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Bombs to birdsong

Frontline religious praise Irish generosity to Ukraine

Chai Brady and Jason Osborne

Religious in Poland have praised the Church in Ireland's response to the Ukraine crisis after €3.25 million was raised by parishes.

Poland has taken in almost three million Ukrainian refugees, more than any other country.

The Irish Catholic visited several sites where Church-charity Caritas and religious orders operate on the ground in Kraków and the border town of Przemysl, witnessing donations being put into action.

Salesian priest Fr Gabriel Stawowy SDB, who is based in Kraków, said the millions raised by parishes was "amazing" and Ireland is "very generous".

The Salesians are accommodating more than 150 refugees in their school, seminary and provincial house. Fr Stawowy said the Irish Salesians were the first to offer help when the war began.

He said: "When the war started in February, Irish Salesians were the first to phone me and ask how they can help. So they organised immediately some collections and collected some money, and then they sent the money immediately as we needed it."

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The light of the world...



Bro. Francis Iacuitto, a brother in Koinonia John the Baptist, Belfast, prepares to light the paschal candle held by Fr Conor McGrath PP in the parish of Glenravel and the Braid, Ballymena, Co. Antrim at the Easter Vigil Mass, April 16.

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Managing Editor: Michael Kelly, editor@irishcatholic.ie

Deputy Editor: Chai Brady, chai@irishcatholic.ie

Northern Correspondent: Martin O'Brien, martin@irishcatholic.ie

Multimedia Journalists: Ruadhán Jones, ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie
Jason Osborne, jason@irishcatholic.ie

Newsroom: news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026

Books Editor: Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie

Advertising: advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874094

Accounts: accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874020

Magnificat: magnificat@irishcatholic.ie

Shop: shop@irishcatholic.ie

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Easter season is about looking forward with hope

For the believer, Holy Week and Easter are the culmination of the Faith when we mark the saving death and lifegiving resurrection of the Saviour.

Even if some people sometimes relegate Easter to a mere festival of over-indulgence in chocolate eggs, the glory of this festival transformed our world. The Carpenter of Nazareth revealed in the New Covenant a way of life that not only calls us to make our world a better place, but opened up the gates to eternal happiness in the world that is to come.

“In Jesus, God reveals himself as the God who chooses to walk alongside us”

While the Jewish people knew their God was always with them through the Prophets urging them to hope for salvation, the Greeks and the Romans had modelled their gods as indifferent even capricious foes to be feared rather than loved. If interaction with the gods was necessary, it was pure supplication in a bid to assuage their anger.

Alongside us

In Jesus, God reveals himself as the God who chooses to walk alongside us. As the Letter to



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



The two Archbishops of Dublin Archbishop Dermot Farrell and Archbishop Michael Jackson walk from Christ Church Cathedral to St Mary's Pro Cathedral - carrying a cross - where a prayer service took place, April 15. Photo: John McElroy

the Hebrews puts it: “It is not as if we had a high priest who was incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us; but we have one who has been tempted in every way that we are, though he is without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

Institution

The ups and downs of that first Holy Week from

the triumphal procession on Palm Sunday through to the institution of the Eucharist on Holy Thursday, the passion and death on Good Friday, the emptiness of Holy Saturday and the Rising serve as a metaphor for our Church and world.

Holy Week with its mix of apparent defeat being transformed into triumph is also the story of our lives as individuals marked by sin and selfishness.

“This is our hope – the hope of the resurrection and the knowledge that our suffering has meaning”

Even if Lent has not been as fruitful as we would've liked, or our commitment to pray, fast and give alms wavered, Holy Week is the week to begin again and feast on God's mercy.

Confession

The reason the Church sets before us the obligation of going to Confession is not because it needs to tick a box beside our name, it is because we need it to help us grow in holiness of life and so lead other people to God. We do this in the midst of our sinfulness and inadequacy – not in spite of it. As Pope Francis has

constantly reiterated since his election in 2013, God never tires of forgiving us – we tire of asking.

Suffering

Like the earthly life of Christ, our lives are also marked by suffering and weariness. We get sick in mind, heart and body – we decay and we age. Those whom we love and love us get sick and die. Our plans come to nothing and our hopes are dashed. Just when it seems like nothing else can go wrong, something does and we are bowed low our only prayer are our tears. It's then that God sends an angel as he sent one to comfort and strengthen his Son in the agony of Gethsemane reminding us that we have no need to be afraid for God is on our side and will not forsake us.

“As Pope Francis has constantly reiterated since his election in 2013, God never tires of forgiving us”

This is our hope – the hope of the resurrection and the knowledge that our suffering has meaning. And that if we unite our sufferings to Christ's, our suffering will be redemptive.

In his depiction of the resurrection, Piero della Francesca presents Christ to us as the unblemished king – with the exception of the wound to his side and the wound in the back of both his hands made by the crucifixion nails. Christ returned to the Father with the marks of his human condition and the painting reminds us that he is both God and man. The story of Easter is the confidence that we too – wounds and all – can look forward with joyful hope.

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Frontline religious praise Irish generosity for Ukraine

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“They also organised a van and we use it for transporting food and medicines to Ukraine, so I'm really grateful to the Irish... I know that the Irish are very, very generous people, and I'm very grateful for all of your help. You are great people.”

Refugee Hlisa Bila, who lives in a Caritas centre on Zywiecka Street in Kraków, left her home in Zaporizhzhia in south-eastern Ukraine when their central railway station was bombed. She fled with her children Tymur (4) and Hrina (8) to Poland.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* she said she was scared and “immediately all I wanted was to save my children and escape”.

“There is no city where there will not be bombs, it's not safe, people go from one city to another, and they are running all over the country, because every day there can be new bombs,” she said. Praising Caritas, she added: “We're happy that we don't hear bombs and wake up to birds singing.”

Refugee turned Caritas volunteer at Krakow train station, Anastasia Kepkina (19), fled Odesa as a refugee.

She told this paper it was a Caritas volunteer who helped her get accommodation when she was crying at a train station. Now she helps other refugees by providing supplies and assisting them reach and get accommodation in Norway.

She told this paper: “Like a lot of Ukrainian people I hope

to go back home but if it's not possible, maybe I'm staying in Poland. Poland is a very good country. All the people are very kind and help me. When I first came to Poland, I was at the railway station and cried. I found one [Caritas] volunteer who helped me with an apartment, with this work, and I'm very glad I help a lot of people.”

Following Russia's invasion of the country on February 24, Ireland's bishops asked for a special collection in parishes across the island. This mainly took place over the weekend of March 26-27, as an additional way of helping to address the humanitarian crisis.

Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh and Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin said: “Since the outbreak of

this war, over seven million people have been displaced and nearly five million people have been forced to emigrate from Ukraine, becoming international refugees.

“As Christians, our Gospel imperative is to support the victims of this appalling humanitarian crisis, in the words of the Holy Thursday Liturgy, ‘where charity and love are found there is God.’”

They added: “The large funds raised by Irish parishes will be channelled to assist those who are suffering such devastation to their lives and livelihoods. Parishes across Ireland have responded with enormous generosity and compassion and we are most grateful for that.”

i See pages 13-17

Parishes rejoice as Easter celebrations return with gusto after three-year wait

Brandon Scott and Ruadhán Jones

The return of Easter celebrations to churches was a “very joyful occasion”, parishes across the country have said, with large attendances at all Easter liturgies.

It was the first time in three years that parishes could celebrate Holy Week in person due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Joyful

Fr Bernard Healy of St John's Parish, Tralee, Co. Kerry told *The Irish Catholic* that Easter was a “very joyful occasion”, adding that priests and parishioners were “very uplifted by the numbers turning out

for the ceremonies and the sense of joy for the communities”.

There was a renewed sense of belonging for many people, Fr Aidan O'Driscoll of Clonakilty Parish, Co. Cork reported, saying the ceremonies left “a lasting impression”.

“There was a different atmosphere in Holy Week ceremonies this year,” Fr O'Driscoll said. “It was just a lovely sense of everyone belonging and coming together in the celebration.”

Fr Declan Lohan of Renmore Parish, Co. Galway said they had a “great Easter”, with a lot of younger families “very visible at Mass”.

Fr Lohan felt that, after the restrictions, people “got a lot of meaning from the

celebrations,” he said. “It was a great Triduum.”

A number of parishes were heartened by the “great crowds” that attended and the generosity of parishioners in preparing the Easter liturgies.

“We were talking after Mass this morning with some parishioners about how good the numbers were compared to any other Easter in the last couple of years,” said Canon Liam Belton of Ballinteer parish, Dublin.

Take part

Fr Robert McCabe of Navan Parish, Co. Meath told this paper that the parish “didn't have to ask anyone to do a job for us during Holy Week because so many people wanted to do

things. They wanted to take part in the liturgy and they took part very, very well.

“We had an ecumenical procession between the churches in the town on Good Friday and that was very well attended. We had a full day of confessions on the Tuesday of Holy Week from 8 in the morning until 11 at night and that allowed all of the local priests to come in and help out. We're very glad to be back.”

In Portlaoise Parish, Fr David Vard said that more effort went into advertising the return of Easter Masses compared with other years.

“We had great crowds at all of the Triduum celebrations. It was fantastic. On Easter Sunday the church was so full,” he said. “There was definitely a bit more promotion of what was going on in the church as opposed to previous years.”

Ireland must not ignore ‘forgotten’ crises, says Trócaire chief

Staff reporter

Ireland must not ignore the “forgotten” crises affecting millions of people all over the world, Trócaire's CEO has said.

The Irish charity's statement came as they thanked the Irish people for their “incredible support” for this year's Lent campaign, asking people to return their boxes to their local church.

Devastating

Trócaire CEO Caoimhe de Barra said that prior to the “devastating” Ukraine conflict, many countries were already facing humanitarian crises, with an estimated 811 million people going to bed hungry every night.

“The Ukraine crisis has triggered a catastrophe on top of a catastrophe, increasing the cost of food and fuel globally,” Ms de Barra said.

“This will have devastating implications for those impacted by forgotten crises and rapid action is needed.”

Trócaire's Lent campaign is in support of the millions of people in Africa suffering from the devastating impact of Covid-19 and climate change.

Ms de Barra appealed to people to bring back their Trócaire box and “make it count”.

“We are so incredibly grateful for the generous donations we receive from parishes, schools and families all over Ireland,” the Trócaire CEO said.

“I would appeal to people to return their Trócaire boxes this weekend so we can continue to provide life-saving support to the people who rely on our work overseas.”

Masters Tournament winner plays golf to glorify God



2022 Masters champion Scottie Scheffler celebrating his victory

Brandon Scott

The 2022 Masters Tournament winner Scottie Scheffler spoke with reporters directly after his victory and revealed how God provides the motivation for him to flourish on the course.

The 25-year-old Texan, who eclipsed Irish golfers Shane Lowry and Rory McIlroy to claim victory, frequently references his faith on social media and used his win and resulting media platform to provide testimony for God's presence.

“That all goes back to my faith,” Mr Scheffler said after being asked how he

balances his desire to golf competitively without letting it define him as a person. “The reason why I play golf is: I'm trying to glorify God and all that he's done in my life.”

Mr Scheffler also said his wife regularly prays for him to experience peace – something he always wants to have on the golf course.

“Every day when we go out there, Meredith [his wife] always prays for peace, because that's what I want to feel on the golf course, is peace and have fun and just feel his presence,” he said.

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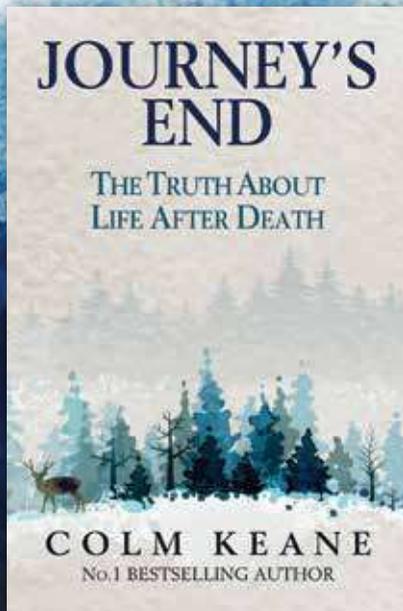
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'Intolerant secularising forces' resent Catholic education, says Bishop McKeown

Ruadhán Jones

"Intolerant secularising forces" want to remove Christianity from the public sphere, particularly education, Bishop Donal McKeown warned in his Easter homily.

The bishop of Derry said that the "new intolerant secular dogma" wants to portray Christianity as an evil force.

"All sorts of agendas insist that faith is a conduit of culturally unacceptable teachings for modern people," Bishop McKeown said on Easter Sunday.

"Education is a particular area where intolerant secularising forces resent anybody else influencing young people except themselves and their ever-fluctuating ideas."

The bishop's comments come as a bill that would promote integrated education awaits royal assent, having been voted through the North's assembly in March.

Catholic schools' bodies in the North have previously warned that the bill will create a "two-tiered system", favour-

ing integrated education ahead of Catholic and Protestant schools.

In his Easter homily, Bishop McKeown went on to say that Christ's Resurrection "breaks the blinkered worldview that says human wisdom knows better than divine foolishness".

"Resurrection is central to our faith for it calls for a decision to dare to believe," Dr McKeown continued.

"Being nice to people is no big deal. Believing that Jesus rose from the dead is a challenge. It is on that teaching that

our faith stands or falls."

Meanwhile, in their Easter messages, the archbishops of Dublin and Armagh reflected on the meaning of Easter in the face of continuing violence against Ukraine by Russia.

Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell called on people to remember that "the support of the State and NGOs is no replacement for the concreteness of warmth and love. A welcome centre is a shelter, but not a home."

Christ's Resurrection calls us to a "road, not of domination,

but of service" that is "made real for us in how we now welcome our sisters and brothers from Ukraine", Archbishop Farrell continued during the Easter Vigil Mass. "Welcoming the stranger is the Resurrection in action!"

The Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin said in his Easter message that "peace and prosperity seem a distant dream" for the people of Ukraine.

"How much our world today needs to hear that [Easter] message – from Ukraine to Tig-

ray, Syria to South Sudan, the cross of Good Friday still casts its shadow in the suffering of millions caught up in the violence and aggression of war," he continued.

"But mercifully also, the work of peacemakers and the enormous outpouring of love, welcome and humanitarian aid bears witness to the hope and promise of Easter, of Easter peace that can never be extinguished by war or hatred," Archbishop Martin finished.

Hollywood star Antonio Banderas joins Holy Week procession



Antonio Banderas takes part in a Holy Week procession in Malaga. Photo: Twitter.

Jason Osborne

Antonio Banderas took to social media to share his participation in his native Spain's Holy Week festivities.

Spain is known for its huge processions at important times throughout the Catholic calendar, and it was to take part in these that Mr Banderas returned to Malaga.

Writing on Twitter, he said, "After three years of waiting, yesterday we were finally able to walk our Niña de

San Juan through the streets of Malaga.

"Palm Sunday at Málaga. The spiritual unites with tradition, with identity, with art, with popular culture and with social and solidarity work."

Mr Banderas shared videos on Instagram of a large statue of Jesus being carried upon hundreds of shoulders as it made its way through busy Spanish streets, as well as pictures of himself in traditional attire alongside dozens of attendees.

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How the Church could preside over Ireland's neutrality debate

Ever since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1992, and especially since Russia's recent brutal invasion of Ukraine, there has been a queue of European nations applying to join NATO – the western military alliance led by the United States. Fourteen new states joined between 1999 and 2020, and the most recent applicants are likely to be Finland and Sweden, previously both neutral.

Sympathies

Since Ireland's sympathies are evidently with the defence of Ukraine, should Ireland, too, be one of the previously neutral applicant countries? It would seem that the Irish public is not favourable to such a move: a poll shows that 66% of the public wish to retain Irish



Mary Kenny

military neutrality, while 24% would favour change.

Still, it is worth a serious national conversation, and here, I think, the Church could provide a constructive forum by convening a conference discussing the moral, political, historical and military aspects of supporting NATO – or remaining aloof from the group.

The Catholic Church has a considerable scholarly background in addressing issues such as “the Just War”, and could bring intellectual and moral heft to such a gathering.

Invite moral theologians who have a sound knowledge of the scholarship in matters of war and peace; include military men and women who

can add knowledge of the strategic aspect; bring on historians and biographers who can analyse the situation in terms of Irish sovereignty; and have advocates both for and against, and the full spectrum from hawks to doves.

“Political thinkers would be useful in assessing how NATO membership would affect cross-border relations”

Politicians could be invited but this should be a

conference based on moral and intellectual ideas – not just on whether such a policy would attract votes in Galway West or Cork North Central. Political thinkers would be useful in assessing how NATO membership would affect cross-border relations.

A central moral question might be: is it acceptable for a neutral country to expect others to carry the burden of its defence? It's indisputable that Ireland has benefited from the NATO defence umbrella – just because of a geographical position between Britain

and the US.

Or can Ireland serve peace better by not being part of a military alliance?

Contribution

Geographers, too, might make a contribution. In Finland, the national mood has dramatically changed since Putin's invasion of Ukraine. The public was tepid about joining NATO previously: now a majority is in favour, and the Finns are busy purchasing defence weapons – 64 American F-35 warplanes since February, plus formidable air-to-surface

missiles which can strike deep into Russia. But then Finland has a frontier of more than 1,000km with Russia – and the Finns still remember how Stalin took nearly 10% of Finnish territory in 1940 as a reprisal for the Winter War.

So here's a moral point which might also be aired: is geography destiny?

The Catholic Church could make a major contribution to an important national debate by launching a pow-wow on NATO/not NATO. Call it a parallel “citizens' assembly”, but with expertise.

● She seldom imagined that she'd be a vicar's wife in her last years, but thus it was: Elizabeth (*née* Rees-Williams), a delicate beauty, was first married to the Limerick actor Richard Harris, then to Rex Harrison, and finally to Jonathan Aitken, former Tory MP and jailbird and now an Anglican chaplain at Pentonville Prison. Before she died, aged 85, Elizabeth encouraged Jonathan to attend to the prisoners' spirituality. Truly, there are many paths to faith.

“Fourteen new states joined between 1999 and 2020, and the most recent applicants are likely to be Finland and Sweden, previously both neutral”

A better notion of nuns



Julie Andrews sings in the 1965 musical *The Sound of Music*. Photo: CNS

Movies about nuns have always been part of cinema stories and the most recent, *Benedetta* is directed by Paul Verhoevan, who has a reputation for embracing themes of “sex, power and self-realisation” – especially sex. The theme is about a young nun in the 17th century (Virginie Efira) imprisoned for having a relationship with another sister. One critic said it might well have been called “Hot Lesbian Nuns”.

Older movies portrayed nuns more wholesomely: in *The Bells of St Mary's*

Ingrid Bergman (1945) was a spirited Sister Mary Benedict opposite Bing Crosby's *Benedetta* is directed by Paul Verhoevan, who has a reputation for embracing themes of “sex, power and self-realisation” – especially sex. The theme is about a young nun in the 17th century (Virginie Efira) imprisoned for having a relationship with another sister. One critic said it might well have been called “Hot Lesbian Nuns”.

Whoopi Goldberg was an irreverent nun in the 1992 *Sister Act*; Meryl Streep was a stern, but courageous, reverend mother in *Doubt* (2008).

Ken Russell's *The Devils* in 1971, with Vanessa Redgrave

and Oliver Reed, centred on witchcraft. Barbara Jefford as the cruel Sister Hildegard in *Philomena* in 2013 was the epitome of the nun as villain.

There's an element of prurience in some directors' film treatment of nuns. Yet probably the most popular movie featuring nuns is entirely free from any such suggestion: *The Sound of Music*, with Peggy Wood as the Mother Prioress valiantly urging Julie Andrews to “Climb Every Mountain”.

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Priests praise 'strong faith' and love of Aidan Moffitt and Michael Snee at funerals

Ruadhán Jones

Aidan Moffitt was remembered as a man of "strong faith", while Michael Snee was described as having a "heart filled with love" by the priests officiating their funerals.

Mr Moffitt's (41) funeral Mass took place April 12 in the Church of Christ the King,

Lisacul, Co. Roscommon, while Mr Snee's (58) funeral was at St Joseph's Church, Ballytivnan, Co. Sligo.

Both men were killed in their own homes last week and a man has been charged in relation to their deaths.

At the funeral for Mr Snee, Fr Noel Rooney said it is "important today that we do not allow the horror of Michael's death to define his

beautiful life.

"Michael was a beautiful, kind, and gentle person," Fr Rooney said in his homily. "He was much-loved and had a heart filled with love. He was sensitive and couldn't do enough for his family, his friends and those with whom he worked."

Fr Rooney continued, saying that "despite sadness and grief, may we all, especially

Michael's family, allow that small seed of hope" that we will meet our beloved dead again "find a home in our hearts".

Fr Michael McManus, a close friend of the Moffitt family, told the congregation that Aidan had a "strong faith". A statue of the Virgin Mary was laid on his coffin.

Mr Moffitt often attended Mass with his mother Kath-

leen, and "every Christmas Eve and on New Year's Eve, Aidan and his mother Kathleen would visit Knock Shrine for Our Lady's blessings for Christmas and the new year ahead," Fr McManus told the large congregation.

"One of the commandments is to honour our father and mother - Kathleen, your son Aidan lived that commandment to the full. His love

for you was exceptional," Fr McManus said.

Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran offered a message of condolence to both families, saying that he was united with them in prayer.

He added that he trusts that they will experience "the healing presence of God's Spirit" at work in their lives through the consoling works of friends and family.

Former Donegal radio presenter to be ordained to priesthood

Brandon Scott

Former Highland radio presenter Shaun Doherty, who presented for the popular Donegal station for more than thirty years, is set to become a priest after spending the last number of years training in Rome.

Mr Doherty recently revealed that his life is constantly evolving but God's presence has helped him use all his experience to finally arrive at his doorstep to where he can now help other people.

"I've come to a stage in my life where I feel God has brought me to this place and

I think he has used all my good and bad experiences and mistakes I've made to help me to be a better person, and to be able to use the gifts that he has given me, which were communication, and being able to listen to people and empathise with people," Mr Doherty said.

"I have a special interest in people who are suffering from addiction and people who have issues with anxiety, depression, loneliness, and all of these issues", he said. Mr Doherty will be ordained a Deacon in a ceremony at St Paul's Basilica in Rome in June.

Bishop pays tribute to late politician Michael O'Kennedy

Staff reporter

Former TD for Tipperary Michael O'Kennedy, who spent a total of 35 years as a public representative after spending time as a seminarian in Maynooth, was laid to rest on Tuesday in Nenagh aged 86, with Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan commending his long public service.

Mr O'Kennedy initially

began his third level education at St Patrick's College Maynooth, where he studied as a seminarian alongside future SDLP co-founder John Hume.

Mr O'Kennedy lent his oversight to a multitude of government departments, including Transport, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Agriculture and Labour.

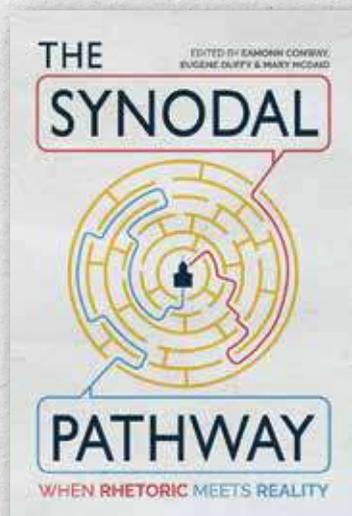
Commenting after his death Bishop of Killaloe Fintan

Monahan reflected on the service Mr O'Kennedy provided for both county and country as a politician.

"Over his lifetime Michael made a huge and positive contribution on the lives of so many people, and on behalf of the parishioners across the Diocese of Killaloe I wish to acknowledge Michael's contribution to the common good of society," Bishop Monahan said.

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Washed in the waters of Christ



Fr Pat Fogarty baptises a new member of the church during the Easter Vigil at Carrigaline Church, Co. Cork, April 16. Photo: CNS.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Care argues against 'sex work' on popular Channel 4 show

'Sex work' sees women "bought and sold" and used for sex, Care Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation Policy Officer Lauren Agnew argued on Channel 4's popular *WouldYouRather* series.

The episode saw the cases for "pro-sex work" and "anti sex-work" debated,

with Ms Agnew arguing that women are "made for purpose, and not for purchase".

The term 'sex worker' legitimises and endorses what can be a "really harmful and exploitative industry," Ms Agnew said, adding that she prefers to use the term "prostitution".

Catholic Grandparents' Association launches podcast

The Catholic Grandparents' Association have launched a new podcast as a companion to their Faith Café.

In their April newsletter, the CGA announced that the first episode hears from CGA founder Catherine Wiley and its international ministry co-ordinator Marilyn Henry about the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly. The

podcast is available on Anchor FM and on Spotify.

The CGA also announced the guest speaker for its May Faith Café, Fr Willie Purcell, national co-ordinator for diocesan vocations with the Irish bishops' conference.

The Faith Café takes place Tuesday, May 10. For more information, visit catholicgrandparent-sassociation.org.

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'Fish on Friday' initiative encourages synodal conversations



Claire Carmicheal, Helena Connolly and Brendan Dineen from the Redemptorist team arrive to the 'Fish on Friday' event.



Jim Deeds, chair of the steering committee for the Irish synodal pathway Nicola Brady, Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor, CEO of Trócaire Caoimhe de Barra and Paula McKeown of Living Church, who facilitated the event.

Ruadhán Jones

The diocese of Down and Connor hosted a 'Fish on Friday' gathering in Stormont with people from parishes and other churches and organisations to encourage a synodal dialogue.

Participants came together April 8 to enjoy fish and chips and a cup of tea, and to talk together "about the mobilising the Church as a force for the common good", said Paula McKeown of Living Church in Down and Connor.

They heard from guest speakers, including chair of the steering committee for the Irish synodal pathway Nicola Brady and CEO of Trócaire Caoimhe de Barra.

Ms Brady encouraged everyone to "engage deeply in conversation", saying "I really believe that in this process every conversation counts, from the formally structured listening process to chats over coffee".

Meanwhile, Ms De Barra emphasised our interconnectivity and that all our actions have an impact for the global community.

"If in the synodal process the Holy Spirit reawakened a passion for Catholic social teaching then not only would the Church be transformed, but also the world in which we all live," she said.



Enjoying the day.



Eileen Boden from Newcastle Parish sharing her insights on the day.



Tracey Harkin of Iona Institute NI, Caroline Bradley of Care for the Family and Caoimhe McCann of Mary's Meals attend the 'Fish on Friday' initiative, April 8.



Conversation flows over fish and chips.



Volunteers pass out goody bags to event delegates to encourage the conversations to continue.



Delegates settle in for the first input.



Participants deep in conversation.



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Sophia thank religious for tackling housing crisis



Representatives of Sophia and of the religious orders they have worked with are pictured outside the Royal Marine Hotel in Dun Laoghaire.



Sr Quinn is presented with a bouquet by Michael McCarthy, chair of Sophia's board.

Ruadhán Jones

Irish charity Sophia Housing hosted an event in the Royal Marine Hotel Dun Laoghaire to thank religious congregations for their work in tackling the housing crisis.

Since its foundation in 1997, Sophia has acted as a conduit for orders to who make lands and property available to be converted into homes.

Speaking at the April 12 event Sr Jean Quinn DW,

founder of Sophia, said that "while Sophia has supported hundreds of people including families to progress out of homelessness this could not have been achieved without the vision and courage of the religious congregations".

Over the past 25 years Sophia has been supported by: the Daughters of Wisdom; the Sisters of Mercy; the Presentation Sisters; Marist Sisters; the Sisters of Charity of St Paul the Apostle; the Sisters of Bons Secour; St John of God Sisters; the Franciscan Brothers; Reli-

gious Sisters of Christian Education; Little Company of Mary; Sisters of Marie Auxiliaries Holy Family Sisters of Bordeaux; Carmelite Order; Cistercians; Loreto Sisters; Little Sisters of the Assumption; Missionary Sisters of the Assumption; Missionary Sisters of St Columban; Nazareth Sisters; Our Lady of Good Counsel; Redemptorists; Salesians of Don Bosco; Sisters of the Faithful Companion of Jesus; Sisters of our Lady of Charity; Sisters of St Clare; Sisters of St Joseph the Assumption.



Sr Jean Quinn DW, founder of Sophia, meets with representatives of some religious orders. Photos: John McEvoy.



Sophia CEO Tony O'Riordan



Sr Quinn speaks during the event.

Shannon Campbell

The View



The cross comes before the resurrection

On Ash Wednesday past, our chaplain, Fr Dominic McGrattan, invited students to consider what it is that makes a cross a crucifix?

Crosses, we know, come in all shapes and sizes. Some are jewelled, others are intricately carved. I wear one my grandmother gave me when I was a child. What was once the preferred instrument of torture for the Romans has become an adornment as well as a Christian symbol.

But if we think about it, a cross is nothing more than two intersecting beams of simple wood. It has no significance apart from the one who hung upon it that first Good Friday. Without him, the cross leaves no challenge.

The cross that we, as Christians, behold bears the body of Christ, whose only crime was that he loved us without condition and that he was willing to show the depth of his love with the ultimate sacrifice.

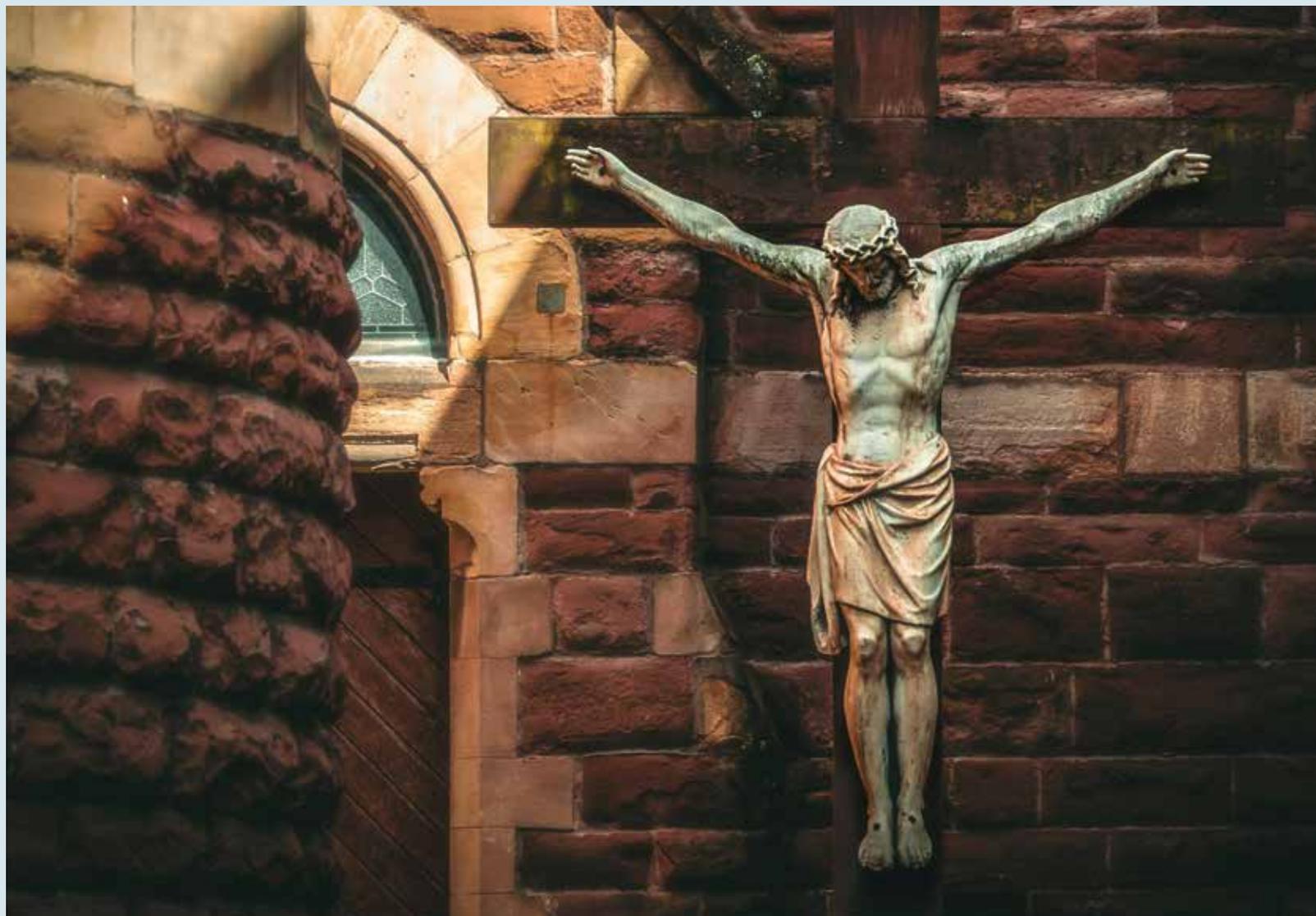
“One of the most challenging images of that atrocity was a simple cross of palm”

The crucifix is the most powerful reminder of the greatest love the world has ever known. It is a crucified love that turns the wood of a tree, a tree of defeat and death, into a tree of life and victory. A crucified love that makes all human life worthy, whose sacrifice makes every human breath holy.

That must be why it has endured for over two thousand years in a world where little seems permanent, where things come and go easily, where passing fads are commonplace and where so much is considered relative.

In every age, the crucifix calls people to a decision, a decision about Jesus. People must choose what to do about him. Do we accept his death and, with it, the fullness of all that he revealed? Or do we reject him?

In the University Chaplaincy, we have welcomed members of the Coptic Church from Eastern Africa. They are seeking refuge and asylum in Northern



Ireland having fled their homeland, in part because of religious persecution.

Safe space

We provide them with safe space for worship, and our student-led Language and Solidarity Initiative helps them learn English, enabling them to integrate and have an opportunity. We've just started a Book Club to help improve their English further and give opportunities for interaction and sharing.

When Fr McGrattan invited us to reflect on the difference between the cross and the crucifix this Lent, I was reminded of that harrowing story which made newspaper headlines back in 2017.

On Palm Sunday of that year, 47 of our Coptic

Christian brothers and sisters were slaughtered in Egypt as they commemorated Jesus' passion.

One of the most challenging images of that atrocity was a simple cross of palm, splattered in blood, that had been picked up off the floor of the church after the evil deed was done. The blood of those martyred for Christ made that cross a crucifix.

Decision

Those who had gone to Church that Palm Sunday, waving their crosses of palm, had been brought to a moment of decision. They knew that in giving public witness to their faith in Jesus they might just have to give their lives. For them, the scandal of the cross was real and immediate.

And rather than stay at the foot of the cross with the crowds, indifferent to the suffering of Jesus, they got up on to the cross and joined him in his passion. Their cross became a crucifix.

“If we think about it, a cross is nothing more than two intersecting beams of simple wood”

Every Good Friday, the crucifix brings us to a moment of decision. What do we think of Jesus? What place does he really occupy in our lives? How deeply does his passion, death and resurrection impact us?

Our response should be based on what is found in

our hearts. It is there, in the very core of our being, that the question must be settled.

Mercy

And there, in our hearts, we find mercy. Thomas Aquinas wrote that mercy takes its name *miseriordia*, which is composed of two words.

Cordia is familiar to us from such words as 'cardiologist' and 'cardiac.' It means heart. The first part, *miseri* refers to suffering.

Mercy means to have a heart for those who suffer or, more precisely, to have a heart willing to suffer for others.

The cross, because of the one who hung upon it, challenges us to mercy and compassion. The cross tells us that wherever men,

women or children grieve, the ultimate mystery that surrounds our history grieves too.

Torture

Wherever human beings suffer unjust torture and death, God is there, for God has *already* been there in Jesus as the one who endured the curse of crucifixion (Gal 3:13).

Whatever we go through in this life, he has gone through before “so that we may not grow weary or lose heart” (Heb 12:2-3).

Though all of us go through this life under the shadow of the cross, it is a cross which holds out hope. Gathering together the many shards of our broken, fragmented lives and world, the one who hangs upon the cross rises to new life on Easter Sunday, and he promises the same for you and me.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world. Amen

“The crucifix is the most powerful reminder of the greatest love the world has ever known”

WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS
OF JESUS IN...

THE HOLY LAND

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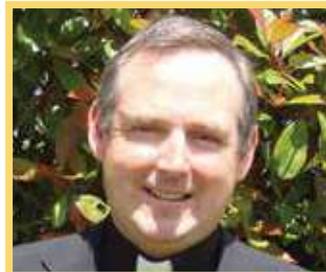
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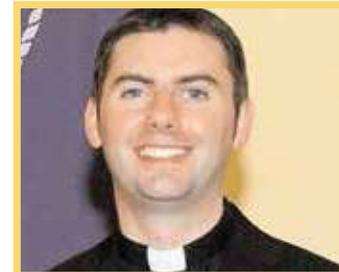
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Border to bedroom: A Church that leads people to safety



Tents set up to assist refugees arriving in Kraków primarily by train provide food, rest and clothes.



Writing from the Polish border and Kraków, Chai Brady investigates the fate of refugees who have fled Ukraine

During Holy Week, the border is not as hectic as usual. Apparently four weeks ago NGO workers and volunteers could barely manage the huge numbers entering Poland from Ukraine, through the Medyka border crossing.

The road leading up to the border is lined with hundreds of trucks packed with humanitarian aid and other, more run of the mill, cargo. Security

checks on the Ukrainian side are understandably strict – they are at war and need to know what’s entering the country.

Arriving at the border, it’s 22 degrees celsius, and with the sun and cheerful NGOs in their various tents preparing and distributing food it feels almost like a festival, until you look a bit closer. You can see people with big travel bags, looking drained. Prams, medicine, travel information and more are also being provided, all free of charge, of course.

While the pedestrian access to Poland is quiet, there are still many buses and private cars coming by road. Potentially due to Russia’s recent focus on their assault on the eastern side of Ukraine, there are many, many cars with Ukrainian plates leaving Poland, returning home, and the line stretches into the distance.

However, recent Russian missile strikes on Lviv in Ukraine – a city that has turned into a refugee hub – which killed seven people, indicate that in a warzone, nowhere is truly safe. Lviv is less than a two-hour drive from the Medyka border.

Having already escaped war-torn Ukraine there is still a long journey ahead to safety and a more stable existence.

Travelling with four Salesians, including Fr Gabriel Sta-

wow, based in Kraków, and Deacon Dawid Wilkos from Przemysl, who drives trucks of humanitarian aid periodically into Ukraine, our journey from the border to where refugees end up highlighted the challenges they face. It also underlines the fact that religious orders were some of the first to respond to the crisis.

“The road leading up to the border is lined with hundreds of trucks packed with humanitarian aid”

While the border is quiet during our visit, the situation can change rapidly and in such a volatile situation, the response has to be direct and immediate.

Chaotic

Further down the road, travelling into Poland, the scenes at a former Tesco turned refugee centre 10km from the Polish



Caritas volunteers Sr Barbara Radzimska (left) and Denise Smith help mothers and children escaping Ukraine at Przemysl Glowny train station.

border with Ukraine are somewhat chaotic as people forced to flee their homes mill about, receiving food, getting rest and planning their journeys deeper into Poland or to western Europe.

There are soldiers – Polish and American – police and NGO volunteers maintaining some order as buses pull in and people decide where to make new lives. Some people with signs reading ‘Berlin’ lead refugees to their buses, onwards to safe harbour in Germany.

A Ukrainian English teacher, Tetiana Oleksandrova from the Kirovohrad Oblast in central Ukraine stayed the night in the centre with her mother

and sister. She hopes to reach Newcastle.

Sirens

Ms Oleksandrova explains they left because they no longer felt safe and “we got very scared every time we heard the sirens”.

“We received an invitation from our friend in the UK, so we are going to spend a while there. We are very hopeful to come back. I have a job there, I have my flat, my life is in Ukraine,” she added.

Initially there were a lot more Ukrainians with accommodation arranged with relatives or friends abroad. Now there are more refugees arriv-

ing who do not have a definite plan – forced out by increasing instability – which is reflected in the faces of many people who appear lost, or very stressed.

At Przemysl Glowny train station Red Cross volunteer Dr Roman Patrus works long hours. He is the only medical doctor there and sees 100 refugees a day, mainly children.

Originally from Poland Dr Patrus moved to France, where he has lived and worked for 20 years. When he saw the suffering of the Ukrainian people, he wanted to help. Speaking through translator Fr Gabriel Stawowy SDB, he says he returned because he “felt in his heart it was the right thing to do”.

Regarding his work, he said: “It’s very difficult because the people who come from Ukraine are very stressed out, they don’t know any other language so communication is very difficult. They have been travelling for a few days so they

“With the sun and cheerful NGOs in their various tents preparing and distributing food it feels almost like a festival, until you look a bit closer”

Aliona Skovyza (right) is pictured with a mother and children who fled Ukraine outside a refugee centre in Poland, 10km from the border in Przemysl. Aliona, from Kyiv, gives children art supplies.



Ukrainians board a bus at a refugee centre in Przemysl in Poland, 10km from the border with Ukraine.



are very, very tired. Before they came here, they lived in basements looking for shelter to be safe.

"Sometimes they don't know they need help, they're not conscious, they're in a different world, they don't know if they're safe in Poland," Dr Patrus says.

Medicine

He added that the Ukrainians that arrive are "in very good hands" because they have a variety of medicine from all across Europe and sometimes there are cases which are "very grave, very serious" so they deal with it immediately.

Dr Patrus is currently staying with the Salesians in their parochial house in Przemysl. The order also accommodates and feeds many other volunteers who operate from the order's premises.

The Church's charitable works can be seen across the world, and the Ukraine crisis is no different. While religious orders and diocesan priests continue to stay in Ukraine, ministering to people and get-

ting supplies across borders, bigger organisations such as Caritas Internationalis, of which Trócaire is part of, also continue to respond.

At the same train station as Dr Patrus, Caritas volunteer Denise Smith, who lives in Italy but was born in New York and grew up in Michigan, US, says Caritas arrived at the train station on the third day of the war. Ms Smith has been volunteering at the station for four weeks.

Explaining their role, she says: "Our main responsibility is to take care of women and children. We provide a room and safe place for the women and children to come and relax after their train journey.

"Some people arrive in the morning, some arrive in the evening, those who arrive late at night need a place to stay so we provide a safe place for them to sleep and wait until morning until they're ready to move on to their next destination.

"While they're here with us we try to provide everything we can think of for

them. For example, mothers might need Pampers, baby formula, baby food, so we provide that. They might need shampoo, or toothpaste, they might need just a hot cup of coffee or tea, for kids we provide snacks like sweets and potato chips and drinks."

“Ms Kosmina spent two weeks living in her basement hiding from bombing and the sound of helicopters”

Ms Smith adds: "For the kids in particular we have stuffed animals, we have Lego, we have balls that they can play with so they can really get their heads out of being in a new strange place having fled from their home and the stress that is connected to that. Here they can be kids, they can play with each other, they can play with all the toys, so they can forget

about the war for the moment they're here with us."

Basic needs

Religious orders were among the first to respond, but the situation became too serious so they cooperated with the local government of the border town of Przemysl, according to Deacon Wilkos. Along with charities, they are trying to fulfil people's basic needs while getting them to where they need to go – whether that is a particular country or just a room they can use while deciding how best to proceed. This is not an easy decision to make, particularly for those with both children and elderly in their care.

For Olha Kosmina from rural Kyiv, she is currently living in hostel-style accommodation with Church-charity Caritas in Kraków, Poland, along with 58 other refugees.

It's a vibrant house with potted plants, the sound of children playing and food being cooked. There are boxes of various canned goods, condiments and other foods lining

one of the hallways upstairs, the kitchens are well stocked and there's plenty more in a storage room in a property behind the house. There are also huge amounts of supplies for babies and toddlers.

Ms Kosmina spent two weeks living in her basement hiding from bombing and the sound of helicopters. She travelled with her children through Lviv from Kyiv and on to Poland – which is a path many refugees take.

Due to having an elderly mother, she feels she can't leave: "I don't know what to do, but now I will stay here because my mother, I'm afraid she will die because she's old, and how will I transfer her to Ukraine? If I was just with kids, I could go wherever I want, but because of my mother... she has a hope that it will stop soon and she will go home."

Hlisa Bila, who lives in the same Caritas centre, left her home in Zaporizhzhia in south-eastern Ukraine when their central railway station was bombed on March 16. She quickly packed her bags and brought her children Tymur (4) and Hrina (8) to Poland.

Speaking through a translator, when asked how she

felt at the time, she says she was scared and her children started crying, "Immediately all I wanted was to save my children and escape".

Mrs Bila said her son doesn't sleep many nights, he's very scared and there is "hysterical crying".

"There is no city where there will not be bombs, it's not safe, people go from one city to another, and they are running all over the country, because every day there can be new bombs," she says, adding that now she is in Poland, "We're happy that we don't hear bombs and wake up to birds singing."

“The efforts of Irish people, religious orders and Catholic charities are certainly helping”

One child at the centre, Margarita Karwan (9), was very keen to show off her hamster Kokos, a present from her parents, who had come with her all the way from Khmelnytskyi in western Ukraine. Kokos was a birthday present to her and her brother Roman (4). They share a birthday on November 8, which their mother said was a "big surprise", and that she's happy Margarita has Kokos to play with.

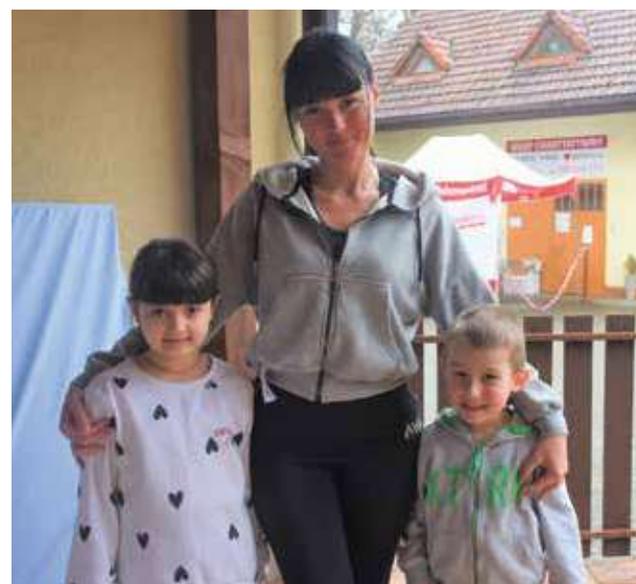
Margarita said she brought the hamster in her jacket pocket in a yoghurt carton while travelling to Poland, but kept him in a bigger container while they slept. The family has two cats as well but they have been left at home in Ukraine, along with their father.

Caritas worker Dominik Klos, who is based at the centre, says 230 people have passed through, staying varying amounts of time before moving on, mainly to Norway and Germany.

Train station

At Kraków train station there are Caritas volunteers giving

Salesian priest Fr Gabriel Stawowy stands in a camp where dozens of NGOs have set up tents to assist refugees in Medyka, right beside a Poland-Ukraine border crossing, April 14.



Hlisa Bila stays with her children Hrina (8) and Tymur (4) in a Caritas refugee centre on Zywiecka Street in Krakow.



Anastasia Kepkina (19), a Ukrainian refugee from Odesa, now volunteers for Church-charity Caritas at Kraków train station.



Margarita Karwan (9) poses with her brother Roman (4) and their hamster Kokos which she brought in a yoghurt carton in her pocket from Ukraine.

out free provisions and travel advice for arriving refugees.

Anastasia Kepkina (19), who left Odesa as a refugee, decided to help alleviate the refugee crisis by volunteering for Caritas.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* she says she arrived in Poland three weeks ago, but crossed the border into Moldova first. She came with her mother, sister, aunt and cousin and now they're helping other refugees who are arriving.

They help in two ways, in the train station they have a shop which provides refugees with "whatever they need" and she also helps people travel to Norway and find housing. Ms Kepkina said that at the beginning of her volunteering she was seeing up to 100 people a day, but currently it has died down to about a dozen.

She says: "Like a lot of Ukrainian people I hope to go back home but if it's not possible, maybe I'm staying in Poland. Poland is a very good country. All the people are very kind and help me. When I first came to Poland, I was at the railway station and cried. I found one volun-



Journalist with *The Irish Catholic* Jason Osborne records video at the Poland-Ukraine border crossing at Medyka, where dozens of NGOs have set up tents to assist refugees.

teer who helped me with an apartment, with this work, and I'm very glad I help a lot of people."

Generosity

Last week Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh and Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin thanked parishes across Ireland for their generosity in raising more than €3.25 million in response to the crisis in Ukraine which will go towards Caritas Internationalis.

Following Russia's invasion of the country on February 24, Ireland's bishops asked for a special collection in parishes across the island. This mainly took place over the weekend of March 26-27, as an additional way of helping to address the humanitarian crisis.

The efforts of Irish people, religious orders and Catholic charities are certainly helping to uphold the dignity and prevent the suffering of many Ukrainian refugees, but

an end to the war is the only way to stop the barbarity and diabolic acts being perpetrated against the Ukrainian people.

Currently the best that can be done is to help them find safe havens in other countries and ease the trauma of their journeys, but for many, they just hope and pray for the day they can return home.



Olha Kosmina and her two children Matviy (5) and Lev (13) stay at a Caritas refugee centre in Krakow.



Margarita Karwan (9) helps Caritas worker Dominik Klos find her hamster Kokos who ran up his sleeve.



Ukrainian English teacher Tetiana Oleksandrova from Kirovohrad Oblast is pictured outside a refugee centre in Przemyśl with her sister Liubov and mother Valentyna, April 14.



A trip to Kraków revealed the loving service the Church in Poland is offering its Ukrainian neighbours fleeing war, writes **Jason Osborne**

Poland has been lauded for its response to an unprecedented refugee crisis that comes off the back of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. As of April 15, nearly 2.8 million people fleeing the war in Ukraine have entered Poland. While hundreds of thousands crossed the border every day during the first days of the conflict, tens of thousands continue to two months on, with almost 27,000 crossing in a single day April 14.

Every level of Polish society has mobilised, with individuals, families, businesses and local and national government offering various forms of aid to those who have fled their country with little more than the clothes on their backs. Despite the guarantee that this influx will change Poland's course forever, the only question that has been posed is that of how more help can be offered.

Forefront

The Church has been at the forefront of this mercy mission, responding rapidly across Poland, but particularly in the south-eastern regions close to the Polish-Ukrainian border. Pope Francis referenced this during an address in early March, as he told Poland and the Church there:

"You were the first to support Ukraine by opening your borders, your hearts and the doors of your homes to Ukrainians fleeing the war. You give them generously everything they need to enable them to live with dignity despite the tragedy of the present moment."

"I am deeply grateful to you and bless you with all my heart," he said.

The Irish Catholic can confirm the enormous and humane efforts the Church is making on the ground in Poland, following a trip to Kraków and the surrounding regions. Here, we saw the housing, clothing, feeding, and teaching of hundreds of Ukrainian women and children who were forced out of

Religious in Poland offer



Fr Karol blesses Easter baskets, a Polish tradition, in Kraków on Holy Saturday in the Church of St Stanislaus Kostka. Photos: Chai Brady.

their country by an aggressive and unjust war.

The Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB), with whom we stayed during our time there, are a primary hub of Church-aid to Ukrainian refugees throughout Poland. In Kraków, the Salesians of St Stanisław Kostka parish are housing 15 Ukrainian women and children, as well as providing employment for a number of them in their on-site printing shop.

Upon arrival at the large, communist-era parochial house, the change brought about by the crisis in the neighbouring country is apparent. A child's bicycle leans against the wall on a floor of the building devoted entirely to housing refugees, while teenagers attend school in Ukraine via their laptops from their new rooms.

Here, Viola Shyshkova has travelled to Kraków with her two children, Sasha (13) and Daniil (3). As was the case for so many fleeing Ukraine, the journey was anything but straight-

forward, leaving their home city of Odessa by crossing the border into neighbouring Moldova, before undertaking the lengthy trek to Kraków.

Similarly displaced is 19-year-old Anastasiia Sidanych, who's housed at the Salesian seminary in the Debniiki district of Kraków alongside her grandmother, mother and three siblings. Like so many, her family has been split apart by the ongoing war, with her father staying behind to defend their country.

“The Church has been at the forefront of this mercy mission, responding rapidly across Poland”

A talented musician on the traditional Ukrainian bandura, a stringed-instrument, Anastasiia has accompanied the

seminary's religious services with her music, as well as having given a number of concerts following Sunday Masses.

Education

Continuing her music course online, she says it's not too unusual a change in education for her as the pandemic prepared her for the world of e-learning.

"We are used to it because of Covid, we had online lessons in Ukraine. So when we arrived here to Kraków, they just continued," she tells us via translator Fr Gabriel Stawowy SDB, our guide for much of the trip.

With music as much a communal activity as a personal one, we ask her whether it's difficult to have left her Ukrainian musical community behind – particularly considering her talent on an instrument unique to Ukraine. However, she responds that she's brought her instrument with her, practices every day, and has even made Polish friends with whom she can continue playing.

18-year-old Witalii Kharkevych, wearing a hoody sporting the Salesian insignia, is also temporarily housed at the Salesian seminary in Kraków alongside Anastasiia. In total, the Salesians are housing 60 people here, mainly women and their children, out of a total of 150 people in the Kraków region.

Witalii's family stayed behind in Ukraine, sending him to Poland as he wasn't yet 18, and so he wasn't affected by the ruling that all men aged between 18-60 in Ukraine must stay behind and fight against the invading force. Having found part-time employment, Witalii is currently applying for Polish universities in the hope

of studying IT or computer science, as he says he'd like to stay in Poland for the long-run.

The room Witalii is practicing his IT skills in is dominated by large tables at the back of the room, bearing piles of clothes, nappies, toiletries and more for the women and children to take as they need. An unusual site in a seminary, it indicates the degree to which the Church has taken the plight of the refugees onto its own shoulders.

Activities

Chatting to us outside the formation house for the students, Fr Gabriel Stawowy tells us that activities for the refugees are organised here, as well as aid efforts to address the wider crisis, such as sending food and medicine to Ukraine.

"We try to organise all activities for them; like school, like Polish language three times a week for different age groups – for kids, for young people and for adults. We organise also activities for the kids so that the mothers have some free time for themselves, to have some rest," he says.

"The first wave who came to Poland, to our Salesian houses here in Poland, was, I would say, rich, because they had some relatives in Poland, so they just stayed for two, three days before moving on to different places.

"But now, the second wave is of those who don't know where to go, so they always ask, 'How long can we stay?' And we always say, 'As long as you want. You are most welcome.' So they stay here in this Salesian house in the seminary."

Fr Gabriel gives a special mention to his Irish Salesian



19-year-old musician Anastasiia Sidanych (left) stays in the Salesian seminary in Kraków after leaving Ukraine, pictured with family members Haluna, Liubuv and Vsevolod.

brothers, as they were the first to send aid to Poland when the scale of the crisis became apparent.

"When the war started in February, Irish Salesians were the first to phone me and ask how they can help. So they organised immediately some collections and collected some money, and then they sent the money immediately as we needed it.

"They also organised a car, a van, and we use it for transporting food and medicines to Ukraine, so I'm really grateful to Irish people because I stayed in Ireland for two years in 1998 – it was many years ago," he laughs, "but I remember, I still have good memories of Ireland and I know that the Irish are very, very generous people, and I'm very grateful for all of your help. You are great people."

“The second wave is of those who don't know where to go, so they always ask, 'How long can we stay?'"

The Salesian seminary in Kraków also caters spiritually to those it has taken under its wing, if they wish to avail of it. A chapel in the seminary has been specifically devoted to the 60 refugees living there, with adoration every night at 9pm, and Confession and Mass organised every Sunday in their language.

The seminarians themselves are drafted in to look after many of the needs of their new community, with many students running activities for the children and keeping an eye on their requests and needs.

An hour's drive from central Kraków is the picturesque town of Oswiecim, better known to



Bro. Jacek Kepinski, a Dominican based in Kraków, assists refugees in finding accommodation.

Easter light to Ukrainian refugees



the world as Auschwitz. Here, the Salesians boast their oldest outpost in Poland, founded in 1898 – just 10 years after Don Bosco's death. They run a large school here with over 1,000 students and now 40 Ukrainian refugees, housed in boarding students' rooms given over to the refugees. A sign on the door to their corridor tells students that entry is strictly forbidden now.

Here we speak to 18-year-old Anastasia Moroz, who fled Kyiv with her mother at her father's urging.

"I left Kyiv on March 6. It was the morning. My mom came to work and I woke up approximately at 8 o'clock and I hear some loud noise. It was our dad – he decided that we can't stay here in Kyiv anymore. He just said, 'Pack all your clothes and you and your mom will go to Poland.'

"We didn't know where to go. We just felt that we had to go. We came to a city in Poland and they said it's better if you go to Kraków, you have more possibilities. And then they said that you can go to Oświęcim and we said, 'Ok, we will go, we have no choice'. It is a foreign country, we don't know anyone.

"When we came here, the people were very friendly. They protect us, they care for us. They always ask me how was my night, what dreams did I have, how do I feel here."

Learning the language

We visit as a Polish lesson begins for a classroom full of Ukrainian mothers and their children, who totter about the classroom. Taught by a Salesian, many of the women are learning the language in the anticipation of a long stay in Poland, and in the hope of getting a job to support themselves while they're here.

Leaving them to their lesson, we're given a tour of the school

by Salesian father and principal, Dariusz Bartocha SDB. He shows us boarding corridors and a canteen sequestered off for sole use by the refugees. Clotheslines and toys adorn these as in Kraków's parochial house, a reminder of the outlandish situation both Ukrainian refugee and Polish caregiver are currently in.

In the town of Przemysl, just 30 kilometres from the Polish-Ukrainian border, the Salesians continue to offer help but of a different kind. At the Salesian parish of St Joseph, housing is offered to volunteers from all over the world who've come to the border to assist with the desperate need to be found at the border.

Volunteers

Here, Deacon Dawid Wilkos, who's due to be ordained in May, tells us that they've had volunteers from as far afield as Australia staying with them, while going out to help and welcome Ukrainians into Poland. The Salesians here, he tells us, were the first to respond when the situation in their nearby neighbour became apparent, stockpiling material aid for distribution.

However, as the influx of refugees grew out of manageable proportion, local government stepped in to organise more permanent refugee hubs from which the aid effort could continue. Now, Deacon Wilkos tells us, the Salesians concentrate their efforts on bringing regular deliveries of material aid into Ukraine, often driven by Deacon Wilkos himself, for use by their five Salesian congregations, who are remaining in Ukraine.

In the heart of Kraków's old town, the Basilica of the Holy Trinity houses the city's Dominican congregation, and now, Ukrainian refugees. Ukrainian-speaking Bro. Jacek Kepinski tells *The Irish Catholic* that

they're housing 41 refugees at present in guestrooms and in nearby apartments belonging to the Dominicans.

"When the war started, we just asked, what could we do in this situation?" he says, continuing, "We have some guestrooms, so if there are any refugees in Kraków, we can house them.

"But when we were taking them in, we weren't really sure what was going to happen next. So we decided to make our guestrooms available for refugees, and then we also figured that it will be useful if we have some contact if any charity organisation wants to call us, it would be easier to stay in touch. So we got a number and gave it to some charitable organisations and said we have some rooms, we can help someone."

More housing

"Then some of the organisations started to call us, so very quickly, our rooms filled up. We thought, right, it went so quickly, we need more housing. So we figured out that we can prepare, in a way, some apartments we have...we thought we just need some beds and we can organise that area for the refugees, so we also did that."

Bro. Jacek says since the beginning of the crisis, 141 refugees have passed through their doors, as they work in coordination with organisations that provide housing for refugees further into western Europe.

“When the war started, we just asked, what could we do in this situation?”

A friary of 80 friars, with 40 of them student brothers preparing for the priesthood, they share the work between themselves. Each group of refugees has an assistant brother assigned to them, so that if they need help with any of the official Polish processes, such as obtaining an ID number, they can help streamline the process.

Bro. Jacek says he believes the Polish Dominicans were quick in their response to the crisis, as they had rooms ready even before the refugees arrived. However, they're here now he says, estimating that just under half of the people you pass in the street in Kraków's city centre are Ukrainian. Echoing what we heard from others, Bro. Jacek says they expect many to stay into the future, and the Dominicans are helping them to enrol their children in Polish schools if that's their wish.

For now though, they're doing their best to make the



A mother whispers to her child during Polish lessons in the Salesian school in Oświęcim, April 13.



Deacon Dawid Wilkos, who is based in the Salesian parish in Przemysl in Poland, and drives humanitarian aid into Ukraine, explains their current situation.

refugees they're hosting feel as welcome as they can – particularly over Easter. While most of the refugees are Greek-Orthodox, they invited all of their guests to a big lunch last Sunday to celebrate the hopeful event of the Lord's resurrection.

With Easter bookending our trip to Poland's south, the passion and resurrection aptly summate the situation the Ukrainian refugees themselves and their religious helpers find themselves in. The Church in Poland has taken it upon itself to carry its neighbour's cross, and while it continues to be bitter with the war raging on, the light of the resurrection is clear in their efforts.



Anastasia Moroz (18), a Ukrainian refugee from Kyiv, staying in the Salesian school in Oświęcim on April 13.



A toy pram owned by a refugee child is seen in a hallway on a floor which has been dedicated to Ukrainian refugees in the Salesian school in Oświęcim.

German synodal process a danger to Church unity



The Church in Germany's synodal pathway is the biggest threat to Church unity since the Reformation, writes David Quinn

The Catholic Church in Germany has embarked on what it calls a 'synodal pathway' to re-examine teachings and practices of the Church in light of the abuse scandals. But the path it appears to wish to follow seems so radical, that a growing number of bishops from around the world are warning that a schism in the Church could happen as a result, and Rome is also increasingly nervous about what is unfolding.

To cut a long story short, the Church in Germany appears to be seeking the abolition of priestly celibacy, ordination of women, communion for the divorced, and the blessing of same-sex unions, among other radical changes.

If the German Church unilaterally undertakes these changes, then it will automatically fall out of communion with the Church in the rest of the world. That, on its own, would be schismatic. On the other hand, if it simply makes recommendations along these lines, but then campaigns for allies elsewhere in the world in order to push for them, including in Rome itself, then it will be inviting a much broader schism. In short, the German synodal pathway is potentially the single biggest threat to the unity of the Catholic Church since the Reformation, which also began in Germany.

If you think this is an



German Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising attends the second Synodal Assembly in Frankfurt September 30, 2021. Photo: CNS.

exaggeration, then consider the letters recently sent to the German hierarchy by the head of the Bishops' Conference in Poland, by the Nordic Bishops' Conference, and most recently by 70 cardinals and bishops from around the world in an open letter to their German counterparts. All see clearly the threat the German synodal pathway poses to Church unity.

The synodal pathway commenced on September 1, 2019. It was supposed to be completed by now but was delayed by Covid lockdown measures.

“The Church in Germany is very rich because there is a Church tax in Germany of 1pc that is collected and then distributed to the Churches by the German Government”

The areas up for discussion are the following: 'Power and Separation of Powers in the Church'; 'Living Love in Sexuality and Partnership'; 'Priestly Existence Today'; and 'Women in Ministries and Offices in the Church'.

The main body of the synodal pathway consists of 230 members, including the 69 German bishops, an equal number from the Central Committee of German [lay] Catholics and representatives of religious orders as well as other bodies, associations and councils.

The Central Committee of German Catholics is interesting in itself. Established in 1949, it receives around

€2.5 million per annum from the German hierarchy. The Church in Germany is very rich because there is a Church tax in Germany of 1pc that is collected and then distributed to the Churches by the German Government. This is to compensate them for religious properties seized by the State decades ago.

Members of the lay committee are on the record as calling for changes in Church teaching and practice which would push the Catholic Church in Germany down the liberal, Protestant path.

Recently we have had the most senior prelate in Germany, the archbishop of Munich, Cardinal Reinhard Marx, announcing that the Catechism of the Catholic Church is “not set in stone” and “one is also allowed to doubt what it says”. It is true, of course, that the wording of the Catechism can be changed here or there, to soften its tone, for example, but core areas of doctrine and morals cannot be changed.

Pope Francis is obviously concerned about where the synodal pathway might lead. In June 2019, before it even began, he wrote a letter to German Catholics in which he warned of “a belief that the best response to the many problems and shortcomings that exist is to reorganise things, change them and ‘put them back together’ to bring order and make ecclesial life easier”.

Cardinal Walter Kasper, himself German, and considered to be on the moderately liberal wing of the Church because of past theological disputes with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger prior to him becoming pope, said last year, “I have not yet given up hope that the prayers of many

faithful Catholics will help to steer the Synodal Way in Germany on Catholic tracks”.

In his recent letter to the head of the German bishops' conference, Archbishop Stanislaw Gadecki, the head of the Polish bishops' conference, warned that the synodal pathway “should not yield to the pressures of the world or to the patterns of the dominant culture, since this can lead to moral and spiritual corruption”.

The bishops from the Nordic countries in their letter said that true reform in the Church has always started with “divine Revelation” and “authentic Tradition” and never by capitulating to the ever-changing ‘zeitgeist’, that is, to the ‘spirit of the age’.

They called on their German fellow bishops to preserve unity in the Church.

The most recent letter to the German bishops, dated April 11, is signed by dozens of bishops and cardinals from

around the world. A notable number are from Africa.

Among other things, it accuses the synodal pathway of “failing to listen to the Holy Spirit and the Gospel”.

It says the pathway is undermining “the credibility of Church authority, including that of Pope Francis; Christian anthropology and sexual morality; and the reliability of Scripture”.

“Some of the signatories will be easily dismissed as ‘conservatives’”

The signatories say that if synodal pathways become a tool to undermine Church teachings in toto, then a significant casualty could be trust in synodal processes per se.

Notably no Irish bishop has signed the letter, although it is hard to know if any were

asked.

Some of the signatories will be easily dismissed as ‘conservatives’. But given the other voices listed above that are also raising concerns about where the Church in Germany appears to be heading, it would be wrong to pretend something of the utmost significance is not potentially unfolding before us.

The Irish bishops are probably waiting to see what happens. Will the German Church pull back from the brink, or will it go headlong down a path that will split it off from the universal Church, while at the same time inviting the Church elsewhere to go down the same path, which would only make things worse?

If the German Church chooses the path of disunity, then the Irish bishops will clearly have to publicly stand with “divine Revelation” and “authentic Tradition”, as the bishops of Scandinavia put it. They can do no other.

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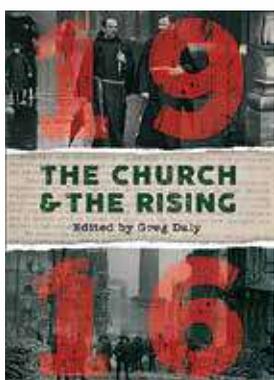
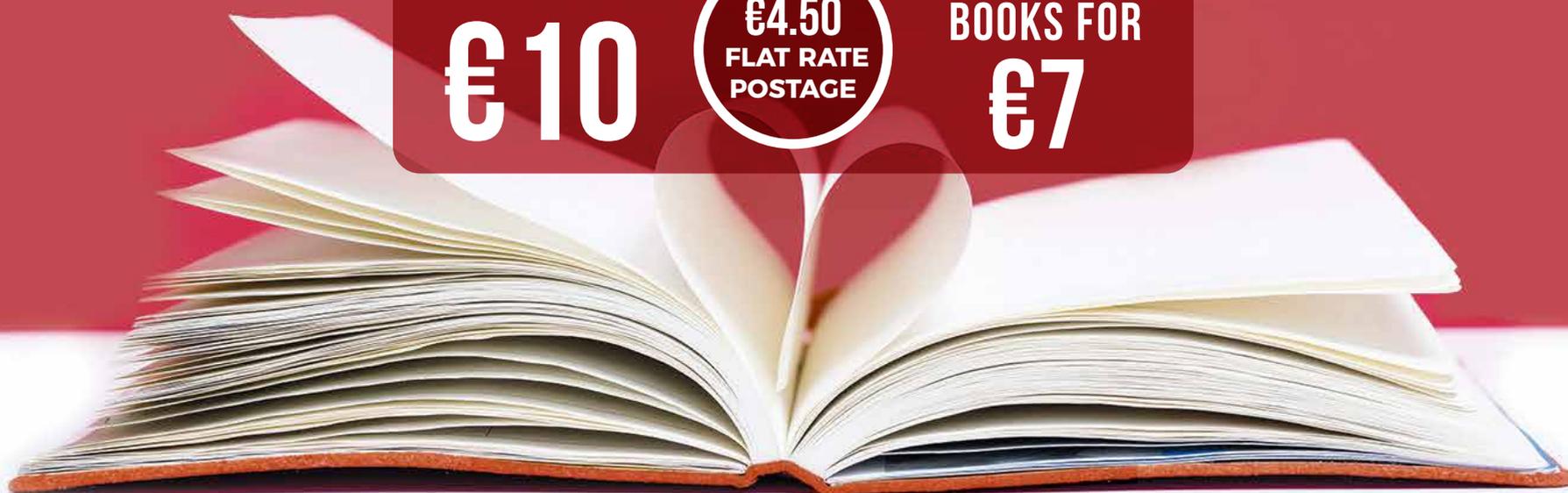
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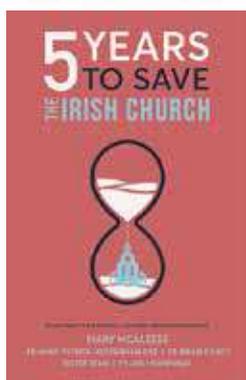
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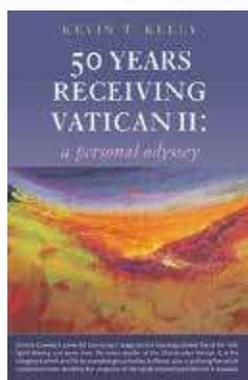
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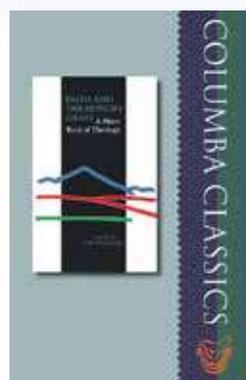
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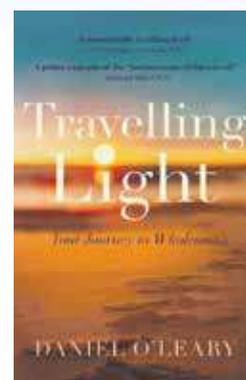
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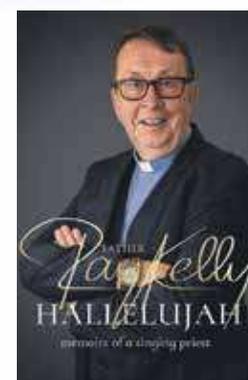
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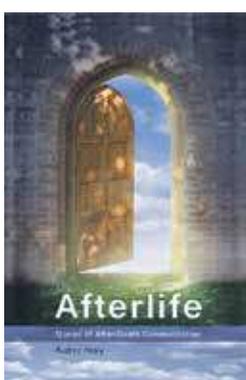
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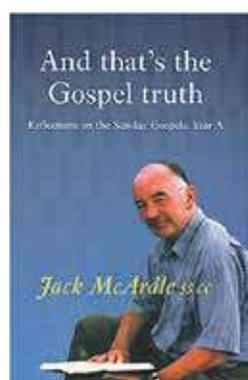
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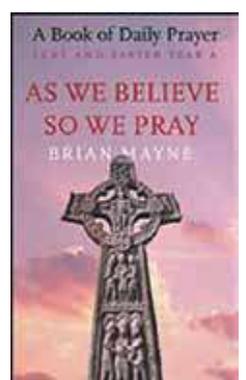
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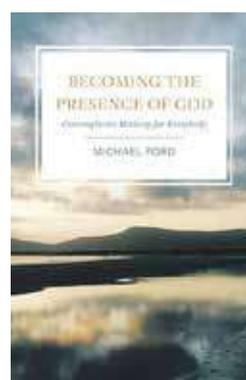
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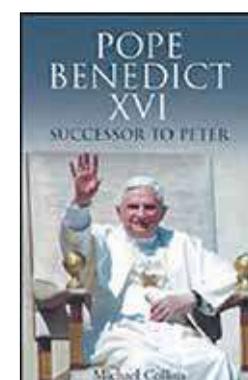
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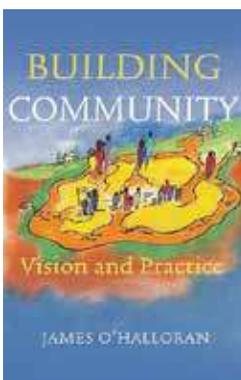
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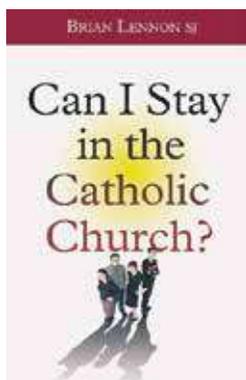
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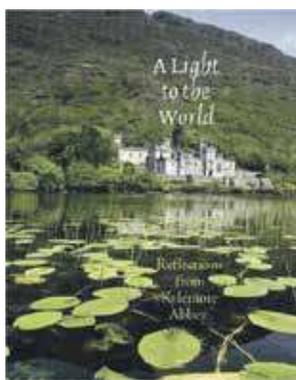
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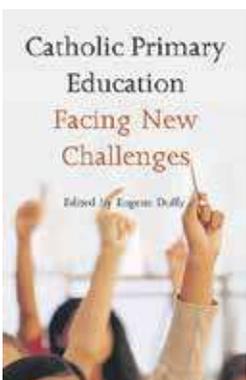
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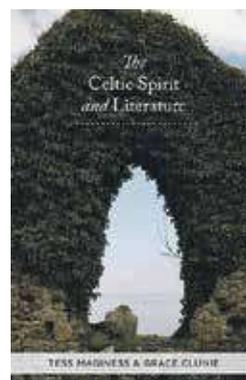
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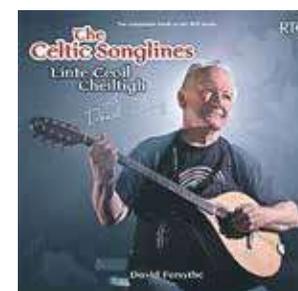
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Kylemore Abbey



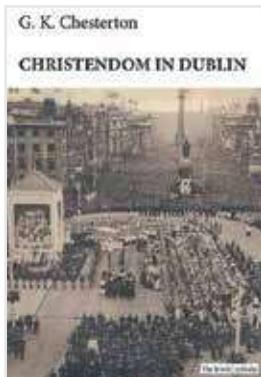
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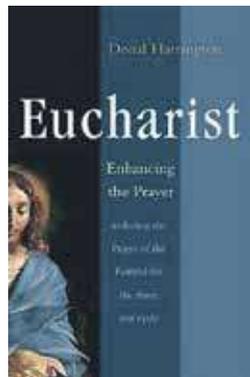
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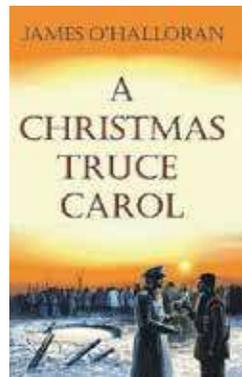
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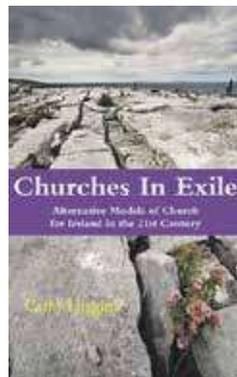
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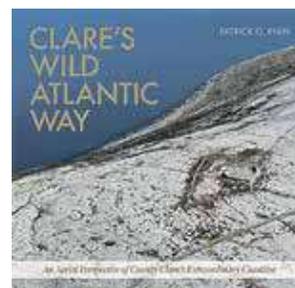
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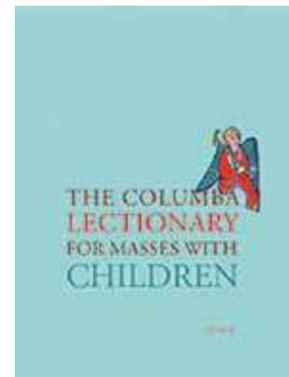
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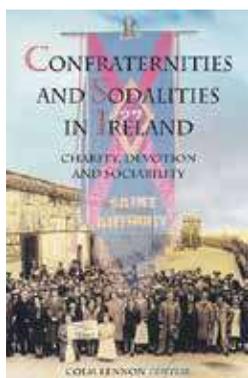
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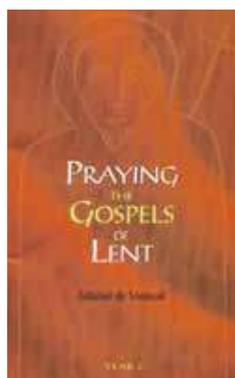
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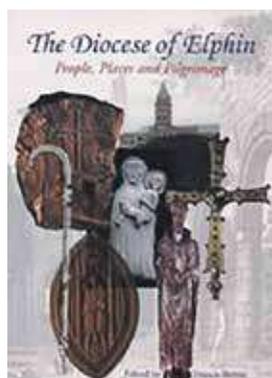
Columba Lectionary Masses with Children Year B
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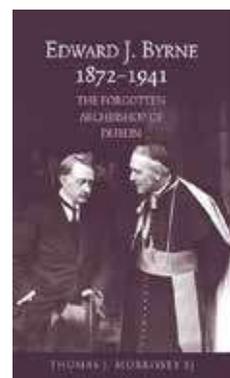
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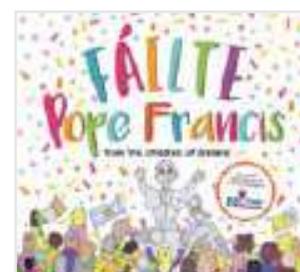
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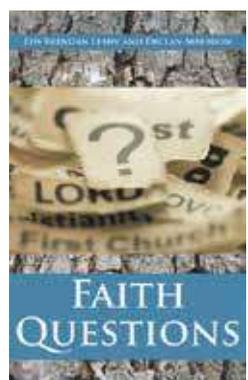
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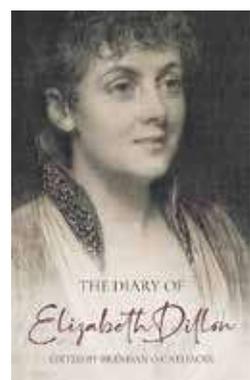
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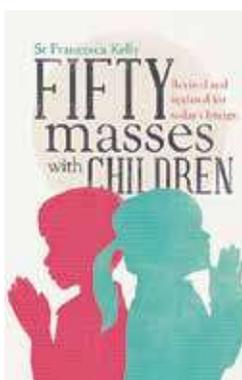
Fáilte Pope Francis
Children of Ireland



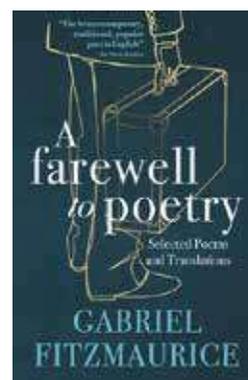
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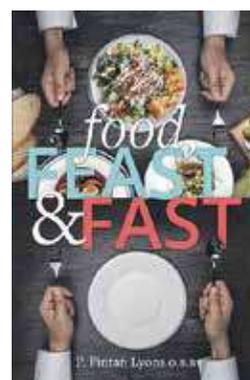
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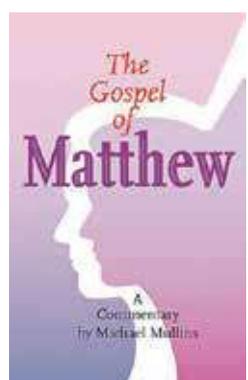
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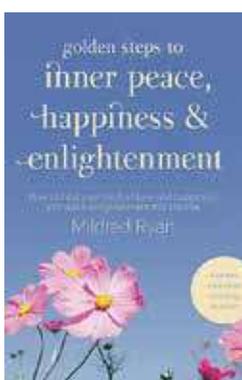
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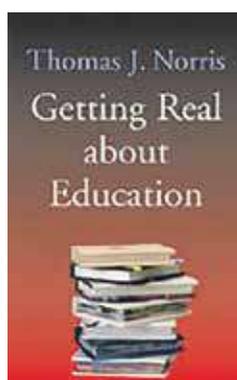
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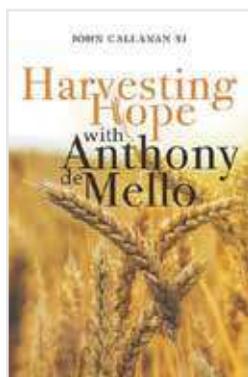
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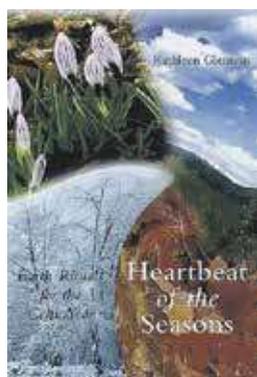
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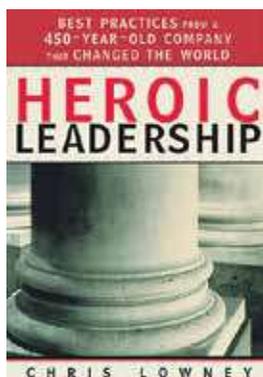
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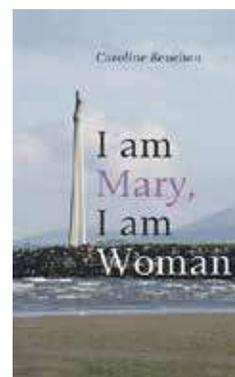
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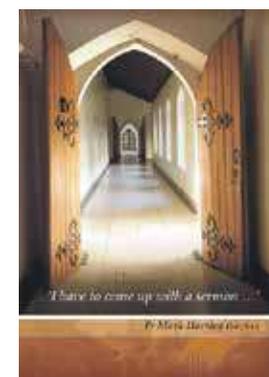
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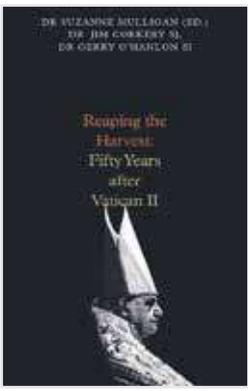
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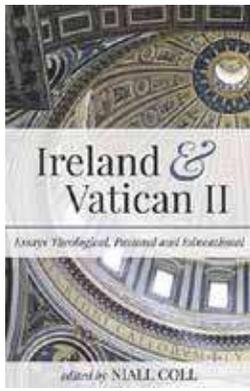
I am Mary, I am Woman
Caroline Renehan



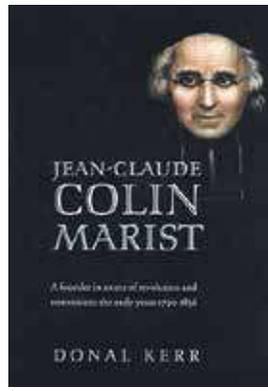
I have got to come up with a sermon Year A
Fr Mark Hartley OCSO



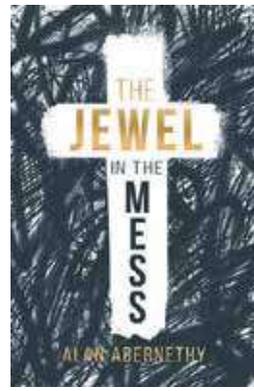
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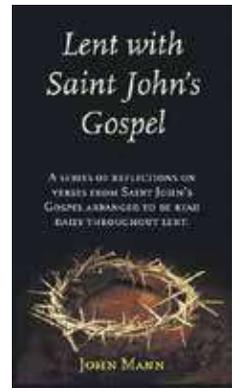
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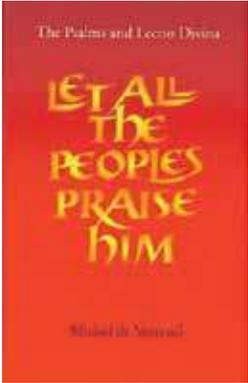
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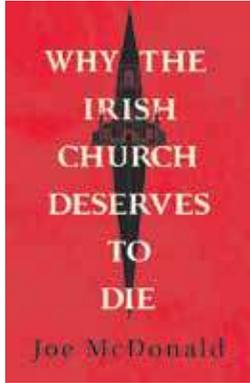
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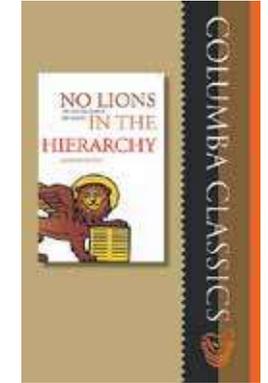
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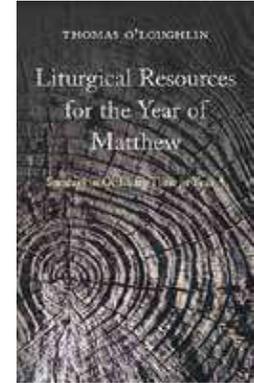
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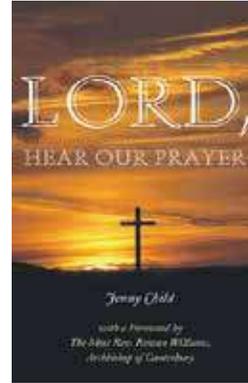
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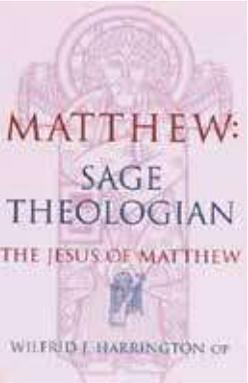
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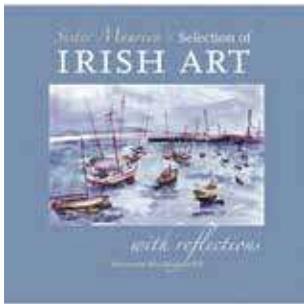
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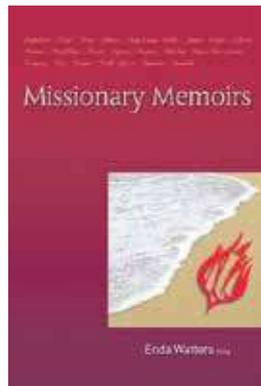
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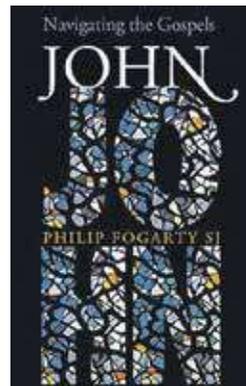
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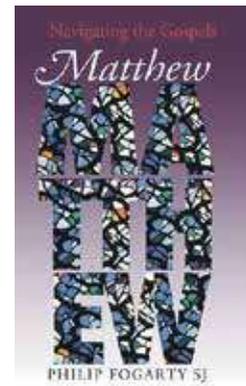
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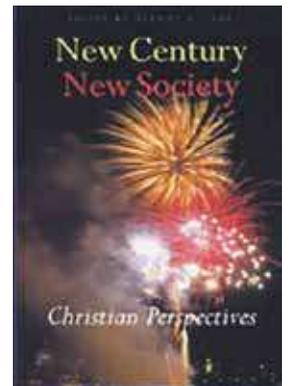
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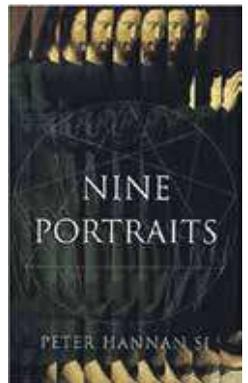
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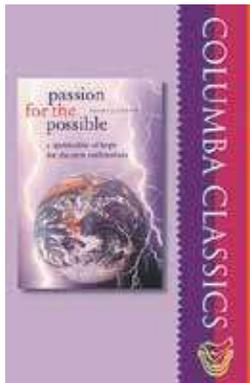
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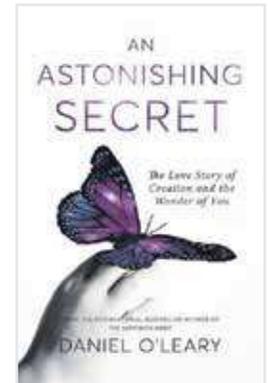
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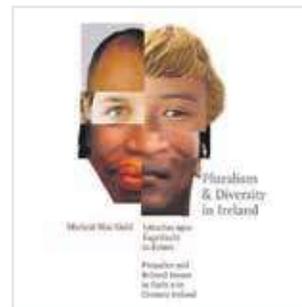
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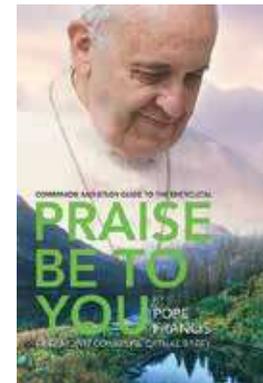
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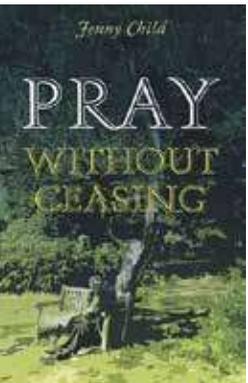
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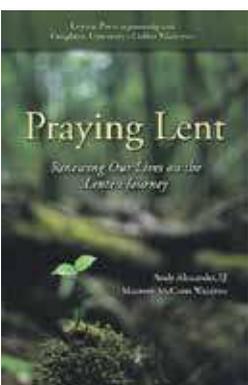
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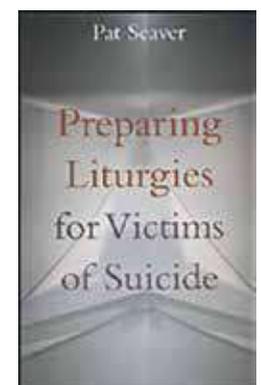
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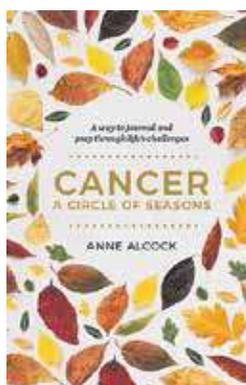
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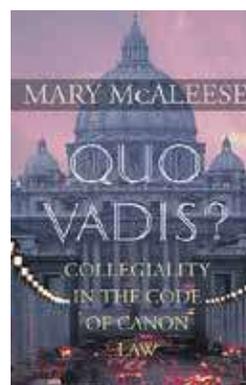
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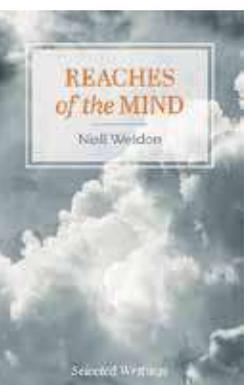
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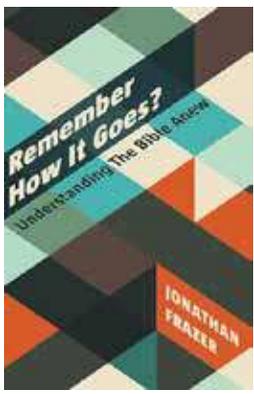
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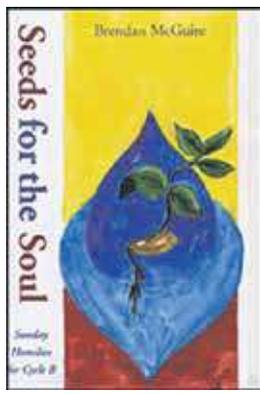
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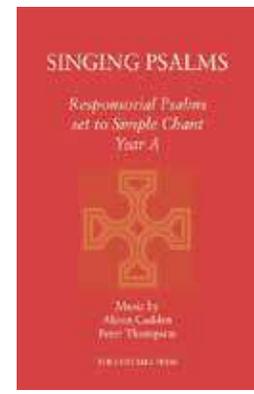
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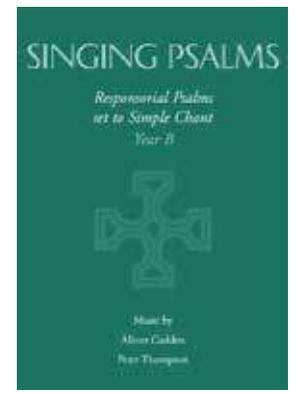
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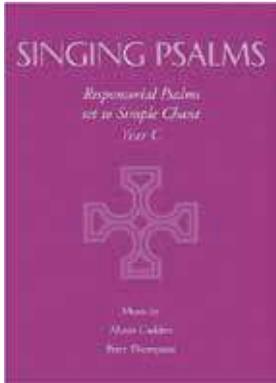
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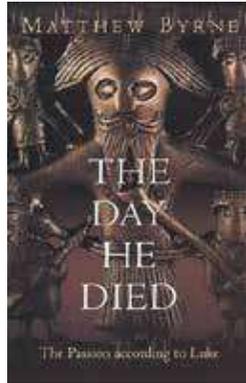
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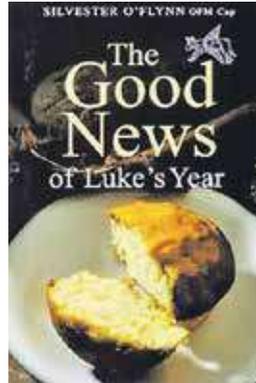
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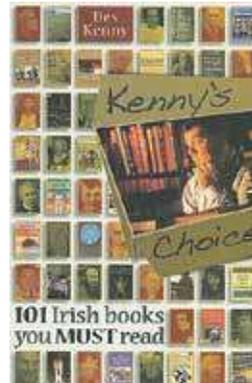
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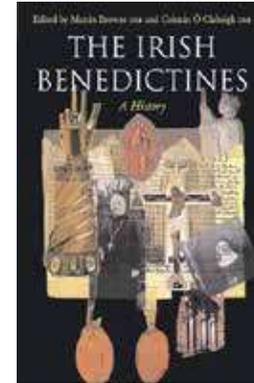
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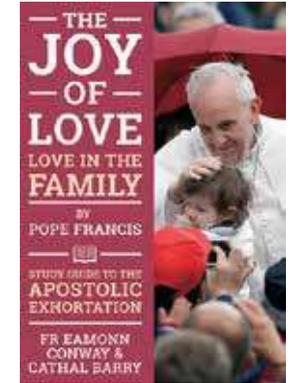
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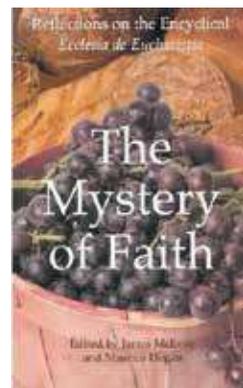
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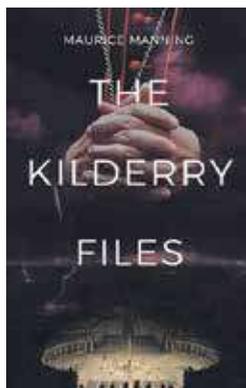
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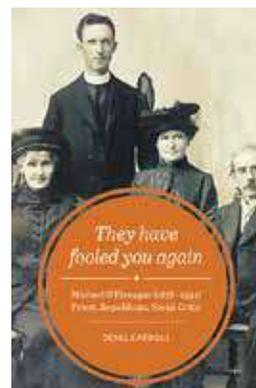
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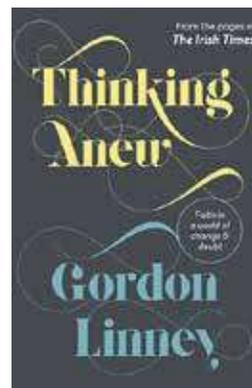
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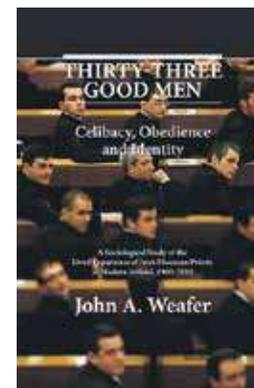
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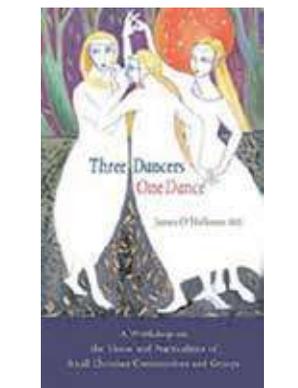
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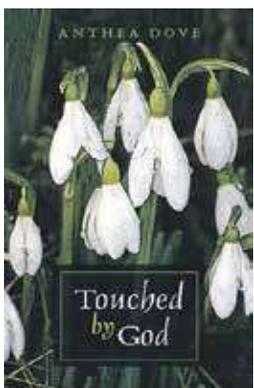
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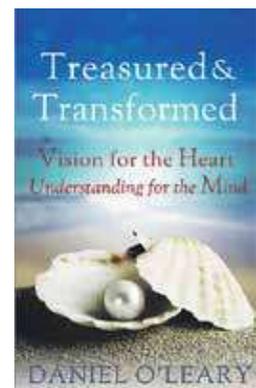
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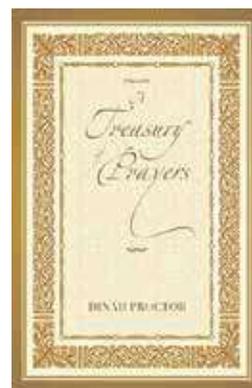
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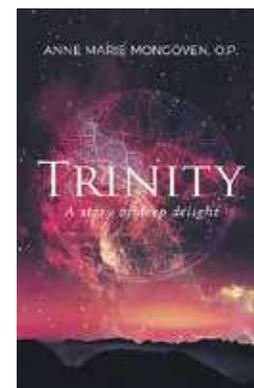
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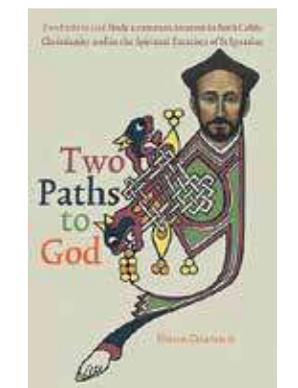
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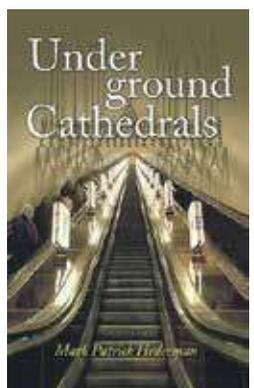
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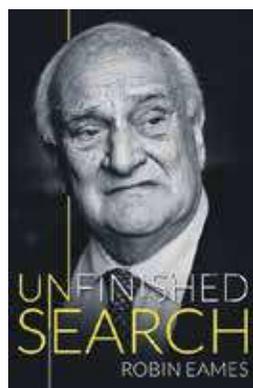
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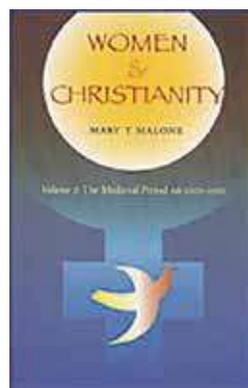
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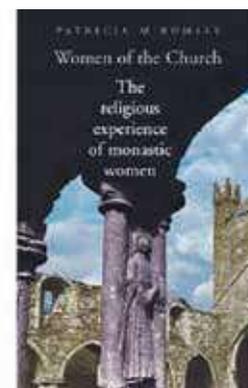
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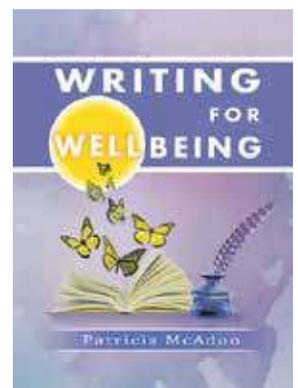
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The Risen Lord can heal our wounds

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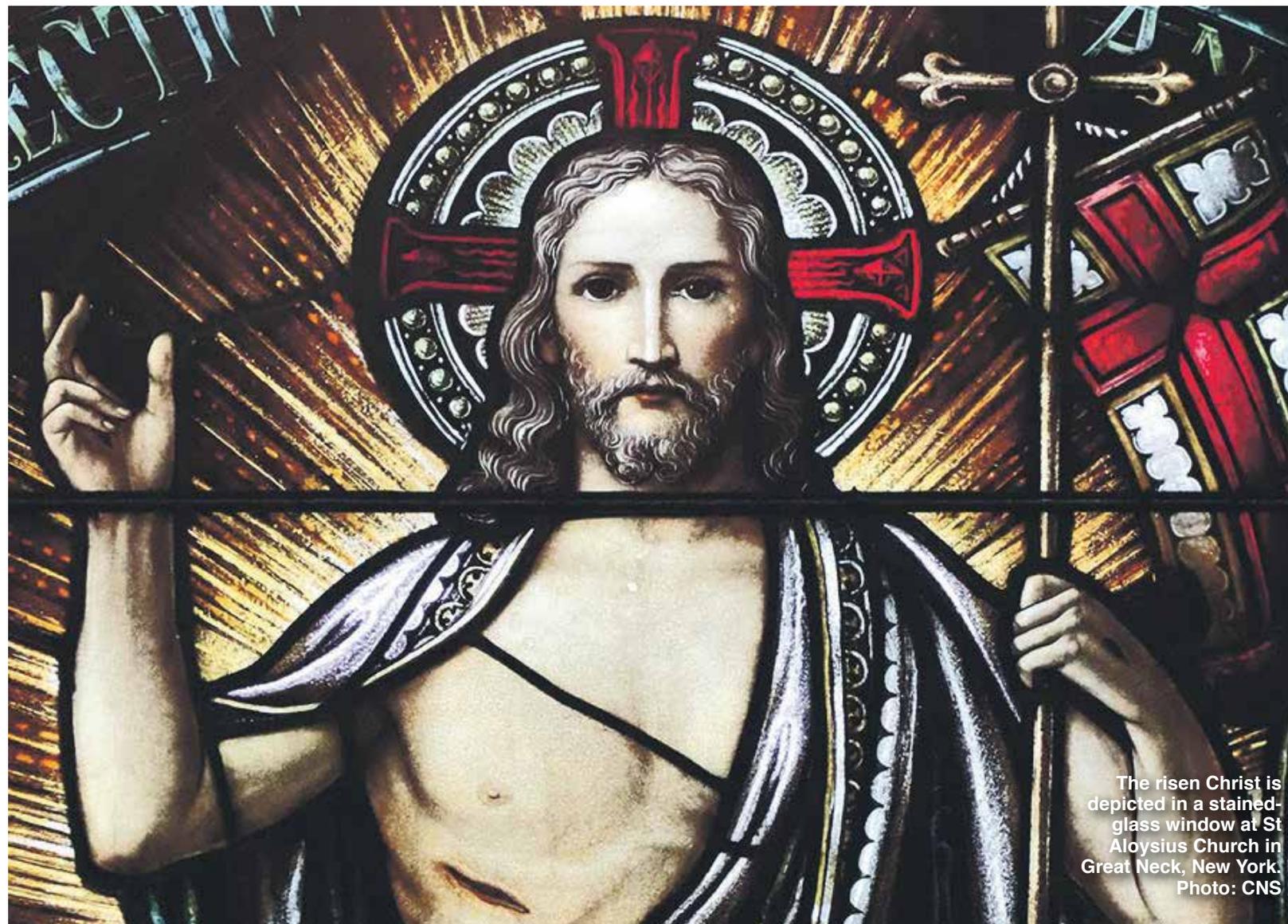
Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



As we noted at the start of Lent, the number 40 is usually associated with a period of preparation. Following the 40 days of Lent, there are 40 days of preparation between the Resurrection and Ascension. My very young grand-nephew once asked me a very profound question: "Where was Jesus in the time between his Resurrection and Ascension?" All I could say was that he came back on several occasions to strengthen the faith of the Apostles and to prepare them to take up leadership in the Church. He would not be with them as before when they could see him, hear him and touch him, but he would still be with them in many different ways. "You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe".

Closed doors

Today's Gospel (John 20:19-31) gives us two encounters of the Risen Lord with his disciples. The setting for the first encounter doesn't look too promising. The disciples were locked in behind closed doors, confused and afraid. Would there be more arrests? There is an old Irish saying that God's help is nearer than the closed door, and sure enough, Jesus came and stood among them. "Peace be with you," he said. Like a document of identity, he showed them his wounded hands and side. This is a very significant identification because, as the prophet Isaiah wrote many years previously, "Ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried. Through his wounds we are healed". He is the wounded sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Then he told them that they were to carry on his ministry of mercy to the sinner. "As the Father sent me, so am I sending you." But how might they perform this divine work? It would be through the power of the Holy Spirit. One of the psalms described the moment of death thus: "You sent forth your spirit and they are created. You take back your spirit when they



The risen Christ is depicted in a stained-glass window at St Aloysius Church in Great Neck, New York. Photo: CNS

die, returning to the dust of the earth." John's Gospel describing the death Jesus wrote that he bowed his head and gave up his Spirit. The inspiration of the mission of Jesus would now be passed on to the disciples. The Risen Lord breathed on the disciples saying "Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained." Retaining means calling a sin a sin, and telling people that the mercy which God wishes to bestow on them is being blocked until they humbly and genuinely repent of their wrongdoing. The message for Christians down the ages is to recognise the presence of the Risen Lord in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Wounds of life

The Apostle Thomas was missing that day. He absolutely refused to believe what the others told him about the Lord's appearance. He was so loyal to Jesus that he once

declared that he was willing to go to Jerusalem with Jesus and die with him. But he was loyal to a fault. Loyalists, as we know, whether political or religious, find it very hard to accept change and often become embittered. Thomas was so loyal to the former days of knowing Jesus physically that he was not ready for the change to know him by faith instead of physical recognition. In his despondency and bitterness, he absolutely refused what the others told him about the Lord's appearance. "Unless I can see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe." Now, there's bitter stubbornness for you!

When the Lord appeared the following Sunday, he invited Thomas not only to see the wounds, but to touch them. Touching the wounds is very significant because it suggests getting in touch

with the wounded parts of our inner self.

The steps in a rehabilitation programme begin with getting in touch with the inner wounds of life. The humble admission of an inner hurt or uncontrolled addiction involves touching the wounded area. Then it is handed over to the higher power. And there is no power higher than the saviour who knows suffering from the inside because he experienced it personally. He achieved the ultimate victory when he conquered death itself by rising from the dead. I have met many people in recovery who hand their lives over to God every day and they have developed a powerful experience of the closeness of God.

Mysterious wisdom

When Pope Francis was a bishop in his native Argentina, he made a point of visiting the very poor families in the shanty towns. There, he met people who had come to know the suffering Christ as one of their own. He found a mysterious wisdom among them. The help of God can come through closed doors.

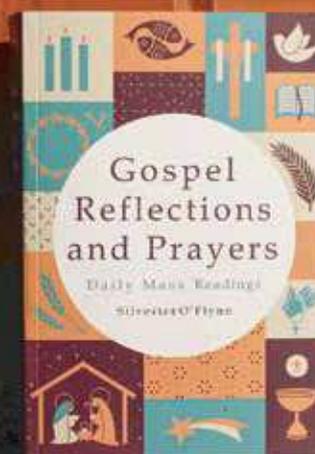
Prayer

O risen Lord, in the power of the Holy Spirit, call us to come out from behind the closed doors of life. Touch the wounds of our past failures with the healing power of your wounded hands. Call us out of the tomb of guilt unto full belief in your divine mercy. Call us out from the dark cave of fear into believing in your closeness to us. Call us out from the claustrophobia of anxious fretting into the open air of full trust in your care. Risen Lord, raise us up into the fullness of life.

“All I could say was that he came back on several occasions to strengthen the faith of the Apostles and to prepare them to take up leadership in the Church”

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Queen's Catholic chaplaincy marks 50 years at 'iconic' site



Ruadhán Jones

The Catholic Chaplaincy at Queen's University Belfast marked 50 years of its presence at the chaplaincy's iconic site situated at the heart of the Queen's campus, Friday April 8.

All gathered in the University's Great Hall were treated to a rich programme of art, poetry and music, much of which was performed by current students and alumni.

The performances included the premiere of Sir James MacMillan's *With my heart I worship*. The renowned Scottish composer set to music the ancient Eucharistic hymn, *Adoro te Devote*, written by St Thomas Aquinas, excerpts of which feature in the University Chapel's artwork.

The specially commissioned work was performed by the University's chamber choir, in the presence of the composer, and received a standing ovation.

“We provide them with opportunities for informed and intelligent reflection on issues of human dignity, social justice and care for the environment”

Prof. Michael Longley, one of Ireland's most respected living poets, recited his poem *Canticle*, also specially commissioned by the chaplaincy, and world-renowned artist and newly appointed Chancellor of Ulster University, Dr Colin Davidson, unveiled a commemorative painting.

Davidson is best known for his portraits of noted figures but each year, he paints a cityscape of his native Belfast. The Chaplaincy commissioned his cityscape for 2022, which takes in the University Quarter and pans over Belfast as far as Cave Hill.

Painting

Davidson's painting, together with a copy of *Canticle* handwritten by Longley, and

a companion illustration by the poet's daughter, Sarah Longley, will be displayed in a newly refurbished Chaplaincy, plans for which are well advanced.

Throughout the evening, guests enjoyed music and song provided by the University's Chamber Choir, under the direction of Donal McCrisken. The Chaplaincy's Choir, *Canticle*, also gave renditions of some well-known pieces, with solo performances by acclaimed soprano Marcella Walsh, and cellist Niall Leonard, both Queen's alumni.

University Chaplain, Fr Dominic McGrattan, commented that the Chaplaincy “engaged the best of creative talent across these islands to help us celebrate this important milestone in our distinguished record of service to the University. We hope to honour past achievements and envision the future with confidence.”

Community

Over more than a century, the Catholic Chaplaincy has grown to become “a vibrant, Christ-centred community of faith and friendship serving Northern Ireland's oldest university”.

According to Chaplaincy Director, Shannon Campbell, “going to university is an exciting and transformative time when students experience new possibilities”, but it can cause “unexpected anxieties” and new challenges.

The “Chaplaincy seeks to provide students with a safe space and nurturing presence where they feel welcome, listened to, valued and supported,” she said.

Fr McGrattan added that “through the celebration of the Sacraments, and moments of prayer, reflection and togetherness, students are reassured that life does make sense, that there is a God who loves them, and that in the end, all will be well.”

Speaking at the event, Fr McGrattan said that the Chaplaincy believes it “a vital part of its mission to form today's students to become tomorrow's much-needed agents of change.

“We provide them with opportunities for informed and intelligent reflection on issues of human dignity, social justice and care for the environment. We support them to become whole-hearted contributors to public service and the common good.”



Fr Dominic McGrattan, Shannon Campbell, Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor, Dr Colin Davidson and Vice Chancellor of QUB Prof. Ian Greer.

This dimension of the Chaplaincy's work and mission was highlighted with the award of two student prizes. The Macaulay Prize, which commemorates former Chaplain, Msgr Ambrose Macaulay, was presented to Anna Murray and Mark McDonnell, for their efforts to further the Chaplaincy's mission “to foster community, engage in outreach and promote action and global concern”.

“Throughout the evening, guests enjoyed music and song provided by the University's Chamber Choir”

Meanwhile, the Ryan Prize, which commemorates academic and churchman Msgr. Arthur Ryan, was presented to Bláthnaid French and Gerard Scullion, recognising their excellence in their field of study and contribution to the “intellectual discourse and cultural life” of the college.

According to Fr McGrattan, “the students have, in the best traditions of the University and its Chaplaincy, shared their gifts and talents generously for

the betterment of people's lives”.

At the event, Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor announced that the Chaplaincy, in partnership with the diocese, is working to safeguard its important work with students, well into the future, progressing ambitious plans to develop the Chaplaincy building and ministry “in new and exciting ways”.

Fr McGrattan concluded the evening with heartfelt thanks to those who made the event possible and he invited all gathered to “look forward, with confidence, to a bright future for the Chaplaincy and the University it serves”.



Poet Prof. Michael Longley reciting his poem *Canticle* for the first time.



Bishop Noel Treanor and Shannon Campbell unveil a painting by Colin Davidson. *Towards Cave Hill from Botanic, Belfast* was specially commissioned for Chaplaincy's Golden Jubilee.



Student recipients of the Msgr Ambrose MacAulay Prize and Msgr Arthur Ryan Prize are pictured with Shannon Campbell, Fr Dominic McGrattan, Prof. Ian Greer and Bishop Noel Treanor.



Bishop Noel Treanor, Fr Dominic McGrattan, composer Sir James MacMillan, Shannon Campbell and Ppal Nuncio Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo



Student Prize Winners (from left) Gerard Scullion, Bláthnaid French, Anna Murray and Mark McDonnell.



Bishop Noel Treanor introduces the Msgr Ambrose MacAulay Prize.



Dr Colin Davidson speaking about the inspiration behind the painting before it is unveiled.



Chaplaincy's choir Canticle under the direction of Marcella Walsh.



Marcella Walsh, award winning soprano and Director of Music Ministry at Chaplaincy.



Cellist Niall Leonard, a Queen's alumnus.



The University's Chamber Choir, under the direction of Donal McCrisken, performs during the gala.



Out&About

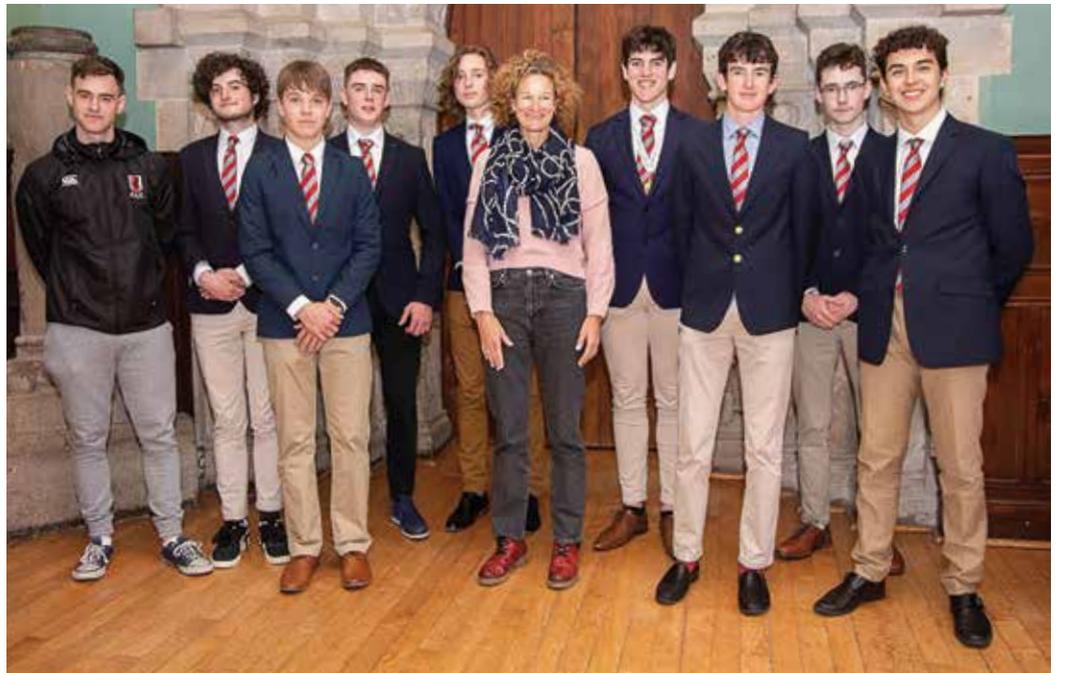
The keys of success



DOWN: The Northern Ireland International Organ Competition (NIIOC) celebrated its 10th birthday with a gala recital from 10 of its international winners, April 6. Pictured (from the back left): Alexander Hamilton, Ivan-Bogdan-Reincke, Johannes Krahl, Gillian Morrow, Richard Gowers, Ben Comeau, Fr Eugene O'Hagan, Ben Bloor, Andrew Forbes, Neale Agnew, Sebastian Heindl, Mona Rozdestvenskyte, Deputy Lord Mayor Alderman Tom Haire, Lord Lieutenant Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle, Richard Yarr, Laura Schlappa, Nicholas Tall.



KILKENNY: Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty meets young people from the diocese, some of whom travelled to Lourdes with the diocese, at the chrism Mass, April 13, in St Mary's Cathedral.



LIMERICK: Irish Olympic medallist Sonia O'Sullivan is pictured with some budding athletes of Glenstal Abbey School, to whom she gave an address April 4.

INSHORT

Students show support for pro-life movement

Pro-life students from all across Ireland gathered together in Cork last weekend at the Student Summit hosted by Students for Life, its first national gathering since before the pandemic.

Speakers from Ireland and abroad, as well as participants, were "particularly engaged by a presentation from Eden McCourt and Natalia Isherwood of Abortion Resistance, a new youth pro-life group formed in London", said Katie Fenton, the event organiser.

Other speakers included Dr Brendan Crow-

ley, representatives of the Minimise project and Senator Sharon Keogan.

Speaking after the event, Ms Fenton said it was "refreshing to be able to gather as a group again after so long to socialise and share ideas".

"The speeches and workshop elements of the weekend were incredible and we are grateful to all those who participated from near and far. It's encouraging to see students who are motivated and positive about protecting the human rights of the unborn child and supporting mothers."

Ms Fenton urged any student who is interested in hearing more about Students For Life to get in touch on hello@studentsforlife.ie.

New books on Sr Clare mark 6th anniversary of her death

The sixth anniversary of the death of Irish nun Sr Clare Crockett was marked by her order the Servants of the Home of the Mother with new books on her life, works and words.

The publications include a first selection of stories published by Sr Clare in the Servant's *HM Zoom+ Magazine*, under the title *When I Was Little*.

The stories, which Sr Clare's sisters Shauna and Megan said were partly based on her

real-life experiences, also highlight Sr Clare's use of imagination.

In a press release, the Servants explain that "ever since she was little, she liked to recite poems, sing, act, dance and make up stories".

"When she grew up and consecrated herself to God, she wrote these stories thinking of you. She wanted to make you laugh and to help you to not make the same mistakes she did when she was little," the release reads.

The Servants of the Home of the Mother said they hope the stories encourage people to imitate Sr Clare's love and generosity.

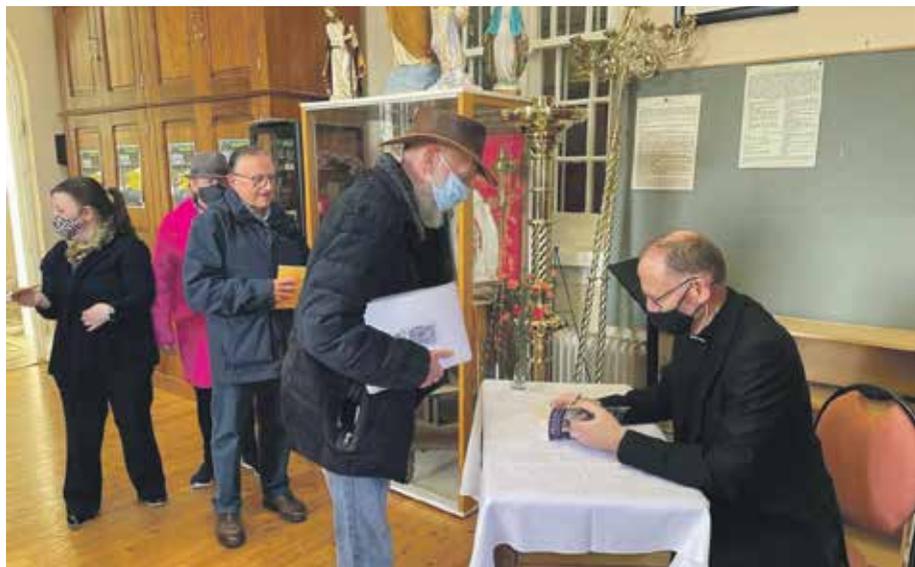
"She went from being a mischievous and crazy young girl to being a great friend of God's," they said.



CORK: A group of Pro-Life students from across Ireland gathered together in Cork last weekend at the Student Summit hosted by Students for Life. Pictured is Eden McCourt, who with Natalia Isherwood founded Abortion Resistance, a new youth pro-life group formed in London, who gave an address to the students.



DUBLIN: After two years without in-person graduation ceremonies the Loyola institute hosted graduations last week. Pictured are some of the Loyola Institute's 2019/20 and 20/21 graduates in MPhil in Christian Theology with members of the Loyola faculty: (front, from left) Dr Michael Kirwan, Deirdre Soffe, Dr Fainche Ryan, Emmet O'Regan, Dr Con Casey; (back) Ursula Halligan, Marian White and Seamus Crimmins.



CLARE: Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan signs a copy of his new book, *Peace Apart, Lasting impressions of C.S.Lewis* for local artist Harry Guinnane, who drew the front cover for the book, at the book's launch in Ennis Cathedral.



KERRY: Pictured after the Dominican service for Holy Week at Our Lady and St Brendan Pastoral Centre are (sitting, from left) Paula Hickey, National President of the Lay Dominicans Tony Kenny, Myra Stack and Sr. Mary Cremins; and (back, from left) Bobby Boylan, Christy Switzer, Pat Hickey and Fr Padraig Walsh PP Our Lady and St Brendan. Photo: John Cleary.



DOWN: Members of the Knights of Columbanus community in Queens University Belfast are pictured on a sponsored walk of the Columban Way to raise money for Trocaire, raising more than £600.



DUBLIN: Our Lady's Hospice and Care Services awarded a 'Hospice Hero' lifetime achievement award to one of its long-standing fundraisers, 86-year-old Mr William Tilly, pictured with his grandchildren (from left) Ava Tilly-Rock (13), Saoirse Mayland-Tilly (8) and Emma Tilly (18), who has raised over €175,000 through his annual Christmas lights display and other projects, April 8. Photo: Mark Stedman.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



ROSCOMMON: Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey (centre) is pictured with Msgr John Johnston and Canon Peyton, who both celebrate their Golden Jubilee of priesthood this year, after the diocese's chrism Mass, April 11.



TIPPERARY: The local branch were delighted to be back again after an absence of two years due to Covi19 restrictions. People wishing to donate a sacred vessel to the missions, such as a Chalice, Ciborium, Sick Call Set etc. in memory of a loved one were invited to do so. The sacred vessels will be used daily by the Priests in Missionary countries. Present were Fr. Willie McCormack P.P. who came along to view the work carried out by the members and their associates (L-R) Peggy Quigley (Treasurer) Bridie Gavin, Betty Killeen (Secretary) Dolores Smith, Margaret Mulcahy (President) and Cara Mulch. Photo: pádraigoflannabhra.com



DUBLIN: Trinity College hosted a reception last week to mark the retirement of the founding director of The Loyola Institute Dr Con Casey, who is seen here with Linda Doyle, President and Provost at Trinity College Dublin.

ANTRIM

Mass will be celebrated by Fr Celsus Kelly on Tuesday April 26 in Abbey Conference room, Portglenone at 7pm.

ARMAGH

A Mass of thanksgiving will be celebrated in St Malachy's Church on Wednesday April 27 at 8pm in thanksgiving for the seminars hosted by the Armagh Parish Holy Spirit Prayer Group over the last number of weeks.

CARLOW

Graiguecullen Parish will commence its novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help on Monday April 25. See parish website for list of prospective speakers at event.

CLARE

Annual Killaloe Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine takes place on 22 May 2022. Any questions Contact Claire (065-6828638) at the Killaloe Diocesan Office.

CORK

Scripture Group: Next meeting will take place on Wednesday, May 4 at 8pm at St Finbarr's Church, Bantry.

DERRY

There will be a Sr Clare Crockett retreat taking place between April 25 and May 1 at St Mary's Church, Creggan.

DONEGAL

Bundoran Parish cake sale will take place in the Pastoral Centre after 7pm Mass on Saturday April 23 with other items being available after 11pm Mass the following day.

DOWN

Bookings now open for new workshops at the Dromantine Centre, Newry beginning with No Visible Scar, a workshop dedicated to comforting those who were bereaved during the pandemic. Friday 20 May 5pm – Sunday 22 May 2pm. Coordinated by Fr Hugh Lagan SMA. Contact Jacinta or Louisa to reserve your place: Phone 3082 1964 or Email: admin@dromantineconference.com.

DUBLIN

A conversation around pro-life issues will be held on Thursday April 21 at

Presentation Brother's Hall, Glathule Road, Dun Laoghaire 8pm.

The Archdiocese of Dublin Pilgrimage to Knock takes place on Saturday 23 April. More details are available on the Archdiocese of Dublin website.

GALWAY

Emmanuel House, Ballinasloe, Clonfert, will celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday April 24 at 11am. The day includes talks, chaplet, holy Mass, Confessions, and Divine Mercy blessing. Bring packed lunch.

Bishop of Galway, Dr Michael Duignan, will be formally installed on May 1 at a 3pm ceremony in the Cathedral in Galway. Tickets will be required and each parish will be allocated a limited number.

KERRY

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place every Wednesday at St Mary's Church, Listowel straight after 10.30am Mass until 1pm.

KILDARE

Families are invited to bring their children to come and pray the Rosary together every Saturday at 6pm in Our Lady and the Guardian Angels Church, Sallins.

LAOIS

Divine Mercy Sunday April 24 at St Peter and Paul's Parish Church Portlaoise. Devotions starting at 2.50pm followed by Mass with Fr David Vard.

LEITRIM

Adoration at Drumkeeran Church on Monday from 6pm to 7pm before Mass.

LIMERICK

The Legion of Mary weekly meetings take place in the Pastoral Centre, Doon on Tuesday evenings at 7pm.

LOUTH

St Pio Devotions will recommence in St Mary's Church, Drogheda on April 21 at 7.30pm. Rosary at 7.05pm followed by Mass at 7.30pm.

MEATH

A meeting for people interested in or helping out Ukrainian families in Trim and Boardsmill will take place at the Trim Parish Centre on Wednesday May 4 at 7.30pm.

MAYO

Parish Trip for Crossmolina - The bus will depart the GAA pitch on Monday April 25 at 8.30am sharp.

MONAGHAN

Fr Brendan Walsh will lead celebrations of St Joseph's Triduum which will take place April 27, 28 and 29. There will be a healing service Thursday 28 at 7.30pm in St Joseph's Church, Carrickmacross.

OFFALY

Celebrations for Divine Mercy Sunday will take place at Mucklagh Church, Sunday 24, 3pm, Confessions 2.30pm.

ROSCOMMON

Fundraising concert in aid of the Ozanam Day Centre in St Nathy's Cathedral, Ballaghaderreen to take place on Friday, April 29 at 7.30pm. Tickets €10.00 Family €20.00.

TIPPERARY

Devotions will take place at Thurles Cathedral on Divine Mercy Sunday April 24 beginning at 2.30 pm. Chaplet at 3.00 pm and Mass. Confessions will also be available from 2.30 pm.

TYRONE

Cookstown Pioneer Centre is organising a Parish Pilgrimage to Knock as part of the Armagh Diocesan Pilgrimage on Sunday 29 May 29. Contact parish office for more details.

WATERFORD

The Diocese of Waterford and Lismore presents Ablaze - Life in the Spirit Seminars, starting after Easter on Zoom Tuesday evenings, April 26 – June 7 at 7:30pm. For further information go to: www.waterfordlismore.ie/youth-ministry.

WESTMEATH

Divine Mercy Prayer Group recites prayers every Wednesday at 3 pm at Our Lady, Queen of Peace Church, Coosan.

WEXFORD

A Spirituality of our Times Conference will take place at Ballyvaloo Retreat and Conference Centre on May 13, featuring guest speaker Jane Mellett of Trocaire. Contact Sara or Catherina on 056 7722870.

World Report

IN BRIEF

Archbishop criticises plenary council preparations

● At a time when Catholicism in Australia faces crises such as a loss of faith and declining religious practice, a plenary council preparatory document shows “serious failures” that suggest a lack of confidence and “evangelical vigour”, Archbishop Julian Porteous of Hobart has said.

Archbishop Porteous warned that the document may encourage Catholics to shrink from their “prophetic task” and become caught in a “spiritual paralysis.”

Speaking recently, Archbishop Porteous said that: “In reading the working document, I sense a church that has lost confidence in itself; a church that has lost confidence in its identity and mission”.

“The Church in Australia is in the midst of an existential crisis as it witnesses thousands abandoning participation in the sacramental life of the Church each year,” he added. “The Church is in serious decline, yet no real recognition of this reality is given in the document”.

Knights of Columbus give 10,000 care packages to Ukraine

● The Knights of Columbus have worked to deliver 10,000 Easter care packages to displaced families in Ukraine.

Patrick Kelly, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus, met with the Pope in a private audience on April 11 while en route to western Ukraine, where he delivered care packages to families who have taken refuge in a 14th-century monastery in the Archdiocese of Lviv.

“By distributing these

Easter care packages to Ukrainian families, we are sharing the light and hope of Christ’s Resurrection, even in this time of darkness and war,” Kelly said in a recent statement.

During his audience with the Pope, the Supreme Knight discussed the Knights of Columbus’ humanitarian efforts in Ukraine and Poland to aid those suffering from the war.

Grandmother challenges fine for ‘solitary prayer walk’ during lockdown

● A 76-year-old grandmother is seeking to overturn a fine she received for taking a “solitary prayer walk” during a Covid lockdown in England. Rosa Lalor intends to challenge the fine in court with assistance from the Christian legal group ADF UK.

“With support from ADF UK, I’m taking a stand to protect fundamental freedoms for all people,” she said.

On February 24, 2021, she left her home in Liverpool and went for a prayer walk near an abortion facility. She wore a mask, walked alone, and maintained a social distance from others.

A police officer stopped her and asked why she was outdoors. When she replied that she was “walking and praying”, the officer reportedly said that she did not have a “reasonable excuse” to be outside and accused her of engaging in a protest.

Lalor was arrested, detained in a police car, charged, and fined £200 under temporary coronavirus measures.

Pope Francis washes prisoners’ feet at Mass on Holy Thursday

● Pope Francis washed the feet of prisoners on Thursday as he celebrated the Mass of the Lord’s Supper at a prison outside Rome.

The Pope offered the Mass on April 14 in Civitavecchia, a port city around 50 miles northwest of Rome.

In an impromptu homily, Pope Francis said that Jesus calls his betrayer “friend,” waiting for him until the end, forgiving everything. “God forgives everything and God always forgives! It is we

who get tired of asking for forgiveness,” he commented.

Each one of us, the Pope added, has something that we have been carrying in our heart for a long time, “but ask Jesus for forgiveness.”

After the homily, the pope washed the feet of 12 inmates, representing the disciples. The Holy See press office noted that they were “men and women, including people of different ages and nationalities”.

Catholic Florida senator officially ratifies Florida 15-week abortion ban

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, a practicing Catholic, signed into law a bill protecting the unborn from abortion after 15 weeks gestation last Thursday.

“What we’re doing today is saying that we will not let that happen in the state of Florida,” the Republican politician said.

DeSantis signed into law House Bill 5 in Kissimmee, Florida. The legislation bans abortions in that state after an unborn baby reaches 15 weeks gestation, except to save the life or physical health of the mother and in cases of fatal foetal abnormalities.

“We’re here today to defend those who can’t defend themselves,” DeSantis said. “This will represent the most significant protections for life that have been enacted in this state in a generation.”

In addition to providing protections for the unborn, DeSantis highlighted that the legislation expands efforts to reduce foetal-infant mortality cases and works to improve hospitals’ prenatal care. Previously, Florida law barred abortion after 24 weeks.

The Florida bishops’ conference lauded the legislation, commenting that the bishops “are grateful for Governor DeSantis’ commitment to defend unborn children and their mothers. The governor’s leadership and support for a prohibition on abortions after



Florida Governor Ron DeSantis speaks at a conference in Orlando, Florida February 24, 2022. Photo: CNS

15 weeks gestation encouraged the legislature to take up and pass House Bill 5. We applaud his approval of this historic law.

“We also commend Florida’s legislative leaders and especially bill sponsors, Senator Kelli Stargel (R-Lakeland) and Representative Erin Grall (R-Vero Beach), who courageously accomplished the difficult task of advancing the bill through the committee process and floor debate in the Florida House and Senate,” the bishops continued. “While there is still work to

be done, today’s bill signing marks significant progress towards full legal recognition of unborn children. Additionally, the bishops of Florida remain committed to supporting mothers in need during their pregnancies through parishes and other ministries, and the network of pregnancy centres across Florida.”

Pro-life leaders such as Susan B Anthony List President Marjorie Dannenfelser also praised DeSantis and Florida legislators for the new law.

“Governor DeSantis and

the Florida Legislature have delivered a milestone victory for women and children,” she said in a press release Thursday. “The legislation enacted today may save more than 3,300 lives a year by protecting unborn children, as well as their mothers, from cruel and dangerous late abortions.”

She concluded, “As we await a decision in the Dobbs case, momentum is growing across America to modernise our extreme abortion laws”.

Fatima statue destroyed after Russian seminary takeover

When Fr Ruslan Mikhalkiv, rector of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Higher Theological Seminary in Vorzel, a forested village 50 kilometers northwest of Kyiv, returned to the abandoned seminary outside Kyiv in early April, he shockingly noticed that the statue of Our Lady of Fatima had been destroyed.

“I have been studying for days how exactly it was destroyed,” Mikhalkiv said after finding the Marian image on the floor of the dining room in the Major Theological Seminary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Vorzel.

“At first, we thought the military might

have come in and overturned the figure, or perhaps it had been knocked over by a rocket explosion, because the windows there were also broken. I also thought that a shell fragment might have hit the figure.

“In the end, I had the impression that it had been a blow from the devil to the Blessed Virgin Mary, just when we were consecrating Ukraine and Russia to her Immaculate Heart,” the priest said, referring to the worldwide act of consecration on March 25.

“I am not particularly prone to put things in such supernatural terms, but this affair struck me as very unusual. The wily

devil, when he loses, what can he do? Only destroy,” he said.

Priests and students evacuated the seminary after Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24. They found refuge in the neighbouring Diocese of Kamianets-Podilski. Russian troops occupied the area surrounding the seminary for weeks.

“Interestingly, the face of the Virgin Mary has been preserved,” Mikhalkiv said. “I have already started to pick up some pieces, I am sure we will restore it. It will be a special sign for us. Time will tell.”

Bishops: Germany’s Synodal Path could lead to schism

More than 70 bishops from around the world have released a “fraternal open letter” to Germany’s bishops warning that sweeping changes to Church teaching advocated by the ongoing process known as the “Synodal Path” may lead to schism.

The letter expresses “our

growing concern about the nature of the entire German ‘Synodal Path,’” which the signatories say has led to confusion about Church teaching and appears focused more on man’s will than God’s.

“Failing to listen to the Holy Spirit and the Gospel, the Synodal Path’s actions

undermine the credibility of Church authority, including that of Pope Francis; Christian anthropology and sexual morality; and the reliability of Scripture,” the letter states.

The letter’s initial signatories included 48 bishops from the United States. Another 19 are from Africa, 14 of whom

are from Tanzania. Those lending their names to the document include such well-known prelates as Cardinal Raymond Burke, Cardinal George Pell, Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco, and Archbishop Samuel Aquila of Denver.

Letters

Letter of the week

A synodal suggestion

Dear Editor, Thank you for your continued focus on the synodal pathway on which the Church in Ireland is not embarked. It is long overdue, but must not be allowed to become a 'talking shop' that goes nowhere dominated by the sort of people we all remember at meetings during our professional career.

Thankfully I have attended the

meetings in my own parish and have been greatly enlivened and encouraged by them. There has been a strong sense of purpose and a genuinely joyful appreciation for what brings us hope and happiness in the Church. The small group format as opposed to that of a parliamentary assembly has allowed for a genuine sharing and dialogue.

The challenges are aplenty, but there

should be a basic commitment from everyone who is part of the synodal pathway: we will work as hard as we can to ensure that the preaching of the Gospel – in word and deed – is central to every parish in the country.

*Yours etc.,
John Delaney
Dublin 12*

Politics is about principles

Dear Editor, We again witness the spectacle of an election where both Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) are competing to be 'top dog'. At the end of the day, they will all come together at Stormont and divide the spoils.

My door knob is raw with competing candidates canvassing for my vote: all of them in this nationalist community insist to me that they are Catholic. When I ask them about standing up for the rights of the unborn – the reaction ranged from polite but uncomfortable silence to a shifty "good luck now" as they move to another door.

Politics, they say, is the art of the possible: but the only desire here in this mad house is to get one over on another. No party really cares for the vulnerable – born or unborn.

*Yours etc.,
Billy Adams
Ardoyne, Belfast*



An aggressive assault on western culture and democracy

Dear Editor, I read with interest David Quinn's article on the war in Ukraine (*The Irish Catholic* April 7, 2022). However, I couldn't help but feeling that something was missing. As commentators in Ukraine have repeatedly pointed out, this is not simply a war between Russia and Ukraine. It is rather an aggressive assault on western culture and democracy. I am reminded of the words spoken by Our Lady at Fatima.

She said that Russia would foment wars but that eventually her Immaculate Heart would triumph, Russia would be converted and an era of peace would follow.

I agree with Mr Quinn when he says that we all need to work for a peaceful solution to the present crises. But how can this possibly come about while there remains such aggression against the West on the Russian

side? The problem is surely much deeper, is it not? While we need to be wholehearted in our commitment to do everything we can to help Ukraine and its refugees, we need also to keep in mind the need to work and pray for the conversion of Russia.

*Yours etc.,
Gerard Kavanagh.
Ballybrack Co. Dublin.*

Evil is a reality

Dear Editor, Every time an appalling act of violence is carried out people are quick to rush to judge that the alleged culprit must be insane, a psychopath or suffering from some sort of mental illness of personality disorder.

It is so incomprehensible that such a person might simply be wicked and be acting in full freedom and therefore be responsible for their actions? Looking back over the landscape of human

history, the past is littered with instances when men and women had the chance to act morally and with honour but chose to do otherwise. Are we to believe now through our modern lens that they were all insane?

The sad truth is that human beings are capable of great wickedness – science cannot explain this away.

*Yours etc.,
Mary Murphy
Tullamore, Co. Offaly*

Fashionable youth culture reigns over truly vulnerable

Dear Editor, As one can tell, we are now living in an age where 'youth culture' pervades. When was the last time any of us saw an elderly person, with maybe a walking stick, advertising a product on television?

We hear a lot about 'equality' and 'social democracy', yet the liberals, leftists and modernists who have appointed themselves

as our 'politically correct mentors' vigorously exclude anyone who is judged 'unfashionable' or 'uncool'.

Sadly, we are now ruled by an atheistic elite who are totally governed by the fashion of the day. May God help us.

*Yours etc.,
Bernard Isaac
Turner's Cross, Co. Cork*

Tougher conditions in Irish prison needed to stop re-offence

Dear Editor, I refer to your report on the criminal justice system. (*The Irish Catholic* April 7, 2022) regarding the advice of two good people who are experienced in dealing with criminals both pre- and post- release from prison.

Unfortunately, I believe that they are misguided in this instance and I fundamentally disagree with their recommendations.

First of all, I want to say that I am more interested in protecting law-abiding people than in being lenient with criminals. I believe that when a person is convicted of a crime, he – usually a he – should receive a prison sentence compatible with that crime, and that prison sentence should actually be served. I don't understand why prison sentences for criminal activity are commuted or suspended. What's the point in imposing a sentence and then reducing or cancelling it?

Secondly, I want to say that I believe our prison system is not fit for purpose. A prison sentence should be a punishment, not a reward, as it now is.

So how would I change it?

There are a few things that stand out:

- visitors should not be allowed into prisons;
- prisoners should not have access to radio, television, newspapers, mobile or landline phones, films or shows;
- food within prison should be scarce and cheap;
- prison authorities should have the right to increase the length of a sentence for bad behaviour, but they should have no right to reduce it for any reason; parole should not exist for any reason.

I believe that if we gave such a system a try for a ten-year period we would see a massive reduction in criminal activity, and especially recidivism.

*Yours etc.,
Pat Naughton
Clondalkin, Dublin 22*

God crucified on closer hills

Dear Editor, As I write it is Holy Week and we journey with Christ through suffering to the sure and certain hope of Easter Sunday.

It's hard to feel like that. This morning on the radio: two men murdered in Sligo evidently by a man they invited to come to their homes.

An elderly woman dead in Donegal after a house fire – a gentleman, according to the newspapers "known to the victim", arrested. In Dublin, a woman in her 80s who was the lifeblood of the local parish dead – apparently at the hands of a distressed woman arrested by gardaí – again reported by the media to be "known to the victim".

What is going wrong in our country? Why this orgy of violence – particularly in Holy Week. Christ is daily crucified a lot closer to home.

*Yours etc.,
Mary Wilson
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

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

Family & Lifestyle

Vaccination will become a regular affair for high-risk patients



We are now well into the phase of 'living with Covid' with the vast majority of the population either having been vaccinated or contracted infection. Hospitalisation rates have dropped and newly confirmed cases are also in decline. It is also estimated that those who are incompletely or not vaccinated continue to be disproportionately affected accounting for about a third of hospital cases.

“There are still reported cases of re-infection with Covid-19 in recent months, within 90 days of the initial viral illness”

The multiple mutations in the virus 'spike protein' which allows it attach to cells has produced the highly transmissible omicron variants, BA1 and BA2 which are now the dominant strains. Fortunately, they do not result in any more severe disease but appear to evade some immunity provided by natural infection and vaccination. In fact, omicron has more mutations than other strains (over 72) and may multiply up to 70 times faster in the upper airways than the delta variant.

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



In general, it is known that immunity from natural infection wanes significantly from about three months with a drop in antibody levels - these normally latch on to the virus preventing it from entering cells and replicating. Despite this, when the immune system has been 'primed' by previous immunisation or infection it can quickly be reactivated which explains the reduction in Covid-19 severity.

Re-infection

There are still reported cases of re-infection with Covid-19 in recent months, within 90 days of the initial viral illness. A recent study found that the effectiveness of previous infection in preventing re-infection was estimated to be 92% against the delta variant, but dropping to 56.0% against the omicron variant. Indeed, in Ireland re-infection with omicron in a healthy adult within two months of having had the delta

variant is reported. However, importantly protection against hospitalisations and death has remained robust.

So what about the merits of a fourth vaccination? The National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) has recommended a fourth Covid-19 vaccine dose for everyone aged 65 and older. This should only be given after at least six months of a previous dose, though could be considered as early four months in high-risk



patients. A large study of more than 1.25 million people in Israel aged 60 or older from January to March 2022 explored the effect of a fourth booster vaccine dose, during which time the omicron variant was the dominant strain. It found that Covid-19 infection rates were two times lower in the month post booster with severe disease being reduced by a factor

of 3.5. However, we await longer term follow up data.

The oral antivirals 'paxlovid' which combines two drugs and 'molnupiravir' will now be made available soon in Ireland, though as of yet there are no clear criteria as to which patients they will be used to treat. Paxlovid has been shown to reduce the risk of hospitalisation by up to 90% in adults with at least one risk factor such as lung or heart disease.

“The advent of new vaccine technology has truly changed the landscape in our battle against this and any future pandemics”

A monoclonal antibody therapy called sotrovimab has also been used in the treatment of high risk patients. The treatment comprises an infusion of antibodies that target the 'spike protein' of the virus that can be given early in the course of infection. However, while very effective against the BA1 variant, it's now clear that much of its ability to neutralise the BA2 strain is lost due to further additional mutations which unfortunately have limited it's

use. However, another antibody therapy called 'bebtelovimab' has recently been authorised by the FDA with preliminary data indicating that it remains effective.

It now seems likely that vaccinations against Covid-19 will become, at least in the short-term, a regular affair for higher risk patients. The virus continues to mutate but with no change in disease severity. However, it also means that at a population level, we can expect that contracting Covid-19 and getting flu-like symptoms from time to time is something we will need to live with. Whilst a minor inconvenience it may be, it will still have a negative impact economically and on a health service under pressure.

Long Covid

It remains to be seen whether 'long Covid' is less likely with the more recent variants, though reassuringly most studies show a higher prevalence with more severe illness. Additionally, vaccination appears to reduce long covid incidence. At last, just after two years since the first case of Covid-19 in Ireland, there is now a semblance of normality, with a virus that now causes only mild disease in the vast majority of cases. The advent of new vaccine technology has truly changed the landscape in our battle against this and any future pandemics.

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

Learning to love God through music

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

Ruth Hogan grew up in a family that was both musical and Catholic, but it took some time for both these childhood realities to find their home in her life. After spending time in the Holy Family Mission and giving retreats herself, she realised that music is a gift God gave her to praise him.

Having grown up as one of 10 children in a Mass-going family, Ruth admits that she didn't initially have a strong personal relationship with God.

“Ruth grew up in a musical family, but it wasn't until her time at Holy Family Mission that she began to combine her faith and her musical ability”

“It wasn't personal so much as my family did it so I did it too, that sort of thing,” Ruth explains. “And then I guess it was really when I was 15 or 16, we had a retreat in school with Fr Patrick Cahill and some of the sisters from his order [Work of Jesus the High Priest].”

“As a teenager, I didn't have any real interest in the Faith, I don't think it had much of an impact on my life at all. But Fr Patrick and two of the sisters came into my school to run a day



Ruth Hogan.

retreat with us and what they said that day just struck me. I think they talked about how God is interested in us particularly and in our lives and has a plan for us.”

That message stuck with Ruth, although it didn't sink in right away: “I'm not sure I believed that straight away, but it stayed with me and I went to Youth 2000 that Christmas, the Newbridge Christmas retreat and I had an experience of God's love at the healing service.

“I had a good Confession, probably my first real, honest Confession in a long time and just really experienced

the Lord's love there... I began to say a decade of the rosary before I went to bed and began to speak with the Lord myself a little bit more. Then I went to Holy Family mission after Leaving Cert, that would have been a huge part of my own faith journey as well.”

Ruth grew up in a musical family, but it wasn't until her time at Holy Family Mission that she began to combine her faith and her musical ability.

“Before then I would have played music, I played the flute and was involved in an orchestra in Limerick. But it wasn't anything to do with my faith. When I went to Holy Family, I

remember Fr Patrick asking on our first or second day does anybody play the guitar or sing. And I put up my hand kind of expecting at least half the group to put up theirs.

“There were just two or three of us who did. I think one of us played the guitar and one of us sang, so that meant I was in the music ministry every single day for that year. It meant learning a load of praise and worship songs, and it was a whole process of learning how to detach from musical perfection and needing everything to be note perfect and instead learning how to praise with music and through music.

“After finishing her college course, Ruth quickly applied for and got a job working with Radio Maria, promoting the station's work and mission”

“This was a process, it wasn't something I learned quickly. I was there for two years and over those two years I really grew in that way. Now praise and worship and music is one of my favourite forms of prayer and one of the ways I find my heart opens to the Lord most quickly and easily.”

Having spent two years at Holy Family Mission, Ruth started studying Theology in Maynooth. She had initially intended to study English as well, but ultimately ended up doing music.

“I found that English and theology were just so academically intense, a lot of reading and writing in both of those subjects, so I decided to keep on the music instead. The music course was with NUI Maynooth, so it wasn't to do with the Faith or sacred music or anything like that.

“I just found it was a great combination because I was learning about

God and then to me music had become a way in which I was able to express myself or speak with the Lord in some form. It was a lovely pairing that while I was learning about God, I discovered music was a gift from the Lord for me, that it was something he had given to me for the building up of his kingdom and to glorify him.

“I began to learn that just because you have a gift, doesn't mean it's perfectly formed. We have a responsibility to work on our gifts and to try and have them be as ready as they can be for when the Lord might ask us to use them. I think doing music in college and learning more about musical theory and music history and all the ins and outs of it was me sharpening that tool or gift to be ready whenever the Lord might ask me to share it.”

After finishing her college course, Ruth quickly applied for and got a job working with Radio Maria, promoting the station's work and mission. She says the work “is very rewarding and working in a Catholic environment is a great blessing”. She recently participated in recording an album of praise and worship music with Poor and Humble Heart, a retreat group begun by Bro. Damian, a Franciscan friar. It took four years to gather the material, but she said it was a great experience.

She continues to work and pray through her music, leading musical retreats and playing in the studio for the Masses Radio Maria broadcast: “I sometimes play for different retreats and that. I really love doing that. That's my favourite thing to do to share that gift. We were at the Youth 2000 retreat in Ashbourne recently and I was able to play with my sister and a couple of others and two religious joined us for the Palm Sunday Mass as well, which was really beautiful. It was my sister and myself, a Dominican brother and a Franciscan CFR sister. It was just the most beautiful experience to be able to sing and play with them.”

Do you know someone who we should profile? Send an email to ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Living Laudato Si'

Jane Mellett



How to make ethical financial decisions for the planet

This month saw the release of another stark report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the third in a series of red alerts from the United Nations, calling for governments around the world to urgently respond to the climate crisis. The report painted a grim picture of a world with rising greenhouse gas emissions and the ever-widening gap between pledges and action. The war in Ukraine has further highlighted the urgent need to get off our addiction to fossil fuels and to embrace renewable, sustainable, clean forms of energy without delay. There are huge challenges, but they are not impossible.

In launching the ‘Laudato Si’ Action Platform’ last November, Pope Francis has given Catholic communities a roadmap for a way forward. We have been exploring the seven Laudato Si’ goals launched as part of this platform: seven goals to be achieved over seven years by seven Church institutions or sectors - a jubilee for the earth. The Laudato Si’ goals are a response to the call for healing in our relationships with God,

our neighbours and the earth itself as we build a better future.

This month we are going to look at Laudato Si’ goal four: adoption of sustainable livelihoods. This goal is grounded in the idea of sufficiency and promoting sobriety in the use of resources and energy, i.e. living more simply and more in tune with God's creation. In the current climate, we are not short of reasons to think more carefully about our energy use in our homes and places of work. Other suggested actions under this goal include reducing waste, reusing and repairing goods, ensuring that we are recycling properly, adopting more sustainable dietary habits (opting for a more plant-based diet and reducing meat consumption), greater use of public transport, walking, cycling, avoiding single use items especially single use plastic.

One might wonder, given the severity of the climate and biodiversity crises and the fact that 100 major corporations are responsible for 70% of global emissions, what use our small daily actions

might be? However, in Laudato Si’ Pope Francis urges us to take example from St Thérèse of Lisieux and to practice the “little ways of love”. He tells us to never underestimate the power of small actions which can have a ripple effect across a community. These actions witness to our vocation to be protectors and carers of God's creation and help us to live in solidarity with the world's poorest who suffer the most from climate injustice and also future generations who are inheriting this environmental mess. These actions raise awareness and consciousness, they are steppingstones along the way. Hope is found through action, even the smallest actions, and the Laudato Si’ Action Platform gives us the blueprint. Perhaps your family, school, business or parish could consider signing up? Go to www.laudatosiactionplatform.org to find out more.

“Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change.” (LS, 202).

Jane Mellett is the Laudato Si’ Officer with Trócaire



Pope Francis kisses the foot of an inmate after washing it during the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper at a prison in Civitavecchia on April 14. Photo: Vatican Media

Show me a selfish person who is truly happy

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin once said something to the effect that we reach moral maturity on the day we realise that, ultimately, we have to choose: genuflect before something higher than ourselves or begin to self-destruct!

Simone Weil had a similar idea. She consistently affirmed that our deepest longing was to find someone or something to be obedient to. Without this submission, she claimed, we inevitably inflate, become pompous and make an idol out of ourselves.

“There are important implications in this and one of them is that we are built for altruism and martyrdom”

In their view, only adoration of something beyond ourselves can save us from self-adoration.

If they are right, and I believe they are, then, as human beings, we have in us a congenital pressure towards adoration and healthy self-abnegation. Deep inside of us there is a pattern for the health of our souls and, according to that pattern, we only feel right when we make our own grandiosity genuflect before something that



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

is really great. As adults, we only feel right when we are giving our lives away.

There are important implications in this and one of them is that we are built for altruism and martyrdom. Ultimately, we only feel right about ourselves when we are dying to our own needs and, indeed, dying to our very lives.

At one level, this is captured in the rather simple axiom: I defy you to show me a selfish person who is truly happy!

But the early Christians added a further dimension to this. It wasn't just a question of living unselfishly, it was also a question of dying! For them, we were built for martyrdom. Martyrdom was considered the normal end to a Christian life! To live a true Christian life meant to die as a martyr.

What's interesting is that they continued to believe this, that we

are built for and called to martyrdom, even after the Roman powers stopped persecuting and killing Christians. When the persecutions stopped, their theology of martyrdom remained. They still believed that the normal way to end one's life was in death through martyrdom. What changed was only how this martyrdom was now conceived. In their mind, you still ended your life through a martyrdom of some kind or you ended it badly!

Human beings

Our own lives, not just as Christians but even simply as human beings, could be a whole lot healthier and less filled with depression if we understood that. Put simply: we either end up dying as a crucified martyr on one hill... or we end up bitter, inflated, a jerk, on some other hill!

“Ultimately, we only feel right about ourselves when we are dying to our own needs and, indeed, dying to our very lives”

That's rather blunt, but it conveys the sense of what Teilhard, Simone Weil and the early Christians intuited. Only one thing can save us from infantile grandiosity, from dangerous self-righteousness, from ultimate disappointment with and bitterness about our own lives, and from aging and dying badly, namely, martyrdom.

There is reason for this: We are made in God's image and the *Imago Dei* puts inside of us an immense fire—energy for love and creativity, but also nostalgia for glory, greatness and transcendence.

“Our hearts and souls are like our bodies, they contain within themselves the instinctual patterns for their own health”

There is deep, restless, insatiable, burning energy inside of us, but it is not, in the end, chaotic energy. It's configured energy—energy arranged in clear and meaningful patterns. We burn with fire, but it's God's fire and therefore it has divine meaning, purpose and direction.

It's fire to bless others, to fight for others, to teach others, to cre-

ate delight for others, and to empty itself completely, unto death, for others. It's fire to act like Christ who was the ultimate *Imago Dei*. Hence, it's fire for crucifixion.

In the end, we are hardwired both to live for others and to die for them and we are only healthy and happy when we are about the business of doing that.

Our hearts and souls are like our bodies, they contain within themselves the instinctual patterns for their own health. When those patterns are ignored or violated they send out strong signals to let us know that something is wrong. As well, in our hungers and in our proclivities they let us know what they need to sustain their health.

Martyrdom

When we analyse the deepest hungers of the heart we see there the longing for martyrdom. This longing has many disguises — the desire for heroism, the desire to be a great lover and the simple desire to be a great person. In all of these, ultimately, there is the longing to take love to its altruistic end — death in sacrifice for the ones we love.

This is the deep instinctual pattern of the soul and it posits that true morality and spirituality (and the absence of bitterness and disappointment with life) lie in ending up stretched truly tall, dying on a cross, in crucifixion.



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Airwaves turn holy over Easter season

Usually there are loads of religious programmes on mainstream media over Easter. Mostly it's biblical epics and religious services, but I'm always on the lookout for something different and creative.

Walled City Passion (RTE One, Easter Sunday) certainly had those qualities. It imagined a peace festival in a certain walled city - Derry, but not identified as such, with a guildhall and a governor! The format was a brash news programme reporting on the event, with reporters and commentators on the scene, when news breaks of a disruptive incident involving Christopher, a Jesus-like character who was allegedly inciting the crowds and fermenting revolution. There were several nods to the familiar passion narrative - the "Caiphas Organisation" out to get Jesus, Christopher falling a few times, the Governor's release of another prisoner instead of the Jesus figure, the wiping of Christopher's face by a Veronica character, the security man injured in the arrest (and healed by Christopher) doubling as Simon of Cyrene, and unusually but effectively a devil-like character (actually a high-profile gangster) tempting Christopher with the lure of power.

Enthusiastic

Yet I found it hard to get very enthusiastic about the



An image from *The Walled City Passion*, a reimagining of Christ's Passion and death.

drama. At times it felt stilted and awkward, and the shrill reporter on the scene, Jenny, was thoroughly irritating. The kind of things Jesus said were pretty bland ("vague niceties" according to one unsympathetic commentator in the show) and certainly not the fullness of the teaching of Jesus. He came across as just a peaceful social reformer, without much of a spiritual context, though at one stage in his agony he cried out "Father!",

but no one seemed curious as to what exactly he meant by this. Thankfully they didn't hedge on the Resurrection and I liked the way that was portrayed, however briefly.

Positive

On the **Nine O'Clock News** (RTE One, Good Friday) there was a very positive item about a new outdoor Stations of the Cross in the grounds of the Cistercian Abbey in Roscrea Co. Tip-

perary. We heard from Fr Aodhán McDunphy about the background and some very articulate students contributed as well, explaining their role in this imaginative creation. On that same programme the vigil in Sligo for the two men violently killed earlier in the week seemed very dignified. Organisers had asked that people dress in black, and if bringing LGBT flags to keep them small. Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin in supportive attendance - he had met the families and said it was "hard to put words on the grief". He was accompanied by Dr Jamshaid Sulheri of the Sligo and Leitrim Islamic Cultural Centre who wanted to show the solidarity of the Muslim community. By contrast the clip we saw of the vigil outside Leinster House was marked by a sea of large rainbow flags.

With all the coverage of those killings it seemed to me that some activists were using personal tragedies to push agendas. We've seen this weaponising of tragedy all too often - and well before the full facts of the case are known - people jumping to some mighty big conclusions.

On **Drivetime** (RTE Radio 1, Good Friday) there was another positive religious item when we heard of the Redemptorists in Limerick city supporting the new

PICK OF THE WEEK

PILGRIMAGE: ROAD TO THE SCOTTISH ISLES

BBC One Sunday April 24 10.30am

With the end of their pilgrimage looming, the celebrities get a taste of monastic life in a medieval abbey, but will it help them discover more about the pathway to faith?

AIFREANN AN DOMHNAIGH

RTE RnaG Sunday April 24 11am

Mass from Galway Cathedral, celebrated by Bishop of Galway, Brendan Kelly. This will be Bishop Kelly's final mass before he retires.

EURO EXPRESS

EWTN Monday April 25 8pm

The Euro Express passes through Strasbourg and Brussels to pick up Lorcán Price and Adina Portaru. They discuss the state of human rights, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion across Europe with host Kevin Turley.

Ukrainian arrivals. Many were Catholic or Orthodox and were taking part in a meal and prayer service. Helena, one of the refugees was impressed by the hospitality of the Irish - it felt like "real love for humanity" in contrast with the atrocities in her country.

Surprised

On **David Lammy** (LBC, Holy Saturday) I was surprised to hear the host (a Labour MP) declare himself a Christian Socialist, and was an obviously enthusiastic Anglo-Catholic. He had a fascinating interview with Gavin Ashenden, former Chaplain to the Queen and more recently a Catholic convert, and was "rushing off to a service" after the show. All that being said I'm not a fan of sitting

politicians hosting their own shows - conflict of interest and not good for media neutrality. It's worth listening back to the item.

On **Sunday with Miriam** (RTE Radio 1, Easter Sunday) Michael Kelly spoke of the attractiveness of Christianity to its early followers - because of the love they showed. His enthusiasm for the Holy Land was evident, and inspired by that, along with keeping a wish from his mother before she died, he has written a new book - *An Irish Pilgrimage Guide to the Holy Land*. Listen back to the item, buy and then read!

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



Music

Pat O'Kelly



A strange staging...but I stuck to the music

Kansas-born mezzo Joyce DiDonato returned to the National Concert Hall (NCH) recently as part of its International Concert Series 2022. The impeccable instrumental ensemble *Il Pomo d'Oro* accompanied her again, this time directed by young Russian conductor and harpsichordist, Maxim Emelyanychev.

Strangely-lit

Entitled EDEN, the evening was a strangely-lit staged event where a circular centrepiece mound had the musicians on either side and behind. Bare-footed Ms DiDonato spent most of her time on and around this central elevation occasionally crouching, crawling and kneeling.



Joyce DiDonato

According to the programme booklet, she was, in this time of possible environmental disaster, endeavouring to remind us that, "This is

the precise moment in time when each of us is called to participate in the nourishing and healing of our world and hearts".

No doubt, a splendid philosophy but, even if Joyce DiDonato and her creative team were convinced about the relevance of the staging, I decided to concentrate on the music. This was drawn from the 17th Century - Italians Marco Uccellini and Biagio Manini - to the present day - England's Rachel Portman - via Handel and Gluck among others.

Whatever reservations I had about the presentation, musically this was an astonishing overall performance in which Joyce DiDonato was heard at her finest with *Il*

Pomo d'Oro under Maestro Emelyanychev equally spell-binding. It ended with one of Mahler's Rückert songs - *I am lost to the world* - that was simply breathtaking.

Musical journey

But there was so much more to enthral one on this musical journey, which showed the extraordinary range of Joyce DiDonato's vocal colouring that could drop to dark baritone depths and there again become a beacon of soprano radiance.

There was an adjunct with the *prima donna* who has Irish connections, by the way, joined by the NCH's Cór na nÓg in a piece - *Seed of Hope* - composed as an exercise by a group of English school

children. It looked to the future with confidence but for me it broke the ethereal musical atmosphere that had been created in the rest of this relatively short concert.

Recent NSO programmes brought their own share of delights, not least one conducted by Anja Bihlmaier who reminded us forcibly of the strength of Schumann's Second Symphony. Her interpretation found the music's throbbing pulse and had the NSO responding powerfully. The scherzo was giddy; the Adagio expressive and the finale exhilarating.

Germany's Clara-Jumi Kang was the vibrant soloist in Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in a performance that had sensitivity and lyrical

refinement as well as being full-blooded and passionate when required.

It was all 'snap, crackle and pop' in Galina Ustvoskaya's *Sports Suite* of 1959. With vitality and brilliance, there were elements of music hall, vaudeville and carnival as it sprinted along its hilarious track. The NSO's percussionists had a ball.

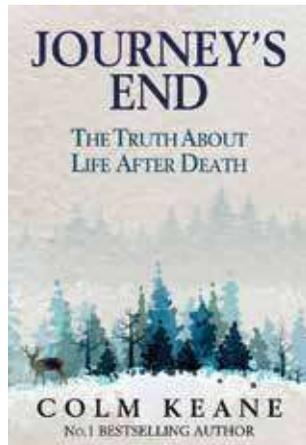
In a jazz-inspired evening - Milhaud, Ravel, Weill and Gershwin - veteran US conductor Leonard Slatkin also elicited the best from the orchestra especially in Ravel's Piano Concerto in G. There was sparkling effervescence from French virtuoso Lise de la Salle but her extended second movement solo was the essence of elegance.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



The last words of Colm Keane



Journey's End: The Truth about Life after Death
by Colm Keane
(Capel Island Press (€14.99 / £12.99))

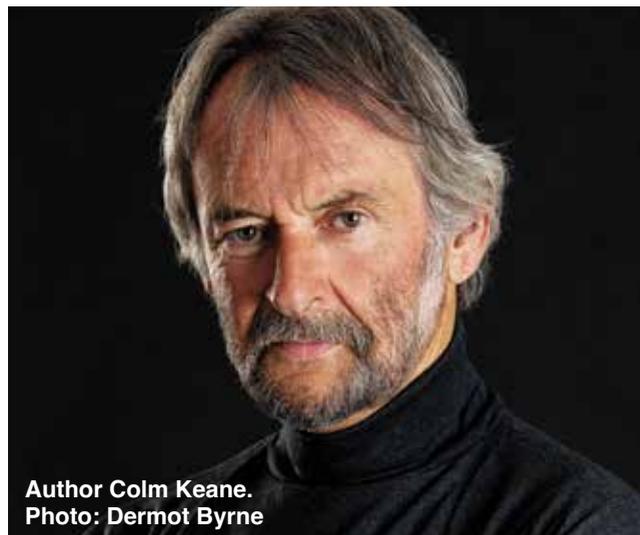
Peter Costello

In classical times some Greek philosophers likened the soul to a butterfly erupting from the very different chrysalis. The implication was that the "next life" of the human soul is likewise so different that it cannot be imagined by a living human being.

This has never prevented, however, human beings from earliest times onward speculating about the nature of a future existence. Others have felt that it was better to accept the mystery for what it is, live the present existence as best they can do. This course is what the Gospels tell us to do. We know not the day or the hour, so we should live for others as best we can.

Variety

Over the course of his life as a writer the late Colm Keane explored this topic in different ways through a variety of books that gained a very wide readership. This is his last book, which was conceived, written and achieved while he himself was mortally ill.



Author Colm Keane.
Photo: Dermot Byrne

Based on some thirteen years of research, the ideas explored in these pages are not his ideas, but as he says, those of mystics, scholars and scientists. Now, across a wide area of opinion, not all readers will feel able to follow or accept all that he says.

Arctic landscape

The cover of the book suggests a bleak arctic landscape which is not actually conveyed in the chapters of the book itself.

Those who have followed Colm Keane through eight No. 1 Bestsellers, and a total of 19 "Top Six" bestsellers over some 30 books – some of which were entertainments – will certainly want to read this book, the final outcome of those years of wide ranging and humane research.

He believed that our consciousness, our personality, survives and lives on in a hereafter of our own making, where "we will meet again deceased relatives and beloved pets". Colm Keane read widely, but his ideas wherever they led were always based in a sense of love and kindness, on giving of one's best to others.

He dismisses all those notions of eternal punishments that trouble so many people. But when we observe the course of the world around us this is what we would all like to believe; but the evil of human actions, as in the present war, leave us dismayed and uncertain about how true justice is served in the universe. Yet he is basically right: it is better for us and for the community that we embrace at least some of what his assembled sages have suggested and taught.

I suspect that Colm Keane is an author many will miss; but he has at least left his admirers a legacy of writing which his publisher will continue to keep in print.

Teresa Ball and Loreto Education: Convents and the Colonial World 1794 -1875

by Deirdre Raftery
(Four Courts Press 2022)

J. Anthony Gaughan

Frances Ball was born in Dublin on January 9, 1794. John Ball, her father, was a wealthy Dublin silk merchant. Although a convert, he was at that time one of the most prominent Catholic citizens of Dublin.

From 1803 to 1808 Frances attended St Mary's Convent of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM) in York in the north of England. The Institute had been established by Mary Ward at St-Omer in Flanders in 1609. Its main remit became the Catholic education of girls.

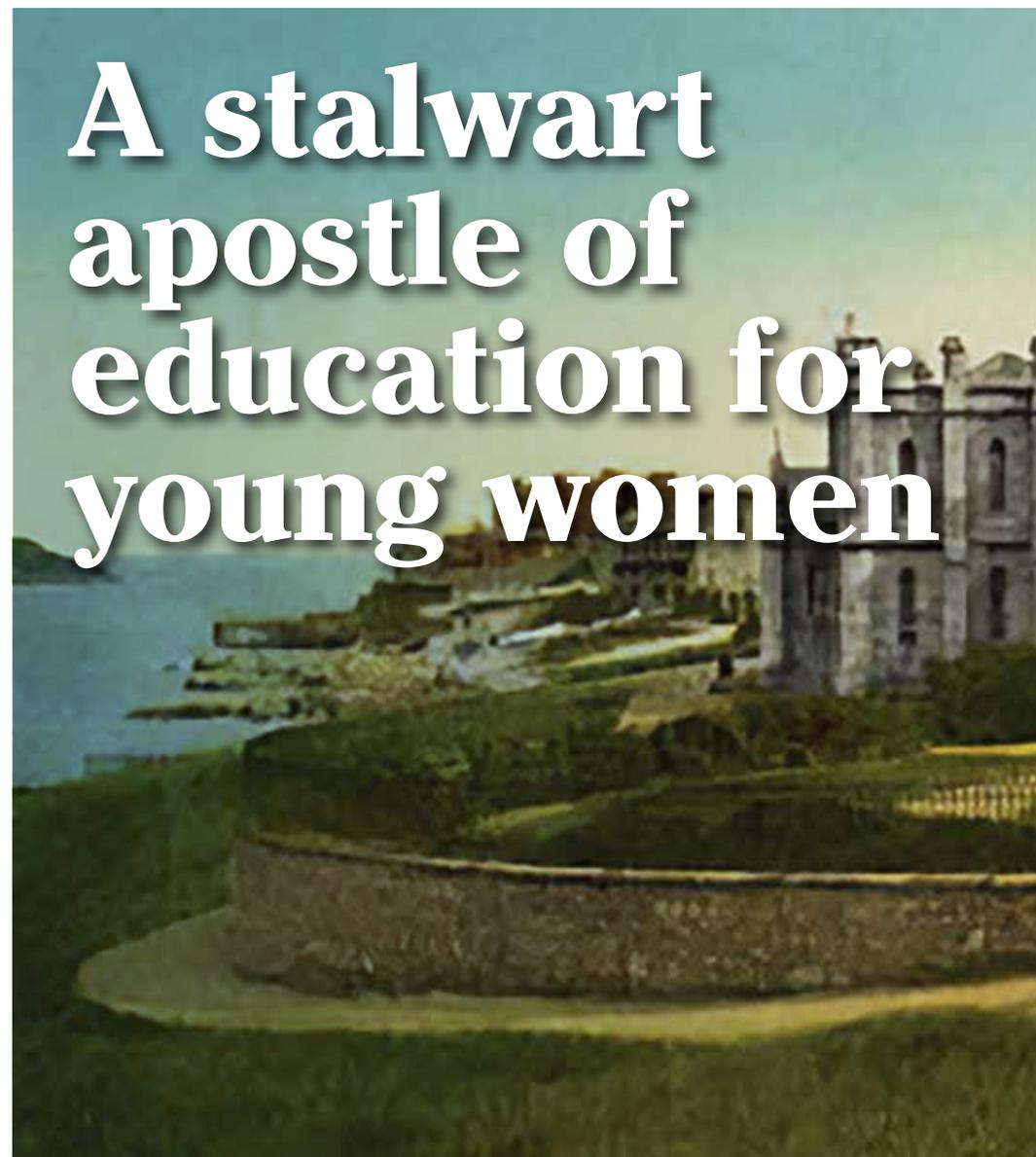
After her return to Dublin Frances assisted her sister in charity work, frequently visiting the homes of the sick and the poor and teaching catechism. Through these activities she came into contact with the future archbishop of Dublin, Dr Daniel Murray.

In 1814 she decided to be a nun and agreed to Murray's suggestion that she found a new and autonomous branch of the IBVM in Ireland. She returned to York as a teacher and novice in 1814 and was professed in 1816 and given the name Mary Teresa. She opened her first convent in Ireland at Rathfarnham in Co. Dublin in 1822. Having a devotion to the Marian Shrine at Loreto, a village in Italy, she named the mother house Loreto and thereafter the members of the IBVM were known as "the Loreto Sisters".

“She returned to York as a teacher and novice in 1814 and was professed in 1816 and given the name Mary Teresa”

Displaying remarkable confidence and energy, Mary Teresa set up two other convents in Dublin, and there followed foundations across Ireland: Navan (1833), Gorey (1843), Clontarf (1847), Bray (1850), Fermoy (1853), Letterkenny (1854), Omagh (1855), Kilkenny (1859) and Killarney (1860). Beginning in 1841 under her supervision the order also spread to India – three foundations – Mauritius (1844), Gibraltar (1845), Toronto (1847) and Cadiz (1855).

Attached to each convent was a fee-paying school for the daughters of middle-class families. Also attached to it was a free-school for the chil-



A stalwart apostle of education for young women

dren of the poor who resided in the area and the poorer pupils were generally provided with meals. The IBVM was structured along the lines of the Society of Jesus, hence the education it provided was based on the Jesuits' *Ratio Studiorum*. The quality of that education was universally acknowledged and a Loreto education came to be highly prized.

Mary Teresa's evangelistic endeavours were not always successful. She failed in her

attempt to establish a convent and school in Manchester. The school she opened in Gort, Co. Galway, in 1852 did not attract a sufficient number of pupils and was closed in 1854.

Nevertheless, most of her ventures were successful and by the end of her life she had founded 38 convents and schools. In the latter half of her life, she was mainly concerned with the health and well-being of the Loreto Sisters. She also had to cope with bishops and

priests, especially those overseas, who sought to divert the Loreto Sisters under their jurisdiction into pastoral services other than the administration and staffing of schools.

Most concern

The issue which caused Mary Teresa most concern was what Archbishop Cullen described as the 'Green Schism'. In October 1854, to cope with internal strife within the community in St Stephens Green, Mary Teresa replaced the superior, Mother Justina D'Arcy. This prompted D'Arcy and her supporters to request the archbishop to separate the convent from Rathfarnham and the jurisdiction of Mary Teresa Ball. The stand-off was not resolved until 1858.

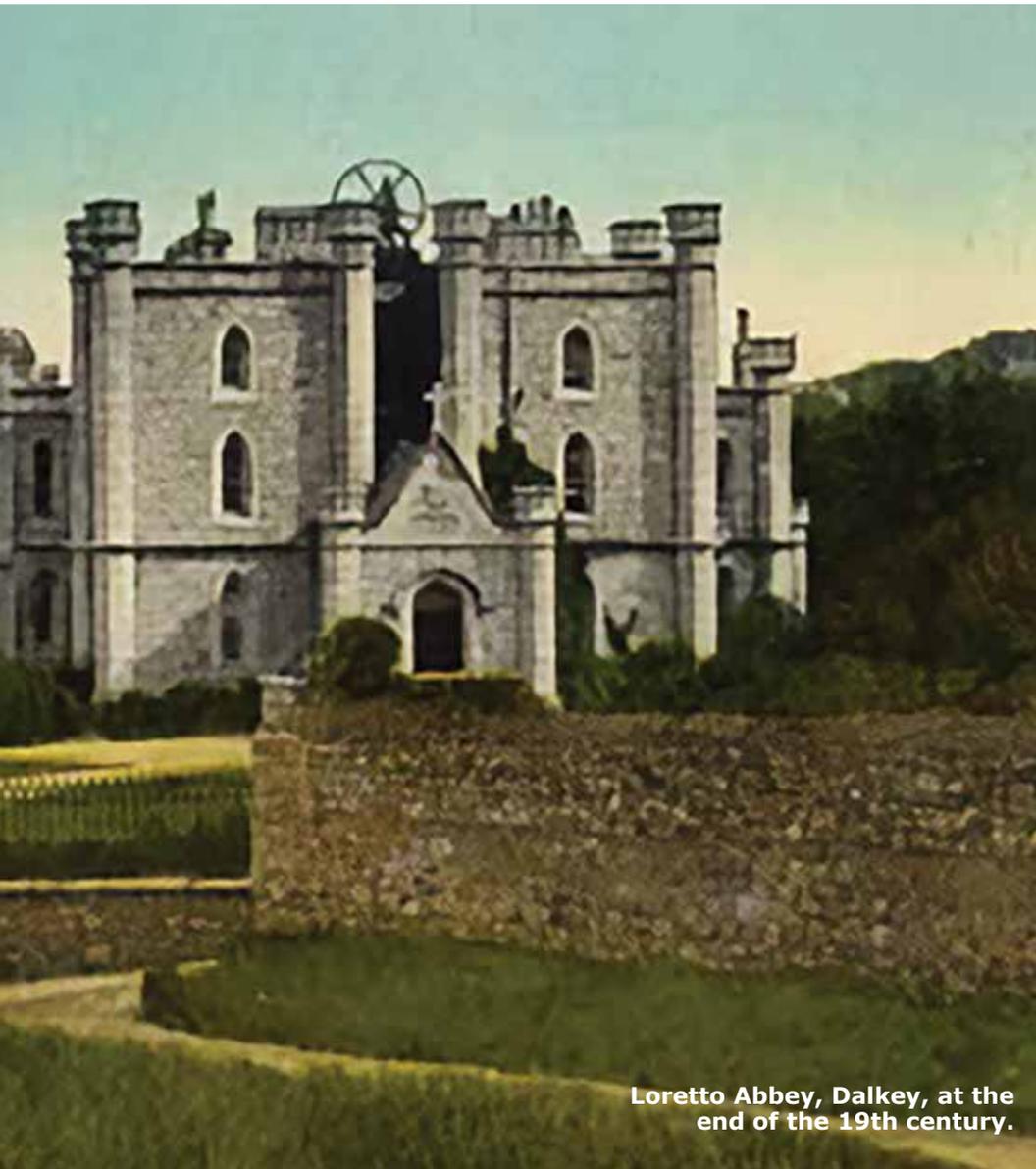
Mary Teresa stepped down from the leadership of the Loreto Sisters in January 1861. Sensing the nearness of death she requested to be transferred from Loreto abbey, the motherhouse, to Dalkey Convent, where she died on May 18, 1861.

Apart from the informative and interesting narrative, this study also provides a wealth of useful and valuable information in a number of appendices. The Loreto Sisters have in Deirdre Raftery a most worthy chronicler.



Teresa Ball as a young woman.

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.



Loretto Abbey, Dalkey, at the end of the 19th century.

The first, and last voyage of the Titanic

Travelling on Titanic with Father Browne
by EE O'Donnell SJ,
foreword by Dr Robert D. Ballard
(Messenger Publications,
€25.00 / £23.00)

Peter Costello

Published last week, to mark the 110th anniversary of the sinking of RMS Titanic, this evocative collection shows Frank Browne's photographs taken on the leg of the ship's maiden voyage from England to Queenstown. There the photographer was ordered by his superior to leave the ship, and so were saved his images for posterity.

I know this was an event that the world will never forget. But I find, for instance, Robert Ballard's photos of the wreckage of the liner on the sea-bed the eeriest things possible. When we have had visitors who wanted to see the museum in Belfast I have let them,



Two poor emigrant women settle down as steerage passengers on the Titanic.

but while they are there I have done something else.

I realise this is not the response of everyone, but all I feel is the sense of human futility. The disaster itself moved poets, moralists and theologians to ponder the very nature of destiny and grace.

But here are the images of engineering achievement, high society grandeur and Anglo-American wealth. But Browne did not forget there

were others on board the Titanic beside grandees. So aside from the very familiar images of wealth and social power, he also captured the scene illustrated: Steerage passengers getting settled on deck. We can take it, I think, that the two poor women in the foreground were drowned only days later, on their voyage to a new land of hope and opportunity. This is really the image of the Titanic to remember.

Tolkien's take on the modern world

Tolkien's Modern Reading: Middle-earth Beyond the Middle Ages

by Holly Ordway
(Word on Fire Academic,
€25.00 / £20.99)

Ruadhán Jones

There is a widespread belief that JRR Tolkien, the famous Catholic author of *The Lord of the Rings*, was against all things modern. Whether it was industrialisation, morals or literature, the narrative goes that he gave credence to nothing after Chaucer (who died in 1400).

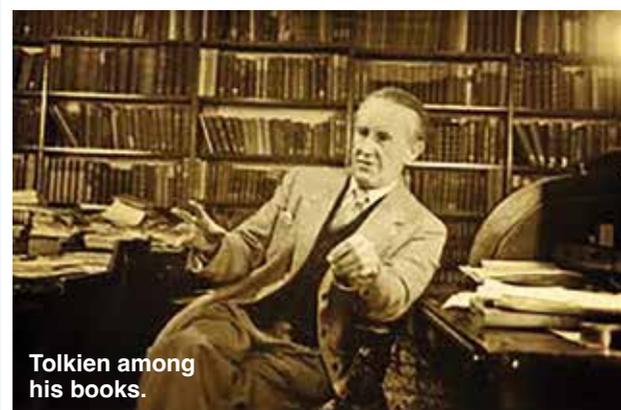
This myth has ill-served his legacy as one of the great authors of the 20th century. For his admirers, it gives an excuse for anachronistic and at best eccentric dress and views; for his detractors, it is an excuse to disregard his work.

To that end, Dr Holly Ordway's book *Tolkien's Modern Reading* fills a gap in Tolkien scholarship and does so excellently. Dr. Holly Ordway is Fellow of Faith and Culture at the Word on Fire Institute and Visiting Professor of Apologetics at Houston Baptist University. She has written widely on the literary milieu, in which Tolkien moved, both as a scholar and a writer.

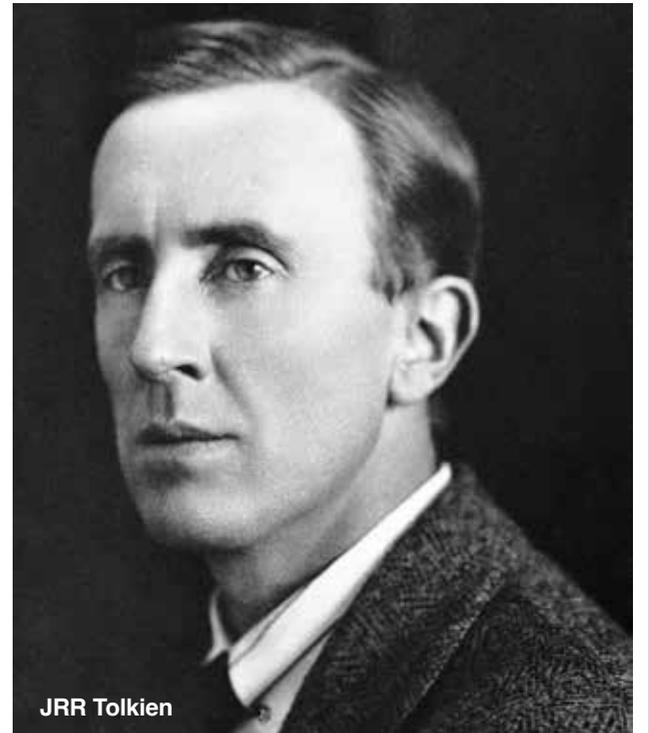
Much is known of Tolkien's professional reading in Anglo-Saxon and Medieval literature – but before Dr Ordway, little was said about the influence of science fiction, fantasy or late Victorian fairy tales on his great books.

Enthusiast

Dr Ordway brings a Tolkien-enthusiast's zest to the project, as well as a professional academic's skills – she has a PhD in English literature from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She lays out clearly the limits of the project. It is only works she knows for certain that Tolkien read or owned that are addressed, leaving as she says herself ample space for future study, while giving her project greater focus.



Tolkien among his books.



JRR Tolkien

She goes straight to the heart of the matter in rebutting the view proposed by Tolkien's official biographer, Humphrey Carpenter, that Prof. Tolkien was a fuddy-duddy Oxford academic. Mr Carpenter's influence has had a baleful effect, tending to distract from Tolkien's wide reading and engagement with the modern age.

“Dr Holly Ordway's book *Tolkien's Modern Reading* fills a gap in Tolkien scholarship and does so excellently”

For instance, as a trained philologist and lover of words, Tolkien took an interest in the ultimate modernist novel, *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce. It was not an unquestioning interest; he enjoyed Joyce's attention to the sound words have, less so his irreverence.

But noted Tolkien scholar Tom Shippey (author of *The Road to Middle Earth*) points out that “both *Ulysses* and

The Lord of the Rings are evidently works of the 20th century, neither of them readily describable as novels, which are engaged in deep negotiation with the ancient genres of epic and romance”.

But while that shows Tolkien's almost professional interest in modern literature, his casual reading suggests the more lasting influences on *The Lord of the Rings*. In particular, Dr Ordway suggests that his childhood reading and lifelong interest in children's literature – such as the fairy tales of George MacDonald, but also the works of Beatrix Potter.

Equally, more distinctive stylists such as William Morris also helped him, Dr Ordway argues, to find the mixed prose-and-verse form of one of his earliest tales. And then of course there's his love of Agatha Christie, his love-hate for Dorothy Sayers' works, his delight in all fictional worlds that implied a thorough and plausible sub-creation, including science fiction and modern fantasy.

Tolkien himself had a much subtler view on how other works influenced his mind, according to Dr Ordway, than either his supporters or detractors suggest. Stories such as *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien said, “grow like a seed in the dark out of the leaf-mould of the mind: out of all that has been seen or thought or read, that has long ago been forgotten, descending into the deeps”.

His reading was “available for use by his imagination in ways that went beyond the conscious or the deliberate”, Dr Ordway writes, and in proving this to be the case she has done Tolkien's multitude of admirers a great service.

Classifieds

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

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– Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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A gift in your will to Irish Hospice Foundation is a meaningful way to help ensure no-one faces death or bereavement without the care and support they need.

Email Anna Sadlier at anna.sadlier@hospicefoundation.ie or call 01 679 3188



www.hospicefoundation.ie

MQI

Merchants Quay Ireland
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Your heart for the homeless



Merchants Quay Ireland reaches out with kindness to people living on our streets, sleeping in doorways, suffering and alone.

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This is your heart for the homeless and those on the road to recovery.

To receive your little wooden heart and information on remembering

Merchants Quay Ireland in your will, ring Emma Murphy, Legacies Manager at 01-524 0965 or email emma.murphy@mqi.ie

Please pray for the beatification of

Little Nellie of Holy God

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

— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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

Please help us with a gift in your Will

Contact:

MSC Missions Office, PO Box 23 Western Road, Cork.
Tel: 021-4545704 Email: info@mscmisions.ie

www.mscmissions.ie

When you remember Trócaire in your Will, you bring hope to people living in the world's poorest places

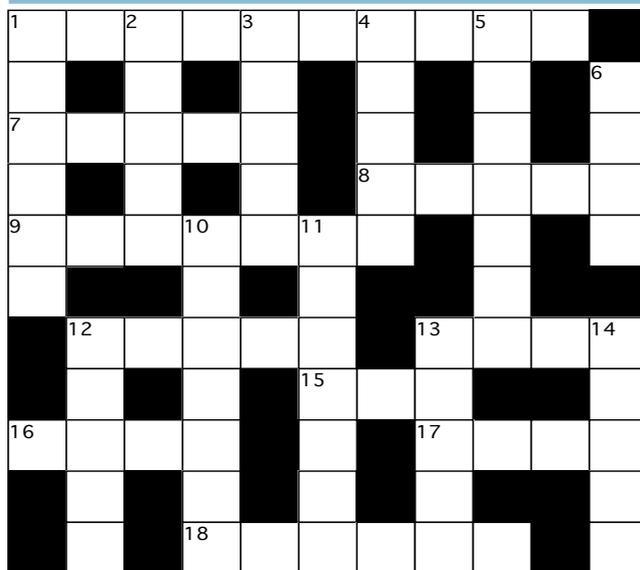
Trócaire

It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call Grace Kelly on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

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

Crossword Junior

Ferdia 429



Across

- 1 You may see swings and slides here (10)
- 7 Town in Co Meath (5)
- 8 Not old (5)
- 9 Sickness (7)
- 12 Rapunzel was locked away in one (5)
- 13 Not quick (4)
- 15 You may deliver goods in this vehicle (3)
- 16 The lead singer with U2 (4)
- 17 The first man in the Bible (4)
- 18 Baby cat (6)

Down

- 1 If you make a mistake writing with this, you can rub it out (6)

2 Metal block used by a blacksmith (5)

- 3 Aladdin's helper, who lived in a lamp (5)
- 4 Does as one is told (5)
- 5 Not man-made (7)
- 6 Large pieces of wood for the fire (4)
- 10 This American city is sometimes called 'The Big Apple' (3,4)
- 11 A butler or maid, perhaps (7)
- 12 Sharp point on a plant (5)
- 13 A cobra or adder, perhaps (5)
- 14 What a girl grows up to be (5)

SOLUTIONS, APRIL 14

GORDIUS NO. 554

Across – 1 Antibiotic 6 Echo 10 Orals 11 Bulgarian 12 Climate 15 Clamp 17 Dash 18 Iona 19 Asset 21 Crucial 23 Visor 24 Scan 25 Oust 26 Renew 28 Elastic 33 Applauded 34 Irish 35 Eels 36 Assessment

Down – 1 Ahoy 2 Tramlines 3 Besom 4 Orbit 5 Idle 7 China 8 Omnipotent 9 Paschal Sacrifice 13 Aver 14 Educate 16 Silverware 21 Crowbar 22 Aura 27 Nepal 29 Ladle 30 Spies 31 Odes 32 Shut

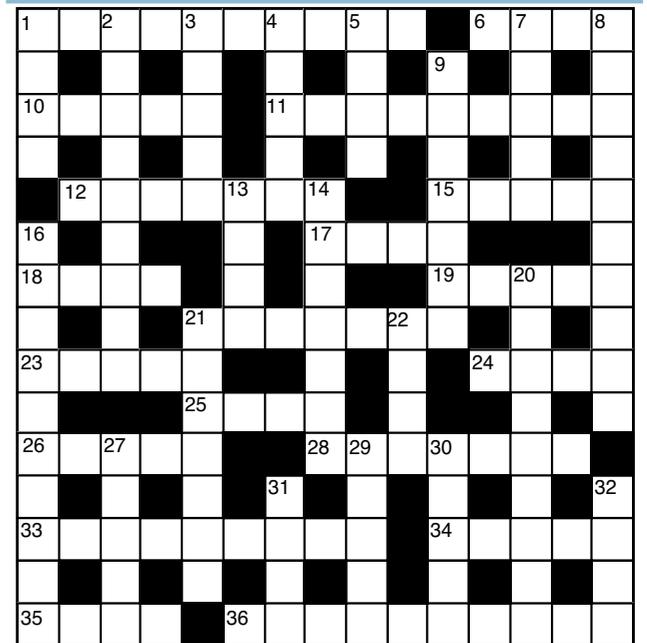
CHILDREN'S No. 428

Across – 1 Moonlight 6 Ham 7 Dragon 8 April 9 Means 12 Played 15 Salute 16 Tramps 18 Her 19 Cart 20 Ladder

Down – 1 Madam 2 Obama 3 Looks 4 Thirty 5 Smiled 8 All 10 Exam 11 Naughty 12 Petrol 13 Amazed 14 Empire 17 Ace

Crossword

Gordius 555



Across

- 1 Scary tale (5,5)
- 6 Flavoursome plant (4)
- 10 Country also known as the Friendly Islands (5)
- 11 Make Satan hark some lamb-swool from the Volga (9)
- 12 Fashionable (7)
- 15 Blue hedgehog in a classic computer game (5)
- 17 Aesthetically engrave with acid (4)
- 18 Ferrous metal (4)
- 19 Steadfast use of alloy (5)
- 21 According to St Paul, the greatest of the Great Christian Virtues (7)
- 23 Molars, for example (5)
- 24 Mark on the skin from an old wound (4)
- 25 Strangely wane afresh (4)
- 26 Such an animal has reverted to a wild state (5)
- 28 Furtiveness (7)
- 33 Impeccable (9)
- 34 From the French, a beautiful woman (5)
- 35 Star Wars character encountered in a Mayo dance (4)
- 36 Capable of being quantified exactly (10)

Down

- 1 Money taken at the turnstiles at a match (4)
- 2 See 22 down
- 3 Path in the wilderness (5)
- 4 Mates break into competing sides in a competition (5)
- 5 Rodents (4)
- 7 Singer at the court of King David? Then a change occurred (5)
- 8 Field glasses (10)
- 9 In an extremely severe way (7)
- 13 Skin irritation (4)
- 14 It seems he makes beer in this epistle! (7)
- 16 Evenly divided (5-5)
- 20 Boat with a golf implement to where you go sailing (5,4)
- 21 Alpine dwellings (7)
- 22 & 2d The first six words of Hamlet's famous soliloquy (2,2,2,3,2,2)
- 27 Spherical (5)
- 29 Onerous jobs (5)
- 30 The colour of the middle traffic light (5)
- 31 Bazaar (4)
- 32 Brazilian soccer legend, believed by many to be the game's greatest (4)

Sudoku Corner

429

Easy

		4	2	7		1		
		3	1	9	8	4		
	8	7						
		9						6
	1	8				5	2	9
	6			5	3			
	9			1	5		3	
2				4			7	
7				8	2		6	5

Hard

			4	1		6		2
	6	8			5			
	4			8		5		1
8			1				6	
9		4				1		7
	7				9			4
4	9		5				1	
			3			4	2	
2				6	4			

Last week's Easy 428

6	1	8	2	3	7	9	4	5
3	5	2	8	4	9	7	1	6
9	7	4	6	5	1	2	8	3
7	2	6	4	1	5	3	9	8
5	8	1	9	6	3	4	2	7
4	9	3	7	2	8	6	5	1
1	3	7	5	9	4	8	6	2
8	6	9	1	7	2	5	3	4
2	4	5	3	8	6	1	7	9

Last week's Hard 428

2	4	7	9	6	5	8	1	3
3	6	5	1	8	7	4	2	9
9	8	1	3	2	4	5	7	6
8	1	3	7	4	9	2	6	5
7	2	4	5	1	6	3	9	8
6	5	9	8	3	2	7	4	1
1	3	6	4	7	8	9	5	2
5	7	8	2	9	1	6	3	4
4	9	2	6	5	3	1	8	7

Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



Why do I remain a priest?

I'M WRITING THESE reflections in Holy Week and later this evening I will join my colleagues to celebrate the Chrism Mass during which we will renew the promises made at ordination. Much has changed since that July evening in 1986 when I first made those promises and so this annual renewal causes me to reflect on a fundamental question; Why do I remain a priest? My current answer to that question is linked to what I now see as the core of the ministry of a priest in 2022. I stress that this is how I see it and it may not be how others view their vocation or their ministry.



Lenses

I view priesthood through three lenses. The first one I have mentioned before in these pages, and it brings me back to the ordination ceremony itself. During that ritual my name was called out and I answered with one word: "present". As I look back over 36 years, being a priest has meant being really present in many different ways to many different people. I have been called to be present when I was very happy to be there and many times when I wished I was far away. Being present has often meant having privileged access to people's lives at very special and sometimes very

sensitive times in their lives. Being present also means somehow making people aware of God's presence in their lives, something which they may only be vaguely aware of. Part of my examination of conscience always must be around the quality of my presence in different situations.

The second lens comes from my growing conviction that the most important role of a priest is to be a minister and conduit of God's mercy, forgiveness, and compassion in this world. Whenever Pope Francis speaks to priests or speaks about priesthood he never fails to speak about God's compassion and he describes what that compassion involves; "God's compassion is to place himself in the difficulty, to put himself in the situation of the other, with his fatherly heart... This too is the mission of every priest: to be moved, to be engaged in peo-

ple's lives". One of my dreams for our Church is that we could reclaim the Sacrament of Reconciliation in such a way that we all discover the power of God's forgiveness, mercy and compassion. The Gospel story of the prodigal son surely provides the blueprint for a re-imagining of how to celebrate this incredible sacrament.

Overlap

All three lenses through which I now view priesthood overlap each other. The third one is summed up

in a famous quote used to describe the mission of Jesus; "He came to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable". I believe the role of the priest is to do likewise. Comforting the afflicted has been reflected in the first two lenses but the other part is perhaps more challenging in 21st century Ireland. Whenever a priest puts his head above the parapet to challenge any aspect of the prevailing culture he will be quickly put back in his place and reminded about the sins of the Church's past and how it no longer has any moral authority to question or challenge. It is difficult to argue the facts about the recent history of the Irish

Church but our authority to afflict the comfortable does not come from a place of power or prestige or an ability to instil fear as it may have done in the past. The authority comes directly from the gospel and from Jesus himself. At the end of the gospel on Holy Thursday Jesus said to his disciples: "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly so I am. If I then the Lord and Master have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you."

Mixed messages!

A man went off to church on Easter Sunday morning but returned home after a very short time and his wife questioned him as to why he was back so soon. He said he did not see much point in staying because when got to the church there was a big sign outside which read: "He is not here, He is risen!"

A Blessing For Priesthood

May the blessings released through your hands
Cause windows to open in darkened minds.

May the sufferings your calling brings
Be but winter before the spring.

May the companionship of your doubt
Restore what your beliefs leave out.

May the secret hungers of your heart
Harvest from emptiness its sacred fruit.

May your solitude be a voyage
Into the wilderness and wonder of God.

May your words have the prophetic edge
To enable the heart to hear itself.

May the silence where your calling dwells
Foster your freedom in all you do and feel.

May you find words full of divine warmth
To clothe the dying in the language of dawn.

May the slow light of the Eucharist
Be a sure shelter around your future.

John O'Donohue
Benedictus - A Book of Blessings: 2007



THIS EASTERTIDE, PLEASE HELP THE CHURCH IN UKRAINE

The Little Way Association is supporting the church in war-torn Ukraine. A grateful bishop whom we have helped writes: "Immediately after the beginning of the war we set up 450 places for internally displaced persons (women and children) from all over Ukraine in the houses of our diocese. In each facility they receive safe accommodation, meals, as well as clothing, hygiene products, etc. A further 1,200 places have been set up in the parish and family houses throughout the diocese. We wish you and all our benefactors God's richest blessings!"

The appeals for assistance continue to arrive at Sacred Heart House. A bishop in south-west Ukraine writes: "We are united and everyone wants to help those in need. Today we have many refugees. On the ground, in every city, town and village, we receive people who have left their homes because of the war. We provide them with housing and various kinds of help (food, hygiene items, clothes, etc.)."

"We try to help with humanitarian aid both in our territory and in the territory where hostilities are taking place. We share everything we can. As we are unfortunately not able to meet the current needs, we are asking you for your financial support for the procurement of the necessary items for the needy people who have been affected by the war or who have had to flee from the war zones."

This Eastertide, please give what you can for the families, clergy and religious of Ukraine. Every cent you donate will be gratefully received and sent without deduction to help the suffering people of Ukraine. To donate online go to littlewayassociation.enthuse.com/ukraine



"Jesus wills that we give alms to Him as to one poor and needy. He puts Himself as it were at our mercy; He will take nothing but what we give Him from our heart, and the very least trifle is precious in His sight." ~ St Therese

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In these fraught times, missionary priests rely more than ever on stipends for their daily subsistence and for helping the poorest of their communities. The Little Way Association will convey your stipends and your intentions to the clergy overseas.

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

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- €..... **HUNGRY, SICK & DEPRIVED**
- €..... **WELLS AND CLEAN WATER**
- €..... **MASS OFFERINGS**
(Please state no. of Masses _____)
- €..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

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To donate online go to
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