

The Irish Catholic

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Thursday, August 24, 2023

€3.00 (Stg £2.70)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

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Knock reports marked increase in pilgrims as bumper novena closes

Chai Brady

Ireland's national Eucharistic and Marian Shrine has reported an increase in pilgrims and visitors this summer, after a sluggish post-pandemic restart last year and two years when on-off Covid-19 restrictions devastated numbers.

Tens of thousands of pilgrims flocked to Knock in Co. Mayo over the past two weeks for the traditional novena, with rector Fr Richard Gibbons describing numbers this year as "excellent".

A popular feature of the novena was the family fun day which saw hundreds of families descend on the shrine to participate in activities as well as the traditional pilgrim programme.

Fr Gibbons said that he was gratified that there has been a "marked increase" in people attending Knock this year since the season began in the spring.

He told *The Irish Catholic*: "The novena has gone very, very well, the attendance has been excellent and there was a wonderful atmosphere."

"The numbers from the season as a whole have been excellent, that is what we expected and anticipated and that's really since last March or so," he said.

He also said that a feature of the pilgrims this year is the number of people who discovered liturgies at Knock online during the pandemic, and now wanted to come for themselves.

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Some of the young volunteers who are on-hand to welcome pilgrims and visitors to Knock this summer are (left to right) Maria Convery, Annie-May McHugh, Cathal Reynolds, Phyrne Glenn and Mairead Martin. All are members of the Volunteers At Knock Shrine (VAKS) group. Photo: Jana Jurakova

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Annual Subscription Rates: Ireland €185. Airmail €320. Six months €95.

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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Knock reports marked increase in pilgrims as bumper novena closes

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In his time at the shrine, Fr Gibbons also said Knock was becoming increasingly popular with the 'new Irish'.

"There would be a lot of Filipino groups and Indian groups that are coming in more numbers because there are more coming to the country, so that has added to it too. We're definitely seeing an increase in migrant communities".

The Knock novena ran from August 14-22, and Fr Gibbons said that while final numbers have not yet been collated, the rector and staff say numbers at the novena "are up from last year".

"There is a marked difference between this year and last year, because last year the season didn't really take off until the middle of July - we were still a little bit hesitant about coming out [post-Covid]. But this year definitely we saw a marked

increase in numbers and that was throughout the season so we're very, very happy with that," Fr Gibbons said.

He added that they are also "getting a bounce from people that would have joined us online during Covid" and are now visiting the country and Knock.

"There were people from all over Ireland and beyond, I met a Canadian woman who tuned in to Knock during Covid, she came over from Toronto specifically for the novena and she was very, very happy. I met several people over from Britain. So many people connected online during Covid, that they felt that they wanted to be here for this special time, because it is the busiest time and the most important time in the season, the novena itself, and they wanted to be here," he said.

"We had a lot of follow-on from the people who joined



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

'Messenger for God' Donal Walsh inspiring young people's faith

Ruadhán Jones

The example of "messenger for God" Donal Walsh, the teen whose faith and poise as he battled cancer captivated Ireland, is inspiring interest in the Faith among young people today, his mother has said.

Young people are seeking "guidance for their faith and spirituality and see an example in Donal that they can relate to", Elma Walsh told a packed Knock basilica on Sunday, August 20.

She warned that we have

"lost the ability to harness and guide" young people's spirituality due to our "fear of interference".

Ms Walsh, who visits schools, clubs and parishes across the country spreading Donal's message of faith and life, said that interest in his faith journey comes up constantly.

"Young people are not without spirituality," she stressed.

Donal Walsh died 10 years ago at the age of 16 after a battle with multiple bouts of cancer. The foundation

his parents established in his name promotes his faith and his anti-suicide message among young people, reaching out to around 30,000 students a year.

"At that time, as there is now, there was a huge discourse around faith, respect and morality," Ms Walsh continued.

"Through his direct language, Donal was able to initiate, in a previously taboo subject, an open conversation about minding mental health around teenagers in particular and not consider suicide as

an option."

A letter left on Donal Walsh's grave describing the young Kerryman as a "messenger for God" encapsulates his legacy, his mother said.

The anonymous letter read: "Donal, you helped me to see the light when I thought there was none. I'm forever grateful for what you've done for me. I'm forever grateful. I pray for your soul, but I think you are in Heaven a long time now. I only hope I can be as good a messenger for God as you have been."

Youghal turns to prayer following Ironman deaths

Jason Osborne

Following the deaths of two competitors in an Ironman event in Youghal, Co. Cork, parish priest Fr William Bermingham has said that the whole town is "saddened" and that the community will be praying for both men who died during the event.

The men who died have been named as 64-year-old Ivan Chittenden, from Toronto, Canada, and 45-year-old Brendan Wall, who was originally from Slane, Co. Meath, but had been living in the UK for a number of years.

They were taking part in the sea swim element of the event when they got into difficulties at Claycastle beach in Youghal on Sunday.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Fr Bermingham said that normally "the whole event of the weekend, the ironman, brings a great atmosphere to the town and a great sense of joy and celebration".

"The people of the town are very saddened by the fact that two families have experienced sudden deaths as part of that event," he said, continuing, "we hope that when they come here they'll have a positive and happy experience. We know that for thousands of people that was the case over the weekend, but for two families it ended in tragedy and that's very sad".

"We certainly will be praying for both of the men who died in the water at the beginning of the Ironman event."

Pope penning follow-up environmental document after Laudato Si'

Staff Reporter

Pope Francis has announced that he is writing a second part to his 2015 environmental encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

Speaking off-the-cuff at an audience with lawyers on Monday, the Pope said that he is updating the document to cover current issues.

The Holy See Press Office Director, Matteo Bruni, confirmed that "the Pope is working on a letter updating *Laudato Si'* with regard to the recent environmental crises". He

could not provide any information on when the letter will be released.

Pope Francis told the lawyers he is sensitive to their care for the common home and commitment to the development of regulatory frameworks for environmental protection.

"We must never forget that the younger generations are entitled to receive from us a beautiful and liveable world and that this invests us with grave duties towards the creation we have received from God's generous hands," he said.

online who wouldn't have joined us before or wouldn't have been here before, and they have come. It was wonderful to see and it was great to meet them.

"There was a great buzz around, a happy atmosphere and feeling and that's what we try to generate here all the time so we in turn were very, very happy," he added.

Welcoming new life...



Happy dad Ruadhán Jones, journalist with *The Irish Catholic*, and his wife Kiley are pictured after the birth of their first child, baby Caitriona.

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'Foolhardy' to deny the existence of sectarianism in PSNI – superintendent

Chai Brady

It would be "foolhardy" to deny that there are "aspects of sectarianism" in the PSNI, the chairman of the North's Catholic Police Guild (CPG) has warned.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* Supt Gerry Murray said no Catholic police officer should have to deal with sectarian comments. This comes after a recent article detailed sectarian slurs reported to a *Belfast Telegraph* journalist by Catholic PSNI officers.

Supt Murray said: "It would be foolhardy to say that there are not aspects of sectarianism within the Police Ser-

vice of Northern Ireland but everybody that comes to the front door of policing, have their prejudices, they have to leave them at the front door because we're all signed up to the code of ethics and we police with the code of ethics.

"Catholics and Catholic staff who come into the organisation, should feel valued, should feel wanted and should be able to do a turn of duty without any of these alleged sectarian comments."

He added that while he is aware Catholic PSNI officers have spoken to journalists about their individual experiences, currently they are trying to support Catholic

officers who are "anxious" and "fearful" following the PSNI's major data breach.

The information was leaked accidentally in a Freedom of Information response, which saw the surnames, initials, rank and the work location of 10,000 police employees released. This has led to a "lack of confidence" in the PSNI among the Catholic, nationalist, republican communities, according to Supt Murray and from a CPG perspective "we need to build bridges between ourselves and the Catholic community to hopefully continue recruitment whether it be

police staff or officers".

Last week Primate of All Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin spoke to PSNI Chief Constable Simon Byrne, to express concern at the circumstances and implications of the data leak.

Archbishop Martin said, "In recent days I have spoken

to several families and relatives of Catholic PSNI members. I wish to state my unequivocal support for all those who serve as police members or civilian support workers for the PSNI. "I have previously encouraged young people from the Catholic community to consider a career in policing.

Today I reiterate this sentiment. For that reason I also call on everyone in the community to reject entirely those who would intimidate or threaten the courageous women and men - including those from the Catholic community - who selflessly choose this noble vocation of policing."

Cristiano's sign of the cross sends signal to Saudi



Cristiano Ronaldo. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Jason Osborne

The world's most famous footballer Cristiano Ronaldo sent a signal when he made the sign of the cross after scoring a goal while playing for his new Saudi Arabian club, Al-Nassr.

Ronaldo's public profession of Christian faith comes as no surprise, as he's spoken openly about his faith on previous occasions, but the gesture was viewed as a bold one in

light of Saudi Arabia's repressive treatment of Christianity.

According to Open Doors, an organisation that deals with religious persecution, Saudi Arabia ranks 13th on the list of countries that persecute Christians.

Making the gesture while playing against Iraq's Al Shorta, commentators have expressed hope that the Portuguese star's openness will inspire courage in the Middle East's Christians.

Broadcaster Sean O'Rourke urges young people to consider vocation

Ruadhán Jones

Renowned broadcaster Seán O'Rourke has urged young people to "go the extra mile" and consider a vocation to the priesthood.

In an address delivered in Knock Basilica on August 16, Mr O'Rourke, paid tribute to priests and religious who inspired him in his life, including his two deceased aunts, Cecilia and Anna, who were sisters of the Holy Cross.

"They were like many thousands of other Irish women who served both here and abroad over the centuries," the broadcaster said.

"Decisions to serve took them to the ends of the earth. They became great teachers, nurses, servants of God in ways that no AI technology ever could replicate, because their work was human and divine.

"It came from the heart and they saw God in every single person they served,"

he said.

Mr O'Rourke stressed that "We can all, I'm absolutely certain, think of a priest or priests who have made a positive difference in our family circle, our friends, our community or our schools."

He called for young people to "go the extra mile" and take up the life of love exemplified by the missionaries and religious who have shown Christ's love to the world.

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Irish missionary priest in Pakistan decries 'frenzied' Christian assault

Jason Osborne

Following mob violence in east Pakistan that saw thousands of Muslims burn and vandalise churches and Christian homes, Pakistan-based missionary, Fr Liam O'Callaghan SSC described the scenes as "appalling" and "disturbing".

More than 100 people have since been arrested in the city of Jaranwala, where violence was sparked August 18 by claims that two Christian men had torn pages from a copy of the Koran.

The two men have been arrested and stand accused of blasphemy, which is punishable by death in Pakistan. While a death sentence for blasphemy hasn't been carried out yet by the state, the mere accusation of blasphemy can result in riots,

which sometimes lead to lynchings and killings.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Sindh province-based Fr O'Callaghan said that "it's a familiar enough pattern".

"It was shocking. Once again, in the majority of those cases, the accusation is almost certainly false. It's always a pretext for that type of thing. In this case, again, it would seem to be untrue.

"It's mostly, or often, deliberately done for the purpose of revenge or to get property or to get Christians out of an area," Fr O'Callaghan said, continuing, "it's just this horrendous abuse of the so-called blasphemy laws".

The critical factor, the Columban missionary said, is the way in which mob violence is so easily incited.

"The critical factor is the whipping up of the mob. I'm still shocked by it. How otherwise normal, intelligent people can be whipped into a frenzy and even not have any doubt that it's not true," he said.

"It's something I don't understand and it's just so frustrating, such a classic part of all of this drama."

While the "main thing" is that there was no loss of life on this occasion, Fr O'Callaghan said, he criticised what he described as "systematic" destruction carried out against the Christian community.

"The damage done was enormous. It was systematic destruction. They were looking for Christian houses and even if they were locked, they were broken into and smashed."

Church in Ireland celebrates a bumper week for vocations

Ruadhán Jones

The Church in Ireland had a bumper week for vocations, with two priests ordained and four men and women making their professions to religious life.

Fr Mark Moriarty (below) was first up, ordained a priest for Kerry diocese on Sunday, August 13, by Bishop Ray Browne.

He was followed by Fr Mark O'Farrell (right), ordained a priest by Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan to the diocese of Waterford and Lismore on Sunday, August 20.

Speaking at the ordination of Fr O'Farrell, Bishop Cullinan, chair of the Irish bishops' council for vocations, encouraged the new priest "to have something of the courage and missionary desire of St Paul, as we read today in the second reading, who was sent to the non-believers as their apostle".

On Saturday, August 19, two young men made their simple

profession to the Augustinians in Ireland. Bro. Adeel Abid OSA and Bro. Fearghal Caden OSA made their profession in Galway. That same day, Sr Mary Louisa Olmo made her solemn profession to Redemptoristine Nuns at their convent in Dublin.

Finally, Bro. Cian Hennessy made his first profession to the Passionists over the weekend, after completing his novitiate.



Fr Mark O'Farrell is pictured after being ordained to the priesthood for Waterford and Lismore with Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan.



Fr Mark Moriarty, newly ordained to the diocese of Kerry by Bishop Ray Browne, is pictured with his parents Marjic and Brian and his brother Paul after celebrating his first Mass in St John's Church, Tralee, on Friday August 18. Photo: John Cleary.

New Catholic schools CEO brings 'wealth of experience'

Chai Brady

A new CEO has been announced for the body that advocates on behalf of the Catholic maintained schools sector in the North of Ireland.

It was announced on Monday that Eve Bremner would take the reins of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS).

Ms Bremner was assistant director in the Education Authority (EA) with responsibility for leading and developing frontline services, including school transport, and strategic transformation projects. Prior to this, she was Director of Area Planning and Development in CCMS and held several senior positions in Belfast City Council.

Ms Bremner said she

was "delighted" with the appointment, and is fortunate to join a team "who are passionate about providing inclusive school environments that enrich the lives of pupils and wider communities".

"I am committed to advocating for investment in children and young people and look forward to working with our partner organisations to support transforma-

tion that improves outcomes for pupils," she said.

Bishop Donal McKeown, Chairperson at CCMS, said the new CEO brings "a wealth of experience of the broader education sector and is a passionate advocate for the pivotal role that education plays in young people's futures and in creating a healthy, stable and sustainable society".

NEWS IN BRIEF

Franciscans of Ireland and Britain become one province

The Franciscans of Ireland and Britain have become one province for the first time, the order has announced.

After some 50 friars from both provinces gathered for the first provincial chapter in six years, the order took the decision to integrate the British friars in the Franciscan Province of Ireland.

The English Province was begun in 1224 and the Province of Ireland was established in 1230.

Bro. Aidan McGrath was elected Provincial Minister during the chapter, while Bro. David Collins was elected Vicar Provincial.

The Franciscans definitory, their leadership team, was completed by the election of Bros. Damian Casey, Patrick Lonsdale, Stephen O'Kane and Antony Jukes.

'Kneejerk reactions' to climate issues make problems worse - Bishop Doran

We need personal integrity in stewarding creation, not kneejerk reactions to the climate crisis, if we are to create a fairer, more sustainable world Bishop Kevin Doran told a packed Knock Basilica on Sunday, August 20.

Reflecting on the possible connection between young people flying to Lisbon for World Youth Day and higher than normal temperatures, Bishop Doran said it's "not as simple as all that".

"Simplistic solutions and knee-jerk reactions, more often than not, make problems worse," said the bishop of Elphin.

He stressed the need for "joined up thinking" and "moral integrity", if we are to achieve a "fairer distribution of resources of the earth".

Cardinal Dolan to join Armagh cathedral celebrations

As celebrations for Armagh cathedral's 150th anniversary continue, American Cardinal Timothy Dolan is to celebrate Mass in the cathedral on Sunday, August 27.

Cardinal Dolan, the archbishop of New York, will be the main celebrant and preacher at a Mass of Thanksgiving in the cathedral at 11am.

Celebrations began on Thursday, August 24, 150 years since the cathedral was first dedicated.

Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin led an evening of prayer at 7.30pm on Thursday with Bishop Michael Router and Archbishop emeritus of Armagh Cardinal Seán Brady.

The prayer was preceded by a 'celebration for families', with the large crowd processing to the cathedral at 7pm.

A rule of thumb – don't rain on their parade

Every August, when the Rose of Tralee festival comes around, there's a breakout of demands calling for it to be brought to an end – on grounds that it's outdated, sexist, judgmental of women and all the rest. I may even have voiced such an opinion myself back in the dim dark past.

“It's harmless, those who enter it do so voluntarily, and it reaches out to the global Irish diaspora”

But in latter years, I've embraced a more tolerant view of many such events, with the phrase “why rain on their parade”?

If people enjoy the Rose of Tralee – and it always gets high TV viewing figures, especially among women – why rain on their



Mary Kenny

parade? It's harmless, those who enter it do so voluntarily, and it reaches out to the global Irish diaspora.

Attitude

I've adopted this attitude towards the hype surrounding the women's football World Cup. I sympathised with a friend who expostulated – “It's only a flipping football match – I'm sick of all the hysteria around it!” And when the England team – the ‘Lionesses’ – lost to Spain, they were reassured they were still great heroes who had changed the course of history, had done a nation proud and each one deserved a personal honour. I found it comically disproportionate. But then I thought “don't rain on their parade – let them enjoy their moment of fame” (and they did congratulate

Spain, sportswomanlike).

Similarly, I'm not a huge fan of ‘Pride’ and transgender flags being plastered all over Garda vehicles, commercial and public buildings. Why do people have to turn their sexuality into a form of display behaviour? Surely this is a private matter. But if it cheers up some folks – is it worth raining on their parade? Put up with it and let it be.

“Didn't James Galway play the Orange flute as a youngster? – so, why shouldn't they mark that tradition?”

The same goes for drag queen performances: there's often an element of parodying women in the exaggerated costume and gaudy presentation. Yet transvestitism has been part of theatre since the Greeks, and so long as it doesn't involve inappropriate behaviour aimed at children, let it pass.

Then there's the loyalist marches in the North.



Outgoing Rose of Tralee, Rachel Duffy, shows off her sash to Issie Scanlan (age 13), Chloe Scanlan (age 11) and Lucy Scanlan (age 11) from Glasnevin, Dublin. Photo: Sasko Lazarov/Photocall Ireland

Obviously, it's insensitive and even offensive if these involve moving through nationalist or Catholic areas. They should and must comply with public

order and law. But their flutes and drums are part of their tradition, too – didn't James Galway play the Orange flute as a youngster? – so, why

shouldn't they mark that tradition?

It's worth applying the test to events that are not to our taste: why rain on the parade?

“If it cheers up some folks - is it worth raining on their parade? Put up with it and let it be”

The imitation of youth

“Vanity, vanity, all is vanity”, is a doleful warning that occurs in St Thomas à Kempis *Imitation of Christ* (a devotional tome once popular in Ireland) quoting from the biblical Book of Ecclesiastes.

It came to mind last week as I started tidying my bedroom dressing-table, wherein I found the following collection: 31 lipsticks (plus two make-up boxes with ‘lip palettes’); 26 eye shadows; six palettes of blusher or what was once called ‘rouge’; 11 bottles or tubes of skin foundation;

23 bottles or tubes of varied skin creams; plus assorted lotions, unguents, mascaras, scents and sprays, as well as nail varnishes galore, and eight hand mirrors, one of which, incongruously, had a holy image of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the obverse (a gift from Mexico).

On counting this cache, other quotations came to mind too: Dolly Parton's witticism “you know how much money it takes to look this cheap”? And Hamlet's macabre reflections on Ophelia's recourse to cosmetics, while regarding the

death's skull: “let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come”.

It's obvious why we buy all this stuff – because we are sold it as a dream of, if not eternal youth, at least attractive self-preservation. But why do we buy it over and over again, when we have so much of it? It's shameful!

We're fortunate we don't pay the ultimate price of women in previous centuries, who could die from mercury poisoning as a result of more primitive cosmetics: thus did Madame de Pompadour perish from such ‘paintings’.

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● After Nurse Lucy Letby – of the Countess of Chester Hospital – was found guilty of the murder of seven premature babies in her care, and the attempted murder of six more, some people speculated on social media if the killing of very young infants had a link with routine acceptance of abortion. After all, Britain largest abortion provider, the BPAS, has been campaigning for the right to abortion up to birth. There is a thin timeline between life just before

birth and just after it.

In fairness, most pro-choice people are horrified by infant murder. But, to a twisted, psychopathic or distorted mind, the notion that you can extinguish a small human life by choice might well justify the power to do so on a continuum.

Lucy Letby has been described as Britain's leading murderess and the authorities are now probing if she killed dozens more infants as yet unknown.

New data shows number of abortions could rise to 10,000 by end of year

Ruadhán Jones

The number of abortions taking place in Ireland are “out of control”, the Life Institute has said, after new figures suggest as many as 10,000 terminations could be carried out in 2023. New data covering the first six months of the year indicate more than 5,000 abortions

took place between January and June 2023. Figures released by the HSE to TD Carol Nolan show that €1,515,600 was spent over that six month period on “combined termination procedure and aftercare”. Since €300 is paid to service providers for this category of abortion, this suggests that some 5,032 abortions took place

between January and June. Deputy Nolan described the situation as being a “humanitarian emergency”. “If that trend continues, we are looking at 10,000 abortions in 2023,” said Megan Ní Scealláin of the Life Institute. This would exceed by more than 1,000 the 8,876 abortions recorded in 2022. “The Government should be ashamed of

these numbers, and of their absolute failure – and lack of interest – in tackling the soaring abortion rate,” she added. “The abortion figures are now out of control: the number is spiraling, clearly women are being made to feel that they have no other options and that abortion is the default option.” Eilis Mulroy of the Pro

Life Campaign criticised the Government for spending €25 million on abortion provision and “not a single cent” in the area of unplanned pregnancy. “Not a single cent of all the monies spent in the area of unplanned pregnancy by the Government in the past five years was used to promote positive alternatives to abortion,” she said.

“This shocking fact alone will have to become a major election issue for 2024 and in the run up to the next general election.” Ms Mulroy added that “Abortion doctors have already been paid €2,439,600 in the first six months of 2023, compared with €2,652,000 for the entire year in 2019”.

Bishop McGuckian: Synod must be guided by Church teaching

Jason Osborne

Speaking to a packed Knock Basilica as part of the annual Knock novena, Bishop of Raphoe Alan McGuckian SJ told the Faithful that the synod will be successful if it remains grounded in Scripture and the Church's Tradition.

Describing the Church as “divided,” Bishop McGuckian said that the Church can rely on the “anchors” of Scripture and Tradition to ensure respectful dialogue, even where there is difference.

“We have to walk together to learn to listen to one another respectfully, even when we're different,” Bishop McGuckian said.

“We in the Church of course have an anchor that you need when you're in the sea, a stormy sea, our anchor is that we as Catholics are obliged to listen to one another in the light

of the Scripture and of our Catholic tradition.

“We're anchored and grounded in those two things. And if we really stay grounded in Scripture and our Catholic tradition, we can listen to one another and talk to one another in respectful ways.”

Quoting St Paul, Bishop McGuckian said that the divided Church of today must listen to his advice: “Do not model your behaviour on the contemporary world but be transformed in the renewing of your mind, then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is.”

“Do not be conformed to the contemporary world, either its ways of dealing with one another that we hear and pick up on social media that we can enter into very readily, or indeed its rejection of our tradition and teaching and our moral tradition,” Dr McGuckian said.

PSNI investigating sectarian hate crime at Apprentice Boys parade

Chai Brady

Police in the North of Ireland are investigating an alleged sectarian hate crime that occurred at an Apprentice Boys march earlier this month.

The PSNI confirmed to *The Irish Catholic* that derogatory remarks shouted about the Pope by loyalists marching through Derry – to mark the anniversary of the ending of the Siege of Derry in 1689 – were being investigated.

The event is attended by around 10,000 Apprentice Boys and more than

100 bands, making it one of the biggest loyal order parades in the North.

In a statement, a PSNI spokeswoman said: “Police in Derry/Londonderry received a report on Saturday August 12, of an incident that occurred earlier in the afternoon, at around 2.45pm, in the vicinity of Ferryquay Street in the city centre. It is reported comments were made towards a member of the public during the parade by a band member. This is being treated as a sectarian hate crime, and enquiries are ongoing.”

A joyous profession...



Sr Mary Louisa Olmo makes her solemn profession to the Redemptoristine nuns in Dublin on Saturday, August 19, with her fellow sisters joining her for the joyous occasion.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Veritas launches Knock jewellery

Religious publisher and retailer Veritas has launched a range of jewellery ahead of the 144th anniversary of the Knock apparitions. The nine-piece fine jewellery collection was created to celebrate and commemorate the pilgrimages that have been made to Knock since 1879. Each piece is crafted in sterling silver and is designed to be a reminder of a blessed journey taken. All pieces carry the bespoke Knock Shrine logo and are authenticated by the Assay Office in Dublin Castle.

President of Veritas Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick diocese said: “It is my hope that these items will remind people of Knock and of the graces received from our Lord through the intercession of Our Lady of Knock.”

Tribute for ‘compassionate pastor’ Bishop MacDaid

The Bishop of Clogher has hailed his predecessor Bishop Liam MacDaid as a “compassionate pastor who brought the love of Christ to all the people he ministered to”, following his death while on holiday in France last week.

Bishop Larry Duffy said: “Throughout his 54 years of priestly ministry, whether in an educational setting, in a parish or as Bishop of Clogher, Bishop Liam saw his mission as one of proclaiming Christ. His devoted service to the diocese will be long remembered for its genuine commitment to God's people...”

The Co. Donegal, Bundoran native Bishop MacDaid (78) was Bishop of Clogher from 2010 until his retirement due to ill-health in October 2016.

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Breda O'Brien
The View



Remember brave bishop jailed in Nicaragua

As you read this, a courageous bishop is sitting in solitary confinement in a Nicaraguan prison – Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa.

We are so flooded with bad news that it can sometimes be hard to care about a country thousands of miles away. *The Irish Catholic* has played a valuable role in helping us to think about, pray for and lobby about Nicaragua.

When the corrupt right-wing Somoza dictatorship was toppled in 1979 by the Sandinistas, by and large, Ireland rejoiced. Michael D. Higgins and his wife Sabina hosted Daniel Ortega and his partner, now wife, Rosario Murillo in Galway on their visit to Ireland in 1989. (In fairness, the president challenged the regime's corruption in 2022.)

Ashes

The Sandinista dream is in ashes. Ortega-Murillo and their son, Laureano, preside over a virtual police state. In February, they neatly disposed of 222 political prisoners by exiling them to the United States, stripping them of Nicaraguan citizenship in the process.

Bishop Álvarez refused to board the plane. In a move widely seen as revenge for his refusal to leave his flock, he was subjected to a show trial and sentenced to 26 years in prison, in a place called *La Modelo*, locally known as the hellhole. Conditions are dire – starvation rations, running water only twice a day, prisoners sleeping on a concrete slab, regular beatings and often, months of solitary confinement.

Prior to his imprisonment, he had been under house arrest for nearly a year. He is a thorn in the regime's side.

Bishop Álvarez was briefly allowed out of prison in July but has been returned there. Nicaraguan civil society is being dismantled while the pockets of the dictatorship are being lined. Our own



Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa, Nicaragua, prays at a Catholic church in Managua on May 20, 2022. In February 2023, after refusing deportation to the US, Bishop Álvarez was sentenced to more than 26 years in prison. August 4 marked the one-year anniversary of his arrest.

Trócaire has been refused permission to operate there and St Theresa of Kolkata's order, the Missionaries of Charity, has also been expelled.

“The Ortega-Murillo regime has closed at least 26 institutions of higher education”

The latest outrage is the seizure of the Jesuit-run University of Central America (UCA), including all its assets, on a baseless charge of being a centre of terrorism. *Crux Now* reports: “In their fiery statement, the Jesuits said the confiscation of UCA was ‘about a government policy that is systematically violating human rights and appears to be aimed at consolidat-

ing a totalitarian state’.”

The Ortega-Murillo regime has closed at least 26 institutions of higher education, and imprisoned or forced into exile dozens of priests and religious.

Monitor

Martha Patricia Molina Montenegro, a Nicaraguan lawyer, continues to monitor human rights abuses against the Church. Thanks to her, we know about the freezing of pension funds for clergy. A monthly pension of \$300 is allocated for priests 75 years of age or older and \$150 a month for priests who are between 65 and 74, hardly princely sums, but even these amounts are now being blocked.

The Church is widely seen as a locus of resistance. For example, students from UCA were central to protests in 2018,

when the wildly unpopular government imposed taxes on social welfare payments.

“He ‘survived on a diet of 14 beans, three small spoons of rice and a boiled egg for breakfast and dinner’”

Those who were sent into exile in the United States earlier this year are not in a good situation, either. *The Washington Post* reports not only that they are finding it difficult to recover from the trauma of unjust imprisonment but many of them are fearful to speak out, as they still have relatives and friends in Nicaragua

who are vulnerable to the regime's machinations. It cites Lester Alemán, a student activist, who says that he “survived on a diet of 14 beans, three small spoons of rice and a boiled egg for breakfast and dinner. He said he lost so much weight that he could hear the sound of his knee bones knocking against each other when he lay down on a concrete slab”.

Struggling

He is struggling to make a new life in the US. When he and the other prisoners were stripped of their nationality, their bank accounts were also closed. While some of the prisoners have rich and influential patrons in the US, the majority do not. The harsh realities of US healthcare, where those who cannot afford to pay are simply

not treated, are impinging on these ex-prisoners who have many physical and mental after-effects.

The Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) which is assisting the Nicaraguan exiles, says that “at least half the former prisoners do not have stable housing, 170 are penniless and at least 50 are on the verge of becoming homeless”.

Like all people forced from their country, they long to go back but it looks unlikely in the near future. Archbishop Eamon Martin is among those who have called for the release of Bishop Álvarez and an end to the repression.

We need to keep praying but also reminding our politicians about the fate of Bishop Álvarez and other brave souls. They rely on us to keep their story before the world.

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Church and medicine often guilty of the same failings



Once again, reputation protection was deemed more important than victims and survivors, writes **David Quinn**

This week, nurse Lucy Letby found out that she will spend the rest of her life behind bars. She was found guilty of the murder of seven babies in her care at the Countess of Chester hospital in Britain. She attempted to kill others.

Her killing spree began in June 2015 and ended a year later. Doctors at the hospital tried to raise concerns about what was happening in her ward but when they complained to management, management was more concerned with possible reputational damage to the hospital if police were involved. Reputation protection was deemed more important than patient protection.

Management actually turned on the doctors and rallied around Ms Letby, seeing her as the real victim.

“Reputation was put first, and the priest-abusers were often seen as the ‘victims’”

Unfortunately, this is all too reminiscent of the Church and how it responded to child sex abuse allegations. Reputation was put first, and the priest-abusers were often seen as the ‘victims’ of their impulses, and sent off for treatment, although in the case of Ms Letby, management did not

consider her guilty at all.

Ms Letby, as many have noted, is the prototypical sweet and innocent looking person, the ‘butter wouldn’t melt in her mouth’ type.

Her upbringing appears to have been wholly conventional. Those looking for clues as to why she embarked on her killing spree can find no real clues in her past.

Personality

She was only 25 when she murdered her first victim. She worked in the neonatal unit of her hospital and colleagues certainly didn’t spot anything overly odd about her personality. “She was like Little Miss Perfect”, a former friend told a newspaper. “Maybe slightly awkward but sociable. She is literally the last person anyone would suspect as a killer”.

Just about the only thing that stood out about her behaviour was her close relationship with a married registrar, but this can hardly be taken as a predictor that someone was about to become a killer or there would be a lot more killers in the world than there are.

Her first killing took place on June 8, 2015. Twins had been born six weeks premature, which is well within the capacity of modern medicine to manage.

Both babies were healthy. Ms Letby injected a fatal amount of air into ‘Child A’s’ bloodstream, killing him.

A little over a day later, she tried to kill his twin in the same way, but this time staff were able to save the baby’s life.

She killed other babies by injecting them with milk or insulin.

By the time her killing spree came to an end, she had murdered seven infants and attempted to murder six others, some of whom were left permanently disabled.

Doctors began to raise the alarm within a few months of the first death because the number of babies dying was unusually high and the common denominator each time an infant died was the presence of Ms Letby on the ward.

But when they brought their concerns to hospital



Lucy Letby was sentenced to life without parole.

management, they were rebuffed. An interesting aspect of the case is that to some extent it became a matter internally of doctors vs nurses.

For example, the chief executive of the hospital who was dealing with the complaints against Ms Letby was a former nurse.

One nurse complained that doctors were leading a ‘witch-hunt’ against Ms Letby. Royal College of Nursing union representatives took her side.

Doctors were warned not to contact the police because that would mean “blue tape everywhere and the end of the unit as well as the trust’s reputation”.

At one point, Ms Letby actually made a bullying complaint against the doctors who were trying to have her investigated and amazingly, this succeeded.

By this point, the doctors had succeeded in having her removed from the unit where she was working

Grievance

The subsequent grievance inquiry turned on the doctors and Ms Letby was told, “this behaviour has resulted in you, a junior colleague and fellow professional, feeling isolated and vulnerable,

putting your reputation in question. This is unacceptable and could be viewed as victimisation”.

On top of this, she was offered a placement at the world-famous Alder Hey Children’s Hospital in Liverpool and support for a master’s degree or advanced nurse training.

The inquiry raised no red flags about her behaviour when on duty.

To cut a long story short, the doctors persisted with their concerns, and finally hospital management called in the police in May 2017.

“I don’t deserve to live. I killed them on purpose because I’m not good enough. I am a horrible evil person”

Ms Letby was arrested two months later. In her home, police found pieces of paper written by her saying, “I don’t deserve to live. I killed them on purpose because I’m not good enough. I am a

horrible evil person”, and in capital letters, “I AM EVIL I DID THIS”.

Perhaps this goes to the heart of it. Sometimes a person is not malformed by their background and any other event in their life. They are not suffering from severe mental health difficulties. They are simply motivated by evil and maybe this was the case with Ms Letby.

Not the first

She is not the first and only nurse in Britain to act in this way. Another was Beverley Allitt, who was given 13 life sentences in 1993. She also injected babies with insulin and air.

She had attacked 13 babies over a 59-day period, killing four of them. Like Ms Letby, she was only in her 20s when she conducted her killing spree. She is still serving time in prison and is now age 54.

No proper explanation was ever found for her behaviour either.

The history of medicine is, in fact, riddled with scandals and cover-ups, rather like the history of the Church. The intentions of medicine are excellent, and it is an indispensable part of life, but sometimes it attracts bad or incompetent people and

can be run by a hierarchy more concerned with reputation protection and promotion rather than anything else.

Doctors, as well as nurses, have deliberately killed people, or sexually abused patients, or covered up their own malpractice and been assisted in this by colleagues. Doctors have conducted highly unethical, sometimes murderous, medical experiments and trials. They have presided over torture. They have worked in concentration camps and assisted in eugenics, which includes involuntary sterilisation of patients. The list goes on.

Human nature

Unfortunately, we see that every human endeavour is subject to the same human weaknesses, frailties and sometimes downright evil because human nature is bad as well as good, just as Christianity teaches.

Everything we do is in constant need of renewal and reform and vigilance so that our failures don’t overwhelm and corrupt systems and fail people, especially those they are intended to serve.

The Church, above all, should never forget this, and neither, as we can see, should the world of medicine.

The Catholic chip on Ireland's shoulder



Rightfully deplored sins in the Church's past have driven many into irrationality in the present, writes Jason Osborne

Being both a Catholic and a journalist, I cannot help but notice the surging anti-Catholic sentiment sweeping Ireland at the moment. You don't have to look far to see it, or strain your ears too hard to hear it. Whereas once, perhaps, popular opinion in Ireland couldn't fathom the Church being anything but a force for good – even if imperfections were admitted – now, I challenge you to find many people other than practicing Catholics who can see past the Church's sins and shortcomings.

“Something of the magnitude of the abuse crisis should haunt the Church forever, that it never happens again”

Of course, calling to mind the sins of those claiming to follow Christ has an important role to play. Speaking last week at Knock basilica, one of Ireland's best-known broadcasters, Sean O'Rourke, said that of the many thousands of questions he asked on air, the one that stuck out most to him was when he asked Primate of All-Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin how long he thought the Church would be haunted by the abuse crisis, to which

Archbishop Martin began by saying: “Hopefully, forever.” He's right about that. Something of the magnitude of the abuse crisis should haunt the Church forever so, that it never happens again.

However, as Catholics, we profess that Jesus Christ is God himself, and that he instituted the Catholic Church. If we truly believe that, we cannot but stand by the Church and proclaim its goodness while acknowledging the many, many failings of we who make it up. Despite the harm done by those associated with the Church, untold masses of people throughout history have experienced Jesus' presence in the Church, and benefitted from following the teachings they've found here throughout their lives.

I preface an article about anti-Catholicism this way because, while I've met many Catholics grieved not only by the abuse crisis in particular, but by other ills throughout the Church's long history too, it's becoming increasingly uncommon in Ireland to encounter people who will speak well of the Church. Rather, it's becoming increasingly common that speaking well of the Church, or merely defending the Church against unjust attacks and falsities, is heretical in the eyes of the new narrative in Ireland.

According to that narrative, the 20th Century saw Ireland utterly dominated by a Church not unlike the Taliban, and all social progress since then – the redefinition of the family, the introduction of abortion, the current discussion of euthanasia/assisted suicide and more – carries us further and further from those dark days into the light of an age ruled by reason rather than religious superstition. If you believe that line of thought, as many seem to, then no amount of distance from the Church is too much, and pretty much any social development that carries us further from the Church's vision of the world is a good thing.

Comparison

Once a movement or institution takes on this character in the collective imagination, it's not hard to be carried away from reality by fantasy, which is precisely what I believe to be happening in Ireland at the moment. A couple of recent episodes have highlighted this.

Take, for instance, the

increasingly frequent comparisons of the Church to the Taliban, who currently rule Afghanistan with an iron, and frequently violent, fist. The most recent, high-profile iteration of this came from Rosita Sweetman in an op-ed for the *Irish Examiner*, where she wrote that for decades, “Irish women had... been stripped of their power, their rage, by our Taliban – the Catholic Church”. She doubled down on this by tweeting “photographic evidence of how bonkers things were”: a picture of Archbishop John Charles McQuaid blessing a hospital.

“Any comparison of the Catholic Church to the Taliban is not only to be condemned – it's utterly fantastical”

In case anyone needed a reminder, women and girls currently dread leaving their homes in Afghanistan and are largely banned from societal participation. The Taliban have a history of carrying out massacres, violent attacks and executions, human trafficking and cul-

tural genocide, to name but a few of their practices. Any comparison of the Catholic Church to the Taliban is not only to be condemned – it's utterly fantastical.

The inducement of this fantasy is not without consequences. Another recent anti-Catholic incident saw a group of people apparently belonging to the ‘Ireland needs Fatima’ group assaulted as they engaged in street preaching in Dublin city centre. While legitimate debate can be had about whether or not their method is good or effective, it should go without saying that they don't deserve to be assaulted, even if what they have to say is unpleasant to modern Irish ears.

The response to the assault, a video of which went viral? Nothing. It received no condemnation from the political or media class, who, you'd have to imagine, would have been tumbling over themselves to offer stern warnings had it been any other group assaulted by someone with any sort of association with the Church. As we've noted, though, if the Church is as bad – Taliban-like – as we say it is, an odd slap or a push about, while distasteful, is quite understandable.

Harassment

Meanwhile, the Church can't even conduct its own

affairs without harassment. Recent articles in a variety of publications highlighting calls from bishops and other personalities for vocations have received overwhelmingly negative responses, rejoicing in the Church's plight and condemning those who speak up on the Church's behalf for trying to get others involved in, as they see it, a failing endeavour. The comments are there for all to see, but I won't quote them here due to their often unsavoury nature.

Catholics should not indulge in the so-called “persecution complex,” which sees hardships and difficulties targeting them around every corner, behind every decision made by Government. Life is dif-

ficult in different ways for everyone, and at the very least, Christ himself warned us that unjust treatment is part and parcel of following him, and that we, like him, are expected to “turn the other cheek” rather than strike back with equal violence.

However, we do a disservice to truth if we don't acknowledge that a spirit of anti-Catholicism is brewing among no small number of people here, and that significant efforts are being made to paint the Church as the source of all of our troubles, both past and present. Calling that out, in loving concern for what Ireland is missing out on in a relationship with God in his Church, is both right and just.



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A new book aims to show us that questions rather than commandments bring us closer to God and one another, writes **Jason Osborne**

The Dominican Order has long been associated with the disciplined pursuit of truth, and the only tool we have for questing after truth is the question. With that in mind, it's shameful and astonishing that, at times and in places, questions about God or about faith have been discouraged, and the mere memorisation of formulas or unquestioning obedience to commandments encouraged.

If we believe the Church's commandments to be true, and God's existence to be self-evident, we shouldn't be afraid of questions, because "ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened," as Jesus says in the Gospel according to Matthew.

Human strivings

Not only are questions useful in our human strivings for truth, they're at the same time the manner by which the truth itself – God – draws us into deeper relationship with himself. Renowned preacher and author, Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP and biblical scholar, Fr Lukasz Popko OP in their new book *Questioning God* set out to show that God's revelation to humanity is not a one way affair, but a conversation with his people through which friendship and intimacy might be developed.

Choosing 18 biblical conversations that illustrate this point in a variety of ways, the authors were surprised to find that the conversations they'd chosen nearly all revolved around questions. From the first conversation in the Bible, when God inquires of Adam, "Where are you?" to the Resurrected Christ's questioning of Peter: "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"

In our modern times, it's still very common for people to question God, or whatever other higher power they believe exists, when faced with the tragedy, trials and

The conversations that bring us to the heart of God



A Mass preceding a synodal gathering at the Vatican in 2021. Fr Radcliffe says that listening to what God has to say will be a vital part of a successful synod. Photo: CNS

“Where the world’s ears often seem to have grown deaf to God, I ask them whether questioning, rather than commanding, can be a more effective route back to God”

mystery life necessarily entails. We seem to have lost the sense of being questioned by God in turn, however – which the Bible clearly lays out as one of the key ways in which God draws us out of ourselves.

One way

To discern whether or not this is the case, I asked the authors whether they believe the conversation with God has been somewhat one way lately (That is, we interrogate God and don't hear what he has to say in turn) or whether the understanding of revelation as a monolithic command has killed this sense of "divine questioning".

"I think it's interesting. The

title of the book deliberately has two meanings. God questions us, and we question God. So, I think at the heart of the book is the conviction that we can dare to draw near to God, questioning and being questioned. People often think that revelation is that you get a whole lot of commands and you're just supposed to passively obey, but that doesn't create for a profound relationship," Fr Radcliffe tells *The Irish Catholic* newspaper.

"It's much more of a deep, human relationship because we are open to being questioned and to question. We didn't actually at the beginning, I think it's true to say, Lukasz, expect



Fr Timothy Radcliffe. Photo: CNS

that questions would be so prominent. But when we just looked at questions that we found, conversations that we found fun, and the book is supposed to be enjoyable, when we looked at these, it actually emerged that so many of the most stimulating ones begin and end with questions." For his part, Fr Popko says that the point of revelation is not "to give us new data," but rather to "create a relationship".

"The point of the revelation is not to give us new data, it's not about two plus two makes four, but to create a relationship, that's communion, that's the point of meeting a person, ultimately – we're not

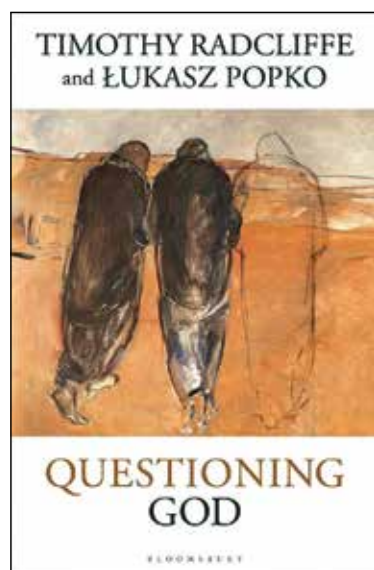
meeting a set of sentences, but the point of the Bible is to create relationship and to maintain the dialogue," Fr Popko says, continuing, "I think the personal aim of the revelation presumes that it's not only about a set of sentences you need to memorise or be obedient to – it's not enough in Christianity. You need to have a personal relationship with God."

Where the world's ears often seem to have grown deaf to God, I ask them whether questioning, rather than commanding, can be a more effective route back to God, and whether promoting this notion was at least in part the motivation behind their new book.

Cancel culture

"You know, I think people are, in the West, very keen on questioning God...but there are plenty of things that they're not questioning at all and they should, especially in the modern culture. We mentioned that there is cancel culture, but it's everywhere. I mean, there are different mechanisms of not asking questions, even fundamental questions – like questions about God are also so dismissed....dismissed or made ridiculous or put aside as is the very attitude to awaken the question about God, or any question," Fr Popko says.

"Sometimes people think,



“What prevents us from having the most edifying, truly enlightening conversations, Fr Popko suggests simply, is sin”

the question about God, or any question,” Fr Popko says.

“Sometimes people think, ‘Oh, we have a problem with faith,’ but I would say we have a problem with faith because we have a problem with reason. People lose faith because, I would say, quite often they lose their reason, and the reasonable attitude, and follow easy, ideological, not even answers, but identities and they stop seeking for truth because they think they’ve found it.”

Fr Radcliffe says that the problem with our present age is one of “reductionism,” and this affects everything, including our questions and our conversations.

Finding God

“Whether it’s scientific reductionism, economic reductionism, simplification – which goes with polarisation and trying to reduce things to the simplest categories – I think the illness of our time is not that we don’t believe in God so much as we lose all nuance, subtlety, complexity and I can engage, and happily talk to and learn from anybody who’s happy to engage with the complexity of human experience, seriously,” he says, adding, “then we will find God together.”

“The beauty, I think, of any conversation, conversations that Łukasz and I have, the conversations that we have with our friends and contacts is you don’t know where it’s going to go. You don’t know what it’s leading to, except for if you do believe, as we believe, that God is the fundamental meaning that we all search and hunger for, you do believe that in embarking on that search for truth and for meaning, you’re always taking a step towards God,” Fr Radcliffe says.

With the universal Church engaged in one big, synodal conversation at the moment, I ask what contribution their book on the very topic of conversation can make. Fr Radcliffe says he hopes that their book can make those involved in the synod aware that not only are they being given a chance to speak,

but that they’re also being addressed.

Being heard

“I think a lot of people will go to the synod saying, ‘I want to be heard’. And they will be. But there’s maybe a prior question, which is, ‘When I go to the synod, will I be prepared to listen?’ One of the things that emerged, which Łukasz and I both found, what’s fundamental about being a human being is that we’re addressed. We’re addressed by God, who calls us by name. We’re addressed by each other. I don’t think we have anything to say until we learn the vulnerable, patient art of listening,” Fr Radcliffe says.

“What we’re hoping is that it will model, in a very, small, terribly modest way, it will model how you listen. That means you don’t listen just to what somebody says, you listen to what they’re trying to say. You listen to what they’re afraid to hear. You listen to what they don’t even dare mention.”

Silence, then, has an important part to play in the upcoming synodal gathering in Rome, and any future synodal events, for it’s in silence that we not only come to hear and know God, but in which we come to know ourselves, too.

“If I have difficulty listening to my brother, I have difficulty listening to myself, or to God...I think it’s [silence] a very precious experience,” Fr Popko says.

“Nowadays, because we have technology filling all this space and it’s so easy to fill it, people do not listen to themselves,” and so “being in touch with oneself is often lost”.

“People, we, because I’m part of it too, because we don’t know who we are because you don’t listen to yourself, you don’t know what you are, you’re easily manipulated. You’re told what to feel, you’re told what to think and you’re told how to behave and that’s why I think people go crazy about identity, self-identification,” he says.

“Why in the past wasn’t this a problem? I think, and

it’s not that people didn’t know who they were – they knew. They gave more time for that. To teach themselves and to listen to themselves, to understand themselves.”

Not keen to end on a negative note, but an important point to touch upon, I ask the authors which trends – particularly in the western world – they see inhibiting the sort of conversations, the sort of listening their book advocates so powerfully for. Perhaps unsurprisingly, “cancel culture” features prominently in their answer.

Insecurity

“Cancellation culture, and I think that is symptomatic of fear and insecurity where you dare not listen. Trigger warnings. You can’t read *Macbeth* now without a trigger warning...a trigger warning, somebody’s going to die and you may need counselling to face it,” Fr Radcliffe says, warning that, “we’re raising people with deep insecurity and we give them security, not, I think in the end, by protecting them from everything that will hurt. We give them security by knowing that they’re promised a life and a flourishing beyond hurt”.

“One of my brethren, Herbert McCabe, who lived about 10 feet away [from here], used to say, if you love, you will get hurt, and you will die, but if you don’t love, you’re dead already. For us, the Risen Lord is wounded. He shows his wounds. So we have to form young people, and ourselves because we’re all in the same boat, not to be afraid of getting hurt, because if you dare to get hurt, in hope and in love, you’ll flourish. But if you protect yourself from every possible injury and danger and rejection, then you’re dead already.”

What prevents us from having the most edifying, truly enlightening conversations, Fr Popko suggests simply, is sin.

“Ultimately our deepest vocation is to be able to receive, and be received by, God, another person... if I imagine the ideal



Fr Łukasz Popko. Photo: École Biblique et Archéologique

conversation, I still hope it’s ahead of me because you imagine [yourself] to be understood totally...It’s really theological in my head, the ultimate conversation. What impedes us, I would say, is sin. It’s as simple as that. Sin can touch anything – the deepest fears we have or lack of charity and hope, so I really would identify it with that.”

Both men are aware, though, that Christian

conversations proceed with the end in mind – that we’re called to be saints, and that our ultimate home is heaven, where we will enjoy the final, unending and all-revealing conversation face to face with the one who made us. As such, our conversations here and now flow from that place, from the awareness that “we are the richest,” for knowing God, as Fr Popko puts it.

“If I think, what is the

function of Christians in this world, because we are the richest – you know, I know that I’m loved by God, I should be the person who in this world is able to show that such conversation is possible. This is my function of being a Christian, in a way. I received so much, the start of a conversation for a Christian should be somewhere there, because it ends in heaven,” he finishes.


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Family fun during Knock shrine novena

Staff reporter

There was delight among young pilgrims at Knock shrine who enjoyed a special 'Family Day' on Sunday, during the Knock novena.

Families enjoyed a range of free indoor and outdoor activities. These included a puppet show, music, kite-making and kite-flying, face painting, dance and more. Families also enjoyed the ice cream, crepe and burger vans close at hand.



Photos: Jana Jurakova





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Thousands swarm to Knock for national Novena

Chai Brady

Thousands of people travelled to Knock shrine for each day of the popular annual national novena to Our Lady of Knock which ran from August 14-22.

Over the course of the nine-day novena, pilgrims heard from a variety of guest speakers who offered insights into a variety of topics including personal faith stories and how the Faithful can respond to a changing world. The theme this year was 'Caring for Creation'.



A blessing from Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor, Papal Nuncio to Ireland, who also delivered a speech at the novena. Photos: Sinéad Mallee



Mary's Meals Mass on August 15.



Calvary procession.



One of the novena speakers, Paula McKeown, director of Living Church in the Diocese of Down and Connor.



Candlelight procession.



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Chai Brady

Hundreds attend annual Lee Road shrine Mass in Cork

Hundreds of pilgrims flocked to the Holy Rosary shrine on the Lee Road in Cork for the 72nd year to mark the Feast Day of the Assumption last week.

Bishop emeritus of Cork and Ross, John Buckley, was the chief celebrant of the Mass, which only returned this year – the last pilgrimage occurring in 2019 – after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Tradition

One of the preachers at the event, Fr Marius O'Reilly of St Peter and Paul's parish, told *The Irish Catholic* that "it was great, it was very encouraging to see so many people after Covid continuing this tradition".

Attendees walked from the Sacred Heart church on Western Road to the shrine. The Butter Exchange Band provided hymns during the Mass.

Fr O'Reilly said he believes about 500 people were in attendance and it was the biggest crowd in the last five to 10 years, adding "it seems that it's here for a while and it seems people are getting into these traditions even more, and realising the importance".

Seated at the table is Deputy Lord Mayor Cllr John Sheehan with his wife Ademar Sheehan and sister Geraldine (left), attending the annual devotions for the feast of Our Lady of the Assumption at the Holy Rosary Shrine, Lee Road, Cork. Photos: Tony O'Connell, PRO.



Bishop emeritus John Buckley of the Diocese of Cork and Ross with members of the Shrine Committee after Mass, this devotion is now in its 72th year.



Colette Fitzpatrick, Shrine Committee, and Paddy O'Brien, PRO.



Bishop emeritus John Buckley with priests from the Diocese of Cork and Ross who concelebrated Mass at the Lee Road shrine on the Feast of Our Lady of the Assumption.



Out&About

Killaloe keen on prayerful pilgrimage



DONEGAL: The Faithful from the Diocese of Killaloe pictured on their August pilgrimage to Lough Derg with Bishop Fintan Monahan. They met the prior of Lough Derg Fr La Flynn.



DONEGAL: Some of the Faithful from the Diocese of Killaloe pictured on their August pilgrimage to Lough Derg.



DONEGAL: Mary McDaid is pictured following her retirement from her dedicated work on renowned pilgrimage site Lough Derg for 36 years. Her responsibilities were carried out alongside a teaching job in Enniskillen, leaving there each afternoon for the month of June and then living on the island for the months of July and August.

IN SHORT

Charity offers supports for children returning to school

An Irish children's charity are aiming to help young people returning to school, as well as those transitioning from primary to secondary school.

The Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC) have highlighted their 'Smart Moves' resource. The charity said they are aware of the "many concerns" that children and young people have about going back to school and children tell them their worries, from fitting in with new friendship groups to getting used to a new teacher, juggling extracurricular activities and meeting expectations of family, friends and school.

In a statement, the charity said that in recognising the challenges and anxiety around these transitions, ISPCC offers Smart Moves which they describe as a free, resilience and evidence-based programme for fifth- and sixth-class pupils. It also has a secondary school programme which supports young people as they begin their journey in secondary school.

The Smart Moves programme is teacher-

led and includes short lessons covering topics from friendship to problem-solving to sleep difficulties. Niamh Clarke of ISPCC said that: "Smart Moves is based on the resilience framework and looks to build lifelong coping skills for young people. Having resilience does not mean you will not face challenges. However, it gives ability to endure these challenges and bounce back."

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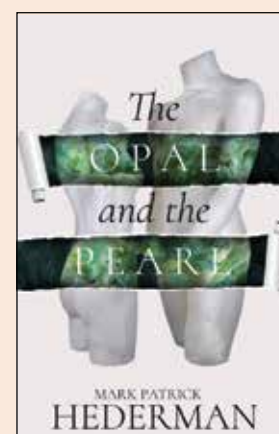
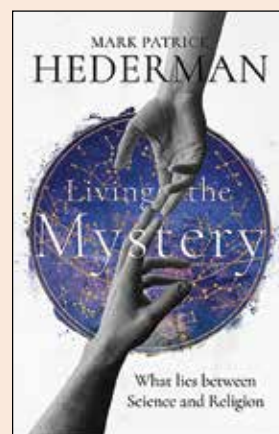
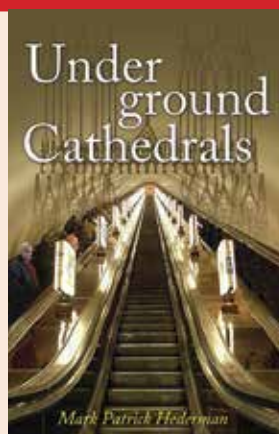
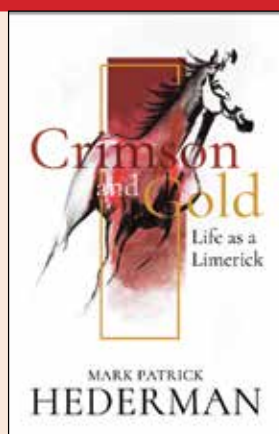
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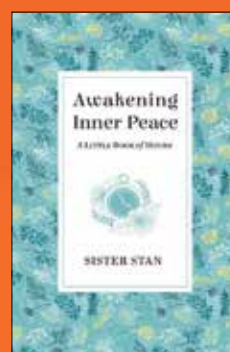
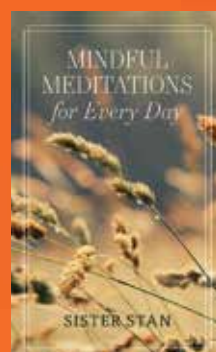
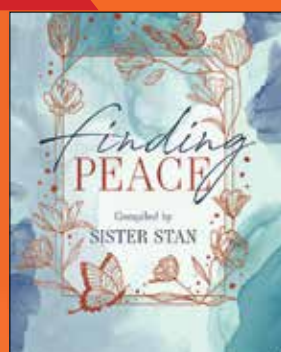
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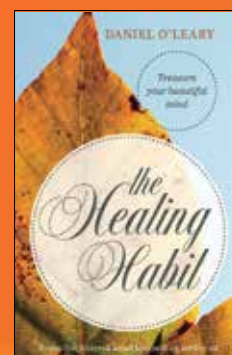
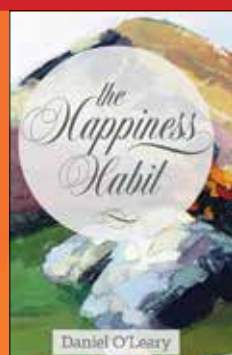
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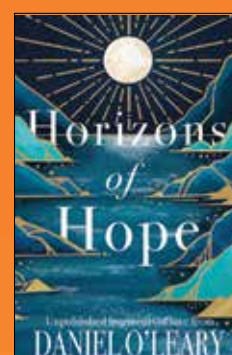
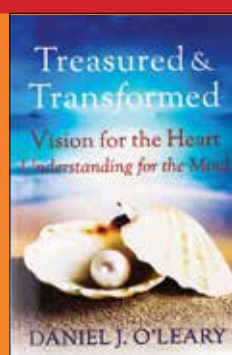
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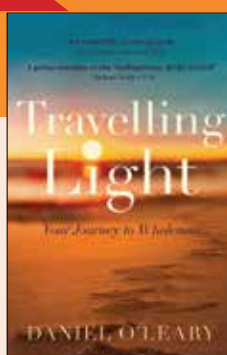
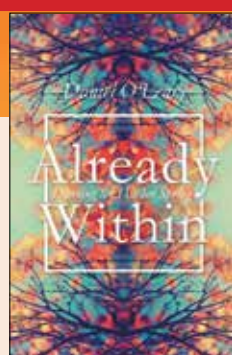
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CARLOW: Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin diocese joined the Carlow Poor Clare sisters in celebrating the Feast of St Clare along with Fr John Dunphy, Fr Yanbo Chen SVD, Fr Francis and two newly arrived sisters to the community from Lusaka in Zambia – Sr Mary Agnes and Sr Choolwe.



LOUTH: Bishop Michael Router joined parishioners in St Michael's Church in Darver, Castlebellingham for Mass on the Feast of the Assumption.



LONGFORD: There were emotional scenes at St Mel's cathedral at the return of Rose of Tralee Grace Kemple (with all the other Roses) to where she was baptised. Fr Michael McGrath was on hand to welcome the international group of Roses. Photos: Tiernan Dolan.



TYRONE: Seamstress Brigid Conway who made the new monstrance veil (centre), pictured with Alice Keenan who commissioned the veil in St Patrick's Church, Greencastle. Photo: Fr Roland Colhoun.



CLARE: Choir members are pictured at the Church of St Imy, Killimer parish, after the unveiling of a newly commissioned painting of St Imy.



KILKENNY: Bishop Niall Coll of the Diocese of Ossory awards Bridie Bergin with a Benemerenti medal for her many years of dedicated service in Callan parish.

Edited by Chai Brady
Chai@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



CORK: As part of the "Year of Prayer for Diocesan Priesthood", Bishop Michael celebrated Mass at St Brigid Shrine Faughart on August 15th at 7pm.

ANTRIM

Eucharistic adoration takes place 10am-7pm every Tuesday and Thursday in St Peter's Cathedral's adoration chapel.

ARMAGH

On Sunday August 27 at 11am, Cardinal Timothy Dolan (Archbishop of New York) will celebrate a Mass of thanksgiving in Armagh Cathedral to mark the cathedral's 150th anniversary.

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

Eucharistic adoration takes place in St Clare's Chapel, Cavan Town parish, from 11am-7pm daily.

CLARE

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place daily 3-7pm, with Benediction and evening prayer at 5.30pm on Sundays in the Poor Clare's oratory.

CORK

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in Skibbereen every Monday and Friday from 10am-6pm each day.

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

DERRY

The Sr Clare Crockett rosary takes place every Monday night, at 8.30pm, in St Joseph's Room, at the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca.

Beginning on Thursday, September 14, 7.30-8.30pm, the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, will host a monthly talk on different elements of the faith. The talks will be led by Fr Cajetan Ikedi Apeh OCD and are open to everyone aged 18 and above. For more information call: 0044 (0)28 7126 2512 or 0044 (0)79 3312 3633.

The talks are aimed at leading the participants towards personal development through meditative prayer and convivial discussions of the Church doctrines.

Buncrana parish is to host a family fun day on the grounds of Scoil Mhuire on Sunday, August 27, from 3-6pm.

DOWN

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed in Newry Cathedral every Thursday from 5-9pm, on Saturday after 10.30am Mass until 5.30pm and Sunday from after the 12 noon Mass until 5.30pm.

DUBLIN

Beginning Experience, a support group for those coping with the pain of loss of their life partner, through death, separation or divorce, to host 'Coping with Life Alone Programme' on Saturday September 16, in Carmelite Community Centre, 56 Aungier St, Dublin 2, D02 T258.

FERMANAGH

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

GALWAY

Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Saturday evenings from 7-8pm and on Monday evenings from 6-9pm in Galway Cathedral.

KERRY

Bishop Ray Browne will celebrate Pattern Day Mass at Our Lady's Well and Grotto in Ballyheigue on Friday September 8 at 11am.

KILDARE

Mass for the African Community is celebrated in St Brigid's Parish Church on the third Sunday of each month.

KILKENNY

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

LAOIS

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

LEITRIM

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

LOUTH

St Peter's parish youth group for young people between the ages of 13-17, meet in the family room at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Hardmans Gardens, Drogheda for fun, faith and friendship every first and third Friday of each month from 5-6.30pm. Contact Sr Jacinta MMM on 089 987 7046 or Clare 086 850 8955.

MEATH

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

MONAGHAN

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

ROSCOMMON

Eucharistic adoration takes place the first Friday of each month in Drumboylan Church (Ardcarne Parish) from 9am-10pm.

TIPPERARY

A Medjugorje prayer night takes place the second Thursday of every month in Glencomeragh house, beginning with the rosary at 8pm during which confessions will be available, followed by Mass, adoration and prayers for healing.

TYRONE

A service of blessing with rosary will take place in Kilclogher graveyard on Sunday, September 3, at 1pm. Graves will be blessed at Knockmoyle Sunday, September 10, directly after 10am Mass, and at Mountfield on Sunday, September 3, directly after 10am Mass.

WATERFORD

A Divine Mercy prayer group meets in the Church of the Sacred Heart, the Folly, Waterford City, every Friday from 3-3.45pm. Mass is celebrated every first Friday at 3pm.

World Report

IN BRIEF

Slovenians showing 'exceptional solidarity' after floods

● As Slovenia recovers from catastrophic flooding, Catholic aid workers told *OSV News* the nation is showing "exceptional solidarity".

Record rainfall earlier this month killed at least six and caused massive damage to homes and infrastructure in two-thirds of the country.

Prime Minister Robert Golob has called the flooding "the worst national disaster in Slovenia's (recent) history," with damage estimated at some \$500 million (€459 million).

Current estimates show that more than 4,000 households were "seriously affected" by the flooding, Mojca Kepic of Caritas Slovenia (*Slovenska Karitas*) told *OSV News*.

"At least 121 houses are completely destroyed, 2,733 badly damaged, the rest have flooded basements and destroyed infrastructure," said Ms Kepic in an email to *OSV News*.

Indian bishops reiterate Christians' patriotism

● As India celebrated its 77th Independence Day marking freedom from colonial British rule on August 15, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) asserted the patriotism of Christians and called for "resolving internal challenges with empathy, understanding, and unity".

"India's journey to freedom was not solely forged on the battlefield but also through unwavering

determination, sacrifices, and visionary leadership from those of diverse backgrounds, including the Christian community," the CBCI said in a press release.

Though British imperialism spread in India when the East India Company began trading there in the 17th Century, the British Parliament took total control over the Indian subcontinent in 1858

Alabama priest who absconded with teen believes it is 'Jesus' will'

● An Alabama priest disgraced after abandoning his parish to travel to Italy with an 18-year-old woman described himself as "married" to her in a Valentine's Day letter.

Fr Alex Crow (30) and the unnamed woman are believed to have left Mobile unannounced on July 24 and have been located in Italy.

In a separate letter, Fr Crow indicated he believed that Jesus had told him and the young women to leave, and planned to remain a priest.

Fr Crow had been a parochial vicar at Corpus Christi Parish in Mobile and left behind a letter to the Archdiocese of Mobile stating that he would never return to the United States, according to the Mobile County Sheriff's Office.

The sheriff's office has been investigating whether a crime has occurred.

A spokesperson for the sheriff's office said that there are currently no criminal charges against Fr Crow, but the office is investigating the nature of the relationship and whether the woman has been manipulated or coerced.

Vatican reports €32 million profit for 2022

● The Vatican investment office made €32.27 million in profit in 2022 and contributed the entire amount to the Vatican's operating budget, said Bishop Nunzio Galantino, president of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See.

The profit was close to €6 million less than what the investments earned in 2021, the bishop said in the annual report of the administration, which is known by its Italian acronym, APSA, and controls most of the Vatican's portfolio, including real estate.

"Transparency of numbers, achievements and defined procedures is one of the tools we have at our disposal to ward off – at least in those who are free of preconceptions – unfounded suspicions regarding the extent of the Church's assets, its administration or the fulfilment of the duties of justice, such as payment of due taxes and other tributes," the bishop wrote in his introduction to the 104-page report, which was published in early August.

US Carmelites may be excommunicated after public rejection of bishop's authority

Bishop Michael F. Olson of Fort Worth, Texas, said August 19 that a community of Carmelites in his diocese, and their prioress in particular, may have incurred excommunication after posting a letter online on August 18 saying their community no longer recognises his authority, claiming that he has interfered with and humiliated them since initiating an investigation into their prioress in late April.

In his statement to the Faithful, Bishop Olson noted that many people, including himself, have relied on the prayers of the Carmelites of the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity in Arlington, and that the nuns' rejection of his authority as bishop and pontifical commissary "has hurt me as a friend and as the bishop because of the deep wound this has cut in our unity as the Diocese of Fort Worth".

"Thus, it is with deep sorrow that I must inform the Faithful of the Diocese of Fort Worth, that Mother Teresa Agnes, thereby, may have incurred upon herself *latae sententiae*, (i.e., by her own schismatic actions), excommunication. The other nuns, depending on their complicity in Mother Teresa Agnes' publicly, scandalous and schismatic actions could possibly have incurred the same *latae sententiae* excommunication," Bishop Olson said in his statement.

In their 1,120-word state-



Sr Teresa Agnes Gerlach, of Jesus Crucified, former prioress of the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity in Arlington, Texas, and Bishop Michael F. Olson of Fort Worth are pictured in an undated combination photo. Photo: *OSV News*/courtesy Matthew Bobo/Bob Roller



ment from the "Reverend Mother Prioress and Chapter," posted August 18 to their website's homepage, the nuns said, "In recent months, our Monastery in general and our Mother Prioress in particular have been subjected to unprecedented interference, intimidation, aggression, private and public humiliation and spiritual manipulation as the direct result of the attitudes and ambitions of the current Bishop of Fort Worth in respect of our Reverend Mother Prioress, ourselves and of our property".

The nuns said that due to the bishop's alleged treatment of them, they "no longer

recognise the authority of, and can have no further relations with, the current Bishop of Fort Worth or his officials, and forbid him or any of his officials or representatives to enter our monastery property or to have any contact or relations with the monastery or any of its nuns or novices. No one who abuses us as has the current Bishop of Fort Worth, has any right to our cooperation or obedience".

In late April, Bishop Olson initiated an investigation under Church law of the community's prioress, Reverend Mother Teresa Agnes Gerlach of Jesus Crucified, into allegations of her breaking chastity

vows via "video chat" with a priest.

In the August 18 statement, the Carmelites said that they "remain utterly faithful to the doctrine of the Catholic Church and to affirm that the Pope and the Bishop of Fort Worth, whomever they are today or whomever they may be in the future, shall always be prayed for in this monastery, most especially in the Canon of the Mass".

Acknowledging that they can "expect much rhetoric to the contrary, maybe even sanctions," the sisters emphasised they "are breaking Communion with no one".

Solidarity for Iraqi Christians expressed in Beirut prayer service

In Lebanon, Christian leaders gathered for an evening of prayer for Iraq and the beleaguered Chaldean Catholic Church.

"Our Church in Iraq is going through difficult circumstances," Chaldean Bishop Michel Kassarji of Beirut said at the August 12 solidarity prayer gathering at the Chaldean Cathedral of Archangel Raphael in Baabda, outside of Beirut, with representation by patriarchs, bishops and priests from Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

"We will not surrender and the Lord is the one who protects us. Spread your light, O Lord, and bless us, bless our

shepherds, bless your priests and your consecrated people who carry the good news of your Gospel, bless Iraq and its people, bless the Chaldean Church, bless Lebanon, bless our countries," Bishop Kassarji said.

"God placed us on this holy land, the land of Abraham the Prophet, the land of Ur of the Chaldeans," Bishop Kassarji said, in reference to Iraq, where the roots of the Chaldean Church go back to the early Christian centuries.

The prayer appeal follows the announcement in July by Cardinal Louis Sako, patriarch of Chaldean Catholics in

Iraq, to withdraw from the patriarchal see in Baghdad and relocate to a monastery in the Kurdistan region.

That voluntary departure from the patriarchal headquarters follows the decision of Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid, who revoked a decree that formally recognised the cardinal as Chaldean patriarch in the country.

A decree of 2013 by President Rashid's predecessor granted this authority to Cardinal Sako. He was appointed patriarch in 2013 and elevated to cardinal by Pope Francis in 2018.

Vatican urges South Sudanese to remain committed to peace

Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin in his recent visit to South Sudan urged the people of God in the east-central African country to continue to work toward building a united nation by embracing a spirit of peace

and reconciliation.

Speaking to the media after his meeting with South Sudan President Salva Kiir Mayardit on Monday, August 14, Cardinal Parolin underscored the importance of peace and reconciliation in building a

stable country.

"Embrace the spirit of peace and reconciliation in order to build a harmonious society in the country," said Cardinal Parolin, who was in the country for a four-day official visit, in his address in Juba.

He urged South Sudanese leaders to fully implement the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), which was signed in 2018 to end the country's civil war and to sustain lasting peace in the country.



Edited by Jason Osborne
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Following in the footsteps of her heavenly mother...



A girl is pictured in traditional clothing during an outdoor Mass on the feast of the Assumption of Mary in Perros-Guirec, France, August 15. Photo: OSV News/Benoît Tessier, Reuters

Ortega regime shuts down Jesuit university in Nicaragua

The Jesuit-run Central American University in Managua suspended operations August 16 after Nicaraguan authorities branded the school a "centre of terrorism" the previous day and froze its assets for confiscation – actions marking an escalation in the regime's repression of the Catholic Church and its charitable and educational projects.

The Jesuit province in Central America immediately rebuked the terrorism accusations as "false and unfounded," saying in an August 16 statement, "The de facto confiscation of the (university) is the price to pay for seeking a more just society, protecting life, truth and freedom for the Nicara-

guan people in accordance with the (school) slogan, 'The truth will set you free'."

The accusations against the school, known locally as UCA, "form part of a series of unjustified attacks against the Nicaraguan population and other educational and social institutions of civil society – and are generating a climate of violence and insecurity and worsening the country's social-political crisis."

UCA confirmed in a statement to the university community that the country's 10th district court – which accused the school of "organising criminal groups" – had ordered its assets seized and handed over to "the State of Nicaragua, which will guaran-

tee the continuity of all educational programs".

Auxiliary Bishop Silvio José Baez of Managua, currently exiled in Miami, called the "confiscation" of UCA by the Sandinista dictatorship "unjust," "illegal" and "outrageous". "They demonstrate their contempt for intellectual freedom, quality education and critical thinking. Every day they sink deeper into their irrationality, their wickedness and their fear," he wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

The National Council of Universities issued a statement August 16, saying it would "work to guarantee educational continuity for the undergraduate and graduate

students' of the extinct UCA". The council told students to await details on resuming classes.

"The seizure of Central American University, a symbol of academic excellence and hope for the future in Nicaragua, represents further erosion of democratic norms and a stifling of civic space by Ortega-Murillo. We will continue to stand up for Nicaraguans' fundamental rights," US Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Brian Nichols, said on X.

On August 9, the bank accounts of the country's Jesuit university were frozen – a move now proved only anticipating the complete closure of its premises.

Jesuit provincial: 'I wouldn't have joined' if I'd known about abuse

In the wake of the sexual abuse of minors scandal that broke out in April involving various members of the Society of Jesus in Bolivia, the country's provincial superior, Fr Bernardo Mercado, said that not even if he "were crazy" would he have entered the Jesuit order if he had known the real situation involving those members accused of pederasty.

The priest was interviewed recently

by the special commission for the investigation of crimes of sexual abuse taking place in ecclesial environments recently created by the Bolivian Chamber of Senators, *ATB Digital media* reported.

Referring to the numerous Jesuits accused of sexual abuse, Fr Mercado said: "Personally, for me they were great missionaries."

The Jesuit provincial made the comparison to the members of the com-

mission: "It's as if [growing up] I were looking at you [senators] and one day I wanted to be like you."

"At no time did I see [the Jesuits involved] with these characteristics that we are putting on them today," he said in reference to the paedophilia.

"If I had known, not even if I were crazy would I become a Jesuit," he remarked.

Vatican roundup

Pope meets president of Madagascar

● While many Vatican officials and employees were enjoying a traditional August break from work, Pope Francis welcomed President Andry Rajoelina of Madagascar to the Vatican for a private meeting.

According to the Vatican press office, the two spoke alone for 20 minutes August 17 in the library of the Apostolic Palace.

After President Rajoelina introduced his entourage to the Pope, Pope Francis led the group to a table holding the small model ship Mr Rajoelina had given him in Madagascar in 2019. The group posed for a photo there, the press office said.

Then the Pope led his guests to a statue of Mary given to him by the country's bishops; with the Pope, the group recited the Hail Mary, the press office said.

Pope Francis gave the president a bronze sculpture of a dove on a grapevine with the message "Be messengers of peace" inscribed on its base.

President Rajoelina gave the Pope a painting of a scene of rural life and a large game of Madagascar Solitaire, sometimes also called marble solitaire.

Pope entrusts prayers for peace to Mary assumed into heaven

● On the feast of Mary's assumption into heaven, Pope Francis entrusted to her people's prayers for peace, especially in Ukraine.

"The din of weapons drowns out attempts at dialogue," the Pope told an estimated 10,000 people gathered in St Peter's Square August 15 to pray the Angelus with him.

"The law of force prevails over the force of law" and respect for human rights, "but we must not be discouraged," the Pope said.

"Let's continue to hope and pray because it is God, it is he who guides history. May he hear us."

While the Catholic Church celebrates the feast of Mary's assumption, body and soul, into heaven, the day's Gospel reading focused the Visitation, Mary's decision to rush to visit her cousin Elizabeth when she heard the older woman also was expecting.

The passage also includes the Magnificat, when Mary praises the greatness of God and all he has done for her. "Mary ascends, and the word of God reveals to us what characterised her as she does so: service to her neighbour and praise to God," Pope Francis told people in the square.

Vatican merges two dioceses in Japan

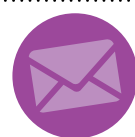
● Pope Francis this week merged the Diocese of Takamatsu with the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Osaka in Japan.

Cardinal Thomas Aquino Manyo Maeda, archbishop of Osaka since 2014, was named on August 15 as the first archbishop of the new Archdiocese of Osaka-Takamatsu. The last bishop of the Diocese of Takamatsu, John Eijiro Suwa, died in 2022.

The two territories are on different islands: Takamatsu is on Japan's Shikoku Island while Osaka is on Honshu. They are connected by water through the Osaka Bay and Seto Inland Sea or by land by crossing Awaji Island, already part of the territory of the former Archdiocese of Osaka.

The new archdiocese has just 51,413 Catholics, less than a third of 1% of the area's 19 million inhabitants.

The Catholic Church in Japan has 15 dioceses. According to the latest available Vatican statistics, Catholics make up just .5% of the population in the largely secular country. Approximately half of these Catholics are foreign nationals let into the country as temporary workers in unskilled jobs.



Letter from Rome



Cindy Wooden

Mission to Mongolia: Pope plans to encourage tiny flock

Pope Francis continually calls Catholics to go to the “peripheries,” and that is exactly what he will do August 31 when he boards a plane to Mongolia.

Bordering both Russia and China, Mongolia is one of the few countries St John Paul II did not manage to visit, although plans were well underway for such a visit in 2003 when the well-travelled Polish pope also had hoped to make a brief “technical stop” in Kazan, Russia, to return to the Russian Orthodox Church the famed icon of Our Lady of Kazan.

St John Paul’s failing health, the Russian Orthodox patriarch’s lack of enthusiasm and the logistical challenges of a very small Catholic community hosting a papal visit all contributed to the plan being scratched.

Pope Francis

Pope Francis, who is scheduled to be in Mongolia September 1–4, will visit a Catholic community that has grown from fewer than 200 members in 2003 to some 1,450 today.

When St John Paul missed the trip, he sent a cardinal to ordain the first bishop for the Apostolic Prefecture of Ulaanbaatar, the jurisdiction – smaller than a diocese – that continues to cover the entire nation. Mongolia now has its own cardinal, the 49-year-old Cardinal Giorgio Marengo, who has served as a missionary in Mongolia for more than 20 years.

While in Rome in mid-July for a conference on catechesis, Cardinal Marengo said “whisper” was the best verb to describe missionary activity in Mongolia.

Whispering is a “means of profound and respectful communication, which can occur only in the context of a relationship of friendship,” he said. “One does not whisper to the first person (he meets) on the street; otherwise, you will be taken for a fool. You whisper to a friend, to a person you love.”

Mongolia

Mongolia, with 3.3 million inhabitants, is a sparsely populated country of vast distances where Soviet-influenced communist rule lasted close to 70 years and included the harsh suppression of religion, including the killing of Buddhist monks.

According to the US State Department, in the country’s national census in 2020, more than 40% of Mongolians said they had no religious identity. Of the 60% percent who said they were religious, some 87% said they were Buddhist, just



“In the 1920s, the Vatican formally established mission structures in Mongolia, but within a year of the country becoming communist, it ceased to function. It wasn’t until 1991 that Catholic missionaries returned and began rebuilding the community”

over 5% were Muslim, 4% followed traditional Mongolian religion, usually referred to as “shamanism,” and just over 2% were Christians.

According to *Fides*, the news agency of the Dicastery for Evangelisation, the small Catholic community counts two Mongolia-born priests. It has nine churches and chapels – including a ger (sometimes referred to as a yurt) and a cathedral of brick and mortar modelled after the traditional Mongolian dwelling. The people are served by 30 women religious and 25 religious-order priests from a variety of countries.

Close to 28% of the population lives below the national poverty line, according to the Asian Development Bank.

Cardinal Marengo told *Fides* in August that about 70% of the Catholic Church’s time and resources in Mongolia are devoted to charity and social activities, including running

day-care centres, a trade school, homes for orphaned or homeless children and soup kitchens.

Pope Francis’ last appointment in Mongolia is scheduled to be a meeting September 4 with charity workers and the inauguration of the House of Mercy, which will house a shelter for women and children escaping domestic abuse and offer temporary housing to migrants forced to return to Mongolia.

Migration

The UN International Organisation for Migration country report for Mongolia estimates one in 11 Mongolians are living outside the country, and those leaving tend to be young, educated and skilled.

But the organisation also drew attention to “internal migration,” people leaving their traditionally nomadic lives as herders and moving into the city. The population of Ulaanbaatar, now estimated at 1.6

million people – half the country’s population – is more than double what it was in 2000. The urban influx has been pushed by a search for economic opportunities, particularly in light of fast-growing desertification from climate change and overgrazing and environmental degradation caused by mining for coal, copper, gold and other minerals.

The situation is a perfect setting for Pope Francis to talk about the importance of “integral ecology” as proposed by Catholic social teaching, recognising how the preservation of the natural environment also means preserving Mongolian culture, the dignity of its people and their livelihoods.

Local tradition

In showing respect for his hosts and encouraging the small Mongolian Catholic flock, Pope Francis will need to honour traditional Mongolian culture, just as Cardinal Marengo and the other missionaries have tried to do.

“Sometimes Christianity in Mongolia is considered something recent, new and imported,” the cardinal told *Fides*, but “the Christian faith has very ancient roots” in the region, going back to the seventh century, and “we also know that in the era of the great empire of Genghis Khan, some commanders, soldiers were of the Christian faith”. The great emperor died in 1227.

In the 1920s, the Vatican formally

established mission structures in Mongolia, but within a year of the country becoming communist, it ceased to function. It wasn’t until 1991 that Catholic missionaries returned and began rebuilding the community.

Pope Francis is scheduled to hold an ecumenical and interreligious meeting on the morning of September 3 before celebrating Mass with the country’s Catholic community.

While a variety of other Christian missionaries are expected to attend, the Buddhist delegation is expected to be the most significant.

Pope Francis had met at the Vatican in May 2022 with Buddhist leaders from the country. He told them that even though the Catholic community in Mongolia is small, “the Church is fully committed to fostering a culture of encounter, in imitation of her master and founder, who commanded his disciples: ‘Love one another as I love you.’”

“Let us strengthen our friendship for the benefit of everyone,” the Pope told his guests.

Citing Mongolia’s “ancient history of harmony in diversity,” Pope Francis told them he hoped such attitudes would grow “through the effective implementation of religious freedom and the promotion of joint initiatives for the common good”.

i Cindy Wooden is Rome Bureau Chief with Catholic News Service



Elise Ann Allen

Pakistan's Christians again face fire after blasphemy allegations

Bishops in Pakistan have called for prayer after an angry mob vandalised several Christian homes and churches in the district of Faisalabad August 16 following allegations of blasphemy and desecration of the Koran.

In a brief social media post, the Pakistani bishops on their "Catholics in Pakistan" Facebook page said that "on 16th August, an enraged mob vandalised multiple churches in Jaranwala, Faisalabad over blasphemy allegations," and asked followers to "pray for us".

The incident unfolded the Wednesday morning, as hundreds of Muslims armed with batons and sticks attacked a Christian community in Jaranwala, an industrial district of Faisalabad in Pakistan, damaging several homes and burning several churches after a Koran was allegedly desecrated by a young Christian man.

Both the Salvation Army Church and the Saint Paul Catholic Church in Jaranwala were attacked, with the mob setting them ablaze, while another mob attacked private homes nearby, setting them alight and breaking windows.

Torn pages

The violence erupted after pages torn from the Koran were apparently discovered near the Christian community with allegedly blasphemous content written on them. Those pages were then taken to a local religious leader, who reportedly told Muslims to protest and demanded that those responsible be arrested.

Angry protesters then went on a rampage, destroying the young man's house and attacking churches and other homes nearby.

Due to the scale of the violence, government officials deployed additional police forces and sent in the army to help restore order to the area. Police launched raids after clearing the crowd in an effort to identify perpetrators, and dozens have reportedly been arrested.

However, several videos circulating on social media show policemen watching the scene unfold without intervening.

A local priest, Fr Khalid Mukhtar, told the *Associated Press* that there are 17 Christian churches in Jaranwala and that he believes most of them were attacked. He said his own house had been burned.

Similarly, Fr Gulshan Barkat, who teaches Church history at the National Catholic Institute of Theology in Karachi, told the *AP* that the allegations of blasphemy were a "false accusation," and that mosques in the area were to blame, as earlier in the day they had used loudspeakers attached to minarets to urge Muslims to "attack the churches and Christian community".



People gather at a church building vandalised by protesters in Jaranwala, Pakistan, August 16. A Muslim crowd vandalised churches and torched homes after two Christians were accused of blasphemy. Photo: OSV News/Fayyaz Hussain, Reuters

"The emotion of our Muslim brethren flares up very quickly, even at hearsay," he said.

Residents speaking to other international news outlets also reported hearing announcements inciting the mob, with one such resident, Shakil Masih, telling *Reuters* that he heard the announcements and then saw crowds flocking to the Christian area.

News spread

News of the incident quickly spread, and in the southern port city of Karachi, the largest city in Pakistan, dozens of Christians rallied to condemn the violence in Jaranwala.

A delegation of Muslim clerics apparently arrived in Jaranwala from Lahore to express solidarity with the Christian community. Pakistani Christians long have complained of what they describe as routine discrimination and acts of persecution.

The incident was widely condemned both within Pakistan and by the international community, with caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar saying on Twitter, "I am gutted by the visuals coming out of Jaranwala, Faisalabad".

He pledged that "stern action would be taken against those who violate law and target minorities," saying, "All law enforcement has been asked to apprehend culprits & bring them to justice. Rest assured that the government of Pakistan stands with our citizenry on equal basis".

Former Prime Minister Shehbaz

Sharif also condemned the rampage, saying, "There is no place for violence in any religion".

Blasphemy is a sensitive issue in Pakistan, as the mere suggestion can incite widespread violence.

Blasphemy

Under Pakistan's controversial blasphemy laws, anyone found guilty of insulting Islam or prominent Islamic religious figures can be jailed and even sentenced to death. While authorities have not yet formally carried out a death sentence for blasphemy, several people, mostly Christians, have spent years on death row after facing accusations they claim are false.

“According to the Centre for Social Justice, an independent organisation that advocates for minority rights, more than 2,000 people have been formally accused of blasphemy in Pakistan since 1987, and at least 88 people have been killed as a result of these allegations”

The most famous of those cases is that of Asia Bibi, who in 2010 was accused of blasphemy following an altercation with fellow farmhands who refused to drink from the

same water jug as a Christian. She was then jailed and sentenced to death.

Two government officials were murdered after voicing public support for Bibi, who was eventually acquitted in 2018 after spending nearly 10 years on death row. An appeal to the ruling was shot down in 2019, and she and her family then fled Pakistan after receiving death threats.

For years, rights groups have insisted that Pakistan's blasphemy laws are less about religion and are more often used to settle personal scores. Even the mention of blasphemy in the country is enough to spark mass riots and incite mobs to violence, lynchings and killings.

Earlier this month, a teacher in Turbat, in the southern province of Balochistan, was killed after being accused of blasphemy during a lecture. In February, a mob grabbed a man from his prison cell in the rural district of Nankana and lynched him for allegedly desecrating the Koran.

One of the worst attacks against Christians took place in 2009, when a mob burned an estimated 60 homes and killed six Christians in the district of Gojra in Punjab after the Christians were accused of insulting Islam.

In December 2021, an angry Muslim mob swarmed a sports equipment factory in the Sialkot district, killing a Sri Lankan man and burning his body over allegations of blasphemy.

According to the Centre for Social Justice, an independent organisation that advocates for

minority rights, more than 2,000 people have been formally accused of blasphemy in Pakistan since 1987, and at least 88 people have been killed as a result of these allegations.

Prominent Pakistani politician Shireen Mazari, who previously served as Minister for Human Rights, said the attack was "absolutely shameful and condemnable". "Where are the law enforcers to protect our Christian community and their churches?" she asked.

Prominent Protestant Bishop Azad Marshall, who belongs to the Church of Pakistan, an amalgama of Anglicans, Scottish Presbyterians, Lutherans, and the Methodists, said on Twitter that "words fail me" in light of the attack.

"We, bishops, priests, and lay people are deeply pained and distressed at the Jaranwala incident in the Faisalabad district in Pakistan. A church building is being burnt as I type this message," he said, saying, "Bibles have been desecrated and Christians have been tortured and harassed having been falsely accused of violating the Holy Koran".

Marshall said that as a Christian community, "We cry out for justice and action from law enforcement and those who dispense justice and the safety of all citizens to intervene immediately and assure us that our lives are valuable in our own homeland that has just celebrated independence and freedom".

He asked in two separate hashtags that followers "cry with us" and "pray with us".

Letters

Letter of the week

Pushing for justice and human rights in Nicaragua

Dear Editor, I write in response to the recent article discussing the unjust sentencing of Bishop Rolando Álvarez in Nicaragua [*The Irish Catholic* – August 10, 2023]. The primate's call for the release of Bishop Álvarez from prison is not only a matter of humanitarian concern, but also a reflection of the core values that our faith upholds – the protection of human rights, justice, and the freedom to express one's beliefs.

The circumstances surrounding Bishop Álvarez's conviction are deeply troubling. It is disheartening to witness a religious leader

being punished for bravely speaking out against injustice and advocating for the rights of his fellow citizens. His refusal to be exiled speaks volumes about his commitment to the principles he stands for and his unwavering dedication to his congregation and his country.

Archbishop Martin's correspondence to the Tánaiste rightly emphasises the widespread persecution faced by those who dare to challenge the Nicaraguan regime. The closure of numerous organisations, including religious ones, along with the crackdown

on dissent and erosion of democratic norms, paints a bleak picture of the current state of affairs. The silencing of the Church and other civil society voices represents a violation of the very values that should guide any nation.

International pressure and solidarity play a vital role in promoting human rights and ensuring that those who stand for justice are not forgotten.

As believers in a just and compassionate world, we must stand united against oppression and advocate for the rights and freedoms that all individuals deserve. I join

the primate and many others in urging the Irish Government to continue their efforts in bringing about the release of Bishop Álvarez and in voicing their concern for the plight of all those who suffer under the oppressive regime in Nicaragua.

In our collective efforts, we must push for the pursuit of justice, human rights, and freedom.

Yours etc.,
Joseph Moore
Tallaght, Dublin 24

Making a lot of sense to the senseless

Dear Editor, Whenever I hear Catholics, engaged in the synodal process, express opinions at variance with the authentic magisterium of the Church, it always reminds me of the time when someone approached Cardinal Newman concerning a theologian of rather dubious theological principles. He stated that "his arguments were clear". Newman replied, "shallows are clear".

Shallow thinking can make a lot of sense to the senseless. And what is profound can often seem obscure, inscrutable, or impenetrable. And this explains that the popularity of religious superficiality. In Ireland we need look no further than the popularity of anthropocentric Church services that are substituted as true and authentic worship, or eulogies that engage the living, whilst devaluing intercession for the deceased, the move to clericalise the laity. Lack of liturgical discipline is but a symptom of the deeper malaise of confusion and division. In 1937, the protestant theologian Richard Niebuhr decried what was happening in his own ecclesial world, defining his experience of this type of superficiality: "This is not the Gospel," he explained, "it is the proclamation of a God without wrath, bringing men without sin into a kingdom without judgement, through the ministrations of Christ without a cross."

Yours etc.,
David Walshe
Malahide, Co. Dublin



Receiving Communion

Dear Editor, Fr Vincent Sherlock strikes a despondent note [*The Irish Catholic* – August 3, 2023] about the large numbers who attended a wedding Mass – largely on a once-off basis. He was "impressed" however to see many receive Communion and that "it just felt 'right'".

What I find wearisome is that Fr Sherlock – or any other cleric for that matter – has no authority to approve such casual reception of the Holy Eucharist. Before a priest receives the Eucharist himself he says in a low voice a missal prayer reminding him of the importance of receiving worthily: "May the receiving of your body and blood, Lord Jesus Christ, not bring me to judgment and condemnation, but through your loving mercy be for me protection in mind and body and a healing remedy."

This solemn prayer/teaching is a summary of 1 Corinthians 11:27 reminding us that receiving Communion is a solemn act (a covenant oath, no less!) and affirmation that we are in communion (common-union) with Jesus and the essentials of the Catholic life. One such essential is the 'Sunday Obligation': the Catechism informs us that it is a "grave sin" to miss Mass on a Sunday or Holy Day without a "serious reason" (2181).

Here in the US, it is routine that the priest at such Masses alerts those present about the importance of receiving Communion truthfully and worthily.

Yours etc.,
A.P. Breen
Bronx, New York, USA

RTÉ – 'The national broadcaster is ours'

Dear Editor, Rory FitzGerald made the case very well for cultural change in RTÉ, post Tubridy, as a wider remit than what RTÉ itself allows by its definition of culture [*The Irish Catholic* – August 10, 2023]. Permit me to add an additional point or two.

One is that conservatives have been inclined to cede the national broadcaster to the 'agenda people', say when there was talk of founding our own media to defend family, redress the perversion of 20th Century social history, cover developments in America, and the like. This was a mistake. The national broadcaster is ours. Fix the complaints procedures, the impenetrable

sections and subsections of which suited the agenda people down to the ground. And coordinate complainants like myself who protested repeatedly about people and points of view uninvited, and about restricted questioning and the fear of not being invited back.

Another point is the situation of a divided pro-life movement, with many head offices, ensuring there never a possibility of united action. There tended to be a metropolitan bias in the pro-life leadership which rendered it ill-equipped to confront the perversion of 20th Century history in the domain of social change. No doubt some of that

failure should be attributed to bias in the education system whose reach was country wide.

Either way, we have two generations now with nothing but a perverted view of the 20th Century in Ireland. Your excellent feature by Mary Kenny [*The Irish Catholic* – August 10, 2023] on the abolition of the marriage bar should be read by every feminist and in particular by those who control the departments of so-called women's studies in our universities.

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

Only God's grace can change hearts about climate change

Dear Editor, I recently watched the film *Oppenheimer* about the American scientist who led the Manhattan Project in developing the atomic bomb. I left the cinema with a disturbing feeling similar to Oppenheimer's dismay that he may have started a chain reaction that would destroy Earth. I came home to watch reports of wildfires in Europe, America and Canada, and devastating floods in Asia and other regions caused by climate change. This added to my foreboding. Our planet seems to be on the brink of destruction which has been caused by the human craving for power, energy and riches.

The Old Testament tells us the Israelites turned away from Yahweh to worship Baal, the god of the Canaanites, who promised wealth and fertility. Today, energy has replaced Baal as the new idol promising productivity, wealth and success. Many organisations are calling on governments to protect our world, and in doing so they are reading the signs of the times and speaking with a prophetic voice. They may not be believers but theirs is a call to metanoia involving a complete change of heart and mind.

While Church leaders are clearly working to promote change, we may need more. We seem to need a miracle.

The people of Israel believed it was only through God's help that they overcame evil. The evil we are faced with is the intransigence of people who are capable of effecting change. We need to be united in prayer that the minds of the leaders of our world will be moved to change from placing the economy above the welfare of our planet. We need to be convinced of the value and necessity of prayer because science alone will not save us. Only the grace of God can bring about a complete change of heart and mind.

Yours etc.,
Brendan Kennedy
Belfast, Co. Antrim

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.

Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, August 24, 2023

**Questions of Faith:
On celibacy
and tattoos**

Jenna Marie Cooper

Page 32



Mother Teresa's essential lessons for living



St Teresa of Kolkata, India, presents documents for a new house to a villager in 1994 in Mumbai, formerly Bombay. Photo: CNS/Luciano Mellace, Reuters

No modern figure has been more revered as a saint in life, so the rapid progress of Mother Teresa's cause from her death to her canonisation within two decades came as no surprise.

From the day Mother Teresa rode on a train in India in 1946 and heard Jesus Christ tell her, "Come be my light," her life was a steady answer to that call until her death September 5, 1997. Pope Francis canonised her in 2016. With her September 5 feast day, the Church honours St Teresa of Kolkata for committing herself to bring the light of God's love to the poorest of the poor.

Response

Her response has borne great fruit, as we can see from the con-



Mother Teresa's imitation of Christ provides an example for us all, writes Amy Welborn

tinued ministry of the Missionaries of Charity with the dying, the destitute, the orphans and the rejected. But Mother Teresa would not want our reflections on her life to stop with appreciation of what others have done in her name. As she said many times, God desires to work through each one of us. When we reflect on her life, we are really seeing how any of us – if we allow God to fill our hearts and guide us – can change

the world, one life at a time.

She was born Agnes Bojaxhiu August 27, 1910, in Yugoslavia, of Albanian parents. In 1928, she joined the Sisters of Loretto and travelled to Ireland for formation. Soon after, she was sent to India to teach in her order's school for girls in Calcutta (officially renamed Kolkata in 2001, four years after her death).

In 1946, then-Sister Teresa was traveling to a retreat when she

experienced a "call within a call" from God to follow him in a new direction. "The mission was quite clear," she later told a biographer. "It was an order. I was to leave the convent. I felt God wanted something more from me. He wanted me to be poor and to love him in the distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor."

Indian attire

Sister Teresa became Mother Teresa, foundress of a new religious order, the Missionaries of Charity. Teresa left her old motherhouse with only a few coins in her pocket, began dressing in traditional Indian attire – a white sari with a blue border – and moved to the poorest section of Calcutta. She obtained some basic medical training and opened a school.

Within a year, she had been joined by several of her former students, and in time, they embraced the ministry for which they are most well known today: the care of the dying.

At the time of her death, the Missionaries of Charity ministered to the poor throughout the world, from Calcutta to Baghdad to New York City. They continue to touch the lives of thousands with the love of Jesus, bringing his light to those whom the world would like to forget.

Her ministry to the dying and destitute was tremendously difficult on many levels. The people whom the sisters brought in from the streets were suffering physically, emotionally and spiritually. Why bother with them? Because God called her

to do that. How could she continue with joy? Through the presence of Jesus, especially in the Eucharist.

Matthew

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells us that when we meet those in need, we meet him, and that when we serve those in need, we serve him. Mother Teresa is a living witness to the truth of Jesus' words, and to their power. The Christ she met in the Eucharist each day revealed to her his presence in the poor.

Mother Teresa also reminds us that if Christ is present in the poor, we have much to learn from them. They teach us about human dignity, patience and wisdom. It is, as Mother Teresa said, a privilege to live with and serve the poor.

It is tempting to turn away from the difficulty of suffering, to let someone else handle it, to hope it will go away. Sometimes we are even tempted to take pleasure in the suffering of others or, at the very least, rest complacently in our belief that suffering was unavoidable or even deserved. But when we listen to Jesus, when we see how Mother Teresa put flesh onto his words and what joy it brought to the suffering, even if for only the brief moments before they passed from this life, how can we continue to think this way?

Famous

By the 1970s, Mother Teresa was famous. Books had been written about her, documentary films had been made about her, and she had received numerous important awards. We live in an age of celebrity, and perhaps some think that Mother Teresa's importance lay in her fame, or in the big things she had done, because



Missionaries of Charity nuns are seen at a Mass marking the 25th anniversary of the death of St Teresa of Kolkata, who founded that religious order that serves the poor around the world. Photo: CNS

“Mother Teresa also reminds us that if Christ is present in the poor, we have much to learn from them. They teach us about human dignity, patience and wisdom. It is, as Mother Teresa said, a privilege to live with and serve the poor”

inspire headlines or make a profit, but small acts that are precious because they are “something beautiful for God”.

The suffering that Mother Teresa and her sisters have dealt with is extreme. Over the years, many have travelled to Kolkata to serve with the Missionaries of Charity, doing valuable work and building up other foundations and ministries of the order around the world.

Greatest poverty

Mother Teresa, however, always made it clear that there is no need for any of us to travel across the globe to follow Jesus. She said, “You can find Calcutta all over the world, if you have eyes to see. Everywhere, wherever you go, you find people who are unwanted, unloved, uncared for, just rejected by the society – completely forgotten, completely left alone. That is the greatest poverty of the rich countries.”

There are many kinds of hunger besides physical hunger, Mother Teresa constantly reminds us. Even those who are well fed suffer from loneliness and hurt. There are many kinds of suffering – physical and spiritual – and many kinds of darkness. This is where the love of Christ can shed light, and why Mother Teresa said, “Do ordinary things with extraordinary love”.

today, that is what we value: huge achievements, powerful institutions and a wealth of attention.

But Mother Teresa's life and message always stood in complete opposition to this modern sensibility. From the day she took the first dying person into her room in Calcutta, she was a witness to the importance of the small gesture and simple acts of care, performed with great love.

The dying

In a world that values productivity, health and usefulness, Mother Teresa's care for the dying seems kindly, but of doubtful use, perhaps even a “waste”. But that is the way the world sees it. Through the eyes of Mother Teresa, each dying person is a precious child of God in need of love, no matter how close death might loom.

Cleansing a wound, sharing food, pushing a wheelchair, or simply being present to another: acts that will not



The city of Kolkata, India.

i Amy Welborn is a freelance writer living in the US.

One epic ‘Our Father’ drew me into holy mystery



Scott Richert

A decade or more ago, I went to Confession one Saturday afternoon. Like many other priests, the particular confessor who heard my confession that day frequently defaulted to three Hail Marys as the standard penance that he assigned.

But not that day. Whether led by something I had confessed or by his own meditations in the silence of the confessional between penitents, he assigned me a penance no confessor had ever given me before: “I want you to pray one Our Father very slowly, saying each word out loud and meditating on it, while looking at the crucifix at the front of the church.”

The Lord’s Prayer

I had prayed many Our Fathers in front of a crucifix. Praying to God the Father in the words Our Savior taught us is part of every liturgy, East and West, usually (as in the Mass) very soon after the Eucharistic prayer in which the bread and wine are consecrated and become the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

But until that day, as I returned to the pew and knelt down and made the sign of the cross while keeping my eyes fixed on the crucifix, I had never considered why the church has placed the Lord’s Prayer at this moment of the Mass.

“Had man not fallen ... Christ would still have come and inaugurated his kingdom here on earth, without the need for sacrifice”

“Our Father,” I began to pray, slowly enunciating each word, “who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name”. I paused, struck at that moment by the reality that I was looking at the lifeless body of Jesus, who had stood before his disciples and taught them how to pray in these very words. When he said “hallowed be thy name,” he did not mean merely “your name is holy” but “your name is made holy” by the humble obedience of all who revere his name, and especially by the one here before me, who had made the ultimate sacrifice on the cross. He not only prayed

those words; he not only taught his disciples – and through them, us – to pray them; he lived them by humbling himself, “becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8).

“Thy kingdom come”, I continued, and then stopped, shaken to my core. The scene before me, the moment in which Christ offered himself in the greatest of all sacrifices, the sacrifice prefigured again and again throughout the history of Israel, the sacrifice here consummated once and for all – this is the moment in which the kingdom of God triumphs over the lord of this world and is inaugurated in history.

And while my eyes remained fixed on the crucifix, I became aware, too, of the tabernacle just to the side of the sanctuary, and my understanding of the connection between the sacrifice before my eyes and the Sacrament we celebrate on the altar and the body of Christ reposing in that tabernacle and in every tabernacle throughout the world moved from my intellect to my heart.

‘Not as I will’

“Thy will be done” ... This is what it looks like to do God’s will in a world broken by man’s sin, a world in need of a redemption that no merely human sacrifice could accomplish: “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will” (Mt 26:39). Had man not fallen, the Eastern Fathers of the Church believed, Christ would still have come and inaugurated his kingdom here on earth, without the need for sacrifice; but man did fall, and thus a sacrifice was necessary, and this is what it means for his kingdom to come and his will to be done in a world shaped by man according to our own fallen will, “on earth as it is in heaven”.

When Christ taught his disciples how to pray, they had not yet taken part in his Last Supper; they did not yet know what kind of death the Son of Man would die; they hadn’t fully comprehended that the kingdom he would inaugurate here on earth is very different from the earthly kingdoms that they knew. But in the wake of his resurrection, as they came to know him in the breaking of the bread and shaped the liturgies through which we complete his command to “do this in memory of me,” the words of the Lord’s Prayer became clear. There is a reason why we pray it not at the beginning of Mass, when all are welcome, but in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, when only those who have been initiated into the sacred mysteries are supposed to be present. For in these words, Jesus captured the essence of those mysteries.

i Scott P. Richert is publisher for OSV.



Working hard for instant gratification



Jaymie Stuart Wolfe

How we live our lives is substantially different from how our parents and grandparents lived theirs. We no longer need to wait a whole week for the next episode of a favourite TV show; we can watch all five seasons in a single binge. We don't have to buy tickets or drive to a theatre to see a movie; we can stream it whenever we want and pause it to make popcorn. We can listen to our music whenever we want to hear it and regardless of where we are. And if we want to shop for a new bookcase or a pair of shoes, we can do it online and at any hour of the day or night.

Life may seem more complicated, but most of what we need to do takes less time than it used to. We bank and pay our bills online, split a restaurant check with friends, take classes, and see our lab results all on our phones. We apply for a new job and find someone to date from the comfort of our favourite chair.

The result is that every one of us has time to do more.

Progress?

That sounds like progress until we stop long enough to fully consider the "more" we're so busy doing. We spend more, own more, eat more (and throw away more) than our predecessors did just one generation ago. We access more healthcare, subscribe to more ongoing services and pay people

to do things our parents did for themselves more than ever before. In all of history, no group of people has consumed as much as we do. And, as we kill ourselves to keep consuming or to meet the demands of those who do, we tell ourselves we have achieved a higher standard of living.

But there's a catch to all this. It's not just the world around us that's changed; we've changed too. Being able to tailor our lives to fit our personal preferences places us at the centre of our world and creates a whole portfolio of high, possibly unfair, expectations. We want what we want when we want it. We take in as much as possible as quickly as possible, like Pacman speeding through the maze to the next available snack, barely digesting anything as we consume, consume, consume. Even within our spiritual gleanings, valuable insights barely take hold because we take so little downtime to let anything really sink in.

“It's become way too easy to convince ourselves that we deserve everything we want, the moment we want it, no matter what it costs someone else”

Most of us stopped asking ourselves “How much is enough?” – for ourselves and of each other – a long time ago, even as we take everything, including the availability of others, for granted. We work hard – too hard – to keep feeding our insatiable appetites while forgetting that things don't just appear out of thin air. Hidden in everything we consume is the

contribution made by a living human soul. That film, book, meal, music download, contract, retreat, or homily we consume (and too often quickly forget) is a product of someone else's real time and labour, sacrifice, creativity and expertise.

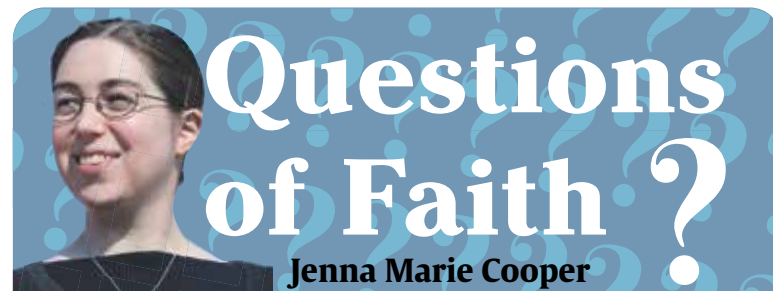
Somewhere along the way to where we have arrived, we've lost sight of the fact that our on-demand lifestyle isn't fair in what it demands of other people. None of us is entitled to someone else's labour, or their time. The overnight clerk at the 24-hour petrol station and the professor we email at 10:00 pm the night before the term project is due don't owe us much of anything. In fact, loving our neighbours might just include not overworking them; it might mean taking a moment to consider their lives, and appreciate their work.

Rat race

That's why our faith has a body of thought we call Catholic Social Teaching – 2,000 years of considering how we must treat the people with whom we live in this remarkable era, and why. It's too easy to lose our own humanity and disregard the real lives of others in the rat race we are so thoughtlessly running.

It's become way too easy to convince ourselves that we deserve everything we want, the moment we want it, no matter what it costs someone else.

The next time we find ourselves on the 24/7 consuming end of life, let's keep our wits about us and recognise not only the price we pay for all the instant gratifications we want and demand, but the real – and very human – cost behind it all.



Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper



On celibacy and tattoos

Q: My new parish priest's wife died before he became a priest. He sometimes even talks about his grandchildren during the homily. Why is this allowed? He obviously wasn't always celibate, and I thought priests had to be celibate?

A: Latin (a.k.a. “Roman”) Catholic priests are indeed expected to be celibate. As canon 277, 1 of the Code of Canon Law tells us, they are “obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven and are therefore bound to celibacy. Celibacy is a special gift of God by which sacred ministers can more easily remain close to Christ with an undivided heart and can dedicate themselves more freely to the service of God and their neighbour”. (A quick note on terminology: in canon law, “continence” means refraining from all sexual relations, while “celibacy” refers to being unmarried. “Chastity,” a term not mentioned in this canon, means expressing one's sexuality in ways appropriate to one's state in life.)

However, priestly celibacy is not a retroactive requirement. Provided that he is otherwise suitable, a man can be ordained to the priesthood if he is presently unmarried and willing to commit to a life of chaste celibacy going forward – even if he had been previously married or is a father to children. Of course, if a previously married man aspires to the priesthood, generally during his formation period there will be additional, careful discernment concerning any possible family obligations he may have. E.g., men with minor children are generally not admitted to seminary formation, since in such a case he would already have serious preexisting obligations as a natural father.

Incidentally, married Catholic clergy are not quite as extraordinary as you might expect. Permanent deacons, while not priests, have still received the Sacrament of Holy Orders and are therefore still considered clergy. And the various Eastern Catholic Churches have a tradition of married priests. There is also a pas-

toral provision that allows former Anglican priests who have converted to Catholicism to discern a vocation to the Catholic priesthood, allowing for the possibility of their ordination even if they are married.

But one major caveat in this discussion is that while it can be possible to ordain already-married or once-married men, a man cannot validly marry after he had been ordained. This means that married Eastern Catholic priests, permanent deacons, etc. cannot re-marry if their wife dies. And in the case of your pastor, a widowed man who later becomes a priest obviously would not be allowed to marry again.

Q: Is a tattoo a good way to develop a devotion to Our Lady?

A: Tattoos are certainly not one of the Church's first line, go-to recommendations for deepening any sort of devotion. And as far as I have been able to tell, the Church does not have any specific teaching regarding tattoos in general.

That being said, whether or not a tattoo could be useful for a specific person to develop a devotion to Our Lady depends on that particular individual, their particular life circumstances and cultural context, their personal spirituality and unique spiritual needs. While there needs to be sufficient reflection for any permanent decision, in theory I would imagine that a tasteful and artistically beautiful tattoo in a Marian theme could help some people further love and honour Our Lady.

Interestingly, although the Church doesn't have any official doctrine on tattoos, there are a few instances where tattoos are part of a broader cultural Catholic tradition. One good example is a custom, dating back to the Middle Ages, where Catholic pilgrims to the Holy Land get a religious tattoo to commemorate their pilgrimage.

i Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News.



Unfinished relationships



A colleague of mine, a clinical therapist, shares this story: A woman came to him in considerable distress. Her husband had recently died of a heart attack. His death had been sudden and at a most inept time. They'd been happily married for 30 years and, during all those years, had never had a major crisis in their relationship. But, on the day her husband died, they had gotten into an argument about something very insignificant and it had escalated to where they began to hurl some mean and cutting words at each other. At a point, agitated and angry, her husband walked out of the room, told her he was going shopping, then died of a heart attack before he got to the car.

Final words

Understandably, the woman was devastated, both by the sudden death of her spouse but also by that last exchange. "All these years," she lamented, "we had this loving relationship and then we have this useless argument over nothing and it ends up being our last conversation!"

The therapist led off with something meant in humor. He said: "How horrible of him to do that to you! To die just then!" Obviously the man hadn't intended his death, but its timing was in fact awfully unfair to his wife, as it left her holding a guilt that was



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

seemingly permanent with no apparent avenue for resolution.

However, then the therapist went into a different mode. He asked her: "If you had your husband back for five minutes what would you say to him?" Without hesitation, she answered: "I'd tell him how much I loved him, how good he was to me for all these years, and how our little moment of anger at the end was a meaningless epi-second that means nothing in terms of our love."

Not too late

The therapist then said: "You're a woman of faith, you believe in the communion of saints; well, your husband is alive still and present to you now, so why don't you just say

all those things to him right now. It's not too late to express that all to him!"

He's right. It's never too late! It's never too late to tell our deceased loved ones how we really feel about them. It's never too late to apologise for the ways we might have hurt them. It's never too late to ask their forgiveness for our negligence in the relationship, and it's never too late to speak the words of appreciation, affirmation and gratitude that we should have spoken to them while they were alive. As Christians, we have the great consolation of knowing that death isn't final, that it's never too late.

And we desperately need that particular consolation, that second

chance. No matter who we are, we're always inadequate in our relationships. We can't always be present to our loved ones as we should, we sometimes say things in anger and bitterness that leave deep scars, we betray trust in all kinds of ways, and we mostly lack the maturity and self-confidence to express the affirmation we should be conveying to our loved ones. None of us ever fully measures up. When Karl Rahner says that none of us ever have the "full symphony" in this life, he isn't just referring to the fact that none of us ever fully realises her dream, he's also referring to the fact that in all of our most important relationships none of us ever fully measures up. We cannot not be disappointing sometimes.

Bad timing

At the end of the day, all of us lose loved ones in ways similar to how that woman lost her husband, with unfinished business, with bad timing. There are always things

that should have been said and weren't and there are always things that shouldn't have been said and were.

But that's where our Christian faith comes in. We aren't the only ones who come up short. At the moment of Jesus' death, virtually all of his disciples had deserted. The timing here was also very bad. Good Friday was bad long before it was good. But, and this is the point, as Christians, we don't believe there will always be perfect endings in this life, nor that we will always be adequate in life. Rather we believe that the fullness of life and happiness will come to us through the redemption of what has gone wrong, not least with what has gone wrong because of our own inadequacies and weakness.

GK Chesterton said that Christianity is special because in its belief in the communion of saints, "even the dead get a vote". They get more than a vote. They still get to hear what we're saying to them.

So, if you've lost a loved one in a situation where there was still something unresolved, where there was still a tension that needed easing, where you should have been more attentive, or where you feel badly because you never adequately expressed the affirmation and affection that you might have, know it's not too late. It can all still be done!

“It's never too late to apologise for the ways we might have hurt them. It's never too late to ask their forgiveness for our negligence in the relationship”

A faith unafraid of questions

August 27
Twenty-first Sunday in
Ordinary Time
Is 22:19-23
Ps 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8
Rom 11:33-36
Mt 16:13-20

The Sunday Gospel

Jem
Sullivan



Artificial intelligence and language processing tools like ChatGPT are changing the face of education today. Teachers are finding new ways to evaluate what their students truly know. Instead of superficial questions that can be answered easily by artificial intelligence tools, teachers must engage their students in personal reflection and critical thinking that cannot be substituted by a machine, no matter how intelligent it might be!

Teacher

In the Gospels, Jesus is called “teacher” close to fifty times. As a master teacher, he spoke personally to large crowds, small groups of disciples, and the religious and political leaders of his day. And whenever Jesus taught, he pointed not to abstract, speculative truths that one might easily gain from an “intelligent” computer. Rather, Jesus invited his listeners into the living mystery of God, his heavenly Father. All of Jesus’ words were meant to lead his disciples, and us, closer to friendship with God.

Jesus was a convincing, persuasive teacher because his words and parables could not be separated from his life and identity.

In *Catechesis In Our Time*, Pope Saint John Paul II observed, “the whole of Christ’s life was a continual teaching: his silences, his miracles, his gestures, his prayer, his love for people, his special affection for the little and the poor, his acceptance of the total sacrifice on the cross for the redemption of the world, and his resurrection are the actualisation of his word and the fulfilment of revelation”.

Jesus, the master teacher, opened a new pathway of faith in his divine identity and saving mission. His most effective teaching method was the use of questions, as we read in today’s Gospel. Yet Jesus’ questions were not delivered as a teacher’s final exam or surprise quiz but as invitations to a radically transformed life in him, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Who do people say that

the Son of Man is?” Jesus’ first question elicited various public opinions circulating about him in Caesarea Philippi. Some assumed he was John the Baptist, others thought he was a prophet like Elijah or Jeremiah. Jesus does not stop at these superficial responses. Rather Jesus invites his disciples, and us, to deeper reflection with a personally meaningful question, “But who do you say that I am?”

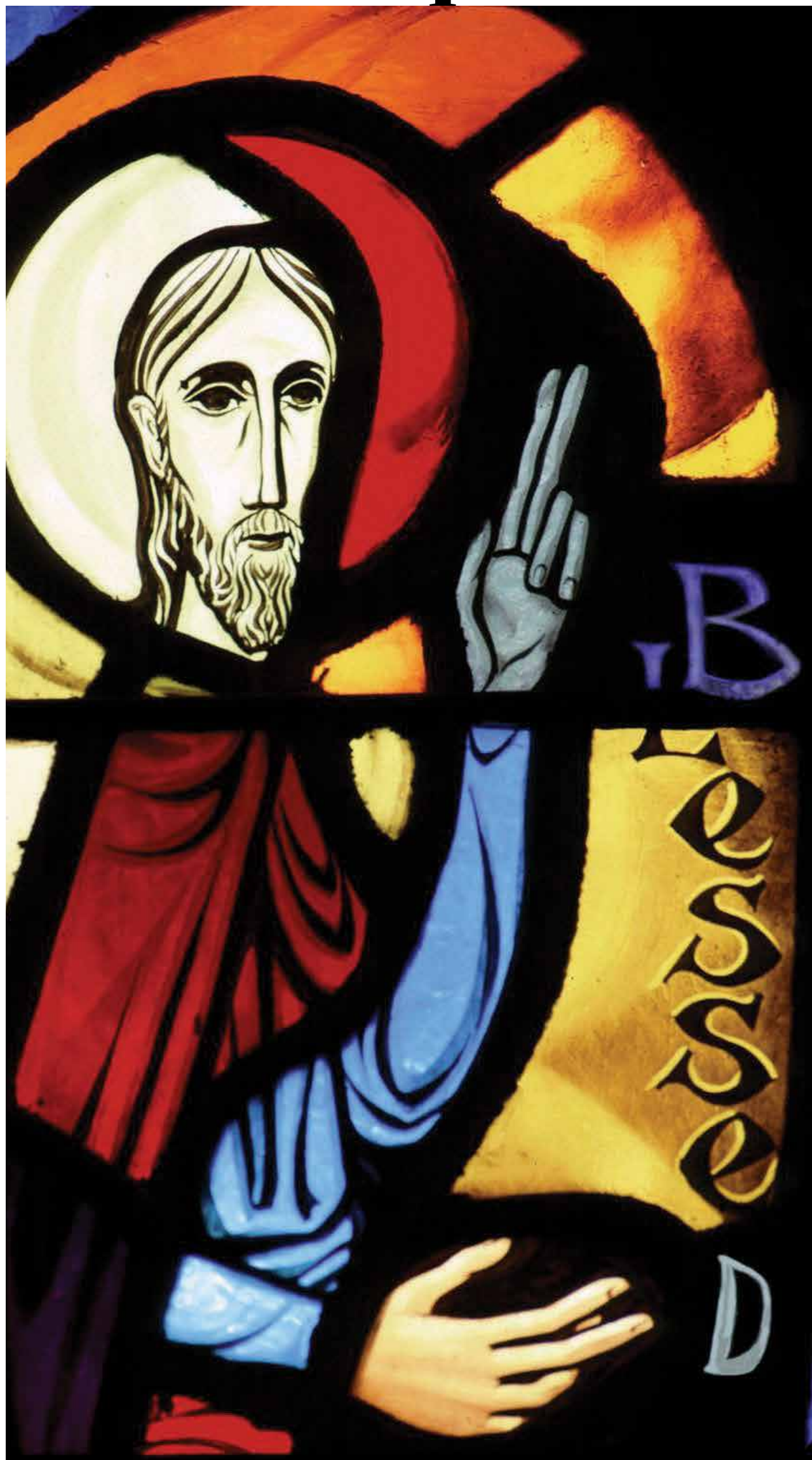
“Jesus’ questions were not delivered as a teacher’s final exam or surprise quiz but as invitations to a radically transformed life in him, through the power of the Holy Spirit”

Peter responds with faith acknowledging that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God. His profession of faith becomes the foundation of the Church’s response of faith in the divinity of Jesus.

We might say this Gospel passage contains the central question of the New Testament. Everything depends on how I answer this fundamental question of Jesus. For what I believe about Jesus’ identity is the most consequential truth of my life. How I respond personally to the question that Jesus poses to me – “who do you say that I am?” becomes the foundation of my Christian faith.

The spiritual life is a lifelong journey of faith in Jesus who desires to guide us to know and live in the transforming mystery of who he is. Every disciple is faced with Jesus’ question, “who do you say that I am?” For the wisdom to respond with lifechanging faith in Jesus, the master teacher, we pray, “speak to me, Lord”.

i Jem Sullivan holds a doctorate in religious education and is an associate professor of Catechetics in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.



Question:

How does Jesus’ question in today’s Gospel challenge you to deeper faith in him?

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Fresh focus on need for priests is welcome

It was good to see the theme of vocations getting prominence last week in the media. It was sparked by journalist Sean O'Rourke's address to a gathering at Knock. He favoured encouraging young people to consider joining the priesthood.

Stand-in presenter Jonathan Healy discussed the vocations crisis on the **Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk, Friday). David Quinn suggested that in past times there was an attractive 'social status' attached to being a priest, but now, sometimes, it was the opposite because of the scandals (ironically, poor handling of abuse cases were sometimes due to efforts to avoid scandal). As often happens, the pendulum had swung to the other extreme. He thought that in the past there were too many in the priesthood that were unsuited to the role, but there were still plenty of good role models. In response to Jonathan Healy's suggestion that some young priests were now more "doctrinally pure", whatever that implies, Mr Quinn reckoned some were maybe too strict, and some were ultra-progressive, but the big problem was that there were too few overall. Pointing to the massive turnout at World Youth Day he suggested many of the new vocations would come from new youth move-



The Capuchins played a major role in events around the Easter Rising.

ments in the Church. Simon Lewis, an Educate Together principal from a Jewish background but not practising, said the Jewish community in Ireland also saw a decline (e.g. he instanced the closure of a synagogue in Cork). The discussion then veered off onto the topic of people attending church for the sacraments but not having a living faith.

Earlier that morning on **Newstalk Breakfast** Bishop

Alphonsus Cullinane spoke of the current 'Year of Vocations' and surrounding initiatives, especially prayer and a cross being assembled from all dioceses in the country. He enthused about his "favourite subject", the priesthood, and said he was finding renewed interest, resurgence and rejuvenation. Inevitably on secular media the issues of married priests and women priests were raised. Bishop

Cullinan favoured sticking with Church tradition, but I thought it would have been useful if a clearer distinction was made between the two categories of teaching involved.

Vocations to the religious life can take people in all sorts of directions. **Ar Son na Poblachta** (TG4, Tuesday) told the story of how the Capuchins of Church Street in Dublin were involved in bringing about peace during the Easter Rising of 1916. They were trusted by the rebels and by the British Army which made them ideal negotiators, or even just messengers bringing news of surrender when communications between the rebel garrisons had broken down. They also tended to the dying and wounded – of which there were many in the area around the friary. Despite their best efforts and their warning about the blood of martyrs creating seeds, the infamous executions of the leaders went ahead. Then the Capuchin friars accompanied the leaders in their final hours and had the unenviable task of bring the sad news to the bereaved. The re-enactments were useful and subtle enough and the contributions of people like Capuchin Fr Bryan Shortall and historian Diarmuid Ferriter gave plenty of interesting historical context. At the end we got footage of the Capuchin Day

PICK OF THE WEEK

JANEY MARY

EWTN Sunday August 27, 4.30pm

Drama about a young girl who is forced on the streets of 1940's Dublin to search for food and her friendship with an Augustinian priest, Fr Benedict.

KEYS TO MY LIFE

RTÉ One Sunday August 27, 8.30pm

Brendan Courtney invites more celebrities to reveal how the places they have lived in have shaped their lives, beginning with broadcaster and priest Fr Brian D'Arcy.

A WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

EWTN Sunday August 27, 9pm

An exploration of the ideas of 1960s radical, Saul Alinsky. His political tactics and theories espoused social justice, but carried an agenda that could threaten core beliefs of Christianity and the Church.

Centre tending currently to the needs of the poor of Dublin, as they had done in 1916. The programme was a repeat, as is so much on TV nowadays is, but some shows are well worth repeating and this was surely one of those.

Clergy were also very much involved in peace efforts in Northern Ireland during The Troubles, though for some reason this didn't figure in the last episode of the hard-hitting series **Once Upon a Time in Northern Ireland** (RTÉ One, Thursday). This episode concentrated on the political peace efforts leading to the Good Friday Agreement, but didn't gloss over the problems and loose ends.

The personal stories were particularly moving. Alan McBride lost his young wife Sharon in the notorious Shankill bombing, and yet voted for the peace deal, which saw his wife's killer released early. On the other side of the political-religious divide, comedian Patrick Kilty told of his father Jack having been murdered by loyalist paramilitaries.

Mr Kilty is due to be the next host of the Late Late Show, and in these interviews I saw a new depth and seriousness to him. Ironically, we saw footage of an early appearance of his on that show – doing a comedy routine wearing a balaclava!



Pat O'Kelly

Music

We have lost a great who fostered so much talent

Among the tributes to the late Jane Carty was one that struck a particular chord for me, "She helped young people fall in love – with music". It was part of the death notice informing us of her passing on August 2 and funeral from St Patrick's Church in Dublin's Monks-town on August 11. She was 87.

Dublin-born Jane Carty studied music in UCD as well as in Paris, Strasburg and Perugia. Her first job was teaching piano, theory and composition at Dublin's Municipal School of Music.

But Jane spent most of her working life in RTÉ's music department where she became an executive producer. Besides she organised and directed national com-

petitions for choirs, singers, instrumentalists and composers and was founder/director of RTÉ's *Musician of the Future* Competition.

Jane Carty was also well known on the international music circuit serving on the juries of several festivals not least the International Choral Eisteddfod in Wales and others further afield including Hong Kong and the West Indies where, if my memory is serving correctly, she met her future husband, Dutch-born widower Wil Keune. Their union was relatively short as Wil predeceased Jane in 2007.

For many years Jane Carty was a jury member of the Hans Gruber Belvedere singing competition in Vienna and when RTÉ decided to withdraw its involvement from *Musician of the Future*,



The late Jane Carty.

Jane used her considerable powers of persuasion on the Irish Freemasons to sponsor the competition instead.

Jane was a member of the board of governors of the RIAM from 2000 and chairman of the board of the

Veronica Dunne International Singing Competition. She was also involved with the Dublin International Piano Competition, served a five-year period as a director of the National Concert Hall and was part of the repertory committee of

Wexford Festival Opera.

A recipient of a Jacob's Radio Award for her work in promoting the careers of Irish musicians at home and abroad, Jane Carty received the prestigious Fellowship *Honoris Causa* from the RIAM in 2010.

Séamus Crimmins, who worked closely with Jane in RTÉ, paid her a well-deserved tribute from which I quote, "Jane was a remarkable person and an unforgettable colleague. Blessed with many gifts, she possessed energy, resilience, vision, and determination."

"She was famed internationally for her coverage of major European festivals and interviews with top musicians, including one between Herbert von Karajan and Ian Fox.

"Above all it was her identifying and fostering talent that Jane will be particularly remembered. This was her exceptional passion and I believe many musicians agree it is her outstanding legacy. The discovery of musical potential in young people excited her beyond measure. Recognising the seeds of brilliance, she devoted herself to finding every avenue to nurturing and propelling these to fulfilment. In so doing she provided platforms for countless young musicians down the decades.

"Adjectives seem inadequate to sum up Jane so I will just end by recalling her friendship, her loyalty and her love, all of which ran very deep. She was unique".

May the soul of Jane Carty rest in peace.



BookReviews

Peter Costello



A great Irish poet's evidence of his faith and art

Testament

Micheal O'Siadhail
(Baylor University Press,
\$24.99/ €22.99; distributed in
Europe by Eurospan, email:
direct.orders@marston.co.uk)

Thomas McCarthy

In the Irish poetry world Micheal O'Siadhail has been a writer of towering brilliance for over 40 years.

A life dedicated to language and ethics has seen him study in great depth both the structure of the Irish language and the scope of Icelandic saga. Jesuit-educated, he has been a prolific poet in two languages as well as research professor at the Institute for Advanced Studies and, currently, distinguished poet-in-residence at Union Theological Seminary of Columbia University.

He is the epitome of what one might call the still very much alive 'Irish Catholic genius'. Yet running parallel with this Joycean life of undoubted genius has been Mr O'Siadhail's perpetual anxiety of faith, an ethical restlessness that has surfaced constantly in his memorable, personal poetry of love, despair, history and displacement.

Testament is a milestone in this ethical journey. His new book is a paramount Christian endeavour.

Jazz

Verbally, it is a kind of jazz improvisation on the Word of God. Here is a book of two parts; the first, *Psalter*, comprises of 150 psalm-like poems of joy, delight and despair; the second, *Gospel*, is a vivid retelling of Gospel stories from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Reading from a single source, as every poet knows, is also one of the most powerful ways of creating a gathered community.

There is such immense power in repeating the promises of Christ, there is such embedded resilience within, that poets will always be drawn back to those first principles of faith – often despite themselves. Matters of faith and rumblings from the passage of 'big questions', have always been part of Mr O'Siadhail's aesthetic as well as academic quest. In *Testament* we come to a moment in the poet's life when "My time ripens, my days mellow".



Micheal O'Siadhail

“This is the Christ-landscape where every worker in the vineyard will get a full day's wage no matter how late in the working-day they began”

Joyful

It is the writer's sheer pleasure in the uncontrollable resonance of faith that distinguishes this book from all the other published works of the poet. This is a joyful book, first and foremost, and a great deal of its joy comes from the verbal capture of those promises of Christ:

"Eternities of joy deny
Time's ruthless arrow on the fly—
O promise that they do not lie.

We laugh and laughing you're nearby,
All fun is reaching for your sky—
O promise that it doesn't lie."

The tight, John Donne-like rhyming creates a sense of timelessness in the reader's mind; and one feels that this is the sense the poet is

after. The intrinsic coherence is propelled beyond literal sense by the effect of accumulated rhymes; the effect is hallucinatory joy. We may read words but we should succumb to faith – this is the higher message that the poet, the word-smith, wants to tell us. In other words, faith has made his life rhyme.

Gratitude

Being grateful is almost a prerequisite to this sense of joy, which is difficult in this world where we are trained by therapy to feel entitled but hardly ever grateful. The poet puts our dilemma like this: "I bless you God although I don't know how/ to thank enough for air, for light, for food. /I do not take for granted – I receive." The astonishing power of gratitude is, therefore, a keynote of *Testament*.

"A mustard-seed faith tackles any task," the poet writes bluntly in *Gospel*. The poems in part two of this collection have an earthy, sun-drenched quality taken from the Galilean and Judean landscapes of the original gospels. This earthiness is hugely effective, giving a strong backbone to the lyrics, to that world of pressed olives and lamb, of Zechariah, Elizabeth and Mary. This is the Christ-landscape where every worker in the vineyard will get a full day's wage no matter how late in the working-day they began.

Mr O'Siadhail recreates this ultimate metaphor of the bounty of heaven, wonderfully, lyrically. But that is only one of the many landscapes that Micheal O'Siadhail makes vivid through his skilled verse-craft in this inspiring and very beautiful book.

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.

A Catholic inspired solution to the ills of democracy in the USA



Regime Change: Towards a Postliberal Future

Patrick J. Deneen

(Forum Press/an imprint of Swift Press, £22.00/€27.50)

Frank Litton

Patrick J. Deneen's *Regime Change* has attracted a good deal of attention. Reviewers have acknowledged his intelligence, his command of political philosophy and praised his writing skills.

But they have balked at his conclusions, claiming that he is promoting, if not a full-blown theocracy, then at least a far greater role for religion in politics.

Certainly, Prof. Deneen, who is professor of political science at the university of Notre Dame and a Catholic, draws on the tradition of political thought rooted in the teachings of Aristotle and Aquinas. His argument for a "common good politics" need not amount to a case for the revival of Christendom.

So why this reaction? Why are committed liberals, members of the elites that dominate academia, protectors of the status-quo, frightened by this view from the margins? I think that it's because they recognise the problems which Prof. Deneen analyses and fear that they do not have the solutions.

The various versions of liberalism whose sources can be traced to Locke, John Stuart Mill, Hobbes and Rousseau have served us well, sustaining democracy and supporting economic prosperity. But their time is up. Their solution to the 'political problem' no longer works.

What is the political problem? Rousseau gives us a secular version of the 'fall'. All was going well for our remote ancestors until they discovered the 'division of labour'. The division of labour is a curse and a blessing; a blessing because it greatly increases productivity and enhances the material conditions of existence, a curse because it generates inequalities in power and wealth, encouraging the will to dominate.

The interdependencies it delivers produce conflicts of interest that drive us apart. While we have a clear view of our immediate interests, the 'big picture' into which they fit is obscure.

As Prof. Deneen, following Aristotle, points out, good government, a healthy democracy, requires a 'mixed regime' in which a few rule constrained by the interests of the many.

The few, the elite, bring the bigger picture into harmony with the particular. They are

competent in the business of balancing interests, seeking compromises, finding policies that keep the show on the road.

The link between the few and the many is vital.

For a sizeable proportion of the US electorate, the link has been broken. They voted Donald Trump into office. Mr Trump, who had no political track record, had never held elected office, and whose performance in office showed, had no competence in the formulation and implementation of policy, did have the skill to express his supporters' disenchantment with and anger at the political elites. His ascendancy gives a disturbing insight into the rule of the many in the absence of an elite.

If rule by the many is bad, the rule of the few disconnected from the many is no better.

The United States becomes more and more unequal. While middle class incomes stagnate, the wealthy grow wealthier. For instance, in 2021, a US CEO earned 399 times the pay of the average worker. Between 1978 and 2021, the pay of CEOs increased by 1,460%, that of the typical worker by 18%.

The US wavers between populist revolt and the depredations of wealthy oligarchs who control the large corporations, wield enormous economic power and dominate political parties.

While we can speculate on the many causes, the neo-liberalism that guides the political elite must be a major factor. Its emphasis on autonomy that feeds into a politics of victimhood erodes a sense of national unity. The individualism that it promotes in the name of freedom is, in the end, self-defeating.

Prof. Deneen combines a Marxian diagnosis with a prescription indebted to Catholic social teaching with its focus on the common good. He reminds us of the binding force of religion. Not content to understand the world, he seeks to change it, calling for action to oust the reigning elites.

No wonder he puts the fear of God into the defenders of the collapsing status-quo.

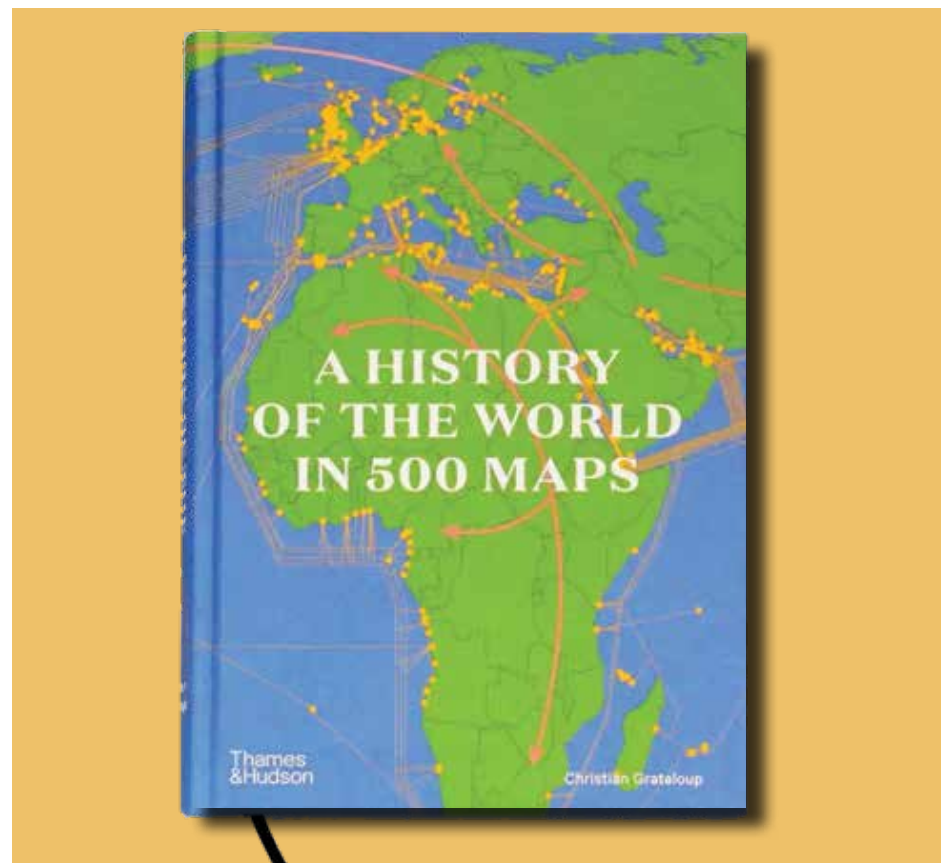
The prognosis? I am not sufficiently acquainted with the dynamics of US politics to hazard a judgement.

The question is: how else can good government and healthy democracy be restored in the US? This, of course, is not just a question for the US. While the details differ, the same malaise is endemic in western democracies.

The World of Books

By the books editor

How the lie of the land shapes the course of history



A History of the World in 500 Maps

Christian Grataloup and others
(Thames & Hudson, £35.00/ €40.50)

Peter Costello

This is an interesting and unusual book. It was originally published in French a couple of years ago. Christian Grataloup is the overall editor; the introduction is by Patrick Boucheron; other associates were French academics; and the attractive cartography is also by French experts.

The whole project thus breaks free of the Anglo-American centred worldview which we in Ireland have all too often to make do with, in favour of a more European centric one. This is a value not to be underestimated these days.

The team who put it together wanted to create what Mr Boucheron calls "an atlas for the 21st Century", and that is indeed what they have created between them.

Though the present century weighs heavily on us all, with so many problems derived from the failed and even successful politics of the past two centuries, this book vividly illustrates and illuminates the environmental context in which the past took place and with which the rulers of today and indeed the ordinary people struggle as events in Amazonia, and indeed only the other day in Maui, ordinary people struggle often on their own. We need maps to understand it all.

There are a few things I would have liked to see, but let's deal first with the positive points.

First as to size. Unlike too many atlases this one is a handy size for family, school or college use. These days a sensible size is important.

But it is also an atlas, it shows history through maps. This too is not to be undervalued, even though many people, even many historians, seem to have little understanding of what maps can reveal: this is the result of poor teaching at school and

early college levels.

A good half of the nearly 600 pages is devoted to the world since 1492, a third to the world since 1914. This may seem unbalanced, and yet it is not: the earliest pages certainly illustrate many aspects of ancient and medieval history to which we give little attention, the major developments in China and India for instance, which are essential for understanding the aspiration and claims to status and respect of India and China today.

Coming to more modern times it may be a surprise to some to find a whole page graphically devoted to Lenin's train journey in 1918 under the auspices of the German Empire that took him from exiles in Zurich to the Finland Station in Petersburg, so he could meddle with the democratic revolution which had already broken out. The consequences of that sealed carriage are still with us to this day, despite the fall of communism, in the attitudes of President Putin.

But the heavy attention to the recent past will be what makes this book attractive to many younger users, for they illustrate so many events and movements which the cultural isolation of the very recent decades has injured so many. Here a series of maps will help illuminate, for instance, the continuing turmoil of Africa.

The interests of those concerned with religious matters are also served, for the rise, spread, and fracturing of Christianity all receive detailed treatment, as do the intricacies attending the origins and global spread of Islam.

For many people under 30, this book will prove to be as good as a new education. They will really learn about the world in ways they have never seen before.

This is a book which can be warmly recommended to the ordinary reader. It is remarkably good value, as the prices of some academic books from university presses go these days. Indeed, for all the expertly distilled and strikingly presented information that it contains, it is wonderfully cheap.

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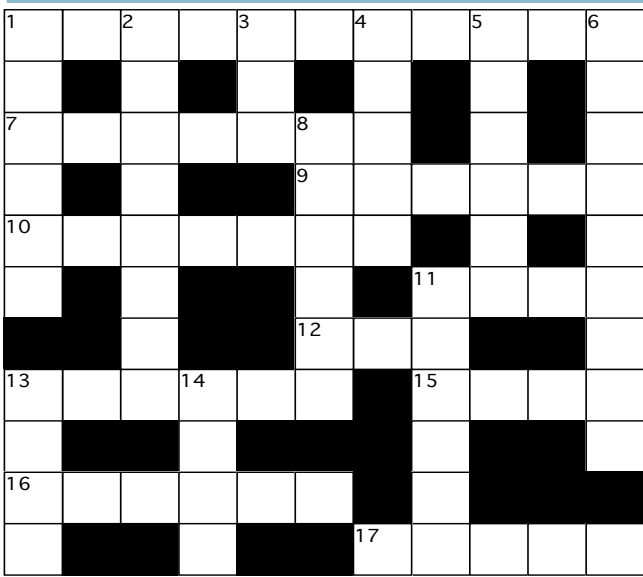
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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 497



Across

1 This piece of jewel-lery is often given to a woman when she becomes engaged (7,4)
7 Kerry and Tipperary are in this province (7)
9 Painter, or sculptor per-haps (6)
10 Bold (7)
11 "_____ upon a time" (4)
12 Catch fish in it, or hang it behind a goal (3)
13 Noticing with the eyes (6)
15 An oak is one (4)
16 Ring-shape (6)
17 An Academy Award, given to someone in the movies (5)

Down

1 This playing piece has two sets of dots on it (6)
2 Declare, tell publicly (8)
3 Not in (3)
4 City in Northern Ireland, on the river Foyle (5)
5 Person from a huge coun-try in Asia (6)
6 'Ladies and _____' (9)
8 Having food (6)
11 These animals live in and near a river (6)
13 Ill (4)
14 It makes you want to scratch (4)

SOLUTIONS, AUGUST 17

GORDIUS NO. 624

Across - 1 Angel Falls 6 Skit 10 Rearm 11 Guacamole 12 Feather 15 Troll 17 Esau 18 Iran 19 Risks 21 Machete 23 Draco 24 Ache 25 Nora 26 Wreck 28 Tugboat 33 Honeycomb 34 Where 35 Push 36 Exonerated

Down - 1 Agra 2 Guatemala 3 Limit 4 Angle 5 Lead 7 Kyoto 8 The Blessed Sacrament 9 Pasture 13 Haka 14 Red heat 16 Window-shop 21 Monkeys 22 Thug 27 Ennis 29 Urban 30 Bower 31 Hoax 32 Lend

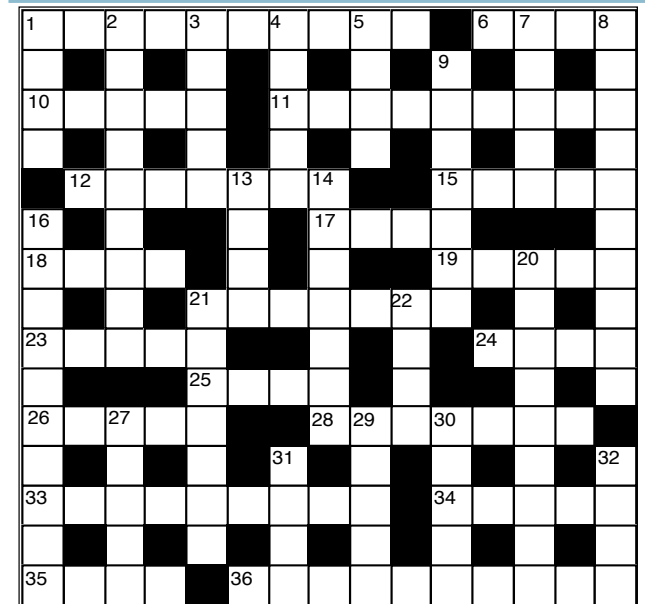
CHILDREN'S No. 496

Across - 1 Minibus 7 Adult 8 Genie 9 Theatre 12 Cattle 13 Erasers 16 Anne 17 Attempt 19 And 21 Break 22 Shark

Down - 1 Magician 2 Ninety-nine 3 Beetle 4 Safe 5 Duet 6 Athens 10 Her 11 Ass 14 Actors 15 Elm 18 Pair 19 Ark 20 Day

Crossword

Gordius 625



Across

1 Waterproof outer garment (10)
6 Antiaircraft explosives (4)
10 Bishop's headgear (5)
11 More unfortunate (9)
12 Disparaging term for one from Dublin (7)
15 & 36a A number of blessings which Jesus mentions in the Sermon on the Mount (5,10)
17 Plant with edible pods, also called lady's-finger or gumbo (4)
18 The first word of the Ave Maria in English (4)
19 Medically-trained mem-ber of the armed forces (5)
21 Selling agents (7)
23 Part of a play (5)
24 See 21 down
25 Greek goddess of vic-tory (4)
26 Japanese verse form (5)
28 They contain the lines for movies (7)
33 Soldier in Cromwell's army (9)
34 Rove in search of prey (5)
35 Location for a building project (4)
36 See 15 across

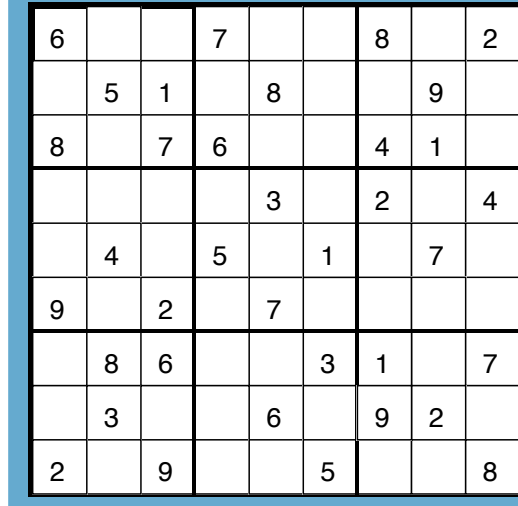
Down

1 It can be measured in minutes (4)
2 Deter taxi thus to transfer to another jurisdiction (9)
3 Insolence (5)
4 Coarse, unrefined (5)
5 One who takes your side in conflict (4)
7 Telling fibs (5)
8 Distinctive blow in a cer-tain martial art (6,4)
9 Shrieks (7)
13 This river flows through Hamburg (4)
14 Ribbon-shaped pieces of egg dough, often served in soup (7)
16 Chemical element number 15, with the symbol P (10)
20 Tidal debris (9)
21 & 24a Ancient sculpture on display in the Louvre, the inspiration for the logo of 25 across (5,2,4)
22 Bellow (4)
27 Native Arctic people (5)
29 Trainee officer (5)
30 Contribution to a meeting or discussion (5)
31 In this place (4)
32 Regrettably (4)

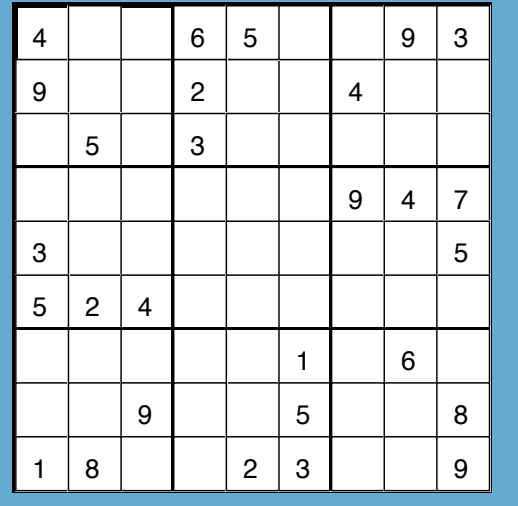
Sudoku Corner

497

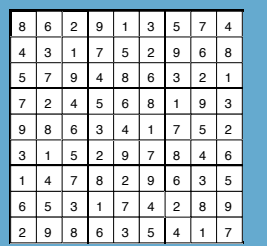
Easy



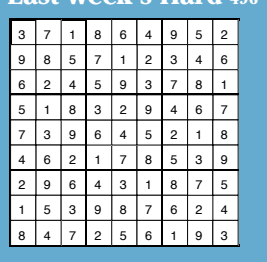
Hard



Last week's Easy 496



Last week's Hard 496



Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter



Baptism is the hot button issue in Irish parishes

It's official — the significance of Baptism in Irish parish life is the top 'hot-button' issue for readers of this page. In all my years of contributing here, nothing else has exercised readers in the way this topic did in the July 23 edition. Reactions have been flooding in (quoted below, with permission).

My thesis that Baptism is the forgotten, sidelined Sacrament that needs to be re-instated at the core of parish life attracted much support. One priest colleague reported that his pastoral council hope to invite all parents of newly-baptised children to the parish Mass once a month and then send them home with a gift (a children's Bible). A Carmelite confrere had an alternative idea: that "all families who had a child baptised in the year be invited to celebrate the feast day of The Baptism of the Lord". Couples could come forward for a blessing at the end of the Mass and receive a memento to mark the occasion.

Landmark

A reader in a parish adjacent to my own saw baptisms at Sunday Mass as a win/win situation:

"The parents of the child would be delighted to have a well-heated



church (especially in winter)," because the church is always warm for Sunday Mass. "Furthermore it would add to the status of the Sacrament — especially with more than one child: the more the merrier. The sense of occasion would be a landmark, like weddings, ordinations, First Communion, Confirmation," they said.

Grace Frayne also liked the idea of including baptisms in Sunday Mass once a month, perhaps "as part of the family Mass". Kathleen Faley thought baptisms could be held at Mass "as often as necessary in rural parishes".

Patricia McCarthy spoke of having just that experience: "My four children are now all adults

and when they were born we lived in Scotland and the youngest was born in Wales. The Catholic community in both places was more intimate than most parishes in Ireland. Each of my children was baptised during Sunday Mass. They were joyous celebrations with the whole focus of the Mass a catechesis on the meaning of baptism — and a renewal of our own vows."

Necessity

Many readers also emphasised the necessity of preparing for the Sacrament, suggesting a good preparatory programme for parents, with a mix of Zoom and face-to-face meetings. Such Zoom meetings could be shared by several parishes, with time for a Q&A locally.

Sean Smith has written a book which details the bones of a four-week pre-baptism course. His comments were practical, "We don't need highly trained people to facilitate this. Solid, happily-married couples are by far the best because they witness more than teach, and this touches parents more than information" (from Jesus — Answer to Evangelising the Irish Church, now on sale).

And Andrew Kieran made a prediction: "When the good name of the Church in Ireland is restored, which will take much dedication and perseverance, there will be a return to an appreciation of the holiness of this Sacrament."

Your reactions please to frbernard1984@gmail.com

Creation-tide will challenge us

My favourite cartoon from the summer showed an Italian family arriving home from a holiday in Ireland, exclaiming: "It was wonderful, it rained every day!" People across North America and Europe would have loved our damp July and August.

The wildfires around the world this year provide a perfect context for the soon-to-begin Creation-tide (September 1 to October 4). Lessening fossil-fuel dependence challenges everyone, including parishes. Is it time for solar panels on churches, alternatives to gas or oil heating? Should we cut back on paper missalettes, hymn sheets and other printed media? Creation-tide will challenge each of us this year.

Are cemetery Masses a good idea?

Cemetery Masses abound in the summer throughout Ireland — but are they really such a good idea? Rural cemeteries are often windswept, exposed, higgledy-piggledy places, with little space for standing and no toilet facilities. Chairs have to be brought, amplification added and some shelter provided. And all the while, every parish has a building with all this laid on, i.e. a church. Wouldn't it be better to have Mass in the comfort of the church, then adjourn to the cemetery for a short prayer service? Water blessed at Mass could be brought along, to forge a link between the two holy places.



Impoverished Catholic community in D.R. Congo badly needs our help to build a solid and dignified chapel

Fr Cesar Balayulu, a Consolata priest working on the outskirts of Kinshasa, has told us about his Catholic faithful at serie Dix, about ten miles from his parish church. "The people live in small houses often made from metal sheets or straw. Because of their poverty our people cannot help us financially with the cost of building the chapel dedicated to Our Lady Consolata which we wish to construct. At present Mass is offered under a large metal sheet on poles, this becoming impossible in bad weather.

"The new chapel, when completed, will help our Christians to participate with dignity in the Holy Eucharist, no longer having to carry chairs from their homes every Sunday. It will enable them to focus more on prayer and not to be distracted by noise from outside. It will promote the social life of the Christian community. We turn to you, Little Way, with great confidence that you will support us with your aid."

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PLEASE HELP FEED HUNGRY CHILDREN

Fr Eamonn Gowing is a Redemptorist priest working in a favela/shanty town in the Brazilian city of Fortaleza. He reports of the great poverty there and how more than 200 children benefit from a feeding programme he has started which provides a nutritious meal each day. For many of the children it is the only regular meal they receive. Fr Eamonn is one of the many missionaries The Little Way Association supports with funds to feed hungry children.

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