

The Irish Catholic

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Restore women to a 'position of influence' in the Church – new bishop

Colm Fitzpatrick

The role of female laity must be "enhanced" so that they are brought into the decision-making process of the Church, Armagh's new Auxiliary Bishop has said.

Speaking ahead of his ordination Mass in St Patrick's Cathedral on Sunday, Dr Michael Router told this newspaper that the majority of worshippers are female, and stressed that the Church couldn't survive without their vital contribution.

Broaching the topic of female deacons, the former Kilmore priest said: "I think there's a conversation that needs to continue in that whole area definitely. At least 75% – three quarters – of the people who helped me out and ministered along with me in parishes were women, and I suppose three quarters of the people who worship on a regular basis in parishes are women, so they're already

extremely involved," he said.

While ongoing discussion about the ministerial roles of women in the early Church has not resulted in any change concerning their eligibility for the diaconate, Dr Router said that their position must be enhanced in some shape or form, especially given how instrumental they are in the Church's everyday running.

Contribution

"We couldn't survive without them. It just wouldn't be possible. But I do think their contribution does need further enhancement and it needs more development if we are to survive into the future.

"You know, the Church has to follow the lead of its founder Jesus Christ and he didn't choose women as apostles but chose women to be part of his inner circle and they were always there at the most important and crucial times in his life," Bishop Router told *The Irish Catholic*.

Recognising that this is a "sensitive" issue as it could cause a certain amount of division, Dr Router added that restoring women to a position of influence in the Church where they are brought into the decision-making process is "something we have to deal with", and for some requires overcoming fears.

Programmes

The Cavan native, who will be assisting Armagh's Archbishop Eamon Martin in the diocese pastorally and administratively, also said that a parish can only function smoothly with the help of lay people and called for more training programmes to prepare them for this role.

"There's just no way you could run a parish without having lay people involved. Once again, they need to be prepared for that. You just can't throw people in at the

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Auxiliary Bishop Michael Router stands with students from Mount St Catherine's Primary School after his episcopal ordination in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, on Sunday. Photo: LiamMcArdle.com

DAVID QUINN

Trading in children...today

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You can't walk your way to climate change, Micheál

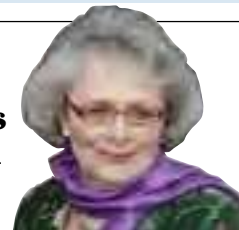
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MARY KENNY

People don't always choose goodness in a politician

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"Lough Derg is a magical and special place and I always feel totally bathed in grace when I put the shoes back on and head for the mainland. That feeling of peace on completing the Pilgrimage stays for weeks and months and I occasionally fast, pray and meditate to recreate it. All good, All God." PILGRIM PAUL 2019

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Trócaire and Church tackle 'high mortality' Ebola crisis in Congo

Chai Brady

The Church response to the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been "amazing" according to a Trócaire worker currently in the country.

The Head of Humanitarian Programmes for Ireland's Church-charity, Noreen Gumbo flew to the DRC after the World Health Organisation announced last week the disease's spread was an emergency of international concern.

Since August 2018 there are more than 2,500 cases of Ebola, with 1,700 deaths. Ms Gumbo told *The Irish Catholic* this shows there's a "very high level of mortality".

She said: "The prevention messaging is a really important part, but also then provision of clean water, making sure that the well is in good functioning order and also erecting these water stations along the routes that people are moving."

"This work is complicated. The situation in part of Ituri at the moment is there's violent conflict, there is militia groups that are having ongoing activity between each other, between communities, between tribal groups. We've had cases here in June where villages have been burnt out and therefore people move and of course with movement like that you have the risk of Ebola spreading."

Ms Gumbo said that when she attended Mass people aren't shaking hands anymore, they punch fists, "they touch like that because hand-shaking is one of the means of spreading this disease".

"One of the things the Church has done here is to put out an appeal to people to get the message out," she said. One parish now works with taxi drivers, encouraging them to speak about Ebola and inhibit its spread.

Prevention

Trócaire operate from Ituri province in the north-east of the country, although there are a number of cases in the regions. The problem area is further south, which makes

most of their work aimed at prevention.

Ms Gumbo said: "The Church is at the forefront of lots of the problems here, for the displacement that I mentioned, the reaction to conflict, they put out an appeal to their own parishioners for cash, for food, for clothes and there's been lots of local support provided which is then administered through the Church, collected in the various churches and then taken to the affected areas."

"Many times after displacement the church opens up its land to allow people to shelter until they can return to their own villages. There's an amazing response from the Church really."



Maria Maynes and Lucy Kelly of Youth for Life take to the streets of Belfast to promote their pro-life message, and encourage passers-by to sign a petition to stop abortion being imposed on the country by Westminster.

Man faces charge of dangerous driving after Dundalk cemetery incident

A man has been charged in relation to an incident that occurred during the annual blessing of graves at Dundalk cemetery in Louth over the weekend.

James McDonagh (28), with an address at Glenmore Park, Muirhevnamore in Dundalk, appeared before the district court on Tuesday. The first charge is unlawful use of

a car, the second is dangerous driving.

The judge remanded him in custody after gardaí cited several reasons for not granting bail. He will appear again at Cloverhill District Court on July 30.

Both offences are alleged to have taken place at St Patrick's Cemetery in Dundalk on Sunday, July 21.

Restore women to a 'position of influence'

» Continued from Page 1

deep end, there needs to be greater emphasis on adult education in the Church in Ireland to prepare people for those roles," he said.

"Any young priest that's coming out now to work in a parish, either from the seminary or coming in from abroad, that has to be an essential element of their ministry; that they would spend a lot of their time preparing adults to do the tasks that priests would have done in the past."

See Pages 14-17.

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Parish prayers answered as victorious Lowry triumphs

Chai Brady

After Massgoers' prayers for golfer Shane Lowry were answered over the weekend, there is "tremendous excitement" in Clara parish, a local priest has said.

Shane returned home to the small Offaly town on Wednesday and received a hero's welcome after winning the British Open.

Commenting on Shane's mother Bridget clutching a statue of St Anthony while watching some spectacular golfing, PP Fr Joe Deegan said she is a "very active parishioner" and a woman of "great faith".

"There's a St Anthony's shrine in Clara in St Bridget's Church, she has a very strong devotion to St Anthony," he said.

Connection

The family's connection to the parish goes back further, with Shane previously being an altar server himself in the church. During Mass on the Saturday and Sunday during the competition, parishioners joined together in prayer for his success.

Fr Deegan said: "We prayed for Shane of course at the Masses on Sunday and Saturday night, included him in our prayers of intercession, there was great anticipation."

"The whole place, you can feel a buzz around the town." He added he prayed that



Shane Lowry smiles during a press conference after winning The Open Championship on Day Four of the 148th Open Championship at Royal Portrush in Portrush, Co. Antrim. Photo: Ramsey Cardy/Sportsfile

"the Lord's peace would be upon him in his endeavours, like all people involved in sport, that they would know something of God's glory and goodness in their lives".

Beginning with pitch and putt, Shane began playing

golf at age 12 but was also involved in the local GAA club.

When push came to shove, however, it was golf that won out.

"As a parish, as a community we feel very proud

of Shane as a native, and his family, I mean they're lovely people, good solid earthly people and it's great for Clara.

Small town

"It's a small town, it's not

on any major tourist map or anything like that but it may change now," said Fr Deegan.

"There's a great feeling of pride and elation...it's given a great boost to the community".

Boys Town priest's sainthood cause edges forward

Staff reporter

The canonisation cause of a famous Irish-American priest has taken a key step forward with the presentation in the Vatican of a summary of records about his life.

A *positio* about Roscommon-born Fr Edward Flanagan, founder of Nebraska's Boys Town community was presented to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on Monday July 22, along with a letter of support from Omaha Nebraska's Archbishop George Lucas.

Fr Flanagan was born in Leabeg, Co. Roscommon, in 1886, the eighth of 11 children. He emigrated to the US in 1904, being ordained eight years later. After working with homeless men in Omaha he founded a boarding house for orphans and other boys, and then expanded to found a home known as the Village of Boys Town. Spencer Tracy won an Oscar for playing him in the 1938 film *Boys Town*.

Request

At the request of US President Harry Truman Fr Flanagan helped care for orphans and other displaced children in defeated Axis countries after the Second World War. He died in Berlin in 1948.

If the congregation is satisfied that Fr Flanagan showed 'heroic virtue', it will recommend that Pope Francis declare him 'venerable'.

Failure to solve housing crisis could define next election – Focus

Greg Daly

Public concern about housing and homelessness is set to be a defining issue in the next general election, Focus Ireland has said.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Mike Allen of Focus said widespread concern on doorsteps about the housing crisis has not yet manifested in the ballot box.

"I think some of the political strategists will be looking at the local elections and saying that the biggest local election issue was housing – everybody said that, everybody who was knocking on doors said that housing and homelessness were the big issues – but it didn't turn into a vote for any particular party," he said.

While party strategists

might be tempted to conclude that there are no votes in the issue, Mr Allen says this could prove a costly mistake at the next general election.

"Unless political parties have credible responses to the scale of the problems they're going to very much suffer at the polls," he said.

The temptation, he said, is that party thinkers

might compare public concern about housing with public concern about health, which despite having long been the top concern of voters has not swung an election in over 20 years.

Solvable

"I think people recognise that housing and homelessness are more

solvable than our particular version of the health crisis," he said.

"They know that it was solved in the past, they know that we had massive house building projects and so have other countries which have really got to the heart of this issue, so people are asking why if we were able to do this in the past, why can't we do it now?"

Carmelites' €35 million land sale

It is understood that the Irish Carmelites in Dublin's Ballinteer are set to receive up to €35 million from the sale of eight acres of land attached to its student and novitiate house.

It has been reported that the site is located to the rear of the Carmelites' house at Gort Muire and adjacent to St Tiernan's

Community School.

Gort Muire is still the student and novitiate house for the Province but nowadays students go elsewhere to study.

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Reduce number of churches to save planet – eco-theologian

Colm Fitzpatrick

Near-empty churches and unused parish land should be repurposed to help save the environment, a leading eco-theologian has said.

Kevin Hargaden of Dublin's Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice told this newspaper that instead of being dispersed over a number of churches, parishioners should gather in "larger groups", creating opportunities for vacant churches to be repurposed for ecological means.

"I think that it's a good idea for Christian communities that we would gather in larger groups for Mass on Sunday, but the buildings that don't get used, I think can get repurposed. Again, that's an opportunity for us to think about how do we make a church fit for the 21 Century

mission," Dr Hargaden told *The Irish Catholic*.

Rewilded

He added that for a "whole bunch of logistical and operational reasons", rationalising church buildings is a smart decision, and noted that unused land in parishes can also be rewilded – a process of restoring land to its natural state – to reduce Ireland's collective carbon footprint.

Emphasising that while individual actions aimed at preventing ecological peril are important, he said only collective efforts can make any substantive difference to the environment's wellbeing.

"The parish becomes the lynchpin, the cornerstone member of a broad coalition within the town that seeks so to develop policies on that collective level. And

that makes sense because so much of this conversation directs us towards individual behavioural change and while that's important, that is utterly insignificant and insufficient – even the most severe eco-warrior is making no difference on their own," he said, stressing that the environmental work of even the most committed parish in isolation is "just a drop in the ocean".

Initiatives

Recommending what parishes can do to begin their ecological journey, Dr Hargaden suggested joining initiatives like Eco Congregation Ireland which encourages churches of all denominations to consider what practical steps can be taken to prevent further damage to the environment.

Ploughing championships ideal spot for 'green prayer' – bishop

Greg Daly

A poll of visitors at the National Ploughing Championship to find their traditional prayer is intended to boost an awareness of faith and the importance of prayer, Bishop Denis Nulty has said.

The Bishop of Kildare and

Leighlin, in whose diocese this year's ploughing championships will take place in September, said that with over 85% of respondents in Ireland's most recent census claiming a religious affiliation, prayer remains important for many citizens.

"I find people pray more

for exams and when they're sick – they turn to the Lord, so there's a huge recognition of prayer's importance and we're reminding people of that," he told *The Irish Catholic*.

Because the championships, this year held in Ballinacorney, Co. Carlow, focus on rural living, Dr Nulty is also inviting people of all ages and faiths to submit a short prayer of their own about the environment, relating perhaps to farming, gardening or sustainability.

"There's no better place for that than in a ploughing championship, in the middle of a field," he said.

Preferences and entries can be submitted to prayer-at-the-ploughing@kandle.ie up to September 10.



Staff reporter

Antrim Rose Orlagh McClinton [pictured] has picked the Michaela Foundation as her chosen charity as she attempts to be crowned Rose of Tralee.

Hailing from Glenavy, the 22-year-old said she is "delighted" to be supporting the Catholic organisation which has faith as one of its central tenets.

The foundation was established to honour the life of Michaela McAreevey – daughter of Tyrone football manager Mickey Harte – who was murdered on the island of Mauritius in 2011. It runs summers camps offered to girls aged 11-13, focusing on fun, faith, fashion, well-being and fáilte.

"I am delighted to be supporting the Michaela Foundation over my year as the Antrim Rose. I have been a volunteer for the foundation for over four years and believe that its ethos and values are inspiring for young girls, in this ever changing society," Ms Clinton told *The Irish Catholic*.

"It was with the encouragement and support of my friends at Michaela Foundation that I applied to become the Antrim Rose. They remind me daily to have faith in myself, in what I believe and that nothing is out of my reach. As Michaela herself was a Rose it makes this journey that little bit closer to my heart."

The Rose of Tralee International Festival marks its 60th anniversary in 2019, and this year runs from August 23-27.



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Goodness is not always what good people choose in a politician



Mary Kenny

Anna is a long-time friend of mine. She is a devout Anglican, English, and also a member of the Conservative Party. Thus, she had a vote in deciding whether Jeremy Hunt or Boris Johnson should become the next Conservative leader, and next Prime Minister of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

She's a conscientious person and her pencil hovered over the choice of the two men for some time. Jeremy Hunt is a Christian, faithfully married and the father of three children. He has shown himself to be a steady political figure, although he has made some errors in office, as have most politicians.

Boris Johnson – well, everyone knows about Boris's shambolic appearance, well-documented gaffes and a private life which, to be charitable, might be described as bewildering.

Nobody seems to know how many children he has

– it's a question political inquisitors have asked repeatedly, in the public realm.

A respectable historian, Dr David Starkey, has written frankly, in a respectable newspaper, that Boris is led by his libido. The commentator Camilla Long has described Johnson as an "appalling, destructive, emotionally cruel sex addict".

Decorum

In a recent, well-publicised episode Boris had a domestic ding-dong with his girlfriend, reported by the neighbours, as shouty words were exchanged and wine was chucked over a sofa – hardly the prescribed decorum for the occupant of 10 Downing Street. He is in the process of divorcing his second wife.

And yet Anna's pencil hovered. I gave her the only advice that was in my capacity to give: "You'll have to be guided by your conscience."

In the end, yes, she put her endorsing mark against



Boris Johnson (left) and Jeremy Hunt.

the candidature of Boris Johnson.

“Boris had been a successful Mayor of London – traditionally a Labour city”

Boris, she thought, was the only person who brought dynamic energy to the job. Boris was able to galvanise others. Boris had been a successful Mayor of London – traditionally a Labour city – and had hired effective people to work with him.

Boris also had that most important quality of leadership – optimism. With optimism, you can solve problems, including that Rubik's cube of a dilemma – the Irish border backstop.

And what Anna felt was that the most vital thing for her country, right now, was action, energy, and decisiveness. Jeremy was a good man, but Boris had that 'x' factor which propels

action.

In politics, it's not always moral character that wins the day (as we could perceive from the life of David Lloyd George, a gifted politician, but privately nicknamed "the goat", because of his sexual morals).

And even supporters who themselves have high religious and moral standards may choose a candidate who seems to fall well short of the ideal, either for pragmatic reasons, or because they believe that redemption of character is always possible.

As Prime Minister, two of Johnson's closest aides are likely to be Jacob Rees-Mogg and Iain Duncan Smith, both Catholics.

In the British media, his strongest supporter has been Charles Moore, a Catholic convert.

I'm a fan of the green way to stay cool!



In hot weather, there's one item that you see commonly used in Paris, but very seldom in either Dublin or London: the hand-held fan. The French – and even more, the Spanish – have much recourse to the fan when the mercury rises.

I am a great fan of the fan, and own a pretty collection of them. They are effective against the heat, and, unlike artificial air conditioning, they neither damage the planet nor circulate germs. They are beautifully decorative and among the cheapest of little luxuries – often costing just a couple of euros.

Yet the fanning of fans can annoy some people, and are sometimes considered an affectation. They're not: they're a very old and practical way of keeping cool.

At least Tory leader Boris Johnson was a Catholic...in the past!

Boris Johnson will be the first British Prime Minister who was baptised a Catholic, which was his mother Charlotte's Faith. His godmother is Lady Rachel Billington, daughter of the high-minded convert Lord Longford.

Boris changed to the Church of England after he got a scholarship to Eton, but I did wonder if the rule of 'once a Catholic, always a Catholic' applied.

So I asked Fr Fergus O'Donoghue SJ,

who knows about these things, and he informed me that if Boris Johnson was confirmed as an Anglican at Eton, then he is no longer a Catholic. "If we are baptised as Catholics, we're regarded as remaining so unless we transfer to another denomination."

The only Catholic element that seems to have stayed with Boris is his love of Latin: though there's not a lot of that, today, in the Church of Rome.



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Vatican prelate to discuss shrines' role in new evangelisation at Knock Novena

Chai Brady

A high-ranking Vatican prelate will discuss the role and importance of shrines for spreading the faith during "exciting" celebrations for the 140th anniversary of the Apparition at Knock Shrine.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, the President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation, will speak at Ireland's most prominent Marian shrine on August 15. The 12pm seminar will focus on 'Mary in the life of the Church'. He is also expected to celebrate the 3pm and 8pm Novena Masses.

His job at the Vatican is to help reawaken the Faith in parts of the world that are traditionally Christian, but he also has responsibility over the Church's shrines.

Fr Richard Gibbons PP of Knock said that they are

"very focused" on evangelisation in Knock and that it's part of their renewal programme. "We want to focus on what we can do to help with the renewal of the faith in the country," he said.

Popular

It was at the International Convention of the Rectors and Pastoral Workers of Shrines in the Vatican in November last year – where Pope Francis said that "Shrines are irreplaceable because they keep

popular piety alive" – that Fr Gibbons invited Archbishop Fisichello to Ireland, who he said was "very excited" about the prospect.

"I think he feels the shrines are very, very important centres of evangelisation. They are places people still come to and feel great affinity for and that they can be focus points in terms of preaching the word of God, in terms of renewal programmes and simply encouraging people in their faith," Fr Gibbons said.

"He has been to Ireland a couple of times and he's very interested to see how shrines work as well on the ground."

Archbishop Fisichello joins Archbishop of Tuam, Michael Neary, Bishop of Raphoe, Alan McGuckian, Fr Peter McVerry and more at the Novena celebrations beginning in mid-August.

[Read more on Pages 18-21.](#)

What do you think?

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The Clarke family stands with Knock parish priest Fr Richard Gibbons at the Blessing of Children Ceremony at Knock Shrine over the weekend. Photo: Sinead Mallee

Health Committee recommendations 'treat babies as consumer items'

Staff reporter

An Oireachtas report on the fertility industry has been accused of treating babies, eggs, sperm, wombs and embryos as "consumer items".

The report from the Joint Health Committee examines proposed legislation aimed at regulating Assisted Human Reproduction practices. One recommendation, if followed, would allow women to give their own babies to infertile couples in return for a fee. This is a version of surrogacy called 'traditional' or 'genetic surrogacy' which is banned in almost all Western

countries because it is too like baby-buying.

Normally a surrogate mother is impregnated with the fertilised egg of another woman, but with 'traditional' surrogacy she has her own baby who she then gives to another couple or individual in return for 'reasonable expenses' or a fee. In very rare cases she will hand the baby over in return for no money.

Currently, the Government plans to outlaw 'traditional' surrogacy, but the Health Committee wants Minister Simon Harris to consider permitting it.

Commenting on behalf of the Iona Institute, columnist and teacher Breda O'Brien

said: "The Health Committee would permit a woman to hand over a baby that is fully hers, biologically speaking, in return for a fee in some cases, such as in international surrogacy.

"There is a complete lack of debate about the matter and the dominant narrative rarely takes into account the experience of children conceived via egg or sperm donation or surrogacy who object to the practice and who are best-placed to understand the pitfalls. We are sleepwalking to disaster due to the lack of public debate.

"No civilised country should consider permitting these proposals."

Funerals should focus on prayers – IC poll

The majority of our online readers believe that Catholic funerals should focus on prayers for the deceased, rather than a celebration of their life.

Facebook users were asked: "Should Catholic funerals emphasise more clearly their role in helping people to pray for the souls of their loved ones, or is it more important to celebrate the achievements of their lives?"

Out of 551 votes, the majority of respondents – 343 – said that prayers for the dead should be a focus at funerals, in comparison to the 208 who believe the ceremony is a cause for celebrating one's life.

Trócaire thank 'passionate' Bishop John Kirby

Staff reporter

Trócaire have thanked Bishop John Kirby for serving as the Church-charity's chairperson for 20 years after his resignation as the Bishop of Clonfert was accepted by Pope Francis.

CEO Caoimhe de Barra said Bishop Kirby's "passion and enthusiasm" helped drive the organisation, and that he was "deeply committed to campaigning for social justice".

"He helped guide the organisation through some momentous and challenging events, including the Rwandan genocide, Hurricane Mitch and the Asian tsunami. Throughout all of these events, his commitment to the world's poor shone through," she said.

"Bishop Kirby brought great energy and insightfulness to our work. He had very genuine compassion with the communities we work with."

Dr Kirby served as the Bishop of Clonfert for over 30 years, his resignation was accepted last week by Pope Francis who announced that Fr Michael Duignan from Bealnamulla in Co. Roscommon would take the reins.

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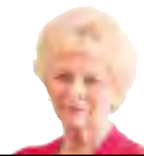
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Imposing a lethal law over Irish heads

Nuala O'Loan The View



Unless the Northern Ireland Assembly is reconstituted and an Executive is formed on or before October 21, 2019, abortion law in Northern Ireland will change utterly on October 22, 2019.

66% of women and 70% of 18-34-year-olds in the North said in a recent ComRes opinion poll that they did not want abortion law imposed on Northern Ireland from Westminster. Yet this is what has happened.

There has been no consultation. The Government has ignored its obligations under Parliamentary conventions, the devolution settlement and the Good Friday Agreement. It did not have to do this. It is giving effect to recommendations in a report issued under a protocol to the CEDAW convention, which are not legally required, and are unclear in their meaning.

When I asked in Parliament what some of these recommendations meant, the Minister did not respond. Extended abortion law will be imposed on Northern Ireland unless the Assembly is back at work on October 21, by the Government and by Parliamentarians, none of whom live or work in Northern Ireland. It represents a total democratic deficit.

Risk

The consequences of this ill-thought-through bill have never even been assessed for their impact or risk.

Nothing can happen to change the law until October 22, when the provisions of the Offences against the Person Act 1861, which will still apply in England and Wales, will be abolished.

No criminal offence will be committed by any person who carries out any abortion of any baby up to 28 weeks in the womb, although the Secretary of State must then legislate to create an abortion law by January 13, which may include new criminal penalties, making whatever other changes to the law he or she thinks are 'necessary or appropriate' to regulate abortions in Northern Ireland, including providing for the circumstances in which an abortion may take place.

We do not know what the new law which must be made by March 31, 2020 will look like.

Government and Parliamentarians refused to back an amendment requiring the Secretary of State to consult with NI Assembly members

and to seek their consent as the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland.

There are many things we do not know about what the new law will look like including:

- In what circumstances abortion will be allowed;
- Whether there will be any time limit;
- Whether there will be any restrictions on access to abortion;
- Whether there will be provision for abortion to birth if the baby has a disability or for other reasons as happens in Great Britain;
- What arrangements will be made as to who can carry out abortions;
- Whether there will be a right to conscientious objection for medical practitioners and pharmacists, and in what circumstances such a right might be exercised.

All of these major decisions can be made by a single Minister with no general consultation with the people of the North. This is what is going to happen and it will be very difficult to challenge anything the Secretary of State might do.

The Bill was passed to introduce abortion, with total uncertainty as to what the law will be.

“Signatories came from all sectors of our divided society”

All this happened over the period of the July 12 holidays, a time when traditionally many in the North go on holiday and when the attention of its people is not on Westminster. Despite this an open letter to the Prime Minister which was agreed between me and Lord Eames was signed by over 20,000 people in just a few days.

Signatories came from all sectors of our divided society – from MPs, MLAs, Peers, clergymen of all denominations, doctors, nurses, lawyers and many other professions, so many people responding in days to ask the Prime Minister not to do this, or to consult our MLAs, and give them a voice. That rapid response, a united voice by so many people from all parts of Northern Ireland, was ignored.

If the NI Assembly does not return, then between October 22, 2019 and the introduction of the new regulations setting out how abortion will work, which must happen before March 31 2020, will be a period of five months when there will be no protection at all for the unborn child who has been in his or her mother's womb for fewer than 28 weeks.

Presumption

I am tabling an amending bill to try and stop the immediate repeal of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861.

Before 28 weeks the medical and nursing staff to whom a woman goes will have to decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether the baby is capable of being born alive.

The presumption in law is that a baby is capable of being born alive only at 28 weeks, a presumption which is decades old and does not reflect advances in modern medicine. It is most unlikely that any doctor would challenge this presumption, despite the fact that we know that a baby can survive after birth from about 22 weeks (and babies have survived from 21 weeks).

If an abortion is carried out in these circumstances, there will be no investigation and no criminal prosecution. This would apply even in a case where a man, who does not want his wife/partner to have her baby, puts abortifacient medication in her food, for example, as has happened in an actual case.

Such a person could be prosecuted for poisoning under other parts of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, but that will not even acknowledge that a baby has died, and the penalties for poisoning are more limited than those currently available for unlawful abortion.

In addition to this, between October 22 and March 31:

- There would be no legal mechanism to check whether a woman or girl has been forced to have an abortion.
- There will be no legal requirement that two doctors must certify in good faith, as in England and Wales, that an abortion is medically necessary for the mother.
- There will be no requirement for a doctor to be present to deal with any com-

plications which may result.

- It will be possible to have an abortion anywhere, not just in hospital or other regulated places.

- There will be no provision enabling medical practitioners to exercise any right of conscientious objection to being involved in abortion.

- Abortion pills will be able to be given out in schools and the parents of the girl who is pregnant may never know, despite the fact that the medication to induce an abortion carries its own dangers.

- Private abortion clinics could operate without regulation.

This will be similar to the most draconian abortion legislation in the world.

Of course, the Assembly could be reconstituted by October 21. Sinn Féin had what has been described as three red lines in the talks which are currently under way – same sex marriage, the introduction of abortion and an Irish Language Act; the DUP say that they will go back without any conditions.

“There will be no provision enabling medical practitioners to exercise any right of conscientious objection”

The British Parliament has now delivered the first two requirements of Sinn Féin. There is therefore, no reason why Sinn Féin would go back into the Assembly before October 21. Were they to do so, they would have to start renegotiating same-sex marriage and abortion. Now they don't. They just have to sit and wait.

My concern is that one of those key demands involves the intentional taking of the life of babies not yet born – what a terrible basis on which to build a new Northern Ireland Government.

If the NI Assembly does not return, then between October 22, 2019 and the introduction of the new regulations setting out how abortion will work, (which must happen before March 31, 2020) there will be a period of five months when there will be no protection at all for the unborn child who has been in his or her mother's womb for fewer than 28 weeks. I am tabling an amending bill to try and stop the immediate repeal of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861.

As Westminster MPs plan to force abortion on Northern Ireland, we launch our...

FIGHT-BACK CAMPAIGN



• Precious Life outside the Houses of Parliament on the day MPs voted to force abortion on Northern Ireland

Dear Friend of the Unborn,

It is with a heavy heart that I write this very urgent letter to ask for your help. I'm sure by now you will have heard the harrowing news that the Westminster Parliament voted to force a barbaric 'up-to-birth' Abortion Bill on Northern Ireland, against the wishes of the people and our elected representatives.

On Friday 5th July, I received the news that pro-abortion MPs in Westminster had unexpectedly tabled amendments to the *Northern Ireland (Executive Formation) Bill* – an otherwise mundane government bill connected to budgets and elections for the NI Assembly.

On the morning of the debate on the Bill, I flew to London and met with the Northern Ireland MPs before they entered the Chamber. And that afternoon while the vote was taking place, I joined with other Precious Life members to pray outside the Houses of Parliament for the protection of our unborn babies.

I cannot even begin to describe to you just how devastated I felt when the result came through – 332 pro-abortion MPs voted in favour of such an evil amendment. In all my 23 years of fighting to protect our unborn babies, I can honestly say this has to be the greatest onslaught ever seen in the history of the abortion battle in Northern Ireland.

The hijacking of the Bill means that – if our Assembly isn't up and running by 21st October – the British Government will force on Northern Ireland, one of the most horrific, extreme and cruel laws in the world – legalising abortion-on-demand, and more than likely, right up to birth! This is even MORE extreme than Britain's atrocious 1967 *Abortion Act*, or the abortion legislation recently enacted in the Republic of Ireland.

The vote by pro-abortion MPs at Westminster is also abhorrent for another reason; it is an outrageous betrayal of devolution and completely ignores the democratic will of the people of Northern Ireland.

Normally, a Bill takes months to pass through Parliament, but this abortion Bill has been fast-tracked through in a matter of days.

Baroness Nuala O'Loan – the only Catholic from Northern Ireland in the Houses of Parliament – said, "...the Bill will go down in British constitutional history as one of its blackest moments of all times, when constitutional due process was completely swept aside because of the conviction of parliamentarians, none of whom represents Northern Ireland..."

So time is of the essence. This death threat to our unborn babies must be resisted at all costs, but sadly, time is not on our side. We must ACT NOW!

This is why I'm launching a **FIGHT BACK CAMPAIGN** that will expose the horror of what these politicians want to impose on Northern Ireland. But I can't do this alone - I need your urgent help RIGHT NOW! At this moment in time, we need the pro-life majority in Northern Ireland to rise up in opposition against such an undemocratic, disgraceful and cruel decision by these pro-abortion Westminster MPs who have no mandate to speak for the people of Northern Ireland. We must tell these MPs – "It's Not In Our Name" and that our laws matter because **OUR BABIES MATTER!**

Over these coming weeks and months ahead, we will make an all-out push to stop this abominable law being implemented. I want you to know that Precious Life will do everything we can to stop this bill. And I personally promise you, that as long as God gives me breath, I will fight for justice and be a voice for our little brothers and sisters in the womb; I will do everything in my human power to save our babies from this diabolical horror.

I know you will agree that losing is not an option because if this law is implemented, the lives of hundreds of thousands of our future children are at stake. So we need to stay strong; we need to keep fighting; and there needs to be a public outcry against this from the people of Northern Ireland and our politicians.

As I pray and plan this **FIGHT BACK CAMPAIGN**, I'm reminded of what Frederick Douglass, National leader of the Abolitionist Movement said in a speech against slavery – "*For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.*"

The killing of unborn children is the greatest evil in the history of all of the world's atrocities. It has to be exposed and stopped, and it is our duty to get involved in this battle.

Please help me to launch this urgent **FIGHT BACK CAMPAIGN**, which will include:

• A massive "**March for the Babies**" to be held in Belfast in September;

• A **intensification** of our efforts to expose the horrific reality of abortion - through our **weekly Street Outreach**, our **website**, **social media**, **radio** and **TV interviews**, etc;

• A **Pro-Life Summer Roadshow** in August travelling to the towns and cities across Northern Ireland,

bringing the pro-life message straight to the people, bypassing the biased media, and changing hearts and minds directly on the streets;

• A **new Billboard Campaign** across Northern Ireland, highlighting the humanity of the unborn child.

But as you and I know – this is ultimately a Spiritual Battle. Most importantly, we must **FIGHT BACK** with our spiritual weapons so I am currently organising **40 Days of Prayer and Fasting**. We will also hold a **Candle-light Rosary Vigil** at Stormont on Sunday 8th September - the Birthday of Our Blessed Mother.

As I said, I can't begin this **FIGHT BACK CAMPAIGN** alone. I need your urgent help and financial support RIGHT NOW, so that we're prepared and equipped for this most critical battle ahead. **Please send your most generous donation TODAY** because the future of our unborn babies depends on what we do at this critical time.

We must pray as if everything depends on God, and work as if everything depends on us.

Yours for the least of the little ones,

Bernadette Smyth
DIRECTOR
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Trading in children...today

We are rightly disgusted at some of the adoption scandals of the past, especially those that involve a mother being effectively forced to give up her child. Another source of scandals were those instances where a birth certificate was illegally altered so that it became almost impossible for mother and child to ever find each other again.

What disgusts us about this? A big element is that the natural tie between mother and child has been deliberately sundered. It is one thing when the mother gives up her child voluntarily because she believes she is not in a position to raise a child. It is quite another when she feels under pressure to do so and the decision is effectively involuntary.

The excesses of the fertility industry will come back to bite us, writes **David Quinn**



Adoption now is extremely rare. In many instances, abortion has taken its place. When a woman feels she cannot raise her child, she will often opt to end the pregnancy rather than place the child up for adoption. Sometimes she will come under pressure to abort, either from family, friends or the child's father.

Except in those very rare cases where a baby survives an abortion, the mother and her aborted baby will

never seek one another out, will never be reunited and no story will be told of a mother and a child separated at birth. Who would you interview? If the woman regrets her abortion, most of the media aren't interested, and if she doesn't, then there appears to be no unhappy story to tell. The child can obviously tell no tale.

But what will happen in the future as more and more children created by fertility clinics come of age? Will we hear their tales? Will they be given a platform? Will we heed what they say?

I am referring here to the children brought into being by IVF and other such procedures using the eggs, sperm and wombs of other people, that is, people different from the adults who will actually raise the children.

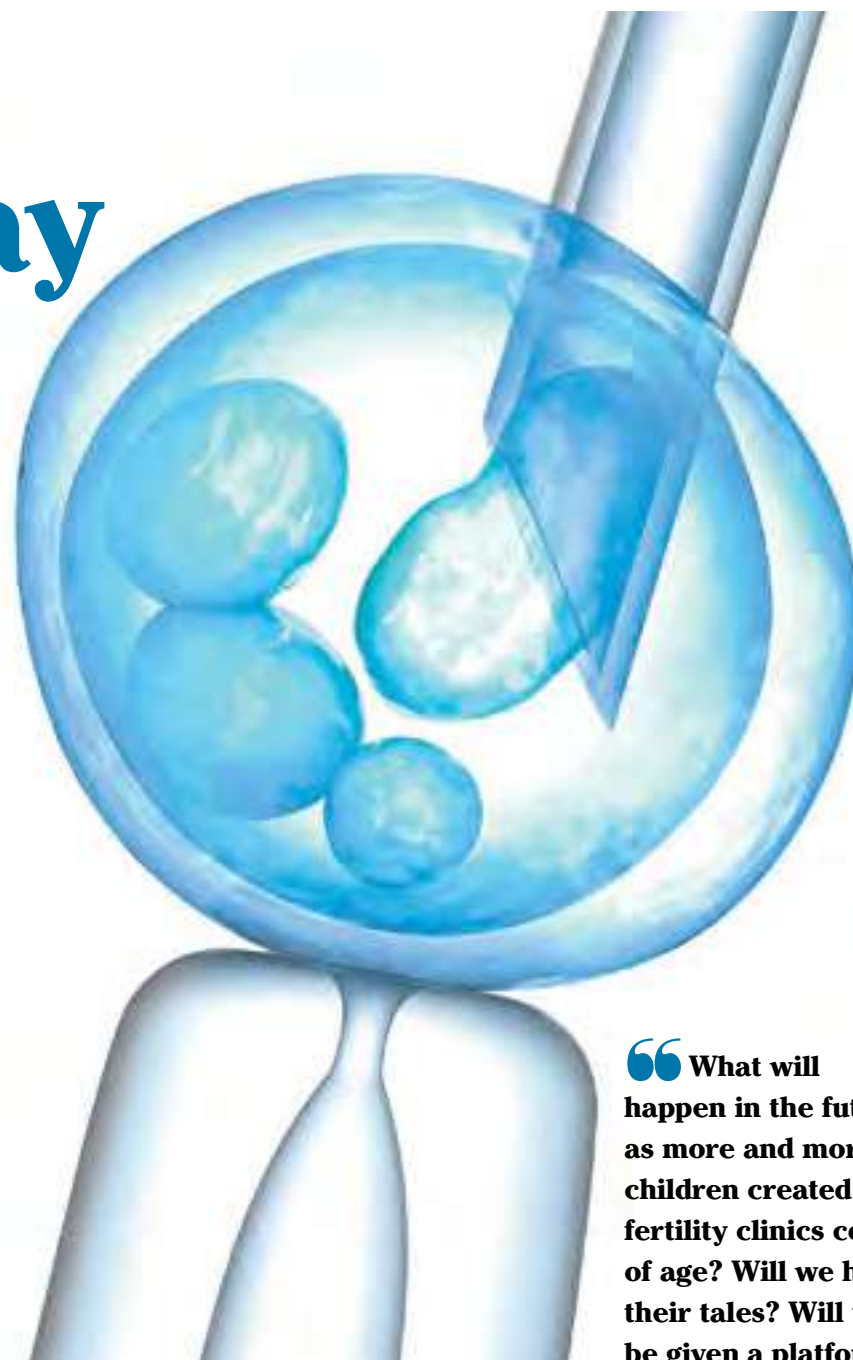
Not regulated

The fertility industry in Ireland is still not regulated. Plans have been afoot to do so for a long time now. Currently before Leinster House is something called the General Scheme of the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill.

The Oireachtas Health Committee examined the scheme. The scheme is bad enough, but the report of the Health Committee is even worse. Together, the two of them take a giant step towards the total commodification of children and the trivialising of the natural ties.

The great majority of people who use IVF, etc. by use their own eggs, their own sperm and their own wombs in order to have a child. But when they cannot do this, they will sometimes obtain the eggs and/or sperm of someone else, and sometimes they will use someone else's womb as well, that is, they will use a surrogate mother.

When you use someone else's sperm or egg to have a baby, that baby is the biological offspring of the sperm or egg donor. You



“What will happen in the future as more and more children created by fertility clinics come of age? Will we hear their tales? Will they be given a platform?”

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have deliberately cut the natural tie to either the mother or the father. How will the resultant children feel about that in later life? It turns out that they feel a lot like adopted children who go looking for their mothers, (and it is usually the mothers they seek out).

But there is a sharp difference with adoption. In the case of adoption, no-one plans to cut the natural ties on purpose. Instead it is done by life's circumstances and the adoptive parents step in when the mother cannot raise her child for whatever reason.

But when another person's egg and/or sperm is used to have a child, the natural tie is cut deliberately and many of the children who are conceived in this way do not like it one bit. They demand to know why anyone thought it was

permissible to deliberately cut the natural tie to a biological parent and that they plan to do so even before the child is conceived.

This is what makes a lot of our anger about past adoption scandals so hypocritical. The outrage shows we care about the natural ties, that we want children to find their natural parents. But why don't we want the same thing for the children of egg and sperm donors?

“If a fee is paid to the woman, this amounts to baby-buying. What else can we call it?”

The Health Committee wants to go even further than the General Scheme. It wants to permit something

“When another person's egg and/or sperm is used to have a child, the natural tie is cut deliberately and many of the children who are conceived in this way do not like it one bit”

called 'traditional' surrogacy. Typically, when a woman agrees to have a baby on behalf of someone else – sometimes for a fee – she will be impregnated with the fertilised egg of another woman. This is called 'gestational' surrogacy.

But with 'traditional' surrogacy the woman uses her own egg, that is to say, the baby she gives to the couple or person who hired her is fully hers, biologically speaking. If a fee is paid to the woman, this amounts to baby-buying. What else can we call it? Even when a fee is not paid, the woman agrees to become pregnant with her own child and then hands it over to someone else.

This practice makes a total mockery of the natural ties. It pretends they do not matter. It treats babies, and sperm and eggs and wombs as commodities that can be traded in the marketplace.

The very occasional article or interview aside, this is happening with almost no debate. These highly dubious practices will eventually come back to bite us, like the bad adoption practices of the past.

You can't walk your way to a better climate, Micheál



John McGuirk

The leader of Fianna Fáil was at pains to announce to the public this week that he is making every effort to walk places, instead of being driven to places, in order to help combat climate change. If Micheál's doctor is anything like mine, he or she will be delighted with him. My doctor can't get enough of telling me to walk places, to the extent that I often feel like telling him that if he loves walking so much, he should just do it himself and leave me alone.

Anyway, back to the climate. Leo Varadkar was going to become a vegetarian, you might remember from earlier in the year. It was all going very well, great publicity, until the beef farmers reminded him that they had votes, and poor Leo had to pretend that he likes a steak after all, climate be damned.

Elsewhere, they're planting a rose garden in Leinster House to take some of the carbon emissions out of the air and lead by example.

Eamon Ryan wants everyone to cycle everywhere, and I think Mary Lou McDonald is also committed to reducing the amount of hot air in the atmosphere, because she's been very quiet lately.

For you and me, of course, climate change won't be as simple as it is for our politicians. They get to lead by example, but when it comes to you and me, they're going to make an example of us for the rest of the world.

Facts

Let's start with the facts, because they've been in short supply when it comes to climate change recently. After all, the Government's new commitment to climate change taxes is not based on science, it's based on the fact that the Green Party took their votes in the local elections. Science is a secondary consideration.

Irish people produce, on average, seven tonnes of carbon per person per year. That sounds like a lot, but remember, the average



American produces 16.5 tonnes per year, and there are more than a hundred Americans for every one Irish person. Qatar, in the Middle East, produces 45 tonnes of carbon per person per year, and New Zealand, a country very much like Ireland, produces more than we do, at 7.7 tonnes. 43 countries in the world produce more carbon per person than we do. Not only do we have to suffer, but for our suffering to work, we have to get all of those 43 countries to copy us.

To stop climate change, the scientists say, we have to get to a figure of two tonnes of carbon per person globally as soon as possible. That's not just for Ireland – it's for everyone. So, the Americans will have to do about three times as much carbon reducing as we do, and it appears that we will basically have to close down Qatar altogether.

The Government's plan, by its own figures, will cost Irish people between €4,000 and €5,000 per annum. It will ban diesel cars. It will in time eliminate all fossil fuelled home heating. It will impose steep penalties on businesses that produce carbon. It will cover the countryside in windmills.

And it will reduce our carbon emissions by 2030 to about five tonnes per person. Even if we do all this, it will

not be enough, according to the scientists. We would still need the Americans, the Chinese, the EU and all those countries many times our size to take even more pain than will be inflicted on us. None of those countries have any plans whatsoever to get anywhere close to what the scientists say they need to do.

The Government's plan is completely pointless, because even if every other country copied it, and they won't, it won't work.

“Politicians like to tell you that if only you would do what politicians tell you, everything will be better”

So, we will in time find out whether the warnings of a global warming apocalypse are real, or overblown. The truth of the matter is that we have long gone past the points where we could stop what scientists say is coming.

Now, politicians will never admit this, because Politicians like to tell you that if only you would do what politicians tell you, everything will be better. Charities won't tell you, because there's still money to be raised from demanding

action on climate change. The Church won't even tell you, because climate change is the one issue that the Church can still talk about and be listened to by people who wouldn't listen to it usually.

There is one way to get to two tonnes of carbon

per person by 2030, by the way: we could ban air travel, which is the single most carbon-intensive thing any of us do. A single holiday to Spain, a round trip flight to Madrid, will produce one tonne per person. We can't do that, of course, because politicians love

their holidays, and they know full well that all those Green voters in Dublin won't be Green voters for long if politicians actually do what's needed to tackle climate change.

So Micheál Martin is going to walk more. It's some country, all the same.

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“For you and me, of course, climate change won't be as simple as it is for our politicians. They get to lead by example, but when it comes to you and me, they're going to make an example of us for the rest of the world”

A wholly harmonious

Claims this week that Pope Benedict had in 2005 wanted the then Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio to serve as his Secretary of State and help clean up the Roman Curia may be surprising, especially to those who clutter and poison Catholic media with tales of antipathy between Pope Francis and his predecessor, but they are by no means implausible.

Indeed, veteran Vatican reporter John Allen noted in *The Rise of Benedict XVI*, written against the background of the 2005 conclave and detailing how Vienna's Cardinal Christoph Schönborn had been perhaps the key player pushing for the election of the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, that there had been a feeling during the conclave that Cardinal Bergoglio could draw support from the same well as Cardinal Ratzinger.

Some Latin American cardinals, he reported, had hoped to elect a cardinal from their own continent, home as it was to almost half the world's Catholics, and had settled on the then Cardinal Archbishop of Buenos Aires.

"A Jesuit, Bergoglio has a reputation as a man of great humility, deep spirituality, and unwavering commitment to rather traditional doctrinal views," Allen wrote. "In that sense, some of the Latin Americans felt, he could attract some of the Ratzinger votes but at the same time appeal to moderates attracted to the very idea of a non-European Pope."

Colleague

It was not to be, of course: Cardinal Ratzinger became Benedict XVI, and a year later his old colleague Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone – and not Cardinal Bergoglio – became Secretary of State.

Despite John Allen's comments back in 2005, since the election of Pope Francis in 2013 it has been an increasingly common line for some Catholic commentators that he and Pope Emeritus Benedict could hardly be more different, not merely in tone and style but in theology and in how they think about the Church.

In such a context, it's perhaps unsurprising that the retired Pontiff has become a totemic figure for those opposed to the current papacy, with, it would

Francis and Benedict's papacies are profoundly interwoven, writes Greg Daly



looking to him for guidance as though his imprimatur matters more than that of his successor.

Having unconditionally promised his loyalty to his successor, whoever he might choose to be, on resigning in 2013, the Pope Emeritus has, however, been as good as his word.

"The adversaries of Bergoglio, often conservatives desperately seeking a word of Benedict that would sound as a criticism of Bergoglio, have unfailingly heard [from Benedict] that 'there is one Pope, he is Francis'," wrote Massimo Franco in the Italian *Corriere della Serra* some weeks ago, highlighting how the Pope Emeritus has consistently underlined not merely his loyalty towards the Holy Father but the need for unity in the Church.

“In the end, the consciousness that the Church is and must remain united has always prevailed”

"The unity of the Church is always in danger, for centuries," he said. "It has been throughout its entire history. Wars, internal conflicts, centrifugal pushes, threats of schism. But in the end, the consciousness that the Church is and must remain united has always prevailed."

That Benedict has publicly spoken with immense fondness for Francis on several occasions, highlighting his "goodness", is a matter of record, of course, but for the first Pope to resign his office in almost six centuries to stress both the perennial threat to Church unity and its ongoing necessity shouldn't have surprised anyone seriously familiar with his history.

Indeed, as far back as 1977, in his first homily after becoming a bishop he called for unity in the Church, and in July 1981, in his first homily as cardinal, he specifically stressed the need for unity with the Pope.

except in the visible Church where we find Peter," Elio Guerriero sums him up as saying in one of two recent books that are essential reading for anybody serious about the intellectual roots, apparent contradictions, and fundamental harmony of the papacies of Benedict XVI and Francis.

Benedict XVI: His Life and Thought, originally published in Italian in 2017, is the closest we are likely to get to an official biography of the Pope Emeritus: written by Guerriero and introduced by Pope Francis, it is drawn in part from lengthy interviews with Benedict, concludes with the transcript of a short interview with him, and crucially was read by him ahead of publication.

Perhaps even more valuable, given how little of Pope Francis' writings from before becoming Pope are available in English, is Massimo Borghesi's *The Mind of Pope Francis: Jorge Mario Bergoglio's Intellectual Journey*, likewise first published in Italian two years ago.

Together the books make for an extraordinary and indispensable double-act that should cause us to recall a curious episode from early last year.

February 2018 saw the publication of a series of short books about the theology of Pope Francis, with a letter from the Pope Emeritus being read from at the launch. Media attention focused on whether a photograph of Benedict's letter had been altered, and the substance of what Francis' predecessor actually said was lost in the ensuing storm.

"I applaud this initiative that wants to oppose and react to the foolish prejudice in which Pope Francis is just a practical man without particular theological or philosophical formation, while I have been only a theorist of theology with little understanding of the concrete life of a Christian today," the Pope Emeritus wrote.

"The small volumes show, rightly, that Pope Francis is a man of profound philosophi-



Pope Francis pays a pre-Christmas visit to 91-year-old retired Pope Benedict XVI. Left, Fr Romano Guardini.

into which the poles, if isolated and left to themselves, tend to degenerate."

The notion of a Christianity that pulls together apparent opposites is one that's seen in, for instance, the writings of GK Chesterton – another influence both directly and indirectly on Pope Francis – who wrote in 1908's *Orthodoxy* that the Church prefers a tension between opposites than a midway blend of them.

"It has always had a healthy hatred of pink. It hates that combination of two colours which is the feeble expedient of the philosophers. It hates that evolution of black into white which is tantamount to a dirty grey," he wrote.

"All that I am urging here can be expressed by saying that Christianity sought in most of these cases to keep two colours coexistent but pure. It is not a mixture like russet or purple; it is rather like a shot silk, for a shot silk is always at right angles, and is in the pattern of the cross."

Formed

Chesterton had, in fact, inspired the conversion to Catholicism of Alberto Methol Ferré, a Uruguayan theologian whose thought Borghesi shows as having profoundly formed that of the future Pope Francis, and who believed the notion of the Church as a "people of angels in an earthly world" was a profoundly secular error.

and they therefore help to see the inner continuity between the two pontificates, despite all the differences of style and temperament," he continued, before going on to say that he hadn't been able to read the books in detail, and to criticise the choice of one of the series authors.

“The small volumes show, rightly, that Pope Francis is a man of profound philosophical and theological formation”

That "rightly" speaks volumes. These books, the Pope Emeritus was saying, were merely showing something that was already clear to him, that Francis is a man of profound philosophical and theological formation, with his papacy having a deep inner continuity with his own.

One obvious way in which the two papacies overlap is in how both Pope Benedict

and Pope Francis had been deeply influenced by the late Italian-German intellectual Fr Romano Guardini.

Fr Guardini's influence on Benedict is well known, with his books *The Essence of Christianity*, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* and *The Lord* inspiring the German Pope's *Introduction to Christianity*, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* and his *Jesus of Nazareth* trilogy, and Guerriero's book brings out just how profound that influence was more generally.

That Guardini had been of interest to Pope Francis is a matter of record too, with his unfinished PhD thesis having been about him, but what Borghesi shows is just deeply the future Pontiff engaged with Guardini's writings in subsequent years, with him becoming every bit as much a disciple of Guardini as Benedict had been.

"From [19th-Century Church scholar Johann Adam] Möhler to Guardini, one can follow a golden thread that leads up to Bergoglio," Borghesi writes. "It sees Catholic thought as a synthesis of opposing polarities, overcoming the contradictory forces

double act



gressives and reactionaries tended to share the same flawed presuppositions, he diagnosed Catholic traditionalists stuck in defensive mind-sets as frozen by modernity, conquered by the Enlightenment through the simple fact of defining themselves in opposition to it.

The real challenge, he argued, and one that the Church had achieved at the Second Vatican Council, was to transcend both the Reformation and the Enlightenment, overcoming them by taking into itself what was best in both of them.

This notion of pulling together opposites is, of course, implied by the Pope's ancient title of Pontifex, literally meaning 'bridge-builder'. Central to the role of the Pope is the need to build bridges and join together divisions, and for Francis, Guardini had shown a way to do this.

"He spoke of a polar opposition in which the two opposites are not annulled. One pole does not destroy the other. There is no contradiction and no identity. For him, opposition is resolved at a higher level. In such a situation, however, the polar tension remains," Borghesi records Francis as saying of Guardini.

"Oppositions are helpful. Human life is structured in an oppositional form," he continued, stressing that the challenge is to overcome limits, not to negate them.

One might think here too of how Pope Emeritus Benedict, as Guerriero records, described Jesus as avoiding the errors of Pharisees and Essenes on one side and Sadducees on the other, instead realising the best of both and setting a template for a Church that neither cuts itself off from society nor loses its identity within society.

"I believe it is a 'sign of the times' that the idea of God's mercy is becoming increasingly central"

This approach, Borghesi shows, is crucial for understanding how Pope Francis thinks about such distinctions as the individual and society, citizens and the state, localisation and globalisation, and even distinctions between theology and pastoral care.

"Not infrequently, a kind of opposition is constructed between theology and pastoral care, as though they were two opposing, separate realities, which have nothing to do with one another," he quotes the Pope as saying. "Not infrequently we identify doctrine with the conservative, the retrograde; and, on the contrary, we think that pastoral care is an adaptation, a reduction, an accommodation, as if they had nothing to do with one another."

Flatly rejecting false

oppositions between pastors who are supposedly on the side of the people and academics who are supposedly on the side of doctrine, the Pope stresses the need to understand how our religious reflection and lived experience are intertwined in the lives of believers, adding: "The great Fathers of the Church, Irenaeus, Augustine, Basil, Ambrose to name a few, were great theologians because they were great pastors."

Distinctions

This attempt to transcend distinctions between doctrine and life is echoed in the Pope Emeritus' July 2017 address to Cardinal Gerhard Müller in which he said: "You defended the clear traditions of the Faith, but in the spirit of Pope Francis you also sought to understand how they can be lived today."

The most controversial aspects of Pope Francis' papacy have, of course, tended to revolve around *Amoris Laetitia* and how Church communities can help rebuild bonds with Catholics who have undergone civil divorces and remarriage. Francis' teaching in *Amoris* can be usefully understood as an attempt to transcend and integrate apparent clashes between doctrinal theory and lived reality, but it is perhaps easier to understand it as being above all about mercy.

"The priority of mercy does not suggest an irenic character of the faith, an opposition between truth and mercy," Borghesi spells out. "Mercy is not being placed 'against' the truth, but as a manifestation of the truth."

Mercy

It is worth pointing out that on March 16, 2016, just three days before the public unveiling of *Amoris Laetitia* by Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, the Pope Emeritus spoke eloquently about the importance of mercy in the pontificates of Francis, St John Paul and himself.

"I believe it is a 'sign of the times' that the idea of God's mercy is becoming increasingly central and dominant," he told *Vatican Insider*. "Pope Francis fully shares this line of thought. His pastoral practice finds expression in his continuous references to God's mercy. It is mercy that steers us towards God, while justice makes us fearful in his presence."

Pope Benedict may not, admittedly, have had much direct pastoral experience when he was called upon to become pastor of the universal Church – certainly

not when compared to the years at the coalface his Argentine successor would be able to claim – but one thing that Guerriero's book effectively demonstrates is that he always had a deep and thoughtful pastoral sensitivity.

Describing the death of Benedict's mother in 1963, for instance, he says that "later on, when the German theologian would repeatedly invite his listeners or readers to consider the faith of simple people, he would have in mind the example of his parents".

Noting that the Dominican Yves Congar had a similar experience and reached similar conclusions about the importance of ties passing through generations, Guerriero writes of the Pope Emeritus: "This is one of the arguments that Ratzinger would often use to stress the importance of the faith of simple people and the need to defend and protect it from excessive, gratuitous innovations."

He details elsewhere in the book how Benedict had felt that the reform of the Mass had been driven by specialists and imposed on the faithful in a jarring way, with in practical terms a disregard for the pastoral needs and habits of ordinary people.

"The most controversial aspects of Pope Francis' papacy have, of course, tended to revolve around *Amoris Laetitia*"

Reading both books the same themes come up again and again, with both Popes reflecting deeply and harmoniously upon clericalism, threats to the most vulnerable, institutions losing their Christian spirit, ecology and economy, international cooperation, the rise of libertine atheism, the need for saints, and so much else.

Above all, both men uphold understandings of Christianity that see it as first and foremost a personal relationship with Christ. Indeed, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis' 2013 'blueprint for the Church' leans heavily on a principle eloquently pinpointed by Benedict in his 2005 encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*: "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction."

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Plotting the route for

The Church can't afford to lie back and do nothing, Bishop Michael Router tells **Colm Fitzpatrick**



At a time in Ireland when the Church is experiencing tumultuous and unprecedented change, visionaries who can move it in the right direction are needed more than ever.

The challenges are well-known and can't be solved overnight – declining Mass attendance; the shadow of the clerical abuse scandals; a disillusioned youth; and a disenfranchised laity. The mission of the Church in response to these cumulative problems then, is firstly to learn from its mistakes, and secondly reignite a zeal for Christ in the hearts and minds of Ireland's people.

This is no easy task, but Armagh's new Auxiliary Bishop believes we should remain hopeful that the Church will continue to share a needed message to our broken society, while it itself learns and grows humbler.

"I think it's facing an awful lot of challenges really, the primary goal of the Church is evangelisation, in other words, bringing the message of Jesus and the grace of the Sacraments to people, and that's difficult in a kind of fractured society we live in now," Bishop Michael Router told *The Irish Catholic* before his ordination over the weekend in Armagh's St Patrick's Cathedral.

"In the past, the Church was sort of a monolith in Irish society, there was very little competition I suppose for the attention of the hearts and minds of people, but now there's a multitude of methods of communication, particularly, with social media being so popular. Particularly, you'll have so many people that the Church is just one other voice in a mix of so many seeking to be heard. So, basically, you're competing for that airtime in a sense."

Appointment

On May 7 of this year, Pope Francis appointed Dr Router – former parish priest of Bailieborough in the Diocese of Kilmore – to the Armagh role, assigning to him the Titular See of Lugmad. This is an ancient episcopal see in

Co. Louth. Previous bishops who held that title included Bishop Thomas Winning, Auxiliary Bishop and later Cardinal Archbishop of Glasgow.

The appointment was a surprise to many, not least Bishop Router, who said that when the Papal Nuncio called him to Dublin to discuss matters about Kilmore diocese, the notion of assisting Archbishop Eamon pastorally and administratively in Armagh wasn't even a passing thought.

"Certainly, we're without a bishop in Kilmore at the moment and you know there'd be a certain amount of comment about who might possibly be the next bishop or whatever, and I suppose some people had mentioned it to me that possibly I would succeed Bishop Leo [O'Reilly], but I knew that wasn't going to be a possibility anyway because the trend is now not to appoint bishops to their own dioceses.

"I certainly didn't expect to be appointed anywhere else and I didn't know that they were going to appoint an Auxiliary [Bishop] in Armagh. That was a big surprise," Dr Router said.

Surprise

The news meant that the Virginia-native would be uprooted from his Co. Cavan home – a place where he has ministered for three decades. Ordained in 1989, Bishop Router began as curate in the parish of Killinkere and in 1991 joined the teaching staff of St Patrick's College, Cavan.

Following this, he was appointed chaplain of Bailieborough Community School, and later served as priest in residence in the parish of Castletara/Ballyhaire. Before his appointment by Pope Francis, he was parish priest of Killann – a role which he will fondly miss.

"I was very surprised to be appointed, I was very happily working away as a parish priest in Bailieborough in a place I felt very relaxed in, very much at home. Suddenly, you get the call and everything changes. You're cast into a very different, more



Bishop Router celebrating Mass at his ordination.



Bishop Michael Router stands with his mother Nora after his farewell ceremony – she was honoured with a bouquet of flowers as it was also her birthday.

public role and you know I had no real training for this in a sense, you don't know what to expect, what's involved, so I mean it has been, the last few months, a huge upheaval in many ways.

"I'm going to be leaving my home diocese, I'm going to be leaving the priests and

the people I have worked with for the last 30 years, it is difficult," Dr Router said, adding that he's excited about the challenge.

The word 'challenge' is perhaps the best word to describe what the Church is facing

today, and in an era where its voice no longer holds a monopoly of influence, strident efforts are required to encourage people to listen.

"It's a new experience for the Church in Ireland. There was a time in the past – maybe the 50s and 60s, even maybe in the 70s – that when

the Church spoke on any issue people listened, there were very few other competing voices in a sense. But now, there's a multitude of different opinions and voices," he said.

"The Church has its authority – it comes from a different source; but it just can't rely on that anymore. It just can't lie back and say look we've spoke and that's the way it is. It has to justify that in the public space."

“There's a general respect out there for the Faith and how it contributes in the local area, to community, and the work that people of Faith do for those who are marginalised or forgotten”

Certainly, no greater demographic the Church needs to reach out to more is young people, who are deciding to disassociate themselves with the institution in bigger numbers, and at an increasingly younger age. It's not only the Church who is experiencing a fallout in this regard but most large organisations, as the general public grows more cynical of unchecked power.

"I think young people generally are moving away from identifying with the large institutions whether they're

“Young people generally are moving away from identifying with the large institutions whether they're religious or social or political or whatever. Social media has in a sense given people the chance to do that”

our future Church



Family, friends, parishioners and priests fill St Anne's Church in Baileborough at his Mass of Thanksgiving and Farewell on June 21.

religious or social or political or whatever. Social media has in a sense given people the chance to do that, to kind of form their own like-minded groups in a sense through social media in the very different shared interests that they might have. I think it's not just the Church that's suffering from that in a way. All the major institutions would find that people distrust them to some degree," Dr Router said.

He added that while the youth aren't aligned with the Church in its corporeal form, there's still a massive attraction towards the person of Jesus and the message he espouses.

"There's a general respect out there for the Faith and how it contributes in the local area, to community, and the work that people of Faith do for those who are marginalised or forgotten. So, I think there's respect there but it's sort of at a local level.

"A few young people told me there at my farewell function when I was going away that they still have great time for the Faith, great respect for the Faith, and not to get discouraged by the lack of practice and all the rest."

While it's hard for devout believers to draw a distinction between the Faith and the Church, Dr Router said this perspective

is understandable given how difficult it can be to come to terms with the historic abuses crises that damaged the country in an irreversible way. The generation of young Irish today have only ever experienced a Church in turmoil and apology, imploring forgiveness for heinous crimes.

“It is unfortunate that we’re not supplying enough priests from our local area. Our local Church should be able to supply its own priests”

"There's just that little disconnect with the institution and that's for a lot of reasons, mainly the scandals; overcoming the hurt and the pain caused by abuse in the past. The Church really has to become a humbler Church all the time, it won't ever go back to the position that it was in before. It must always continue now to work hard to heal those wounds and not to be making excuses, to acknowledge the damage that has been done to people's lives," Bishop Router explained. "If it does that, and if it continues to do that, then

I think it will bring back the hearts and minds of people to some degree."

Learning from its errors, Dr Router also said that the Church won't attract people to its doors by preaching about "rules and regulations and strict morality", but by focusing on relationship with God. By replacing this prescriptive method with a message about who Jesus was and how he is relevant to our lives today, those listening can garner a deeper appreciation of the Faith.

"The Church has to become more focused on developing the quality of people's relationship with Jesus Christ, their understanding of him, their knowledge of him. People have a vague notion of Jesus Christ and who he was, but unless they have the educational opportunities to know more or the prayer experiences to get into a relationship with Jesus Christ, then they won't really know who he was or what he stood for.

"I think if people are taught to love Jesus and have a relationship with him, then surely, they'd come around to seeing things. They'll be converted from the inside out in a sense. Seeing things in the light of his teaching," he said.

* * * * *

Priests, of course, play a crucial role as teachers and evangelisers in sharing this message, but with a significant decline in ordinations over the past two decades, it's difficult to see what shape the Church will take in the coming years. In 2017, just six first year seminarians began classes at Maynooth, which is thought to be lowest number on record in the national seminary's history.

Deficit

Given this deficit, Bishop Router holds that a short-term solution can be found in Ireland's multiculturalism, as clerics feel comfortable travelling from abroad to minister here.

"It is definitely sad that we're not able to meet our own needs at present but I think once again, many of the priests who come from abroad, are bringing with them a new approach as well and that's adding a certain freshness to the whole situation and by and large, they're very popular with the Irish parishioners," Dr Router said, adding that the culturally diverse nature of the Irish Church has been a "great thing".

"It is unfortunate that we're not supplying enough priests from our local area. Our local Church should be able to supply its own priests,

we still have to think about that, we have to work on that, we need to pray about that, that vocations will increase."

Certainly, the declining number of priests is a pressing concern, but the enduring solution to this problem is probably not solved by focusing on clerical figures, but by raising up the people of Faith who fill the pews every week. At one time the Kilmore Diocesan Director of Adult Faith Formation and Pastoral Renewal, Bishop Router believes that lay-led empowerment is necessary for the Irish Church's survival.

“The Church has to become more focused on developing the quality of people’s relationship with Jesus Christ”

"There's just no way you could run a parish without having lay people involved. Once again, they need to be prepared for that. You just can't throw people in at the deep end, there needs to be greater emphasis on adult education in the Church in Ireland to prepare people for those roles.

"Any young priest that's

coming out now to work in a parish, either from the seminary or coming in from abroad, that has to be an essential element of their ministry; that they would spend a lot of their time preparing adults to do the tasks that priests would have done in the past."

Alongside being Ministers of the Word, members of parish councils and catechists, there has been a greater call for laymen specifically to become deacons. While ongoing discussion about the ministerial roles of women in the early Church has not resulted in any change concerning their eligibility for the diaconate, Dr Router thinks that their role must be enhanced in some shape or form, especially given how instrumental they are in its everyday running.

"I think there's a conversation that needs to continue in that whole area definitely. At least 75% - three quarters - of the people who helped me out and ministered along with me in parishes were women, and I suppose three quarters of the people who worship on a regular basis in parishes are women, so they're already extremely involved," he said.

Contribution

"We couldn't survive without them. It just wouldn't be possible. But I do think their contribution does need further enhancement and it needs more development if we are to survive into the future.

"You know, the Church has to follow the lead of its founder Jesus Christ and he didn't choose women as apostles but chose women to be part of his inner circle and they were always there at the most important and crucial time in his life."

Recognising that this is a "sensitive" issue as it could cause a certain amount of division, Dr Router said that restoring women to a position of influence in the Church where they are brought into the decision-making process is "something we have to deal with", and for some requires overcoming fears.

It's contentious issues like these that makes Bishop Router believe that there are "stormy seas ahead" for a Church that is transforming from a monolithic fortress into beacon of hope reaching out to those on the margins. Although waves will crash, the ship of Faith will continue on its journey, bringing on board all those pilgrims who are searching for purpose.

"That quest for meaning will be bring people back to the Faith as time goes by. It's a difficult future but it has a future and there's a lot of challenges and a lot of excitement there as well."



Bishop Leo O'Reilly, Bishop Michael Router, Archbishop Eamon Martin and Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, Papal Nuncio. Photos: Liam McArdle



Archbishop Eamon Martin lays his hands on the new bishop, Michael Router.



Papal Nuncio Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo greets Tony Router watched by Bishop Michael Router and Mrs Nora Router.



Archbishop Eamon Martin presents Bishop Michael Router with his crozier.

Church will be smaller



Colm Fitzpatrick

Armagh's new Auxiliary Bishop Michael Router said that the Church of the future will be smaller and humbler – but those who practice the Faith will do so because Christ is at the centre of their lives.

Speaking at his ordination Mass in St Patrick's Cathedral on Sunday, the former Kilmore priest said that our striving for purpose will always lead us back to the Church.

"The Church will be smaller and humbler in the future but those who are involved, who practice regularly, who volunteer their time, energy and resources to support the mission will not be doing it for any social or economic advantage but because they want to; because they see that life has no meaning without Jesus Christ at its centre. The quest for meaning, such a central issue in the modern world, will always bring people back to the faith," he said.

Among those in attendance were Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly of Cashel and Emly, Bishop Emeritus Leo O'Reilly of Kilmore, and many of the diocesan bishops around the country. Archbishop Richard Clarke represented the Church of Ireland and Rev. Louise Donald attended for the Methodist Church.

During his homily, Archbishop Eamon Martin said that life as bishop is both "fulfilling and interesting", but it comes with many challenges. "The burden of



administration has grown much heavier since then, and the needs of our people, priests and society have become more complex. The Church's teaching on many important social and moral issues, including marriage and the sacredness of all human life, has become increasingly countercultural," the Primate of All Ireland said.

"With the decline in religious practice and fewer vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, we have once again entered 'mission mode' here in Ireland, and sometimes it's difficult to discern precisely where the Holy Spirit is leading us."

Change

He added that despite this change, the fundamental calling of the bishop is to be a devoted father and brother who loves all those that God has placed in his care.

On May 7 of this year, Pope Francis appointed Dr Router – now former parish priest of Bailieborough – to the Armagh role, replacing the late Bishop Gerry Clifford, who died two and half years ago. He was assigned to the Titular See of Lugmad, an ancient episcopal see in Co. Louth. Previous bishops who held that title included Bishop Thomas Winning, Auxiliary Bishop and later Cardinal Archbishop of Glasgow.

Speaking to hundreds in the pews, Bishop Router said that the future will necessitate a greater education and formation of committed lay people, who will be able to provide leadership in the Church and create Christian communities.

"Now is the time for us, people and clergy together, to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in order to shape a Church fit for purpose



An emotional Mrs Nora Router watches on as her son is ordained bishop.

but much stronger



in the 21st Century and to continue to bring ourselves and our communities into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ who will take on all our burdens and our anxieties if we trust in him," Dr Router said.

"To know Jesus in prayer and in the reading of Scripture is to allow him to change us from the inside out. That is our task as ministers of his Sacraments and of his word; not to place burdens upon people's shoulders but to give them hope. None of us are perfect, all of us are sinners but we won't change or strive to be better unless we first encounter the real Jesus and let him touch our hearts."

Bishop Router is a native of Virginia in Co. Cavan and was born on April 15, 1965. He was ordained as a priest for the Diocese of Kilmore in St Matthew's Church, Maghera, in his native parish, on June 25, 1989.



Renowned Sculptor Dony MacManus and his mother Mary with Bishop Michael Router.



The Router family: (front, l-r): Aoife Murphy, Breda Murphy, Nora Router, Bishop Michael Router, Tony Router, Martina Keville, Aine McIntyre; (back) Derek Murphy, Riaona Keville, Orla Keville, Niall Keville, Margaret Gildea, Niall McIntyre and Ollie Keville.



Bishop Michael Router is congratulated by the sisters of the Missionaries of Charity.



Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, Papal Nuncio, greets Bishop Michael Router.



Bishop Michael Router with his classmates at a celebration dinner following his ordination. (l-r): Fr Joe Gallagher, Fr Philip Gaffney, Bishop Denis Nulty, Bishop Michael Router, Canon Eugene Sweeney, Fr Maurice McMorrough, Fr John Loftus and Fr John Kenny.

Knock: a history best not

In the 19th Century, Knock was typical of the villages dotted around the West of Ireland. It was a small collection of thatched houses and two school houses with the parish church at its centre.

On the evening of August 21, 1879, Our Lady appeared at the gable of the church in the company of St Joseph and St John the Evangelist.

Unique to the Apparition at Knock is the representation of the Eucharist in the appearance of the Lamb on the altar, standing before a cross. The local villagers prayed before this silent Apparition in heavy rain for about two hours.

For 140 years, pilgrims have come to Knock from all over the world. Each person carries with them their own personal story, following in the footsteps of those who have come before them. The silence of the message at Knock calls each of us to find our own personal meaning as we gather to pray and reflect at the sacred place.

Meeting heaven at harvest time

The witnesses – men, wo-men and children – were hardworking people who, at the harvest time of year, had spent the day bringing home hay and turf. As evening fell and the sky darkened, a heavy rain fell as they settled in for the evening. At about 8pm, two women made their way along the lane that led past the church. They were neighbours and friends. One was making her way homewards and the other kept her company along the way.

Mary McLoughlin, the priest's housekeeper, had been visiting the family home of Mary Byrne and, as they continued their conversation along the road, they suddenly saw a heavenly vision at the gable of the church as they came closer to the churchyard.

They went quickly to the nearby houses to gather people ranging in age from five to 74 years. Fifteen witnesses gave their written account of what they saw that evening. Mary Byrne's widowed mother, Margaret, came with her son Dominick (Jnr), her daughter Margaret and her little granddaughter Catherine Murray who was eight years old. The elderly Bridget Trench was with Judy Campbell as she had called to visit Judy's mother, who was unwell. Patrick Byrne, a young man of 16 years, came from a neighbouring



house. From the other side of the village, two younger boys, Patrick Hill and John Curry who were aged 12 and 5 respectively, ran to the church upon hearing the news.

“Knock parish church has been at the spiritual heart of the village since 1828”

They were joined by John's uncle Dominick Byrne and John Durkan, a farm labourer who had been helping the Byrnes that day.

Bridget Flatley was returning home after a visit to her relatives in the village when she passed by the church that evening and Patrick Walsh, who was out in the fields at dusk, saw the brightness at the church from his farm about a mile from Knock.

The story is told

Shortly after the Apparition, a Commission of Enquiry was established to hear the testimonies of the witnesses.

All were found to be trustworthy in their accounts. In 1936, a second Commission of Enquiry

was held to interview Mary Byrne O'Connell and Patrick Byrne, the two elderly witnesses still living in Knock at that time. In 1937 John Curry, the youngest witness to the Apparition, gave his testimony at a specially convened enquiry in New York.

Knock parish church

Knock parish church has been at the spiritual heart of the village since 1828. Dedicated to St John the Baptist, a simple plaque on its West elevation prophetically states 'My House shall be called the house of Prayer to all Nations' (Matt 11).

This historic church has been carefully and sensitively restored for future generations of parishioners and pilgrims and stands as a testament to the faithful devotion of those who have gathered at this sacred place for almost 200 years.

Knock Basilica

With its spire clearly visible across the rural Western skyline, this iconic church was constructed in honour

of Our Lady, Queen of Ireland and dedicated in 1976 to provide for the pilgrims who visit Knock Shrine each year.

The church was elevated to the status of Basilica by Pope John Paul II when he visited Knock Shrine in 1979 and was extensively redeveloped in 2015.

Its stunning interior can be equally described as aesthetically beautiful and spiritually uplifting. Knock Basilica forms a serene backdrop for ceremonies throughout the pilgrimage season, most notably the National Novena to Our Lady of Knock which continues unbroken since 1977.

Apparition mosaic

The Apparition mosaic at Knock Basilica is a magnificent representation of the evening of August 21, 1879. The vivid richness of over 1.5 million individual pieces of coloured glass combine in unison to give a sense of the wonder and awe that the people of the village must have felt as they gazed at the heavenly vision before them.

The mosaic is one of the largest of its kind in Europe and is based on an

artistic representation of the Apparition by renowned Irish illustrator, PJ Lynch.

It was crafted by Travanutto Mosaics in Spilimbergo, Italy. Echoing the evening of the Apparition, the local people of Spilimbergo gathered to gaze upon the beautiful artwork before it was brought to Ireland to be inlaid by hand in the sanctuary at the Basilica.

“For some, Knock evokes childhood memories of family visits and a closeness to those who have gone before us”

Pope John Paul II

To celebrate the centenary of the Knock Apparition of 1879, Pope John Paul II visited Knock Shrine on September 30, 1979.

He arrived in Knock by helicopter to a gathering of over 450,000 people. The place where he said Mass is now marked by a large Papal Cross.

He presented a Golden Rose, a symbol of the Risen Lord, as a gift to the Shrine

on the occasion. It was one of only nine Golden Roses presented by Pope John Paul II during his 25-year papacy.

The message of Knock reveals itself every day to the pilgrims who are drawn to this special place. When you cross the threshold and enter Knock Shrine, you leave behind the worry and cares of our troubled world and join with your fellow pilgrims on a journey.

Each person who comes here has their own reason for making the journey, however long or short, to experience the unique atmosphere that is found in Knock.

For some, Knock evokes childhood memories of family visits and a closeness to those who have gone before us. It is a reminder of the faith and devotion that has been passed down through generations. Some come searching for answers and consolation, others to give simple thanks. Many are drawn by curiosity and the desire to reconnect with God.

Pilgrims find themselves refreshed in their faith and renewed in spirit. For all who come to seek and find, Knock offers hope.

forgotten by the Faithful

Knock Shrine builds for a bigger future



Chai Brady hears about Knock Shrine's plans and their 140th anniversary

Cogs are in motion as excitement builds for the 140th anniversary of the Apparition at Ireland's national Marian shrine in Co. Mayo, with the parish priest of Knock saying it has "come an awful long way" in recent years.

Extensive refurbishment work, a publicity push, volunteer surge and the organisation of workshops and seminars has made Knock Shrine an even more "inviting place" according to Fr Richard Gibbons.

The annual Novena at the Shrine, which takes place every August – described as the "highlight of the year" – is set to be even bigger next month.

Fr Gibbons says: "Because it's the 140th anniversary we wanted to make it extra special, so on August 21 itself, which is the 140th anniversary, our own Archbishop Michael Neary is taking that day. He's doing both Masses and then we have special events, such as the unveiling of the historic model of Knock village which we have just commissioned exactly as it was in 1879, it's a beautiful thing, it's really something else." The model itself is expected to be extremely detailed and give an accurate depiction of the village over a century ago.

Statue

Their new processional statue will also be revealed for the first time, and people can also partake in a 'witness walk', which is a re-enactment of what happened on the evening of the Apparition. People dress up as the witnesses and recreate what happened all those years ago.

Emphasising the importance of these activities Fr Gibbons says



“We have special events, such as the unveiling of the historic model of Knock village which we have just commissioned exactly as it was in 1879”

that “people can see the fact that these were ordinary people like them, who just happened to experience an extraordinary event and they went back to their everyday lives after that”.

“None of them became saints or became hugely known after that, or famous after that, it was just a group of ordinary villagers that saw this extraordinary thing and people can identify with that.

“These are real people that can be connected with real homes, real houses and real streets in the locality and their people are here, their relations, their descendants, all of these people are still here in the parish so a lot of the models for the witnesses are taken from the families as well,” he says.

Although 1-1.5 million people visit the shrine each year from all over the world,

there's a concerted effort to increase that number. This was helped by the papal visit for the World Meeting of Families last August.

Whenever Pope Francis visits a country, the eyes of the world pay attention and Fr Gibbons says this assisted Knock Shrine in their mission regarding “the renewal of the Church” in Ireland. Some 45,000 tickets to see the Pontiff at the

» **Continued on Page 20**



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» Continued from Page 19

shrine were snapped up in just four hours.

Regarding the Pontiff's visit Fr Gibbons said: "Of course anything like that is high profile internationally, it might put us on the radar of people who would visit Ireland, and they might like to come on pilgrimage here maybe."

"It definitely raised our profile and all of that is good because of the work that goes on here and we certainly enjoyed the day. It was a wonderful encounter, there was a fantastic atmosphere here. The village coming together in terms of its planning and organisation along with the State agencies as well, so everybody worked extremely well together on that."

While at the shrine the Pope spent some time in prayer at the Apparition chapel, during which he entrusted to Mary's care the victims and survivors of abuse.

Francis arrived at Ireland West Airport on an Aer Lingus flight aptly named EI1979, a reference to St John Paul II's visit in 1979. He landed just after 9.40am on Sunday August 26 and spent an hour and a half at the Shrine, where he led pilgrims in the Angelus Prayer.

Renovation

Knock Shrine hasn't just relied on the Pope's visit to keep pilgrims flowing in, ongoing renovation and revitalisation hasn't slowed for several years. Since the Basilica itself was refurbished it's turned out to be a "world class church" says Fr Gibbons.

"It's got an atmosphere about it now that people find very conducive to prayer, also with the wonderful mosaic that depicts the Apparition 140 years ago, the refurbishment of the old church, the apparition chapel and upgrading all our technology here has helped enormously."



In addition to these upgrades that have seen Knock Shrine become more desirable a location for pilgrims, their volunteers are a key component in the operation of the shrine, and with three levels of volunteers they all play their part.

VAKS (Volunteer at Knock Shrine) is a programme for teenagers which gives them an opportunity to meet friends, serve others and express faith during weekends.

Fr Gibbons explains their

role saying: "Let's say there might be people who are confined to wheelchairs and that kind of thing on the ground, they help out in a practical way, they help out at ceremonies and it's good for people to see young people around the place just simply being friendly and welcoming to the shrine. They're a very important part to our volunteer system."

Parish volunteers will do a similar job but also help and welcome people during the week.

Finally, the "ever faithful"

Timeline of events and speakers during the 140th anniversary Novena

● The Novena takes place at 3pm and 8pm each day.

● Anointing of the Sick at 2.30pm daily.

Wednesday, August 14

John Bruton

Theme: Faith, Future and Europe

12pm Seminar

John Bruton is a former Irish Fine Gael politician who served as Taoiseach from 1994 to 1997. He was also the EU Ambassador to the US and held various other Leadership and Ministerial roles throughout his career.

Thursday, August 15

Archbishop Rino

Fisichella, Rome, Italy

Theme: Mary in the life of the Church

12pm Seminar

3pm and 8pm Novena
Archbishop Rino Fisichella is the President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation. He has served as President of the Pontifical Academy for Life and as President of the International Council for Catechesis since 2013.

Friday, August 16

Olive Foley

Theme: Family and Faith

12pm Seminar

Olive Foley is the mother of two young boys and wife of

the late Anthony Foley, the Munster Rugby coach who died suddenly in his sleep at the age of 42 in 2016. Olive is an ambassador for the Children's Grief Centre in Limerick.

Saturday, August 17

Dr John Feehan

Theme: God in Creation – Learning to read the other Book of Revelation

12pm Seminar

Dr John Feehan is an Irish geologist, botanist, author and broadcaster. He was a senior lecturer in UCD, where he taught for 20 years. His book on creation spirituality, *The Singing Heart of the World*

won a Nautilus Book Award in 2013.

Alan McGuckian, Bishop of Raphoe

Theme: What Knock means to me

3pm Novena

Bishop Alan McGuckian is a native of Cloughmills, Co. Antrim and has been Bishop of Raphoe since 2017. As a Jesuit priest, he worked in communications for many years. In recent years, Bishop McGuckian ran the Living Church Office in the Diocese of Down and Connor.

Sunday, August 18

Family Day at Knock Shrine

A day to celebrate all things family throughout the grounds at Knock Shrine. Activities include drumming, kite design, face painting, games and much more! The day begins at 12 noon.

Msgr John Armitage

Theme: Mary and the reality of family life

8pm Novena

Msgr John Armitage is the Rector of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, known as 'The Nazareth of England'. Walsingham has been a place of pilgrimage for almost a thousand years.

Monday, August 19

Carole Coleman

Theme: Motherhood, media and me

3pm and 8pm Novena

Carole Coleman is an experienced multimedia journalist and is currently a presenter and reporter on *This Week* on RTÉ Radio One.

12pm: Seminar: New shoots
Knock Youth Ministry
The Youth Ministry Team at Knock Shrine run a vibrant faith centre for school retreats and summer youth programmes. Their aim is to give young people a positive experience of Knock and a powerful encounter with God.

Tuesday, August 20



Cairde Mhuire, Our Lady's Volunteers, who have been redeveloped, "so there's a new impetus in getting new volunteers involved," according to Fr Gibbons.

"They're the backbone of the shrine in terms of volunteers, every single year since they were founded in 1935 – so they have a long history as well and are a very important part of the shrine."

People are beginning to see Knock Shrine in a new light and not just going because it's tradition, he

says, "but they want to come now to see what's going on, to engage with the ceremonies and with the programmes here".

Confession

"Young families are seeing it now is as a place to come for part of a day or just an hour or so or whatever, we're seeing quite a lot of visits that way. They come and attend maybe a Mass or go to Confession."

Just last week there was a 'Family Focus Week' which aimed to provide a space for

prayer in order to strengthen the ties of family and nurture faith. Held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday there was an evening talk which addressed family concerns and difficulties.

Fr Gibbons says that some pilgrims may not have received any of the Sacraments for many years but when they go to Knock some go to Confession or Mass.

Finally, he adds: "We have a wonderful faith renewal council, in fact it's one of the core planning groups of the

shrine itself. We look to see what we can provide each year in off-season in terms of whole rafts of spiritual programmes, theological programmes and more in terms of where parishes might need resources in terms of information on readers and Eucharistic Ministers and workshops in that regard.

"So we're trying to be as helpful and as practical as possible as well as offering a wide range of different types of services to the Church."

Rev. Trevor Sargent Theme: Faith in Action

12pm Seminar

Rev. Trevor Sargent is a Church of Ireland minister and a former Irish Green Party politician who served as Minister of State for Food and Horticulture from 2007 to 2010 and Leader of the Green Party from 2001 to 2007. Trevor was ordained in 2018.

Wednesday, August 21 – 140th Anniversary of the Apparition

Special day of Celebration with Michael Neary, Archbishop of Tuam
Theme: The message of the

Knock Apparition then and now

3pm and 8pm

On the 140th Anniversary of the Apparition at Knock, Archbishop Neary will be the main Celebrant at the ceremonies.

12pm Seminar: 19th Century Mayo – Place, people and the Knock Apparition.

Nollaig Ó Muraile and Tom Neary

published an acclaimed edition of Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh's *Leabhar na nGenealach* in 2004 and was admitted to the Royal Irish Academy in 2009. Tom Neary served as Head Steward of

The Knock Shrine Society for many years and is the author of many books and publications on the Knock Apparition.

● The unveiling of the Knock Village Model will take place at the seminar at 12pm

● Knock Museum will unveil a unique and historic model of Knock Village as it was in 1879.

● The Unveiling of the New Processional Statue of Our Lady of Knock which has been carved by Stuflesser Ortesei in Italy will take place at 3pm Mass.

● 'Witnesses' Walk – Meeting heaven at harvest time' – celebration and commemoration

of the Apparition witnesses takes place at 7pm. Follow in the footsteps of each of the Apparition witnesses as they made their way to the gable of the parish church in August, 1879.

Thursday, August 22

Fr Peter McVerry
Theme: *Following the dream of Jesus*

12pm Seminar

Fr Peter McVerry is the founder of Peter McVerry Trust, one of the country's largest organisations responding to the issue of homelessness. In 2017 the charity worked with over 4,900 vulnerable youths.

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Out&About

Mass in the park



KERRY: Fr Tadgh Fitzgerald of St John's Church, celebrates the annual Mass for the residents of Derrylea, Tralee, on Tuesday evening at their local park in Derrylea Estate. Photo: John Cleary



CLARE: Msgr Seamus Horgan of Killaloe celebrates his Silver Jubilee in Ennis, with Bishop Willie Walsh and Canon Pat Taffe.



▲ GALWAY: Bishop-elect Michael Duignan greets people outside St Brendan's Cathedral, Loughrea, after it was announced he would be the new Bishop of Clonfert. Photo: John McElroy



ARMAGH: Armagh Youth Director Dermot Kelly (third from left) shares his faith at an ApsireNI camp with leaders and campers.



Edited by Colm Fitzpatrick
colm@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



CAVAN: The Knights of St Columbanus with the relics of St Oliver Plunkett at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Kingscourt.



DUBLIN: Bro. Seán Kelly OFM Cap (third from left) is elected as the new Provincial Minister of the Capuchin Franciscans for the next three years, at the Emmaus Retreat Centre, Swords. (l-r) Brs Philip Baxter, Richard Hendrick (Provincial Vicar), Roberto Genuin (General Minister), Seán Kelly (Provincial Minister), Sean Donohue and Bryan Shortall.



MONAGHAN: Bishop Emeritus of Clogher Liam MacDaid, marks the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood with a special Mass of Thanksgiving in St Macartan's Cathedral.



DUBLIN: Auxiliary Bishop Eamonn Walsh with listeners and volunteers of Radio Maria Ireland and parish team at Newlands Cross Cemetery Mass.

ARMAGH

A Centre Prayer Meeting is held at Mount Oliver (near Ballymascanlon Dundalk) every Wednesday evening at 7.30pm.

Special Mass of Thanksgiving in St Patrick's Cathedral on Saturday, October 1, at 1pm to celebrate the 80th year of Apostolic Workers in the archdiocese.

CLARE

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

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

Outdoor Novena of Prayer at Drumellihi Shrine, Cooraclare Parish on August 15 from 6-7am.

CORK

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

Rosary conscious group prayer meeting on Fridays from 7.30-8.30pm in the Portiuncula Chapel, St Francis Church, Liberty Street. Entrance to the rosary through the Mass office door.

DERRY

Dungiven Parish: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Monday to Friday, 8-12pm and 3-9pm.

St Maria Goretti Prayer Movement: Prayer for healing for victims of abuse and reparation for the Church. First Holy Hour of prayer in the Immaculate Conception Church, Trench Road Derry at 8.15pm led by Fr Sean O'Donnell, on third Tuesday of every month.

DUBLIN

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

A three-day Tridium in honour of St Maximilian Kolbe will take place in Our Lady of the Visitation Church, Fairview, from August 12-19. The solemn act of consecration to Mary Immaculate and the Blessings of the Relic of St Maximilian will take place each day at the end of the 10am Mass.

FERMANAGH

A Mass to St Peregrine for all the sick is prayed each Tuesday evening in St Patrick's Church, Derrygonnelly at 7pm: www.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly. There is also a St Peregrine Novena Mass in Holy Cross Church, Lisnaskea on Tuesday nights at 7pm. www.churchservices.tv/lisnaskea

GALWAY

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

Emmanuel House Clonfert: Monthly first Saturday of prayer

and reflection on August 3 at 10.30am. Guest speaker Fr Pat Collins. Please bring a packed lunch.

KERRY

Weekly Monday prayer meetings led by Ben Perkins, from 8-9.30pm in the Ardferret Retreat Centre.

KILDARE

Praying, reading and sharing the following Sunday's Gospel in Resurrexit, Kilmeague, every Wednesday from 8-9.30pm. See www.resurrexit.ie for details, or ring 087-6825407.

KILKENNY

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

LIMERICK

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

LOUTH

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

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

MAYO

Jesuit Week - a week of Ignatian spirituality from July 28 to August 4 at the Prayer Centre, Knock Shrine. Preached retreats daily, with guided prayer and talks on Ignatian themes. Spiritual direction also available. Facilitated by Brian Grogan SJ, Terry Howard SJ and Niall Leahy SJ. For details, see www.knockshrine.ie or phone 094 93 75 355

MEATH

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

Adoration in St Patrick's Church, Stamullen, after 10am Mass every Thursday until 5pm in St Mary's Church, and in St Mary's Church, Julianstown, on Wednesdays from 9am and after 10am Mass.

ROSCOMMON

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St Bride's Church, Ballintubber, every Wednesday, 7.30-8.30pm.

WICKLOW

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

St Patrick's Prayer Group, Wicklow town, meet on Thursdays at 7.30pm in the De La Salle Pastoral Care Centre.



World Report

IN BRIEF

Notre-Dame not yet safe to restore – architect

● A French architect says that Notre Dame Cathedral still isn't safe enough for restoration work to begin, more than three months after a devastating fire nearly destroyed the monument.

French television showed the chief architect of France's historic monuments, Philippe Villeneuve, taking Culture Minister Franck Riester on a tour of the cathedral.

He said that "we are still in extreme urgency of securing the site".

Wooden supporting arches are being placed under the 28 buttresses, without anchoring them in stone. A robot was helping to clear debris on the lower level of the cathedral.

The minister said that the safety and quality of the restoration "is what counts" despite the goal of finishing the repairs by 2024.

Parents ask court to move comatose child to Italy

● Parents of a comatose five-year-old are attempting to move their child to Italy from a London hospital after doctors in the UK declared any further medical treatment to be futile and ordered the removal of "life-sustaining treatment".

Tafida Raqeeb has been in a coma since February 9, after she suffered from a brain arteriovenous malformation (AVM), which resulted in a burst blood vessel in her brain. Her parents said she was "completely healthy" prior to the injury.

On July 16, her parents asked the High Court in London to allow her to leave the country. Doctors at the Royal London Hospital say there is no chance she will recover from her coma.

US diocese reaches \$5m deal with abuse survivors

● The Diocese of Crookston announced last week it has reached a \$5 million (€4.4m) settlement with victims/survivors of clergy sexual abuse. The settlement resolves 15 lawsuits for sexual abuse claims filed between April 2016 and May 2017 because of the Minnesota Child Victims Act.

"To all victims and survivors of sexual abuse by clergy, as the Bishop of

Crookston I apologise for the harm done to you by those entrusted with your spiritual care. Although you can never be fully compensated for your suffering, we are thankful this litigation has now come to a good end and are hopeful this settlement offers you justice and will be helpful for healing," Bishop Michael Hoeppner said in a letter to Catholics of the diocese.

UK porn access restriction put on hold again

● A planned restriction on websites that host pornography in the UK, set to go into effect on July 22, has been delayed for another six months. This marks the third delay for the proposed rules, which mandate that porn websites verify that users are over 18.

"I'm extremely sorry that there has been a delay...mistakes do happen, and I'm terribly sorry that it happened in such an important area," UK Digital Minister Margot James told the BBC.

To view online pornography, internet users would need to confirm their age by entering information from a driver's license, credit card, or passport. If users do not wish to input their personal information, they may purchase a special ID card, available at thousands of retail shops across the nation for under £10.

Vice-president speaks out against religious persecution

● Religious persecution is a concern for the entire global community, Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told a religious freedom gathering last week.

"We're gathered here, 106 nations strong, because we believe in the freedom of conscience – the right of all people to live out their lives according to their deeply held religious beliefs," Vice President Pence told religious and civic leaders from around the world at the Second Annual Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in Washington.

Vatican bones discovery raises more questions

The search for the remains of missing 15-year-old Emanuela Orlandi took another twist as Vatican officials discovered "thousands" of human bones in a previously unknown ossuary over the weekend. It is unclear if any of the bones belong to Orlandi, or how old they are.

On July 11, the Vatican opened two tombs belonging to Princess Sophie von Hohenlohe and Duchess Charlotte Frederica of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, who both died in the mid-19th Century. The tombs, located in the cemetery of the Teutonic College, adjacent to the Vatican City State, were found to be completely empty of any human remains. Scientists were initially puzzled by this unforeseen development.

Afterwards, Vatican officials realised that restoration and structural work done in the 1960s and 1970s likely resulted in remains being moved. This led to the discovery of two ossuaries underneath the Teutonic College, which held containers of bones.

Ossuaries are containers, or even rooms, used to store skeletal remains after the rest of the body has decomposed.



Workers inspect an ossuary at the Teutonic Cemetery at the Vatican.

They are common in areas where underground burial space is limited.

Members of Orlandi's family, as well as their lawyer and a forensic expert, were present at the opening of the containers.

Remains

Orlandi's sister, Frederica, described the opening as an "emotional experience" and thinks that Emanuela's remains are possibly in the ossuary.

Her brother, Pietro, described the discovery as "a large number of diverse bones", and noted the need to

identify and date the remains. Giorgio Portera, a forensic expert working with the family, estimated the total number of bones found indicated "the presence of the remains of a few dozen people".

"There are long bones, small bones, many are fragmented," said Portera. He explained they were not sorted, and were mixed together "all piled up inside a cavity".

There are 206 bones in an adult body, meaning that the partial remains of a handful of people could easily number over 1,000 bones.

Orlandi disappeared in

Rome on June 22, 1983, and has not been seen or heard from since – although there have been several unconfirmed sightings. Prior to her disappearance, Orlandi called her sister and told her that she was approached by a man in a BMW who offered her a job selling Avon cosmetics. This man has never been identified.

Almost two weeks after she disappeared, Pope St John Paul II mentioned her in the Angelus, and asked for her those responsible for her disappearance to come forward. Shortly after this, her family began receiving telephone calls from people claiming to be associated with Turkish nationalist groups, claiming to have kidnapped Orlandi as a bargaining chip to secure the release of Mehmet Ali Agca.

Agca, who attempted to assassinate Pope St John Paul II in 1981, said in an interview with Italian television that he believed Orlandi was alive and well and living in a convent. In 2006 he again stated that Orlandi is living in a cloistered convent somewhere in Europe. This has never been confirmed.

Bishops condemn President Trump's new asylum-seeker policy

The president of US bishops' conference issued a statement last week condemning a newly-announced rule on asylum eligibility at the southern border, suggesting that countries like Mexico are not a safe final destination for asylum seekers, and encouraging the Trump administration to change the policy.

"The rule adds further barriers to asylum-seekers' ability to access life-saving protection, shirks our moral duty, and will prevent the US from taking its usual leading role in the international

community as a provider of asylum protection," said Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, president of the USCCB.

Cardinal DiNardo also said that "initial analysis raises serious questions" about the new rule's legal soundness. The new policy establishes that claimants are ineligible to apply for asylum in the US if they failed to first apply for asylum in any third country they passed through after departing their country of origin.

Practically, the new rule requires that asylum seekers travelling through

Mexico from Central or South American countries must first apply for asylum in Mexico before being eligible to claim asylum in the US. The rule contains a number of exceptions.

Those who arrive at an American port of entry having passed through a country that has not signed up to certain refugee agreements are exempt, as are survivors of human trafficking. Those who apply for asylum in a pass-through country and are denied there may still claim asylum in the US.

Catholic charity to help plight of Syrian Christians

The pontifical foundation Aid to the Church in Need has launched a new fundraising campaign to aid Syrian Christians, whose lives continue to be devastated by violence and poverty.

"The war in Syria has still not ended, terrorism has yet to be defeated and our brothers have more need of our aid than ever," said

Alessandro Monteduro, the director of Aid to the Church in Need in Italy.

Much of the region is still reeling from the destruction left behind by the Islamic State, while the ongoing Syrian civil war – now in its ninth year – continues to bring fresh devastation.

The city of Aleppo, once the most populous city Syria

and its main economic and industrial centre, was reduced to ruins during a bloody siege from 2012 to 2016.

The number of Christians in Aleppo has fallen dramatically, from 180,000 before the civil war to 32,000 in early 2019.

Facing high inflation, corruption, and a sluggish economy, the people of the

city are struggling to rebuild.

Aid to the Church in Need will be distributing food to the poorest Christian families in Aleppo, as well as access to cooking gas and fuel for electrical generators. The second project will be carried out in Damascus, focusing on purchasing medicine, much of it very expensive, for sick Christians.



Edited by Colm Fitzpatrick
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Brick by brick, Notre Dame's glory will be rebuilt



Workers are seen during preliminary work in Notre Dame Cathedral, three months after a fire destroyed much of the monument's wooden structure in Paris.

Life sentence for drug lord 'El Chapo' shows justice – bishop

The bishop of one of Mexico's most violent areas has said that the sentencing of drug lord Joaquín Guzmán Loera to life in prison plus 30 years is proper and prudent.

Guzmán, known as 'El Chapo', is a former head of the Sinaloa Cartel. He was sentenced on July 17 by a judge in New York, after having been found guilty of 10 charges, including drug trafficking and money laundering.

"I believe there is justice by God and human justice," Bishop Salvador Rangel Mendoza of Chilpancingo-Chilapa told *ACI Prensa*.

"I believe he was properly judged. I have more confidence in American laws than Mexican, and I believe that they judged it to be prudent to give him life

in prison plus 30 years," Bishop Rangel stated.

Guzmán's sentence "is the fruit of the criminal acts he committed, and in particular I believe this should help many other criminals to see that sooner or later they will have to face justice and that we all have to answer for the evil deeds we have done", the bishop said.

"I believe it's a just sentence given to that man and especially so it's an example for everyone else."

"Hopefully this will also rein in crime a bit here in Mexico," he added.

Prison

Guzmán had been captured by Mexican authorities in 2014, but escaped from a maximum-security prison in July 2015.

He was re-captured in January 2016, and extradited to the US in 2017.

In addition to his prison sentence, Guzmán was also ordered to pay \$12.6 billion (€11.2bn) in forfeiture.

The Department of Justice said that the drug trafficker's trial brought out the methods used by the Sinaloa Cartel to transport tons of drugs to the United States as well as the violence the organisation "relied on to maintain its power throughout the region and beyond".

Mexico faces much violent crime, often related to drug trafficking. According to the Citizen Council for Public Safety and Criminal Justice, 15 of the 50 most violent cities in the world during 2018 were in Mexico.

Congo in crisis after Ebola outbreak, Church warns

Church representatives in Congo have urged international action to contain Ebola, after an epidemic in the country's eastern provinces was declared an emergency by the World Health Organisation.

"The Congolese people have suffered so many troubles in recent years – Ebola is only the latest," said Msgr Andre Massinganda, deputy secretary-general

of the Congolese bishops' conference.

"Our greatest need now is for those with power to identify an effective strategy for containing the disease and to come to the aid, via the United Nations, of our government and population."

The priest spoke as the World Health Organisation, meeting last week in Geneva, declared the Ebola outbreak a "public health emergency of

international concern", after signs it could have spread to Goma, a city of up to two million people bordering Rwanda.

Msgr Massinganda said Church leaders were satisfied that local authorities were doing what they could to isolate potential victims and were pleased the "gravity of the situation" had been recognised internationally.

"In places like Butembo,

Beni and Goma, where there are large churches and public centres, there's now great unease about possible spread throughout our country and abroad – it's a problem that has to be taken seriously."

Ebola, a highly contagious and mostly fatal virus causing haemorrhagic fever, devastated parts of West Africa from 2014 to 2016, killing more than 11,000 people.

Vatican roundup

New Vatican press office director appointed

Pope Francis has appointed Matteo Bruni to serve as director of the Vatican press office, replacing Alessandro Gisotti, who had been serving as interim director since December 31, 2018.

The Vatican announced the appointment last week. Bruni (42), previously served as assistant to the director since 2013, helping organise and coordinate media presence and pools on papal trips.

Born in Winchester, Bruni began working at the Vatican press office in 2009, coordinating accreditation for journalists. In 2016, during the Year of Mercy, he was appointed as coordinator of media operations for the Jubilee Year events.

According to the Vatican, he also helps Church-run projects dealing with "humanitarian cooperation and support programmes for the elderly".

The Vatican also announced that the Pope appointed Gisotti and Sergio Centofanti, an Italian journalist at *Vatican News*, as deputy editorial directors of the Dicastery for Communications. Both Gisotti and Centofanti will work with the dicastery's editorial director, Andrea Tornielli.

Vatican City to stop selling single-use plastic

After current supplies run out, Vatican City State will no longer be selling any single-use plastic items on its tiny territory.

While the European Union pledged in May to ban single-use plastic starting in 2021, the Vatican had already begun limiting its use and soon "it will no longer be sold", said Rafael Ignacio Tornini, head of the department handling Vatican City State's gardens and waste collection.

"We have been making an effort to sort as much (plastic) as possible, and the state has limited all sales of single-use plastic," he told the Italian news

agency ANSA last week.

After all previously stocked items are gone, no more single-use plastic will be sold, he said.

Single-use plastic include bags, water bottles, cutlery, straws and balloons. The top five single-use plastic items polluting European shores are cigarette butts, bottles and caps, food packaging, cotton swab sticks and wet wipes, according to research in 2016 by the European Commission.

The Vatican has long been working to get green, most notably with the installation of a solar power system on the roof of the Paul VI audience hall.

Amazon Synod to focus on 'culture of waste'

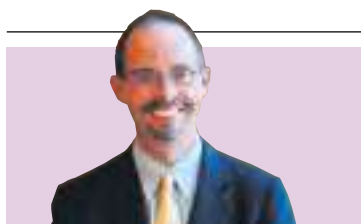
The objective of the upcoming Synod of Bishops for the Amazon is to highlight the need for religious, political and social leaders to come together and defend the dignity of indigenous men, women and children and an ecosystem that is crucial to the environment, Peruvian Cardinal Pedro Barreto Jimeno of Huancayo has said.

In an essay published on July 18 by *La Civiltà Cattolica*, the Jesuit journal, Cardinal Barreto said the synod as well as the Church's mission in the Amazon are "expressions of a significant accompaniment to the daily life of the peoples and communities who live there".

"According to the social doctrine of the Church, the mission of every Christian includes a prophetic commitment to justice, peace, the dignity of every human being without distinction, and to the integrity of creation in response to a predominant model of society that leads to exclusion and inequality and causes what Pope Francis has called a real 'culture of waste' and a 'globalisation of indifference'," the cardinal said.

The synod gathering in October will reflect on the theme 'Amazonia: New paths for the Church and for an integral ecology'.

Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

When the Vatican announced last Thursday that Pope Francis had named a new spokesman, most early reaction suggested the move didn't exactly inspire confidence about an upgrade in the role of the press office.

The Pope tapped a 43-year-old Italian layman who's worked in the press office for the last decade, and who's known primarily for his organisational chops, his charm, and his command of languages (including a flawless British-accented English). While those are all good qualities, it struck most observers as an option for a competent functionary rather than a genuine power broker.

Yet just to play devil's advocate, I'd like to offer a brief refresher in the recent history of Vatican communications.

Thirty-five years ago, a Pope from a foreign land had been in office for about six years when he hired a new lay spokesman who hailed from that Pontiff's favourite "new movement" in the Church. The rest, as they say, is history, as Spanish layman Joaquin Navarro Valls went on to shape the global narrative about St John Paul II masterfully for more than 20 years.

At least in terms of a few basic matters of biography, there's a case that history may be repeating itself in Matteo Bruni.

Bruni replaces another Italian layman, Alessandro Gisotti, who'd held the post of papal spokesman on an interim basis since veteran American journalist Greg Burke stepped down last December.

Burke, as it happens, is a member of Opus Dei, just like Navarro-Valls. His affiliation was a huge asset for Navarro, as John Paul II was a big fan of the group founded by St Josemaría Escrivá in Spain in 1928.

Class struggle

The Polish Pope, who came of age behind the Iron Curtain and was confronted with its indoctrination about labour and class struggle, admired the alternative spirituality of work fostered by Opus Dei. He displayed his gratitude in a big way at least once a decade, declaring Opus Dei a personal prelature in 1982, beatifying St Escrivá in 1992 and canonising him in 2002.

In part because of his Opus Dei background, in part because of his profile as an accomplished journalist who'd served as president of Rome's Foreign Press Club, and in part because of his



Pope Francis greets Matteo Bruni of the Vatican Press Office. Bruni, who has helped organise and coordinate media presence on papal trips since 2013, has been appointed the new director of the Vatican Press Office. Also pictured is Salvatore Scolozzi, who also works for the Vatican press office. Photo: CNS

As a Pope picks a spokesman, could history repeat itself?

strong personality and unwavering devotion, John Paul trusted Navarro and gave him virtually unfettered access – which, of course, is the coin of the realm when it comes to any leader's mouthpiece.

“If Francis is looking for more bang for his buck out of the spokesman's role, Bruni in many ways seems well-cast for the part”

Because the Pope had his back, Navarro was able to exercise real leadership in the rarefied world of the Vatican and he was also taken seriously by journalists covering the place. He often could set narratives in motion or stop them in their tracks, in part by doling out insider information or bestowing access to key figures (both of which he had in abundance).

Whether Bruni will be able to wield the same influence is a long

shot, in part because it's not at all clear Pope Francis takes corporate communications or the role of his spokesman especially seriously.

From the beginning, Francis has acted as his own spokesman, using unofficial channels and speaking in an unscripted manner without consulting his official communications experts. His three spokesmen so far – Fr Federico Lombardi, Burke and Gisotti – often were as surprised as anyone else by the latest papal bombshell.

Discussion

Yet by now, Francis appears to have become a bit more disciplined in engaging the media. His airborne news conferences at the end of overseas trips haven't delivered any “Who am I to judge?” frenzies for a while, and he appears more willing to allow his spokesman to set a tone and steer the discussion.

If Francis is looking for more bang for his buck out of the spokesman's role, Bruni in many ways seems well-cast for the part.

For one thing, he's a member

of the Community of Sant'Egidio, which is more or less to Francis what Opus Dei was to St John Paul. Francis admires Sant'Egidio's efforts in defence of the poor and immigrants, its accomplishments in conflict resolution, and its commitment to ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.

“It also helps that Bruni's previous gig included handling the logistics of foreign trips for the press corps that travels aboard the papal plane”

Bruni referred to that background in an interview on Thursday with Vatican News, saying he's been shaped by his experience of the “poor of the peripheries of Rome and the world, which I lived with the Community of Sant'Egidio since I was a high school student”.

It obviously boosts the stock of any spokesperson when the boss believes you move in the right circles. It also helps that Bruni's previous gig included handling the logistics of foreign trips for the press corps that travels aboard the papal plane. It's a thankless, pain-in-the-neck gig, but Bruni is generally well-liked by reporters for his preternatural calm and helpful disposition.

Of course, the media landscape has changed significantly since Navarro's time. In his day, if you could influence the thinking of a handful of journalists from major outlets, you essentially owned the story; in a social media and blog-driven world, it's a whole different ball game, and it's not clear any spokesperson could have the same impact.

Time will tell, but at least one can say that Bruni seems as well-positioned as anybody to inspire this Pope's confidence.

John J. Allen Jr. is Editor of Cruxnow.com



Inés San Martín

Future Pope once called host-turned-to-blood a 'mark of the Lord'

Seventeen years ago, a priest at the Church of Santa Maria in Buenos Aires was tidying up when he discovered two small pieces of a Eucharistic host on the altar. Church rules told him exactly what to do in such a situation, and he followed them to the letter – placing the pieces of host in a chalice with water to dissolve, then putting the chalice into a tabernacle.

Such small gestures of respect for the Eucharist are common in Catholic parishes all around the world, but what followed was anything but.

One week later – on May 8, feast of Our Lady of Lujan, patroness of Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay – the priest checked the chalice. Astonished, he reported that the water had turned a deep red, like the colour of blood. An 'informal' analysis at the time suggested it was indeed blood, but little more was done to investigate.

That, however, wasn't the end of the story.

Two years later, a Eucharistic minister distributing Communion during a Mass at Santa Maria claimed to see a drop of blood fall inside a chalice. Two years after that, on the feast of the Assumption, a host that had fallen to the floor during Mass was once again placed in water at Santa Maria, and it too turned into what was believed to be blood.

As the parish's fame for such happenings grew, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the Archbishop of Buenos Aires at the time – who today is Pope Francis – asked for tests. A local doctor named Ricardo Castañón took a sample from what had become known by then as the '1992 Sign' and sent it to a lab in San Francisco.

Results

When the results came back, the lab reported the substance "could be" human tissue. Another analysis by a doctor in Sydney, Australia, likewise concluded the substance was human tissue and "could" belong to a heart.

Dissatisfied with "could" and knowing that Bergoglio expected an answer, Castañón sent the material to a third doctor in New York for what he called a "blind sample".

This last doctor was more definitive: the substance, he reported, belonged to a heart muscle called the myocardium – more specifically, the left ventricle that pumps oxygenated blood from the lungs to the body. The doctor also found the person the sample came from had suffered greatly, including trauma to the chest.

Told the sample didn't belong to a living patient, the New York doctor said he found the presence of white blood cells inexplicable, since they usually disintegrate



Pope Francis uses incense as he reverences the Eucharist during the World Youth Day prayer vigil at St John Paul II Field in Panama City. Photo: CNS

minutes after a blood sample is removed from the body. He also reported the sample had a 'beat', which also had been noted in the first report in 1992.

In light of those findings, Castañón swiftly drew spiritual conclusions: the fact that the substance is from the myocardium, he said, suggests the Eucharist is what "pumps blood into [Christ's] Church". It being from the left ventricle, he said, is a reminder that Christ "cleans the Church of its sins".

"We don't call it a miracle, we describe it as a 'sign'," said Fr Alberto Vari, the pastor of Santa Maria.

"The Eucharist in this parish, in facts and in words, has become the center of community life", he said last week. "Prayer and adoration are almost permanent: the doors open at 8am and close at 9pm, and [Christ] is never alone because there's always someone praying."

Though there's some information about the reputed miracles online, mostly in Spanish, there's little overt publicity.

Appointed to the parish

in March, Fr Vari's previous experience came at two major shrines of Buenos Aires: San Ramon no Nato and Santa Rosa de Lima, both examples of Argentina's strong popular religiosity. He wants the 'sign' to become better known outside Santa Maria, while at the same time maintaining the parish's intimacy.

“During one of his homilies, Bergoglio described the reputed miracles as ‘Mary opening a space for us to encounter her son Jesus’”

"The Eucharist is for everyone, but it leads to silence, and the community doesn't want to lose this. If you separate the sign from the Eucharist, from prayer, you risk the parish becoming a highway of people," he said.

Fr Vari said that at the end of the day, the parish community believes

that what happened in Santa Maria was for the world, not just for them.

It's a realisation in part thanks to the Pope, who, when he was still in Buenos Aires, was asked his opinion on the happenings at the parish. He replied, "The Lord passed and left his mark [for the world]", which was turned into a song.

Visitors can see the 'sign' a handful of times a month as part of a Eucharistic adoration.

The blood from 1994 and 1996 has evaporated, while that of 1992 remains, preserved in a glass case the size of a large collectible coin. It's regularly kept in the tabernacle behind a receptacle used for adoration. A large blue glass represents Mary's tunic, a red one the fire of the Holy Spirit. There's a white one, which imitates a cloth thread and has a very simple flower in yellow, and which actually encases the Eucharist.

The flower is a *tonalli*, a four-petal flower that's found in the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In the Aztec language, according to Fr Vari, *tonalli* means "abode of God".

The decision to keep the "sign" together with the Eucharist at all times, Fr Vari said, is a reminder of what really matters.

"I don't know if Christ is still present in the sign, but I know he's present in the Eucharist, that he becomes present at every Mass, and that's unexplainable enough," Fr Vari said.

During one of his homilies, Bergoglio described the reputed miracles as "Mary opening a space for us to encounter her son Jesus", which today is written in one of Santa Maria's side chapels.

Beyond the primacy of the Eucharist at Santa Maria, service for the poor occupies a strong second place. Twice a week, the church runs a soup kitchen, and no one who comes in asking for clothes, food or help is ever turned away, Fr Vari said.

"When he was dying of tongue cancer, Pascal couldn't receive Communion so he asked that a poor man be brought to him so that he could embrace Christ," Fr Vari said. "We have to ask ourselves: 'Do we see Christ in the Eucharist? And do we see him in those in need?'"

“The Eucharist is for everyone, but it leads to silence, and the community doesn't want to lose this”

i Inés San Martín is Rome Bureau Chief of Cruxnow.com

Letters

Letter of the week

How we turn our backs on martyrs

Dear Editor, Fr Conor McDonough's piece on religious leaders with 'chutzpah' and Greg Daly's feature on the 42 martyrs under consideration for beatification made for a powerful combination in your latest issue (IC 18/7/2019).

Episcopal boldness is something we clearly need in our Church today, but it's not good enough to whinge that the bishops aren't doing enough; during the Irish Church's darkest days we had people willing to light candles rather than curse darkness at every level of the Church.

Lay men and women, religious

men and women, priests and bishops – despite threats to life and liberty, Irish people from all over the country refused to forsake the religion of their ancestors and the duties this entailed of them, and refused to deny their children and grandchildren the faith that had been their inheritance from the days of St Patrick. Their stories are both awe-inspiring and shaming: how many of us can put our hands on our hearts and say we'd have been as loyal or as loving?

This question isn't even all that hypothetical. Right now Irish people stray and wander from the Church

every day, turning their backs on that which for which our ancestors died. Perhaps our martyrs are neglected rather than rejected, some might say. Maybe, but remember the 1916 Proclamation, proclaimed in God's name and calling for religious freedom.

We'll freely talk of the sacrifices of the dead of 1916, but we just as freely turn our backs on that for which they died.

Yours etc.,
Thomas Murray,
Lucan, Co. Dublin.

The call of God is still for total dedication

Dear Editor, Mary Kenny sees the obvious answer to a 'shortage of priests' is to have married priests (IC11/7/2019). Compared with the missions as yet we do not actually have a shortage of priests, particularly if parishes were organised so that priests carry out duties which only they can do and lay people attend to all other measures

involved in running a parish.

Secondly while Mrs Kenny quotes the 'art of the possible' regarding secular politics, we are surely aware that 'with God all things are possible'. Jesus was not married and the priest is called to be another Christ, totally dedicated to God and to his parishioners. Otherwise the priesthood is no longer a vocation but a

profession.

Her suggestion that a priest's wife would likely not require to be supported by the parish "as most women have jobs of their own" raises the question of looking at a scenario in which the wife is working outside the home and the children in a creche?

Do we really believe that Jesus is no longer calling

men to follow him in totally dedicating their lives to him and to his people? Perhaps we can all play our part in fervent prayer that many will continue to answer that call and that many will step up their support for priests and bishops.

Yours etc.,
Mary Stewart,
Donegal Town,
Co. Donegal.

News of Irish martyrs recognition to be celebrated

Dear Editor, Thank you for giving us that great news in your front page of 42 Irish Martyrs on their way to Beatification and Sainthood (IC 11/7/2019). We all know the name of one martyr, St Oliver Plunkett, Archbishop of Armagh, savagely hanged, drawn and quartered in Tyburn London in 1681.

In the parish where I served – Balinspittle/Ballinadee – I arranged that Bishop Buckley and 20 of us priests would concelebrate Mass at the Mass Rock at a spot appropriately called Gort na Croise when the Pope was beatifying the first tranche of 17 Irish Martyrs in Rome.

Nearly everyone in the parish attended and many also came from the surrounding parishes that September evening in 1992. I remember well we had to watch the time to complete the Mass for all to get out of the valley safely before darkness fell.

In 1752 the people of the parish dared to build a church in Ballinspittle

to avoid the wind and rain of the Mass Rock. In order not to draw the attention of the Bandon constabulary to their act of defiance they just called the building a Mass-house, as the word church was reserved exclusively for a Protestant

building. This was the first Catholic Church built in Ireland after King Henry VIII's Protestant revolt.

Yours etc.,
Fr Tom Kelleher,
Kinsale, Co. Cork.



Clerical celibacy is a theological non-issue – fact!

Dear Editor, In the current issue of *The Irish Catholic* you talk about a priest who is tired of the discussion on priest shortages. So are we all.

Clerical celibacy is a theological non-issue. It is one of the first topics in the Book of Genesis, Chapter 2, Verses 18 to 24. Verse 18 says: "It is not good for man to be alone." No discussion! God's word is clear. Why are the bishops waffling about it? If they want to visit Rome, organise a pilgrimage, not an excuse.

Now another topic, the ordination of women to the priesthood, is not quite

as clear. I have no deep feelings on the subject, but I have known many holy and competent women who would fill many roles assigned to priests as well or better than many priests. I am not thinking of parish administrators either, but roles such as spiritual directors and confessors particularly. I have no problem with ordaining women deacons; it fits in with their role assigned in the same verse of the Book of Genesis: "I will make a helper suited to him."

The role of the papacy and general

councils is not to make new laws, assign new tasks or promulgate new doctrines, but to define and clarify matters which are not clear in the Church's understanding of Christ's teaching. The role of women may be such a topic, clerical celibacy is not.

In fact, since it binds only the Roman rite it is not even a concern for a general council of the Church.

Yours etc.,
Bill Keane,
Leesburg, Florida.

facebook community

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

What should Catholic funerals emphasise more clearly: prayers for the dead or the achievements of lives?

Mourning and praying for the dead are not things to be shunned. We should celebrate the memories of our dead, but that's not what a Catholic funeral is for. – **Kevin Bell**

I often think of the souls in Purgatory as prisoners, they are trapped and helpless. They depend on those outside the prison to look after all their needs and visit now and then to comfort them. – **Annette Devlin**

The Church's Requiem Liturgy is emphatically not a 'celebration of life' – even though this notion has crept in. We will all need the infinite mercy of God when we leave this world – all of us – no exceptions. The Requiem Mass is a plea for that Mercy. – **Paddy McCafferty**

The main point of life is to be with God so it makes sense to try and bring that person to God. Why celebrate someone's life when we can help that person instead? – **Nectarios Davis**

There's nothing wrong with celebrating the life of a person well lived at a funeral and using the funeral as an example to inspire others to holiness but it all depends on the person being buried. Celebrating someone's life though does nothing for them in Purgatory – it's really a self-soothing mechanism for those grieving. Prayer is the only thing that heals. – **Stephen McElligott**

Protest, but leave the white coffins at home

White coffins are a great reminder of the forgotten victims. The coffins contradict the strategy of the abortionistas, that of having the unborn unrecognised and unacknowledged. – **Micheál Lyons**

I'm pro-life myself but I don't agree with the use of the coffins or anything like it. I had an ectopic pregnancy years ago and I would have been horrified to come out and see little white coffins like that. It's just wrong. – **Helen Kiely-O'Regan**

Moon landing shows need for more openness

Prof. Conway makes the point that mankind has reached into space, yet close to many borders (Palestine, Syria, US spring to mind) there are huge numbers living in poor conditions. As a species we have not sorted the problems of war, famine, inequality. This is true. – **Mary Moran**

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

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Around the world



▲ **SYRIA:** A woman is assisted at the site of a car bomb blast outside the Syriac Orthodox Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Qamishli. At least 11 people were injured in the blast during evening services. It was unclear who was responsible for the attack. Photos: CNS

◀ **UK:** Environmental activists march through London. Cardinal Peter Turkson, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, said last week that the intensified demand for climate action by young people is a sign of hope during the planetary ecological crisis.



USA: Catholic leaders and advocates protest the Trump administration's handling of detained immigrant children during a 'Catholic Day of Action for Immigrant Children' on July 18 in the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington.



PUERTO RICO: Police in San Juan detain demonstrators, the fifth day of protests calling for the resignation of Puerto Rican Gov. Ricardo Rossello.



CONGO: A Congolese health worker administers the Ebola vaccine to a child at the Himbi Health Center in Goma. Church representatives in Congo are urging international action to contain Ebola, as the World Health Organisation declares an emergency in Congo's eastern provinces.



HONG KONG: People carry a cross during a march to protest against the extradition bill in Hong Kong.

What it means to be BORN AGAIN

What does it mean to 'be born again', to 'be born from above'? If you're an Evangelical or Baptist, you've probably already answered that for yourself. However, if you're a Roman Catholic or a mainline Protestant then the phrase probably isn't a normal part of your spiritual vocabulary and, indeed, might connote for you a biblical fundamentalism which confuses you.

What does it mean to 'be born again'? The expression appears in John's Gospel in a conversation Jesus has with a man named, Nicodemus. Jesus tells him that he "must be born again from above". Nicodemus takes this literally and protests that it's impossible for a grown man to re-enter his mother's womb so as to be born a second time.

So Jesus recasts the phrase metaphorically, telling Nicodemus that one's second birth, unlike the first, is not from the flesh, but "from water and the Spirit". That doesn't clarify things much for Nicodemus, or for us. What does it mean to be born again from above?

Perhaps there are as many answers to that as there are people in the world.

Spiritual birth, unlike physical birth, doesn't mean the same thing for everyone. I have Evangelical friends who share that for them this refers to a particularly powerful affective moment within their lives when, like Mary Magdala in the Garden with Jesus on Easter Sunday, they had a deep personal encounter with Jesus that indelibly affirmed his intimate love for them. In



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

that moment, in their words, "they met Jesus Christ" and "were born again", even though from their very childhood they had always known about Jesus Christ and been Christians.

Most Roman Catholics and mainline Protestants do not identify 'knowing Jesus Christ' with one such personal affective experience. But then they're left wondering what Jesus met exactly when he challenges us "to be born again, from above".

“To be born again from above means we must, at some point in our lives, come to understand that our life comes from beyond this world, from a place and source beyond our mother's womb”

A priest that I know shares this story regarding his understanding of this. His mother, widowed sometime before his ordination, lived in the same parish where he had been assigned to minister. It was a mixed blessing, nice to see her every day in church but she, widowed and alone, began to lean pretty heavily upon

him in terms of wanting his time and he, the dutiful son, now had to spend all his free time with his mother, taking her for meals, taking her for drives, and being her one vital contact with the world outside the narrow confines of the seniors' home within which she lived.

During their time together she reminisced a lot and not infrequently complained about being alone and lonely. But one day, on a drive with her, after a period of silence, she said something that surprised him and caught his deeper attention: "I've given up on fear!" she said, "I'm no longer afraid of anything. I've spent my whole life living in fear. But now, I've given up on it because I've nothing to lose! I've already lost everything, my husband, my youthful body, my health, my place in the world and much of my pride and dignity. Now I'm free! I'm no longer afraid!"

Her son, who had only been half-listening to her for a long time, now began to listen. He began to spend longer hours with her, recognising that she had something important to teach him.

After a couple of more years, she died. But, by then, she had been able to impart to her son some things that helped him understand his life more deeply. "My mother gave me birth twice; once from below, and once from above," he says. He now

understands something that Nicodemus couldn't quite grasp.

We all, no doubt, have our own stories.

And what do the Biblical scholars teach about this? The Synoptic Gospels, scholars say, tell us that we can only enter the Kingdom of God if we become like little children, meaning that we must, in our very way of living, acknowledge our dependence upon God and others. We are not self-sufficient and that means truly recognising and living out our human dependence upon the gratuitous providence of God. To do that, is to be born from above.

Second birth

John's Gospel adds something to this. Raymond Brown, commenting on John's Gospel, puts it this way: to be born again from above means we must, at some point in our lives, come to understand that our life comes from beyond this world, from a place and source beyond our mother's womb, and that deeper life and deeper meaning lie there.

And so we must have two births, one that gives us biological life (births us into this world) and another that gives us eschatological life (births us into the world of faith, soul, love and spirit). And sometimes, as was the case with my friend, it can be your own birthmother who does the major midwifing in that second birth.

Nicodemus couldn't quite get past his instinctual empiricism. In the end, he didn't get it. Do we?

QUESTIONS of faith

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



Where did dead people go before Jesus?

It's a safe scientific assumption to make that humans have been roaming the earth for at least 100,000 years – but if Christ only appeared 2,000 years ago, what happened to all those who died before he arrived?

It would be unfair for the pre-Christian deceased to go to Hell for eternity, especially those who preached the word of God like Abraham and Moses.

Clement of Alexandria (150-215) described the dilemma like this: "It is not right that these should be condemned without trial, and those alone who lived after the advent should have the advantage of the divine righteousness."

The Church teaches that those who died in friendship with God before the Resurrection went to a place in Hell called the 'Bosom of Abraham'. This idea is echoed in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31); both men descended to Hell, but Lazarus was comforted, while the wealthy man experienced suffering. There was a great chasm between them.

'Waiting room'

This spiritual waiting room has been referred to as the Limbo of the Patriarchs or Fathers, where they remained until Jesus descended into Hell to free them.

After his death, but before his Resurrection, Catholics believe that Jesus entered Hell and preached the Good News to those hadn't the opportunity to know it in their earthly lives. In doing so, he opened the gates of Heaven to those who had died before him.

"Scripture calls the abode of the dead, to which the dead Christ went down, 'Hell' – *Sheol* in Hebrew or *Hades* in Greek – because those who are there are deprived of the vision of God. Such is the case for all the dead, whether evil or righteous,

while they await the Redeemer: which does not mean that their lot is identical, as Jesus shows through the parable of the poor man Lazarus who was received into 'Abraham's bosom'. "It is precisely these holy souls, who awaited their Saviour in Abraham's bosom, whom Christ the Lord delivered when he descended into Hell," the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reads.

"Jesus did not descend into Hell to deliver the damned, nor to destroy the Hell of damnation, but to free the just who had gone before him."

“The Church teaches that those who died in friendship with God before the Resurrection went to a place in Hell called the 'Bosom of Abraham'”

This teaching reinforces the doctrinal idea that Christ is central to salvation, as it is through his life, death and Resurrection, that the possibility of eternal life is made real. Jesus' descent into Hell brought the Gospel message of salvation to complete fulfilment.

There's plenty of artwork depicting this story, often referred to as the 'Harrowing of Hell', where Jesus triumphantly binds together the righteous and delivers them from the realm of the dead.

If this idea seems new to you, just remember that we recite a short version of it in the Apostles' Creed: "[He] was crucified, died and was buried, he descended into Hell, on third day he rose again for the dead, he ascended into Heaven."

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

Family & Lifestyle

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Happy Holidays?



With the summer months upon us, people begin to plan and prepare for their summer holidays. Whether it be a trip with family or friends, everyone is itching for a weekend on a beach or exploring a new city.

While being on vacation can provide one with some much-needed relaxation and 'vitamin sea', planning a holiday can be one of the most stressful, frustrating and exhausting tasks. Through the whole process, most people will think to themselves, 'why didn't I just hire a travel agent?'

So how can one make the trip planning as enjoyable as the vacation itself?



Madison Duddy gives travel tips and tricks to guarantee a stress-free summer getaway

While spontaneous trips can be some of the most fun and memorable experiences, spontaneity just causes stressful planning. When booking a trip on short notice, prices will be inevitably higher for hotels and airfare. For hotels, most of the nice ones with desirable locations will be booked, so travellers could get stuck overpaying for the hotel away from their desired area.

If a spontaneous trip is a must, use websites like Hotels Tonight to book a room. Hotels Tonight is an online travel app that allows customers to book accommodation last minute at discounted prices.

When booking the hotel, always remember- location, location, location. Even if the hotels in a good area are more expensive, consider this: taxis are beyond expensive, so

staying in an area that is far away from the city centre will cost a lot in taxi fares back and forth. At the end of the trip, the money spent on taxis might as well have paid for a hotel in a better area and saved the extra travel time.

“For airfare, apply similar rules to that of hotel booking.”

Also, always get the travel insurance. Even though travellers may think there is nothing in this world, neither sickness nor act of God that could possibly keep them from

their holiday, dilemmas can always get in the way. People get violently ill the morning before their flight, obligatory funerals pop up, and family emergencies happen, so there needs to be an option to cancel and receive a refund. The unsympathetic customer service agent on the other end of the phone will not care about the traveller's fever or sudden family death. There will only be a 'Sorry, we do not offer refunds. Have a nice day', before they hang up and ask for a rating of their dreadful service.

For airfare, apply similar rules to that of hotel booking. Buy the airfare ahead of time, make sure it is refundable, and

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Family News

AND EVENTS

LONELY SCARECROWS, GRANNIES, AND THE CORK PUPPET FESTIVAL

It's not every day there's an opportunity to see a puppet show, especially a professional production involving a lonely but imaginative scarecrow and an unpredictable granny. Merlin Puppet Theatre will bring 'No One's Land' to Cork for the Cork Puppetry Festival 2019 on August 3 at 3pm in Middle Parish Hall Community Centre on Grattan Street. No One's Land tells the story of a scarecrow who one day comes to life. Stuck in the middle of a field with nothing but the bird's for company, he entertains himself using the power of his imagination. With well-crafted puppets, and visual effects organisers say No One's Land will delight kids and adults alike. The show will last 50 minutes. Granny and the Salmon of Knowledge, another puppet show for children ages 3-9 includes a lost dog and a wolf on the prowl, which is expected to be lively and interactive. It takes place from 11am-12pm on the same day in Cork at The Crawford Art Gallery Lecture Hall, Emmett Place.

RESEARCH INVESTIGATES WHY WOMEN MORE AFFECTED BY ALZHEIMERS

Scientists are beginning to understand why Alzheimer's disease affects more women than men and why the disease seems to progress more quickly in women's brains. The explanation appears to involve social, biological and genetic differences, researchers reported last week at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference in Los Angeles. One study looked at sex differences involving a toxic protein called tau, which tends to spread like an infection through the brain. "We think it goes from neuron to neuron and goes from one part of the brain to the next part," says Sepideh Shokouhi, a research assistant professor of psychiatry at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Researchers used special brain scans to compare tau in the brains of more than 400 men and women. Some had mild cognitive impairment, a memory problem that often precedes Alzheimer's. "We saw a more spread-out pattern in women with mild cognitive impairment than men," Shokouhi explained.

CHARCOAL TOOTH PASTE: IS IT A WHITE LIE?

Many people would associate charcoal with barbecues and as a fuel, but nowadays 'activated charcoal' is being used as a toothpaste, but is this really what's best for your teeth? Charcoal-based toothpastes, which claim to whiten teeth, are a "marketing gimmick" which could increase the risk of tooth decay and staining, says a review in the British Dental Journal. The charcoal products, which are increasingly popular, often contain no fluoride to help protect the teeth. And there is no scientific evidence to back up the claims they make, the authors say, and excessive brushing with them can do more harm than good. They advise people to go to their dentist for advice on bleaching, or whitening, their teeth adding that it's better to stick to using a regular fluoride-based toothpaste. Charcoal was first used for oral hygiene purposes in ancient Greece, as a way of removing stains from teeth and disguising unpleasant odours from diseased gums.

Living spiritually



Spirituality is notoriously difficult to define because ultimately it is attempting to put into language something that cannot adequately be described in words. When we use words to describe the mysterious, the words serve only as pointers. There is an old proverb which says that when the wise man points to the moon, the fool sees only the finger. In other words, when we try to capture spiritual experience in words, the words we use are not the thing we are attempting to describe – they are merely stepping stones towards it.

“Because we are busy so much of the time, very often we act out of habit, without being really mindful of what we are doing or with awareness of what is driving us to do it.”

In recent decades, spirituality has gradually disappeared from public discourse in Ireland because the historical model of the predominant Christian religion failed to connect sufficiently with the spiritual needs of people. As a consequence it is very challenging to engage people in conversation about what remains nonetheless an essential part of our being. And the frantic pace of modern life makes it even more difficult; we spend so much of our time doing, there isn't much left for simply being. One could make a case that nowadays we should be called human doings rather than human beings.

Because we are busy so much of the time, very often

Mindful living

Dr Noel Keating



we act out of habit, without being really mindful of what we are doing or with awareness of what is driving us to do it. And that can be very problematic. Autopilot is very useful for mundane, repetitive tasks but, for most of life we really need to be more mindful. This is especially true of our thoughts; they too often work on autopilot and we develop, and tend to slavishly but unconsciously follow, ingrained patterns of behaviour, which leave us acting without awareness.

This lack of awareness can give rise to reactive, emotional responses when something mindful would have served us and those around us better. When we act in auto-pilot mode, we fail to notice what is happening within us; we don't see how we have become caught up in a reactive state of mind. We are not mindful of what we are doing when we are doing it.

When we first begin to meditate we become aware that, in the silence – despite intending otherwise – thoughts arise spontaneously and continually. They arise from our preoccupations, our desires, our needs, our attachments, our worries, our emotions, our fears, our hopes; whatever drives them we can be certain thoughts will arise when we sit in silence.

And it seems impossible to not engage with them.

But meditation involves taking attention away from thoughts and emotions by letting them go as soon as they arise or as soon as we come to realise we have engaged with them. Each time we realise we have once again fallen into thought, we let go and return to whatever word we chose to be our anchor in the stormy sea of the mind; we return to the simple practice of pure attention, beyond thought and self-observation.

The more you meditate, the more you notice that incessant stream of thought and you come to understand that thoughts



are fleeting, that you are more than your thoughts and that your essential being can witness those thoughts. And you begin to understand how your thoughts and emotions colour your experience of everything; you come to realise that your thoughts can subtly affect how you interpret everything you encounter in life and everything you do – even though it happens at an unconscious level, so you are not aware how they are urging you on. Meditation helps you to understand that very often we don't see things as they are but as we are.

As Susannah Healy writes in *The Seven-Day Soul: Finding Meaning Beneath the Noise*, meditation makes us conscious

of the mental maps by which we negotiate our way through life and how the culture of modern secular society excludes the rich spiritual landscape from those mental maps. Meditation changes the 'how' rather than the 'what' of our living. It illuminates all of our conversations and decisions in light of our deepest sense of being. We need to take time out of our busy lives simply to be; to take time for stillness and silence in our lives in order to awaken and nourish our sense of who we are at that essential level of our being.

When, through the regular practice of meditation, we learn to break free from the tyranny of our egoic concerns, to rise above I, me and mine, we begin to uncover and witness our essential nature, the *true-self*, deep within. When that happens meditation becomes not merely a place within that we can access when we meditate, but a place we live from. Our spirituality then becomes a living spirituality which informs all that we do. We appreciate that all of life is inter-connected and hence no one is a stranger. And we find we are no longer a stranger to our deepest selves.

After 40 years in the education sector Noel Keating was awarded a PhD for his research into the child's experience of meditation and its spiritual fruits. Noel now leads, in a voluntary capacity, a project which offers free in-service to primary schools who may wish to consider introducing meditation as a whole-school practice. Noel is author of *Meditation with Children: A Resource for Teachers and Parents*.

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don't fly into the cheap airport that is an hour away from the final destination. After a whole day of travel, sitting next to a screaming child, someone with repugnant smelling food, or the passenger who claims their shedding cat is a "therapy animal", no one wants to get on a bus, train or pay in the hundreds for a taxi to their hotel because that is the only transportation available at the hour they arrive. Proximity is worth every penny, and if the trip is booked early enough, the prices won't be too unreasonable.

“When travelling to a new destination, asking other people who have traveled there before or reading online reviews can be very helpful.”

Planning ahead also takes away from the stress of booking restaurant reservations and tours days before the departure. While there isn't already enough to do before a holiday like packing, finishing up work, and finding a pet sitter or babysitter, trying to book reservations can be frustrating when there are no more available at the last minute. Getting blacked out of a restaurant one was eager to try or the tour they've heard is a must is disappointing and makes the traveller feel like they aren't getting everything out of the trip that they wanted to.

When travelling to a new destination, asking other people who have travelled there before or

reading online reviews can be very helpful. Before booking anything, talking to someone about where to stay, eat, shop and what tours to go on can be extremely helpful because then one can be sure the experiences are well worth it.

“Check the travel dates are at the destination for citywide events.”

Online reviews for hotels, tours and restaurants can be useful, but some people that post online reviews are a tad dramatic. Often, they are just angry travellers that have way too much time on their hands to write an odyssey about how a server was slow or a hotel's wifi was spotty. Speaking to a trusted family member, friend or coworker about what they suggest is often the best option because they cannot only provide honest opinions but also cater their recommendations accordingly to the person inquiring.

Check the travel dates are at the



destination for citywide events.

A relaxing vacation can be rudely interrupted by crowded streets, bars and public transportation. It is crucial to ensure there are no huge parades, music festivals or protests at the destination the weekend of one's visit.

These events can make the city absolute mayhem, public transportation feel like a cattle car and taxi prices surge exponentially. There are few things worse than trying to walk around on vacation and finding oneself in a crowd of angry protesters or intoxicated festival goers who are blocking a museum or restaurant they wanted to visit.

“Lastly, remember that a vacation doesn't mean shipping the whole family off to a foreign country.”

Lastly, remember that a vacation doesn't mean shipping the whole family off to a foreign country. Many people live in their home country all their life and never see even half of it. Ireland has so many unique and beautiful places that are only a few hours away on a train or bus. From the turquoise water beaches of Wexford to the young atmosphere of Galway to the Mourne Mountains in the North, Ireland has so much to offer for all different types of vacations. Whether one fancies laying on a beach, going to summer festivals or horseraces, or hiking and camping with their family, a staycation in Ireland can be more affordable and just as memorable as a holiday abroad.

Faith —IN THE— family

Bairbre Cahill



“No, the Word is very near to you, it is in your mouth and in your heart for your observance.” (Deuteronomy 30:14)

I was reading at Mass a couple of weeks ago and that line stayed with me. It was that sense that God's Word is not something distant or illusive that attracted me. As Moses says to the people, it is not something that resides in heaven or beyond the seas. We do not need to rely on someone else to go and fetch it for us. It is here in our own mouths and our own hearts.

Those words came back to me yesterday standing with my extended family at the funeral of my Auntie Úna. Although my own mother died as a young woman the rest of the family are hardy souls and it was a shock to them all when Úna, the one who 'never had anything wrong with her', died after a short illness at the age of 86.

When I heard the news, I texted my brother in Chicago. His message back to me was in Irish – but with a typo – “Ar dheis Dev go raibh a hanam”. I replied that Auntie Úna would probably be quite chuffed to be sitting at de Valera's right hand! In a bizarre coincidence it turned out that there was indeed a Dev connection. The priest, a good family friend, who prayed with the family as Úna made her gentle transition from life to death, was Fr Shan Ó Cuiv, grandson of de Valera.

Fr Ó Cuiv celebrated – and that is certainly the right word to use – the funeral Mass. He told us that Úna's living and dying were a homily on what it means to have faith. Úna wasn't afraid of death. If anything, Fr Ó Cuiv told us, she seemed a bit put out that Jesus was taking his time to bring her home. There was a palpable sense that Úna was now surrounded by those she loved, her own parents, my mother and my brother who was her Godson. And yet he didn't underplay the depth of loss and loneliness which Úna's family are going

through. Faith doesn't take away that terrible loss, it just sets it in a different context.

My cousin Joe had written a beautiful piece for the Mass booklet, a real gathering up of Úna, who she was and what mattered to her. It was a picture of a woman steeped in



relationships, with her parents and siblings, her husband Stephen, her children and grandchildren. There was a powerful sense of the importance to Úna of her faith and her sense of place, her love for the West of Ireland. He finished with the line, “That's me so, my husband my family and my grandchildren, the West of Ireland and my God. What is there to be sad about?”

And those lines from Deuteronomy came back to me – that the Word of God is here, now, with us, in our mouths and in our hearts. It was clear that Úna knew that in the very depth of her being and as I stood there with my own four children, I prayed that they too will always have that deep sustaining faith. I know Úna and my mother and their siblings came from a generation when faith was as natural as the ground under their feet – a natural part of life.

For my children's generation life is more complicated and to have a living faith is to swim against the tide. Danny and I did not tell our daughters and son that they had to come yesterday. It was their choice and the significance of the day did not escape them. They knew that to be together with family, to mourn and celebrate Úna was not an obligation – it was a statement of identity. This is who we are – family, sustained by faith and the love of each other.

Feeling blessed in sun drenched Lourdes

Youth Space



Claire Murray

I walked into Shannon Airport for the eighth year last month, to go on the annual Diocesan Summer Pilgrimage to Lourdes. I had the honour of being there twice as a youth helper, and this was my sixth trip going as a youth leader.

Even though there are different people coming and going each year, I still love to see the familiar sight of 48 young people with eager eyes, excited for the adventure ahead. This year we were lucky to travel with the assisted section on the plane out to Lourdes. It was lovely to be able to connect with some familiar faces in Shannon, that I hadn't seen since the previous trip. After catching up over some tea and scones, we were ready to embark on the 63rd Pilgrimage.

I return to Lourdes each year as it is simply an amazing experience. It has taught me about what is really important in life, and how we shouldn't take simple things for granted.

On arrival in Lourdes, the warm air hit us immediately this year. This would become a familiar feeling for us all, as the daily temperature did not go below 34C for the duration of our stay.

While the assisted pilgrims got set up in the Accueil Notre-Dame, the youth section were given a tour of the shrine and a crash course in safely transporting pilgrims in the voitures, more commonly known as the blue buggies.

Other pilgrims that had landed celebrated Mass in the Church



of the Seven Dolours, while we awaited the safe arrival of the two other pilgrim-filled planes.

Eleven priests from across the diocese led by Bishop Fintan Monahan came with us, with a mix of veteran priests.

The Mountshannon and Whitegate Choir led all our liturgies in beautiful song each day. They sang their hearts out from beginning to end, with the congregation wholeheartedly joining in.

The opening Mass was celebrated by Fr Brendan Quinlivan, which had everyone in high spirits. He told us a story about him using a satnav on a journey, and how when he didn't follow the directions given, that it would recalculate its planned route. He made us think about the path we are on in life, and if we might need to recalculate the route we are on. In the afternoon, the assisted section were brought to the Baths. This is always a special time, as so many are looking for a cure; answers to questions; or just peace and tranquillity in their

hearts. Everyone has their own unique experience of the baths, some come out revitalised and rejuvenated, while others come out feeling completely cleansed in spirit. In the evening we had the Eucharistic Procession, which was based in the Underground Basilica, due to the heat.

On the second morning in Lourdes, we had the Grotto Mass, which was led by Bishop Fintan. He spoke about the theme of this year's pilgrimage: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' He went on to praise the youth group highly saying how they are the core of our pilgrimage and how they bring joy to all of us.

Fr Martin Shanahan celebrated the Mass of Anointing the Sick – Sacrament of Healing the next day, the Feast of the Sacred Heart. Fr Martin thanked all the people that help the sick, Dr Martin Fitzgerald, all the nurses, carers, helpers and the hospitality volunteers.

That afternoon, we had the Stations of the Cross. It was the first

time that I had experienced the whole pilgrimage coming together for it. Due to the immense heat, we were unable to do the high and low stations and instead went back to the underground Basilica of St Pius X. Fr Tom Ryan – Pilgrimage Director, led the service, with the help of Mary Freeman – Pilgrimage Secretary. It was the first time in all my years coming to Lourdes, that I heard the stations being told through Bernadette's story. I found it interesting to listen to, and it really grabbed my attention.

Youth helpers alongside their leaders, Bishop Fintan and Fr Brendan went out to Bartrès, the little village outside of Lourdes, on the final day of the pilgrimage. This is where Bernadette often stayed as a young girl. We first visited the Church of Saint John the Baptist, and venerated St Bernadette's relic, after being blessed by Bishop Fintan.

We had the closing ceremony that evening, which was led by Fr Ger Jones, and the blessing and lighting of the pilgrimage candle.

Fr Ger enlightened us on the two types of burdens, both physical and mental, which personally I had never really thought about before. When a physical burden gets too much, we just have to let it go.

However, when it comes to mental burdens, we carry them around for a long time, because there is no physical weight associated, but it can often weigh us down even more. After this ceremony, Bishop Fintan blessed the pilgrimage candle, which was lit by Daniel and Philomena Smyth, from Roscrea, who are celebrating 50 years of marriage this year. Our diocesan candle will continue to burn in the Sanctuary long after we depart, it holds the many intentions and prayers of not only those present but those back home too.

It amazes me to think that the pilgrimage to Lourdes brings so many from our diocese together – from east to west; young and old; sick and healthy alike.

Even if you were not physically in Lourdes with us, you can still connect with our prayerful pilgrimage, as well as some fun filled aspects on the Killaloe Diocesan website or on the Killaloe Diocese Facebook and Twitter pages. Daily videos were posted, these snippets capture the meaningful journey we undertook over the five days.

Fr Ger Jones's summarised what Lourdes means to me and many others so perfectly when he said in the closing ceremony: "Lourdes, a little piece of heaven on earth."

Claire Murray from the Parish of Kilmurry Ibrickane was a Youth Leader on the Killaloe Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes 085-8228626

Sweet Treats

Laura Anderson



Banana Bread - a perfect low-sugar loaf

Banana bread is a staple in any baker's repertoire and this recipe doesn't even call for a hand mixer so it's perfect for beginners. If you don't even have a loaf tin you could always make mini banana bread muffins, a delicious breakfast treat, just adjust the cooking time down as necessary. A classic banana loaf always goes down a treat especially with a cup of tea. If your bananas are going off in the fruit bowl with the recent bout of warm weather this is the perfect way to use them up. The riper they are the better - they will add more moisture and sweetness to this otherwise refined sugar-free recipe. If you have more of a sweet tooth you could always mix in some dark chocolate chips or a teaspoon of vanilla extract. It's also great with a handful of chopped walnuts or raisins.

Ingredients

Makes one loaf

- 3 small ripe bananas

- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- 110g unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 2 free range eggs
- 225g self-raising flour
- □ tsp cinnamon

Pre-heat the oven to 180°C/160°F/Gas mark 4. Grease and line a one litre loaf tin with baking paper. Mash the bananas in a small bowl with a fork. You don't want to completely pulverise them, leaving a bit of texture is nice as you get little pockets of banana throughout the loaf. Stir through the apple juice and set aside. Cream the butter in a mixing bowl using a wooden spoon and then whisk in the eggs one at a time making sure they are

combined well. It will look curdled at this point but don't worry. Sieve and then fold in the flour and cinnamon gently. You want to avoid knocking too much air out at this point so you get a nice cracked top on your loaf. Stir in the banana and apple mixture with the maple syrup until evenly distributed. Carefully pour the mixture into the loaf tin and pop in the oven for 40-45 mins until golden brown and a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Allow the loaf to cool in the tin for 10 minutes then turn onto a wire rack to cool completely if you can wait that long before you steal a slice! This keeps for several days if kept in an airtight container at room temperature or also freezes quite well.



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Satisfying conclusion for *Dark Money*

We've had the exposure of child abuse scandals in the Church, in sports, in scouting and there's been the #MeToo movement. But I still feel there's a scandal to hear about relating to the abuse of children in the film industry. A few years ago former child actor Corey Feldman made accusations but it didn't gain much traction.

Now with the BBC1 drama series **Dark Money**, which finished on Tuesday, that issue is again under the spotlight.

The plot features a child actor from the UK who is abused by a producer while filming in Hollywood. The distraught parents, trying to do their best for the boy but not accessing much in the way of legal advice, are pushed into a huge financial settlement on condition of non-disclosure. Cue months of stress, guilt, broken relationships and the downward spiral of the young boy in a toxic combination of guilt, arrogance and entitlement – all of which he's too young to cope with.

To add another layer, his older sister, who feels left out and possibly jealous, is asked hugely intrusive questions when trying out for a reality TV show *Shacked Up in Ibiza!* At least she maintains her dignity.

It's not relaxing – the topic, the tension and sense of fore-



Isaac Mensah is played by Max Fincham in BBC1's *Dark Money*.

boding are maintained to the point of discomfort. The acting is first class, and the minor characters well drawn. There's infrequent rough language, but on the whole the approach is responsible, sensitive and not all prurient or exploitative.

Melodramatic

The last episode might have turned melodramatic but turned back from that particular precipice, and the ending I found really satisfying.

I have mixed feelings about

US sitcom **Last Man Standing** (5 Star, Tuesday) starring comedian Tim Allen coping with a house full of women – a wife and three daughters.

It can be funny, moving, and annoying too – e.g. I'm uneasy with how much the Allen character likes guns (he runs an outdoor sports store).

The Allen character Mike Baxter is a Republican, in the past has thrown plenty of digs Obama's way but other characters, including one of the daughters and especially son-in-law Ryan have differ-

ent views leading to lots of political banter.

At times it seems to promote traditional family values and we often see the family saying grace or attending church.

In last week's episode however some of the adult children casually try a séance as if it's a harmless joke – complete with Bernie Sanders 'Keep the Flame Alive' candles! We are reminded that Ryan runs a pot shop which he has taken over from Mike's father, with Mike's reluctant approval – marijuana is legal in Colorado where the show is set, and that's often seen as a joke too. So, it's a rather odd mix of values.

I've written previously that I'm not a fan of the approach to religion in US comedy series **Young Sheldon** (RTÉ 2 and E4). Too often it seems rather dismissive, patronis-



Iain Armitage plays *Young Sheldon*.

PICK OF THE WEEK

SUNDAY SEQUENCE

BBC Radio Ulster, Sunday, July 28, 8.30am

Topical religious and ethical affairs with Audrey Carville.

QUEST FOR SHAKESPEARE

EWTN, Sunday, July 28, 9am

Issue of choices and consequences from choices made. Importance of marriage is highlighted.

THE SHED THAT FED A MILLION CHILDREN

EWTN, Tuesday, July 30, 8am

Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow interviews Mary Anne MacFarlane-Barrow on the creation of Mary's Meals, an initiative that feeds a million children each year.

ing and maybe even mocking, though sometimes what is being sent up is the poor attempt at religiosity by some of God's children. Whatever the case, I found last Wednesday's episode on RTÉ2 rather moving.

The most genuinely religious person, Mary, young Sheldon's mother, has a crisis of faith after the death of a young girl in a car accident. Pastor Jeff, a rather ambiguous character constantly harried by the awkward questions Sheldon poses in church, says he has doubts too but deals with it by throwing himself into even more intense religious practice.

Mary tries, and there's a striking scene where she prays in her newly-constructed faith garden. But it doesn't quite work for her – next she cuts loose with a night of drinking with her mother! Unsurprisingly the

experience isn't enlightening.

In a genuinely touching scene at the end Sheldon, a science-obsessed non-believer, assures her that considering the precision of the universe belief in a creator is quite logical, but more importantly she is moved to tears when he says that of all the people in the world she is exactly the perfect mother for him – 'what are the odds of that!'

In a related episode on E4 last Friday Mary got upset, fearing she wasn't a good mother. Her own mother Meemaw puts her right – "you've done a fantastic job with those kids" – and reminded her that mothering is "not a job that gets a lot of compliments". Nice one.

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Aubrey Malone

Film

Cohen, Bresson and Varda at the Irish Film Institute

I had the good fortune to interview Leonard Cohen in 1988 when he was promoting his *I'm Your Man* album. During the course of the interview he told me Marianne Ihlen, a Norwegian woman he met on the Greek island of Hydra during the 1960s, was the love of his life.

At the Irish Film Institute from July 26 is *Marianne and Leonard: Words of Love*, a documentary which explores their relationship throughout that halcyon decade. She was the inspiration behind many of his songs, most notably 'So Long, Marianne' which contains classic lines like "we met when we were almost young" and "she held on to me like I was a crucifix".

Marianne died of leukemia in 2016. When Cohen heard

how ill she was he wrote a letter to her saying: "Well, Marianne, it's come to a time when our bodies are so old we're falling apart. I think I'll follow you very soon. Goodbye, old friend. See you down the road."

His words went viral on social media. They sadly came to fruition; he followed her to the grave a few months later. But his reputation endures. This documentary from Nick Broomfield, who also had a romance with Ihlen, will confirm the depth of his legacy.

Reflections

A large part of the film career of the French Catholic director Robert Bresson, perhaps most famous for *Diary of a Country*

Priest, contained reflections on the decay of modern society. Nowhere was this more evident than in *The Devil, Probably*, which you can see at the IFI from July 28.

"What prompted me to make the film," he said, "is the total waste we've made of everything. We're living in a world in which the human being doesn't exist anymore."

Tackling issues like famine, pollution, the waste of natural resources and the "hole in the soul" brought about by spiritual emptiness, his film has as much to say to us today as it did on its release over forty years ago.

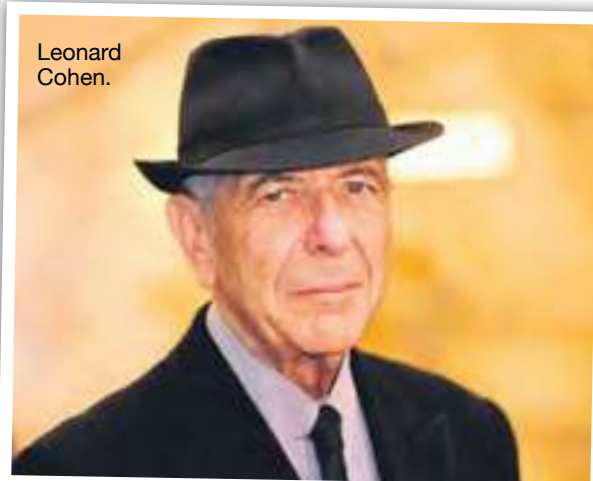
A third film at the IFI, from July 19, is *Varda by Agnes*. It's the directorial swansong of Agnes Varda, the 'Queen of

French Cinema'. The much-loved pioneer recaps on her life from the time she was an avatar of the French New Wave in the 1950s.

General release

On general release is *The Current War*, a more mainstream offering. It stars Benedict Cumberbatch as Thomas Edison and Michael Shannon as George Westinghouse. The inventors become rivals in a bid to see which of their electrical systems will dominate the future.

Also on general release is *Teen Spirit*. It concerns the fortunes of a shy teenager (Elle Fanning) who dreams of escaping her small town to become a singer. Fanning



Leonard Cohen.

does her own singing in the film and proves really adept at it.

The film is the directorial

debut of Max Minghella, son of the late Anthony who was of course most famous for helming *The English Patient*.



BookReviews

Peter Costello



The great Dom Eugene Boylan

Dom Eugene Boylan: Trappist Monk, Scientist & Writer

by Thomas J. Morrissey SJ
(Messenger Publications, €19.95)

J. Anthony Gaughan

This is an important biography of Dom Eugene Boylan, the well-known abbot of Mount St Joseph, the Cistercian Abbey at Roscrea. He was the author of two once widely read books, *This Tremendous Lover* and *Difficulties in Mental Prayer*, which gave him an international following.

He was born on February 3, 1904 at Bray, Co. Wicklow, where his father was sub-manager in the Hibernian Bank; later his father was moved to Derry where Kevin, as he was then known, spent part of his childhood. After his primary education, Kevin was enrolled in the O'Connell Christian Brothers School in Dublin, where he excelled academically. He entered Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, the major seminary of the Archdiocese of Dublin, in 1921.

Like his classmates he attended UCD but, while they prepared to sit for an arts degree, he studied mathematics and science. The excessive supervision and repressive regula-

tions of the seminary grated on him. Concluding that he did not have a vocation for the diocesan priesthood he left the college before Christmas of his third year.

Returning to UCD as a lay student Kevin immersed himself in the activities of the university. He joined the Literary and Historical Society, Scientific Society, Musical Society and the Swimming Club and enjoyed the social events organised by his peers.

Love of music

He secured an MSc and a travelling studentship in physics in 1925. Not least because of his love of music he opted to spend his studentship years in Vienna, city of the Strauss family and many of the other grandees of classical music. In letters home he disclosed how he enjoyed attending operas and music-enhanced High Masses on Sundays. He returned to Dublin in 1929 and took up a position as assistant lecturer in physics at UCD. His researches in cosmic physics were widely recognised.

Just two years later Kevin joined the Cistercian Order at Roscrea. After a month's postulancy the abbot clothed Kevin with the Cistercian habit and gave him the name Eugene.

Then as a novice he shared the life of the community. This involved

spending six hours of each day reciting the Divine Office as well as spending time engaged in manual work.

In due course Eugene made his final profession in 1936 and was ordained a year later. He was appointed to the staff in the Abbey school, but it seems he was not a successful teacher. However, he became popular as a confessor and preacher. As a result many requests came from religious groups for him to conduct days of spiritual conferences and to give longer retreats.

At the prompting of an Irish Christian Brother he met at one of those conferences he published *Difficulties in Mental Prayer* in 1943. Intended for priests and religious, it was enthusiastically received by the laity, was re-printed on numerous occasions and received universal acclaim.

In it he stressed that meditation, prayer and spiritual reading were essential to pursuing a spiritual life. Subsequently he published other books on these topics and contributed articles on cognate subjects to religious journals.

During a visit to the Abbey in Roscrea in 1952 Cardinal Gilroy invited the abbot to make a foundation in his archdiocese in

Sydney. Eugene was dispatched to explore the feasibility of such a project, as the first Cistercian ever to set foot in Australia. Eventually a foundation was made at Tarrawarra, near Melbourne, and Eugene himself was given the responsibility of ensuring its financial viability.

“In due course Eugene made his final profession in 1936 and was ordained a year later”

Three years later Eugene was a member of the community on Caldey Island in the Bristol Channel, near the town of Tenby in South Wales. Caldey was the site of a monastic settlement dating from early Christian times. It was acquired at the beginning of the 20th Century by a group of Anglican Benedictines who eventually were received as a community into the Catholic Church.

Subsequent to their transferring to the mainland a Cistercian monastery was established on the island. However, by the mid-1950s the community were struggling to keep it operational and the authorities sent Eugene to assist them.

After Eugene returned to Roscrea

from Caldey he obtained permission to go to the US in response to appeals from American Cistercian abbots (Trappists as they were known in the US) to preach their annual retreat. While there he moved from one monastery to another.

Across the US there were 12 Cistercian foundations including the two largest monasteries in the world at Gethsemane in Kentucky and Spencer in Massachusetts. The renowned spiritual writer Thomas Merton, who was a member of the community in Gethsemane, was reported to have described Eugene's retreat as the best he had ever attended.

Dom Camillus Claffey, abbot of Mount St Joseph Abbey, Roscrea, resigned in 1962. He was succeeded by Dom Eugene, who by then was in greater demand than ever to conduct conferences and retreats. He also became a well-known figure because of his contributions on national issues. Following a car crash Dom Eugene died in hospital on January 5, 1964.

The great Dom Eugene Boylan has never been quite forgotten, here in Ireland or in the wider world. Fr Morrissey's very full biography will undoubtedly revive interest in not just the man, but also in his many inspiring books.

Jacob Rees-Mogg's lost

The Victorians: The Titans Who Forged Modern Britain
by Jacob Rees-Mogg
(W.H. Allen, €20.00)

Peter Costello

At the time of writing the futures of Brexit and the British Conservative party are still unsettled. But whatever happens we can expect the author of this book to have some role in it.

Jacob Rees-Mogg is being spoken of by some as a future Chancellor of the Exchequer. This should not surprise us, as he began his public life in his teens hectoring chairmen and boards of companies in which he had shares that his dividends were not high enough. He believes in the paramount rights of the investor over any other stake holder in a business, like the mere workers. Little wonder that after university he switched from history to finance.

He is currently a partner in Somerset Investments – famous for setting up a Dublin office to avoid the effects of Brexit – from which he takes his share of £25m year. Many of those

who know him in the world of finance speak well of him.

“I think he is perceived,” his business partner says, “as...a man of huge integrity, huge honesty and a thoroughly decent, fair and courteous person. That's what people, whoever they are and whatever they think of his views, say.”

Oxford

So personal success on the financial front. But this book is evidence that if Rees-Mogg had a desire to write history he should have continued at Oxford. History is too serious a matter to be a mere hobby. Here in Ireland many were dismayed that he has revealed such ignorance of the past and present of this island – but then Ireland, like Wales and Scotland, is of little interest to the true-born English nationalist.

The critics of his book have not been kind, and sales are reported to have been a poor 700-odd copies in the first week – which might seem like success to a young author whose novel sells a mere 200 or less over all, and finds it hard to get published because the shops are packed with tomes of all

kinds by celebrities, like this one.

Jacob Rees-Mogg has been mocked as the “member for the 18th Century”, but as he would be aware he could not, as a Catholic, have been a member of Parliament at all until after 1829.

He has brought his Catholicism into the public arena, which makes it a fair question to ask does a book in which he speaks constantly of the need for “faith” actually reflect Catholic values in any way?

“Catholic readers might wish to know what the book has of interest to them. The answer is nothing”

His particular kind of very traditionalist Catholicism has been much admired by some of his co-religionists, who have come to see him a spokesman for their religion too.

Catholic readers might wish to know what the book has of interest to them. The answer is nothing.

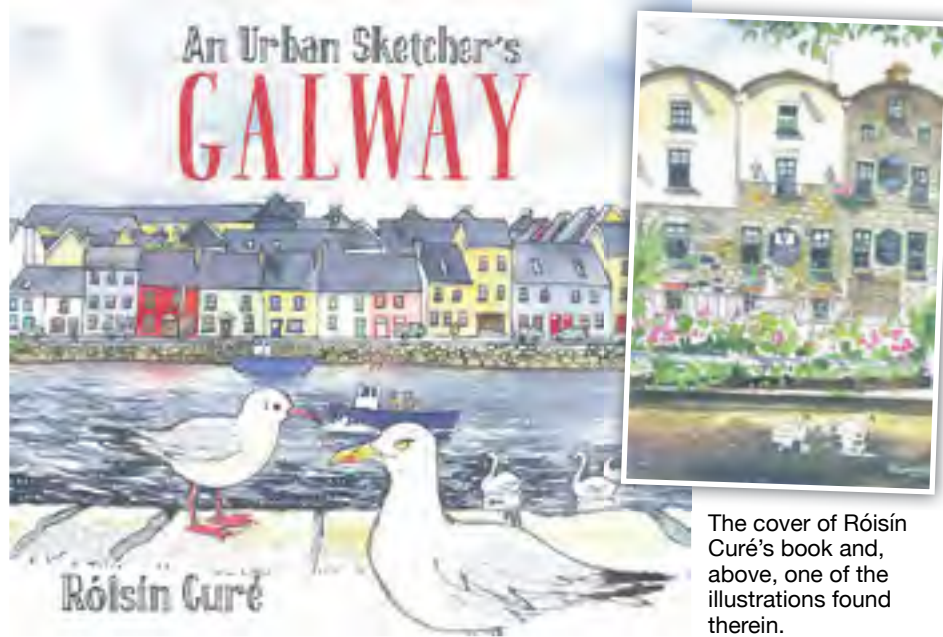
However, much that the



Jacob Rees-Mogg.

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.

The wide-awake City of the Tribes



An Urban Sketcher's Galway
by Róisín Curé
(Currach Books, €22.99)

My wife and I often go down to Galway by train to have lunch, then a walk in Salthill by the sea, rounded off with a browse in Charlie Byrne's Bookshop – truly the best in Ireland.

The city, in our experience has changed dramatically

since the 1970s, yet somehow remains true to itself. Róisín Curé in her delightful book with her lively and charming drawings accompanied by her equally interesting text manages to convey that great vitality, sense of fun and adventure that the city seems to have in spades.

I was warmly reminded of the great Posy Simmons' work. Of course, one is aware

there are problems, but among the principal cities of Ireland today Galway is the best place to be, especially if one is in one's 20. Having just returned from another brief visit I can assure readers that Róisín Curé has the place down to a tee, even to the extraordinary number of raucous sea gulls that pervade the city and decorate her book. **P.C.**

opportunity

critics have been saying is true about the people selected. The treatments are often unfocused. One looks to see what Rees-Mogg, in his chapter on Gladstone, might have to say about Gladstone's notorious pamphlet of 1874, *The Vatican Decrees and their Bearing on Civil Allegiance*, which enunciates his opinion that the declaring of papal infallibility affected the civil obedience of Catholic subjects in Britain. Faithful to the Pope, they could not be loyal to the Queen Empress.

This has been seen by some historians as the last chance for anti-papal agitation in England. This is only partially true for England, entirely untrue for Scotland and Ireland. The pamphlet drew a famous reply from Newman.

But Rees-Mogg passes over this incident in total silence.

He is not in fact much interested in mere history as history. He sneers constantly at Lytton Strachey's book *Eminent Victorians* – he seems to regard the queries that

many have about, say, General Gordon's private life, as beneath contempt.

But Strachey devoted one of his chapters to Cardinal Manning; Rees Mogg has room for Pugin, but not for Cardinal Newman, who will be canonised in October, clearly a Victorian titan.

“Rees-Mogg is happy to be...as ‘the best dressed man’ in the House of Commons...”

Indeed the moral figures of the age, Dickens, William Booth of the Salvation Army (voted one of ‘100 Greatest Britons’ in a recent poll), anti-slavery campaigners, women suffragists, engineers, biologists, all those responsible for the really lasting achievements of the era in knowledge of all kinds, are passed over.

His overall attention concentrates on prime ministers and those who are of that political world (even Pugin as the architect of the new Parliament building).

Extraordinary technical and social changes receive little or no discussion. Rees-Mogg sees the era as one of faith; yet it saw the introduction into wide use of the word agnostic. He has so little interest in the varied, controversial and often astonishing religious developments of the period, it makes one wonder about his own concern with religion.

(To seek out the Catholic aspects of this book is quite fair. Was it not Graham Greene who remarked that any British novel with more than 20 characters ought to contain two or three Catholics to be a picture of real life?)

Rees-Mogg is happy to be regarded (according to the *Spectator*) as “the best dressed man” in the House of Commons. But appearances are not everything.

Matthew Parris, the respected commentator of the *Times*, thinks Rees-Mogg has “a fine philosophical mind”. If he has, he has chosen not to display it on this occasion.

WebWatch

Greg Daly



Holding fast to the Faith in a stormy sea of Catholic commentary

I do not understand people who struggle to understand this Pope,” begins Mark Shea over at patheos.com/blogs/markshea. “I don’t really believe they find him ‘confusing’. I think they just don’t want to listen to him.”

Perhaps Mark overreaches in saying that everything people need to know about Francis is summed up in the words “he has preached good news to the poor”, but he’s surely spot on about Pope Francis’ more prominent opponents, if not those they’ve succeeded in baffling.

“His mortal enemies are people who either (a) dislike the Church’s teaching on our duty to the poor or (b) dislike evangelism because it brings people they regard as riffraff into a Church they want to make an accessory to their views on money and power and race and aesthetics and not face it for what it is: the body of the living Christ,” he says.

It’s been bizarre of late to see Mark harried by an online mob screaming that he’s an enemy of the Church. Bizarre, I say, because not merely is Mark – in *By What Authority? An Evangelical Discovers Catholic Tradition* – the author of perhaps the best popular introduction to the Tradition of the Church, but because anybody who’s been paying attention can see he’s held fast to the Church and its teaching ever since.

That a striking number of Catholics who clearly despise Peter’s successor



Mark Shea.

have an irksome habit of defending or excusing profoundly anti-Catholic political stances is something few people with their eyes open can have missed. On this it’s worth reading, say, patheos.com/blogs/scottericall about how St John Paul identified deportation as an ‘intrinsic evil’ and on an outspoken US priest who has “abandoned Christ to shill” for Mr Trump.

Those interested in how the Catholic commentariat has changed of late, such that longstanding champions of the Faith have been left aghast at onetime allies, could do worse than read Heidi Schlumpf’s four-part series at nconline.org beginning with ‘The rise of EWTN: From piety to partisanship’.

Sure, the *National Catholic Reporter* is hardly a paragon of impartiality, but even so, the series is a valiant attempt at

showing how “a television outlet once devoted to expressions of Catholic piety and conservative catechesis and apologetics has grown into a truly influential media empire, well connected to Republican politicians and the Trump White House”.

Forces

“EWTN, where the ‘Catholic perspective’ is unabashedly partisan, has also become the media star in a web of connections including wealthy conservative Catholic donors and some of the most public anti-Pope Francis forces in the Catholic world,” the introductory article continues.

There’s a lot to chew on there, not least for those of us baffled by Catholic media outlets becoming the playthings of people whose agendas and attitudes are anything but Catholic. Read it critically, but do read it.

Who exactly are our brothers and sisters?

“Can we as Catholics call Muslims our brothers and sisters?” asks Steven Greydanus in a fascinating article over at ncregister.com. “How about Jews? Other non-Christians? In what sense?”

It’s an important question, especially in a world where we bump off each other more than we ever did, where Catholics shy away from criticising racist and sectarian rabblousing, and where prelates like Cardinal Raymond Burke confuse people by falsely claiming – utterly contrary to Church teaching – that Christians and Muslims do not worship the same God.

Recalling a post at patheos.com/blogs/standingonmyhead where Fr Dwight

Longenecker said “I simply don’t think it does much good to refer to Muslims as our ‘brothers and sisters’”, Deacon Greydanus minces no words.

“Jews, Muslims, Hindus, atheists are our brothers and sisters,” he says. “Even if many of them reject us, we don’t reject them. The whole human race is one family, all born of Adam, all redeemed in Christ, all sharing the common fatherhood of God, though not brotherhood in Christ.”

Powerful words, and ones which to be understood fully require holding certain truths in tension. Rev. Greydanus does a superb job in explaining not just how this can be done, but how this *must* be done.

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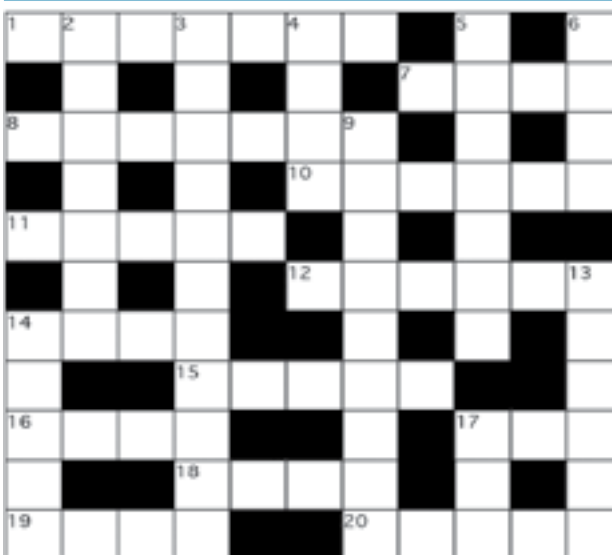
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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 292



ACROSS

- 1 Miami and Orlando are in this American state (7)
 7 Tug or drag (4)
 8 Gather (7)
 10 You boil water in it (6)
 11 Used a needle and thread (5)
 12 Painter, or sculptor perhaps (6)
 14 Puts a question (4)
 15 Piece of cutlery used for cutting (5)
 16 A thought (4)
 17 Tin (3)
 18 Look at the clock to see it (4)
 19 We breathe and smell through this (4)
 20 Throw them to try to score a bullseye (5)

DOWN

- 2 Female big cat (7)
 3 It's like a boot with wheels (6-5)
 4 Bird that goes 'quack' (4)
 5 It hangs beside a window (7)
 6 You stick things together with this (4)
 9 Badly frightened (9)
 13 Sport played with a racquet (6)
 14 Creature from another planet (5)
 17 Automobile (3)

SOLUTIONS, JULY 18

GORDIUS No.412

Across – 1 Captivated 6 Avow 10 Tyrol 11 Agreement
 12 Panther 15 Sisal 17 Aida 18 Amok 18 Lagan 21 Apricot
 23 Lay-up 24 Hale 25 Open 26 Notes 28 Thermal
 33 On balance 34 Ozone 35 Eton 36 Clean sheet

Down – 1 Cats 2 Purgatory 3 Islet 4 Awake 5 Earl 7 Views
 8 Wet blanket 9 Sea salt 13 Harp 14 Radiant 16 Fall in love
 20 Guacamole 21 Apostle 22 Once 27 Taboo 29 Hyena
 30 Riots 31 Anil 32 Melt

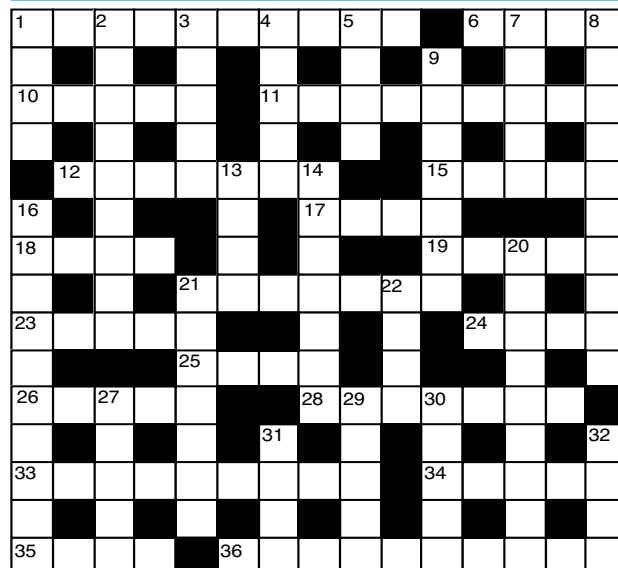
CHILDREN'S No.291

Across – 1 Crystal 7 Open 8 Divide 9 Ladies 11 Pilot 13 Raven
 15 Age 17 Mow 18 Ruled 19 Tea 20 Eaten 21 Toe 22 Chess
 23 Nasty

Down – 2 Raining 3 Sailor 4 Abel 5 April 6 Ants 10 Aberdeen
 12 Tablets 14 Twenty 15 Attic 16 Erase 17 Maths

Crossword

Gordius 413



ACROSS

- 1 Lace collar lost in the fuel store (4,6)
 6 Old-fashioned way of writing "you" (4)
 10 Flinch (5)
 11 Not given adequate attention (9)
 12 Here, one may delay the advance of Public Transport (3-4)
 15 Supplementary clause found on horseback (5)
 17 Part of the vehicle upon which wheels spin (4)
 18 Skin irritation (4)
 19 One Glaswegian, perhaps, is enough for an English racecourse (5)
 21 Train me thus to create an Islamic structure (7)
 23 & 24 Financial resource assigned to privet development? (5,4)
 25 Otherwise (4)
 26 Deduce (5)
 28 As an attempt to get around the elderly, it's a disaster (7)
 33 How's the church organized distribution of richer hay? (9)
 34 Up to a certain time (5)
 35 Soap bubbles (4)
 36 Plentifully land tuna by arrangement (10)

DOWN

- 1 A monk's hood may intimidate

a novice (4)

- 2 Publicly declared (9)
 3 The game of grandmasters (5)
 4 Play slowly in time before Easter, Love (5)
 5 In Greek mythology, the ship in which Jason sailed (4)
 7 Detested (5)
 8 One ready to step in for a principal, being below Den (10)
 9 It's time to contemplate about a nice surprise (7)
 13 One from the country formerly known as Siam (4)
 14 Protective wall or bank (7)
 16 The most dramatic passages of play involved in having colour added to one's hair? (10)
 20 Military seizure of power may make a cadet pout (4,1'4)
 21 South African mongoose, such as Timon in the Lion King (7)
 22 Napoleon was imprisoned here (4)
 27 Loud, rude, confused that's Sigmund for you! (5)
 29 Synthetic material (5)
 30 Dutch cheese (5)
 31 Crust formed over a sore (4)
 32 Theatrical production that's fun to do? (4)

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Sudoku Corner

292

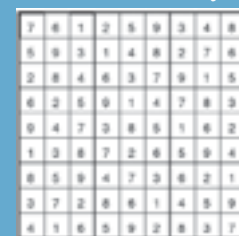
Easy



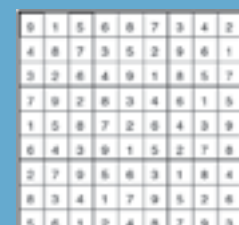
Hard



Last week's Easy 291



Last week's Hard 291



Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock



Laughter in the Dáil bar at an easy target

IT'S AN OLD STORY NOW – well a few weeks old and that's history, the way life moves on.

The Taoiseach compared the leader of the opposition to being like a priest who speaks against sin while being a sinner himself. It was, in all fairness, a cheap and unnecessary shot. If a priest is honest with himself, he knows all too well the meaning of sinfulness and of the need to acknowledge and repent.

I don't know many priests who speak out about sin, in isolation, or who refer to people as being sinners. Rather priests urge all to live a better lifestyle and, in making that choice, sin is put in its place. The hope is that we all realise our weaknesses and, having identified them, determine to do something about them. Quite often, and appropriately so, this may lead us to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where we commit to starting a fresh.

Slip

It may well have been a slip on the Taoiseach's behalf, and we know he issued an apology. Many saw it as an opportunity to attack him or maybe jump on some sort of bandwagon. Truth told, he didn't



An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar.

need to make that comment but, since we believe in forgiveness, maybe we should let it go. To capitalise on the 'slip' serves little purpose.

What I found more upsetting in all of this, was hearing that An Taoiseach refers to this same leader as "the priest" – it is said he does this in private. You can almost hear the laughter in the Dáil bar, even the rodent there

might have chuckled! I try to imagine the tone, the nudges and winks, "quiet lads, the priest is here" or "you can't talk like that in front of the priest" – Shortt and Kenny come to mind – "you can't be doing that lads!" Little, well measured laughs, at the 'priest's' expense.

“Ours are quite often the first doors called to when someone needs a helping hand”

How many of us got the memo that to be called 'priest' is an insult? I hadn't. I know some priests who have been very shaken by hostile words addressed to them, solely because they were identifiable as priests. Thankfully it is not an experience I have had but have heard enough to know it happens. I know enough too, to know that some of those hostile words came from a place of personal pain and, though perhaps mis-directed, were not totally without foundation.

The truth remains that priests, all things considered, live as best they can in a fragile and human world that seeks its guidance from

God. Priests were once youngsters who felt they had something to offer – something called 'self' and did so with good intention and in faith. They put themselves forward in response to what they heard as God's call and, having been accepted, gave of their youth to pursue studies and become priests.

As priests, in most cases, they have stood with people and accompanied them on some of the most joyous and painful moments of their lives. Priests offered support, kindness and loyalty to those in whose communities they were privileged to minister. They – we – have tried to bring out the best in people so that the best can be celebrated and appreciated, and the best too brought out in ourselves.

Ours are quite often the first doors called to when someone needs a helping hand, our phones the first called when there's a tragedy in the parish and ours, the last feet to walk away when someone needs support.

Oddly enough, I still believe it's a good and meaning-filled life. I'm happy to be called "priest" and most people who know priests in their lives, would not think of that as being an insult.

The Urlaur pattern

No, it's not a version of an Aran Sweater! It is an annual gathering on the shores of Urlaur Lake in Kilmovee Parish, Co. Mayo. Here the ruins of an old Dominican Abbey stand. Each year on August 4, irrespective of the day of the week it falls on, people gather for Mass in the old Abbey and for a family day of fun and gathering.

There is something very special about it and it runs deep in the hearts and memories of people. I once met a young man there from Dublin. He told me he never missed 'The Pattern' and the first job he had, at the age of 16, in HMV Music Stores, saw him on his first day asking the boss for the day off so that he could attend The Pattern.

All over Ireland now, festivals and gatherings are taking place. Enjoy them, let them run deep and let them make a difference.



PLEASE HELP BUILD AND MAINTAIN HEALTH CENTRES FOR NEEDY PEOPLE IN MISSION LANDS

The Consolata Missionaries in Raposa Serra do Sol, Brazil, wrote to The Little Way Association: "The lack of a medical centre [here] has led to the high death rate of pregnant women. The only existing medical centre is 60km away. Many people are dying of snake bites because they cannot access assistance. The region is suffering from epidemic diseases, diarrhoea etc." Local leaders offered to provide builders and stonemasons, as well as food for the workers. Thanks to Little Way funding, a new health centre is now open.

Pregnant women must walk many kilometres in scorching heat for medical help

Fr Mugerwa Joseph imc wrote to us: "Your act of charity has changed ordinary opportunities into God's blessings to the indigenous communities here. We continue praying for all friends of Little Way Association."

Your contribution to our Hungry, Sick and Deprived fund will help construct and equip more places where the needy can receive basic health care. Donations go direct to the missions without deduction.



Many health centres in mission lands are humble buildings like this one in the indigenous territory of Raposa Serra do Sol, Brazil.



Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

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119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR
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IC/07/25



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WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER AT ONE OF OUR HOUSES?

The work involves general house-keeping duties, providing guests with a light breakfast, prayer and welcoming pilgrims.

If this work appeals to you, and you could offer one month of your time, please write to us giving details, experience and a contact number.

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