools as there may be no one qualified to teach in them.

Alignment

As a result, MIC's negotiations with the University of Limerick (UL) seeking "closer structural alignment" take on increased significance, as do decisions regarding the theology department.

The Irish Catholic has been reporting on proceedings in MIC for the past year, ever since MIC-UL linkage negotiations began.

The negotiations have been shrouded in secrecy, with queries both from this paper and from MIC staff going repeatedly unanswered.

Senior management have refused to consult with staff or to reveal information about the negotiations until they are completed, which is likely to

be this autumn.

Then, once a model for alignment is decided on by the governing authority, it will be presented to staff in November, President Prof. Eugene Wall has said.

The secrecy has increased speculation as to what closer alignment could involve. Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy, chair of MIC's governing authority, has insisted it will not involve a merger.

But it's hard to see what arrangement other than a merger could be of benefit to MIC or UL, as the two colleges already have a very close relationship.

One of the reasons MIC is pursuing closer alignment is to attain university status. How can it achieve this without merging with UL?

On UL's side, the attraction of MIC is obvious – the reputation of a well-respected training college and not one, but two excellent campuses. (The former seminary St Patrick's College Thurles was gifted to MIC just a few years ago).

But what use would a secular university have for a Catholic ethos college? The most likely answer is none whatsoever.

Bishop Leahy's trip to Rome last year to meet with representatives of the Vatican's education dicastery has only increased speculation that a merger is likely and that his meeting was a chance to clear the way.

If such a decision is on the cards, Bishop Leahy would have the final say in the Irish bishops' conference because he is chair of the education committee.

This body oversees major decisions relating to education, such as the merger or incorporation of Catholic colleges with secular bodies.

If they were to merge, then more than likely MIC would lose its Catholic ethos, meaning Ireland would have no entirely publicly funded Catholic college, a fairly unique situation in Europe.

The question then would become, what does the Church get in return for gifting lands to the State?

Bishop Leahy, being a former priest of the Dublin diocese, may have in mind a model similar to the Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education (MDCCE).

In 2016, two Catholic teacher training colleges were incorporated into Dublin City University (DCU), these being the Mater Dei Institute of Education and St Patrick's College Drumcondra.

What the Church got in return was the MDCCE, an institute which seeks to carry on the legacy of the previous Catholic teacher training colleges.

A more recent example would be the Merici Institute, established as part of the Ursuline sisters deal to gift St Angela's college to the State.

Bishop Leahy is well placed to have an intimate knowledge of how that deal was negotiated, given his role on the education committee.

So is there any sign that similar intentions may be at play for MIC? Again, speculation is rife as facts on the ground are thin.

Notable

But what has been notable over the past few years is a gradual thinning out of the theology department in MIC.

A number of senior lecturers have left full-time positions the department since 2019. However, they have not been replaced or else have been replaced by part-time staff or entry level positions.

Meanwhile, this paper understands that another senior member of the theology department was recently appointed as full-time head of MIC's Irish Institute for Catholic Studies (IICS) for a period of two years.

MIC have subsequently advertised for a less senior post in theology by way of replacement.

Once again, it seems as though the theology department is being trimmed back.

The beneficiary here is the IICS, which has raised eyebrows with some of its lecture topics in the past, including one which called for the 'queering' of Catholic education.

Could it be that the IICS will be the next Mater Dei or Merici Institute? It is not a far-fetched speculation, given recent history.

For now though, it is just speculation. Perhaps it will ultimately be idle speculation – the MIC-UL linkage talks could come to nothing. Both sides are dealing with internal strife of different kinds, with UL's senior management recently before the Dáil over an €8 million deal.

Is a link with MIC really at the top of UL's priorities? Some sources suggest it may be down the list quite a way.

Regardless, a decision to merge or not to merge could have large implications for the wider Catholic education landscape.



President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins and his wife Sabina are shown around by curator Naomi O'Nolan at the official opening of a retrospective exhibition by Imogen Stuart, one of Ireland's foremost sculptors, at Mary Immaculate College last year.

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Ukrainian Catholic bishop visits Irish chaplaincy

Ruadhán Jones

Ukrainian Catholic Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski visited the Irish chaplaincy for Ukrainians in Dublin, celebrating the Divine Liturgy for the local community on Sunday, July 16.

Bishop Nowakowski, the Apostolic Visitor for Ukrainian Catholics in Great Britain and Ireland, joined chaplain Fr Vasyl Kornitsky for the celebration in Our Lady of Consolation, Donnycarney, Dublin.

The chaplaincy's membership has expanded rapidly since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Fr Kornitsky has been to the forefront in providing spiritual care to the more than 70,000 who have fled the war for Ireland.

The children of the community and Fr Kornitsky welcomed Bishop Nowakowski and Fr Andrew Malish (chancellor of the diocese of the Holy Family, London) to the church.



Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski celebrates the Divine Liturgy in Our Lady of Consolation, Donnycarney, Dublin, on July 16. Photos: Artem Kulnych.



Children of the Ukrainian Catholic chaplaincy in Dublin greet Bishop Nowakowski to Donnycarney.



A large congregation attended Divine Liturgy on Sunday.



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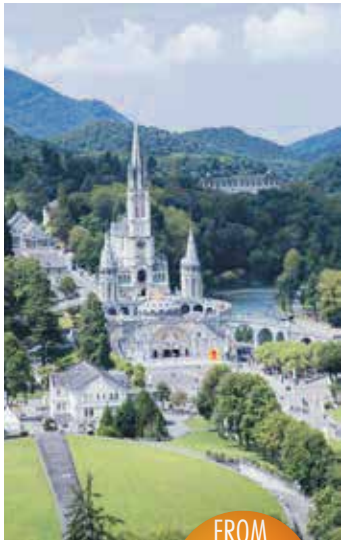
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Why the Government capitulates to every trendy new demand



Politicians are out of control in their zealotry to reshape every aspect of life, writes **David Quinn**

There was a time when social policy was very strongly influenced by Catholic teaching. Now the opposite is often the case. It is a classic example of the pendulum swinging first one way and then the other.

But when the Church had a great deal of influence in the country it was for a reason; it had huge popular support. Almost everyone went to Mass and people wanted social policy and the laws of the land to bear a Catholic imprint.

This was why, for example, the law reflected the Catholic belief that marriage is the permanent and indissoluble union of a man and a woman orientated towards raising the next generation, and it is why we protected the right to life from womb to tomb.

Overtaken

Today, we have overturned these beliefs. A husband and wife can divorce one another, and the time before you divorce has been shortened. Two people of the same sex can marry, and children are regarded as an optional extra in marriage. Marriage is now seen as much more adult-centred than child-centred.

And of course, we stripped the unborn of the right to life.

These moves had popular support. We saw this in the various referendums, even if the amount of media bias on display in those campaigns and in the run-up to them was appalling.

But the Government doesn't seem to know when to stop. On the surface, it seems to regard it as its mission to continue to 'liberalise' the country, regardless of



Pro-life advocates participate in the All-Ireland Rally for Life in Dublin July 1. The pro-life march could be rerouted if the controversial 'safe access' proposals become law. Photo: OSV

whether or not the public is still with them. Some of what the Government is doing now appears to be a response to pressure from various lobby groups many members of the public will never have heard of.

A good example is the 'safe access' bill, currently before the Dáil. This appears to mainly be the brainchild of a militantly pro-choice lobby group called 'Together for Safety' which has no real grassroots support.

The 'safe access' bill is intended to prevent all visible pro-life activities within 100 metres of where abortions take place, and that includes when such activities take place in nearby church grounds.

The display of any pro-life posters would certainly be banned, no matter how innocuous. No audible prayers would be permitted and no handing out of leaflets. It is quite probable that even a silent vigil would be prohibited.

Almost no country in the world has a law like this. In Britain, certain city councils have imposed such restrictions and we have an example from Birmingham of a pro-life woman being arrested pray-

ing silently near an abortion clinic.

A region of Germany tried to impose similar prohibitions, but a federal court stuck them down on the grounds that there were against freedom of speech and assembly.

We already have laws against intimidation and harassment and the Garda Commissioner has indicated he sees no need for additional laws to protect hospitals and GP surgeries. In addition, no hospital has reported cases of patients feeling harassed or intimidated on the way into hospital.

Nonetheless, the Government is pressing ahead with this law anyway. Why? It is as though it wishes to further humiliate the pro-life movement and pander to whatever demands the pro-abortion movement makes.

Mentality

The planned 'hate crime' law springs from a similar mentality. Whereas the 'safe access' bill takes the concept of 'safety' and stretches it to breaking point, the hate crime law does the same with the concept of 'hate'.

Increasingly, 'hate' seems to mean whatever certain groups find offensive. The

word is used with abandon.

This law is pandering to lobby groups who see 'hate' everywhere. Ironically, these same groups never seem to notice the intense hatred that is often directed at nuns who have been reduced in the eyes of some to concentration camp commandants presiding over, in some cases, the deliberate killing of babies. Hence the call by some groups to declare the sites of former mother and baby homes, 'crime scenes.' This is the modern version of a blood libel.

We don't know how the hate crime law will be interpreted, but is it really needed, even on its own terms? As mentioned, there are already laws against intimidation and harassment, and if hate leads to assault, or a public order offence, those can already be punished.

Again, it is hard to avoid the impression that the Government is simply pandering to certain groups and finds it hard to say no to them.

In the case of the hate crime bill, a considerable backlash has been provoked and there appears to be little or no real public appetite for this law.

A further example of Gov-

ernment pandering to lobby groups is the revision of Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) courses (which incorporate Relationships and Sexuality Education) for secondary schools.

A draft SPHE course for Leaving Certificate pupils was released last week by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

Removed

In several respects it seems as far removed from where the general public are at as is possible to get. For one thing, it tries to paint anyone who is "Irish", "white" or "male" as being "privileged" compared with members of minority groups.

Secondly, it adheres to a theory which says that all of the behavioural differences between the sexes (which the syllabus calls "genders") are due to nurture and not nature. If it said the differences stem from a mixture of nature and nurture, people would go along with that, but to dismiss nature from the picture entirely is pure ideology and has nothing to do with science.

Thirdly, it wants to teach students that you can declare yourself to be a boy or a girl,

or something in between, without regard to the actual biological sex you are.

This is also proving very unpopular with many parents. So why is the Government going full steam ahead with these proposals?

Cowardice is one reason. It is simply scared to stand up to the lobby groups and their allies in the media. If they were to stand up to them, they would be accused of being "backward", "conservative", and even worse, somehow in thrall to the bishops.

A second reason is that they half believe the ideologies behind proposals like the 'safe access' bill, the 'hate crime' law and the radical new SPHE programmes.

A further reason might be that Government ministers simply lack the intellectual wherewithal to fight back. If they were to reject the proposals of the lobby groups, they might be hauled onto RTE for an explanation and would be unable to offer one.

This means it is up to the public to push back. It seems the only way of resisting the Government's total capitulation to every 'woke' demand is for voters to rise up and make their voices heard.

'Authentic dialogue' needed amid heated debates on Catholic education



Issues around gender dysphoria should not be elevated as a singular issue for schools, Chai Brady hears

Discussions in Ireland about Catholic education often occur between two people with deep-rooted ideals who are not listening to one another – this dilemma does not lead to the vital “shared understanding” a Dublin City University (DCU) academic is striving for in his new podcast.

Dr David Kennedy, Assistant Professor of Religious Education in Dublin City University, launched the podcast series ‘Conversations from the Classroom’, which he will host, earlier this year. In the series, Dr Kennedy speaks to a variety of guests from the field of Catholic education and other associated areas.

Topics include matters of management and governance in Catholic education and Irish education, LGBTQ perspectives in Catholic education, the politics of Irish education and ongoing developments in the professional practice of the educator.

Dr Kennedy said: “It’s such a common feature today that all the media that we consume, through podcasts, the news, newspapers, TikTok, any kind of media... usually what you encounter is two people from two entrenched positions talking past each other, and not necessarily listening to one another.

“The whole point of the conversation they’re having is not trying to move towards a shared understanding, and that might never happen, but it’s trying to model an authentic dialogue.”

The 32-year-old also believes many people of his age and younger, despite being educated in a Catholic school, do not have the vocabulary to discuss faith

or Catholicism. He believes his podcast will help to bridge that gap by giving the floor to experts in an “accessible, digestible way”.

Asked what he believes to be the issues that lead to more heated discussions around education, Dr Kennedy pointed to a more fundamental question: ‘What is a Catholic school?’ Issues around children identifying as transgender, and expressing a wish for classmates and teachers to recognise and accept their transition, often cause huge controversy and spark diatribes in the online world. However, Dr Kennedy told this paper on the ground in schools it is not as big an issue as it is often portrayed. “What struck me the most was the topics I thought would cause difficulty, where the ones that caused little if any difficulty,” he said.

“Trans and LGB are just one of those aspects in the daily life of a school and we need to be very, very careful that is not elevated as ‘the’ issue”

“Stuff like ‘queer theory’, LGBT lives and Catholic education, I would have imagined before I did this that would have been a space littered with potholes, challenges and obstacles, but they actually turned out to be some of the most fruitful and enjoyable conversations actually in it.

“A big part of engaging on any of these issues, be it divestment, what it means to educate, what type of school you are, be it LGBT rights and lives, is that there are moments where you can agree to disagree.

“Is dialogue about convincing? Is it about bringing someone over to your position? Or is it about reaching a shared vision, a shared understanding? There will be moments where it’s not going to be uniform – it’s not about moving towards uniformity, but that’s the difference between dialogue and debate,” he insisted.

Specifically on children wanting to identify as the opposite gender, he said: “What we find in Catholic schools around the country is that they’ve been doing a phenomenal job at meeting a varied range of needs on all fronts. Trans and LGB are just one of those aspects in the daily life of a school



Prof. Cora O’Farrell, Director of the Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education, DCU Institute of Education, Dr David Kennedy, Assistant Professor of Theology and Religious Education and Raymond Friel OBE, Former CEO of Plymouth CAST, a multi-academy trust of 36 Catholic schools based in the UK and CEO of Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) at the launch of the ‘Conversations from the Classroom’ podcast.

and we need to be very, very careful that is not elevated as ‘the’ issue. Or even an issue at all.”

Divestment

The Church’s hierarchy has continuously expressed its openness to engage with Government and all stakeholders of schools regarding changing patronage. They have said they would only divest patronage in a situation where the majority of people express a desire for a different school model. With the vast majority of schools being Catholic, the steep drop in the number of people identifying as Catholic and the growing numbers of people from other religious traditions coming to Ireland – revealed by the latest CSO statistics – there has been increased calls in the Dáil to push harder to diversify school patronage. This

has been largely unsuccessful, with many people expressing a wish to retain the status quo.

Asked his opinion about divestment, Dr Kennedy said: “Change will be slow. All evidence has shown through any attempts rolled out by the Church to encourage schools to consider divestment – for a variety of reasons, good ones at that as well – it has been exceptionally challenging.

“What I often notice is that if you ask anybody ‘do you think there should be more of a choice of schools in Ireland?’ Everyone will say ‘Yes’. When they say ‘We’re going to change your school’, that’s when the challenges happen.

If you asked someone ‘What do you think of the Catholic Church’s role in public education in Ireland?’ You could get a hostile response, but then you say, ‘Well what

do you think of your local Catholic school?’ – ‘Oh I love it’.

Engrained

“What that is really saying to us is that our schools are so engrained in our community that people have a personal buy-in and relationship with those schools. Now into the future in Ireland there needs to be a greater diversity of patron, there needs to be a greater diversity of school types, but for me the most interesting statistic in terms of Irish education in general is the fact that at primary or post-primary there’s no secular school available in the whole of the Republic of Ireland. There’s only multi-denominational, inter-denominational and denominational. Why? You’d be forgiven for thinking there’s some massive outcry for it.”

These issues are among the many Dr Kennedy has and will continue to engage with in the podcast.

As Dr Raymond Friel OBE, former CEO of Plymouth CAST, a multi-academy trust of 36 Catholic schools, and current CEO of Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) said at the launch of the podcast earlier this year: “Dialogue is at the heart of the current synod process in the Church, at the heart indeed of evangelisation. Pope Francis calls us to a culture of encounter, to build bridges, not walls, to overcome the virus of hostility and suspicion of the stranger. This podcast series is exactly what we need to support this culture, to create spaces for courageous conversations, for friendly and life-enhancing exchanges. I recommend it highly.”

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Finding peace with Julian of Norwich



Dr Claire Gilbert hopes her fictional account of the English mystic will help others see her relevance, writes **Audrey Bryce**

Our modern world is often overwhelmed by external distractions so much so that we fail to find peace within our own minds.

Director of Westminster Abbey Institute Claire Gilbert demonstrates the importance of self-reflection through her story of the late Julian of Norwich (1342–c. 1416) in her fictional biography, *I, Julian*, that was published in April.

A ‘mother, mystic, and radical’, Julian of Norwich is an English anchoress of the Middle Ages, as portrayed in *I, Julian*. She falls severely ill at the age of 30 and experiences ineffable visions of the Passion of Christ while she nears death. In an attempt to comprehend her miraculous healing, Julian locks herself away in isolation in a small anchorage adjacent to St Julian’s Church for decades, reflecting and writing about her visions of Jesus.

Her Revelations of Divine Love would become the first known English manuscript written by a woman.

Unrest

Written during a period plagued by social and religious unrest, the 14th Century spiritual revelations of Julian of Norwich have retained an astonishing relevance for coping with the commotion of our modern-day world.

I, Julian aids readers in discovering the inner peace within themselves, posing the question: What do a 14th Century woman’s writings teach us about ourselves? A lot, it turns out.

When she first encountered the medieval anchoress and her famous manuscript, Dr Gilbert was pursuing her undergraduate theology degree at Oxford. Julian was a “shining light” for Dr Gilbert amid a heavy load of coursework.



A statue of Julian of Norwich is seen on the facade of the Anglicans’ Norwich Cathedral in Norwich, England, in this file photo from February 2017. Photo: CNS.

Illness

It wasn’t until Dr Gilbert was diagnosed with cancer in 2019, however, that she became enthralled with Julian’s life, prompting her to write the fictional novel.

Its release this April marked the 650th anniversary of Julian’s visions.

“She stopped being the subject of my academic studies and became my spiritual companion over two and a half years of gruelling cancer treatment,” Dr Gilbert told *The Irish Catholic*. “She taught me how to face the cancer and not fight it or push it away, but to walk towards it porously, to receive it and to move through whatever pain came as a result of that.”

“It was at the end of treatment that I received the call to tell her story – and in the first person,” she remarked.

Dr Gilbert dedicated the following four years to creating her novel, leaning on Julian as her own spiritual mentor throughout the process. Dr Gilbert vouched that Julian’s centuries-old writings have only become of notable interest to people

rather recently, throughout these past 50 years or so.

In TS Eliot’s 20th Century *Little Gidding*, he quotes Julian’s famous words, saying “all shall be well”, which directed attention to Julian from religious and nonreligious alike.

“Dr Gilbert assures that ‘one’s interior life can be really dramatic if you pay attention to it’”

“There are a lot of ways in which I think she speaks into our 21st Century minds”, Dr Gilbert tells *The Irish Catholic*. Julian’s time was clouded by a period of social upheaval and accusations of heresy on behalf of the Church.

While we may not have those things, Dr Gilbert believes there is a certain correlation between the common fear of speaking seen today, specifically, the fear “that we’re going to say the wrong thing, that we’re going to be ‘cancelled’”.

“She offers us a way of

being that makes us open to each other, to God, to nature and to the world. She helps us have a kind of fearlessness and courage in understanding that we will face troubles and we will be ‘tempered’ but not overcome,” says Dr Gilbert. “Her message is to receive what comes and not push it away.”

Today’s trials

Dr Gilbert warns of “enormous” trials that the world faces today such as climate change, migration and other global difficulties. Julian serves as a reminder that we should not push them away, but rather, move toward these issues as denying them serves no purpose.

The context of the eras is different, but the fear is not.

As life presents great adversity, the storm must be weathered and not avoided. Her words, “all shall be well”, remind us not that everything is good all the time, but that we must be hopeful in those times of adversity. “It’s all within the dance of God”, says Dr Gilbert.

These words, however, are not trite. It’s crucial to



Author Dr Claire Gilbert.

“It’s important to tune into yourself and who you are – to be able to discern and place your attention carefully where you want to place it, not where it’s pulled”

understand that “it’s a deep wisdom gained from herself facing all sorts of tribulations and meeting them with love”, says Dr Gilbert, and she encourages her readers to do the same.

In a tumultuous time of the Black Death, the Peasants’ Revolt, and the Suppression of the Lollards, Julian listened to herself intently and lived a life of contemplation. While the world around her was in disorder, she turned inward, and coursed a life in her own presence, in seclusion.

Dr Gilbert speaks about the value of living this kind of interior life that Julian models throughout *I, Julian*, insisting that “you become more able to attune to and to discern the life that is right for you”, she tells *The Irish Catholic*. “It’s important to tune into yourself and who you are – to be able to discern and place your attention carefully where you want to place it, not where it’s pulled.”

Social media

Our society today is one that is engrossed in the realm of the internet and social media, claims Dr Gilbert, which makes it difficult to devote one’s attention to a task, as one’s attention is “constantly being pulled in every direction”.

While the majority of *I, Julian* is set within the small anchorage during Julian’s self-reflective years, some wonder how Dr Gilbert’s autobiography maintains the status

of a riveting tale. Dr Gilbert assures that “one’s interior life can be really dramatic if you pay attention to it”, as she homes in on the inner tumult of Julian’s mind throughout her 40–50 years spent in isolation as the source of the plot that retains the attention of her readers from beginning to end.

More and more people are now reading Julian’s original Revelations of Divine Love, as feedback for Dr Gilbert’s *I, Julian* has been “tremendous”, touching a multitude of people and not just people of faith. Julian can “rightly be claimed by all denominations of Christianity and people who are spiritually serious”, says Dr Gilbert, as she is a “uniting” and “ecumenical” figure in that regard.

Values

As Dr Gilbert continues her work advocating for the fortification of moral and spiritual values in public life, she hopes that readers gain a greater sense of courage from *I, Julian*, and “take time to lead an interior life, spending time away from external distractions” and find peace within their own minds.

So, what do a 14th Century woman’s writings teach us about ourselves? They teach us wisdom, depth of character, personality and experience – “to appreciate the extraordinary life that we have been given and all that comes with it”, Dr Gilbert finishes.

Govt must break cycle of poverty says SVP



SVP believes Budget 2024 needs more than sticking plasters over deep issues, writes Sofia Zate

The Society of St Vincent de Paul has released its 2024 pre-budget submission, highlighting its recommendations for the upcoming national budget.

Announcing the submission, President Rose McGowan stressed that "The last 18 months have been an incredibly difficult time for those that seek our help and a very busy time for our members right across the country."

Ms McGowan pointed to the cost of living crisis as of particular concern as food and energy bills continue to rise.

Although she praised the support of the Government during this crisis, she called this support "sticking plasters for long term and deeper issues". Rising child poverty is one of the main issues that SVP and its members are concerned about in the coming year.

Nearly 70% of calls SVP received in the last year were from families with children.

"The new child poverty unit in the Department of An Taoiseach has the potential to break the cycle of poverty but it will require a number of budgets focused on the needs and rights of children living in disadvantaged circumstances" Ms McGowan went on to say.

In Ireland, almost 700,000 people live below the poverty line with over 12,000 people living in emergency accommodation, SVP reported.

Additionally, there was a 64% increase in child poverty in the last year and energy bills have more than doubled in the last 18 months, laying bare the cost of living crisis.

In order to combat this, SVP has proposed "Four pillars to break the cycle in Budget 2024".

"For Budget 2024, the Government must protect more people from experiencing poverty and exclusion as the cost

of living continues to rise," SVP say in their submission.

"At the same time, we need to see progress on the structural issues like income inadequacy, low pay and underfunded public services that are trapping people in the cycle of poverty."

These four pillars are as follows:

- Protect people's incomes and guarantee the essentials
- Prioritise children in poverty
- Promote access to good quality jobs, and
- Prevent poverty through affordable and accessible services.

With the ongoing cost of living crisis, SVP and its members are concerned with growing income inequality which has expanded by between 31-59% in 2023.

The cost of childcare, particularly for children with disabilities, has increased as well. SVP has made the following suggestions to combat this, including by not limited to:

- Due to the cost of living crisis, anything less than a €27.50 adjustment in core social welfare rates will be a real term cut. This is the absolute minimum required to prevent individuals and families being pulled deeper into poverty. Estimated cost:

€934 million.

- Maximise the returns from work for low-income employees by introducing a refundable tax credit which returns unused portions of the Paye tax credit to workers. Estimated cost: €140 million.

- Increase the daily living allowance and extend child benefit type payment to families in the international protection process. Estimated cost: €4.7 million.

Another issue that SVP highlights in its 2024 budget is homelessness. Groups most vulnerable to homelessness include senior renters, lone parents, and migrants. SVP has made the following suggestions to address this, which include:

- Provide funding of €5 million to address rent arrears for tenants availing of HAP.
- Establish a dedicated homelessness prevention budget, amounting to 20% of all homeless expenditure.
- Provide €4 million in funding to implement a pilot project of supported housing for youth.

Additional issues that SVP urges the 2024 budget to address include energy, transport and climate justice. As energy costs increase. Families are suffering without access to



A large queue at a food bank. Photo: CNS.

hot water. They suggest:

- Use windfall taxes from suppliers to fund a social energy tariff for low income households to protect people during the price crisis and the transition to a low carbon economy.
- Invest in adequate, affordable and reliable rural public transport, focussing on 'everyday' routes that enable people to access education, employment and public services, and move towards a commitment to provide services at the transformative 'every village, every hour' level, while maintaining the 20% discounted fare rates permanently. Estimated cost of 20% discount: €54 million.

Continuing with their concern about child welfare in Ireland, SVP understates

the importance of education including the early years. They suggest the following to be included in the 2024 budget:

- Provide free access to early learning care and education for families on the lowest incomes by providing higher levels of subsidisation under the NCS for all families in receipt of the medical card.
- Expand a child benefit type payment to young people over the age of 18 still in school and in receipt of the back to school clothing and footwear allowance (BSCFA).
- Provide €5 million to expand the programme of counselling and wellbeing/mental health supports to post-primary schools targeting pupils at key transition stages in education.

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Marist Sisters celebrate 150 years in Co. Leitrim

Ruadhán Jones

July 2, 2023, will remain in the memory of all who joined the Marist Sisters for Mass in St Mary's Parish Church, Carrick-on-Shannon, as they celebrated the 150th anniversary of the sisters arrival in Co. Leitrim.

Mass was concelebrated by the newly appointed Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois Paul Connell along with local clergy, Marist Fathers and fellow priests.

The Marist Sisters have played an indispensable role in the religious, educational, musical, medical and social development of the people in Carrick-on-Shannon and at all times kept in step with modern developments in the surrounding areas.

An afternoon of joyful celebration through talks, videos, and delicious food followed Mass.

Sr Miriam, Marist Unit Leader in Ireland, said she rejoices "and encouraged all to give thanks for all the Sisters who have given dedicated service over the past 150 years, not only in Carrick-on-Shannon, but in our other communities in Ireland and throughout the world. May our convents continue to be places of warmth and welcome to all who call".

A commemorative book *Light on the Hill*, compiled and edited by Sr Elizabeth Gilmartin, was launched on the day.

Enquiries regarding the commemorative book may be made by contacting lightonthehill1873@gmail.com.



Members of the clergy and the Marist Sisters are pictured with Sr Sylvette, Mother General Marist Sisters in Rome; Sr Miriam McManus, Unit Leader Marist Sisters Ireland; Sr Elizabeth Gilmartin, Superior Marist Sisters, Carrick-on-Shannon and Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois Paul Connell.



Siobhán Talbot, Geraldine and Frankie Smith, Phil McWeeney and Brendan Cryan.



Deirdre Logan is pictured with her two children Jack and Ava and her mother Elizabeth Flynn.



Sr Elizabeth Gilmartin, Phia Gannon, Mary Scollan and Carmel O'Rourke.



Sr Mary C. Duffy, Sr Rita Durkin, Jennie Harte-Lavin, Sr Augusta Thornton and Sr Ann O'Mahoney. Photos: Willie Donnellan/The Leitrim Observer.



Pictured at the 150th anniversary celebrations are: (standing, from left) John McDwyer, Oliver McWeeney, Tommy Moran, Sean Murray and Brendan Flynn; (seated) Marcella Murray and Josephine McDwyer.



Sheila and Ann Enright from Belturbet, Co. Cavan.



Valerie Moran and Sr Georgina.



Pictured (standing) are Sr Elizabeth Gilmartin, Sr Sylvette, Bishop Paul Connell, Sr Miriam McManus and Sr Georgina Cawley. Pictured (seated) is Sr Ann McCormack.



Pictured (from left) are Sr Augusta Thornton, Sr Sylvette, Sr Bernadette McManus, Sr Ann O'Mahoney and Sr Antoinette Beyagi, all of whom have worked with the missionaries in Africa.



Michael and Orla Morahan, Geraldine Lowe, Patricia Kelly and Joe Lowe.



Joan Regan, Deirdre, Jack and Ava Logan and Kathleen Cassells.

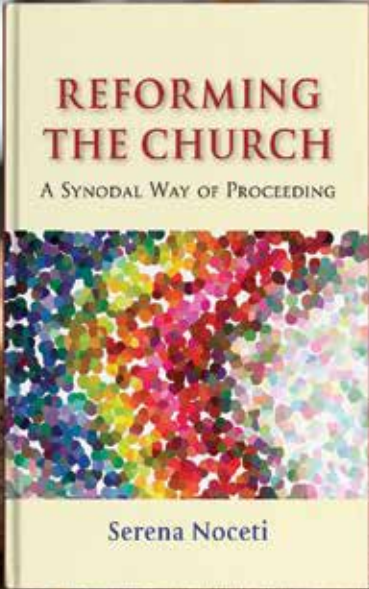


Pictured (from left) are Kathleen Flanagan, Sinéad Tracey, Catherine Moran, Lorraine Taylor, Sr Ann McCormack, Declan Faughnan, Frankie Smith and Mary McManus



Pictured are: (back, from left) Tommy Moran, Editorial; Sr Miriam McManus, Unit Leader Marist Sisters Ireland; Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise Paul Connell; Dr Eileen McDermott-O'Connor, past pupil; Sr Georgina Cawley, Asst Superior Marist Sisters, Carrick-on-Shannon; and Frankie Smith, Editorial committee. Pictured (seated) are Sr Sylvette, Mother General Marist Sisters Rome and Sr Elizabeth Gilmartin, Superior Marist Sisters Carrick-on-Shannon. Missing from photo, Tony Fahy, Design.

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Sister honoured for courageous work tackling addiction in Navan

Staff reporter

Sr Catherine Lillis, a Columban sister and founder of Tabor House in Navan – which assists people struggling with addiction – was presented with the Papal Medal and parchment, Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice [For Church and Pope] by Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan.

Taking place on July 8 at St Mary's Church, Navan, Co. Kildare, many loved ones came to honour Sr Catherine at the ceremony.

Aged 94, Sr Catherine is not the only one in the family to become a missionary. Her late brother Jimmy and her sister, Sr Camillus, were also Columban missionaries who spent their lives ministering in the Philippines.

Sr Catherine began her missionary life in Burma (now called Myanmar), where she directed the Columban sisters' medical clinic in the town of Manbaw, in the northern Kachin State.

When military rule took over, she had to leave and went to Hong Kong where she served in the Columban TB hospital.

TB was prevalent in Hong Kong at that time. In the 1980s she joined a group of volunteer religious medicals in setting up a rehabilitation hospital in Egypt.

From the 1980s-90s Catherine worked in Dublin with the health board. Her concern was for troubled youth, mostly children of alcoholic or one-parent families. Her area of ministry was Teresa's Gardens and other socially deprived areas in the city. On more than one occasion she had to accompany young boys to the morgue to identify their recently deceased mothers. She attended juvenile court hearings for youth, working closely with John Delap.

It is said her most difficult day was when she had to confine a young person to State care.

While Catherine realised the importance of her work in inner city Dublin, she knew that most problems were

caused by drug and alcohol addiction. It is for this reason that she trained as an addiction counsellor in the 1970s. Her training in the US was based on the Minnesota model of addiction counselling. While working in Dublin she went to Navan at weekends to offer counselling sessions. It was then that she decided to move to the Rutland Centre where she could use her expertise as an addiction counsellor. From the Rutland Centre she continued her outreach to Navan residents until eventually she went to reside there.

From the realisation of the need for facilities for a recovery follow up programme, the vision of Tabor House was born. Its programme offers young men one-to-one counselling and group therapy. The official opening of the House took place in May 2005 and was performed by President Mary McAleese. A centre for women is in the final stages of preparation and therapy and support will soon be available for women too.



Sr Catherine Lillis with her nieces and nephews and Bishop Tom Deenihan of the Diocese of Meath.



Sr Catherine Lillis is presented with the papal medal and parchment Pro Ecclesia Et Pontifice, from Bishop Deenihan.



Sr Catherine Lillis with her Columban sisters from Magheramore, Co. Wicklow.

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Out&About

A ruby jubilee



CLARE: Archbishop Eugene Nugent, papal nuncio to Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar, is pictured with Bishop Fintan Monahan and priests of Killaloe diocese after celebrating his ruby jubilee in Scarriff on July 9.



DUBLIN: Staff at Radio Maria Ireland wish the station's priest-director Fr Eamonn McCarthy well as he goes on sabbatical, on July 7.



TIPPERARY: Members of the Secular Franciscan Order Clonmel recently held a prayer service at the Abbey House of Prayer, formerly the Franciscan Friary. Despite the Friars leaving Clonmel on January 6 this year, the SFO continues to meet on a monthly basis for their Mass and meeting.

IN SHORT

Bishop Doran criticises use of cluster bombs

The use of 'cluster bombs' is "immoral", Bishop Kevin Doran has said after US President Joe Biden gave cluster bombs to Ukraine as they repel the Russian invasion.

Bishop Doran affirmed Ukraine's right to defend their people against Russian armed forces in a July 9 statement.

However, there are moral obligations to avoid use of weapons that place non-combatants "at grave risk", he said.

"Cluster bombs are made up of hundreds of small bombs, like grenades, which scatter on impact. Many of them do not explode immediately, but remain lying on the ground, often for weeks, so that civilians – and especially

children – coming across them can often be maimed and killed," Bishop Doran said.

"Now the United States, a leading member of NATO is committing to give cluster bombs to Ukraine. This risks a further escalation of the conflict and the killing of many more Ukrainian civilians. It is immoral and unacceptable," said the bishop of Elphin.

Heritage walk raises £3,000 for parish

A heritage walk to the ruins of Ardstraw Monastery raised £3,000 for St Eugene's Church at Glencock, which is in need of major repair.

Newtownstewart parish in Co. Tyrone walked to the historic monastery, which is on a site said to have been visited by St Patrick.

In 550AD, St Eugene travelled to Ardstraw and founded a monastery, commencing a thousand years of religious life at the site, said Fr Roland Colhoun.

"The Ulster Plantation and the suppression of the monasteries sounded the death-knell for Ardstraw in 1609," Fr Colhoun said.

"The people of Newtownstewart and its district can be proud that this parish was a renowned monastic community and gave St Eugene as patron to the Derry diocese."

Exploring these historic matters was the purpose of the heritage walk on Sunday, July 2.

Kildare and Leighlin appointments announced

A number of priests will be taking on extra

parish duties when Kildare and Leighlin's summer appointments take effect on August 4, the bishop has announced.

Appointments no longer mean a priest moving from one parish to another, Bishop Denis Nulty said in his announcement.

"These changes also now mean that all priests must cast their nets wide into the newly formed parish cluster groups and pastoral areas," he continued.

"The importance of working together has never been more urgent than it is now," said Bishop Nulty.

Two priests of the diocese, Fr Willie O'Byrne and Fr Pat O'Brien SPS, are to retire, while another cleric is to go on sabbatical.

Bishop Nulty also congratulated recent jubilarians, particularly those who are celebrating 60 years in the priesthood.



KERRY: Fr Gregory Patrick Carroll OP is pictured with his brother Michael Carroll, Toronto, Canada, sisters Stella Purcell, Dublin, Frances Carroll-McCarthy, Tipperary and Mary Mitchell, Leeds, UK. Photo: John Cleary.



KERRY: Fr Gregory Patrick Carroll OP Dominican, who celebrated his golden jubilee with Mass at Holy Cross Priory Tralee, is pictured with friends and family outside Our Lady and St Brendan's Church Tralee. Photo: John Cleary.



KERRY: Dominican Priests and Sisters attending the golden jubilee celebration of Fr Gregory Carroll OP, Prior of Holy Cross Priory, Tralee. Pictured are Fr Seamus Tuohy OP, Fr Joe Dineen OP, Fr Gregory Carroll OP (centre), Provincial of Dominicans Fr John Harris OP, Fr David McGovern OP, Sr Mary Magdalene, Sr Rose, Sr Therese, Sr Caitriona, Sr Mary Ruth and Sr Mary Emily. Photo: John Cleary.



LOUTH: Members of the Drogheda and Slane branch of the Organisation of National Ex-Servicemen lead the procession with the relics of St Oliver Plunkett in Drogheda on July 2.



TYRONE: Fr Roland Colhoun is pictured with a group of Newtownstewart parishioners on a heritage walk to Ardstraw Monastery on July 2.



DUBLIN: Pictured after the perpetual profession of three members of the Finglas Secular Franciscan Order, which took place in St Mary of the Angels Capuchin Church, Church Street, on Sunday July 9 are (from left): Fr Seán Kelly, OFM Cap. Provincial Minister, Eithne O'Toole, secretary Finglas SFO, Monica Hempenstall, Kathleen Hempenstall, Sarah Scully, Angela Glavin, formation assistant Finglas SFO and Fr James Connolly OFM Cap. spiritual assistant, Church Street.



KERRY: Fr Denis O'Mahony PP Abbeydorney is pictured with Deacon Francis White and a group of parishioners after his retirement Mass in St. Bernard's Church, Abbeydorney.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



CAVAN: Annette Patterson O'Rourke, chairperson of Kingscourt Parish pastoral planning team makes a presentation to PJ Fleming, parish sacristan, at the Church of the Immaculate Conception to mark his recent 80th birthday.



CORK: Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin addresses the National Day of Commemoration, honouring Irish men and women who died in past wars or on service with the United Nations in a ceremony at Collins Barracks. Photo: Airman Gibney.



DOWN: Canon John Murray presents the Benemerenti medal to Mrs Joan Gilchrist in recognition of her distinguished service as organist for over 50 years in St Patrick's Parish, Downpatrick.



DOWN: Mrs Joan Gilchrist is congratulated by choir mistress Mary McHugh after being presented the Benemerenti medal.

ANTRIM

A 24-hour vigil of prayer for vocations to the diocesan priesthood is to take place from 6pm Thursday, August 3, to 6pm Friday, August 4, in St Columille's Church, Ballhackamore, 191 Upper Newtonards Road, Belfast.

ARMAGH

An outdoor festival for families is to take place in the Shambles Yard on Thursday, August 24, from 5-7pm. It will include music and a wide range of entertainment for families throughout the diocese and beyond.

CAVAN

Cavan parish blessing of the graves to take place in Urney on Saturday, August 5, at 7.30pm and Butlersbridge on Sunday, August 6, after 10.30am Mass. Families are asked to prepare their plots in advance and to bring their own holy water.

CLARE

A memorial to deceased residents at St Michael's Villas Grotto will be unveiled Saturday, July 29, at 4.30pm followed by 70th anniversary Mass at 5pm and refreshments and music later.

CORK

The rosary is prayed at the Grotto in Dripsey every night of the year at 8pm, either outdoors or if the weather is inclement, from the car.

Rosary followed by Divine Mercy devotions take place at 8pm every night year-round at the Grotto in 'Carraig an Aifreann' Mass rock, Glenville.

DONEGAL

Weekly rosary for priests takes place every Thursday evening at the Grotto beside the Pius X Adoration Chapel, Letterkenny, at 7.40pm.

DERRY

Coleraine parish will host a parish family picnic on Sunday, August 20, from 2pm in the grounds of Chapel-field House. Families are to bring their own rug and picnic.

DUBLIN

The Parish of Our Lady Immaculate Darndale Belcamp will be celebrating its 50th anniversary with Mass

at 11am on Sunday, July 23, followed by a reception in the Parish Garden. The community will be joined by Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell.

Rathmines parish young adult ice cream and prayer hike to Bray head takes place Saturday, July 22. For more information contact eoin@rathminesprish.com.

FERMANAGH

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place after 10am Mass until 1pm each Tuesday in St Michael's Church, Enniskillen during July and August.

GALWAY

A Youth 2000 prayer meeting for young adults (18-35) takes place in the Church of St Oliver Plunkett, Renmore on Fridays at 8.15pm.

KILDARE

An eight kilometre walk on the Curragh Plains led by Bishop Denis Nulty takes place on Saturday, July 29. The walk begins at St Anne's School, the Curragh at 12 noon and concludes with a prayer service in St Brigid's Church at 4pm. To register contact Aras Bhride on 045-521352 or email kildareparish@gmail.com.

KILKENNY

St John's Parish Scripture group meets in the presbytery at 7.30pm each Thursday to reflect on Scripture texts for the following Sunday's Mass.

LAOIS

Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Michael's Church, Portarlinton after 10 o'clock Mass each Tuesday, with rosary at 7pm followed by prayers to the Holy Face. The rosary is prayed each night at 7pm live on the webcam.

LEITRIM

Daily rosary at 6pm in St Joseph's Church, Leitrim Village.

LIMERICK

Adoration is held every Friday during the summer in the Adoration Chapel Abbeyfeale. It starts after 10am Mass and continues until 7pm.

MAYO

Reek Sunday, the national pilgrimage to Croagh Patrick, takes place July 30, with

Masses every hour from 8am-2pm and Confessions from 7.30am-2pm.

MEATH

Navan parish novena in honour of the Sacred Heart takes place Fridays in St Oliver's Church with 7.30pm Mass and devotions.

MONAGHAN

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place every Tuesday from 2-4pm in Muckno parish, St Mary's Church.

OFFALY

Clonminch cemetery Sunday in Tullamore Parish takes place on Sunday, August 20 at 1pm.

SLIGO

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place each day 9am-5pm in St Bernadette's Chapel, Sligo Cathedral.

TIPPERARY

Relics of Padre Pio coming to St Mary's Church, Cahir on Saturday, July 29 at 6pm. Healing Mass followed by blessing with St Padre Pio's relics.

TYRONE

The blessing of the graves will take place in Rouskey on Friday, July 21, at 7.30pm, and in Gortin on Saturday, July 22 at 6pm, with Mass in St Patrick's, followed by a walk and prayer to the graveyard for the blessing of graves.

WATERFORD

The annual Mass at St Declan's Holy Well, Toor, Aglish, takes place on Thursday July 27 at 12 noon. Confessions will be held before Mass.

WESTMEATH

Cemetery devotions for Mullingar parish take place on Sunday, July 30 in Kilonan after 11am Mass in Gainstown; Marlinstown at 12.15pm; and Ballyglass at 2pm.

WEXFORD

Men's prayer group takes place in the adoration chapel, Bride St Church, Wexford town, every Wednesday evening at 8pm. It includes Rosary, Lectio Divina and benediction.



World Report

IN BRIEF

Kyiv bishop opens up about war's spiritual impact

● With Russia's full-scale invasion surpassing the 500-day mark, OSV News traveled to Kyiv to meet with Bishop Vitalii Kryvytskyi of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Kyiv-Zhytomyr, who shared his reflections on the war's spiritual impact.

Air raid sirens, soldiers' funerals and endless work hours have become routine as Ukraine tries to carry on with daily life while fighting a war for global values and security, said the bishop.

Grief and confusion can break "even people really close to God", he admitted.

At the same time, "war takes off all the masks" and ultimately, the persecution inflicted by Russia against Ukrainian faithful mysteriously "crystallises faith and faithfulness to the Gospel", said Bishop Kryvytskyi.

Complex Catholic hospital mergers pose ethics challenge

● The US Conference of Catholic Bishops has asked its Committee on Doctrine to address issues such as transgender surgeries and hormone treatments for a proposed update to the bishops' "Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services" (ERDs).

But due to the complexities of Catholic health care systems today, the bishops' directives may not be easy to enforce.

That challenge is underscored by a recent

report that claims that non-Catholic hospitals within the country's largest Catholic network of hospitals are performing transgender-affirming surgeries and possibly elective abortions.

The report on the Chicago-based CommonSpirit Health network, published by the Virginia-based Lepanto Institute, alleges "indisputable proof of gross defiance of Catholic moral teaching on the part of CommonSpirit Health".

FDA approves first over the counter birth control pill in America

● The Food and Drug Administration on July 13 announced it approved the sale of a birth control pill without a prescription for the first time in the United States.

The move will increase the availability of oral contraception and impact ongoing debates about abortion policy post-Roe.

While some have called for expanded access to contraception in the wake of the Supreme Court's reversal of Roe v. Wade last year, others have argued that their misuse without medical supervision could cause more unintended pregnancies.

In a guide about the Church's teaching on issues including contraception, the National Catholic Bioethics Centre describes contraception as "any action that is specifically intended, whether as an end or as a means, to prevent procreation either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse".

Louisiana priest stable after machete attack

● Fr Stephen Ugwu, pastor of St John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Melville, Louisiana, is stable and recovering following a July 13 attack with a machete.

The priest is at a hospital being treated for lacerations to his head and body.

According to local media reports, a man wielding a machete attacked the priest at the church's campus after Fr Ugwu declined the man's request, leaving Fr Ugwu with cuts on his head and body.

Melville police arrested the attacker and assisted Fr Ugwu, a priest from Nigeria serving the Diocese of Lafayette.

The suspect, identified as Johnny Dwayne Neely, 58, of Palmetto, is in custody, according to St Landry Parish Sheriff's Office.

He faces charges of attempted second-degree murder, hate crimes and home invasion and a bench warrant.

US bishops: abuse allegations down but challenges remain to protect vulnerable

Abuse allegations against Catholic clergy and religious in the US declined last year, but challenges remain regarding protecting vulnerable adults and ensuring online safety, according to the US conference of Catholic bishops (USCCB).

On July 14, the USCCB's Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection released the '2022 Annual Report – Findings and Recommendations on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People'.

USCCB President Archbishop Timothy Broglio of Military Services said in his preface the report was "a milestone accounting of the continued efforts in the ministry of protection, healing, and accompaniment".

The document – covering the period July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022 – consists of a progress report from the secretariat; an audit report conducted by the Rochester, New York-based consultants StoneBridge Business Partners; and a survey of abuse allegations and costs by the Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University.

Now in its 12th year of performing the audit, StoneBridge visited 62 dioceses and eparchies, 48 in person and 14 virtually.

The report itself is the 20th of its kind since 2002, when the US bishops established the 'Charter for the Protection



Archbishop Timothy Broglio of head of the US Archdiocese for the Military Services, president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, speaks on June 15, 2023, during the USCCB spring assembly in Orlando, Florida. Photo: OSV News.

of Children and Young People' as a number of clerical abuse scandals emerged.

Commonly called the 'Dallas Charter' for the city in which the bishops met at the time of its ratification, the document lays out a comprehensive set of procedures for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. The charter also includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability and prevention of abuse.

During the 2022 report period, 1,998 individuals came forward with 2,704 allegations of abuse, with claims down 399 from 2021 and 1,548 from 2020. The

decrease was largely due to resolutions of allegations received through lawsuits, compensation programmes and bankruptcies. Most allegations (83%) were initially brought to diocesan officials by an attorney.

Some 16 reports during the period involved current minors, with all other allegations made by adults citing abuse as minors.

The CARA portion of the report said that 194 responding dioceses and eparchies had judged 245 allegations of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or deacon to be credible. Of those, 20 allegations involved children who were under the age of 18.

CARA also calculated that total costs incurred by dioceses and eparchies due to allegations were down 19% from the previous year, totalling over \$157 million (€140 million). (Costs for men's religious communities, by contrast, rose 53%, approaching \$45 million (€40 million).)

The secretariat said in its assessment "the year-over-year trends are encouraging as the number of current minor allegations in the U.S. remains low".

Many dioceses and eparchies "have taken certain measures that go beyond the specific requirements of the charter", StoneBridge noted in its report.

UN council passes religious hatred resolution amid opposition

The United Nations Human Rights Council approved a controversial resolution Wednesday that urges member states to more aggressively prosecute acts of religious-based antagonism, with the motion passing even amid opposition from United States and European delegations.

The measure, backed by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and passed by a 28-12 vote, calls upon member states to "examine their national laws, policies, and law enforcement frameworks" to identify and rectify "gaps that

may impede the prevention and prosecution of acts and advocacy of religious hatred".

The document referenced in part the recent incident of the burning of the Koran that took place in Stockholm, Sweden, last month. The resolution called for the perpetrators of the act to be "[held] to account" in accord with "international human rights law".

The US was joined by Germany, France, and several other Western nations in opposing the measure.

Michèle Taylor, the US envoy to the

council, said afterward that she was "heartbroken" that the council "was unable to speak with a unanimous voice today in condemning what we all agree are deplorable acts of anti-Muslim hatred, while also respecting freedom of expression."

"We strongly believe that hatred withers in the face of public scrutiny," Ms Taylor said, "and that limiting freedom of expression will only force hateful ideas to find new venues in which to manifest and call undue attention to acts that we would not wish to amplify."

Church most credible institution in Nicaragua poll finds

A new survey commissioned by the Nicaraguan media outlet *Confidencial* and conducted by market researcher CID Gallup of Costa Rica revealed that the Catholic Church is the most credible institution in Nicaragua.

This is despite the harsh persecution to which it has

been subjected for some years by the dictatorship of President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo.

The survey indicated that 48% consider the Catholic Church to be the most credible institution, while the Ortega presidency has only 26% credibility.

Along the same lines, the personalities enjoying the most favorable opinions are former presidential candidate Félix Maradiaga with 48% followed by journalist and activist Cristiana Chamorro Barrios with 43%.

Maradiaga was imprisoned by the Ortega regime,

deported February 9 along with 221 other political prisoners, and lives in exile in the United States.

The latest Corruption Perception Index (CPI) evaluated by Transparency International placed Nicaragua as the most corrupt country in Central America.



Edited by Ruadhán Jones
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Fighting the tide...



Residents carrying their belongings on a rickshaw as they wade through a street flooded by the rising water level of the Yamuna River after heavy monsoon rains in New Delhi July 12. Photo: OSV News/Adnan Abidi, Reuters.

Cardinal Marx apologises for previous bishop's role in brutal WWII massacre

Cardinal Reinhard Marx asked for forgiveness in the case of a German WWII massacre in Italy on the orders of a man who went on to become a bishop in Munich.

Before he ascended to the rank of auxiliary bishop in the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising in 1968, Matthias Defregger wore a different uniform. As a captain in the 114th Jäger Division, he presided over a grim chapter of history. His unit, in the summer of 1944, extinguished the lives of 17 innocent men and set ablaze the village of Filetto di Camarda.

On July 9, the current archbishop of Munich found

himself face-to-face with descendants of those victims.

Cardinal Marx thanked the people of Filetto for their courage in confronting the past and their refusal to let history be swept under the rug.

"We feel how important it is not to forget," he said. "Suppression of history cannot build a good future."

WWII was nearing its end in Italy when the massacre occurred. The German Wehrmacht was in retreat, the US-led Allies had just entered Rome.

Yet, in the small community of Filetto di Camarda, not far from L'Aquila, the war was

far from over.

After an attack by Italian partisans, Maj. Gen. Hans Boelsen ordered a brutal act of "reprisal".

Defregger, reportedly reluctant, ultimately relayed the order that led to the execution of at least 17 innocent men between the ages of 20 and 65, and the burning of their village.

When the smoke of war cleared, Defregger sought solace in the priesthood. He studied at a Jesuit college in Austria and was ordained a priest in 1949 in his native town of Munich.

Defregger's charisma and competence saw the for-

mer Wehrmacht officer rise swiftly through the ranks of the Bavarian diocese, culminating in his appointment as auxiliary bishop by Pope Paul VI.

Yet the shadow of his past was never far behind. The "Defregger case" made headlines in the 1960s with allegations that Munich Cardinal Julius Döpfner knew about the popular prelate's wartime actions when he consecrated him.

Ultimately, despite long legal investigations and several court proceedings in both Italy and Germany, Defregger was never found guilty.

Arrest made in murder of teacher on Catholic university campus

Authorities have arrested a suspect in the murder last week of a teacher from Kentucky on the campus of the Catholic University of America.

On July 5, 25-year-old Maxwell Emerson was shot and killed on the university's Washington, DC, campus.

The DC Metropolitan Police Department said in a statement this week that it had made an arrest in the case, apprehending 22-year-old DC resident Jaime Maceo and charging him with first-

degree murder.

It is unclear if and how Mr Emerson and Mr Maceo knew each other. Mr Emerson was in Washington for a development seminar, his family told media.

Police reportedly identified Mr Maceo from security camera footage showing the altercation that led to Mr Emerson's death.

Charging documents filed in connection with the arrest reveal that Mr Emerson allegedly texted a family mem-

ber during the incident and said he was being robbed.

Police connected Mr Maceo to the case due to a DNA match from a ski mask left at the scene, according to the *Washington Post*.

Mr Emerson had been a social studies teacher at Oldham County High School in Buckner, Kentucky. A GoFundMe set up after his death called him a "wise, witty, and hardworking individual who cherished his family deeply".

Vatican roundup

Cardinal: Catholic universities must engage with AI

● Catholic universities must not recoil from the daunting risks of artificial intelligence but become proactively involved in its ethical development, said the head of the Dicastery for Culture and Education.

Catholic universities are obligated "to a delicate exercise of responsibility" in the "new historical era" represented by AI, said Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, prefect of the dicastery.

"Universities and, even more so, universities which share the Church's mission, stand at a crossroads of cultural, scientific and social possibilities."

Quoting Pope Francis, he said "mere training in the correct use of new technologies will not prove sufficient" and that "it is not enough to simply to trust in the moral sense of researchers and developers of devices and algorithms," signalling the need to develop "algor-ethics".

The cardinal spoke July 13 at the opening of a conference in Milan titled, 'The Future of Catholic Universities in the AI Age' organised by the Strategic Alliance of Catholic Research Universities, an international network of leading Catholic universities dedicated to research.

"Catholic universities must indeed dialogue with the new, work unsparingly on current questions and issues, and establish themselves as great laboratories of the future," he said.

Boy who hugged Pope Francis at WYD 2013 now a seminarian

● The little boy who managed to get past the crowd control barrier at World Youth Day (WYD) in Rio de Janeiro in 2013 to give an emotional embrace to Pope Francis is now a seminarian preparing for the priesthood.

On July 26, 2013, de Brito, then nine-years-old, managed to get to the popemobile carrying Pope Francis through the streets of Rio de Janeiro. He then hugged the Holy Father and told him that he wanted to be a priest.

Ten years later, de

Brito is in the preparatory seminary of the Archdiocese of Campo Grande in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul. For de Brito, "remembering that encounter is to always rekindle the flame of vocation".

"It will be 10 years since that great moment in my life. Of course it was not the awakening of my vocation, because I had wanted to be a priest for a long time. But it was, without a doubt, one more motivation within my vocation," de Brito told *ACI Digital* in an interview.

Pope mourns 'silent massacres' of migrants

● Mourning the "silent massacres" of innocent people who died while crossing the Mediterranean Sea seeking a better life elsewhere, the world must change its attitude toward migrants and those in need, Pope Francis said.

"The brother who knocks at the door deserves love, hospitality and every care," the Pope said in a letter marking the tenth anniversary of his first apostolic journey as Pope to the Italian island of Lampedusa on July 8, 2013.

Lampedusa, which lies between Sicily and the northern African nations of Tunisia and Libya, has been for decades a major destination point for migrants from Africa, the Middle East and Asia seeking a new life in Europe.

However, many migrants often make the journey in unsafe vessels or without needed provisions like food, water and floatation devices.

In his letter to Archbishop Alessandro Damiano of Agrigento, Sicily, the Pope said "we are shocked by the silent massacres before which we still remain helpless and stunned".

"The death of innocents, mainly children, in search of a more serene existence, far from wars and violence, is a painful and deafening cry that cannot leave us indifferent," he wrote.



Letter from Jerusalem

Latin patriarch condemns Israeli assault on Palestinians



Judith Sudilovsky

Cardinal-designate Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, expressed the need to respect and protect the life and dignity of Palestinians during a July 10 visit to Jenin, following the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the city July 5.

"I see another face of resilience. I see people suffering, people experiencing the consequences of the occupation, but at the same time I see people who don't want to leave, who don't give up, who don't let anyone break down their will to live with dignity in their homeland," said the cardinal-designate in an interview with Franciscan Christian Media Centre, a day after being named a cardinal by Pope Francis.

On July 3, the Israeli military launched a major assault on the Jenin refugee camp located in the West Bank Palestinian city of Jenin in a two-day operation that they said was meant to destroy militant infrastructure and weapons, cracking down on a hotbed of Palestinian militant activity.

Some 12 Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were killed during the operation, and more than 100 Palestinians were wounded, including civilians.

In a July 4 statement, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem condemned the violence and demanded a ceasefire. "(We) hope for pursuit of peace and dialogue to prevent other future unjustified attacks on the population," he said.

Incursion

The assault was the largest incursion against Palestinian militants in 20 years, since fighting during the Second Intifada, or uprising, in the early 2000s. The attack came amid a string of terror attacks by Palestinians and nightly Israel Defence Forces military raids.

Since the beginning of this year, 25 Israelis have been killed in Palestinian attacks in Israel and the West Bank, including soldiers and civilians. During this period, at least 152 Palestinians in the West Bank have been killed, with most of them being involved in clashes with security forces or carrying out attacks. However, there also were cases of uninvolved civilians being killed.



Smoke is seen from Israel's side during a raid on Jenin refugee camp in the Israeli-occupied West Bank Jalamah checkpoint, July 3, 2023. Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, visited Jenin July 10, days after the Israel Defense Forces launched air and ground attacks on the camp. Photo: OSV News/Ronen Zvulun, Reuters.

“Third states must demand that Israeli authorities respect and protect the rights of Palestinians, abide by the provisions of the law of occupation and applicable rules on the use of lethal force, and work to de-escalate the ongoing violence.”

The July military attack caused major damage to the city's roads and buildings, including the Latin Catholic Church of the Holy Redeemer, when a large explosion near the church shattered windows, destroyed the electrical source and caused other structural damage.

“Human rights need to be protected in order for human beings to live a respectful life”

The explosion took place on the night of the invasion when no one was in the church, so no one was injured while fighting was taking place outside, Fr Labib Deibs, the parish priest, told the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem Media Centre.

Young members of the parish swept up the broken glass and cleaned the church as best they could, and they were able to pray there, said Fr Deibs.

"We ask God to bring peace to this land, because it desperately needs it. Human rights need to be protected in order for human beings to live a respectful life," he said. "We pray for

peace to manifest in this land."

According to a July 6 report by the Norwegian Refugee Council, this year is on track to be the deadliest year in the occupied West Bank since the UN began recording casualties in 2005.

Extreme

The report noted that since Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu returned to power late last year with Israel's most extreme nationalist-religious government, conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory have rapidly deteriorated.

"Settlement expansion, home demolitions and violence perpetrated by Israeli forces and settlers are increasing humanitarian suffering and fuelling further tensions across the West Bank," said Caroline Ort, the Norwegian Refugee Council's country director for Palestine, in the report. "Third states must demand that Israeli authorities respect and protect the rights of Palestinians, abide by the provisions of the law of occupation and applicable rules on the use of lethal force, and work to de-escalate the ongoing violence."

This year also is on course to surpass 2022's record-setting year

for settler attacks and demolitions by Israel in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the report continued.

“The attacks are rarely investigated by Israeli authorities”

The Norwegian Refugee Council report said the UN has documented more than 441 settler attacks in the first half of this year, compared to 343 during the same period last year.

The report said these included multiple large-scale attacks in which dozens of settlers have rampaged through Palestinian communities, attacking civilians and causing widespread destruction.

The report maintained that settler violence is often overlooked by Israeli forces and even encouraged by officials and ministers in the current Israeli government.

"The attacks are rarely investigated by Israeli authorities. Sometimes they are perpetrated under the protection or with the assistance of Israeli forces," said the report. Israeli authorities have also promoted more than 13,000

new settlement housing units so far this year, adding to the rising tensions.

Defiance

Though Israel insisted that the Jenin incursion was meant to weaken the militant groups, the Palestinian defiance left in the wake of its devastation has instead only deepened, according to CNN.

Christians are a tiny minority in Jenin, with some 200 Christians living among the city's Muslim majority, who number 50,000 residents. Approximately one-third of the population lives in the Jenin refugee camp.

Cardinal-designate Pizzaballa's visit included seeing civil authorities in Jenin Governorate, and the Jenin Governmental Hospital, and a tour of the Jenin refugee camp. The cardinal-designate stressed the need to stop all forms of violence and to seek a just and comprehensive solution to bring peace to the Holy Land.

"As a Church we don't have an army, we don't have weapons, we don't believe in violence, we are against all forms of violence. But we are here to express our solidarity with the dignity and freedom of Palestinians," he said.

"Hope remains, as well as the need to seek a just and comprehensive peace that includes all parties."

i Judith Sudilovsky writes for OSV News from Jerusalem.

Synod's first-ever discussion of 'LGBTQ+ people' raises important pastoral questions

Kimberley Heatherington

Those who minister to, or are part of, the community of people who identify as LGBTQ+ have observed a noted shift with respect to them and their concerns in the working document for the Church's forthcoming synod of bishops convened by Pope Francis.

The working document, or *Instrumentum Laboris*, was released June 20 by the Holy See and is meant to guide the Church's discussions at the global level on a wide variety of issues starting in October.

Rather than speaking of "persons with homosexual tendencies" or "persons struggling with same-sex attractions," the official document released in advance of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops refers to them as "LGBTQ+ people".

“It is indeed significant because the Vatican is now officially using the term that most LGBTQ people around the world use themselves”

Specific questions deal with how to offer “genuine welcome” to “those who do not feel accepted in the Church, such as ... LGBTQ+ Catholics”. It also asks participants to consider “what concrete steps are needed to welcome those who feel excluded from the Church because of their status or sexuality” including “LGBTQ+ people” as an example alongside “remarried divorcees (and) people in polygamous marriages”.

The synod's working document is the result of a multiyear, worldwide consultation of the Faithful for what is often referred to as the ‘Synod on Synodality’. The first of two assemblies of bishops – which now includes laypeople with voting privileges – will be held in Rome from October 4-28. The second will be held in October 2024. Keith Wildenberg, co-founder with author Eve Tushnet of Building Catholic Futures, which is described as “a new project providing parishes and schools with encouraging and orthodox content for gay Christians,” told *OSV News* the document's use of LGBTQ+ “fits neatly alongside ‘remarried’ and ‘polygamous’ by adding another (set of) several states in life that don't quite fit with the Church's current habits of pastoral ministry.”

He also noted that language has an impact, and viewed other formulations as missing the mark. “Euphemisms like ‘persons with homosexual tendencies’ and ‘persons struggling with same-sex attractions’ have done great harm,” said Mr Wildenberg.

“They label gay people according to our sexual attractions; not according to our capacity for love and vocation.” Fr Colin Blatchford, associate director of Courage International, said “the Church's language has changed in the last 30, 40 years as she's begun to



Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, NM, accepts the gifts during the closing Mass for the Outreach LGBTQ Catholic Ministry Conference at the Church of St Paul the Apostle in New York City June 18, 2023. Photo: *OSV News*/Gregory Shemitz.

really look into this”.

Courage, which describes itself as a “Roman Catholic apostolate for men and women who experience same-sex attractions and those who love them”, calls its members to chastity, and offers pastoral support in the form of spiritual guidance, community prayer support, and fellowship.

Community

“It's good that it was mentioned, insofar as how we welcome specifically this community, because I think that will be familiar for individuals,” he said.

Jesuit Fr James Martin – whose ministry includes the book *Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity* – noted the first usage of “LGBTQ” appeared in the working document prepared for the continental stage. “One of the reasons it did so was that so many reports from dioceses around the world used it as well. Fully half mentioned the issue,” said Fr Martin, editor-at-large at the Jesuit journal *America* and a recently appointed US representative to the October synod by Pope Francis.

“It is indeed significant because the Vatican is now officially using the term that most LGBTQ people around the world use themselves.”

With its inclusion of the term ‘LGBTQ+’, the “synod is asking critical questions about receptivity and accompaniment in a complicated world as we guide people to Christ,”

Anna Carter, co-founder and president of Eden Invitation, told *OSV News*.

The Catholic nonprofit defines its mission as “original personhood beyond the LGBT+ paradigm” and declares on its website, “we firmly accept and hold each and everything definitively proposed by the Catholic Church regarding teaching on faith and morals”.

“Courage's Fr Blatchford emphasised the importance of an authentic accompaniment that truly listens”

“The Church's teachings on sexuality and gender are both ‘good news’ and ‘hard sayings,’” Ms Carter said, referring to John 6:60, a passage where some of Jesus' disciples push back on his Bread of Life discourse and soon after stop following him.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that “homosexual persons are called to chastity” and instructs that “every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided”. Looking to October, those involved in Catholic ministry to people who identify as LGBTQ+ noted to *OSV News* the upcoming synodal discussion has the potential to be a positive start for a broader pastoral discussion.

Courage's Fr Blatchford emphasised the importance of an authentic accompaniment that truly listens.

“Pope Francis says very clearly that

if we just give the moral rules of the Church, we're not really encountering the person; we're not helping them,” he said.

“So first and foremost, I think we need to listen to their story – that's part of this real accompaniment. Be able to receive the person, and the reality of their story, even if I don't agree with it.”

“You could say there are three primary things they need to hear,” Father Blatchford added. “One: I love you. Two: I believe God has a plan for your life. And three: I'd like to hear your story.”

“Showing welcome to those who have felt, and have been, historically excluded in the Church is an important first step,” Fr Martin said.

Experiences

“Another step would be for all of us in the church to listen to the experiences of LGBTQ Catholics: Who is God for them? What does Jesus mean for them? How have they been treated by their own Church?” However, Mr Wildenberg noted the synod's process has seen some shortcomings for people who identify as LGBTQ+ Catholics – particularly in the framing.

“The initial diocese-level synod summary documents often framed LGBTQ+ people as a problem of catechesis, and we were lumped into headings like, ‘What shall we do about groups who disagree with Church teaching?’” Mr Wildenberg noted.

“It's a problem of inclusion, not of discord,” he added. “It's a failure to

accept people with love, not a failure to accept truth.”

Fr Blatchford said the term “authentic welcoming” used by the synod's working document is more than just making a person feel welcome.

“It's about somebody actually welcoming them,” he said. “It's about feeling invested enough to pour out your body and blood – as Christ did for us – for your neighbour.”

“I would say that really that's where that gap might be right now – that people are kind of uncomfortable with that; they don't know how to do that,” Fr Blatchford explained. “And so I think it's good that it was brought up this way.” Mr Wildenberg, however, noted the church needs to have a positive vision for those Catholics who identify as LGBTQ+ and who are living the path of discipleship.

He would have liked the synod's working document to acknowledge “the many LGBTQ Catholics” who are “working side by side with straight Catholics and clergy to build the kingdom of God”.

Parishes, he explained, can extend the most authentic welcome to those in the LGBTQ+ community through these faithful LGBTQ Catholics who are “visible as witnesses to the Christian life, to natural virtue, and to holy lifestyles that respond to the call to family and extended kinship”.

Kimberley Heatherington writes for *OSV News* from Virginia.

Letters

Letter of the week

Reservations about drug decriminalisation

Dear Editor, I am writing to express my reservations about the decision of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference to advocate for the decriminalisation of drug possession for personal use [*The Irish Catholic* – July 6, 2023]. While I understand the intention to address the complexities of drug addiction and support individuals, I believe this approach may have unintended consequences and send a misleading message to society.

The UN report highlighting

Ireland's high consumption of cocaine underlines the severity of our nation's drug epidemic. In light of this, it is crucial that we focus on comprehensive drug prevention, education, and rehabilitation programs rather than considering decriminalisation. Such a measure could inadvertently downplay the risks associated with drug use and fail to discourage individuals from engaging in harmful behaviour.

Moreover, the concerns raised by former drug addict and addic-

tion counsellor Damian Richardson [*The Irish Catholic* – July 6, 2023] hold significant weight. Decriminalisation may inadvertently normalise mind-altering substances, disregarding the importance of addressing the root causes of drug addiction and providing alternative coping mechanisms for individuals struggling with emotional and psychological challenges. Instead of simply decriminalising drug use, we should emphasise the importance of mental health support and

engage in robust education campaigns to dissuade individuals from turning to substances as a means of escape.

Furthermore, decriminalisation might inadvertently contribute to criminal enterprises by creating a perception that drug use is socially acceptable. As Mr Richardson aptly points out, the money used to purchase drugs is often linked to illicit activities, perpetuating the existing drug trade.

Rather than pursuing decrimi-

nalisation, our efforts should be directed towards implementing effective prevention strategies, ensuring accessible treatment programmes, and supporting families affected by drug addiction. It is imperative that we invest in comprehensive drug education campaigns, prioritise mental health services, and improve access to rehabilitation programmes.

*Yours etc.,
Hannah O'Riordan
Phibsborough, Dublin 7*

Also investigating 'termination of pregnancies'

Dear Editor, Yes; it is right that RTÉ should investigate alleged instances of cruelty in the shipment of animals from Ireland. We hope that they will also investigate what is now happening in our hospitals under the heading of 'termination of pregnancies'.

Yours etc.,

Eamon Fitzpatrick,
Strandhill Road, Co. Sligo



Conserving the Faith of the apostles

Dear Editor, Prof. Eamon Conway welcomes the appointment of Archbishop Víctor Manuel Fernández to lead the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith who he claims is the source of much of Pope Francis' thinking and writing. Those who do not welcome this appointment or the direction Pope Francis is taking the Church, Fr Conway labels conservative.

It would be naive to assume he applies the best sense of the word, but at its best it implies conserving the Faith of the apostles which gives meaning to the lives of countless people

today. Fr Conway claims the appointment of the archbishop puts doctrine firmly at the service of mission whereas the purpose of the dicastery is to put theologians firmly at the service of the Faith of the Church. He regards theologians as victims of the dicastery whereas its purpose is to ensure that the task of the theologians is to present the people of the Church with the Faith of the Church in concepts, ideas and language that they understand. That some theologians adopt the spirit of the age in their task is all too obvious as is Fr Conway's Pollyanna view of

the situation. He assures us that all of this is part of the synodal direction Pope Francis is taking the Church, which would be fine except that it doesn't appear in Scripture or in the lived tradition of the Church where the people of God govern themselves as they do in society. The bishops are the successors of the apostles and in close collaboration with their priests and in consultation with the people of God they are tasked with governing the Church. This present interpretation of governance is nowhere to be found in the life or history of the Church.

As John Henry Newman mused in the 19th Century when Pope Pius IX defined the doctrine of infallibility a dogma which in Newman's view was exaggerated, he said another pope will come and trim the sail. That took almost 100 years to come about when Pope John XXIII summoned a council and Pope Paul VI developed the doctrine of collegiality, which gave balance to the former dogma. I hope we won't be waiting as long this time.

*Yours etc.,
Fr Gregory O'Brien
Leixlip, Co. Kildare*

A kindness to warn people of hell

Dear Editor, It certainly seems, judging by the letters of Joe Foyle and Mary Stewart [*The Irish Catholic* – June 29, 2023], that Fr Martin Delaney was on to something with his bouncy castle Catholics! [*The Irish Catholic* – June 8, 2023]

I think that there is more to it than meets the eye. Part of the problem must surely lie in the way our Faith is taught and understood today. I think

it is fair to say that, in contrast to the more severe but fulsome presentation of pre-Vatican II Christian doctrine, we are getting a censored catechesis nowadays and even a saccharine version of Christ himself. The more difficult or challenging teachings of Christ have been air-brushed out.

I personally have never heard so much as mention of hell or even purgatory in recent Masses and funer-

als and Gospel passages like "he will answer for it in hell fire" or "you will not get out until you have paid the last penny" (Mt. 5.20-26) are never explained.

Surely it is a kindness to warn people.

*Yours etc.,
Brid Ní Rinn,
Naas, Co. Kildare*

facebook community

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

God will send priests despite modern world where life is no longer sacred

I agree with Baroness O'Loan. God will never abandon his Church as founded and established by apostolic succession from Jesus. He will send the right men at the correct time. And we will keep praying and reminding the Lord of his promises. – **Patricia O'Neill**

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

A problematic column about King Charles II

Dear Editor, The title used in this week's 'In Short' column is problematic on several fronts [*The Irish Catholic* – July 6, 2023]. Firstly, while it [Roman Missal] did belong to Fr Huddleston, to take a *Missale Romanum* to Whitehall in February 1685 to convert the king was impracticable unless he was going to offer Mass, which he did not! It was a clandestine move by the Duke of York to convert Charles, known to very few, finally. The priest instead would have carried the Sacrament and a ritual that he could quietly keep to his person without raising concern.

Likewise, Charles, who attended his mother's private chapel not infrequently as a child, would have already been

familiar with the Mass; it was instead the work *A Short and Plain Way to the Faith and Church* that did much to arrest the King's attention towards Catholicism, as he expressed: "I have not seen anything so plain or clear on this subject before."

It is fitting to remember the kindness of the act which his brother did for him. When James stated here is the priest that saved you after the Battle of Worcester, he reportedly replied: "You who saved the body, now hold the soul!" This is a sentiment I hope all your readers will hear when it is our time to give an account of our stewardship.

*Yours etc.,
Fr John McCallion
Coalisland, Co. Tyrone*

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

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Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, July 20, 2023

**Saint of
the Week**
Mary Magdalene
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The angelic doctor Aquinas at 700



“He was the world’s flower and glory, and has rendered superfluous the writings of doctors (of theology) who shall come after him.” St Albert the Great is said to have exclaimed these words upon the news of the death of St Thomas Aquinas, his former student, in 1274 at age 48.

July 18 marked the 700th anniversary of St Thomas’ canonisation, and expert Thomists – those who study and teach St Thomas’ work in philosophy and theology – say the Dominican priest who dedicated his life to writing and teaching has had an unparalleled influence on Catholic thought.

St Thomas is best known for his *Summa Theologiae*,



a summary of theology that covers God, creation, humanity, man’s purpose, Christ and the sacraments. He also wrote many other works addressing disputed questions and on the nature of particular things, as well as philosophical and Biblical commentaries. He also crafted several hymns, especially on the mystery of the Eucharist, including *Tantum Ergo Sacramentum* and *Godhead Here in Hiding*.

St Thomas Aquinas’ thought continues to reveal God and creation’s proper order to the world, writes Maria Wiering

“He still is an incredibly rich resource for the thinking of the Church, both philosophically and theologically, and spiritually,” said Dominican Fr Brian Shanley OP, president of St John’s University in New York and an Aquinas scholar, noting that St Thomas and St Augustine stand out as “the two giants in the Catholic tradition”.

“I think a lot of people still think Aquinas has the final answer, if you will, and even if

you don’t think he does, you have to know him to be conversant with Catholic thought,” Fr Shanley said.

Noble family

St Thomas was born in 1225 near Aquino, Italy, into a noble family who expected him to gain power as a Benedictine abbot like his uncle. However, after receiving an impressive education at the nearby Benedictine abbey and the

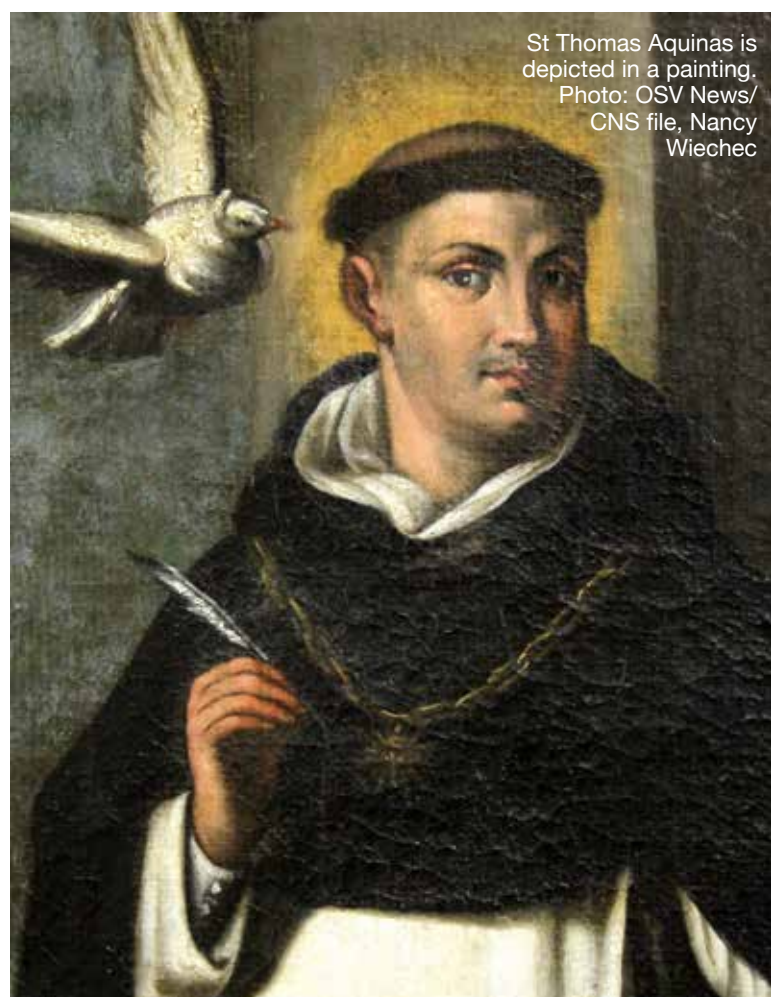
University of Naples, at the age of 19 he joined the Dominicans, then a relatively new mendicant order, embracing poverty and itinerant preaching. His appalled family members arranged for him to be kidnapped and locked in their castle in Roccasecca, but he would not recant. Infamously, his desperate brothers hired a prostitute to seduce him, and he chased her away with a firebrand.

“St Thomas is especially known for bringing the works of Aristotle into dialogue with the Christian tradition”



St Thomas Aquinas is seen in stained glass. Photo: CNS/ Gene Plaisted, *The Crosiers*

“He would have been a genius in any culture, anywhere. (He’s) one of the great geniuses of human history, period. That doesn’t make you a saint”



St Thomas Aquinas is depicted in a painting. Photo: OSV News/ CNS file, Nancy Wiechec

Eventually his parents relented, and he went first to Paris and then to Cologne, Germany, to study under St Albert, a fellow Dominican and renowned and wide-ranging philosopher who was working to relate Arabic and ancient Greek philosophy to Catholic thought. In 1252, with the recommendation of this mentor – whom, Fr Shanley said, had recognised his student’s remarkable intellectual gifts and that he would surpass him – St Thomas returned to Paris to study theology.

“St Thomas’ clarity makes him both accessible to students and contemporary thinkers wrestling with emerging questions posed by new developments in knowledge and technology”

St Thomas earned a doctorate at the University of Paris, where he also taught until 1259, when he returned to Italy to teach in Dominican houses of study in Anagni, Orvieto, Rome and Viterbo. He returned to Paris in 1268, where he worked on the *Summa Theologiae* and wrote commentaries on Aristotle’s major works.

Four years later, he went to Naples, where around December 1273, he famously stopped writing after a vision during Mass, leaving his *Summa* incomplete. A few months later, in March 1274, he died at the Cistercian Abbey of Fossanova, en route to the Second Council of Lyon.

Stunning clarity

John Boyle, professor of Catholic Studies at the University of St Thomas in St Paul, Minnesota, and author of the recently published *Aquinas on Scripture: A Primer*, said St Thomas’ work stands out for its “stunning clarity” and breadth. Others before him, including St Augustine, had endeavoured to explore creation’s order and relationship to God, but scholars of the High Middle Ages were unique in the discipline they applied to their pursuit, Prof. Boyle said.

At the same time, they were “bombarded with new knowledge that could have just intellectually ... overwhelmed the culture,” Prof. Boyle said, as newly translated work from the Greek Church fathers, as well as Judaic, Arabic and classical pagan sources, flooded the West, and intellectuals scrambled to make sense of it.

St Thomas is especially known for bringing the works of Aristotle (384–322 BC) into dialogue with the Christian tradition, a key component of his enduring contribution to Catholic thought, said Dominican Fr Romanus Cessario OP, a theology professor at Ave Maria University in Florida and member of the Pontifical Academy of St Thomas Aquinas, an institute the Holy See founded to study its namesake.

Faith and reason

“Unlike any of the theologians that preceded him in the early Middle Ages, and surely in the patristic period, (St Thomas) found a way of uniting faith and reason that was unique, and which can be explained fundamentally by his option for Aristotle over Plato and Platonic writers, including St Augustine, who have a conception of the Christian life that makes it difficult to express the full implications of the Incarnation,” he said.

Plato didn’t appreciate the material world as Aristotle did, Fr Cessario explained. Even without the benefit of modern science, he said, Aristotle “extracted from his observations (of the natural world) principles that are sound” for philosophical and theological thinking.

St Thomas developed Aristotle’s principles and distinctions to articulate an understanding of God, humanity and the world.

“The reason he (St Thomas) is so important to the Church is that he saw how everything from God to dirt is ordered and related in significant and intelligible ways,” Prof. Boyle said. “It starts with God. You get the first cause right, you start to see how everything else stands in an ordered and intelligible way, and then you can order your own thinking, your own understanding, in accord with reality; because you can judge what this is, how it stands in relation to other things, and then order your own knowledge.”

While some might make the mistake of reducing St Thomas to “a brain on a stick,” Prof. Boyle said, the priest was also profoundly holy, hence his canonisation 49 years after his death.

A genius

“He would have been a genius in any culture, anywhere. (He’s) one of the great geniuses of human history, period. That doesn’t make you a saint,” Prof. Boyle said. “All that genius is put to the service of the Church to test the vehicle of truth. There’s this incredible unity of life – intellectual life, spiritual life, sacramental life. He thinks about them all. He lives them all.”

Sr Elinor Gardner, a member of the Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia who teaches philosophy at the University of Dallas, said she first encountered St Thomas through his writings as an undergraduate philosophy student, but it wasn’t until she became a Dominican that she fully appreciated him as a “spiritual guide”.

“We do think of him as identical with his writings, with his thought, but he is first and foremost a holy man, a man of God,” she said. “In his own life, he first prayed and studied the scriptures, meditated on the scriptures, before teaching. That in and of itself is an important reminder for me as a Dominican, and for all who want to teach the Faith, that we need to first live it.”

Sr Elinor pointed to a famous vision St Thomas had of Christ speaking to him from a crucifix, saying, “‘You’ve written well of me, Thomas; what would you have as your reward?’ He replied, ‘Only yourself, Lord.’”

“That really sums up his whole life,” she said.

St Thomas’ clarity makes him both accessible to students and contemporary thinkers wrestling with emerging questions posed by new developments in knowledge and technology, she said.

In 1567, Pope Pius V proclaimed St Thomas a doctor of the universal Church, signifying the importance of his writings to advancing the cause of Christ. In 1879, Pope Leo XIII issued *Aeterni Patris*, which included accolades for St Thomas’ thought and contributions and, the following year, the pope declared him the worldwide patron of all Catholic universities, colleges and schools.

Master of thought

In his 1998 encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (*Faith and Reason*), St John Paul II likewise held the “Angelic Doctor” aloft, calling St Thomas “a master of thought and a model of the right way to do theology,” and applauded the way he reconciled “the secularity of the world and the radicality of the Gospel, thus avoiding the unnatural tendency to negate the world and its values while at the same time keeping faith with the supreme and inexorable demands of the supernatural order”.

“We do think of him as identical with his writings, with his thought, but he is first and foremost a holy man, a man of God. In his own life, he first prayed and studied the scriptures, meditated on the scriptures, before teaching”

On June 6, Pope Francis appointed Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, as his special papal envoy to the Abbey of Fossanova, Italy, for the official celebration of the 700th anniversary of St Thomas’ canonisation.

In the appointment letter, published July 11, the pope wrote that St Thomas “shone with right intelligence and clearness, and while he reverently investigated the divine mysteries with reason, he contemplated them with fervent faith”.

Humble

Despite his incredible intellect and contribution to theology and philosophy, St Thomas was also deeply humble. After his vision that compelled him to cease writing near the end of his life, the saint reportedly said, “All that I have written seems to me like straw compared with what has now been revealed to me.”

“We don’t know what he saw,” Prof. Boyle said, noting that he is grateful the Church has St Thomas’ profound “straw”.

“My personal view is that he saw the beatific vision. ... What he yearned for, what his entire life was ordered to, I think the Lord gave him a taste of it.”

i Maria Wiering is senior writer for OSV News.

How an artist responds to senseless violence

Faith in film



Ruadhán Jones

The *Pianist*, about a Polish Jew's experience of WWII, was a bit of a passion project for its Polish-Jewish director, Roman Polanski. Since coming out in 2002, it has been hailed as a classic.

It stars Adrien Brody as pianist and composer Władysław Szpilman, a real-life Holocaust survivor who wrote a memoir also called *The Pianist*. And survivor is a word that doesn't really do justice to his experience, as the film relates.

I had always been put off the film because of the subject matter, which is very hard to dramatise without becoming sentimental or too gruesome. But Polanski casts an ice cool gaze over the story.

In Adrien Brody he has an ideal conduit. He blew me away with his performance, so often silent and entirely solitary. He plays a character who is regularly stripped of anything that we might call 'life', left with the merest essentials for survival.

Virtue

For instance, there are two occasions where by virtue of the kindness of non-Jews, he conceals himself in abandoned apartments, without any other human contact except irregular deliveries of food.

All he can do is observe his own small corner of the world, one which happens to be full of activity all the same. He witnesses the Polish Jews rising from their Warsaw ghetto, only to be crushed mercilessly by the Nazis. He witnesses the Warsaw uprising against the Nazis and their brutal retaliation, all from his solitary apartment.

Having given you this impres-



Adrien Brody stars as Władysław Szpilman in *The Pianist*.

sionistic account, let me outline the story in more detail. When war arrives in 1939, Szpilman and his family are well-to-do Jews. Szpilman is a renowned pianist, whose final performance before the war is interrupted by massive explosions.

“What makes *The Pianist* stand out from the main body of war films is down largely to Brody's performance”

The situation for Jews in Warsaw deteriorates quickly. All Jews were internally exiled to the infamous Warsaw Ghetto, subjected to random acts of violence and murder, as well as the most dehumanising kinds of abuse by the Nazi soldiers.

Then they were shipped off to the concentration camps. Szpilman just about escapes this fate due to the actions of a sympathetic guard – but his family are not so lucky.

Live

Having escaped, he has to live by his wits, good fortune and the

occasional kindness of fellow Poles and even a Nazi soldier. This makes up the second half of the film.

What makes *The Pianist* stand out from the main body of war films is down largely to Brody's performance. He goes through quite a physical transformation, losing a lot of weight to be more convincing as this starving Jewish fugitive. His fellow cast members don't do a bad job either, it has to be said, although I never really warmed to any of them as characters.

Then there is the remarkable story, how he happened to be in these key locations at these times, and in the way that he was. The film begins with the everyday bickering of a middle class family, arguing over where to hide their money, and shifts quickly and seamlessly from one event to the next.

Polanski wanted to remain as true as possible to the real Szpilman's experiences, and he manages to integrate the random shifts in environment and company well.

There is something arbitrary to story, and that's how it was. Szpil-

man's life could have followed those of hundreds of thousands of Jews, to the mass graves, and that he doesn't is as much down to fortune as anything else.

“Thank God, not me. He wants us to survive. Well, that's what we have to believe”

This was quite a personal film for Polanski, who himself survived the ghetto while his mother didn't. This comes through, but not in any conventional way. This isn't a film that has what most would consider authentic, that is to say, it isn't invested with a vast amount of sentimentality or emotion.

Observer

That surprised me, but it seems to be Polanski's style. He is an observer of events, always regarding them at a distance with his ice cool gaze. It allows him to integrate what is quite a disparate story so well.

And perhaps also that explains the way in which his experiences do come through. This detached observation is his response to wanton brutality, to the seemingly arbitrary balance between life and death, between his survival and his mother's death.

I think it's both a strength and a weakness of the film. I was never quite invested emotionally, although I was impressed by his skill – he did come close to moving me with one scene though, when all of a sudden the pianist is given his chance to play again, in the unlikely surroundings of a bombed out house with a German officer for his audience.

It is the same German who helps him, united by their love of music. When Szpilman tries to thank him, the German comments, “Thank God, not me. He wants us to survive. Well, that's what we have to believe”.

While this is an equivocal statement, it does hint at the film's main theme which is quite simply, why? And it is a question which ultimately Polanski doesn't seek to answer – he is the observer.

Saint — of the — week

By Jason Osborne



St Mary Magdalene

Saint Mary Magdalene: Apostle of the Apostles

July 22 sees the Church celebrate another of its greatest saints; indeed, one of those closest to Christ as he walked among us. The ‘Apostle of the Apostles’ according to Christian tradition, Mary Magdalene was the first to encounter the risen Lord, the first to catch a glimpse of the heavenly new creation that God himself was inaugurating. ‘Apostle’ meaning ‘sent’, all four Gospels record that Mary Magdalene was at the tomb that first Easter Sunday morning, and that she was ‘sent’ to share the good news with the apostles, locked in the upper room as they were.

Clearly, then, Mary Magdalene had a unique relationship with Jesus, and we're led to believe that that was the case because she understood just who he was, and just how much he had done for her.

Luke chapter eight tells us that as Jesus went from town to town, preaching the Gospel, he was joined not only by the apostles, but also by “some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities” (Luke 8:2). Among these women

was “Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out” (Luke 8:2).

From this short passage, we understand that encountering Jesus, for Mary Magdalene as for everyone else, was encountering life itself. Meeting him involved shedding a former way of life and entering into a new, missionary mode of being.

Coming from the town of Magdala, (a village on the shore of Lake Tiberias), walking with Jesus would take her to the foot of the cross. While details about this most faithful of disciples are relatively sparse in the gospels, much can be inferred by what is told of her.

As mentioned, Mary Magdalene was one of the few to remain with Christ as he died on the cross, when all of the apostles but John had fled. She is the one to most faithfully accompany Christ through his death to his resurrection, being the first to witness him rise in glory.

The Gospel according to John reveals that when the risen Lord appeared to Mary on the morning of his resurrection, she didn't recognise him – in

fact, she thought him the gardener. It is only when Jesus says her name, “Mary”, that she recognises who she's speaking with, and she responds, “Rabboni” (meaning ‘teacher’).

We can only imagine the depths that Jesus' calling of Mary's name must have struck in her. By healing Mary, as the gospels reveal to us, Jesus had led her down the path he intended her to walk from the beginning – he taught her who she really was. In uttering only her name, Jesus must have known that Mary would recognise the Lord the prophet Isaiah conveys to us:

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.” (Isaiah 43:1)

Pope Francis elevated the memory of Mary Magdalene to the status of Festivity in 2016 in order to stress the importance of this faithful disciple of Christ. In Mary Magdalene, we have a model to follow – one who recognised what God did for her, and walked at his side, enduring the cross itself, until the end of her days.

Blessed Stanley Rother: Farmer, priest, shepherd



A pastor who understood the power of presence, Fr Stanley Rother devoted himself entirely to the people he lived among, writes **Maria Ruiz Scaperlanda**

In December 2016, Pope Francis officially recognised Fr Stanley Rother's martyrdom, making him the first American-born martyr. In September 2017, he became the first male born in the United States to be beatified.

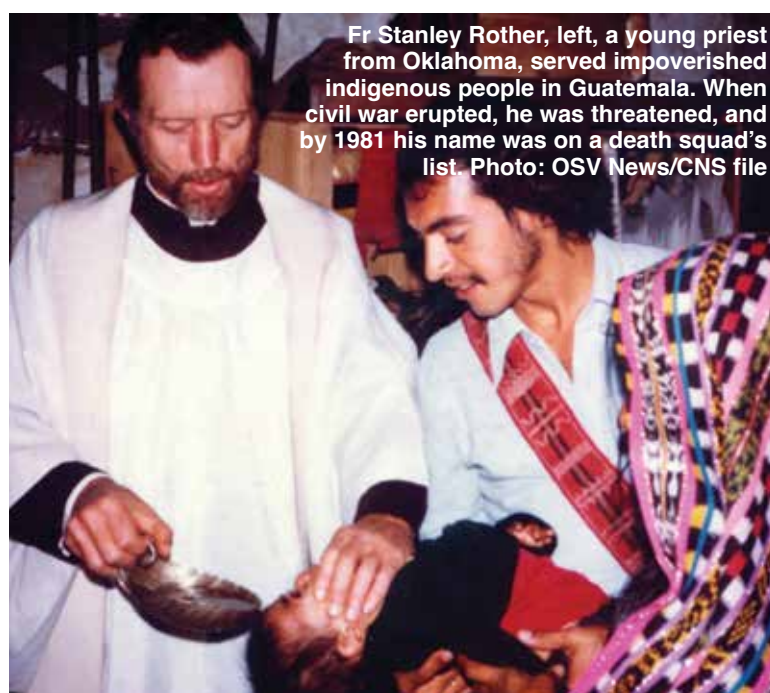
How a 46-year-old diocesan priest from a small German farming community in Oklahoma came to live and die in the remote, ancient village of Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala, is a story full of wonder and God's providence.

It began when the farm boy from Okarche decided to plant a different kind of harvest, becoming a priest for the then-Oklahoma City and Tulsa diocese in 1963 at age 28. Five years later, Fr Rother volunteered for Oklahoma's mission in Guatemala, ultimately finding his heart's vocation as a priest to the Tz'utujil Mayan people – until his violent death in 1981 on July 28, now his feast day.

Ordinary life

Stanley and his four siblings grew up in the farmhouse where he was born, surrounded by extended family. It is in this ordinary life that Stanley first experienced a personal encounter with the Good Shepherd. This is where he learned to be a man of prayer and a hands-on servant with a resolute desire to become a priest. It is here where he learned the perseverance needed years later to trust God when academics proved to be a painful challenge in the seminary. And, it is here where he learned the love and compassion that led him to lay down his life for the Gospel and for his sheep.

It is no coincidence that the same values Stanley learned growing up in an Oklahoma farming community – putting family first, hard work, kindness, generosity, perseverance – are precisely the values that enabled him to become a missionary shepherd. Even his knowledge of farming and love for the land connected him in a special way to his impoverished



Fr Stanley Rother, left, a young priest from Oklahoma, served impoverished indigenous people in Guatemala. When civil war erupted, he was threatened, and by 1981 his name was on a death squad's list. Photo: OSV News/CNS file

and close-knit Mayan parishioners. It is little wonder, then, that his Santiago Atitlán community claimed him as "our priest".

“Because he saw the Gospel values not as a set of ideas but as an affair of the heart, Fr Rother took care of the most menial duties with his whole being”

After enrolling in seminary, Stanley discovered that learning Latin would prove to be a huge obstacle to his priestly vocation. At age 23 he flunked Theology I and was sent home. Back in Oklahoma City, when asked by his bishop, Stanley reiterated his unwavering desire to follow the call to the priesthood. His supportive bishop agreed to find him a new seminary, sending Stanley to Mount St Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland, where he successfully completed his studies.

Stanley never gave up pursuing the truth of his call. Years later, that young man who flunked because he couldn't master Latin volunteered to go to a foreign mission – where he not only became competent in Spanish, but by the grace of God also was able to master the challenging Tz'utujil dialect of his Mayan parishioners.

When he arrived at Santiago Atitlán in 1968, Fr Rother instantly fell in love with the volatile and stunning land of volcanoes and earthquakes, but above all with its people. In time, Fr Rother helped establish there the first farmers' co-op, a school, the first hospital clinic, and the first Catholic radio station, used for catechesis.

While he did not institute the project, he was a critical driving force in establishing Tz'utujil as a written language, which led to the publication of a New Testament in Tz'utujil. This priest and farmer who loved the land and recognised God in all of creation was never afraid to dig in and get his own hands dirty

fixing tractors or ploughing the land – a trait deeply loved by his Tz'utujil people.

In one of his final media interviews, Fr Rother explained: "Despite all this (hardship), you see happiness in the people. Their zest for life – to live and enjoy what they have – their friendliness, their spirit of cooperation ... They are remarkable. I want to stay as long as I can." His prayer was answered. His body was returned for burial to his hometown of Okarche in western Oklahoma, but his heart is entombed in a side altar at the Santiago Atitlán church, a request of his Tz'utujil community.

In his first apostolic exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis describes what he calls "evangelising gestures". Often little and always powerful, these are the acts and attitudes that mark a Christian as a missionary.

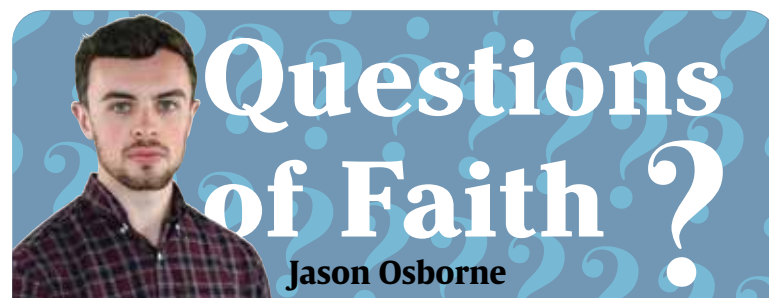
Love, joy and hope

Because he saw the Gospel values not as a set of ideas but as an affair of the heart, Fr Rother took care of the most menial duties with his whole being. Whether listening to someone's pain, fixing a car, changing a diaper, driving someone to the doctor or shopping for the mission's supplies, he recognised the reality of God's presence in each act – and by doing so he proclaimed the Gospel of love, joy and hope.

Fr Rother came to understand with clarity the importance of 'presence'. By constantly striving to be present to the people in front of him, to the needs in front of him, he proclaimed a God who lives and suffers with his people. For Fr Rother, the choice to die for his Tz'utujil was a natural extension of the daily choice he made to live for them, and in communion with them.

His death was nothing less than a proclamation of God's love for the poor of Santiago Atitlán.

❗ *María Ruiz Scaperlanda is the author of The Shepherd Who Didn't Run: Blessed Stanley Rother, Martyr from Oklahoma (OSV Books).*



Can anyone be a saint?

There is an enormous gap between the public perception of sainthood and the reality of it. The vast majority of people believe that saints are born rather than made, titanic figures of myth and legend that we devote art to and tell stories about, nearly like Hercules or Prometheus, except that their stories are often closer in time and space to us (although not always).

Regardless, the idea has unfortunately been received far and wide that sainthood is unattainable for the average person. Messy and muddled as we often are, we can't compare to the towering personages who seem to have floated into this world and remained unsullied throughout their lives, until they were taken up in a blaze of glory at the end.

In reality, that last paragraph outlines the true myth. While God told remarkable stories with the lives of many of his saints, they were as human as you or me. Reading their stories reveals to us that they all struggled with the same fallen impulses and made many of the same mistakes as we do.

If that's the case, what's to stop us from striving for the same sanctity? The Church's answer is: nothing. In fact, the Church goes further and says that that's what every single person is called to.

Chapter V of *Lumen gentium* (*The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*), which is one of the principal documents of the Second Vatican Council, tells us that: "all the Faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity".

"In order that the Faithful may reach this perfection, they must use their strength accordingly as they have received it, as a gift from Christ. They must follow in his footsteps and conform themselves to his image seeking the will of the Father in all things.

They must devote themselves with all their being to the glory of God and the service of their neighbour. In this way, the holiness of the People of God will grow into an abundant harvest of good, as is admirably shown by the life of so many saints in Church history."

This is the Church's teaching, that everyone is called to holiness, and those who follow Christ are given everything they need to attain it. That doesn't mean the way is made easy – in fact, those who walk at his side are often in for a rough ride, as he came not to "bring peace, but a sword". Being a source of discomfort has seen the saints often targeted – martyrs being the exemplars of this – but the Church assures us that God is truly with those who strive to be the people he created them to be.

Despite the Church's assurances, it can still seem too high a goal to be attained. Indeed, one of the saints, St Josemaría Escrivá asked in one of his homilies on the topic of the universal call to holiness: "In recommending this unbroken union with God, am I not presenting an ideal so sublime that it is unattainable by the majority of Christians?"

His answer: "Certainly the goal is high, but it is not unattainable. The path that leads to holiness is the path of prayer; and prayer ought to take root and grow in the soul little by little, like the tiny seed which later develops into a tree with many branches."

Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect". He was not speaking idly – he really meant it. We have to reconfigure our vision to understand that holiness isn't attained by birthright or in one great leap. Holiness is a thing attained little by little, prayer by prayer, loving action by loving action. As such, it's equally accessible for the "great and the small", for all of us.

Praying for both the weak and the strong



When Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper, he held up bread and wine as two elements within which to make himself especially present to us. Since that time, now more than 2,000 years ago, Christians celebrating the Eucharist have used the same two things, bread and wine, to ask Christ to bless this world and to bring God's special presence to our world. Why two elements? Why both bread and wine? What reality does each represent?

Eucharist

I have always found this insight from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin particularly meaningful. Commenting on why both bread and wine are offered at each Eucharist, he says this: "In a sense the true substance to be consecrated each day is the world's development during that day - the bread symbolising appropriately what creation succeeds in producing, the wine (blood) what creation causes to be lost in exhaustion and suffering in the course of that effort."

There's an important lesson here for how we are invited to enter into and pray the Eucharist. When Jesus said, "my flesh is food for the life of the world", he meant just that. He meant that our prayer, particularly the Eucharist, needs to embrace nothing less than the world, the whole world and everything and everybody in it. And that is asking a lot because, as we know, our world is a pathologically complex place, mixed, bi-polar, differentiated; a place full of both good and



Fr Rolheiser

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bad, young and old, healthy and sick, rich and poor, powerful and powerless, triumph and defeat, life and death. Making Christ's flesh food for the life of the world means holding a lot of things up for God's blessing, and that doesn't always come naturally to us.

The whole world

As instituted by Jesus, the Eucharist needs to be a prayer that embraces the whole world and everything and everyone in it. It needs to be a prayer for the poor, the aged, the sick, the suffering, the powerless, and for everyone

(including Mother Earth) who is being victimised - even as it needs to be a prayer for the rich, the young, the healthy, and the powerful. At the Eucharist, we need to pray for those in our hospitals and for those who are bursting with health. We need to pray for the woman or man who is dying, even as we pray for the young athlete who is preparing to compete in the Olympic games. And we need to pray for the refugees on our borders as well as for those who make laws regarding our borders. As Teilhard de Chardin says, we must hold up in prayer "what creation suc-

ceeds in producing and what creation causes to be lost in exhaustion and suffering in the course of that effort".

God's blessing

As a Catholic priest, I have the privilege of presiding at the Eucharist, and whenever I do, I try always to remain conscious of the separate realities which the bread and wine symbolise. When I lift up the bread, I try to be conscious of the fact that I am holding up for God's blessing all that is healthy, growing in life, and is being celebrated in our world today. When I lift up the wine, I try to be conscious that I am holding up for God's blessing all that is being crushed, is suffering, and is dying today, as life on this earth moves forwards.

Our world is a big place and at every moment somewhere on this

planet new life is being born, young life is taking root, some people are celebrating life, some are finding love, some are making love, and some are celebrating success and triumph. And, while all of this is happening, others are losing their health, others are dying, others are being raped and violated, and others are being crushed by hunger, defeat, hopelessness, and a broken spirit. At the Eucharist, the bread speaks for the former, the wine for the latter.

Several days ago, I presided over the Eucharist at the funeral of a man who had died at the age of 90. We celebrated this Faith, mourned with his family, highlighted the gift that was his life, tried to drink from the spirit he left behind, said a faith-filled ritual goodbye to him, and buried him in the earth. The wine we consecrated at the Eucharist that day, symbolised all this, his death, our loss, and the deaths and losses of people everywhere - God's being with us in our suffering.

Shortly afterwards, I was in a house filled with the vibrancy and young energy of three small children - aged five, two, and eight months. Little on this planet so refreshes the soul as does young life. There's isn't any anti-depressant drug anywhere on this planet that can do for us what the energy of a young child can do. When I next held up the bread at the Eucharist, I was more conscious of what that bread symbolised - energy, health, beauty, young life, vibrancy - God's joy and radiance on this planet.

“Our world is a big place and at every moment somewhere on this planet new life is being born, young life is taking root, some people are celebrating life, some are finding love, some are making love, and some are celebrating success and triumph”

From weeds in God's field to wheat



July 23 - 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time
 Wis 12:13, 16-19
 Ps 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16
 Rom 8:26-27
 Mt 13:24-43

The Sunday Gospel

Deacon
 Greg
 Kandra



As a city dweller who is more familiar with steel and cement than weeds and wheat, I never really connected with this Sunday's Gospel.

I'm sure the people of Jesus's time got his point. If they were a little surprised that the kingdom of heaven could be compared to something like seeds and yeast, they eventually understood the larger point he was making.

Passage

It took me a while to realise that this passage is about so much more than agriculture. It isn't just about the Kingdom of Heaven, either. It can

be understood in many ways.

I see it as an important (and hope-filled!) description of the human heart, and one aspect in particular: the idea of change. Of conversion. Of growth.

The three examples Jesus shares in this parable describing the kingdom are all about God's extraordinary patience with his creation – how he gives it time to become something more.

Yeast, mixed with wheat, can become bread to feed the hungry. A seed that might seem to be worthless, incapable of doing much good, can grow to contain a multitude.

And, in God's plan, weeds can even become wheat.

That's not as farfetched as

it may sound. There is a scientific principle in agriculture known as Vavilovian mimicry. It was first discovered by a Russian plant geneticist by the name of Nikolai Vavilov. He found, to his amazement, that a weed can often take on the characteristics of surrounding plants. Vavilov discovered that rye, a basic grass, when growing among wheat can start bearing seeds like wheat, and even adjust its growing pattern to follow the same annual schedule as wheat.

Change

It can change.

That may be one reason why the landowner in the

parable doesn't destroy the weeds right away. He wants to give them time. Time to evolve. To change. To become something greater.

“We are so polarised, we want to uproot the weeds in our world”

That's how it is with God. He sees what we are. But he sees, too, what we can become.

One of my teachers in high school used to wear a pin: “Please be patient. God isn't finished with me yet.”

“You gave your children good ground for hope, that you would permit repentance for their sins”

The reading from Wisdom evokes a merciful God. “You judge with clemency,” we hear. “You gave your children good ground for hope, that you would permit repentance for their sins.”

He isn't finished with any of us. We have good ground for hope – for ourselves and for those around us.

Suspicious

At a moment in history when we are increasingly suspicious and intolerant of the “other” – whether because of nationality or religion or race or political persuasion – I think that message is one the world needs to hear. We are too quick to mock or dismiss, to judge or condemn. We are so polarised, we want to uproot the weeds in our world.

But sometimes, we fail to realise that the weeds are us – all of us. And we also fail to accept the possibility

that weeds can, incredibly, change.

God gives us time. He gives us opportunities to learn, to grow, to convert, to repent. We can become more than what we are.

St Augustine once put it this way: “Consider what we choose to be in God's field; consider what sort of people we are found to be at the harvest. Nobody knows what is going to happen tomorrow.”

What do we choose to be, in God's field?

The abiding message of this week's Gospel reading, with its colourful parables about growing, harvesting, and planting, is so simple: We don't have to settle for what we are. We don't have to be weeds. By God's grace, we can become wheat.

Deacon Greg Kandra is an award-winning author and journalist, and creator of the blog, “The Deacon's Bench.”

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan

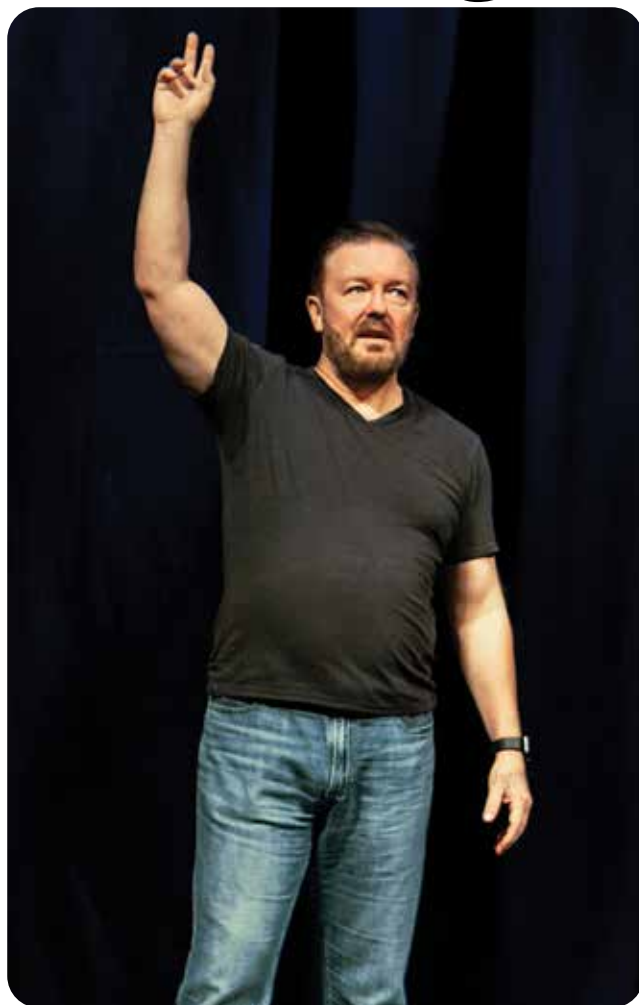


Do we have a right not to be offended?

Can comedy go too far? Oh yes, I think so. I don't see free speech as an absolute right, and most people draw the line somewhere. Disputes tend to happen over the where the line should be drawn, and over who should draw it.

The question was posed by presenter Ciara Kelly on **Newstalk Breakfast** (Friday), prompted by Barry Egan's review of the recent Ricky Gervais stand-up show in the 3Arena. The reviewer had described the show as "intolerant", "nasty" and "grossly offensive". The presenter offered her own opinion: "I, personally, am tired of people, what the young people would call tone policing each other", she said. "I'm tired of people telling people what they are allowed to say and think". Mr Egan's view was that freedom of speech could easily morph into hate speech.

She was joined to discuss the issue by comedian Steve Cummins. He said he wouldn't use some of the controversial material because it would make him feel bad, but felt that if you paid to go to a Ricky Gervais gig you knew what you'd be getting. It wasn't like he was shouting it at people in the street. He seemed to think some offensiveness was in the comedian's job description, though I would disagree with that – there are many comedians who can be hilarious without



Comedian Ricky Gervais

giving such offence, e.g. Bob Newhart or Colm O'Regan (no relation!). Dr Kelly suggested that the material might embolden racists, but Mr Cummins wanted his racists emboldened, speaking out so

that he could call them out on it. Dr Kelly said he mightn't say that if he was one of the minorities being punched down on. He thought if people with unpopular views didn't get a chance to argue

an issue, they would become more entrenched in their views – quite a bit of truth in that. I'd like to have heard someone more critical of Mr Gervais contributing to the discussion.

A related issue was discussed on **Sunday Sequence** (BBC Radio Ulster), in the light of a flurry of false accusations on social media surrounding the controversy involving a BBC presenter. Alison Morris of the *Belfast Telegraph* said she had received loads of abuse on social media and for some reason it was generally worse during the summer. She didn't mind political debate and interaction but innocent people being accused from anonymous accounts was different. As regards taking civil cases for libel or defamation, it was costly and would get you nowhere if the accused had no assets (though wouldn't it help to restore reputation?). She could see the point of anonymous accounts in some cases, but thought people behind these accounts should have to register with identification. Emmet Ryan of the *Business Post* disagreed and thought there was a case for some vulnerable people to be anonymous. He referenced the debate about whether the social media giants were publishers and therefore responsible for content, and said these companies always resisted such efforts and no court had yet decided they

PICK OF THE WEEK

VOX NOSTRA WITH VLAD SMISHKEWYCH
RTÉ Lyric FM, Sunday July 23, 7am

Early music for a modern Camino: Vlad explores pilgrimage music of Ireland, Galicia, and more ahead of Santiago, St James' Day.

FILM: QUIZ SHOW

TG4, Monday July 24, 9.30pm

(1994) Starring Ralph Fiennes and John Turturro. Directed by Robert Redford. A young lawyer investigates a potentially fixed game show. Interesting moral issues.

ROME DIRECT – COURAGE INTERNATIONAL

EWTN, Friday July 28, 7pm

Jan Bentz interviews Fr Paul Check on his worldwide apostolate, Courage International, that helps individuals with same-sex attraction live chaste lives, as they discuss the documentary, *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*.

were publishers. He thought one factor was that the companies were providing so much tax revenue that governments didn't want to upset them and so he reckoned it was important for regulations to be beefed up worldwide.

Away from such aggravations it was good to hear such a positive interview on **Catholics Come Home** (EWTN, Saturday). We heard the inspiring and unusual story of Sr Mary Frances Power – I do like a good vocation story. She was born into a large Irish Catholic family in San Francisco, but moved around a lot because her father was in the Air Force. Engaged to a Baptist convert at 17 and married at 19 (too young, she said), she had three sons, worked in the

Air Force, the Pentagon and the civil service. Eventually, she got divorced, though we didn't learn about the circumstances. She drifted from the Church for a few years, attending church sometimes, then got her religious vocation in her mid-50s. At that age she found it hard to find an order that would take her, but a fortuitous meeting led her to the Eudist Servants of the Eleventh Hour, following the spirituality of St John Eudes, a French priest from the 1600s. Part of the formation involved prison ministry – and the order generally has a strong spirit of service.

She often felt surprised at the paths down which life and God took her.



Aubrey Malone

Film

The old artificer continues to engage audiences

All those years after his death in 1980, Alfred Hitchcock still remains not only the 'Master of the Macabre', his more ubiquitous sobriquet, but also the supreme purveyor of enticing visual grammar in storytelling.

In Mark Cousins' fascinating documentary *My Name is Alfred Hitchcock* (15) – which I recommend you watch in tandem with the 2021 release *I Am Alfred Hitchcock* – Cousins has him speaking to us from the grave, a mischievous stratagem worthy of the great man himself.

He employs British impressionist Alastair McGowan as his mouthpiece in a 'MacGuffin', this being Hitch's own term for thematic devices in

his films that propelled them forward. We're informed in the opening credits that the film has been "written and voiced by Alfred Hitchcock", a posthumous ruse that enables Cousins to give his spin on the tropes in Hitchcock's work by osmosis.

Structuring the film in six 'chapters', we get Cousins – through McGowan – taking us through topics like escape, desire, loneliness, time, fulfilment and height. The choice may seem eccentric at first. Upon reflection it provides us with a totally relevant set of portholes through which to examine the intriguing dynamics at work in films like *Vertigo*, *The Birds*, *Shadow of a Doubt* (his own personal favourite) and countless other



Alfred Hitchcock with crow iconic works.

If you feel Hitchcock has been done to the death already by the scores of writers (and indeed documentarians) who have forensically

analysed almost every frame of his films over the years, brace yourself for Cousins' novel approach to formerly well-travelled roads.

The film is as explicatory

about his life as his career. A Catholic, Hitchcock was taught by the Jesuits in London growing up, afterwards making his way to Hollywood to carve out a career that was epic in its scope. 'Catholic guilt' is a theme in many of his films.

It was most obvious in *I Confess* where Montgomery Clift plays a priest who hears details of a murder in the confession box and finds himself tortured by the revelation, which eventually leads to himself becoming a suspect.

Psycho was the acme of Hitchcock's career. I remember having the surprise of this chiller spoiled for me in the early 60s when, upon entering the cinema with my father, he said to the man-

ager, "Isn't this the one where Anthony Perkins thinks he's his mother?" Aaargh!

The director never reached such Freudian heights again, either in manner or matter. A number of 'meat and potatoes' films followed. By then he'd built up such a body of work it didn't matter. He was already the template for a future generation of directors, François Truffaut and Brian de Palma being the most notable.

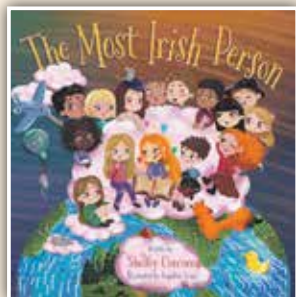
If you're interested in revisiting the 'scenes of the crime', as it were, this is the ideal place to view again his classic films and re-invigorate all those discussions in parlour rooms and pubs that start with the words, "What did you think he was getting at there?"

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Two summer books for young people



The Most Irish Person, written by Shelly Corcoran, illustrated by Angelika Sowul (Curragh Books, €12.99)

Elizabeth Visits the Abbey, by Phyllis Zagano (Clear Faith Publishing, \$US11.00/ £9.00; clearfaithpublishing.com)

Peter Costello

Here are two books, for two different age groups, which will provide amusing and interesting reading for children this summer when they need to escape from the all too brilliant sun and sit in the shade and read.

The first is for 7-10-year-olds, and is a quite delightful thing. It opens with Anna asking her best friend Lucy, "What makes an Irish person Irish"? Well, what indeed.

Anna was born in Poland and then moved to Longford, where Lucy was born. They decide they will hold a competition to find out. This makes up the body of the book, their search among those members of Ireland's new communities who are most Irish. It is delightful and almost unbelievable fun, for they meet a wide array of children with very different experiences.

In the end though they are puzzled who to give the award to. So they decide to give it to everyone! At the end are two pages of photographs of the children who helped the author and perhaps the artist tell the

tale. Altogether a hoot and half. It will delight those who are raised by the sight of how enthusiastically young Nigerian children play Gaelic games.

*

The second book is a surprising book for a Professor of Religion at Hofstra University, who sat on the Pontifical Commission for the Study of the Diaconate of Women. But you have to allow for the fact that *Elizabeth Visits the Abbey* is intended for those aged 10-14.

It is a novel which recounts the visit to Ireland of Elizabeth, a 12-year-old American girl who visits Ireland with her parents. The father is American, her mother is Irish and how they met is part of the story too. But meeting the Irish relations is a revelation.

Her aunt is the Abbess of a Cistercian abbey in rural Ireland, her uncle a commander in the Irish Naval Service (the first time I have ever encountered such a character in fiction, though a family member was in the service).

Slowly the author reveals the role of women in religion and their role in Irish life and history as family members and saints. The role of saints in everyday Irish life, from the names of ships in the navy and planes in the national air fleet, are delicately related.

This is a book which for the warmth and delicacy and quiet amusement of the writing is to be highly recommended so do try to order a copy. The book will be an education for girls about the roles that women have played in the past and will play in the future. The publishers are American, but can be reached through their website. A lovely book, and well worth a family read.



Author Prof. Phyllis Zagano. Photo: CNS.

Hospitality embodies the Gospel message and challenges the Church

Bread and wine as symbols of hospitality.



Thomas O'Loughlin

Hospitality is something we all know about. We have all experienced true, warm hospitality that puts us at our ease. Inhospitality has also left a trail in our memories.

In Matthew hospitality is offered as a key to discipleship, and inhospitality is presented as the signal of failure in following Jesus.

"I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me" (Mt 25:43).

Think of even a small gathering of a few friends, and notice how welcome and hospitality, just putting people at their ease, is a higher level concern than whether you are going to eat.

And yes, then think of the darker side: those times when you hosted a shared meal which was used as an instrument to serve another purpose.

We have all tried to offer real hospitality; and yes, as imperfect humans, we have all gone through the motions and put up a mere front of hospitality.

*

It is at this point that we can consider the hospitality that is part of the Christian way. There are at least four

dimensions to hospitality within the gospels. Let's look at just one passage for each.

The hospitality of love for the stranger: The most succinct expression – some would argue it contains the core of the message of discipleship – is in Mt 25: 31-45, often called 'The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats'.

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took me in, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you visited me.... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these, my sisters and brothers, you did for me."

Pattern

Offering hospitality is to be a pattern, perhaps the pattern for our way of living.

The hospitality of reconciliation: In Luke we have a sequence of three parables that highlight the hospitality Jesus showed to sinners. The chapter opens with these words: "Now all the tax collectors and sinners were gathering around to listen to Jesus. So the Pharisees and scribes began to grumble: 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.'"

Then we have the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the high-point of which is the wonderful hospitality of

the father's meal welcoming back his lost son: "Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let us feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found!" So they began to celebrate" (Lk 15:23-4).

The hospitality of mercy: Faced with the question as to who is our neighbour (Lk 10:29), Jesus told the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-37). The Samaritan is the one who showed mercy, cared for the sick man, and paid for his stay in the inn.

The hospitality of gratitude: We all recall that Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10), the crooked tax collector, had his sins forgiven and promised to repay those he had defrauded, but we forget that the conversion comes when Jesus is staying in his house.

Zacchaeus offers Jesus hospitality, and "salvation comes to his house". In giving and receiving hospitality we can be transformed.

There is a challenge here for the Church. We all like to think of ourselves – and the groups we belong to – as hospitable. A look at what we do should make us more hesitant to declare that.

Where is the nearest hotel housing refugees? Do we have a sneaking like for populist drum-beaters of nationalism who claim that 'they are taking our jobs'?

Do we as Christians even

think it is important? Looking back at many of our celebrations, it would be hard to imagine that hospitality is anything more than a formality – and words are cheap.

Celebrations

Are our celebrations of the Eucharist events when we actually experience hospitality and practice it? Many are simply 'had to be there' events which feel very unlike a welcoming meal. Are we even offered the cup to drink – or is that just for the clergy?

Many are more marked by who cannot eat and drink, than by the forgiving welcome of the Lord. How we behave officially in the liturgy are signals of inhospitality that we would never permit at home.

Maybe it is because we have such an inhospitable liturgy that we do not link this charisma with the Gospel.

Is our presentation of Jesus that of 'the one who ate with sinners'? And if we recall that mercy, do we practice it towards strangers, outcasts, and refugees?

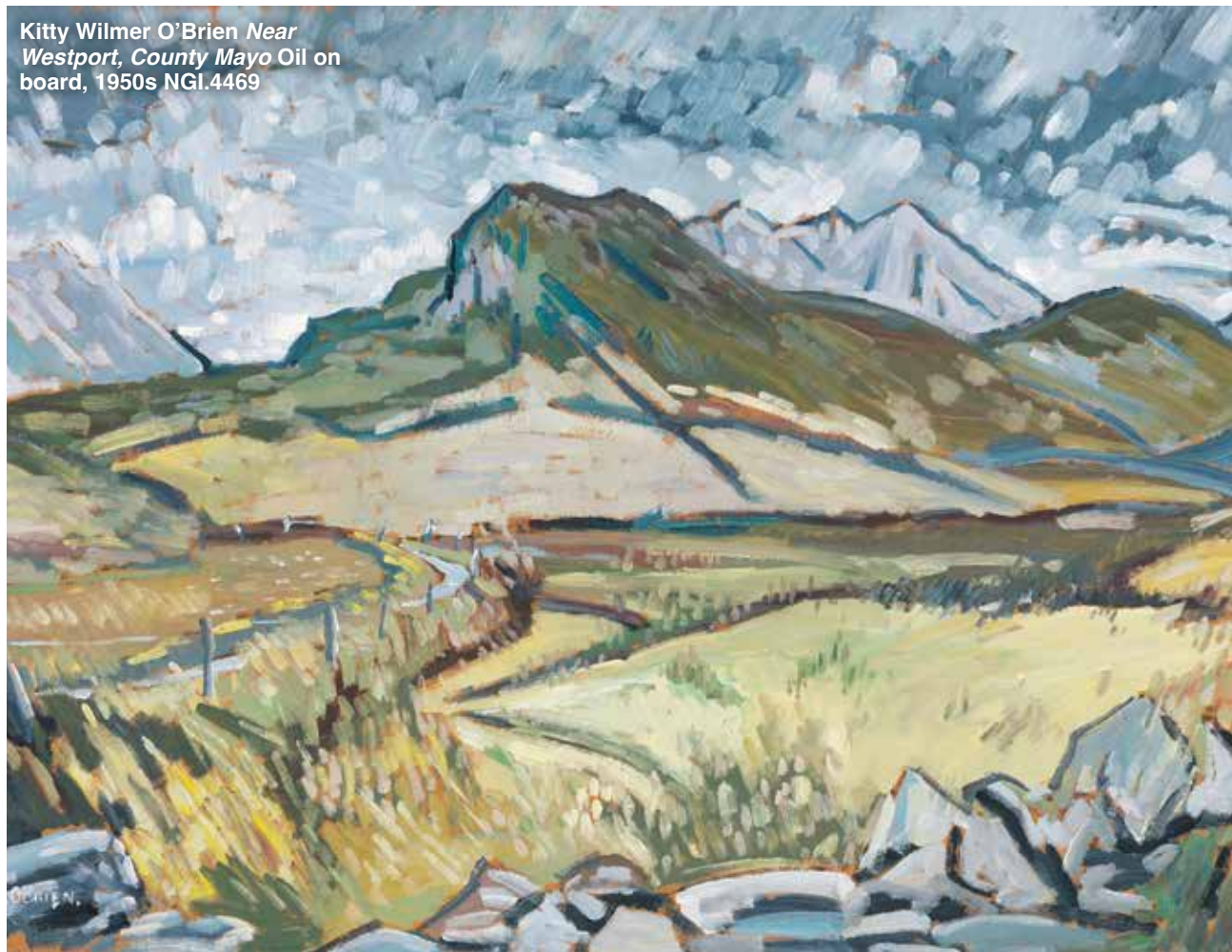
We know what hospitality feels like; the challenge is in practising it.

Thomas O'Loughlin is professor emeritus of historical theology at the University of Nottingham.

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.

'It took a century': women artists and the RHA

Kitty Wilmer O'Brien *Near Westport, County Mayo* Oil on board, 1950s NGI.4469



Maeve McCarthy *Portrait of Maeve Binchy* (1940-2012), 2005 NGI.4752

RHA exhibition at the National Gallery, Room 21 at the National Gallery until October 22. Curated by Kate McBride and others from both the RHA and the NGI.

Peter Costello

The limited exhibition at the National Gallery is one of some special interest concerning the advancement of women artists in modern Ireland.

The Royal Irish Academy during the long 19th Century, though it accepted women artists as contributors to the Annual Summer show, did not have a class of women members. This changed but it has taken a full century since then for the election of a woman president. She is Abigail O'Brien who was elected in 2018.

Striking

One of her works is in fact a very striking feature of the show. It consists of the front image *Perfection I* and allied with *Perfection II*. The first shows the embroidery of an organic heart,

then *Perfection II* shows the reverse, the chaos of threads. Together they go to creating the front image. It is a simile of art itself forming organic order out of seeming creative disorder.

In a way the whole show is a bit like an RHA summer show in miniature. Remember these are selling shows. One is not expected to love every item on display. Indeed at the summer shows the question people have to ask themselves is would I take it home?

On that basis some items stand out. One is undoubtedly Kitty Wilmer O'Brien's *Near Westport, County Mayo* (1950s), an evocation of a much loved place that rivals those by greater hands. My companion thought however she would take home the sycamore seeds cases always much loved by children, a work in bronze and sandstone by Rachel Joynt entitled *Whisper I and II*, that is very evocative of life's new beginnings.

Other pieces too are memorable for a variety of reasons. The portrait of cartoonist Tom Matthews by Una Sealy catches

that ever-mobile man at a moment of forced rest.

Portrait

I liked, too, the portrait by Norah McGuinness of playwright Denis Johnston. But of the portrait that most stands out, this has to be one by Maeve McCarthy of Maeve Binchy, a writer much loved in Ireland for both her books and for her personality, with her husband lurking in the background reading the paper.

Like the RHA Summer shows, it's an exhibition of typical pieces, the usual manner and modes of the artist, rather than masterpieces. There are more than enough pieces created with humour for your children to enjoy too. Some will shock; some truly delight like the Mayo landscape. I would take that home any day.

i In the Ely Place Gallery of the RHA the 193rd Royal Hibernian Academy Annual Exhibition runs until July 30.

The false choices at RTÉ

Peter Costello

The revelations of the ongoing inquiries into the curious financial arrangements at RTÉ have been a shock to the nation, especially to those who are involved in film, writing and the arts. But there has been one big positive. It is the integrity with which RTÉ News has reported on the darker side of its own company. In the past many have complained about the way RTÉ News reported on scandals in other institutions, such as the Church indeed. The current integrity will make everyone aware of the great service that they have given the nation in the past and will in the future.

But on the other side the failures are dismaying. My own experiences of RTÉ are limited. When the matter was of reporting on my doings and writings there was no question of a fee of any kind. But for a contribution to a critical programme, such as a review of a new theatre production for radio or television there was a fee, albeit a small one compared with what the BBC or independent stations offered.

But what really dismays creative people of any kind is the sums involved. I have been involved in several documentaries for television. In all of these the funds available to the producers were always restricted,

compared with what was thrown around for *Toy Show the Musical*.

For a documentary on Liam O'Flaherty for TG4, in discussing the material that should be involved, I suggested that we would certainly need some archive film of horse races in Ireland and Britain. We would need archive film, too, of Russia in the 1930s to cover his visit to the Soviet Union. I was asked did I know what such archive material cost per second. No way would the budget reach to it.

In a documentary on Conan Doyle made with BBC Scotland I was filmed at a seaside scene near Edinburgh, which was made to stand in for Southsea in England where the writer was living when he created Sherlock Holmes. There was no money to come and go to the real place.

Putting aside the BBC, the programmes I made for TG4, which were shared with the national language channels in Wales, Scotland and Brittany, were heavily constrained by short falls in funding. Yet on what was available, some of the producers did really brilliant work.

Creativity will triumph over greed in the end. It is the waste of money at the top, when there were real needs elsewhere in the creative system, that makes one angry. No wonder some people lament the loss of *Radharc*: that was a model of a value-giving programme.

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Leisure time

Crossword Junior Gordius 492

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- Across**
- 1 Huge creature with white fur (5,4)
 - 6 Larger (6)
 - 8 Travelling across ice (7)
 - 10 Puts a plane safely on the ground (5)
 - 12 Spooky (5)
 - 14 River which flows into and out of Lough Neagh (4)
 - 18 Person in charge of a class (7)
 - 19 In the Disney film, he had friends called Thumper and Flower (5)
 - 20 The top of a bin or saucepan (3)
 - 21 Carrick-on-Shannon is in this county (7)
- Down**
- 1 Small, rounded stone (6)
 - 2 This river flows through Belfast (5)
 - 3 Sound like a dog (4)
 - 4 The sister of your mother or father (4)
 - 5 Mix red and white to make this colour (4)
 - 7 "It's _____, I absolutely need it" (9)
 - 9 Creature (6)
 - 11 A fox's home (3)
 - 13 Yell with fear (6)
 - 15 Pointed a gun at something (5)
 - 16 Shout to encourage your team (5)
 - 17 Adam and Eve's first two sons were Cain and _____ (4)

SOLUTIONS, JULY 13
GORDIUS NO. 491

Across — 1 Importance 6 Otis 10 Petal 11 Parachute 12 Copycat 15 Forum 17 Reef 18 Afro 19 Leant 21 Examine your conscience 23 Eying 25 Gave 26 Tough 28 Thicket 33 Adulation 34 Canal

Down — 1 I Spy 2 Potpourri 3 Relay race 4 Alpha 5 Cart 7 Truer 8 Stepmother 9 Scuffle 13 Coax 14 Trumpet 16 Take it easy 20 Agamemnon 21 Egghead 22 Nazi 27 Uluru 29 Hands 30 Cacti 31 Tito 32 Glue

CHILDREN'S No. 491

Across — 1 Fingernails 7 Again 8 Iceland 9 Ill 10 Yacht 13 Tap 15 Coo 16 Serpent 19 Old 20 Blushes 21 Table

Down — 1 Flamingo 2 Neatly 3 Enniscorthy 4 Newest 5 Infant 6 Sand 11 Ace 12 Hop 14 Puddle 16 Soup 17 East 18 Tomb

Crossword Gordius 620

1		2		3		4		5			6	7		8
										9				
10						11								
	12				13		14			15				
16							17							
18										19		20		
				21						22				
23												24		
26		27					28	29		30				
							31							32
33										34				
35							36							

- Across**
- 1 Occasionally (3,3,4)
 - 6 Gale or breeze perhaps (4)
 - 10 Drive-in lodgings (5)
 - 11, 33a & 20d Hymn associated with the Anglican Church whose second line is "All creatures great and small" (3,6,6,3,9)
 - 12 How to derange a Spanish nobleman (7)
 - 15 Musical instruction - slowly, in dignified style (5)
 - 17 African country, capital Bamako (4)
 - 18 Pile (4)
 - 19 A room on board ship (5)
 - 21 Avail of (7)
 - 23 Ignited once more (5)
 - 24 Fragrant powder; the softest stone (4)
 - 25 Weathering on iron (4)
 - 26 Name of a book, film etc (5)
 - 28 From the French, on the way (2,5)
 - 33 See 11 across
 - 34 Pixie-like (5)
 - 35 Ova (4)
 - 36 City (10)
- Down**
- 1 Unable to feel (4)
 - 2 Cataract (9)
 - 3 Synthetic fabric (5)
- Across**
- 4 Business or skilled occupation (5)
 - 5 Slippery creatures (4)
 - 7 More central (5)
 - 8 Unplug (10)
 - 9 Sacred vessel (7)
 - 13 Song to be sung by two singers (4)
 - 14 Try to equal the achievements of another (7)
 - 16 Of helpful and caring disposition or outlook (10)
 - 20 See 11 across
 - 21 Dutch city - it's fourth-largest (7)
 - 22 Goading attachment to a cowboy's boot (4)
 - 27 An object (5)
 - 29 Lowest point (5)
 - 30 A goal ahead (3,2)
 - 31 Flower container (4)
 - 32 Burden, responsibility (4)

Sudoku Corner 492

Easy

	9	1			8	6		2
	5				6			
3			9			5		
8	7			5				4
	1	9				7	8	
5				1			9	3
		7			3			9
			4				1	
1		4	6			3	2	

Hard

8	2					9		5
				1		3		
	3		2	8	7	6		
		2					4	
	1			7			3	
7						1		
		7	5	4	8		9	
		9		6				
3		4					6	8

Last week's Easy 491

1	9	5	3	8	6	4	2	7
6	7	8	4	5	2	9	3	1
4	3	2	7	1	9	6	8	5
8	4	3	5	6	7	2	1	9
2	1	7	9	3	8	5	6	4
9	5	6	2	4	1	8	7	3
3	6	9	1	2	4	7	5	8
5	2	4	8	7	3	1	9	6
7	8	1	6	9	5	3	4	2

Last week's Hard 491

6	4	8	3	5	1	9	2	7
3	2	7	6	9	8	5	4	1
1	9	5	2	7	4	8	6	3
2	1	3	8	4	6	7	9	5
8	5	4	7	2	9	3	1	6
9	7	6	1	3	5	2	8	4
7	6	2	9	1	3	4	5	8
4	8	9	5	6	7	1	3	2
5	3	1	4	8	2	6	7	9

Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter



Baptism needs the biggest makeover in Ireland

An irate mother of a First Communicant complained about all the hoops her family had to go through to participate in the ceremony: enrolment and Mass attendance and First Confession and everything. She might be the kind of parent so well titled by Fr Martin Delaney in these pages: a "bouncy castle Catholic", i.e. one of those for whom the externals seem more important than the actual sacrament itself.

This parent felt she had been misled, that all attention was focused on First Communion and Confirmation, with full 'bells and whistles' liturgies preceded by months of preparing, while Baptism itself, that sacrament that leads to everything else, passed by in the most quiet and ineffective way. And she had a point.

I often see the notices in newsletters, which give a "welcome to the Christian community" to a newly-christened child, even though the ceremony that baptised the child took place as far distant from the Christian community as could be imagined. Baptisms rarely involve the community, they often take place in a dark church, with just child and parents, godparents, friends and priest, and no one else except



perhaps a sacristan to observe proceedings. Baptisms tend to be private events, away from the public gaze, yet everything else follows from Baptism, this wonderful 'gateway' sacrament. Even ordination flows from Baptism, and yet while no one is ever ordained in a celebration that does not include the Eucharist, Baptism is rarely celebrated in that context. And that's a shame because it reinforces the message that Baptism is not all that important.

I believe baptism is the sacrament that needs the biggest makeover in Ireland, not First Communion or Confirmation. If parents realised their child is

becoming part of the community through Baptism, the communal celebrations of First Communion and Confirmation, and the ceremonies that lead to each, might make more sense.

Obviously procedures will vary from parish to parish, but here are my suggestions.

1. Invite a group of lay volunteers to help renew the sacrament of Baptism in your parish. The pastoral council might make this a priority. Make sure members of the team are well informed and understand what Baptism means (and are Garda vetted as well).
2. With the team's insights, review baptismal practices in your parish. How can you bring the sacrament into the centre of community life? Some possibilities might include baptism during Sunday Mass once a month, or during another well-attended liturgy. Private baptisms might be replaced with those where more than one child is baptised. The baptismal team will help decide the best approach.
3. Bless and sprinkle water at the start of Sunday Mass occasionally, reminding people of the privilege of

being baptised people. And with the permission of parents (for GDPR), pray for the newly baptised by name and thus welcome them in that community setting.

You might like to add other ways of re-establishing baptism at the heart of the community. Send them to me at frbernard1984@gmail.com, and I will share them here.

● In June, my local town of Skibbereen had its Eucharistic procession, like many towns in Ireland. The town was resplendent with flags – not religious flags though, rather, the rainbow flag (for gay pride). Practically every premises had such a flag, or several. Fifty years ago, these premises probably flew the Eucharistic or Vatican flags with equal enthusiasm.

The underlying practice is apparently called 'virtue-signalling', done to impress customers of businesses' support for 'in' causes – 50 years ago, the Church triumphant, now the cause of equality, diversity etc. None of this is to be confused with actual conviction however: worry not!

The German word for a cemetery

In Germany earlier this summer, I noticed some of the German language's interesting features. The suffix '-hof' is used to identify a place where specific activities take place. A 'Gast-hof' is a place for guests (an inn) and a 'Bahn-hof' is a place of rails (railway station).

The Irish language used a similar construction, adding '-lann' to indicate a place. So we use 'leabhar-lann' for a place of books (library) and 'uachtar-lann' for a creamery.

The Germans use one other interesting word though: 'Fried-hof' (peace place = cemetery). Maybe in Ireland we should call those places the very pleasant 'síochán-lann'.



Impoverished Catholic community in D.R. Congo badly needs our help to build a solid and dignified chapel

Fr Cesar Balayulu, a Consolata priest working on the outskirts of Kinshasa, has told us about his Catholic faithful at serie Dix, about ten miles from his parish church. "The people live in small houses often made from metal sheets or straw. Because of their poverty our people cannot help us financially with the cost of building the chapel dedicated to Our Lady Consolata which we wish to construct. At present Mass is offered under a large metal sheet on poles, this becoming impossible in bad weather.

"The new chapel, when completed, will help our Christians to participate with dignity in the Holy Eucharist, no longer having to carry chairs from their homes every Sunday. It will enable them to focus more on prayer and not to be distracted by noise from outside. It will promote the social life of the Christian community. We turn to you, Little Way, with great confidence that you will support us with your aid."

Will you please help these Christian brothers and sisters of ours to turn their dream of a chapel into reality?

(If we receive more funds than are required for this project they will be used for similar chapel projects).

Every euro you send will be sent direct to help build a mission chapel.



PLEASE HELP FEED HUNGRY CHILDREN

Fr Eamonn Gowing is a Redemptorist priest working in a favela/shanty town in the Brazilian city of Fortaleza. He reports of the great poverty there and how more than 200 children benefit from a feeding programme he has started which provides a nutritious meal each day. For many of the children it is the only regular meal they receive. Fr Eamonn is one of the many missionaries The Little Way Association supports with funds to feed hungry children.

Can you spare a donation, large or small, to feed a hungry child?

Every euro you send to our fund for Needy Children will be used, without deduction, to provide food, health-supplies and basic necessities for deprived children.

MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS

In these difficult times missionary priests overseas rely more than ever on Mass stipends for their daily subsistence and in order that they may continue to minister to their poor communities.

We like to send a minimum stipend of €6.50 or more for each Mass.

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€..... **WELLS AND WATER**

€..... **MASSES** (please state no.)
(We ask for a minimum of €6.50 or more for each Mass)

€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

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