

The Irish Catholic

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Radical shake-up could see priestly training move to parishes

Greg Daly

Under new plans being considered, men training to be priests would spend most of their time working in parishes rather than in the traditional seminary environment.

It would see seminarians living in parishes with more time involved in active pastoral work alongside priests and lay pastoral workers and would, according to one bishop, give them a more realistic insight into priesthood in contemporary Ireland.

A committee appointed by the hierarchy is currently drawing up a new programme for the formation of priests in Ireland. It is part of what Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin has called "courageously moving the whole formation experience beyond past and present methods so that priests will be suitably prepared to engage with, and evangelise, the secularised contemporary culture". The document is known as the *Ratio Nationalis*.

Bishop Fintan Monahan of Kilmalloe told *The Irish Catholic* that he believed seminarians being formed in parishes "would be more practical" than the current model. He said it would give them "first-hand experience of

working together with priests and laypeople".

"The seminaries are almost monastic in character, and it is a shock to the system for newly-ordained priests when they come to the parish.

"Something based in the parish would help make it a more seamless transition," Bishop Monahan said pointing to the "very positive" impact he sees the pastoral year seminarians complete at present having on aspirants to the priesthood.

He said "every option is being looked at in the context of decreased numbers" of people preparing for priesthood.

He said the evidence from abroad – particularly in France – is that the parish-based model "has been reasonably successful".

However, he cautioned that there are challenges – particularly for dioceses that do not have a university. "Some parishes are a long way from a university where they could study and that would present practical difficulties in some cases".

He said he believed that a parish-based programme could help make formation "more down to earth".

Citing other examples of 'practitioner-based' training such as

» Continued on Page 3

Cookstown comes together in prayer



Students from Holy Trinity College leave floral tributes outside The Greenvale Hotel in Cookstown, Co. Tyrone following the deaths of three teenagers, Lauren Bullock, Connor Currie and Morgan Barnard, at a St Patrick's Day party. See Page 2. Photo: PA

'Hopes and prayers' for Brexit solution

Staff reporter

Ireland's bishop tasked with dealing with European matters says that people are "hoping and praying" that developments with Brexit serve the common good.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Bishop Noel Treanor of Down and Connor said that various Church initiatives show how much concern there is around this issue.

"On the basis of the initiatives launched by Church leaders to promote dialogue between political parties, MLAs, components of civil society, and the Churches themselves, one can say that there is great concern and that people are hoping and praying for an outcome that will serve the common good," he said.

"Personally I trust that the eventuality of a no-deal outcome can be avoided," he added.

See page 6.

MARIA STEEN

When submission is strength and courage

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MARY KENNY

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Rebooting priestly formation

Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger was the Archbishop of Paris until he retired in 2005.

Lustiger – a convert from Judaism – was a towering figure in the global Church and considered a key ally in the reforms of Pope St John Paul II.

Among the projects Cardinal Lustiger himself embraced with gusto was the reform of the seminary in his sprawling diocese. In 1984 he first created a house where young men considering a vocation to the priesthood could spend a year of discernment preceding entry to the seminary. The following year, he decentralised the seminary and sent the seminarians to live and work in parishes while commuting for their studies.

Today, the Archdiocese of Paris has eight houses attached to a parish, where a dozen seminarians and two priests live.

Seminarians

In Lille, Archbishop Laurent Ulrich announced last autumn that 13 residents would leave the large building in the Saint-Maurice district that has housed seminarians since 1931 for a house in the Old Town. "We're moving in a way from a Christian boarding school to a Christian house-share," according to Fr Jean-Luc Garin, rector of Lille's inter-diocesan seminary.

Seminarians came about at the time of the counter-reformation largely due to the fact that many priests at the time were appallingly badly educated. The success of the seminary was extraordinary in

implementing a uniform training for priests across the board. The programme was rigid and consistent and received students largely from the boarding school regime of junior seminaries. The seminaries themselves became, as Fr Garin notes, effectively boarding schools designed to turn out a uniform one-size-fits-all priest.

“Parish-based formation...is an important part of the reform of priestly formation in Ireland”

Perhaps that might've made sense when the traditional norm was that young men entered seminary as adolescents and had effectively been earmarked to become priests from when they were four years of age.

All that has changed now. The most dramatic change, of course, is the huge drop in the number of people applying to begin priestly formation. The other notable change is that most

candidates now enter after university, having worked for years in a profession or even in their 50s or 60s. They make a rather odd addition to a boarding school.

The Church in Ireland is currently working on a new programme for the formation of priests here. The so-called *Ratio Nationalis* will model a new way for the training of seminarians. Part of this will ensure that they are equipped to minister in the contemporary Church where collaboration and co-responsibility are a natural and vital way of conceiving of the Church.

This will take bold leadership and a model that moves farther and farther away from the whiff of the boarding schools will be not only desirable but necessary.

Irish seminarians are, of course, not entirely cut-off from the world. They already undertake pastoral work – including a year in a parish – but there is nothing like living and working in a parish to steep people in pastoral identity.

It is also true that both

Maynooth and the Irish College have a wealth of vital experience and expertise. They are already sharing this with laypeople and those training to become permanent deacons and pastoral workers. Perhaps the next challenge is to help the seminaries increase their awareness of the need to be centres of ministerial formation for both lay and cleric alike.

Parish-based formation – bringing theological, philosophical and spiritual formation together with realistic and day-to-day pastoral experience – is an important part of the reform of priestly formation in Ireland.

The old seminary model was a very good idea in the 17th Century, but it is largely unfit for purpose in the 21st.

Michael Kelly is co-author of a new book with Austen Ivereigh *How to Defend the Faith – Without Raising Your Voice* – it is available from Columba Books www.columbabooks.com



Pray for families of Greenvale tragedy – archbishop

Colm Fitzpatrick

The Primate of All-Ireland has asked for prayers and Christian outreach following the tragic deaths of three teenagers in a crowd crush outside the Greenvale Hotel, Co. Tyrone on St Patrick's night.

The three young people have been named as Lauren Bullock (17), a student of St Patrick's College in Dungannon, and Connor Currie (16) and Morgan Barnard (17), who were both students at St Patrick's Academy in Dungannon.

On Monday, Archbishop Eamon Martin issued a statement expressing his shock and sadness over the tragic incident. "Please join with me in praying for comfort and strength for all the bereaved and injured," he said.

"Our heartfelt thoughts and prayers are with the

families and friends of Lauren, Connor and Morgan, and with all of those who were caught up in the horror and distress of what happened, including those injured and traumatised, and the emergency services and staff who responded."

A book of condolence has been opened in St Patrick's Church, Dungannon.

The Archdiocese of Armagh includes half of Co. Tyrone, as well as counties Armagh and Louth and parts of Derry and Meath.

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Bishop hits out at 'traditional Catholics' for demonising Muslims

Chai Brady

The bishop of Elphin has criticised those who identify as "Faith-filled" while spreading fear and mistrust of migrants and refugees, particularly those who are Muslims.

Bishop Kevin Doran told this paper he has witnessed prejudice in Irish society and that there's an "implication" that because people are Muslim they are more likely to be terrorists. His comments come after the "savage" attack on two mosques in New Zealand which left 50 people dead last Friday.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* he said: "I suppose just in keeping my ear to the ground, at meetings I've been at and looking at social media, I've found that people who would classify themselves in some cases as traditional Catholics and Faith-filled people seem to, in relation to migration and care of asylum seekers and stuff, they'll say 'oh well these

Muslims are putting our civilisation at risk and they pose a threat to us'."

"To define a whole category of people, or a whole nation, or a whole religious group as being in some way more prone to terrorism than any other group is irresponsible."

In his experience Muslim people living in Irish society do so "peacefully and participate fully".

"We have large numbers of Muslim children in our Catholic schools and they contribute to the ethos in many ways."

"One of the interesting things about Muslims is while they are of a different faith they tend to have a level of commitment to faith that in many ways we might well sit up and pay attention to."

Although in some Middle Eastern countries their human rights may have a long way to go, he said that "in Ireland we have to have the highest possible standard of respect for others, espe-

cially those who are pro-life Christians".

"Individuals or groups of people who are persecuted or targeted because of their

religious beliefs deserve our support and our solidarity, irrespective if they're Christians, Muslims or Jews."

Before this paper went to

print there was still 34 people in hospital and 12 in intensive care in Christchurch Hospital in New Zealand, following the March 15 terrorist attack.



Clodagh Hegarty, Legion GAA Club, taking part in St Patrick's Festival Parade in Killarney, on Sunday, the theme of this year's parade was 'the circus'. Thousands lined the streets of Killarney for the parade. Photo:Valerie O'Sullivan

Look beyond racist clichés, Irish-American cardinal urges

Greg Daly

A prominent Irish-American cardinal has used St Patrick's Day to hit out at anti-immigrant rhetoric, and called on Catholics to look beyond stereotypes to see people as they truly are.

"In the 1870s, the code images for Irish people were drunken apes," Cardinal Joe Tobin wrote on Twitter. "The same sort of calumny is used today, when immigrants are called rapists and drug dealers. When we speak about immigrants as less than human, we become something less than what God intended us to be."

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, the cardinal, who heads the New Jersey diocese of Newark, said: "I believe that a great deal of anti-immigrant rhetoric is based on caricatures, hence the tweet."

"Our task is to 'restore people's faces' by seeing them as they really are," he continued.

Born into an Irish-American family in Detroit, Michigan, the cardinal is a former Redemptorist Superior General. As Archbishop of Indianapolis in 2015 he famously clashed with Indiana's then governor, Vice-President Mike Pence, over welcoming and settling Syrian refugees.

Radical shake-up could see priestly training move to parishes

» Continued from Page 1

for nurses and doctors, he said the parish model "would allow for a seminarian to be steeped and immersed in parish and diocesan life".

There are approximately 23 seminarians in Maynooth at present and around a dozen in the Irish College in Rome, and Bishop Monahan said that the low numbers in formation has "focused attention". "Can we keep two seminaries?" he asked.

"The old seminary model served its purpose, but there's a definite need to look at other models now," he said.

Describing both Maynooth and the Irish College as "national treasures" he said there is "huge affection" for both institutions.

Fr Tom Surlis, rector of Maynooth said the consultation process has been going on since the start of the year and that the committee has already received responses from diocesan vocations directors, councils of priests and leaders of religious congregations amongst others.

Formation

He said that the committee is working "in tandem with the trustees of the college, the wider Episcopal Conference" and others "to learn from the insights gained at various conferences on new models of priestly formation held in the past two years in Maynooth and in Rome."

"The key task facing the committee is to ensure that the programme of priestly formation in Irish seminaries continues to be fully in keeping with the teaching of the Magisterium and the law of the Church".

He said a key part of the work of the committee will be looking at how prospective priests are accompanied before and during their formation.

"In a vocational environment where most applicants have either completed a third-level qualification and/or have worked in their particular field for a number of years, this period of accompaniment and discernment is very important in terms of helping applicants to properly examine their motivations for pursuing a vocation to the diocesan priesthood in Ireland," he said.

Leadership style inspired by Church – top rugby coach

Faith isn't a matter of praying for victory, Wales's defence coach told a gathering of Catholics ahead of the Welsh rugby team's 25-7 trouncing of Ireland last weekend.

Speaking on 'Faith in a Competitive World' to over 120 people near Cardiff's St David's Cathedral, lifelong Catholic Shaun Edwards said that as a boy he had regu-

larly attended Mass because "I was scared of my mam" and that he was still serving as an altar boy when, aged 21, he captained the Wigan rugby league team.

At the talk, Mr Edwards identified his uncle, Wigan's Fr John Johnson, as a major influence, and said "the Church has always been a part of my life".

Claiming that the Church "has influenced me on how I do my job as a coach", he said he did not shout at players as that has an adverse effect, that he makes a point of showing compassion for injured players, and that his Faith never obliged him to ask God to win, but only to be able to compete and survive injury.

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Parade offers 'unreal' joy in 'tense' Paris

Greg Daly

Fr Aidan Troy, a priest who came to prominence shielding local schoolgirls from loyalist mobs in Belfast, has said families are terrified by conflicts between police and protesters in Paris, and that dialogue is the only way of ending the violence.

Famous for his role in the Holy Cross Ardoyne protests in 2001, Passionist Fr Troy is now parish priest of St Joseph's Church in Paris, where he served last weekend as Grand Marshall of the French capital's second official St Patrick's Day parade.

Apprehension

"It came the day after the horrendous trouble on the Champs Elysee so there was a certain amount of apprehension around another parade, but I must pay tribute to the police," he told *The Irish Catholic*, praising them for discretely protecting and

accompanying the parade along its route.

"It went from 500 to 5,000 in one year, and the joy and the happiness was just unreal," he said, contrasting them with the "extremely tense" atmosphere in the city surrounding the *Gilet jaunes* – 'yellow vests' – protests.

"It's been every week, this is the 17th or the 18th consecutive week," he said, describing the wreckage of burnt and looted shops and businesses on the Champs Elysee on Saturday evening as "just so sad".

"I just felt so sorry, and particularly for the small businesses – people are talking about the big shops, but I know people who have a little restaurant on a side street who can't open. I know a family who've had to take their children up to Normandy every Saturday for the last three or four months because they're afraid of the tear gas," he said.

"I've lived through Belfast, I know what violence is like,

and I know there's no answer in violence of any sort," he continued. "Eventually there's going to have to be a conversation, a dialogue of some sort, to bring this to an end. It is extremely tense."

Not best of times

Describing the atmosphere as "very scary, particularly for families", Fr Troy said the church regularly gets phone-calls from parents worried about whether it is safe to bring their children to Mass.

"I always say 'never put yourself in danger, but we are not going to close', so they know we're open, and if they can get here well and good," he said, adding, "It's not the best of times."



Speaking out in the big apple

Renua's Michael O'Dowd, Chair of Disability Voices for Life in Ireland, stands with Cardinal Timothy Dolan after addressing a large pro-life rally at the New York City St Patrick's Day Parade.

CIA backed Rosary crusades, documentary claims

Staff reporter

Rosary Crusades in Latin America organised by a famous Irish-born priest were funded by the CIA as part of a campaign against communism, according to a documentary to be shown on RTE tonight.

Guns and Rosaries tells the story of how Fr Patrick Peyton, the US-based 'Rosary priest' from Attymass, Co. Mayo, who after recovering from tuberculosis and being ordained started the Family Rosary Crusade, promoting the idea of family prayer as the cornerstone of family values.

Fr Peyton's media campaign won the support of numerous Hollywood

stars and eventually caught the attention of the CIA, impressed by Fr Peyton's claim that "The Rosary is the offensive weapon that will destroy communism – the great evil that seeks to destroy the Faith."

In 1959, the CIA began to supply funds to advertise and promote the Rosary Crusade in Latin America. While Fr Peyton believed the important thing was the promotion of the Rosary message, his superiors in the Congregation of the Holy Cross were uneasy with this alliance, and Pope St Paul VI directed that it should stop.

The documentary is directed by Peter Kelly and narrated by Martin Sheen.

Third petition as GPs 'fight' for conscience rights on abortion

Chai Brady

Hundreds of Irish GPs have submitted a third petition to their representative body calling for a vote on abortion and freedom of conscience.

Approximately 600 GPs hand-signed the petition calling for the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) to hold an extraordinary general meeting (EGM).

Dr Orla Halpenny from Doctors for Life said that "members are very angry" not only with the issue of abortion but several actions taken by the ICGP.

"It's the same petition as before looking for a vote on whether or not termination of pregnancy should be held in general practice and requesting that those objecting in conscience would not have their careers or job prospects affected," said Dr Halpenny.

The first petition in summer didn't receive enough signatures, while the second petition last November spurred an EGM but there was no voting held. This led

to about 50 GPs walking out who said their voices were not being heard.

Legal advice

After receiving legal advice all the signatures have now been signed by hand, following a question mark over some signatures in their second petition being collected digitally.

Dr Halpenny said they have reached the quota needed and of the 600 signatures about 470 are full members of the ICGP.

"The law very clearly states that even if a doctor objects in conscience to a termination of pregnancy he or she is obliged to refer the patient onwards: facilitating it.

"That's not satisfactory to anybody with a conscientious objection," she added.

"Unless we fight this battle outside the hospitals then it is going to be much, much fiercer in the hospitals." The petition was submitted two weeks ago.

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Every generation likes to embrace a cause, and almost every generation thinks its elders are responsible for messing up the world. So it is unsurprising that some of the young activists on the 'climate change' school strikes blame oldsters for causing global warming by greed and careless living.

Did we? Maybe so. Still, it might be useful for some of these crusading youngsters to know a little more about how previous generations lived.

Some of us grew up in a world where most families didn't have a motor car – that vehicle which does so much to pollute the planet. We walked or cycled to school, or waited for the bus. I know women of my generation who cycled 10 or 12 miles to a country school, sometimes in the pouring rain.

“Vegetables and fruit were eaten in season, not wrapped in plastic bubbles and imported from halfway across the world”

I know people who didn't have electricity until the middle 1950s, when they were school children in Co. Monaghan. There are people in Connemara who can remember a time when houses had no running water – water was still drawn from the local pump.

In my Dublin childhood, plastic was rare. Tea, sugar and other comestibles were weighed out in brown bags. You got a pennyworth of sweets in a scrap of brown paper shaped into a cone.

I used to visit an aunt in Limerick where the bacon was particularly delicious: the pigs had been fed on the peelings of apples and potatoes, and sometimes even the slops of Guinness – the pig being a perfect recycler.

Convents were adept



Mary Kenny

at using old tea-leaves to clean wooden floors and corridors.

You had a bath once a week, on a Saturday night. Men didn't change their shirts daily – they affixed a fresh collar to a shirt already worn.

Hand-me-downs

Old clothes weren't just junked, they were altered and re-used. People wore hand-me-downs, and the dressmaker was skilful at re-fashioning a worn garment into something useful.

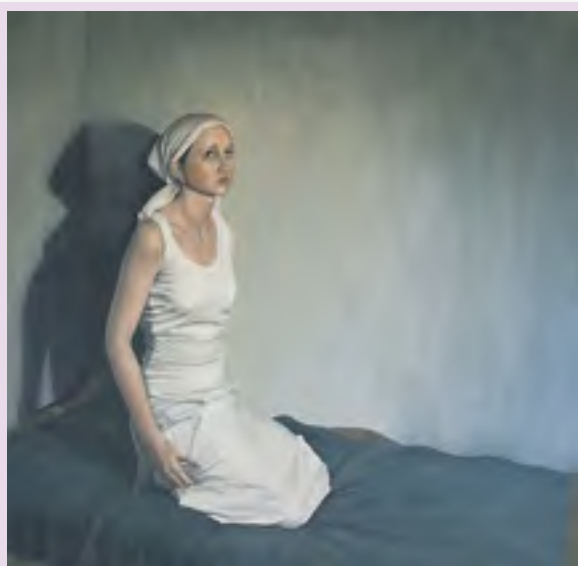
Laundry was often done by hand until the 'twin tub' washing-machine appeared in the 1950s. But the mangle still had to be turned manually, and then the clothes were hung on

a line to dry – no energy-gobbling tumble-dryers then!

A larder was a box affixed to a cool part of the yard. It conserved food without using energy or electricity.

Vegetables and fruit were eaten in season, not wrapped in plastic bubbles and imported from halfway across the world. If you ate apples in spring it was because last autumn's had been conserved locally.

Yes, we welcomed many of the changes, especially where they reduced drudgery. But on a balance of probability, the oldest generations alive almost certainly used less of the planet's energy and resources in their youth than youngsters do today.



© Adam Pomeroy

● Since before the Renaissance, the subject of the Annunciation has attracted painters, and I was much struck by a modern interpretation by Adam Pomeroy at Ennis' Cathedral of Ss Peter and Paul. It's a picture [above] which really holds the eye: Mary as a teenager – as she was – faced with something quite awesome, her simple head covering suggesting a connection with the Middle East. People visiting the church come over to look at it intently, I noticed, and ponder on it.

The artist is originally a native of Norfolk but has lived in Co. Clare since 1999 and is working on a series of paintings based on Bible themes. The inscription under the oil is, incidentally, also in Polish.

It's good to see the church showing the work of artists. There should be more of that.

Don't waste your time, Mr Corbyn

Jeremy Corbyn has promised that if voted into power, he will make St Patrick's Day a national holiday in Britain. Nice of a declared atheist like Mr Corbyn to have so much care for Ireland's Christian evangelist!

I doubt it will happen. Protestant cultures seldom take to saints' days. Even when imposed, they almost never have popular resonance. Repeated efforts to make St George's Day a holiday have failed to obtain any broad appeal.

The British invented 'bank' holidays to compensate for want of saints' days, and even Christian holy days, like Good Friday, are now sometimes called 'bank' holidays. Easter Monday is now a 'bank holiday weekend' and Pentecost has disappeared altogether into 'bank holidaydom'.

If Jeremy Corbyn does formally make March 17 a public holiday in Britain it will soon be, I regret, just another 'bank' holiday.



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EU president's praise for Catholic teaching welcomed

A call from European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker for the EU to rediscover its Catholic roots is an invitation for politicians to bring Catholic values to bear in their work, Bishop Noel Treanor of Down and Connor has said.

Addressing the spring assembly of COMECE – the European bishops' conference – Mr Juncker spoke effusively about the importance of Catholic social teaching, upon which the European project was founded in the aftermath of World War Two.

"I am a fervent advocate of the social doctrine of the Church. It is one of the most noble teachings of our Church," Mr Juncker said on March 14. "All of this is part of a doctrine that Europe does not apply often enough. I would like us to rediscover the values and guiding principles of the social teaching of the Church."

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Bishop Treanor explained that Mr Juncker had been looking back on the achievements and challenges that have marked the European project over the last five years, looking ahead to the future.

"He began by emphasising that this European project is inclusive, it doesn't exclude anybody," Dr Treanor said. "He quoted Pope John Paul II, saying it has two lungs – east and west – and went on to talk about the European



Greg Daly

Union being a peace-building project.

"He emphasised the importance of that, mentioning that after some 60-70 years of European construction the permanent challenge of building, maintaining, and consolidating peace is something that escapes those who have not had the experience of war, and in terms of our relationships with our neighbours and in terms of internal tensions the importance of building true peace and security is foundational," he said.

Mr Juncker then observed how the European project draws its energy from a number of sources – "and especially from Christianity and Christian values, rooted, as he says, or mediated in reason" – Dr Treanor continued, adding that the president went on to say that "Europe and its member states needs to focus more on promoting the dignity of the human person, promoting a community of values, and also promoting and building the rule of law".

The president's emphasis on Catholic social teaching makes perfect sense, Dr Treanor said, given the challenges

posed by today's changing world.

"We are undergoing such profound changes in our culture and in our world, which are impacting on the world of work, which are impacting also on democracy, which are impacting on the citizen over against not only the nation state but the world economy, that institutions at regional, national and supranational level do have to take account of them," he said. "And it is through a process of dialogue, such as COMECE is engaged in with the European institutions, that we provide for the irrigation of policy development by the social teaching of the Church."

"In other words," he continued, "we need women and men – our fellow citizens – who in our schools and through our catechesis have discovered and have appreciated the contribution of Catholic social teaching to reflection on the human condition in all its aspects, for these people in their professional lives at national and international level to funnel into policy making the insights of Catholic social teaching."

He described Mr Juncker's call as "a recognition of the contribution of Christian tradition to shaping public policy and at the same time an invitation to continue making this input through the initiatives taken through an institution such as COMECE."



Former Trócaire director Eamonn Meehan and Fr Brendan McConvery CSsR, with Archbishop Eamon Martin after both were conferred with an honorary doctorate in Theology, at the Annual Lecture in St Patrick's College, Maynooth.

Friendly dialogue is key to progress, priest urges

Colm Fitzpatrick

While many Twitter users saw last week's meeting of American Vice President Mike Pence with Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and his partner as an in-your-face moment for the pro-marriage Christian politician, a Dublin-based priest has said the scene really shows gracious dialogue.

Fr Bill Dailey, priest in Dublin's Newman University Church, criticised Twitter users who were getting a kick out of the March 14 meeting at the US Naval

Observatory, rather than appreciating that people can disagree with one another and still be friendly.

The tweet, which has garnered almost 1,000 likes said: "I assume those amused by this cannot produce a picture of themselves being gracious and loving to people with whom they have disagreements about morality. Hence the hilarity."

Speaking to this newspaper about the tweet, US-born Fr Dailey said that "people should be able to find a way to love through

disagreements", on divisive issues such as same-sex marriage.

He added that in a time when people are worried about all kinds of problems, it's vital that productive dialogue takes place, without personal hate attached.

"It's crucial that we find a way to have conversations, even moral disagreements, with love."

Mr Pence, who describes himself as a Christian and a conservative, extended an invitation to the couple during a meeting with Varadkar last year.

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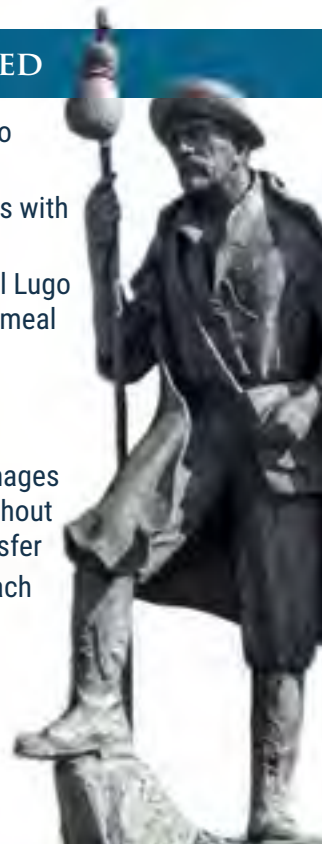
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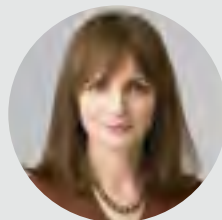
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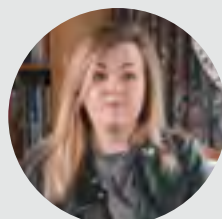
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Maria Steen

The View



When submission is strength and courage

We celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation on Monday next. Reflecting on this seminal moment in the history of Salvation got me thinking about Mary's role in it as a young girl, and how different a view modern society and feminism promotes.

Today's feminist empowerment classes surely would utterly reject Mary's submission to God's will, her willingness to embrace motherhood and the unfathomable responsibility of her station with a promise that a sword would pierce her soul. How different a lesson young girls today learn at the feet of feminism, compared to the lesson that Our Lady teaches



Participants in the Women's March on Washington make their way down Independence Avenue. Photo: CNS

by her example.

Girls and women have learned well that pregnancy and motherhood

are burdens. We have been taught that men are aggressors, manipulative, or just plain stupid and to be pitied. An article in *The Irish Times* recently suggested that until women demand the right to be as incompetent, lazy and useless as men, they will never achieve equality. And as for society, well, that is just one massive oppressive patriarchy constantly conspiring against women and preventing them from achieving anything.

Shocked

Where has this all got us? I was shocked when visiting a girl's school last year to see a poster which stated that girls could achieve anything that boys can. When I was growing up, I never doubted it, nor even thought about it as an issue. Had I seen such a poster, however, it would have raised a doubt in my mind: if those in authority are telling me this, it sounds like they don't believe it themselves.

The result of this type of victim-status promotion is that we see gender quotas being introduced, not only in politics but in academia also, and before long everywhere else – except of course in male-dominated careers like construction, road-sweeping and any job which feminists view as undesirable. Why no gender quotas there?

Feminism teaches that, to be valuable, women must be achieving the top positions in boardrooms, parliaments and the professions. Anything else – such as motherhood – is less valuable, and so women who want to make this their main

vocation feel less valued. But these quotas even ruin things for the women who would have reached the top jobs on the basis of hard work, as there will always be the whisper and doubt as to whether they really got there on merit.

As for relationships, dating and marriage, this is truly train-wreck territory. Despite almost 60 years of so-called sexual freedom and equality, the dating scene for women today is nothing short of nightmarish.

The falling numbers of those marrying and increasing numbers of those with relationship breakdown does not mirror the deep desires of the heart for most people – men and women alike. A friend who is currently internet dating recently confided – “at the end of the day, everyone is just looking for someone to love”.

The problem is, people don't know how to love any more. The lessons learned from the sexual revolution are the opposite of love. Rather they emphasise that interactions between men and women are competitive, with women being urged to never let the man win. Women – and men – are judged by aspiring partners based on their profile picture and a short description.

Sex is traded like a commodity; emotions are used to bargain. This reductionist and hostile view of human relations is utterly antipathetic to love and marriage, where giving the benefit of the doubt to the other is the order of the

day.

The sexual revolution has even ruined sex. It has been reduced to consent classes for adults to learn what yes and no mean. There is an app so that a couple can each witness their consent before embarking on a sexual encounter. How utterly unromantic, but worse is what it implies: nobody's word means anything anymore. No one can be trusted. What an impoverished view of humanity.

As for pornography – which amazingly many women still refuse to condemn (there is even a feminist movement for “ethical porn”, which means porn directed by women) – it is like a cancer for relationships and marriages.

As Catholics, we are told that a man who looks at another woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart, but young women nowadays style themselves on porn culture in a desperate bid to attract the attention of young men who have become addicts to pornography, encouraging them by watching it with them. And still nobody shouts “Stop!”

“This kind of submission is different from the world's understanding of submission. It is rather an indicator of great strength and courage”

While the original feminists had a valid and worthy cause, modern feminism has become utterly self-destructive. It is myopically short-term in its approach: it never seems to stop and think of the long-term consequences for women – or anyone else for that matter. It is, at heart, fundamentally anti-woman. Any traditional feminine attributes or instincts are rejected as weak and undesirable. Any hankering after domesticity and marriage and motherhood is bad; unless of course you can make millions selling it as a lifestyle choice, and doing the celebrity circuit – then it's okay, because

you're a savvy business woman.

But ordinary marriage, ordinary motherhood, wanting to care for a family and keep house are all seen as inferior choices for any self-respecting woman to make.

The terrible thing is: this is still what many women want – only now we're not allowed to say it. We can do anything we want – just not that. We must remove all traces from society that this is a real and valid choice – no doubt our modern nation will erase the provision from our Constitution which elevates the role of the mother in the home. “And good riddance too!” I can hear them say.

Vulnerable

And yet, so often, when we feel vulnerable, it is to our mothers that we turn. Mothers do make sacrifices for their children, they often put their children's needs ahead of their own even though this is the opposite of what feminism teaches.

By contrast to the feminist ‘gospel’, Mary's ‘yes’, or ‘fiat’, “let it be done”, was the perfect submission to God's will.

Through a feminist lens, meekness, submission and the shouldering of responsibility are seen as weakness. But there is a profound difference between submission from cowardice and submission from resolve, as exemplified by Mary. This kind of submission is different from the world's understanding of submission. It is rather an indicator of great strength and courage. Mary's is the same quality of submission that we see in martyrs and in Christ's own perfect example on the Cross: “Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Mary did not blindly accept immediately, she questioned, engaging intellectually with what had been said to her. Her submission was actually the thing that feminists might call “empowering”, though Mary in her humility did not consider it so. But it was her “yes”, her bearing a child and becoming a mother, that paved the way for her to become Queen of Heaven.



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Irish people must start having children in their 20s, writes **David Quinn**

Almost half of women aged 18 to 24 would consider freezing their eggs according to a new survey from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in the UK. They would do so in order to 'preserve their fertility' in the hope of starting a family one day.

This finding dovetails nicely with the theme of a programme RTÉ aired last week called *Fertility Shock*, which looked at Ireland's below-replacement level birth rates.

The Irish birth rate is around 1.8 children per woman, well below the 2.1 needed to keep our population stable without immigration. This means the population is set to age rapidly even with high levels of immigration.

At present, there are about 600,000 people in Ireland aged 65 and over. This is projected by the CSO to rise to around 1.6 million by the middle part of the century, which is only 30 years away.

The percentage of over 65s compared with those aged 15-64 is expected to increase from 20% to today, to about 40% by 2050. This is completely unsustainable. It means too few people of working age will be supporting too many dependents, and unlike in the past, the dependents will mostly be retirees, not children. A country like that has no future.

And Ireland isn't even close to the worst example in Europe. In fact, as low as it is, we have one of Europe's highest birth rates. Countries like Italy, Greece, Spain and Germany are ageing far more quickly than we are.

Decline

The finding that so many young women in Britain would consider freezing their eggs is a good indicator of why we are where we are. Most people are now waiting until they are well into their 30s before they have their first child. By then, a woman's fertility is declining

Fertility shock as we get our priorities wrong



rapidly and she has only a few more years left in which she can have children.

The presenter of *Fertility Shock*, journalist Dearbhail McDonald, spoke to some young people at music event Electric Picnic about when they wanted to have children. They all wanted to wait until they are a lot older, in their 30s, because they "want to live life first".

Well, that's all very well, but you can't ultimately buck nature. In your own mind you think you can delay having children until you are well into your 30s, but your body isn't listening. It is aging pretty much the same as everyone else's bodies have been aging since the dawn of time. Your body and your fertility won't be frozen at age 20 just because it suits you.

“Both the market economy and feminism want as many women in the workplace as possible. Family and home and children are forced into second place”

This is where egg freezing comes in. It allows the illusion that you can, sort of, freeze time. It allows a woman to think that if she extracts some eggs from her body now, she can have a child later, even if she never met someone she wants to settle down with. Meanwhile she can concentrate on her career.

But of course, life usually doesn't work that way. To begin with, having a baby

this way has only a small chance of working, especially if you wait until you are in your 30s, never mind your 40s. Secondly, it is very expensive.

In addition, there are multiple ethical problems with it. For example, once the eggs are fertilised, the resultant embryos might never be implanted, and many will be permanently frozen or destroyed. The latter is tantamount to abortion.

Another problem is that the sperm used will most likely be from a man that the child will never get to know. Is that fair?

In some cases, women will resort to using surrogate mothers rather than their own wombs, because of their age, or because they simply don't want to become pregnant with their own child for whatever reason.

Those surrogates will almost certainly be lower income women, often from developing countries. They will, in effect, be the 'handmaids' of better-off Western women. (*The Handmaid's Tale* is a drama about women who are forced to have children for other people. Surrogacy might not be directly coercive, but it involves a great amount of economic exploitation.)

But even if egg freezing, sperm and egg donation, and surrogacy involved no ethical dilemmas, for the most part, women would still be waiting until they are well into their 30s before having children, and that is still going to mean a low birth rate.

The fact is, we are getting things the wrong way around. Both the market

But we can't expect to do this and to have a healthy birth rate. So, what's the answer? Should we copy the Scandinavian countries with their strongly feminist policies and affordable childcare, which is what *Fertility Shock* suggested?

“The bottom line is that we cannot hope to bring our birth rates in line with what we need to keep the number of older and younger people in the right balance”

The Scandinavian countries appear on the surface to give women a chance to reconcile work and family life, but when we look closer, their policies haven't made much difference to

their birth rates. Sweden has a birth rate more or less identical to ours, while those of Denmark, Norway and Finland are all lower.

Hungary is now attempting something quite radical. It has announced extremely strong financial inducements to any couples having more than two children, and a woman who has four, will never pay any income tax again. We await the effect of this on the birth rate.

But the bottom line is that we cannot hope to bring our birth rates in line with what we need to keep the number of older and younger people in the right balance unless we start having children again when we are in our 20s.

That is not going to happen so long as we think our 20s isn't the time to have children, but to "live it up".

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Christian schools turn out for climate strike



Thousands of school students took to the streets in Dublin and around the world on March 15 to pressure governments to take action and tackle climate change. In the capital many were supported by schools and parents who also joined in. Up to 10,000 people were believed to have joined the #schoolstrike4climate protest. Photos: Chai Brady



Parent and CEO of Dóchas, Suzanne Keating (pictured bottom left), protests with her two children and other pupils from Gaelscoil Inse Chór. She said: "It's an incredible turnout today and I think it just shows the mobilisation in the country, particularly among young people, that we want a better future so let's make some change."



Students representing Larkin Community College, an inter denominational school, were delighted to raise awareness of climate change. Beside her twin sister Ayah, Sheyma Hudson (14) said: "It's great we have posters and we've done some protesting and I already know Richard Bruton, he used to be the Minister for Education but now he's the Minister of Climate. We need to change the politics, we need to change the climate. We want to change this world, we want to make this a new world for our kid's kids, our future, our generation, we need a new world."



Students from Gonzaga College's Green-Schools committee and the justice and peace group are pictured at the end of the climate strike march. Siobhán McNamara, the college librarian in Gonzaga College, runs the green schools programme and joined marching pupils. She said: "For us it's very important to educate the students about climate change and for them to feel like they're active citizens, they're calling out to the politicians to listen to the young people."



Pupils from St Michael's College attend the climate strike.



Glenageary Killiney National School students show up in their droves to highlight climate change. Parent Lena Brooks told this paper: "We can't just tell them to recycle and protect the planet if we are not there with them."



It's time to switch on the lights for youth ministry, writes **Colm Fitzpatrick**

Earlier this month, Archbishop Eamon Martin spoke to thousands of young people from across England and Wales about the power of faith, and the vital role that they play in evangelisation today. Addressing around 10,000 Catholics at the 2019 Flame Conference in Wembley's SSE Arena, Dr Martin said: "You my young friends are in the heart of God and in the heart of the Church...you are personally called to holiness."

His message was a radical call to transformation – young people should open up to Jesus, and act courageously on this divine encounter.

The Church, of course, is tasked with creating spaces where this encounter is made more accessible, and also providing spiritual resources by which young people's faith can develop and deepen. It can be easy to fall into the trap of focusing only on this latter point, where the Church throws its energy into those young people already converted, leaving behind the many who are religiously disinterested.

And yet, according to Belfast youth worker Brian McKee, who works with some of the most disadvantaged young people in the North, the Irish Church has fallen squarely into the convenient hole. Speaking about the growing problem of gangland violence among teenagers, he says that the Church here has consciously "turned its back" on the young people at the edges of society, leaving a "vast bulk" untouched by Christ.

Uncomfortable

"The Church can't afford to turn its back and that's what we've done...young people at the edge, who are uncomfortable to be with," Mr McKee tells *The Irish Catholic*.

He suggests that today's youth ministry is more focused on "inside" events like liturgies or pilgrimages where

The Church of the future is young



Flame is the largest Catholic youth event in England and Wales with thousands of young people filling up the SSE arena for a day of prayer, adoration, catechesis, reflection, celebration and praise.

the Faith is already present among young people, rather than outreach to the apathetic or groups who are often disregarded as unchangeable, like gangs. As a result, he says the Church has "abdicated" its responsibility to young people on the street by deciding to swim in safe waters, instead of jumping in the deep end.

It's a bold claim, and one that many people would sympathise with – but it doesn't paint an entirely accurate picture. Firstly, it puts Ireland's youth ministry, which is varied and dynamic, into one box; and secondly, it undervalues the important contribution of "inside" events like liturgies and pilgrimages such as World Youth Day.

While Derry's Bishop Donal McKeown recognises that there is "certainly on the side of clergy, a lack of confidence in how to engage with young people", he says that in his diocese there are very strong youth programmes that are "good" at reaching out to those on the fringes, and that the actual challenge is keeping people interested in the Church.

This challenge has become increasingly difficult in modern times, he tells this newspaper,



Bishop Donal McKeown.

as young people find it harder to believe in the transcendent, there's a general mistrust of organisations and institutions, and the sordid history of the Irish Church has made Catholicism unpopular.

“There is ‘certainly on the side of clergy, a lack of confidence in how to engage with young people’”

To remedy the drop in young people subscribing to the Faith, Dr McKeown says that one-off large scale events won't work that are independent of "an ongoing process of faith formation", pointing out that there always needs to be preparation and follow-up. This can be achieved through a "larger and strategic approach" to ministry, where youth workers and religious don't work in isolation of one another, but nationally coordinate together.

By placing youth ministry in a larger context, where leaders can discuss what works, learn from the mistakes of others, and bring different youth groups together, ministry can become much more effective.

Bishop McKeown adds that creating a safe environment where young people can come together and discuss their Faith is the best pathway to religious revitalisation in Ireland.

"The whole idea of having groups of young people who are growing in Faith together,

influencing and evangelising one another, seems to me to be the obvious way forward, particularly in our own context where we're not making young disciples for Jesus in sufficient numbers," he says, noting that it may be easier for them to reach out to their own generation, rather than older groups.

"They can be disciples together, they can be journeying together and they can be sharing their own faith journey together, as well as building friendships and building self-confidence and developing the whole usage of the spiritual vocabulary," Dr McKeown explains.

Echoing these sentiments, Fr Alan Neville MSC, youth minister for the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, says that outreach and evangelisation are vital, but that they must be complemented with faith development work.

“The sordid history of the Irish Church has made Catholicism unpopular”

One concrete example of how this can be facilitated is through initiatives like 'Nightfever', where on designated nights, Mass is held in a city centre church, and afterwards, the church is filled with candlelight and prayerful music. Volunteers invite passers-by on the street to come inside and light a candle of their own, and many stay to enjoy the peaceful and prayerful atmosphere.

"I think there's an awak-

ening now at the moment, whereas before so much of our youth ministry was actually focused on catechetical preparation for first Holy Communion and Confirmation and that's not really youth ministry, that's catechesis within a school - and what we have the awareness of now is that actually we do need to provide full engaging youth ministry that meets young people where they are, but then kind of introducing them to the richness we have in our Church," Fr Alan says.

He adds that this vision and openness to reaching out to young people in Ireland will be progressed by religious groups and leaders joining forces to create better events and outlets where God can be encountered.

"Now is the time, this is the moment, this is the time when we either decide that we're actually going to get out there and to engage young people or we're just going to put up the chairs and switch off the lights. Now is the time."

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A medieval friar may hold the keys to tackling modern confusion, **Greg Daly** is told

Today's young people have a natural craving for a coherent vision of the world and our universities are not helping them towards this, Fr Thomas White OP says, following numerous meetings with students and young academics in top universities across the English-speaking world.

"So the irony is that the Catholic Church today actually is in possession of a resource that's more powerful for helping people intellectually than 99% of what's present in the university," he says. "What we lack is the knowledge of our own tradition and the conviction to make good use of it."

Originally from the US state of Georgia, the child of a Presbyterian mother and a Jewish father, Fr Thomas grew up with no particular religious identity.

"I was agnostic as a college student, but began asking religious questions and eventually read my way into the Catholic Church, helped along the way by Benedictine monks in Peterstown, Massachusetts," he says. "I was then admitted to Oxford to study Patristics – the Fathers of the Church – on a two-year reading course and it was then that I encountered the Dominicans."

Getting to know the Dominicans in Oxford had a huge impact on him, he says, explaining how he was drawn to their harmonious integration of prayer, study, apostolate and friendship, and in 2002 he eventually entered the formation house of the order's St Joseph's province in Washington DC.

Philosophy

As a priest in the US capital, he taught theology and ran the country's Thomistic Institute.

"The Thomistic Institute in Washington DC puts on academic events in philosophy and theology and the most

Building a **THINKING** Church



The Apotheosis St Thomas Aquinas by Francisco de Zurbarán.

secular campuses in the US. We're now on 50 campuses and we have about 200 events annually, and are very active in places like Harvard, Yale, MIT, Brown, and Columbia," he explains.

His experiences inspired him to write *The Light of Christ: An introduction to Catholicism*, and led the Master of the Order, Fr Bruno Cadoré, to ask him to run the European Thomistic Institute.

"Basically the Thomistic Institute in Rome is a research institute at the heart of the Church, to foster excellence in academic philosophy and theology, both in the service of the Church in Rome and as a crossroads of conversation with those who are in non-Christian universities around Europe," he says. "In a way, to use American-speak, it's a kind of think tank. We host academic events in Rome, but we're also hosting events in other parts of Europe."

The institute is named, of course, after the famous 13th-Century Dominican St Thomas Aquinas. "Aquinas was both an intellectual and a mystic, who spent his life illustrating the harmony of faith and reason, and Aquinas is famous for developing profound reflections on the nature of being – what we call metaphysics – which ultimately leads to arguments for the existence of God, and reflections on the nature of God as best we can know him philosophically."

Beyond philosophy, he explains, St Thomas wrote deeply on the mysteries of the Faith, seeking to show his contemporaries how a deep analysis of these was in harmony with the best of philosophical learning.

"So he was trying to show the deep harmony that can exist between Faith and reason and he remains a normative reference in the

Catholic Church's teaching on this matter," Fr Thomas points out, noting how St John Paul II had identified him as such in his 1999 encyclical *Fides et Ratio*.

“Many Catholics have a kind of pious idea of Aquinas as kind of a notable thinker of the past”

The universality of St Thomas's thinking enables those who study him to get a grasp on issues as diverse as what it is to be a human being, the nature of existence, what goodness, beauty, and truth are, and the moral life of human beings, he says.

Despite how large the 13th-Century friar looms in the history of Catholic thought, he's far less well known nowadays than one might expect, Fr Thomas concedes.

"Many Catholics have a kind of pious idea of Aquinas as kind of a notable thinker of the past who is – metaphorically speaking – locked somewhere behind a glass case, and we don't necessarily have deep exposure to his thought in the Church today."

This was partly driven by a feeling in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council that profound study of Aquinas was in many ways a distraction from contemporary philosophies that needed to be engaged with, he says, adding that a problem with that is the lack of a real consensus in modern philosophical thought that Catholic thinkers can work with and build on.

"In fact, the crisis of the contemporary university is in many ways a crisis of heterogeneity, or of just disintegration of learning," he says. "You have lots of strands of expertise and speciality, but

you don't have a way to put together what you learn in physics, what you learn in a poetry class, what you learn in a class on palaeontology or early human history, what you study in philosophy of mind. These are all disparate subjects and no one has a way to put it together, and no one's offering the students a way to put it together."

Aquinas has extremely pertinent thoughts on how to understand the unity of learning, he then adds, offering an answer to young people trying to join the dots of what they know.

"We've gone into places like Harvard and MIT, and what we've seen is that people who are absolutely expert at, say, natural sciences or law, are deeply tantalised by the idea of having a deeper understanding of reality," he says, describing how students and academics take part in

Fr Thomas White OP.

for Catholic intellectuals and in UCD on the theme of when religious belief is irrational, and it's striking that he believes the Scriptures are themselves very clear on religious irrationality.

"On the harmony of faith and reason and the question of irrational belief, the most severe critiques of religious irrationality are in the Bible itself, in that you'll find them in the Old Testament prophets, who were the most severe critics of superstitious or irrational religion or morally disoriented religious practice," he says. Noting how exco-riating the prophets could be of superstition, idolatry, human sacrifice, hypocrites and those who fabricate God on their own terms, he says "they're very severe on almost every front and they're equal opportunity offenders – they go after everyone".

One thing the Old Testament points to, he observes, is that a lot of religious activity is dangerous.

"That doesn't mean of course that we're not religious; we are naturally religious, that's precisely why we should be so vigilant," he says. Scepticism about revealed religion, already present in Antiquity, developed in the modern era under the influence of the likes of David Hume and Sigmund Freud, such that Fr Thomas thinks it's well worth examining *Dei Filius*, the First Vatican Council's understudied constitution on the Catholic Faith.

This, he says, sees the Church making several important observations he describes as "decisive" for thinking about the issue of Faith and reason, the first being that human reason is naturally open to God, with humans able to think about why we exist and why the world exists.

"The Church teaches at Vatican I that the human being can come by rational reflection to the philosophical demonstration of the existence of God as the first cause and final end of all things – in other words put briefly it's reasonable to believe God exists, philosophically speaking," he says.

"The second thing is that it's reasonable to be open to the possibility of Revelation," he continues. "The human person rightly longs to have contact with what is absolutely meaningful, and if God exists it's reasonable to want to know God personally not just to know that God exists, rather like an orphan would have a natural desire to know their parents, so the human person has a natural desire to know God."

Revelation provides a living contact with God, he explains, since while we can discern that God exists from reflecting on the world, knowledge



Edith Stein, or St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, an intellectual who Fr Thomas believes today's Catholics could usefully engage with.

based on creation alone is inevitably imperfect and thus unsatisfying. By revealing himself to us, Fr Thomas explains, God can allow us a personal relationship with him and a deeper knowledge of him.

Thirdly, he says, *Dei Filius* points to how revelation is reasonable because its mysteries can make sense.

“If it's true, then it means that God has a tremendous love for the human race and a solidarity with us”

"What we can know is that God has revealed certain mysteries as a benefit to man, that have internal intelligibility, coherence, and that enlighten us with regard to our human condition," he says. "For example if God truly became human and if Christ is God, we can only know this by the grace of Faith and recognise him for who he is by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

"But if it's true, then it means that God has a tremendous love for the human race and a solidarity with us, and that he has become human to

atone for human sins, which gives us tremendous hope regarding the power and intensity of God's mercy and his justice," he says, explaining that this should encourage us in engaging in a spiritual life with God.

"None of those arguments are proofs that are suggestive of proof that God has become human, but if God has become human it's deeply intelligible," he clarifies.

Finally, he says, the Church teaches that "God has given signs of the true religion through miracles, through the sound philosophical and moral teaching of the Catholic Church, and through the example of saints and the longevity of the Church, which survives every possible human calamity through history including calamities from within, as we know all too well, as recently present in our history."

The importance of religion being rational was central to Pope Benedict's famous and much-misunderstood 2006 Regensburg address, with Fr Thomas explaining how the then Pope had identified two modern tendencies that threaten human intellectual life.

"One is the tendency of the

modern secular university, to utterly exclude the disciplined intellectual consideration of religion and divine revelation, that is to say the exclusion from the secular universities of real reference to traditional theology, which has its own immensely sophisticated intellectual heritage," he says, maintaining that "that heritage is simply being ignored and we're ceasing to learn from it".

"On the other hand," he says, "you'd see the emergence of religion in sectarian forms, that is insufficiently formed by reason and that can give rise to extreme forms of violence and terrorism." Recalling the natural tendency towards religiosity, he says that without serious intellectual reflection there's a real danger that religion can become unreasonable.

"So you have these two as it were wings of division instead of having a harmony and a kind of symbiotic relationship," he says, "where religious traditions and specifically divine revelation given to us in Christ nourish human reason and philosophical reflection without seeking to capture it or imprison it, and on the other hand, philosophy, which has its own autonomy and dignity as a natural work of the human intellect, shows a kind of openness to considering integrally religious questions."

Belief

This can entail arguing against religious belief, of course, but doing so in a religiously literate way is important, he suggests, noting that in a modern culture of secular functionality and technology the language needed to talk about the transcendent is lost.

This goes back to his earlier point about there being a lack of a coherent agreed modern philosophical outlook, which echoes the ideas of Catholic philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre. "We don't even remember the language that would be necessary for us to be able to create the terms for us to have the conversation in which we could agree about what we disagree about," Fr Thomas exclaims, acknowledging that his argument is very much in MacIntyre's tradition.

What, then, can Catholics today do in the face of such confusion? Fr Thomas has a few ideas, which come down largely to learning how rich and reasonable our Faith is, building a rich and beautiful spiritual and sacramental life, and creating communities that foster both of these things.

"I'm talking about communities of intentional disciples that are open to evangelisation but that is charitable and gentle but also truth-telling, so that you invite people in

to a conversation about the truth," he says, describing respectfully engaging with others' objections as opportunities to seek the truth together.

"That means being a seeker as well as a proposer of the truth, because the more we engage with people who are sceptical or at least questioning, the more we have to ourselves engage in the search for the truth in real vulnerability with regards to the Catholic faith and the Catholic philosophical tradition," he says.

The Church in modern times is hardly without serious thinkers that today's Catholics can engage with, he says, citing St John Paul II, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, and Blessed John Henry Newman alongside philosophers like MacIntyre, St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross – better known as Edith Stein, Elizabeth Anscombe and Jacques Maritain, artists like Antoni Gaudí, Arvo Pärt, Paul Claudel and Evelyn Waugh, and such scientists as Kenneth Miller and Robert Barr.

“The institute reaches about 15,000 people in person, with a further million people around the world listening to the conferences online”

Striking the right balance between thought and devotion is key, he clarifies.

"The devotional life of the heart is very important, and we tend sometimes to think that most of the battle is in the heart – the battle to convert, the battle to submit to God, the battle to love rightly and virtuously, and to become spiritual people," he says, adding that in reality at least half of this battle is in the mind, as we're called to be people of truth and people of love, since we can't love what we don't know.

"In a culture where the Faith is contested intellectually, there is a necessity on the part of the Church to have an intellectual search for the truth, to clarify why and how the Church believes what she does," he says, warning that just as truth without love can be harsh and inhuman, so love without truth risks dissolving into sentimentality, nostalgia and an inarticulate sectarianism.

"If you don't have the search for the truth in an age of scepticism and unbelief, devotional life will never be sufficient and will always be in danger of collapsing," he says.

1 Thomistic Institute conferences can be listened to at <https://soundcloud.com/thomisticinstitute>



annual conferences on campuses and in nearby monasteries, where they learn about the Catholic intellectual tradition and begin to engage with it, changing spiritually as they do.

All told, he says, the institute reaches about 15,000 people in person, with a further million people around the world listening to the conferences online.

"I think Aquinas is a resource that we can tap into today, that allows us to speak directly to our contemporaries and to our contemporary questions," he says, noting that "questions that we have in our own sceptical era about whether there's any fixed knowledge or truth than can be obtained universally are issues he deals with in a direct way that are extremely compelling and very profound".

Fr Thomas was in Dublin last month to speak at St Saviour's Priory on the need



Elizabeth Anscombe.

Martyrs can save a dying

Chai Brady
discusses Egypt's
21 beheaded
martyrs



The murder of dozens of martyrs was nothing short of a devastating tragedy, but it is also an example of the courage and enduring faith of Egypt's persecuted Christian community.

A new book by a renowned German author details his travels to one of the small villages these men came from. He meets their families and delves into the mindset of those who would rather give their lives than denounce their Christianity.

It was in February 2015 that fundamentalist terrorist group the Islamic State released photos of 21 Egyptian migrant workers who they had kidnapped in Sirte, Libya. They threatened to kill them for the alleged kidnapping of Muslim women by the Coptic Church.

Three days after this, on February 15, a five-minute video was published called 'People of the Cross, followers of the hostile Egyptian Church'. It showed the beheading of the captives on a beach along the southern Mediterranean coast.

Persecution

The persecution of Egypt's Christians has long been a topic of criticism and anger, but the writer of *The 21: A Journey into the Land of the Coptic Martyrs* says the Copts are an example to the Church in the western world and the Coptic Church itself should not always be viewed as a victim.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, international bestselling author Martin Mosebach says that for the Copts the most important part of Christian life is imitation of the Cross as "they consider themselves as members of the Church of the martyrs".

He says: "We all are worried about the persecution of Christians in the Near East and consider this one of the most horrible consequences of the wars now in Near East, but we have lost a bit of the idea that Christianity and martyrdom belong together and, in each century, society and circumstance this is a couple, martyrdom and Christianity."

"Before the Gospels there were the martyrs and the martyrs were the element of

Christianity that made Christianity grow so fast that it was impossible to extinguish, even when emperor Diocletian in Egypt tried to extinguish it just by mass murder, it was impossible. From these times, from the early times of persecution comes the particular side of the Coptic Church that considers itself as church of the martyrs and until now it's not just an empty phrase. It's something that the people are living.

Mr Mosebach asked the families of the martyrs about the Islamic State and its terrorist activities in the region. They were not interested. He had conversations with many people in Cairo regarding the politics of the nation but "the families of the martyrs were not interested at all about the Islamic State, about Islamism and political Islam, they did not care for that".

“Those to whom Jesus has revealed himself must not, and cannot, ever betray him”

"They had no political understanding of the state of politics in Egypt in the present, this was something they were looking at from the point of you could say *sub specie aeternitatis*, these Islamist murderers, they were just some new incarnation of the devil, with the one task: to be a temptation for the Christians," he says.

Their sons, brothers, husbands and more had overcome temptation, "so they were kings, victors, second Christs, this was the point of view of these people".

Christian martyrdom can be a difficult concept to grasp, even for many Christians themselves. Mr Mosebach deals with this near the beginning of his book, with a section in which a 'doubter' and a 'believer' have a conversation about what it means to be a martyr.

While the doubter attests the word 'martyr' is propaganda and many use it as a glorification of violence and terrorism, it is argued back that Christians devised the term and that it meant even under the threat of death a person would not give up



Icon of the 21 Coptic martyrs.



Coptic Christian women attend a service in Cairo for the Egyptians who were beheaded in Libya in 2015. Photo: CNS

their faith.

It is also asked why an admission made under threat of death would carry any weight, Mr Mosebach argues: "Those to whom Jesus has revealed himself must not,

and cannot, ever betray him; they must instead bear witness to his simultaneous divinity and humanity."

"The secret behind the religion's expansion is the people who, from the very start, were

ready to die for their love of Jesus: martyrs."

Attacks

There have been several vicious attacks targeting Copts in recent years, with the

issue seemingly intensifying.

In November 2018 seven Coptic Christians were killed and 12 more injured when a bus traveling to a desert monastery south of Cairo was ambushed by Islamic militants.

“The secret behind the religion's expansion is the people who, from the very start, were ready to die for their love of Jesus”

The bus was traveling to St Samuel the Confessor monastery when a number of attackers approached the vehicle from nearby dirt roads and opened fire. The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack.

The ambush was very similar to an attack claimed by the Islamic State in May 2017, which also involved a bus heading to visit the monastery of St Samuel the Confessor, that time 29 people were killed and 22 injured.

Church



to Coptic Christians and all Egyptians upon the inauguration of a major Coptic cathedral, jointly opened with a larger mosque at the same complex.

Alluding to the deaths of many Copts who never denounced their faith despite death threats at the hands of terrorists, he said to the head of the Coptic Church, Pope Tawadros II, "you have some martyrs who give strength to your faith. Thank you for your example."

He said the Coptic Church "is known to give a true witness of faith and charity even in very difficult times".

Media

Recognising the important role of the Church in Egypt can be overshadowed by media coverage of horrific attacks, Mr Mosebach says, "certainly they must be ready for any kind of act of aggression, of attacks against the churches – burning of churches and so on".

"At the same time, it is a very proud and it is a powerful Church, it is wrong if you see this Church as a poor victim of persecution, at the same time it is a very powerful institution, even growing and now in a much better state.

"This is also one of the paradoxical developments in history, sometimes you find, now at a time of the highest persecution of the last centuries, the Church is flourishing more than a hundred years ago, it's very fascinating."

Coptic Christianity is very much based around their monasteries, some of which can be very large and house hundreds of monks Mr Mosebach discovered on his travels. Many of the monks are trained professionals, doctors or lawyers, some of which had a profession before they entered monastic life.

Some of the sites were the biggest monasteries near the Nile Delta were destroyed in the 19th Century now have become monastic settlements, they developed into "a kind of town of monasteries", Mr Mosebach explains.

"To this place comes hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who confess there and pray at the tombs of the saints. All the people like to



Still image taken from the propaganda video published by the Islamic State in which the beheadings took place.

have a certain relationship with a monk, who is a confessor and gives them advice for life." The vast majority of Egypt's Christian community come from Northern Egypt, which is where many of the monasteries exist.

Decline

It is well known traditional religious practice in the Western world is declining as more and more people move away from their faith.

For Mr Mosebach he calls this part of the world's "shrinking Churches" a "deeply depressing crisis".

Contemplating how he might tackle the situation he said: "Finally, I came to the idea that these people, martyrs, are much more important for the life of the Church than any Pope or bishop or theologian in the western world can be.

"Where people are ready to die for their faith, there is a living Church. Martyrdom is the hope of the Church, so I wanted to create attention regarding this point."

He adds that it is not only proof of a living Church, but that a martyr is considered in 1st Century theology to be a second Christ, "he has imitated the Cross and he has got the form of a second Christ".

There is a distinction drawn between the brutal murder of Copts across Egypt based on their Faith, and the murder of the martyrs in Mr Mosebach's book.

"Many people were killed in Egypt, Christians, by bombs and so on, but not so many had the opportunity before their deaths to confess the Faith, and not to save their lives taking the very simple possibility to confess the creed of Islam which is one small and nice sounding sen-

tence."

Sympathy and outrage at the situation Christians face in Egypt is justified but Mr Mosebach points out that this is a Church that survived through 1,400 years of persecution. Although persecution of the Copts is becoming a hot topic currently with a huge amount of terrorist attacks perpetrated by fundamentalist groups over recent years, they have suffered for their religious beliefs for centuries at varying degrees.

"This situation will not change, they will not disappear, the situation cannot change for they are the

minority and the Islamic majority will be in one way or another not friendly," Mr Mosebach says.

"For you know in 1,400 years you have not only the question of religion, you have also the question of culture. The groups have become very distinct and this will be... never completely good for the Copts in Egypt."

"I do not see a solution. It's an insolvable problem, it's very hot this problem and Islamism after the suppression of the Muslim brotherhood by the dictator All-Sissi, the abdication of President Morsi, this has heated the

situation immensely, it has created an immense hatred against the Copts but this is only one small chapter you have to see it in the long run, this situation in 20 years 30 years will be another but it will be not much better," he added.

Although the future of the Copts does not seem like it will improve any time soon, or ever according to Mr Mosebach, they have endured for so long in a culture of a Faith so strong even the threat of death has no power for many Christians. This, he says, is an example for Christians all over the world.


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“Where people are ready to die for their faith, there is a living Church. Martyrdom is the hope of the church, so I wanted to create attention regarding this point”

The Copts seemingly suffered an increase in vicious attacks by Islamic militants after the Islamic State issued a call to target the country's Christians in February 2017. In addition to the bus massacre in Minya in May of that year, 45 people were killed and over 125 were injured in two separate bombings of Coptic churches on Palm Sunday. In December 2017, 11 people were shot and killed in an Islamist attack on a church in the city of Helwan.

During these horrific terrorist attacks and after a call for more violence from extremists, Pope Francis visited Egypt on April 2017.

Following the Palm Sunday bombings, he travelled to Cairo and appeared in public with the Coptic Pope Tawadros II and other religious figures. Francis honoured various Coptic martyrs during this visit, and declared that the sufferings of the Copts "are also our sufferings".

More recently Pope Francis sent Christmas and New Year's greetings this year

Pio: a saint for our time



Fr Jean-Marie Benjamin, director of *We'll Rise at Dawn* with Amanda Devine, Shrines of Italy Manager of Marian Pilgrimages, at Dublin's Capuchin Friary, Church Street.

St Pio represents the quiet but courageous mission of Christians across the world, writes **Colm Fitzpatrick**



Oftentimes, religious movies tend to focus on the incredible or miraculous events of an occasion or person, resulting in piety overkill – but one Catholic priest has decided to present the life of a renowned saint in a much quieter and more touching way.

Hoping to offer “a breath of fresh air” to our understanding of St Padre Pio of Pietreclina, the new movie *We'll Rise at Dawn: The Strength of Friendship* gives a nuanced take on what we can learn from the Italian Capuchin friar to a modern audience who may not have even heard his name uttered before.

The 96-minute movie which has already screened across the globe is non-biographical, and explores the story of two young boys, Luca and Sebastian, from San Giovanni Rotondo who seek out to learn more about the saint of Gargano, by conducting research among the people in their town who knew him.

Highlight

Speaking in the newly-located Irish Office for St Pio at Dublin's Capuchin friary on Church Street, director Fr Jean-Marie Benjamin told *The Irish Catholic* that the movie aims to highlight “the strength of friendship in the life of young people” which can be “pure, sincere and very strong”, and also offer an insight into the positive everyday lives of Italian people.

“I would like to show a different sort of Italy, not

always the criminality, the mafia, and everything, but the normal people – they are the majority,” he explains.

Indeed, it seems that the French priest is well-qualified to explore the shades and beauty of Italy given that he has lived in the country since 1974 and has a wealth of experience in movie-making. Ordained in 1991, Fr Benjamin wrote, produced and directed the first fictional film dedicated to the life and work of St Pio, *Padre Pio: The Night of the Prophet*, which from 1999 until today has been regularly broadcast on the EWTN Network in the US.

“Fr Benjamin's inspiration for the movie wouldn't have occurred had he not met St Pio in San Giovanni Rotondo in 1968, just prior to his death”

On top of this, he is a composer and conductor, and plays the guitar, piano and electric keyboard. From 1966 until today, he has recorded 28 albums – works of classical music, film soundtracks and popular music. He is also the author of the Official Anthem of UNICEF (‘Ode to the Child’), created in Rome in April 1984. Notably, all of the music in the film is played by him, highlighting his personal dedication to the movie.

While the temptation existed to mention Padre Pio in the title of the film, Fr



The two main characters, Luca and Sebastian, who seek out to learn more about St Pio, by conducting research among the people in their town who knew him.

Benjamin made a conscious decision to exclude his name, believing that it would attract more attention from a lay audience who were unaware of the saint's existence.

“I made the film for a lay approach, because if some people see that it's a religious film, they won't go to the cinema to see that. Most people in France for example,” he says, adding that if the audience encounters a more familiar image of two families in the south of Italy, they can slowly discover the figure of the saint.

Of course, Fr Benjamin's

inspiration for the movie wouldn't have occurred had he not met St Pio in San Giovanni Rotondo in 1968, just prior to his death. This is the location where the then-Francesco Pio was assigned to in 1916, to work with the seven-strong community of Our Lady of Grace, and where he would remain. The Italian area was also where the news of Padre Pio receiving stigmata – wounds corresponding to those Christ suffered on the Cross – began and subsequently spread across the world.

Despite the movie being fictional, three of the characters the two boys

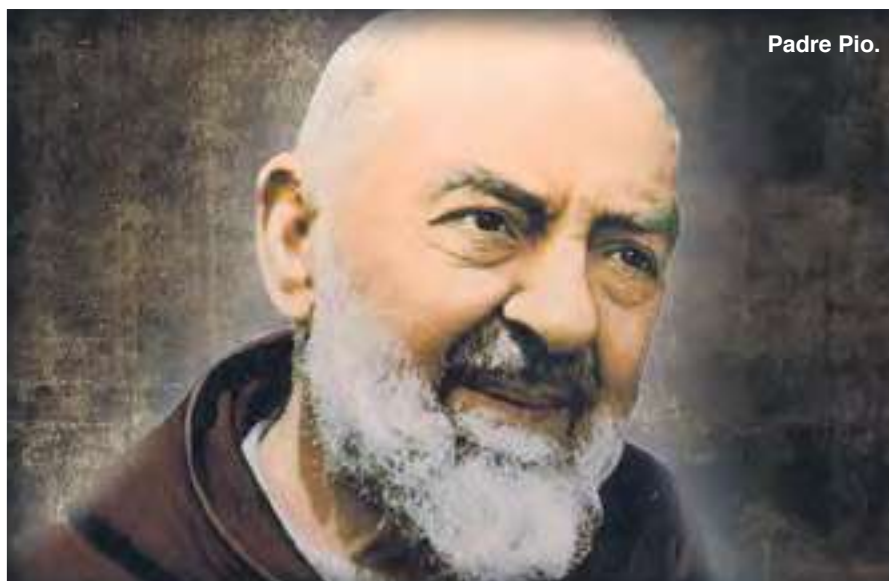
interview in their efforts to write a book about the saint, actually knew and spoke to Padre Pio. They were real witnesses of his miracles, charisms, extraordinary gifts, his sufferings and configuration to the Cross of Christ. As a result, the audience are faced with the new generation that discovers Padre Pio, which is confronted with the one that has already known him. Between one interview and another, the two exchange their impressions, with arguments, amusing episodes and boyish banter, alternating with some very moving moments.

“During the film we see the people smile and some people cry because there are emotional moments. It's very emotional and very sensory,” Fr Benjamin says, adding that one of the child actors actually cried during the shoot because of how significant it felt to be present in the special movie.

“For Fr Benjamin, the movie doesn't just represent a different approach to presenting this saint, but also a shift in how the media popularly portray religious life”

“The testimony of Padre Pio is only six or seven minutes in the film, but it's enough because it's not a documentary. I can't explain the end of the film because the end of the film is fantastic, it's a fiction but the film is a crescendo. And the music is fantastic because it's my music!” he jokes.

The filming of the movie took place last year to mark the 50th anniversary death of St Pio and the 100th anniversary of the stigmata; but for Fr Benjamin, the movie doesn't just represent a different approach to presenting this saint, but



Padre Pio.



Some film-goers who travelled to Tralee to watch the screening of *We'll Rise at Dawn*.

also a shift in how the media popularly portray religious life.

"But you know, the problem is that, we talk about a lot of scandal in the Church now. It's a terrible situation you know. I prefer to talk about the saints. In 2,000 years, the Church has had hundreds and hundreds of saints.

"The media don't talk about Mother Teresa of Calcutta or the friars or the

Capuchins in Amazonia or Brazil, who help the people, or the priests who are killed in the Middle East by Daesh, and I prefer to talk about this aspect of the Church," Fr Benjamin says.

He stresses that it's easy to forget about those Christians who are quietly but courageously working to create a better world, and that the new movie attempts to highlight this often-overlooked missionary work.

"The people are positive, not only the saints, but the normal people, we have thousands and thousands of priests and sisters who work in the world doing fantastic work. They risk their lives. I prefer to present this side of the Church, to focus on the positive because the people need to have something positive, not only the bad news about some terrible guys who made a very big criminal mistake, at this

moment in the Church. Yes, it's a sad reality, but I prefer to present the other face, the face of the positive and what the Church and people can do."

Screenings of the film have taken place in various countries and festivals across the world, and last month the touching picture came to Ireland for the first time. Marian Pilgrimages, which

is the official agent for the Irish Office for St Pio, were responsible for the two Irish screenings in Tralee and Dublin.

With well over 200 people turning up in total, Marian Pilgrimages' Shrines of Italy Manager Amanda Devine, said that the enthusiasm for the movie shows that "there most definitely is still a religious appetite" in Ireland, adding that the film can inspire and move those of all ages.

“Fr Benjamin hopes that it not only touches devotees of the saint, but also makes an ‘impression’ on atheists”

"The reality was that the majority of those in attendance were in the over-65 age bracket. It was however encouraging to see some families arrive with young children. The aim of this film is to reach out also to the younger generation, teach them about Padre Pio, and through the story of Padre Pio the power of faith and the strength of friendship."

She adds that through this faith, tangible and positive differences can be made in the lives of people who are in desperately in need of God, pointing to the private hospital St Pio built in the 1950's, which today is known for its modern technologies and efficiency.

The friar called the hospital the Casa Solievo

della Sofferenza, or 'Home for the Relief of the Suffering', because, as he said later, this work was inspired and created to be a "spiritual demonstration" of God's love through a call for charity.

"When he decided to build a hospital in San Giovanni Rotondo he said he wanted to build a 'cathedral of science and faith' – a place where prayer and science could unite to relieve the pain of the suffering. This is very much evident today in the hospital with the spiritual needs of the sick provided by the nuns from the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Sisters, whom Padre Pio chose to serve the sick, along with the support of the Capuchin community," Ms Devine explains.

Taking around three years to complete, Fr Benjamin says that he is "happy" about the reactions the movie has received, and hopes that it not only touches devotees of the saint, but also makes an "impression" on atheists or those who don't attend Church.

While creating the movie was a stressful ordeal, he adds that the real worry on his mind now is the dwindling number of people going to the cinema – but despite this dearth – he has faith that the saint of Gargano will guide the film in the right direction.

"Netflix, Amazon Prime, Sky on demand, and the people don't go to cinema. It's a difficult situation. But with help of Padre Pio, we can do it!"

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Out&About

Confirmed in Portlaoise



LAOIS: Pupils of the Holy Family Senior School, Portlaoise, celebrate their Confirmation with Kildare and Leighlin's Bishop Denis Nulty.



CLARE: The legendary Michéal Ó Muircheartaigh explores how the Irish language and culture are interwoven with Christian faith as part of a Lenten series of talks in Críost Rí oratory, Cloughleigh, Ennis. (l-r) Michéal Ó Muircheartaigh, Ger Fitzgerald, Mary Howard, Noreen Moloney, and Bishop Fintan Monahan.



DOWN: Year 13 pupils of St Patrick's College, Ballymena: Rihannon, Brianne, Cara, Ciara, Kinga and Aoife, participate in the 'Stay Awake for Homelessness' Living Youth initiative in Belfast to raise funds and awareness for the cause.

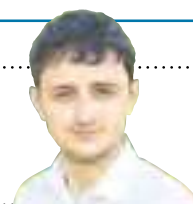


DUBLIN: Dublin's Archbishop Diarmuid Martin celebrates the reopening of St Joseph the Artisan Church with Fr Damien McNeice and Fr Joe Jones. Photo: John Jones



KILDARE: Justin Kilcullen, director of Trocaire from 1993-2013, pictured receiving a Papal Knighthood of the Order of St Gregory the Great from Archbishop Diarmuid Martin in Maynooth. Photo: Fr. Sean Farrell

Edited by Colm Fitzpatrick
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Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



DOWN: P7 pupils of St Brigid's Primary School, Downpatrick, celebrate with some cake after receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.



DUBLIN: Bro. James Dormer, Doon, receives the GAA President's award from the President of the GAA, John Horan at a function in Croke Park.



DUBLIN: As part of international Women's Day, Mary T. Malone launches the revised edition of her book *Elephant in the Church*, at Donnybrook's Avila Carmelite Centre. Ursula Halligan, Sharon Tighe-Mooney and Angela Hanley also spoke at the event.



LIMERICK: The launch of Visible Reminders: Art in School, takes place in St John's Cathedral attended by Bishop Brendan Leahy, Cllr Joe Pond representing the Mayor of Limerick City and county, students and teachers from participating schools. The winning entry by Mollie Daly, Coláiste Iósaef, Kilmallock was a piece entitled, 'Hidden: a reflection on domestic violence'. Photo: Keith Wiseman

IN SHORT

Local community celebrate work of Monaghan nuns

The Parish of Muckno (Castleblayney and Oram), Co. Monaghan, will mark the various contributions of the Sisters of Mercy to the life of the parish and wider community on March 22 when it unveils a specially-designed commemorative plaque, to be erected later in the recently-refurbished St Mary's Church, Castleblayney.

The unveiling will take place following a Mass of Thanksgiving in the church at 7pm that evening and this will be followed by refreshments and short performances by the three

Convent schools in the Íontas Centre.

The Sisters of Mercy came to Castleblayney from Enniskillen in September 1905 at the request of the then parish priest of Muckno, Canon James Meegan. They immediately began their ministry in education and soon afterwards they established a Girls National School and, later, a secondary school at Laurel Hill in the town.

The secondary school was to become Our Lady's Secondary School in 1971 when it merged with St Mary's Boys Secondary School on the Dublin Road. Today, Our Lady's Secondary School, the Convent Girls School and the Junior School continue to fulfil their mission in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy.

The people of the Parish of Muckno wish to acknowledge all of this in

a permanent way through a plaque that will remind present and future generations how the seed sown in 1905 continues to grow in the parish and surrounding areas, and further afield.

The plaque's place in the entrance area of the church will give that recognition the prominence it merits. Bishop Larry Duffy, Bishop of Clogher and a former curate in Castleblayney, will preside at the Mass while the Chief-Celebrant will be Canon Shane McCaughey PP, Castleblayney.

They will be joined by an assembly of other priests, religious as well as the many lay people from Blayney who have been educated and influenced by the Sisters of Mercy over the years.

ARMAGH

Lenten talks to take place in St Malachy's Church each Monday of Lent at 7.30pm.

The Prayer and Spirituality Commission to hold a day of prayer for all on Saturday, March 23, in the Franciscan Missionary Community Mount Oliver, Ballymascanlon and repeated on Saturday, April 6 in Kilmore Parish Pastoral Centre, Stonebridge, beginning at 10am.

Armagh Parish Holy Spirit Prayer Group are hosting the Life in the Spirit Seminars in The St Vincent de Paul Centre, Chapel Lane, Armagh. March 26: Fr Gerry Campbell on 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit', April 2: Patricia Kelly on 'Growth in the Spirit', April 9: Archbishop Eamon Martin will speak on 'Transformation in Christ'.

St Paul's Church, Lurgan to host '24 Hours for the Lord', an opportunity for adoration, reflection and an invitation to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Available continuously for 24 hours beginning 7pm on March 29.

CLARE

Youth 2000 prayer meeting every Friday at 7pm in the Poor Clare's Oratory, Ennis. Join other young adults for prayer and reflection followed by tea and chats in the Friary.

Cloughleigh Oratory will continue to pray the Novena Prayer to St Anthony every Tuesday morning at the 9.30 Mass.

CORK

Medjugorje prayer meeting in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament every Wednesday night at 8pm in Holy Trinity Church, Fr Matthew Quay. Prayers for healing are on the first Wednesday of every month.

DERRY

Dungiven Parish: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Monday to Friday, 8am-noon and 3-9pm.

DUBLIN

Our Lady of Knock prayer meetings take place on the last Thursday of every month in St Gabriel's Nursing Home, Glenayle Road, Raheny, Dublin 5, from 8pm-9pm.

Holy Hour of Adoration for Healing at St Laurence O'Toole Church, Seville Place, every Tuesday evening during Lent at 8pm.

Prayer Vigil for Life on March 23 from 10-11.30am across the street from the IFPA building on Cathal Brugha Street. Contact CFR Sisters on 0419830441.

Divine Mercy Sunday on April 28 at the Church of St Vincent de Paul, Marino. Holy hour and Confession at 3-4pm and Mass at 4-5pm. The celebrant is Fr Conor McDonough.

Holy Hour, reflecting on Mary the Mother of Jesus, in St John the Baptist Church, Clontarf Road on March 24 at 7.30pm. Led by Fr Martin Hogan.

St Laurence O'Toole Church, North Wall. Holy Hour of Adoration for Healing at St Laurence O'Toole Church, North Wall every Tuesday evening during Lent at 8pm.

FERMANAGH

Mass in the Extraordinary Form in St Patrick's Church (opposite

site St Kieran's College) every Sunday at 5pm.

GALWAY

Day of Prayer, Reflection and Healing Service at Emmanuel House, Clonfert led by Eddie Stones. Saturday, April 6 at 10.30am. Please bring packed lunch.

KILKENNY

Traditional Latin Mass every Sunday at 5pm in St Patrick's Church, College Road, Kilkenny (opposite St Kieran's College).

LIMERICK

Eucharistic Adoration takes place each Friday in Raheen church following 10am Mass until 10pm, Crecora on Thursdays, following morning Mass until 12pm and from 6-10pm, and in Mungret Church on Wednesdays, from 10am to 12pm.

LOUTH

Mass in reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary will take place at 10.30am every first Saturday of the month in St Malachy's Church, Anne Street, Dundalk. Organised by the Legion of Mary, Presidium of Our Lady of the Listening Heart. Spiritual Director Fr Bede McGregor OP.

A Centre Prayer Meeting is held at Mount Oliver (near Ballymascanlon Dundalk) every Wednesday evening at 7.30pm. Contact 00353 863623361 from the North of Ireland or 0863623361 from the Republic of Ireland.

MAYO

The 24th annual Eucharistic Loreto Vigil in honour of the Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord takes place in the parish church at Knock Shrine on Monday, March 25, from 8.30pm to 12.30am. Chief celebrant will be Fr Brendan Walsh SAC.

MEATH

Enfield Prayer Group meets every Monday evening at 7.30pm in the parish centre.

OFFALY

Clonmacnois Prayer Vigil in Cluain Chiarain Prayer Centre every third Friday. Mass at 9pm. Adoration and Prayers follow until 2.10am. Enquiries Dave: 085 7746763.

ROSCOMMON

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St Croan's Church, Ballymoe, every Monday, 10-11am and Thursday, 8-10pm. Also at St Bride's Church, Ballintubber, every Wednesday, 7.30-8.30pm.

TIPPERARY

The Fatima Apostolate to hold a three-hour vigil in honour of our Lady of the Annunciation in the Pallottine Chapel, Thurles, on March 25 from 7.30-10.30pm.

WICKLOW

The Glencree Parish Group hold a special Mass for healing in St Kevin's Church, Glencree on the first Saturday of the month.

St Patrick's Prayer Group, Wicklow town, meet on Thursdays at 7.30pm in The de la Salle Pastoral Care Centre.



World Report

IN BRIEF

California bishops welcome executions pause

● The Catholic bishops of California welcomed last week's decision by Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom to issue a moratorium on executions in the state and a temporary reprieve for all inmates on the state's death row.

"We appreciate this recognition that the state has the adequate means to defend human dignity and public safety without recourse to capital punishment," San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone said in a statement on behalf of the state's bishops.

California's San Quentin State Prison is located in his archdiocese. The facility is California's oldest penitentiary and it houses the state's only death row for men and currently has 737 inmates condemned to death.

Gender transition banned in US military

● Troops enlisting and serving in the US military will have to serve as their biological sex and are forbidden from transitioning to another gender, a new Department of Defence policy states. The policy was announced in a memo that was obtained by the *Associated Press* last week. The policy will go into effect on April 12.

While not a ban on transgender persons in the military altogether, the new policy will presumably result in many transgender troops being discharged from the military if they wish to serve under a different sex, seek cross-sex hormones, or gender transition surgeries.

Hundreds join Church in England and Wales

● More than 400 people took part in Rites of Election at Westminster Cathedral this month.

At Masses presided over by Cardinal Nichols, who was assisted by Bishops Sherrington, Hudson, McAleenan and Wilson, 219 candidates and 200 catechumens attended Rites of Election over Saturday and Sunday.

In his remarks to the congregation, Cardinal Nichols said: "We give thanks to God for the ways in which our parishes and diocesan family will be enriched by you and we promise to continue to support you and your families with our prayers and the example of Christian life that you experience in our parish communities."

India's Christians criticise Good Friday holiday scrapping

● Catholic bishops and Christian activists in India have criticised authorities in two former Portuguese territories, now under Indian federal rule, for cancelling the traditional Good Friday holiday.

Christian leaders in the western territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu say their district administrations have moved Good Friday from the list of public holidays to restricted holidays when staff have an option to take a day off or work.

"It is very sad and unfortunate. It once again shows that our sentiments have not been cared for," said Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas, secretary-general of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India.

Jesuit bailed nine months after rape case arrest

● The High Court in India's Jharkhand state has granted bail to a Jesuit priest nine months after he was arrested in connection with the abduction and rape of five women.

Fr Alphonse Aind was released from jail after he met all the bail conditions set by the court.

The conditions include surrendering of his passport and regular attendance at the local court where his case is under trial. He also needs the court's permission to move out of Khunti district.

Fr Aind was asked to furnish a surety bond of 50,000 rupees (€640).

Church agencies support thousands after killer cyclone

Church agencies have rallied together to help more than half-a-million people in dire need after a cyclone hit Southern Africa last week.

It's estimated that at least 1,000 people have died in Cyclone Idai which hit Mozambique on March 15, making landfall near the port city of Beira on Thursday with winds of up to 177 km/h (106 mph).

The country's president, Filipe Nyusi, told Mozambican radio he had seen "many bodies" floating in the overflowing Pungwe and Busi rivers. "It appears that we can register more than 1,000 deaths," he said, adding that more than 100,000 people were at risk because of severe flooding.

Responding to the disaster, aid teams of the Catholic relief organisation Caritas arrived to the city on March 17 to provide needed resources, including 1,500 canvases which will be sent to the area as soon as possible.

Antonio Anosso, humanitarian officer for Caritas Mozambique said: "We are



People made homeless by the cyclone that hit Mozambique gather their belongings.

still facing some challenges in getting information from Beira because there is no communication. There is lack of food, water and shelter.

"Our priority for staff in the disaster zone is rescuing people, accommodation, registering the affected group. But they do not have resources to respond to food, water and shelter needs."

He added that the urgent needs are food, iron sheets, water and sanitation, shelter and seeds.

The Catholic Agency

for Overseas Development (CAFOD) also pledged €35,000 towards relief in Mozambique, with priority given to reaching 1,400 vulnerable people, with food – rice, beans, sugar and cooking oil – as well as hygiene kits.

Missing

At least 215 people have been confirmed dead and hundreds are missing across Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe from the devastating cyclone, according to government agencies and the

Red Cross, which said 1.5 million people had been affected.

Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa said that the government was conducting rescue missions and delivering food aid.

Zimbabwe declared a state of emergency in the affected areas. At least 31 people are thought to have been killed. Among the casualties there were at least two boarding school pupils and a security officer from St Charles Lwanga High School in Zimbabwe's mountainous district of Chimanimani, after rocks and water swept down a mountain after torrential rain. Nearly 200 other pupils had to be rescued by the army. At least 20,000 houses have been partially damaged in the south-eastern town of Chipinge, 600 others were completely destroyed.

The Catholic Church in Mozambique expressed deep sorrow and solidarity with families who have lost loved ones and with thousands of families severely affected.

Pope and New Zealand bishops hold Muslims in prayer after attacks

New Zealand's Catholic bishops have expressed horror and distress at a terrorist attack in two mosques in Christchurch that saw at least 50 people killed.

The shootings took place at or near the Al Noor Mosque, where 41 people were killed, and at the Linwood Mosque, where seven were killed. One more person subsequently died at Christchurch Hospital. Muslims had gathered at the mosques for Friday prayers. Some of those killed were children.

The terror attack started at around 1.40pm local time on March 15, sparking a massive mobilisation by police. Mike Bush, New Zealand police commissioner,

announced at 9pm.

Some three-and-a-half hours after the attacks began, the New Zealand bishops released a message, addressed to the nation's Muslim community, via social media.

"We hold you in prayer as we hear the terrible news of violence against Muslims at mosques in Christchurch," the bishops wrote.

"We are profoundly aware of the positive relationships we have with Islamic people in this land, and we are particularly horrified that this has happened at a place and time of prayer.

The bishops signed off their message

"Peace, Salaam".

Violence

A message sent by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State, on behalf of Pope Francis, said the Pontiff was "deeply saddened to learn of the injury and loss of life caused by the senseless acts of violence" at the mosques.

"He assures all New Zealanders, and in particular the Muslim community, of his heartfelt solidarity in the wake of these attacks."

He also offered prayers and blessings to those injured, those grieving, those who died and emergency personnel.

Big differencing between considering and leaving Church – researcher

The headlines from a Gallup Poll about the growing number of US Catholics who have thought about leaving the Church because of the clergy abuse crisis did not faze one researcher of Catholic data too much.

"There is a substantial difference between considering leaving and leaving. It is also

the case among those who do leave, some come back," said Mark Gray, director of Catholic polls and a senior research associate at Georgetown University's Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate, or CARA.

"When you think about the question about considering leaving, I am frankly surprised

the percentage isn't higher.

"Given the realities of the scandal I think it is natural to ask oneself questions about membership and identity," he said after last week's poll.

It revealed that 37% of US Catholics, up from 22% in 2002, said the abuse scandal in the Church has led them to question whether they would

remain Catholic.

The poll's results are based on interviews with 581 US Catholics from January 21-27 and February 12-28.

Gallup conducted a similar poll in 2002 after *The Boston Globe* reported on clergy abuse gained widespread attention.



Edited by Colm Fitzpatrick
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Evil visits the streets of Utrecht



Police secure the site of a shooting in Utrecht, Netherlands on March 18. Police were hunting for a gunman after a shooting on a tram that left at least three people dead. Officials said it was possible the attack had a "terrorist motive". Photo: CNS

European justice groups urge action as EU elections loom

Catholic justice and peace commissions have called for greater attention to social justice across the EU, urging political leaders to take steps to curb food waste, arms exports and multinational abuses.

The Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions said a "new and comprehensive European regional development policy" was needed to better serve the common good.

"The single market has contributed to an enormous increase in material well-being in Europe over past decades. However, a free market economy also needs clear rules, as well as an infrastructure for its governance in view of the common good...otherwise, unwanted consequences multiply," the umbrella organisation said in an early March appeal as the EU prepared for European Parliament elections from May 23-26.

Observers have predicted that the elections will see gains for far-right and far-left candidates at the cost of longer-established political groupings.

The Brussels-based conference, a network of 31 national justice and peace commissions established by local Catholic bishops' conferences, explained that most law-making in Europe relates to the functioning of the EU's single market, focusing on core principle of the free movement of goods, capital, services and people.

Social justice

However, it said, social justice was threatened by continuing poverty and social exclusion, economic inequality and a lack of equal opportunities for EU residents. It expressed concern that large volumes of food waste undermined care

for the natural environment and that growing arms exports endangered global peace.

"The single market is not functioning well from the perspective of the EU's values and principles, as well as the social teaching of the Church," the conference said.

"The next European Parliament should address these issues vigorously."

The appeal noted that hourly wages in the EU's 28 member-countries ranged from \$4.62 (€4.08) in Bulgaria to \$48.02 (€42.40) in Denmark.

Plans for economic unity have stalled in the face of growing regional disparities and a continent-wide exodus from rural and underdeveloped areas, which undermines trust in European institutions, the statement said.

German Church must tackle 'blocked thinking'

The Church in Germany is at a point where serious debate – including on priestly celibacy and the role of women – and openness to doing things in a new way must be encouraged, said the president of the German bishops' conference.

"Shakeups demand special proceedings," Cardinal Reinhard Marx said at the end of the bishops' spring meeting in Linen.

The sexual abuse scandal and demands for reform have changed the German Church, the cardinal said.

"The Church in Germany is experiencing a break. The Faith can only grow and deepen if we are liberated from blocked thinking, in order to pursue free and open debates and the ability to take new positions and go down new paths.

"The Church needs a synodal advancement. Pope Francis encourages this," said Cardinal Marx. "We will create formats for open debates and bind ourselves to proceedings that facilitate a responsible participation of women and men from our dioceses.

"We know about the cases of clerical abuses of power. It betrays the trust of people

searching for firm footing and religious orientation. What must be done to achieve the necessary reduction of power and to construct a fairer and legally bound order will be to clarify a synodal path."

Germany's bishops said they are still working on how to move forward following the sexual abuse scandal and other pressing issues.

Vatican roundup

Argentine bishops urge Pope to visit homeland

In a letter commemorating the sixth anniversary of Pope Francis' election, the bishops of Argentina said they will ask the Pope to visit his homeland.

"In our next meeting with him, we will propose once again that he does not deprive himself of the joy of visiting us," the Argentine bishops said in statement released during their plenary assembly.

The bishops said they will meet with the Pope during their *ad limina* visit in spring.

The Argentine bishops said the Pope's "peace and strength" encouraged them in confronting the challenges facing the Church today, especially the "sorrowful tragedy" of sexual abuse of minors by members of the clergy.

"He looks beyond the immediate and knows how to say an illuminating word in front of walls that often stop us. He knows how to innovate with audacity without neglecting respect for people," the bishops said.

Bishop Carlos Humberto Malfa of Chascomus, secretary general of the bishops' conference, announced last year that the bishops will be in Rome in May for the *ad limina* visit that bishops are required to make to the Vatican.

Bishops begin to act after abuse summit says CCP

The bishops who participated in the Vatican summit on abuse at the end of February have "taken some initiatives", according to Fr Hans Zollner, SJ, President of the Centre for Child Protection.

Some bishops, he said in an interview with Italian media last week, have revised their guidelines to find and implement ways of "cooperating with civil authorities".

Fr Zollner explained that presidents of Catholic bishops' conferences are seeking the help of the Centre for Child Protection in the formation of Church personnel on the ground, after many of them were

reduced to tears in hearing testimonies of survivors of child sexual abuse.

Since the end of the meeting, Fr Zollner said, he has seen and heard the steps the bishops are taking. They have not simply "communicated what happened during those three and a half days" of the meeting, but are beginning to act, he said.

The message they received, he said, is: "Do everything you can to do justice to the victims. Listen to victims", and do whatever you can to ensure that safeguarding is implemented "in your countries, in your dioceses and in your congregations".

'Zealous' Belgium cardinal dies aged 85

Belgian Cardinal Godfried Danneels, retired archbishop of Mechelen-Brussels, died last week at the age of 85.

Pope Francis expressed his condolences to Cardinal Danneels' family, and the Belgian faithful and praised the late prelate's zeal for the Church, especially during the Synod of Bishops on the family in 2014 and 2015.

"This zealous pastor has served the Church with dedication not only in his diocese but also at the national level as president of the Belgian bishops' conference, as well as serving as a member of various Roman dicasteries," the Pope said in a March 14 telegram to Cardinal Jozef De Kesel, the current archbishop of Mechelen-Brussels.

"I ask Christ, conqueror of evil and death, to welcome him into his peace and joy," the Pope said.

Born June 4, 1933, in Kanegem, Belgium, Cardinal Danneels was the oldest of six children. He was ordained a priest in 1957 and two years later became chairman of the department of theology and spiritual director at the seminary in Bruges. In 1969, he became professor of theology at Louvain University.

Known as a lecturer and a liturgist, he was appointed by St Paul VI as bishop of Antwerp in 1977.

Letter from America



Communion and Liberation founder Msgr Luigi Giussani who died on February 22, 2005.

“If I love Christ, if I follow Christ, every other desire, every other relationship, acquires its just perspective. Above all, one recognises that they are a sinner and that they cannot save themselves on their own”

“From Don Giussani we learned that obedience to the Pope is fundamental for living a Catholic experience,” he said, adding that since the Pope is the Vicar of Christ, “since the beginning we wanted to follow and to support the steps of Pope Francis”.

Mr Savorana described the relationship between the *ciellini* and Francis as “very close”, and said the current head of the movement, Spanish Fr Julián Carrón, named as Giussani’s successor in 2005, meets with the Pope periodically when he’s in Rome.

Audience

Referring to the 2015 audience held for the movement in Rome, he said the Pope’s speech that day “gave us a programme of returning to the essential, to follow the charism of Don Giussani, which indicates Christ as the centre of life so as to become, as he said, the arms, legs and hands of a Church that goes out to serve the presence of Christ in the world today”.

Noting similarities between Francis and Benedict, Mr Savorana said the centrality of Christ is a key theme in their writings that the movement appreciates, as is Francis’s emphasis on being a “Church that reaches out”.

These things, he said, constitute a return “to the essence of the origin of being Christian”.

Speaking of Giussani’s legacy in the 21st Century, Mr Savorana said that if it had to be boiled down to one phrase, it would be the constant emphasis on man’s humanity and his need to be saved. “Christ and Christianity become incomprehensible, and therefore useless in living, if man does not take his own humanity into consideration,” Mr Savorana said.

The greatest poverty in Catholicism today, he said, is “not feeling our own humanity, because Christ came and comes to respond to humanity as we are today, full of needs as we were 2,000 years ago”.

Elise Harris is senior correspondent at Cruxnow.com

Movement leader says Christ is key to recovery from abuse scandals

Catholicism’s ongoing clerical abuse scandals have provoked wide reactions, not the least of which has been a push both within the Church and from outside it for tough norms and policies to provide accountability for both the crime and the cover-up.

However, according to a leading member of a high-profile Catholic movement, the more essential change the scandals should provoke is a renewed internal commitment to Christ.

“All the efforts that can be made will not solve the problem if the Faith, that is, the personal and communitarian bond with Christ, is not the centre,” said Alberto Savorana, a member of the Communion and Liberation movement.

Crisis

“If I love Christ, if I follow Christ, every other desire, every other relationship, acquires its just perspective. Above all, one recognises that they are a sinner and that they cannot save themselves on their own,” he said, adding that recovering from the



Elise Harris

abuse crisis does not mean simply fighting evil, but doing good.

The renewal the Church is facing has to be more than correcting the wrong that’s been done, but it has to be offering something positive to the world, he said, and pointed to Peter’s denial of Christ as an example.

When Jesus came to Peter after his resurrection, “He doesn’t say, ‘You made a mistake, you betrayed me.’ He says, ‘Peter, do you love me?’” Mr Savorana said, arguing that Peter’s response was an expression of love which recognised his limits but which also allowed God to work in him, turning him into someone who would accomplish great things for the Kingdom of God.

Mr Savorana spoke on a March

15 panel in Denver presenting the English edition of his whopping 1,300-page biography of Monsignor Luigi Giussani, *The Life of Luigi Giussani*, originally published in Italian in 2013. The panel, which was hosted by the University of Denver, was one stop on a wider US tour presenting the lengthy biography.

“Shortly after Pope Francis’s election in 2013, the group got a reputation for being loyal opponents to the new Pontiff”

Giussani, who lived from 1922-2005, was the founder of a Catholic lay movement called Communion and Liberation, which he established in Milan in the 1950s and which boasts of hundreds of thousands of members throughout the world, with the greatest concentration of members in Italy.

Communion and Liberation is one of the largest “new movements” in the Church. It’s known to be a favourite of retired

Pope Benedict XVI, who often met with the community’s members and leadership, and whose household is run by consecrated women who are part of the movement’s *Memores Domini* association.

Shortly after Pope Francis’s election in 2013, the group got a reputation for being loyal opponents to the new Pontiff, due in large part to the fact that a bishop from the movement, Italian Archbishop Luigi Negri of Ferrara, was quoted in an Italian newspaper in 2015 as saying he wanted Francis dead.

However, Francis also in 2015 held a major audience with the *ciellini* marking the 10th anniversary of Giussani’s death, and which was attended by thousands of members of the movement from around the world.

Mr Savorana said the election of Pope Francis came as “a great surprise” to the movement, but they were glad to hear the Pontiff on several occasions mention that he is familiar with Giussani’s writings, and that having read Giussani “made him a better man and a better Christian”.

New Zealand bishops pray for Muslims after Christchurch attack

Michael Otto

New Zealand's Catholic bishops expressed horror and distress at a terrorist attack in two mosques in Christchurch that saw at least 49 people killed.

The shootings took place at or near the Al Noor Mosque, where 41 people were killed, and at the Linwood Mosque, where seven were killed.

One more person subsequently died at Christchurch Hospital. Muslims had gathered at the mosques for Friday prayers. Some of those killed were children, it has been reported.

The terror attack started at around 1.40pm local time on March 15, sparking a massive mobilisation by police. Mike Bush, New Zealand police commissioner, announced at 9pm that a man in his late 20s had been charged with murder and would appear in the Christchurch District Court the next day.

Some three-and-a-half hours after the attacks began, the New Zealand bishops released a message, addressed to the nation's Muslim community, via social media.

"We hold you in prayer as we hear the terrible news of violence against Muslims at mosques in Christchurch," the bishops wrote.

"We are profoundly aware of the positive relationships we have with Islamic people in this land, and we are particularly horrified that this has happened at a place and time of prayer.

"We are deeply saddened that people have been killed and injured, and our hearts go out to them, their families and wider community. We wish you to be aware of our solidarity with you in the face of such violence."

The bishops signed off their message: "Peace, Salaam."

Saddened

A message sent by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, on behalf of Pope Francis, said the Pontiff was "deeply saddened to learn of the injury and loss of life caused by the senseless acts of violence" at the mosques.

"He assures all New Zealanders, and in particular the Muslim community, of his heartfelt solidarity in the wake of these attacks." He also offered prayers and blessings to those injured, those grieving, those who died and emergency personnel.



High school students attend a vigil on March 18, for victims of the mosque attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand. Prayer services are being held across the country and abroad after two mosque attacks in Christchurch on March 15 that left at least 50 people dead and 20 seriously injured.

Christchurch Bishop Paul Martin released his own message on social media.

“Church leaders are absolutely devastated at the unprecedented situation in Christchurch this afternoon, and our hearts and prayers go to all involved”

"We are horrified at the violence that has been inflicted on people of our city this afternoon," Bishop Mar-

tin wrote.

"Words cannot convey our distress. Our prayers are with those who are suffering. I invite you now, wherever you are, alone or with family, workmates or friends, to pray together in the prayer of St Francis of Assisi: Lord make me an instrument of your peace..."

Bishop Martin planned to celebrate a Mass of prayer for peace, "remembering those who have died in the mosques tragedy and praying for those who are suffering", at St Mary's Pro-Cathedral on March 16.

This is the second major tragedy involving significant

loss of life in Christchurch in the last decade. On February 22, 2011, an earthquake struck the city, killing 185 people. The Catholic Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament suffered severe damage, as did the nearby Anglican Cathedral.

Anglican Bishop Peter Carroll of Christchurch issued a statement on behalf of all church leaders in the city in early evening.

"Church leaders are absolutely devastated at the unprecedented situation in Christchurch this afternoon, and our hearts and prayers go to all involved. No religious organisation or group deserves to be the target of

someone's hate – regardless of beliefs.

"We stand for an Aotearoa New Zealand, which will never condone such violence. So, across the churches of Christchurch and Canterbury, we are praying for our Muslim brothers and sisters, for those injured and those who have lost loved ones, for the police, ambulance and other emergency services, and for all in the city of Christchurch who are feeling distress and fear due to this event.

Prayers

"We are upholding you all in our prayers. We pray, too, for the shooter and their supporters, because for any person to do this, they must have such hatred in their hearts, such misalignment of the value of human life, that they too, need our prayer. We thank many others from around our nation and the world who are praying for peace in Christchurch."

Five Catholic high schools and about a dozen elementary schools in Christchurch city were among many schools that went into lockdown in mid-afternoon as news of the terror attacks spread.

Children and staff were unable to leave the schools until 5.30pm, when enough police personnel had been deployed to ensure a safe passage home.

When the lifting of the lockdown, one Catholic high

school, the all-girls Villa Maria College, stated on Facebook that rolls would be taken in the school gym and that students would be "debriefed with pastoral care on hand". After this, students were released.

The attack is the deadliest mass shooting in New Zealand's history.

The gunman reportedly live-streamed video of the attack using a helmet-camera. New Zealand police asked people not to share this on social media.

The shooter also posted a 73-page manifesto.

Facebook and Twitter reportedly removed the gunman's pages.

“For many, this may not have been the place they were born, in fact for many, New Zealand was their choice”

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said: "It is clear that this can now only be described as a terrorist attack." She said the thoughts and prayers of the nation were with "those who have been impacted today".

"Christchurch was their home," Ms Ardern said. "For many, this may not have been the place they were born, in fact for many, New Zealand was their choice. The place they actively came to and committed to. The place they were raising their families.

"Where they were parts of communities that they loved and who loved them in return. It was a place that many came to for its safety. A place where they were free to practice their culture and their religion."

The prime minister added: "For those of you who are watching at home tonight and questioning how this could have happened here. We, New Zealand, we were not a target because we are a safe harbour for those who hate. We were not chosen for this act of violence because we condone racism, because we are an enclave for extremism. We were chosen for the very fact that we are none of those things."

Mosques across the country closed on Friday at the urgings of police. Vigils sprang up throughout New Zealand as people gathered to mourn and grieve.

Michael Otto writes for Catholic News Service.



Bishop Patrick Dunn of Auckland carries flowers to place at Al-Jamie Mosque to memorialise victims of the March 15 mosque attacks in Christchurch.

Letters

Letter of the week

How will the deaf learn to listen?

Dear Editor, Many dioceses are engaging in 'listening' processes which on the face of it is commendable. However, one must ask what qualities are required to "listen"? Surely no institution can embark on a successful 'listening' programme without (i) effectively addressing the reason for embarking on such a listening programme which does of course reflect a long tradition of failure to listen and (ii) addressing the conundrum of how those who have failed to listen will suddenly be in a position to listen because it is now strategy!

In order to go from a no-listening to a listening mode the Church must acknowledge the evil of clericalism and acknowledge and apologise for the terrible damage clericalism caused to the Church's mission, resulting in a failure to serve the people of God, a failure to listen. "Clericalism" is, says Pope Francis, "our ugliest perversion". To ignore this fact, as presented to us by the Holy Father, is to extend and perpetuate clericalism under the guise of apparent necessity.

A prerequisite to listening, renewal and service must surely be an acknowl-

edgement of the evil of clericalism, and of the damage which it has done and then the commencement of a process of re-education and development of those who have been indoctrinated and damaged by clericalism. Then the Church can truly listen and rededicate itself to its mission, otherwise those who embrace "clericalism", both clergy and laity, will continue to choke the mission of the Church and alienate the "little children", the people of God.

Yours etc.,

John Lupton Snr.,
Roscrea, Co. Tipperary.

For Ireland's sake, think outside the box

Dear Editor, Excellent treatment of David Trimble and Kate Hoey's very puzzling Brexit intervention (IC 7/3/2019).

Irish Catholic voters have been alienated by traditional parties in both states, though Renua and Aontú represent alternatives. North of the border, some advise Catholics to vote DUP. Even without Aontú or a reliable SDLP candidate, the DUP has its own factions and those most credible on moral issues are also most likely to be anti-Catholic,

even if they state that they oppose Catholicism and not Catholics.

The more pragmatic group within the DUP have never held more than devolved authority and one would ask what decisions would they make if legislation on abortion or same sex marriage was a price for external investment and jobs in the North of Ireland. Chairman Mao was correct to observe that one would see what people were like when they were given real power.

Aside from this, the Six Counties are at the mercy of a Labour majority in Westminster imposing the infamous 1967 Act on Northern Ireland, something which already has considerable support across the political divide in Britain.

Meanwhile, just as changing demographics in the North point towards an imminent nationalist majority, Brexit is a game changer. Nationalists happy with the Good Friday Agreement arrangements have become doubtful and

some moderate unionists have considered what was previously beyond discussion. A united Ireland may come more quickly than we think – and this needs to be prepared for on this side of the border.

If we are to make a significant impact on this country's direction and future, we all need to begin thinking outside the box with immediate effect.

Yours etc.,

Peadar Laighléis,
Laytown, Co. Meath.

Differences are not secondary

Dear Editor, The article 'Differences are secondary say Ireland's Mormons after Pope meeting' (IC 14/3/2019) could easily give the impression that differences between Catholics and the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) are relatively insignificant.

These difference touch fundamental aspects of the Christian faith. For example, most Churches, including our own, do not recognise the legitimacy of Mormon baptism since it lacks the essential Trinitarian formula, and the theological understanding of baptism is unclear. The Mormon Church claims an additional collection of scriptural books, whose origins are, to say the least, controversial: they have never been considered inspired by any other Christian community. These books add an additional layer to the history of salvation no other Christian Church shares.

This has led many to wonder whether the Mormon Church can in fact be considered a Christian Church at all. Coming to grips with what Mormons actually believe is difficult to assess, given the remarkable degree of secrecy surrounding the beliefs and practises of the Latter Day Saints.

This is in no way to call into question the upright lives of many adherents of this faith. Certainly there are areas in which co-operation between them and Catholics is possible, but to date there has been no formal dialogue between Mormons and Catholics such as between Catholics and Anglicans or Lutherans.

Yours etc.,

Brendan McConvery CSsR,
Belfast, Co. Antrim.



God's wrath is real too

Dear Editor, I was listening to a brother and sister discussing their father recently. Listening to them, as a neutral, I couldn't help thinking that they were talking about two different people. It reminded me of the God presented in the Old Testament readings, and the loving Father that Jesus revealed to us.

And so, our basic belief is in a God who lavishes his love upon us. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus teaches us that Our Father is a total 'softie' who, like the father in the story, not only welcomes the sinner home, but rushes out to meet

his wayward son and embraces him with love. And then they have a party. The story, of course, emphasises the fact, that there is "more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over 99 men who have no need of repentance" (Lk. 15:7).

How unfortunate therefore, that Pope Francis warns us not to "become complacent of God's wrath" as we read in last week's *The Irish Catholic*.

Yours etc.,

Pat Seaver,
Farranshane, Co. Limerick.

facebook community

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

'There was once a time when children were universally considered a blessing'

Children are wonderful – they are the future – but we need to reduce the world population – it's at 7.7 billion people, we will destroy the world if we do not reduce the human population there should less marriage and more people being celibate. – **John Barton**

It's not the population that's the problem. It's the way we are using the earth's resources. – **Patrick Donnan**

Lovely and well written piece. The greatest joy in my life and my wife's is our son. Yes, it can be chaotic, messy, forever on the school run, coming and going to football practice and the weekend games or the guitar lessons or exams tuition. I often regret having worked overtime, even though we needed the money and I missed out on a few special family occasions such as the Christmas steam train to Mullingar and back with Santa Claus on board. However, I made it the following year. A child, even when a grown man or woman, is a marvellous blessing and is a great gift from God who allows us to share in his love for his children. – **Joe Cotter**

Following in faithful footsteps.

I walked two stages of the French Camino and the Portuguese way. Only 80 miles. Love this place – it's in my heart. And yes, the striking resemblance to Ireland from Sarria. – **Jayne Turner**

When you're trying to see the Atlantic through the mists of Finisterre you can certainly believe you're back in Malin Head! – **Charles Glenn**

Making a willingness to perform abortions a job requirement for consultant doctors threatens the training and recruiting of hospital staff, Ireland's bishops have said.

All nurses and doctors should be entitled to religious objection. I am sure this could be argued under the Equality Act. The Equality Act 2010 says you must not be discriminated against because: you are (or are not) of a particular religion; you hold (or do not hold) a particular philosophical belief; someone thinks you are of a particular religion or hold a particular belief (this is known as discrimination by perception); you are connected to someone who has a religion or belief (this is known as discrimination by association)

– **Pamela Ryan**

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

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Around the world



▲ **ROME:** A worker collects notes from pilgrims after wooden coverings over the Holy Stairs were removed during restoration work at the Pontifical Sanctuary of the Holy Stairs in Rome last week. According to Catholic tradition, the Holy Stairs are the steps leading up to the praetorium of Pontius Pilate on which Jesus stepped on his way to trial during the Passion.

◀ **USA:** Students hold signs in New York City to demand action on climate change. Students from around the world are participating in the 'strike'. Photos: CNS



USA: Bagpipers march in the 258th annual St Patrick's Day Parade in New York city.



ETHIOPIA: Ethiopians near Bishoftu prepare for a commemoration ceremony last week, at the scene of the Ethiopian Airlines crash.



GERMANY: Demonstrators stand outside the German bishops' spring meeting in Lingen earlier this month. The sexual abuse scandal and demands for reform have changed the German church, Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich said.



JORDAN: A supporter of the Islamic Action Front party in Amman holds up a copy of the Quran near the New Zealand consulate. Fifty people were killed and at least 40 more are being treated for gunshot wounds following the mosque terror attacks in Christchurch.



We don't know how to celebrate things as they're meant to be celebrated. We want to, but mostly we don't know how. Generally we celebrate badly. How do we normally celebrate? By overdoing things; by taking a lot of the things we ordinarily do, drinking, eating, talking, singing, and humouring, and bringing them to excess.

For most of us, celebration means eating too much, drinking too much, singing too loudly, telling one joke too many and hoping that somewhere in all that excess we will find the secret to make this occasion extraordinary.

We have this odd idea that we can find special joy and delight by pushing things beyond their normal limits. But there's precious little real delight in this. Heightened enjoyment is found in connecting with others more deeply, in feeling our lives expanded, and in experiencing love and playfulness in a special way. But that doesn't happen in a frenzy. Hence our celebrations are mostly followed by a hangover, physical and emotional. Why? Why is genuine celebration so hard to do?

Struggle

Perhaps the main reason is that we struggle congenitally to simply enjoy things, to simply take life, pleasure, love and enjoyment as gracious and free gifts from God, pure and simple.

It's not that we lack this capacity for this. God has given us this gift. More at issue is the fact that our capacity to enjoy is often mixed with inchoate feelings of guilt about experiencing pleasure (and the greater the pleasure, the deeper our feeling of guilt.) Among other things, because of this, we often struggle to enjoy

Our struggle for proper celebration



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

what's legitimately given us by God because, consciously or unconsciously, we feel that our experience of pleasure is somehow "stealing from God". This is an uneasiness that particularly afflicts sensitive and moral souls. Somehow, in the name of God, we struggle to give ourselves full permission to enjoy, and this leaves us prone to excess (which is invariably a substitute for genuine enjoyment).

Whatever the reasons, we struggle with this and thus many of us go through life deprived of a healthy capacity to enjoy and, since nature will still have its way, we end up alternating between rebellious enjoyment ("pleasure we steal from God", but feel guilty about) and dutiful discipline (which we do without a lot of delight). But we're rarely able to genuinely celebrate.

We rarely find the genuine delight we are looking for in life and this pushes us into pseudo-celebration, namely, excess. Put simply, because we struggle to give ourselves permission to enjoy, ironically we tend to pursue enjoyment too much and often not in the right ways. We confuse pleasure with delight, excess with ecstasy, and the obliteration of consciousness with heightened awareness. Because we cannot simply

enjoy, we go to excess, burst our normal limits, and hope that obliterating our awareness will heighten it.

And yet, celebrate we must. We have an innate need to celebrate because certain moments and events of our lives (e.g. a birthday, a wedding, a graduation, a commitment, an achievement or even a funeral) simply demand it. They demand to be surrounded with rituals which heighten and intensify their meaning and they demand that they be shared in a special, highlighted way with others. What we cease to celebrate we will soon cease to cherish.

“We still need to learn that heightened enjoyment is not found in excess, deeper community is not found in mindless intimacy”

The same is true of some of our deeper loving, playful, and creative moments. They too demand to be celebrated: highlighted, widened, and shared with others. We have an irrepressible need to celebrate, that's good. Indeed the need for ecstasy is hardwired into our very DNA. But ecstasy is heightened awareness, not obliterated consciousness.

Celebration is meant to intensify our awareness, not deaden it. The object of celebration is to highlight certain events and feelings so as to share them with others in an extraordinary way. But, given our misunderstandings about celebration, we mostly make pseudo-celebration, that is, we overdo things to a point where we take our own awareness and our awareness of the occasion out of the equation.

Celebration

We have a lot to overcome in our struggle to come to genuine celebration. We still need to learn that heightened enjoyment is not found in excess, deeper community is not found in mindless intimacy, and heightened awareness is not found in a frenzied deadening of our consciousness.

Until we learn that lesson we will still mostly trudge home hung-over, more empty, more tired and more alone than before the party. A hangover is a sure sign that, somewhere back down the road, we missed a signpost. We struggle to know how to celebrate, but we must continue to try.

Jesus came and declared a wedding feast, a celebration, at the centre of life. They crucified him not for being too ascetical, but because he told us we should actually enjoy our lives, assuring us that God and life will give us more goodness and enjoyment than we can stand, if we can learn to receive them with the proper reverence and without undue fear.

QUESTIONS of faith

Each week Colm Fitzpatrick looks at interesting and sometimes controversial questions people have about Catholicism...

Why did Jesus come when he did?

It's often said by theologians that before the Incarnation, history was pregnant with Christ – that is to say, history itself was waiting for God to enter into humanity. It's a powerful and almost poetic idea, that the world was preparing and anticipating for this momentous point in time.

But was there anything special about God becoming flesh specifically 2,000 years ago in a middle-eastern location? Is it not the case that Jesus could've come before this, or after – perhaps even today?

While this may seem like a quirky or inconsequential question, exploring it can help us understand more about God and the theology of salvation.

Not only will this illuminate the knowledge of believers, but the answer will also assuage the charge atheists commonly make that God is immoral for entering into humanity at such a distant point in history rather than today in our more globalised and connected society.

Before answering this question, a preliminary point needs to be made, which is that attempting to understand God's will and his plan for all of us cannot be fully known by mere human thought.

“But is it really the case that people today would be more likely to believe that God became man?”

When trying to discover why God entered into humanity at a specific time and place, we are limited by our capacity to fully know God's intentions. Any answer then never fully explains the truth of the matter – but as rational animals with souls, we can at least make a hampered

attempt.

The first question – 'Why was the Incarnation not earlier?' – is not particularly contentious and can be answered without little thought. For example, culture and language had not sufficiently developed enough for the message of Christ to spread, or perhaps, societies wouldn't have understood the meaning of Jesus' message, resulting in it being forgotten. There are a whole host of possible limits imaginable about why the ancient past is an unsuitable conduit for God's message.

Best time

The second question – 'Why was the Incarnation not now?' – is much trickier to answer. It rests upon the idea that if God really wants everyone to believe he exists, surely the best time to do so would be now, when the whole world is connected through the online web.

But is it really the case that people today would be more likely to believe that God became man? In an era of hyper-rationalism, fake news and a radical mistrust of miraculous claims, it seems less likely that the message of God would be imbibed by society.

The poet G.A. Studdert-Kennedy sums this up when he writes: "When Jesus came to Birmingham, they simply passed him by / They would not hurt a hair of him, they only let him die / For men had grown more tender, and they would not give him pain / They only just passed down the street, and left him in the rain."

While we can't prove, given the nature of the question, that Jesus entering into humanity was the best time to do so, but we do know that there are billions of Christians in the world today. If that's the case, Jesus' message has certainly stood the test of time.

**Got a question or comment?
Email colm@irishcatholic.ie**

Cornerstone

Building tomorrow's parish today

Lent 2019

Until love
conquers fear
Page 30



Reaching the lost generation

Jack Regan

There are certain things that just never surprise you about Catholic parishes. There will almost always be hymns from the 1980s, people who are a bit too precious about their jobs, photocopied newsletters, and a complete lack of community spirit. It's as certain as night following day, the Pope being a Catholic, and bears doing their business in the woods!

As a youth and young adult minister, I'm also never surprised when I visit churches to find what you might call a lost generation. In almost all parishes,

the amount of 18-35s are pretty thin on the ground. I've found this to be fairly consistent in the 20 years I've spent in ministry, but I've also found something else: if you try to find the young adults, and if you're serious about engaging them, they will usually respond.

Back in 2011, I relocated to a new town, and the Catholic young adult scene was, as expected, pretty non-existent. I was 33 at the time and, understandably, I was keen to meet some contemporaries who shared my faith. Together with a friend, I hatched a plan.

» Continued on Page 28



Welcome to this week's Cornerstone

Fish & Tips:

Lenten calendar for children & #livelent.

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Scripture:

This week's reading is from St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians

Page 28

PPCs:

Donal Harrington outlines what matters in the recruitment of member of a PPC.

Page 30



Please spread the word and join us on the journey of the building tomorrow's parish today – a familial community of faith, fostering authentic, intentional discipleship. If your parish is engaged in something exciting or innovative, contact us and let us know! Email me on eoin@irishcatholic.com.

Reaching the lost generation

» Continued from Page 27

Jack Regan offers an approach to young adult ministry which has worked and is essential reading for building tomorrow's parish today.

We put an advert in the local parish newsletters inviting anybody between 18 and 35 to meet with us at one of the local bars so that we could talk about maybe starting something. About seven or eight people turned up. To my left was my co-conspirator – a local girl I knew through the World Youth Day preparation process. To her left was another friend of mine, a local primary school teacher. Everyone else was new to me. The advert had drawn them out of the woodwork and they were keen to see something started.

We began fairly simply. Every other week after the Sunday evening Mass, we went to the pub for an hour or so. For the first year that was it. Some weeks we got a dozen or more people, other weeks only a few. A couple of times it was just me.

I learned two important lessons about young adult ministry in that first year: firstly, that starting a group is a grind. You have to keep advertising it, keep reminding people, and keep turning up. More importantly, when a meeting is a complete wash out you have to have the resolve to come back next time.

Secondly, I learned that socialising and building friendships is a great place to

start. Sure, it's not the end-game in the Church but it's a big part of it, and it makes what comes next much easier to navigate.

What came next was a sort of prayer group. In the second year, we met once a month for a meal and a time of prayer. At first it was Lectio Divina or the Rosary, but we got a little more creative as time went on.

“There were trips to Rome and summer barbeques, and the monthly prayer meetings became fortnightly – at times even weekly.”

After that second year, things really seemed to fly. By that stage, people were close friends and a few romantic relationships were even starting to form. The group was starting to become known and, on the back of that, found it much easier to attract people. There were trips to Rome and summer barbeques, and the monthly prayer meetings became fortnightly – at times even



weekly. People came a long way in their faith, and the local parishes even seemed to notice that the people serving in quite a few ministries were suddenly becoming younger. More than a few foreigners living in the area found an easy way to make friends as they practiced their faith, and more than a few locals were tempted out of lapsation.

Central to it all though,

remained those Sunday evenings. We made friends with a local Italian chef, and he agreed to keep his café open later than usual for us after evening Mass had finished. For me personally, some of the happiest memories of my life were formed in that place with those people, and all around the common experience of our shared faith. The faith and the friendships

seemed to feed one another fairly effortlessly.

“The faith and the friendships seemed to feed one another fairly effortlessly.”

The lessons of that first year were quickly added to by other lessons: the need to protect a growing young adults ministry from the clutches of every group in the parish who think that, rather than a ministry, you've created a handy pool of labour; the need to keep publicising a group no matter how successful it becomes; and the need to balance the social, spiritual and sacramental.

Eventually, as the first generation got married and drifted away, the group was absorbed into a larger young

adults' ministry a few towns away, but its fruits are still seen in a lot of places, and we're all still good friends.

I'll always remember that first meeting back in 2011, with my friend sat to my left and my other friend to her left. That was the first time the two of them met. This weekend I went around to their house to meet their second baby – a beautiful little boy! They got married in 2016, shortly before I did, and last year we celebrated three other marriages – all of which came – directly or indirectly – as a result of our young adults group.

So the next time you find yourself in a parish without many young adults, put an ad in the newsletter. You never know...

Scripture

Reflecting on Scripture is an important part of the Christian faith. Often, however, we Catholics do not allow ourselves the time to really reflect on the Word of God. This weekly series will explore the Second Reading from the coming Sunday's Mass. While originally written to the early Church communities, Scripture is the living Word of God, so each week we can read what was being said to encourage and challenge early Christian communities in order to hear what is being said to us today.

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

I want to remind you, brothers, how our fathers were all guided by a cloud above them and how they all passed through the sea. They were all baptised into Moses in this cloud and in this sea; all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink, since they all drank from the spiritual rock that followed them as they went, and that rock was Christ. In spite of this, most of them failed to please God and their corpses littered the desert.

These things all happened as warnings for us, not to have the wicked lusts for forbidden things that they had. You must never complain: some of them did, and they were killed by the Destroyer.

All this happened to them as a warning, and it was written down to be a lesson for us who are living at the end of the age. The man who thinks he is safe must be careful that he does not fall.

Spend some time in prayer with the reading.

1. Find a quiet place, and give yourself 15 minutes without distractions. Read the section once, and then pause for reflection. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts and response to the passage.
2. Read the passage a second time. Ask yourself: What do I find challenging about this reading? Is there anything that I can try to do differently in my life as a response to it? What is the message in this reading for our parish? Write down anything that comes to your head.
3. Pause in silent reflection, and then read the passage a third time.



Some assembly required



Have you ever had to put together a piece of furniture that comes unassembled in a box? The box innocently advises, 'Some Assembly Required.' "Well, how hard can that be?", I thought, but when there was no instruction manual included I struck out on my own and ended up with a crooked table and some pieces left over. Our lives are much the same way, but the consequences for trying to put it together on your own without the manual are far more serious - we are not aware of the pathway to our heavenly home and the joy of eternal life with God. And here is the good news: for the past 2,000 years, the 'Instruction Manual' has been readily available.

“Our instruction manual for the trials of a worldly life is the Holy Bible containing the teachings of Christ and the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.”

Our instruction manual for the trials of a worldly life is the Holy Bible containing the teachings of Christ and the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Because God's plan for salvation is concealed within the Old Testament and revealed in the New, we need to understand and connect both in order to receive His full message of grace. The inspired Word of God provides us, his children, with the needed direction for gaining forgiveness and glorifying Him in all ways. "The books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into the sacred

writings for the sake of our salvation" (Dei Verbum). Unawareness of Christ and the Scriptures, to continue the metaphor, will lead us to build a crooked table; without knowing His heart for us we search blindly for God. We can build a closer relationship with God and know His love by developing a habit of regular, prayerful, and organised Bible study.

“Community Bible Study (CBS) is a lay-led method of Bible study offered at minimal cost to help people become more familiar with God through His Word.”

Community Bible Study (CBS) is a lay-led method of Bible study offered at minimal cost to help people become more familiar with God through His Word. The passion of CBS is: "Every one in the world in the Word." Study materials are available from CBS for all ages, nationalities, and levels of education - pre-school to adult. Since the Holy Spirit speaks to each of us differently, start by reading God's Word at home for your own impression of what the Word reveals to you personally. Then share your impression of what is being taught in the Scriptures with others in a small group discussion. Discussion groups may be held anywhere; in a home, church, school, or other convenient place. Appoint a member from the discussion group to keep everyone on topic and give

a short wrap-up for clarifying and summarising what the group learned. CBS provides a follow-up commentary derived by a consensus group of theologians who concentrate on the essentials of the Christian faith, not on the distinctions of any particular church denomination. Prayer, fellowship, and caring for each member of the group are essential components of the CBS method. The CBS project started in 1975 with one class in the United States. The CBS ministry has spread like wild-fire to become a world-wide presence (Community Bible Study International, CBSI) in over 100 countries with translations in 76 languages. More details are found at the CBS website: www.communitybiblestudy.org.

“The grass withers, the flower fades; but the Word of our God will stand forever.”
—Isaiah 40:8

Pope Francis's *The Joy of the Gospel* contains the following memorable quote from Pope Benedict XVI: "God has already spoken, and there is nothing further that we need to know, which has not been revealed to us." Furthermore, the Holy Spirit guides us; we do not have to stand alone without an instruction manual.

"The grass withers, the flower fades; but the Word of our God will stand forever." (Isaiah 40:8).

Thanks be to God!

Charles and Jean Driscoll are CBSI Ambassadors to Ireland and should you desire more information or a look at CBSI materials, they will be in Cork City March 28 until April 11 (email cdrisc@icloud.com). Fellow Ambassadors, Sam and Patti Allgood, will be in Dublin from March 27 until April 16 (email jsamallgood@gmail.com).

Fish & Tips

Daily Ideas for Disciples

The Lenten Calendar For Children

This calendar has a little activity for you to do each day of Lent. Besides what you see in the calendar it's good to do one or two things all through Lent. Some people give up things - sweets, chips, xbox or playstation for example... Some people take up something - a good work or a small act of kindness - helping more at home, making your bed each morning, giving some of your pocket money to a good cause for example...

Remember to try and say an extra prayer each day!!

As you'll see, the Sundays of Lent don't really count. There are 40 days without Sundays. Each Sunday is like a mini Easter - So you can have a special treat those days!!

Third Week

Sunday

Jesus told the women at the tomb that He would give us living water.

• WATER gives life & many don't get it. Really. Try not to waste any water today.



Monday

Pilate condemned Jesus to be executed at the pillar.

• Do as little good small acts all through today for someone. Have someone smile!

7

Tuesday

The soldiers took off Jesus' clothes and laid Him out on a pillar.

• Have you old toys or clothes that you should donate to a local charity?

18

Wednesday

The soldiers whipped Jesus many times.

• Kneel and say a 'Glory Be'.



19

Thursday

Jesus died so much that He became weak.

• Drink water instead of juice or soda today.



20

Friday

The soldiers struggle put the clothes back on Jesus.

• Be gentle to your friends or brothers and sisters, especially if they are sad.

21

Saturday

The body of the Lord became Jesus' Mary. And she remained by the Holy Spirit. Jesus then Mary showed the women at the tomb that the body was not there. Mary and the women went home and told the men that Jesus was alive.

22

This resource is generously shared by Frank Brown of the Combined Parishes of Clondalkin.

#LIVELENT 2019 CHALLENGE

The #LiveLent initiative will take place on Twitter and Instagram and will involve short daily suggestions based on the theme of the Holy Father's Lenten message on how to best #LiveLent 2019. These will include suggestions on fasting, prayer and almsgiving, which are the three pillars of the Lenten season:

- Prayer and scripture suggestions (prayer intentions including those of Pope Francis, prayers of intercession and Lenten prayers)
- Opportunities for penance and fasting in our daily lives (fasting from gossip, fasting from negativity online, giving up certain foods for Lent, availing of the Sacrament of Reconciliation)
- Suggestions of charitable acts (donating to Trócaire and other charities; Donating your time by volunteering or helping out within your own family, school, parish; and behaving in a charitable way towards all those we meet)

People are invited to take part using the hashtag #LiveLent and are encouraged to share with their own followers how they are

putting these suggestions into action in their daily lives.

Follow the #LiveLent initiative on the Bishops' Instagram account 'CatholicBishops' and on Twitter @catholicbishops. Don't forget the hashtag!

Daily Lenten Prayer

Today Lord, I choose life, I choose your love and the challenge to live it and share it, I choose hope, even in moments of darkness, I choose faith, accepting you as Lord and God, I choose to let go of some part of my burdens, day by day handing them over to you, I choose to take hold of your strength and power ever more deeply in my life.

May this truly be for me a time of new life, of growth, challenge and change. May I come to Easter with a heart open to dying with you and rising to your new life, day by day.
Amen

PPCs: getting the right team



Donal Harrington outlines what matters in the recruitment of member of a PPC.

What matters in recruiting is getting the right people for the job; there are 'horses for courses'. That includes having a good mix of people. It would be good for the parish to articulate what qualities it expects of each and every member within that mix, for instance:

- In a position to give the time needed.
- Able to think in terms of the whole parish rather than any particular interest.
- A team player, able to work well with others and to listen.
- Open to new ways of doing things; willing to explore.
- Able to work by way of meetings; reflecting, planning, re-viewing.
- A faith full of energy and

passion for the future of the faith community.

- Open to formation, at the beginning and ongoing.

Recruiting can be seen in two stages. The first stage would be some form of personal discernment and self-selection, following on good information about what is being sought. Individuals can be encouraged one-to-one, but the motivation has to come from themselves. A second stage would be some form of parish discernment, to ensure a good mix of people. This could involve a parish assembly, where those who come forward are presented to the faith community.

The time of recruiting is an opportunity to build up more awareness of the PPC and its significance. There could be a talk at Mass about its role and about the pastoral situation today. This would be part of an ongoing effort to bring people on board and to build ownership of the vision that the PPC stands for.

GETTING STARTED

If there is regular rollover of membership, getting started need only happen once, unless circumstances call for a new start and a new group. Getting started takes time. It is like laying the foundations when building a house. Those joining the PPC may be unfamiliar with what is involved and with the thinking behind it. So, if the 'forming' stage is rushed through, everything that follows will suffer the consequences.

Serious attention to formation is required, considering



what is needed at this point. Time is needed for team building. Members need to be familiarised with the role of the PPC. They need to grow in a shared vision, the kind that this book has been setting out. They need the theology and spirituality to underpin their involvement. They need to look at the 'how' we have discussed in this chapter, to set the tone for their time as a group.

Choosing the chairperson and secretary deserves careful thought. Secretary is easier, and it can be made more attractive if the position is rotated every six or twelve months. The chairperson can be chosen once people know each other well enough to judge. There are two requirements. First, this person has to be able to prepare a good agenda and move through it efficiently. Second,

he or she is as much a facilitator as a chairperson, able to enable, setting a standard as regards listening and respect and participation.

Getting started continues over a number of months. The new group has to be introduced to the faith community, perhaps with a commissioning ritual. It has to initiate contact with the parish ministry groups. All of this matters a lot, because it gets the group's relationship with the parish off to a good start. Often PPCs remain anonymous and invisible. They need to have a strong profile in the parish.

In order to move into planning, the group also needs to listen at this stage. usually each member has a limited knowledge of all that goes on in the parish. All need to be familiarised with the overall picture of where the parish is at. This includes the

demographics, the extent of what is currently happening, the issues, the challenges, the strengths and weaknesses.

In relation to vision, the parish may or may not have a mission statement or a vision statement. If it does, the statement may need to be resuscitated or updated. If the parish has no such statement, it could be good to make it part of the group's workload in these early stages. If this is made into a consultative and participative process, it could be a useful part of engaging with the faith community.

For more, see *Tomorrow's Parish* by Donal Harrington, available from Columba Books.

LENT

Until love conquers fear

This year's Trócaire Lenten campaign focuses on land rights and specifically the stories of Maya, Maria and Patricia who all feature on this year's Trócaire box. Maya is a 10 year old who is living in one of Lebanon's refugee camps after her family fled from the Syrian war.

Maria is a nine year old girl from Guatemala whose family's land was violently stolen from them and their home burned down.

Patricia is an 8-year-old from Uganda whose family's land is being stolen from them, bit by bit. Here is a little bit more information on Patricia's situation.

"How can I provide for my children?"

"He came to our house and pulled a matchstick from his pocket. He took some grass, lit it and set fire to our house."

Evelyn (36) from the Gulu District in northern Uganda describes the night in 2015 when the uncle of her late husband tried to burn her and her young family out of their home.

When her husband died in 2011, Evelyn lost more than her life partner: she lost her security. Relatives of her deceased husband claimed that the land she lived on was rightfully theirs.

Around the world, millions of

women like Evelyn are denied the right to land. If their husband's die, they are left with nothing and no way to feed or care for their children.

With her husband's relatives seizing control of her land, Evelyn was soon left with only a quarter acre of land. It is not enough to feed her children.

"When we have run out of food, I go to work in other people's gardens for money," she says.

Patricia's smile When asked to describe her children Evelyn's face lights up. There is Ajok Flavia (17), Acayo Barbara (15), Onenecan Ivan (13), Opio Ronny (9) and Patricia (7).

Patricia's shy smile features on this year's Trócaire box.

"When you talk to Patricia, she

bends the head and the neck," says Evelyn. "That is her, she is shy and quiet."

It is a happy family, filled with children's laughing and playing, but Evelyn lives in a constant state of worry.

"I worry now because I do not have land and my children are growing," she says. "When they grow up into adults, where am I going to take them? That is my worry."

"My husband was not a rich man but at least we had piece of mind. We had the house. Life was better. He was responsible for all the fees, school fees, and medical fees. He was a good father who loved his children and loved people."

[Source: www.trocaire.orgz].

Find out what Trócaire is doing in these situations and how you can offer hope to Patricia, Maria and Maya this Lent at www.trocaire.org/getinvolved/len.



Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, March 21, 2019

Personal Profile

'Life-changing'
World Youth Day
reinspires strong
Faith

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Golden slumbers

Sleep is one of the most important things to watch in order to maintain a healthy body and mind it's often said, but despite this age-old wisdom today's hectic world seems to work against a good night's rest.

Existing in a time when visual entertainment from TV to the internet is always readily available, many workers answer emails long after they've clocked out and shift work defies the body's natural rhythms, switching off for the night seems increasingly difficult.

While these barriers exist, actual sleeping disorders which can be symptomatic of a hectic lifestyle must also be tackled head on. Ignoring them have



Chai Brady discusses the roadblocks to a good shut-eye

many unwanted ramifications both in the short and long term.

There's no need for doom and gloom though, because there are several simple steps to regain control of when you enter sleep's gentle embrace. Depending on if there's a baby in the house, whether your partner snores, or a plethora of other reasons, it's certainly not always easy to control sleeping patterns but it's certainly not the end of the world

when these issues arise.

Speaking to sleep expert Dr John Garvey, who is the Clinical Director of the Sleep Laboratory at St Vincent's University Hospital, the importance of your nightly slumber knows no bounds.

According to Dr Garvey the amount of sleep needed depends on the age of the individual. The general consensus among experts is that adults need between

7-9 hours, teenagers should sleep about eight-10 hours and children between six-12 years of age need nine-12 hours. Babies sleep the most, he says, "although their parents might not think so".

Napping

Napping generally isn't an issue for children aged up to 5 but it may become a problem for teenagers and adults.

"It can often lead to a dysfunctional pattern of sleep where they then have difficulty getting to sleep at night and they feel exhausted during the day again, then need their nap. They reinforce that pattern, so for certain individuals it can have a negative impact," Dr Garvey tells *The Irish Catholic*.

"Now there are certain sleep conditions where we will prescribe napping during the day and schedule naps so people can function, but for most of the population that is not something that can be helpful with regard to their overall sleep pattern."

The most common sleep disorder is insomnia and the issue with many insomniacs is they will have no problem sleeping during the day but just can't sleep at night. Avoiding that nap during the day may be difficult but ultimately beneficial.

Sleep disorders

The categories of patients he would see in his clinic fit into three overall categories:

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Family News



AND EVENTS

Do not be afraid, learn first aid

Keeping the family safe is a number one priority for parents and guardians, and with so many dangers out there, learning first aid could be a skill used on multiple occasions.

Family First Aid is a first aid awareness course designed specifically for carers, parents, grandparents or guardians of children and infants. The three-hour class teaches the basic life saving techniques needed to act quickly in the event of an infant or toddler first aid emergency.

Taking place in Studio 3 Yoga, Pilates and Holistic Centre, Monread Avenue in Naas, Co. Kildare on Sunday, April 28, it teaches several important skills.

These include applying CPR to infants and toddlers, techniques for dealing with choking, asthma, basic burns and scalds, infantile convulsions, fractures and sprains, meningitis and various childhood illnesses and ailments.

TurnAround safety run Family First Aid classes across all Kildare, Carlow, Kilkenny and Dublin in local venues, at times which suit busy family lifestyles. Cost of the class is €42.50 and tickets can be found at <https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/family-first-aid-tickets-45373748102?aff=ebdssbdestsearch#tickets>

WATCH OUT FOR YOUTH

DEPRESSION: A study published in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* finds the percentage of US teens and young adults reporting mental distress, depression and suicidal thoughts and actions has risen significantly over the past decade.

While these problems also increased among adults 26 and older, the increase was not nearly as large as among younger people.

Last week's study findings suggest a generational shift says psychologist Jean Twenge, from San Diego State University. To see a significant increase in negative psychological states "among our vulnerable population of teens and young adults is absolutely heart-breaking", she says.

Twenge and her colleagues analysed data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, a government survey that tracks mental health and substance use in individuals age 12 and over. They looked at survey responses from more than 200,000 adolescents ages 12 to 17 and almost 400,000 young adults ages 18 and over between 2005 and 2017.

They found the rate of individuals reporting symptoms consistent with major depression over the past year increased 52% in teens and 63% in young adults over a decade. Girls were more vulnerable than boys.

Sip, stow and go

Perfect for on the go, you can pick up a nifty reusable coffee cup that's in a league of its own when it comes to portability. Collapsible travel mugs are super compact, leak-proof and simple to use – and limit the wastage from disposable coffee cups. Once you have finished your drink, you can simply collapse the cup and store it in your purse, pocket, backpack or briefcase – perfect for the whole family.

They can be taken to the office, airport, gym, cafe, or park. Perfect for hiking, skiing, snowboarding and camping too.

These eco-friendly collapsible cups can be bought in several shops and online, priced between about €9-€15.



Lessons in love our children deserve

I always remember my mother giving me a little pamphlet titled *My Dear Daughter* which was the equivalent of what's commonly referred to as 'The Talk'. Schools often depend on outside-trained speakers now to supplement the information they deliver on sexuality and relationships. Parents may be relieved to leave this aspect of their children's education to the schools and trust that the job will be well done, and in a sensitive and age-appropriate way.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment in Ireland are conducting a review of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in both primary and post-primary schools. They asked for submissions from interested parties including parents. I had a look at their website and the research paper which aims to "support participants who wish to contribute to the review".

Reading through the paper by Dr Seline Keating, Prof. Mark Morgan and Dr Bernie Collins, I didn't find much that was in keeping with the Catholic vision of sexuality with its focus on helping children to become mature adults who are developing a deeper Christian understanding of human relations and the meaning of love.

Development

One section in the research paper on the NCCA website talks about how "listening authentically to the voices of children and young people is central to the development of programmes that provide positive and relevant experiences of RSE".

It goes on to quote from various sources which suggest that "what can be forgotten in the battlefield which is sexuality

A parent's perspective



Maria Byrne

education is the voice of the student: 'the voices, the desires and the pleasures that young people want to explore'.

Parents seem to be painted as not quite up to the job or hampered by "dominant cultural ideologies". Another observation on parents is that "research in the area of parents and sex communication provides evidence of a traditional, heteronormative and stereotypical approach in the home context".

What the research article has no reference to is the right of parents in a Catholic school to expect an RSE programme that's in line with Gospel values and the values of the Catholic faith. The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference have excellent guidelines on RSE education in Catholic schools. It's an education that is inspired by Jesus Christ and is person-centered with its focus on "developing the full potential of each person".

All those imparting Relationships and Sexuality Education in a Catholic school need to be guided by some basic principles. At the centre of these principles is the belief in the unique dignity of each human being and how sexuality is intimately connected to love, mutual self-giving, unity and fidelity.

Parents are the primary educators. Despite trends which can sideline us, we are the ones

who are entrusted with this important task and should be involved and consulted on every step of this developmental journey. I was talking to a friend recently whose son got a note home about an RSE programme being delivered in his school by an outside speaker.

Being a very involved and interested parent, she did a quick internet search of the website and social media pages of the proposed speaker. TheTalk.ie didn't in any way fulfil the criteria for the sort of RSE education she was hoping for her young son; In fact, it was the opposite. She was extremely concerned, as were other parents, when they viewed the speaker's online posts and videos.



Fortunately, on this occasion, parents were proactive and the speaker was cancelled. I had a look at the sites myself; one video had a list of suitable topics for nine-12 year olds which included contraception, the morning-after pill and STIs with reassurances that "nine- to 12-year-olds are well able for all this information". A shared post on her Facebook page was about an online course in "consensual non-monogamy" and the general vibe is one of sex being a fun activity and not much more.

The insistence that children should deal with an onslaught of information on sexuality at a young age contradicts the Catholic schools' guidelines

which advise that "the methods as well as the content must show the importance of sensitivity to the feelings of others, of courtesy, of self-restraint and of respect for the dignity and the privacy of other people".

“Our children and young people need to hear messages focused on the truth about sexuality, love, marriage and family”

Thinking of my own children, I can see the wisdom of this. Each one varied enormously in their maturity and readiness to hear and process some aspects of education on sexuality and love. I think what's really lost if faith and the love of God is erased from the picture is a pretty empty substitute. Sexual intimacy is the language of total self-giving.

Our children and young people need to hear messages focused on the truth about sexuality, love, marriage and family. The pastoral letter *Love is for Life* describes sexual union as a man and woman saying to each other: "I love you. There is nobody else in all the world I love in the way I love you. I love you just for being you. I want you to become even more wonderful than you are. I want to share my life and my world with you."

Our children deserve to hear about the joy and wonder of the Christian vision of love. It's a good news story that as Catholic parents we have to be willing to defend and impart before those with a very different image and agenda get there first.

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- People who can't sleep, or have difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep for whatever reason. That can either be insomnia or circadian rhythm disturbance; so there's a problem with their body clock.
- The second group is people who sleep enough but feel sleepy during the day, so their sleep is unrefreshing for whatever reason.
- The last group is people who do unusual things in their sleep. This can range from shouting, screaming, acting out their dreams, eating in their sleep or sexual activity in their sleep. They're less common.

Although insomnia is most common, Dr Garvey says the majority of patients referred to his clinic have a condition known as obstructive sleep apnea. Simply put, it occurs when the throat muscles relax intermittently and obstruct the airway during sleep. The most noticeable sign of this is snoring.

"The snoring is usually a nuisance or an annoyance for the bed partner, or the patient has been observed holding their breathe during sleep," he says.

"But I also see people who have circadian rhythm disturbances, where their clock has shifted and that's quite common with teenagers. Kids that are staying awake until 2am at night, can't get to sleep, and you can't get them out of bed the following morning."

“Although some may find alcohol helps them get to sleep, it often leads to disruptive sleep patterns”

Restless legs syndrome is another cause of sleeplessness Dr Garvey observes, which mainly affects older patients. It causes discomfort, generally at night, and stops people getting to sleep or disrupts it. "They just feel that they need to move their legs, they get a discomfort within them and just have to move them in order to get comfortable," he says.

The more unusual sleep issues can be "extremely disturbing". A general practitioner will often refer a patient to a specialist when they present with some of these lesser known concerns.

Dr Garvey says: "Sleepwalking is extremely common, 10% of the population will have done it at any stage in their life."

"Usually you kind of grow out of it as you move into adulthood so it's only about 1% of adults who will sleepwalk, but it can have significant consequences where it creates safety issues for the patient themselves or their bed partner."

"It's too specific to give a general recommendation but if there's any concerns with regard to these things a review at a specialist clinic is probably helpful."

Sleep apps

Nowadays many people use smartphone apps to track their sleep, some will have smart watches that monitor their heart rate. They tell the user how many hours of REM and how many hours of deep sleep they've had, but Dr Garvey says they aren't fully accurate.

"Deep sleep is not a standard



scientific definition so how we define sleep is either Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep which makes up 20-25% of a night's sleep or non-REM sleep which makes up what's left," he says.

"Non-REM sleep, there are different stages to it. So you have stage one, stage two and then you have stage three which is slow wave sleep."

"That staging of sleep varies throughout our lifetime. So older people will have very little slow wave sleep, babies will tend to have more REM."

It's not as straightforward as saying you need a certain amount of stage one or stage two sleep for our bodies to be able to do certain things, he says. "I suppose the most important thing that people can do in modern society is facilitate enough time in their lives for sleep, not to get hung up on this app telling me I have this type of sleep"

Regarding the apps he says some have been validated by certain companies but they are not as "robust" as an actual sleep study in a laboratory.

Another thing to watch out for is the 'nightcap', although some may find alcohol helps them get to sleep, it often leads to disruptive sleep patterns, particularly if it's not consumed in moderation. This includes bathroom breaks during the night and subsequently an inability to fall back to sleep, which leads to what is called sleep maintenance insomnia.

Smartphones have also been heralded as a major sleeping roadblock. Dr Garvey agrees but says the issue is much more intricate than just blaming one device or screen.

"The thing that effects our body clocks the greatest is exposure to light. I suppose even our artificial light in comparison to what we have had for centuries – in terms of candlelight – our bodies are biologically tuned to having daylight during the day and darkness at night and disruption to that for any reason can have a negative impact on our sleep."

The issue of artificial light and screens is just a "single facet" in the modern world which is making it increasingly difficult for people to switch off.

"Over the last 30 years we've seen a change from when TV ran from 8-9am to midnight and the national anthem played, now it's a

24hour entertainment source. Our access to everything has changed, society has moved towards being a 24 hour society.

"I think it is not just a case of excessive screen time, and screen time at an inappropriate time can lead to a disruption of sleep, but we're increasingly becoming aware of the impact that shift work, let's say, can have on people's overall health."

"There's been a Scandinavian study which looked at shift work in nurses and identified it as a potential carcinogen, I suppose it's not so much the screen per say but it's anything that impacts on our sleep in that fashion."

He adds that regular exercise is recommended for overall good health, this too applies if someone wants to have a better sleep. Exercising just before going to sleep isn't always the best choice and can lead to difficulty sleeping but many people aren't affected and doing some exercise during the day is better than doing none at all.

Lack of sleep has several immediate consequences, which anyone who's only slept a few hours or missed a night will understand, but the long term consequences can be much more severe. This includes developing dementia.

"I suppose a good example with regard to that was Maggie Thatcher who said that she only required four or five hours sleep each night, I'm not saying it's cause and effect but she's an example of somebody who said that that was the case who later in life developed cognitive impairment," Dr Garvey says.

"We also know that too long a sleep time can have negative effects as well, it can increase your risk of the metabolic syndrome, obesity and diabetes, an optimal amount of sleep is what we should be aiming for."

He adds there's also an association between sleep apnea and increased cardiovascular risk, which is most evident in men but "probably does exist in women who are post-menopausal", but it is "very much an active area of research".

Fundamentally humans have a need to sleep throughout a third of their lives, with Dr Garvey saying that its importance hasn't been respected "to the level that we've needed to". In the past few decades it's received more focus, which isn't long in the world of medicine, but one thing is for sure, there's nothing better than a good night's sleep.

Faith —IN THE— family

Bairbre Cahill



I have found the need this Lent to change things up a bit. I approached Ash Wednesday and the coming weeks with a sense of dread. I usually go off coffee and various other things. This year I just found myself wondering what I was doing and why.

I have been particularly busy recently and have been on my laptop many evenings, trying to catch up on emails and other bits of work. Inevitably that means I have been going to bed with my head buzzing with ideas which have infiltrated my dreams and left me with a less than restful sleep.

As a mammy I often talk to my now adult children about 'balance'. I have one doing the Leaving Cert, another in her final year at college, one doing a demanding science degree and another running a full-time job and various other jobs in Belfast. I tell them they need balance, they can't be putting themselves under pressure all the time. I extol the benefits of playing sport, listening to music, having a laugh and just relaxing. The problem is, I don't seem to have been listening to my own advice.

“Lent can be a time to buy less, consume less, become mindful of our relationship with the Earth and try to be less wasteful”

Consequently, I found myself approaching Lent feeling truly bent out of shape by the number and weight of things I was carrying. The result was I would go to bed and be too tired and too grumpy to really want to pray. On Ash Wednesday I was still grappling with what to do for Lent. I had the presumption that I would go off the usual things – simply because that is what I have done before.

From somewhere though there was a wee voice saying, 'Is that what you really need this Lent? Should you be doing

that simply because you have done it before? Should you not maybe think about this?"

And so, I have decided that this Lent I am going to re-find my balance. I am trying to be mindful about the choices I am making. I am not going off coffee but I am trying to stop and think about it when the coffee urge strikes. Is this something I need to give me a buzz and get me through work or is caffeine the last thing I need right now? Does my need for coffee reflect a deeper reality that I am pushing myself too hard and need to step back – or do I just really fancy sitting down with a friend for a chat and a cuppa? As I say, it is about being mindful.

Am I just being a chancer? Am I opting out of Lent? I hope not. I really do think Lent is a time to rediscover our balance in life.

That is something that applies to all of us.

Addicted

A child who is absolutely fascinated by – some would say addicted to – the online game Fortnite could find Lent a useful time to rebalance, putting more time into playing outside, getting creative, reading, helping around the house. For many Lent can be a time to buy less, consume less, become mindful of our relationship with the Earth and try to be less wasteful.

I am involved in facilitating parenting programmes and sometimes a family will feel that things have got out of hand, they don't know where to begin. Particularly when children are able to understand – so anything from about three years of age – it is possible for parents to say: "Okay, we are going to make a few changes here."

It is an opportunity to begin again, whether that is in terms of bed time, screen time, meal times or whatever. Maybe Lent is as good a time as ever to give that a go.

We all need balance. When we have that balance, we are more able to be loving and caring to others. Perhaps these weeks, with some mindful living, can help us find it.



Personal Profile



Chai Brady speaks to Eimear Felle from Mary's Meals

Never underestimate the power of World Youth Day (WYD) as it can be a "life-changing" and eye-opening experience, according to one Faith-filled Irish woman.

Now the Communications Co-ordinator for charity Mary's Meals, Eimear Felle (34) to this day thanks the event for giving her so much, including a deeper Faith.

Dublin-born Eimear, along with her brother, was raised in Clondalkin by her mother and grandmother. Now living in Blanchardstown, she says her upbringing was "unconventional".

"I would probably state that I had an exceptional childhood despite the fact that there was no father around," Eimear says.

"I spoke to a priest recently who said the functionality of family needs a father and a mother and I said there are always exceptions and I believe I am one of those exceptions, as with my brother, we never missed out on anything and Faith was a huge part of my life."

Bible bashers'

Although not "bible bashers", her family, particularly her grandmother, inspired her as a person who had "an incredible" Faith that she carried throughout her entire life.

Eimear says: "We always prayed together as a family, if anybody got sick or had an accident the first

thing we did was pray together and we've carried that into our adult lives, my brother and myself.

"Our neighbour unfortunately recently died and the first thing we did was pray together. In an unconventional way it's almost a habit, but I don't want to say habit it's just a natural thing to do."

Her family have been strengthened by this and despite many odds, including the death of Eimear's grandmother when she was 27-years-old, she says "because I had Faith I got through it".

It was in her late teens that she began to drift away from the feelings she had about religion. Although Eimear never stopped going to Mass or praying it became more of a habit, there was less feeling behind her worship.

Then in 2005 her best friend invited her to go to World Youth Day in Cologne together when she was 20 years old – two years after Eimear completed her Leaving Cert.

“The priest she approached was ‘so human’, and she had the best ever experience of Confession”

"I was always open, I never closed myself off to religion, it was always there. I suppose I just wasn't always committed. Then I went to World Youth Day and everything changed," she says.

"It was literally life changing. Being in the same vicinity as literally one million people of your

Eimear Felle with Archbishop Diarmuid Martin and Dublin volunteer group member Orlagh Buckley.

age, wanting to pray and loving Jesus and being very outward about it, it was a real eye-opener because I'd never experienced anything like that before – and it wasn't overwhelming at all. I thought it might be but it wasn't. It was just so much fun, everybody was happy, we were all tired but it was a good tired."

She had a powerful moment when she met a priest in a cathedral in Cologne. Eimear went to Germany with the Emmanuel Community and met with a smaller group of people from all over the world at a forum in Kevelaer before going on to Cologne.

When she arrived in the city and they were sitting down for dinner she began to feel "unsettled", even after going for a walk the feeling did not pass. It became stronger and stronger until she told her friends she was going to visit the nearby cathedral. Her best friend accompanied her.

The priest she approached was "so human", and she had the best experience of Confession she ever had. Eimear says he "took my hand and he just told me that I was loved and that everything was going to be ok and I just burst into tears".

Speaking of her experience at WYD she says: "It solidified my want for faith in every aspect in my life, it made me realise I'm no use without it. Even through the tough times I realise if I'm not able to recite an actual prayer, talking to God is just as good if not better."

After working in her family newsagent for a number of years she went on to become a Fundraising Co-ordinator at Mary's Meals. The charity's goals include providing chronically hungry children with a school meal each day in order for them to engage in education and consequently be lifted from poverty later in life.

Complications

There was complications in Eimear's application process that might have cost her the job if it wasn't for the advice of a friend, who told her to call the Mary's Meals office to find out the status of her application. She was informed that they had never received her CV. After realising there was a formatting issue in the document she sent, Eimear quickly redrafted it over Easter and sent it once again. Shortly after that she received the call she had been hoping to get.

"I just love to give I'm always looking after others, it's just my human nature," says Eimear.

"So finding a job where in fact I can work to help others was just perfect, and who wouldn't want to help starving children receive food and an education? It wouldn't seem right if somebody said no to that."

Taking up a new role as Communications Co-ordinator last month, entering her fifth year in the charity and with Faith giving her strength, there's no doubt Eimear is ready for whatever lies ahead.

'Life-changing' World Youth Day reinspires strong Faith



Eimear Felle.



Children's Corner

Chai Brady

Are you ready to rocket?

Despite billions of dollars and euro being spent on space travel, building your own rocket doesn't have to cost a cent. With some household material and a bit of DIY you can spend some quality time with your own team of family scientists building one.

All you will need is:

- A balloon – round ones will work but the longer 'airship' balloons work best.
- One long thin piece of string, it should preferably be about 10-15 feet long.
- One plastic straw or something that is similar.
- Tape.

What you need to do with your team is tie one end of the string to a chair, door knob, or some other support and then put the other end of the string through a straw.

Pull the string tight and tie it to another support in the room, make sure the string is taught or at least not bending too much.

Blow up the balloon but don't tie it at the end. Pinch the end of it and tape the balloon to the straw. Make sure the straw is taped along the

length of the balloon. Now you're ready for your launch and be sure to count down from 10. Let go and watch the rocket blast off!

So how does it work? It's all about the air and thrust. As the air rushes out of the balloon, it creates a forward motion called thrust.

Force

Thrust is a pushing force created by energy. In the balloon experiment, our thrust comes from the energy of the balloon forcing the air out. Different sizes and shapes of balloon will create more or less thrust. In a real rocket, thrust is created by the force of burning rocket fuel as it blasts from the rocket's engine – as the engines blast down, the rocket goes up. The project above is a demonstration. To make it a true experiment, you can try to answer these questions:

- Does the shape of the balloon affect how far, or fast, the rocket travels?
- Does the length of the string affect how far, or fast, the rocket travels?



- Does the type of string affect how far, or fast, the rocket travels? (Try fishing line, nylon string, cotton string, etc.)
- Does the angle of the string affect how far, or fast, the rocket travels?

According to Newton's Third Law of Motion, every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Therefore, as the gas is released from the balloon, it pushes against the outside air, and the outside air pushes back. As a result, the rocket is propelled forward by the opposing force. This opposing force is thrust.

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Christchurch massacre stops the clock

One of the biggest media stories of the week was the massacre at the mosques in New Zealand, and among the hours of coverage I heard a few items that hit the right tone.

I was impressed by the host's interview with New Zealand's ambassador on Saturday with Cormac Ó hEadhra (RTÉ Radio 1) last weekend and I liked Michael Comyn's dignified approach on *The Leap of Faith* (RTÉ Radio 1) last Friday night. He decried hatred based on religion or ethnicity, and referenced all the religious people he has had on the show whose faith leads them to acts of compassion. These don't often make the headlines in a media landscape that thrives on conflict, scandal and knee jerk reactions.

The main item on the show was a seasonal item on St Patrick. I would have preferred a reflective and critical look at the way we celebrate our Christian heritage while abandoning many features of Christian teaching and values but instead we got an interesting look at the historical Patrick.

In a way it was familiar territory – we know little enough about the historical figure, and there has been lots of spin from the beginning, as various factions, dioceses and areas claimed a piece of him, and perhaps there was a little



Katherine Jenkins presented *Songs of Praise* from Belfast (BBC1).

too much of the iconoclasm as some of the familiar stories were knocked as massaging, fabrications, even deliberate lies. The guest historians rightly concentrated on Patrick's own writings, especially the *Confessio*, which revealed a very human person with endearing vulnerabilities.

Last Sunday's *Songs of Praise* (BBC1) also marked the occasion, in a more upbeat way. Katherine Jenkins presented the programme from Belfast's Titanic quarter, where we were treated to various stories from the history of the ill-fated ship, including

the inspiring tale of passenger and pastor John Harper who gave away his lifebelt to save someone else. (I was reminded of the emerging stories of those losing their lives in the defence of others in the mosques massacre.)

There was much talk of life in the shipyards when Harland & Wolff was thriving, even of how there were prayer and Bible groups in the workplace and of how the company built some "wee tin churches", some of which are still in use.

There was nothing about the discrimination and sec-

tarianism associated with the shipyard, which felt like an obvious omission, but then for the saint's feast day maybe it was appropriate to leave it out for now to move beyond that and leave it to history – we have enough dangerous divisions and destructive identity politics. Bringing people together was the mission of the Titanic Quarter's innovative Dock Café, where instead of items being priced there's an honesty box for customers to pay what they think is fair – definitely going to have a bite there on my next trip to Belfast.

Favourite

It was news to me that the hymn 'What a Friend We Have in Jesus' was originally a touching prayer for his mother written by Banbridge man Joseph Scriven, found after his death and later set to music. It was one of the many



Cormac Ó hEadhra.

PICK OF THE WEEK

UNPLANNED – BEHIND THE SCENES

EWTN, Sunday, March 24, 9.30pm, also Tuesday, March 26, 11.30am.

About the film, *Unplanned*, the true story of former Planned Parenthood clinic director Abby Johnson's conversion and journey to becoming a pro-life advocate.

CATHOLIC LIVES

EWTN, Wednesday, March 27, 5.30pm

Richard Moore, founder of Children in the Crossfire, shares his story of adversity and forgiveness – he was blinded as a child by a plastic bullet during the Troubles.

THE CRUSADES

BBC4, Thursday, March 28, 8pm

Dr Thomas Asbridge challenges the popular misconception that the medieval crusades sparked a clash of civilisations between Islam and the West that continues to this day.

songs featured from a variety of churches in Northern Ireland – that and 'Be Thou My Vision' were my favourites.

'Be Thou My Vision' also featured on the *St Patrick's Day Mass* on RTÉ1 which came from the beautiful St Patrick's Church in Strandhill, Co. Sligo.

It started with an introduction to the Christian heritage of the area the 'noble inheritance of a pilgrim people', with a topical reference to 'the gifts a newcomer can bring'.

Obviously much thought went into the blessing of the shamrock, and among the hymns I loved the rendition of 'Peace Prayer' composed by Liam Lawton.

Also on RTÉ1 that Sunday morning *Celebrate St Patrick* was an enjoyable concert from St Patrick's Cathedral in

Armagh, with a variety of impressive choirs singing some of the familiar songs associated with the saint, and yes, 'Be Thou My Vision' featured yet again – no complaints about that!

The piece that stood out most for me was 'Because of You' sung by the Voices of Ireland, a group conducted by concert producer John Anderson.

The documentary interludes from key locations in Armagh and Down were enjoyable and informative, presented in an amiable and easy going way by Graham Little, striking an appropriately positive tone for the day that was in it.

✉ boregan@hotmail.com, @boreganmedia



Aubrey Malone

Film

Anguished final years of a post-impressionist artist

At Eternity's Gate (12A)

Hollywood has never really understood artists. Kirk Douglas won an Oscar nomination for essaying the role of Vincent van Gogh in Vincente Minnelli's *Lust for Life* in 1956 but his performance was way over the top. Jacques Dutronc presented him in a much more nuanced manner in Maurice Pialat's *Van Gogh* in 1991.

Julian Schnabel, a former artist himself, here treads a middle ground between Douglas and Dutronc. His film is less biopic than psychic interrogation.

Coming just a year after the animated *Loving Vincent*,



Willem Dafoe stars as Vincent van Gogh.

it has Willem Dafoe as the tortured artist who's left Paris for the rural richness of Arles. He's almost twice the age van Gogh was when he died but he gives a performance of such mastery that one is content to overlook this. It's right up there with his portrayal of

Jesus in Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

Schnabel dwells on his craggy face as his mind unravels, evaluating him from the inside out as we witness a kind of nervous breakdown in slow motion. Dafoe's features become the palette upon

which Benoit Delhomme's exquisite cinematography etches in his psychological disintegration.

It's a work of great visual splendour, like a painting itself at times, though it has problems. Tatiana Lisovakia's piano score is too shrieking, for example. And the camera swivel is often too jerky. The mixture of French and English also confuses.

Confusion

Mads Mikkelsen plays a priest who expresses confusion about van Gogh's artistry after he's committed to an asylum. Rupert Friend is perhaps too lightweight as his brother Theo. Oscar Isaac is Paul Gauguin, the friend with whom he argues about artistic tech-

nique.

It's a staccato film that seems much longer than its 111 minutes. But it avoids sensationalism, even when it suggests van Gogh was shot by others rather than himself.

Too many people know him only for the dramatic elements in his life – the madness, the ear-cutting, the suicide. Schnabel is more interested in how he substitutes the monochrome 'real' world for the multi-coloured artist's one. And how loneliness drives him to despair.

He leaves us in little doubt that this is a doomed figure who'll be appreciated more by posterity than his contemporaries. "Maybe God made me a painter for people who aren't born yet," he laments.

As the title indicates, he contemplates the hereafter as the finite mortal world becomes increasingly unbearable to him.

The film goes from depression to catharsis as van Gogh embraces the healing power of art. "Sometimes they say I'm mad," he reflects elegiacally, "but a grain of madness is the best of art."

Would he have been the genius he was if he didn't suffer so much? Was he a pantheistic visionary or a holy fool? Schnabel doesn't attempt to answer such questions, content to tabulate the heartache of a man who loved not wisely but too well.

And who died because of the excessive passion he devoted to his craft.

Excellent
★★★★★



BookReviews

Peter Costello



The memory of the dead past...in the

Forgetful Remembrance: Social Forgetting and Vernacular Historiography of a Rebellion in Ulster by Guy Beiner (Oxford University Press, £35.00)

Ian d'Alton

Troublesome memories, or memories of troubles? This fascinating book is about memory, and how the contemporary inevitably colours perceptions of the past.

In that context, pinning down memory is always aiming at a moving target. Don't



Guy Beiner at the Templepatrick grave of William Orr.

be put off by the book's rather clunky subtitle – it says what is in the tin. As the author – a PhD graduate of UCD, but currently a professor of modern history in an Israeli university – succinctly puts

it: it is 'an exploration of how an episode in provincial history, in a peripheral corner of Europe, was paradoxically both forgotten and remembered locally'.

Beiner is in essence an

analyst of memory, and of a different way of approaching history. Thus this study, while hanging on the peg of the history of a particular strain of memory of the 1798 rebellion, is much more than that.

It attempts to disentangle myth and history – 'mythistory' – an oftentimes lethal construct where truth for one is myth for another.

Chord

The book is as much about forgetting as remembering. It strikes a chord with this reviewer, who recognises in Beiner's thesis much of what has gone on in the west Cork

Protestant community since the traumas of the revolutionary period.

There, remembrance has become selective. Sometimes it hasn't seemed to be there at all, not because the events are deliberately wiped from social memory, or because it was not politic for the community to remember them – but simply because it was no longer necessary, useful or significant to do so. Historians can fall into the trap that history is important to lay people. For most, it isn't.

This book is a dense read, but rewarding. Beiner's scholarship is exemplary. The referencing and bibliography is

mind-bogglingly comprehensive. His writing is complex, but light in touch. This book needs to be taken at a sedate walk, not a canter.

What gives it shape for the general reader is its narrative style, in the sense that it is a journey through the Ulster mindset, in time and space, as it charts and analyses how and why the 1798 rebellion was remembered, forgotten, commemorated and decommemorated through the nineteenth and into the twenty-first century.

Its chapter headings give a flavour of what is under discussion here – such as silencing, unforgiveness,

A neglected tradition in Irish art

Making their Mark: Irish Painter-Etchers 1880-1930 an exhibition curated by Anne Hodge (NGI) and Dr Angela Griffith (TCD) National Gallery of Ireland, Merrion Square, Dublin - runs to 30 June 2019. Admission free.

Peter Costello

A current exhibition at the NGI explores an almost forgotten aspect of modern Irish art, the activities of a small but influential and very talented group of etchers of Irish origin over the decades of the late Victorian era and the first decades of the 20th Century. Going beyond the resources of the NGI, items have been drawn from other collections, notably the British Museum and Trinity College.

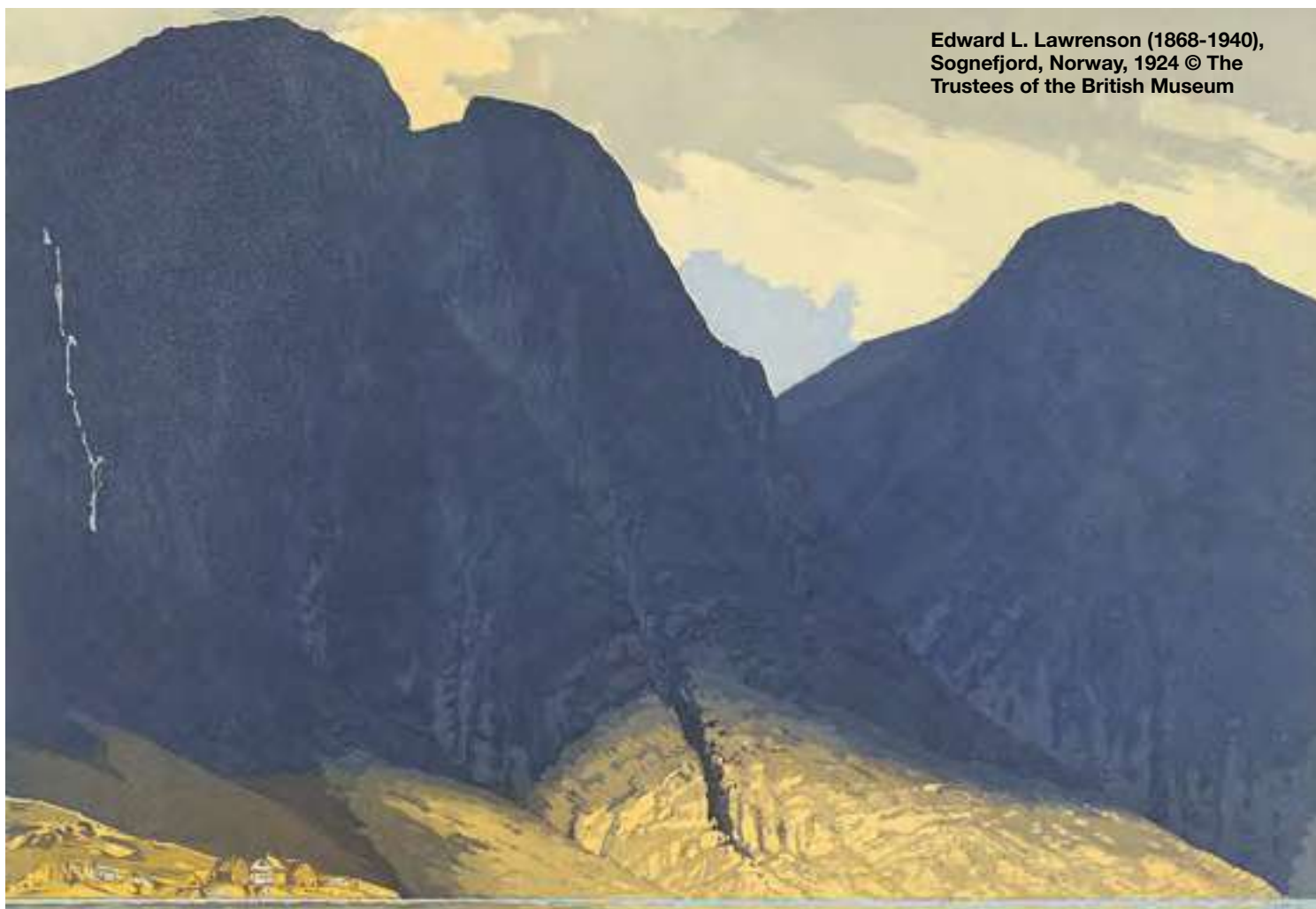
The show is, in a way, dominated by a set of aquatints by Edward L. Lawrence (1868-1940) of a Norwegian fjord which is very powerful indeed; beside it is an image of Gordale Scar, an iconic place, which must have been imaged by many of the artists of the romantic tendency in Britain. But for Dubliners there is also what must be a unique image: the bottle blowers in the 'Glass House' down in Ringsend.

These are very dramatic items, but on the whole etchers preferred, and their medium blossomed in, quieter undramatic images of little corners of city and country, and pensive well-lived in faces.

Standing out also are the etchings made by Estella Solomons, largely in the 1920s, which have been greatly admired since they were first published.

But here a long context is provided to her work by images from 17 Irish artists and some seven of their influential teachers or inspirers.

Of particular interest to some readers will be the very striking portrait of Fr William Delaney SJ, the president of University College



Edward L. Lawrence (1868-1940), Sognefjord, Norway, 1924 © The Trustees of the British Museum

in Joyce's day, one of the most significant figures in the development of Irish third level education. I had never seen this before. It expresses very well the personality of an important and memorable man.

It was, it seems, the lucky creation of a chance request for him to pose for Strang at an influential demonstration and show of etching in 1910 arranged by Dermot O'Brien. O'Brien invited the Jesuit to sit for the artist, remarking that he was 'a most pleasant man with a

fine head for Strang's work'.

Also remarkable are George Atkinson's etching of the Shannon Scheme works, which make a contrast to Sean Keating's more familiar and more extravagant paintings and drawings.

Indeed, an interest in this show is to see the work of well known painters such as Lavery, Roderick O'Connor, Walter Osborne and S. C. Harrison, who rarely worked in this medium.

But the real enjoyment in the

show comes from the pastoral and picturesque images of another Ireland, one which so-called 'progress' has badly damaged.

I have always been surprised by the disdain in which etchings and engraving are held. For those of limited means they make an ideal entry into collecting in a small way, being comparatively cheap.

These are not mass produced images, for each one has to be worked, inked and pulled by hand. But somehow to the investing col-

lector they are not seen as 'real art'; the curators of the show suggests that this is the way it has been in Ireland since the 1890s.

(By the way, Estella Solomon's image of McDaid's is not the well-known literary pub, but rather Hugh McDaid's place at 27 D'Olier Street, leading into that strange little world of second-hand dealers in Leinster Market, that became a pseudo-Tudor passage with the building of the Gas Company offices.)

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.

lives of the living

fictionalised memory, imagined reminiscence, partitioned memory, breaking silence, and troubled forgetting.

Beiner paints on a wide canvas; he interrogates the material world in particular to create a three-dimensional and vivid argument.

Detection

His 'vernacular historiography' is an exercise in detection, more akin to archaeology perhaps, as he excavates hidden oral histories, indirectness in unexplored and unexpected places, and sources such as film, poetry and plays.

Historians are often more

conscious of what isn't there, what isn't said. Silences can sometimes speak volumes. Thus it is in this study.

Forgetting is not necessarily passive; it can be a conscious and active act not to remember. Thus, northern Presbyterians often actively 'forget' their forebears' involvement in the United Irish rebellion of 1798; that simply does not fit the current loyalist narrative.

(In the same vein, the Irish Parliamentary Party's contribution to independence was conveniently shunted into an historical siding and allowed to rust and crumble away.)

And a taciturn society,

which northern Presbyterianism often shows itself to be, is one in which reticence can trump remembrance anyway – Seamus Heaney's "whatever you say, say nothing" is ever-present on these pages.

We're doing a lot of remembering on this island at the moment. Guy Beiner's wonderful book puts that activity into a wider context and embeds it into a deeper conceptual framework – reminding us, perhaps, that while remembrance is important and useful to the psychological health of a community, its alter ego, forgetting, may be equally significant.

The swashbuckling Whaley

Buck Whaley: Ireland's greatest adventurer
by David Ryan
(Merrion Press, €16.95 / £14.99)

Andrew Carpenter

This is a highly entertaining, well-written account of the life of one of 18th-Century Ireland's most famous characters, Thomas 'Buck' Whaley.

Born into a wealthy Anglo-Irish landowning family in 1765 – he was the heir of landowner, magistrate and former Member of Parliament Richard Chappell Whaley, better known to some as 'Burn Chapel Whaley', of strong anti-Catholic views – the young 'Buck' was initially brought up in the family home in Dublin, 96 Stephen's Green; this palatial building is now part of Newman House, and is still the setting for some of the most spectacular interior plasterwork in Dublin.

However, the boy was not impressed by his surroundings and soon showed signs of restlessness and a love of danger, later describing himself as having 'strong passions, a lively imagination and a spirit that could brook no restraint'.

After education in Portarlington and Paris, Buck Whaley embarked on a life of spectacular expenditure, squandering the equivalent of hundreds of millions of euros in 15 years. Much of the money went in gambling, but his love of drink meant he was easy prey for cardsharpers and cheats all over Europe,

and he was pursued by creditors all his adult life.

Whaley was drawn to almost any kind of danger – trying to climb Mont Blanc without proper equipment, potholing in unexplored caves deep below Gibraltar, engaging in duels (one over an early incident of 'road rage'), or trying to rescue the French king, Louis XVI, from the guillotine.

Another of his lifelong activities was chasing women and wherever he went, Whaley left behind him a trail of beautiful girls, seduced and abandoned. As David Ryan's book charts an expert course through all Whaley's romantic and physical adventures, the reader can only admire the man's physical stamina and it comes as little surprise to learn that he died at the age of only 34.

Caper

Whaley's most famous caper was his extraordinary return journey from Dublin to Jerusalem in 1788-89. This was undertaken for a wager and exposed him to all kinds of dangers: storms, pirates, the plague, a ruthless Turkish governor and the appalling privations of travel in the Middle East at that time.

This is the best documented part of Whaley's life and Ryan gives the reader a good idea not only of the strange and unsettling things



Whaley and his companions saw and experienced on the trip, but of their response to the exotic and dangerous world through which they were travelling.

We learn a lot, also, about life on the European continent in the last years of the

18th Century, particularly about the world of gambling and high life. The book contains a lot of information which Ryan has drawn from three primary sources – Whaley's own memoirs, the letters he wrote to his Irish agent and an unpublished manuscript journal kept by the man who accompanied Whaley to Jerusalem, Captain Hugh Moore.

Though the result is a book full of information, Ryan handles his scholarship lightly and the book is a pleasure to read: there are useful illustrations, including the striking portrait on the cover showing Whaley as a young man about to embark on a life of adventure and dissipation.

Still, it was his personal resilience that kept Whaley alive and, despite all his failings, one cannot help but like this irresponsible wastrel.

David Ryan's previous book, *Blasphemers & Blackguards: The Irish Hellfire Clubs* (Merrion Press, €16.99) will fill out more of the 18th Century background for interested readers.

WebWatch

Greg Daly

Patrick's clear sense of mission not on parade

Anybody watching St Patrick's Day festivities with a thoughtful eye last weekend must have wondered what exactly was being celebrated. Was it Irishness? Maybe so, but that's missing the point of the day in spectacular fashion: St Patrick's Day is, after all, a celebration of the gift that Patrick and other missionaries brought to Ireland, and that Ireland subsequently shared with the world. It's not – until recently at any rate – been a celebration of Ireland simply as Ireland.

Of course, there's a sense in which St Patrick's Day has simply been hollowed out by the forces of secularism, capitalism and naked hedonism, in the same way as Christmas, Easter and Halloween have been, but the irony of that this year has been spectacular.

As Fr Seán Connolly writes in 'On the Evangelisation and Re-Evangelisation of Ireland' at catholicworldreport.com: "But this St. Patrick's Day is not like the others. It is the first since last spring's referendum, in which 66.4% of the Irish population voted to legalise abortion, leaving us to wonder, have the snakes returned to Ireland? This appalling result epitomises the rapid decline of the Church in a land Pope St Paul VI once called 'the most Catholic country in the world' and Pope Saint John Paul II once lauded as 'semper fidelis' – always faithful."

Are we left, he asks, with the sad conclusion that the work of the Apostle of Ireland has been undone?

Rebuilding

In many ways, he says, the answer is simply 'Yes'. Acknowledging that the Church's failings in the child sexual abuse crisis have played no small part in this, he equally concedes that there is still Faith in Ireland, and that there are still more practicing Catholics in Ireland than



in most western European countries.

Any rebuilding, he speculates, will depend on the pro-life movement and on monasticism and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, while over at aleteia.org, Fr Michael Rennie speculates that going backwards may be the best way of going forward for the western Church at large.

“Many Christians are beginning to feel like aliens in a strange land, that we are inhabiting an increasingly non-Christian culture”

In 'Why the "Patrick Option" may be the best way to live as a Christian today', Fr Rennie ventures that Ireland's monastic and missionary history may be the variant of the oft-discussed Benedict Option that offers most today.

While Fr Rennie's argument sometimes slips into suggesting that promoting the Faith is a means to promoting civilisation in a wider sense – something Pope Benedict in an impressive September 2008 speech emphatically stressed St Benedict had never done – Fr Rennie is surely on to something with his argument that the conversion of pagan Ireland offers lessons for today.

Noting that "the life of Patrick is far more inspiring than your local St Paddy's

parade would lead you to believe", he says the key to Patrick's success was his ability to interact with the non-Christian native culture.

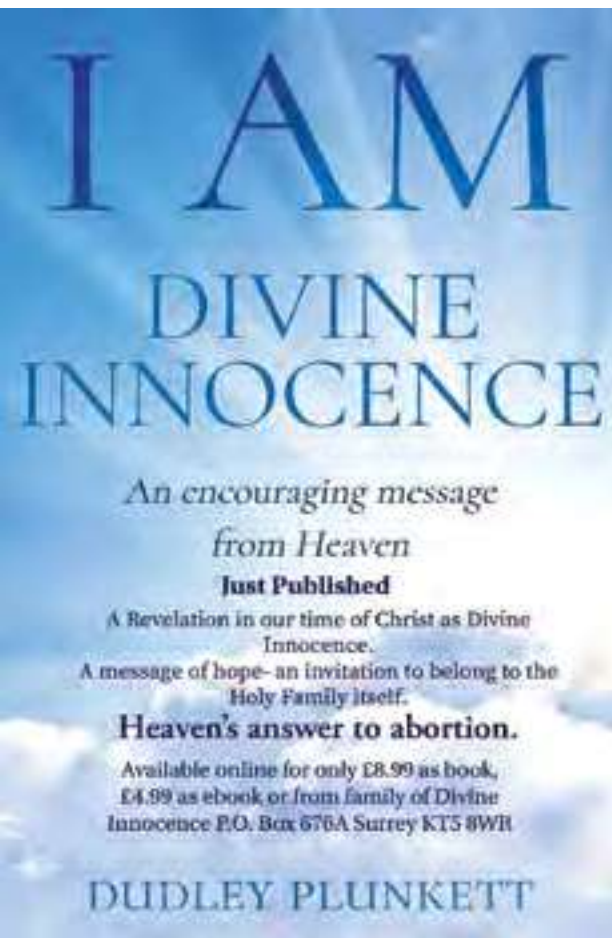
"It seems to me that many Christians are beginning to feel like aliens in a strange land, that we are inhabiting an increasingly non-Christian culture. So perhaps the Patrick Option is the medicine we need for modern times," he says, noting that in his *Confession*, a document written late in his life Patrick makes clear that he never separated himself from the people, considered the chance to interact with a foreign culture to be a blessing, remained faithful to his identity and beliefs, and never wrote anyone off.

"Ultimately, what made St Patrick so influential was his combination of having a clear sense of his mission and values, his willingness to share that with a hostile culture, and his commitment to interacting with that culture in an authentic way," Fr Rennie writes. "We are in much the same position that he was."

● Speaking of Patrick, it would be remiss to sign off this week without a nod to Haley Stewart's remarkable churchofchristlife.nd.edu piece, 'A knight in St Patrick's Purgatory'. It's an extraordinary article, based on a thesis that helped draw her into the Church, exploring a 12th-Century French poem about Lough Derg. Unmissable.

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The Miracle Prayer

Dear Heart of Jesus,
In the past I have asked for many favours.

This time I ask for a special one. (mention here)

Take it, dear Heart of Jesus, and place it within your own broken Heart where your Father sees it.

Then, in his merciful eyes, it will become your favour, not mine. Amen.

Say this prayer for three days.

C.

The Miracle Prayer

Dear Heart of Jesus,
In the past I have asked for many favours.

This time I ask for a special one. (mention here)

Take it, dear Heart of Jesus, and place it within your own broken Heart where your Father sees it.

Then, in his merciful eyes, it will become your favour, not mine. Amen.

Say this prayer for three days.

S.M.



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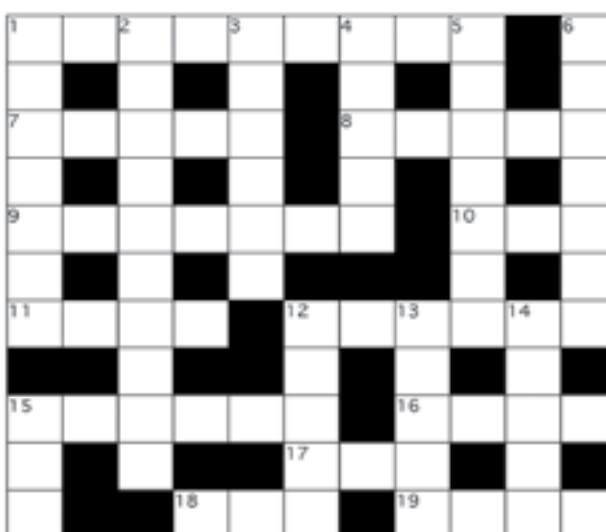
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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 274



ACROSS

- 1 Use it to see things that are far away (9)
7 Discuss, or have a fight with words (5)
8 Go in (5)
9 You list them in the alphabet (7)
10 Lady who is a member of a religious order (3)
11 The part of a plant that is under the ground (4)
12 Spiky plant that grows in some deserts (6)
15 Pay attention to what someone is saying (6)
16 They followed the Pied Piper (4)
17 You might use this word when speaking to your father (3)

DOWN

- 18 Travel through the air (3)
19 Small building in the back garden (4)
1 Fishing-boat (7)
2 It warns ships of rocky dangers (10)
3 Stockholm is the capital of this EU country (6)
4 Unlocks (5)
5 Completely finished off, like the dodo (7)
6 Mother and father (7)
12 What Americans call sweets (5)
13 You need them to play Snap (5)
14 Undo a knot (5)
15 Large piece of wood for the fire (3)

SOLUTIONS, MARCH 14

GORDIUS No.394

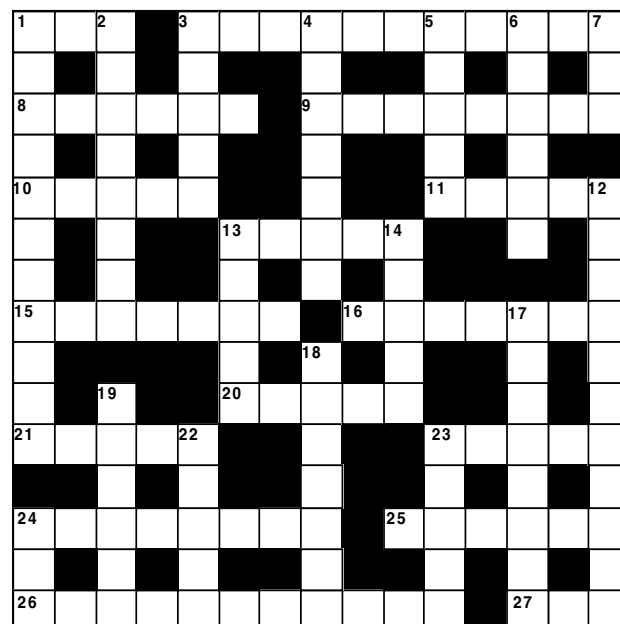
- Across** – 1 Elk 3 Oncologists 8 Panels 9 Schubert 10 Eclat 11 Yemen 13 By gum 15 Sorghum 16 Crooner 20 Broth 21 Cross 23 Bloom 24 Achieved 25 Moving 26 Trespassers 27 Mad
Down – 1 Euphemistic 2 King Lear 3 Owlet 4 Onstage 5 Gaudy 6 Steamy 7 Sat 12 Nearer My God to Thee 13 Blurb 14 Marsh 17 Nepotism 18 Lourdes 22 Steep 23 Books 24 Act

CHILDREN'S No.273

- Across** – 1 The Irish Sea 6 Arrivals 8 Ended 9 Hero 10 Coin 11 Roof rack 14 Egg 16 Tumbled 17 Dealt 18 Ashtay
Down – 1 Toaster 2 Earthworm 3 River 4 Sale 5 Entering 7 Snack 12 Ruler 13 Caddy 14 Exam 15 Gate 16 Tea

Crossword

Gordius 395



ACROSS

- 1 What may be laid on an Eastern horse (3)
3 Get there with spilt cider? In Italy that's a 'goodbye' for sure! (11)
8 Reserved, modest (6)
9 Historic Russian monk has artists installed (8)
10 Sticky stuff that makes one misbehave again? (5)
11 He gets stick for having been a ruler in Judaea (5)
13 Appended (5)
15 Way beside the canal from the top, what? (7)
16 In which environmentally friendly transport arrangement one's motors get on swimmingly? (3,4)
20 & 24d Cockney rhyming slang for tea (5,3)
21 World War I battle featuring in one's history presentation (5)
23 Faint smell (5)
24 It's the toughest punishment, to look at one who sits in Westminster (4,4)
25 Resort in Northern Italy (6)
26 Mortified to be poorly armed (with broken sabres) (11)
27 Digit on the foot (3)

DOWN

- 1 It's for those who like privacy

- in a little black book of former sweethearts? (2-9)
2 TV quiz involving an exhibition of grouse and pheasant? (4,4)
3 Surface in the airport one may wear in the kitchen (5)
4 Invasive progress, where you'll find cats' eyes? (7)
5 The profundity of Department H (5)
6 Roy embraces a sailor at the voluntary organization (6)
7 In science, a charged particle (3)
12 What a priest reads regularly identifies where newspaper employees work, it seems (5,6)
13 It's essential oil is at the heart of a great tartar sauce (5)
14 Male duck (5)
17 This hopeful type might work with Timothy first (8)
18 Hopes to write an article on steeples (7)
19 Abbreviated name for a ready-to-erect building (6)
22 All of Peru's confused by how great this is (5)
23 Wired up? That's uncanny! (5)
24 See 20 across

Sudoku Corner

274

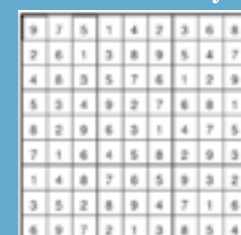
Easy



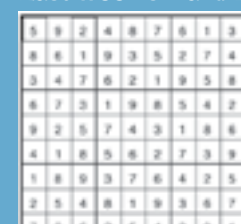
Hard



Last week's Easy 272



Last week's Hard 272



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Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



Ashes still have an appeal to all of us

I SUSPECT VERY FEW people would choose Ash Wednesday as one of their favourite days of the year. I have to admit that in recent times the first day of Lent has become a day I do look forward to. A number of years ago, together with my colleague from the neighbouring Church of Ireland parish, we set up a stall in the local SuperValu supermarket to distribute blessed ashes.

The shop owner was a little sceptical when I first broached the idea with him but now he calls me to make sure that we are coming with the ashes. It is fascinating to see the reaction of some of the unsuspecting customers when they see the two clerics at the table.

Locals are used to some charity or community group fundraising in the shop so a great number try to give us money. When we refuse they are dismayed...two priests refusing money!

One woman came over thinking that I was demonstrating a new brand of black pudding available in the store but stayed nonetheless to have her forehead marked with the black ash instead. Another lady approached my colleague and received the ashes. Later down



the aisle her neighbour asks her whether she knew if it was the "protestant minister" who blessed her with ashes. She wondered should she go back to Mass that night and get them again...from the priest!

Brisk business

Oh dear, we still have some way to travel. Back at the ash table, business was brisk as people of

all ages who perhaps didn't have the chance to get to Mass were delighted to receive ashes even if they only called into to buy a loaf of bread. I discover that the shop owner had advertised our presence on his Facebook page so many came just for the ashes and didn't shop at all.

While our reason for being in the shop for four hours was to distribute blessed ashes, the

highlight for me was the amazing conversations I had with the customers. Most of them were local but many were passing through town from various parts of the country.

I heard stories of broken limbs, broken relationships and broken lives. But there were also happy stories of gratitude for blessings received and prayers answered. Everybody wanted to bring some ash away to a housebound parent or a partner who would be home late from work. The Rector and I agreed that our little initiative to move out of the comfort zones of our ancient churches and meet the people where they are at was a good way to begin the Christian season of Lent.

What is it about Ash Wednesday that still captures the imagination with that very public marking with the cross, the blacker the better? Has it to do with that innate sense in all of us described so well by the poet Brendan Kennelly... "something that will not acknowledge conclusion insists that we forever begin". Every year wherever we are in our life or in our faith, Lent offers us that chance to begin again.

**A prayer for Lent**

Truly dust we are, and to dust we shall return;
And truly yours we are, and to you we shall return.
Help this to be a time of turning round and beginning again.

Through the 40 days of Lent, help us to follow you
And to find you: in the discipline of praying
And in the drudgery of caring –
In whatever we deny ourselves,
And whatever we set ourselves to learn or do.

The joys of married life!

A man and a woman, who have never met before, find themselves assigned to the same sleeping room on a transcontinental train. Though initially embarrassed and uneasy over sharing a room, the two are tired and fall asleep quickly – he in the upper bunk and she in the lower.

At 2am, he leans over and gently wakes the woman, saying: "Ma'am, I'm sorry to bother you, but would you be willing to reach into the cupboard to get me a second blanket? I'm awfully cold."

"I have a better idea," she replies. "Just for tonight, let's pretend that we're married."

"That's a great idea!" he exclaims.

"Good," she replies. "Get up and get your own blanket."



Photo: Water from the lake being brought to the health centre by use of hired donkey carts.

A CATHOLIC HEALTH CENTRE IN TANZANIA NEEDS CLEAN WATER

The Sisters of the Incarnate Word administer a mission health centre, primary school and school hostel in the Catholic Diocese of Musoma, Tanzania. Sister Irene recently contacted The Little Way Association for financial help to install a desperately needed new water system for the health centre. "Water supply has been an issue since the mission started to expand", she wrote. "Initially the water supplied by water mills was enough to serve the small community, but now we are experiencing great water shortage to the point of hiring donkey carts to fetch water from the lake. This is very expensive and unhygienic. With a solar powered water supply system our health centre patients will get constant, clean water for their use, and the whole community will benefit."



"True glory is that which will last eternally, and to reach it, it isn't necessary to perform striking works but to hide oneself and practice virtue in such a way that the left hand knows not what the right is doing." - St Therese

In our modern age of materialism and selfishness, when so many are searching for an authentic spirituality, Therese's little way of simple love for God and others has a powerful appeal. Perhaps we too can join her on the 'little way'.

All Little Way benefactors share in a daily Mass offered for their intentions in the Missions.

HELP FEED THE HUNGRY

Please spare a thought for the thousands who die each year of hunger and disease in mission lands. Your donation will relieve the pangs of starvation, and every euro you send will be forwarded to a missionary for food and medicines for the hungry and sick.

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Can you help the Sisters in their life-saving work for disadvantaged mothers, babies and the sick?

A reliable supply of clean water will make such a difference. Every donation that we receive in response to this Appeal will be sent, without deduction, to this project or a project in similar need.