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Schools 'resent' president's attack on parents' education choice

Ruadhán Jones

Bishop Donal McKeown has accused President Michael D. Higgins of stoking division over "unhelpful" comments from the president characterising Catholic schools in the North as sectarian.

During an event on the role of women in peace-building, Mr Higgins described as "shameful" the fact that parental choice is central to education in the North and that Catholic schools continue to be overwhelmingly popular with parents. The president's unusual intervention comes despite the fact that parental choice is a key plank of education in most free and developed countries.

The Bishop of Derry, a former school principal, said the comments were "inappropriate". He told *The Irish Catholic* that this outsider view shows little understanding of the complexity of the situation and that such comments are "resented" by hard-working Catholic schoolteachers.

It is not a "black and white issue: good, integrated; bad, Catholic schools."

"That really is resented, particularly at a time when there's a private members' bill on integrated education going through the assembly," Bishop McKeown said.

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Having a ball for St Valentine...



Young Catholics and religious alike having a ball at the Youth 2000 Valentine's Ball in the Armagh City Hotel last Saturday, February 19. Photo: Patrick Grant.

Warm Holy Land welcome for first Irish pilgrims

Chai Brady in Jerusalem

A group of pilgrims with *The Irish Catholic* have become the first Irish visitors to the Holy Land since the beginning of the pandemic.

Some 40 people left Dublin Airport on Wednesday under the auspices of Marian Pilgrimages for the trip to the Holy Land for the first time since Covid-19 struck.

Spiritual director Fr John Carroll said that "there is a genuine intensity to the warmth of welcome we have received here in the Holy Land, as the local peoples from across all communities, welcomed us back after a break of two years."

"Among the first of pilgrimages from around the world to arrive since Covid-19, our visit has allowed us incredibly easy access to those places associated with the life and ministry of the Lord," he said.

Fr Carroll said that the decision to travel was "surely a divinely prompted one and our group of 40 disciples, enjoyed great care and comfort, as we got to experience in relaxed and very measured manner the land of his life, death and resurrection," he said.

The Irish Catholic plans two further Christian Solidarity Pilgrimages to the Holy Land in the autumn.

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Schools 'resent' president's attack on parents' education choice

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He added that the president's comments are seen "by many as quite a partisan statement to make and inappropriate for a head of state from another jurisdiction".

"To be taking sides on what is a divisive issue already here is really unhelpful," the bishop of Derry finished.

In his comments Mr Higgins used the loaded term "segregated" and claimed that young people in the North "are separated in the very place where they learn and build relations".

Despite the fact that the sector has remained a minority interest for parents, Mr Higgins claimed that integrated education, meaning State-controlled schools

without a religious ethos, "is not just needed, it is overwhelmingly wanted". He did not cite any evidence to back up his claim.

Bishop McKeown pointed out that "Catholic schools in the North have some excellent examples of highly integrated pupil numbers and teachers".

He added that "52% of non-national, newcomer children choose Catholic education in Northern Ireland".

Bishop McKeown's views were echoed by TD Peadar Tóibín, the leader of all-Ireland political party Aontú.

Mr Tóibín called into question the veracity of President Higgins' statement, saying that "Catholic, controlled and Gaelscoil sectors provide excellent education provision".

There is no place like the Holy Land

"And now our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem," proclaims the psalmist. And it is from Jerusalem that I write this reflection as part of *The Irish Catholic* Christian Solidarity Pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I am leading the first post-coronavirus group of Irish pilgrims walking in the footsteps of Jesus. As we have visited the holy sites, our spiritual director Fr John Carroll has helped bring the Gospel to life for our 40 pilgrims.

There have been times over the past two years when one wondered if it would ever be possible to again visit the Holy Land. The pandemic lockdown shattered so much of what we took for granted. It also took a heavy toll on the tiny Christian community that calls the Holy Land home. Their suffering is not unique, but it is especially acute given the many other challenges they face in the region.

Everywhere we have been on our trip from Nazareth to Cana, from Mount Tabor to the Sea of Galilee and from Bethlehem to Jerusalem we have been greeted warmly in the hope of many more Irish groups to come.

Given the success of our first trip back we've decided to go ahead and organise two pilgrimages in the autumn of 2022 and I would like to invite you, dear readers, to think about joining us.

Lifetime

It really is the trip of a lifetime, and I can promise you it brings the Gospel alive in a new and engaging way. The opportunity to walk where Jesus walked in Bethlehem, Nazareth and Jerusalem makes the biblical accounts real in a way that is hard to explain. To walk the way of the cross – the Via Dolorosa – in Jerusalem to Calvary is an unforgettable and moving experience.

"Some people have used words such as 'apartheid', 'segregation' and even 'parcels of hate' when talking about our schools," he continued, referencing a statement by Mr Higgins in April 2021 equating sending a child to a Catholic school to abandoning them to "parcels of hate".

"These statements on our education system are ill-judged, unfair and untrue. These words could not be further from the truth," the Aontú leader said.

Mr Tóibín highlighted the "great results" achieved by



Editor's Comment

Michael Kelly



Some of our pilgrims renewing their baptismal vows in the River Jordan at the site where John the Baptist baptised Jesus.

From the earliest times, Christians from all over the world have gone to the Holy Land to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. After St Francis visited the Holy Land in the 11th Century, he was so inspired that he began creating nativity scenes in towns and villages in Italy so that people of Faith could have some experience of what it was like in the Holy Land that first Christmas.

"It really is the trip of a lifetime, and I can promise you it brings the Gospel alive in a new and engaging way"

While towns like Nazareth and Bethlehem are now bustling cities far from anything Jesus would've known, the holy sites associated with his earthly life are preserved and revered to this day. Crucially, these places that roll off our tongues when we think of the Gospel are also home to

a small but vibrant Christian community.

Through *The Irish Catholic* I have been privileged in recent years to be part of a series of Christian Solidarity Pilgrimages to the Holy Land. What started out as a once-off has now become a regular feature of our calendar due to the popularity of the trips and so we are already planning to go ahead this coming autumn.

In recent years, we have walked in the footsteps of Jesus and visited the sites around Galilee where he lived the three years of his public ministry.

Nazareth

In Nazareth, we have experienced the place of the Visitation and the hometown of the Holy Family, while in Bethlehem our pilgrims have been able to enter the Church of the Nativity and touch the place where tradition records that Christ was born some 2,000 years ago.

Some people call the Holy Land the 'holy Gospel', for at these places the scriptures really come to life. Standing at the edge of the Sea of Galilee and remembering all the Gospel passages that speak of the sea instantly brings to mind the ministry of Christ and his encounters with his disciples.

As part of the trips, we have also been blessed to meet with local Christians and hear about their joys and struggles to keep their Faith alive in sometimes challenging circles. The number one question I get asked when people speak to me about the Holy Land

is 'is it safe?' My answer is always an emphatic 'yes'.

Living stones

The people who live in the Holy Land – what we refer to as the "living stones" – love to see pilgrims coming. They love to know that they are not alone, and that they have not been forgotten about. Much like during the conflict in the North of our own country, media headlines sometimes frighten people and distract from the reality of the situation on the ground.

"The holy sites associated with his earthly life are preserved and revered to this day"

The Holy Land is a vibrant and unforgettable journey of Faith, fun and friendship. It is also an unique way to bring your Faith to life in a new and refreshing way. I hope you will join us.

The Irish Catholic will organise two pilgrimages to the Holy Land in autumn 2022. The first will depart Dublin on October 2 and the second will depart Dublin on October 6. If you would like more information, please watch this space, or don't hesitate to drop me an email on michael@irishcatholic.ie

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Time is right for parishes to embrace renewable energy, Trócaire says

Ruadhán Jones

As energy costs rise and the climate crisis “stares us in the face”, the time is right for parishes in Ireland to embrace solar energy, Trócaire have said.

Jane Mellett, *Laudato Si'* officer for the Irish bishops' official overseas development agency, told *The Irish Catholic* that “it just seems time” to look at new energy sources.

“I think we have to really look at our fossil fuel usage, and to think about when the time is right and making the switch,” Ms Mellett said.

Costs

“It makes sense, with the rise in energy costs and the reality of the climate crisis staring us in the face as well.”

Ms Mellett's comments come as new Government support schemes offer support for premises, including churches and church buildings, to install and use solar panels. The microgeneration support scheme received Government approval last month and the large retrofit scheme was approved two weeks ago.

Ms Mellett said the schemes are “absolutely” an opportunity for parishes and church groups to embrace solar and green energy.

By installing solar panels or retrofitting, parishes and other Church groups can provide “a great witness to caring for the earth”, Ms Mellett said, one of the seven goals under the Church's environmental *Laudato Si'* action plan.

“It may or may not be solar panels, it may be retrofitting,” Ms

Mellett said. “It's definitely one of the ways we're being encouraged to live *Laudato Si'*.”

She added that parishes and religious congregations are already availing of schemes on offer from the Government, with more interested.

“I know one congregation who is exploring solar panelling their community houses with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI),” Ms Mellett continued.

“They have been assigned a mentor from SEAI to help with that.

“I don't want to name parishes, but in the last two weeks I've had two or three enquiries about how they might go about this. It's definitely something that people are starting to think about,” she finished.

Archbishop Eamon criticises private religion in Oxford debate

Jason Osborne

Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin said during a recent Oxford Union debate that private religion is “primarily a religion of sentiment” and quoted St Cardinal John Henry Newman that “we must of necessity ignore it”.

Opposing the motion February 17 “This House would move beyond organised religion,” Archbishop Martin said that once the aspects of religion that unite believers are downplayed, “what informs it are ultimately the individual's feelings”.

The proposition was defeated, as the students in attendance voted against moving beyond organised religion.

Archbishop Martin defended organised religion, saying that it “brings to bear a coherent corpus of teaching”, rather than a “disparate” collection of voices.

“This teaching is the fruit of centuries of reflection on revelation, and dialogue between faith and reason,” he said.

Archbishop Martin argued that organised religion upholds and defends “fundamental values and non-negotiable ethical principles,” not to stifle freedom, but to protect it against “moral relativism”.

“In this regard organised religion is well able to stand on its feet and offer a challenging, hopefully prophetic, voice and an important balance to the uncritical acceptance of facile ‘group-think’,” Archbishop Martin said.

“To ‘move beyond’ organised religion... would be to invert the whole idea of religion – instead of faith as the reception by humanity of what God has revealed, we end up with the notion of a religion centred on humanity which re-imagines God in humanity's own image.”

Down and Connor ordains six new permanent deacons



The newly ordained deacons are pictured here with Bishop Noel Treanor. Back row from left: Kieran Hunt, Ricky Looney. Front row from left: Jackie Breen, Mark Leneghan, Bishop Noel Treanor, John Downey, Paddy Keown.

Staff Reporter

Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor ordained six new permanent deacons for the diocese on Saturday, calling on them to “incentivise concrete care for all” through their service.

Kieran Hunt, Ricky Looney, Jackie Breen, Mark Leneghan, John Downey and Paddy Keown were all ordained in a ceremony at St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast, February 19.

In his homily, Bishop Treanor told the deacons

that their mission is to use their works of service “to provide an experience for others of the Church as a community of faith where the living Word of God ever incentivises concrete care for all”.

Ultimately, Bishop Treanor continued, “only the witness of simple acts of supreme love will transform and sustain the flame of divine hope for humanity over against the forces of evil”.

“It is to this slow spiritual work of deliverance and salvation that you are now called through your ordination,” he concluded.



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Mickey Rourke to feature in eastern saint movie

Jason Osborne

Hollywood legend Mickey Rourke is set to feature in *Man of God*, an upcoming movie about wonder-working eastern saint, St Nektarios of Aegina.

The movie is currently being filmed in Greece and is to be released later this year.

Mr Rourke has taken on the role of a paralysed man who was healed in hospital by St Nektarios.

Speaking in an interview with the Orthodox News Agency, Mr Rourke said he's experienced miracles in his own life, both big and small.

"In life, there's little miracles and there's big miracles. I've experienced both, so I do believe in miracles but I only believe in miracles through God. I don't believe in luck; I don't believe in money and power," he said.

"I believe that in the decisions that you make in life, the most important thing is to be truthful, to be loyal, and to have a certain

amount of love and care in your heart for people that are less fortunate than you," Mr Rourke added.

Mr Rourke told of a major miracle in his own life, recalling that his brother was very sick at the age of 17 and was given only six months to live. Mr Rourke's grandmother advised him to pray to St Jude, which he began to do several times a day. His brother survived the illness and lived for another 20 years.

"It was a miracle that he lived as long as he did," he said.

When Mr Rourke's brother did die, he said he lost his faith for about three years, before regaining it after turning to a priest he was close to. Since then, he said he has prayed to the Archangel Michael and St Jude every day.

At the end of the interview, Mr Rourke was presented with an icon of the Virgin Mary, the *Theotokos*, by director Yelena Popovich.

"There's not a better gift I could get," the actor said, adding that he'll pray before the icon every day for the rest of his life.

Iconic Cork church structure damaged by storm Franklin

Ruadhán Jones

The "iconic" 15-foot cross on the roof of the Church of the Ascension in Gurrabraher, Cork, has been left tilted by high winds associated with storm Franklin on Sunday.

Masses were temporarily postponed and have since restarted, but parish priest Fr Tom Walsh said that, after Covid, it feels like "one disaster after another".

"It's an iconic structure," Fr Walsh told *The Irish Catholic*. "It can be seen from all over the city."

"It has withstood worse winds

before, looking out over Cork. For a good number of years, it didn't light up, but we got it lighting there again about two years ago."

The Church of the Ascension was built in 1955 and the cross was erected in 1962.

Fr Walsh was alerted to the damage Sunday afternoon, when

the fire brigade attended the scene to assess the damage, advising that Masses stop temporarily.

After a further inspection on Monday afternoon, Masses could restart, but Fr Walsh fears that the cross or its support structure could have to be replaced.

"It will be a bit costly I would

say to replace, although hopefully insurance will cover some of the costs."

He added that a GoFundMe page has been started by a local person, and hopes that through this "some good will come out of a dark moment".

Dublin's newest father



Newly ordained Fr Joe Keegan (left) is pictured with Fr Seamus McEntee, Vocations Director for Dublin diocese. Fr Joe was ordained to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Dublin on Sunday February 20 in the Church of the Most Precious Blood in Cabra West.

St Patrick's Maynooth announces launch of new online faith course

Brandon Scott

St Patrick's Pontifical University Maynooth has launched a new online course on faith in a collaborative project with Aspal.ie, a learning platform committed to digital faith formation in Ireland, which will deliver "cutting edge digital catechesis right into the hands of people all across Ireland".

Taking place over an 8-week period between February 14 and April 8, the Aspal

courses will feature brief presentations that can be accessed at any point via the Aspal app or online, along with live *lectio* sessions, which form a short course that will provide a pathway through *lectio divina* while participants journey with the Sunday gospels of Lent.

To register for a course, log onto Aspal.ie and register for the course of your choice or download the Aspal App to engage with your learning in any location.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Cork inter-faith forum to promote tolerance with webinar

Cork Three Faiths forum is hosting a webinar showcasing the work of women of faith in promoting tolerance and mutual respect.

The webinar, which takes place Tuesday March 2 at 7pm, will present the work of Dublin-based Sisters of Faith for Peace and the Nigerian Women's Interfaith Council, as a model for building peace between communities.

The forum – a Christian, Jewish and Muslim organisation – said in a statement that it hopes people will "learn from the experiences of these women of faith who work for the mutual respect, tolerance and understanding" needed in the world today. Visit <https://mailchi.mp/aac79f7a476c/3ff> to sign up.

Elders have mission to encourage young people's Faith – Bishop Nulty

Grandparents and elders have "a mission to encourage young people on their faith journey", Bishop Denis Nulty said, as the Pope announced the theme for the second World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.

The theme chosen by Pope Francis for the day, which takes place July 24, is 'In old age they will still bear fruit', taken from Psalm 92:15.

Commenting on the announcement, Bishop Nulty said that "throughout his papacy Pope Francis has reminded us to value the many gifts of grandparents and the elderly".

The chair of the Irish bishops' council for marriage and the family added that "grandparents and elders have a mission to encourage young people on their faith journey".



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Boffin says it's goodbye to the handshake tradition

I thought that the “handshake of peace”, which we used to exchange in pre-Covid times, was a lovely gesture during Mass. It was friendly, linking people together, and an expression of community.

It was also egalitarian. You shook hands with whoever happened to be next to you in the pew, and, in busy city churches, whether that was a grandee or a tramp, it was all the same.

But, although more people are returning to Mass in person, the handshake has not returned at any church I've been in. The sign of peace can now just be an acknowledgement of the head, or the *namaste* gesture – joining both palms together while bowing slightly – that comes from Indian culture.

And now a British professor of epidemiology, John Edmunds, suggests that perhaps the handshake may not return at all, as a common social practice (in or out of church). He now seldom shakes hands with anyone, and believes he's better off, healthwise, without it.

Because, even though we are emerging from the Covid pandemic, there are possibly new variants that could come our way, and we might as well get used to taking precautions against the transmission of viruses.

(Some people have called the handshake between two individuals “a germfest”!)

But it would be a regrettable move for humanity if the handshake were to disappear. The elbow-bump is no real substitute, and even the fist-bump – apparently favoured by President Joe Biden and some 49% of Americans – is pretty limp next to placing your hand within the hand of another person.



Mary Kenny



Britain's Queen Elizabeth shakes hands with Martin McGuinness, watched by then-First Minister Peter Robinson, at the Lyric Theatre in Belfast June 27, 2012. Photo: CNS.

It has such historic resonance, going back to the Greeks and the Assyrians, where a handshake also indicated peace – and the absence of a weapon. It has signalled sealing a deal down the ages – “let's shake on it”, from the mighty rulers to the humble hagglers at a country horse fair. Famous – and infamous – handshakes have been the stuff of history, from Anwar Sadat of Egypt with Menachem Begin of Israel, to Richard Nixon meeting “The King” – that is, Elvis Presley.

It certainly was a most extraordinary moment when Martin McGuinness shook hands with Queen Elizabeth in 2016 – although I noticed that Prince Philip managed to avoid to follow that example.

The handshake has been such a pleasant everyday practice in so many parts of Continental Europe. I loved

the way the French shook hands regularly, and when groups of people met, everyone got a handshake.

It was always, in France, very much a working-class practice for colleagues to shake hands daily – it was a symbol both of comradeship and respect.

I hope Professor Edmunds is wrong, and the handshake will revive as a social gesture, as we develop better and better means of combating these wretched viruses.

Though there is one way in which we could circumvent nervousness over the transmission of germs and bacteria: we could, as in certain royal traditions, shake hands while wearing gloves.

I suppose it would be the handshaking equivalent of “social distancing”. A bit stuffy, but better than no handshake at all.

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Ireland's shifting neutrality

It's evident that the crisis in Ukraine has prompted a fresh conversation about Ireland's neutrality. Indeed, as Simon Coveney, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, has strongly and formally supported Ukraine's right to sovereignty, it might be said that Ireland's neutrality has already shifted – to be aligned with the European Union (most of which is in NATO, and even neutrals like Sweden and Finland are now

moving towards, and co-operating with, NATO).

Ireland's neutrality has, in fact, often been a fuzzy area, and as facilities at Shannon for the American military have shown (much to the ire of those who object), we have been on the side of the western alliance.

Neutrality during WW2 was a special case: partly pragmatic, wholly supported by the majority, and partly

as an affirmation of Ireland's sovereignty less than twenty years after the state's foundation. The world has changed and so have approaches to neutrality.

I'd like to hear some serious theologians address this matter. The question of “the Just War” has been a focus of Christian moral theology since Thomas Aquinas, and surely it deserves to be addressed in our time.

● Patrick Jake O'Rourke, as his names indicates, came from Irish stock – his folks emigrated to America during the Famine. “PJ”, who has died aged 74, was that unusual phenomenon – a conservative comedian, albeit with an anarchic streak. His bitter quip about divorce was a classic: he wouldn't marry again, he said: “next time I'll cut out the middle man and just give a house to someone I hate!” Actually, he did marry again, had three children and embraced a “soft” form of Catholicism (whatever that is!).

Foreign pastors eager to repay Irish ministry

Jason Osborne

Incoming religious pastoral workers are eager to “give back” to Ireland after receiving from Irish mission work in the past, and to experience the “richness” of Ireland’s spirituality.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, participants in the Spiritans’ residential orientation course for incoming pastoral workers to

Ireland told of their happiness at coming to Ireland and of the warm welcome they had received.

Swinford parish based-Fr Victor Akongwale from the diocese of Ogoja, Nigeria said that the current retreat at a Holy Ghost Fathers’ residence felt like a “homecoming of sorts”, as his diocese benefitted much from their mission work to Nigeria over the past 100 years.

“The Church in Ireland is small,

yet they punch above their weight,” Fr Victor told this paper.

“It’s a very generous spirit in this Church, that was there in the beginning when they came to my home, and it’s obviously still there, the generosity of the Church in Ireland.

“It’s beautiful to see,” he added.

Fr Victor said that when he was offered the chance to come to Ireland by his bishop, he didn’t hesitate in accepting it.

“My bishop offered me a choice. He said, ‘Victor, would you like to go?’ And I said, ‘Yes, yes, it’s time to give back’.

“So, I knew it was an opportunity for me to give back,” he said.

Another participant in the course, Sr Rosemary Muttasseril from Kerala in the south of India said that it’s a “blessing” to be in Ireland, and that she’s eager to “be helpful to the Irish community here and to her

own community,” the Disciples of the Divine Master on Newtownpark Avenue in Co. Dublin.

“I’m getting a lot of insights into different aspects of the Church in Ireland and I’m very happy about it. Irish people are very good, and they’re very religious,” Sr Rosemary said, adding, “I feel the people are very pious”.

See page 15.

Unique opportunity to journey with St Patrick

Staff reporter

The Saint Patrick Centre in Co. Down continues its highly successful all-inclusive five day/four night ‘St Patrick camino experience’ next month called ‘the journey’ with pilgrim guides Sister Martina Purdy and Sister Elaine Kelly staying in the Tobar Mhuire monastic retreat centre in Crossgar.

The journey includes four guided walks through the stunning St Patrick’s Way in Co. Down, a visit to meet the Benedictine monks in Rostrevor to receive a pilgrim’s blessing and a chance to learn about their spirituality. It is also an opportunity for a monastic meditation and spiritual journaling on the journey through life.

The journey includes walking six-mile sections of St Patrick’s Way in Downpatrick, the Mourne, Newcastle and Ardglass as well as a camino and canoe experience on the Quoile River.

“In the constant age of overwhelm it’s a chance to unwind, and to be refreshed by the absolutely stunning beauty of the coast St Patrick knew so well,” according to Martina.

“You will begin to learn about the true Patrick, his spiritual journey and literally walk in the steps of this great apostle of Ireland,” she added.

The journey, March 28-31, is all-inclusive of food, transport, experiences and guides and includes four nights’ accommodation en-suite. Details available on www.saintpatrickcentre.com.



Pilgrims on the camino with guides Martina and Elaine.

Major extension approved for Donegal school

Brandon Scott

Donegal County Council has recently ratified a move to the design and tender stage of a plan to build a €30 million extension on the grounds of St Eunan’s College in Letterkenny.

The letter sent last week to the

school by the council confirmed the Council’s intention to proceed with the project while outlining the prospective developments for St Eunan’s, which will include the construction of 37 general classrooms, 20 specialist teaching rooms, two special needs classrooms, a multi-purpose hall, staff room, offices,

kitchen and a general purpose room.

Speaking to *Donegal Daily* in the aftermath of the news, St Eunan’s College Principal Damien McCroary said it was fantastic to receive the email from the Council.

“This is something that will benefit everyone in the local community,” he

said. “We’re delighted with the support we’ve got from the local community, residents, staff, pupils and parents.

“While there’s still a few hurdles to be cleared yet it’s very positive for the school because now everyone’s sights will be firmly fixed on the future. We’re still on track,” he added.

Pointing the way forward



Sr Edel Murphy Principal of newly opened Our Lady of Hope school with student Archie Adams, Fr Gareth Byrne, Monsignor Dan O’ Connor and Archbishop Dermot Farrell before the opening ceremony, Wednesday February 16. The Minister for Education and Skills Norma Foley TD and Josepha Madigan TD Minister of State for Special Education and Inclusion officially opened the Crumlin school for children with autism and complex needs and it was blessed by Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell. Photo: John McElroy.

NEWS IN BRIEF

FSSP says Pope Francis confirmed its use of 1962 liturgical books

Pope Francis has issued a decree confirming that the Priestly Fraternity of St Peter (FSSP) can continue to use the liturgical books in force in 1962, according to the traditionalist group.

In a communique published February 21, the FSSP said that Pope Francis met with two members of the priestly fraternity for nearly an hour, a week before he promulgated the decree.

The FSSP is a canonically approved community of priests dedicated to the “formation and sanctification of priests in the cadre of the traditional liturgy” and the care of souls and pastoral activities in the service of the Church.

Loreto student wins national public speaking competition

A Loreto student has won the Sorooptimist Ireland Girls’ Public Speaking Competition, which sees Wexford taking the prize for the first time in its history.

Eve Donohoe of Loreto Secondary School was one of seven finalists who qualified for the competition in The D Hotel, Drogheda, last Saturday.

The participants spoke about a range of topics from the empowerment of women, to the environment and friendship.

Eve secured first place after impressing the judges with both her talk on partnership and the empowerment of women, and an impromptu talk on the topic ‘Storm’, which was a segment during which speakers were given two minutes to prepare a talk on this topic.

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Shannon Campbell

The View



We have to find new, creative ways of connecting with people

The scrapping of the television licence fee is a threat that looms ever large over the BBC. Those in favour of the public defunding argue that it is a cold house for a diversity of views and opinions, often not reflective of the mood of the general populous.

To be fair, it's not a debate that had engaged me very much. Most young people tend to get their news and entertainment from other providers these days. A recent BBC Radio panel discussion I was invited to take part in did make me wonder.

Beyond Belief

BBC Radio 4's 'Beyond Belief' ran with a feature on 'The Good Friday Agreement generation.' Just months old when the agreement was signed, and now engaged in young adult faith formation at the Queen's University Chaplaincy, I was invited to offer my thoughts on how faith had contributed to the making of Northern Ireland as I know it.

I was struck by the predetermined narrative that both producers and presenter appeared to have fixed on; one which suggested that religion in our context was a problem to be solved, rather than a vital contributor to the national conversation.

Putting people in boxes doesn't quite work anymore. Everyone taking part in the panel discussion who was of my generation was at pains to stress the positive impact that faith had had in their own lives and personal stories. The presenter, himself a minister of religion, seemed confused, almost perplexed, that this should be the case.

The notion of predetermined narratives and their helpfulness is being challenged increasingly these days, and rightly so. None of us fit neatly into the boxes people and groups would put us in. Take me as a case and point.

I was born to a (sometimes) practicing Catholic father, and an Anglican mother. Not an easy start in life when you're born in Portadown, at a time when the Garvaghy Road dispute was raging. I went to an integrated primary school, and was taught alongside and befriended children of all

faiths and none. I progressed then to St Catherine's College in Armagh, and it was there that my first real encounter with Catholicism happened, in a very natural, unobtrusive way.

Interestingly, it was the influence of my grandmother, who is a devout Anglican, and who brought me to Church with her on Sundays, that made me open and positive to religion generally, and made possible my embrace of Catholicism as a teenager.

I received instruction from the Jesuits in Portadown and have marked all of the usual milestones of faith that children in Northern Ireland take for granted, during my late teens and early adulthood. After qualifying from St Mary's University College Belfast as a religion teacher for the Catholic Maintained sector, I am now working as Director of Campus Ministry at the Catholic Chaplaincy at Queen's.

“I know that my story is in no way unique, in fact, it is repeated in a variety of permutations in families across Northern Ireland”

My Anglican grandmother – who we wouldn't change for the world – remains my greatest faith friend and was delighted to join the Chaplaincy community at Christmas for our Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. Her only concern was that she might say the bit at the end of the Lord's Prayer that we Catholics insist on leaving out!

I know that my story is in no way unique, in fact, it is repeated in a variety of permutations in families across Northern Ireland. These are the stories which don't make newspaper headlines, or the pages of solemn history

books, but which have, and continue to contribute to the making of peace and reconciliation in this small patch of our world.

Some of those stories involving ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances, did get an airing some months ago in a documentary made by former President, Mary McAleese. Herself, a native of the troubled Ardoyne area of Belfast, engaged in conversation people like Alan McBride whose wife was killed in the Shankill Bomb atrocity, and the late Pat Hume who, with her husband John Hume, was an architect of the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland. These stories of these unsung heroes are the golden threads which run through our local tapestry, which is made up of more than shades of green and orange.

Catholic Chaplaincy

In the Catholic Chaplaincy where I work, we were recently gifted a collection of portraits by local artist Susan Hughes from her 2014 exhibition 'Quiet Peacemakers.' They feature people of Christian faith who in quiet, unassuming ways, operated under the radar during troubled times, working to bring communities together.

The portraits were gifted to us at a time when riots were breaking out on our streets over the Northern Ireland protocol. Those taking part in the civil unrest, using the slogans of the bad old days, were of a generation that has only known peace. They are the unknowing beneficiaries of the labours of quiet peacemakers who have gone before them and who know, from painful experience, that the past is not a place to which we would wish to return.

Those paintings now hang in the Chaplaincy's cloister, overlooking our garden, which is itself an oasis of peace at the heart of the Uni-



Fr Martin Magill posing beside his 'quiet peacemaker' portrait at Queen's University, Belfast.

versity campus. It is hoped they will serve as a timely reminder to a younger generation of the lessons of history and the role that faith can have in making (and keeping) peace.

“This is a Christian reality. To the extent that we open more horizons, the more the grace of God enters us, the more the Lord is revealed to us”

One of the subjects of that portrait series is 'quiet peacemaker' Fr Martin Magill, who together with his Presbyterian friend, Rev Steve Stockman, founded the cross-community 'Four Corners Festival' 10 years ago. The theme for this year's festival was 'common ground, common good'. People of all generations and faith back-

grounds across the city were invited to walk together, crossing boundaries as we search for what unites us and what is good for all. In a video address to the festival at its opening in Belfast's Anglican Cathedral, Pope Francis said: "This is a Christian reality. To the extent that we open more horizons, the more the grace of God enters us, the more the Lord is revealed to us."

Another preoccupation of the presenter who conducted that radio discussion I opened with, was the Church's approach to divorce, homosexuality and abortion, and how this was a root cause of decline in Church practice among people of my generation. My sense was that these hot-button topics were more of a concern for him and his generation than anyone I know of my age.

Most of us are getting on with life. We all have friends who are gay; we all have family members who face crisis pregnancies and are unsure of what to do. We all have divorced and remarried

neighbours and co-workers, trying to make the best of imperfect situations. Those of us of faith find ways to speak truth and compassion and peace and healing into those situations, all the while, journeying with and muddling through as best we can.

The reasons for decline I suspect are many, and complex, and beyond the parameters of the limited analysis of that programme's presenter, or indeed the word count of this short article. We now live in a busy marketplace of ideas, values and beliefs, all competing for young people's buy-in. Moreover, choice rather than convention appears to be the determining factor when we engage young people on their reasons for practice, however that practice manifests.

Catholicism has to find new, creative ways of connecting with people to share with them eternal, life-giving truths. These methods of new evangelisation call for more than a crude count of bums on pews in church. What I am certain of is that now, perhaps more than ever, young people need to be reassured that life does make sense, that there is a God who loves them, and that in the end, all will be well.

“Catholicism has to find new, creative ways of connecting with people to share with them eternal, life-giving truths”

The Irish Catholic

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Archbishop Martin opens centenary celebrations in Tullysaran



Cardinal Sean Brady and Archbishop Eamon Martin are pictured with Vera McGahan, Patsy McKeown and Mary Donnelly in Tullysaran, Co. Tyrone.



Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin joined the people of Tullysaran, Co. Tyrone, February 11 to mark the beginning of the centenary year at the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

The Archbishop was joined by Cardinal Sean Brady, Fr Peter McAnenly Adm, Fr Barry Matthews CC and Deacon Malachy McElmeel.

During the Mass, the Archbishop presented St Patrick's Medals to three representatives from the community, Vera McGahan, Patsy McKeown and Mary Donnelly, to acknowledge their commitment to their Church and local community over the years.

After the Mass, the ladies from the community served a lovely supper in Tullysaran Community Centre.

A number of events are currently being planned for the year ahead, to celebrate the centenary of the church.



Crippling cost of living for young couples



The soaring cost of living is pushing a home and a family out of reach for many young couples, writes **Jason Osborne**

Ireland's soaring cost of living has been at the centre of the nation's attention for the past few weeks now, with the Government seeing fit to unveil a €300 million support package in an effort to alleviate the pressure many are feeling.

Food, fuel and housing are the primary pinch points for the financially squeezed, and one of the foremost groups (not the only one) suffering as a result of this development are young people, and their aspirations for a family and a home.

Speaking powerfully on *The Tonight Show* with Claire Brock recently, Ciarán Mulqueen of Crazy House Prices on social media summed up the sentiments of a generation when he said:

Statistics

"I think it's important, when we talk about CSO statistics and numbers and figures, we often forget about the human impact on this and it is not normal for people in their late 20s, in their 30s and in their 40s to be living at home, in their parent's box room. That's not normal, it's not a functioning society. It leads to so many sociological issues, so many mental health issues. It's insane, and nothing is being done about it."

"I would include young families or those who want to start a family in there"

His interview garnered a powerful response on social media, which revealed the depth of feeling among Ireland's youth on the topic.

It's not one far from my own mind, either, with myself and my wife 'encouraged' to move to Poland shortly after our wedding by the untenable cost of living in Dublin. While we've since come to love life in Poland and the many opportunities on offer here that, frankly, aren't available in Dublin, it's a shame and an injustice that such simple things as raising a family in a modest accommodation are so unreachable for ordinary people in ordinary situations.

To remain with the anecdotal a moment, not a single friend in a similar demographic to myself owns, or



is anywhere close to owning, their own property, be it apartment or house, despite their full-time working status. An argument could be made for a German-styled, rent-oriented way of life, were it not for the fact that rent is sky-high in Dublin and its satellites too, and the accommodation on offer slim.

Unaware

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Chair of Family Solidarity Ireland Angelo Bottone, says he is not unaware of the issue, either, telling this paper that the cost of living crisis is affecting especially those with a young family.

"There is a surge in costs with the heating, lighting and generally with bills. This is reported everywhere, and there's plenty of evidence from those of us who have a young family. Obviously, there is a general increase in the cost of living across the board, but that affects more those who are more vulnerable, more at the margin.

"I would include young families or those who want to start a family in there. Sometimes they've even to postpone their plans because of those costs," he says.

Mr Bottone says that the current situation is particularly affecting those who "want to start, or are at the beginning of, family life," as they're younger and they "might be in less secure employment".

Speaking of those young people trying to live out their faith via a marriage vocation, Mr Bottone says there are "major burdens" on them at the moment.

"The economic factor is having an impact, particularly for young couples who want to live according to the Catholic Faith – they don't want to postpone the time of their marriage, they want to have children, and so on. The cost of living, particularly the costs of heating, lighting and housing, of course, are becoming major burdens for them."

"There is a surge in costs with the heating, lighting and generally with bills"

Seeing this current crisis as rooted in a wider context of falling fertility rates and higher ages of marriage, Mr Bottone says that the "promotion of marriage" is a long-term investment that could be made today to make a difference in the long-run.

"If we promote marriage, which is the stable commitment that creates an environment for a family to bring children into the world and to continue with their education – that's a long-term investment. It has other consequences also, such as an

economic impact, because obviously if the fertility rate keeps dropping and there is a growing elderly population, the young people have to work for the elderly population or otherwise they have to take other measures, such as increasing immigration, perhaps."

Solution

The solution to the present crisis requires more than an economic solution, Mr Bottone suggests, saying that a "cultural approach" is also of value.

"What is needed is a more cultural approach as well, which means that it's not simply based on economics. It's based on the way we see our future and the role of the family. If the State regards the family just like any other form of living together, even without a strong commitment to each other, obviously people in difficulties will commit less or will choose the easier, short-term solution, but this has long-term impacts on the economy, and that's what we're seeing here."

Executive Director of Net Ministries Ireland, Tony Foy, has seen a number of young married and engaged couples come of Net Ministries, and says that while the cost of living crisis is certainly "making it more difficult" on those trying to get started and live out God's plan for family life, it's not stopping those of "strong faith".

"We're still experiencing young couples wanting to get married.... it's not insurmountable, but it does make it more difficult. It's not stopping them," he tells this paper.

One manifestation of the desire young people have for marriage, he says, is their willingness to go where life is possible – in this case, Donegal.

"We're still experiencing young couples wanting to get married....it's not insurmountable, but it does make it more difficult"

"We're experiencing a lot of young couples moving to Ballybofey, where we are, because Donegal is the least expensive place to rent or buy a house in the whole of the Republic of Ireland. We're right next door to Derry city, which is the least expensive city in the whole of the UK to buy or rent a house in.

"The northwest is a really good place to settle down. Some of it is for cost of living reasons, like, to rent a house in Dublin, it's going to cost a minimum two grand. Renting a house in Donegal, in Ballybofey, you're talking €650. There are good jobs up here as well, so we're experiencing a lot of people moving to the area. Young, Catholic couples, because of the cost of living," he says.

With everyone feeling the cost of living squeeze these days, the youth looking to follow God in marriage are finding it particularly difficult. However, as Mr Foy says, it's not stopping those who want to from doing so – just making it more and more difficult.

"The current situation is particularly affecting those who 'want to start, or are at the beginning of, family life,' as they're younger"

Your words flow out of what fills your heart

On this Sunday we have the third extract from the great sermon on the plain where Jesus sets out the ideals of Christian life. Last Sunday we reflected on the ideal of being forgiving and compassionate like our Father in heaven. The ideal is beyond human nature unaided, but with the supernatural grace of the Holy Spirit, the ideals are within reach. The great sermon continues today with the ideal of the proper use of the gift of speech (Luke 6: 39-45). Words can be good or bad, bringers of light or darkness. "Can one blind man guide another? Surely both will fall into a pit."

Some years ago, articles in the press debated whether Jesus ever showed a sense of humour and if humour has any place in the bible. Surely the passage we read today had the hearers in fits of laughter. Scholars tell us that Jewish teachers regularly used humour as a method of communication. Listening to Jesus, who could remain deadly serious at the outrageous image of a plank sticking out of somebody's eye? Or the prospect of figs growing on thorns or grapes on brambles? Put yourself into the story. Don't just read the Gospel but listen to it. Be among the listeners that day. Can't you hear the tone of humour in the voice of a smiling Jesus? Even when he says the word 'hypocrite'? Gentle humour can prove far more effective than cold confrontation in setting an ideal. When an argument starts, there is going to be no winner because each party only hardens its position.

Inner feelings

"Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own?" The joke will be remembered and it might be years later that the listener will apply the lesson to oneself. What I perceive as a large fault in another person is actually revealing more about me than the other person. Psychologists call it projection. Projection is the way that a tiny frame of film is greatly enlarged on the screen. When I make a big issue of another person's fault, it may be an indication that I should really be examining my own faults. When I point the finger of blame at another person, remember that there are three fingers pointing back at me.

At the root

Jesus continues his parable by literally getting to the root of the problem. "There is no sound tree that pro-

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



duces rotten fruit, nor again a rotten tree that produces sound fruit." In the first reading today we hear how our words express what resides in the inner heart. "The kiln tests the work of the potter and the test of a person is in one's conversation. The orchard where the tree grows is judged on the quality of its fruit, similarly a person's words betray what one feels. Do not praise someone before one has spoken, since this is the test of the person" (Ecclesiasticus 27:4-7).

A small flame

Among the writers in the bible there is no one so down to earth as St James. He really shoots from the hip in his letter. He tells us that the person who commits no sin in speech must be absolutely perfect. He compares the tongue to the rudder of a boat which is only a small part of the boat but it steers its direction nonetheless. Similarly, a small flame can start a forest fire. "The tongue is a flame too. Among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a whole wicked world: it infects the whole body; catching fire itself from hell, it sets fire to the whole wheel of creation" (James 3:6).

Of course, the tongue can be used for good purposes too: for blessing God and prayer: for consoling, encouraging, affirming or thanking people; for brightening the world through music and humour.

A resolution

We will be commencing Lent next Wednesday. How about a resolution about the proper use of the gift of speech? Jesus tells us that our words flow out of what fills the heart. What I say is a good indication of the sort of person I am.

When we were young, we were told that sticks and stones can break your bones but names will never hurt you. Unfortunately, that is not true. Names by which we label people can be very cruel. I cringe in embarrassment as I remember the cruel nicknames we put on fellow students in our boarding school where everyone had a nickname. A song by Albert Hammond, a Canadian singer, expressed the hurt caused by these labels: "Other people teach us what we are, we believe them as a rule." If I hear that I am stupid or ugly or perverted, the temptation is



Lent is an opportunity to re-connect.

to believe it. Nowadays the social media are conveyors of shocking character assassination.

The Gospel has a story about a woman who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears. Self-appointed judges at the table murmured, "doesn't he know that she has a bad name." Nobody is born with a bad name. It was gossip that decided that it would be bad.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Word of God made flesh. I thank you for the gift of speech. May the Holy Spirit fill me with words to praise you, to bless you, to adore you and thank you. May I never profane your holy name.

May my conversation be helpful, kind and inspiring.

May I bring light to those in darkness, joy to those in sadness, and hope to all who need it.

May I live up to the blessing I received on the day of my Baptism that you would touch my ears to receive your word, and my mouth to proclaim my faith, to the praise and glory of God the Father.

Cynical and sarcastic words can be deeply hurtful. A harsh tone of voice is one of the chief weapons of a bully.

And what about profanity, the wrong use of the names of God? Sad to say, but Irish people must be top of the league of profanity. If words express the inner heart, then the misuse of God's name reveals a very shallow faith.

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Organised religion is a net force for good in the world, writes David Quinn

The Oxford Union is regarded as the most prestigious university debating society in the world. Last week, the proposition for debate was, 'This House would move beyond organised religion'. One of the speakers opposed to the motion was the Catholic archbishop of Armagh, Eamon Martin.

Unusually for a topic of this kind, the proposition was defeated, that is the students voted not to move beyond organised religion. If I had been asked to guess in advance, I'd have said the motion would pass comfortably, because organised religion is so out of fashion, especially among the young, and most of all among university students. It's nice to be pleasantly surprised sometimes.

Then again, maybe the atmosphere is a bit different in Britain. Perhaps the hostility towards organised religion is not quite as strong there as in Ireland because they have not recently come through several decades of Church dominance and so have gained a little more perspective than we have here at the moment.

Archbishop Martin addressed the audience in the cassock of a bishop. That would probably have alienated an Irish audience immediately. But a debate at the Oxford Union is a formal occasion and everyone is supposed to dress accordingly, including the students.

“No-one today seriously calls for the abolition of organised education because the consequences would be too grave”

But so dressed, no-one could have symbolised organised religion more on the night than a bishop of the Catholic Church in his cassock, complete with the purple bishop's cap, purple waistband and sash with a cross around his neck.

Arguments

We know the arguments against organised religion; it is too controlling, domineering, authoritarian and sometimes violent.

But as Archbishop Martin told the Oxford Union, quoting John Henry Newman, if religion tends towards a "sentiment and a taste", and if it "is the right of each individual to make it say just what strikes his fancy" then such religion becomes "so per-

The case for organised religion



Bishops arrive for a Mass celebrated by Pope Francis at the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal in this 2017 file photo. Photo: CNS.

sonal" and "so private" that we must of necessity ignore it. In his *Apologia* Newman wrote: "...religion, as a mere sentiment, is to me a dream and a mockery."

Wording

Let's change the wording of the proposition on the night. Let's make it instead, 'This House would move beyond organised education'. To begin with that would mean the abolition of Oxford University, and every other university and school in the world because what are they, at the end of the day, but forms of organised education?

What would take their place? It would either be nothing, or people would teach themselves, or where they could afford it, hire a private tutor. Like in the past, many would enter an apprenticeship at a young age, although that would still be a form of organised education.

No-one today seriously calls for the abolition of organised education because the consequences would be too grave.

The House could also have argued against 'organised politics'. That would mean an end to political parties. Politics would become purely a matter of individual action and belief. We know that many people are, in fact, almost totally disengaged from politics and never vote,

much less join a party.

You could also make a case that organised politics has been a destructive force in history, sometimes unleashing enormous bloodshed and upheaval and doing more harm than good.

It would obviously be undeniable that organised politics can be very harmful, but clearly it has done a lot of good as well and anyone arguing in its favour would have to say the key thing is to have the right kind of politics (whatever that may be), and that organised politics has done more good than harm overall.

But exactly the same kind of argument can be made in favour of organised religion. You would concede that it can be harmful. You would concede it is important to opt for the right kind of organised religion, but you would argue that this is entirely possible and that overall organised religion has been a net force for good in the world.

Organised

Organised religion, like organised politics, is ultimately about people gathering together for common action around common beliefs.

They worship together. They study together. They set up charitable works together.

Some regimes in very recent time have sought to destroy organ-

ised religion and they have been invariably secular and totalitarian in nature, from the Soviet Union, to Mao's China to today's North Korea.

These regimes seek to stamp out organised religion because they see it as a rival to their dominance over society. They do not want people looking to any other source of authority. Religions point the way towards the ultimate source of authority, namely God.

“Some regimes in very recent time have sought to destroy organised religion and they have been invariably secular and totalitarian in nature”

Totalitarian regimes would find a privatised, personal, individualistic religion much easier to cope with and control. Millions of disorganised religious believers cannot act as a rival to a totalitarian regime in the same way those same people organised together in religious communities of belief like the Church can.

The Polish communists would have loved it if the Catholic Church did not exist. So would the British in this country in the past, even if

they were not hostile to organised religion, per se.

Around the world, the Catholic Church currently runs 5,000 hospitals, 16,000 health clinics and tens of thousands of schools helping and educating millions of people every day.

People

This is because of organised actions by religious people. No individual could do any of this alone. It can only be done through organisations.

A critic might say it does not have to be done by religious organisations, and that is true, but it so happens that through history it has almost always been done by religious people, acting together.

Christianity, for example, practically founded the idea of the hospital as we have them today and the modern welfare state is based on the charitable work carried out by Christians down the centuries.

Even the harshest critic of Christianity would have to acknowledge this even if they continued to insist that we don't need organised religion anymore.

But a complete end to organised religion would mean an end to communal forms of worship that give countless numbers of people a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives. It would also bring a stop to all the charitable works that religious people continue to do together in almost all parts of the world to this day. Why would any reasonable person seek this?

In light of these arguments, maybe the vote at the Oxford Union wasn't such a surprise after all. Organised religion is, indeed, a net force for good in the world.

“Organised religion, like organised politics, is ultimately about people gathering together for common action around common beliefs”

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From all over the world with love



Incoming pastoral workers have been learning much from a Spiritan-run orientation course as they prepare to minister to Ireland, writes **Jason Osborne**

The Holy Ghost Fathers, more commonly known as the Spiritans these days, have been playing host to a number of Ireland's incoming pastoral ministry workers, priests and sisters alike.

As part of their two week residential orientation course for religious coming to Ireland from all over the globe, the Spiritans have been providing a crash course in Irish ministry at their Retreat and Spirituality Centre in Ardraccon, Co. Meath.

This year, there are 14 participants from a diverse range of places – India, Nigeria, Cameroon, Ivory Coast and Uganda. Ten of the participants are priests, with two of these priests from the Syro-Malabar rite; one other participant is a seminarian, while three are female religious.

“Fr Victor says he’s keen to ‘give back’ to the society that’s given him so much”

“The Orientation Course for Incoming Pastoral Ministry Workers” seeks to support the integration and orientation process for incoming pastoral workers to Ireland, and to prepare them fully for their ministry in parishes and congregational settings.

Goal

The goal is that upon completion of the course, the participants will have received a “holistic” introduction to life in Ireland which will help them to adjust to their new home and feel confident in their ministries.

Fr Victor Akongwale from the diocese of Ogoja in Nigeria arrived in Ireland just over two weeks ago, and brings with him 23 years of priestly experience.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Fr Victor said that his arrival in Ireland, and his participation in the orientation course, feels like a “homecoming” for a



Orientation Course for Incoming Pastoral Workers, Ardraccon, Co. Meath. February 2022.

number of reasons – not least because of the extensive Irish missionary presence in his own diocese in Nigeria.

“I’m enjoying the hospitality of the Holy Ghost Fathers to whom I’m indebted – my seminary was opened by the Holy Ghost Fathers in 1924, so nearly 100 years ago, so this is the second time I’m staying at the Holy Ghost Fathers’ facility. So it’s a homecoming of sorts for me, though I’m not a member of the congregation,” he tells this paper.

Big role

The Kiltegan fathers also played a big role in Fr Victor’s life, the first bishop in his home diocese, the first rector in his seminary and his parish priest all having been Kiltegan priests. The only school in his hometown, St Peter’s, was also built by the Kiltegans.

As such, Fr Victor says he’s keen to “give back” to the society that’s given him so much. Speaking of the moment he was given the choice to come to Ireland, he says it was “exciting”.

“My bishop offered me a choice. He said, ‘Victor, would you like to go?’ And I said, ‘Yes, yes, it’s time to give back.’”

Value

Fr Victor says the course is proving to be of enormous value to him, with the Spiritans providing “the best of the best” in terms of ministerial training.

“[There’s] the history [of Ireland], there are things like the customs, the usage of language and about our own wellbeing. The course goes beyond that, it also deals with self-mindedness, so that we stay healthy, we stay happy and we stay on the path that brought us here,” he says.

It helps them to be “pastoral, without losing our own health or sinking into depression,” Fr Victor says. He’s grateful for the training, as ministry in Ireland will be subtly different from the life he’s used to in Nigeria, he explains.

“Ministry is ministry, one has to confess. You also have to admit that the culture and belief where you find yourself, the setting where you find yourself, affects how you minister. So yes, there are differences there.”

“Where I come from, priests don’t live alone. We would live in pairs, or there’d be three of us. Priests here, it’s almost like being a lone ranger. You have to

look after a huge portion of God’s people...in Nigeria, there’d be two or three of us doing the job or covering the territory one man would cover here.”

“Ministry is ministry, one has to confess. You also have to admit that the culture and belief where you find yourself, the setting where you find yourself, affects how you minister”

Despite the added challenge, Fr Victor is excited to step fully into his ministry in his new home of Swinford parish in Achonry diocese. So far, he says, one of the things he’s found is “the warmth of the people here”.

The Irish people are “very, very warm and very welcoming. They are very happy that you are among them,” he says, continuing, “They’ve embraced me and welcomed me”.

Embedded

Another participant in the course is equally eager to get embedded in her community. Sr Rosemary Muttasseril from Kerala, India, has been a sister with the Disciples of the Divine Master congregation for 35 years, but the past two and a half months have seen her setting change drastically.

“I was in leadership in my congregation in my province in India, so I came for an experience in Ireland to give a service to the Irish community in Newtown Park Avenue. I came for a renewal course...to be helpful to the Irish community here and my community,” Sr Rosemary tells this paper.

“Being with some other people from other places, such as Africa and other countries, it really opens up your mind to grasp more. To know more cultures and backgrounds through other people. Being in Ireland, it is a blessing, I’d say it’s a blessing for me to encounter the richness of Ireland.”

Some of that richness she says she’s already encountered, namely, the “deep spirituality” of the people she’s met.

“India is very vibrant, but I’m just two months over here, and I feel like the people are good and religious-minded, with a deep spirituality....I feel the people are very pious.”

With Fr Victor, Sr Rosemary, and many others currently developing their grasp of ministry in Ireland, the Lord of the harvest is truly sending labourers out into the harvest to be found in our parishes and congregations.

“The goal is that upon completion of the course, the participants will have received a ‘holistic’ introduction to life in Ireland”

Archbishop McQuaid and



A new book on An Garda Síochána reveals how McQuaid's intervention saved the jobs of sacked Gardaí, writes **Ruadhán Jones**

Archbishop John Charles McQuaid is a bit of a bogeyman of Ireland's Catholic past. A controversial figure, he is likely to be remembered as much for his political interventions as for his influence on Irish Catholicism. During his 32-year tenure as Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland (1940-1972), and even before that, he wielded great influence over Irish governments, for better and for worse.

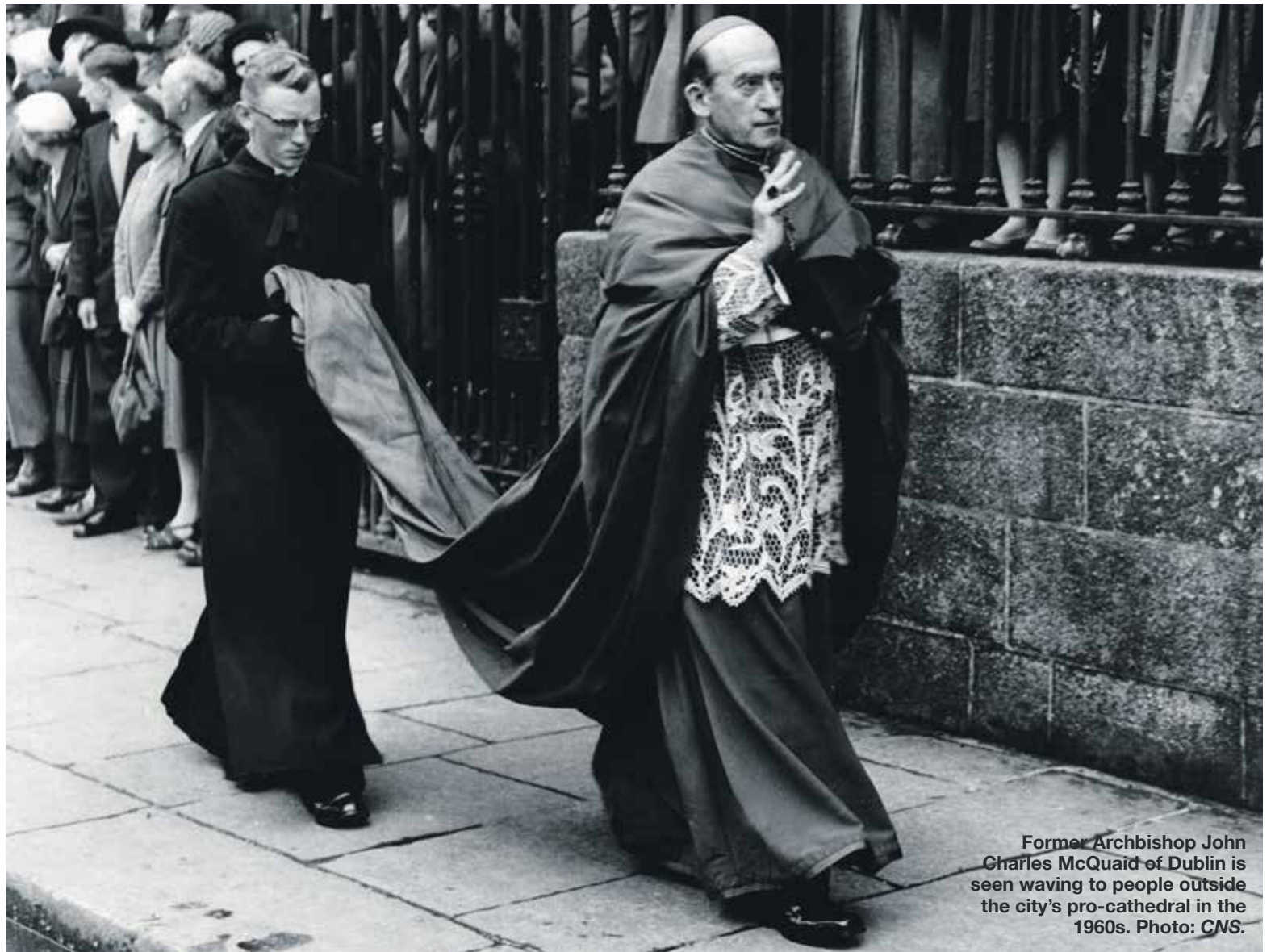
In the popular imagination, Dr McQuaid's legacy is one of arch-conservatism. His criticism of a government proposal for post-pregnancy care for mothers and infants stands out as an illustrative example. However, a new book, on one garda's efforts to modernise An Garda Síochána has shed light on the positive aspect of Dr McQuaid's political power.

Changing of the Guard by retired garda Tim Doyle tells the story of Jack Marrinan's battle to transform the force at a time of great social and economic change in Ireland. Under Marrinan's leadership, the Garda Representative Association (GRA) evolved into a skilful and powerful negotiating body.

“A go-slow protest began, where gardaí conducted their duties with minimal effort”

However, if it weren't for a timely intervention from Archbishop McQuaid, it is possible that Mr Marrinan's efforts to modernise the Gardaí could have been stopped before they began.

Mr Marrinan and Archbishop McQuaid's first encounter was quite a benign one. At the time – the 1950s – Catholics had to get permission to enter Trinity College Dublin, then “a bastion of Protestantism”, writes Tim Doyle. On behalf of the young Jack Marrinan, his parish priest recommended to Archbishop McQuaid that he should be given permission to attend. Dr McQuaid agreed, and, as Mr Doyle writes: “The archbishop, who forgot nothing, would have good reason to remember this young Clareman the next time they met.”



Former Archbishop John Charles McQuaid of Dublin is seen waving to people outside the city's pro-cathedral in the 1960s. Photo: CNS.

The two were brought together again after 11 gardaí, Marrinan included, were dismissed by the Garda commissioner. The events leading up to their dismissal were as follows: in November 1961, younger gardaí were upset when they were excluded from a pay award. The exclusion was the last straw for these young men and women, who had already been struggling with low pay, poor living quarters and a harsh disciplinary regime.

Protest

First, a go-slow protest began, where gardaí conducted their duties with minimal effort. Then, a meeting was organised at the Macushla ballroom in Dublin for November 4. Garda officials claimed the meeting was “unauthorised”, with the threat of penalties hanging over any who went.

Despite this, almost 1,000 members attended the banned protest meeting. The garda hierarchy were swift and harsh in their response, seeking to clamp down on any dissent. Of the thousand, 160 were served with disciplinary notices

charging them with discreditable conduct.

On top of this, Jack Marrinan, who had come to the fore during the Macushla gathering, and ten others were dismissed from the force entirely on November 6. If their dismissal stood, that meant no job, no pension and no prospects. “This was now very serious, as serious as it gets,” writes Mr Doyle. “Everything had changed, and not for the better. Tempers were running high, nerves were fraying,” he says later.

Macushla martyrs

The 11, termed by some the “Macushla martyrs”, continued to meet, and gardaí around the country continued to gather in support, as dissatisfaction reigned. However, at one of the meetings in Galway, news began to filter through that the officers were to be reinstated and on November 13, then-Minister for Justice Charles Haughey announced that any officer who wanted his job back would get it.

So what had made the difference? It would seem to be the intervention

of Archbishop McQuaid on behalf of the 11 gardaí. His action in the story becomes obvious on Sunday afternoon, November 11, days after the Macushla ballroom gathering.

“The 11, termed by some the ‘Macushla martyrs’, continued to meet, and gardaí around the country continued to gather in support”

Jack Marrinan was at the pictures with his girlfriend, when a garda snuck across the aisles and whispered in his ear – the archbishop wanted to meet him. At the same time, writes Tim Doyle, Minister Haughey's car was seen turning into the driveway of Archbishop McQuaid's private house on Military Road, Killiney.

The two had a good working relationship, Mr Doyle explains, as Dr McQuaid's private papers show. “They were both realists and they knew

what they had to do,” Mr Doyle writes. Haughey had already shown an inclination to listen to the younger gardaí's pleas. So long as discipline and normal working returned, it would be matched in parallel by a means of addressing the underlying grievances, he said. After a brief conversation, Archbishop McQuaid offered to publicly mediate in the dispute.

The next day, November 13, Minister Haughey made his announcement. He agreed that any garda who applied would get his job back. “Steps would be taken to address the grievances raised by improvements in the arrangements for representation of garda views,” writes Mr Doyle. “Elections for a new Garda Representative Body would shortly take place and... the matters raised by the Macushla revolt could be addressed.”

Correspondence

Archbishop McQuaid's correspondence file shows just how closely he was involved in getting the 11 guards reinstated and also his insistence that the men's concerns be taken seriously. According to Mr Doyle, a note from Archbishop McQuaid's private secretary dated November 14 said that “the guards concerned have sent in their applications for reinstatement in accordance with the formula suggested by Dr McQuaid”.

The note continued: “Their legal advisers have suggested the following addition: ‘I have been advised that I

“Changing of the Guard by retired garda Tim Doyle tells the story of Jack Marrinan's battle to transform the force at a time of great social and economic change in Ireland”

the 'Macushla martyrs'



Jack Marrinan (second from the left) at the Garda Representative Association (GRA) Conference in 1981. Pictured (from left) are Eamon Doherty, Jack Marrinan, Paddy McLoughlin, Jim Ivers and Gerry Collins. In the background is Michael Conway.

was not lawfully dismissed from the force, and this application is not to be taken as admitting that I was lawfully dismissed'... In deference to Your Grace they refused to make the addition, as they preferred to [leave the matter] in the Archbishop's hands."

Later the same day, Haughey called to Dr McQuaid's house. A document in Dr McQuaid's handwriting explains that he gave Haughey "the men's assurance. [Haughey] was touched and grateful. Assured me that no officer would be on the commission [what would be known as the Fehily Inquiry which was part of the settlement]. No man, I [McQuaid] asked, should be charged or prejudiced in regard to promotion."

Important day

The 14th continued to prove an important day, as Archbishop McQuaid met with some of the gardaí. Each man took the opportunity to thank the archbishop for his intervention. In turn, Archbishop McQuaid warned them "not to be worried by inevitable jolts, remarks etc. after such a settlement." McQuaid instanced a 'very inaccurate report in *The Irish Independent*' which had upset them."

Archbishop McQuaid's involvement didn't end there, however. He spoke to then-Commissioner Daniel Costigan, assuring him of their loyalty and that none of the men said a word against him. On November 16, he again met the men, with all 11 present, along with members of the previous, ineffective representative body. They were afraid that talk in the stations and some press meant that Haughey had gone back on his word, Mr Doyle explains.

Dr McQuaid wrote in a note afterwards that he spent three-quarters of an hour reassuring them. Of the men, "only one was really difficult but that is his type, and he has an offer of another". Mr Doyle comments that Dr McQuaid had as good as identified Marrinan here, before giving the end

of the note: "Eventually one and all declared themselves satisfied".

The esteem Archbishop McQuaid was held in by the affected gardaí led them to confiding in him that there was intimidation happening around the country in garda stations. This was making a settlement more difficult, particularly as senior officers were making threats.

“McQuaid said that he was anxious to resolve the disciplinary crisis which had resulted in the dismissal of 11 gardaí”

Archbishop McQuaid relayed this information to Haughey: "A sergeant in Fitzgibbon Street had spoken on 16 November about the Minister wiping the floor with the rebels. An inspector in Portlaoise had ordered three gardaí to explain their illegal assembly. These are the things that upset young gardaí at such a delicate moment as the present." Haughey gave an undertaking to put a stop to this behaviour.

Archbishop McQuaid's files show that, while his involvement was most effective after the Macushla gathering had taken place, he had attempted to intervene indirectly before that. A note records that Dr McQuaid talked with Fr Tom Fehily, who on November 4 had phoned Assistant Commissioner Quinn. Fr Fehily had asked Mr Quinn to hear Garda Eamonn Gunn, then a representative of a garda union.

Mr Gunn wanted to act as peacemaker, seeking permission to attend the Macushla meeting and ask the younger gardaí to desist. Permission was refused, and McQuaid concludes, presumably in some degree of dismay at the decision, by commenting, "and Gunn is the secretary [representative] answering for 400 men".

However, his interactions with Garda Gunn were not to end there. On the evening of Sunday 12, having already met Minister Haughey, Archbishop McQuaid summoned Mr Gunn and two other gardaí responsible for representative bodies to meet him. Here is how Mr Doyle describes the informal chat:

Resolve

"Over tea and cakes provided by nuns in the adjoining Cenacle convent, McQuaid said that he was anxious to resolve the disciplinary crisis which had resulted in the dismissal of 11 gardaí. The archbishop told Gunn that he had been in contact with the Justice Minister

Charles Haughey, and he had offered to persuade the men to refrain from all undisciplined action, including militant meetings. According to Dunn, 'the archbishop wanted us to leave things to him, and the problem would be overcome'."

Here, Mr Doyle suggests, Archbishop McQuaid was trying to protect the deal he had already brokered. He didn't want Garda Gunn or any of those previously elected to represent Dublin gardaí to step in and torpedo his initiative at that sensitive juncture. He concluded the meeting, which ran until 1am, by saying to Gunn and the others that "your guardian angel would look after you".

“Mr Doyle suggests, Archbishop McQuaid was trying to protect the deal he had already brokered”

Mr Gunn was again present on November 16, when he, Marrinan and the other men who were about to be reinstated met Archbishop McQuaid at Fr Fehily's office. According to Tim Doyle, Mr Gunn said that almost four decades later Fr Fehily told him the Taoiseach Sean Lemass and the Justice Minister Charles Haughey were waiting in the next room for confirmation that the deal had gone through. While this was unlikely, as Lemass was out of the country much of November 1961, it shows the degree of influence Archbishop McQuaid had and his close involvement in the matter.

Around 10 days later, on Monday November 27, Jack Marrinan returned to the force. His notebook entry for the day was initialled and dated by Superintendent Eamonn J. Doherty, the officer who had served his dismissal notice two and half weeks previously.



Jack Marrinan at his desk in the late 1960s.

All the men were reinstated and two months later in January 1962, Haughey set up the Fehily committee to inquire into the conditions of garda service. "While the findings were never published, it was widely believed that the members were shocked with what they learned about garda working and living conditions," writes Mr Doyle. Later that year, when Marrinan applied for promotion to sergeant, he was immediately put on a short list. Although he eventually decided not to go for the position, instead pushing ahead with the Garda Representative Association, the fact that no one opposed him shows the degree to which Archbishop McQuaid's recommendations had been acceded to.

Final word

It seems appropriate to give the final word to Jack Marrinan. After Haughey's November 13 announcement, Marrinan knew that going to McQuaid had worked. But he also realised that he needed to say thank you in writing. While Archbishop McQuaid's legacy will no doubt be debated for many years to come, the letter Marrinan wrote will surely have to be held in his favour as a reminder of the good he achieved during his long tenure.

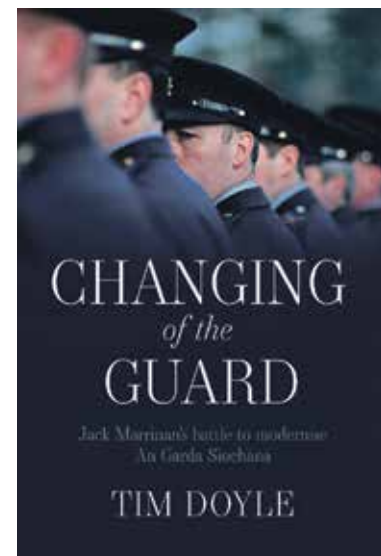
Here is the letter, as printed in *Changing of the Guard*:

"My dear Lord Archbishop
Some of us have already had the privilege of thanking Your Grace in person for your kindness in intervening on our behalf in the recent Garda dispute. We are very conscious of the honour you did us, and indeed the entire force in you thus interesting yourself so personally and effectively in our problems. We now, through this letter, all join together in expressing to Your Grace our united thanks and appreciation for your goodness to us...

With sentiments of deep esteem and gratitude

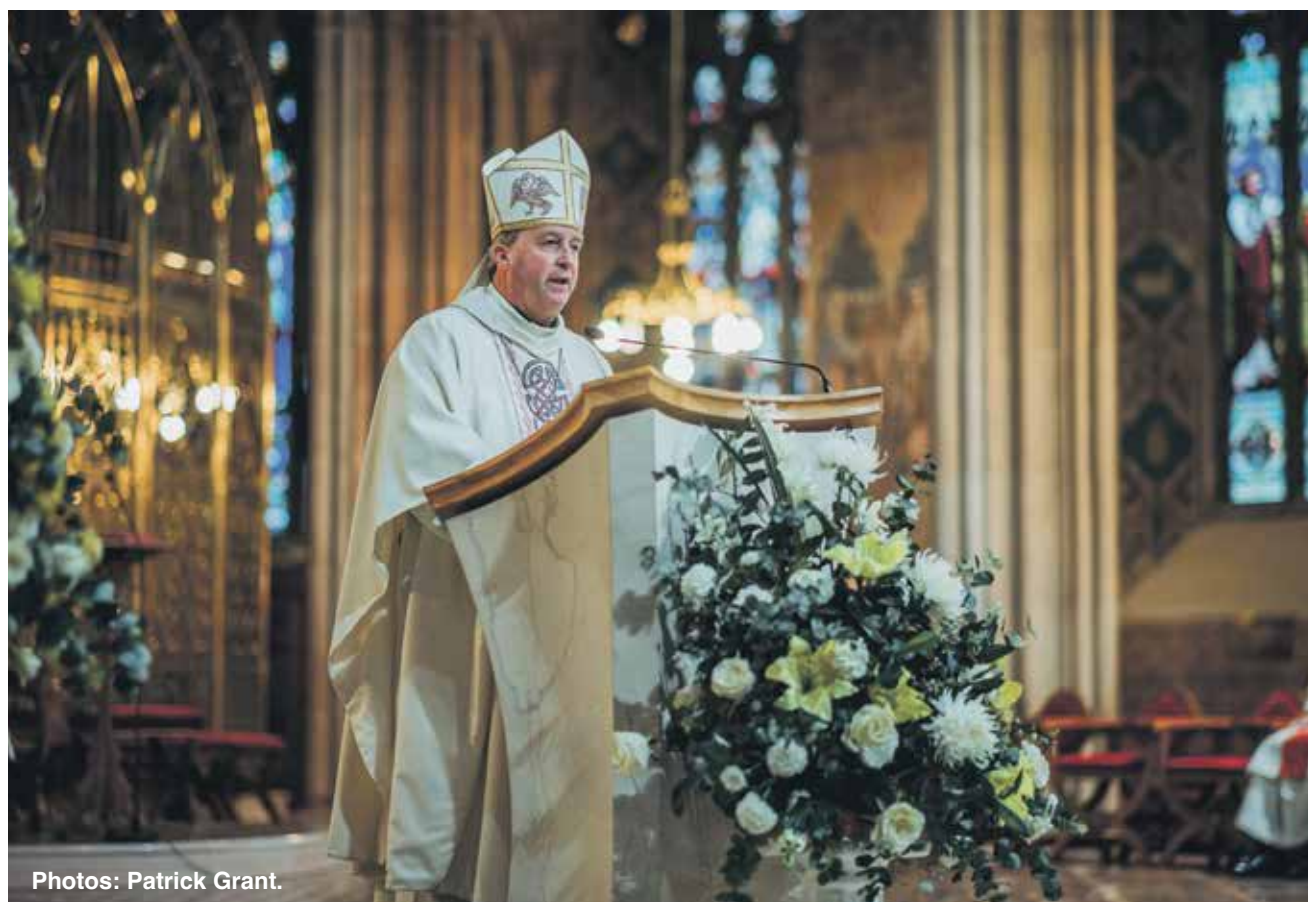
We remain, My dear Lord Archbishop,

Your Grace's obedient sons."



i Changing of the Guard: Jack Marrinan's battle to modernise An Garda Síochána, written by retired Garda Tim Doyle and published by Currach Books, is available online and in stores nationwide.

Young people having a ball the Y2K way



Photos: Patrick Grant.

Jason Osborne

Saturday saw the return of a staple event in the calendars of many young Catholics around Ireland: The Youth 2000 Valentine's Ball.

The ball, which took place in the Armagh City Hotel, was preceded by Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral, celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh Bishop Michael Ruter.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Development and Prayer Group Officer for Youth 2000 Máire McAteer said the atmosphere was "electric".

"There was such a joy and a buzz. After such a long time apart, people were delighted to be together and meet their old friends from across the country, the provinces that they wouldn't have seen in a long time," she told this paper.

"It was the first ball post Coronavirus...last year, we had a massive online blind date on Zoom, and we had nearly 500 people tune in to that.

"There were great fruits from that because at this ball, there were a lot of new faces and people who have never even been to a Youth 2000 retreat, but because friends of friends' had invited them to watch last year's event, they decided to come this year," she explained.

Youth 2000 Regional Leader for Ulster Lisa Russell said that they were "genuinely delighted" to be able to join together again post-pandemic.

"To see so many young Catholics dressed so beautifully for St Patrick's Cathedral for Mass, it was really heart-warming, all so happy just to be present and celebrate their faith.

"We're aware that the Church is going through a challenging time, but Youth 2000 are a real witness to the young people who are just so strong in their faith. If people could witness the true joy and the fun and the loving craic people had at the ball, one could only be uplifted by it. A real day of great hope," she said.

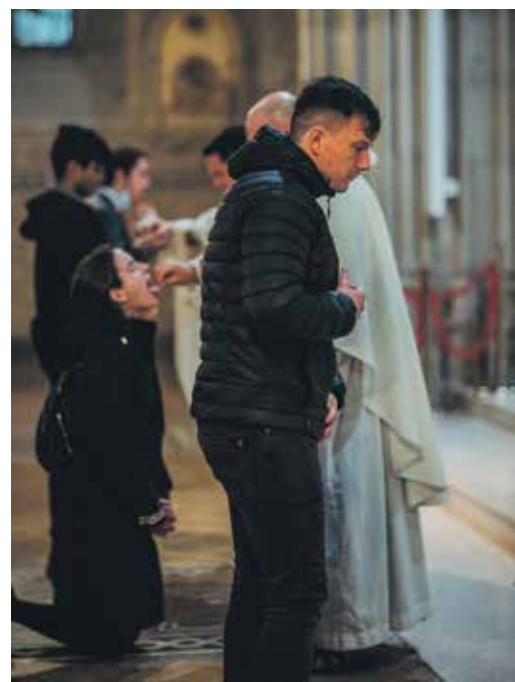






Photo: Sarah Marley.





Out&About

Derry's mayor calls in the experts



DERRY: Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Alderman Graham Warke, pictured with his son Olly and pupils from St Eithne's PS on a visit to the Guildhall. Photo: Tom Heaney



DERRY: Mayor Warke was presented with a booklet 'Our Research on the Guildhall, Derry' by P5 pupils from St Eithne's. Included from left, are Jack, Jenna, Giustina, Lola, Maisie and Nellie Ann. Photo: Tom Heaney.



KILDARE: Trócaire's education officer Niall Quillinan visits Mercy Convent Naas, February 14. He completed workshops with sixth class pupils where they learned all about the work of Trócaire, with a particular focus on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

IN SHORT

First diocesan pilgrimages to Lourdes in three years announced

In-person diocesan pilgrimages to Our Lady of Lourdes shrine in France are underway again for the first time since the pandemic started.

The dioceses of Derry and Down and Connor have announced the dates for their 2022 diocesan pilgrimages, which will take place in July.

The last year dioceses were able to organise in-person pilgrimages was 2019, although virtual pilgrimages took

place in 2020 and 2021.

In a statement accompanying the release of the itinerary, Down and Connor warned that "due to the ongoing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, [the pilgrimage will] be smaller and different" from previous pilgrimages.

Derry diocese also warned of changes, saying that "the pilgrimage will be suitable for pilgrims who do not require medical, nursing or personal assistance as, unfortunately, this cannot be provided this year".

It will be each pilgrim's responsibility to ensure that they comply with France's Covid requirements.

Physio turns musician with CD for the sick

A new CD by a former physiotherapist aims to meet the needs of the sick and suffering with a collection of prayerful songs and hymns.

Former Mayo University Hospital physiotherapist Fiona Jennings recorded *I Thirst* having seen how sickness made it difficult for people to focus on their relationship with God.

"Our faith can be side-lined when our days are filled with other duties, like taking medicines, doing our exercises, going to scans/appointments," Ms Jennings said in a statement.

"This CD is a very prayerful and powerful collection arranged in a way to meet a suffering person's needs."

The CD includes over eighty minutes of material, bringing the listener on a "heavenly journey" with prayers like the rosary and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, as well as healing, surrender and forgiveness prayers recited by various performers.

Almost 20 people were recorded for the project, including tenor Anthony McGorian (Dublin) and soprano Orla Phelan (Kilkenny) and Ms Jennings herself.

It can be purchased in a number of outlets, such as Knock Shrine Bookshop, Smyth's Newsagent, Clarendon and Galway Cathedral Bookshop, with profits going to charity.

For further information, please contact Fiona Jennings at fionatjennings@yahoo.com or by phone at 086 895 8261.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



CORK: Dominican novices lead the way during a candlelight procession during a Lourdes novena Mass at St Mary's Church in Cork City, February 11. Photo: CNS.



SLIGO: Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey visits Cloonacool in Co. Sligo at the base of the Ox Mountains, where the daffodils are blooming, February 13.

DUBLIN: Fr Michael Murtagh PP Ballyroan parish, Joan, Ger and Nuala meet to prepare for the World Day of Prayer, as Ballyroan parish is hosting an ecumenical event March 4 at 7:30pm.



ATHLONE: Fr Michael Hickey of Drum celebrates his 80th birthday by planting a Cherry Blossom tree, February 10.



GALWAY: Bishop Michael Duignan (left), newly appointed as bishop of Galway in addition to Clonfert diocese, and Bishop-emeritus Brendan Kelly meet Sr Collette in the Poor Clare convent in Galway.



DUBLIN: Jennifer Griffin, Accord Dublin, Bishop Denis Nulty, President of Accord, Deirdre O'Rawe, Accord NI and Tony Shanahan, Accord CLG are pictured at the Shrine of St Valentine in Whitefriar Street Church, Dublin after Mass with a renewal of marriage vows for those present, February 14. Photo: Brenda Drumm.

Events

● In the current Covid-19 crisis, it is clear that most (and perhaps all) Church events, other than some Masses, are suspended. Consequently, we are withholding the popular Events Listing column until normal activities can resume in our parishes. However, please do email us if you know of any parish event planned and we will publish details.



World Report

IN BRIEF

Pro-life bell blessed by Pope resounds in Ecuador

● A bell forged in Poland and blessed by Pope Francis has arrived in Ecuador, where it will ring out in honour of unborn children.

The bell, known as the “Voice of the Unborn”, was welcomed into the Cathedral of St Peter the Apostle in Guayaquil, Ecuador’s chief port city, during a Mass on February 12.

The Pope blessed the bell, one of three created at the behest of Poland’s Yes to Life foundation, at the Vatican on October 27, 2021.

The first bell was produced in 2020 after Bogdan Romaniuk, the foundation’s vice-president, read that more than 42 million children are killed annually worldwide as a result of abortion.

Cast in bronze, it weighs more than 2,000 pounds and is nearly four feet in diameter. The bell is decorated with a DNA double helix and an ultrasound image of an unborn child.

Eastern Catholic leaders discuss liturgical identity

● Eastern Catholic Churches must strengthen their liturgical identity, especially given ongoing conflicts in many of the homelands of those Churches and the continuing migration of Eastern Catholics to countries where most Catholics belong to the Latin rite, said a Vatican official.

Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches, spoke at the

opening of a conference marking the 25th anniversary of an instruction from the congregation that urged Eastern Catholics to learn more about their liturgies and to exercise great care in translating the texts and modifying the liturgies.

He said Eastern liturgies are a treasure belonging to the entire Catholic Church and bind it closely to the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches as well.

Rural Africans ignored in EU-African Union deals

● More than 100 faith-based and nongovernmental organisations from 22 African countries, as well as partners like CIDSE, said the EU-African Union partnership failed to improve the lives of rural Africans and needs to put “the dignity and well-being of Africans at the centre of policymaking”.

The joint declaration issued February 16, the day before a two-day summit between the EU and African Union, said “this partnership and similar ones with other world regions have shown themselves to be shadow structures facilitating the grabbing of land, plundering of natural resources, ongoing corporate impunity with the complicity of national and international authorities, and aggressive market expansion at the expense of people’s prosperity and habitats”.

Signatories included representatives of Caritas Africa and various religious congregations and NGOs.

Mexican diocese laments murders of journalists

● Father Martín Lara Becerril, spokesman for the Diocese of Querétaro, lamented the murder of journalists in Mexico and the attempts to silence them, and encouraged those working in the media to have “great courage.”

At a February 16 press conference, Fr Becerril said that “it is a real shame that in a democratic country like Mexico there are deaths and violent deaths against journalists.”

The Mexican priest said that “a journalist fulfills a function in society, which is to inform.”

“Wanting to silence the voices of reporters and often the critical voices is really something very unfortunate,” he stressed.

According to the Mexican press, the first three years of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador’s term have been the most violent for journalists, with 30 homicides, six in 2022 alone.

Cardinal Becciu calls finance probe ‘blitz’ attack

Cardinal Angelo Becciu, former prefect of the Congregation for Saints’ Causes, lambasted a recent financial probe that opened in his native Sardinia.

According to a February 15 report by Italian news agency ANSA, Italian finance authorities conducted several raids on individuals connected with Cardinal Becciu. The raids took place in Rome and in the Sardinian towns of Ozieri, Bono and Pattada, the cardinal’s birthplace.

Speaking to journalists February 18 before the start of the seventh session of the ongoing Vatican trial against him and nine other individuals, Cardinal Becciu said the probe was a “blitz that distressed me so much”.

The cardinal said prosecutors and finance authorities “were very kind” to him and made it clear that it was “a necessary action after (receiving) a report that came from the Vatican prosecutor’s office”.

Cardinal Becciu once again denied accusations that he embezzled an estimated €100,000 of Vatican funds and redirected them to Spes, a Caritas organisation run by his brother, Tonino Becciu, in his home Diocese of Ozieri.

He currently faces charges stemming from a Vatican investigation into how the Secretariat of State incurred millions of dollars in debt in a botched property development project in London’s posh Chelsea district.



Cardinal Angelo Becciu speaks with journalists during a news conference in Rome in this September 25, 2020, file photo. Photo: CNS.

Following the raids, a lawyer representing Bishop Corrado Melis of Ozieri said in a statement that the financial probe was “incomprehensible” and that a prior investigation in July turned up no evidence of financial malfeasance.

“We reaffirm for the umpteenth and – hopefully – last time, that the Diocese of Ozieri has always operated respectfully with regard to religious purposes and solidarity on an economic level, committing its resources to initiatives that are never detached from proven situations of hardship.”

Cardinal Becciu told jour-

nalists that the continuing investigations are “a humiliation for the diocese and for the bishop”.

“I want to express all my solidarity with the bishop who has suffered these humiliations,” he said.

At the trial’s seventh session, lawyers for several defendants once again called on Giuseppe Pignatone, president of the Vatican City State criminal court, to dismiss the charges against their respective clients.

Several of the lawyers argued that prosecutors have avoided sharing all the evidence collected during their investigation.

Among those addressing the court was Salvino Mondello, lawyer for Msgr. Mauro Carlino, the former secretary of then-Archbishop Becciu when he served as *sostituto*, the no. 3 position in the Vatican Secretariat of State.

Msgr Carlino faces charges of extortion and abuse of office in relation to the London property development deal.

Mr Mondello argued that the prosecutor was ignoring information in its possession that could potentially prove Msgr Carlino was in Rome and not in London at a key moment of the transaction.

Indian court bans religious clothing amid hijab dispute

Amid widespread protests over a ban on hijabs in schools, an Indian court has temporarily prohibited all forms of religious dress in schools while it considers a legal challenge to the hijab ban.

The current conflict began in September 2021 when a girl’s preparatory school in the Indian state of Karnataka moved to ban hijabs, saying the Muslim headscarves violated the school’s dress code.

In the months and weeks since, students at various schools in the region

have protested the ban by wearing their hijabs and demanding to be let back into school. At the same time, mobs of Hindu nationalists, many wearing the saffron colour associated with Hinduism, have protested at the schools in support of the hijab ban.

Hindus make up 84% of Karnataka’s people, while about 13% are Muslim and fewer than 2% are Christian.

The government of Karnataka, which has expressed support for the hijab ban, is deliberating whether to pass an anti-

conversion law similar to that of eight other Indian states, which Christians and others say are abused by extremists. Basavaraj Bommai, the chief minister of Karnataka, is a member of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party.

The court then ordered that all students, regardless of religion, should not wear religious garb in school “until further orders.” The court specifically mentioned saffron shawls, scarfs, hijabs, and “religious flags”.

Catholics in Myanmar’s Kayah state in war zone

A Church official from the Diocese of Loikaw told ucanews.com that he was in the middle of a war zone, with sounds of gunfire, artillery shelling and airstrikes a daily affair.

He said the city of Loikaw, in Kayah state, had hundreds of people, “especially women,

children and the elderly”, who were displaced from their homes.

Ucanews.com reported at least 15 parishes in Loikaw Diocese have been severely affected by escalating fighting, while at least seven Catholic churches have been

hit by artillery shelling and airstrikes.

Myanmar’s military junta is now battling ethnic armed groups and local militia groups on multiple fronts. Kayah state, a remote and mountainous region, is regarded as a stronghold of Catholicism in

the Buddhist-majority country. About 90,000 Catholics live in the state with a population of 355,000.

On February 15, a building in the compound of Our Lady, Queen of Peace Church in Dounkankhar was hit by artillery shelling by the military.



Edited by Jason Osborne
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“For theirs is the kingdom of heaven...”



Pope Francis touches a young boy's pacifier as he greets people during his general audience in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican February 16. Photo: CNS

Catholics in Uganda losing donated land due to lack of documentation

Catholics from Mary Mother of Divine Shepherd Mulajje Parish in central Uganda are worried about losing their church and all properties after one of the families that donated the land to the church years ago began to repossess it.

The parish is one among hundreds of Catholic churches in the East African country that continue to lose chunks of donated land due to the lack of proper documentation.

In some instances, churches have been demolished and parishioners evicted, attracting nationwide condemnation from religious leaders, human rights activists, politicians,

and President Yoweri Museveni. Residents have also repossessed land from other religions, including Anglicans, Pentecostals, Baptists and the Seventh-day Adventists.

“What’s happening in our country is evil. Why have people lost respect for God?” wondered catechist Isaac Tumwesige from the Archdiocese of Tororo in eastern Uganda. “Everyone wants to repossess the lands they donated to the church so that they can sell it to get money. Those are forces of darkness bringing such kind of greed. I fear that we are going to lose most of our churches, and this might affect the parishioners who

will be forced to walk for kilometers before they can get another church to worship.”

Mulajje, the second oldest Catholic parish in the Kasana-Luweero Diocese, was established a century ago after well-wishers donated the land. Since then, the parish has grown and even constructed schools, more sub-parishes, and health centres to serve residents.

“It’s disheartening to learn that we might lose our church and properties that have been constructed in the said land,” said 65-year-old Joseph Mayeku, a parishioner at Mulajje. “The government should intervene to help us recover the land that has

already been repossessed and protect the land that people want to repossess.”

Bishop Paul Ssemogerere of Kasana-Luweero said one of the families who had donated more than 60 acres to the parish had already repossessed 45 acres through the court process.

“It’s us to blame for losing these lands, because we didn’t do proper documentation after they were donated to us,” said Bishop Ssemogerere, noting that the conflict was being brought by children and grandchildren of people who donated the land and later died before handing over land documents to the church.

Italy’s constitution court blocks assisted suicide bill

Italy’s constitutional court on February 15 blocked a referendum to decriminalise physician-assisted suicide in the country, citing inadequate legal protections for the weak and vulnerable.

The leadership of the Italian bishops’ conference welcomed the court’s decision in a statement.

The court’s pronouncement “is a very specific invitation... to offer the support necessary to overcome or alleviate the situation of suffering or distress”, the bishops said.

A petition with more than 1.2 million signatures requesting the national referendum was submitted to the Italian court in October 2021.

The constitutional court said it “deemed the referendum question inadmissible”, because if the referendum were to repeal the existing criminal law on assisted suicide, “the constitutionally necessary minimum protection of human life, in general, and with particular reference to weak and vulnerable persons, would not be preserved”.

The court will file its full sentence on the referendum in the coming days.

Both assisted suicide and euthanasia are illegal in Italy, where the criminal law says that “anyone who causes the death of a man, with his consent, is punished with imprisonment from six to 15 years”.

Besides the now-rejected referendum, a bill to legalise assisted suicide, will soon be put up for vote in the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of Italy’s parliament.

Vatican roundup

Pope reflects on what ails the priesthood

● Opening an international conference on priesthood, Pope Francis insisted that those who are not close to God in prayer, close to their bishop and other priests and immersed in the lives of their people are simply “clerical functionaries” or “professionals of the sacred”.

“A priest needs to have a heart sufficiently ‘enlarged’ to expand and embrace the pain of the people entrusted to his care while, at the same time, like a sentinel, being able to proclaim the dawning of God’s grace revealed in that very pain,” the Pope said February 17 as he opened the conference in the Vatican audience hall.

With some 500 people attending in person and hundreds more online, the February 17-19 symposium was organised by Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, and aimed at renewing a theological understanding of Catholic priesthood.

The cardinal told participants he understood how people could wonder about the purpose of such a conference given “the current historical context dominated by the drama of sexual abuse perpetrated by clerics”.

Spanish priest who gave life to save teen to be beatified

● A priest who stood in for a 15-year-old boy who he thought was going to be executed during Spain’s bloody civil war will be among a group of 16 priests, seminarians and laymen who are set to be beatified in Granada, Spain.

The Mass and beatification of the martyrs, including Father Jose Becerra, will take place in the Granada cathedral February 26. Originally scheduled for May 2020, the beatification ceremony was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Tens of thousands of Catholics were killed by left-wing forces between 1936-1939 during the Spanish Civil War; more than 2,000 of the

martyrs already have been beatified and a dozen have been canonised.

Born in Alhama de Granada, Fr José Becerra Sánchez served as a priest in his native town until he was arrested and imprisoned by anti-clerical militants in 1936.

During his imprisonment, the militants also imprisoned Eduardo Raya Mijoler, a 15-year-old boy. The following day, the young boy was escorted from his cell, presumably to be executed.

Upon seeing the young man being taken away, the 61-year-old Fr Becerra told the guards, “Don’t take that boy... Take me, I am already an old man”.

Canons amended to give greater authority to bishops

● Saying he wanted to promote a “healthy decentralisation” of some aspects of Church life, Pope Francis made several changes to Church law, granting greater authority to individual bishops, bishops’ conferences and synods of bishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches.

The changes, the Pope said, should “foster a sense of collegiality and the pastoral responsibility” of bishops and religious superiors who are closest to the matters being decided.

Pope Francis’ amendments to both the Code of Canon Law of the Latin-rite Church and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches were published by the Vatican February 15, the day they were to go into effect.

The modifications, the Pope said, “reflect even more the shared and plural universality of the Church”, which includes many legitimate differences, but preserves its unity in communion with the Pope.

At the same time, he wrote, the changes “encourage a more rapid efficacy of the pastoral action of governance by the local authority, which is facilitated by its very proximity to the persons and situations which require it.”



Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

As the dust began to settle last year on the Vatican's troubled \$400 million dollar land deal in London, and as the colossal dimensions of the failure it represents became clear, Pope Francis was determined to put someone on trial, including his former chief of staff, Italian Cardinal Becciu, along with nine other defendants.

Yet, under the heading of "be careful what you wish for", Francis could find that the primary person on trial ends up being not Becciu and the rest, but himself.

“That, attorneys argued, violated due process, the Vatican's own legal norms, and basic principles of human rights”

That, at least, seems to be the new tactic defence lawyers rolled out Friday, when a Vatican tribunal led by veteran Italian jurist Giuseppe Pignatone conducted its latest hearing in a process that's been underway for seven months and still hasn't gotten anywhere close to considering the actual charges.

Instead, the process has been bogged down with preliminary procedural issues. Initially, they had to do with the prosecution's alleged failures to turn over key evidence, including video tapes of interrogations of star witness Italian Monsignor Alberto Perlasca, objections that still haven't been fully resolved.

On Friday, a new front opened in the struggles over whether this trial should ever get off the ground, this time focusing on the role of Pope Francis himself.

Specifically, defence lawyers Marco Franco, representing financier Gianluigi Torzi who helped broker the London deal, and Luigi Panella, representing the Secretariat of State's former money manager Enrico Crasso, raised the issue of four legal decrees Francis issued at the start of the process, known as *rescriptum*. That, attorneys argued, violated due process, the Vatican's own legal norms, and basic principles of human rights.

Mr Panella charged that the rescripts undercut the legitimacy of the entire process, putting it "outside the laws of this state, but also outside the principles of a fair trial guaranteed by international human rights conventions and the Italian Constitution".

In essence, the rescripts designate this investigation and trial as a "summary rite", basically meaning that it's been conducted on the

Pope's use of authority becomes new front in Vatican 'trial of the century'



Pope Francis looks on during his general audience in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican February 16. Photo: CNS

“Talking with reporters during a break in Friday's hearing, Becciu described the raids as a 'blitz that distressed me so much'”

basis of ad hoc measures that depart in some significant ways from the Vatican's usual criminal procedure. Among other things, those measures authorised wiretaps and other means of electronic surveillance essentially at will, without the need for judicial review, and also allowed defendants to be detained without getting a judge's approval.

Doubts

In addition to doubts about whether such measures impugn the integrity of the process, there are also questions about conflict of interest. In theory, Pope Francis is the victim of the alleged crimes, which involve bilking the Vatican of millions in inflated fees, but he's also the Vatican's supreme authority and his rescripts clearly benefited the prosecution.

In most legal systems, the idea of independent judicial review is to level the playing field between prosecution and defence, and to ensure that someone with a vested interest

in the outcome isn't calling the shots. In this case, defence lawyers are arguing, the deck was stacked from the beginning.

Another reminder of the wide latitude prosecutors enjoy came earlier in the week, when Italian finance authorities carried out several raids in Rome and on the island of Sardinia targeted at individuals connected with Becciu. Talking with reporters during a break in Friday's hearing, Becciu described the raids as a "blitz that distressed me so much".

He said Italian financial authorities told him their hands were tied because the request for the raids came from the Vatican and, under Italy's concordat with the Vatican, they were obliged to honour it.

Apparently, the raids were focused on charges that beyond the London scandal, Becciu also embezzled around \$116,000 from the Secretariat of State's funds and directed them to a Catholic charity in Ozieri in Sardinia run by his brother.

Bishop Corrado Melis of Ozieri called the raids "incomprehensible", insisting that an investigation last July turned up no evidence of wrongdoing, and voiced frustration that he has to defend himself and the diocese for the "umpteenth" time. Becciu insisted the continuing investigations are "a humiliation for the diocese and for the bishop" – not to mention, of course, for himself.

Relief

Whatever one makes of the situation, the fact remains that the raids occurred without judicial approval and there's no Vatican court to which either Melis or Becciu can appeal for relief.

The next hearing in the trial is set for February 28, and Mr Pignatone is expected to rule on the defence objections on March 1. He also said Friday that at the March 1 hearing he'll provide a schedule for future hearings and court activity – adding, ominously, "if there will be future activity", in what some observers took as a sign that he's considering tossing out the entire process.

Here's the thing.

From the beginning of his papacy, Francis has not been bashful about exercising the powers of his office. Earlier in the week, we saw him issue two more *motu proprio*, meaning changes to Church law on

his own initiative, extending his already significant lead in the all-time issuance of the papal equivalent of Executive Orders. Supporters see the Pope's willingness to rule by decree as the resolve needed to make reform stick, while critics see it as arbitrary and excessive.

Up to this point, no one in the Vatican system was really in a position to assess authoritatively whether Francis ever abused his authority. Now, in a sense, that's precisely the call Mr Pignatone is being asked to make. While a Vatican tribunal can't simply overturn a papal decree, since the Pope's personal authority is not a matter for judicial review, it could hold that this specific use of authority invalidates the trial, which would still be a major setback.

However things shake out, this latest turn in the Vatican's trial of the century is a terrific lesson in the Law of Unintended Consequences. Pope Francis wanted this trial because he thought it was important to hold someone accountable – without anticipating, of course, that "someone" could turn out to be him.

i John L. Allen Jr is Editor of *CruxNow.com*

Human rights advocate says Church has kept hope in Venezuela



Rhina Guidos

The load of worries carried on the shoulders of José Gregorio Guarenas, coordinator of Human Rights for the Vicariate of Caracas at the Archdiocese of Venezuela, is heavy.

His work doesn't solely focus on concerns affecting the life of members of the Catholic Church, such as recent cases of nuns facing obstacles in ministering to political prisoners in Venezuelan prisons.

Social situation

It also stretches to concerns that a deteriorating social situation in the South American nation is augmenting human trafficking among the poorer segments of Venezuela's population.

But in the face of all those challenges, he said there's something he wants the world to know.

"This crisis has affected all of us, the Church included," said Mr Guarenas in a February 16 interview with *Catholic News Service* in Washington. "But it's important to note that we have maintained our sense of hope and the (Catholic) Church has played a fundamental role in maintaining that hope. This is not the end."

With help from the Catholic Church in the United States and elsewhere in the world, Venezuela's Catholics have been able to maintain ministries among the country's most downtrodden. While facing some stiff challenges, food and medicine regularly reach the country's poorest through the Church's global humanitarian network Caritas.

Yet the Church struggles to maintain its work in institutions such as schools, prisons and jails and clinics where Church members regularly minister.

Permits for construction of new Church schools linger. Women religious who minister in prisons are forced to wait for hours under sun or rain and often are asked to take off their crucifixes before entering. The government wants to know who's receiving medicines and why, said Mr Guarenas, who has dealt with human rights in the country for more than 30 years.

Some report government officials have started appointing their own priests and bishops, a sort of "parallel Church".

The vicariate's human rights office has long documented those types of violations, even as its staff has faced constant threats, been photographed without their consent and faced general harassment, Mr Guarenas said.

"We've had to bring our profile



José Gregorio Guarenas, of the human rights vicariate in Caracas, pays a visit February 16, to the US Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington. Photo: CNS.

down, decreased public events, not so much because of persecution by authorities but by pro-government groups," he said. "We've faced more aggression from groups of supporters of the government than from the government itself."

During Mr Guarenas' mid-February visit to Washington, funded in part by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Collection for the Church in Latin America, he and a colleague connected with other human rights advocates in the US capital to talk about the situation in Venezuela.

"Inflation soared, jobs went away. Average wages now are about \$25 a month"

For more than 50 years, the collection has funded pastoral programs, seminarian and religious formation, and various ministries as a sign of solidarity between Catholics of the United States and those in Latin America.

Father Leo Perez, director of the collection, told CNS February 17 that the trip was facilitated by the collection so Mr Guarenas and his colleague could dialogue with other advocates on human rights issues.

And there's no shortage of issues in what was once the richest country in South America, largely because of its oil supply.

Venezuela saw its fortunes take a turn in the last decade because of mismanagement of resources and a drop in the value of oil, which plunged even more after political crisis scared off investors.

Inflation soared, jobs went away. Average wages now are about \$25 a month. They can be as low as \$3 a month for those making a minimum wage, Mr Guarenas said.

Primary reason

"The primary reason why Venezuelans leave is because of the economic situation," he said. "The second reason is political, but that's on a smaller scale."

Almost 6 million Venezuelans have left their homeland, according to the most recent figures from the UN Refugee Agency.

That exodus is causing pain inside and outside of the country, Mr Guarenas said. Working-age adults have left the country to be able to send back money so their families can survive, often leaving the elderly alone or leaving them caring for younger children who cannot make the trip outside of the country.

Some Church members have tended to the needs of the elderly, but it is a growing crisis, Mr Guarenas said.

In countries where they have sought refuge, in nearby Colombia, Chile, Brazil, as well as the US, Venezuelans have encountered

xenophobia, faced physical threats, closed borders and even death, Mr Guarenas said.

But the crisis also is fuelling an increase of human trafficking of women and children as well as a type of slave labour of younger workers, Mr Guarenas said.

"The universal Church can help in maintaining us (as) a focal point of interest because ... that which is not spoken about, for some, does not exist"

His office, with financial help from the USCCB's Collection for the Church in Latin America to promote human rights, has been trying to locate the whereabouts of three boats full of people who disappeared in 2020 and have never been heard from again.

"Economic necessity has forced people to accept a variety of conditions and it's something even the families don't want to talk about," he said.

In June 2021, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Vatican officials in Rome about Venezuela, trying to find a path toward dialogue and a solution to the crisis – a task made difficult since the US

does not recognise Nicolás Maduro as the president but Juan Guaidó, whom some recognise as president-in-exile.

Following the meeting, reports surfaced that a Church official had read a letter from a Vatican official at a meeting of a large Venezuelan business group. Maduro publicly responded saying the Vatican had sent a "letter that was a compendium of hatred, of venom," the Reuters news agency reported.

Mr Guarenas said he was not aware of recent efforts by the Vatican to find a solution out of the crisis but said that when it comes to dialogue, "like a lot of dialogues in Venezuela, it goes nowhere".

He said that even though the work of human rights, in any part of the world, presents its challenges and dangers, he remains steadfast that "we don't do this out of ideology ... except for the mandate of Jesus Christ, 'For I was in prison, and you visited me,'" he said, quoting from the book of Matthew.

What keeps him going, along with those who work with him, is the belief that "we belong to a historic moment," he said.

"The universal Church can help in maintaining us (as) a focal point of interest because ... that which is not spoken about, for some, does not exist," he said.

Letters

Letter of the week

A more forthcoming assertion needed on Church teaching

Dear Editor, In a thoroughly referenced article in *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* (July 2, 2020), Fr Regis Scanlon OFM Cap. claimed that Vatican II did not reverse Pius IX's teachings on religious liberty, that the change in the Church's teaching on religious liberty between Pius IX and Vatican II constitutes a "development of doctrine" and not a "reversal" of doctrine; that there was no "no inconsistency" in the Church's teachings on religious liberty between *Quanta Cura* (Pius IX) and *Dignitatis Humanae* (Vatican II).

This is at odds with Sean O'Connell's contention in his letter [The Irish Catholic-February 17, 2022]. Similarly, Sean's assertion about St Augustine in the same letter is open to challenge. In a context of contested views how does one decide on which person to agree with?

Sean is relying on his two declarations, among others, to make a conclusive universal assertion regarding the nature of Church teaching. Consequently, he needs to be more forthcoming on the substance and

validity of the two declarations he makes.

In the context of Sean's assertion on the nature of Church teaching, does it follow that any teaching decreed by the Church, past, present and to come amounts to nothing more than "a temporary little arrangement? Or is *dignitatis Humanae*, as claimed by itself, "in harmony with the things that are old", with "the sacred tradition and doctrine of the Church?"

*Yours etc.,
Neil Bray
Cappamore, Co. Limerick*

Times when one envies the solitary life of a priest

Dear Editor, A recent article [The Irish Catholic-February 10, 2022] entitled 'European cardinals call for major Church changes', quotes Cardinal Marx: "For some priests, it would be better if they were married - not just for sexual reasons, but because it would be better for their life, and they wouldn't be lonely. We must hold this discussion."

The article states that "his remarks on priestly celibacy come as his archdiocese is still reeling from an independent report into its handling of clerical sexual abuse". Sexual abuse is shocking. But, what scandalised believers and non-believers was the way in which Church authorities mis-handled the issue-apparent cover up, lack of empathy with victims and understanding of the seriousness of the crime, silence, lack of cooperation with civil authorities.

If priests marry, to whom do they owe their primary allegiance-family or flock? Currently, the man whom the woman marries is or will be a priest who will or already has espoused himself to a flock.



As the priesthood stands today, where our priests are on call essentially 24/7, the probability for clashes in interests family or flock are infinite.

The issue of 'sexual reasons' may be an issue. But, if Cardinal Marx thinks that marriage solves all sexual concerns,

he may have to rethink. Child abuse is not confined to celibacy. It occurs in married life.

Infidelity/separation/divorce are prevalent in married life. So, it would be naïve to think that a wedding ring is a panacea for 'sexual reasons'.

In terms of loneliness,

yes, priests live quite a lonely life. But, loneliness is also prevalent in married life. Loneliness is a fact of life. Indeed, there are times in married life when one envies the solitary life of the priest!

*Yours etc.,
Malachy Duffin
Bandalstown, Co. Antrim*

Some losing faith in the real presence

Dear Editor, Thankfully some of the restrictions have eased and churches are beginning to fill up again to normal capacity. People have gotten used to the health and safety protocol around receiving Communion. All of which is well and good, stemming from a charitable impulse to be mindful of the physical welfare of our neighbour; and to ensure church buildings were permitted to remain open without further interference from the State.

Yet with all the emphasis on health and safety it seems to have been forgotten who it is we approach in Communion: the Lord himself, the divine healer of body and soul. I have seen people return

from the altar rails with the host still in their hands and in one case, a child in a cowboy outfit, host in one hand, six-shooter dangling from the other.

There have been occasions when I had to remain behind after Mass to surreptitiously check if a host was left on a pew. I admit these instances are very rare, but they shouldn't happen at all. The host should be consumed at the altar before the communicant leaves.

This is not confined to any one parish so I suspect the issue is that many of the 'Faithful' have lost faith in the real presence. Nothing else could explain the lack of reverence towards the host. We never needed our priests and bishops to

re-instill this faith more.

Sadly, most members of the congregation would not take kindly to being individually approached to point this out. Few priests these days would even dare remind the Faithful at Mass of the importance of Confession when necessary prior to Communion. But the pandemic has supplied unexpected opportunities in many ways: as people are already used to taking direction on health and safety, it seems an opportune moment to remind the Faithful of the spiritual protocol around receiving Communion.

*Yours etc.,
Nick Foley
Carrigaline, Co. Cork*

Plans afoot for the new National Maternity Hospital

Dear Editor, Pursuant to novel proposals to advance the long-delayed €800 million National Maternity Hospital (NMH) project, the HSE licence will stipulate legal measures necessary to provide all medical procedures permissible under Irish law. The revised provisions follow recent Government moves to reopen a draft agreement in which the Elm Park site will come under State control for 299 years after its transfer to the NMH from St Vincent's Healthcare Group.

The text of that agreement between the HSE, the NMH and St Vincent's would then be incorporated directly into the licence under which the hospital will operate. The agreement, which has yet to obtain cabinet approval, will be amended to include specific provisions reflective of the fact that procedures at the new hospital will include:

"anything permissible within Irish law."

Former master of the NMH, Dr Peter Boylan has raised "unverified assurances" about the services the new hospital would provide.

The Government has rejected such claims, saying the NMH cannot be perceived as having any religious influence in the new hospital. The plan is to have operational and clinical independence deliverable and permissible in the State. Four months after moves to prolong the hospital lease to 299 years, the latest revised draft agreement effectively doubles the duration of an earlier proposal for a 99-year lease with a 50-year extension. Plans are afoot to expand the number of public interest directors on the board of the new hospital.

*Yours etc.,
Gerry Coughlan
Kilnamanagh, Dublin 24*

Nothing devils flee from more than holy water

Dear Editor, Now that Covid-19 is no longer a major issue, can we please bring back holy water to our churches? Anybody who is worried can sanitise their hands before and/or after they bless themselves. This use of holy water and making a sign of the cross when entering a church reflects a renewal of baptism, a cleansing of venial sin, as well as providing protection against evil.

St Teresa of Avila, the famous mystic, describes a time when she used holy water in her battle against the devil. One night in the chapel, the devil appeared at her side.

He told her that although she had escaped from his clutches this time, he was sure that he would be catching her again soon. She used holy water to combat his presence.

"There was some holy water there, and I threw it in that direction; he never returned again... I often experience that there is nothing that devils flee from more without returning than holy water."

*Yours etc.,
Liam de Paor
Carrickane, Co. Cavan*

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Around the world



▲ **VATICAN:** Members of religious orders use computers as they attend an international symposium on the priesthood at the Vatican, February 17. Photos: CNS.

◀ **VATICAN:** Pope Francis meets with most of the patriarchs and major archbishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the library of the Vatican's Apostolic Palace February 18. The Church leaders were at the Vatican for the plenary meeting of the Congregation for Eastern Churches.



BELGIUM: President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe waves as he arrives for the first day of a European Union-African Union summit at the European Council building in Brussels.



MADAGASCAR: A Malagasy family is pictured outside their destroyed home in Mananjary in the aftermath of Cyclone Batsirai.



BRAZIL: Rescue workers and residents remove a body at the site of a mudslide in Petrópolis, February 16, following more than 10 inches of rain in six hours.



CZECH REPUBLIC: Members of the US Army in Rozvadov, look on as a US Army convoy arrives at the Czech-German border en route to Slovakia to take part in NATO countries' Saber Strike military drills.



The perfect ritual

Sometimes it takes an outsider to help you to see the beauty and depth of something you have never fully appreciated. I suspect this true for many of us, myself no exception, regarding the celebration of the Eucharist in our churches.

David P. Gushee, an Evangelical, recently published a book entitled *After Evangelicalism*, within which he describes his decades-long struggle to make peace with some issues inside his own church. He has remained in his church, though now on Sundays he also goes (with his wife who is a Roman Catholic) to a Catholic Mass. Here's his description of what he sees there.

“A Methodist layman shares this: ‘I’m not a Roman Catholic, but sometimes I go to a Roman Catholic Mass just to take in the ritual’”

“I view the design of the Catholic Mass as something like a polished gem, refined over time to a state of great beauty – if you know what you are looking at. ... The movement of the Mass manages to accomplish so much in something like an hour – a processional, with the cross held high; greetings in the name of the triune God; early confession of sin, brief but compelling; an Old Testament reading read by a lay person; a sung psalm; an Epistle reading by a layperson; the Gospel reading by the priest,



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

and the ceremony around it; a brief homily; the centering movement provided by the creed and the prayers of the people. An offertory and music. Then right to the Table – the people offer gifts that are then offered to God and come back to the people as Christ's body and blood; the kneeling in humility; the Lord's Prayer as an important part of the Eucharistic rite; the precious chance to pass the peace with neighbors just before the supper; more kneeling; the chance to watch the people come up for Communion and pray for them, or instead be quiet with God; the final Trinitarian blessing and recessional.”

Ritual

What an insightful description of the ritual by which we celebrate the Eucharist! Sometimes when we're inside something, we don't see it as clearly as does someone

from the outside.

Let me add two other descriptions that highlight the Eucharistic ritual in a way that we often don't think about or meet in our usual theology and catechesis on this.

The first, like Gushee's, also comes from a non-Catholic. A Methodist layman shares this: “I'm not a Roman Catholic, but sometimes I go to a Roman Catholic Mass just to take in the ritual. I'm not sure if they know exactly what they're doing, but they're doing something very powerful. Take their daily Mass, for example. Unlike their Sunday Mass, they do daily Mass more simply, with the ritual stripped down to its skeleton. What you see then, in essence, is something akin to an *Alcoholics Anonymous* meeting.” Why does he make that connection?

Here are his words. “People who go to daily Mass don't go there to experience anything novel or excit-

ing. It's always the same, and that's the point. Like people going to an *Alcoholics Anonymous* meeting, they're going there to receive the support they need to stay steady in their lives, and the steadiness comes through the ritual. Underneath the surface, each person is saying, ‘My name is ____ and my life is fragile. I know that if I don't come to this ritual regularly my life will begin to unravel. I need this ritual to stay alive.’ The ritual of the Eucharist functions too as a ‘12-Step’ meeting.”

“The ritual of the Eucharist is our one great act of fidelity, and the good news is that this ritual will ultimately be enough”

Another perspective comes from Ronald Knox, a British theologian. He submits that we have never truly been faithful to Jesus. When we're honest, we have to admit that we don't love our enemies, don't turn the other cheek, don't bless those who curse us,

don't forgive those who kill our loved ones, don't reach out enough to the poor, and don't extend our compassion out equally to the bad as well as to the good. Rather, we cherry-pick the teachings of Jesus. But, says Knox, we have been faithful in one great way, through the ritual of the Eucharist. Jesus asked us to keep celebrating that ritual until he returns and, 2,000 years later, we are still celebrating it. *The ritual of the Eucharist is our one great act of fidelity*, and the good news is that this ritual will ultimately be enough.

Approaches

Jesus left us two things: his *Word* and the *Eucharist*. Various churches have taken different approaches as to which of these to give priority. Some churches, like Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and Anglicans have prioritized the *Eucharist* as the foundation on which they build and maintain community. Other churches, most Protestant and Evangelical communities, have reversed this and prioritised the *Word* as the foundation on which they build and maintain community. How do the *Word* and the *Eucharist* play out together?

On the Road to Emmaus when the disciples of Jesus fail to recognize him even as they are walking with him, Jesus stirs their hearts with the *Word*, enough so that they beg him to stay with them. Then he sits down with them for Eucharist, and the ritual does the rest.

“Sometimes when we're inside something, we don't see it as clearly as does someone from the outside”

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, February 24, 2022

Personal Profile

Sharing a
passion for youth
formation

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Hitting the ground running this Lent



Life is a hectic thing. Work, family, hobbies and many, many other things vie for our attention and demand our efforts day in, day out. These are all very good things, of course, but none of them are our highest goal: God. We're only human, and life in the world easily distracts us from God, even if the distractions are good things in and of themselves.

This isn't to say that a busy life occupied with people and important matters can't be deeply holy, just that it's easy for our attention to become divided as the days pass – that's my experience, anyway. As ordinary time rolls on, I sometimes find myself overly focusing on one or another of the things that it's normally good for me



Lent is the ultimate time for re-focusing on the most important things in life, writes Jason Osborne

to be preoccupied by. Like many people, then, prayer and my relationship with God are the first things to suffer when work or an exciting activity asserts itself with force.

With Lent coming up, we're given the perfect opportunity to repent, and recommit to God. What exactly does that mean?

Repent

The word so often, and perhaps misleadingly, translated

as 'repent' in Mark's Gospel is *metanoieite*, a Greek word which is derived from *meta* (beyond) and *nous* (mind/spirit). Where the word 'repent' has taken on unsavoury, moralising overtones for many people, *metanoia* may help us instead to grasp the reason for our Lenten practices.

The essence of *metanoia* is that we're called to a new way of seeing and of being. Whereas once our minds and spirits were set on lower things than

the Creator, now we're called to perform an about-turn and focus on him from whom all good things come.

How does one go about that transformation of being? By participating in the Church's full schedule throughout Lent, is my best suggestion. It's worth taking a look at that here to see how the Church's traditional Lenten outlook and practices are intended to transform us and renew our spiritual lives.

Lent

Always a good place to start, the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that by "the solemn forty days of Lent, the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert" (paragraph 540).

Lent is 40 days, modelled

after our Lord's 40 days in the desert as should be evident from the above, of prayer, fasting and almsgiving that begins on Ash Wednesday, which is March 2 this year. It draws to a close at sundown on Holy Thursday, leading us into Good Friday and the agony of the Passion.

Lent is a time of preparation for celebrating the Lord's Easter Resurrection. During Lent, the Church advises us to double down on the things mentioned above: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We pray personally and communally during this time, availing of the sacraments and adopting a more reflective mindset than usual. We fast by giving up on excessive

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Family News



AND EVENTS

MAN TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID FOR 14 MONTHS STRAIGHT

When Muzaffer Kayasan first caught Covid-19, he thought he was destined to die, as he was already suffering from leukaemia.

Fourteen months and 78 straight positive tests later, he is still alive – and still battling to shake off the infection.

Mr Kayasan, 56, has Turkey's longest recorded continuous Covid-19 infection, doctors say, possibly due to a weakened immune system from the cancer.

Despite being in and out of hospital since November 2020, his spirits have been high.

"I guess this is the female version of Covid – she has been obsessed with me," Mr Kayasan joked as he found out that his latest PCR test was, yet again, positive.

Coronavirus patients with immunosuppression are at risk of prolonged infection with severe acute respiratory syndrome, according to a study published last year in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

ELEPHANT TUSK DNA SLEUTHING REVEALS IVORY TRAFFICKING NETWORKS

DNA testing on seized ivory shipments that reveals family ties among African elephants killed for their tusks is helping to identify poaching areas and trafficking networks at the centre of an illegal trade that continues to devastate the population of Earth's largest land animal.

Researchers said they conducted DNA tests on 4,320 elephant tusks from 49 ivory seizures, totalling 111 tons in 12 African nations from 2002 to 2019.

The results could help crack the transnational criminal organisations behind the trafficking and strengthen prosecutions.

"These transnational criminal organisations we're trying to get – they are the key," said University of Washington biologist Samuel Wasser, lead author of the study published in the journal *Nature Human Behaviour*.

Most ivory is exported in large consignments – up to ten tonnes each – shipped as marine cargo and concealed among legal exports crossing oceans on container ships.

The DNA testing matched two tusks from the same elephant or, more often, tusks from close relatives found in separate containers for shipment in the same port.

STUDY CLAIMS PHARMACEUTICAL DRUGS POLLUTING RIVERS WORLDWIDE

Potentially toxic levels of pharmaceutical drugs have been found in a quarter of river locations examined across the world, a study has found.

Researchers from around the world surveyed more than 1,000 sites on 258 rivers, from the Thames in London to the Brazilian Amazon and rivers in major cities such as Delhi, New York and Guangzhou.

The assessment measured the presence of 61 pharmaceuticals, including some compounds also linked to lifestyles such as caffeine, and whether they were above levels where they could have an effect on the environment.

The study, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, warns that pollution of the world's rivers by medicinal chemicals is a global problem.

The facts of Covid-19



Nearly one in five people or just over 1.25 million have tested PCR positive for Covid in Ireland since the pandemic began. With hundreds of thousands more infected but not officially tested the proportion of the population that have escaped Covid may be a lot smaller than many would have anticipated. The death toll now stands near 6,500 of which about 50% were aged over 82. To date, 22 healthcare workers have also died from Covid-19.

“Loss of smell is distinctly less common with Omicron though a runny nose and sneezing may occur in up to half of cases”

Just how long more the pandemic will last is the big unanswerable question, though there are grounds to be optimistic. Numbers in hospital are stable at about 600 but this is small relative to the high infection rates and is after the lifting of nearly all restrictions one month ago.

The Omicron variants in the vast majority of people do not seem to cause symptomatic infection of the lung or bronchitis but tend to give rise to a sore throat, night sweats, fatigue, muscle pain and headache. Loss of smell is distinctly less common with Omicron though a runny nose and sneezing may occur in up to half of cases. Whether the incidence of long covid is any different is unknown.

Importantly, while there has been some decline in the protection provided by vaccines

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



to Delta and Omicron variants, they remain very effective at preventing moderate to severe disease. Over 2.7 million people have now received booster vaccines while 3.7 million have had a standard vaccination course of two doses. A new subvariant of Omicron that now accounts for the majority of cases in Denmark appears to be more transmissible but doesn't result in more severe disease.

Not surprisingly, scientists have turned back to make comparisons with the Spanish Flu of 1918. It is estimated to have affected about 800,000 Irish and resulted in about 20,000 deaths in a pandemic that spanned three waves. Of course pandemics always end, but we don't have any experience of any previous coronavirus one as a road map in predicting the future! It has been speculated that a "Russian Flu" pandemic in 1889 may have actually been due to a coronavirus but this very much remains a theory. What we do know from the flu of 1918 is that viruses don't go away but become endemic and sometimes seasonal.

Differences

There are some differences with coronaviruses compared to influenza. They have slightly longer incubation period and people tend to be sick and infective for

triggered by the virus seems to wane significantly though there is still a degree of protection even from natural infection. However, we also have the added benefits of vaccination. There are already four different, seasonal coronaviruses in circulation that cause the 'common cold' though less severe disease than Covid.

“Interestingly, in those who already had long Covid and were previously unvaccinated, subsequent vaccination was found to on average reduce symptoms”

Undoubtedly, lockdowns and shutdowns at different times have also influenced patterns of waves emerging. It seems unlikely that any new variants will now emerge that will cause more severe disease. Omicron is so transmissible that it would out compete other types, yet results



in only mild illness for most people. However, re-infection with a new Covid strain can occur.

What about long covid? Long covid refers to a persistence of symptoms beyond 12 weeks after infection. These may include fatigue, 'brain fog', headaches, generalised weakness, muscle

pains and loss of smell. It is difficult to know the true incidence which may be between 10-20%. While ongoing shortness of breath can result from scarring in the lungs the mechanism for others is unclear. It is possible that fragments of virus may remain in the body for longer periods and trigger ongoing inflammation. It has also been suggested that immune dysregulation might allow other dormant viruses to become activated.

Models

In animal models, mild Covid was associated with activation of brain cells (microglia) and high levels of inflammatory proteins that are also found in patients with 'brain fog'. Fortunately, there is evidence that suggests that vaccination may reduce the risk of long Covid in those who get breakthrough infection. Interestingly, in those who already had long Covid and were previously unvaccinated, subsequent vaccination was found to on average reduce symptoms.

Finally, there is good news in that there are two oral antiviral drugs approved in the US for treating Covid, both of which are currently under review by the European Medical Agency. Paxlovid given within five days of symptom onset was shown to reduce the risk of hospitalisations and death for high risk patients by 88%. Treatment with Molnupiravir within three days of developing symptoms in patients with mild to moderate Covid with at least one risk factor for severe disease, also reduced by 33% the risk of going to hospital and death.

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

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attachment, by foregoing whatever we find ourselves attached to. We serve by giving alms, which draws our minds to the service Christ first offered us.

Many of us still hold unconsciously to the idea of Lent that we picked up in school, which is one of very minor sacrifices. A chocolate bar here, a bag of crisps there, with a couple of stumbles along the way probably. This understanding of Lent must be left behind if we're to enter into the true spirit of the season, which is one of true, internal conversion of heart as we seek to follow God more faithfully.

“Would it be a good idea to engage with the Scriptures more by reading the daily readings each day, or by following a reliable reading plan?”

With the bones of Lent established, now would be a good time to consider how best to prepare to engage with the three aforementioned pillars of Lent. We make the most use of the spiritual occasions if we prepare for them beforehand, if we form a plan and stick to it. Just as rolling out of bed late and mousing a few bleary prayers is less useful and sanctifying than an orderly morning, so too is a pre-planned Lent entered with clear disciplines in mind bound to be more fruitful than otherwise.

Preparation

Here are some things to consider beforehand when it comes to prayer, fasting and almsgiving:

Have you got a daily prayer plan? Have you got the time to make a commitment to daily Mass? Or would 15 committed minutes of meditative or contemplative prayer each day be more realistic? Would it be a good idea to engage with the Scriptures more by reading the daily readings each day, or by following a reliable reading plan? Do you have the space for an extra devotional for the duration of Lent such as the rosary or the divine mercy chaplet? Would spiritual reading and a daily examen before bed each night be spiritually beneficial for you?

When it comes to fasting, are you being generous in your sacrifice, for God's sake? Is your current commitment likely to enhance your spiritual life, or is it a light burden? Besides following the basic laws of abstinence and fast-



ing, with perhaps added personal restrictions on luxuries such as entertainment, have you considered applying fasting to your relationships? Is it possible to work on your shortcomings, such as angry retorts or over-agreeableness, by fasting from them?

“I've been guilty in the past of going into Lent blind and unprepared, but I'd like to co-operate with God this year by approaching it readily”

In terms of almsgiving, are you truly serving others this Lent? How much of your time are you devoting to others compared to yourself? Could it realistically, and healthily, be more? Could you afford to donate to a verified, charitable cause or organisation? Could you overcome yourself more often to serve those who most easily overlooked – your close family and friends?

These are but a few questions to stimulate Lenten preparation. I've been guilty in the past of going into Lent blind and unprepared, but I'd like to co-operate with God this year by approaching it readily. Who knows what wonders God can work with a willing heart?

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



The storm coming in from the Atlantic heralded a happy day in our household. After two weeks in quarantine, the children were finally able to go back to school and preschool. Each one skipped out merrily into the rain, to breathe the gusty air of freedom.

It had been a long couple of weeks cooped up in the house. It had been tough for us all at times, especially my wife who had to isolate with the two smallest, while also suffering from Covid herself. Thankfully, she is also now back in work and on the mend. I somehow managed to dodge the illness, so I spent a fortnight in the role of nurse, chef, teacher and general dogsbody. Amid the chaos, I also had to work online. Yet we muddled through, in a hazy fog where days melded into nights.

One of the most disconcerting things about the wave of illness that swept through our house was its ambiguity. Those testing positive were often largely asymptomatic, while those with the most abundant symptoms tested resolutely negative, yet still had to be treated as positive. Some suffered terrible coughing fits and sharp aches and pains. There's nothing worse than seeing a child suffer. You wish you could take on their pain for them, but you can't. You can only administer painkillers, good food, comfort and love.

These past two years of pandemic have stolen parts of the children's childhoods. Yet they have also engendered a fierce closeness within many families. Thanks to lockdowns, symptoms or positive tests, our universe has regularly been shrunk to the size of our house and garden. In that little world, there's just the six of us – and nanna when

she's staying with us. In the past, this was the way of life for many rural families. They had no cars to whip them off to clubs and work, away from the home. They had no screens to enable two people to be physically in the same room, but oblivious to one another, in their different worlds.

I know that our three-year-old was completely delighted to have her mother to herself, 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Myself and my son had to retreat to the apartment at one stage, and it was a lovely bonding time, with conversations that went on long into the evening. It was like an extended father-son camping trip, in the middle of winter.

The pandemic has moved the focus of children's lives more onto their families and their homes. Their peer groups, schools and clubs became much more peripheral during the pandemic. Perhaps this has been a remedy to our more atomised society, when technology shortens our attention spans and sends our consciousness flickering about, all over the world. In my teenage years, like many, for a time my friends seemed far more important and interesting than my family. I remember my father saying to me, “it's great to have friends, but don't forget, we're the ones who'll be here for you for the rest of your life”.

The pandemic has had many downsides for the children, but perhaps it has also given them more secure foundations in life, by regularly mandating quiet weeks and months of a simpler life, spent at home, with those who will be with them forever. Those vital, loving, life-long bonds, are forged in the family and in the homestead. They may well have been made stronger by these strange times.



Sharing a passion for youth formation

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

Charlotte Gormley's faith is grounded in her experience of well-run youth retreats. Having been raised in a Catholic family, retreats during her teenage years reinvigorated her faith. Now, having taken on the role of faith formation coordinator for the parishes of Banagher and Claudy, she hopes to give back what she has received.

“However, as a teenager, Charlotte drifted away from the Faith, losing interest in going to Mass”

Northumberland-born, Ms Gormley explains that faith has been important to her from a very young age.

“I grew up in a Catholic family,” she begins. “My parents and my siblings, we all used to go to Mass every week and I grew up going to Catholic schools as well. It was always a part of my life, celebrating the Sacraments and the like.”

However, as a teenager, Charlotte drifted away from the Faith, losing interest in going to Mass.

“It was just one of those teenage things of your parents wanting you to go, and I thought I wanted to do

better things on a weekend and stuff like that. It definitely wasn't a massive priority in my life when I was a teenager,” she says.

“But in my secondary school, when I was 15/16, I got the opportunity to go on a residential retreat in a Catholic youth retreat centre, which was close to my school and to my home. I just had an amazing experience there.

“It was lots of fun. It was two days out of school, which was nice for me at that age. It was really informal and it was two days away with my friends, but in an environment that was based around faith, a Catholic retreat. They did it in such a way that was so relatable and enjoyable and modern. It really just struck a chord with me, that actually faith

isn't boring and that it's something that could be for me. That was something that got me thinking about it and got me more involved.”

Retreat

After her retreat experience, she signed up for all the retreats that followed, and became more involved in her school's chaplaincy.

“It was very nice, it was a social thing as well. But it was also faith in a way that I had never experienced it before. Because I had only ever experienced it by going to Mass on a Sunday, which is obviously fantastic but as a teenager, it wasn't as appealing to me as a faith that was relatable and something that was a lot of fun.”

After finishing her A-levels, the English equivalent to the Leaving Cer-

tificate, Charlotte decided to take a gap year.

“I didn't feel like I quite wanted to go to university straight away,” she explains. “The retreat centre that I went to when I was in sixth form at school, they had a gap year opportunity. I thought, I've had a such a great time over the years going on retreats as a young person, that I would love to be able to give that experience back to other young people at school. I applied for the gap year and got a place, so straight after school I moved in.

“Charlotte spent two years in Derry, before returning to England to complete a degree in theology and religious studies at St Mary's University, Twickenham”

“It was like a residential retreat centre. You lived in community for a year with other young people. We worked together on the retreats, we prayed together in the morning and the evening and we ate together and we socialised together. It was a year of community life based around the Faith. There were 12 of us like-minded young adults doing youth ministry and ministering to the children in the schools in our local area.

“After that, I got the opportunity to stay on and do a second year in the community in the retreat centre. So I stayed there for another year, so that's where my passion for youth and love for youth ministry came from,” Charlotte finishes.

But her involvement in youth ministry didn't end there. Her boss at the retreat centre, Fr Dermot Donnelly, was friends with Fr Paul Farren at St Eugene's Cathedral in Derry.

“They were having a conversation and Fr Paul wanted to start up something similar to where I was in Newcastle. He asked if there was a chance I would go over. I said yes and I came over and visited. I just really liked it, so I took up that position.”

Charlotte spent two years in Derry, before returning to England to complete a degree in theology and religious studies at St Mary's University, Twickenham.

“Theology was the only thing that I was really passionate about and felt I knew well enough. St Mary's seemed like the perfect place to go. It had a vibrant Catholic chaplaincy, it was quite a small university, which suited me, because I was a little bit older. I wasn't 18 years old going straight from school. I'd been out for a few years. It was quite appealing in that sense, and offered different opportunities and things like that.”

Undergraduate course

Having completed her undergraduate course, Charlotte began a Master's degree in Christian spirituality, which she is about to graduate from. She has also taken up her role in Banagher and Claudy, which she says she's very excited for.

“I'm excited to apply all my experience and knowledge in working now to two country parishes, which is something different. It's a new experience that I'm excited to explore. I've only been in it a couple of months, I'm only finding my feet, getting things off the ground a bit. There will definitely be more things coming up once I get more settled in.”

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

Living Laudato Si'

Jane Mellet



Responding to the cry of the poor this Lent

In November 2021, Pope Francis launched the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform, a seven-year programme for the church to live out the call to care more deeply for God's creation. The platform is based on achieving seven *Laudato Si'* Goals (LSGs) across seven church 'sectors' over seven years – a jubilee for the earth.

Last month we explored LSG1 – Responding to the Cry of the Earth. This month let us explore *Laudato Si'* Goal number 2 which is the call to Respond to the Cry of the Poor. This goal acknowledges the fact that we cannot talk about protecting the environment if we are neglecting the world's most vulnerable people.

Both issues are deeply interconnected. LSG2 is a call to promote eco-justice which means acknowledging that the environmental crisis affects the world's poorest people the most. This is an issue of justice because they have done the least to cause this crisis yet suffer most of the consequences. This goal also reminds us that we are called to defend human life from conception to death, and all forms of life on Earth.

So what might this goal look like in action? Any initiative or project which promotes solidarity with the poor is a response. Efforts to explore issues that affect vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, refugees, migrants, people who are homeless or who are on the front lines of climate change would be included under this LSG2.



Initiatives could involve hearing the voices and experiences of these groups. In Trócaire through our Lenten Campaign each year, we strive to lift the voices of those we work with overseas, to tell that story, to invite people into the narrative of what life is like when, for example, climate change affects your food security as a family or a community.

This year's Lenten campaign focuses on Zimbabwe, and we meet Thandekile, a young mother and her two children, No Matter and Forward. Their lives have been severely impacted by three crises: food insecurity, climate change and the Covid-19 crisis. Through telling Thandekile's story this Lent, in our parishes, schools and families, we are responding

to the Cry of the Poor, creating awareness of the root causes of these injustices and offering hope. Through the partners we work with in Zimbabwe, our work strives to empower women, to promote sustainable methods of agriculture, to support and advocate for human rights.

For a parish to address LSG2 they might create a calendar of one or more annual events to promote social and ecological action such as welcoming migrants, blessing and planting trees, watching films together, holding community suppers, and choosing days that have significance within the Church (such as the Feast of St Francis of Assisi or the World Day of Prayer for the Poor), the global community (such as Earth Day or World Water Day), or the country (such as national volunteering or environment days).

Most of us are overwhelmed when it comes to the environmental crisis. But the *Laudato Si'* Goals are a way forward, a roadmap, a gift. Go to www.laudatosiplatform.org to find out more. Perhaps your family, school or parish could consider signing up?

Jane Mellett is the Laudato Si' Officer with Trócaire

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Brewin' up an opinion-storm ahead of St Patrick's Day

It's a bit early to be brewin' up a storm about St Patrick's Day (St Eunice, maybe), but there seems to be some level of friction about it every year. A conflict over St Patrick's Day stamps blew up on **Liveline** (RTE Radio 1 Thursday), grist to the mill for that *Confessio*-type show. The first caller, Patrick (suitably enough) was critical of An Post for not intending to include the saint on the stamp. He said this omission had been the case for the past three years, regarding this as part of the "re-paganisation" of Ireland. Presenter Joe Duffy seemed to be broadly favourable of having the saint honoured by a stamp – he had recently given a talk in Downpatrick and found out that St Patrick is the most widely celebrated patron saint in the world.

The next caller, Lisa, was having none of it – the saint's day was just an excuse for over indulgence – unfortunately true in many cases. These were different times she said and it was more appropriate to have people like drag queen Panti Bliss or medical campaigner Vicky Phelan on the stamp. I could go with one of those, at a different time of year. Lisa lost me at this stage, saying "why bother" and "the Church is gone really". Duffy demurred, saying that in the last census 86% of the people professed to be Christian. It morphed into a discussion of clerical child



People wave as they watch the St Patrick's Day Parade in Dublin March 17, 2019. Photo: CNS

abuse but Joe pointed out that only a very small amount of clergy was guilty and they were involved in only a small percentage of the abuse. He didn't want everyone "tarred with the shame brush", a pun that sounded unintentional, but apt.

Elizabeth understood people's sensitivities over child abuse and wondered how we could carry our history forward, but Lisa was somewhat offhand with her. Duffy suggested that Lisa was not inclusive and that she was dismissive of Elizabeth, who seemed to end her call rather suddenly, though courteously.

Lisa made some good points in relation to abuse and said she understood the devotion of older people, but undermined her stance I thought by disrespectfully referring to their belief in a "Sky Daddy".

Dave saw an anti-Catholic stance from the powers that be – we were "almost ashamed to celebrate the fact that we're Catholic". Sorcha had a sad and moving story of having had a child taken from her to be adopted, but hadn't lost her faith or her love of God over this. Shay wasn't particularly religious but favoured St Patrick's return to the stamp. The cringe-

worthy stamps for Christmas 2022 got unfavourable mention and it felt like Joe wasn't too enthusiastic about these either, with their trite messages of 'Ho Ho Ho', 'Naughty or Nice' and the like.

It's unfortunate that St Patrick's Day can often be linked to intemperance. On the flip side the virtue of temperance was highlighted in last Sunday's **Service** (RTE One). Fr Robert McCabe from Navan and Chaplain to the Pioneers led a dignified prayer service with beautiful music from Ephrem Feeley, accompanist David Burke and pupils from St Joseph's Mercy

PICK OF THE WEEK

LIFE ON THE ROCK

EWTN Saturday February 26, 3.30 pm

Fr Mark interviews Rachel Harkins Ullmann of the Given Institute, which mentors young adult women, activating their gifts for the Church and creating leaders in the workforce.

MASS

RTÉ One Sunday February 27, 11 am

Mass with students and staff from Blessed Trinity College, North Belfast, County Antrim. Musical Director is Miss Michelle Harte. Today's celebrant is Fr Eugene O'Neill.

GOSPEL MUSIC IN 6 SONGS

BBC 4 Friday March 4, midnight

British soul singer Mica Paris with a personal exploration of the history of Gospel music.

Schola, Navan. I particularly liked the familiar but haunting *Sweet Heart of Jesus* and the unfamiliar (to me at least) *O God You Are My God* a setting of Psalm 63 by Sue Furlong. The Lord's Prayer and the Serenity Prayer were prominent, and there was a striking combination of the 12 Steps of recovery from alcoholism with the Kyrie. Suitably, love was the theme of the readings, from St Paul's reflections on love to the Gospel adjuration to 'love one another'. Fr McCabe effectively linked addictions to Covid related restrictions, showing how both involved the virtues of temperance, prudence, fortitude and justice. I liked his characterisation of habits – "too weak to be felt until too strong to be broken".

Finally, another Irish spir-

itual tradition is this week's Galway Novena, attracting 10,000 people a day pre-Covid. This year it is online at the Galway Cathedral website and there was a very positive item about it on **Drivetime** (RTE Radio 1, Friday). There was a vox pop from the Cathedral, with people speaking of the importance of the event for prayer, petition and thanksgiving. Though preferring the in-person experience, most were enthusiastic about it being online though one woman said she found it hard to concentrate at the computer.

I can relate to that!

✉ boregan@hotmail.com,
@boreganmedia

Music

Pat O'Kelly



Concert Hall begins February with captivating musical occasion

The National Concert Hall's *International Concert Series* 2022 began on February 13 with an impressive recital by South Africa-born soprano Golda Schultz and Texan pianist Jonathan Ware.

Their programme celebrated women composers – Clara Schumann with her lesser known German contemporary, Emilie Mayer; the century-later English composer Rebecca Clarke, who spent the latter part of her life in the US; Clarke's French contemporary Nadia Boulanger, a potent influence on her composition students during her long teaching career and Golda Schultz' compatriot Kathleen Tagg (born 1977).

Relative unfamiliarity with the programme may have



Soprano Golda Schultz.
Photo: Gregor Röhrig

had something to do with the rather 'small house', which was a pity as this was an extremely rewarding musical occasion.

Unfortunately through transport difficulties en route, I missed part of Ms Schultz' opening Schumann lieder but soon realised the exceptionally expressive singer, brilliantly accompanied by Jonathan Ware, was a positive force with whom to be reckoned.

Response

With her sensitive response to Mayer's *Wenn den Abendstern die Rosen* and *Du bist wie eine Blume*, I knew I could safely relax without fear of anything going awry. Certainly the beauty and quality of Golda Schultz' tone cast a wholly captivating spell while her powerful approach to Mayer's *Erkönig II* meant it holding its own against the much better known Schubert

setting of this poignant Goethe tale.

An Irish connection came with the first of Ms Schultz' Rebecca Clarke selection – Yeats' *Down by the Salley Gardens* – before she brought us into the totally contrasted and vividly dramatic ambiance of Clarke's take on William Blake's *The Tiger*. Here the singer rose to the music's challenges with significant vocal colour and striking imagination.

Clarke's *Cradle Song* was tenderly meaningful while the close interpretative bond between Golda Schultz and Jonathan Ware reached an exalted apex in *The Seal Man* with its John Masefield text.

Boulanger's *Prière*, *Cantique*, *Elégie* and *La mer est plus belle* showed the vocalist's innate

ability to seamlessly float across her expansive range with ease and assuredness.

Collaboration

The somewhat short evening ended with Kathleen Tagg's collaboration with US writer Lila Palmer and Palmer's three-poem cycle *This be her verse*. The composer could hardly have asked for a more inspired reaction than that of the Schultz/Ware duo with her added demands of plucking the piano's strings giving extra percussive snaps to the engaging accompaniment.

A welcome touch of amusement came with the Tagg/Palmer *Single Bed* and, all in all, this recital presented two musicians completely aligned in artistic inventiveness.

Thanks to Irish National Opera, Bizet's ever-popular *Carmen* comes to Dublin's Bord Gáis Energy Theatre on March 7, 9, 11 and 12 in a co-production with Philadelphia and Seattle Opera companies.

Mezzo Paula Murrihy is the gypsy temptress of the title with US tenor Dinyar Vania as Don José, bewitched by Carmen's charms but later her murderer. Soprano Celine Byrne is cast as the demure Micaëla, José's abandoned fiancée, and bass Milan Siljanov, an ensemble member of Bavarian State Opera, as the swaggering toreador, Escamillo.

Belfast's revered Kenneth Montgomery conducts with *Carmen* directed by Scotland's Paul Curran.

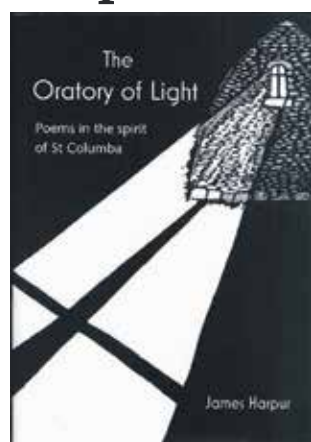


BookReviews

Peter Costello



The mingled mind of poet and saint



The Oratory of Light: Poems in the Spirit of St Columba

by James Harpur
(Wild Goose Publications, £7.99; for further information contact.iona.books.com)

Peter Costello

A while ago poet Gabriel Fitzmaurice writing in these pages passed on a remark of John F. Deane "that the new Christianity [of today] is to be a daring adventure requiring a new language and a new poetry. This was to be found among others in James Harpur, who gives a heartening lift to those who try to pur-

sue Christ through their daily lives".

Inspired

In these poems, inspired by the 1,500th anniversary of the birth in 521 of St Columba, James Harpur (a member of Aosdána who lives in west Cork), draws on the often vivid things we find recorded in Adomnán and others, about the saint, his life, his travails and his achievements. Mr Harpur mingles the divine and the natural in a way that certainly captures the inner spirit of the Celtic outlook as expressed in poetry and prayer.

Here is a passage from one poem in this collection, Mr Harpur's eighth, in which Columba is speaking to Aed, the chief of the Northern Uí Néill:

"If you think poems are just fables

Then why not food...and clothing, too.

The entire world might be a fable

Including you and me... Wheelwrights and smiths have art

But also poets with their rhymes,

The grace of making poetry Is the greatest gift of time."

The annals of the Irish saints

Peter Costello

Reading Seosamh Ó Dufáigh's magnificent book, and his discussions of the difficulty of researching the first centuries of Christianity in Ireland I wondered if a solution to the problems they present might not be partially found already.

We have of course Pádraig Ó Riain's *Dictionary of Irish Saints* (Four Courts Press, 2011, still available at €65.00/£55.00), a fine and always informative book. His 700 pages cover a thousand saints or so.

This many seem a great number, but the late Hubert Butler estimated (perhaps incautiously) that there might well have been in those days some 100,000 saints; not that he could put names to them all.

Calendar

O'Hanlon's great work was a calendar of saints, arranged by their feastdays, as befitted long ecclesiastical tradition. However, modern needs would be better met by having the saints arranged in alphabetical order (as the *Dictionary* is).

Perhaps what we need is a biographical dictionary or rather encyclopaedia say in four or five volumes, which I think might well be based on a thorough revision of O'Hanlon's work, the great task of his life too. (This was the great task of his life too, but left unfinished; though for the last two months of the year some material he had at hand seemed to have survived, only to later disappear).

There is such a considerable amount of textual and archaeological information now to hand, as well as newly developed techniques for interpreting them.

In such a work we might at last be able to cast light on the incursion of Christians into Ireland, and the hints of pre-Patrician activity which has become obscured over time as the cult of the 'national saint' developed in the North.

Such a work could not be the work of one man; it would have to be a concerted project. This would have to be seen (like other projects such as those of the Royal Irish Academy has in hand) as being a national project.

The mysterious centuries of Early Christian Ireland

Davnet and Dymrna: A Single Cult

by Seosamh Ó Dufáigh
(Clogher Historical Society, €30.00; website: www.clogherhistory.ie)

Peter Costello

The tradition about St Dymrna of Oriel (the ancient territory now covered by the Dioceses of Armagh and Clogher) was that she was the beautiful daughter of the local king in the 7th Century. His wife died early and his kinsmen suggested he cure his great grief by marrying again. But rather than that he turned his unmassaged urges towards his 15-year-old daughter, in whom he could see the passing image of his dead wife's beauty.

Fled

She resisted his unnatural lust and fled with some servants, making her way to Geel in northern Belgium. There he tracked her down, and rejected yet again, he beheaded her. It was on the continent that her name and devotion emerged to wide view in the 13th Century, but the cult owes its origins undoubtedly to Oriel.

Today Dymrna is the patron saint of the mentally-ill and the victims of incest abuse; and Geel, also known as Gheel, back in the middle ages developed a system of 'care in the community' which still exists to this day, and is an example to the world.

“There was also the change from Gaelic to English and with it the importation of new religious elements over time”

"Mention of Dymrna of Gheel," the author writes in his introduction, "reminds us that Davnet of Tydavnet has a double *persona* and that their association is centuries old. As the weight of study and research has been given to the cult of the Gheel saint (in Belgium but not in Ireland), this volume attempts to redress this imbalance and to focus more on the saint of Tydavnet.



A woodcut of St Dymrna, created in Antwerp in 1496.

Process

"In the process," he concludes "a third personage has insinuated herself into the arena who, far from creating further confusion, makes space for a common reference point in the remote pagan past. This is the goddess Damona, the pre-Christian dimension of both Davnet and Dymrna and a possible source of uniting them in the popular mind with the historical Mágina of Clogher and Cloonburren by the Shannon. The daunting task here is to maintain the distinc-

tion between history and mythology, to keep discerning one from the other, in the search for remains of a single cult already in existence".

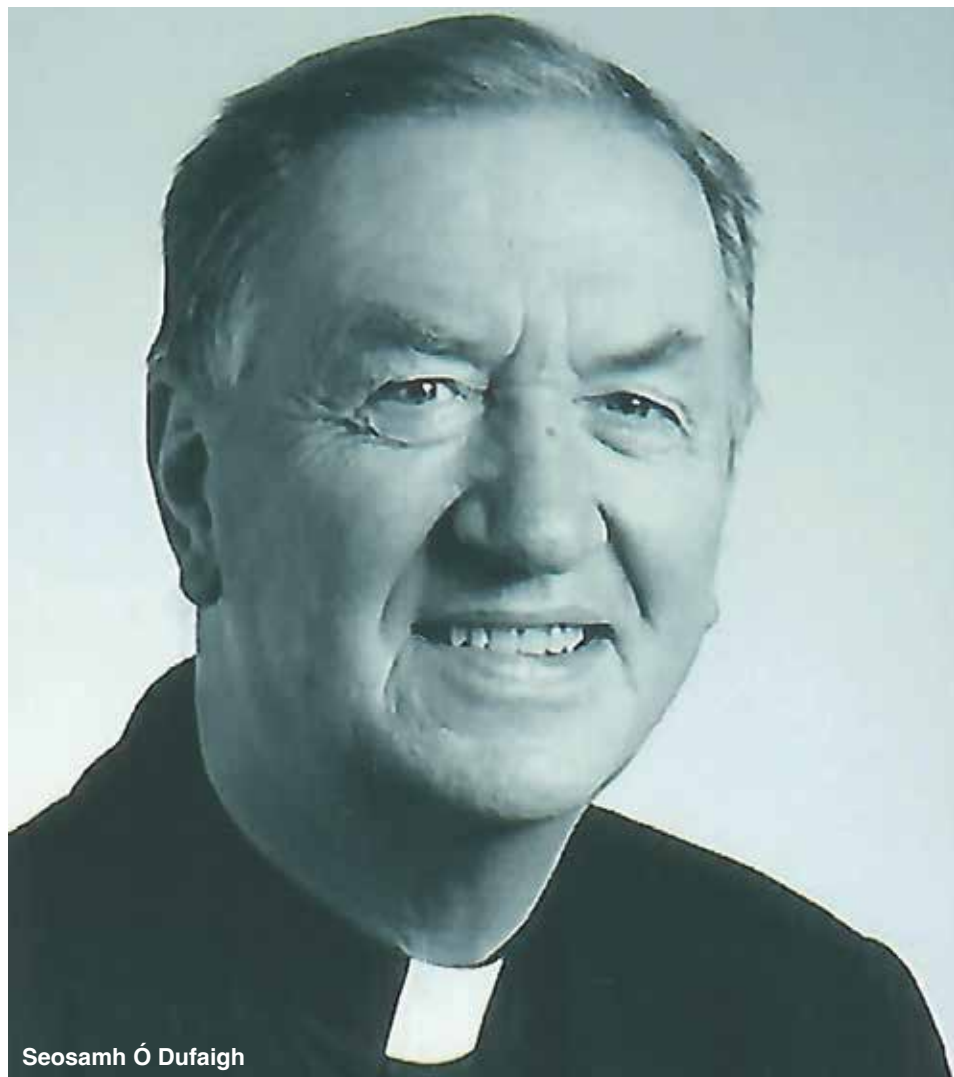
If all that does not sound problematic enough, there is more. There was also the change from Gaelic to English and with it the importation of new religious elements over time. But no matter how confusing it may seem initially it is all part of the intricate network of Irish history and its inter-linguistic, intercultural connections.

Revealed

So the two saints are revealed here to be in reality a single religious continuity. Seosamh Ó Dufáigh has written an immensely important book which has taken many years of research to bring to shape. And as he states his conclusions, which are open everywhere to revision and enlargement, he can rightly take a well-earned pause, before returning to his ancient volumes, field notes, and index cards.

While aimed at the 800 very active members

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.



Seosamh Ó Dufaigh

of the Clogher Historical Society, many copies of this book will be snapped up by libraries and readers in many other places. Congratulations are in order for the author and his associates, who will be an example to those in other such societies around the country.

The book comes, by the way, with extensive footnotes, bibliographies, and some fine colour photographs, often of unfamiliar shrines of ancient times. It volume runs 240 large format pages, so that the actual text in two columns amounts to about 500 pages of an ordinary book. It is beautifully bound, and costs €30. It's available now directly from the Clogher Historical Society.

Connections

Dedications and connections to Davnet/Dympna are spread in an irregular way across Mayo, Donegal, and Clogher of course; but also

Louth, the midlands and down to Wexford.

The last chapter of his text is, I think unusual in the context of a local history book. Naturally the explorations and suggestions in this book will be of vital and inspiring influence on current and future researchers.

“The book comes, by the way, with extensive footnotes, bibliographies, and some fine colour photographs”

But also of striking importance is the final chapter of the book (before the various appendices) which is entitled ‘For today and tomorrow’ and which gives the relevance of the saint for the care and fostering of the mentally

afflicted in the past and today and in the future. This is an usually pastoral discussion to find in a book largely devoted to local and ecclesiastical history. But it is very inspiring and so very relevant if unusual.

Abuse

The question of sexual abuse in the life of the saint is very relevant to some of the most hotly debated matter of our own day. In this chapter the author underlines the striking relevance of what we can learn about the past to how we create the future today. The author is already deeply aware of the psychological problems that face Christians in Ireland, but also the Churches as institutions.

The failures we have been made aware of, but that we now turn to healing, as indicated in the traditions at Gheel, is also vital.

“She resisted his unnatural lust and fled with some servants, making her way to Geel in northern Belgium”

Wising up about our troubled states of mind

Fears, Phobias and Fantasies: Understanding mental health and mental illness

by Prof. Patricia Casey (Currach Books, €22.99)

Peter Costello

This is an excellent and humane book written by a leading psychiatrist, now professor emeritus of psychiatry at University College Dublin (UCD) and active as a consultant psychiatrist. It is aimed at patients and their families, those who really need to know about the subject.

Her text is very wisely broken up into well indicated short sections easily encountered and absorbed. She explains about how mental illness and conditions have become known about over time, from the sometimes unbelievable treatment of patients in the past to the more compassionate way of today, which nevertheless is not flawless.

Moved

Yet she notes here in Ireland we have moved in a lifetime from the era of the county mental home

with its locked doors and barred windows in 1945 to ‘care in the community’, which often ill serves some patients, it seems. But with better insights developing all the time, drug therapies and person to person therapies have brought about remarkable transformations.

“She describes the way the psychiatric services for clients are arranged and what is available”

Through the book are brief contributions from those being treated and how it feels or felt to them. These are highly-illuminating, and dramatise what might not otherwise be fully appreciated the reader.

She describes the way the psychiatric services for clients are arranged and what is available, before going on to break down the various kinds of disorders and other behaviours and psychoses in the broad definition of mental illness. These chapters are all

excellent and will be found helpful by all those who encountered mental illness in one form or another, which these days is - one suspects - in very many more people that we may imagine.

Coverage

One would have liked to have seen more coverage of alcohol and the disorders this gives rise to, which remain a real difficulty in Ireland. Throughout the book Patricia Casey retains a warm and calming tone which attempts at all times to make clear what are often very complex matters confusing even to those who are well and trying to help.

This is a book to be warmly welcomed. This reviewer hopes though that when the book is reprinted, as undoubtedly it will be, that the cover will be changed. As it stands I think it is quite inappropriate to the text, emphasising as it does the lurid gothic elements of mental illness that one hoped were a thing of the past, and which run quite counter to the caring tenor of Prof. Casey's text.

“Her text is very wisely broken up into well indicated short sections easily encountered and absorbed”



Professor Patricia Casey

Leisure time

The Gift Of A Lifetime

Be there for others after you're gone.

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

Email Clare Martin at clare.martin@hospicefoundation.ie or call 01 679 3188

www.hospicefoundation.ie



Irish Hospice Foundation



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services



Your heart for the homeless

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

Your legacy, of any amount, can enfold the most vulnerable and lonely in wrap-around supports. You may wish to keep the details confidential. But we want to give you this little wooden keepsake, made by a client, for you.

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

To receive your little wooden heart and information on remembering

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

Please pray for the beatification of

Little Nellie of Holy God

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

– Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

Will the MSC Missions


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

Please help us with a gift in your Will

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

www.mscmissions.ie

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



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

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives.

Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

Crossword Junior

Gordius 421

1		2		3			4		
								5	
6					7				
				8					
9			10						
		11			12		13		
14					15				
			16				17	18	19
			20						
21									
					22				

- Across**
1 Machine used to clear the roads after a blizzard (10)
6 A great win (7)
8 Grown-up (5)
9 Tidy (4)
11 Got as far as (7)
14 Walk through water (4)
15 Had some food (3)
16 Take a seat (3)
17 Baby sheep (4)
21 Remains of an animal or plant, left over from prehistoric times (6)
22 Newspaper boss (6)
- Down**
1 'Snow White and the _____' (5,6)
2 You might find apple trees here (7)
3 Place where you can swim, that might be indoor or outdoor (4)
4 The earth beneath your feet (6)
5 She is often shown flying on a broomstick (5)
7 Sail this for pleasure (5)
10 Golfers put them in the ground before hitting their first shots (4)
12 Cows (6)
13 Fish that looks a bit like a snake (3)
18 The sister of your mother or father (4)
19 Drink sold in pubs (4)
20 Donkey (3)

SOLUTIONS, FEBRUARY 17

GORDIUS NO. 546

Across – 1 Eggs Benedict 7 Art 9 Skim 11 Flue 14 Telly 15 Raise 16 Grub 18 Tosca 21 Tesla 22 Bilbo 22 Bingo 24 Adam and Eve 25 Uncle 26 Stamp 29 Like 33 Trauma 34 Brae 36 Toe 37 Well-educated

Down – 1 Elk 2 Game 3 Bear 4 Nudge 5 Devil 6 Tail 8 They broke the mould 9 Secret ballot 12 Fiesta 13 Kebab 14 Titan 17 Relics 19 Scoop 20 About 27 Tyrol 30 Knew 31 Talc 32 Abut 35 Aid

CHILDREN'S No. 420

Across – 1 Firewood 6 Rip 7 Neatest 8 Saint 9 Ants 11 Admire 12 Train 14 Asks 16 Cabins 17 Eleven 18 Laughs

Down – 1 Fantastic 2 Roast 3 Week 4 Outside 5 Spotless 6 Raisins 10 Sailing 13 Uses 14 Axes 15 Keep

Crossword

Gordius 547

1		2		3		4		5		6		7
8						9						
10								11				12
					13			14				
15							16			17		
						18						
		19			20							
21			22					23				
24								25				
26											27	

- Across**
1 Wicked (3)
3 Postal service of the Wild West (4,7)
8 Male who is not in the clergy (6)
9 Reigned externally? That has been barred from consideration (5,3)
10 In part of the elegy, Ptolemy identified his country (5)
11 Noise (5)
13 Traditional French headgear (5)
15 Highest tier of the aristocracy (7)
16 The world's largest bird (7)
20 A berried bush for Buddy? (5)
21 The plant-life of an area (5)
23 Male duck (5)
24 Southern USA cuisine that nourishes spiritually as well as physically? (4,4)
25 Run at top speed (6)
26 Nine texts, no scrambling? That can be! (3-8)
27 A man, in American slang (3)
- Down**
1 Invulnerable to gunshots (6-5)
2 Robin next to Doris? Succes- sively every twenty-four hours (3,2,3)
3 Put seed into the ground (5)
4 Piece of rigging, spar (7)
5 Looks closely at members of the aristocracy (5)
6 The second book of the Old Testament (6)
7 Part of a tennis match (3)
12 In an underhand way (11)
13 An amount of bread baked (5)
14 Irritable (5)
17 Breathing in (8)
18 The expression of praise for some tulip ad (7)
19 Pillar (6)
22 This will stick on if fax breaks down (5)
23 Storage facility (5)
24 Japanese money seeds exciting new beginnings (3)

Sudoku Corner

421

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 420

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

Last week's Hard 420

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

Notebook

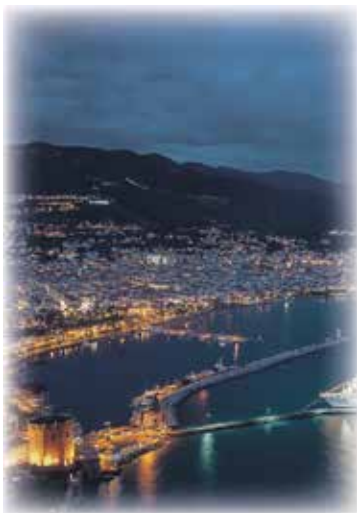
Fr Martin Delaney



A new beginning after two difficult years

CAN I BEGIN this month by sharing a brain teaser liberally mixed in with a fair amount of name-dropping. Last week I celebrated Mass in four different countries. However in all four countries the congregation was made up of pretty much the same people, the choir consisted of a list of Irish household names and in all four countries the Mass was in the same 'chapel'.....No doubt some of you will have guessed it; I was back doing my 'floating ministry' of being chaplain on The All Star Irish Music Cruise organised by Gertrude Byrne, a unique and formidable Irish business woman based in Florida.

Two years ago, the day we returned from a similar adventure off the coast of Mexico was the day when the first case of Covid 19 was recorded in Ireland. Little did we know then what lay ahead for all of us in every part of the world. The cruise planned for 2021 was cancelled and indeed the whole notion of cruising was considered very high risk and many wondered would this particular type of holiday ever happen again. Many of the singers and musicians who had performed on that trip in February 2020 did not work for most of the two-year period that followed. This



year's voyage through the Caribbean was in many ways, not just a reunion for the best-known voices of Irish Country Music but also a new beginning after a very difficult two years for their industry and for them personally.

Integral

The daily Mass is an integral part of the cruise itinerary and is attended by upwards of a thousand people. Many of the entertainers turn up for Mass and form a rather unique choir. Sadly, the most restrictive Covid related

protocol on the ship was that we could not distribute communion. This baffled me in the context of the relative freedom we enjoyed in every other aspect of the week's programme, but we had to reluctantly accept it. One other aspect of the Masses was that each day people submitted intentions for inclusion in the prayers. It is almost like a mission or a novena. Amid an otherwise joyful and celebratory atmosphere it was sobering to hear prayer intentions like; 'for my daughter who is undergoing cancer treatment', 'for my son who is serving a life sentence in jail', 'for my child who was killed in a car accident', 'for my son who has been missing for five years'. One constant theme of the prayer this year was for loved ones who had died during the pandemic. I met two different families both living in the US, whose mothers had died here in

Ireland during the last two years and they were unable to come home for the funerals. Stories like that are heart-breaking but perhaps the most difficult was the woman I met whose husband had died of Covid a year ago. He had been a Fire Fighter in New Jersey for thirty-five years and as he was dying, she had not been allowed to visit his bedside. She was angry and heartbroken in equal measure.

Arrived

Two years ago, I arrived back home to beginning of Covid and all the pain that was to follow. This year I have come back to the aftermath of Storm Eunice and some of her unruly siblings. But also, there is news that the last remaining restrictions imposed in March 2020 will soon be finally removed. May we never take for granted again the sound of live music or the taste of holy Communion.

Lest we forget...

While I was away our parish was looked after by my friend Fr. Sylvanus Attoh from Nigeria. Fr Sylvanus lives and works in a school and seminary in Northern Nigeria. Every day he and his colleagues live in fear of being attacked, kidnapped or killed by the extremist Muslim terrorist group, Boko Haram. Several of Fr Sylvanus' colleagues and students have been killed in recent years and his school now has to have a full battalion of armed security. Media outlets are prevented from reporting on such atrocities and hence we rarely hear about these horrors being visited upon our Christian brothers and sisters in another part of the world. Thankfully, Fr Sylvanus' time here allows him to rest and literally 'sleep in peace'. His presence among us reminds us that we should never take for granted the religious freedoms we enjoy.

Out of the mouths of babes....

The little boy greeted his grandmother with a hug and said, "I'm so happy to see you grandma. Now maybe daddy will do the trick he has been promising us." The grandmother was curious. "What trick is that my dear?" she asked. The little boy replied, "I heard daddy tell mommy that he would climb the damn walls if you came to visit us again."



Little Way Sisters providing refugees with food, medicines and accommodation, and bringing them the love, care and compassion of Christ.

PLEASE HELP
TYPHOON VICTIMS IN
THE PHILIPPINES

The Montfort Missionaries have written to The Little Way Association appealing for urgent help for the victims of typhoon Odette which hit the Philippines in December 2021.

The Fathers have been sheltering homeless victims, and urgently need funds to continue feeding the homeless families, to repair the community's own properties and to build the people new houses.

Fr Norwyn Baydo SMM writes: "The typhoon made landfall in different provinces. Our community in Minglanilla have opened their house to twenty families, though our own building was itself damaged by the typhoon. On Kinatarran island, our house was used as an evacuation site for 10 families. The community members are all safe and are serving the people in providing shelter and for their needs.

"I'm asking on behalf of the victims for financial help to support our relief operation and also for the rebuilding of their houses. Please help us to continue our relief work. God bless you."

Funds sent to The Little Way Association for the homeless are conveyed to religious such as the Montfort Missionaries without deduction of any kind. Please be generous and particularly remember the families with small children.

Typhoon Odette left families in the Philippines homeless and destitute. You can enable missionaries to help rebuild the victims' lives.



"It is love alone that matters."
- St Therese

MISSIONARIES NEED
YOUR MASS OFFERINGS

The Little Way Association regularly receives appeals from bishops and religious superiors on the Missions for Mass stipends and intentions for their poor priests. Such payments help them to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter.

Also, the poor and deprived people, whom the clergy serve so faithfully, often turn to their priests for assistance. Thus, your stipends are gratefully received and your intentions are faithfully honoured at Holy Mass.

We like to send a minimum of €5 or more for each Mass. Our benefactors will be glad to know that a Mass is offered each day for their intentions.

WELLS NEEDED

Missionaries constantly appeal to The Little Way for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean water, the lack of which causes much illness and many medical needs. On average, women in Africa and Asia walk around three hours every day to fetch water, often in scorching heat.

Can you help provide a well?

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

THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466
www.littlewayassociation.com

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

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

☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

To donate online go to
www.littlewayassociation.com

**DONATIONS FOR THE
MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT
DEDUCTION FOR ANY
EXPENSES.**