

The Irish Catholic

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Thursday, August 25, 2022

€2.50 (Stg £2.20)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

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Irish Govt decries the ‘alarming’ crackdown on Church in Nicaragua

Chai Brady

The Irish Government has decried the “alarming” and “concerning” crackdown on the rights of the Church in Nicaragua under President Daniel Ortega’s regime. The Irish bishops’ conference is also being urged by Irish missionaries to show solidarity with Nicaraguan Catholics.

Repression of freedom of religion and expression in Nicaragua are causing a “deterioration in human rights”, with several priests and a bishop arrested under the regime.

In a statement to *The Irish Catholic*, Ireland’s Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said the repression of freedom of religion in the country is “deeply concerning”.

Regarding the treatment of a Nicaraguan prelate and other clergy targeted by the Nicaraguan authorities, a spokesman said the department is “closely monitoring reports of the detention of Catholic Church leaders in Nicaragua, including Bishop Rolando José Álvarez of the Diocese of Matagalpa”.

“The deteriorating human rights situation in Nicaragua, including the repression of freedom of expression and freedom of religion and belief, is deeply concerning. The human rights violations, crackdowns on opposition voices, independent media, religious and other leaders, and backsliding on

» Continued on Page 2

‘Let the children come to me...’



There was a youthful air to Knock Shrine, August 21, as the shrine’s family fun day brought dozens of pilgrims to the national novena 2022. Photo: Sinead Mallee

CHARLOTTE VARD

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

ISSN 1393 - 6832 - Published by The Irish Catholic,

Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford,

Dublin 18, D18 K277.

Printed by Webprint, Cork.

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

Not for bishops to decide who receives Communion, says Bishop Doran

Ruadhán Jones

Bishop Kevin Doran has said it is not for bishops or any member of the Catholic faithful to "cancel" Christ's invitation to the Eucharist for certain groups.

In his homily at Knock, August 21, the bishop of Elphin said he "would seriously question whether I as a bishop, or you as a member of the faithful, have any business in classifying any group of people as unworthy; cancelling the invitation issued by Jesus".

His stance is in line with Pope Francis' own approach, but would appear to be at odds with some American bishops who have barred pro-abortion Catholic politicians like Nancy Pelosi from receiving the Eucharist.

Referencing the findings of Ireland's synodal pathway, Bishop Doran added that it is a "problem for all of us" that some people feel uncomfortable or unwelcome at the Eucharist.

"The reality of Church in Ireland, much of the time, is of people walking away and the rest of us taking it for granted, or worse still, not even noticing," Dr Doran continued.

"This first stage of our synodal process is about sitting up and taking notice."

Warned

He warned against treating the Eucharist as a prize, saying that where this happens "there seem to be winners and losers".

"There are some who quite comfortably think of themselves as worthy, while judging others to be unworthy," the Bishop of Elphin said.

However, he added that there are times when "a person cannot honestly accept the invitation to come to Holy Communion, because he or she has done something gravely wrong with full knowledge and full consent".

But even then, the invitation is not cancelled, Bishop

Doran said, adding that "Often it is the hope of returning to Communion that leads us to seek forgiveness".

It is "for priests, in the privacy of the Confessional, to help people make an honest judgement of conscience" on whether or not to receive, but the "final responsibility" lies with each man or woman to follow his well-formed conscience.

Meanwhile, Archbishop of Tuam Francis Duffy, who celebrated Mass on the final day of the national novena on August 22, said the synod showed areas in the Church "where healing is need".

"That healing that is so necessary extends to those who suffered abuse, clerical and institutional," the archbishop of Tuam said.

"It also extends to others who felt and continue to feel marginalised, stigmatised and judged by society and by Church because of sexual orientation, perceived position in society and being judged and found wanting."

"The Lord's call is to bring healing to those who suffer."

Archbishop Duffy concluded, saying he sees "hope in survivors telling their story and in the desire to have healing and peace".

Irish Govt decries the 'alarming' crackdown on Church in Nicaragua

» Continued from Page 1 democratic norms that have been observed in Nicaragua since 2018, and which have intensified since the November 2021 elections, are unacceptable and deeply alarming," the DFA spokesman said.

Outspoken Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa, five priests, a seminarian and cameraman were under house arrest for more than two weeks at the curia. They were all arrested over the weekend.

Bishop Álvarez is accused of destabilising the country using traditional and social media. Seven Catholic radio stations were forcibly shut down after the bishop refused to close them when ordered to by regulators.

Dublin-based Fr Kevin O'Higgins SJ, who spent many years in Paraguay under a dictatorship in the 80s, said the Church in Nicaragua must be assured it is not alone.

"I think we need to heighten awareness of the Church as one community worldwide, it's not divided into continents. It shouldn't be just bishops in Latin America expressing solidarity, it should be the whole Church," he insisted.

Fr O'Higgins said that simple expressions of solidarity across the world can be "a way of letting the government in Nicaragua know that other people are taking note of what's happening, without attacking them."

"They [the Nicaraguan government] would obviously hope that this is all internal and nobody else is too upset by it, so I think these statements by bishops' conferences are very important, to let them know that the whole world is seeing what's happening. For them it's important to know that they are not alone," he said, adding

that the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference should add their voice.

In June, the Missionaries of Charity, the order founded by St Teresa of Kolkata, was expelled from the country. In March, the Papal Nuncio to Nicaragua Archbishop Walde-mar Stanislaw Sommertag was expelled in what they Vatican dubbed an "unjustified decision".

A report, entitled *Nicaragua: Persecuted Church? (2018-2022)*, by Martha Patricia Molina Montenegro, who is part of the Anticorruption and Transparency Observatory, was published in May – before the arrest of Bishop Álvarez and several priests. It estimates there were 190 attacks on the Church.

The report stated that 37% of the reported hostility is aimed at priests, bishops, members of religious congregations, seminarians and laypeople, and include cases of exile, while 19% are desecrations of places of worship and liturgical items. There was also a high number (17%) of assaults, destruction, arson, blocking of basic services and invasion of private property, among others.

On Sunday Pope Francis called for an "open and sincere" dialogue to resolve a stand-off between the Church and government in Nicaragua.

While the Pope did not specifically mention Bishop Álvarez, he said he was following the situation in Nicaragua with "worry and pain". He asked for prayers for the country.

"I would like to express my conviction and my wish that, through an open and sincere dialogue, the foundations for a respectful and peaceful coexistence can be found," Pope Francis said.

See pages 12-13



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Michael Collins' Catholic Faith shaped his vision of Ireland's future says relative

Ruadhán Jones

The Catholic faith of Irish revolutionary Michael Collins' shaped his political vision of Ireland's future freedom, a relative has said.

Collins' vision for Ireland's path to freedom was marked by his Catholic spirituality, according to Michael O'Mahony, grandson of Collins' older brother Johnny.

"There's a lot in his political remarks about the path to freedom that indicates that spirituality came into his thinking for what was ahead for Ireland," Mr O'Mahony told *The Irish Catholic*.

Commonality

Michael Collins, who was shot to death by anti-treaty insurgents 100 years ago last Monday, August 22, saw the "spiritual commonality" of the Irish people as a "bonding mechanism" for the running of the Irish Free State.

"He certainly saw the spirituality, that it kept the

Irish going right from famine times on and during all the land difficulties – he was seeing a people largely bonded by the Catholic religion," Mr O'Mahony said.

"He was seeing that as being the principle bonding mechanism leading out to all the political and economic requirements of running a free country."

“Collins' vision for Ireland's path to freedom was marked by his Catholic spirituality”

Michael Collins was a regular Massgoer, attending daily in Brompton Oratory in London while he was negotiating the treaty between Britain and Ireland in October-December, 1921.

Mr O'Mahony recalls living with Johnny Collins for a time, saying that if he was anything to go by, the

Faith was "part of his [Collins'] instincts and set up".

The last entry into Collins' appointment diary was to attend Mass, while just days before he was killed he went to Mass in Lisavaird Church, Co. Cork.

An anniversary Mass to mark the 100th anniversary of Collins' death was held in the church on Monday.

Fr John McCarthy, who celebrated the anniversary Mass, said Collins remains an "inspirational figure".

"He would be delighted to see the Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael leaders meeting at Béal na Bláth [where Collins' was shot]," Fr McCarthy told *The Irish Catholic*. He was referencing the commemoration ceremony which took place Sunday August 21, attended by Taoiseach Micheál Martin and Tánaiste Leo Varadkar.

"They may have differences but they came together, it's a sign that we have matured."



Canon Humphrey O'Mahony leads a decade of the rosary during commemorations of the 100th anniversary of Michael Collins' death at Béal na Bláth, August 21. Photo: Airman Gibney

Ireland's fastest man grateful to God

Jason Osborne

Israel Olatunde raced to a new Irish 100-metre record in Munich last week, when he crossed the line in 10.17 seconds.

"What God blesses, no man can curse," Mr Olatunde said on Twitter in the wake of his sporting success.

The Dundalk native made history by becoming the first Irish athlete to qualify for a 100m final at the European Athletics Championships, with a performance that set the national Irish record for the 100-metre sprint.



Israel Olatunde. Photo: Twitter

Mr Olatunde is outspoken about where he sees his success coming from though, tak-

ing to social media to thank God for the many blessings he perceives in his life.

"Enjoying the journey, focused on my art, staying prayed up. Thank you God," the 20-year-old posted on Instagram.

Speaking to this paper last year, Mr Olatunde said that when he first started taking God seriously, it made him realise "how small and insignificant I am."

"But in those deficiencies, that's where God shows his love, his power, his grace, his mercy," Mr Olatunde said.

i See pages 8-9

Priest leads tributes to man killed in Kildare attack

Chai Brady

A priest has described the "sorrow and sadness" of a Limerick community after a son was killed and father hospitalised in an attack in Kildare town over the weekend.

Fr Chris O'Donnell of Kilmallock parish, where the late Dylan McCarthy (29) was from, said that people in the town are devastated and "everybody is heartbroken".

Speaking on RTÉ's *Morning Ireland* Fr O'Donnell said the McCarthy family are "such a

good, quiet, unassuming family" who are held in high regard.

"It is every parent's nightmare and nearly every parent in the area now are thinking of their own children and hopefully holding them a little closer because in many ways it feels like Dylan. It's everyone's son and brother at the moment," he said.

Mr McCarthy died on Monday while his father was being treated in Tallaght University Hospital at the time this paper went to print. It's believed they were assaulted by several people in the early hours of Sunday morning when they were out socialising.

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Chaplains warn of student accommodation 'stress and pressure'

Jason Osborne

University chaplains have spoken out about the added anxiety the lack of student accommodation is causing students ahead of the next academic year.

This comes as Minister for Further and Higher Education Simon Harris has urged homeowners to consider renting out rooms to students ahead of the start of the new academic year.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, chaplain at University College Dublin Fr Brendan Ludlow said that the student accommodation crisis is "pronounced" this year.

"Students are experiencing stress and strain around it – and I suppose it's an additional stress on students who are coming from abroad and trying to sort out their accommodation remotely," Fr Ludlow warned.

Fr Ludlow highlighted the risk of students being "swindled" out of their money when viewing a property from abroad, saying that "booking accom-

modation without seeing it brings its own risks," such as being scammed.

Fr Seamus McEntee of Dublin City University chaplaincy said that there's "definitely pressures this year" when it comes to student accommodation.

"We have something like only about 10% of DCU students out of 20,000 who we can offer accommodation to. We were to build another 1,000 plus rooms or spaces for students before the pandemic hit, but because of it, everything stopped. I do believe that's being restarted again," Fr McEntee said.

"DCU want to offer more on-site student accommodation, because we're very low, below I think what a lot of other universities offer."

Students have also reported in recent months offers of accommodation around the country being withdrawn, which results in a large number of students having to travel long distances to attend their courses.

"It is a crisis because a large number of DCU students travel from out-

side Dublin city – Donegal, Wexford, Dundalk, Drogheda, even the North. It takes up so much of their time, so much of the stress that they have, especially when it approaches exams," Fr McEntee said.

"Some have to arrive very early. We at chaplaincy try and open up our facilities around 8am to offer early commuters because they have to work with their times for buses and trains and planes, actually – some fly up and down from Donegal to Dublin airport, they commute in."

University College Cork has also seen accommodation pressures according to chaplain Fr Ger Dunne, who said that the "pinch hasn't really come yet, but it will in the next two or three weeks when students start to come back to campus".

"It causes further anxiety on top of an anxiety that's been exacerbated by Covid and all the rest of it. There's no getting away from it really," Fr Dunne said.

'Kind and gentle pastor' Bishop Séamus Freeman hailed

Staff reporter

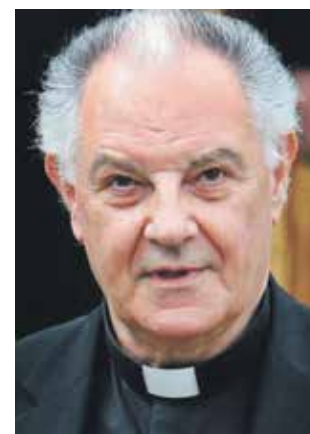
Irish bishops have paid tribute to "kind and gentle pastor" Bishop Séamus Freeman SAC, former bishop of the Diocese of Ossory, following his death over the weekend.

Apostolic administrator of Ossory, Bishop Denis Nulty said Bishop Freeman served the Church "faithfully for many years" including in his worldwide leadership of the Pallotine Order and as a parish priest in Rome and Ireland.

"His deep care for each person he encountered, his interest in the areas of pastoral renewal and faith formation were to the fore throughout his ministry," he said.

Bishop Nulty hailed his work towards Ossory's diocesan pastoral plan and the fact he "placed a great emphasis on the role of lay people responding to their baptismal call".

Primate of All-Ireland and Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin said Bishop Freeman was a committed member



Bishop Séamus Freeman

of the episcopal conference for nine years and "showed particular interest in pastoral renewal and faith development".

Archbishop Martin said: "At his retirement six years ago, Bishop Séamus said he was overwhelmed, and indeed 'very much humbled, by the kindness and absolute goodness' shown to him and hoped that, 'despite human limitations' he had served God's people well."

Secretary general appointed to coordinate national synodal pathway

Chai Brady

A secretary general of the synodal pathway has been appointed to promote synodality in the Church in Ireland and coordinate the work of the national synodal pathway.

The appointee, Julieann Moran, will also support Ireland's contribution to the 'Synod on Synodality' initiated by Pope Francis for 2021-2023 with the theme,

'For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission'. The post includes responsibility for consultation, planning, communications and administration. Nicola Brady, chair of the Synodal Steering Committee, welcomed the announcement saying: "Julieann comes to this role having already made a significant contribution to the work of promoting synodality in the Irish Church at all levels – local, national

and universal. In particular, Julieann's experience in connecting the local Church in Ireland to wider global realities will be invaluable as the synodal process develops."

Ms Moran had been working as national secretary for the Society of Missionary Children at Missio Ireland, where she worked since 2016 to raise mission awareness and develop evangelisation resources for dioceses, parishes, and Catholic primary

schools across the island of Ireland.

She said: "I am delighted to be appointed to this very significant role, and grateful for the opportunity to help shape the next steps taken on this synodal journey."

"This will be a demanding task but a synodal Church is a Church that reaches out and listens: listens to God and listens to one another," she added.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Cork city Dominican centre to be put up for sale

Ennismore Dominican Centre in Montenotte is to be put up for sale in September.

The centre is known for its youth retreats and outreach work, and boasts extensive gardens, a retreat centre, conference rooms and more. The site is visited by thousands of

school students every year. The centre also provides accommodation for refugees from Ukraine and Syria.

The 2021 Provincial Chapter of the Irish Province of Dominicans voted to close Ennismore Retreat Centre as part of its rationalisation process.

Clonfert diocese to allow Communion on the tongue

Clonfert diocese will allow Communion to be received on the tongue, where adequate safety precautions are taken.

The diocese released updated Covid-19 regulations earlier this month, advising people to continue receiving Communion in the hand.

"However, priests are encouraged to make arrangements so that those who may wish to receive

Communion on the tongue may do so safely," the regulations state.

"This may involve, for example receiving Communion at the end of the Communion line or in the sacristy after Mass where adequate sanitising between communicants is possible."

The updated regulations advise attendees to continue wearing masks and using hand sanitiser, as well social distancing.

Only a third of traveller housing budget spent

Just over one-third of the annual budget for traveller housing has been spent so far this year, with a number of local authorities yet to make use of the funds.

€18 million was allocated for traveller-specific accommodation this year and

according to the Department of Housing, €6.2 million has been drawn down.

Local authorities in Carlow, Cavan, Louth, Westmeath and the Dublin areas of Fingal, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and South Dublin have yet to draw down any funds.

Earning your meals...



Volunteers from Mary's Meals walk Main St Ballyhaunis as they set out on their annual 10km pilgrimage to Knock Shrine, August 14-15. Photo: Fr Stephen Farragher.

Have four children and never pay tax again

When my son Ed visited Hungary recently, the first thing that greeted him at the airport was a large billboard with a picture of two parents with three children, bearing the slogan "Hungary Welcomes Families".

Indeed, that is the policy of Viktor Orbán, Hungary's Prime Minister. Orbán is much criticised in western Europe, but his policy of positively supporting family life seems to be succeeding. Most developed countries now have a consistently falling birth rate, but over the past three years the Hungarian birth rate has risen by 5.5%.

Policy

The Hungarian policy to encourage births is simple enough: financial subsidy. Married women under 40 qualify for a government loan of about €26,400 to support them in starting a family and the debt is erased after three or more children.

There is economic support to help families buy homes for the purpose of starting a family, and women who have four or



Mary Kenny

more children are exempt from income-tax for life.

In Poland, too – also criticised by the liberal west – the government is giving families 12,000 zloty (€2,630) a year for each child after the first. They've also eased planning regulations to facilitate building homes suitable for young couples wanting to have a family.

“Orban is much criticised in western Europe, but his policy of positively supporting family life seems to be succeeding”

Some might call this bribery, claiming that financial incentives are not an idealistic reason to have a baby. But the opposite is also true: people choose not to have children because they can't afford them, or

don't have the accommodation or the back-up. A shocking study in Britain recently revealed that one woman in five who terminates a pregnancy does so because of lack of support for child-care.

Whether we like it or not, practical reasons do influence family formation. So any state that wants a sustainable birth rate will sooner or later need to consider more pro-natalist policies like those of Hungary and Poland.

Incentivise

In Britain, the demographer Paul Moreland has suggested that childless people may have to be taxed more heavily, to incentivise fertility. That could be an unfair penalty and yet, the French are also boosting their birth rate by taxing the childless at a higher rate. A childless person is in the top tax bracket at €100,000: parents are not in this category until they earn €250,000.

“The Hungarian policy to encourage births is simple enough: financial subsidy”

Celebrating Michael Collins' achievements

Clonakilty has just had an inspiring week marking the centenary of Michael Collins' death: he grew at Woodfield, near the West Cork town, which is now regarded as his home place. The whole community joined in the commemorations, grieving for The Big Fellow's early loss, but also celebrating the achievements of his life.

The parish hall hosted several of the activities, adjacent to the parish Church of the Immaculate Conception:

and a beautiful church it is. The interior of the dome is adorned with a gold leaf filigree effect, intertwined with a warm russet colour theme.

By the side of the altar hangs a Ukrainian flag, and I heard some speculation as to whether a Catholic church should have a national flag thus displayed. "After all," said the critic, "why not have a Yemeni flag, or the flag of the Lebanon? These countries are suffering dreadfully too,

and need our solidarity." Then national flags might be competing for attention and partisan support.

Yet for Ukrainians who are war refugees in Ireland the sight of their flag must make them feel welcome in church. And in fairness, there wouldn't be so many Yemenis or Lebanese refugees in West Cork.

But I can see why there might be a question mark, for some, over the placing of national flags on the altar.



Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán.

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Jheleen and Andrea before surgery

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A marriage in the limelight

It is virtually certain now that the next Prime Minister of Great Britain and Northern Ireland will be a Mrs O'Leary. Yes, Mary Elizabeth Truss, aged 47, is in private life, Mrs Hugh O'Leary. Mr O'Leary is an accountant from an Irish background, but has elected to live a private life. The couple wed in 2000 and have two children.

One aspect of their marriage has been in the public realm for some time: in 2006, Liz Truss had a relationship with another member of parliament, Mark Field, and it seemed she would leave her husband. But

subsequently, she returned to her marriage, and the couple were reconciled.

Mr O'Leary doesn't comment on this episode, and Liz will say no more about it other than "I am very happily married". But it is now part of the public record.

Being in the public eye holds every human failing up to the limelight, and when the O'Learys enter 10 Downing Street in September, the Prime Minister's husband may not be able to remain quite so private. He seems admirable as a man who has acted in a spirit of Christian forgiveness.



Jheleen and Andrea after surgery

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Church in Ireland listens but doesn't hear, abuse survivors say

Ruadhán Jones

The Church in Ireland claims credit for listening to survivors, but doesn't hear them, survivors of abuse in the Church who took part in the synodal process have said.

Eight survivors took part in the synod on the invitation of the Oversight Committee Towards Peace, a spiritual support group for people who experienced abuse in the Church.

The report from their May 21, 2022, synodal meeting says that the Church is "claiming credit for being seen to do the right thing" when responding to abuse survivors.

"But if the listening does not involve hearing and the hearing does not lead to action, it becomes an empty gesture," the report continues.

"More than that, however, it becomes another form of secondary victimisation because people invest their hopes in the process, only to have them dashed."

Five key themes emerged from the gathering and written responses: secondary victimisation, sacrifice and betrayal; listening, but not hearing; the Church's preoccupation with money; the personal cost of engaging with the Church; and a Gospel-based response to abuse within the Church.

According to the report, there was a consensus among participants that bishops and other Church officials "do not know how to respond to people who disclose abuse and need to be trained for it".

However, "training is not the complete answer. Only those with a capacity to empathise with survivors, and a willingness to do so, should undertake this work".

The Church should follow the model of Jesus in reaching out to those on the margins, the report says, inviting "those who have been abused to come forward and tell their stories".

"Church leaders have to make different choices. When faced with

an allegation, they must refer, in the first instance, to the Gospel, not the lawyers."

The eight survivors who participated came with a variety of experiences of abuse: abuse by religious orders, by diocesan priests, and abuse perpetrated within, or associated with, Church run institutions.

The report states that "it is not asserted that this group represents all of those who were abused in a Church context in Ireland".

The report was submitted to the Irish synodal pathway's steering committee for consideration before the national synthesis was sent to Rome, August 16.

Rosary sales boost online after being linked to 'extremism'

Jason Osborne

Online shops that sell rosaries have reported a leap in sales after a controversial article published in *The Atlantic* attempted to link the centuries-old practice to right-wing extremism.

CEO of popular online shop Rugged Rosaries, Shannon Doty, told CNA that she saw a "pretty good boost in sales" after the article went to print.

Ms Doty said that her team "are not discouraged, and are in fact strengthened in our determination to make strong rugged rosaries for everyone".

Similarly, the World Apostolate of Fatima USA reported a jump in sales of the rosary since *The Atlantic* article, with Executive Director David Carollo saying there has been lots of "buzz" around the rosary since the "downright insulting" article was published.

"We don't pray against people, we pray for people... That's what the rosary is all about," Mr Carollo told CNA.

Synod: Church can only be reformed by insights into message of Jesus

Chai Brady

The Church stops listening to the voice of the Lord when it follows cultural changes and ceases "to be a stone in society's shoe", according to Bishop Donal McKeown of the Diocese of Derry.

In his homily on Sunday Bishop McKeown said that

Jesus "challenges our cosy assumptions" about God and being Christ's follower, and that the synodal process must be driven by "prayerful insights into the message of Jesus".

"When a Church believes it ought merely to adapt to changing cultural priorities and cease to be a stone in society's shoes, then we have

stopped listening for the voice of the Lord," he said.

"The world will not be changed by a Church whose standards are merely human. The world will be transformed by grace when people of faith seek the narrow gate and God's priorities."

Bishop McKeown added that any attempt to "dumb

down the Gospel is an exercise in human arrogance in that we think we know better".

"That is the challenge for the synodal process in our country and around the world. It is easy to feel drawn to a comfortable, non-controversial version of Jesus and expect that we ought to adopt the cultural norms of our society. After all,

these norms are the products of our infallible human reasoning," he said.

"Nothing could be further from the truth of Jesus. There are many things that need to be reformed in how we are Church. But these changes have to be driven by new and prayerful insights into the message of Jesus."

A show of Concern...



Pictured is Concern Worldwide co-founder John O'Loughlin-Kennedy sitting on a recently-installed public bench and sculpture in memory of two of Ireland's leading humanitarians, brothers Frs Aengus and Jack Finucane. Fr Aengus led Concern during the 1980s and early 90s, having helped the charity respond to the famine in Biafra in 1968. Installed on the banks of the River Shannon at Barrington's Pier, the sculpture was unveiled in Limerick city Thursday, August 18. Photo: Liam Burke.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Derry clerical changes announced

The clerical changes for Derry diocese have been announced, to come into effect August 28.

Two priests, Fr Colum Clerkin PP Culmore and Msgr Andrew Dolan PP Ballyscullion are to retire, while Fr Chris Ferguson and Fr James Devine are taking a leave of absence.

Fr Pat O'Hagan PP Moville has been appointed diocesan vocations director, while Fr David O'Kane PP Claudy has been appointed Vicar Forane for the Derry City Deanery.

A number of priests for the diocese, which includes parishes across Derry, Donegal and Tyrone, will receive additional parish duties.

Fr Brian Donnelly PP Newtown Stewart and Plumbridge, is to be in addition Adm Gortin and Greencastle and Fr Roland Colhoun CC Newtown Stewart and Plumbridge, is to be in addition CC Gortin and Greencastle.

Fr Joshy Parokkaran, CC Three Patrons, to be CC Water-side and Strathfoyle, in addition to his appointment with the Syro-Malabar Church.

To see the clerical changes in full, visit derrydiocese.org.

Niamh Uí Bhriain

The View



Gender clinic is a scandal that must be investigated

Last month, the British National Health Service said that it was closing the Tavistock Clinic in London because it was unsafe. The centre was also attended by Irish children with gender dysphoria who wanted to change their sex.

At Tavistock, children were prescribed puberty blockers, even though the long-term effects of this medication were not known. That was seen as a step towards cross sex hormones, which help to change gender, with at least one study finding that almost all children who remained on puberty blockers went on to undergo hormone treatment.

That was then a precursor to surgical interventions which are, of course, often harrowing and irreversible.

The Tavistock Clinic was closed down after an independent review by Dr Hilary Cass, a consultant in paediatric disability, found that the clinic's approach was unsafe, that it overlooked other mental health problems in children, failed to collect data on the safety of puberty blockers, and did not subject the treatments administered to children to normal quality controls.

One of the most appalling findings was that staff felt under pressure to adopt an "unquestioning affirmative approach" to children who said they desired to change their sex. Now, up to 1,000 former patients may be suing Tavistock for failing to provide safe care, with youngsters expected to take mass legal action for misdiagnosis and being placed on a damaging medical pathway.

Approach

But, an "unquestioning affirmative approach" is also the most precise description for the mindset of the political and media establishment in Ireland towards the obviously dangerous pathway that was being created for vulnerable children in Ireland.

Some few doctors tried to speak out, but their serious concerns were apparently ignored by the HSE. This is a scandal that must be investigated – as is the attitude and actions of successive ministers for health who apparently also took no action despite repeated warnings.

“Children were prescribed puberty blockers, even though the long-term effects of this medication were not known”



A gender-neutral bathroom at the University of California, Irvine. Photo: CNS

More than two years ago, consultant endocrinologist Prof. Dónal O'Shea and consultant psychiatrists Dr Paul Moran and Dr Ian Schneider had warned the HSE that the services being provided by Tavistock for children in Ireland were "unsafe". The doctors had serious concerns about how children were being diagnosed and started on unsuitable hormone treatments, and that mental health problems for some children were being ignored.

Unsafe

At that time, journalist Shane Phelan wrote that even though the doctors said the practices were "unsafe" and should be "immediately stopped", their concerns were instead "suppressed" by the HSE. In fact, their concerns were not even noted in the minutes of the meeting with hospital management.

As Tim Jackson noted in a 2020 piece on Gript, Prof. Dónal O'Shea wasn't just ignored when he tried to protect vulnerable children, he was attacked. A Social Democrats councillor, Owen Hanley, described him as "the barrier for trans people seeking the healthcare they need to improve their lives," adding that the clinician "should not be in charge of whether or not people can access trans healthcare".

Now Tavistock has fallen, and the *Sunday Independent* has published redacted details from a profoundly shocking audit on the Irish children sent to Tavistock which was undertaken by Dr Ian Schneider.

“Some few doctors tried to speak out, but their serious concerns were apparently ignored by the HSE”

The purpose of Dr Schneider's audit was to show that children were receiving poor care. His findings were sent to the HSE by psychiatrist Paul Moran. The findings of that audit should have made the HSE and the Government sit up and take immediate notice. But instead, it was ignored. All those who ignored what Dr Schneider found in his audit, should be held to account.

What he reported, and what his colleagues also observed are heart-breaking, especially given that these are often very vulnerable children who needed careful assessment and a holistic approach to treatment which recognised other mental health conditions.

Of the 18 children observed by Dr Schneider, seven had

no accompanying assessment report showing their diagnosis and treatment plans.

Some patients had serious mental health or social problems, aside from issues with their gender.

Competent

In the accompanying email to the HSE, Dr Moran said "it had become clear that the GIDS were not competent to adequately assess children's suitability for medical transition".

"It was also clear that there was a high level of co-morbid mental illness, social adversity and functional impairment among these children, which the GIDS assessment either did not recognise, or did not address," he said.

Dr Moran said that some HSE-funded bodies had coached vulnerable children to "get their stories straight" before being assessed so that they were more likely to be prescribed hormones. He also said that 90% of children presenting as transgender were also diagnosed as autistic.

It is almost beyond belief that when these doctors rang alarm bells, they were ignored. Simon Harris, who was minister at the time should be asked to account for the apparent failure of the HSE to respond to their concerns.

All those who oversaw this appalling model of treatment where ideology seemed to matter more than science or medicine should be held to account. And the media and NGOs who shouted down any attempt at honest discussion with cries of 'transphobia' have a lot to answer for.

JOE WALSH TOURS

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Israel Olatunde is sprinting ahead as the world stands still, but sees God as the greatest prize, writes **Jason Osborne**

Few activities are as liberating as running as fast as you can. For some reason as we grow up, we do it less and less, but most of us can remember the ecstatic joy of sprinting across the sports field in school with our friends.

That may be a rose-tinted recollection, as few of us are as fast as we remember ourselves to have been. However, for 18 year-old Israel Olatunde from Dundalk, it's anything but a dream-like recollection; he's found great success in this most primordial activity.

Momentous success it has been, breaking two national indoor records twice in one day. In February of 2021, Israel broke both the U20 and U23 indoor men's 60-metre records two separate times. [On August 16, 2022, he became Ireland's fastest man ever, coming sixth in the European Championships.]

An Ad Astra Elite scholar at University College Dublin, Israel secured his first record breaking time of 6.74 seconds when he finished second to Leon Reid in the final race of the event. Israel's second 60-metre run saw him blaze past the line in 6.73 seconds, breaking the record he had set himself just an hour before.

Achievements

The path to these impressive achievements was born of a simple beginning – noticing he was faster than the other kids he would play with in his youth.

"I used to play football, so I always knew I was faster than the other kids on the football team," he tells *The Irish Catholic*.

"But then when I got to athletics, it's a whole different ball game. You'd be surprised. You think you're fast in football, then you get to athletics and there's just some crazy kids in that. They're really fast," he laughs.

As he alludes to, competition has really picked up over the years as he's developed in his sport, but Israel's introduction to sprinting in second-

Running races in time and eternity

Israel Olatunde of UCD AC, Dublin, reacts after finishing second in the Men's 60m with a Junior and U23 National Record of 6.73 during day two of the Irish Life Health Elite Athlete Indoor Micro Meet at Sport Ireland National Indoor Arena. Photo: Sam Barnes



ary school was a more casual affair. While it offered him a door into serious running, it was more centred on fun than on serious competition.

“Just growing up, I always said to myself, ‘Oh, there is a good God. I believe in Jesus’”

"In secondary school it was pretty, in terms of the schools around us, it was more serious than others. It was still pretty chilled though, pretty calm. The coach that was at our school – his name is Gerry McArdle – he was also the coach at my first athletics club, Dúndealgan AC. It was just fun, everyone was having fun, but everyone still had passion for the sport, or at least most people did anyway. Even though it was fun, we still worked hard. At the competitions, we had some guys medalling at the North Leinster Championships and small championships like that."

Sticking to the 60, 100 and 200-metre sprints, Israel's success began to blossom over time. Running with both his school and his club, he ran in the Louth Championships at the tender age of 14 with Dúndealgan AC, in his first year after taking up sprinting. He went on to win in his category, heralding things to come.

"Obviously the Louth Championships isn't a high level," he says self-effacingly. "I was in the under-17 age category. It's not really a high level, but for me at the time, that was a big accomplishment, so I was pretty proud of that."

Coach

He offers a word of thanks to his coach, saying that his belief in him helped him to pursue a path with his sprinting that he may not have recognised for himself at the time.

"My coach Gerry McArdle, he always had big aspirations and dreams for me," Israel says, continuing. "He saw I had really good potential from a young age. From there, we were still progressing, just continuing

to train hard and that summer, I came second in the national championships in the under-17 age category in the 200 metres, so just from there, little things just kept happening. I kept getting small achievements. I just kept trying to work off that and get better at each training session, just for the next competition."

As with running, so with life; one foot in front of the other. With Israel focused on simpler steps, he didn't initially consider a future in running. Between the support of his coach and continuous "small achievements," he found his young life taking a decisive shape, one which would lead him to UCD and into European Championships.

"I always had confidence in myself but I never really thought that far ahead when I was in third/fifth year. I didn't really know much about the sport as well, so I didn't really know you could get scholarships from it or whatever."

"Maybe towards the end of fifth year, maybe that summer, I got my first inter-

national competition. The European under-18 Championships, so just from there, I knew I could go international at the youth level. I knew I had potential to run at a senior level or in college, or just further on down the line."

“I always had confidence in myself but I never really thought that far ahead when I was in third/fifth year”

And that's just what he did – going to university on the aforementioned Ad Astra Elite scholarship to hone his sport and study computer science. Asked about the college experience, he said it's a different atmosphere to the one he encountered in secondary school. While his time in school was foundational, he said he found university life to be pervaded with "an air of excellence".

"Yeah, like, not even just specifically to my sport, just

in general. When I got to UCD from my secondary school, I was a good athlete and people recognised me for my sport, but then when you get to UCD, there's dozens of other international athletes and European champions, world champions. The girls' hockey team as well in UCD – they're really good."

Atmosphere

"It's a different atmosphere. It's good honestly. It, kind of, took the pressure off you. You can learn from other people. Because of the scholarship programme I was on, I got to rub shoulders with some of these guys. I'd be seeing them, walking past them in the gym, watching them train. Not guys even just from athletics, guys from different sports like cycling, hockey, rugby, so really good in that aspect, it humbles you a bit and motivates you. In their sport they're doing so well, so I can keep working hard and get to a similar level in my sport as well."

Success

Israel's sporting life is secure, but he makes no mistake about where his success comes from.

"I can't help but thank God for his grace," he posted on Instagram, after his fourth place finish in the 60 metre sprint at the European Indoor Athletics Championship in Poland which took place at the beginning of March.

Israel turned from the temporal racing to the eternal race

“‘I can't help but thank God for his grace,' he posted on Instagram, after his fourth place finish in the 60 metre sprint at the European Indoor Athletics Championship in Poland”



Israel (back right) and his family: brother Gabriel Olatunde (back left), sister Sharon Olatunde (front left), father Isaac Olatunde (front middle) and mother Elizabeth Olatunde (front right).

to tell me about his relationship with God.

"I grew up going to church and everything. I always knew that God was there, but didn't really have a relationship with him growing up. Just like any other kid that grows up.

"As I got older, I knew he was there, so I was searching for him, trying to grow in that relationship with him – maybe not in the right ways, but as I got older – I'd say he found me, in a sense. As I got older, I started getting closer with him, started growing my relationship with him. I'm still not, obviously, perfect, but it's a journey."

“When you get to UCD, there's dozens of other international athletes and European champions, world champions”

Israel tells a tale so many young people in today's Ireland could relate to – being aware of God but not knowing who he truly is. Steeped in a deeply Christian culture, there are few on this island who grow up without having heard God's name, few who haven't received his teachings indirectly, at least.

"Most of my challenges were, kind of, internal," Israel says.

"Most of my friends, they would identify as Christian or Catholic, different denominations, but yeah, just growing up, I always said to myself, 'Oh, there is a good God. I believe in Jesus,' but at the same time, I didn't really know him.

"Growing up, when I was pretty young, like 13,14, I used to worry, I used to have feelings of anxiety, I used to worry

“When I first started taking God seriously, it kind of made me realise that, it sounds weird, but it made me realise how small and insignificant I am”

about things a lot, about my future and just worrying about, how am I going to become successful, how am I going to do this, how am I going to do that? That's all I really thought about as a kid," he says.

These are struggles every person can relate to – many recent statistics showing that more people are struggling with anxiety, depression and stress than ever before. The pandemic surely has a hand in this, but so too does a lack of relationship with God, and a resulting lack of perspective.

"As a kid, you're not meant to be thinking about those things a lot, but I used to put a lot of pressure on myself in that respect and it wasn't until I kind of realised I'm not really in control of all this, there's someone above me that's watching out for me, that's looking after me, that wants to take care of me. But I'm here only worrying about myself, thinking, you know, I'm in control of everything. I think when I realised that there has to be someone above me, watching over me, that's when I tried to develop my relationship with God.

"Obviously it wasn't easy," he says, "but when I first started taking God seriously, it kind of made me realise that, it sounds weird, but it made me realise how small and insignificant I am. But in those deficiencies, that's where God shows his love, his power, his grace, his mercy."

Community

Attending RCCG Miracle Land, a Pentecostal Church in Dun-

dalk (in un-restricted times), Israel says his faith and community mean a lot to him, with family and friends providing a welcome balance when he feels he's lacking.

"With my family, especially like my siblings, I've been able to discuss things with them. Different questions I maybe had or just different worries or concerns, even just to discuss with them. Also, my friends, a lot of my friends are on their own journey with Christ and just being able to talk with them.

“Momentous success it has been, recently breaking two national indoor records twice in one day”

"Especially, during lockdown, I was training on my own here in Dundalk, but sometimes I'd link up with one of my friends, Patience, another athlete from Dundalk. Patience Jumbo-Gula. She's on her own journey as well, and when we were training together, just in the parks or whatever, we'd be talking about different Bible verses, different stories that we had, and I don't know why but it really helped so much. It's comforting knowing that there's other people on this journey with God. They have their own issues and problems, and God sometimes speaks through them to you. So I think it's really important to have people to talk to about that."

His faith has had a real

impact on the way he views life, with gratitude being one of the key characteristics that colours his outlook. He said it'd be the one thing he'd communicate to other young people, given the opportunity.

"I'd say to just, like, try to enjoy things as much as you can. Just little things. Pay attention to little details and try to enjoy as much as you can, because life goes by quick. We're not here for long. This isn't our final destination, but while we're here you might as well try to make the most of it. And that doesn't mean go out and party and do crazy stuff. Just be grateful for things.

"Today, as I was drawing my curtains, I was like, 'Today's a beautiful day,' well in Dundalk anyway. The sun's shining, I'm happy for that, I'm grateful for that. I thank God for that. I'm here, I'm talking to you, I'm grateful for that. Every little thing. That's where true joy and happiness comes from, being grateful for the things God has given you. You might not be in the greatest situation. Things could be better, but things also could be worse. No matter what situation you're in, there's always going to be things to thank God for and to be grateful for. I think that's how you improve a situation, by looking for the good things in it."

Grateful to God and enjoying career-high success, Israel Olatunde is racing into a bright future.

i This article was first printed in the April 29, 2021 edition of The Irish Catholic



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The Holy Spirit can't lead the synod in contradictory directions



The signs of the times can sometimes directly contradict the Church, writes David Quinn

Throughout the history of Christianity there have been battles over what is true and false, right and wrong. These battles have often been fierce, and sometimes violent. In the early Church there were tremendous disputes over the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Could there be three persons in one God?

Tied to this was the absolutely crucial question of whether Jesus was worthy of worship. If he was not God, then the answer was clearly no, because only God is worthy of worship. He was therefore declared the second person of the Holy Trinity, and then the Holy Spirit, the third person.

“The doctrine of the Trinity as we understand it, was decided by the Council of Nicea in 325AD, and refined in later Councils”

If we reject the idea that Jesus is God, then we should not worship him. He is merely a person to be emulated and admired. Reject this doctrine, and you no longer belong to the historic Christian faith. Unitarians reject the entire doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

This is by way of saying that certain doctrines are essential to the very nature and identity of Christianity. How do we decide these doctrines? Not by popular vote, certainly, even if lots of people in the early Church clashed over the Holy Trinity and how it should be properly understood.

The doctrine of the Trinity as we understand it, was decided by the Council of Nicea in 325AD, and refined in later Councils. The Nicene Creed eventually emerged from and we recite it at Mass to remind us what was decided.

Could we go back now and pick



A delegate holds a Bible leading a prayer walk at a pre-synodal assembly in the 6th-century ruins of Clonmacnoise Monastery in Ireland June 18. Photo: CNS / Clodagh Kilcoyne

apart the doctrine again? If a majority of Catholics were to judge now or in the future that we got it wrong after all, would it be appropriate to recast it and change the Nicene Creed?

There is no particular reason why a majority of Catholics could not decide at some point to reject the doctrine. In the early Church, many Catholics, including bishops, backed the priest Arius, who rejected the divinity of Christ.

The Council of Nicea was called in part to denounce Arianism as a heresy.

People of God

Today, it is perfectly possible that the supporters of Arius would insist that they represented the 'People of God', because there were so many of them, and that the Holy Spirit was speaking through them. There would be talk of the *sensus fidei*, or 'sense of the faithful'.

But the Council of Nicea declared that they were not being faithful at all. On the contrary, they had fallen into heresy. The fact that that had so much support, only made matters worse.

What we see here is an illustration of how authority in the Church works and it does not proceed on a democratic basis. Even if you are secular, it should be obvious that matters of truth are not decided in this way. A majority can easily be wrong. In a democratic State, the will of the majority will still usually prevail, politically-speaking, but it does not mean they are right.

At present, the Catholic Church in Ireland and around the world is going through a 'synodal process' ahead of a meeting of bishops in Rome next year to discuss synodal-

ity. As part of the process, parish assemblies were organised, submissions were made, questionnaires were issued and meetings with alienated groups were held.

Last week, a synthesis document was released by the national synodal office in Maynooth, under the auspices of the bishops. It gave more prominence to liberal and dissenting voices in the Church than any other similar document I have come across in other English-speaking countries so far. The contrast with the synthesis documents produced by the Church in Scotland, Australia, and England and Wales, is stark. Only the document from New Zealand comes close in tone to ours.

“The 'People of God' were speaking loudly and clearly, the Holy Spirit was blowing through the dusty corridors of the Church, bringing much needed change and renewal”

In the Irish document there are 13 references to Church teaching, and they are almost all critical, especially those relating to sex, sexuality and family life.

After its publication, liberal voices in the Church were ecstatic. Finally, the declared, the Church was moving in the direction they desired and Rome would have to listen. The 'People of God' were speaking loudly and clearly, the Holy Spirit was blowing through the dusty corridors of the Church, bringing much

needed change and renewal.

In fact, the 'People of God' were not speaking loudly and clearly because the vast majority of Mass-goers did not take part in the synodal process at all. But even if they had, and they backed liberal demands for change, it still would not mean they are right. It would certainly show the need for better catechesis.

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit cannot be confused with the 'zeitgeist', or 'spirit of the age'. Yes, we must pay attention to the 'signs of the times', but sometimes these can directly contradict Church teaching.

Authority

When they do, those in positions of authority in the Church, meaning primarily the bishops, must be willing to say so or they lose their prophetic role, which by definition involves a willingness to speak the truth even when it is unpopular.

And how do we decide which synthesis document most authentically represents the *sensus fidei*, the 'People of God', the 'Holy Spirit', when they are often saying different things and putting the emphasis in different places (even if all mention demands for certain liberal reforms among some Catholics)?

Outside the West, in places like Nigeria, the liberal wish-list barely registers. At their synodal meetings there was far more concern with issues like tribal divisions and poverty and the persecution of Christians. This is where the Church is growing. They are not rejecting core moral teachings in most of Africa, which people are often attracted to the Church because of those teachings.

Is the Holy Spirit driving the Church in different parts of the

world towards contradictory positions? That would be ridiculous, and it would mean the Holy Spirit is sowing division. It would also mean that the Holy Spirit is contradicting itself from one age to another.

This is why, in the end, you judge something is from the Holy Spirit when it is faithful to Church teaching, as decided by the Magisterium. Yes, our understanding of doctrine can develop, but not in such a way as to totally contradict what has previously been declared a core matter of belief.

“If the synodal process in Ireland departs from these principles, and leads the Irish Church in that direction, then it will become less Catholic, and less attached to the Universal Church”

Cardinal St John Henry Newman wrote lucidly on the development of doctrine. He outlined seven pragmatic tests for distinguishing legitimate developments from corruptions. Two of these were fidelity to the original idea and the continuity of principles.

If the synodal process in Ireland departs from these principles, and leads the Irish Church in that direction, then it will become less Catholic, and less attached to the Universal Church. In the end, this won't happen, but hopefully the impetus to prevent it doing so will come from the Irish hierarchy and not have to be imposed by Rome.

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Nicaraguan government

Nicaragua is becoming one of the most dangerous countries for the Church and missionaries to minister, writes **Chai Brady**

Looking at the situation in the Central American country of Nicaragua, the martyred and canonised St Oscar Romero comes to mind. He spoke out against a regime he knew to be unjust up until the end, when he was murdered at the altar by government agents.

President Daniel Ortega's government is ramping up aggression towards Church leaders who are in any way critical of his rule. This is reflected in the arbitrary arrests of several priests.

For instance, on August 15, the Diocese of Siuna released a statement that a diocesan priest, Fr Oscar Danilo Benavidez Tinoco was apprehended by the police in Mulukuku in Northern Nicaragua after celebrating Mass. He is the third priest arrested this year. It is believed Fr Benavidez is imprisoned in the infamous El Chipotle prison.

“While under house arrest, the bishop had continued making social media videos”

There is also the case of outspoken Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa and five other priests put under house arrest for more than two weeks at the curia. He was accused of destabilising the country using traditional and social media and subsequently seven Catholic radio stations were shut down – the bishop had refused to shut them himself when ordered to by regulators.

Criticising

These actions are taken through new laws foisted upon Nicaraguans by Ortega (76), which effectively make criticising the government illegal.

Bishop Álvarez (55), known for calling for political prisoners to be released and democracy to be restored, was then arrested on August 19 when



Nicaraguan police burst into his Matagalpa diocesan headquarters in a pre-dawn raid.

While under house arrest, the bishop had continued making social media videos. In one he stated: “We have to respond to hate with love, despair with hope, and fear with the strength and courage given to us by the glorious and resurrected Christ”.

Nicaragua's National Police said in an August 5 statement that the bishop was under investigation for “trying to organise violent groups, inciting them to execute acts of hate against the population, provoking an environment of chaos and disorder, disturbing

the peace and harmony in the community with the objective of destabilising the Nicaraguan state and attacking the constitutional authorities”.

Before this, in June, the Missionaries of Charity, the order founded by St Teresa of Kolkata, was expelled from the country. Months before this, in March, the Papal Nuncio to Nicaragua Archbishop Waldemar Stanislaw Sommertag was expelled in what the Vatican dubbed an “unjustified decision”.

Statement

In a statement to *The Irish Catholic*, Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said the repression of free-

dom of religion in the country is “deeply concerning”. Regarding the treatment of Bishop Álvarez and other clergy targeted by the Nicaraguan authorities, a spokesman said the department is “closely monitoring reports of the detention of Catholic Church leaders in Nicaragua, including Bishop Rolando José Álvarez of the Diocese of Matagalpa”.

“The deteriorating human rights situation in Nicaragua, including the repression of freedom of expression and freedom of religion and belief, is deeply concerning. The human rights violations, crackdowns on opposition

voices, independent media, religious and other leaders, and backsliding on democratic norms that have been observed in Nicaragua since 2018, and which have intensified since the November 2021 elections, are unacceptable and deeply alarming,” the DFA spokesman said.

Relations

Ever since 2018 negative relations between Church and state have intensified exponentially as the Church was sympathetic to protests against social security reforms. The huge protests were followed by a crackdown by security forces in which more than 350 people were

killed, thousands injured and about 1,600 arrested. Nicaragua remains one of the poorest countries in the western hemisphere. About 30% of the population (2 million people) lived below the poverty line in 2020.

“The huge protests were followed by a crackdown by security forces in which more than 350 people were killed”

While the plans for increased taxes and reduced welfare benefits were binned, the relationship continued to sour – this intensified during the 2021 election.

Ortega continues to use aggressive tactics to silence dissent and criticism. During the 2021 elections – described as a sham by the European Union – opposition

“President Daniel Ortega's government is ramping up aggression towards Church leaders who are in any way critical of his rule”

tightens grip on choked Church



A pilgrim prays with a rosary during a Marian event in the atrium of the Metropolitan Cathedral in Managua, Nicaragua, August 13. Photos: CNS



Bishop Rolando José Álvarez of Matagalpa, Nicaragua, is pictured in a screenshot from video at his residence in Matagalpa as riot police block the door.

is kept in total darkness," he said. The two men were sentenced to 13 years for alleged "conspiracy to undermine national integrity".

Crisis

Since the outbreak of the crisis, the Church has been the target of nearly 200 attacks and desecrations, as well as harassment and intimidations of clerics, with bishops being branded as terrorists. In 2019, Managua Auxiliary Bishop Silvio José Báez was forced to leave the Diocese of Managua at Pope Francis' request after receiving several death threats. He joins many others who opposed the regime and were forced into exile.

“It has been more than a year since Mr Chamorro and Mr Maradiaga were arrested ahead of the 2021 election”

Former guerrilla, Ortega helped overthrow dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1979 and served as president in 1985 before being voted out in 1990. After losing three more elections with the leftist Sandinista National Liberation Front, he finally came into power again in 2007. The Nicaraguan National Assembly, which Ortega controls, approved a bill in 2014 which scrapped the limit for the number of terms Nicaraguan presidents can run. He is now serving his fourth consecutive term as president.

For Dublin-based Fr Kevin O'Higgins SJ, who spent many years in Paraguay under a dictatorship in the 80s, the Church in Nicaragua must be

assured it is not alone.

"I think we need to heighten awareness of the Church as one community worldwide, it's not divided into continents. It shouldn't be just bishops in Latin America expressing solidarity, it should be the whole Church," he insisted.

Solidarity

Several bishops' conferences in South and Central America have expressed solidarity with the Church in Nicaragua, including in Brazil, Argentina and Ecuador.

Fr O'Higgins said that simple expressions of solidarity across the world can be "a way of letting the government in Nicaragua know that other people are taking note of what's happening, without attacking them."

"They [the Nicaraguan government] would obviously hope that this is all internal and nobody else is too upset by it, so I think these statements by bishops' conferences are very important, to let them know that the whole world is seeing what's happening. For them it's important to know that they are not alone."

Looking back at his time as a missionary under a similar authoritarian regime in Central America, he said: "Everything I'm seeing in Nicaragua, it brings back everything I experienced in Paraguay, because that was a dictatorship. The Paraguayan situation was a very right-wing dictatorship and Nicaragua it's

on the left... but the playbook is the very same, same tactics, sending people into exile and arresting people. There are far more lay people arrested than priests and very little is heard about them."

It is believed the Vatican is taking a cautious approach, with sources close to the situation saying they do not want to see another bishop killed in Central America.

The Vatican's permanent

Ortega's regime for the "harassment" and "arbitrary restrictions imposed on religious organisations and those that criticise the government".

Response

In relation to Ireland's response to the situation, the DFA also told this paper that Ireland, along with EU partners, has urged the Nicaraguan authorities to "put an end to all repression and restore full respect for human rights, including by allowing the return of international human rights bodies and NGOs to Nicaragua, and to release political prisoners".

The spokesman added: "We will continue to do so by all means possible, through our engagement in Dublin, at EU level, and on the ground through our Embassy in Mexico, which covers Nicaragua, and the EU Delegation in Managua."

Analysing the situation, the director of Aid to the Church in Need Ireland – an organisation that assists persecuted Christians around the world – Dr Michael Kinsella, said Ortega is "worried" about the power of the Church to effect social change.

"In terms of the treatment of the Church itself, because Latin America is so saturated in Catholicism, the 'problem' for any person coming in is they have to filter everything they do, be it communism, or be it fascism, through Catholicism," he said, "So they never really have a full grip on the minds and the hearts of the people."

Nicaragua is predominantly Christian, with 59% of the population identifying as Catholic according to the last available census in 2005. However, a recent survey, conducted in 2019 by Borge and Associates, indicate the number of Catholics is closer to 43%.

“We will continue to do so by all means possible, through our engagement in Dublin”

Dr Kinsella's believes Ortega's strategy is "kicking out the Church" and "dislocation points of pastoral and humanitarian care that the Church provides so that the people – particularly the poorest – will no longer have that point of connection in identifying the Church as a force for good."

"The message from a lot of missionaries is that the Church is always seen as a plan B, that if this guy doesn't work out, the Church is seen as the medium through which social change, a regime change, can occur. And that is what Ortega is worried about. Here is somebody who has designs on power down the line."

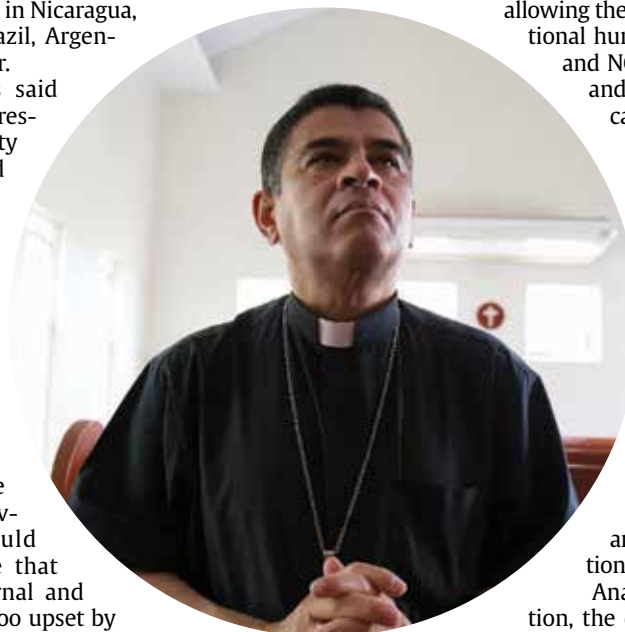
Tale

Dr Kinsella describes it as a tale as old as time – "a turf war for the human mind and the human soul being conducted by temporal powers and the spiritual authority of the Church itself".

"The collateral damage of that is not just the withering of the soul because we've deprived people of hope – you requisition the concept of hope as something that can only ever be fulfilled in the state," Dr Kinsella said.

"Even more pressing than that, because that's at a social engineering level, at an atomic level each missionary who – particularly through their vocations invested in the divine commission to preach the Gospel to all nations – is left with a very, very real possibility that they will pay the ultimate price in martyrdom for witnessing to Christ's life and wealth."

"The irony for Ortega is this, that at no point in human history where the Church was persecuted and where people were martyred for their faith, has the regime that enforced that in the end survived," he said, "This is a common theme among all tyrannies: the dining à la carte on constitutional guarantees and protections because of 'emergency'; history will very quickly judge what has happened."



Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa.

All smiles as Knock national novena

Ruadhán Jones

There were smiles aplenty as Knock Shrine's national novena returned for the first time since before the Covid-19 pandemic.

The novena opened on Sunday, August 14, with Mass celebrated by Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan, concluding Monday August 22 with Archbishop of Tuam Francis Duffy celebrating Mass.

A variety of speakers

addressed the thousands of pilgrims, including Roseanna Ruane, who received a standing ovation, August 15, as she revealed how prayer helped her through her daughter's cancer surgery.

Thursday August 18 was dedicated to praying for the Ukrainian community, with the recently appointed Visitor to the Ukrainian Community in Ireland Bishop Kenneth Nowokowski concelebrating Mass in Knock Shrine.



Paula Flaherty and Eithne McDonald with children Clara, Jasmine, Kiernan and Paul Flaherty.



Eileen Robbins, Myra Pettit, Mary Daly, Iris Kelly and Louise Robbins from Westmeath enjoy a cuppa at the Knock National Novena Tuesday, August 18. Photos: John McElroy.



Mother and daughter Michaela Harty and Kathleen Coffey.



Justin and Kelly Cerilli with children Shannon, Catherine and Carol from the USA.



Husband and wife Abhijith Paul and Jovina Joy taking a photo at the Knock National Novena.



Oliver and Eileen Doyle with children Abbie, Farrah, Emmett and baby Liam from Longford



Darragh, Joe, Arlene and Niamh Collins from Stockport, Manchester.



Liz Mulvey, Mary Kelly, Eileen Whelan, Claire Daly and Margaret Murray from Moore parish, Co. Roscommon.



Thomas Maughan, Tom Connors, Eileen Conroy and Samantha McCarthy.

makes a comeback



Lorraine Cripps, Ellie Jones, Erin Jones, Noah Jones, Sarah Cripps, Martina Cripps with Piper the dog.



Sisters Mary and Christina Duignan from Galway with Irene Anidjah from London.



Eileen Maughan and Michael Conroy.



David and Elaine Harkin getting some holy water at the Knock National Novena.



Margaret McGeever and Brigid Shire.



Karen, Louis and Lauren Sampil from Dublin.



Mary O'Brien, Helen Flynn, Margaret Sheehan and Geraldine Murphy.



The Catherwood family from Magherafelt, Co. Tyrone.



Bishop Michael Ruter celebrates Mass in Knock Basilica, August 16.



The Knock novena gets the thumbs up.



A group of people chatting in the grounds of Knock.



Members of the Indian community from Dublin.





Auxiliary-Bishop of Armagh Michael Router leads prayers at the apparition chapel after Mass in the Basilica during the Knock National Novena.



A large crowd of pilgrims processions to the apparition chapel for final prayers after Mass in the Basilica during the Knock National Novena last Tuesday, August 16.



Dr Nicola Brady, chair of the Synodal Steering group, speaks on 'The Synodal Pathway: What have we learned and what will we do', during Mass in the Basilica celebrated by Bishop Michael Router.



Fr Douglas Zaggi, Co. Roscommon, is pictured with Sr Loretto Okwaji Daughters of Divine Love from London.



Members of Moore ICA, Co. Roscommon.



Fr Willie Purcell national vocations co-ordinator and Deacon Eric Cooney, Dublin Diocese.

General Chapter helps Doms chart course into the future



The Dominican General Chapter gathered the brothers in Spirit and in prayer to address the global challenges the Order faces, writes **Jason Osborne**

The General Chapter of the Dominicans convened this year in Tultenango, Mexico from July 18 to August 8, during which time the brothers came together in a spirit of prayer and fraternity to chart a course forward through the perils and challenges of the modern age.

The General Chapter is the highest authority in the Dominican Order while it's in session, and is composed of an assembly of friars representing the Provinces of the Order, who come together to "discuss and define matters pertaining to the good of the entire Order".

For the 2022 session, the Irish Province sent one delegate – Prior of Tallaght, Fr Donal Roche OP – and one translator, Fr Conor McDonough OP who told *The Irish Catholic* newspaper that it was a "powerful moment" for them all.

“All the Mexicans just reacted with great emotion to that announcement”

"It was fascinating, because so many of the delegates from the other provinces like from Australia, South Africa, whatever – so many of them have connections with Ireland," Fr McDonough said when asked about the Irish presence at the chapter.

"So, several of the provinces were actually founded from Ireland and became independent. The Indian Province of Dominicans and then the Australian Province of Dominicans, so they're both Irish foundations.

"Then, lots of provinces over the decades would have sent their students to Irish houses to learn English. A lot of them would have memories of Tralee or Waterford or Tallaght and they were really keen to recall all of that with great gratitude," he said.

With so many different cultures and contexts represented at the global gathering, Fr McDonough said



The Dominicans celebrate during their General Chapter in Tultenango, Mexico. Photo: Ordo Praedicatorum Flickr.

that the brothers opened each other's eyes to the variety of challenges the Order is facing around the world.

Contexts

"It was really, really interesting to see that obviously, we're in so many different contexts. Really, really different contexts. Sometimes for example, when secularism is spoken about, some friars from, especially, the southern half of the Church, would just remind people gently that secularism or secularisation is not such a problem in their context, because they have other challenges, like the rise of Pentecostalism, which is not such a challenge in Europe.

"You get, first of all, that sense of the real diversity of challenges that

the Order is facing, but then the fact that there are some common things that we return to. So, it's not that we're doing completely different things in different places," Fr McDonough said.

Realism

The chapter was held in a spirit of "realism", Fr McDonough explained, with the Master of the Order Fr Gerard Timoner III making the point during the opening Mass that 'we're not in the business of optimism, we're in the business of hope'.

"He mentioned that he had in the week leading up to the chapter, signed documents to suppress something like seven Dominican houses around the world, in other words, just communities that have died out, and

he signed a document to close them. But then, at the same opening Mass he said, 'But, alongside leaving these seven places and letting them die, we have opened up one new community in the last week, the newest Dominican community is in Ukraine.

“It was really, really interesting to see that obviously, we're in so many different contexts”

"All the Mexicans just reacted with great emotion to that announcement. That's in Chmielnicki. One of the most recently ordained Dominican priests is a Ukrainian who was

ordained in Ukraine in the context of war. His family couldn't be there because they live in Donetsk, so he was talking about not being just blindly optimistic, genuinely facing up to reality, and yet, constantly to keep our eyes on Christ so that we have hope," Fr McDonough said.

Solutions

Concrete solutions were sought too, Fr McDonough saying that a "major theme" at this chapter compared to previous ones was the need for "authentic Dominican formation", so that the young people joining them around the world are being deeply rooted in the Dominican tradition of prayer and study.

"There was that real push in the legislation that was produced by the chapter, there was a real push towards making sure that we're providing a really authentic Dominican formation, so that the preachers we're sending out to these radically different contexts are all solidly formed and that they have deep wells to drink from and that they have a solid identity as Dominicans. So I think that was really a major theme at this chapter."

The brothers were sent away with great enthusiasm as the chapter came to a close, but not an "ungrounded, unrealistic enthusiasm", Fr McDonough said.

"There's that very powerful sense at these general chapters of a global movement, but that's really locally rooted. You're just listening to what the Spirit is doing and saying to each of the local churches and trying to get some kind of a sense of a global vision, to see what the Lord is doing in the life of the Church today, and how we can then simply get involved with what the Lord is doing."



Fr McDonough speaks during the General Chapter in Tultenango, Mexico.

Out&About

At the service of the Lord



KILKENNY: Mrs Rena Kennelly, (centre) who received the Benemerenti Medal in recognition of her service to the Church, is pictured with family and friends: front row (from left) Ben Clifford, Shirley Clifford, Kate Kennelly O'Driscoll, Roan Clifford, Justine O'Driscoll; second row Jacquie O'Sullivan, Sr Rose O'Donoghue, Jason Clifford, Paula Kennelly, Ailbhne O'Driscoll, Catherine O'Driscoll; third row Enda O'Meara, Tadhghe Fleming, Margaret Moriarty, John Joe Clifford, Mark Kennelly, Fr Kieran O'Brien Adm., Noreen Coffey and Dan O'Driscoll. Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan.



DERRY: St Mary's Derry past pupil Ava Canney (right) meets Mayor of Derry and Strabane Cllr Sandra Duffy at the Guildhall. Mayor Duffy presented her with a gift and wished her the best of luck as she gets ready to jet off to America and begin a new chapter at Yale University, August 16.



MEATH: Miss Meath Aine Duffy is pictured with country music singer Mary Duff and Fr Yohanna Jacob (far left) and Fr Timothy Mejida (centre).

IN SHORT

Wanted: Ireland's Volunteer of the Year

Nominations have opened for the 2022 Volunteer Ireland Awards and the public is being asked to nominate Ireland's 'Volunteer of the Year'.

The Volunteer Ireland Awards take place annually and celebrate the "immense contribution volunteers make to communities across Ireland", a statement from the company said.

Volunteer Ireland CEO, Nina Arwitz, said: "These awards give us the opportunity to celebrate the extraordinary kindness and generosity of Ireland's volunteers."

"As we emerge from a pandemic during which volunteers provided crucial sup-

ports, volunteers are once again selflessly stepping forward, this time in welcoming and supporting displaced Ukrainian people in communities across Ireland."

However, it's not just at times of crisis that Irish volunteers make an impact, Ms Arwitz continued.

"All year round, volunteers are the beating hearts of our communities... The Volunteer Ireland Awards give us a chance to say thank you by celebrating the invaluable contribution volunteers make to Irish society."

Visit www.volunteer.ie to nominate a volunteer for a Volunteer Ireland Award.

This year's Volunteer Ireland Awards will take place in Dublin in December.

NCBI launches 'Clear Our Paths' campaign

The National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI) has launched its annual Clear Our Paths campaign.

The campaign aims to create a safer and cleaner environment on our streets for people who are blind or vision impaired to get around independently.

"This campaign is aimed at informing and educating people on the impact that temporary obstacles and shared spaces have on people who have sight loss," said June Tinsley, NCBI Head of Advocacy and Communications.

"Everyday obstacles such as cars parked on footpaths, dog fouling, overhanging branches, wheelie bins etc., can obstruct or injure someone who is blind or vision impaired as they try

to navigate past safely.

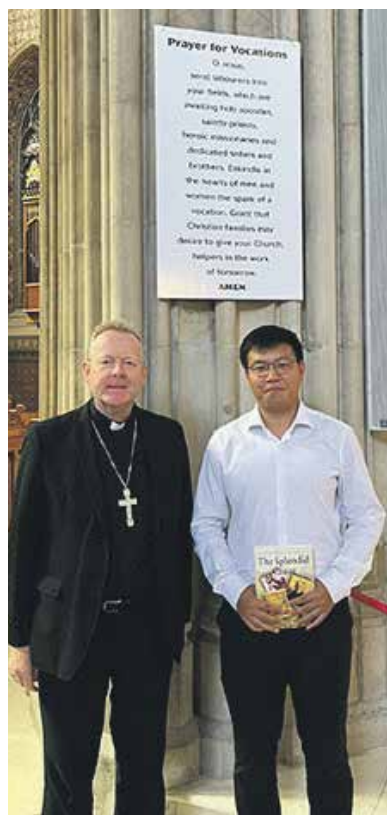
"We are encouraging people to be mindful of these obstacles and remove them to ensure our footpaths are safe and clean."

Mary's Meals appoints new education officer

Angela Moore, from the borders of Laois, Offaly and Tipperary, has been appointed the new Support Engagement Officer for international school feeding charity, Mary's Meals.

Having volunteered for the charity for the past two years, Ms Moore said she is delighted to be given the opportunity to grow the movement in the south of Ireland.

"It is an absolute privilege for me to join the Mary's Meals Ireland team as Support Engagement Officer in Munster and Leinster," she said in a statement.



ARMAGH: Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin welcomes Peter, a Chinese seminarian, to the cathedral. Peter is on pastoral placement in Ireland, August 16.



WATERFORD: The French boy scouts of Groupe Notre Dame du Chene, Clan Sainte Petronille pitched their tents in one of the fields at Glencairn Abbey. They are pictured with the Cistercian community before their departure.



CORK: Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family of London and the Apostolic Visitor for Ukrainian Catholics in Ireland, meets Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin, August 15.



KILKENNY: The Kilkenney Gospel Choir is pictured with Mayor of Kilkenney Andrew McGuinness who honoured the choir for its work in raising awareness and money for local and national charities.



DUBLIN: Bridewell Garda Station hosted an afternoon tea for Brother Kevin and Brother Alphie to wish them farewell as they transfer from the Capuchin Centre Dublin, August 15.



LAOIS: Portlaoise Parish celebrated Mass in the Heath at the Grotto, remembering all who are buried in the sacred place, August 16.



CORK: A sizeable crowd gathered to pray the rosary at the grotto in Assumption Place. The rosary is prayed there every Tuesday at 2.30pm. Photo: Fr Aquin.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



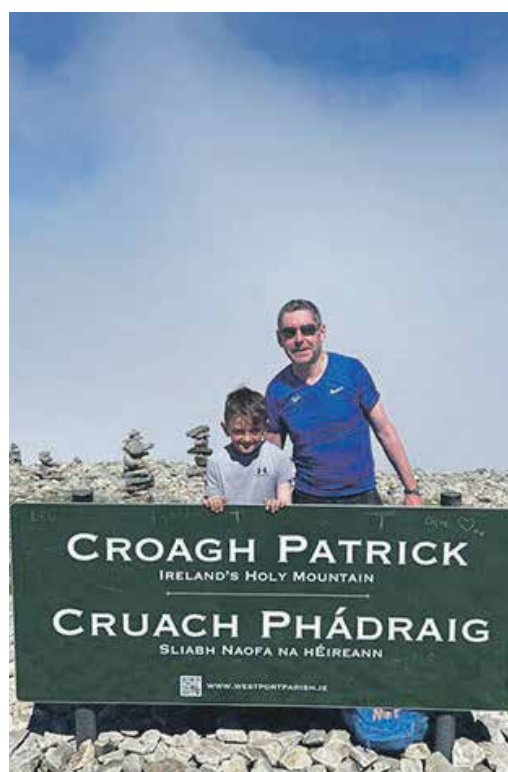
OFFALY: Volunteers, from left, Doireann Brown (12), Georgia Corrigan (11), yard manager Ciara Malone and Alex Corrigan from My Lovely Horse Rescue helps launch nominations for the Volunteer Ireland Awards, August 16. Visit www.volunteer.ie to nominate a volunteer for a Volunteer Ireland Award. Photo: Mark Stedman



MAYO: Mark Dilworth from Knockavilla, Co. Cork, in seminary with the Diocese of Shrewsbury, and Benjamin Houessou from Benin, now with the Archdiocese of Bourges, are pictured at Knock Shrine, August 17.



MAYO: Bridget, Juliet and Mark Clear from Clonaslee, Co. Laois, are pictured having reached the top of Croagh Patrick.



MAYO: Dr Michael Haverty, Ballycowan, Tullamore with his son Joe Haverty at the top of Croagh Patrick.

ANTRIM

Apostolic Work Randalstown are holding a treasure hunt Thursday August 25. Cars leave the Parish Centre, Station Road, Randalstown from 6.30pm. Admission £5, drivers free. Proceeds in aid of missionary projects overseas.

ARMAGH

A special blessing of school bags will take place at all Masses on Saturday 27 and Sunday August 28 in Armagh Parish. All young people are invited to come along with their school bags to a Mass on that weekend and receive God's blessing on their work in the year to come.

CLARE

The Killaloe diocesan pilgrimage to Scattery Island takes place August 28 from 2:30-5pm.

CORK

The adoration chapel at St Colman's Cathedral is open each week, on Wednesdays from 11am until 9pm, and on Thursdays and Fridays from 11am until 6pm. Moycullen artist Sara Kyne is showing her collection of oil paintings, entitled "People for Others", in the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne from Tuesday August 9 to Sunday August 28.

DERRY

Derry diocese is holding its annual 'Come and See' weekend for anyone interested in studying for the diocesan priesthood. The retreat takes place August 26-28. For information and reservation, please contact the Diocesan Vocations Director Fr Pat O'Hagan at pgoh2111@gmail.com or email the National Vocations Office: info@vocations.ie.

DONEGAL

Mother of Mercy residential retreat takes place August 26-28 run by the Sisters of Merciful Jesus, who wish to share their love for Our Lady. The retreat is residential. Cost: €159 inclusive. Bookings are essential. Contact dvmlatterkenny@gmail.com or phone 0749169934. If you have any dietary requirements or food allergies, please say so when booking.

DOWN

Eucharistic Adoration in St Patrick's Church, Downpatrick, will resume on Friday September 2 at 11am until 7:30pm.

DUBLIN

Legion of Mary Centenary concert takes place September 3 in St Patrick's Cathedral. Featuring Celine Byrne, the Dublin Concert Band and many more. Begins 8pm, ticks cost €20 or €30. Visit Eventbrite.ie or contact 087 230 5946.

Catholic Ireland: A proud legacy or a shameful debacle? To mark the release of her new book *The Way We Were: Catholic Ireland Since 1922* this autumn, journalist Mary Kenny has invited *The Irish Times* journalist Derek Scally for a discussion on the legacy of Catholic Ireland. Moderating this discussion is renowned journalist Sean O'Rourke. Takes place September 7 in Hodges Figgis, Dawson St, beginning at 6pm.

GALWAY

A Youth 2000 prayer gathering for young Catholics (aged 18-35) takes place in the Church of St Oliver Plunkett, Renmore on Fridays at 8:15pm. For more information, contact Maire on 0851482076

KILKENNY

A prayer group meets in Troyscourt every Monday at 7.30pm.

LONGFORD

The diocesan pilgrimage to Knock takes place Sunday September 4 with ceremonies beginning at 2.30pm. Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Mel's Cathedral from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 8pm to 12 midnight Monday to Saturday in the Oratory at the side of the Presbytery.

MAYO

The Order of Malta pilgrimage to Knock takes place Sunday August 28, beginning at 2:30pm.

OFFALY

Clonmacnoise pattern day takes place Sunday, September 11. The pattern begins at 2.45pm with Mass at 3pm.

ROSCOMMON

The cemetery Mass at the New Cemetery Elphin takes place Sunday August 28 at 6pm

SLIGO

Legion of Mary Rosary Procession to mark the Centenary of its founding by Servant of God Frank Duff. This will take place on Saturday August 27 leaving St Anne's Church, Sligo at 3pm, to arrive at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Sligo at around 4pm

TYRONE

Benburb Priory will host a day conference on the meaning crisis (rise in suicides, depression, and more) and the Christian way, September 2. The conference will feature leading Christian thinkers, including Paul Kingsnorth, Paul Vander Klay, and Fr Calvin Robinson. Tickets are available at Benburbpriory.com.

WATERFORD

'Jesus, My Lord' – a day of prayer, thanksgiving and healing – takes place Sunday, September 11 in the Rhu Glenn Hotel, Slieverue with guest speaker Fr Pat Collins. Runs from 10am to 6pm with Mass at 12 O'clock. Contact Tom 087 2701311/ Síle 086 8590394.

A study group on the *Theology of the Body* called 'Discovering God's Masterplan for your life!' begins Mondays 7.30-9pm, September 12 – November 14. It includes prayer, discussion, tea/coffee. Venue: Foyer of Charity, Dunmore East, Waterford, X91 FC65. Registration essential, contact: hellywilliams@gmail.com.

WESTMEATH

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

WEXFORD

St Aidan's Cathedral Enniscorthy's parish pilgrimage to Our Lady's Island takes place Monday August 29 at 8pm. The bus is subsidised by the parish so the cost is €5 per person.



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Horizons of Hope
Daniel O'Leary

A celebration of Daniel O'Leary's unrelenting conviction that life itself is God's love eternally unfolding before us. Featuring a collection of notes found on Daniel's laptop after his death.



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Vicka Her Story
Finbar O'Leary

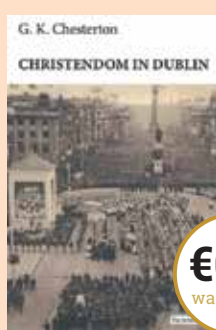
This is the fullest account given by the eldest visionary Vicka of her story and experiences with Our Lady. Here, Vicka relays many of the Messages which the 'Queen of Peace' has given to her.



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S A L E

2022

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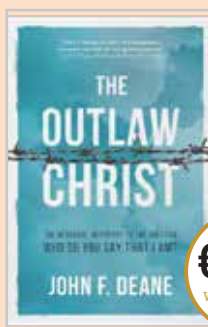


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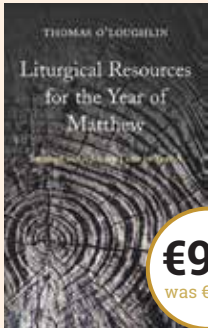


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World Report

IN BRIEF

Sri Lankan priest involved in protests granted bail

● A priest involved in the recent protests in Sri Lanka has been granted bail after being accused of several criminal offenses.

Fr Amila Jeewantha Peiris appeared in the Colombo Fort Magistrate's Court on August 12 and was granted bail thanks to two personal sureties of 500,000 Sri Lankan rupees (around \$1,375).

The 45-year-old priest, serving in Ratnapura diocese, was driven by the country's economic crisis to join protesters in Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital city.

Police searched for him at his parents' home and St Joseph's Church in Balangoda — 89 miles from Colombo — on July 27, UCA news reported.

Journalist who reported on massacre of Nigerian Christians to stand trial

● A journalist who wrote an article accusing the Nigerian government of failing to protect Christians threatened by armed militants was arrested and will be tried on charges of "cyberstalking".

Luka Binniyat, a Catholic human rights reporter, is facing prison after writing an article in which the Nigerian government was criticised for its inaction in the face of an ongoing threat to Christian communities.

In the article, Mr

Binniyat reported on charges that Kaduna State's Commissioner of Internal Security and Home Affairs, Samuel Aruwan, had mischaracterised the massacre of unarmed Christians as a "clash" between villagers and herdsmen.

Mr Binniyat is set to stand trial before a Nigerian magistrate on September 6 on charges of cyberstalking, aiding, and abetting the offenses of cybercrime, charges which he denies.

Portugal abuse commission urges victims to come forward during home visits

● An independent commission investigating sexual abuse in Portugal's Catholic Church urged more victims to submit testimonies, especially during summer home visits by citizens living abroad.

"In our work as a voice in the silence, we continue appealing to all adults who may have been victims as children," said the commission's chairman, Pedro Strecht.

"We make the same request to all members of the Church who can spread this message as they consider appropriate, such as in homilies or on parish door notices."

The child psychiatrist spoke at a Lisbon media conference August 17, nine months after the six-member commission was set up by Portugal's Catholic bishops.

He said he was concerned to reach the 2.3 million Portuguese, 20% of the population, currently living outside the country, a "significant number" of whom visited during summer, especially from Europe.

Catholics note violence against Indigenous in Brazil surges

● Last year was marked by the dramatic increase of violence and rights violations against Indigenous peoples in Brazil, said the Brazilian bishops' Indigenous Missionary Council.

"This ... was the most disastrous in the country's history," said Archbishop Roque Paloschi of Porto Velho, president of the council, known by its Portuguese acronym as CIMI.

The archbishop presented the report, "Violence Against Indigenous Peoples of Brazil: Data from 2021," August 17 at the bishops' conference headquarters in Brasilia.

The increase in invasions and attacks against Indigenous communities and leaders and the intensification of conflicts reflected "the institutional environment of offensive against the constitutional rights of native peoples," said the document.

Nuns in Philippines call terrorism financing charges 'preposterous'

Catholic nuns from a missionary order in the Philippines have denounced a criminal charge accusing them of financing terrorism and violating the country's anti-terrorism law.

Ucanews.com reported the nuns from the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines issued a statement August 18 to denounce the criminal charge filed by the Department of Justice.

The nuns termed the allegation of terrorist financing as "preposterous" as they claimed that "all our projects and activities are well-documented, reported and accounted for".

"All these allegations and charges were not based on solid evidence and had demonised the works of our religious congregation," the nuns said in a statement.

On August 15 the Department of Justice filed a criminal charge against 16 individuals, including five nuns from the congregation, for a non-bailable offense of allegedly donating to and soliciting funds for the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army.

The justice department earlier said the sisters failed to refute the allegations and charges against them, which led the prosecutor to believe there was probable cause to indict them of the charge.

The Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, however, said their indictment was part of government repression to



Members of religious groups take part in a protest a few hours before the start of the hearing of oral arguments on the anti-terrorism law, outside a church in Manila, Philippines, in this 2021 file photo. Critics of the bill said it could be used to stifle political dissent and abuse human rights. Photo: CNS/Lisa Marie David, Reuters.

silence dissenters, particularly critics of two political families accused of massive human rights violations.

"This is part of the worsening state of repression against human rights defenders, especially those who are against the policies of two former Presidents Ferdinand Marcos Sr. and Rodrigo Duterte. ... Why is the government — especially from Duterte to Marcos Jr — hell-bent on using all resources at its disposal to shut down the congregation for good?" the religious sisters asked.

"The accusations have negatively affected our various ministries in sustainable agriculture, education, health,

environment protection, and defence of humans. When our fight for the common good is at stake, especially the interests and rights of the poor and the marginalised, we must speak," they added.

Ucanews.com said the nuns expressed their concern about the allegedly concocted testimonies of two former members of the New People's Army, who said the congregation had been helping terrorists. The nuns said one former NPA member testified against them in exchange for the release of her mother.

"The Marcos Jr's government is using the same playbook by predecessor (Rodrigo

Duterte by demonising legal democratic organisations such as RMP, which provide much-needed services to the people, and (by) putting its members in direct harm's way," the statement said.

Retired Bishop Arturo Bastes of Sorsogon said that by charging the nuns, the state intended to send a "chilling warning" to silence Marcos and Duterte dissenters within the Catholic Church.

"The message is very clear. Those who want to criticise the present (Marcos) administration should think twice or suffer the consequence of facing criminal prosecution," Bishop Bastes told ucanews.com.

Peru's bishops call for urgent solution to nation's crisis

Amid a political crisis in which the president, his wife and members of her family are accused of corruption and taking bribes, Peru's bishops have called for dialogue and a commitment to uphold democratic institutions.

At a news conference August 18, the bishops issued a statement calling for "an urgent and creative solution" in the face of "alarming levels of political, social, economic and moral decomposition, combined with distrust on the part of a large percentage of the population, and a loss of credibility and governance".

The statement comes just after the first-

year mark of the government of President Pedro Castillo, a rural teacher and union leader from the northern Cajamarca region who had no prior government experience when he took office in July 2021.

President Castillo took the helm of a country reeling from the coronavirus pandemic, which claimed at least 200,000 lives and left more than a quarter of the population living in poverty.

His administration has been plagued by constant turnover in key positions, with nearly 60 people having passed through the 19 top Cabinet posts so far.

His term also has been marked by

constant sparring between the president and Congress. The constitution gives Congress the power to censure ministers and impeach the president, but also allows the president to dissolve Congress under certain circumstances.

The result has been an uneasy standoff. Conflicts between the president and the national are "seriously harming democracy and creating greater division and conflict, which leads to a serious confrontation among Peruvians and may lead to uncontrollable levels of violence".

Archbishop condemns organised crime attacks on US-Mexico border

Francisco Moreno Barrón, the archbishop of Tijuana, Mexico, across the border from metro San Diego in the United States, condemned the 20 attacks carried out in several towns in the state of Baja California.

The archbishop issued an August 13 statement regard-

ing the public transportation vehicles set on fire by armed men on the afternoon and night of August 12 in Tijuana, Tecate, Ensenada, Mexicali, and Rosarito, towns on or not far from the US border.

"I condemn this painful scenario that harms the entire society, which is suffering the

consequences of problems that must find other ways of being solved, never with the violence that always causes more violence," the archbishop stressed.

According to the newspaper *El Universal*, witnesses to some of the incidents said that the armed men stopped

the vehicles, threatened the drivers, forced them to get off with all their passengers, and then poured on fuel and set the public transport vehicles on fire.

The motive for the attacks is unclear, but the violence may be related to turf wars between rival cartels.



Edited by Jason Osborne
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Democracy under fire



A plain-clothes law enforcement member holds a tear gas launcher as protests erupt after the presidential election results were announced, in Kisumu, Kenya, August 15. Kenya's Catholic bishops have called for peace after a dispute emerged in the presidential election. Photo: CNS/Baz Ratner, Reuters.

UN: China's mistreatment of Uyghurs 'modern-day slavery'

A new report from the United Nations on modern slavery provides further documentation of China's mistreatment of the Uyghur ethnic group, a Muslim minority that according to some human rights groups is suffering genocide.

The UN's Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, Dr Tomoya Obokata, wrote that it is "reasonable to conclude" that forced labour among ethnic minorities, including the Uyghurs, "in sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing has been occurring in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China".

Dr Obokata identified two state-mandated systems that

have contributed to the forced labour of the Uyghurs, one of which is a system that detains minorities and subjects them to work placements, while the other system shifts rural laborers into other forms of low-skilled, low-paid work. While the Chinese government claims that the programs provide work opportunities for minorities, the report found that "indicators of forced labour pointing to the involuntary nature of work rendered by affected communities have been present in many cases".

"Further, given the nature and extent of powers exercised over affected workers during forced labour, includ-

ing excessive surveillance, abusive living and working conditions, restriction of movement through internment, threats, physical and/or sexual violence and other inhuman or degrading treatment, some instances may amount to enslavement as a crime against humanity, meriting a further independent analysis," the report reads.

In recent years, Uyghurs — with estimates ranging as high as 1.8 million — have been detained in hundreds of "re-education camps" in China's Xinjiang, a sparsely populated autonomous region in the far west of the country. Inside the camps, the Uyghurs are reportedly subjected to

torture and political indoctrination. Outside the camps, Uyghurs are monitored by pervasive police forces and facial recognition technology.

China has for years conflated the Uyghurs' culture and religious activities with extremism and separatism. The government at one time denied the camps even existed but has since shifted to defending its actions as a reasonable response to a national security threat.

The United States formally labelled China's actions in Xinjiang a genocide in January 2021.

Spanish bishops stand in solidarity with Church in Nicaragua

At least two Spanish archdioceses have expressed their support for the Church in Nicaragua, which is being persecuted by dictator Daniel Ortega, with messages of solidarity on social media, especially for the Bishop of Matagalpa, Rolando José Álvarez.

Spain's primate archdiocese of Toledo, said on Twitter "We entrust the entire Diocese of Matagalpa (to God) in these critical moments and ask the Lord for the gift of fortitude for their pastors

and lay Faithful."

The message was sent commenting on a previous tweet from Bishop Álvarez himself: "Love one another as I have loved you." (Jn 15:12-27)

The recently named coadjutor archbishop of Granada, Spain, and apostolic administrator of Ávila, José María Gil Tamayo, expressed his "solidarity for the Church in Nicaragua, its freedom under siege by the dictatorship that governs the country".

The persecution of the Catholic Church in Nicaragua has been increasing for years. The bishops accurately warned of the dictatorial drift of the Ortega government as early as 2014. The bishops have decried the indiscriminate use of force by the regime in cracking down on the opposition, beginning in 2018 when it brutally repressed protesters demanding change.

Vatican roundup

Vatican says not enough evidence to try cardinal for sexual assault

● A preliminary Vatican investigation into allegations against Cardinal Marc Ouellet concluded there was not sufficient evidence to warrant opening up formal proceedings against the cardinal for sexual assault, a Vatican spokesman said.

However, the Jesuit who did the investigation was a long-time associate of the cardinal.

Pope Francis has been made aware of these findings and, after further consultation, has declared that "there are insufficient elements to open a canonical investigation for sexual assault by Cardinal Ouellet against person F," Matteo Bruni, head of the Vatican press office, said in a written statement August 18.

Mr Bruni wrote that a preliminary investigation ordered by Pope Francis had been completed and that it concluded there were no facts or "elements to initiate a trial against Cardinal Ouellet for sexual assault".

The Canadian cardinal is prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Bishops.

Mr Bruni confirmed that Belgian Jesuit Fr Jacques Servais had been chosen by the Pope to conduct the preliminary study after Cardinal Ouellet was accused of actions allegedly committed against a young laywoman, identified as "F" in Canadian court documents in a class action lawsuit against the Archdiocese of Quebec.

The elderly can unite all generations – Pope Francis

● Pope Francis dedicated his general audience talk to the urgent need for young and old to come together so older people can share their faith and wisdom about the world. "Let's think about dialogue, about the alliance between old and young," he said, as well as make sure this bond is not broken.

"May the elderly have the joy of speaking, of expressing themselves with young people and may young people seek out the elderly to receive the wisdom of life from them."

It was an appeal one small boy in the Vatican's

Paul VI audience hall seemed to take to heart, walking past the guards and straight up to the Pope to stand transfixed by his side during the final greetings at the audience's end.

The Pope affectionately rubbed the boy's close-cropped hair and reassured him he was welcome to stay.

"During the audience we talked about dialogue between old and young, right? And this one, he has been brave and he's at ease," the Pope said about his small guest to applause.

Zelenskyy thanks Pope for praying for Ukraine

● Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said that he spoke with Pope Francis over the phone and thanked the Pope for his prayers and humanitarian support.

In a tweet posted on August 12, Zelenskyy wrote that he had briefed the Pope on Russia's "horrible crimes" and aggression against Ukraine.

"Our people need support of world spiritual leaders who should convey to the world the truth about acts of horror committed by the aggressor," the Ukrainian president said.

Andrii Yurash, Ukraine's ambassador to the Holy See, reported that this is the third time that Pope Francis has spoken with Zelenskyy since Russia invaded Ukraine nearly six months ago.

The ambassador added that Ukraine would be happy to welcome the Pope for an official visit to help with the peace process.

Pope Francis has repeatedly expressed his interest in a potential visit to the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv.

On his return flight from Canada, the Pope reiterated his interest in traveling to the war-torn country. In July, the Ukrainian foreign ministry renewed its invitation for Pope Francis to visit.



Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

Whenver the next papal election occurs, in the run-up to the big vote airwaves and column inches will be full of traditional wisdom about conclaves, often expressed in familiar soundbites destined to be recycled almost endlessly.

One such classic is, “He who enters a conclave as a pope exits as a cardinal,” usually taken to mean that favourites don’t win, and that the result will come as a surprise. Another is the vintage Italian saying, “You always follow a fat pope with a thin one,” meaning that the next pope will represent a departure from the one who came before.

“Only in two cases over the last century, John XXIII and John Paul II, could the winner be described as a genuine surprise”

Then, of course, there’s the oft-repeated maxim “those who know don’t talk, and those who talk don’t know,” suggesting it’s impossible to predict the outcome of a conclave because the only people who matter don’t reveal their thinking, and everyone else is simply serving up meaningless chatter.

In that galaxy of purported wisdom, for the last 100 years or so there’s been another virtually iron-clad axiom, which goes like this: “There can’t be an American pope.” Among other considerations, the assumption is that the Vatican can’t have a “superpower pope,” because it would fatally compromise its geopolitical and diplomatic independence.

Here’s the good news for Americans, however: Most of those other bits of alleged wisdom are at least partly bunk, so there’s no special reason to believe the one about Americans holds much water either.

Take the bit about entering as a pope and exiting as a cardinal. Over the last 100 years, from 1922 to 2022, there have been eight papal elections, and clear front-runners actually prevailed in three of them: Pius XII in 1939, Paul VI in 1963 and Benedict XVI in 2005. In three other cases, the winner was only a moderate surprise, meaning somebody who was considered a second-tier candidate before the fact: Pius XI, John Paul I and Francis.

Only in two cases over the last century, John XXIII and John Paul II, could the winner be described as a genuine surprise.

Following a fat pope with a thin one? Well, Pius XI largely continued

Why alleged conclave wisdom often isn’t really all that wise



Cardinals from around the world attend a Mass for the election of the Roman pontiff in St Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican in this 2013 photo. Photo: CNS.

“As an historical matter, the election of Karol Wojtyla of Poland in 1978 ended the Italian monopoly on the papacy, just as the choice of Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina in 2013 broke the European stranglehold”

the policies of Benedict XV, Pius XII was already in charge of Vatican diplomacy before he was elected, Paul VI implemented the vision for Vatican II launched by John XXIII, and Benedict XVI had already been the intellectual architect of John Paul II’s reign. Of course, we don’t know how John Paul I would have turned out.

Perhaps only with John XXIII, John Paul II and Francis over the last 100 years could the cardinals be said to have opted for a clear break, and even then, the depth of the change probably wasn’t entirely clear in the moment. It’s worth recalling, for example, that many observers regarded Bergoglio in Argentina in 2005 as a “John Paul II bishop” at odds with his more liberal confreres.

In other words, discontinuity isn’t written into the stars either.

As for “those who know not talk-

ing,” that might have been true some time ago, but this is the 21st century. Ease of travel now means cardinals gather in Rome well before the actual conclave starts, and they actually talk a lot before they file into the Sistine Chapel.

Congregation meetings

They speak to one another during daily general congregation meetings, and their comments almost always leak out in real time. Many also give talks around Rome, celebrate Masses, hold press briefings, and otherwise make themselves available. They also meet privately with one another, in twos and threes and 10s and 20s, and more often than not, the contents of those sessions also make the rounds.

Decoding what’s being said usually isn’t all that arduous. For instance, if a cardinal says, “What the Church

needs is a pastoral figure,” they usually mean a moderate-to-liberal. If he says, “We need clarity,” that generally means a more conservative option.

It’s true, of course, they’re not going to say out loud “I plan to vote for X,” but that doesn’t mean pope-watchers are operating in a complete vacuum.

That brings us to the old saw about Americans.

As an historical matter, the election of Karol Wojtyla of Poland in 1978 ended the Italian monopoly on the papacy, just as the choice of Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina in 2013 broke the European stranglehold. We’re now in an era in which the next pope could come from anywhere.

Moreover, the informal veto against a “superpower pope” doesn’t have the same bite because today we live in a multipolar world, in which there no longer two dominant blocs but multiple centres of power and influence. If you’re going to ban an American pope, then you’d probably have to do the same thing for China and Russia, and perhaps a few of the emerging new superpowers such as India and Brazil, and, hypothetically anyway, the EU too – and once you start down that path, you’re seriously limiting the talent pool.

To prove the point, it’s worth remembering that in the conclave of

2013 which elected Francis, Cardinal Sean O’Malley of Boston got some serious attention, and many observers believe that if the cardinals hadn’t quickly coalesced around Bergoglio, he might have been a real possibility.

“The fact is, however, he’s still an American, but nobody anymore thinks that makes him unelectable”

Granted, the Italians refer to O’Malley as *il cardinale meno americano tra gli americani*, meaning “the least American cardinal among the Americans,” because of his command of languages, his deep global experience and his brown Capuchin habit and beard that remind locals of Padre Pio. The fact is, however, he’s still an American, but nobody anymore thinks that makes him unelectable.

The bottom line is this: When the time comes, it’s always worth considering what conventional wisdom might have to say. Just remember that while popes may be infallible, conclave soundbites are anything but.

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

Nicaraguan police move bishop and others to Managua in predawn raid

Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa poses for a photo at a Catholic church in Managua, Nicaragua, in this May 20 file photo. Bishop Álvarez, who has been critical of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, was arrested by police August 19. Photos: CNS/Maynor Valenzuela, Reuters.

David Agren

Nicaraguan police burst into Matagalpa diocesan headquarters and removed an outspoken bishop who had been under house arrest for more than two weeks.

Police raided the curia in the predawn hours of August 19 and took Bishop Rolando Álvarez, according to a social media statement from the Diocese of Matagalpa.

“The bishop’s arrest marked another escalation in the repression against the Catholic Church in the Central American country”

Nicaragua’s National Police later confirmed that they carried out “an operation which permitted the recuperation of normalcy for Matagalpa’s citizens and families”.

Bishop Álvarez is being held under house arrest in the Nicaraguan capital, Managua, where he has received family and visited with Managua Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes.

The bishop had been holed up in the diocesan office for 16 days with 11 others as police maintained a constant presence outside. Sirens wailed and church bells tolled as he was taken away at 3:20am.

The police statement said the others in the office were taken to Managua, while the curia was left to the diocesan vicar, Msgr Oscar Escoto.

“As destabilising and provocative activities persisted, the aforementioned public order operation was necessary,” the statement said.

The bishop’s arrest marked another escalation in the repression against the Catholic Church in the Central American country.

The National Police said in an August 5 statement that the bishop was under investigation for “trying to organise violent groups, inciting them to execute acts of hate against the population, provoking an environment of chaos and disorder, disturbing the peace and harmony in the

community with the objective of destabilising the Nicaraguan state and attacking the constitutional authorities”.

The investigation was revealed after Bishop Álvarez vociferously objected to regulators ordering the closure of Catholic radio stations in the Diocese of Matagalpa; parishioners had tried to impede police confiscating equipment.

Social media

During his house arrest, the bishop and companions had released a series of social media videos.

“We have to respond to hate with love, despair with hope, and fear with the strength and courage given to us by the glorious and resurrected Christ,” the 55-year-old prelate said in one

video posted on various social media platforms.

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega – who has treated the Catholic Church as a political enemy – has arrested priests, expelled the Missionaries of Charity and apostolic nuncio and closed Catholic media outlets and educational and charitable projects.

“The faith of the Nicaraguan people, who stand in solidarity with their bishops and priests, is an inspiration for us all”

One priest, Fr Oscar Benavides, was detained in the Diocese of Siuna while traveling to celebrate Mass August 14 and has been imprisoned in the notorious El Chipote political prison in Managua, according to a source. Multiple news reports have documented the repressive conditions inside the prison.

“Here in Nicaragua it seems that to be a priest is a sin, is prohibited,” the source said.

The same day Fr Benavides was arrested, two other priests were prevented by police from attending a Marian celebration at the Matagalpa Cathedral.

Auxiliary Bishop Silvio José Baez of Managua, who was forced to leave Nicaragua in 2019 due to security concerns, tweeted about Bishop Álvarez: “May his kidnappers

respect his dignity and release him! Once again, the dictatorship surpasses its evil and diabolical spirit.”

The Ortega regime started cracking down on critics in 2018 after protests erupted and the people took to the streets demanding Ortega’s ouster.

The Nicaraguan bishops’ conference attempted to mediate a dialogue between the protesters and the government, but the process broke down due to a “lack of consensus,” according to the bishops. Some parishes and priests, along with the Jesuit-run Central American University, provided refuge for student protesters being violently suppressed by police and paramilitaries.

In the United States, August 19, Bishop David Malloy of Rockford, Illinois, chairman of the US bishops’ Committee on International Justice and Peace, expressed “our continued steadfast solidarity with our brothers in the Nicaraguan episcopate, along with their priests and foreign missionaries, in their calling to freely proclaim the Gospel and live the faith. The faith of the Nicaraguan people, who stand in solidarity with their bishops and priests, is an inspiration for us all.”

He noted that in 2018, “Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio travelled to Nicaragua to express USCCB’s solidarity with our brother bishops in that country. In his homily at the Cathedral of Managua he memorably said, ‘I see the commitment of your bishops as a sign of God’s love.’ In the last few weeks, the Nicaraguan bishops have, once again, heroically demonstrated the enduring validity of that sentiment.”



National Police officers keep watch outside a Catholic church where Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa was taking refuge.

Letters

Letter of the week

Speak now or forever hold your tongue

Dear Editor, As many of your readers will be aware, it is proposed to make radical changes to the Junior Cycle curriculum for SPHE.

The new curriculum proposes to focus the attention of our 12-15-year-olds on such topics as: sexual identity, contraception, pornography and the interrogation and questioning of social

norms of behaviour.

We have the opportunity of letting it be known if this is really what we want our idealistic young people to be immersed in.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) have an online survey on the proposed changes, which will be open until mid-

October. They will also accept written submissions from parents and other interested parties.

It is surely a time to "speak or forever hold our tongue!"

Yours etc.,

Eamon Fitzpatrick,
Strandhill Road, Co. Sligo

Paying tribute to Bro. Kevin

Dear Editor, It is sad to see Bro. Kevin is leaving the Capuchin Day Centre but he can be proud of his legacy of love and care for the poorest in Dublin. The capital won't be the same without him. Thank you for your coverage on the front page [*The Irish Catholic* – August 11, 2022] which included some of the big Church names when it comes to social justice in Ireland such as Fr Peter McVerry and Sr Stan paying tribute.

It's hard to see anyone stepping into such big shoes, but he deserves his rest at this point!

Yours etc.,
Jim Brady

Blanchardstown, Dublin



Catholic teaching on sexuality must be defended

Dear Editor, Catholics must resist the imposition of the new NCCA curriculum, that opposes Catholic teaching on human sexuality in schools with a Catholic ethos. In 2019, the Vatican released a statement which rejects the idea that gender can diverge from biological sex, a voice that the NCCA want silenced.

Primary teachers are now advised not to use the expression, boys and girls. Children young enough to be reading fairy tales and who believe in Santa, are

given agency to come in, dressed in clothes of the opposite sex. The notion of transgender is being imposed on them.

Senator Regina Doherty claims there are probably about nine genders. Based on this claim, gender identity is an amorphous area with an indefinite and undetermined number of gender permutations. The promoters of this false ideology call it "fact based" education.

However, a teacher cannot subvert a student's reli-

gious beliefs. The parent is the primary educator of the child. The teacher acts in *loco parentis* and has a duty of care that obliges him/her to act in a role of delegated responsibility in a child-centred environment.

With a closure order on the discredited Tavistock Clinic, the HSE should reflect, before rushing headlong with referrals for minors to the next gender identity clinic.

With a palpable hostility towards Catholicism in the Irish media, the hidden

agenda is to drive Catholic education and its values underground, a model of education that has been with us for many a year and that belongs to the largest Christian church in the world. The NCCA wants unquestioning obedience and docile submission to the enforcement of their transgender ideology, but Catholic teaching on human sexuality must be defended in these schools.

Yours etc.,
Mary Reynolds
Dublin 6

What can we do help our Church in modern Ireland?

Dear Editor, We can tap into new reserves of women and men to come forward to help our elderly and often exhausted clergy. Our priests have served us splendidly in our lifetimes and especially over the Covid years. We need new blood – women and men of all ages to come forward now. Unfortunately, the present discipline in our Church does not yet admit women to full priesthood. What a loss! Other Christian Churches are enriched incalculably by the women who have come forward into full ministry.

But we can help too. We need to move on from traditional full-time ministry as the only model. Here are two imagined examples of what I mean.

Take Paul. He is 56 years old, serious about his Faith and well-informed in Catholic teaching. He is employed, married with family. He could come forward for ordination to celebrate the Eucharist. He probably could not manage to celebrate more than once a week. But that would be a powerful help to his parish priest. He could 'do' a much-needed Mass for him at the weekend, or maybe go to that next-door parish that now has no priest at all. That's as much as his life-style will allow him to do. But it's a very worthwhile contribution.

Call this a 'part-time' priesthood if you wish. But we need new thinking on how we do things.

Take Anna. She's 'with it', great with people, knows how to get things done including harnessing the talents of others to help her ministry. She takes over the whole 'social' side of the parish, in a spirit of practical distributive charity and justice, undertakes, for example, the organisation of accommodation for those in need of such and there are many such in our communities to-day, native and immigrant. Her's is a very practical, down-to-earth ministry.

I believe there are Pauls and Annas out there waiting to be invited to help.

Yours etc.,
Alec Reid
Rossylongan, Donegal Town

facebook community

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

Synod report sees disconnect between many Catholics and Church teaching, calls for more accountability

All the Church needs to do is be faithful to Christ. The Church was not created to accommodate mankind on every issue that might arise throughout its tenure. – **Annette Devlin**

Dr Nicola Brady has done a fine job as overall Chair – as I expected, given her fine record and her understanding of what synodality means in practice. – **Nessan Vaughan**

That's a lot of words to say that by and large Irish Catholics, particularly those under 60, are woefully uncatechised and have no idea what Church teaching is or how it is unchanging because it is rooted in Christ who is truth. – **Róisín Grimm**

The Church under the current leadership is heading for total meltdown. Time to embrace the fullness of traditional teaching on morality, liturgy and proper Eucharistic celebration of the Latin Mass. A small remnant of faithful Catholics is all that remain. – **Paddy Early**

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

Confessional and mobile phone surveillance

Dear Editor, I wish to bring the following to the attention of bishop and priest readers as well as the laity.

Mobile phones are ubiquitous and used by most of us and many clergy in the course of their duties. However useful, most of us are unaware of the fact that mobile phones both transmit and listen to conversations. That said, the issue of privacy is paramount.

In particular clergy and anybody who is having a private conversation ought not to have a mobile phone on their person nor in the room when privacy is an issue.

This particularly applies to hearing confessions since the seal of the confessional can be broken by such electronic surveillance. It matters not whether the phone is turned off as it can turn itself on automatically without the owner being aware.

To check whether your conversation is being recorded just engage in a conversation eg about holidays in Spain and watch what advertisements appear on your phone minutes later! One could also check on the internet and view videos on the subject by computer experts to verify what I am saying.

So please could the clergy leave their mobiles outside the confessional eg in the sacristy or with someone who could take an emergency call while engaged in hearing confessions.

Yours etc.,
Loretto Browne
Ashbourne, Co. Meath

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

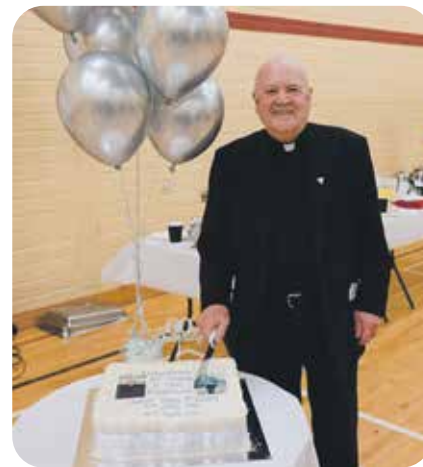
Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, August 25, 2022

Personal Profile

No life more rewarding than the priesthood

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The power of positive thinking



I recently finished Joan Druehl's *Island of the Lost*, a book concerning shipwrecks on the Auckland Islands, a desolate, uninhabited place 290 miles south of New Zealand. Situated in the stormy South Pacific Ocean, its shores have seen many ships break apart throughout the centuries, including those that are the subject of the book, the Grafton and the Invercauld.

In 1864, the Grafton's crew of five were spilled out on one end of the island, and a few months later, the Invercauld's crew of 25 crashed against the island, with 19 of them managing to get ashore. The crews were separated by 20 miles and rugged, impassable ter-



There's nothing new-age about the effect adopting a sunnier outlook has on your life, writes Jason Osborne

rain – but they were separated by more than this. Whereas the crew of the Grafton banded together to survive; hunting, building a cabin and forge and eventually escaping, the Invercauld survivors quickly turned on one another; fighting and arguing before descending into starvation and cannibalism.

One of the biggest differences I identified between the crews

was that of mindset. The Grafton crew, despite battling discouragement and depression, tried to be upbeat and can-do where they could, while the Invercauld bunch, with one exception, immediately became resentful, argumentative and hopeless. In the final analysis, it was the difference between life and death, as the entire crew of the Grafton survived, whereas just

three of the Invercauld's 19 survivors made it off the island.

This story just serves to corroborate much of the emerging scientific picture, which is that adopting a positive or optimistic outlook can have a good effect on both your physical and mental health. Living life on the sunny side seems to result in not only a healthy glow, but in a soul-glow too!

Studies

According to the US's Mayo Clinic, some studies show that traits such as optimism and pessimism can affect your health. Optimism and positive thinking often go hand-in-hand, and so if we're able

to turn our mental frown upside down, there's a good chance we'll benefit on a number of levels. Here are just a few of the physical and mental benefits that may come in the wake of an upbeat approach to life.

Potential physical benefits:

- Lower chance of heart attack
- Better stress management
- Lower blood pressure
- Higher pain tolerance
- Higher resistance to illnesses like the common cold

Potential mental benefits:

- A longer life span
- Less depression
- Clearer thinking
- More gratitude

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Family News



AND EVENTS

'HUNGER STONES' REVEAL ANCIENT DROUGHT WARNINGS

With an intense drought causing rivers across Europe to shrink, stones with etchings warning of hard times ahead have been re-appearing in a number of the continent's rivers.

One such stone is to be found on the banks of the Elbe River, which begins in the Czech Republic and flows through Germany.

The boulder, dating back to 1616, is etched with the warning in German, "*Wenn du mich siehst, dann weine*", which translates as "When you see me, then weep".

Researchers have revealed in recent years that the inscriptions convey years of hardship and the consequences of drought.

It was previously reported that these stones last reappeared in 2018, but the current drought Europe is weathering could be the worst in 500 years, according to senior researcher at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, Andrea Toreti.

MONKEY IN US ZOO DIALS 911

Police in California rushed to a zoo after a 911 call – only to find it had been placed by a mischievous monkey.

Dispatchers sent officers to investigate a possible emergency after receiving a call that had disconnected.

Sheriff's deputies in San Luis Obispo County traced the call to the offices of Zoo to You, a conservation park 320km north of Los Angeles, but could not find any humans in trouble, AFP reported.

Undeterred, and determined to get to the bottom of the mystery, they began to investigate.

"Then they all realised... it must have been Route the Capuchin monkey," said a social media post by the sheriff's office.

"Apparently, Route had picked up the zoo's cell phone... which was in the zoo's golf cart... which is used to travel around the zoo's 40 acre site."

Capuchins are particularly inquisitive creatures, who enjoy poking and pressing objects they pick up.

"And that's what Route did... just so happened it was in the right combination of numbers to call us."

MEDIEVAL CURES TO BE DIGITISED AND SHARED ONLINE

Curious medieval cures, including a treatment for gout that involved baking an owl then grinding it into a powder, are to be shared with the public online by Cambridge University Library, PA reports.

Another unusual recipe, also intended to tackle gout, instructed readers to stuff a puppy with snails and sage royal then roast it over a fire, with the rendered fat used to make a salve.

More than 180 medieval manuscripts are to be digitised, catalogued and conserved over the next two years as part of the Curious Cures in Cambridge Libraries project.

The manuscripts, containing around 8,000 unedited medical recipes, mostly date from the 14th or 15th centuries, with some examples from earlier, the oldest being 1,000 years old.

The texts are from the collections of the University Library, Fitzwilliam Museum and a dozen Cambridge colleges.

The funny thing about trust



Trust is a funny thing. To see why, imagine you're betting on a horse race. You're betting on the favourite, Philosopher's Rant, but you've heard some background information about the horse and his competitors reckon he still only has a 33% chance of winning.

In this situation, you want to bet if you can get odds of around 2/1 (or better). In other words, you proportion your beliefs to the evidence. The evidence suggests that there's about a one-third chance of Philosopher's Rant winning, and so you ought to believe there's about a one-third chance of it winning, and act accordingly.

“If someone is known to be a truth-teller that's good evidence that they're telling the truth now”

You should believe things to the extent that they seem credible. This seems so obvious as to be trivial. But trust sometimes requires something very different.

Why this is, is not immediately obvious. We do, after all, have a concept of trustworthiness. You trust someone because they are worthy of trust. If someone is known to be a truth-teller that's good evidence that they're telling the truth now.

If someone is known to be reliable that's good evidence that they're likely to keep their commitments this time. A person's good character can be among the pieces of evidence that we should proportion our beliefs to.

But something more is going on with trust. At the start of *Les Misérables*, almost no one

Everyday philosophy
Ben Conroy

will offer the former convict Jean Valjean shelter – his yellow passport is evidence of his criminal history, evidence that he is not worthy of the trust involved in taking someone in under your roof.

When the Bishop of Digne offers Valjean shelter in his house, he is trusting him not to rob him or take advantage of his hospitality. Valjean immediately robs the Bishop's silverware. If we understand trust as being about proportioning your beliefs to the evidence, the Bishop is a fool.

Gifts

But the Bishop is not a fool. When Valjean is apprehended for the theft the Bishop covers for him, remonstrating with him for forgetting to take two silver candlesticks along with the rest of his 'gifts'. The Bishop tells him to use the money to make an honest man of himself. By placing his trust in someone not trustworthy, the Bishop sets in motion a transformation of Valjean's life, one that has ripple effects throughout the whole story of *Les Misérables* and brings about the salvation or redemption of many other characters.

Now you might say this isn't really a story about trust. It's true that the Bishop is not just extending trust, he's offering forgiveness and generosity. But none of that would have been possible if he hadn't offered Valjean the opportunity to

stay with him in the first place – and by giving Valjean the money rather than sending him back to prison the Bishop trusted him to make good use of his life.

Think of another situation, a thought experiment a professor shared with me. Imagine your wife is accused of being a spy or a traitor, but she maintains steadfastly that she's innocent. Should you proceed to look at all the available evidence and make a judgement on her



guilt based on the balance of probability? Or do you have additional reasons to trust her just because she's your wife? I think it's the latter.

My professor put it to me this way: it might be bad if you believed her and she turned out to be guilty. But how much worse if you didn't believe her and she turned out to be innocent! Certain relationships demand more trust of us than the evidence warrants.

None of this means that

you should trust everyone all the time. The point is that sometimes it's rational and good to trust people even when you're not sure that they're trustworthy – or even sometimes when you're pretty sure they aren't.

“The only way for such a person to prove that they have changed is to once again be trusted and this time not to betray that trust”

Sometimes trusting people is the right thing to do even if you might end up hurt or damaged by it. Sometimes, not always: it's not a universal ethical obligation to put yourself at risk in this way. But if no-one ever trusted people who don't deserve it, our world would be too harsh to live in.

It would, among other things, be a world in which second chances didn't exist. Once a person proved fundamentally untrustworthy once, there would be no way back. The only way for such a person to prove that they have changed is to once again be trusted and this time not to betray that trust. But that involves someone, at some point, trusting them before they've proven themselves reformed.

If we all made our decisions on who to trust purely based on evidence of their reliability, we would doom the Jean Valjeans of the world. Fortunately trust does not always depend on trustworthiness. It can sometimes create it.

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- More creativity
- Better coping skills

Johns Hopkins expert, Lisa Yanek, and her colleagues found that people who have a family history of heart disease, but who also have a positive outlook, were one-third less likely to have a heart attack or other cardiovascular event within five to 25 years than those with a negative or pessimistic outlook.

“In another study of people aged over 50, it was found that those who had more positive thoughts about ageing tended to live longer”

Another study found that when people were exposed to the common cold and the flu, those with a positive outlook were less likely to get sick and reported fewer symptoms. In another study of people aged over 50, it was found that those who had more positive thoughts about ageing tended to live longer. They also reported less stress-related inflammation.

Pessimism

As can be seen from the above, there are a number of compelling reasons to adopt a more positive outlook on life. However, if you're of a more pessimistic bent, this might all sound like a load of hogwash. Either that, or it can come across as rubbing salt in the wound. What are you to do if you're naturally pessimistic, though? If you can't help but notice the dark clouds obscuring the sunshine?

Don't give in to despair just yet – try and think of positive thinking as a skill that can be cultivated, rather than as an unchangeable personality trait that you have no say over. Research seems to confirm this, too, with a group of adults who focused on positive thoughts throughout the day reporting the gradual takeover of a more optimistic outlook.

I know all about combatting pes-

simism, as I went through quite a severe bout of it during the heavy days of the pandemic. I couldn't help but focus on all the things I disagreed with or thought were wrong, to the point that nearly every time I opened my mouth it was a complaint. I didn't get over it quickly, but once it was pointed out to me, I set about identifying those negative ruts I was routinely falling into and expelling them from my life.

Here are a couple of those ruts, so you can check and see if you fall into them frequently, too:

- **Catastrophising:** You find yourself assuming that the worst will happen, without necessarily having sufficient reason to think so.
- **Blaming:** You tend to pin wrongdoing on others and other factors, rather than on yourself (when it's right to do so, of course).
- **Polarised thought:** You see things in black or white; something is either good or bad, with no middle ground whatsoever. As such, if things aren't perfect, they're not going well at all.
- **Negative filter:** You focus on the negatives in your life, rather than the positives. For example, if you have a lovely day with friends but get soaked in a downpour on the way home, and end up focusing exclusively on the annoying way in which the day



ended, you may be filtering your thoughts for the negative ones.

- **Magnifying:** This is when you make a much bigger deal out of what is, objectively speaking, a small problem.

These behaviours are quite pernicious, and all the more so when they go unidentified. The first step in adopting a more positive outlook is to notice them and take action.

Practicing positivity

Once you've done that, how do you turn your negativity in to positivity? There's no end of ways to do it, fortunately.

- **Smile more:** A University of Kansas study found that smiling, even when it's fake, reduces heart rate and blood pressure during stressful situations. If arbitrarily smiling seems weird to you, try and consciously include it more in appropriate social situations.
- **Keep a gratitude journal:** I, and many others, have received the advice to note down three things you're grateful for at the end of each day. Doing so helps you to acknowledge the good your life is undoubtedly filled with, and will help you to notice the many beautiful aspects of life as you go about your days.
- **Reframing:** Rather than catastrophising when something goes wrong, try to focus on the positives in the situation. Your train was delayed and you've been inconvenienced? How about, 'more time to read'?
- **Build and maintain good relationships:** Enjoying good relationships with family and friends is the best way to be brought out of your own personal storm cloud, and to buffer yourself against the blows that life often deals.

None of this is to say that the gripes and sufferings that we have to endure aren't real or valid – they are. It's simply a matter of what we choose to focus on. As ever, it's the good that's better for us.

Young Church



Charlotte Vard

Overturning Roe vs Wade is the result of a nearly 50-year effort committed to a singular outcome – protecting the lives of the unborn human. Without debate, this decision will carry profound political, social, and personal effects regarding pro-life topics throughout our culture, not only in America but indeed here in Ireland. We are already seeing it. The fight is on.

Legality aside, the complexity of conversations about abortion and the pro-life movement is intimidating for anyone. However, situations like the overturning of Roe vs Wade present an especially complicated environment for teenagers especially when you consider social media. The constant stream of information be it good or bad on all platforms is overwhelming even for me. Tears streamed as I watched on Twitter the power of both men and women standing together praying the rosary outside a Church in New York City while protestors shouted abuse. This moved me more than I ever thought it could because this subject matters. It matters so deeply.

Amid the steep learning curve of legislative jargon and American history, the monumental act of overturning a landmark case demands much of our youth. In a world marked by divisive morality, a teenager's friendships, popularity, and seemingly, his or her future, depends on opinions about deeply complex issues like abortion.

Culture persuades our youth to manufacture alliances to a disconnected web of social issues that are often far more convoluted than simply saying yes or no. That's why it's vital for teens to develop their ability to have thoughtful conversations with their peers. Even when the conversations are intimidating, confusing, and potentially impactful to their future.

There's an opportunity right now. One that places the future generations at the centre of the conversation. It's never been more important for our youth, for all of us to take initiative and develop our worldview regarding the topic of abortion

and protecting the unborn.

I still remember the first time I learned about abortion. I was a teenager. What started as a normal conversation with my friends quickly morphed into something unfamiliar. I didn't know half the words that my friends did. I didn't know what to say or how to respond. But I quickly observed that I had to have an answer to one critical question.

Do you think abortion is right or wrong?

In that moment when I had to answer, right or wrong, I felt the weight of my decision. Would I still be liked? Who would view me differently?

Would I lose friends?

What if I said the wrong thing? Is there more to this than simply right or wrong? In 2018, when we as Irish citizens voted on the 8th Amendment, I was stunned into silence once again, and I was no longer a teenager. Wearing a 'LoveBoth' jumper I was very aggressively told to "take it off". I am pro-life and will never apologise for that.

As adults we have the opportunity and responsibility to show our youth that there's more to conversations about abortion and the pro-life movement than simply right or wrong. Defence of abortion is often a symptom of deeper, more impactful issues. We'll never achieve the complete and total eradication of abortion through purely legislative measures. They might help, and that's worth something. But true restoration and support comes from focusing on the needs of individual females and males impacted by abortion-related decisions.

The repealing of the 8th Amendment has done irreversible damage, but now is the time to have meaningful conversations. For teenagers, knowing how to engage in healthy conversations with peers about abortion and the pro-life movement can lead to authentic care and compassion.

One of the greatest commands issued to humanity is this: that we love God and love others as he has loved us. This is the core of the pro-life movement and it will continue to be long after Roe vs Wade is another footnote in our history.



No life more rewarding than the priesthood

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

In June of this year, the parish of Kilskeery gathered in St Macartan's Church for an eagerly-awaited day – the celebration of Canon John McKenna's 60 years in the priesthood. Reflecting on his six decades of service, Canon McKenna told me that no life "could have been more enjoyable and rewarding".

“He recalls that his vocation came to him early in life, while he was still in primary school”

This year actually marks the 61st anniversary of Canon McKenna's ordination, but as with many other things, Covid-19 disrupted celebrations. He was ordained for Clogher Diocese on June 4, 1961, and served in four parishes: Cleenish, Pettigo, Clogher and Kilskeery/Trillick, where he now serves as Pastor Emeritus.

It was a "truly happy day in my life", says Canon McKenna of the celebration. "I'm so delighted to have spent 61 years as a priest." He adds that it was a privilege to spend "many wonderful years" serving the people of the parishes.

"These surely broke me in as a raw inexperienced young fella, and made me ready to come to the

lovely parish of Trillick," Canon McKenna jokes.

He recalls that his vocation came to him early in life, while he was still in primary school. The local priests came by regularly and were a source of inspiration for him. He went straight from school into the seminary, he says, studying in St Kieran's College, Co. Kilkenny.

Another source was his parents, who Canon McKenna says handed "the Faith onto me by living the Faith themselves and providing a suitable area to nourish a vocation.

All the family prayer, the rosaries, the holy font at the door – when we went to school, my mother would bless us with holy water at the door. May God reward for all they've done for me.

Great life

"It's been a great life," he adds, saying through the priesthood he has met so many wonderful people, many of whom have gone to God before him. "And many, thank God, are still here. I've enjoyed visiting homes and schools, helping to prepare children for the sacraments,

being with the sick and the elderly at home and in hospitals.

"The strong faith of those people who are sick and dying was most uplifting. I enjoyed too assisting at weddings and funerals, celebrating Mass with the people and for the people. No life could have been more enjoyable and rewarding."

There were difficult times in the midst of the good, however, particularly due to the Troubles in the North. Canon McKenna's community of Clogher was directly affected by them when the Provisional IRA attacked the barracks of an Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) in 1974.

“Dr Duffy said that Canon McKenna witnessed many changes in the Church during his six decades as a priest”

"It was a terrible time," he recalls. "It was a hard time to be ministering, there were so many homes destroyed by bombs, even Catholic homes. The attack on the barracks damaged the church building too."

But for the most part, it was "a great time" Canon McKenna says. "I enjoyed my 60 years, people were so good and helpful and made my life so pleasant. It's good that people still have a deal of respect for the priest in local communities.

"I thank this parish of Trillick and all the parishes I worked in for being so kind to me and for making life so pleasant for the priest and for putting up with me so long. I have worked under five bishops – may God reward them all."

One of those five bishops was present at Canon McKenna's 60th celebrations, Bishop of Clogher Larry Duffy. Dr Duffy said that Canon

McKenna witnessed many changes in the Church during his six decades as a priest.

Canon McKenna was ordained before the Second Vatican Council and witnessed many momentous changes as they came into effect. He started off celebrating the old Mass, as it were, facing with his back to the people: "I had just a couple of years with that, we were in an interesting time in the Church."

The Second Vatican Council took place from 1962 to 1965 and overturned a number of conventions, including relating to Catholics attending services in other Christian churches.

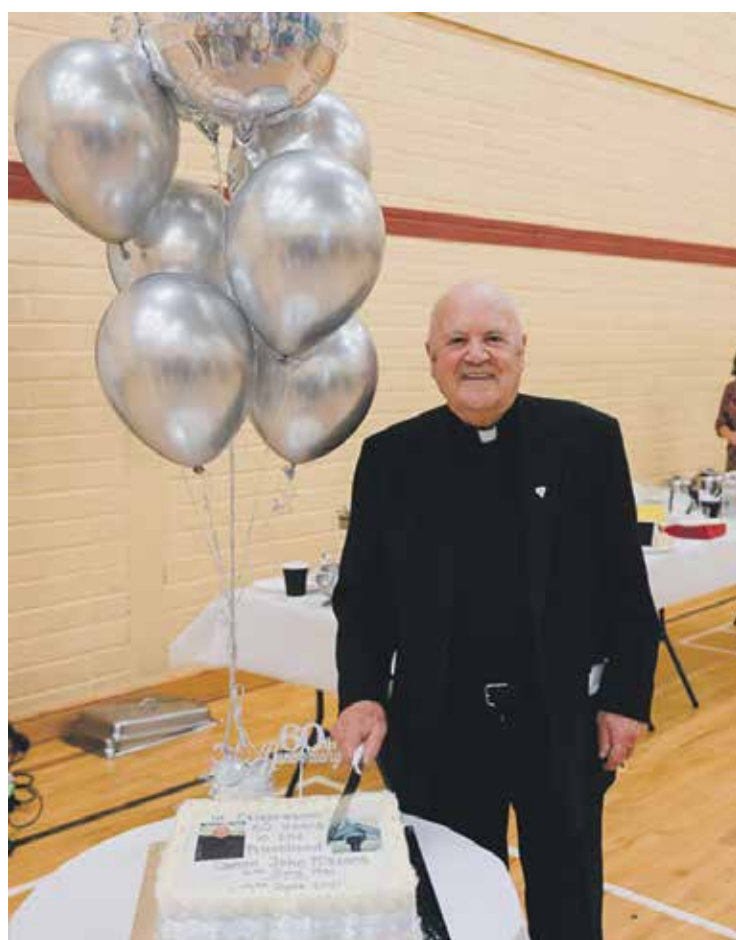
"I remember when I was parish priest in Pettigo, before the council, Catholics weren't allowed to go into the Protestant church for funerals.

And there was a man I had received into the Church and his father, his funeral was on and I was involved in the funeral cortege going down to the Church of Ireland. All the Catholics branched out, waited outside the door – I went in and they all followed me in. I'll never forget that!"

It was a time of change outside the Church as well, something which Canon McKenna reflects on with mixed emotions. "There's some terrible changes in Ireland since that time. The land of saints and scholars, you couldn't call it that now. Abortion is one that really, you know, worries me," he says.

But despite having a heavy heart on these matters, Canon McKenna looks back on his 60 years of service with great pride.

"Do you know what would make my heart overflow completely with joy," he asks. "If someone from this parish of Trillick or any parish that I worked in decided to answer God's call to the priesthood. If any man hears that call, let him answer it. He will never regret it. No life could have been more enjoyable and rewarding."



Canon John McKenna, retired Parish Priest of Kilskeery Parish, is pictured at the celebration of his Diamond Jubilee (60 years) in the priesthood in St Macartan's Church, Trillick.

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



Children's Corner

Chai Brady

A soapy toothpick meets some pepper flakes

Scientific experiments are an excellent way to learn about the world around you and also allow you to create, imagine, and explore.

Although in films scientists are often wearing long white lab coats and are usually surrounded with test-tubes of bubbling liquids, you don't actually need any of these things to do your own scientific experiment. In fact, all you need are some things you can find around your kitchen!

The pepper and soap experiment is quite famous and helps you understand how soap affects the surface of water. It's great fun and is an experiment that you'll want to keep repeating.

To do it, fill a bowl with about 2.5cm of water and then sprinkle pepper evenly across the surface. The pepper flakes should float, not sink,

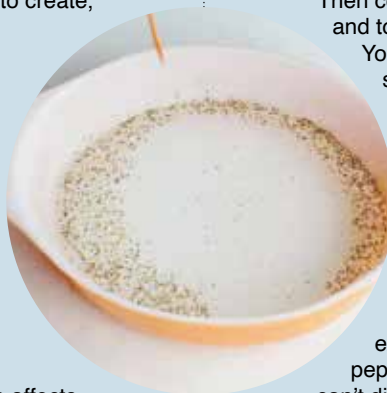
upon the surface of the water. After this, squeeze a tiny bubble of dish soap onto a clean counter.

Then comes the fun part. Get a toothpick and touch it to the bubble of dish soap.

You only need a tiny amount of soap.

Now poke the soapy toothpick into the water, right in the centre of the bowl. What happens next is very strange and unexpected as all of the pepper flakes should dart to the sides of the pan, and some of the flakes will fall to the bottom of the pan.

But how does this interesting experiment work? First of all, pepper is not attracted to water and can't dissolve in it. The pepper also stays afloat on top of the water because the water molecules stick together and this gives the top of the water surface tension. And because the pepper flakes are so light, the surface tension keeps them floating on top.



This explains why the pepper stays afloat, but why does it shoot to the sides when soap touches the water? Soap is able to break down the surface tension of the water, and so as the soap moves into the water the surface tension changes.

But the water molecules still want to keep the surface tension going, so they pull back away from the soap, and take the pepper along with them.

It's pretty incredible how all of these substances interact with one another, and as you grow in your scientific knowledge you'll learn about more complex interactions. For example, if olive oil and water are mixed together and left for a period of time they will eventually separate on their own.

When you feel confident in doing the pepper and soap experiment, you can bet your friends that you can separate pepper from water in only a second. When they say they don't believe you, just dip the soapy toothpick in the water and watch them become amazed.

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Imagine if a soccer team campaigned for an oval ball...

Imagine if members of a football club campaigned for the ball to be oval, with 15 a side. It would be fair to say they were really rugby fans and were in the wrong club.

So said Kieran Cuddihy on **The Hard Shoulder** (Newstalk, Wednesday) in his introduction to a piece on the synthesis report on the synodal process. In some ways he has a point, though I'm not a fan of the 'club' image for the Church – e.g. 'if you don't like the rules of the club, just leave'. Church membership is surely more complex and nuanced. The discussion that followed was calm and reasoned.

Approach

The *Irish Catholic* editor Michael Kelly took a low-key approach – he said the document gave the views of the small number that had engaged with the synodal process (0.5% of census Catholics, 2% of practising Catholics). He thought most didn't really care either way. Some problems, like people not feeling welcome in their church, needed to be solved at a local level. Catholicism was always a broad Church and people were creative about where they were on the spectrum, from conservative, through orthodox to liberal. The Church proposed ideals and



Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell discussed Ireland's national synodal synthesis report on *Today With Claire Byrne*. Photo: CNS.

believed people should try to reach them.

I reckon the synod has been dogged by unrealistic expectations, and Michael Kelly thought that what was most likely to change was the "mood music". In the Church's self-identity they didn't have the power or authority to have ordination of women or gay marriages in church. Theologian Gina Menzies seemed to be pleased with the document, as it echoed issues that the group she belongs to, We Are Church, had been

highlighting for 25 years. She said it was "representative of people that I know" (telling) and of "people in the pews".

Comprehensive

The document itself is varied and comprehensive, but of course the media has focused almost entirely on the sex and gender related issues. This was particularly so when Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell was interviewed on **Today With Claire Byrne** (RTE Radio One, Tuesday). Led by the

presenter, it was all about these issues, with a few words about housing at the end. I have not heard in any mainstream media a report of that letter from a group of young people calling for the Church to be true to its teachings, as reported in this paper over the last few weeks. That doesn't suit the narrative.

The narrative was well served by the coverage on the **Six-One News** (RTE One, Wednesday) when the sex/gender issues were to the fore again. There were two interviewees – Fr Iggy O'Donovan of the Fethard Augustinian Abbey was good at identifying some of the problems, but too downbeat for my liking – speaking of the priests he said "we're aging and dying out". I agree that reform is very late in coming but I wouldn't agree that it's "probably too late". Bleak assessments without hopeful strategies won't attract congregations. Soline Humbert from We Are Church wanted to be a priest since she was 17. I would agree with her that the next generation needs a sign of hope, but I suspect we would disagree as to what would provide this hope.

Earlier that morning, on **Newstalk Breakfast**, we had a balanced debate with Fr Patrick McCafferty and Fr Iggy O'Donovan, who were not singing from

PICK OF THE WEEK

SUNDAY SEQUENCE

BBC Radio Ulster Sunday August 28, 9am

Audrey Carville and guests debate the week's religious and ethical news and explore the world of culture and ideas.

PLACE AT THE TABLE, AFRICAN-AMERICANS ON THE PATH TO SAINTHOOD

EWTN Sunday August 28, 9pm

An intriguing documentary examines the lives of six African-American Catholics who earned their place at the table. See the virtuous actions that placed them on the path to canonisation.

FÍORSÉAL

TG 4 Thursday September 1, 10:30pm

Femicide - Everywhere in the world violence against women is on the rise. India is number one on a list of 10, a list which includes many Middle Eastern and African countries but also includes the USA.

quite the same hymn sheet. Fr McCafferty said that "certain things are non-negotiable", things that "God himself will not allow it to happen". Fr O'Donovan welcomed the document as he had been advocating on this for the last 30 years, and he had "some hope".

Interview

We Are Church got yet another outing on **The Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk, Wednesday). It was a soft uncontested interview with journalist Ursula Halligan. She was delighted with the synthesis report. She had fears that the views of Catholics would be censored or diluted but this didn't happen. Pat Kenny suggested at one stage that

some 'traditional' Catholics might think the process had been "hijacked by self-selecting people" with a view to recommending change. He also suggested that the hands of Pope Francis might be tied by people around him – nothing about how they might be tied by Church teaching. He was also conscious of the danger of schism if proposed changes were not welcomed across the universal Church.

This debate will run and run. I hope it energises rather than exhausts us.

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



Pat O'Kelly

Music

Musicians and the passage of time

As the saying goes *tempus fugit* and I am remembering the initial Veronica Dunne International Singing Competition (VDISC) held in 1995 with soprano Orla Boylan its first prizewinner. Ms Boylan still retains the distinction of being the only Irish singer to have been awarded the competition's premier prize.

Competition

But, as often happens, competition losers can, in time, be found in the upper echelons of their chosen careers. Dundalk-born mezzo Tara Erraught, who took second place to Japanese soprano Mari Moriya in the 2007 VDISC, is a case in point.

Interestingly Ms Erraught will be part of the 2022 VDISC



US soprano Nadine Sierra. jury at the National Concert Hall from today, August 25 to Tuesday, August 30. The preliminary piano-accompa-

nied rounds take place in the NCH's Kevin Barry Room. The finale occupies the main stage with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra under former principal conductor Laurent Wagner making a welcome return to both the ensemble and the competition.

Looking over the latter's history I noted US soprano Nadine Sierra, winner in 2013, had a resounding success earlier this year singing the title role in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* at New York's Metropolitan Opera, with one of its performances screened in cinemas across the globe.

Another interesting point is that of the nine, now triennial, VDISCs to date eight had been won by sopranos until

UK bass William Thomas broke the mould in 2019. He makes his La Scala, Milan debut in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* next year.

Veteran

Esteemed Jane Carty chairs the 2022 competition jury with members including veteran conductor Richard Bonyng; Tara Erraught; Jonathan Friend of the Metropolitan, New York; David Gowland, artistic director of the Jette Parker Young Artists' programme at Covent Garden; Isla Mundell Perkins, casting director at Hamburg State Opera; Henning Ruhe from Gothenburg Opera and Christina Scheppelman of Seattle Opera.

Another case of *tempus fugit* came as the doyen of our pianists, John O'Connor, belatedly celebrated his 75th birthday at the NCH last week with the RTÉCO under David Brophy. Not unexpectedly O'Connor chose Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto* as part of his programme. The composer is almost synonymous with the pianist since his winning the Beethoven International Piano Competition in Vienna in 1973.

Beforehand, John O'Connor was joined by one of his own protégés, San Francisco-born Alexander Bernstein and now a visiting professor at Shenandoah University, for Mozart's *Concerto for Two Pianos K 365*.

Educated by the Jesuits at Belvedere College, John O'Connor was also a pupil of the renowned Dr JJ O'Reilly at Dublin's College of Music.

An Austrian Government scholarship enabled him to study with the highly regarded Dieter Weber in Vienna and distinguished German-born pianist Wilhelm Kempff. Besides his Beethoven award, O'Connor also received the Bösendorfer Prize in 1975 after which the world was his oyster.

Along side his performing career, O'Connor has held important teaching posts at the RIAM and in North America and is in constant demand for his insightful master classes worldwide. Decorated by the Austrian and French governments, the Emperor of Japan conferred him with the *Order of the Rising Sun* in 2011.

Humility is down-to-earth honesty

On a sabbath day Jesus was invited for a meal to the house of a leading Pharisee (Luke 14:1). No table was considered blessed unless a scholar sat at it. The body will savour the delights of victual and vine all the more if the meal is salted with lively table-talk. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus is never far from a table. There are ten tables, each one being the scene of important teaching.

I imagine that the host and his friends were curious about this Galilean preacher who had acquired a reputation.

They were watching him, but he was keeping an eye on them too, noticing the importance they attached to the places of honour. Remember, the setting here was a meal with guests, so we must expect table-talk which is different to sermon-talk. We should not only read this story but hear it. It may be of help to read it aloud. You have to hear the tone of voice, light-hearted and humorous but having a little dig also.

Jesus took up his favoured way of instructing: he told a parable. Parable sounds very like parallel, and rightly so. The story runs parallel to my life until the two lines meet and I recognise that the story is really about me. As today's first reading says, the heart of a sensible person will reflect on parables.

Parable

Every good parable should begin with the word, "Imagine". Imagine a wedding feast and this fellow is asked to leave a place of honour and find a lower seat. What an embarrassment!

Then Jesus speaks to the host who invited him. "When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not ask your friends, brothers, relations or rich neighbours, for fear they repay your courtesy by inviting you in return." Doesn't

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester
O'Flynn
OFM Cap.



it sound rather ungracious to address your host like that? No, this is where you must hear the tone of voice. I imagine Jesus was giggling as he spoke. Picture the perplexed person writing a list of invitations, tearing his hair out to make sure there would not be anyone on the list who would return the favour.

Then comes the great message in a more serious voice. "No, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; that they cannot pay you back means that you are fortunate, because repayment will be made to you when the virtuous rise again." It's those who are impoverished or deprived in this life who will check your ticket at the gate of heaven. "Whatsoever you do to the least of my family, that you do unto me."

Contrast

The whole episode shows up the contrast between pride and humility. "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the man who humbles himself will be exalted." Today's Old Testament reading was chosen for its connection with the Gospel. The greater you are, the more you should behave humbly and God accepts the homage of the humble. In contrast, we read that there is no cure for the proud man's malady, since an evil growth has taken root in him. The ancient catalogue of the seven deadly sins listed pride as the first poisonous root of evil. That wisdom is verified in the temptation of Adam and Eve. The tempter, the father of lies, suggests that if they eat the forbidden fruit they will be like gods with the knowledge of good and evil. In other words, they can

walk proudly as their own god. Conspiracy lies began in the Garden of Eden!

Humility

The proud person struts with head in the air while the humble person keeps his feet on the ground. The word *humility* actually comes from the Latin word *humus*, meaning the earth. True humility is based on down to earth honesty. It recognises one's success and talents, not with pride but with a sense of gratitude and a willingness to use them. The best model is the humble honesty of Mary, the mother of the Lord. "The Almighty has done great things for me, holy is his name".

Humility is certainly not the most popular ideal nowadays when the emphasis is on get to the top, win at all costs, weakest to the wall. What is off-putting is bogus humility where one denies one's gifts, or shelters with bowed head to evade volunteering for any task or responsibility. True humility is not a weakness but a strength.

Sanctity

Many years ago, as novices imbued with youthful zeal for instant sanctity, we had many discussions on humility and the business of taking the lowest seat. But we foresaw a problem. Could you eventually be proud of your humility? We read about the heroes of the desert and the obscure saints who virtually lusted for occasions of self-abasement. And we were guided by a manual of exterior conduct on how to be self-effacing in conversation or how to yield right of way at table or passing in the corridor. There was even an instruction regarding which side to direct a spit! Fortunately for our survival, once a week on the hurling field, sanity prevailed over sanctity as honest endeavour and the will to win surfaced once more.



Mary is a model of true Christian humility.

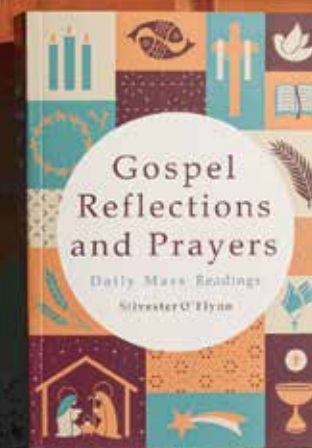
Some of the proudest and most stubborn people I know have reserved seats at the lowest table ... or back seat in the church. But dare you try to budge them from the lowest seat. It's okay when they profess their own unworthiness but they will be extremely annoyed if somebody else says it for them!

Humility is not paralysed by the crippling fear of failure because the humble person is not overly concerned with personal success. God is not demanding that we succeed, only that we try our best. Humility refrains from passing derogatory judgement on others from a position of moral superiority because there go I but for the grace of God. The inspirational ideal of the prophet Micah is to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God.

“Imagine a wedding feast and this fellow is asked to leave a place of honour and find a lower seat. What an embarrassment”

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Seeing what lies near our doorsteps

Henri Nouwen once suggested that if you want to understand the tragedy of the Second World War, you can read a hundred history books about it and watch a thousand hours of video documentaries on it, or you can read the *Diary of Anne Frank*. In that single memoir of a young girl imprisoned and later executed by the Nazis you will see, first-hand, the tragedy of war and what war does to the human soul.

The same might be said about the refugee crisis now taking place everywhere on borders around the world. According to statistics from the United Nations, there are now over 80 million refugees, displaced, homeless, nationless, frightened, and often hungry people on our borders around the world. Two-thirds of these are women and children, and the vast majority are not there by choice, seeking a better economic opportunity in another country. The vast majority of them have been driven from their homes and their countries by war, violence, famine, hunger, ethnic and religious cleansing, and by fear for their lives.

Abstract problem

For many of us, this is a faceless, abstract problem. We have a generic sympathy for their plight but not one deep enough to keep us awake at night, unsettle our conscience, or make us willing to sacrifice some of our own comfort and security to do something for them or to pressure our govern-



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

ments into action. Indeed, too often we are over-protective of our borders and the settled, comfortable lives we live inside our nations. This is our country! Our home! We worked hard for the things we have. It is unfair to us to have to deal with these people! They should go back to their countries and leave us alone!

“We have a generic sympathy for their plight but not one deep enough to keep us awake at night”

We need a wake-up call. A recent book, a novel, by Jeanine Cummins, *American Dirt*, gives us a fictionalised account of a young Mexican woman who because of violence and fear of death had to leave her life behind and flee with her young son

in an attempt to reach the borders of the United States as an undocumented immigrant. Full disclosure, the book has been heavily criticised by many because it doesn't always measure up to the exact facts. Conversely, it has also been highly praised by many others. Be that as it may, the bottom-line is that this is a powerful story and a wake-up call, one meant to wake us up to the real tragedy of those who for reasons of poverty, violence, famine, fear, and hopelessness are forced to flee their countries in search of a better life (or any life at all!) elsewhere. Whatever the book's imperfections, it helps shatter the abstractness we can lean on to protect ourselves against having to look at the issue of refugees today.

Complex

Admittedly, the issue isn't simple. There are extremely complex

issues involved in protecting our borders and in having millions of people freely enter our countries. However, as men and women who share a common humanity and a common planet with these refugees, can we remain callous to their plight? Moreover, as Christians, do we accept the fundamental, non-negotiable principle within Christian social doctrine that tells us that the world belongs to everyone equally and we may not adhere to any nationalistic belief that says, explicitly or implicitly, that our country is ours and we have no obligation to share it with others. To espouse this is unchristian and goes against the clear teaching of Jesus.

Parable

We might all, I submit, contemplate a certain parable of Jesus (Luke 16, 19-31) where he tells the story of a rich man who ignored a poor man sitting at his doorstep and refused to share his food with him. The poor man dies and finds himself in the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also dies and finds himself tormented by thirst

in Hades. He begs Abraham to send the poor man, whom he had ignored during this lifetime, to bring him some water to quench his thirst, but it turns out this is not possible. Jesus tells us that there is an “unbridgeable gap” between the two of them. We have always simplistically assumed that this unbridgeable gap is the gap between heaven and hell, but that is not exactly the point the parable is making. The unbridgeable gap is the gap that already exists now between the rich and poor, and the lesson is that we had best try to bridge that gap now, in this life.

“There are extremely complex issues involved in protecting our borders and in having millions of people freely enter our countries”

Notice that Jesus does not say that the rich man is a bad man, or that he didn't earn his riches honestly, or that he wasn't an upright citizen, or that he wasn't going to church, or that he was unfaithful to his wife, or that he was a bad father to his children. It only says that he had one fault, a mortal one – inside his richness he did not respond to a hungry man sitting on the borders of his house.

“This is a powerful story and a wake-up call, one meant to wake us up to the real tragedy of those who for reasons of poverty, violence, famine, fear, and hopelessness are forced to flee their countries”



BookReviews

Peter Costello



Three books about prayer in some of its many aspects

Peter Costello

Prayer: Our Dialogue with God

by Pat Collins CM, preface by Cardinal Seán Brady (New Life Publications, €18.00)
Fr Pat Collins has been popular with many people for many years. This book is an epitome of the qualities that they go to his books to find.

He sets out in his new book, which contains some 27 chapters, a survey of prayer as it is and could be.

He starts with prayer in relation to religion, and Jesus in particular, and what he actually thought about prayer, and not perhaps what people think he taught. He then explores further particular aspects, such as prayers as friendship with God, as self-disclosure to God, and prayer as "self-forgetful attention".

Through prayers people can seek and discover God's will for them. He then chapter by chapter examines particular forms, a more diverse and complex matter perhaps, such as Charismatic prayer and prayers to the Virgin and saints, prayers as praise and worship and as thanksgiving – surely an important matter. How often these days do we all simply forget to say thanks. He closes with a discussion of the stages of prayer as it develops, and with a chapter on family prayers.

All of those who admire Fr Collins will find here things they value and appreciate. But running as it does to nearly 400 pages it has to be approached with patience, which is all to the good. This is a book which many will find of lasting value in coming years.

Sacred Space: The Prayer Book 2023

(Messenger Publication, €14.95/£12.95)

Some readers seeing the title of this book, which relates to the upcoming year, may say "Surely not Christmas already, it's still summer".

Well whatever the heat tells, this is the end of August and before you know it the holiday will be down on you. This is the time to think of those family members, relatives and friends abroad, and post gifts early.

Now this prayer book has become a familiar one, beloved of many in previous years. It covers a full year, of course, but this year a special emphasis will be given to synodal journey, which for many will need a special process of prayers.

How the process evolves is not down to the clerical authorities, but every person who still sees themselves as a Catholic, and that is a great deal more than go to church most Sundays, should take part.

The thoughts and feelings of those who see themselves as lapsed or distanced are worthy of attention, for the conditions they find themselves in say a great deal about what confronts and confounds the Catholic Church across the world today.

(With regard to those relatives in North America, readers might like a note that the Messenger Publications Irish edition is not for sale in the USA and Canada. If you are resident in the USA or Canada, please beware that the Irish editions are distributed by Loyola Press in those countries. Please visit <https://store.loyolapress.com/>.)

The Good and the Beautiful: Discovering the Person Jesus Created You to Be

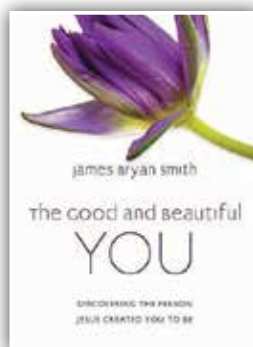
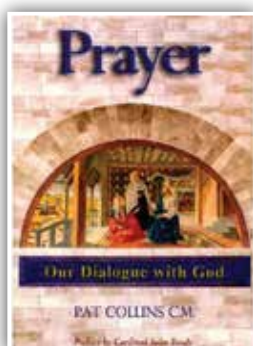
by James Bryan Smith (Hodder & Stoughton, €9.95/£16.99)

For many Christians of all traditions their "faith" is about belief and practises. But this kind of approach has the danger, as everyone really knows, of being a merely superficial mask, often without any inner meaning, but great social acceptance.

Even the most superficial reading of the Gospels reveals that Jesus himself set little store by such things. His emphasis was and is all about now and about being, as the author puts it so well, the person Jesus created you to be.

And becoming that person is not a matter of thinking about yourself, but thinking what you can do for others. The Gospels seem to pack such a lot into that seemingly simple notion of "Love your neighbour as yourself". A simple notion, but often neglected.

We race to judge others, even after being told not to judge others for fear we ourselves are judged.



Summer excursions to places of faith: Part 3 - The Northern Lands

Peter Costello

The Norwegians and Dublin's Christ Church

When we Irish set off on a holiday, or related pilgrimage (to repeat myself slightly from the other week), we inevitably turn south. Because of this we often miss many interesting things.

It seems our chilled Hyperborean hearts need a large supply of those "beaded bubbles winking at the rim" that the poet Keats romances over so glowingly in the poem we all learnt once at school. For us, it is south, always south.

The Northern lands of Scandinavia, by contrast, seem beyond us, even though there are the millennial-long connections with our land, some violent, of course, others involving more cultural, often spiritual matters. The notes and remarks this week emphasise not particular places, as in the previous articles, but general aspects of Scandinavian and Northern culture that have connections with Ireland or religion.

The Norse arrived as pagans, and the monastic annals and poetry of the eighth and later centuries are

filled with disdain for these savages. I cannot be the only one to have carried away from those first years of Irish history at school the simple, and then attractive idea, that Brian Boru had driven all the Danes out of Ireland, leaving the vacant land behind for the enjoyment of the natives...yes well, not quite ...

“The people of the farms, villages and towns became Lutherans quietly enough at the time of the Reformation”

The Norse became Irish and the Irish became Norse. In due course they were converted with their Norse kinfolk in the North and scattered across the Atlantic as far as the Hiberno-Norse settlement in Vinland beyond the ocean.

Indeed, in the city of Dublin the first-ever Cathedral, Christ Church, was built by the Norse. I have long suspected that this fane, of which nothing now remains (having been built over by the later church), was actually built of wood in the manner of the medieval Scandinavian churches. It must

have been a lovely sight, as some of those that still survive in Norway indeed are.

Those transoceanic colonies of the Norse planted among the natives of North America, by the way, as I have suggested, must have had over the centuries strong connections with Dublin, for they were a well-established source of salted fish, furs, ivory from walrus, and some slaves, of course, for the Dublin market.

Certainly the evidence shows that the people were still being visited by bishops up to the time they vanished from history, after 1450, though from that date no documents seem to survive, either relating to Ireland or Vinland in the Vatican Archives. But no one I suppose is going to cross the Atlantic on a pilgrimage to see the Christian remains of Ireland in Iceland and Greater Ireland. There are no tours there yet....

Land of wood and water

In contrast Finland is known for its woods, lakes and advanced design – a curious combination that it was once the hope the Government of Ireland could follow. Hence the Kilkenny Design Centre – now alas a thing of the past in its original, high-minded

conception.

But for an Irish person Finland is a strange place to visit. The people of the farms, villages and towns became Lutherans quietly enough at the time of the Reformation, and most people are formally members of the Church, though the Finns are not great church goers.

So it would be something of an experience to be in a nation where only about 0.1% of the people are Catholics. There are a great many more real pagans among the Sami of the Arctic region who claim to be pagans in continuing practise going back to 7000BC.

However, I have known traditional-minded Catholics who felt Ireland could benefit by the law by which everyone born in the country is automatically a member of the state Church by law, as it is among the Finns and others. I cannot see the idea catching on here these days.

The great literary treasure of the Finns is the *Kalevala*, a compendium of the people's ancient tales composed into a poetic epic by Elias Lönnrot before 1835, a contemporary of the poets of our national revival.

Finland, the land of forest and snow, is reflected in the human truths of the *Kalevala*,



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.



Gol stave church.

and its influence on Europe was great. Thanks to Longfellow the American poet who used the metre to write 'The Song of Hiawatha' it even sneaked into Irish childhoods.

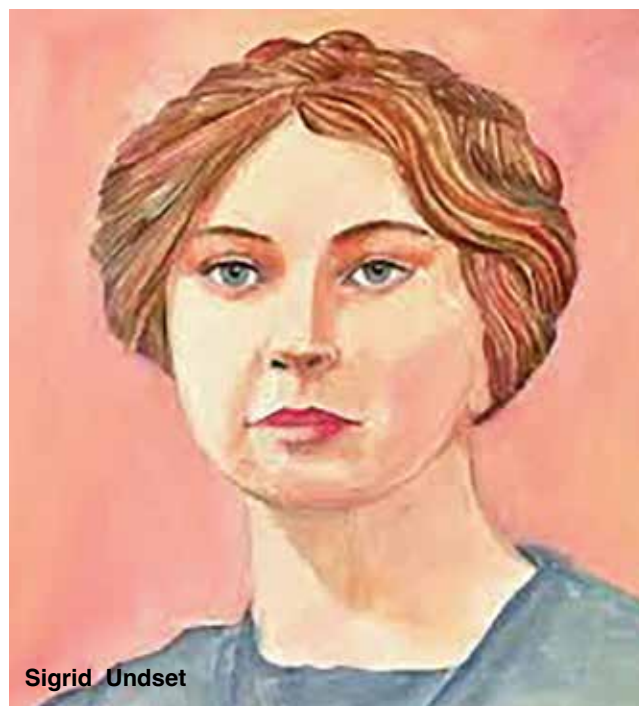
“The rest of Europe spiritually and mentally has been deeply influenced by Sweden, even down to quite small things”

In our day, though, one of Finland's very greatest literary works is *The Unknown Soldier* (1954) by Väinö Linna, about the “Winter War” with Russia 1939-1940, which the Finns won from one point of view, and which became available in English in 1957.

Nations have won wars with Russia, the Ukrainians should realise. Perhaps a reminder to us as well that those who seek peace can sometimes actually have it.

Northern lights of different kinds

How very different Sweden is. The rest of Europe spiritually and mentally has been deeply influenced by Sweden, even



Sigrid Undset

down to quite small things. How curious it is that our own Sheridan Le Faun should have been a follower of Swedish mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg – a faith not easily to be reconciled with the conflicting one in this country. But Ibsen, Bergman and “Nordic Noir” still dominate the modern imagination.

To revert to Norway for a moment: Catholics should at least make an attempt to read one of the great works of the Catholic imagination in the 20th century, *Kristin Lavransdatter* by Sigrid Undset, a trilogy she began issuing in 1920 and completed in 1923. Since it was published in English in 1925 it has never been out of print.

But a novel running to more than a thousand pages set in medieval Catholic Norway needs stamina, which perhaps modern readers no longer have. It was followed by another long romance in four volumes *The Master of Hestviken*, also set in medieval Norway.

Roskilde and Ireland

Irish people visiting Denmark should not become so distracted by the culture, design and entertainments of Copenhagen, as to fail to visit Roskilde, on the island of Zealand. This was much in the general news a little while ago when it was demonstrated by Danish and Irish archaeologists that the remains of a ship found there in the ancient Viking sea haven was connected with Ireland.

But the place is also the burial place of the kings of Denmark. It is thus the same class of place as St Denis, Westminster, Iona, or the crypt of the Capuchin Convent in Vienna where the Austrian Imperial and Royal family were entombed.

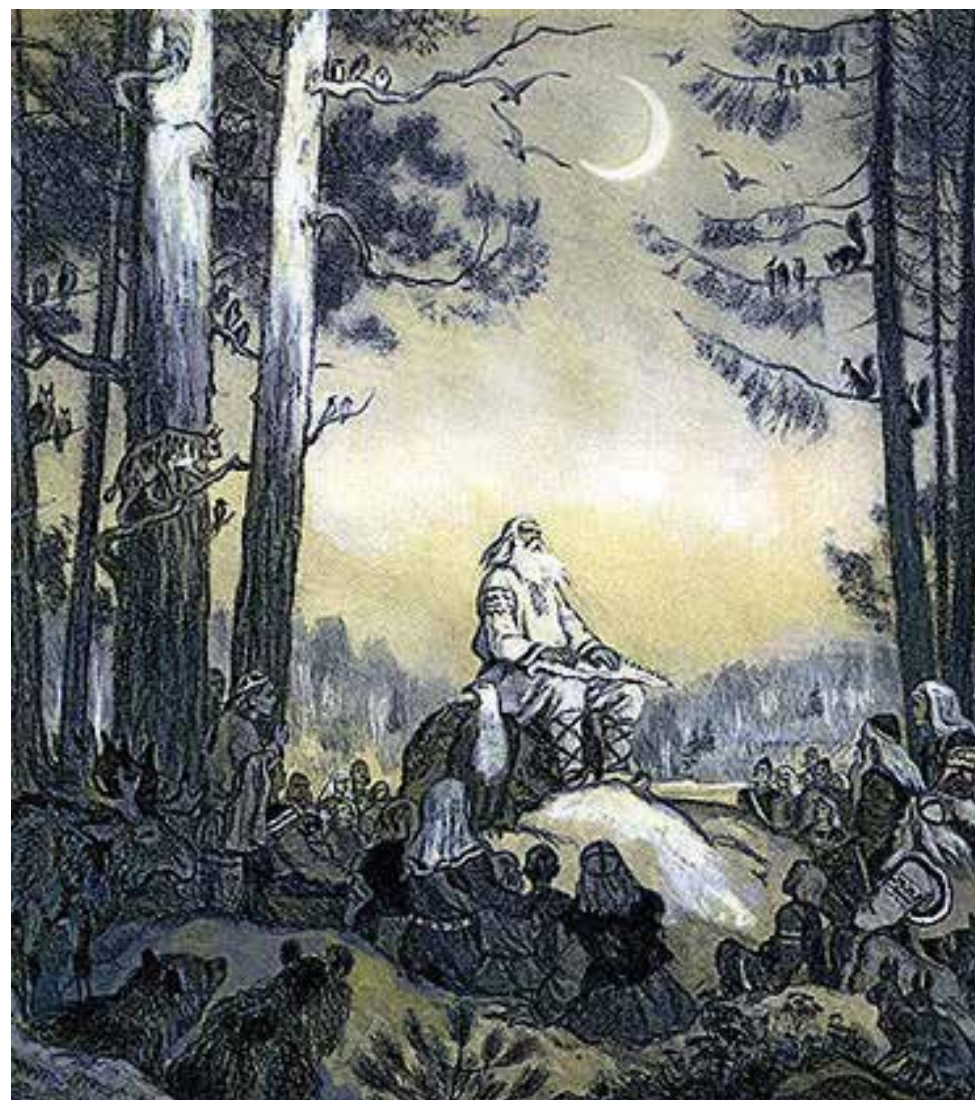
On the way, those tourists from Ireland, many may well

pass through Holland, reaching it through Belgium, which is also another country full of strange experiences. One of the things to visit in Northern Belgium is Bruges to see *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* in St Bravo's Cathedral in Ghent, which attracts countless visitors. Recently restored it is one of the great art works of the world.

But Bruges is a curious place. It is impossible to buy French language papers or books. They simply do not exist. For some it seems that Belgium should not exist either, and needs to be partitioned between Holland and France.

Yet many Dutch people seem themselves as modern minded and unpredicted in a manner of ways. How difficult it is for us to see ourselves as others see us. In this art Scandinavia has lessons for us all.

Next week: Part 4 – Germanic Countries and Celtic Contrasts

The imagined world of the *Kalevala* still greatly influences Finland.

The royal tombs in Roskilde Cathedral.



Adoration of the Mystic Lamb.

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CHURCH STATUE of St Philomena required. One needing repair work will be considered. Replies to comeragh21@gmail.com or 087 9224271.



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A WORLD WITHOUT HUNGER

A gift in your Will is an act of kindness that has the power to help end hunger and extreme poverty for generations to come.

Your legacy could help families overcome the life-threatening challenges caused by climate change and the devastating effects of poverty and hunger, by providing the tools needed to support themselves long into the future.

Your compassion today could change the future.

For more information, please request your free copy of Concern's legacy guide. Contact Siobhán on 01 417 8020, email siobhan.oconnor@concern.net or visit www.concern.net/legacy - finding out more does not, of course, oblige you to leave a gift.

Concern Worldwide, a company limited by guarantee, Registered Company Number: 39647, Registered Revenue Number: CHY 5745, Registered Charity Number: 20009090, Registered in Ireland, Registered address is 52-55 Lower Camden St, Dublin 2
Image: Roge Wavio (29) of Kalacha, Marsabit, Kenya holds produce she has grown with support from Concern. Photographer: Jennifer Nolan / Concern Worldwide

Support Irish Missionaries



'NET helped me make my faith SO much stronger than it's ever been, and it's really helped me improve as a man of God.' – Michael (19), Dublin

Please help support young NET missionaries like Michael to minister to the youth of Ireland.

Phone 074 919 0606 to make a donation today.



By choosing to leave a gift or a donation at any time, you are choosing to share God's love with those who need it most.

To learn more about the Holy Father's official charity for overseas mission, call Fiona on 01 497 2035 or visit www.missio.ie



We will pass on the flame of faith.

For over 130 years, *The Irish Catholic* has been a voice of hope and inspiration for Catholics in Ireland. Help us pass on the flame of faith by remembering us in your Will.

Phone 01 6874028 info@irishcatholic.ie

The Gift Of A Lifetime

Be there for others after you're gone.

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

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



www.hospicefoundation.ie

MQI

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

Trócaire

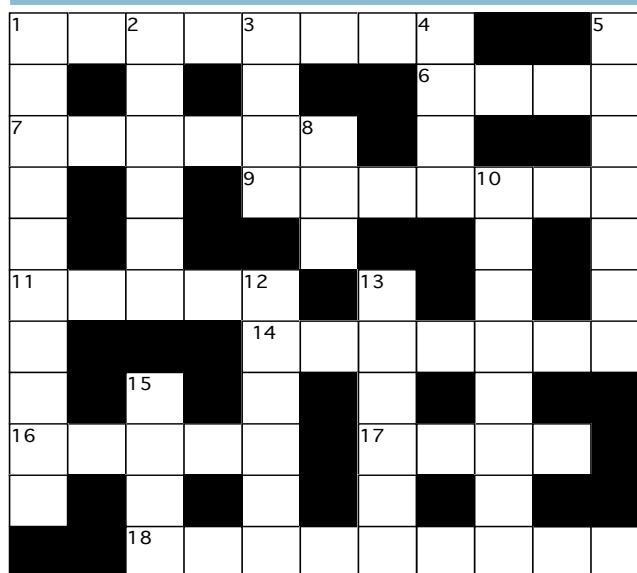
It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call Grace Kelly on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

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

Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Children's 447



Across

- 1 Put a certain kind of meat between slices of bread to make this (3,8)
6 A simple house made of wood (3,5)
7 It allows you to hear your own voice coming back from a cave or other place (4)
9 Molly Malone sold _____ and mussels (7)
12 This size is neither large nor small (6)
14 This chap delivers your letters (7)
15 "Jack be _____, Jack be quick" (6)
16 Two fours make this (5)
17 This planet is between

Saturn and Neptune (6)

- 18 Beer is often poured into a glass of this size (4)

Down

- 1 Flying machine sometimes nicknamed a chopper (10)
2 What witches and wizards practise (5)
3 A duke or earl, perhaps (8)
4 Drink made from grapes (4)
5 Town on Cork Harbour (4)
8 Going up a tree or mountain (8)
10 Room where meals are prepared (7)
11 Sometimes, things are divided into junior and _____ (6)
13 Comes face to face with (5)

SOLUTIONS, AUGUST 18

GORDIUS NO. 572

Across — 1 Cop 3 Strait-laced 8 Nosier 9 Star turn 10 Impel 11 Cubic centimetres 13 Birch 15 Treason 16 Scorpio 20 Minus 21 Swamp 23 Bleep 24 Cemetery Sunday 26 Backhanders 27 Nil

Down — 2 Postpone 3 Smell 4 Austere 5 Lyric 6 Chubby 7 Din 12 Chlorophyll 13 Broom 14 Hacks 17 Poseidon 18 Enjoyed 19 Tarmac 22 Pitch 23 Blues 24 Cob

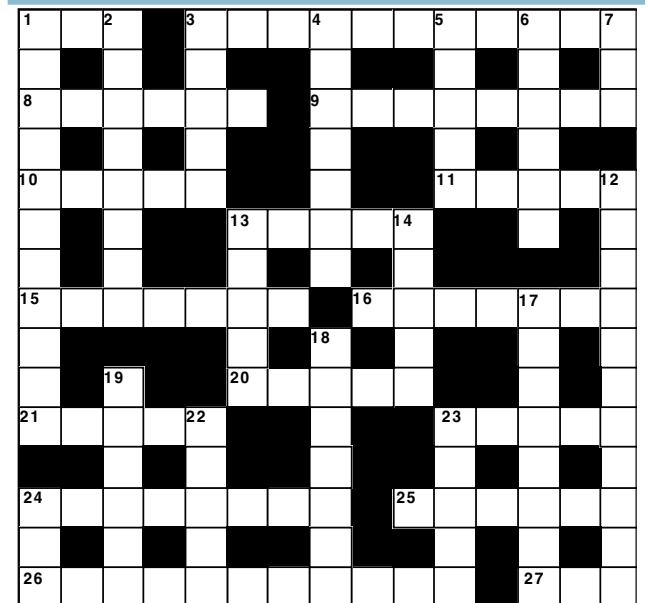
CHILDREN'S No. 446

Across — 1 School bus 6 Axe 7 Unlock 8 Equals 10 Aries 12 Peasant 14 Elope 15 Rests 18 Beehive 19 Lagan 20 Needles

Down — 1 Sausage 2 Hole-in-one 3 Like 4 Sahara 5 Tea set 9 Quarrels 11 Special 13 Nut 16 Sign 17 Sons 18 Bun

Crossword

Gordius 573



Across

- 1 Signal agreement (3)
3 Craft involving fine stitching (11)
8 & 11a Star of 'Gone With the Wind' who married Laurence Olivier (6,5)
9 Chop prey up for a vision of the future (8)
10 Avail of once more (5)
11 See 8 across
13 Construct (5)
15 Bumper-cars (7)
16 Chuckled (7)
20 Faint (5)
21 Thin-faced (5)
23 Luxury holiday home (5)
24 Defeated utterly (8)
25 Horrified to see the state of the gas hat (6)
26 This system allows you use both private and public transport in one trip (4,3,4)
27 Young goat (3)

Down

- 1 Limitless, eternal (5-6)

- 2 Gobbled up (8)
3 Female relative (5)
4 Put money into your savings account (7)
5 Part of the eye found in the classroom (5)
6 Spain is the largest country in this peninsula (6)
7 Attempt (3)
12 Pitiless, having a difficult ticker? (11)
13 Explosive devices (5)
14 Waste water channel (5)
17 Assay sign engraved on precious metal (8)
18 The one who established something (7)
19 Hearsay, unconfirmed story (6)
22 Girl's name - country singer Ms Tucker, perhaps (5)
23 Fashion (5)
24 Spinning toy (3)

SOLUTIONS, AUGUST 11

GORDIUS NO. 571

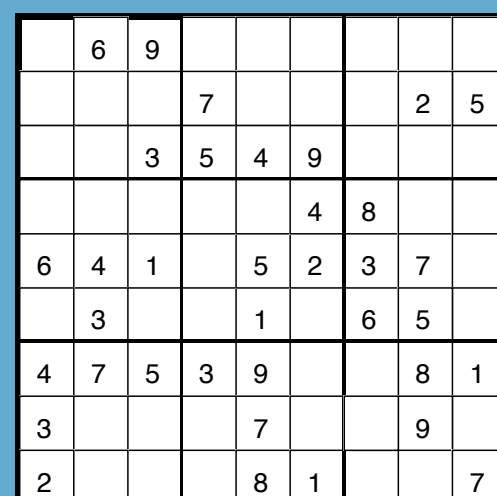
Across — 1 Hog 3 Confiscated 8 Prayer 9 Betrayed 10 Ypres 11 Attic 13 Laced 15 Dessert 16 Endives 20 Hurts 21 Mount Vesuvius 23 Jaunt 24 San Diego 25 Syrian 26 Blank cheque 27 Sky

Down — 1 Happy medium 2 Glad rags 3 Chefs 4 Fabrics 5 Curia 6 Trysts 7 Dud 12 Consultancy 13 Lurch 14 Dunes 18 Propose 19 Quinoa 22 Thick 23 Joyce 24 Sob

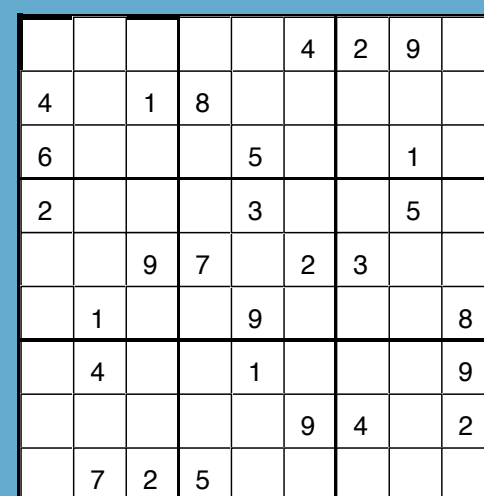
Sudoku Corner

447

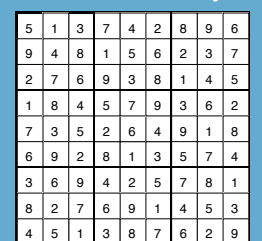
Easy



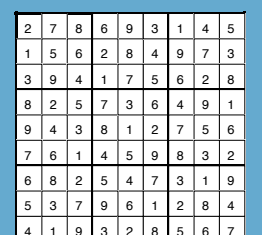
Hard



Last week's Easy 446



Last week's Hard 446



Notebook

Fr Billy Swan



What do we teach our children about porn?

AT THE END OF JULY, the Department of Education announced that the topic of pornography will be included in a revised curriculum to be taught in our schools. While there is nothing wrong with discussing the topic *per se*, there are concerns about how it will be taught – as something morally neutral, or worse still, as something ethical and educational.

There are worrying signs that this will be the case and that the compelling evidence that pornography is harmful, will be excluded. The author of a recently published book *Sex Educated*, suggests that: “Watching porn does not have to be bad... watching porn can be bad for someone, depending on how it is affecting them, but watching porn in itself is nothing to feel ashamed about” (p. 183). This book is endorsed by the HSE and none other than the President of Ireland. Basically, it states that there is nothing objectively wrong with pornography in itself. But does this argument stand up?

Cultural

One man who has studied the cultural phenomenon of pornography for many years is Australian author Matt Fradd. In his 2021 publication



The Porn Myth, he offers a non-religious response to the commonly held belief that pornography is a harmless or even beneficial pastime. He draws on the latest research in the fields of psychology, sociology, neurological studies and the experience of porn performers and users to demonstrate unequivocally that pornography is destructive to individuals, relationships and society.

This emerging evidence of the harmful effects of pornography confirms what the Church has taught all along – that porn is not just sinful and offensive to God but devastating to human beings. Just before the explosion of the

internet in the mid-1990's, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (published in 1992) taught that “pornography does grave injury to the dignity of the participants” (CCC 2354).

Problem

In *The Joy of Love*, Pope Francis acknowledges the problem of porn and warns that constant use leads to distorted sense of sexuality, objectifying women and creating unrealistic expectations in normal relationships” (*The Joy of Love*, 281). As recently as June 10 this year, he again clarified that porn is “an attack against human dignity” (Address to Directors of the Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe).

Significantly, Francis approaches the issue from a positive stance – saying ‘No’ to porn in order to say ‘Yes’ to the beauty and joy of human love and commitment. For the Pope, he urges us to reject pornography and anything else that “cripples our capacity for love” (*The Joy of Love*, 281).

Here is the work of formation that is the concern of pastors and teachers but especially of parents as we invite young minds and hearts to embrace a higher and beautiful vision of love inscribed by grace in our human nature. This is why the Church must stand athwart to a culture that accepts or tolerates porn and propose a more persuasive type of education in sexuality and the art of loving for our children. They deserve nothing less.

The power and limits of inclusion

We hear much these days about the importance of inclusion. To be included is to feel recognised, valued and embraced in a life-giving way. So too is it important for the Church to be inclusive for Christ was inclusive of all. But why then does Jesus tell parables where some will be “turned outside where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth”? (Luke 13:28). If Jesus was inclusive, why are the wicked excluded from his kingdom at the final judgment? (Matt. 25:41). Perhaps the answer lies in the Church's call to be inclusive on Christ's terms and not ours. Here lies the creative tension between a Church of standards and a Church of mercy, a Church with bridges, yes, but also of walls.

The source of love

On August 20, the Church celebrated the feast of St Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) – a gifted spiritual master who wrote many beautiful things about the nature of love. One of his most memorable insights was that “Love has a source” (Sermons on the Song of Songs, 83, 4–6). With these words, Bernard takes Christians back to an eternal truth that the love for which we desire and the love that unites us has a source that is God himself. I find this insight very helpful for preaching and evangelisation – how we humans are like mobile phones that need to re-charge by connecting to the power and source of love who is God.



PLEASE HELP MANY ABANDONED ELDERLY MEN AND WOMEN IN PERU



Sr Elsa Reyes Mejia, of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, has written to The Little Way Association from the region of Cusco in Peru appealing for funds. “We arrived in the parish of San Pedro in 2018”, Sr Elsa tells us, “and soon found, during our pastoral work, that many elderly people are living alone and abandoned, their children having moved to the city or gone abroad for work or study. The local community gave us a 6,000 sq. m. plot of land and since then we have been raising funds for the building of a large Home for many lonely aged people. Some organisations have helped us and we trust in God that the Home will gradually be built.

“Many die alone, having no one to care for them. We take Holy Communion to many, and sometimes food. The cost of the Home is fairly high, and we still need much financial help. We are confident The Little Way Association will assist us.”

Please send whatever you can for this special project.

The Little Way Association will send your gift, without deduction, to the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception for this much-needed Home for the abandoned elderly in Peru.



“A word or a smile is often enough to put fresh life in a despondent soul.”
~ St Therese

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?

Your kind gift will be forwarded intact and gratefully received.

MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS

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

We like to send a minimum of €6 or more for each Mass

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:

€..... **HOME FOR ABANDONED ELDERLY, PERU**

€..... **UKRAINE APPEAL**

€..... **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.