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Thursday, September 22, 2022

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Irish MEP blasted over 'reckless' claims on jailed Nicaraguan bishop

Chai Brady

Comments made by Irish MEP Mick Wallace about a bishop detained by the Nicaraguan regime have been dubbed "inexcusable" and "reckless" by an Irish missionary.

The European Parliament motion on Nicaragua, which decried the arrest of Bishop Rolando Álvarez and the "repression" of the Church in the country under authoritarian leader Daniel Ortega, passed by more than 500 votes.

Mr Wallace was one of the few MEPs who voted against the motion. In the debate he alleged that Bishop Álvarez – a hugely popular critic of repression by the regime – was "heavily involved" in what he claimed was a CIA-backed coup in Nicaragua in 2018 which led to "death and destruction".

However, Jesuit missionary Fr Kevin O'Higgins SJ – who spent decades in Central America working for justice and has been working to highlight the crisis in Nicaragua – said he believes Mr Wallace's intervention in the parliament was "embarrassing".

"I would challenge him to produce any kind of evidence to back up what he said, and if he can't do that, I would certainly ask him to withdraw the remarks and apologise and speak

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Marching on for life...



Young women show their support for unborn children at the March for Life, which saw thousands take to the streets of Dublin, September 17.
Photo: Aine Ascough. See pages 10-11

LOVE NOTES

Respect yourself and avoid troubled men

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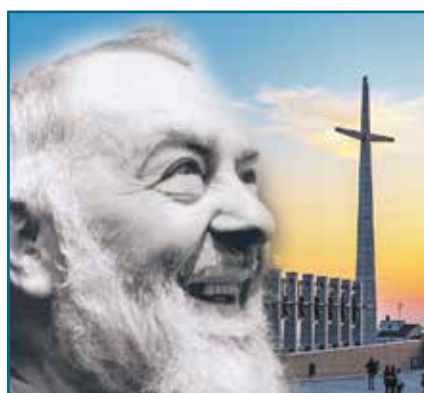
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Managing Editor: Michael Kelly, editor@irishcatholic.ie

Deputy Editor: Chai Brady, chai@irishcatholic.ie

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

Multimedia Journalists: Ruadhán Jones, ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Jason Osborne, jason@irishcatholic.ie

Newsroom: news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026

Books Editor: Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie

Advertising: advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874094

Accounts: accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874020

Magnificat: magnificat@irishcatholic.ie

Shop: shop@irishcatholic.ie

Annual Subscription Rates: Ireland €165. Airmail €250. Six months €85.

ISSN 1393 - 6832 - Published by The Irish Catholic,
Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford,
Dublin 18, D18 K277.

Printed by Webprint, Cork.

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Facing the reality of death is a healthy thing

"If you ever wonder what the relevance of the Faith might be for people in modern Ireland try a death bed," a priest once told me.

He was speaking about one of the most profound aspects of his ministry – accompanying a departing soul on their final journey and comforting and consoling their grieving family as they come to terms with the finality of death.

It is something he experiences often, but is conscious that for the families and loved ones it is one of only a few occasions in life when they will be present as someone one moment alive, no longer is.

"He who believes in me will never die', Christ confidently assures us"

The religious rituals around death – what we often call the last rites – are hugely important, for they create a moment and a space for the full awareness of what is happening to the person who is dying: that they are going from this world – something which we try to shy away from, but we need to know.

"Death is nothing at all," I saw some time ago



Editor's Comment
Michael Kelly



Prince George and Princess Charlotte at the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II.

as the opening words of a poem designed to comfort on the Missalette at a funeral. It continued: "It does not count/I have only slipped away into the next room/Nothing has happened."

Comfort

But, while such sentiments might bring comfort in the short-term, it does not encapsulate the reality of

death. In death, those we love are now separated from us by an unbridgeable chasm. It is only in facing the fact that death brings a finality that, I believe, we can actually grapple to cope with it.

"He who believes in me will never die," Christ confidently assures us. And in faith and surrender we believe this to be true. But the reality is that one has to die in order to inherit eternal life: not seeming death, but the real thing.

Threshold

Facing the death of someone we love and cherish points to a horizon beyond the threshold of this world, where the mystery of God awaits.

"We live in a world that increasingly shies away from talk of mortality"

It's one reason why I've never particularly liked terms like "I lost my mother" or "my mother passed" – no, my mother died. She died in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, but it was a real death and that has meaning that goes beyond slipping into another room.

With the death and obsequies surrounding Queen Elizabeth II, we have all had a chance to think more deeply about death in recent days given the constant news cycle that is now part of our world. This is no bad thing.

We live in a world that increasingly shies away from talk of mortality. In the highly-developed West, death is not as present as it was in previous generations – yet it is inevitable and will come to all of our doors and we too will die, one day.

People from another generation used to pray for a 'happy death' or deliverance from an 'unprovided death', and while this might seem morbid and gloomy it is also a realisation of the fact that one day we will cease to be in this world.

Debate

There was much debate surrounding the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II about the presence of two of her younger great-grandchildren Prince George (9) and Princess Charlotte (7) walking behind the cortege. Many people argued that this might be traumatising for the children, but I think that it can be part of a healthy understanding of death.

Grief affects us all – children also experience the complex emotions surrounding death and the absence of someone they dearly loved. I think it is important that children get to participate and mourn in an age-appropriate way.

Telling them that someone they were once familiar with seeing has simply slipped off to another room, or is now an angel floating around their bed is dishonest. Trying to pretend death isn't real is unhealthy.

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Irish MEP blasted over 'reckless' claims on jailed Nicaraguan bishop

» Continued from Page 1 out on behalf of the political prisoners in Nicaragua," Fr O'Higgins said, "It's a basic human rights issue and what he said is inexcusable."

Bishop Álvarez has consistently dismissed the claims of the regime.

While the vote was overwhelmingly in favour of the bishop, Fr O'Higgins told *The Irish Catholic* he believes Mr Wallace's statement was "dangerous" given the ongoing human rights abuses under the Ortega regime.

The missionary said he thinks accusing the bishop of being involved with the CIA or a coup is "reckless and totally unfounded", particularly as he believes

it could be used as propaganda by the regime.

The bishop is still being detained but has not been charged, with Fr O'Higgins claiming Mr Wallace has gone even further than the Nicaraguan authorities in his statement against the prelate.

"Even some basic research would have been enough to see it was a crazy accusation," Fr O'Higgins claimed.

"It's embarrassing," he said pointing out that the Irish Government has been outspoken against the repression of the Church.

"The Irish Government's stand is quite clear...how can anyone stand up and defend over 200 political prisoners and evidence of

mistreatment?" he asked.

Bishop Álvarez was a high-profile critic of the Nicaraguan government. Last month, police forcibly raided the curia of Mata-galpa Diocese to arrest the bishop in a move described by the European Parliament motion as arbitrary.

"Bishop Álvarez played an important role as a mediator in the 2018 National Dialogue and has constantly called for peaceful and reasoned dialogue in Nicaragua," the lawmakers said. The motion also criticised the closure of seven Catholic radio stations operated by the diocese.

There are currently more than 200 political prisoners being detained in Nicaragua and the motion condemned

the "abusive detention" and the "lack of trial guarantees and the illegal convictions of political prisoners". It called for their immediate release.

Regarding the protests in 2018, Mr Wallace said in his address to the EU Parliament last week in Strasbourg: "...the CIA funded some far-right criminals who plotted this death and destruction. Bishop Alvarez, with his own TV station and several radio stations, was also heavily involved.

"He may be a bishop, but Rolando Álvarez is no saint. The crimes he's accused of are serious and require a fair and thorough investigation," the Ireland South MEP claimed.

📖 See page 25

Women religious lament 'constant battering' by the Irish media

Ruadhán Jones

Women religious in Ireland have lamented their "constant battering" by the media in a submission to the Irish synodal process.

Media reporting is "happy to use women religious as scapegoats for Irish Church and society", the Irish women religious say in their submission.

"When we feel that it's ending it comes back again and again like a niggling sore," the submission reads.

The women religious add that they feel invisible and there is "a sense of being silenced".

"But silence is seen as condoning the accusations and giving an impression that 'we're all guilty,'" the submission continues.

"We are partly to blame for our own invisibility as we appear to have gone underground," the religious admit.

However, they say it is difficult for women religious to respond, as "any religious who speaks up would be shut down."

They also apologised for the past "hurt, pain, oppression and sadness" experienced by women and children in their care, in the submission entitled 'Experience and dreams as Religious Women in the Catholic Church in Ireland'.

"For our failure to give the care and compassion which they so needed and deserved we are deeply sorry," the women religious say.

Submission

The submission also calls for greater inclusivity in Church life at parish, leadership and sacramental level.

When the role of deacon was reinvigorated after Vatican II, "yet another layer was added to exclude" women religious, as the

position was limited to men.

According to the submission, a dialogue between the Irish bishops' conference and women religious took place in 2021.

"On hearing the report from women religious on their experiences in the Church in Ireland, the bishops expressed a deep-felt sense of sadness that women religious have become hidden, criticised, belittled," the submission says.

"They accept that it will be necessary to examine structures to see how women, religious and lay, can be brought into the decision-making process, realising that the synod will stand or fall on this issue."

The submission was one of three from the Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland as part of the synodal process.

'Fighting Irish' head coach converts to Catholicism



Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman.
Photo: Twitter.

Jason Osborne

Marcus Freeman, head coach of the University of Notre Dame's football team, has announced that he converted to Catholicism after his home parish published an announcement welcoming Mr Freeman into the Church in its parish bulletin.

According to sources, Mr Freeman entered the Church at the end of August, before the start of the college football season.

Mr Freeman told members of the press September 15 that he had tried to keep his recent conversion private but joked that "when you're head coach at Notre Dame, nothing is private".

In a Zoom meeting with

reporters, Mr Freeman said that his decision to join the Catholic Church was a "family decision" and a "personal decision". He said that he was confirmed in September.

"Marcus made a profession of faith, was confirmed, and received his First Holy Communion. Please pray for Marcus and his family as they celebrate and continue this journey in faith!" the parish announcement said.

In an interview with the *National Catholic Register* published August 31, Mr Freeman – who was a Christian before his entrance into the Catholic Church – said that he was happy to be at Notre Dame because of the university's focus on faith.

"That's important for me. I want our guys to wonder about what it means to embrace Jesus Christ," Mr Freeman said.

Lights, cameras, action...



Fr John Dunphy PP Graiguecullen-Killeslin parish and teacher Áine Shiels are pictured at the official rehearsal in St Leo's College, Carlow, before the performance of students and staff on RTE's televised Mass, September 18. Music was led by members of the St Leo's Folk Group and Chamber Choir, musicians were from the school's Trad group and they were directed by teachers Áine Shiels and Carrie McCarthy.

JOE WALSH TOURS

PILGRIMAGES 2022



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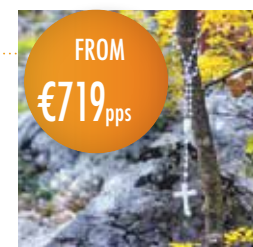
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Govt failing to protect children's rights, Irish religious warn

Ruadhán Jones

The Irish Government is failing to meet its own agreements for protecting the rights of children, Irish religious have warned.

Very concerned

In a joint submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Irish religious said they are "very concerned" that the Government is "falling short" in a number of key areas.

The five areas identified were:

human trafficking, domestic violence, children living in the Direct Provision system, right to education and racism in schools.

The submission came in response to the Government's evaluation of its own implementation of the Rights of the Child, as part of a standard review of Irish practice by the UN.

"Government has a responsibility to find the resources needed to fulfil its obligations," Mr John McGeady, justice officer for the sisters of Our Lady of Apostles told *The Irish Catholic*.

"We as citizens are entitled to those rights and Government has a duty to uphold and vindicate those rights."

While acknowledging that some improvements have been made, Mr McGeady said "there's a lot more work to be done".

Agreements

The submission highlights the Government's failure to meet international agreements, such as for the number of refuge spaces for domestic violence victims.

It also shows that Ireland's

Government is not addressing the "growing evidence" that ethnic minority people are suffering "substantial distress" due to racism in schools.

The religious orders call for anti-racism training for teachers and the introduction of a State-wide intercultural education plan. The last intercultural education plan ended in 2015 and has yet to be replaced.

"The State's failure to identify racism as a problem in schools and to propose solutions is very concerning," the report says.

The six religious orders and civil society groups who created the submission are: the sisters of Our Lady of Apostles; the Presentation Sisters; the Society of African Missionaries (SMA); the Cork Migrant Centre; the Christian Brothers; and the Presentation Brothers.

The joint submission by religious orders and civil society groups was one of many submitted to the Committee for the Rights of the Child.

[See pages 16-17](#)

Primate hopes Queen Elizabeth's peace-making won't be forgotten

Chai Brady

The Primate of All-Ireland has said he hopes that following Queen Elizabeth II's death the risks she took to build peace will not be forgotten.

Archbishop Eamon Martin of the Archdiocese of Armagh attended the queen's funeral on Monday.

He said: "Since the queen's death there has been an outpouring of affection and genuine respect from right across the island of Ireland.

"I hope and pray that in some small ways this has helped to strengthen relationships and mutual understanding between our communities. Queen Elizabeth herself would want this. She was a courageous peacemaker and a reconciler of difference."

The day before the funeral at Westminster Abbey, Archbishop Martin said that he will be praying that "the efforts of Queen Elizabeth, and of so many others who took risks for our peace, will not be forgotten, or allowed to slip away".

"Many of these peacemakers

have now gone to their rest. The work of peace, however, remains unfinished and urgent – and it is up to all of us to play our part," he added.

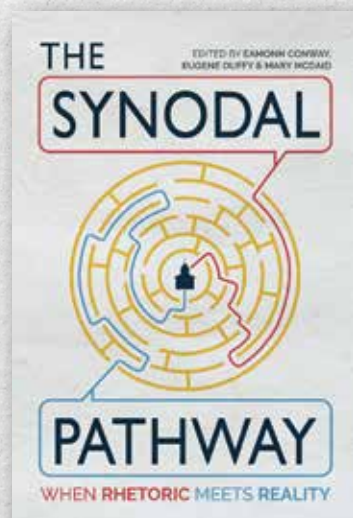
On September 13, Archbishop Eamon Martin attended St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast for a Service of Reflection for the life of Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of Ireland's Catholic community, which was attended by King Charles III. The archbishop offered his sympathy to the king and "prayerful good wishes as he takes up his new responsibilities".



Archbishop John McDowell of the Church of Ireland, Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis and Archbishop Eamon Martin at Westminster Abbey ahead of Queen Elizabeth II's funeral on Monday.

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Kilmore focuses on hope with climate event



Barbara Lidwell, Tess Jimmy, Rachel Cullivan, Margaret and David Mulligan, Bishop Martin Hayes, Canon Mark Lidwell, Dillon Duffy, Grace McNeill, Conor Gilsenan and Isla Mulligan at Kilmore Cathedral.

Staff reporter

An ecumenical event was held at Kilmore Cathedral in Cavan which involved the planting of crocus bulbs on the front lawn of the cathedral which will spell out 'Hope', to celebrate the Season of Creation.

The crocus bulbs were planted by young parishioners on Sunday to illustrate the need to address the impact of climate change on future generations.

Bishop Martin Hayes of Kilmore

diocese said "despite all our troubles, difficulties, trials and crises, opportunities present themselves and we can always be hopeful. We look forward to spring and to seeing our crocus bulbs emerge to symbolise our hope for the future".

The Season of Creation runs from September 1 to October 4, a time in which "we give thanks for the beauty, diversity, the fruitfulness of God's creation at harvest time..." said Bishop Hayes.

Cavan's Catholic and Church of

Ireland communities came together for the event, with the bishop being joined by Canon Mark Lidwell. They highlighted how the poor in the developing world are most affected due to the destruction of agricultural crops.

The Diocesan Kilmore Care of Creation group came up with the idea. They have engaged in various projects, including a garden bed makeover at St Clare's Convent Chapel, litter clean ups, educational talks and the promotion of tree planting.

Where a queue was a pilgrimage...



Mary Kenny

‘A pilgrimage’ – that was one of the most frequent descriptions of the vast queue, miles long, formed by the public filing past Queen Elizabeth II’s coffin before her funeral.

“And pilgrimage has another dimension that is both practical and symbolic”

Pilgrimage is primarily religious in nature and its main purpose is to achieve holiness and grace. It may also take the form of repentance. But pilgrimage has also had a secondary goal. It’s been described as “walking with a purpose”. It is seen as a metaphor of life’s journey. As Peter Stanford has pointed out in his book *Pilgrimage*, it’s about pushing the body and the will into exhaustion – as those who joined what became known as ‘the queue’ surely did, often

waiting in line for up to 24 hours. It’s about putting the object of the journey before one’s own comfort.

And pilgrimage has another dimension that is both practical and symbolic. The journey is about sharing with other people. It’s about accepting the companionship of strangers. It’s about a sense of belonging, of realising that there is something called ‘the common good’, something bigger than one’s own ego. It’s about leaving behind, if only for a short time, the everyday worries of the world, and entering a different dimension.

Community

For some people, in a modern fragmented society, this event was also about relieving the loneliness of everyday existence and seeking a community.

Britain is not, nowadays, a very religious country, and yet the queue to pay respects to the sovereign’s lying-in-state displayed an impulse that is surely part of a religious ritual. Those who queued made similar observations: that as soon



Britain’s King Charles III sits in front of the coffin of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, during her state funeral at Westminster Abbey in London on Monday. Photo: CNS

as they saw the catafalque they felt that unique sense of awe for the soul of the departed. They experienced the epiphany of journey’s end after their long walk, their wait of endurance.

It took a French sociologist, Matthieu Bock-Coté, speaking on a Paris-based television channel, to describe the ceremony of Queen Elizabeth’s funeral

rites as “a quest for the spiritual – a need for the sacred”. Human beings, he said, need a portal whereby they can access the sacred, and Elizabeth’s adieu had

made that possible, even if people didn’t realise it.

Sacred

It made me ask, too, what ‘portal of the sacred’ would

the Irish State pass through were we marking a great national event? Do we have a unifying religious ceremonial now which answers to that ‘need for the sacred’?

“Pilgrimage is primarily religious in nature and its main purpose is to achieve holiness and grace”

● I have it from an impeccably reliable source that President Michael D. Higgins and King Charles III have an excellent personal rapport. They have bonded over shared environmental concerns, and also a common love of literature – Michael D. is a poet and Charles is an ardent Shakespearean and poetry fan.

Who would have predicted that our left-wing Uachtarán, and admirer of Fidel Castro, would inspire fondness from a hereditary and spiritually-minded monarch? But it’s my experience that you never can tell how personal chemistry will strike between two individuals, and lead them to emphasise their similarities rather than their differences.

Of boys and men

I suggested last week that Jordan Peterson, who recently spoke in Dublin, provided a sense of leadership for young men looking for a role model. And a new book, *Of Boys and Men*, by Richard V. Reeves, highlights just how males are now failing, across many societies, in an increasingly feminised society.

In the US, 57% of BA college degrees now go to women. Women now hold the majority of law degrees. In 1972, women accounted for 7% of doctoral degrees in law, medicine and dentistry; in 2019, females accounted for 50%. Women are now the main breadwinners in 41%

of American households.

Universally, girls are doing better than boys at school and in education generally. In Finland, 20% of girls score at the highest level of reading in primary school, compared to 9% of boys. The wages of most men are lower (in real terms) than they were in 1979; the wages of most women are higher. One in five fathers is not living with their children.

Men account for two out of three ‘deaths of despair’ – that is, from suicide or overdose. Men are more seriously affected by alcoholism and addiction.

The jobs that men tra-

ditionally did have often been erased by technology and automation, while the same technology advances have enabled more women to enter the field of employment. Driving a train, for example, is now assisted by computerisation, rather than physical strength.

I’m glad to see more opportunities for women. But women have sons, husbands, brothers, nephews, grandsons and most of us, I think, don’t want to see men made into the redundant sex, or humiliated by a sense of uselessness which Richard Reeves warns is increasingly the lot of the male.

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Parents urged to speak up as WitchTok surges

Jason Osborne

Parents have been advised not to be afraid of making a “value judgement” if they’re concerned about their children’s activity online as the ‘WitchTok’ hashtag surged past 31.5 billion views on social media app TikTok.

WitchTok is an umbrella term under which young people post and share content related to magic and witchcraft, with many commentators online expressing concern at its potentially harmful effects.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper

about the popular online trend, writer and theology student at Cambridge University Esmé Partridge said that modern society is “defenceless” against these trends because parents may believe they shouldn’t interfere with their children’s lifestyle choices.

“I think not being afraid, if you do come from a religious tradition, and certainly if you’re a parent, not being afraid to actually make a value judgment and actually say, ‘This could be harmful’, is very important,” Ms Partridge said.

Saying that “from a place of love”, rather

than suppressing a child’s sense of spirituality is necessary for combatting trends such as WitchTok, Ms Partridge said. She added that you can allow young people to explore faith and to develop their own personal sense of spirituality while also setting boundaries.

“Religious people do have a duty I think actually to protect and to issue spiritual protection. And I think also even people who aren’t religious, I think taking negative effects of things like the occult a bit more seriously instead of just reducing them to, ‘Oh maybe it’s just psychological’ or ‘Maybe it’s just mental’.

“I think trying to think, ‘Well, maybe this could be something else and maybe we should not just shrug it off,’ she said. “Maybe we are actually connected to the supernatural in ways that we didn’t think we were.”

Ms Partridge added that “people underestimate actually how vast the exposure to these things is, because TikTok’s algorithms can really propel a video that’s been produced by some midwestern teenager in their bedroom, you know? That can be getting billions of views.”

See pages 14-15

Minister praises proposed gift of Carlow College to the Government

Ruadhán Jones

Minister for Higher Education Simon Harris has praised Carlow College, St Patrick’s, for their “generous offer” to gift the Catholic university to the State.

However, there is a “long and labourious” process ahead to get the transfer right, Minister Harris said. The college continues negotiations with the newly-formed South Eastern Technological University (SETU).

“I think it’s an extraordinarily

generous offer, and I really appreciate it,” Minister Harris said on Kilkenny and Carlow Radio (KCLR).

“What they’ve done for inclusion and access to education can’t be overstated and the gift they’re offering is significant and generous.”

Due to the length of the legal process involved, the Government has frontloaded funding to the college to “keep the show on the road”, Minister Harris added.

“What that will do is provide them with the time and the space

to have the conversations they’re having with the technological university,” he explained.

Minister Harris went on to describe the campus as “an absolute gem” and a “beautiful campus”.

Despite the length of the process, he stated his hope that the gift and transfer would be completed in 2023.

“We’re definitely in the period of months rather than weeks, but this is something that I’d like to see done in 2023,” the minister said.

State neglecting nature of Ireland’s homelessness, says report

Staff reporter

The Irish State’s definition of homelessness is not fully responding to its true nature and “neglecting” hidden homelessness, a report has stated.

The report, published by Focus Ireland, found that homelessness focused on people sleeping rough and the number and duration of stays in emergency accommodation.

In the report, a group of international researchers reviewed the effects of the Rebuilding Ireland strategy on the level and nature of Irish homelessness.

They found that women’s experience

of homelessness tends to be significantly underestimated when there is no attempt to count the hidden homelessness.

The experts were critical of Government policy, and while acknowledging progress made, said more social and affordable housing was needed.

People with lived experience of homelessness reported that only social housing offered the affordability, standards and security of tenure to exit from homelessness.

Minister for Housing Darragh O’Brien, who launched the report, said the State is on track to building more social homes this year than any other year.

Proud day for the parish...



Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin ordains Fr Ronan Sheehan (27) to the priesthood in his parish church in Newcestown, Co. Cork, on Sunday, September 18. He becomes the youngest priest in the diocese. The congregation included his parents Bud and Denise Sheehan, his sisters Ciara, Leona, Orlaith and Aoibhe, and extended family. Photo: Peter Pietrzak

NEWS IN BRIEF

Veritas opens two new stores in Limerick and Letterkenny

Veritas is opening two new stores this week in Letterkenny and in Limerick, bringing the total number of Veritas branches to seven.

Bishop of Raphoe Alan McGuckian SJ will officially open the new Veritas store in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, with the official opening to take place in 12-14 Upper Main Street September 22 at 12pm with parishioners and guests in attendance.

Meanwhile, Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy is set to open the Limerick branch at 122 O’Connell Street on September 24 at 12pm.

Both launches will be livestreamed via Facebook and Instagram.



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Breda O'Brien

The View



Men who opt for priesthood want to challenge the dominant culture

The diocese of Kildare and Leighlin recently announced a timeline for the introduction of lay-led liturgies and the introduction of what is called a “sustainable Mass schedule” by the first Sunday in Lent in February 2023.

It is far from the first Irish diocese to announce such measures. Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin says in his pastoral letter about the proposed changes that “we all accept that we celebrate too many Masses and our priests are stretched to cover every scheduled celebration”.

Bishop Nulty also refers to this as a “wonderful opportunity”. He is right, of course, if it leads to greater lay participation and what he calls “deep reflection”.

Along with every opportunity, comes risk. Among them are giving up on the idea of vocations to the priesthood, or accepting Communion services where lay people distribute Communion as essentially the same as celebrating Mass together. There is also the risk of clericalisation of the laity, rather than deepening the mission of lay people as a distinct vocation.

We have long been told that we are fortunate in Ireland to have so many priests compared to countries in the Amazon, where people may only have a celebration of the Eucharist once or twice a year.

Here in Ireland, we are told that the Faith survived during penal times despite the fact that so many priests were forced to flee for their lives. Pope Francis is also very fond of the “hidden Christians” of Nagasaki in Japan, who despite horrendous persecution, including being subjected to torture and death if they refused to trample on images of our Lord and our Lady, managed to keep the Faith alive for centuries entirely without priests.

Difference

The difference between the history of the penal times and that of the hidden Christians of Japan, and our reality today, is that in both cases, people were willing to endure suffering and even death for the sake of the Faith.

A priest friend of mine told me of a couple, both

in their 70s, who had worshipped every Sunday of their lives. They stopped going to Mass completely because a changed Mass time interfered with their Sunday routine and the time they liked to have lunch.

This may be an extreme example, but Covid-19 also showed the fragility of people’s commitment to the Eucharist. While many have returned to Mass, many have not. Livestreaming was a great boon during the pandemic but it is no substitute for being present in the flesh, in order to receive Christ made truly present.

Liturgies

Much will depend on what lay-led liturgies look like. If they are a kind of Mass-lite, mimicking the structure of Mass without the consecration, that could lead to real confusion about the vital importance of the Mass being celebrated together as a community.

Some dioceses have experimented with versions of the Liturgy of the Hours instead, with some success.

“Here in Ireland, we are told that the Faith survived during penal times despite the fact that so many priests were forced to flee for their lives”

It is also vitally important that we do not give up on the idea of vocations to the priesthood. The reality is that such vocations, limited as they are in numbers, are coming from two sources: families with an orthodox Catholic perspective and those who have come in contact with living communities or movements.

This displeases some priests, including one priest well-known for his public utterances, who declared that he would prefer to have no vocations at all rather than have what he believes to be priests with a conservative viewpoint. Obviously, the Holy Spirit does not agree.

Young or not-so-young men are not going to opt for celibate priesthood if it does



not involve a counter-cultural challenge. Choosing priesthood is a dramatic and even drastic step for generations who are averse to commitment of any kind. In order to put out in that very deep water, it has to be worth it. Role models who are indistinguishable in their views from the dominant culture are not going to attract anyone to the priesthood.

Men are attracted to the priesthood not because they are innately conservative but because they appreciate the profound gift of the Catholic faith and want to conserve, deepen and share it, are what we need.

Vocations

If families are the seedbed of vocations, then strong families who have not just a commitment to faith but deep knowledge of it combined with regular prayer lives, are going to produce such vocations. Clericalising the laity will not foster the growth of families with their own distinct vocations.

Kildare and Leighlin is instituting training for those who will lead liturgies. That is a vital step. There are possibilities for beautiful, meaningful liturgies centred on the Word of God and much-loved prayers.

Lay-led liturgies can indeed be a wonderful opportunity but only if they are part of a wider deepening and renewal of faith among laity, religious and priests.

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Nine students begin seminary studies

Chai Brady, Ruadhán Jones and Jason Osborne

Nine students have begun formal seminary studies for the priesthood for Ireland's 26 dioceses this month. It is up on the six who entered seminary last year.

A further ten men will also begin a preparatory programme – known as a propaedeutic year – with the hope of entering seminary proper next year, figures compiled by *The Irish Catholic* reveal.

There will be a total of 23 seminarians resident in the national seminary St Patrick's College, Maynooth – 21 of whom are studying for Irish dioceses.

A survey of the national diocesan vocations picture carried out by this newspaper shows that by the end of this

month there will be 39 men in seminary formation for Irish dioceses.

Just four dioceses have a new candidate entering seminary. However, more encouragingly for Church leaders, eight dioceses have men participating in the propaedeutic year.

Sixteen dioceses have no candidate for either seminary or the propaedeutic programme this year, while ten dioceses – almost 40% – have no-one in seminary formation at any stage of the cycle meaning that it is at least eight years before those dioceses could even have the possibility of a priestly ordination.

Seminarians are spread across Maynooth and the Beda College in Rome while those participating in the preparatory year are mostly attending the Royal English College in Valladolid in Spain.

DIOCESE	Propaedeutic	Entering Seminary	In Seminary
Achonry	0	0	0
Ardagh and Clonmacnoise	0	0	0
Clogher	0	0	1
Cloyne	0	0	3
Dromore	1	0	1
Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora	0	0	0
Kilmore	0	0	1
Ossory	0	0	0
Armagh*	0	3	8
Cork and Ross	2	0	0
Clonfert	0	0	0
Elphin	0	0	4
Kerry	0	0	2
Killala	0	0	0
Limerick	0	0	1
Meath	0	0	2
Raphoe	1	1	1
Cashel and Emly	0	0	1
Dublin	1	1	0
Derry	2	0	2
Kildare and Leighlin	1	0	0
Ferns	0	0	1
Killaloe	1	0	0
Waterford and Lismore	0	0	2
Down and Connor	0	4	8
Tuam	1	0	1
Total	10	9	39



Ordinands lie prostrate during their ordination by Pope Francis in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. Photo: CNS

*Includes seminarians at the Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Dundalk, Co. Louth.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Frank Duff's house opens for Culture Night

The house of Servant of God Frank Duff will be open to the public for Culture Night on Friday, September 23.

The house on Morning Star Avenue has been preserved to maintain its original look and contents since Blessed Duff died in it in November 1980.

Frank Duff is best known for the founding the lay apostolate the Legion of Mary, and many artefacts associated with his life are on display in his old home.

These include his bike, still made up for the cycle ride he had been planning on cycling the day he died, as well as books, photographs and more.

The house will be open from 5:30-10pm Friday, September 23.

Death from hunger every four seconds, charities warn

A person dies of hunger every four seconds, Irish charities have warned in an open letter to Governments worldwide.

The 238 local and international NGOs called on leaders gathering at the 77th UN General Assembly to take decisive action to end the spiralling global hunger crisis.

Organisations from 75 countries have signed an open letter expressing outrage at skyrocketing hunger levels and recommendations for action.

The signatories include Irish organisations Concern Worldwide, Dóchas, Don Bosco Aid, Goal, Misesan Cara, Oxfam, and Trócaire.

"Despite promises from world leaders to never allow famine again in the 21st century, famine is once more imminent in Somalia," a statement from Concern Worldwide says.

"Around the world, 50 million people are on the brink of starvation in 45 countries."

Full excavation of Tuam Mother and Baby Home in early 2023

Children's Minister Roderic O'Gorman has indicated that full-scale excavations of the Tuam Mother and Baby home site will begin in early 2023.

Minister O'Gorman said that "substantial work" has already been done in terms of job specification, and that he hopes preliminary works can take place on the site in the next number of weeks.

"I would hope that full scale excavations can begin early in 2023," the Minister said, adding that the Office of Public Works has been tasked with locating a site in the area that can be used as a support base for the works.

Irish missionary priest tells tragic stories of abused, abandoned elderly in his remote mission region

Dear Fellow Pro-Life Catholic & Irish Catholic Reader,

My name is David Manly and I'm writing to you on behalf of Family & Life, one of Ireland's oldest and largest Catholic pro-life, pro-family organisation.

One of Family & Life's most critical projects is aiding the work of Father Brian, a heroic Irish missionary priest whose mission district includes part of a large city in Peru and large areas of the Peruvian rainforest. Father Brian works with a group of equally courageous nuns. They provide urgently-needed medical and other services to the impoverished in their mission district, especially pregnant women who might otherwise go through pregnancy and birth without medical care.

Father Brian and the sisters are also often the only source of help for the elderly, especially those abused or abandoned.

The sad, tragic stories Father Brian told us about the elderly he and the nuns rescue

I should warn you: These stories from Father Brian are **not** easy reading . . .

† **Francisco, 86, was living alone with no family to care for him** when Father Brian and the Sisters found him. He was living with only a tin roof over his head, no walls to protect him against storms. Worse, Francisco was suffering from malnutrition and showed signs of heart ailments.

Father Brian and the nuns rushed Francisco to their clinic and arranged for medical care. Francisco is now recuperating, but without the quick intervention of Father and the sisters, this 86-year old man most likely would have soon suffered a sad and lonely death.

† **Manuel, 92, was abandoned by his family.** Father and the sisters found him living on the streets, badly malnourished and unable to care for himself. They immediately took Manuel to their clinic where he is recovering and will be lovingly cared for by the nuns who work with Father Brian.

† **Then Father told us of Susana, age 90, left by her family to fend for herself on the streets.** Severely malnourished, Susana was also in urgent need of surgical intervention to save her. Father Brian and the sisters rescued her.

And Father Brian sent us more such stories, if you can bear to read them . . .

† He told us of elderly people in his mission district trying to cook for themselves, although many have very poor eyesight and can barely see. Father told us their diets often were little more than watery soups made with small amounts of beans or rice. He told us stories of finding elderly people with bed sores and grave illnesses, left alone to die.

I could go on and on with stories Father Brian told us. But you get the picture, and it is *tragic*.

The needs in Father's mission district are immediate and urgent. There is no time for delay!

Father Brian's clinic is in immediate need of a six month supply of basic medicines, syringes, diabetes test strips, vitamins and special nutritional supplements for the elderly. Father tells us the cost is **€8,500**.

€8,500 would almost be "spare change" for some of the big clinics in Ireland. But for Father Brian's clinic in remote Peru, **€8,500** may as well be all the money in the world.

So I promised Father that Family & Life will provide this **€8,500** – an amount that will go a **very** long way in the remote regions of Peru.

My wife and I have just sent our support. Will you match our gift – or send some other amount?

My wife and I have just contributed €100 to help Father Brian care for abused and abandoned elderly in his mission district. It is possible for you to match our gift of €100?

Or is some other amount possible? We will raise the **€8,500** Father urgently needs through gifts in **all** amounts – **€50 . . . €75 . . . €100 . . . €150 . . . €200 . . . €250 . . . and €500.** Will you send one of those amounts? Or is a larger gift

possible? Perhaps **€1,000 or even €1,500?**

Every gift is important, regardless of the amount. It will aid Father Brian's work without requiring us to cut into other essential Family & Life programmes. Honouring our promise to Father requires the help of you, me and many other pro-life, pro-family friends, whether it's **€50, €100, €250 or some other amount.**

Your gift – in whatever amount you can afford – will indeed be a blessing to Father Brian as he struggles to save abused and abandoned elderly in his mission district!

Can I tell Father that he can count on you?

My fear is that Father's urgent mission needs will be left undone if Family & Life cannot quickly help him, that many of the impoverished elderly people in his mission will continue suffering alone and without help. So can I tell Father Brian that he can count on you, as generously as possible please?

Yours in prayer and sacrifice for Father Brian and his mission work,



David Manly
Family & Life

Ps. Ireland has a long and well-deserved reputation for caring for the elderly in need. Perhaps you're helping care for an elderly relative or friend. Or probably you know someone who is.

So in our tradition of protecting the elderly, my prayer is that you – in your charity – will help this Irish missionary priest as he struggles to care for abused and abandoned elderly in his mission district.

Can I tell Father Brian that you'll help with your prayers and financial sacrifice? Please send a donation by cutting out the section below or phone

01 855 2145 or donate securely on line today at **donate.familyandlife.org**

Other major, ongoing pro-life projects of Family & Life . . .

- Family & Life helps lead the fight to overturn egalized abortion in Ireland which has killed over 27,000 babies so far . . . our Leadership Academy trains young pro-lifers volunteers to become pro-life leaders . . .
- Family & Life sends lobbyists to major UN meeting where life and family issues are decided . . . we conduct community and voter education programmes across Ireland . . . our educational messages on social media reach over 100,000 Irish viewers each month . . .
- Family & Life aids crisis pregnancy centres in Africa and other countries . . . we provide urgent support to Christians persecuted in Iraq . . . plus many more programmes that defend life and family!

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**David Manly, Family & Life, 25 Mountjoy Square,
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☐ **€250** ☐ **€500** ☐ **€750**

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Code: ICP22

Thousands march for life demanding 'positive' abortion alternatives

Chai Brady

Thousands attended the March for Life in Dublin on Saturday with attendees walking from St Stephen's Green to Leinster House to call on the Government to address the large increase in abortions in Ireland as well as to push for positive alternatives to abortion.

Eilís Mulroy of the Pro Life Campaign, organisers of the march, said: "In the first three years since the new abortion law was introduced, 20,718 Irish abortions have taken place. This is a national tragedy that demands urgent action to ensure that women contemplating abortion are fully informed about positive alternatives prior to any abortion happening."

A speaker at the event, Rachel Mackenzie, talked about her personal experience of having two abortions. She told marchers: "I know what abortion regret feels like, like countless others do. It's time that politicians acknowledged that people like me exist."

"Women and unborn babies deserve better than a system that only offers abortion. We can do better than this. Women that are facing unplanned pregnancies need to be offered positive alternatives because you see

one choice is no choice," she said.

Media commentator Wendy Grace told the marchers: "We gather here today at a particularly important moment as the Government's three-year review of the abortion law nears its end. The pro-life movement represents more than one in three voters, yet the Government is behaving like we don't exist. This undermining of democracy has to end. We are here to demand proper representation at the decision-making table."

Carol Nolan TD of Laois-Offaly told the crowd: "There is absolutely no excusing the way the Government is excluding the pro-life movement from the three-year review process. It is wholly unacceptable for the Minister for Health to repeatedly meet with pro-abortion groups for their views on what should happen as part of the review, while refusing to meet with any pro-life representatives."

Other Oireachtas members in attendance included Senator Sharon Keogan and Senator Rónán Mullen.

Organisers said the event was the fourth in a series of regional marches organised by the Pro Life Campaign this year with the previous events taking place in Cork, Galway and Co. Donegal last May.



The Crowe family Faustina, Anne, Rosa, Anne (mother), Anthony, Maria, Benedict, Joachim and Oscar Lacken at the March For Life. Photos: John McElroy



Thousands attended the March For Life on Saturday in Dublin, where marchers walked from St Stephens Green to Leinster House to call on the Government to address the huge increase of abortions.



In advance of the March For Life families with children were invited to make their own homemade posters. The Flynn family and Maria with her poster alongside her mother and Teddy, Iosaf, Louis and Oliver.



Elizabeth Dunne (Tullamore), Emma Sisk (Tipperary) and Ann-Marie McDonough (Galway) pictured outside Leinster House.

Clíodhna Ní Bhuachalla with her sister Muireann.



Sisters Hannah and Roisin Lawlor from Co. Louth.



David O'Mahony with his children Fionn and Liam.



Niamh Maher (9) with mother Deirdre photographed before the pro-life march.



A lesson in the workings of God's providence from a faraway country



Parts of the world we barely think about have an importance we in Ireland don't appreciate writes **David Quinn**

One of the Pope's fiercest critics is Athanasius Schneider, the auxiliary bishop of Astana in Kazakhstan, the vast landlocked central Asian country which Pope Francis visited last week.

Bishop Schneider's criticisms of the Pope are often excessive, in my opinion. I mention him only because his name tells us something of the recent history of Kazakhstan, for it is German in origin. How did a person of German descent end up so far from home?

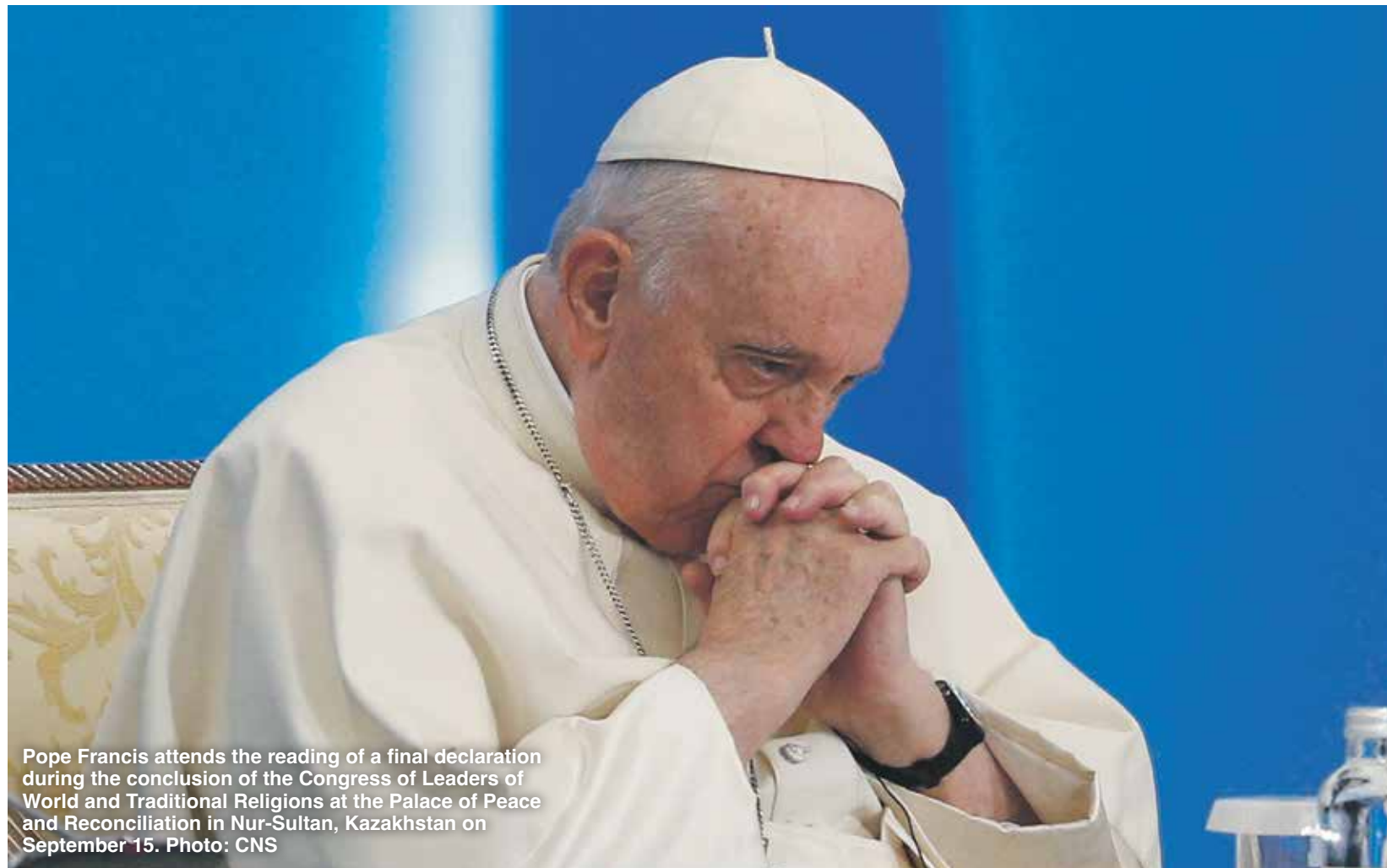
“Kazakh Catholics still kneel to receive Communion and receive it on the tongue”

The answer is that in the 19th Century, at the invitation of the Tsar, Germans travelled to the Russian Empire to settle some of the rich farming lands north of the Black Sea. During World War II, Bishop Schneider's parents were evacuated to Berlin and then when Soviet forces entered the city, they were exiled to Kazakhstan.

But Germans had been moving there in the 20th Century in any case, along with waves of Russians and Ukrainians. Stalin was determined to settle the land, and after him, Khrushchev. This meant depriving the native Kazakhs, a nomadic people, of their traditional way of life. Many were forcibly settled in urban areas.

Imagine the waves of immigrants to America depriving the native Americans of their ancestral lands and you have a good picture of what happened.

Part of Bishop Schneider's ultra-traditionalism is explained by the extreme persecution the Church in



Pope Francis attends the reading of a final declaration during the conclusion of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions at the Palace of Peace and Reconciliation in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan on September 15. Photo: CNS

Kazakhstan underwent in much of the 20th Century. An experience of this sort makes a Church feel insecure, and it can make its members more determined to hold on to the old ways that allowed them to endure hardship.

We did the same for a long time in Ireland. People think, 'why should we give up those ways now? We didn't do so when people were threatening our lives'.

Communion

Kazakh Catholics still kneel to receive Communion and receive it on the tongue.

In December 2017, three local bishops signed a 'Profession of the Immutable Truths about Sacramental Marriage' critical of the papal document, *Amoris laetitia*, for opening the door to divorce and remarried Catholics being allowed to receive Communion under certain circumstances.

Kazakhstan is a country few people in this part of the world will know much about. It is a truly enormous place. It stretches from China in the East over to the Caspian Sea in the West. At its widest, it is almost 2,000 miles across, and 1,000 miles from north to south. It is 38 times the size of Ireland with a population of about 19 million.

It has a lot of rich, arable land and is rich in natural

resources. This is what made it such a tempting target for Tsars, and later the Soviet Union. As far as they were concerned, the native nomadic peoples were not putting the land to good use, which is why they encouraged settlers to go there.

“The earlier diocese dates back to the Fourth Century, that is, before Christianity arrived in Ireland”

Our best reference point for how the native Kazakhs lived is probably the Mongols, that is, a horse-based people who moved back and forth across the huge steppes and whose religion was based around animal spirits and nature.

Christianity is supposed to have arrived in the area as early as the Second Century. Reportedly there were Christians among the Roman soldiers taken prisoner to the country after they lost a battle in Persia.

The earlier diocese dates back to the Fourth Century, that is, before Christianity arrived in Ireland. We tend to think of Christianity moving from east to west, that is, from the Holy Land into Europe and North Africa, and following the outline of the Roman empire. But the Roman Empire

had considerable lands in the East as well, and Christianity expanded into those areas, and beyond, very early. Christianity put down roots in modern Iraq in the First Century, so why would we believe it wouldn't keep advancing east? Often it was Nestorian Christians who were responsible for this very early missionary work.

Nestorians came in contact with the Mongols, and the mother of great Mongol chieftain, Kublai Khan, was a Nestorian Christian. She was the daughter-in-law of Genghis Khan.

Franciscans began to arrive in what is now Kazakhstan in the 13th Century. They won converts and the Catholic Church was beginning to flourish in the region, but then the Mongol chiefs converted to Islam and this spelled disaster for the Christians.

For the next 600 years there was no Catholic bishop in the area and Catholics were left to fend more or less for themselves. They dwindled drastically in number.

The first Catholic bishop after those long centuries was appointed by Pope John Paul II in 1991, who himself made a visit to the country in 2001.

Ironically, what helped to give the Church a foothold in Kazakhstan again was a very unlikely figure, namely Joseph Stalin.

As *L'Osservatore Romano* wrote in 2001: "it can be said that the history of the Catholic Church in Kazakhstan resumed in the 20th Century when Stalin ordered the deportation to Central Asia of whole peoples of the Catholic tradition. Providence turned a diabolical plan into a missionary event beyond the boldest dreams of even *Propaganda Fide* or any missionary strategist."

“The Pope's visit to the country is a reminder of the worldwide scope of the Church, of its true universality and deep history”

Essentially, some of the priests Stalin had exiled to Kazakhstan restarted the work of evangelisation there.

Estimates vary, but there appear to be around 250,000 Catholics in the mostly Muslim country today.

Pope Francis travelled to Kazakhstan chiefly to attend the seventh Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

While there, Pope Francis hoped to meet the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, but that did not come off, partly because of ten-

sions over the war in Ukraine.

President Xi Jinping was in the country at the same time. There was talk of the Pontiff meeting him, but that did not happen either.

The Pope's visit to the country is a reminder of the worldwide scope of the Church, of its true universality and deep history. It is also a reminder that parts of the world we barely think about, have an importance we don't properly appreciate.

Finally, it reminds us of the ebb and flow of history, and how the Church can seem to flourish in a given part of the world, relatively speaking, only to fade again, sometimes under conditions of extreme persecution. Then, it enjoys a small revival in the most unexpected way when exiled priests take up their Cross, seeing it as a gift from God, and begin the task of evangelisation in their new home-in-exile.

The Church in Ireland and the West is in a period of sharp decline, but who knows what is in the plan of providence and how God might use the twists and turns of history to eventually re-evangelise our part of the world? We cannot anticipate how and when God will act, but he will do so in his own time and in his own way, of that there can be no doubt, even if it takes centuries, as it did in faraway Kazakhstan.

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The demonic new world of online occultism



Social media like Instagram and Tiktok are allowing the occult to spread and mutate as never before Esmé Partridge tells Jason Osborne

The internet in 2022 continues to provide ever-new frontiers; it truly is a wild-west that has yet to be fully mapped out and understood by those who inhabit it. While there are the familiar highways and byways most of us trend, new territory is being opened up all the time – not all of it good. Drawing on ancient influences from a dizzying mix of places and times, one of the strangest phenomena of recent years is that of ‘WitchTok’.

“Speaking to The Irish Catholic newspaper, Ms Partridge said that you already find occult ideas there ‘in the philosophy of the internet’”

Writer and Masters student at the Faculty of Divinity at Cambridge, Esmé Partridge, described the melting pot of spiritualities that constitutes WitchTok in a viral piece for *The Critic*, titled *The demons of WitchTok*:

“Look up #WitchTok and you’ll find hundreds of thousands of tutorials – mostly by young women – teaching you how to cast spells or summon pagan deities, interspersed with healing crystal hauls and vlogs about their latest otherworldly encounters,” Ms Partridge wrote.

While most of this will be news to your average Catholic in Ireland, it’s already a world affecting our own – so much so that Ms Partridge devoted her undergraduate thesis to these TikTok spiritualities. Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Ms Partridge said that you already find occult ideas there “in the philosophy of the internet”.

“You have people like Timothy Leary for example, who’s involved in this cyber-culture and this dream of an almost gnostic utopia,

and so technology has always been quite embroiled in occult ideas,” Ms Partridge tells me.

“But with social media, I think that’s taken on a radically new form. Obviously, everybody has their own accounts, everybody has their own feeds, technology has become privatised, everybody has their own smartphone and so you see a lot more individualised forms of spirituality.”

Instawitches

“I would say around the 2010s, maybe 2014, ‘15, ‘16, you see ‘Instawitches’, so mostly young women starting to experiment with magic, especially astrology, those kinds of things on Instagram. It becomes quite an aesthetic, as well – a kind of style or a trend of being kind of ‘witchy’.”

With the surging popularity of the Chinese-owned app TikTok, it “exploded to another level,” Ms Partridge says.

“You had all kinds of occult and new age practices, but quite dis-embedded from their traditions, so you’d have random things like ‘astral projection’, which comes from shamanism, but taking on a new form called ‘reality shifting’, or other kinds of new age spell-casting practices which become ‘manifesting’.

Even though these spiritualities and their concomitant practices have become dis-embedded, as Ms Partridge puts it, from their various traditions, they’ve been fully appropriated at this stage, even though people don’t know where they come from. They’ve become so popular, in fact, that the WitchTok hashtag on TikTok, under which people post videos of themselves practicing magic and tutorials in different things like spell-casting and manifesting, currently has 30.9 billion views in total.

“I think people underestimate actually how vast the exposure to these things is, because TikTok’s algorithms can really propel a video that’s been produced by some midwestern teenager in their bedroom, you know? That can be getting millions of views,” Ms Partridge says.

The obvious question to ask is whether all of this is pure fad, and so I ask Ms Partridge how much of this online content is pure aesthetic among rebellious and discontented teens.

“I mean I think it definitely is tempting to look at it and reduce it to being an aesthetic, because I think it’s safe to say that the imagery of the occult and of the hidden and the unseen has always been quite appealing. I think you only have to look at the ‘90s where you have that particular kind of grungy aesthetic and ouija boards and pentagrams. So it’s always been quite fashionable and I think it’s easy to understand why a rebellious teenager might be drawn to that at a purely aesthetic level.

“I think with WitchTok, because it’s a very, almost a kind of democratised form of spirituality, which encourages you to try



“The obvious question to ask is whether all of this is pure fad, and so I ask Ms Partridge how much of this online content is pure aesthetic among rebellious and discontented teens”

things for yourself and to form your own kind of spirituality, it does invite you to actually experiment with practices and not just looks,” Ms Partridge says.

Temptation

“Especially because I think there’s a temptation for people to maybe become interested in it as an aesthetic but then to start realising, ‘Hmm, this is a community where

people are doing these things and I want to be a part of that’, and that does end up spilling into practice.”

Part of the appeal of this online subculture, Ms Partridge says, is that they get a lot of views.

“Like, if you look at these videos, for example, there’s a few accounts which try to ‘manifest’, which is a word which means ‘summon’ basically, huge amounts

of money or good grades or even clear skin. Things that young people want. People will create this content where they’re claiming that they’ve magically managed to procure these wishes and they’ve managed to turn their desires into reality, and they will get millions of views, understandably. So I think that that’s where you get the transition from something being an aesthetic to something

being like, 'Wow, people are actually doing things. I want to be a part of this,' and there's a huge appeal in that," Ms Partridge explains.

However, not all of it is a quest for community and popularity. Ms Partridge tells of the deeper relationship some claim to have with their different spiritualities, with some people going so far as proclaiming that they've summoned different deities – including Satan himself.

“Ms Partridge describes a video online in which the poster says ‘The devil doesn’t want your soul, the devil is friendly’”

“Some will make up deities, or they'll claim they've had encounters with angels, even. It seems to be really up to the individual as to what they want to summon and which deities are involved in their magical practice. But interestingly, you do see instances of people trying to summon demons.

“And it's clearly, I think it's an intentional rebellion against, perhaps, what they've been taught about Christianity. I think it's important to remember that a lot of these practices are quite polemically charged, they are often coming from young people who are trying to rebel against the Christianity of their upbringing. And so, quite self-consciously, they will go, 'Well, we've been taught that the devil is bad, but this is a patriarchal, Christian idea,' and so in rebellion against that they start opening themselves up to being influenced by demonic forces, basically,” Ms Partridge says.

Some try to make light of traditional taboos, claiming that demons aren't so bad. Ms Partridge describes a video online in which the poster says ‘The devil doesn't want your soul, the devil is friendly’. She says there are plenty of videos in which you can't be sure whether the person is “completely joking” or whether they're just performative, or otherwise.

“I think some people, they'll take it very light-heartedly, they'll post about it, saying, ‘Guys, I had an encounter with Satan and Satan appeared to me like this. I felt a strange sensation and then I heard a voice and Satan started talking to me, and he's actually really nice’, and things like that. The funniest one was a young woman who claimed she'd encountered Satan and Satan went by the pronouns ‘they/them’. So she'd encountered a gender-neutral Satan. She was flaunting it, like ‘I encountered the devil,’ and that naturally gets hundreds, thousands even of likes and views,” Ms Partridge says.

“But in any case, you do see these instances of mostly young women, that is overwhelmingly the demographic, claiming to have summoned some kind of demonic force,” she continues.

“I saw this really quite unnerving video where it was quite a different experience. It was quite a short video, but you could infer a lot from it. It was a young woman

who had been experimenting with spirituality, I'm not sure exactly what, something in the WitchTok orbit. She made this video about how she'd stopped doing it and so she films herself and then on the screen there's this text, ‘You were so into spirituality, what happened?’, and then she films this montage of these really disturbing images of these humanoid shadow figures, basically demonic creatures – it looks like something out of *Paranormal Activity* – and the implication is that she's been experimenting with magic and she's basically been haunted and she's evoked something that she didn't mean to evoke and she's now seeing these creatures in rooms and she's unleashed something.”

Online occultism

Ms Partridge mentions that the demographic seemingly most likely to engage in online occultism is that of young women, and she suggests a couple of reasons for why this may be so.

“The demographic of this in terms of age is mostly Gen-Z and younger millennials, and it is quite politicised. So, as I say, there is a, sort of, polemical charge against the institutional religions that they see as being hegemonic... In particular, I think, in the case of America, you do seem to get some young people who are rebelling against quite conservative types of Christianity like Mormonism, for example.

“So I think it's worth saying that it is political and I think feminism is also really deeply embroiled into it, there's this idea that institutional religion is patriarchal. They associate Christianity with the authority of white men telling them what to do, what to believe. And so witchcraft is sort of the ideal antithesis of that, because it places a lot of emphasis on female divinity,” Ms Partridge says.

“It's also because of the malleability of these practices, they can decide for themselves what their spirituality is. They can shape their own identity in a way that they want to. There's no orthodoxy. I think that's a really important thing. There isn't any prescriptive rules or guidelines for how you practice alternative spirituality, it's completely up to the individual. You don't have any constraints of orthodoxy or tradition in that way.”



Esmé Partridge.

The promise magic makes of being able to harness nature and to manipulate it “comes with it a great deal of power”, Ms Partridge suggests, and this can appeal particularly to women who feel powerless – “whether that's because as feminists, that's how they situate themselves in the world; they say, ‘Oh, we've been oppressed and we want to reclaim our power and reclaim our strength’.”

“Magic is a metaphysical way of actualising that, because you're literally controlling nature. I mean, you're not only rising above the patriarchy or the order of society but you're rising above nature itself and the laws

of the physical world and that's an incredibly radical and very political gesture I think. So, I think that's why it is particularly young women, it's that reclaiming of power and that freedom from patriarchal institutions and orthodoxies,” she says.

Ms Partridge says modern society is largely defenceless against these harmful spiritual trends because of the denial of the supernatural. Since the Enlightenment, she says, there's been the idea that if there is the supernatural, if there is a God, it exists “out there”, outside the sphere of relevance to our day-to-day lives.

“I suppose there will be some people who are quite wary about letting their children experiment with their faith”

“I think where we are now in 2022, I think for the majority of people, this kind of translates into either the supernatural doesn't matter or it just doesn't exist, which is obviously atheism. I think that implicit in this idea is this kind of separation of the material world from the supernatural, which means that if somebody claims to have a supernatural experience, we will reduce it to a purely psychological or imaginary phenomena. If a child or a teenager claims that they've done some kind of magic ritual and

has encountered a demonic force, unless as a parent you do come from a religious tradition, if you were just secular, you'd probably think, ‘Oh, well at best, no it's fine, it doesn't matter. Or at worst, maybe they're just going through a bad period of mental health,’ and reducing it to a psychological thing, which is a naturalistic explanation,” she says.

The other problem, she argues, is that in a liberal society, “even if we do believe that there is something out there that could be affecting young people, the attitude of parents in most cases is, ‘Well, it's my child's decision to do that and it's not my place to make a value judgment to tell them that maybe that's bad or that they shouldn't be doing that’.”

Harmful

Ms Partridge suggests that parents shouldn't be afraid of making a value judgment if their child is getting wrapped up in something potentially harmful online, to point out and acknowledge that, ‘This could be harmful’.

“I suppose there will be some people who are quite wary about letting their children experiment with their faith. I do understand that, but I think you can allow young people to explore faith and to develop their own personal sense of spirituality, but while also setting boundaries and saying, you know, like ‘There are dangerous forces out there, and these things are to be taken seriously’,” she finishes.



Religious warn of Ireland's failure to protect children



In a UN submission, Religious warn of Ireland's failings in protecting the rights of children and urge improvement, writes Ruadhán Jones

In a comprehensive joint submission, a number of Irish religious orders and some civil society groups have raised concerns about Ireland's implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The wide-ranging submission breaks down its concerns and recommendations across five areas: human trafficking, domestic violence, children living in the Direct Provision system, right to education and racism in schools.

It is one of many submissions made to the UN's Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), as part of a review of Irish practice which takes place every five years. The Irish religious' joint submission responds to the Irish Government's evaluation – called the State Report – of its implementation of the UN's convention.

"I suppose a lot of the things in the joint submission are about saying, Government already knows what it needs to do – we understand that there are other pressures on resources, but we try to highlight issues that we think ought to be looked at and deemed important," explains John McGeady, justice and peace officer for the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles (OLA).

They were one of the six orders and civil society groups who contributed to the submission, along with: the Presentation Sisters; the Society of African Missionaries (SMA); the Cork Migrant Centre; the Christian Brothers; and the Presentation Brothers.

Mr McGeady continued, pointing out that "Government has a responsibility to find the resources needed to fulfil its obligations... like the Istanbul Convention, or more generally across the board its obligations to vindicate people's human rights. And that eventually is what the Conventions of the Rights of the Child come down to... all the convention is doing is looking at how they [human rights] apply specifically to children.

"We as citizens are entitled to those rights and Government has a duty to uphold and vindicate those rights... dedicating resources to make sure they are actually realised."

Domestic violence

The Istanbul Convention referenced by Mr McGeady, which Ireland is signed up to, commits nations to providing a minimum of one refuge space per 10,000 people in a country for victims of domestic or gender-based violence.

As the religious' joint submission

notes, Ireland would need to increase refuge spaces by two and a half times to meet this requirement. This issue was raised in 2016 when Ireland was last reviewed by the Committee for the Rights of the Child.

"Six years on and the State is still only beginning to tackle this often-reported gap in service provision," the submission reads. Mr McGeady adds that "There was an agreement made in Turkey about the numbers of refuge spaces that are needed and it's supposed to be one in 10,000, but we don't meet that number. One of our key recommendations was quite straightforward, that we would meet that number that we agreed to meet."

“The views and wishes of children are not being given appropriate consideration in practice”

Another issue raised by the religious orders is that data used by Government often doesn't accurately capture the number of children who are victims of domestic violence.

"There is very little data on the number of children as victims impacted by domestic violence," the joint submission notes. It calls on the State to "commission State-funded research to get a more accurate picture of the scale and prevalence of children experiencing domestic violence and abuse within Ireland".

Equally, the State is "falling short" in its obligation to heed the

voices of child victims of domestic violence, and "the views and wishes of children are not being given appropriate consideration in practice."

While the third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence acknowledges children as victims/survivors as well as witnesses, the submission criticises the "vague" language.

"The child may not be on the blunt end of abuse, where there are instances of domestic abuse they may not be directed at the child, but that doesn't mean the child isn't also a victim of it," said Mr McGeady. "Because they are there and they're being traumatised by it in that setting."

Direct Provision

Direct Provision continues to be an open wound for the Government. In its 2021 White Paper, the current Government committed to abolishing Direct Provision, but thus far it hasn't implemented the provisions set out.

"Particularly from the point of view of children, there's a whole lot of issues with Direct Provision," Mr McGeady said. "Even as the Government has taken steps to improve the conditions in Direct Provision centres, nonetheless there are whole issues around privacy and family life for people living in it.

"It's very difficult to lead normal family life in an institutional setting when you're not in your own home. And so, one of the things we suggested is, when they do wind down direct provision, children should take priority. Children and those families should be moved out of those centres as quickly as

possible and into their own-door facilities, as they're calling them."

These issues range from barriers that hinder access to third-level education, a risk of poor nutrition, an absence of play facilities and constraints on parental decisions. The submission sums it up: "while the Direct Provision system remains in place children are subject to living conditions detrimental to their healthy development."

"We recognise and acknowledge and welcome the fact that the Government made its commitment with the 2021 White Paper to end Direct Provision", Mr McGeady explains.

“What we're recommending and asking Government to do is to review the resources they've dedicated and the timeline they've set out”

"Obviously, an awful lot has happened since then. We're looking at massive inflation, we're looking at the crisis in Ukraine and bringing refugees in from Ukraine and that's absolutely right that we should do that.

"But we have to be realistic about the pressure that puts on the resources that were already dedicated to trying to abolish Direct Provision," he continues. "What we're recommending and asking Government to do is to review the



John McGeady, justice and peace officer for the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles.

resources they've dedicated and the timeline they've set out. Look at it in the clear light of day realistically and say, well actually if we're to do this in the timeframe we suggested, we're actually going to have to dedicate a lot more resources to it."

Right to education

When it comes to education, the submission has two focuses, the first of which is on the right to accessing education for early school leavers, with the Irish religious questioning whether "the education system [is] failing those most in need".

The authors acknowledge that the percentage of those leaving school early is low, but points out that there is still a consistent group of young people (3%) of school-going age who leave the education system without qualifications and without completing their education.

"This applies, in particular, to children in disadvantaged circumstances. It appears the circus is failing to identify and address the needs of children at risk of early school leaving," they write. This leaves children "at risk of becoming invisible within the education system".

Despite this, there has been little engagement with the participatory needs of students at risk of early school leaving. The submission states that "the effective identification of, and response to, the participatory needs of children in the education system is essential", if we are to uphold the right to education for all.

However, while there has been some progress in tackling this issue, the Government's practice of a "one-size-fits-all" approach is a "significant barrier", the submission

warns. It threatens to leave disadvantaged children falling through the cracks, according to Mr McGeady.

"Alternatives need to be made available and there are places like the Cork Life Centre which offer an alternative model for engaging with young people who maybe are not happy in school," he says.

"But we're suggesting that those alternative models could be supported by the Government and those models should not be mainstreamed, but should be integrated into the wider education system so that there is a plurality of options there to deal with those children for whom the mainstream education system doesn't work."

The current Intercultural Education Strategy ended in 2015 and a new one has yet to be implemented

For this to happen, Government needs to recognise that students "are individuals and so their needs are going to be particular to them. Obviously, there can't a single system for every child in the country, but what we're seeing is they need to put more effort into looking at what are the needs of children who are falling out of the education system early."

Racism in Irish schools

"There is growing evidence that ethnic minority young people are suffering substantial distress, anxiety and alienation in our schools because of racism," the submission states baldly.

Staff at the Cork Migrant Centre, one of the contributors to the joint submission, report that students contact them on a weekly and often daily basis to report racist incidents at school.

Some of the examples listed are: young black children being referred to as a 'gang' by teachers when they hang out together in school; students making monkey noises as children walk by and being called the 'N' word; "Go back to your country" being shouted by other children in schools at children of colour, many of whom were born in Ireland and have not lived anywhere else.

There is a general ignorance or even denial of the problem of racism in Irish schools, the submission says, and calls for a "decolonisation" of the curriculum: "The school curriculum is largely skewed towards deficit narratives of ethnic minorities while marginalising their contributions to knowledge and this in itself, inadvertently, reinforces negative stereotypes and ultimately racism."

While the submission suggests that there may not be "widespread overt racism" in schools, there would appear to be a "much wider culture of 'soft' or systemic racism, a lack of sensitivity or ignorance to race issues that young students of colour find upsetting and alienating".

For this reason, it continues, and "because of the evident distress and anxiety among ethnic minority youth, the State's failure to identify racism as a problem in schools and to propose solutions is very concerning".

The list of recommendations to Government on how to address this issue is very detailed, ranging from anti-racism

training for teachers, to the introduction of a State-wide intercultural education plan. The current Intercultural Education Strategy ended in 2015 and a new one has yet to be implemented.

"The staff at the CMC found that time and time again, they have young people of migrant origin or of different ethnic backgrounds who are coming to them saying very casually, oh this comment was made today at school. Or we had these experiences at school today. They're not being dealt with, they're not being acknowledged," Mr McGeady says.

Human trafficking

The last key concern listed in the joint submission is child trafficking in Ireland. As the report points out, as long ago as 2013 the State acknowledged child trafficking as an emerging issue in Ireland. Despite this, "the State has failed to effectively coordinate and resource anti-trafficking efforts".

In the recent Trafficking in Persons report, Ireland's position improved slightly following several years of poor reviews

In 2016, the Government adopted the Second National Action Plan (NAP) to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Ireland. However, according to the 2022 *Trafficking in Persons* report from the US State Department, "It was uncertain whether the Government followed its 2016 NAP; the plan had no end date, timeframe, budget allocation, or indication of agencies responsible for its implementation."

The submission raises a number of concerns in light of Ireland's

failure to tackle the trafficking of children. For instance, in 2020 and 2021, the State failed to formally identify children who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation as victims of trafficking, negating its responsibilities towards those children.

The submission warns that "The failure to properly identify child victims of trafficking not only compromises the State's ability to provide accurate data to inform policy, but also raises serious concerns about the treatment of child victims of trafficking."

This is a "hidden human rights abuse" that happens in Ireland, Mr McGeady told me. "Some of the issues and concerns we'd have are in areas like prosecution. But also issues around resourcing, what steps are taken to prevent human trafficking from happening and some of the resourcing issues around protecting victims who have been identified. Those concerns continue."

In the recent *Trafficking in Persons* report, Ireland's position improved slightly following several years of poor reviews. However, we remain on Tier 2, along with countries including Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Benin.

"While we welcome the fact that Ireland has made some improvements, there's a lot more work to be done," Mr McGeady finishes.

UN Committee

The joint submission by religious orders and civil society groups was one of many submitted to the Committee for the Rights of the Child in August. The next stage will be the 93rd pre-session working group of the Committee, due to take place at the end of September 2022.

This will then be followed by the constructive dialogue between the Committee and representatives from the Irish Government, due to take place at the 92nd Session of the Committee from January 16 to February 3, 2023.

Following the dialogue, the Committee will publish the concluding observations which will outline a list of recommendations to better realise the rights of the child in the coming five years.



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Day 2

After breakfast, we take the short walk to the Church of the Nativity where we spend the morning and celebrate Mass. Here we will visit the birthplace of Jesus, and the Holy Manger as well as the chapels of St Joseph, St Jerome, the Holy Innocents and the Church of St Catherine.

Leaving the Church of the Nativity, we make our way to the Milk Grotto Church before sitting down to lunch in Manger Square where we will have a chance to meet the Mayor of Bethlehem and hear from local Christians. After lunch, we board the coaches for the short drive to the Shepherds

Fields' where the angels heralded the birth of Christ. After lunch, we continue to Ein Karem and visit the Churches of the Visitation (where Mary met Elizabeth) and St John the Baptist before we return to the hotel for dinner.

Day 3

This morning we drive to Jerusalem and enter the Old City to the Church of St Anne and nearby, see the Pool of Bethesda where Jesus healed a man paralysed for over 40 years. Close by we begin the *Via Dolorosa* – the way of sorrow – and follow the stations of the cross through the markets and streets of the Old City to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the site of Calvary (where Jesus was crucified) and his tomb. Here we will celebrate Mass and take some time to reflect at this sacred site.

Afterwards we can enjoy some free time in Jerusalem for lunch and exploring the markets, before visiting the Western Wall.

Day 4

After breakfast, we drive to the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem where we take our group photo and enjoy the view of the Old City below. We make our way to the highest point on the Mount of Olives to the Ascension Dome that marks the site

where Christ ascended into heaven. After this, we continue to visit the *Pater Noster* Church, *Dominus Flevit*, the Assumption Church and Grotto and the Garden of Gethsemane. In the afternoon we celebrate Mass in the Church of St Peter in Gallicantu or 'cock's crow', where Peter denied Jesus three times and see the dungeon where Jesus was held the night of Holy Thursday.

Afterwards, we walk around Mount Zion and visit the Church of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Tomb of King David and the Room of the Last Supper before returning to the hotel for dinner.

Day 5

This morning, we leave Bethlehem and visit Bethany where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, for Mass. We will then drive via the Inn of the Good Samaritan to the Dead Sea – the lowest point on earth. We have some time to relax and float on the water near Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. We will then continue to Qasr-al-Yahud where Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan by St John the Baptist for a renewal of baptism vows.

We then proceed to Jericho to see the Mount of Temptation where Jesus was tempted by the devil, and the Sycamore tree of Zacchaeus. After lunch,

we drive along the Jordan Valley to Nazareth and for check-in to the four-star Legacy Hotel for four nights, dinner, bed and breakfast. Optional Eucharistic Adoration at the Basilica of the Annunciation at 8.30pm.

Day 6

After breakfast, we will spend our morning exploring the city where Jesus lived as a child. We make our way to the Basilica of the Annunciation to celebrate Mass. Visiting the lower level of the basilica, we see the remains of Mary's house and where the Angel Gabriel visited her. Here inscribed on the altar are the Latin words of 'Here the Word was made flesh'. Adjacent to the basilica is the St Joseph's Church, where we will visit the site of Joseph's workshop and the house of the Holy Family.

A short walk from the basilica through the thriving market is Mary's Well where we have the opportunity to draw water from the same well as the Virgin Mary. After some time for lunch, we take the short coach journey to Cana where we visit

the Wedding Church, the site of Jesus' first miracle, turning the water to wine. Couples on the pilgrimage can take part in the special ceremony to renew their wedding vows and there is also prayers and blessings for spouses at home and deceased husbands and wives. In the lower level of the church we see artifacts from the site before having an opportunity to taste and purchase some wine from this sacred site. Afterwards, we make the short return journey to Nazareth for dinner in our hotel.

Optional rosary at the Irish icon at the Basilica of the Annunciation at 8.30pm.

Day 7

This morning we make our way to the Mount of Beatitudes overlooking the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum and Tabgha. Here we take some time to listen to the readings of the great Sermon on the Mount before continuing to Capernaum to see the old synagogue and the excavations of St Peter's house. We then visit

the nearby site of the multiplication of the loaves and fish at Tabgha, and the Church of the Primacy of St Peter.

We enjoy lunch on the shore of the Sea of Galilee before taking a boat trip on the lake. Before returning to the hotel, we visit Magdala and the magnificent retreat centre and celebrate Mass in the newly built chapel at the home of Mary Magdalene.

Optional candlelit procession at the Basilica of the Annunciation at 8.30pm.

Day 8

After breakfast we drive to Mount Tabor and ascend by taxi for Mass at the Church of the Transfiguration where Jesus is transfigured and speaks to Moses and Elijah. We have a chance to enjoy the view of the Valley of Armageddon before returning to Nazareth for some free time and dinner at the hotel.

Day 9

Early breakfast before taking our coach to Tel Aviv airport for return flights to Dublin via Istanbul.

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Penal crosses to go on display in Mayo museum

Chai Brady

A selection of 21 penal crosses have been taken out of storage and put on display until the end of October at the Mayo branch of the National Museum of Ireland.

The crosses, dating back to the early 18th to the middle of the 19th Century, can be seen at 'Country Life' in Turlough Park, Castlebar.

Penal crosses have been described as one of the few examples of Irish folk art. The crosses were likely carved and sold to pilgrims in the vicinity of Lough Derg, Co. Donegal. The dates carved onto the crosses recorded the year a pilgrimage was undertaken.

"Strictly speaking, they should be called penal crucifixes but as can be seen from the cards, even within the museum, there were changes over time in the terminology used to describe these objects," explained Clodagh Doyle, keeper of the Irish Folklife Collection. "Although mistakenly thought to be associated with the Penal Law era, penal crosses was the term used in folk tradition. Today, due to research by A.T. Lucas, we could call them Lough Derg crucifixes, but we continue to use the term penal cross."

Similarities can be seen in the inscriptions on the crosses. They also have certain symbols in common – although these are not always present in every instance. The symbols of the Passion of Christ that are usual include a ladder, a spear, a cock-in-a-pot, scourges, pincers, a hammer and

three nails.

Ms Doyle said the museum is delighted to display objects from the museum stores throughout 2022, as this is a significant year in the history of the National Museum of Ireland.

"We moved the Irish Folklife Collection objects into our new Mayo home 21 years ago this September, creating the only branch of the National Museum of Ireland outside of Dublin. Our museum storage is like an 'Aladdin's Cave' of treasures so throughout the year, we are taking out objects associated with each of the seasons. For autumn, we are displaying 21 penal crosses because this time of year was very much a time for pilgrimage, patterns (communal visits to holy sites) and prayer in folk tradition in Ireland. Many people went on pilgrimage to famous sites such as Croagh Patrick and Knock in Co. Mayo. The Lough Derg pilgrimage in Co. Donegal, where these crosses originated, was as internationally popular in Europe in medieval times, as Santiago de Compostela."

After being displayed until the end of October, they will be replaced with a selection of 21 storage vessels over the winter season to conclude the Folk21 programme.

The National Museum of Ireland - Country Life has welcomed more than 2 million visitors since opening its doors in 2001.

Mayo County Council purchased Turlough Park House and gardens in 1991 and the site was then selected in 1995 for a new branch of the National Museum of Ireland to display the Irish Folklife Collection.



Clodagh Doyle, keeper of the Irish Folklife Collection, at the Folk21 display at the National Museum of Ireland – Country Life, Turlough Park, Castlebar, Co. Mayo. Photo: Karen Cox



Out&About

Well done, good and faithful servant



CARLOW: Ann Nolan, recipient of the Benemerenti medal for her work in Graiguecullen-Killeshin Parish, is pictured with her family in Holy Cross Church.



TYRONE: Parishioners in Errigal Ciaran joined with Fr Michael O'Dwyer to celebrate the 40th anniversary of his ordination recently. Fr O'Dwyer was ordained on 10th June 1982. Members of his family, friends and parishioners attended the Mass in the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Ballygawley on Sunday, September 4, to celebrate this milestone.



TIPPERARY: Some of the new ministers of Killaloe diocese are pictured with Bishop Fintan Monahan on retreat in Mount St Joseph's Roscrea, September 10.

IN SHORT

Wexford parish announces parish prayer mission

Wexford parish is hosting a week-long mission of prayer October 2-9 that will be a time of "celebration, belonging and renewal".

'A Mission for All' begins Sunday October 2, and includes talks, Mass, visits to schools, faith testimonies and more.

Bishop of Ferns Ger Nash will open an icon exhibition in Friary Hall, as well as later hosting an ecumenical conference on caring for the Earth on Thursday October 6.

Other speakers include Sr Stephanie O'Brien, Fr Pat Collins CM and Fr Billy Swan.

In a release, the parish said it hopes the mission will "move our conscience to cherish our planet and care for creation that reflects your glory".

In a prayer accompanying the release, the parish prays that the mission will "be a time of celebration, belonging and renewal from which will flow rivers of living water, leading to growth, healing and lasting change for good in our parish".

Archbishop of Cashel opens school extension in Jordan

Archbishop of Cashel and Emly Kieran O'Reilly SMA opened a new four-classroom school extension at Mafraq Latin Parish in Jordan.

Archbishop O'Reilly is the Spiritual Director for the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem (EOHSJ) – Lieutenancy of Ireland, leading their 2022 Holy Land Pilgrimage

The school in Mafraq is one of a number of projects that the Equestrian Order support financially.

Mafraq has a Christian community of only 500 Faithful, in a city of 75,000 people.

The extension of the school serves the needs of the Latin Parish, as it ensures the continuation of a Christian presence in this part of the Holy Land.

Without the school and the ongoing financial support, given by the Equestrian Order, the Christian population will be extinct as families would have been forced to move away from the area.

Concern hosts COP-ON music festival

Irish charity Concern Worldwide will host a climate-action focused music festival, called COP ON, in Dublin next month.

The festival will begin October 14 with an outdoor cinema screening of *Some Like It Hot*, and will be followed the next day by a day of music and other acts.

COP ON attendees will be able to submit messages to world leaders, which will be collected and brought to the UN's COP27 climate change conference in Egypt this November by a youth ambassador chosen by the event's hosts Concern Worldwide.



JORDAN: Archbishop of Cashel and Emly Kieran O'Reilly SMA opens a new four-classroom school extension at Mafrag Latin Parish, September 12.



CLARE: A large crowd attends the Mass and social to mark the centenary celebration of the Salesian Sisters in Ireland at St Michael's Church, Kildysart.



CARLOW: Junior infant students at Killeslin NS settle in on their first day of 'big school'.



JORDAN: Fr Ferghal McGrady; Mr Kareem Hassan, Engineer Latin Patriarchate; Fr Tareq Hijazin, PP Mafrag; Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly; Chevalier Damien Walls, AD Group Chatered Surveyors Belfast; His Excellency Peter Durnin, Lieutenant of Ireland; and Fr Francis Mitchell are pictured following the opening ceremony in Mafrag, September 12.



DONEGAL: Fr Roland Colhoun (Newtownstewart, Plumbridge, Gortin and Greencastle, Co. Tyrone) with a group of parishioners and friends on the one-day Lough Derg retreat, September 7.



GALWAY: Transition year students from Coláiste Chroí Mhuire Spiddal Galway are pictured having hiked up Croagh Patrick, September 8.



BELFAST: St Mary's University College welcomed their new intake of Irish medium Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students for the 2022/23 academic year recently, pictured here in front of the college chapel.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



MAYO: Bishop of Waterford and Lismore Alphonsus Cullinan and Fr Vincent Finnegan OFM (left) from Rosnowlagh Franciscan friary are pictured with NET Ministries missionaries after the commissioning Mass on Wednesday, September 7, in Knock. NET Ministries will have three teams this year: in Delvin, Co. Westmeath; Gardiner St Parish, Dublin, with the Jesuit Community; and Moyross, Limerick City, with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal.



ROME: Bishop of Kilmore Martin Hayes (left) and Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey (second from left) are pictured with their brother bishops from around the world at the course for recently appointed bishops.



DUBLIN: On Sunday September 11 in St Saviour's Church, Dublin, four Dominican friars made solemn profession, taking vows of obedience until death. Bros Benedict McGlinchey OP, Ruaidhri Grieve OP, Błażej Biatek OP, and Chris Gault OP, made their vows in the hands of the Prior Provincial of Ireland, Fr John Harris OP. Photo: Bro. Sean Blackwell.



LOURDES: Sixth year students from St Mary's Glasnevin are pictured on their pilgrimage to Lourdes with Dublin diocese, September 8.

ANTRIM

Pathways adult faith development programme, a two-year, part-time course, is now enrolling for 2022-2023 intake. The course runs one Saturday per month (10am-4:30pm) from October to June, either in-house at Drumalis, Larne or online via Zoom. To register, contact 028 28276455/28272196 or email maura@drumalis.co.uk.

ARMAGH

The Dromantine retreat and conference centre is hosting an understanding suicide workshop. It runs from 9.30am-4.30pm Saturday September 24 at a cost of £40. Contact Jacinta/Louisa on 048 3082 1964 or admin@dromantineconference.com

CORK

'Life in Spirit' Seminar commencing Friday night September 23 and subsequent Friday nights in Glash Community Hall, Glash, Newmarket P51W024. For more information contact Pat on 087 250 5528.

DONEGAL

The 150th anniversary celebrations for St Brigid's Church, Golan, Milford take place Friday, October 14, at 7pm. Bishop of Raphoe Alan McGuckian will be the main celebrant. Refreshment and entertainment afterwards. Lough Derg is hosting a day of prayer for peace in Ukraine Sunday September 25. Guest speaker Halyna Tesluk, professor of Old Testament. For more information visit www.loughderg.org. Pre-booking essential.

DOWN

Adoration takes place every Wednesday 2-4pm in Christ the Redeemer, Lagmore.

DUBLIN

The Spiritans will host a public exhibition on the history of the order as part of Culture Night 2022, taking place Friday September 23. You can register for the event on www.spiritans.ie. A tour of the Holy Spirit Church and its stained-glass windows will be on offer. Mass for the anointing of the sick will take place on Sunday September

25 in St Patrick's Church, Ringsend at 3pm.

FERMANAGH

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will take place each Tuesday from 10.30am-9pm at the Crypt Chapel, St Michael's Church, Enniskillen.

GALWAY

Poor Clares Galway are hosting a monastic experience day, Saturday September 24 from 10am-5pm. If you are under 40 and would like to know more about the Poor Clares' way of life, contact vocations@poorclares.ie.

KERRY

A free Season of Creation Zoom talk takes place September 22, focusing on the vital role of soil and water with speakers: Thomas O Connor, organic farmer and Talamh Beo, and Catherine Seale-Duggan, Local Authorities Water. To register, visit www.dioceseofkerry.ie.

KILDARE

An African Mass is held on the third Sunday of the month in St Brigid's Church, Kildare at 2pm.

KILKENNY

The rosary is said at 2:30pm on Fridays in the Grotto Graiguenamanagh.

LIMERICK

Eucharistic Adoration takes place in the Adoration Chapel Abbeyfeale, every Friday after 10am Mass until 8pm. A come and see retreat for those exploring vocations with the Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia takes place October 14-16. For more information or to register email limerick@op-tn.org.

LOUTH

Cancer prayer support group for men and women who have or have had cancer takes place Wednesday September 21 and 28 in the "Bethany" House of Prayer, 34 Point Road, Dundalk, Co. Louth A91 WOC 9. A time of relaxation, meditation and prayer followed by tea/coffee from 11am-12 noon. Contact: 00353 429 331 602. No fee – donations gratefully accepted. Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal host a come and

see retreat for women age 18-35 who are discerning a vocation in St Anthony's convent October 12-16. If interested, contact Sr Agnes 041 983 0441.

LEITRIM

Ballinamore prayer group meet on Tuesdays 8:30-9:45 pm, in St Brigid's Parish Centre, Ballinamore.

MAYO

The annual Blessing of Pets ceremony returns to Knock Shrine on Saturday, October 8 at 11am. The blessing will take place in the Shrine grounds at the Hub.

TIPPERARY

'Get used to different' weekend retreat inspired by *The Chosen* TV series takes place Friday September 30-Sunday October 2 in Glencomeragh House. Full board accommodation, the cost is €195. For 18s and over. To book contact info@holyfamilymission.ie or 052 6133181.

TYRONE

Youth 2000 country barndance takes place Saturday, September 24 at the Mellon hotel, Omagh. From 6pm-late, includes dance lesson, dinner, barndance. Cost is £30/€35, strictly for 18s and over. Wild west attire suggested. Contact office@youth2000.ie.

WATERFORD

Lectio Divina, a time of Gospel reading, sharing and socialising, takes place Tuesdays 2:30-4pm in St John's Pastoral Centre and on Thursdays 7:30-9pm in Sacred Heart Convent, Cedar Lodge. Contact Sr Kathryn 087 404 2784 or waterford@ascjus.org.

WESTMEATH

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the Cathedral of Christ the King from 2:30-7pm Monday-Friday.

WEXFORD

Wexford parish mission takes place October 2-9 with the theme 'A Mission for All'. Events will include Mass, talks, testimonies, conferences and much more. Speakers include Bishop of Ferns Ger Nash, Fr Pat Collins CM and Sr Stephanie O'Brien.



World Report

IN BRIEF

Cuban dictatorship expels Jesuit's superior

● The Cuban dictatorship has expelled Fr David Pantaleón, who served as superior of the Jesuits, from the island by not renewing his residency permit.

"On the morning of Tuesday, September 13, Fr David Pantaleón, superior of the Jesuits in Cuba, left the island because his residency permit was not renewed," a statement from the Jesuits of Latin America announced.

The communiqué noted that the priest, who is from the Dominican Republic, "is also the president of the Cuban Conference of Religious Men and Women (CONCUR)". Like the Jesuits, CONCUR has been outspoken in defending human rights.

Spanish court confirms former priest's sentence for abuse

● Spain's Supreme Court has confirmed an appeal court's sentence of 30 years in prison for a man convicted of sexually abusing minors and who was expelled from the clerical state by Pope Francis in 2019 for repeatedly refusing to serve the canonical sentence that had been imposed upon him.

The ex-priest was accused of sexually abusing seven minors who were studying at the minor

seminary of the Diocese of Ciudad Real in Spain where he was a formator.

The high court dismissed the appeal filed by Pedro Jiménez Arias against the judgment of the Superior Court of Justice of Castilla La Mancha, which increased the sentence to 30 years from the 22 years and eight months that the Provincial Court of Ciudad Real had imposed.

African bishops reflect on British monarchy

● Many Africans, including bishops, mourned the death of Britain's Queen Elizabeth, but for some, that feeling of grief was dwarfed by memories of Britain's colonial exploitation of the continent.

And while Queen Elizabeth lived through an era of industrialisation that is responsible for the current climate crisis, some hope her successor, King Charles III, could be part of the solution.

Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah of Sokoto, Nigeria, described the late queen as "a moral force in a world that has become severely fractured by hatred and other forms of extremism."

Bishop Sithembele Sipuka of Umtata, president of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, told CNS that Elizabeth was "a source of cohesion and identity for her people", while Fr Humphrey Tatah Mbuy, communications director of the Cameroonian bishops' conference, described the late queen as "a beautiful, gentle lady".

But Bishop Sipuka noted that "colonisation is something that should have never happened in the first place, because it was an oppressive system to the locals and led to robbery of resources and brains."

Archaeological digs in US northwest uncover Catholic artefacts

● Oregon's rich Catholic history begins a few miles north in what was then Oregon Country and now is Washington state. Archaeological digs at Fort Vancouver, Washington, have uncovered a trove of Catholic artifacts from the earliest days of the Church in the Pacific Northwest, including a crucifix, rosary beads and a Miraculous Medal, all from the 1840s.

The finds are remarkable, said Meagan Huff, curator at the Fort Vancouver National Historical Site.

"Most items found underground that are part of the archaeological record are things that were discarded, for example, broken dishes or leftover bones from a meal," she told the *Catholic Sentinel*, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Portland.

Pakistani bishops say more help needed after deadly flooding

Three bishops of Pakistan dioceses most affected by recent deadly monsoon flooding appealed for more funding for emergency food, repairing damaged homes and providing medical needs for the worst-hit victims in their provinces. The South Asian country has been hit hard by record floods caused by monsoon rains and glacial melting since the rainy season started this summer.

But Archbishop Benny Trivas of Karachi, Bishop Samson Shukardin of Hyderabad and Bishop Khalid Rehmat of Quetta also praised the generosity of local citizens and international aid groups during a virtual news conference hosted by the pontifical foundation Aid to the Church in Need September 15. Pakistani Christians, a minority, are mostly impoverished.

Bishop Rehmat described his sprawling province of Balochistan as all but cut off, because main roads connecting to major provinces and cities such as Punjab and Karachi have been flooded and bridges broken. He said four churches in his southwest vicariate, previously not as affected by the yearly monsoons as other parts of the country, are in remote mountain areas, and no church workers have been able to reach them.

He said even the poor are donating money to help. "We have received very little help from the government, but



Men who were displaced by flooding bathe amid floodwaters in Sehwan, Pakistan, Sept. 13, 2022. As of Sept. 15, Pakistan's disaster management office reported more than 1,500 people dead since half the country became submerged starting in June. (CNS photo/Akhtar Soomro, Reuters)

local people, they are helping us. Christians also and Muslims also, they are helping us ... but it is not enough."

As of September 15, Pakistan's disaster management office reported more than 1,500 people dead since floods started in June, submerging at least a third of the country. It also said more than 33 million people (of the 220 million population) have been affected. More than a million houses have either been partially or completely damaged. And close to a million livestock have been lost. Pakistan is a

world exporter of cotton, and much of those crops have been severely damaged. Widely reported estimates of recovery costs come to about \$30 billion.

Bishop Shukardin said apart from help of locals in the neighbouring Karachi Archdiocese, his diocese is receiving tens of thousands of dollars from aid groups in Austria, the Netherlands and other countries as well as \$200,000 from Aid to the Church in Need. He expressed concern for farmers in his province who pay land rent using the revenue they gain from selling crops.

"This time they will not pay them back," said Bishop Shukardin. "It means their debt will increase, and the bonded labour which is existing in Sindh province will increase broader than that."

Sindh province in the south-east has reported the most deaths and lost homes since the floods started. Bishop Shukardin said the money would go toward helping the farmers drain flooded land, procuring medicines to fight the expected rise in dengue and cholera cases due to unclean water and providing food aid.

US court's blocking transgender mandate a 'victory'

A unanimous ruling by the 5th US Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans blocking the Biden administration's transgender mandate "is a major victory for conscience rights and compassionate medical care in America," said the attorney who represented the plaintiffs in the case.

"Doctors cannot do their jobs and comply with the Hippocratic oath if the government requires them to perform harmful, irreversible procedures against their conscience and medical expertise,"

said Joseph Davis, counsel at Becket, a Washington-based religious liberty law firm.

Mr Davis made the remarks about the court's August 26 ruling permanently blocking a US Department of Health and Human Services mandate that would have forced doctors and hospitals to perform gender-transition procedures on their patients even if this violated their conscience and medical judgment.

On August 4, the 5th Circuit heard oral arguments in the case, Franciscan

Alliance v. Becerra, which was brought by a Catholic health care network and a group of nearly 19,000 health care professionals.

"Franciscan Alliance and the Sisters of St Francis of Perpetual Adoration seek to carry on Jesus Christ's healing ministry by providing the best possible care to every person who comes through our doors," said Sr Petra Nielsen, a Sister of St Francis of Perpetual Adoration, who is a member of the Franciscan Alliance's corporate board.

Myanmar's soldiers lay land mines around church

Soldiers in Myanmar used a Catholic church as a kitchen and laid mines around the building, Church sources told ucanews.com.

A video posted by local defence forces showed dirty floors and pews covered with dust along with cooking pots and military uniforms inside Mother of God Church in Moby, in Shan

state. The video went viral on social media.

Ucanews.com reported local defence forces urged parishioners not to go near the church building because the army had laid mines near it.

The military occupied the town for several days before retreating from the church in mid-September following

casualties in fierce fighting with local defence forces, ucanews.com reported.

Moby, where the majority of people are Catholic, is part of the Pekhon Diocese.

Myanmar's military has continued to target churches and Christian institutions in the conflict-stricken country where the religious minority bears the brunt of the con-

flict triggered by the February 2021 coup, ucanews.com reported.

Fierce fighting erupted between the military and local defence forces around Moby township in early September, when the military used airstrikes and heavy weapons after dozens of soldiers were killed.



Edited by Jason Osborne
jason@irishcatholic.ie

An angel stands guard



A destroyed church is seen near the town of Izium, Ukraine, September 14, 2022, during the Russian invasion. Photo:CNS

UN human rights report on Nicaragua cites 'attacks on Church'

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) released a report September 13 that condemned the regime of Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, citing a "deterioration of the human rights situation".

The report included a compilation of recent incidents in which the Nicaraguan government has attacked and repressed the Catholic Church.

President Ortega, who took office in 2007, has become increasingly authoritarian since his re-election in November 2021. A brutal crackdown on protesters in 2018, the arrest and imprisonment of political opponents before the presidential election, and the repression of the Church

prompted a UN resolution to further monitor the country.

The report, introduced before the 51st session of the UNHRC in Geneva, documented known human rights violations since March when the report was commissioned.

In summing up the report's findings, UN official Christian Salazar Volkmann cited "serious violations of civil and political rights, the absence of a national dialogue, the deepening of the political crisis, and the isolation of Nicaragua from the international community".

"I urge the international community to sustain its efforts and engagement, including, most urgently, to keep calling on the authorities for the release of the arbitrar-

ily detained persons," Mr Volkmann said.

Included among the findings were attacks on the Catholic Church:

— In March, the report noted, Nicaragua expelled the apostolic nuncio, "who had supported dialogue at the beginning of the crisis".

— On August 1, Nicaraguan police broke into a Catholic radio station in Sébaca, Matagalpa, using violent force. A parish priest and six others were confined in his house for three days without food or electricity.

— The bishop of Matagalpa, Rolando Álvarez, along with two priests, was harassed beginning in May, the report noted. On August 4, police surrounded the bishop's home

and prevented him from going to the cathedral to celebrate Mass. The bishop, five other priests, and six lay people were held by riot police and subject to a criminal investigation. According to human-rights observers, as of today, his location is not known.

— Between May and August, government authorities shut down 12 radio and television media outlets of the Catholic Church, "arguing that they did not have operating permits," the report said.

— Twelve universities "had their legal personality cancelled," according to the UN report. Among them was the Jesuit-run Central American University.

Kidnapped nun 'filled with gratitude' following safe release

During nearly five months of captivity in Burkina Faso, Marianite Sister Suellen Tennyson wondered aloud where God was hiding in the midst of her isolation and loneliness.

Then, in an instant, she looked down at her feet, where one of her toenails had been battered and bloodied during a harrowing post-kidnapping motorcycle ride deep into the forests of West Africa, after which she was turned over to a rival Muslim group.

Her new captor saw her gouged toe and, inexplicably, began washing her feet.

"I'm sitting there, and this Muslim man is washing my feet. And I said, 'God, is something going on here?' It was like God was using him in some kind of way. I was just taken aback," Sr Suellen said in a September 13 interview with the *Clarion Herald*, newspaper of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

Sr Suellen, 83, was abducted by a

group of armed men the night of April 4-5 from the medical mission residence in Yalgo she had shared since 2013 with two other Marianite sisters and lay employees.

Through Sr Suellen's ordeal, the Marianites of Holy Cross, of which she is the former international leader, heard nothing about her whereabouts. She was freed peacefully in late August in neighbouring Niger into the custody of the FBI and US Embassy and Air Force personnel.

Vatican roundup

Holy See and Kazakhstan strengthen collaboration

● On Wednesday, 14 September, at the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the capital Nur-Sultan, an agreement was signed between the Holy See and the Republic of Kazakhstan.

A statement from the Holy See Press Office said that the agreement was signed on behalf of the Holy See by Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, the Secretary for Relations with States, while Mr Mukhtar Tileuberdi, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, signed for Kazakhstan.

The agreement was signed on the sidelines of Pope Francis' visit to Kazakhstan for the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, taking place in Nur-Sultan from 13-15 September.

The new agreement aims to implement article 2 of the 1998 bilateral agreement, facilitating the granting of visas and residence permits to ecclesiastical and religious personnel coming from abroad and engaged in the pastoral care of the Catholic Faithful in Kazakhstan.

"Consisting of a preamble and 8 paragraphs, the document further consolidates the bonds of friendship and collaboration that already exist between the two Parties," read the statement.

The agreement will enter into force after the exchange of the instruments of ratification.

Pope: 'The West has taken the wrong paths'

● Discussing on the flight from Kazakhstan to Italy the moral degradation of the West, particularly concerning the advance of legal euthanasia, Pope Francis said the region has taken the wrong path and that killing should be left "to the animals".

"It is true that the West degenerates," the Pope said during his September 15 in-flight press conference in response to a question about the loss of values in the West, and in particular to the push for

legal euthanasia in France, Italy, and Belgium.

"It is not, at this moment, at the highest level of exemplariness ... The West has taken the wrong paths," the Pope said.

Pressed on the problem of euthanasia, Pope Francis said: "To kill is not human, period. If you kill — with motivation yes — in the end you will kill more. It's not human. Let's leave killing to the animals."

Kazakh bishop says criticisms of Pope are sign of collegiality

● Awaiting the arrival of the Pope, a bishop who frequently criticises Pope Francis told reporters that speaking up when he disagrees with the Pope is an expression of "collegiality".

For example, Auxiliary Bishop Athanasius Schneider of Astana, Kazakhstan, told reporters Pope Francis' participation in the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions — the principal reason the Pope travelled to Kazakhstan — was "dangerous" because it could "undermine the uniqueness and absoluteness of Jesus Christ as saviour and of our mission to preach to all nations, to all religions, Jesus Christ."

The bishop made his comments September 15 while awaiting Pope Francis' arrival at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Cathedral in Nur-Sultan for a meeting with bishops, priests, religious, laity and seminarians.

Bishop Schneider said the congress could give the impression that the Pope supports "a supermarket of religions" that people could choose freely from.

"This is not correct because there is only one true religion, which is the Catholic Church, founded by God himself, but commanded to all men, to all religions, to believe and accept his son Jesus Christ, the only saviour," the bishop said.

Papal trip to Kazakhstan sees inter-faith dialogue take centre stage

Nur Sultan, Kazakhstan -- Arriving in Kazakhstan, a country that borders Russia, Pope Francis said he came as a "pilgrim of peace" at a time when "our world urgently needs peace; it needs to recover harmony".

"I am visiting you in the course of the senseless and tragic war that broke out with the invasion of Ukraine, even as other conflicts and threats of conflict continue to imperil our times," the Pope said September 13 in a speech to the country's civil authorities, representatives of civic groups and members of the diplomatic corps.

"I have come to echo the plea of all those who cry out for peace, which is the essential path to development for our globalised world," he said.

After a nearly seven-hour flight from Rome, Pope Francis arrived in the capital city, Nur-Sultan, where he attended the September 14-15 Congress of World and Traditional Religions. As he arrived in Kazakhstan airspace, his plane was escorted by fighter jets.

Knee pain

Arriving at the presidential palace, Pope Francis, who continues to suffer from knee pain, remained seated while Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev stood next to him as an honour guard played the national anthems of Vatican City State and Kazakhstan.

Welcoming the Pope, President Tokayev thanked him for his "tireless and dedicated efforts in the name of

the human family around the world" at a "critical juncture in human history".

As Islamophobia, antisemitism and Christian persecutions continue to rise, the president said, "humanity could really go one way or the other if we are not vigilant".

"I believe it is high time for moderates from different cultures and religions to pool their wisdom and energy to unite people behind the ideas of peace, social harmony and mutual support," he said.

"We need religion in order to respond to the thirst for world peace"

President Tokayev said the Pope's presence at the interreligious meeting would ensure its success "and instil a true joy and happiness in the hearts of all devout Catholics in Kazakhstan and beyond".

Responding to the president and addressing the civil leaders, the Pope reflected on the two-stringed "dombra," a traditional Kazakh musical instrument, and noted its use for centuries, thus "linking the past to the present".

"As a symbol of continuity in diversity, its rhythm accompanies your country's memory," he said. "It thus serves as a reminder of how important it is, amid today's rapid economic and social changes, not to neglect the bonds that connect us to the lives of those who have gone before us."

Because of its history, St John Paul II regarded Kazakhstan as a "land of martyrs and of believers, land of deportees and of heroes, land of intellectuals and artists," he said.

That history, the Pope said, is one of "culture, humanity and suffering," particularly during the Soviet era that brought prison camps and mass deportations.

Nevertheless, "Kazakhs did not let themselves remain prisoners of these injustices," the Pope said. "The memory of your seclusion led to a deep concern for inclusion."

Religions must be purified of extremism

As war, violence and extremism in countries around the world threaten the lives of countless men, women and children, religions must rise above differences and be examples of peace and harmony, Pope Francis said.

"It is time to realise that fundamentalism defiles and corrupts every creed; time for open and compassionate hearts," the Pope said September 14 at the plenary session of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

"We need religion in order to respond to the thirst for world peace and the thirst for the infinite that dwells in the heart of each man and woman," he said.

On the second day of his visit to Kazakhstan, the Pope addressed 80 religious leaders and hundreds of delegates participating in the interreligious meeting September 14-15 in the Palace of Independence, a



blue-glassed trapezoid-shaped building in the heart of the Kazakh capital, Nur-Sultan.

The congress, which is held every three years, was the initiative of Kazakhstan's first president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, as a way of promoting dialogue among religions, the congress' website stated. It also aims to prevent "the use of religious feelings of people for the escalation of conflicts and hostilities".

Arriving at the meeting, the Pope took his place at a huge round table with the other leaders and was immediately greeted by Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of Al-Azhar in Egypt. Smiling, the Pope affectionately embraced him.

The event began with a moment of silent prayer.

After the formal session, Pope Francis held private meetings with a dozen of the leaders, including the sheikh, but also with Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, head of external relations for the

Russian Orthodox Church. The metropolitan took the place of Russian Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, who cancelled his attendance at the congress.

Metropolitan Anthony told reporters his 15-minute meeting with the Pope was "very cordial" and that the Pope had asked him to pass his greetings to the patriarch, whom the Pope had hoped to meet in Nur-Sultan. The patriarch's withdrawal from the congress was seen by many observers as a protest of Pope Francis' decision not to meet Patriarch Kirill in Jerusalem in June because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and of Patriarch Kirill's support for the war.

"Pope Francis said that 'authentic religiosity' is needed to fight fundamentalism and extremism in religion"

"We had worked to prepare the second meeting (between a pope and patriarch -- the first was in Havana in 2016), and then it was cancelled by the Vatican," Metropolitan Anthony told reporters at the Palace of Independence. "We'll see what we can do" to arrange a new meeting time.

Asked if Patriarch Kirill was still bothered by Pope Francis' comment in May to an Italian newspaper that "the patriarch cannot turn himself into Putin's altar boy," the metropolitan said, "I can say it was something very unexpected, this interview, and it is clear that expressions of this kind are

not helpful for Christian unity."

In his formal talk to the congress, Pope Francis said that "authentic religiosity" is needed to fight fundamentalism and extremism in religion and to show the world that it has no reason to distrust or have "contempt for religion as if it were a destabilising force in modern society."

Kazakhstan and other nations of the former Soviet Union "are all too familiar with the legacy of decades of state-imposed atheism: that oppressive and stifling mentality for which the mere mention of the word 'religion' was greeted with embarrassed silence," the Pope said.

Religion, he said, "is not a problem, but part of the solution for a more harmonious life in society".

"Memories of past hurts renew hope for peaceful future"

The painful memories of the persecution of Christians in Kazakhstan serve as a reminder that peace "must be achieved anew each day," Pope Francis said.

Celebrating Mass on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross September 14 at the Expo grounds in Nur-Sultan, the Pope said that, much like the people of Israel experienced serpent bites in the desert, the people of Kazakhstan felt the painful bites from the "fiery serpents of violence, atheistic persecution and all those troubled times when people's freedom was threatened and their dignity offended."

"We do well to keep alive the memory of those sufferings and not forget certain



Pope Francis and President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev attend a welcoming ceremony at the presidential palace in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, September 13.



Pope Francis greets Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar mosque and university.



Pope Francis is welcomed by Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev as he arrives at the international airport in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, September 13. The Pope was attending the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Nur-Sultan. Photos: CNS.

grim moments; otherwise, we can consider them water under the bridge and think that now, once and for all, we are on the right road," he said.

Before concluding the Mass, Pope Francis prayed for "all the war-torn areas of our world," including Ukraine, which has been under attack by neighbouring Russia since the end of February.

The Pope prayed that the world would "never grow accustomed to war or resigned to its inevitability" and instead choose peace through dialogue.

Pope: Church in Kazakhstan's strength is its diversity, not its numbers

The strength of the Catholic Church in Central Asia is measured not in numbers, but by the diversity of its people, Pope Francis said.

"The beauty of the Church comes from the fact that we are one family, in which no one is a stranger," the Pope said September 15 during a meeting with clergy, religious, lay men and women and seminarians at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Cathedral in Nur-Sultan.

"Let me repeat: In the Church, no one is a stranger! We are the one holy people of God, enriched by a multitude of peoples," he said. "The strength of this priestly and holy people lies precisely in its ability to draw richness from this diversity, by sharing with one another who we are and what we have."

About 125,000 Catholics live in Kazakhstan, which has



Pope Francis greets the crowd before celebrating Mass at the Expo grounds in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, September 14.

a population of more than 18.7 million people.

The Pope was welcomed to the cathedral by a group of men, women and children dressed in traditional Kazakh clothing. Seated in his wheelchair, the Pope listened and smiled as the group played traditional music.

During the meeting, the Pope heard the testimonies of three people, including Miroslava Galushka, the wife of an Eastern Catholic priest, who told the Pope she was happy to support her husband's ministry in the country and to share their lives with "the people the Lord has placed along the way".

“In the Church, no one is a stranger! We are the one holy people of God, enriched by a multitude of peoples”

A native of Ukraine, Mrs Galushka also thanked the Pope for his "prayers and for all your efforts to restore peace in my homeland".

World leaders urged to 'work for peace, not weapons'

Speaking on behalf of dozens of religious leaders, Pope Francis called on world leaders to put an end to violence and bloodshed and instead strive for peace. "We plead with you, in the name of God and for the good of humanity: work for peace, not weapons," the Pope said September 15, the final day of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Nur-Sultan and the final day of his three-day visit to Kazakhstan.

"Only by serving the cause of peace, will you make a name

for yourselves in the annals of history," he said.

The Pope joined the 80 religious leaders and hundreds of delegates participating in the interreligious meeting at the Palace of Independence for the reading of the congress' final declaration.

Read by Anglican Bishop Jo Bailey Wells of Dorking, England, the declaration expressed the leaders' belief that "extremism, radicalism, terrorism and all other forms of violence and wars, whatever their goals, have nothing to do with true religion and must be rejected in the strongest possible terms".

Addressing congress participants, Pope Francis said that after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States, a collective response was needed to counter the "incendiary atmosphere" caused by religious extremism that "threatened to turn religion into a grounds for conflict".

However, "pseudo-religious terrorism, extremism, radicalism and nationalism, dressed up in religious garb, nonetheless continue to foment fears and concerns about religion," he said.

The congress' declaration reaffirms that religious extremism, radicalism and terrorism "have nothing to do with the authentic spirit of religion and must be rejected in the most decisive terms possible," he said.

Pope acknowledges necessity of weapons for self-defence

Under the right moral conditions, a country has the right to purchase weapons to defend itself from those who attack it, Pope Francis said.

Speaking to journalists September 15 after his three-

day trip to Kazakhstan, the Pope responded to a question regarding the sale of weapons to Ukraine, saying that it can be "morally acceptable if done under the conditions of morality".

However, "it can be immoral if done with intentions of making more war or of selling weapons," the Pope said.

In what has become a tradition for the papal flight after a visit to another country, Pope

Francis answered a variety of questions.

He touched on dialogue with warring countries, religious freedom in places like China and Nicaragua and the possibility of future travels abroad.

Speaking of the purchase of weapons, the Pope said: "The motivation is what in a great part qualifies the morality of that act. To defend oneself is not only licit, it's also an

expression of love toward one's homeland; whoever doesn't defend something, doesn't love it. Instead, those who defend, love."

He also said it was important to reflect "now more than ever on the concept of just war." While everyone "speaks of peace today," there are still "so many wars happening".

i CNS/Junno Arocho Esteves reporting from Nur Sultan, Kazakhstan.



Pope Francis and other religious leaders gather for a group photo.



Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev speaks at the opening and plenary sessions of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions attended by Pope Francis at the Palace of Peace and Reconciliation in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, September 14.

Letters

Letter of the week

Housing crisis seems to have slipped from agenda

Dear Editor, With all the hullabaloo surrounding Queen Elizabeth's death, the energy crisis, war in Ukraine etc... the fact that we are living through a housing crisis seems to have slipped from the agenda. This is the issue that seems unsolvable, at least it seems that way due to a host of inept politicians and bad policy after bad policy. We are supposedly a developed country but have an incredible inability to build houses, it's mind boggling.

We have huge homelessness rates and young people are still struggling to get on the property ladder despite Government intervention. House prices continue to rise and targets for house building are consistently not met. This paper previously reported on the religious orders offering land to the Government to build houses but the Government were very unresponsive. How will this issue be fixed if the Government is literally being handed

land but are not acting on it?

To say it is frustrating is an understatement. The fact hard-working people are forced to stay in sub-standard accommodation at the mercy of landlords who are hugely powerful due to the supply and demand issues is totally unsustainable and unforgivable.

*Yours etc.,
Rose O'Sullivan
Mullingar, Co. Westmeath*

Pray for families facing 'horrifying' tragedies

Dear Editor, Over the last month there seems to have been a spate of violent attacks and murders. Thanks to Fr Bill O'Shaughnessy out in Tallaght for stating what was done to those three children was an "evil" act [The Irish Catholic – September 8, 2022]. The level of violence in the Tallaght case was simply demonic, it is hard to comprehend.

Another tragic case in Multyfarnham in recent days, in which two children died in a burning car, is horrifying, although I do not know the full details as of yet.

The family and friends connected to these tragedies must be prayed for in these difficult times. If it is hard to lose a child at the best of times, it must be far worse in violent circumstances.

*Yours etc.,
Gavin Keane
Cherry Orchard, Dublin*



Pope must apologise on behalf of Catholics for anti-Semitism

Dear Editor, While visiting my sister in New York about 20 years ago, I went to see the Holocaust Memorial in Manhattan. I remember seeing a large black and white photograph of Adolf Hitler inside the Vatican in Rome. The guide was angry at this association and I

didn't know what to say as we never learnt about this at school.

Hitler was a baptised and confirmed Catholic like all of us. Why then was there so much anti-Semitism in his heart and the hearts of so many others? The Jews were scapegoated after

World War I on the grounds that they had killed the Messiah.

The pope rescued many Jews during World War II however the youth of Europe in the time leading up to World War II had been corrupted with a hatred for Jews which cul-

minated in the Holocaust.

We need to repent of this and there is only one person who can apologise on behalf of us all and that is the Bishop of Rome.

*Yours etc.,
Andrew Kieran OSF
Mornington, Co. Meath*

Benefits of prayerful services led by laity

Dear Editor, It is heartening to see that 31 candidates for the permanent diaconate are about to begin their three-year training programme in Maynooth. This is in contrast to the reported 23 seminarians currently studying there. [The Irish Catholic – September 8, 2022].

Far from being a worrying situation, it seems that the Holy Spirit is paving the way for the future of the Church in Ireland. While many Catholics may wish to have Mass on a daily basis, for many others, Mass will be seen as more spiritually valuable if we can

only participate once or twice a week due to a shortage of priests. In the meantime, once a priest has reposed consecrated hosts in the tabernacle, every day in every parish can be filled with services of prayer, of thanksgiving, sacred music and the reception of Holy Communion all presented and led by lay women and men and managed by deacons, who can also lead programmes of spiritual education. Let's just follow the voice of the Holy Spirit.

*Yours etc.,
Tony Corcoran
Rathfarnham, Dublin 14.*

Feminism and left-wing ideology affected synod

Dear Editor, Why Fr Martin Delaney (The Irish Catholic – September 8, 2022) might be "intrigued" that Americans would comment on the recent synodal consultation in this country is not clear, unless it is because he dislikes what they saw, which is, that we are indeed "suspicious" and "intolerant" of our Catholic inheritance – exactly as the American writer stated.

It is self-serving of Fr Delaney to conclude intentions on the part of Irish Catholics when we all know the tiny minority who

participated in the process, and the huge numbers who stayed away.

Nor should he conclude too much about what happened in the meetings, and after the meetings were over.

My experience, having participated at a synod meeting, leads me to conclude that fear of the LGBT and feminism and the left predominated in the meetings of the synod – and affected the writing up of the reports.

*Yours etc.,
Gerald O'Carroll
Ballylongford, Co. Kerry*

facebook community

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

1500 years of faith come to an end in Waterford and Lismore

A sad day. – **Ann Marie McErlean**

A sad time but God is in control. We need more Rosaries prayed and more time in Adoration. And more reverence for The Eucharist. Holy communion on the tongue given out by Sacred hands. – **Margaret Griffin**

Pope offers 'heartfelt condolences' to Gorbachev's only child

I admire this man of peace. He did his homework well. God bless Mikhail Gorbachev, his only daughter Irina and family! – **Danny Escabarte**

My deepest sympathy to Mr Gorbachev's daughter and family. He was a great peacemaker and a great president. May he rest in peace. – **Jacinta Newell**

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

Deacons can lessen impact of priest shortage

Dear Editor, It is wonderful to see so many devoted men go forward for the permanent diaconate – record numbers as you report [The Irish Catholic – September 8, 2022].

They are much needed in a Church that is struggling to keep parishes lively and Masses going but at the moment it seems like a losing battle. Fewer people going to Church, particularly after the pandemic, is leading to smaller and smaller congregations and poorly used churches. There will come a time that very poorly attended churches will have to be closed as there is quite an expense associated with them.

Hopefully deacons can, at the least, help hard-pressed priests who struggle to get even a few days off during the year with their duties. In addition, hopefully they will also assist in breathing new life into parish communities and do the pastoral work that may have been falling through the cracks due to a lack of personnel.

The shortage of priestly vocations is extremely concerning though. Even if we get 500 permanent deacons tomorrow, it will help in a plethora of ways, but for the Church we need people going forward for the priesthood, it is essential for the future. We will have to hope and pray more men hear the call, but thankfully deacons can lessen the impact of our shortage of priests.

*Yours etc.,
Donal Grady
East Wall, Dublin 3*

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, September 22, 2022

Personal Profile

Bringing Christian contemplation to the world

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The relationship perks of being religious



A recent study from the University of Exeter caught the public eye when it boldly proclaimed that more religious people have higher sexual satisfaction. Except that it isn't that bold, because it's adding to a growing body of research that's supporting that surprising (to some) finding. It might seem counter-intuitive to a society that's long associated religiosity with sexual repression, but the testimonies of both social science and faith seem to agree here.

"As religious individuals are less likely to engage in casual sex and are more likely to limit sexual activity to a relationship



Taking your faith seriously is bound to benefit your relationship, writes Jason Osborne

based on love this can lead to lower expectations of sexual activity outside a formal union, as well as increased satisfaction from sex life in general," the *Daily Mail* reported Dr Vegard Skirbekk, co-author of the study, as saying.

The researchers behind the study used data on 15,162 men and women aged 18 to 59 from

the British National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles in order to generate their results.

Religion

Eleven percent of male respondents and 16% of female respondents said religion was important to them, while more than two-thirds had never been

to a religious service. Half of the respondents were married, while 17% were living with a romantic partner. A fifth claimed to have no "stable" romantic partner.

In the final analysis, the results revealed that participants who reported religion being important in their lives had less sex, which was largely driven by abstinence. However, these same participants reported being more content overall with their sex life.

Interestingly, married women who described themselves as more religious reported higher sexual satisfaction than their less religious peers. The *Daily Mail* also reported Dr Skirbekk as say-

ing: "It is possible that religious sentiments about the sanctity of marital sex, as well as disapproval of sex outside marriage, matter more for women's than for men's sexual satisfaction".

While these findings are another string to religion's bow, it's far from the only benefit it confers on those who take it seriously. While there's a whole pantheon of religions out there as we all know in this pluralistic world, why look any further than at Catholicism to see what taking it seriously can do for a couple, whether dating, engaged or married?

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Family News



AND EVENTS

CRAVINGS FOR FATTY FOODS TRACED TO GUT-BRAIN CONNECTION

New research investigating the source of our appetites has uncovered an entirely new connection between the gut and the brain that drives our desire for fat.

At Columbia's Zuckerman Institute, scientists studying mice found that fat entering the intestines triggers a signal. Conducted along nerves to the brain, this signal drives a desire for fatty foods.

Published September 7, 2022, in *Nature*, the new study raises the possibility of interfering with this gut-brain connection to help prevent unhealthy choices and address the growing global health crisis caused by overeating.

"We live in unprecedented times, in which the overconsumption of fats and sugars is causing an epidemic of obesity and metabolic disorders," said first author Mengtong Li, PhD, a postdoctoral researcher in the lab of the Zuckerman Institute's Charles Zuker, PhD, supported by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

"If we want to control our insatiable desire for fat, science is showing us that the key conduit driving these cravings is a connection between the gut and the brain."

STUDY CLAIMS WALKING SPEED AS IMPORTANT AS DOING 10,000 STEPS

How fast you walk is just as important as how many steps you take in a day, research suggests.

Studies found that walking 10,000 steps a day was associated with a lower risk of dementia, heart disease, cancer and death.

But experts also found that a faster pace, like a power walk, showed benefits beyond how many steps were recorded.

Co-lead author Dr Matthew Ahmadi, research fellow at the University of Sydney's Charles Perkins Centre and Faculty of Medicine and Health, said: "The take-home message here is that for protective health benefits people could not only ideally aim for 10,000 steps a day but also aim to walk faster."

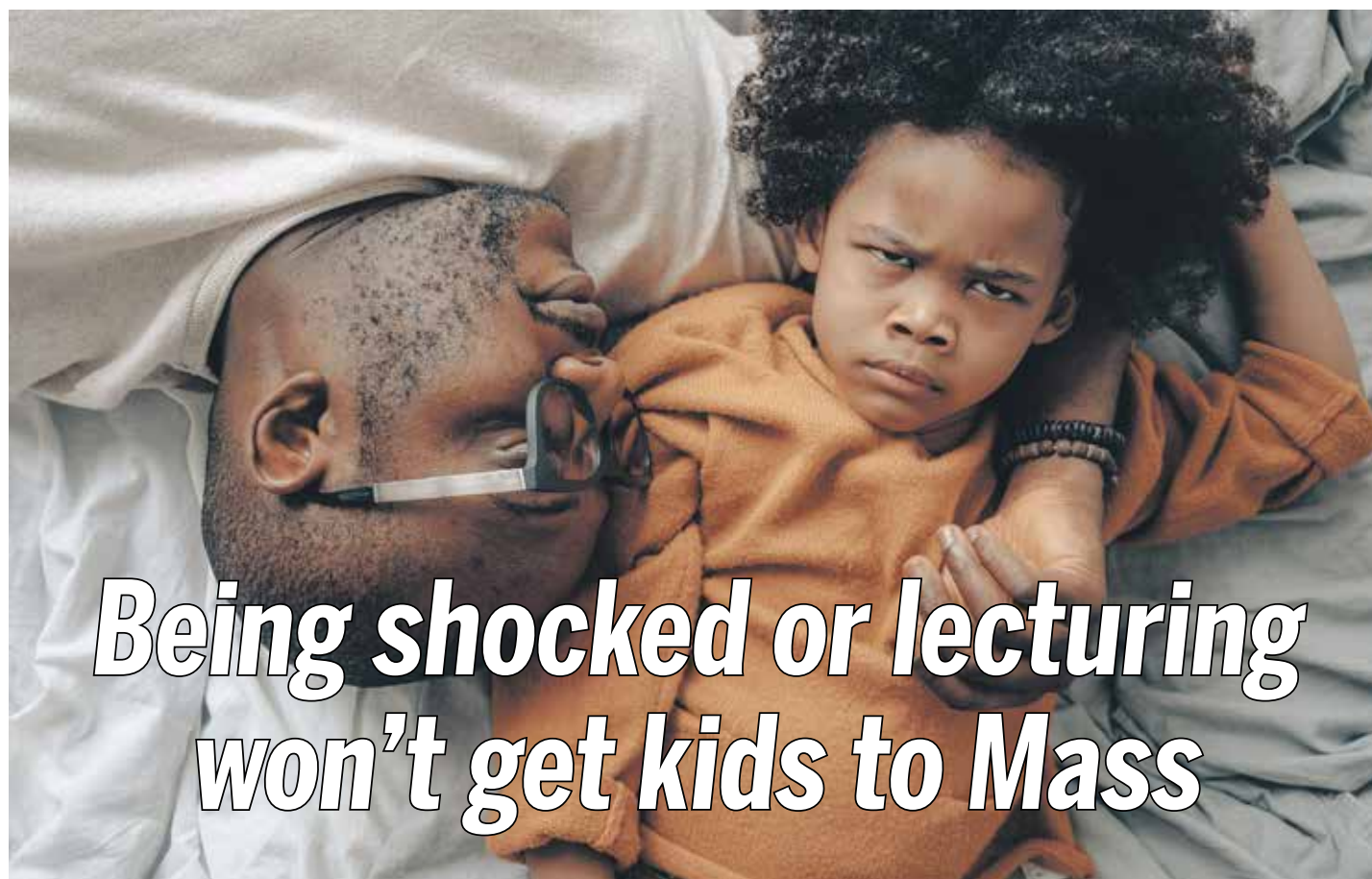
Associate professor Borja del Pozo Cruz from the University of Southern Denmark, who is also a senior researcher in health at the University of Cadiz, said: "For less active individuals, our study also demonstrates that as low as 3,800 steps a day can cut the risk of dementia by 25%."

AUSTRALIAN BANKNOTES MAY NOT HAVE ROYAL SUCCESSION

The Australian government has said the image of King Charles III would not automatically replace Queen Elizabeth II's on Australian \$5 notes, and it may be replaced by Australian figures.

While coins are mandated to carry the image of the British monarch, Federal Assistant Minister for the Treasury Andrew Leigh said the decision to include the queen's image on the A\$5 dollar note was about her personality as opposed to her status as the monarch, and any changes would not be "automatic".

Asked by a reporter if the government would consider replacing the British monarch with an Australian such as indigenous land rights activist Edward Mabo, Mr Leigh said: "It will be a conversation to be had down the track."



Being shocked or lecturing won't get kids to Mass

There's a lot of worry and concern about the dwindling numbers of young people attending Mass. Reactions to this often fall into two broad categories – one stance is to brush over the facts and take the focus off the issue by praising the efforts of teenagers and young adults in other areas like their involvement in charity work or social issues. Another way to deal with the drop-off in numbers is to go on the attack, blaming the local parish or the bishops while mournfully pointing to the negative influence of the media and the various social networking platforms. Neither of these approaches really tackles the problem of how we can halt the exodus and attract back those who have stopped attending Mass for one reason or another.

“In the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual goodness of the Church, namely Christ himself”

To have any hope of success in our efforts, we need to identify the cause and source of the problem. If a 14- or 15-year-old suddenly proclaims that they're not going to go to Mass anymore, it may say something about our own attitude as a family? We need to look honestly at the place of Mass in our daily lives: do we see our Sunday church attendance as a tick-box exercise, squeezed in between numerous sporting fixtures or activities and our Sunday dinner? Even expressions like "We have to get Mass in" may give the impression of a tedious obligation rather than what the Catechism of the Catholic Church refers to as "the source and summit of the Christian life".

In the blessed Eucharist is

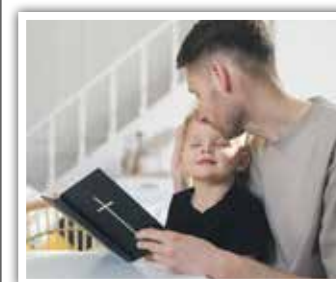


A parent's perspective Maria Byrne

contained the whole spiritual goodness of the Church, namely Christ himself. Often parents who have a great love for the Holy Eucharist haven't demonstrated this love to their children, maybe not even speaking of it very often. Of course, we must lead by example but children need a very definite education in the Eucharist which can't be achieved if we ourselves have a poor understanding of our faith. We have to have the tools to explain what we believe and to attempt to answer our children's questions. A shocked or lecturing approach is counterproductive if a child is just expressing a natural curiosity and wants to know more. On the website brotherfrancisstore.com, the Catholic social media consultant and blogger, Allison Gingras, has some great tips on explaining the Eucharist to young children. Her advice is suitable for all ages but it's vital to ensure children understand our belief in the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. It's not just "holy bread" or a mere symbol but, as Gingras explains, it's "the real presence of Jesus, his body, blood, soul and divinity". We can't be afraid to share that truth, trusting in the Holy Spirit to guide our words.

Well known Catholic author and counsellor, Dr Gregory Popcak, advises that we shouldn't accept Mass going as optional given that the Eucharist "is the food our souls need for eternal life". If our child stopped eating, we wouldn't just accept it but would seek expert guidance on what to do. Very few parents

would let a teenager opt out of school without an alternative plan in place for their education but, when it comes to the most important relationship in our child's life and God's precious gift to us and to our children, we can give up all too easily. As our children get older, a lack of interest in Mass could be



connected to their failure to form their own personal relationship with God.

Dr Popcak talks of how "Too many kids and teens ride their parents' coattails when it comes to faith". He compares it to a parent meeting a friend for lunch every week for many years, bringing their child with them but, without that child having some personal engagement with that friend, and being encouraged to make appropriate inputs into the discussions, it's hard to imagine how any meaningful relationship could be formed. Likewise, when bringing children to Mass, we parents need to help our children to develop their relationship with Jesus. This is a lifelong effort and begins in babyhood with family prayer and instruction in the Catholic

faith. We must talk lovingly of Jesus as our dearest friend who is really, truly present in the Blessed Sacrament and who gives himself to us in Holy Communion. Foster that love by having books about Jesus, Mary and the saints, and be a house that displays beautiful religious images. Speak often of the joy of faith and the gift of grace in the sacraments, bringing your children along to Mass and Confession long before their First Communion and Confession.

“Finally, think of St Monica, the mother of St Augustine, who never gave up on her wayward son, persevering in prayer for many, many years until she was rewarded with success.”

When older children seem to be floundering in the Faith, seek out Catholic youth initiatives and attach yourself to a vibrant Church community. Many young adults who were struggling with their Catholic faith found their way home through the love and support of good, loyal, Catholic friends. Finally, think of St Monica, the mother of St Augustine, who never gave up on her wayward son, persevering in prayer for many, many years until she was rewarded with success.

She was the model of a dedicated parent trusting so much in the love of God for her son that St Ambrose said to her "Surely the son of so many tears will not perish". She is definitely the saint to turn to for our own children who may be drifting from the Faith, and is an encouragement to all Catholic parents to never give up on encouraging their children to return to the Lord.

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Common values

One of the most obvious pros of a religious relationship is the foundation of shared values it offers. In an increasingly polarised age, to be on the same page as your significant other is a blessing, no matter what stage of life you find yourself in.

“The Church teaches that the Sacrament of Marriage is a lasting commitment of a man and a woman to their lifelong union, established for the good of each other and the procreation and education of their children”

When it comes to dating, inhabiting the same faith will likely see you both asking the same questions as you seek to figure out whether the other person is one you could spend your life with in marriage. More importantly, it's probable you'll end up giving the same answers. In the Catholic context, the question of whether or not the other person is right for you will take into account the sacramental definition of marriage.

The Church teaches that the Sacrament of Marriage is a lasting commitment of a man and a woman to their lifelong union, established for the good of each other and the procreation and education of their children. If you're both aimed in the same direction and you share the same priorities, fulfilling this definition of your shared life is going to be much, much easier – albeit not without its difficulties!

On another note, in an age debating such hot-button topics as abortion, transgenderism and more, to be united on these fronts is sure to spare you both some fireworks.

Purpose

Related to the topic of shared values but slightly different is the value of the sense of purpose that a shared faith gives a couple. A common foundation, such as Catholicism, is more than a set of ideas that you both happen to agree with. It's both the beginning and end of your relationship – the reason you both get up in the morning and that which carries you through to the end of life.

While life is surely brief, from our limited, human perspective it can seem incredibly long. While it's nice to agree with the people around us, a solid, life-long relationship like marriage requires more than mere agreement. It requires a shared, foundational motivation that propels you both in the same direction, day in, day out. That's where faith steps in.

“Every one then who hears



these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock,” Jesus tells us in the Gospel according to Matthew.

“Long before I met my wife, I attended a talk by a couple who'd been married for a number of years and who have Christ fixed firmly at the centre”

When the storms of life, such as illness, death, financial difficulty or whatever else batter against your union, building your house on Christ is sure to help you weather them together.

Security

Long before I met my wife, I attended a talk by a couple who'd been married for a number of years and who have Christ fixed firmly at the centre. One of the greatest blessings of marriage, they said, was the certainty and security you enjoy of knowing that no matter how difficult things may get, you have at least one person in your life who'll never walk out on you. To have that is to have a taste of heavenly faithfulness here on earth, they suggested.

It seems to me that this is one of the least acknowledged benefits of serious religious engagement for a couple. With so few certainties in this life, to have another person to travel this long and difficult road to the end with is a constant comfort, despite the difficulties you may undergo together.

Young Church



Charlotte Vard

The heavy exhale. The almost lifeless body beneath the covers. You beg, you plead, you offer the ultimatum that threatens a loss of phone or PlayStation. Slowly their overtired, hormone-driven corpse emerges from the darkness, bloodshot eyes rolling back in their heads as they make their way to the bathroom in hopes of being presentable... for Mass. Perhaps this is your typical Sunday morning. It was absolutely the scene in my home when I was growing up on that odd Sunday morning when we were dragged, pulled and bribed to get up for Mass. My typical Irish Catholic mother tried her hardest to instil in us the importance of going to Mass but never able to articulate the why, answering only “because we are Catholic and because I said so”. That answer simply did not cut it for me.

It wasn't until a priest explained the significance, depth, and beauty of the Mass that my eyes and heart were truly opened. Slowly, over time, I began to see the liturgy differently. It was as though, with every fact and insight I learned, the dots began to connect between the history and the mystery—between God's divinity and our humanity, all colliding within the Church walls. I was given the ultimate gift.

We all desire for the next generation to develop a deep and abiding love for the sacraments, in particular the Eucharist, but how do we develop and “unleash” that love in an increasingly overstimulated, disengaged, and screen-obsessed culture? Or even still, how do we develop and unleash that love when Masses are being cut, our vocations are at an all-time low and everything seems fairly bleak within the walls of our parishes?

I believe our youth need our time more than our teaching points. Everyone I encountered was patient with me, they did not expect my disinterested attitude to change overnight. They didn't try to ‘convince’ me of the beauty of the Mass.

I strongly believe that

once our young people see our passion for the Mass and humble interaction with the Lord, they will begin to recognise the joy that it is to pursue virtue and their hearts will begin to soften through God's grace and our intercession. They will see that in the priest but also in the volunteers who surround our Masses.

We each have to ask ourselves whether we are passionate about Mass – do we fully engage in celebrating the Sacrament of the Eucharist? Are our parishes working to create a celebratory space, where the joy of the

encounter at Mass is nourished and experienced? How do we each create space at Mass to encounter the Lord? In dioceses around the country, Masses are being dropped or will be dropped over the next number of months, we need to ensure that the Masses we do have are celebrations where parishioners and young people are more likely to encounter the Lord. We need to take the time to enable the next generation to develop a deep and abiding love of the sacraments by experiencing our deep and abiding love of those same sacraments.

Are the homilies delivered connected with that deep and real encounter with the Lord and with the lives of the people in the congregation? Is the Liturgy of the Word brought to life as it is shared? Does the music ministry add to the celebration of the liturgy? Is the atmosphere created one of welcome and openness?

We each add to the celebration of the Eucharist. We each create the space for the Eucharist to be celebrated and for our young people to find a place where they see and experience the members of the congregation nourishing their spiritual life at Mass. We each get to give the youth our greatest gift – time and experience of divinity and humanity in one place. Every parishioner has a responsibility for the future of our Church and I believe now more than ever before is the time to stand with your faith and with its future.



Bringing Christian contemplation to the world

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

When Bro. Richard Hendrick OFM Cap. was in his teens, he wanted to study zoology, the scientific study of animals. Instead, God called him to a new contemplation of nature in the Franciscan tradition, one Bro. Richard is keen to share with the rest of the world.

“Bro. Richard began to research, visiting libraries and reading up on the Franciscan tradition”

Bro. Richard grew up in what he calls “an average 1980s Catholic family”. They joined in the celebration of Mass on Sunday and went to Catholic school. This meant he was aware of vocation as a possibility.

“I was about 15/16, I was heading towards leaving cert and college,” Bro. Richard begins. “My intention was to study biology, specialising in zoology. Round about that time, I was asking the deeper questions, what’s it all about, those kinds of ones.”

“Someone gave me a book on the life of St Francis. I was hugely intrigued and enthused by this



Capuchin poet Bro. Richard Hendrick.

man and his vision of the Gospel, the idea that one could live a holy life and a joyful life, and that they could be one and the same.”

Bro. Richard began to research, visiting libraries and reading up on the Franciscan tradition. Through this, he discovered the Capuchins. He got in touch with them in Church St in the centre of Dublin, where he lives to this day. Having made his profession and become a Capuchin, Bro. Richard continued to keep up his interest in zoology.

“I suppose it [my interest] has broadened,” he says. “While the science end of things still intrigues me and I still study it and keep an eye on it, over the years it has become a more integrated contemplative understanding

of how creation fits in within the whole Franciscan vision of things. It continues to inspire me and be a place where I discern the presence of God.”

Franciscan form

The Capuchins are not engaged in one particular ministry, Bro. Richard explains, going wherever they are needed: “I’ve worked in parishes, I’ve worked in hospitals, I’ve worked in prisons. I have worked a lot with young people, I was director of youth ministry with the Capuchins for over 10 years and for the last 20 years, I’ve specialised in trying to bring to the public the Christian contemplative tradition, particularly in its Franciscan form.”

In his work with young people,

Bro. Richard has seen that there is still a hunger for this kind of contemplative life. This is because “every human being, no matter what their age is, is looking for meaning”.

“The poem had its origin in the lockdown experience shared by people across the world”

“And we only find meaning when we have reflective space, when we begin to actually reflect and think and engage in those ancient practices of meditation and prayer,” he tells me.

One element of Bro. Richard’s own contemplative prayer life is poetry. During Covid-19, he achieved a certain amount of fame with a poem entitled *Lockdown*, which quickly captured people’s attention.

“I put it out to the world and it’s still making its journey,” he says. “It’s been translated at the last count into 26/27 languages, there are numerous musical pieces that have been inspired by it, three animated movies have happened out of it.”

The poem had its origin in the lockdown experience shared by people across the world. While there was understandably a great deal of negative news, “around the edges of the negative news there were actually a lot of positives going on”, Bro. Richard says.

“So I wanted to name the fear and the hurt and indeed the death that was part of the early stages of Covid. But also to look at how God can work through and around these things to bring many little small miracles of grace.”

He has continued his ministry of writing, and will soon release a book which combines both his creative endeavours and his mission to spread the word about Christian contemplation. *Still Points: A Guide*

to *Living the Mindful, Meditative Way* came out September 22 and will be launched September 26 in the Sanctuary, Stanhope St, Dublin at 6:30pm.

“It’s something that’s been in the background for a long time,” Bro. Richard says. “It’s come out of both my retreat work and my online teaching around the practices of stillness, meditation, contemplation, trying to live and take a reflective stance on the world.”

“And I suppose, there’s a new mindfulness book every month from people from every kind of background, whether it’s Buddhist or Christian or secular or whatever. But what I really wanted to do with this book was to invite people into this space into reflection that would touch their own ordinary existence, their own way of life.”

Bro. Richard adds that it is inspired by the Franciscan vision of “a world that’s on fire with meaning”. In the Franciscan tradition, the burning bush didn’t happen once; every bush is burning with God’s glory.

“Every sunrise is another experience of the resurrection and every moonlit night is an invitation into reflecting the light of Christ,” Bro. Richard says. “In that instance, everything sings with the glory of God. Every poem, every meditation in it, every essay in it is drawn from that Franciscan view of creation as fundamentally good and a God who lovingly heals, renews and redeems it at each moment.”

The written word is far from the only ministry Bro. Richard is involved in. He takes time at the end of our conversation to emphasise that the Day Centre continues, despite Bro. Kevin’s retirement.

“It has been one of the apostolates of the order since the very beginning, to try and combine contemplation and action, and to invite all people into a contemplative form of Christian prayer,” he finishes.

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

Love Notes



Helen Vysotska

Respect yourself and avoid troubled men

My boyfriend has a lot of problems. I am worried about our relationship and I am not sure where it is going. We do love each other though and always make up. What should I do?

The purpose of dating anyone is to find a worthy spouse, not to rehabilitate a troubled guy. Any dating relationship must bring you both closer to God not further away. Marriage just like any other vocation in life must help to bring you and your spouse to eternal life – Heaven.

So, it sounds like you are too emotionally and physically involved in this relationship to make any big decisions so you should step back from this relationship. Take a 1-3 month break to evaluate your relationship and come back to talk about it and see if any changes have been made or can be implemented. If not, then the best thing to do is leave the relationship.



Many young women with good hearts want to play the role of a therapist for a guy who has a rough life, but they end up wounded, and the guy is not much better off.

A girl might stay in a relationship because she does not want to hurt the guy by leaving. Also, scientists have discovered that feelings of romantic love tend to deactivate certain parts of the brain that make moral judgements (mesial prefrontal cortex, the parietotemporal junction, and the temporal poles). In other words,

when you’re in love with a guy and not practising chastity, your brain is handicapped when it comes to judging the value and morality of a relationship. That’s one reason why it’s important to date only guys who have strong values.

Until he can deal with his problems in a way that is not destructive to him or to others, he is not ready to be in an intimate relationship. Friendship? Maybe. Dating relationship.

Definitely not now.

It is not your job to save this guy from his problems. Let him know that you are praying for him but you need space for yourself and stability in your life. This is not selfishness. It shows a healthy respect for yourself, and that is the foundation for any good solid future relationship.

Remember you are worth more, and he needs time to mature. If you do not understand your value in God’s eyes, then it is easy to seek your worth in relationships, even in unhealthy ones. Right now, while he is still single, the most loving thing you can do is to show him that he cannot deal with his hurt by hurting others. He needs to know that his behaviour is unacceptable. Therefore, do not spend time trying to change your boyfriend. Instead imagine what it would be like to be cherished by a man who would protect your purity and make you feel safe and secure. Such men do exist!

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



When the Church is the only voice to speak out

Sometimes you hear online about what seems to be a big story, but can't find much if any coverage in the mainstream media. Sometimes they catch up, sometimes it never surfaces.

I find the story of the oppression of the Church and other opposing voices in Nicaragua to be largely under the radar. So, it was welcome when the issue was discussed on **Sunday** (BBC Radio 4) last weekend. Presenter Edward Stourton referenced the crackdown on the Church and the detention of Bishop Rolando Alvarez, currently under house arrest. Human rights activist Bianca Jagger is Nicaraguan and has witnessed the oppression first hand. She referenced the government's "all out persecution" of students and political leaders. Recently, she said, they had declared a war against the Church. She had called on the UN Security Council to join with the European Parliament's recent initiative on the issue, to investigate human rights abuses.

Loved

She described Bishop Alvarez as a "loved pastor" with a "prophetic voice". The priests and seminarians, she said, were now almost the only ones daring to speak out, and currently eight of them were in jail



People pray outside the Nicaraguan Embassy in Mexico City. They were demanding respect for religious freedom in Nicaragua and an end to the persecution of the Church and opponents of the government of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega. Photo: CNS

or under house arrest. She said she was saddened that Pope Francis hadn't spoken as forcefully as she would have liked. She didn't feel the Pope could have the dialogue he wished for with a government she described as "perverse, cruel, murderous". She too believed in dialogue but wondered what dialogue you could have with a regime under investigation for crimes against

humanity. The programme had asked for the Nicaraguan embassy in London for a response, but "they didn't get back to us".

Trial

In a similar vein the show also covered the upcoming trial of the 90-year-old Cardinal Zen in Hong Kong, described as "an outspoken champion of democracy". He is accused of "colluding with

foreign forces" and more specifically of setting up a society without registering it, which seems connected to a fund set up to support pro-democracy supporters threatened with imprisonment due to the protests in 2019. Former governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patton, said the pro-Beijing press had been attacking him for months and that the authorities hated him because he was "a great Chinese pastor". BBC reporter Andrew Wood said Cardinal Zen was unhappy with the way the Church has dealt with China. Now the cardinal was being tried under a new national security law, introduced by Beijing, and he said there was little chance of anyone being found 'not guilty' in a court established under this law.

Funeral

Last Monday morning's funeral of Queen Elizabeth has been described as the biggest live TV event ever which is impressive. The ceremonies were marked by a great dignity and in Britain at least polarisation has taken a back seat for a while. As we look forward, **Sunday Morning Live** (BBC One, Sunday) considered the future role of King Charles III in the faith life of his country. His re-iteration of his own Christian faith, and meetings with faith leaders in Belfast and London were mentioned with approval,

PICK OF THE WEEK

SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC One Sunday September 25, 1.15pm

To mark the harvest season, Aled Jones is in East Anglia to find out what the annual celebration means to local Christians and to talk about the importance of caring for creation.

NEW: MASS FROM KNOCK

EWTN Sunday September 25, 3pm

Live from Knock, celebrate Mass from the pilgrimage site and national shrine known worldwide for the miraculous apparitions in 1879.

THE LEAP OF FAITH

RTÉ Radio One Friday September 30, 10.05pm

Topical religious and ethical matters with Siobhán Garrigan.

and Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis was impressed with how the king knew of the Sabbath requirements that required the Friday meeting to start earlier. The question was asked "Can Anglicanism be a canopy for other faiths?" The Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu leaders present believed it could, and that the king would champion the rights of all faiths, which seems to be his declared intention. This is welcome at a time when religion is often pushed to the margins of society. Author Catherine Butcher agreed but felt he hadn't yet put into words his "personal allegiance" the way the queen had, especially in her Christmas broadcasts. Watching this space will be intriguing, though I wondered if the recent high profile of dedi-

cation to faith will have any effect in an increasingly secular Ireland.

Whether Ireland is religious or secular or maintains a healthy balance, you'd like to think we'd have laws that protect human life. The Dublin 'March for Life' last Saturday was a welcome development but from what I observed it got little attention in the media, and therefore (by design?) it will have limited impact. **Six-One News** (RTÉ One, Saturday) gave it no coverage, while the **Nine News** that evening gave it 23 seconds, with no speakers interviewed. Weekend protests often lead to lively debates on the current affairs shows that follow.

✉ boregan@hotmail.com,
@boreganmedia

Music

Pat O'Kelly



A welcome time of year for music lovers

This month means new 'seasons' opening up not least the National Symphony Orchestra's at the National Concert Hall, which began on September 9 with the orchestra in splendid form in music by Berg and Mahler.

Dating from 1935, Berg's Violin Concerto was written "in memory of an angel" – Manon Gropius, the recently deceased 19-year-old daughter of Mahler's widow Alma and her second husband, architect Walter Gropius.

Under principal conductor Jaime Martín, Dutch soloist Simone Lamsma's playing moves from eloquent tenderness to bracing drama. The NSO's support is a gripping constant.



Simone Lamsma

In Mahler's Fifth Symphony, Maestro Martín conveys the music's sense of upheaval with its war-like shrieks – Mahler's second movement marking is "tempestuously, with utmost vehemence" – and the contrasted serenity of its plaintive sighs. Undoubtedly exhilarating elsewhere, inherent mel-

ancholy haunts its Adagietto that found a separate life in Luchino Visconti's 1971 film *Death in Venice*.

With Finghin Collins as artistic director, the 16th New Ross Piano Festival got under way last evening (Wednesday 21) with a young pianists' programme at the festival venue – St Mary's Church of Ireland.

Mr Collins' adventurous programming celebrates jazz today (Thursday 22) with a lunchtime gig (1.05pm) by Irish trio, Origin Story. The evening brings US master of improvisation, Craig Taborn, to New Ross for the first time.

Tomorrow's noon coffee concert presents Máire Carroll in music by Bach, Beethoven and Chopin while the evening

event finds UK's Albion Quartet with Georgian pianist Tamara Licheli in Amy Beach's Piano Quintet. There is also Jacques Ibert's rarely heard *Histoires* with UK's Jonathan Plowright before Finghin Collins concludes the programme with Schubert's marvellous *Wanderer Fantasie*.

Compatriot

A Ukrainian touch comes with Saturday's noon coffee concert when Dmytro Choni plays his compatriot Valentin Silvestrov's Bagatelles but makes Rakhmaninov's Second Sonata his principal work.

Tamara Licheli opens Saturday's 7.30pm programme with Mozart followed by Schumann; Jonathan Plowright unites with

the Albion Quartet for Ukrainian Juliusz Zarebski's First Quintet before Swiss pianist, François-Xavier Poizat, also making his New Ross debut, rounds off the programme with Ravel's stunning *Gaspard de la Nuit*. A 10pm piano pot-pourri – *The Bright Day is Done* – has the indefatigable Collins at the keyboard.

As well as Stravinsky's *Firebird* Suite, Poizat offers further Ravel delights at Sunday's noon recital while the festival's final concert at 3.30pm has a Russo-French connection through Tamara Licheli in Prokofiev; Finghin Collins and the Albion in Shostakovich and Jonathan Plowright ringing the curtain down with César Franck's imposing Prel-

ude, Chorale and Fugue.

Music for Galway opens its 2022/23 season with Bach's *Goldberg Variations* in an arrangement for string trio by Dmitri Sitkovetsky, an uncle of the visiting trio's violinist Alexander Sitkovetsky. He is joined by violist Sergey Malov and cellist Natalie Clein in UCG next Thursday 29 and on Friday 30 at Christ Church, Portumna. Performances begin at 8pm.

Finally, the National String Quartet Foundation tours the Banbha Quartet in mainly Mozart and Mendelssohn to Clifden's Christ Church at 1pm today; Wexford's, St Iberius Church 8pm tomorrow; Cork's Triskel Christ Church 1pm on Saturday and the NCH at 3pm on Sunday 25.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus

Luke, more than the other evangelists, portrays Jesus as being on the side of the poor. In last Sunday's Gospel, Jesus referred to money as tainted with temptation. Today's Gospel (Luke 16:19-23) is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Although he is commonly called Dives, the rich man is not actually named in the text whereas Lazarus is the only person in any parable to be given a personal name. And what a name it is, meaning God-has-compassion.

Our style of reflection today will be imaginative. I invite you to allow the two characters to speak for themselves as they reflect on their lives.

The rich man

They call me Dives, meaning the millionaire. Some actually refer to me as Mister Millions, and I rather like it. My father gave us a good start in life, but it took a lot of hard work to attain our present position. My five brothers and I worked hard before we were rich enough to diversify and build our own personal empires. Money makes money, but only if you have a shrewd brain to use it.

At times you have to be ruthless. But that is really in self-defence because survival works on the principle of weakest to the wall. My conscience is perfectly clear because I never employed strong arm tactics or never went beyond the accepted rules of business ethics.

“I don't know how he offended his creator to deserve that fate, nor is it any business of mine”

That stuff always catches up on you and I have no time for it. My friends say that I am as tough as they come, but I regard that as a compliment. I know that I had some lucky breaks. I am not ashamed of being a religious man who acknowledges that he has been richly blessed by God in my good fortune and natural acumen. I am openly grateful to God and I pay my priests well. I know that I am a soft touch to any good cause. Actually, that soft streak in my make-up is something my friends do not always see. Take that beggar who lies at my gate all day, what's his name...God-help-us.

It's not a pretty sight I can tell you. Yet for years I have let him take up his station there. He smells to high heaven and seems to draw dogs around the place. Scavengers like himself. You know what they say...it takes one

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



dog to know another.

I don't know how he offended his creator to deserve that fate, nor is it any business of mine. I'm a fair-minded man and that's his story. He can feed off the tasty leftovers which the servants give him on my instruction. I will always let him at my gate because he is crippled and can't do much for himself. Most beggars have only themselves to blame. They are lazy by nature and utterly improvident. You could sell your whole estate and give the money to the poor, and do you know what, they would be back next week, not a penny left. Stupid and lazy, that's what they are.

I've more or less retired now. Time to enjoy the good things of life. A man deserves a break. I give employment to my cooks, servants, tailors and entertainers. I pay them well. The one person on my payroll that I find disagreeable is that buffoon of a doctor who warns me to give up this and cut back on that. I've been around long enough to know how to enjoy life without his solemn warnings. I refuse to listen to fools.

Lazarus

Nobody seems to know my real name now, Lazarus: God-has-compassion. My real name is my secret now and it consoles me. I have a habit of saying "God help us" which has caused people to nickname me as Godhelpus. Sometimes when children mock me, they leave out God and call me Helpus, or worse.

I have only a hazy memory of my father...if I can give him that title. He was a violent, drunken lout who terrorised my mother and all of us. I have a memory blackout on my accident. My mother would never talk about it. All I know is that he tossed over a table that pinned me to a wall. It left me crippled for life. That was the day he left us and we never saw him again. Nor wanted to.

Still, I'm luckier than some. I can survive on the scraps at Mister Millions' gate. The servants more or less dump it in front of me but the man himself has never hunted me away.

It's the same with my running ulcers. How could I afford any apothecary's bill? Dogs are friendly creatures. They treat me with dignity. Their tongues are soothing and people say their saliva can heal. I haven't had much luck so far

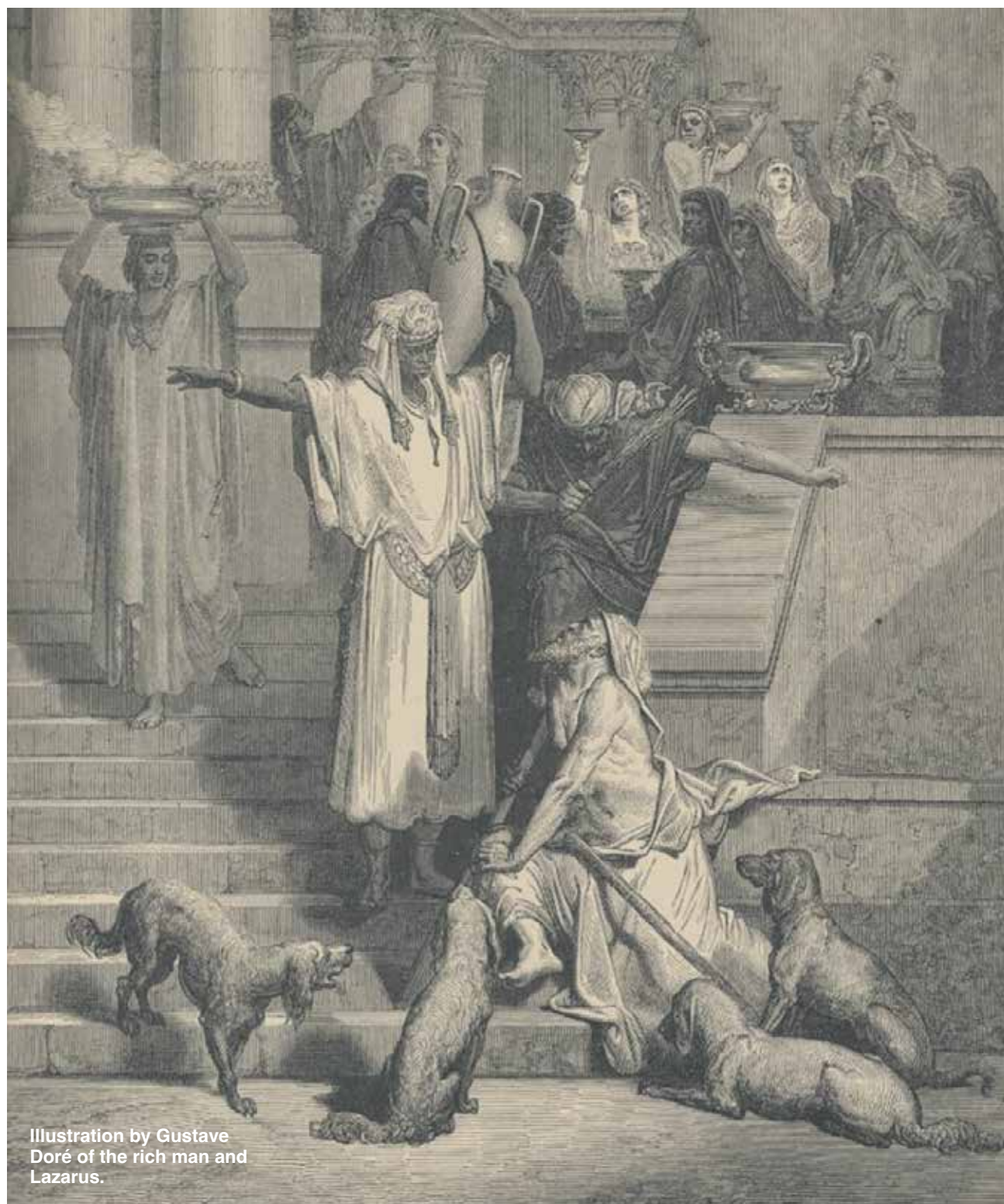


Illustration by Gustave Doré of the rich man and Lazarus.

but I live in hope.

There was a time when I was very angry, with my father, the system, the whole world. Most of all, angry with God. I thought of setting fire to Mister Millions' mansion during one of his banquets and burn the lot of them to death. Crazy, wasn't it, for it wasn't his fault.

But that was long ago and my anger has long since abated. My real name, Lazarus, comforts me with the assurance that God is on my side. I know that I will always

be poor, yet I enjoy deep peace and contentment.

I don't wish an ounce of evil on Mister Millions. In fact, I don't envy him at all. He doesn't look too happy to me. I think all these parties and dressing up are only covering up his anxieties. He looks very bloated and unwell. I know that I don't have too long more to sit at his gate. I suspect that he won't be here very long either.

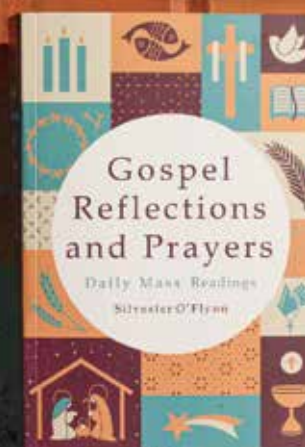
I wonder will we meet on the other side. There is such a great gulf between us.

Restoration

"By making the restoration of our peoples' dignity the central objective of the post-Covid world, we make everyone's dignity the key to our actions. To guarantee a world where dignity is valued and respected through concrete actions is not just a dream but a path to a better future" (Pope Francis: *Let Us Dream*, page 133).

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On being jealous of God's generosity

“The cock will crow at the breaking of your own ego – there are lots of ways to wake up!”

John Shea gave me those words and I understood them a little better recently as I stood in line at an airport: I had checked in for a flight, approached security, saw a huge line-up, and accepted the fact that it would take at least 40 minutes to get through it.

“We know we need God's mercy, but if grace is true for us, it has to be true for everyone”

I was all right with the long wait and moved patiently in the line – until, just as my turn came, another security crew arrived, opened a second scanning machine, and a whole line-up of people, behind me, who had not waited the 40 minutes, got their turns almost immediately. I still got my turn as I would have before, but something inside of me felt slighted and angry: “This wasn't fair! I'd been waiting for 40 minutes and they got their turns at the same time as I did!” I had been content waiting, until those who arrived later didn't have to wait at all. I hadn't been treated unfairly, but some others had been luckier than I'd been.

That experience taught me something, beyond the fact that my heart isn't always huge and generous. It helped me understand



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

something about Jesus' parable concerning the workers who came at the 11th hour and received the same wages as those who'd worked all day and what is meant by the challenge that is given to those who grumbled about the unfairness of this: “Are you envious because I'm generous?”

Jealous

Are we jealous because God is generous? Does it bother us when others are given unmerited gifts and forgiveness?

You bet! Ultimately, that sense of injustice, of envy that someone else caught a break is a huge stumbling block to our happiness. Why? Because something in us reacts negatively when it seems that life is not making others pay the same dues as we are paying.

In the gospels we see an incident where Jesus goes to the

synagogue on a Sabbath, stands up to read, and quotes a text from Isaiah – except he doesn't quote it fully but omits a part. The text (Isaiah 61,1-2) would have been well known to his listeners and it describes Isaiah's vision of what will be the sign that God has finally broken into the world and irrevocably changed things. And what will that be?

Ruling

For Isaiah, the sign that God is now ruling the earth will be good news for the poor, consolation or the broken-hearted, freedom for the enslaved, grace abundant for everyone, and vengeance on the wicked. Notice though, when Jesus quotes this, he leaves out the part about vengeance. Unlike Isaiah, he doesn't say that part of our joy will be seeing the wicked punished.

In heaven we will be given what we are owed and more (unmerited gift, forgiveness we don't deserve, joy beyond imagining) but, it seems, we will not be given that catharsis we so much want here on earth, the joy of seeing the wicked punished.

“Does it bother us when others are given unmerited gifts and forgiveness?”

The joys of heaven will not include seeing Hitler suffer. Indeed the natural itch we have for strict justice (‘An eye for an eye’) is exactly that, a natural itch, something the gospels invite us beyond. The desire for strict justice blocks our capacity for forgiveness and thereby prevents us from entering heaven where God, like the Father of the Prodigal Son, embraces and forgives without demanding a pound of flesh for a pound of sin.

Mercy

We know we need God's mercy, but if grace is true for us, it has to be true for everyone; if forgive-

ness is given us, it must be given everybody; and if God does not avenge our misdeeds, God must not avenge the misdeeds of others either. Such is the logic of grace and such is the love of the God to whom we must attune ourselves.

Happiness is not about vengeance, but about forgiveness; not about vindication, but about unmerited embrace; and not about capital punishment, but about living beyond even murder.

Surprising

It is not surprising that, in some of the great saints, we see a theology bordering on universalism, namely, the belief that in the end God will save everyone, even the Hitlers. They believed this not because they didn't believe in hell or the possibility of forever excluding ourselves from God, but because they believed that God's love is so universal, so powerful, and so inviting that, ultimately, even those in hell will see the error of their ways, swallow their pride, and give themselves over to love. The final triumph of God, they felt, will be when the devil himself converts and hell is empty.

Maybe that will never happen. God leaves us free. Nevertheless, when I, or anyone else, is upset at an airport, at a parole-board hearing, or anywhere else where someone gets something we don't think he or she deserves, we have to accept that we're still a long way from understanding and accepting the kingdom of God.

“Happiness is not about vengeance, but about forgiveness; not about vindication, but about unmerited embrace”



BookReviews

Peter Costello



Culture Night 2022

Peter Costello

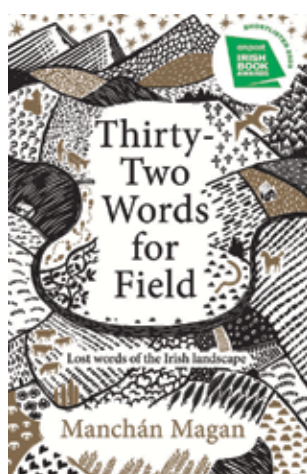
This now essential event is marked tomorrow with events of all kinds all over the cities, towns and counties of Ireland. For all the data about culture night, go to info@culturenight.ie. Wherever you live, whatever you care for, there will be things for you in the programme.

In my immediate location I am taken by the exhibition and book launch *Turning Corners* by a local, very local artist indeed, Gerard Byrne. His paintings of corners of Dublin, old and new amount to a wonderful assembly of topographical images quite out of the common, which will be even more important when a human-scaled city is a thing of the past. His wonderful recording eye will be

even more highly treasured in years to come, so why not now? Well worth half an hour of anyone's time on the night in question. The "Gerard Byrne Studio" in Ranelagh can be reached at gerardbyrne.com.

But Culture Night is all about the local, your own place, and as such every year is a major eye-opener and mind filling experience for many, many thousands, and for their children. How well I remember when I was involved with it, the excitement of the children to experience quite new things and new ideas. This year it will be a great mental and spiritual boost to the nation. So it is a pity that more Church related groups do not enter into the spirit of the night, and share their culture.

Walking the land through Gaelic eyes



Thirty-Two Words for Field: Lost Words of the Irish Landscape
Manchán Magan
(Gill Books, €19.99)

J. Anthony Gaughan

To the country folk of Ireland even the smallest piece of land is important, and today as in the past can give rise to bitter conflict.

Witness J. B. Keane's classic play *The Field*.

This attitude often carries into the city. I know a Dubliner of rural descent who defied his neighbour over three square feet of garden, when the man next door wished to shift the wall between them for his own convenience, determined to stick to the long established boundary line; and he carried the day.

“No one was more receptive of The O’Rahilly’s idealism and patriotism than his niece, Sighle Humphreys.”

This is a fascinating book, with many new insights into the Irish love and deep knowledge of land. The author begins by disclosing that there are

no less than 32 Irish words for field. Among them are: Geamhar- a field of corn grass; Tuar – a field for cattle at night; Reidhleán – a field for games or dancing; Catherín – a field with a fairy-dwelling in it. He insists that every Irish word has layers of wisdom and insight encoded in it which allows one to delve into the secrets of the landscape of our island. In 45 chapters he ruminates on a tsunami of Irish words which describe every aspect of Irish reality: the physical world, the animal world, the human world and the spiritual world.

Immersed from his earliest years in the folklore and story-telling of the Kerry Gaeltacht, he recalls some of the legends and myths of Ireland's pre-history. These were preserved in the oral tradition and passed down through generations in the minds of druids and poets until the arrival of the writ-



Author Manchán Magan explains the richness of Irish place names to the Prince of Wales and his wife.

ten word in the fifth century. They were then picked up and relayed until the 17th century by the annals and chronicles crafted by Ireland's first missionaries. Manchán highlights the vital role of the Irish language as the handmaid in that cultural process.

“Immersed from his earliest years in the folklore and story-telling of the Kerry Gaeltacht, he recalls some of the legends and myths of Ireland’s pre-history”

The annals are like our newspaper headlines, noting the most significant events. They claim that our oldest ancestors arrived on the island in 700 BC, having sailed here from Spain. Archaeologists, however, suggest a much, much earlier date. According to the old lore Amergin, a poet and a druid, was the leader of the first occupants of the island. And it is said that he managed to



Artist Gerard Byrne pictured with *Turning Corners* book on Ashfield Road, Ranelagh. Photo: Richie Stokes.

The Pope’s new book provides a key to his pastoral aims

A Gift of Joy and Hope
by Pope Francis.
Translated from the original Italian by Oonagh Stransky (Hodder & Stoughton, €17.99/£16.99) This title will be released on 29 September.

Peter Costello

This book by Pope Francis, his third official book, may seem to follow very closely on the Pope's recent pamphlet about the meaning of Christmas and the Nativity for the family today.

This, however, is an illusion. This 200-page text has been in preparation over some years, piece by piece, part by part, in other articles and speeches (all listed at the end). Far from appearing too quickly with

little consideration, this book has been profoundly pondered and carefully considered in the Pope's heart, soul and mind. In it he is continuing his pastoral vocation begun in Argentina, but now to a global audience, rather than merely to the people of Buenos Aires.

Among the stresses of his reign so far, one of the worst has been for many the Covid-19 lockdown. Faced with this sore trial, the Pope's wish was to expound the idea that if God means anything, it means the spirit of joy, and at the heart of this joy is the hope of the Christian vision.

The Pope encourages people to look outside themselves, to the beauty and character of God's creation, to embrace others rather

than find reason for excluding them as we so often do, and to resolve in ourselves to meet the challenges of life as a whole with native courage. Hope is always possible, and with hope the feelings of joy, real joy.

“Hope is a gift of God,” he writes. “We need to nourish the roots of hope so that they can bear fruit: whatever evil we may have committed, we must be aware of the certainty of God's closeness and compassion. There is no corner of our heart that God's love cannot touch.”

These words provide, in a way not only a summary of the thought at the heart of this book, but also a resume of what the pontificate of Pope Francis is all about.



Pope Francis reads an important message to children about the hope of the future.

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.



reach the coast of Co. Kerry because of a magical wave that plucked him from the Atlantic Ocean and dropped him on the shore during a storm!

Monograph

While this monograph is first and foremost a thesaurus of Irish words, it also reads like an autobiography. Manchán is descended from the truly remarkable O'Rathaille family. He is the great-great-great-grandnephew of Aodhagán Ó Rathaille, the renowned poet, noted for his satires on those responsible for ending the Gaelic Lordships. More to the point he is the grandson of Sighle Humphreys, niece of Michael O'Rahilly who called himself 'The O'Rahilly' – one of the icons of the Easter Rising in 1916. The O'Rahilly was consumed with a passion for his country, its language

and its culture. This he passed on to his extended family and close associates.

“The annals are like our newspaper headlines, noting the most significant events”

No one was more receptive of The O'Rahilly's idealism and patriotism than his niece, Sighle Humphreys. Throughout her life she remained totally committed to the idyll of the Easter Rising. She was Manchán's grandmother and from his earliest years shared with him her comprehensive knowledge and love of Irish. She saw to it that he attended an Irish-speaking school, spent quality time each year in the Kerry Gaeltacht and was infused with an awareness of the patriotism (tír

ghrá) and heroism of his great grand uncle.

Champion

Not surprisingly, Manchán as a writer and documentary-maker has been a champion of the Irish language and Irish culture. With regret he notes the decline in the number of people speaking Irish, the demise of Irish words and even the possible extinction of the Irish language. And in an emotional farewell, which deserves a practical response from those of us who can but do not speak Irish, he writes: “The richness of a language closely tied to the national landscape offered our ancestors a more magical way of seeing the world. Before we lose their unique knowledge, let us consider the sublime beauty and profound oddness of the ancient tongue that has been spoken on this island for over 2,000 years.”

“This is a fascinating book, with many new insights into the Irish love and deep knowledge of land”

Poems for Christians - in a nice, but limited selection

The Saint Mary's Book of Christian Verse

Chosen and introduced by Edward Short, with a foreword by Dana Gioia (Gracewing, £20.00 / €23.50)

Peter Costello

Edward Short is a writer and teacher who lives in New York City, and is already well known for his books relating to St John Henry Newman. This book sees itself as a successor to an earlier anthology by Donald Davie of Christian verse for Oxford University Press.

But the title may be found misleading by readers, or perhaps merely ambiguous, but certainly ill thought-out. What this handsome book contains is verse by Christian poets in English, largely by English poets. Christian poets of other cultures, who write in English, have no place here.

“The title may be found misleading by readers, or perhaps merely ambiguous, but certainly ill thought-out”

It certainly demonstrates, I feel, a misapprehension of poetry written in these islands by those poets who write in English. It is for Irish readers the old familiar confusion of English with British. It will be enough

to say there is nothing here by John F. Deane or Seamus Heaney, though Patrick Kavanagh gets a look in while his contemporaries such as Robert Farren do not.

There is nothing by the Welsh poet R. S. Thomas, nothing by Canon Andrew Young, the Scottish-born poet. Both were ordained Anglican ministers. Young's long poem *Out of the World and Back*, which “describes the journey of a soul into the shades”, is a distinctly Christian work. For all his ruggedness of face and mind, Thomas passed his life as a poor parish pastor, yet his later volumes sold an average of 20,000 copies, and he was nominated for the Nobel Prize.

Supplies

But Short supplies any number of English poets, many of them from the 19th century, thus contemporaries of Newman. There is nothing from the pen of Helen Waddell. No translation from the Old and Medieval Irish, many of which are now very well established in the English language as poems in their own right.

I may well seem merely crabby and capricious, and these comments seen as unfair. The book certainly contains a great deal of fine poems some very familiar and much loved, others much less familiar but still deeply affective.

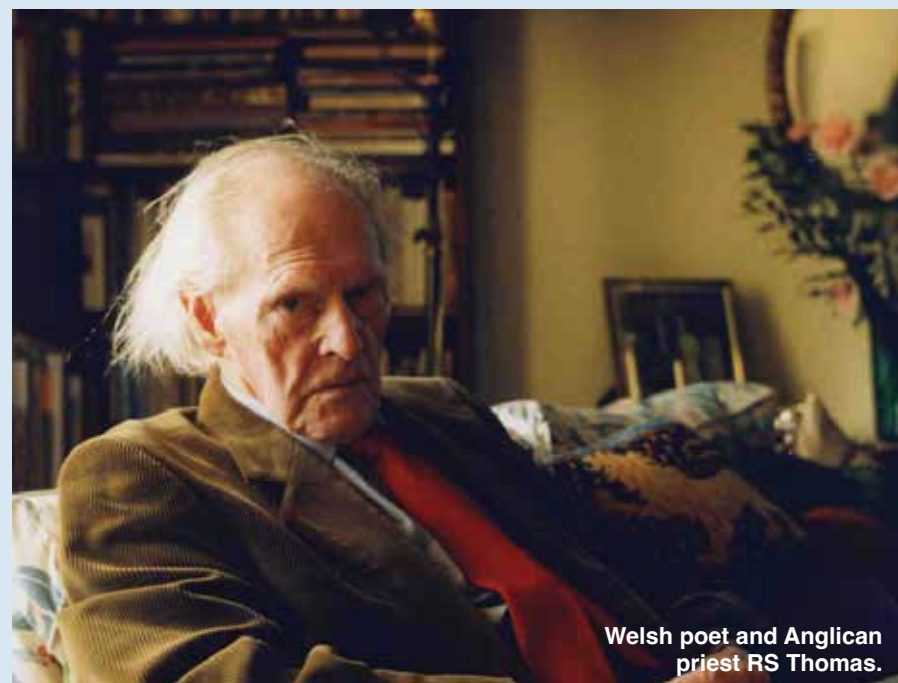
But still the horizon of the book seems limited. The author alludes to Donald Davie's OUP anthology *Christian*

poetry of the 1980s, reissued in 2003. But I would also draw attention to *The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse* (1924), a much older but still excellent compilation. And that opens, by the way, with *The Song of Amergin*, with which the poetry of these islands begins. Short prefers Caedmon.

In any case anthologies can be seriously misleading. In the 1920s Robert Graves refused to have his poems used in anthologies, after his early poem *In the Wilderness*, about Christ in the Wilderness being followed by the Scapegoat, gave (he felt) a very false impression of his total work, even then deeply imbued with Celtic mythology.

“In the 1920s Robert Graves refused to have his poems used in anthologies”

A book such as *Palgrave's Golden Treasury* is still often used for introducing the work of poets, but no one should imagine that they get a correct and full idea of a poet's whole work from three or four poems in an anthology. Edward's Short's anthology will also serve a teaching role very well, but it provides a very limited idea of the extent of Christian verse in these islands since the time of St Patrick, or whoever it was that composed *The Deer's Cry*, with which the *Christian* poetry in these islands could be said to begin.



Welsh poet and Anglican priest RS Thomas.

Leisure time

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www.hospicefoundation.ie



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— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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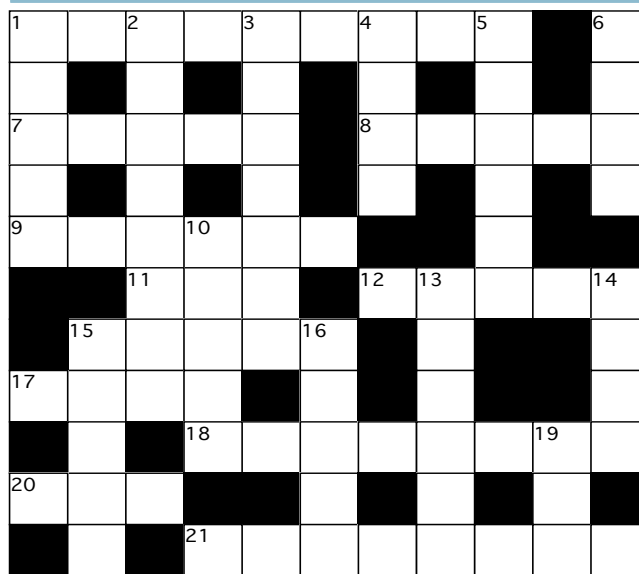
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It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call Grace Kelly on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

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

Crossword Junior

Gordius 451



Across

- 1 One thousand metres (9)
- 7 They will grow up to be sheep (5)
- 8 This spirit might haunt a house (5)
- 9 Small river (6)
- 11 You put this in a fountain pen (3)
- 12 They're left when something has been burned (5)
- 15 Played a role in a movie or play (5)
- 17 Short word for bicycle (4)
- 18 Coloured arches in the sky (8)
- 20 Fast plane (3)

Down

- 1 The Book of _____ is in Trinity College (5)
- 2 County and city in Munster (8)
- 3 Error (7)
- 4 Swimsuit (4)
- 5 As much as is needed (6)
- 6 You can relax in this while getting lovely and clean (4)
- 10 Go in (5)
- 13 A building for horses (6)
- 14 Put your feet in these to travel over snow or water (4)
- 15 Pointed a gun at something (5)
- 16 Control a car (5)
- 19 Damp (3)

SOLUTIONS, SEPTEMBER 15

GORDIUS NO. 576

Across — 1 Three piece suite 6 Foil 10 Occur 11 Operation 12 Shatter 15 Coral 17 Inch 18 Lark 19 Eland 21 Bequest 23 Clear 24 Hole in one 25 Earl 26 Throw 28 Sunbeam 33 Waterford 35 Rely 36 Excellence

Down — 1 Took 2 Racehorse 3 Egret 5 Crew 7 Osier 8 Landladies 9 Hatchet 13 Tune 14 Rituals 16 Clock tower 20 Adoration 21 Brewery 22 Shun 27 Ratel 29 Undue 30 Basil 31 Roux 32 Here

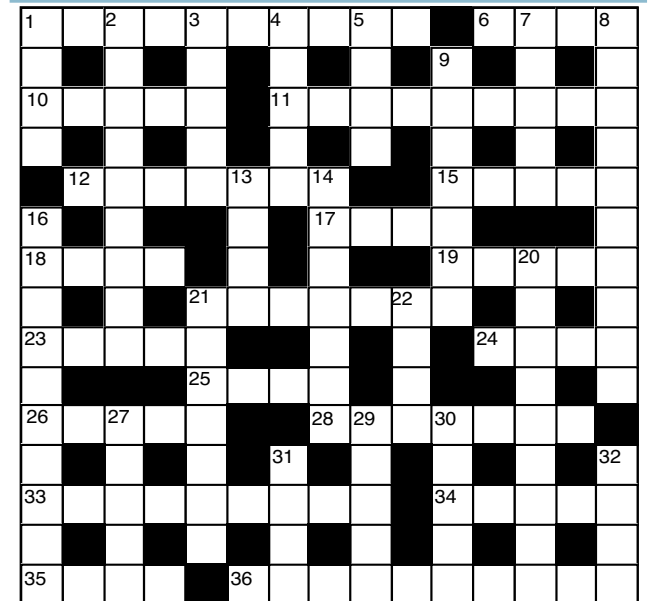
CHILDREN'S No. 450

Across — 1 Programme 7 VIP 8 Agent 9 Hairnet 10 Uncle 11 Rescued 15 Sea 17 Attic 19 Unkind 21 Flocks 22 Ending

Down — 1 Peanuts 2 Overcoat 3 Rather 4 Movies 5 Even 6 Spot 12 Excuse 13 Cooked 14 Dyed 16 Early 18 Tack 20 Nun

Crossword

Gordius 577



Across

- 1 Morsels to get one in the mood for more food (10)
- 6 At the heart of things, the maid is confused (4)
- 10 A cake's sweet covering (5)
- 11 Artificial international language (9)
- 12 Evergreen often seen in graveyards (3,4)
- 15 More pleasant (5)
- 17 Relating to the country formerly known as Siam (4)
- 18 The back of the foot (4)
- 19 A drink to wish someone well (5)
- 21 & 9d Doctrine explained by St Patrick by using a shamrock (3,4,7)
- 23 Potentially dangerous (5)
- 24 Meditative relaxation (4)
- 25 Precipitation (4)
- 26 The world's most populous democracy (5)
- 28 This flower may make a goat die (7)
- 33 Variety of plum (9)
- 34 Competing; contending (5)
- 35 A bark of pain (4)
- 36 Cop-on, such as Black Beauty might have? (5,5)

Down

- 1 Extremely dry (4)

2 Impossible to value

- adequately (9)
- 3 Taut, close-fitting (5)
- 4 Turnip (5)
- 5 Mature, ready for picking (4)
- 7 Uncommonly euphoric (5)
- 8 "Thanks be to God!" in Latin (3,7)
- 9 See 21 across
- 13 Wealthy (4)
- 14 Cutting with acid, or a piece of art created in this way (7)
- 16 Delightfully, in a winsome way (10)
- 20 The movement that brought an end to slavery (9)
- 21 Reign of terror (7)
- 22 Told fibs (4)
- 27 Reside (5)
- 29 Unlocks (5)
- 30 Mr Presley or Mr Costello, perhaps (5)
- 31 Connacht county (4)
- 32 Man-eating monster (4)

Sudoku Corner

451

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 450

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

Last week's Hard 450

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

Is it time for a parish mission?

AS TIME GOES BY, parishes all over the country are continuing to realise the negative effects that Covid-19 had on their communities. Apart from the loss of those who died from the disease, the virus scattered people into greater isolation and broke the habit of Church attendance for many. As communities struggle to re-build after Covid, has the time come for a parish mission to help? Now that the dangers of Covid have eased, is the time right for parishes to summon the Faithful back to full participation through a parish mission?

Response

Lessons from history suggest a positive response to these questions. After the trauma of the famine here in Ireland, the parish mission movement was born with remarkable effects. They served to gather people after a time of great suffering, to rebuild community and to give people hope. The success of these parish missions led to the building of many churches across the country – projects that galvanised people's pride in their local areas and gave them a glimpse of the future after a dark past. Of course, many would point out that this is the period of



the Church in Ireland's history that is dying fast today and there is certainly truth in this. However, what cannot be denied is that the parish mission movement did revive a dispirited people after a traumatic time. I believe that parish missions can do so again in our time after Covid. It is not about restorationism, going backwards or mimicking the past. It is about finding creative ways to proclaim the Gospel of life that speaks to people's lives today, revives communities and restores hope.

Mission

With that in mind, here in the parish of Wexford we have organised a parish mission that takes place from

Sunday October 2 to Sunday October 9. The title of the mission is 'A Mission for All' which reveals who the mission is aimed at. Each day is dedicated to a particular theme. On the Monday we focus on the gift of faith and 'How the doubter

and the believer can be friends'. This includes an exhibition of icons from local artists. Tuesday focuses on the youth and how our young people are 'Chosen, called and sent'. On Wednesday, our focus is on those who are sick, tired, wounded and in need of healing. Thursday's theme is 'Care for the Earth' and Friday's theme of 'Belonging and believing' as we welcome the many new people who have come to live in our parish in recent years. Finally, on Saturday we focus on 'Mission and ministry' with the theme 'You go into my vineyard too'. Here we invite all our people to volunteer their gifts and talents to rebuild our parish. Can I ask all you who read this to please pray for the success of our mission. *Duc in Altum!*

Loving beauty early

St Augustine famously wrote in his Confessions: "Late have I loved you O beauty so ancient and new. Late have I loved you!" Perhaps we too discovered God as beautiful late in life or maybe we have yet to experience God as beauty itself. In *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis advocates 'the way of beauty' as a route to evangelise and transmit the Faith. This means a greater attentiveness on our part to the presence of beauty wherever it is found and as a way that leads to God. For as Simon Weil explains: "The soul's natural inclination to love beauty is the trap God most frequently uses in order to win it and open it to the breath from on high" (Waiting on God).

Removing the filter

As we continue to prayerfully ponder the content of the final synthesis document submitted recently to Rome, I was reminded of wise words from Jesuit Cardinal Henri de Lubac. In *Paradoxes of Faith*, de Lubac wrote: "Everybody has his filter which he takes about with him/her through which, from the definite mass of facts, he/she gathers in those suited to confirm his prejudices...It has always been so, it always will be so in this world. Rare, very rare are those who check their filter." This wisdom comes from a man who lived at a time of great change and movement in the Church, leading to and beyond the Second Vatican Council. As we enter more deeply into the synodal process, perhaps it's a time to check our filters.



LITTLE WAY PAKISTAN FLOODS APPEAL

Flood-hit victims urgently need our help

Bishop Khalid Remat, of the Apostolic Vicariate of Quetta, is urgently asking for our help for 3,600 of those in great need as a result of the very heavy monsoon rains. He writes to The Little Way Association: "Those whose homes were damaged or destroyed need above all food and clean water. Polluted water is likely to cause, especially to children and pregnant women, pneumonia, diarrhoea, dengue fever, on top of the malnutrition they are enduring.

"Our project, upon which ten volunteers and ten members of staff will work free of charge, will aid flood victims in the districts of Sibi, Loralai and Pashin. With your help 600 families will be provided with food items such as wheat flour, cooking oil, sugar, tea, pulses, rice and milk packs. The families will be given drinking water, high energy biscuits, hygiene kits, soap, washing powder, toothpaste and toothbrushes, sanitary towels, combs, towels, razors, a mirror and vaseline."

PLEASE WILL YOU SEND A DONATION TODAY

The situation is an emergency. Your gift will be forwarded WITHOUT DEDUCTION to provide food, and basic essentials to help the flood victims to overcome their sorrow and hardship. Please give whatever you can. Thank you.



"Our Lord does not look so much as the greatness of our actions, but at the love at which we do them."

~ St Therese

PLEASE HELP FEED THE HUNGRY

Please spare a thought for the millions 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 priest or sister for food for the hungry.

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

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€..... **MASS OFFERINGS**
(Please state no. of Masses _____)

€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

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Address

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IC/09/22