

# The Irish Catholic

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# Taoiseach urged to retract 'slow learners' comment

Outdated language  
has no place  
says disability  
theologian

Chai Brady

An Irish theologian who advocates for persons living with a disability has said that comments from the Taoiseach describing political opponents as "slow learners" amounts to a slur on people with a learning disability.

Dr Liam Waldron described as "completely unacceptable" the Taoiseach's description of Sinn Féin policies as "politics for slow learners".

Mayo-born Dr Waldron, who lectures at Robert Gordon University in Scotland, warned the language used by the Taoiseach implied that people with a learning disability "are incapable of making informed political decisions" and that Mr Varadkar seemed to be equating certain political beliefs with a disability.

Mr Varadkar made the comments in an interview in reference to Sinn Féin's policy changes on the Special Criminal Court and Ireland's relationship with the European Union (EU).

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## Trócaire's game changers



Pictured at the 2023 Trócaire Game Changers and Right Focus Competitions are the Game Changers Youth Winners: Foróige, Blanchardstown, Co. Dublin, Daniel Sulyma, Darcy Macgillivray, Aoife Noone, Isabelle Macgillivray, Nicolas Pasich Carrara and Maia Pasich Carrara with their game 'Ethiopia Aid' which focused on NGO's and humanitarian disasters. Photo: Mark Stedman

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# A small group of people can't continue to carry the entire parish

One of the good-natured grumbles I hear from priests about Pope Francis is the quip that it wasn't the Argentine Pontiff who invented being nice to people.

What do they mean when they say this? Well, the fact is that the overwhelming majority of priests – almost to a man, I would say – are other-centred people who want their parishes and the Church in general to be a place where everyone can find a place.

If you think back to the reason why one would become a priest in the first-place, it is by-and-large because one has a pastoral and a passionate belief that the life-changing power of the Gospel is good for people.

Sometimes you'd get the impression from some of the superficial reporting around Pope Francis that what he says about ensuring the Church is a welcoming place and an open place is new. It isn't, of course – it is central to the Gospel.

But, that's not to say people have always experienced it as such. God knows there are many people who have experienced both the Church and sometimes our image of God as cold and judgemental.

### Mirrored

Too often we have mirrored more the actions of the scribes and pharisees rather than the gentle Good Shepherd.

We all want our parishes and churches to be field hospitals where people in need of God's mercy can readily find a repository of that mercy.

But, if we're honest in a parish, one of our greatest struggles is to hold the tension between being a community that is welcome to all and being a community that has a set of shared values, beliefs and a common purpose.

When I speak in parishes around the country, the same things come up time and again: how can we be a more welcoming community? Certainly, the example of Pope Francis is

key around this. He models a form of pastoral ministry that 'goes out' and is ever-ready to accompany people. This is after the example of Christ, and a wonderful model of priesthood to be emulated.

But, in the lived reality of parish life there is the fact that the priest and parish pastoral council has to deal with life where it is, not always as we would like it to be.

**“There were immediate howls that Fr Magill was being unwelcoming to people when really, he was only pointing to the fact that if it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a community to run a parish”**

Take, for example, the fact that in many parishes – far too many – all of the volunteering responsibilities fall to the same small group of people. A priest told me recently how a parishioner complained to him that it was always the same people involved in every group in the parish. “They'd be in the crib if they could, Father” the parishioner said. “Why don't you get involved, it would be lovely to see a new face?” the priest enquired. “Oh, I wouldn't have time,” was the reply before the parishioner went on their way. It reminded me of Chesterton's observation that “the reformer is always right about what's wrong. However, he's often wrong about what is right.”

I've been thinking about it this week after Fr Martin Magill was unfairly criticised by some people for pointing out that in his own parish in Belfast it is the same small group of volunteers who

## Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



ensure that everything runs smoothly, while other people simply avail of the parish as if they were service-users of any other public utility. Most, he said, don't even make a small donation for the upkeep of the parish.

Of course, there were immediate howls that Fr Magill was being unwelcoming to people when really, he was only pointing to the fact that if it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a community to run a parish.

### Dilemma

It is a dilemma for priests – and one that is evident in discussions about sacramental preparation as well. Canon Law stipulates that for baptism to be conferred, there must be a reasonable hope that the child will be raised in the Faith. How often do priests know there is no chance whatsoever? And yet, we believe in the grace of the

sacraments so we believe that the Holy Spirit is working in and through this situation.

The challenge, I think, is to ask more from people without turning faith or commitment to the parish into something that is burdensome. It has been clear for some time that we can't keep going the way we are with a small minority of people keeping the show on the road for everyone else.

Time and again in the Scriptures, Christ presents a faith that is both consoling and challenging.

We need to be able to meet people where they are at, but also to help them move along the road of becoming intentional disciples – people who want to cultivate a friendship with God for whom the parish is the conduit of grace.

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## Taoiseach urged to retract 'slow learners' comment

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“This kind of language brings us way back to the days when people who have what we now call learning differences or learning disabilities were really regarded as not being capable of self-direction,” Dr Waldron told *The Irish Catholic*.

A spokesperson for the Taoiseach said that in his remark about slow learners he “was clearly using the well-known and oft-quoted remark of [SDLP negotiator] Séamus Mallon than the Good Friday Agreement was Sunningdale for slow learners”.

However, Dr Waldron said that even if the remark was a throwaway comment “someone ‘in that position should be very careful about language – we're all very aware of language because it is very powerful. I think that is something that needs to be addressed and I think he should withdraw it,” he said.

He added: “I think it is completely unacceptable,” particularly as Mr Varadkar is a trained medical professional.

Calling on the Taoiseach to withdraw the remark, the theologian said: “there is nothing more admirable than somebody saying ‘that is a term that is completely outdated, we don't use that anymore and I certainly wouldn't use that language, it's not what I meant’, I think that would be very refreshing to be honest.

“I think that, on reflection, someone who uses that phrase should just be brave and take it back,” Dr Waldron said.

In the interview with *The Irish Examiner*, the Taoiseach said of Sinn Féin: “I do think the policy changes that they are making in recent times are significant.

“Watching Sinn Féin, it is like politics for slow learners sometimes. I think it was Séamus Mallon who famously described the Good Friday Agreement as Sunningdale for slow learners because Sinn Féin finally accepted democracy and peace and power sharing and consent,” the Taoiseach said.

**“In the lived reality of parish life there is the fact that the priest and parish pastoral council has to deal with life where it is, not always as we would like it to be.**

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# Raheny schools to stay under Catholic patronage after heated debate

Ruadhán Jones

**T**hree schools in Raheny are to stay under Catholic patronage after heated debate in the North Dublin community, and despite the lobbying of a local TD.

The three schools took part in a pilot scheme that investigated local interest for divestment, but Minister for Education Norma Foley confirmed they were “not amenable to or potential candidates for transfer of patronage”.

As the level of demand was not sufficient, the Raheny schools will remain under Catholic patronage, Ms Foley confirmed following a question from TD Seán Haughey in the Dáil.

The three Catholic schools, which share the same campus, were: a coeducational junior school, Naíscóil Íde, a senior girls school, Scoil Aine and a senior boys' school, Scoil Assaim.

Discussions on divestment,

which took place in Autumn last year, involved parents and others with interest in the schools and became heated, *The Irish Catholic* understands.

A minority of parents took a hard line in pushing for divestment, this paper understands, while parents feared that the school would be forced to change its ethos.

**“No one on either side of the debate feels their views were heard. There is a huge amount of confusion around it”**

Ultimately somewhere around 80% of parents who gave their views wanted to keep the school's Catholic ethos.

The move to remain under Catholic patronage comes despite the lobbying of local TD's, including Labour's Aodhán O'Riordáin.

He has previously

described the pilot scheme as flawed and “patently not fair”.

Speaking about the consultation that took place in Raheny, North Dublin city, Mr O'Riordáin said the process “has led to incredible division and an uncomfortable feeling around the whole discussion”, *The Irish Catholic* reported on April 6.

“No one on either side of the debate feels their views were heard. There is a huge amount of confusion around it.”

Some 63 schools across the country participated in the pilot scheme, a joint project between the Department for Education and the Irish bishops' conference.

The reports on the schools were due to be released at the end of March, but Minister Foley has yet to do so.

This paper understands that the vast majority of schools favour retaining their Catholic patronage, leading to speculation that the reports' release are being delayed as they reflect an unpopular political opinion.

## Lord bless this land...



Deacon Leonard Cleary, director of services with responsibility for tourism in Clare County Council, blesses the Cliffs of Moher as the congregation pray for the 1.6 million people who visit the cliffs each year. Mass was celebrated by Fr Martin Shanahan, with Fr Tom Ryan and Fr Martin Blake, on Thursday, May 18.

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# NI diocese plans ahead as only 24 priests left in 20 years

**Chai Brady**

Lay people will increasingly be asked to step up to the plate in one of Ireland's largest diocese as priest numbers are expected to fall to dramatically.

The Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Down and Connor will say this Sunday that "very soon" it's likely

the celebration of a Requiem Mass will "no longer be the norm". Instead lay women and men will be called to take a much bigger role in helping families prepare for funerals and lead prayers at graves.

Bishop Donal McKeown, in a pastoral letter 'Be part of God's amazing dream!' seen by *The Irish Catholic* to be released on Pentecost Sunday, May 28, will call on the

Faithful of the diocese to "collaborate alongside priests and deacons to build and renew the Church".

Currently the diocese has 86 parishes and 146 churches, with 84 priests in active ministry. There are seven priests aged under 40.

The diocese estimates that in 10 years the number of priests in active ministry will halve and for the first time

in Down and Connor – in the next 15 years – there will be more retired priests than priests in active ministry. In 20 years, it is forecast only 24 priests will be available for all the diocese's parishes.

The diocese is currently following a process of discernment called 'Pathways for the Future' started by Bishop Noel Treanor before he was appointed Apostolic Nuncio

to the European Union. It is supported by a steering committee of clergy, parishioners, and diocesan staff.

Bishop McKeown will ask the diocese to "reflect seriously" on customary practices and "unsustainable expectations, considering new ways of being parish and celebrating faith".

The letter also states: "Being called by name lies at

the heart of our identity as baptised people. Baptism is not merely an entry point to other sacraments. It is making ourselves available to be used for God's greater glory and for the salvation of the world. The acceptance of Baptism says that our first vocation is to become saints, dying to ourselves so that Christ's new life can be born in us. Ministry is a calling for all of us."

## Proposed bus route change 'a disaster' for Rathmines parish

**Ruadhán Jones**

A proposed change to traffic access on a bus route in Rathmines will be a "a disaster" for elderly parishioners and those with mobility issues, the parish priest has warned.

A 'bus gate' – a length of road open only to busses, taxis and cyclists – outside Rathmines parish church would be "a disaster" and "could lead to an

impoverishment of the services we provide as well as the church becoming redundant over time," Fr Andrew O'Sullivan told parishioners.

The proposed bus gate is part of changes to the Tempogue/Rathfarnham to city centre bus corridor.

It would "impact in a negative way" funerals, weddings, Baptisms and other celebration as there would be no access for cars, Fr O'Sullivan said

May 19.

"The elderly, invalids, and those with mobility issues, would be impacted negatively too," the parish priest of the Church of Mary Immaculate Refuge of Sinners said.

He pleaded with parishioners and friends of Rathmines "not to sit on your hands, but rather help us by actively objecting to this proposal".

He added that he was expressing

no view on the proposed bus corridor, but on the 'bus gate' proposal "which has made no allowances for us to function as a church".

Submissions/observations on this scheme may be made up to 5pm on June 20, 2023, at [www.pleanala.ie/en-ie/observations](http://www.pleanala.ie/en-ie/observations) or by post to An Bord Pleanála (Strategic Infrastructure Division), 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### World's oldest Hebrew Bible sells for nearly \$40 million

The world's oldest and most complete Hebrew Bible has sold for just over \$38 million, which is one of the highest prices ever paid for a book or document sold at auction.

The winning bid for the 'Codex Sassoon' was made by Alfred H. Moses, a former US ambassador and president of the American Jewish Committee, who is giving it to the ANU Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv, Israel.

The Codex Sassoon, which was written around the year 900, is named after a previous owner, David Solomon Sassoon, who acquired the Bible in 1929 and assembled one of the most significant collections of Judaica and Hebraica manuscripts of the 20th Century.

### Clonfert launches new pastoral areas

Clonfert diocese has launched three new faith community areas, which will group the diocese's 24 parishes around the towns of Loughrea, Ballinasloe and Portlanna.

The pastoral areas will share priests, personnel, resources and talents "over time", said Bishop Michael Duignan.

The future provision of lay ministers, priests and Mass schedules, among others, will be shaped by the faith community area focus, the bishop added on May 16.

The areas were designed by the Clonfert diocesan parish restructuring and development committee, made up of a group of priests and laity.

Chair of the committee Fr Iomar Daniels said the pastoral areas were drawn up to "keep the faith alive in our parish communities".

## Oscar-winning James Martin to be honoured by Ulster University

**Jason Osborne**

Belfast actor James Martin is set to be recognised for his contribution to the arts by Ulster University.

Star of the Oscar-winning Northern

Irish short film, *An Irish Goodbye*, Mr Martin is the first person with Down's Syndrome to win film's biggest award.

Responding to the news of his Honorary Doctorate, James said: "I will be delighted to receive this Honorary Doctorate from Ulster University in

recognition of my contribution to *An Irish Goodbye*.

"We had a great team working on the movie which told a universal story that people really connected with and enjoyed watching. The impact it has had on people with learning difficul-

ties has been very positive," he said.

Ulster University recently hosted Mr Martin during US President Joe Biden's visit, during which President Biden paid tribute to the young actor, saying that he was going to "brag to my daughter" about meeting James.

## Benedictines explore St Patrick...



Benedictine monks from Holy Cross Abbey Rostervor enjoy hospitality at the Saint Patrick Centre Café on Thursday, May 18, having toured the centre in Downpatrick, Co. Down. The monks are pictured with Dean Henry Hull and centre director Dr Tim Campbell.



# Sexual violence report – why such high statistics?

**W**hat are we to make of the appalling report from the Central Statistics Office that a quarter of adult women in Ireland have experienced sexual violence from a partner?

**“The online acceptance of casual relationships must surely be a risk factor”**

According to the Sexual Violence Survey 2022, over half of the victims had been violently assaulted more than once. Violence occurred more frequently to single people than to those who were married. And graduates were victims more often than to those with lower educational attainments – 34% of those with third-level education reported having experienced sexual violence as opposed to just 6% of those with less education.

The pub, the club or the disco emerged as the most likely location for such violent episodes. (Men experienced sexual violence too – but only 6% of victims were male. More than half of bisexual people reported higher levels of sexual violence, running at 55%.)

It is always difficult to discern whether distressing statistics like these emerge from a greater



**Mary Kenny**

awareness and readiness to report such incidents; or whether there is currently an alarming amount of sexual violence in society at large.

## Contemporary life

But some of the conditions of contemporary life may well prompt or endorse the prevalence of sexual violence. One, surely, is the easy availability of pornography. A survey by the Children's Commissioner in the UK earlier this year reported that the average age at which a youngster sees on-line pornography is 13; and 10% start seeing porn at age 9. The UK report emphasised that “early exposure and frequent consumption” of porn leads to “harmful attitudes and behaviours”. Much of this online porn focuses on sexual violence.

The online acceptance of casual relationships must surely be a risk factor. There was a reason why traditions of courtship once involved a test of character, whereby someone's personality became apparent before any relationship became intimate or committed.

Since pubs and clubs are mentioned as the locations of assault, drink and drugs

must be part of the picture.

And I wonder if the emphasis on equality between the sexes lacks realistic perspective? Yes, men and women are intellectually equal and have equal rights before the law: but males are, everywhere, more risk-taking than females, more likely to be reckless and to invite danger. While women – as rape and assault statistics show – are more physically vulnerable, and on common-sense grounds, need to be more prudent.

**“This shocking report should be met with a probing, honest analysis of some of the reasons why so much sexual violence occurs”**

Bad things have always happened, but a civilised society strives to prevent assault and battery. This shocking report should be met with a probing, honest analysis of some of the reasons why so much sexual violence occurs.



## McQuaid meets a feisty nun...

Anecdotes about Archbishop John Charles McQuaid are legendary, and I seem to encounter ever more of them. The most recent story arises in the writer A.N. Wilson's affecting memoir *Confessions – a Life of Failed Promises*. Andrew Wilson's primary school was a Staffordshire convent, where he was taught by a wonderful Dominican nun Sr Mary Mark, whom he revered. Sr Mary had also encouraged a clever young Irish pupil, Mary O'Donnell, to apply to Trinity College Dublin, and the student was admitted with flying colours.

But back came a missive from John Charles in which

he informed the nun that he would excommunicate this Catholic student if she attended TCD. He would also excommunicate the entire convent of nuns in Stone, Staffordshire, for encouraging Catholic girls to apply to this Protestant foundation.

Sr Mary Mark composed a letter in her elegant Italic hand, “pointing out to the archbishop that his jurisdiction did not stretch beyond the archdiocese of Dublin, let alone across the Irish Sea to Staffordshire”. The young student went to Trinity, and became a very successful graduate.

This Staffordshire nun – a grand-daughter of the

great Italian actress Eleonora Duse – was the second Dominican sister to square up to John Charles. Our brilliant late historian Margaret MacCurtain – Sr Benvenuta OP – also famously refused Dr McQuaid's order that she submit her UCD history notes to him. Sr Ben pointed out that she and her prioress answered to Rome, not to the Dublin diocese.

John Charles McQuaid did many good things during his stewardship, and his own pupils spoke warmly of him as a teacher, but he did like to extend his control. It took a feisty nun – or two – to point out the limits of his reach.

● The famous Chelsea Flower Show in London this year features weeds, wildness, nettles, brambles, and dandelions. The tidy herbaceous border garden is now well out of fashion: the ‘re-wilded’ garden is the vogue. Even rubble and bits of old corrugated iron are acceptable parts of garden displays.

Delighted to learn that I am now completely on-trend, with a small garden run amok with all kinds of wildflowers, ferns, grasses and weeds. And a by-product of my gardening neglect is constant, beautiful birdsong.



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### Dr. Eugene Duffy

Is a priest of the diocese of Achonry and Episcopal Vicar for Pastoral Renewal and Development; formerly lecturer in Theology and Religious Studies at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick.

### Prof. Massimo Faggioli

Professor of Historical Theology Villanova University USA. He is also a columnist for *La Croix International*, and contributing writer to *Commonweal*.

### Prof. Myriam Wijlens

Professor of Canon Law Erfurt Germany. She is a member of The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, an advisor to ARCIC III and a Co-Moderator of the Peter and Paul Seminar.

### Prof. Eamonn Conway

Is a priest of Tuam archdiocese and Professor of Integral Human Development in the School of Philosophy & Theology, University of Notre Dame Australia.

### Mr. Christopher Lamb

Is a British journalist who is the Rome correspondent for *The Tablet*. He is a contributor to the Vatican Insider page of *La Stampa* and a regular commentator for the BBC on Vatican and religious affairs.

### Dr Gemma Simmonds CJ

Is a sister of the Congregation of Jesus, director of the Religious Life Institute and senior lecturer in pastoral theology at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, Cambridge. She teaches Christian spirituality at the Cambridge Theological Federation.

### Prof. Maria Cimperman RSCJ

Is the Associate Professor of Catholic Theological Ethics. Founding Director, Center for the Study of Consecrated Life (2014-2022) and Associate Professor of Consecrated Life Catholic Theological Union (Chicago, USA).

### Prof. Vimal Tirimanna CSsR

Is Professor of Moral Theology at the National Seminary of Our Lady of Lanka, Kandy, Sri Lanka and the Pontifical Alphonsian Academy, Rome.



# Aontú looks to the future following NI election disappointment

**Jason Osborne**

Deputy leader of pro-life party Aontú in the North, Gemma Brolly has expressed regret following disappointment in the recent local elections.

Sinn Féin was the big winner of the election, and is now the largest party in both local government and Stormont for the first time after making huge gains.

With all seats counted, the party has won 144, up from the 105 councillors returned in 2019.

Aontú received a 0.9% share of the vote, down 0.2% from 2019's 1.1%. Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Ms Brolly said that she believed Aontú's loss was Sinn Féin's gain.

"We were shocked and disappointed, and unfortunately, as much as council elections

should be based locally, they really weren't. I think people took that drive to punish the DUP and that went to voting Sinn Féin," she said.

After losing her seat, former deputy leader of Aontú, Moy-based Denise Mullen also affirmed that the election took an adversarial shape between Sinn Féin and the DUP, and that that was to the disadvantage of smaller parties such as Aontú.

Both Ms Brolly and Ms Mullen agreed that Aontú is a "party of principle" and that now they have a chance to focus on local work for the next elections.

"I have to say now that the dust has settled, as deputy leader, I'm very positive. We've had four years, we're only four years old and we've had election after election thrown at us. I'm very well aware we

have elections coming up in the south, but here in the North we now have four years to do what we want to do - we'll take from what's happened, but we'll now strategically plan forward," Ms Brolly said.

"I felt as deputy leader I didn't even really get a chance to embody that role, as I was so busy fighting an election, so to be honest, I'm quite excited now."

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Cork diocese gathers to discuss future

The Faithful of Cork and Ross will gather to discuss the diocese's future reorganisation over Pentecost weekend, with Bishop Fintan Gavin saying closer collaboration between laity and clergy is needed.

Bishop Gavin has invited Julian Stanz, a married woman and mother of three, to lead two gatherings where she will share her experience from working with parishes across America.

Ms Stanz will address two gatherings on the weekend of Pentecost Sunday on Saturday May 27 in the Celtic Ross Hotel, Rosscarbery or the second gathering on Sunday May 28 in Clayton Silversprings Conference Centre, Tivoli.

"There will be a time of prayer, reflection and fellowship as we gather to build a shared vision for our Families of Parishes in the diocese," Bishop Gavin said in a letter to parishes.

## Shared education funding cuts 'detrimental' to young people

**Ruadhán Jones**

Catholic and Protestant schools' bodies in the North have expressed "deep disappointment" at cuts to shared education initiatives, despite their "clear benefits".

Shared education projects bring staff and pupils from different religious backgrounds together on a regu-

lar basis, but funding will be halved this year and cease entirely from 2024 under Stormont's 2023-24 budget.

The Catholic Council for Maintained Schools is "very concerned" about the financial pressures placed on schools by the budget.

Funding reductions mean "successful programmes" like shared education will cease, a spokeswoman for the CCMS told *The Irish Catholic*.

They are calling for additional funding to be allocated to the education sector in light of "the clear benefits" young people gain from involvement in shared education and other programmes.

The cuts to shared education funding will be to the detriment "not only of children and young people, but also to good relations across society", according to a Protestant schools body, the Transferor Representatives Council

(TRC).

The TRC is "deeply disappointed" by the cuts, and concerned "about this direction of travel, not least because of the endemic underfunding of the education system in recent years", a spokesperson said.

The TRC oversees the appointment of governors to Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches' schools.

## Irish WWI chaplain honoured by English college

**Chai Brady**

An Irish World War I military chaplain has been honoured by a college in England after they named their new English centre after him.

Servant of God Fr Willie Doyle SJ, whose cause for saint-

hood has been opened, was killed in action while assisting soldiers. He ministered to the 8th Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers and died at the Battle of Passchendaele in August 1917.

A group working for his beatification and canonisation, the Father Willie Doyle

Association, welcomed the decision of Ratcliffe College, Leicestershire.

The building contains nine classrooms and will be known as the Fr William Doyle English Centre. Fr Doyle was a student at Ratcliffe College from 1884 until 1890.

Speaking at the official

opening, the president of the association Dr Patrick Kenny said: "The teenage years have a profound impact on all of us, and it is clear that Fr Doyle's spirit and priestly ministry were shaped by his experience at Ratcliffe.

"It was at Ratcliffe that his decision to become a priest

matured. The college must have had a warm place in his heart. This is the very first building in the world to be named in Fr Doyle's honour, and we are sure that Fr Doyle's good humour, sincere holiness and selfless heroism will inspire future generations of students at Ratcliffe," he said.

### 'Speak truth with love' online, prelate says

Social media can create a "toxic and hurtful environment" and people should consider their use of online platforms, according to the Primate of All Ireland and Archbishop of Armagh.

In a message on the World Day of Social Communications, May 21, Archbishop Eamon Martin echoed Pope Francis' call challenging people to "always speak the truth with love".

He said: "It is worth thinking this week about our own use of online platforms: our likes, our retweets, the opinions we share, including the images or gifs that pretend to be funny.

"Apart from the times when information can be widely shared which is blatantly false and defamatory, there are so many other comments about people's looks, or failings, mistakes or faults that lack any kind of mercy or understanding of human weakness and frailty."

## End of an era...



The nuns from the Sisters of St Clare Order in Kerry have departed Kenmare after more than 160 years. In a special ceremony at Holy Cross Church Kenmare, on Sunday, May 21 presided by Fr George Hayes, the Sisters from Kenmare and across Ireland, gathered for a final farewell celebration. Pictured are Mother Abbess Julie McGoldrick (centre), Sr Maureen O'Dea, Sr Anne Kelly, Sr Zita Daly, Sr Concepta Looney, Sr Karen Small and Sr Mercedes Coen. Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan.



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## Niamh Uí Bhriain

### The View



# People should be consulted on migration

In March of last year, emails between senior officials in several Government departments discussing the preparations necessary for a surge in the number of people arriving in Ireland who would need accommodation, were released under the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act.

The expected newcomers under discussion in that instance were Ukrainian people displaced by the war, but an interesting point was made in regard to the huge challenges the country was facing in providing housing, in particular, to so many people.

**“Most people feel a great deal of compassion for anyone, especially women and children and older people, fleeing war”**

“Have we brought our current citizens on board with the scale of what they are about to face?” asked one senior policy co-ordinator. It was a vitally important question, because the Government should always consider both the resources available and the wishes of its own people in making decisions which have a huge impact on the country in which we all live.

But that is not what happened. Almost 14 months later, it is fair to say that the current immigration policy - or lack thereof - has proved a disaster, and has been based on what seems to be a deliberate decision to avoid consulting local people ahead of moving hundreds of strangers into their communities.

Most people feel a great deal of compassion for anyone, especially women and children and older people, fleeing war. But three things happened at once which should have been foretold by those making decisions on policy - especially given

that these outcomes were driven by reckless Government actions or their failures to tackle current deficits in the country.

Firstly, and most obviously, refusing to put a cap on the number of people one small country could take has exacerbated the already-pressing housing crisis.

It is pure folly, given the record level of homelessness and the critical rental shortage in Ireland, to insist - and even now to continue insisting - that Ireland cannot cap the number of people coming here for all sorts of reasons, some genuinely seeking asylum, and others being economic migrants.

Secondly, Roderic O’Gorman, as Minister for Integration, decided to tweet out to the world his plan to provide asylum seekers with their ‘own-door’ accommodation and “wrap-around supports, healthcare and education” - helpfully posting the generous offer in multiple languages.

### Asylum

This was followed by a huge surge in the number of people coming to Ireland to claim asylum. Figures from the International Protection Office (IPO) show that huge numbers of those arriving here are coming, not from war-zones like Ukraine, but from countries like Georgia, Nigeria, and Algeria.

This is absurd. Yet, once people claim asylum, they are in the system and the State must provide housing, medical cards and much else.

Obviously, many of the asylum claims are bogus. The International Protection Appeals Tribunal has said that 84% of claims for asylum by Algerians were rejected on appeal, as were 75% of asylum claims made by arrivals from Georgia, and 74% of claims by Albanians.

But the system is ridiculously slow to get to that point of a tribunal hearing, and the State rarely carries out deportation orders in

any case. Then there is the alarming fact that thousands of migrants arriving to claim asylum here have lost or destroyed their documents - meaning that local people, who are being told they must welcome the new arrivals, literally have no idea if said arrivals are who they say they are.

Then, thirdly, the Government has decided to behave in the most high-handed and arrogant fashion possible towards local communities who are expected to bear the brunt of the calamitously ill-thought asylum system which has now loaded an unmanageable burden onto housing and healthcare systems creaking at the seams.

Local people, the people who live in an area, and who very often have roots in that locality going back generations, absolutely have a right to be part of the decision-making regarding what happens in their own community. Polls have repeatedly shown that most people feel that there is a limit to the number of migrants the country can provide for.

Locals also know that capacity - locally and nationally - is already stretched beyond limits: so that the arrival of hundreds of men into a small village where facilities have already closed due to decades of neglect, and where GPs and other services are already backed up, is simply unsustainable.

This has now led to protests and blockades, and that has happened because the Government, knowing full well that the local people would have objections, decided to impose migrant centres on mostly rural or already-disadvantaged communities without even discussing it with them.

And the same Government then uses the media and NGO complex to label and bully and disparage the people who are understandably upset at the lack of consultation and the arrogance of politicians - who are, of course, not being inconvenienced in any way



Residents have called off their protest in Inch, Co. Clare.

by the outcomes of their disastrous policies.

As I have pointed out repeatedly, the pretence that Ireland can accept an unlimited number of immigrants is also tremendously unfair to the people coming here who have been led to believe that housing and services can be endlessly provided in a country which seems to be rapidly coming apart at the seams.

**“At the very least our own citizens, in Inch and elsewhere, who are bearing the brunt of the Government’s recklessness, should be consulted”**

We are all called to help those suffering and in peril. But we are also entitled to have defined borders and to an immigration policy that makes sense - in order to protect both Irish people and those vulnerable to ruthless people smugglers and to exploitative employment practices.

At the very least our own citizens, in Inch and elsewhere, who are bearing the brunt of the Government’s recklessness, should be consulted. This country belongs to the people of Ireland. It’s past time for those in power to remember that.

## LOURDES FROM YOUR LOCAL AIRPORT



### IRELAND WEST AIRPORT KNOCK

JUNE 2nd  
AUGUST 10th, 19th, 23rd, 29th  
SEPTEMBER 1st

### SHANNON AIRPORT

JUNE 17th, 22nd, 27th  
OCTOBER 2nd

### CORK AIRPORT

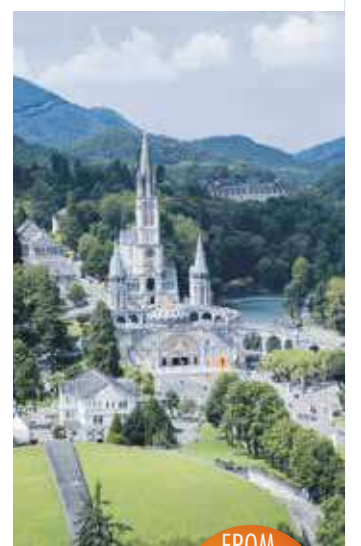
JUNE 2nd  
AUGUST 3rd  
SEPTEMBER 17th, 22nd, 27th

### BELFAST AIRPORT

JULY 11th, 12th

### CITY OF DERRY AIRPORT

JULY 3rd, 7th



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**“Figures from the International Protection Office (IPO) show that huge numbers of those arriving here are coming, not from war-zones like Ukraine, but from countries like Georgia, Nigeria, and Algeria”**



# Climate change targeted by Trócaire competition winners

Jason Osborne

Students from Dublin and Limerick scooped the top prizes on Monday as part of the 2023 Trócaire Game Changers and Right Focus competition.

Trócaire Game Changers is an annual competition that invites students to create a development education game that focuses on one or more of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Students played and judged the games of fellow finalists at Monday's event.

This year's competition received over 223 entries from all over Ireland, with a final selection of 26 board, digital and card games – based on different themes including climate change, gender equality and education, refugee journeys and ocean pollution – making it through to the finals in DCU's Helix Centre in Dublin May 22.

The three overall winners in each of the categories were:

**Primary Category:** Nicker National School, Old Palla, Co. Limerick with their board-game 'River Run' which aims to raise awareness about the SDGs.

**Post Primary:** Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin with their game 'A Blob's Rights' exploring human rights.

**Youth Category:** Foróige, Blanchardstown, Co. Dublin with their game 'Ethiopia Aid' which focused on NGO's and humanitarian disasters.

Trócaire's Director of Ireland Programmes, Gwen Dempsey, said at the event: "One of Trócaire's aims is to connect, engage and mobilise people to act together for change. Game Changers and The Right Focus are a perfect example of this. All of the young people who have taken part in this programme not only learn about global justice issues themselves but also become peer educators. The quality of the games and documentaries they created was outstanding.

"By working together, we can bring about real and positive lasting change and the amazing interest these young people have shown in issues of social justice is both humbling and heartening," Ms Dempsey said.



Pictured at the 2023 Trócaire Game Changers and Right Focus Competitions are the Winners of the Post Primary Game Changers Award: Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan.



The Game Changers Youth Winners: Foróige, Blanchardstown, Co. Dublin Daniel Sulyma, Darcy Macgillivray, Aoife Noone, Isabelle Macgillivray, Nicolas Pasich Carrara and Maia Pasich Carrara with their game 'Ethiopia Aid' which focused on NGO's and humanitarian disasters. Photos: Mark Stedman



The Winners of the Post Primary Game Changers Award: Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan students Aoife Langley, Orla Carroll, Molly Smyth, Iris Solana-Jimenez and Deirbhle Geoghagan with their game 'A Blob's Right' which explores human rights.



The Winners of the Primary Game Changers Award: Nicker National School, Old Pallas, Co. Limerick students Fionn Kelly, Sam Fraher, Keeva Gleeson, Molly Dillon, Lily McPhail, Anita McMahon, Ellie Bourke, Anne Fennessy with their innovative, interactive boardgame 'River Run' which aims to raise awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



# Only 47pc of eligible couples availing of Catholic marriage

Jason Osborne

**T**he Central Statistics Office (CSO) has released its data for marriages in 2022, and it makes for very interesting reading for those interested in the faith landscape of modern Ireland.

There were 22,555 opposite-sex marriages in total in Ireland in 2022, with 19,672 of these being first-time marriages in the State. The CSO's official webpage for the 2022 marriage data says that Catholic ceremonies accounted for 42% of opposite-sex marriages, but a closer look reveals that the 9,376 couples who chose to marry in the Catholic Church accounted for 47% of those who were eligible to marry in the Church – that is, those marrying for the first time.

## Popular

Catholic ceremonies remain the most popular form of marriage in Ireland, followed by civil ceremonies, of which 5,767 took place last year, which accounted for 26% of all opposite-sex

marriages. Together then, Catholic and civil marriages accounted for 68% of all marriage ceremonies, which represents a fairly significant decline from the 2014 total of 87% of all marriage ceremonies.

**“The CSO's marriage data for 2012 revealing that of the 20,713 marriages registered that year, there were 13,497 Catholic marriage ceremonies (65%)”**

Meanwhile, humanist ceremonies accounted for 9%, or 2,053, of all opposite-sex marriages.

The data revealed that there were 23,173 legal unions during 2022, which represented an increase of 35% on the previous year, when lockdowns and other Covid restrictions were still in force.

There has been a steady decline of Catholic marriages in Ireland over the decades, with the CSO's marriage data for 2012 revealing that of the 20,713 marriages registered that year, there were 13,497 Catholic marriage ceremonies (65%).

## Decline

A decline in the number of Catholic marriages is to be expected alongside the general decline in the presence of the Catholic Church in the lives of many in Ireland. As alternatives become more popular, such as the humanist ceremonies mentioned above, it is likely that this will snowball and couples who previously would have opted for a Catholic marriage out of convention will opt instead for these.

What is to be done about this? Well, leaving aside the wider question of how a missionary Church ought to engage with a culture that feels it's “been there, done that” with regards to Catholicism, there are a number of things that could be done to

attract couples into engagement with the Church around the time of their marriage. While some may view this approach as tokenistic, a mere attempt to bump up numbers, a priest I spoke to recently said that it's important we're ready to meet couples where they're at and hopefully encourage them to continue along the road to Christ themselves by our witness.

**“The US archdiocese of Baltimore is experimenting with outdoor and other locations for weddings, which would likely see an increase in interest from couples who otherwise might not consider the Church”**

As reported in this paper recently, increasing awareness that the Sacrament of Marriage

can take place as its own rite, without requiring the celebration of the Eucharist (as is commonly done in countries such as Brazil) could help couples who feel alienated to come forward into re-engagement with the Church, where they could be met and hopefully accompanied into greater engagement with Christ.

## Experimenting

Meanwhile, the US archdiocese of Baltimore is experimenting with outdoor and other locations for weddings, which would likely see an increase in interest from couples who otherwise might not consider the Church. To reiterate, this brainstorming ought not to be undertaken with an eye to merely “bumping up” the number of Catholic marriages, but out of a desire to bring couples estranged from the Church back into a pastoral orbit, that they might be accompanied into fuller communion with Christ.

## THE SYNODAL TIMES



MAY  
2023 ISSUE

One year on from the Synodal Listening process, Editor Garry O'Sullivan pleads with Irish Archbishop Eamonn Martin as Chair of the Irish Bishops Conference to try unite the Irish bishops and their priests if the national synod in Ireland is to have a chance. He calls for professional change managers to be employed and for resources to be deployed for any chance of a synodal success story. New wine for new wine skins he says.

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# Father Peyton Centre

The Father Peyton Centre in Attymass, County Mayo, is a place of pilgrimage for those who seek spiritual guidance and inspiration. Dedicated to the memory of Venerable Patrick Peyton, the Irish-born Catholic priest who became famous around the world for his devotion to the Rosary and his message of family unity.

**“Although he had not fully completed his studies he was given permission to be ordained with his brother in 1941”**

Patrick Peyton was born in 1909 in the small village of Attymass and grew up in a devoutly Catholic family. He dreamed from an early age of joining the priesthood. When he was nineteen years old, he and his brother Tom emigrated to Scranton in the United States to join their sisters. There, they were given the opportunity to continue their education and shared the job of sexton in Scranton Cathedral to support themselves. After completing high school, they moved to Indiana to continue their studies at Notre Dame University.

In his final year Patrick was diagnosed with TB, he was very weak, and his medical team gave him two options, an operation with very little chance of success or prayer.



He chose prayer. Within a short time, his health began to improve and to the astonishment of his doctors he made a steady recovery.

Although he had not fully completed his studies he was given permission to be ordained with his brother in 1941.

In thanks to Our Lady for his miraculous recovery he pledged to bring family prayer to ten million homes across America in her name.

Father Peyton believed that the family was the cornerstone of society, and that prayer was the key to family unity. Here recognized the power of radio to reach people in their homes and brought his message to the airwaves through his popular radio show, “The Family Theatre.” The stars of Hollywood gave their time and talents willingly to bring inspirational stories to life and the show was a huge success. Through the show, he encouraged families to

pray together and emphasized the importance of family prayer in a rapidly changing world. His work on radio helped to establish him as a leading figure in the Catholic Church and cemented his legacy as a champion of the family.

He held Rosary rallies in Canada and America drawing crowds of thousands, to listen to his message and pray together as a community. His message was simple and powerful: “The family that prays together stays together.”

Father Peyton’s work quickly spread around the world, and he soon became

known as the “Rosary Priest.” He founded the Family Rosary Crusade and continued to spread his message around the world.

The Father Peyton Centre in Attymass is a testament to Father Peyton’s legacy. Located in the small village where he was born and raised. Visitors can learn about Father Peyton’s life, his work, and his message of family prayer.

One of the highlights is a DVD presentation that tells his fascinating story, tour guides will tell the stories behind the personal items on display such as his beads, his vestments, and photographs.

Each Tuesday senior citizens from the surrounding area travel to the centre for Mass, lunch and social activities using the Local Link Bus Services.

**“The bookshop specializes in religious literature, as well as a selection of local interest books”**

The facilities provided for the locality are very much in demand and the centre strives to make everything as socially inclusive as possible.

There are several amenities, including a gift shop, bookshop, restaurant, guided tour, prayer garden and home baking available to visitors. The gift shop offers a variety of items, including souvenirs, religious items, and Irish-made gifts.

The bookshop specializes in religious literature, as well as a selection of local interest books.

There is also a large range of gifts and books dedicated to Venerable Patrick Peyton.

The restaurant prides itself on using locally sourced, fresh ingredients and offers a warm



and welcoming atmosphere. The dining room can cater to touring groups of fifty and is also the perfect place for a family occasion.

The home baking at the Father Peyton Centre is a must-try. Everyone enjoys the famous apple tarts and scones, made using traditional recipes and fresh ingredients.

As a starting point on three beautiful loop walks, all our services are available to walkers and cyclist enjoying the beauty of the local area.

The stunning gardens are a hidden gem and well worth a visit: a place for reflection and prayer while connecting with nature.

## Accommodation

Overnight accommodation is available on site with seven ensuite fully wheelchair accessible rooms. The Melody Residence, named for Father Peyton’s cousin Father William Melody who was a driving force behind the building and opening of the Centre, is the perfect place for a guided or self-guided retreat or just to escape to the peace and tranquillity of the beautiful gardens and countryside.

Programs and events are held throughout the year continuing the work of Venerable Patrick Peyton. Visitors can attend Mass and retreat days and the oratory is the perfect place for quiet prayer or fam-



ily Mass.

Youth retreats are tailored to meet the needs of a school whether for a First Holy Communion or Confirmation Class, students preparing for their Leaving Certificate or just for a school outing.

**“This year’s event takes place at Knock Shrine on Saturday the 3rd of June from 1pm”**

The day includes age-appropriate group activities and discussions, presentations by the Spiritual Director and his team, prayer, and music. The goal is for the students to have a positive experience that is conducive to helping them know themselves and those around them.

The Father Peyton Centre is a must-visit destination for anyone interested in the life and legacy of Father Patrick Peyton or anyone looking for

a peaceful, welcoming retreat. It is a place of inspiration and faith, where visitors can learn about the power of prayer and the importance of family unity. A fitting and beautiful tribute to a remarkable man.

The All Ireland Rosary Rally which is held annually in Knock also serves as a continuation of Father Peyton’s mission. The event allows people to come together to recite the Rosary, echoing Father Peyton’s teachings and honouring his commitment to family prayer.

His legacy lives on, as the All Ireland Rosary Rally continues to inspire and uplift participants, deepening their devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and reinforcing the importance of family prayer.

This year’s event takes place at Knock Shrine on Saturday the 3rd of June from 1pm.

The Rosary talk will be given by Bishop Oliver Doeme at the Basilica; the main celebrant will be Archbishop Eamon Martin.





# Confirmation in Trillick



Knocknagor Primary School pupils Daniel Grainger, Joel Harkin, Billy McElholm, Shaina-Rose McFadden, Aoife McLaughlin and Maciee McKinney with Principal Cara Donnelly, class teacher Mark McLaughlin, Bishop Larry Duffy, Kilskeery parish priest Fr Pdraig McKenna, Canon John McKenna and Fr Artie McCann.



Photos: Jason McCartan

St Scire's Primary School pupils with Principal Iggy Gallagher and P7 teacher Deborah McCarroll with Bishop Larry Duffy, Kilskeery parish priest Fr Pdraig McKenna, Canon John McKenna and Fr Artie McCann.



Blanaid and the McCann family.



Matthew and the Farry family.



Shaina-Rose McFadden and family.



Daithi and the McGurran family.



Billy McElholm and family.



Cousins Orlagh and Cahir Conway both made their Confirmation.



Niamh McNulty's big brother Daire pictured with her on her special day.



Maya Rose enjoyed her special day with brother Adrian and proud mum Edel.

## Catching the Fire



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# Out&About

## Cheerful new communicants



**KILDARE:** Students from Scoil Bhride Lackagh Monasterevin are pictured on their Communion day on May 14 at Ss Peter and Paul Church along with Fr Liam Merrigan, teachers Aine Kavanagh and Marion Keogh. Photo: Donal Harrison.



**DERRY:** Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown hands out roses on May 14, at the end of the Little Way novena to St Thérèse of Lisieux, held in St Eugene's Cathedral.



**DERRY:** The altar servers lead the procession into St Eugene's Cathedral for the final Mass of the Little Way novena. Photos: Stephen Latimer.

### IN SHORT

#### Ireland and North Macedonia have 'strong spiritual ties'

Ireland and North Macedonia have "strong spiritual ties", the Balkan country's foreign minister told Dáil Éireann, referencing the inspiring effect of Irish nuns on Mother Teresa.

"Many things and similarities connect North Macedonia and Ireland," Dr Bujar Osman said on May 10.

He added that it is "an honour for me to mention the renowned Mother Teresa who was born in Skopje in 1910".

She "felt strongly the call of God and at the age of 18 left her family and home and joined the Sisters of Loreto, an Irish community of nuns with missions in India", the North Mac-

edonian minister continued.

"After a few months' training in Dublin she was sent to India where, in 1931, she took her initial vows as a nun," Mr Osman said. "This is a deep spiritual bond that ties us together as small countries."

#### Catholic schools merge for £56 million campus

The North's Permanent Secretary at the Department of Education Dr Mark Browne accompanied Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin to cut the first sod of a new £56 million school for St Ronan's College, Lurgan.

St Ronan's College opened in September 2015 following the amalgamation of three post-primary Catholic schools in the Lurgan area, Co. Armagh, St Mary's High School, St Paul's Junior High School and St Michael's

Grammar School.

Dr Browne praised the "exciting project", describing it as the largest, single school build within the department's major capital programme.

"It will bring the school together as one single campus and give everyone involved with the school an opportunity to further build their unique identity and ethos," he added.

St Ronan's College has operated on a split since it was established in September 2015. These new works will accommodate up to 1,750 pupils and bring the school together on one single campus on the site of the former St Michael's Grammar School.

Dr Browne concluded: "I wish pupils, staff and school management every success as they set out on the next phase of their ambitious journey for their school."

Construction commenced on site in April 2023 with an anticipated completion in spring 2025.

#### Refugee camps destroyed in cyclone, says Concern

Cyclone Mocha, which battered the Bangladesh and Myanmar coasts, damaged nutrition centres, a stabilisation facility for sick children and bamboo shelters in the camp for almost one million displaced Rohingya people at Cox's Bazar, Irish charity Concern have warned.

Bangladeshi communities in the wider Cox's Bazar area were also counting the cost of the cyclone today. Three schools and 1,820 shelters were damaged. Over 6,700 gardens and a banana yard with 10,000 trees were destroyed.





**KILDARE:** Fr Liam Merrigan and Hashim are pictured after the first Communion Mass on May 14. Photo: Liz Fitzpatrick.



**CORK:** Abbie Murray, Gael Scoil Pheig Sayers, who received her Confirmation at Church of the Assumption, Blackpool, on May 9 is pictured with her parents Sean and Shirley Anne, grandparents Helen and Richard Kearney, sister Kasey and sponsor Toni Leahy. Photo: Mike English



**TIPPERARY:** Fr Tadhg Furlong PP Cappawhite is pictured with Hannah O'Connell of Ayle National School, after Hannah received her first Holy Communion at Our Lady of Fatima Church, Cappawhite, on the feast day of Our Lady of Fatima, May 13.



**CORK:** Class representatives at St Mary's High School, Midleton present a cheque on May 11 for €2,282.40, the proceeds of a number of fundraising events, to Trócaire's Janet Twomey (left). Also pictured are Anne Leahy Rooney, co-ordinator, Niamh O'Connor, deputy principal and Lydia Walsh. Photo: Mike English.



**ARMAGH:** Pictured at the cutting the first sod to officially mark the beginning of a new £56million school for St Ronan's College, Lurgan are (from left) Aidan Cassidy, Head Boy; Principal, Fiona Kane; Permanent Secretary at the Department of Education, Dr Mark Browne; Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin; and Olivia Murtagh, Head Girl.



**KILKENNY:** The children who hurled in Ossory diocese's annual diocesan U9 hurling and camogie blitz receive their medals from Bishop Niall Coll and Kilkenny stars Adrian Mullen, Billy Ryan, Eoin Cody, Conor Delaney and David Blanchfield.



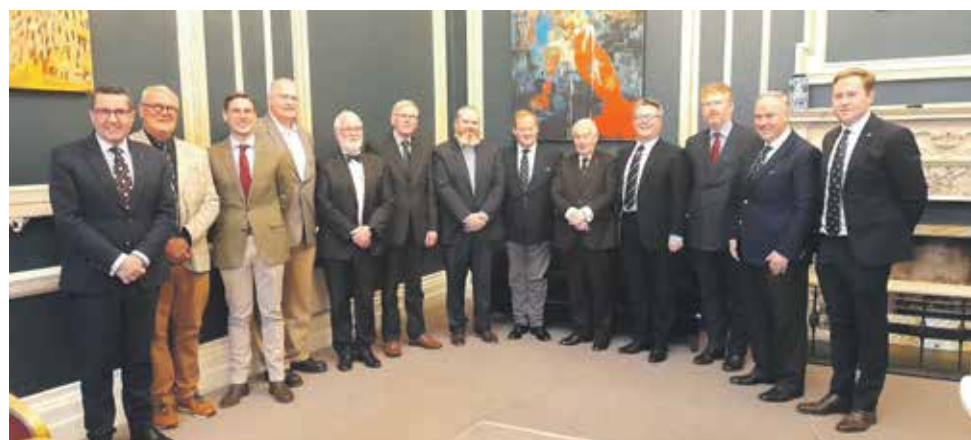
**KILDARE:** A May procession takes place in Castledermot parish after the first Holy Communion Mass. Photo: John Farrelly.



Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**DUBLIN:** Members of the Alliance Orders of St John are pictured with Mr Barry Kehoe, MA, heritage research historian at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) after Mr Kehoe's lecture on the priory of Knights Hospitaller in Kilmainham on Monday May 15.



**LIMERICK:** Boys and staff from Sexton St, CBS Primary School, are pictured after receiving their first Holy Communion at St Michael's Church, Denmark Street, with the Parish Priest, Fr Leo Mc Donnell.



**DUBLIN:** Prof. James O'Higgins Norman, MStJ, President of the Irish Association of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem; Chevalier Thomas Kilduff KC\*HS, Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem – Lieutenancy of Ireland and Patrick Downes, KM, Chair Order of Malta Ireland.



**SLIGO:** Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran joins the Dominican Community for Mass in Holy Cross Friary on Sunday, May 14, to mark the 50th anniversary of the opening of the new church. Pictured with Bishop Doran are (left to right) Fr John Harris OP, Provincial; Fr Tom Jordan OP, Prior in 1973 when the new church was opened; Fr Michael Dunleavy OP, Superior of Holy Cross Friary, Sligo.

## ANTRIM

The JCM prayer group meets every Sunday evening in St Joseph's hall, Antrim parish, from 6-8pm.

## ARMAGH

All mothers and grandmothers in the Archdiocese of Armagh are invited to evening prayer followed by a presentation on the history of St Patrick's Cathedral at 7pm on May 25, as part of St Patrick's Cathedral's 150th anniversary celebrations. Refreshments to follow in The Synod Hall.

## CARLOW

The Poor Clare Sisters in Graiguecullen will continue to recite the rosary before the 10am Mass Tuesday to Friday for the month of May. They will begin at 9.35am.

## CAVAN

The Legion of Mary will recite the Holy Rosary in St Clare's Chapel, Cavan cathedral, during May at 7pm after the Holy Face devotions.

## CORK

Scott Hann speaks to Ireland on Saturday May 27 at 7pm, a free online event with the Dominicans. Register on [dominicanscork.ie](http://dominicanscork.ie).

Pentecost retreat in Rochestown Park Hotel on May 28 from 2.30-6.30pm with music, meditation, poetry, Scripture and ritual. Hosted by Martina Lehan Sheehan and the Ruah Retreat Team. Bookings to [info@ruah-rest.com](mailto:info@ruah-rest.com)

## DERRY

The 'Fan the Flame' Mass for Confirmation children takes place Thursday, June 8 in Celtic Park.

## DONEGAL

The Legion of Mary will recite the holy rosary for the month of May at the entrance to the Long Lane, Letterkenny on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 7pm.

Young adult prayer meeting (18-40) takes place every Wednesday at 8pm in the meeting room upstairs in Mountcharles church.

## DOWN

A candlelit hour of adoration,

quiet prayer and reflection with Taizé chant in St Colmcille's Church, Hollywood, on Wednesday, May 31, from 7.30-8.30pm

## DUBLIN

Whitefriar St Church to host an organ recital by Gerard Gillen, organist emeritus St Mary's Pro-Cathedral, to perform works by Bach, Peeters, Hakim and more.

## GALWAY

Eucharistic adoration takes place in Galway cathedral from Monday to Friday from 11.30am-6pm and on Sunday from 1.15-6pm.

## KERRY

A screening of *The Letter – A Message for Our Earth* in St Mary's parish church, Listowel, on Friday, May 26, at 6.30pm.

## KILDARE

St Padre Pio's glove will be in Fitzpatrick's house, Kilderry, Athy on Saturday, June 3 from 11am-5pm.

## KILKENNY

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

## LAOIS

St Peter and Paul's cemetery Mass, Portlaoise parish, takes place on Sunday, June 4, at 1pm. The Mass will take the place of 12.30pm Mass in the parish church.

## LEITRIM

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

Ballinamore parish pastoral council and community to host a Padre Pio healing Mass in St Patrick's Church, Ballinamore, on Thursday May 25 at 7pm. Fr Bryan Shortall, National Director of Padre Pio Ministry, and Bro James Connolly in attendance. There will be individual blessings after the Mass with Relics of St Pio.

## LIMERICK

Free taster session for Godly Play in Limerick diocesan centre V94 925C on Saturday, May 27, 9.30am-1pm. For information or to book contact [james.connery@limerickdiocese.org](mailto:james.connery@limerickdiocese.org).

## LOUTH

During the month of May the rosary will be prayed at Our Lady's Grotto St Oliver Plunkett Church, Blackrock, every evening at 7pm.

A Novena to St Gerard takes place every Wednesday at 9.30am and 7.30pm in St Joseph's Redemptorist Church, Dundalk.

## MAYO

The next Latin Mass (Tridentine) will take place in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, Knock Shrine, on Sunday, June 11, at 6pm.

Lectio Divina in Westport parish takes place Monday 11-11.30am in the Choir Room on the ground floor of the Parish Centre at the James St entrance.

## MEATH

Blessing of expectant mothers takes place on Saturday June 3, after 6pm Mass in St Mary's church, Navan.

## TIPPERARY

Family Day in Glencomeragh House, Holy Family Mission, Kilsheelan, takes place Sunday, June 4, 10am-3pm. A day of prayer, talk, Mass, music, fun and games for all.

## TYRONE

A baby and toddlers' group is held in Holy Trinity Church Hall, Dromore, "The Ark", every Tuesday morning from 10am-12pm. All babies and toddlers with their carers' welcome.

## WATERFORD

Holy Family Church host a healing service on Saturday, May 27, beginning at 11am and including Eucharistic adoration, anointing of the sick and Benediction. Individual prayer is offered by the parish prayer team.

A day of talks and prayer on Pentecost Sunday, May 28 from 10.30am-5.30pm in the Edmund Rice Chapel. Guest speaker is Fr Pat Scanlan, Cork. Contact Síle 086 8590394.

## WEXFORD

Rosary and devotions continue every Tuesday at 2.30pm at Rocklands shrine to Our Lady of Wexford until the summer.



# AN ENDURING GIFT



**The Irish Catholic**  
LEGACY SUPPLEMENT 2023



# Saving hearts and minds



Immediate calls for an ambulance by mobile health units reflect the danger of unnoticed high blood pressure, writes **Chai Brady**

**I**rish people are now living longer than ever before due to advances in medical science and technology as well as better health education, but this does not come without its challenges.

Over the decades more health problems will arise and need to be tackled quickly as people enter their golden years. A 'silent killer' that so often goes unnoticed, as it can have no symptoms, is high blood pressure. It can be easily treated with medication but without intervention the situation can deteriorate quickly.

Recognising this, the Irish Heart Foundation are starting a new campaign focusing on raising awareness of the dangers of high blood pressure, both through information campaigns, advocacy and on the ground particularly in disadvantaged communities.

The Covid-19 pandemic meant most of their mobile outreach was halted as Government restrictions were imposed. This created a challenging environment when they went back on the road, as vulnerable people who may have caught their relatively high blood pressure a year or two before were now in an emergency scenario.

For Director of Health Promotion, Information and Training at the Irish Heart Foundation, Janis Morrissey, it is her department that work mostly on prevention and health promotion with one of the services they provide being health checks in the community.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Ms Morrissey said: "We do a lot of work with underserved communities with free blood pressure checks and certainly the demand for that service has been phenomenal since we've got back.



A free blood pressure and pulse check.

"We've identified a lot of high-risk individuals and referred them on to their GP but there are occasions where we need to call an ambulance because somebody's blood pressure is so high that they're at immediate risk and it's an emergency situation. It is a very impactful service to be offering," she said.

## Symptomless

Asked why they decided on high blood pressure, Ms Mor-

rissey said: "Blood pressure is the number one risk factor for heart disease and stroke and it is usually symptomless so the only way to know that you have high blood pressure is to go and get it checked so the target group for this campaign is those undiagnosed with high blood pressure.

"Having high blood pressure can also put you at risk of other serious conditions like dementia and kidney disease, so we're really encouraging

people to get checked. The good news is that if you do happen to be diagnosed with high blood pressure it's easily treatable. There's lots that can be done to manage it and to reduce your risk of developing any serious conditions and diseases in the future."

## Recommend

The charity would recommend that younger adults over the age of 30 should get their blood pressure checked

every five years, which should be enough unless advised otherwise by a GP. If for example, there is a strong family history of high blood pressure a GP may decide more frequent reviews are necessary.

In addition to the Irish Heart Foundation getting their mobile units back up and running post-pandemic, like many other organisations they used the opportunity to take a fresh look at their

services and how they are delivered – from prevention to patient support services.

Mrs Morrissey said: "I think we've emerged as a stronger organisation, yes we're out on the ground of course but also offering a range of services – particularly in terms of the patient support side – to meet people's needs in different ways so that could be phone call based, it could be online Zoom classes, it could be Facebook peer support groups for people diagnosed with conditions or their carers.

"It's allowed us that flexibility to have that physical on the ground presence but also the virtual presence and again – in responding to people's needs – not everybody is comfortable in the digital world so it's important we strike that balance across the board."

The Irish Heart Foundation are aiming to develop their information services and expand them outside the standard leafletting, such as video content, infographics, web content and more.

## Child intervention

Mrs Morrissey said intervening at a young age is crucial as 80% of heart disease and stroke is preventable but children may not be equipped to understand



CPR lessons with the Irish Heart Foundation.





Children taking part in one of the Irish Heart Foundation's school programmes.

good health advice or even follow it because of conditions at home. Currently the Irish Heart Foundation are doing a World Health Organisation (WHO) project around 'health literacy'.

"We do a lot of work, particularly with DEIS [Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools], with schools in disadvantaged areas to build life skills, educating around heart health. But we take an approach of building skills around understanding health information and how to analyse it and understand it and apply it in your own life as well," she explained.

**“We’re not going in and telling them what should be the case, we’re listening to them, understanding their world, and working together to come up with practical solutions that can be applied in their school”**

"For example we all know we should get five-a-day fruit and veg but it's not as simple as that if in the environment you live you don't have access, or it's not affordable, and there's lots of health information bombarded at us that is not

based on good evidence as well."

Finding, understanding and using health information is not only relevant when a person is diagnosed with a condition and are grappling with treatments and tests, Mrs Morrissey continued, "It's relevant for all of us, through all stages of life as well".

"The project is with young people, teenagers in disadvantaged communities and we've done a lot of focus group work and a lot of collaborative workshops where young people's voices are at the centre," she said.

"We're not going in and telling them what should be the case, we're listening to them, understanding their world, and working together to come up with practical solutions that can be applied in their school and that teachers can deliver as part of their curriculum as well. It's a really exciting project to be involved in, it's really energising to work so closely with young people as well."

### Influencers

Asked where social media and 'influencers' – people who use social media who have a large audience and can influence others to act based on their advice – come into the picture, Mrs Morrissey said no doubt it had an impact, but that peer pressure is still "really important" when understanding teenagers' actions. "Yes, there are the online social influencers, but they

[teenagers] are often very influenced by each other and by not wanting to be different from each other at that stage of life," she said.

Alcohol abuse and cigarettes are known to be directly associated with the development of heart disease in later life. However, 'vaping' and the

use of e-cigarettes is now much more popular than the traditionally smoked tobacco, which Mrs Morrissey describes as a "real concern" as it is targeted at young people.

"Essentially the tobacco industry is back getting its hands on young people in a different way, so we're doing a lot of work on the ground with young people, but also advocacy work as well," she said.

**“It’s all well and good telling people what they should be doing but if the world they are in does not help them to do that then it’s really difficult. A lot of our work as well is lobbying Government”**

"Children shouldn't be exposed to all the marketing tactics of the tobacco industry – it's just the tobacco industry coming back in a different form. We thought we had won that war and here we are again, and all of the flavours that are very clearly targeted at children and young people – like bubblegum flavour and things like that – are very clearly from the tobacco marketing playbook."

In terms of the work the charity is doing to influence Government policy

regarding the products, Mrs Morrissey said: "It's a big focus of our advocacy work, yes education is important, but so is shaping the world around children and indeed adults too, that the healthy choice is an easy choice. It's all well and good telling people what they should be doing but if the world they are in does not help them to do that then it's really difficult. A lot of our work as well is lobbying Government."

### CPR

Another aspect of their outreach to schools is their CPR (Cardiopulmonary resuscitation) programme which the charity say is now in 86% of secondary schools across the country. The aim is to train the "next generation of lifesavers" with the confidence to act in the event of a cardiac emergency, according to Ms Morrissey.

"We know that even by learning CPR once in your life you're 10 times more likely to respond to an emergency than someone who has never received training. Over 70% of cardiac arrests happen in the home, not in a public place, so the more people who learn CPR the better and we have a big focus on the quality of CPR generally. People are willing to get stuck in, but the quality of the CPR isn't always good enough, are you pushing hard enough, are you pushing fast enough?" she said.

Currently the charity is

in their CPR award season for schools in which they recognise the efforts made by schools across the country for engaging with the programme, they have 50 awards this year.

### Stroke awareness

While their current campaign is about blood pressure, they also raise awareness of all aspects of heart diseases. FAST [Face, arms, speech, time], an acronym used to heighten awareness of stroke symptoms, was the focus of a previous campaign, with Ms Morrissey saying: "It's so importance to have those symptoms at the front of the mind because as we say time is brain. If people see a relative with not necessarily all of the symptoms, even just one of those symptoms, it's an indication to seek emergency care because the sooner that somebody has that care the more brain can be saved and the less impact on quality of life down the road".

Ms Morrissey added that they are extremely grateful to the Irish public whose donations make up 90% of the charity's running cost, with 10% coming from the State, saying "we heavily rely on the generosity of the public to do the work that we do".

Legacy donations have been "vital", and while also helping the charity to continue their work, Ms Morrissey said, for example, one particularly significant gift allowed them to ramp up their children and young people services.



A member of the Irish Heart Foundation nurse support line.



# 50 years of Trócaire: How the support of the people of Ireland has changed the lives of millions all over the world

**Trócaire**  
TOGETHER FOR A JUST WORLD

**Miriam Donohoe, Head of Communications with Trócaire**

A half century ago the Irish people mobilised to raise funds for the victims of famine and flooding in Bangladesh. The country was deeply moved by the devastating scenes broadcast on their TV screens. The response was incredible, with £250,000 raised for the Catholic Church to deliver life-saving aid.

This outpouring of kindness proved to be the start of an era. It inspired the Church to establish an organisation to support people living in the world's poorest regions. In February 1973, Trócaire was born.

**“Together, Trócaire is working to bring about positive and lasting change for a just world”**

The aim of Trócaire was two-fold. The Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of Ireland establishing the agency said: “Abroad it will give whatever help lies within its resources to the areas of greatest need among developing countries. At home it will try to make us all more aware of the needs of these countries and of our duties towards them. These duties are no longer a matter of charity – but of simple Justice.”

Working on this dual mandate Trócaire – with the support of the people of Ireland – has changed the lives of tens of millions of people all over the world over the last five decades. It has also been vocal in that period in speaking up on behalf of the oppressed and marginalised.

Trócaire's mission is stronger than ever today. It is working with local partners in the world's most at-risk communities tackling the underlying causes of poverty and injustice, and responding to the crises they create.

Together, Trócaire is working to bring about positive and lasting change for a just world.

Last year Trócaire supported almost 1.8 million people in over 20 countries around the world, working under five main Goals: 1) Supporting Human Rights and Promoting Access to Justice; 2) Climate and Environmental Justice; 3) Supporting Women's and Girl's Protection, Voice and Leadership; 4) Saving Lives and Protecting Human Dignity and 5) Mobilising in Ireland to Achieve Global Justice.

Having worked in partnership with local organisations for almost 50 years, Trócaire believes more than ever that local people should play a leading role in the development processes in their communities.

To that end it is committed to shifting power more profoundly to

its local and national partners in the countries in which it works.

Over the last 50 years Trócaire has made a huge impact and responded to key issues.

Not long after its establishment Trócaire's mandate was put into action as it campaigned against apartheid in South Africa, funding human rights movements and trade unions, while lobbying the Irish Government to condemn the apartheid regime.

Years later, Nelson Mandela thanked Trócaire: “South Africans have a long association with Trócaire, who have not only been staunch opponents of apartheid but have also initiated and supported projects in South Africa since 1977.”

The 1970s saw brutal conflict and human rights abuses in Latin America and Trócaire's response to violations in Chile, Nicaragua and El Salvador defined its commitment to human rights work.

## Emergency-relief programmes

In El Salvador, the violent repression of farmers, students and church leaders by death squads acting under President Arturo Molina's government drew Trócaire into one of the most dangerous emergency-relief programmes in its history.

While conflict took hold of Central American states in the 1980s, public attention shifted to Ethiopia, where famine killed almost one million people in 1984. Trócaire established a major relief programme and Irish people donated £11.8 million. The impact of these donations is still felt today.

At the time it was said that a famine this vicious could never happen again. But Somalia proved them wrong with the country plunged into hunger, disease and conflict in 1991. There was no government, no local organisations, no infrastructure and a total collapse of institutions.

Trócaire responded launching a



Buhoy Rahey, (20), and her three children who walked five days and five nights to reach Kabasa Internally Displaced Camp.



Trócaire is the main health provider in Gedo region, southern Somalia. It is supporting people like mother of three, Buhoy Rahey, (20), who recently walked five days and five nights with her family 230 kilometres from the Ethiopian border to Kabasa Internally Displaced Camp. Somalia. Her husband died from hunger on the second day of the journey. Photo: Miriam Donohoe

£1million appeal to aid people inside Somalia with the money allowed it to rebuild clinics, schools and water sources.

Today Trócaire provides critical health services to over 220,000 people in Gedo in southern Somalia. Due to its 30 years of support in the region, which is currently in the grip of a devastating drought, local people describe Trócaire as the “Mother of Health”.

Unfortunately, Somalia and the Horn of Africa is once again in the grip of a major hunger crisis and on the verge of famine...despite promises from global leaders in the past that this would never happen again.

In 2003 at least 800,000 Tutsis and thousands of Hutus were killed by Hutu extremists in the Genocide. Trócaire staff in Rwanda reported horrific scenes and it was inspired by the determination of Rwandan people to pick up the pieces of their broken country and £6 million was raised to help the country rebuild.

## “In the new millennium, Trócaire joined the Jubilee 2000 campaign which led to reductions in debt for some of the poorest countries”

Trócaire developed projects in agriculture, health, trauma-counselling, education, community development, women's development and human rights. Its medical programme served 200,000 people in southwest Rwanda.

In the new millennium, Trócaire joined the Jubilee 2000 campaign which led to reductions in debt for some of the poorest countries. But a



The iconic Trócaire Box has been synonymous with the aid agency over the last 50 years.

number of catastrophic natural disasters reminded the world of their vulnerability.

On St Stephen's Day 2004, the Asian tsunami killed over 250,000 people. Over the course of one month Trócaire received a phenomenal €27million in public donations.

A new issue also influenced Trócaire's work at the start of the new millennium and continues - climate change. Communities were struggling to grow food in increasingly drought-prone conditions. Rainy seasons were becoming shorter and dry seasons longer.

Much of Trócaire's work today involves developing ways for rural communities to cultivate their parched land, while demanding that rich industrial countries acknowledge their responsibility for the problem.

## Agency's history

Trócaire CEO, Caoimhe de Barra, says that the agency's history is owned by people in Ireland who together for 50 years have devoted unyielding solidarity to those who are suffer-

ing in our world.

“It is also owned by our brave partner organisations overseas, who work every day to better their own communities. But most importantly, it is owned by the people who benefit from our work and who have hope for a better future in their joined humanity with Irish people.”

“Since Trócaire was set up half a century ago, Irish people have been unstinting in their support of the work we do and the difference that support has made cannot be underestimated. The number of lives not just changed but saved is huge.”

She said: “Trócaire's vision of a fairer world and our determination to tackle the drivers of poverty and injustice are as strong and relevant as ever. Our world has changed since our foundation in 1973, and so have we. But we remain rooted in the values that shape us and in our belief that a more just and sustainable world is possible.”

<https://www.trocaire.org/about/history/>





# It's 11 pm and the rest of Ireland is getting ready for bed. But not you. You have important work to do...



## “You’ll never get this time again..”

**T**hat’s what I tell the families of my end-of-life care patients when I meet them. Think of someone you love dearly and imagine you’ve only 72 hours left with that person. Imagine how precious and fleeting every second would feel. Now you understand the weight of those words for the family — you’ll never get this time again.

My name is Annemarie and I’m a Nurse for Night Care.

Irish Hospice Foundation funds Nurses for Night Care service for people dying with illnesses other than cancer such as dementia, motor neuron and cardiac disease. Myself and the other nurses provide night nursing care, practical support and reassurance for the person and their loved ones in the last days of their life.

Usually, my being there means family caring for a loved one at home in their dying days can get some much-needed rest — a few precious hours of sleep without the worry.

## This is how a night goes...

### 11 pm:

The doorbell rings, and that’s when our shift begins...There’s a real sense of relief when we arrive. You can see it in their faces — thank God you’re here... There



was one patient I was so fond of. I remember walking in that second night, and I’ll never forget the look of relief in her eyes. She looked up at me and she said, “I’ve never been so glad to see anyone in my life.”

### Midnight:

Most of the time when I get to families, they’re on their knees... They’re exhausted, emotionally and physically. I say to them, “You’re not to worry, go on up to bed now, and I promise to call you if anything happens. Being rested will make tomorrow go that little bit easier.”

### 2 am:

It’s the small things we can do as nurses that make such a big difference... We can spot if someone’s positioning needs to be changed to bring them more comfort. We know how much pain relief to give and when to give it. That’s what this is all about, making the passing of the person you love as comfortable, pain-free, and peaceful as possible.

### 3 am:

By now, most of the household are sound asleep. But some people refuse to leave their loved one’s side...One daughter slept on a blow-up bed beside her Mam. She’d done it for weeks. I always say to the family, “this is your time. If you want to be here all night, that’s fine. If you want to come down at 3 am to

hold your mam’s hand or sing her a song, you do that. This is your precious time, and you never get to do it again.”

### 4 am:

The worst nights are when somebody dies... I remember there was a son, a man of about 50.

His mam died when I was with them. The mother was in her 90s. He was just so devastated. He said to me, “You must think I’m silly. I knew this was coming”, and I said, “That doesn’t matter... It’s mammy. No matter what age you are, she’s your mammy, and you’re her baby.”

### 5 am:

If you’ve ever been in hospital yourself, you know that it’s the nurses who bring that very human ‘something’ to healthcare...During the night and in the wee hours of the morning, the person I’m caring for might become confused or agitated. I’ll calm them by telling them, “You’re ok. You’re here in your own home... you’ve got your lovely family around you and everything is fine

**“I got a night’s sleep for the first time in weeks because I knew you were here.”**

### 7 am:

As we prepare to leave, we’ll make sure the house is awake. Honestly, I can’t count the number of times a family member has said to me — “I got a night’s sleep for the first time in weeks because I knew you were here.” — they’re so appreciative.



**Without Nurses for Night Care, people wouldn’t be able to choose to be at home in those final nights on this earth — in the place they lived and loved and perhaps raised their family and felt safe and warm.**

**A gift of any amount in your will to Irish Hospice Foundation could be the easiest and most meaningful one you ever make. It is a way of enabling you to continue to support our work beyond your lifetime.**

**By remembering us in your will you can help us make long-term plans in support of end-of-life and bereavement care across Ireland, including Nurses for Night Service. On behalf of those facing death and grief, thank you.**

For more information on leaving a gift in your will, please contact Anna Sadlier at 01 679 3188 or email [anna.sadlier@hospicefoundation.ie](mailto:anna.sadlier@hospicefoundation.ie)



# Faith in the future: new miracle innovations could save thousands of lives from climate disaster

As climate change brings the worst drought in 40 years to the Horn of Africa, Concern Worldwide supporters are helping local farmers use new climate-resilient techniques to save their families and communities from starvation.

In some parts of the Horn of Africa, there hasn't been a single drop of rain in three years. Dead cows lie decaying by the road, overcome by dehydration. Across Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya, the dust-filled plains are so bare of vegetation that they don't attract any animals. The villages are just as quiet. The hustle and bustle of families cooking or working has fallen silent. Children who haven't eaten for days do nothing but sit still in their huts, too tired and sick to move – they just don't have the energy.

It's the same dire, drought-ravaged situation across all the countries in the Horn of Africa. Right now, 16 million people are acutely food insecure. It's estimated one person dies of hunger every 36 seconds. And as climate change causes more extreme weather patterns, experts predict that droughts like these will become even more frequent, and last even longer, with devastating effects for future generations.

## Living in hunger

Ahmed, a farmer in Somalia, and his children, live on the frontline of the climate crisis. He inherited his trade and his land from his father who was a farmer before him. But with each year that has gone by since he was a boy, he has seen less and less rain falling on the family farm. The soil has become so dry that he can no longer grow the nutritious corn and sorghum that once helped him put food on the table for his family.



Somalian farmer Ahmed has the tools and training to feed his family, even amid the worst drought in four decades.



Whole communities face the threat of mass starvation as the climate crisis worsens.

Seeing his crops wither before his eyes, Ahmed did everything he could to save them, but without water, it wasn't enough. He had nothing to eat and nothing to sell at the market. The pain of hunger began to take hold of his children. Even if his family were to survive the current crisis, he could only wonder how his children would ever live through the more formidable droughts of the future.

**"With the seeds Concern provided, I was able to harvest a lot more and help my family, it changed everything."**

Ahmed, Somalia

## Miracle innovation

It was in this desperate situation that Concern Worldwide, Ireland's largest international aid charity, and their generous community of supporters, were able to provide a lifeline for Ahmed. For 55 years, the charity has been helping people from the world's poorest communities to build lives free from hunger.

In Ahmed's case, escaping hunger meant achieving something that seemed impossible to him – finding a way to turn his dusty fields green again despite the onslaught of the current drought. But thanks to supporters who left a gift in their Will to the charity, Concern has the

resources to build climate-smart agricultural programmes that can support Ahmed and families like his. They provide the tools and training that, even in the driest conditions, help farmers grow nourishing food.

Together, Concern and their supporters were able to provide Ahmed with a wide range of drought-resistant seeds, and training on how to grow them. The results have been nothing short of miraculous – today, his once-barren land is sprouting thousands of vibrant, fruit-bearing trees. With the income he's earning from selling the produce, he can afford to feed

## Life-saving innovation

For decades, Concern Worldwide has been bringing life-saving solutions to people facing the climate crisis. The miraculous results have been nothing short of life-changing for thousands of families.



### CROP VARIETY & DIVERSIFICATION

Drought-resistant seeds increase the chance of a successful crop, even in dry conditions, to protect families from hunger.



### IRRIGATION

When an area receives no rainfall, water pumping systems can bring vital, enriching moisture to barren soil.



### POST-HARVEST MANAGEMENT

When crops are harvested, more secure storage techniques can protect them from being spoiled by insects and fungi later.



Before Concern supporters stepped in, the drought was killing all of Ahmed's crops. But today, there are fruit trees sprouting on his land, including orange, citrus and guava.



his children again. And when they're old enough, they will learn these life-changing skills from Ahmed, which they, in turn, can pass on to their own children, ensuring future generations live a life free from hunger.

## The future threat of climate change

Although the future looks brighter for Ahmed and his children, many families are still not safe from climate change. The World Bank predicts that the coming changes in weather patterns could force more than

## Leaving a legacy of hope for future generations

Siobhán O'Connor, from Concern, advises people who want to leave a gift in their Will to the charity. "The gifts that our generous supporters leave in their Wills have the power to change so much," Siobhán told us. She continued, "that single act of kindness goes far beyond helping one family protect themselves from hunger – it lives on through the years, from generation to generation, helping the families and children of the future survive even the deadliest drought."

**"I am proud to know that, even when I am gone, my support will continue to save lives."**

Colm, who's leaving a gift in his Will to Concern Worldwide, Co. Galway

100 million people into extreme poverty by 2030. And by 2050, it may internally displace 143 million people from countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia and Latin America.

While the threat of mass starvation looms, Concern Worldwide is calling for more people to help them protect vulnerable families like Ahmed's from the hunger caused by drought and climate change. Climate change might be inevitable for future generations, but with your legacy, hunger doesn't have to be.

More and more compassionate people across Ireland are now moving to support Concern's vision to build a hunger-free world. Siobhán explains, "Our community is united by a simple belief that no one should ever have to suffer the pain of hunger. If you share in this belief, I would encourage you to consider joining us today. No gift is too small or big, even the smallest donation will help build a world free from hunger."

## Find out how you can be part of a world without hunger

If you'd like to request your free brochure to find out more about leaving a gift in your Will to Concern, please contact Siobhán O'Connor at Concern Worldwide today.

**Phone:** 01 417 8020 **E-mail:** [siobhan.oconnor@concern.net](mailto:siobhan.oconnor@concern.net) **Visit:** [concern.net/legacy](http://concern.net/legacy)





# MAKE YOUR LEGACY A FUTURE WITHOUT HUNGER

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Sori Gollo (21) in her kitchen garden in Kalacha, Marsabit. Gifts in Wills to Concern have helped to support this mother of three to grow a healthy and varied kitchen garden in Chalbi desert.  
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Susie Cunningham  
**Senior Manager - Partnerships & Philanthropy**  
Our Lady's Hospice & Care Services  
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# Where there's a will...

## Staff Reporter

No one likes to plan for their own death but writing a will is the best way to ensure your loved ones are taken care of after you're gone. Without one you will have no say in what happens to your assets and hard-earned savings. So if you have been putting it off, then here's your chance to put things down on paper with a simple 10 step guide.

### 1. Make a list of your assets:

This will make it easier for you to work out what assets you actually own, before deciding who you would like to make gifts to and how. By having all the relevant details at your fingertips it will save a considerable amount of time in the preparation of your will.

Citizens Information provides a handy form called 'Where my possessions are kept' which will make it easier to identify and trace your assets after you die.

### 2. Choose who draws up your will:

Your will must be in writing, you must be over 18

and you must be of sound mind. While it is possible to write your own will without legal advice, it is well-worth investing in having a properly drafted, tax-efficient and valid will. Making a will with a solicitor is not expensive. Shop around for the best rates offered by solicitors and ask people you trust for recommendations.

### 3. Select your beneficiaries:

This should be straightforward unless you have a complicated family structure. It is very important that it is made extremely clear what gift is being given and who it is being given to. It is quite common that people are leaving property to their relations who often bare the same name as another relation, so it is important to avoid any ambiguity. If you want to preserve family heirlooms or items of special sentimental value, you should leave these items as a specific legacy to a named beneficiary.

### 4. Consider a charity legacy:

After you have taken care of your family and loved ones, you

could consider leaving a gift to your favourite charity. Charitable donations in wills are the foundation of many Irish charities, but the culture of leaving a gift in your will to a charity is in its infancy in Ireland.

### 5. The format of your will:

There are certain things that a will must state such as your name and address. It should include a statement that says you revoke or disown all earlier wills and a residuary clause, which is a section in your will that sets out how property not effectively dealt with in the will should be distributed. The will must also be dated.

### 6. Choose your executors carefully:

The will should name who you have appointed as one or more executors and state these executors' names and addresses. This is the person tasked with making sure your wishes are carried out, so you'll want to choose someone who is responsible and who gets along well with everyone in the family. It can be a demanding role so make sure to check that they are happy to take on the responsibility.

### 7. Choose your witnesses:

You must have two witnesses sign the will in your presence. The witnesses cannot be people who will gain from your will and they must be present with you at the same time for their attestation to be valid. The witnesses' spouses/civil partners also cannot gain from your will.

### 8. Sign your will:

If you don't sign your will in front of two independent witnesses it will not be valid. Your witnesses must see you sign it, but they do not have to see what is written in it. The signature or mark must be at the end of the will.

### 9. Store the will safely:

Whatever you do – don't hide your will! It is no good to anyone if it cannot be found after your death. Consider having it stored in a safe storage facility which will protect it from fire, flood, damage, or loss.

### 10. Keep your will up-to-date:

You should think about updating your will every

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Photo by Paul Jeffrey.

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four or five years. If you want to change your will, you and your witnesses must sign or initial the will in the margin of the page beside the changes.

You can also make a separate document, called a

codicil, which is an update added to the end of your will. However, if you plan to make a lot of changes, it might be easier to simply revoke your current will and make a new one, using the same procedures.

## A gift that lives on

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Every hour someone in Ireland suffers from a stroke. Every day, hundreds of people are diagnosed with heart disease. Causing devastation and impacting too many lives.

By leaving a gift to the Irish Heart Foundation in your Will, large or small, you can make a real and lasting difference to the lives of people affected by heart disease and stroke. With your help we can continue to save lives, transform recovery, promote health, campaign and advocate.

A gift in your Will is a simple and powerful way to provide ongoing support to the causes closest to your heart, and an opportunity to say that you believe in a future where no hearts are broken by preventable heart disease and stroke.

Please join our fight for every heartbeat in Ireland. To find out more about leaving a life-saving gift in your Will to the Irish Heart Foundation, please contact **Alice Sachova** on 01 6685001, or email [asachova@irishheart.ie](mailto:asachova@irishheart.ie) in confidence.

**THANK YOU**

Irish Heart Foundation, 17-19 Rathmines Road Lower, Dublin 6, D06 C780

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SOME OF THE INITIATIVES WE HAVE SUPPORTED:





# World Report

## Pope asks Cardinal Zuppi to lead peace mission for Ukraine

Pope Francis has asked Italian Cardinal Matteo Zuppi of Bologna to lead a mission “to help ease tensions in the conflict in Ukraine,” the Vatican press office said.

The appointment of the cardinal, who is president of the Italian bishops’ conference and a long-time member of the Sant’Egidio Community, was confirmed May 20 by Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican press office.

While Mr Bruni said “the timing of such a mission and its modalities are currently being studied,” he said Pope Francis has never lost hope that some kind of dialogue could “initiate paths of peace”.

By referring to Cardinal Zuppi’s task as a “mission”, Mr Bruni appeared to affirm that it was the same peace mission Pope Francis was referring to April 30 when he told reporters returning to Rome with him from Budapest, Hungary, that he had a plan underway.

Spokesmen for the Ukrainian and Russian governments denied knowing anything about the Pope’s plan, although Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, insisted they had been informed.

Pope Francis met May 13 at the Vatican with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who tweeted that he asked the Pope “to condemn Russian crimes in Ukraine. Because there can be no equality between the victim and the aggressor”. The Ukrainian leader also said he reiterated his insistence on a “just peace” that involves Russia leaving all the Ukrainian territory it occupies.

*Il Sismografo*, an Italian blog that closely follows the Vatican, had reported May 18 that Zelenskyy and President Vladimir Putin of Russia “each agreed to talks with the Holy Father’s two special envoys to discuss and achieve a truce”.

The blog had said there

were “preliminary agreements” from the Vatican, Kyiv and Moscow that Cardinal Zuppi would go to Ukraine and Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, the Russian-speaking prefect of the Dicastery for Eastern Churches, would serve as papal envoy to Moscow. However, the archbishop’s office on May 19 denied that he was involved.

Cardinal Zuppi (67) has been involved with the lay Community of Sant’Egidio for almost 50 years. The community serves the poor, the elderly and has served as a mediator and hosted several formal peace talks, including the talks that in 1992 led to the end of the civil war in Mozambique. Cardinal Zuppi, a parish priest at the time, was involved in the negotiations.

At the Sant’Egidio Community’s annual religions for peace meeting in October, Russia’s war on Ukraine was the key focus.



Pope Francis greets Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, president of the Italian bishops’ conference. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

Cardinal Zuppi told the gathering that “without dialogue only weapons remain”. However, “dialogue by

no means treats all motives as equal, it does not avoid the question of responsibility, and it never confuses the

aggressor and the victim,” he said. Stopping the exponential spiral of war is possible only by recognising the truth.

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## Investigation: Church in Poland under communism plagued by clerical sexual abuse

The number of victims of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in Poland between 1944 and 1990 may be close to 1,100 with the number of abusers close to 300.

Those are, however, not the official findings of the Church in Poland.

On March 15, the bishops announced they will create a commission of experts to investigate past cases of abuse of minors by clergy in the country. The numbers come from two journalists with Poland’s *Rzeczpospolita* journal, Tomasz Krzyzak and Piotr Litka, that published an investigation May 18 on the scale of sexual abuse in the Church in Poland between 1944 and 1989.

“We did a very simple thing that is easily accessible to any public institution in the

country – we looked at the state archives of communist-ruled Poland, that are stored today in the Institute of National Remembrance and the so-called ‘New’ National Archives,” Tomasz Krzyzak, national editor of *Rzeczpospolita* and co-author of the investigation, told *OSV News*.

“It is necessary to combine the knowledge revealed by the journalists with the knowledge from the Church archives, which will give a more complete picture of how the Church was reacting,” Fr Piotr Studnicki, head of the Office of Child Protection of the Polish bishops’ conference, told *OSV News*.

“In all this horrific data, one thing is hopeful – that now we know that our most important perspective should be the victim’s perspective,” Fr Studnicki said.

## Anti-Catholic vandalism carried out in Mexico

The Diocese of Irapuato in the Mexican state of Guanajuato expressed its “profound consternation” over a fire deliberately set at Santiaguito (St James) Church and called it a “sacrilege”.

In a statement published May 15, Fr Efrén Silva Plascencia, spokesman for the diocese, said that the fire “was set on the exterior by a male person who arrived outside the church at 1:04 am and left at 1:26 am”.

Fr Silva pointed out that the Church of Santiaguito, whose origins date back to the 17 Century, is one of the “most emblematic and iconic” in the region.

According to the diocese, a criminal complaint has already been filed with the authorities.

“The diocesan Church of Irapuato vigorously condemns this sacrilege, and we ask the corresponding authorities to find those

responsible,” Fr Silva said.

The priest lamented that this arson attack occurred shortly after the completion of restoration work paid for “with the effort and cooperation of many people”.

At the end of his statement, the diocesan spokesman assured that, despite the attack, “the Church will tirelessly continue in this mission of building peace”.





Edited by Jason Osborne  
jason@irishcatholic.ie

## Fast, furious and faithful?



Helen Mirren and Vin Diesel stand before St Peter's Basilica in a scene from the new movie *Fast X*. Photo: OSV News/Peter Mountain, Universal Pictures

## Nicaragua dictatorship announces 'voluntary dissolution' of university forming seminarians

The Nicaraguan Ministry of the Interior (Migob) announced in official media the "voluntary dissolution" of the Immaculate Conception Catholic University of the Archdiocese of Managua (UCICAM), which functioned as a formation centre for seminarians from the Nicaraguan capital.

According to ministerial agreement 77-2023-OSFL, published May 18 in *La Gaceta*, the regime's official newspaper, the minister of the interior, María Amelia Coronel Kinloch, approved "by voluntary dissolution agreed by its members ... the cancellation of legal

personality" of the UCICAM.

The dictatorship pointed out that the university, registered in the public records since July 2012, had allegedly been in "noncompliance with its obligations since 2015, since they did not report their financial statements and board of directors".

However, the local investigative newspaper *Confidencial* noted that representatives of several national institutions that were dissolved have charged that Migob prevented them from complying with the filing of the required documents.

In the first quarter of 2023, some 30 nonprofit organisa-

tions "voluntarily" closed their operations in Nicaragua, according to a *Confidencial* report.

"In most cases, Migob pointed out that these organisations were inactive or that they had a deficit of funds to carry out their projects," the newspaper stated.

The UCICAM headquarters were located in the same facilities as La Purísima Major Seminary in Managua, the Nicaraguan capital, and it was where the seminarians of the archdiocese received high-level formation in philosophy and theology since 2011.

The university rector was Fr Eyleen Castro Rodríguez.

The first rector of UCICAM was Silvio Báez, auxiliary bishop of Managua, who currently lives in exile in the United States after receiving several death threats. Bishop Báez is one of the members of the clergy most critical of the Nicaraguan dictatorship.

From December 2021 to March 2023, some 19 universities in the country were forcibly shut down.

Among those affected are the John Paul II University and the Autonomous Christian University of Nicaragua (UCAN).

## Guard opens fire as man drives car into Vatican

An unidentified man is in custody after driving a car at high speed through a gate at the Vatican May 18, the Holy See press office said.

A guard stationed at the Santa Anna entrance fired his weapon in the direction of the vehicle's front tires, hitting the left front fender, but the vehicle proceeded onto the Vatican grounds until the driver got out at the San Damaso Courtyard, the main courtyard of the Apostolic Palace, the press office said. There the man was blocked and placed

under arrest by the Gendarmerie Corps, the press office said.

The incident happened after 8pm at one of the main entrances to Vatican City by car. It is located north of St Peter's Square and next to the Swiss Guard barracks. The press office said the man initially approached the entrance in his vehicle and was turned away because he lacked the proper authorisation.

"Regardless of the indications provided to him by the Pontifical Swiss Guard, which prevented him from

entering the State without the relative authorisations, he temporarily left the entrance and, after having manoeuvred, returned at high speed, forcing the two control gates, of the Swiss Guard and of the Gendarmerie of the Vatican City State," the press office said.

"The man, aged about 40, was immediately subjected to a visit by the doctors of the Directorate of Health and Hygiene of the Vatican City State, who found a serious state of psychophysical alteration," the statement said.

## Vatican roundup

### Vatican reportedly pulls 'controversial' World Youth Day stamp

● The Vatican has pulled from circulation a World Youth Day stamp of Pope Francis with young people in an image that resembles propaganda from Portugal's former dictatorship, Radio Renascença, the radio station of the Patriarchate of Lisbon and the Portuguese bishops' conference, reported May 18.

The stamp, which was advertised May 11 by the Vatican philatelic office, depicts Pope Francis leading a group of young people toward the World Youth Day 2023 logo and mimics the statue of "Padrão dos Descobrimentos" (Monument of the Discoveries) in Lisbon, a statue built during Portugal's conservative dictatorship.

Radio Renascença reported that the stamp "raised controversies in some sectors of the Portuguese Church" due to its resemblance to nationalistic propaganda produced by Portugal's dictatorship in the mid-20th Century.

It had been scheduled to enter circulation May 16. The statue is thought to romanticise Portuguese exploration and colonisation. With a giant cross in the centre, the statue is lined with figures of explorers, including Vasco da Gama and St Francis Xavier looking out to sea.

The Vatican postal service originally expected to produce 450,000 copies of the €3.10 stamp.

### Vatican secretary of state calls for 'creative' peace efforts in Ukraine

● Asking European leaders for "creative efforts for peace" in Ukraine, the Vatican secretary of state said the Holy See will continue to do its part.

"We cannot accept passively that the war of aggression in that tormented country continues," Cardinal Pietro Parolin said May 16 at the Council of Europe Summit in Reykjavik, Iceland.

Heads of state and government of the council's 46 member countries voted to establish a "Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation Against Ukraine" with a view toward

eventually making Russia pay reparations.

"The Council of Europe was founded in the wake of the Second World War, born out of the conviction that 'the pursuit of peace based upon justice and international cooperation is vital for the preservation of human society and civilisation,'" the leaders said in their final declaration.

"It is a peace project, built on the promise of 'never again,' a promise that has been fundamentally challenged by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine."

### Abuse victims share 'wounded heart' with Pope Francis

● A group of survivors of abuse by priests and religious cycled hundreds of miles from southern Germany to Rome to urge the Pope "to do everything in your power" to make the Catholic Church a safe space and to send "a clear signal" to perpetrators and bishops who avoid action.

"The victims of abuse and violence in the Archdiocese of Munich turn to you, Holy Father, with open and at the same time wounded hearts," the group said in a letter hand delivered to the Pope at the end of his weekly general audience in St Peter's Square May 17.

In addition to the two-page letter, the group also gave the Pope a small heart-shaped sculpture by Munich artist Michael Pendry.

Eight men and one woman completed the journey by bicycle, leaving Munich May 6 with a send-off ceremony attended by the city's mayor and Church officials, and arriving in Rome May 16.

The 450-mile pilgrimage was called, "We are setting out! Church, are you with us?" and it was supported by the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising.



# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Peace must be the priority

**Dear Editor,** Pope Francis deserves much credit for his heroic witness and work for a just and lasting peace between Ukraine and Russia [*The Irish Catholic*, May 18, 2023]. Let me be clear from the outset, this is not a 'two sides' conflict. Russia's illegal, unjust and genocidal invasion of Ukraine must be condemned by all right-thinking people. It was not provoked by Ukraine or NATO, whatever the failings of that latter organisation.

In my view there is far too much jingoistic language in the west with western politicians trotting out platitudes like 'victory to Ukraine', as if the only possible outcome to this conflict that we should support will be

Ukrainian tanks rolling into Moscow's Red Square.

No, peace must be the goal while obviously respecting Ukraine's right to national self-determination and right to territorial integrity. Everything is lost by war; nothing is lost by peace.

I remember well in the build-up to the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq and subsequent Second Persian Gulf War; the great Pope St John Paul II was dismissed as "naïve" by many commentators – including prominent Catholics – who said they knew better and that his efforts for peace were misguided. Well, what did the Iraq War achieve? Some 100,000 Iraqis lost their lives, and countless others were

maimed for life.

The US-led invasion also unleashed a bloody sectarian bloodbath with rival Sunni and Shia Muslims vying for control while the small Christian community there were either dismissed as collateral damage or run from their homes by an increasingly fierce Islamism.

The Pope is to be applauded for believing that peace is possible between Ukraine and Russia, and other world leaders should back his campaign for a just and lasting settlement.

Yours etc.,  
**David Kelly**  
Terenure, Dublin 6W

## Time to face reality

**Dear Editor,** Peadar Kirby will be forever a hero given the brave stance he has taken consistently in the defence of unborn life, and other vulnerable people.

Like many, I was excited at the prospect of Aontú offering a real alternative to the stifling uniformity of the mainstream parties – including Sinn Féin.

From the beginning, the established parties have worked to thwart Aontú and deny it the massive advantage of State funding enjoyed by other parties. Despite this, Aontú has been to the fore in proposing new legislation around things like the welfare of those most in need in our society, online safety and protecting children from pornographers.

Most of these measures are, at best, ignored by the mainstream parties.

Rory Fitzgerald writes with lucidity about the tantalising prospect of a new rural-focused political party [*The Irish Catholic*, May 18, 2023]. Maybe, just maybe, it is time for Aontú to face reality, realise that people must work together and throw its lot in with that rural independents to bring Mr Kirby's considerable ability to that new movement.

Yours etc.,  
**Art McDonagh**  
Galway City



## What if the school was Catholic?

**Dear Editor,** Politicians and commentators are rightly condemning the vicious animal-like attack on the child in Navan, allegedly perpetrated because he is a homosexual. I note that the school is under secular patronage. Could you imagine

the furore if the school was under Catholic patronage? We'd be treated to another screed from former president Mary McAleese about how the Catholic Church was an "empire of homophobia" and was responsible for this attack. Instead, the patronage

of the school is hardly mentioned in reports.

Sadly, homophobia – like all prejudices – is a cancer in society that has to be overcome. This requires work in both the home and the school to show people the inherent worth of every

human person as made in God's image and likeness.

The usual scapegoating that goes on around Catholic schools is neither just or helpful.

Yours etc.,  
**Adam Carroll**  
Gorey, Co. Wexford

## Is the Church naive on gender?

**Dear Editor,** I'm afraid I don't share the enthusiasm of the Catholic Schools Partnership for the new curriculum on Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) as unveiled by Minister for Education Norma Foley [*The Irish Catholic*, May 18, 2023].

As outlined, the programme presents a radically liberal view of the human person and understanding of gender as something that is fluid. I accept the

contention of Alan Hynes as reported in your newspaper that some of the more extreme elements have been removed, but the simple truth is that Catholic schools will still be asked to teach things that are absolutely at odds with Catholic values and Church teaching.

It is welcome that the Catholic Schools Partnership is ready to roll-out significant resources to schools that will

present the Catholic view on sexuality and gender. However, at a time when many of the teachers in our schools are not Catholic themselves or are even hostile to the Faith, it is naïve in the extreme to believe that they will teach what Catholic parents want and expect.

Yours etc.,  
**John A. Byrne**  
Santry, Dublin 9

## Asleep at the wheel...

**Dear Editor,** So the staff of Mary Immaculate College in Limerick are "in the dark" about plans for the future of the college [*The Irish Catholic*, May 18, 2023]. They obviously haven't been paying attention for decades. The Irish hierarchy has been asleep at the wheel for as long as I can remember. Catholic institutions are either handed over to the State or, as in the case of the Sisters of Charity, offered to facilitate abortions for what is described as a "peppercorn rent".

Yours etc.,  
**Anne McColgan**  
Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

## A different form of brutality

**Dear Editor,** Having just viewed this film *Pray for Our Sinners*, it brought back painful memories. I suffered corporal punishment also (as did virtually all of my classmates). Sadly, in my experience lay teachers (and by association, their unions) were equally culpable.

Yet there have been no public apologies, much less compensatory payments, from this source. In contrast, having been taught by seven or eight priests in St Patrick's in Navan, the experience was much more agreeable.

My criticisms of the film are two-fold. Firstly, it did not 'compare and contrast', with other, non-Catholic countries. For example, 27 US states forcibly sterilised unmarried mothers at the behest of the eugenics advocate, Margaret Sanger. The secular Scandinavians took this a step further, with a combined abortion/sterilisation policy. The UK officially described unmarried mothers as 'moral imbeciles'. They carried out over 250,000 forced adoptions between the mid 1950s and 1970s – primarily at the behest of parents and social workers.

Secondly, the film ended with a sequence showing the 'celebrations' (inappropriate to many) in Dublin Castle, after the abortion referendum. We recently learned that over 95% of babies diagnosed with Down Syndrome are now aborted in Irish hospitals. At the conclusion of the film one is left with the uneasy thought, have we simply replaced one form of barbarity with another.

Yours etc.,  
**Eric Conway**  
Navan, Co. Meath

## Wither the vision of Hume...

**Dear Editor,** The North's local elections are over bar the shouting. The SDLP has suffered catastrophic losses, as they have done in every election for over 20 years. The current leadership of that party put this down to the fact that the party is "in transition". But successive leaders have said that. Disappointingly, Colum Eastwood insists that he is leading the "party of John Hume". If I can borrow a biblical analogy, Mr Eastwood is not fit to undo the sandal of Mr Hume. Neither Hume nor Séamus Mallon would recognise what the current vote-chasing woke leadership have done to the party.

Yours etc.,  
**Rosella Walshe**  
Omagh, Co. Tyrone

## Letters to the Editor

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

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

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



# Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, May 25, 2023

**Deacon  
Greg Kandra**  
Welcoming the Spirit  
this Pentecost

Page 34



## What does it look like to hold a consistent life ethic?

**W**hen approached to write this piece, I first considered expounding upon my understanding of all the various issues that the consistent life ethic touches on: ending abortion, war, the death penalty, euthanasia, embryo destruction, police brutality, assisted suicide, torture, etc.

Upon reflection, I think that perhaps the most important aspect I can challenge anyone on, whether they come from a “left” or “right” political perspective, reaches further than a cursory evaluation of particular issues of systemic violence.

### Preconception

Instead, I want to ask you to shake up the mental “Etch A



Sketch” in your mind, with whatever preconception you might have about the consistent life ethic, and ask yourself one question:

“When I say that I care about human rights, or the right to life, do I actually care about the human being behind those rights, or do I just care about the vague, nebulous idea of human rights?”

It can be easy to stand

**A consistent life ethic takes us beyond ideas of the deserving and undeserving poor and vulnerable, writes Aimee Murphy**

up for “human rights” as a concept or the “right to life” as an idea. It’s easy enough to go to marches to end abortion or protests to end war and still – at the end of the day – leave some humans out.

### Champion

It’s easy enough to champion an end to one form of violence under the banner of “choosing the lesser of two evils” while

giving cover to another form of violence.

It’s easy enough to stay in our respective political silos and throw vulnerable people – immigrants, prenatal humans, disabled people, black communities, etc. – under the bus for the sake of political expediency.

Both partisan sides refuse to acknowledge or protect the first and foundational right

of all human beings: to live free from aggressive violence. When they pick and choose which humans should be protected under the law, and which should be excluded from such protections, they engage in a dangerous, often lethal discrimination.

### Authentically

When we consider what it means to authentically care about humans – not just as a concept, but as living beings – then we could no more ask that they be killed by forceps and vacuum suction before birth, nor could we ask that they receive a lethal injection execution on death row.

When we allow violence and discrimination, it isn’t a





A family displays signs during the annual “All-Ireland Rally for Life” last year.

vague, generic violence against the idea of humans; it is actual harm inflicted against actual, living, unique, unrepeatable, individual human beings who are worthy of a name, who would have a future, and have a past.

**“We must engage in the necessary work of creative nonviolence: to see the dignity of each and every human being and demand better than the violent paradigm we’ve been offered again and again”**

Just as much as you or I are – simply by the nature of being a human being – worthy of being respected, valued and protected because we share the same inherent dignity as human, so too are the embryonic children, the prisoners on death row, the people behind enemy lines, the elders, the disabled people, the prenatal humans, the members of racial minorities and all others worthy of this same respect, value and protection.

Us activists in the consistent life ethic community recognise that we don’t fit into the political

binary. We refuse to be shoved into boxes that would demand we choose between the prisoner on death row or the prenatal child they once were; we care about that human in all stages, in all circumstances. Neither age nor guilt nor ability nor race can change who they are or their inherent value as human.

In our society built upon exclusion and systems of violence, it is a necessity to stand opposed to the cycles that keep us locked into violence and discrimination.

It is necessary to proudly declare (in the words of Feminists for Life,) that we refuse to choose when the choice is violence. In kowtowing to this “lesser of two evils” system, we have only allowed violence to become more and more entrenched.

Instead, we must engage in the necessary work of creative nonviolence: to see the dignity of each and every human being and demand better than the violent paradigm we’ve been offered again and again.

This does mean rejecting the legal violence of torture, embryonic stem cell research, the death penalty, abortion, war, euthanasia, police brutality and assisted suicide.

But it also demands so much more: that we see the individuals behind those rights and stand with them in solidarity to build a better world, beyond violence.

In this work, we will have to

uproot decades of inculturation into dehumanisation, whether it be ageism, ableism, classism, homophobia/transphobia, racism, sexism or other unjust discrimination.

### Community

Even when we are done eliminating violence and dehumanisation, we still will have the task of accompanying others: to walk in community and ensure that none of our fellow humans go without what they need to survive and thrive: housing, health care, clean food and water, and education.

It’s a big task, I don’t deny it. The idea of consistently caring for all humans might grate against the partisan ideas you’ve been raised with. But Christ didn’t call us to love only some of our neighbours, nor did he die for only some of humanity: We should follow his example.

In the words of Dorothy Day, “The Gospel takes away our right forever to discriminate between the deserving and the undeserving poor.”

**i** Aimee Murphy is the founder of Rehumanize International, a nonpartisan, secular human rights organization, and the author of the new Magenta series book, *Rehumanize: A Vision to Secure Human Rights for All*. Learn more about her work at: [www.consistentlyaimee.com](http://www.consistentlyaimee.com).



Opponents of euthanasia and assisted suicide are pictured in a file photo staging a “die-in” following a rally on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Canada. Photo: CNS/Art Babych.



# Four distinct kinds of Christian prayer



**T**here are four distinct kinds of Christian prayer: There is incarnational prayer, mystical prayer, affective prayer, and priestly prayer. What are these? How are they different from each other?

## Incarnational prayer

St Paul invites us to “pray always”. How is this possible? We can’t always be praying – or can we? What Paul is inviting us to do is what Jesus asks of us when he tells us to “read the signs of the times”. In asking this, Jesus is not suggesting we read every political, social or economic analysis we can find. Rather, he is inviting us to look for the finger of God in every event in our lives. My parents’ generation called this being attuned to “divine providence”, that is, looking at every event in our lives and the major events of our world, and asking ourselves: “What is God saying in this event?”

One must be careful in doing this. God doesn’t cause accidents, sickness, heartbreak, wars, famine, earthquakes, global warming or pandemics; neither does God cause lottery wins or our favourite sports team to win a championship, but God speaks through them. We pray incarnationally when we pick up that voice.

## Mystical prayer

Praying mystically is not a question of having extraordinary spiritual experiences – visions, raptures, ecstasies. Mysticism is



**Fr Rolheiser**

[www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com)

not about these things. Mystical experience is simply being touched by God in a way that is deeper than what we can grasp and understand in our intellect and imagination, a knowing beyond head and heart. Mystical knowing works this way: Your head tells you what you think is wise to do; your heart tells you what you want to do; and your mystical centre tells you what you have to do. For example, C.S. Lewis, in describing his conversion experience, tells us that the first time he knelt down and acknowledged Christ, he didn’t do it with enthusiasm. Rather, in his famous words, he knelt down “as the most reluctant convert in the history of Christendom”. What compelled him to do that?

His words: “God’s harshness is kinder than human gentleness, and God’s compulsion is our liberation.” We pray mystically whenever we hear and listen to the most compelling voice of all inside us, the one that tells us where God and duty call us.

## Affective prayer

All devotional prayers (adoration of Christ, litanies, rosaries, prayers asking for the intercession of Mary or a saint, and the like) are ultimately affective prayer, as are all forms of meditation and contemplation. They all have the same intentionality. What is that?

In the Gospel of John, the first words out of Jesus’ mouth are a question. People are looking

at him in curiosity, and he asks them, “What are you looking for?” That question remains throughout the rest of the Gospel as an undergirding. A lot of things are happening on the surface, but underneath, there remains always the one nagging, restless question: “What are you looking for?”

Jesus answers that question explicitly at the end of the Gospel, on the morning of the resurrection. Mary of Magdala comes looking for him, carrying spices with which to embalm his dead body. Jesus meets her, but she does not recognise him. He then repeats the question with which he had opened the Gospel: “What are you looking for?” and gives us its real answer. He pronounces her name in love: “Mary”. In doing this, he reveals what she and every one of us are forever looking for, namely, God’s voice, one-to-one, speaking unconditional love, lovingly saying our name. At the end of the day, that’s what we all are looking for, to hear God pronounce our name

in love. All devotional prayer, whether it be for ourselves, for others, or for the world, has this as its ultimate aim.

## Priestly prayer

Priestly prayer is the prayer of Christ through the Church for the world. The Christian belief is that Christ is still gathering us together around his word and the Eucharist. And, we believe that whenever we come together, in a church or elsewhere, to gather around the scriptures or to celebrate the Eucharist, we are entering into that prayer. This is generally called liturgical prayer; this kind of prayer is Christ’s prayer, not our own. Moreover, it’s not a prayer first of all for ourselves or even for the Church, but one for the world – “My flesh is food for the life of the world”.

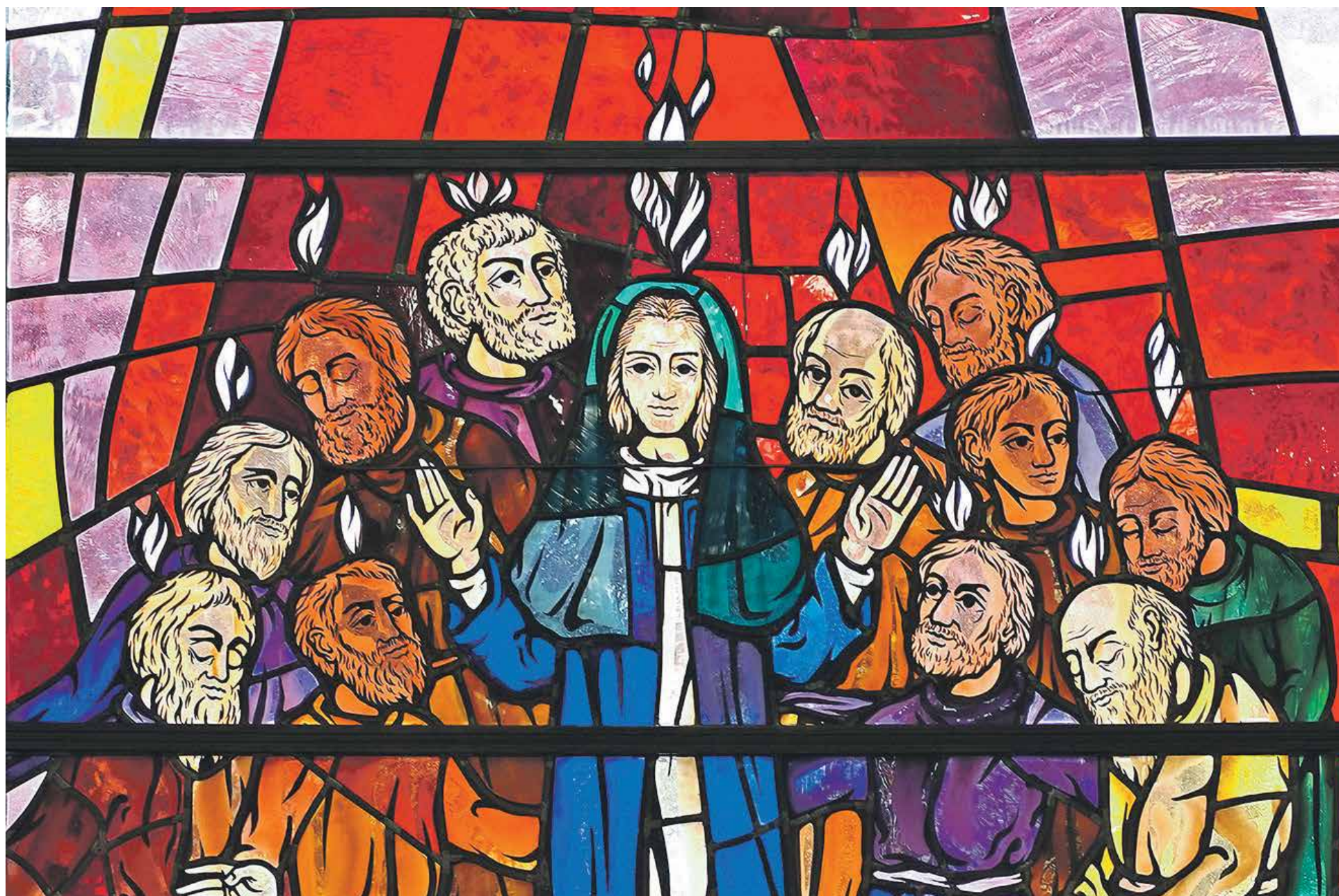
We pray liturgically, priestly prayer, whenever we gather to celebrate the scriptures, the Eucharist, or any Sacrament. As well we pray in this way when, in community or privately, we pray what is called the Liturgy of the Hours or the Divine Office (Lauds and Vespers). We are asked to pray regularly for the world in this way by virtue of the priesthood conferred on us in our Baptism.

A mature, spiritually healthy Christian prays in these four ways, and it can be helpful to distinguish clearly among these kinds of prayers so as to be praying always and praying with Christ.

**“Mystical experience is simply being touched by God in a way that is deeper than what we can grasp and understand in our intellect and imagination, a knowing beyond head and heart”**



# Welcoming the Spirit this Pentecost



May 28 - Pentecost

Acts 2:1-11

Ps 104:1, 24, 29-30,  
31, 34

1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13

Jn 20:19-23

## The Sunday Gospel

Deacon  
Greg  
Kandra



"After the tongues of fire landed, they burned out". There is never a point where we hear that it is over. Considered that way, this beautiful truth reveals itself: Pentecost doesn't have an expiration date. As a priest friend likes to say, it is still going on.

**"The Spirit is astoundingly productive, but often shockingly quiet. He likes to whisper, nudge, coax and prompt"**

That alone is worth celebrating. But how? What is a fitting way to spread the joy of the Holy Spirit burning in our hearts?

To pick one obvious way: Strike a match and light a candle. Watch the flame burn and dance. That is how the Spirit works – and the very image of a flickering fire should inspire us to dance, as well.

Call a friend. Embrace a loved one. Remind them, every one of them, that they are loved by God. In case they have forgotten – or put it all on a back burner (so to speak) – share the good news that Christ has risen. Hope has prevailed! Death doesn't have the last word! And don't let anyone forget it.

### Charity

This day, give to a charity. Volunteer at a soup kitchen. Take a lonely neighbour to lunch. Pay for a stranger's meal at a neighbourhood diner.

And then sit down, inhale – maybe hearing a vague echo of that mighty wind that blew through the Upper Room – and take an inventory of profound gratitude.

Yes, give thanks! Make

a list, check it twice. Thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit – the Spirit that landed like fire 2,000 years ago and continues to singe our hearts and illuminate our Church.

**"Every birthday party, in a sense, encapsulates all of that, complete with candles and singing and wishes being made"**

The Spirit is astoundingly productive, but often shockingly quiet. He likes to whisper, nudge, coax and prompt; you never hear him yell, which may be why so many of us don't realise he's in the room. A friend likes to refer to "The Sneaky Spirit," and that's an apt description.

It's a good time to ask: How has the Spirit been at work in our lives? Have we listened for him lately? Have we found time for silence, to hear what he

has to say? Take time this Pentecost to (as one of my favourite hymns puts it) "ponder anew what the Almighty can do". What has he been doing in your life? You may be amazed to realise how much.

### Liturgical calendar

As we look back on the last two Sundays of the liturgical calendar, we see resurrection and mercy, life and renewal. Now, on Pentecost, we see inspiration – a spark catching fire. We see the affirmation of all that has come before. Here is light and fervour and hope.

Every birthday party, in a sense, encapsulates all of that, complete with candles and singing and wishes being made. But this celebration is different. We don't blow out the flame. As my priest friend reminds me, the fire keeps going.

And so do our hopes and aspirations for the lives we want to lead, and the faith we want to share and the Church – the body of Christ, we need to be. Pentecost is

about beginnings, about possibility, about carrying the joy of Easter out of the Upper Room and into the world.

**"Come, Holy Spirit, and enkindle in us the fire of your love!"**

So, all things considered, maybe that's the best way to celebrate this great feast: Make a wish! Ask the Holy Spirit to give us what we need to be the Christians we need to be, now, at a moment when it feels like the fire is about to sputter out.

Come, Holy Spirit, and enkindle in us the fire of your love! Then, let's keep the fire going – and prayerfully work to make that wish come true. Happy Pentecost!

**Deacon Greg Kandra** is an award-winning author and journalist, and creator of the blog, *The Deacon's Bench*. He serves in the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York.



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## Tears and laughter mark the journeys of life

**M**ost weeks you get a at least one good new documentary on television. Last week there were two.

**Inside the Hospice** (Virgin Media One, Wednesday) was so moving and intense, an affirmation of the value of palliative care. The film makers got access to several hospices including those in Harold's Cross and Wicklow and several residents agreed to be interviewed – a brave move, but of benefit to us all. There was laughter and tears as these courageous people faced into what might be the final part of their lives, with dignity and positivity.

Cancer and Motor Neurone Disease figured large, but the patients themselves were central of course – Ray, who couldn't eat solid food but who kept cooking anyway; Stephanie, a teacher who had volunteered in Uganda after retirement; Fraser, a graphic artist who, amazingly, could still make his art just by eye movement; a mother, Rachel, who was diagnosed with a huge tumour while home on holiday; Fergus, a journalist, who got to the stage of planning his own funeral ('the gig'). It was tough to watch, especially so when we learned that Stephanie and Fergus had died, but the strength of the human spirit made it inspirational.

The families were inspir-



Pilgrims on St Patrick's Way.

ing as well as they supported their loved ones, always with such dignity, even when hope seemed difficult. I was also moved by the dedication and humanity of the medical staff, whether working in the hospices or on home visits. Towards the end patients and staff spoke of the spiritual side of things – for Stephanie her illness brought her back to her faith, gave her time to forgive and ask forgiveness. Others were believers, agnostics or atheists. Many believed there was an after-life and that somehow the departed lived on.

**Iniúcadh** (TG 4, Wednesday) looked at one of our most pressing social problems – homelessness. I liked presenter Kevin Magee's

easy going but serious style as he investigated aspects of the crisis. Firstly, there was a focus on people sleeping rough, on the streets and in the woods. We met them as they visited the various charities supplying food on the streets – food queues in one of the wealthiest countries. I was surprised that the Capuchin Day Centre didn't figure but there are plenty of other charities in this space. I was particularly impressed by the articulate young volunteers, including one Leaving Certificate student – along with most of the others she was also impressive with her standard of spoken Irish. Those in the food queues included the working poor, the unemployed, asylum

seekers and those suffering from various forms of addiction – showing how complex the problem is.

The second strand focused on students' difficulties getting accommodation, though I'd suspect viewer sympathies mightn't have been quite as strong this time as students were concerned about commuting, having to live at home, missing the 'full college experience' and couch surfing. Another side of the issue featured a young teacher on a good salary who had to leave her rented accommodation and feared she wouldn't find a new place that was affordable. She had tried to buy a house but found major obstacles in her way, including the

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### SONGS OF PRAISE

**BBC One Sunday May 28, 1.15pm**

Sean Fletcher visits St Margaret's Church in Westminster, a place of worship for politicians. Pam Rhodes meets Christians in Politics, a group that brings together Christians from different political parties.

#### SPEAK OF THE DEVIL – SPIRITUAL WARFARE

**EWTN Sunday May 28, 9pm**

This EWTN original docudrama features a cinematic retelling of the Bible story of the prodigal son interwoven with insightful interviews.

#### GENDER WARS

**Channel 4 Tuesday May 30, 10pm**

The meaning of sex and gender lies at the heart of one of the most polarised discussions of our times.

fact that she was single and could therefore bring only one income to the table. The lifting of the eviction ban was seen by some as part of the problem – opposition politicians opposed the lifting. Government politicians defended it. Mairéad Tóibín of Aontú had wanted the ban retained for the particularly vulnerable.

Finally, I was impressed by **Songs of Praise** (BBC One, Sunday) which focused on Co. Down, described as the cradle of Irish Christianity. Presenter Claire McCollum joined two guides – Martina Purdy and Elaine Kelly on a walking and kayaking pilgrimage – a new concept on me! They were guiding pilgrims on the Way of St Patrick, on land and water,

and to my surprise, I spotted among the pilgrims *The Irish Catholic* editor Michael Kelly, who described the event as "a very powerful experience".

Artist Aly Harte related to God as artist and creator as she painted at Strangford Lough and as usual the music was uplifting, with congregations from various locations in the North of Ireland. I have a particular soft spot for *The King of Love My Shepherd Is*, while *An Irish Blessing* sung by Margaret Keyes with a string quartet was particularly beautiful.

The programme finished nicely with a prayer shared by the main contributors.

# Music

Pat O'Kelly



## Mozart turns his hand to comedy with great effect

Following Gluck's death in November 1787, Emperor Joseph II appointed Mozart as imperial and royal court composer. Among his formal duties the composer was expected to provide music for court balls and other such state occasions and, to fit the bill, Mozart supplied over 30 minuets and German dances in a relatively short time.

However, still finding it problematic to live on his earnings, Mozart often sought financial favours from friends but, overcoming these embarrassing distractions, he composed his last three symphonic masterpieces in a few weeks between June and August 1788.

Some monetary improve-



Gianluca Margheri

ment came when the emperor, having enjoyed *The Marriage of Figaro*, asked Mozart for a new opera. The result was the sophisticated comedy *Così fan tutte* with the subtitle *La Scuola degli amanti* (The School for Lovers). With its text by former priest Lorenzo da Ponte, who had supplied the libretti

for *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, *Così's* first performance took place in Vienna's Burgtheater on January 26, 1790.

Enthusiastically received, prominent civil servant and diarist Count Karl Zinzendorf commented, "the music by Mozart is charming and the subject rather amusing". Most likely da Ponte based his script on an actual incident that had been fascinating Viennese society at the time.

The opening action of the opera has army officers Ferrando and Guglielmo boasting to their sceptical philosopher friend Don Alfonso about the constancy of their sweethearts, sisters Fiordiligi and Dorabella.

Alfonso viewed all women as fickle!

A bet is wagered and the sisters' maid, Despina, called in to assist in a plot of putting the young ladies to the test. Confusion reigns but, eventually, 'all's well that ends well.'

Thanks to Irish National Opera, *Così fan tutte* is currently running at Dublin's Gaiety Theatre until Saturday May 27. There is a concert performance at Galway's Leisureland on Monday 29 and *Così* transfers to Cork's Opera House on Wednesday 31 and Friday June 2.

Polly Graham directs in Jamie Vartan's sets and costumes and Sinéad McKenna's lighting. Peter Whelan and

Elaine Kelly conduct alternate performances and a double cast has Anna Devin and Sarah Brady as Fiordiligi; Sharon Carty and Gemma Ní Bhriain, Dorabella; Majella Cullagh and Emma Morwood, Despina; Dean Power and William Morgan, Ferrando; Benjamin Russell and Gianluca Margheri, Guglielmo. John Molloy changes place with Milan Siljanov as Don Alfonso.

Rakhmaninov celebrations continued at the NCH during the month with splendid performances of his Paganini Rhapsody and Second Piano Concerto by visiting soloists Martin James Bartlett and Kirill Gerstein. This latter NSO concert opened with a blistering

account of Ian Wilson's gripping tone poem *Man-o'-War* under principal conductor Jaime Martín.

Music from earlier times was well served by Berlin's Akademie für Alte Musik and the Irish Baroque Orchestra. Directed from the harpsichord by John Butt, IBO's tenor soloist, Hugo Hymas, was exceptionally stylish in Buxtehude and Bach.

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony commemorated Ireland's 50th anniversary of joining the EU with the NSO directed by David Brophy who mustered a large choral group for the occasion. Still, the performance left me somewhat underwhelmed.





# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## Recent books in brief

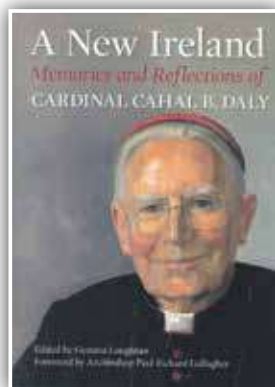
### A New Ireland: Memories and Reflections of Cardinal Cahal B. Daly,

edited by Gemma Loughran, foreword by Archbishop Paul Gallagher (Veritas, €12.99 / £11.50)

This little book was edited by Northern Ireland barrister Gemma Loughran, who knew Cardinal Daly from her days as a student. To mark the anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement she was invited to edit together some of the cardinal's writings over the years relevant to the theme of war, peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

In doing this she had the help of his former secretary who had worked with the cardinal over the years. Though the occasions of their original composition, often for a funeral homily, have long past, the general theme is one which is still burningly relevant.

Those who already have read Cardinal Daly's *Steps on my Pilgrim Journey* (1998) this will be a very relevant addition. Emphasising once again the very ancient truth that words of wisdom and empathy never go out of date.

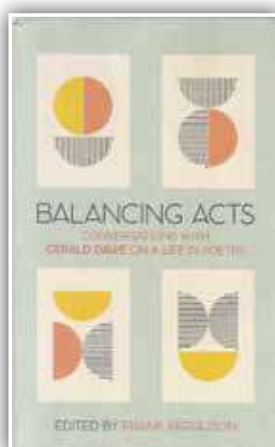


### Balancing Acts: Conversations with Gerald Dawe on a Life in Poetry,

edited by Frank Ferguson (Irish Academic Press, €19.99 / £17.99)

This is a collection of conversations and interviews with Belfast poet Gerald Dawe. It has been put together by Frank Patterson, an academic at Ulster University in Belfast. Dawe was born in that city in 1952 and so grew with the communities that came into conflict in the 1970s. In a sense this book is a literary counterpart to Cardinal Daly's, showcasing another point of view. Here two astute and insightful men struggle to make sense of what human beings, from what they see as the highest of motives, can do to each other.

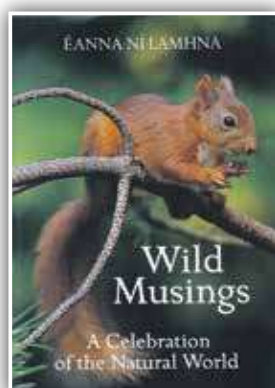
But just as the cardinal attempted to impart to his audiences a true sense of religion, so the poet sought to make literary sense of a society divided by languages, even by simple words. See for instance his remarks on page 41. Both in their different modes provide, according to their different vocations, in a society divided by words as a force for evil, a more effective sense of words as a force for good through prayer and poetry.



### Wild Musing: A Celebration of the Natural World,

by Éanna Ní Lamhna (Beehive, €14.99 / £12.99)

The author of this book will be known to many for her appearances on television and radio, and writings in *The Irish Times*. As a biologist her focus is on wildlife as a key to environmental survival. The book deals with the cycle of the natural year and is just the sort of book that an older school student (and indeed their even older parents and grandparents) will love to read.



Oddly however that annual round in a curious way follows the calendar of faith as well. Take chapter eight, for example, called "Called after the Saints – What's in a name" where the association of plants is often fixed in the memory of the past by the fact they first appeared in or about that saint's day. All through these pages these allusions to human life and the use and love of plants and animals are brought together. A most attractive little book.

# Exploring the role of Mary in the first days of the Church

Mary, Founder of Christianity,  
by Chris Maunder  
(One World, €21.99/£18.99)

Peter Costello

Over the recent decades the role of women in the first centuries of the Church has come under more critical examination. One result of this, arising also from developed views of the role of women in society today, has been the demand for the ordination of women.

Curiously this particular debate is not one which Chris Maunder in this book addresses. This may be explained by his background.

Chris Maunder is visiting Fellow in Theology and Religious Studies at York St John University. He is also the author of *Our Lady of All Nations: Apparitions of Mary in 20th Century Europe*, a book which aroused wide interest, *Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary* and has also edited *The Oxford Handbook of Mary*.

## Scholar

He himself, as these titles might suggest, is "a member of the Catholic community". But he writes here as a scholar, going back to first principles and following contemporary direction in biblical studies. Though scholarly and fully referenced his study is written in a way which presents the ordinary reader without any real

difficulty.

There are naturally enough, given the nature of the records he is dealing with, many difficulties. Questions of the miracles are turned to a fuller understanding, which can be accepted or not.

He concentrates on the historical and social setting of a woman with a special destiny, as she saw it. It is startling to be told that Mary would have probably had her son at the age of 14, which was the cultural norm then. This means that when Jesus began his public ministry she was widow of 45.

Maunder sees her as playing an essential role in the organising of his ministry. This is illuminated for instance by what we are told about the marriage Feast at Cana.

**“He reviews all the references to Mary, and other women of the name in the early text. By separating them out he gives them a presence for the readers, which they would not have had otherwise”**

Readers of the Gospels have often a sense behind what we are told, a community of women who provided shelter, food and

other support thought normal for a woman in Jewish society. This is not always explicit, but one sense is for instance the arrangements made for what we now call “the last supper”.

He says little here about Pentecost, but the traditional images of that event by artists show Mary seated among the Apostles, when the Holy Spirit descends on them (Acts: 1-11), though her presence is not mentioned in the text. The image however must have been a reflection of a long tradition that she was there, on an equal footing with the Apostles.

## References

Maunder does not discuss this but he reviews all the references to Mary, and other women of the name in the early text. By separating them out he gives them a presence for the readers, which they would not have had otherwise. Maunder asks his readers to reflect on her role among the apostles, which he sees as one of far greater significance than many think.

However, his discussion means that he has to lose sight of the figure of Mary herself for extended passages of the text. It might perhaps have been better to have been more closely focused on the figure of Mary; but this would have sacrificed a great deal of his discussion of context, which is vital to

the overall purpose of the book.

This will I think provide informative reading for many, bringing alive, as it does whole aspects of the New Testament which are all too often passed over in attempts to achieve a doctrinal view.

**“Chris Maunder’s book, while not without its longueurs, provides a very interesting presentation which will enlighten many readers, of interest to all who seek answers”**

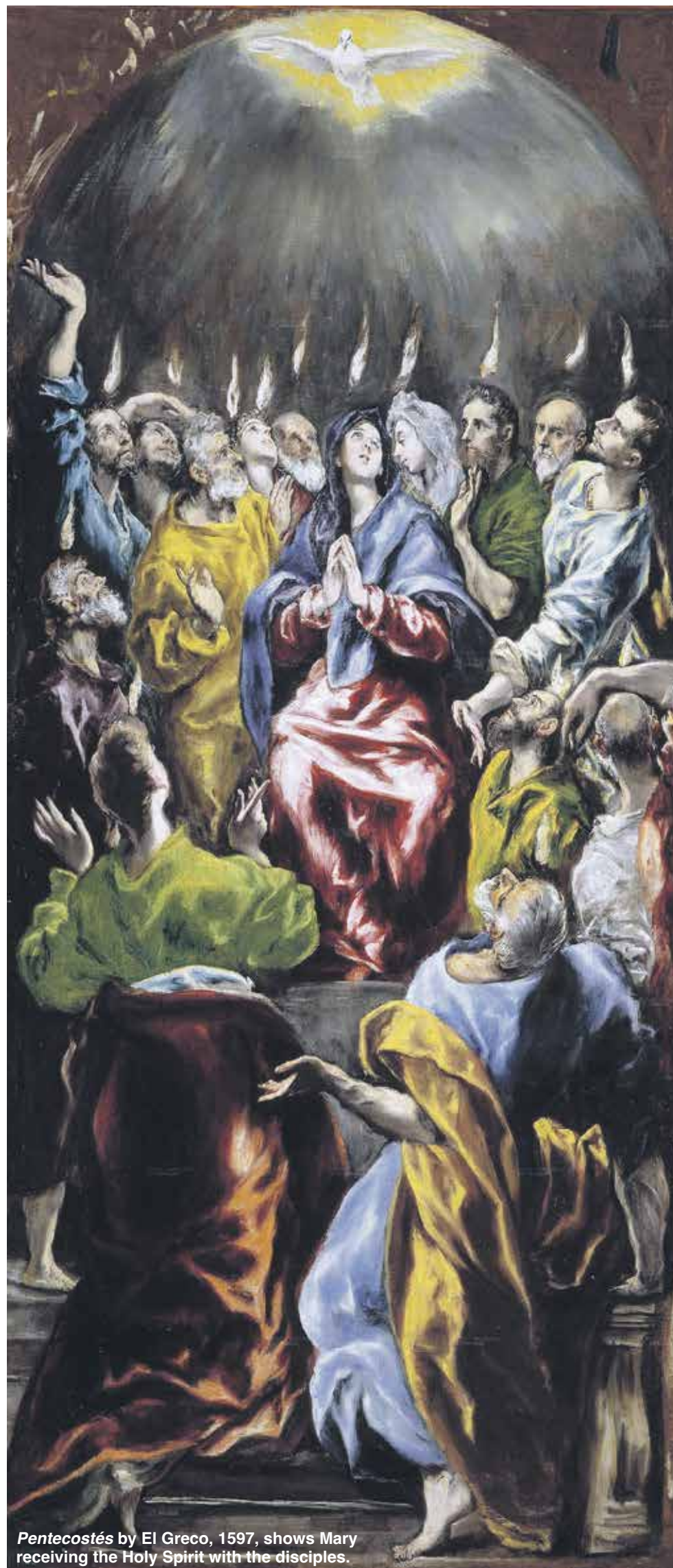
On that point, to those Catholics who take a very literal view of the gospels he quotes with relevance passages from the Vatican document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, prepared in 1993, prefaced by the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. The document's strongest critique is on fundamentalism. Those who find themselves troubled by what they hear about ‘advanced views’ should bring these observations to mind.

Chris Maunder's book, while not without its longueurs, provides a very interesting presentation which will enlighten many readers, of interest to all who seek answers. The basic question that the book addresses is: “Who was Mary?”; the answers he proposes will interest a great many who have posed that question to themselves. He gives to the doctrinal Mary, the Mother of God, a fuller human sense of Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

**“Maunder asks his readers to reflect on her role among the apostles, which he sees as one of far greater significance than many think”**



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*Pentecostés* by El Greco, 1597, shows Mary receiving the Holy Spirit with the disciples.

## Comments on the margin

By the books editor

### Should we think more about Egypt's role in the making of Christianity



A moment of quiet prayer in urban Coptic church in Egypt.

The other week, in a review of Bill Manley's insightful book on the world's most ancient book, recording the moral maxims of the ancient Egyptian sage Ptahhapt from about 2,400BC, I remarked that it set off in my mind a train of thought, but I postponed writing about that for another day, as it was not strictly pertinent to the author's intentions.

Readers will recall that I was surprised to find, contrary to what we had long been told, that monotheism in Egypt was not a significant characteristic of Pharaoh Akhenaten's reign. But Manley's book demonstrated that back in 2,400BC behind the panoply of gods and goddesses so familiar from accounts of ancient Egypt, the sage himself believed in a single deity as the actual creator of all things.

But my train of thought went further, to think about what is recorded in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, and in more recent historical periods, about Egypt. Readers of Genesis will be aware of the role that Mesopotamia plays in this area. The Garden of Eden, Ur of the Chaldees, where Abraham came from, and the Jewish captivity in Babylon's role in shaping Hebrew ideas about the past. All these give grounds for the importance of the land of the two rivers.

But thinking on, we might ask what role the land of the River Nile had in the same developments

It was into Egypt that Joseph was sold by his brothers, and where he rose to be an official in the government. But then in time Moses too was connected by tradition with the Royal family. Was he, as Freud used to speculate, actually an Egyptian rather than a Hebrew: probably not most scholars agree. But the influence of Egyptian culture is plain...

The popular idea was once those Jewish slaves built the pyramids. But it is now agreed that these royal tombs were not built by slaves at all, but by ordinary citizens as a form of collective religious activity.

#### Controversial

All of Exodus is controversial, but nevertheless illustrates the profound impact that Egyptian culture had on the Hebrews. But what of the point raised in Manley's book, that the Egyptians of the era of 2,400 were essentially monotheists in believing in a creator god, above and beyond the gods so familiar from Egyptian lore.

The Israelites on arriving in the Promised Land brought with them from Egypt a belief in a single god as well as a moral code. Are these parts of a legendary nation making, religious tales or a legend of the cultural influence that Egypt had on the Israelites? To a certain extent

they are.

However, the Egyptian influence is also present in the gospels. The persecutions of Herod and the Flight into Egypt are also disputed. But the flight of the Holy Family is clearly a reflection of some real experience of the Jewish people as a whole.

When traced, the places associated in early Christian tradition are all places with Jewish communities, and run the length of the country to the south. After the Diaspora Jewish communities were to be found not only in Egypt, but all across North Africa, and indeed by the early middle ages Jewish traders had crossed the great desert and were to be found in West Africa.

Tradition suggests that the Holy Family returned very soon to Galilee, and so little Egyptian influence could be expected on the growing Jesus. But the 'lost years of Jesus' can only be speculated on: did he spend some of the years before his public ministry began in Egypt?

Whatever about the flight into Egypt, the Christian presence in Egypt was very early. St Mark has always been associated with the great Greek city of Alexandria. But the presence there of the most important library in the western world at that date meant that the city was an attraction to scholars of numerous cultures.

#### Septuagint

This is what brought about the translation by the Septuagint into common Greek after all, beginning the complex matter of the translation of the Hebrew scriptures into other languages, which still goes on.

Certainly it was in Egypt that early Christian culture began to develop. It was from Egypt after all that monasticism was derived, an ideal of the holy life which was to have extensive influence all over Western and Eastern Europe, even to early Christian Ireland.

Egypt was one of the earliest Christian cultures. Despite the Muslim occupation of Egypt from Arabia after 641, Christianity remains a characteristic culture in urban and rural Egypt. This perhaps is one reason why the Flight into Egypt became so cherished, as Egypt was the only country outside Palestine that played a role in the life of Jesus.

The interaction of the cultures of the past is complex and never as simple as people would like, as the development of Gnosticism and other 'heresies' reveals.

It cannot be denied that one way or another Egypt played a formative and influential role in the emergence of all varieties of Christianity.



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### The Miracle Prayer

Dear Heart of Jesus,  
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This time I ask for a  
special one. (mention here)

Take it, dear Heart of Jesus, and  
place it within your own broken

Heart where your  
Father sees it.

Then, in his merciful eyes,  
it will become your favour,  
not mine. Amen.

Say this prayer for three days.

M.M

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## Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock



# Calling God to guide us home...

**Recently I spoke at the novena** in the Parish of Graiguecullen/Killeshin and it was an honour to be asked. I realise now that I spoke for about twice as long as I was intended to speak! I might not be there again! I should have left out a few bits but, as the song says: "What is done is done..."

Before Mass the Poor Clare Sisters led us in the rosary. Though central to all that was happening, they were out of sight to most, though I had the joy of meeting them before Mass. They are such happy and focused people, literally happy in their own skins – their souls. They welcomed me, wished me well and told me they like the pieces I write here. I offered them a blessing and sought their blessing, but I was already blessed through meeting them. I had a real sense of how important they are to the parish in which we gathered, to the people who are that parish and, truth be told to me too. I realised again the value of their prayer.

## Retreat

Thinking about them as I drove home, I remembered a retreat in Maynooth. The director spoke of going away for a few days to a silent retreat in a Cistercian mon-



astery. He saw another man there, but they did not speak, though they walked the same ground for a few days. Then, one night, shortly after a time of prayer by the monks in the small hours of the night, he went to the kitchen to have a cup of tea. He met the other man there and they began to speak. The man told him that he was a recovering alcoholic and that it frightened him to think back on the life he had lived – the life he lived in fear of visiting him again. He said that there were times he drank for days on end, nights he drove home in his car and had no recollection of the journeys. Often, he told him, he crept out of bed in the morning, went outside and walked around his car to make sure there was no damage. Thankfully there never was but it frightened him to think

he could have driven home so obviously unaware and unheeding of the devastation he could have caused and the damage he could have done. He said he often wondered how he got home safely those nights. Sharing this, in the monastery kitchen, the man said he now realised that these monks, and others like them, were praying for him and guiding him homewards. It was a moment of truth that led him to a place of gratitude and to feeling the need to share it in the small hours.

## Thought

We might give a bit of thought now to the Poor Clares, the Carmelites, the Red nuns, Benedictines, Cistercians and many more who have chosen to live the call

to be enclosed, to be together in prayer and to be contemplatives. It is not a life I could imagine myself living, perhaps few of us could, but let us be thankful to all who have found peace there and know they made the right choice. When our prayers are few, our time maybe not always faith-focused, may we have that deep awareness of those who are praying for us when maybe we cannot pray ourselves. Let us be grateful for and to those who call out to God to guide us home, when maybe we don't even remember the journey.

The Poor Clares put in a word for vocations: asking me to keep an eye out for anyone that might feel called to this way of life. I am not sure that I know anyone but,

## Final word

Thinking of the Poor Clares, I am reminded of a story of a Reverend Mother who was dying. She asked for a glass of milk and a young sister went to the kitchen to get it, she noticed a bottle of whiskey in the cupboard and added a little to the milk. Returning to the room, she gave it to the Reverend Mother who sipped and then drank it down in one go. She asked for another. The young sister repeated the journey and the "mix". This was repeated a few times during the night. When asked if she had any advice for the community before her death, the Reverend Mother said: "Whatever you do, sisters, do not ever sell that cow."

in this year of prayer around diocesan vocations, maybe we add the occasional prayer for the enclosed orders too. Their vocation is very special and the work they do remains vital. So can I ask you to put a prayer for them alongside a candle in your local church? I have no doubt they would appreciate that very much.

## Meeting

Before meeting the Poor Clares, I met the parish priest's dog! Friendly to a fault, her place in the house and parish was assured. She joined us in the sacristy, lay down there (maybe she knew it was going to be a long sermon!) and arrived out at the end of Mass to take her place in the final procession. It was uplifting to see the smiles of recognition from the congregation. There was a sense of homeliness about it all. Maybe the Poor Clares have their part to play in that too.

All God's creatures have a place in the choir...



## A poor rural community in Ethiopia need our help to build a solid chapel in place of a grass-roofed one



Fr Amanuel Mulatu CM, a Vincentian missionary in Ethiopia has written to ask for our help in enabling a solid and strong chapel building to be built to replace the grass-roofed one which was put up over a decade ago. The local bishop, Markos Gebremedhin, fully endorses this appeal and says that a modest but a permanent chapel will support evangelization and encourage the spiritual growth of the parish. It will be a worthy place for celebrating the Divine Liturgy and for Eucharistic Adoration.

The faithful people are very poor, depending on rainfall for the growth of maize, beans, coffee and root crops, which in good times they can sell and use themselves. The Manja ethnic minority earn a living partly from the sale of charcoal, firewood and honey. Fr Amanuel has many outstations to take care of and is asking The Little Way for the sum of €9,200 for the new chapel building.

## Can you spare a small gift to build this chapel?

Your gift will be gratefully received and sent without deduction to Fr Amanuel for the chapel building. You may be sure of the prayers of Father and the people who will pray and worship in their new chapel. (If we receive more funds than are required for this project they will be used for similar chapel projects).



*"My life is but an instant, a passing hour. My life is a but a day that escapes and flies away. O my God! You know that to love you on earth I only have today." - St Therese*

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