

The Irish Catholic

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Parishes warn of 'perfect storm' as Covid and cost of living cause poverty crisis

Ruadhán Jones

Parishes across the country are fearful that the soaring cost of living and job losses due to the pandemic are "tipping people into poverty". The Society of St Vincent de Paul – which helps people in need in every parish in Ireland – is bracing itself for record demand ahead of Christmas.

Rose McGowan, national president of the parish-based organisation, warned that the country is facing "a perfect storm for families contending with a cost of living crisis on multiple fronts".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Ms McGowan said that their volunteers report that young families in particular are bearing the brunt.

"They're struggling, and they're worried, and they're upset about that because that wasn't what they expected their life to be," she explained.

The organisation has reported what it has described as an "unprecedented" number of calls for help in 2021, which could reach 200,000 by the end of year.

Given the numbers they are facing, Ms McGowan said she is worried that the crisis is going to get worse.

"I'm fearful for everybody, but I'm definitely fearful for younger people and young families that really want the best for their families. People are losing their jobs, their salaries are cut.

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Sweet celebrations for Holy Family Mission



Eva Morrissey, Mary Scott-Boras and Louise Keelan hold a cake celebrating Holy Family Mission's sixth year following the commissioning Mass of this year's missionaries for the Waterford-based apostolate.

More diocesan re-organisation on the cards

Chai Brady

The move by Pope Francis to put two dioceses in the west under the leadership of a single bishop is just the first phase of structural rationalisation in the Church in Ireland, *The Irish Catholic* understands.

The Pontiff indicated last week that when Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora Brendan Kelly retires shortly, the diocese will be joined with Clonfert, likely under the leadership of the incumbent there, Bishop Michael Duignan.

Officials are at pains to point out that it is not an amalgamation. *The Irish Catholic* understands that there was huge resistance to formal amalgamation from Irish bishops, so the decision was made to unite the two dioceses instead while both retain their individual identity and separate structures.

The Irish Catholic understands that further consolidation will follow. A source close to the talks indicated to this newspaper that the Vatican was not keen to impose solutions but instead wanted local dioceses to come up with proposals. However, the source also said that Rome's patience would "not be eternal in the absence of local solutions".

The source added that amalgamation and the subsequent unifying of structures and resources "was not the

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First permanent deacons for Tuam



Julian Drapiewski, Cathal Galligan and James McLoughlin were the Archdiocese of Tuam's first ordinations to the Permanent Diaconate by the Archbishop of Tuam Michael Neary in the Cathedral of the Assumption, November 21. Photo: Stephen Farragher.

An Advent call to rediscover thrift

We have tested and tasted too much, lover-

Through a chink too wide there comes in no wonder.

But here in the Advent-darkened room

Where the dry black bread and the sugarless tea

Of penance will charm back the luxury

Of a child's soul, we'll return to Doom

The knowledge we stole but could not use.

Advent, by Patrick Kavanagh

Perhaps we no longer think of Advent the way Kavanagh did, as a time of penance. But, it is still a precious time to prepare for the coming of the Christ-child at Christmas and an invitation to return to innocence. The coronavirus pandemic has allowed many people to take stock. To consider whether lengthy commutes are what they want for themselves. To ask whether slowing down might be better for their peace of mind and soul. To question whether lives of constant consumption really make us happier or increase our levels of distress and unease.

Lost season

Advent has almost become a lost season. Already the staff in department stores must be tired of the gaudy fairy lights and the meaningless ditties that play endlessly on the tannoy system which mark Christmas in the marketplace. And yet, we are

only beginning our Advent journey!

“We’ve got used to the idea that societies get progressively richer, that choice is ever-expanding”

We see countless headlines this year about supply chains. Many of the large containers filled with Christmas presents, we are told, will not arrive this year. There are fears that the toys and other consumer goods we associate with a ‘good Christmas’ may not materialise. Again this year, we hear endless chatter on the radio about the seemingly annual shortage of Brussels sprouts and some have even spoken about a potential shortage of turkeys...and yet our stores remain full of

every possible delight, while in many parts of the world people again go without.

The uncertainty of Covid-19 has exposed the fragility of our world. It has also exposed the shallowness of a reliance on the consumption of finite resources to slake our thirst. Perhaps, if we’re open to it, it is a pause to reflect and to choose what really matters and what really quenches our deeper thirst.

Choice

We’ve got used to the idea that societies get progressively richer, that choice is ever-expanding. Yet, this Christmas we might have thrift – that almost archaic word, never mind concept – thrust upon us.

Of course, only a comfortable person in a wealthy society can speak of thrift being good for the soul –

“There are fears that the toys and other consumer goods we associate with a ‘good Christmas’ may not materialise”

‘Perfect storm’ as Covid and cost of living cause poverty crisis, parishes warn

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People are thinking, ‘God, I’d normally be able to provide for my children, for education, for Christmas.’”

She cited the Covid-19 pandemic and soaring living costs as the reasons why more people have been “tipped into poverty”.

“What has happened is that people who were able

to manage because they had work, have been hit by income loss and job [losses], they have been tipped into poverty,” she said.

Fr Tim Bartlett of St Mary’s parish, Belfast, said that rising costs and a cut in government assistance is causing “an absolute crisis”.

“I’ve seen more people coming over the last month,”

many others have no choice but to live thriftily.

If this Christmas we can’t get everything we want, we can rest assured that we will have everything we need. And Advent can be a season to help us create the interior disposition of waiting in expectation for the joy of Christmas: an event 2,000 years ago that dispelled the darkness of a long night and transformed our world.

“Perhaps we no longer think of Advent the way Kavanagh did, as a time of penance”

Today our western world often appears so tired of the Gospel and indifferent to Christ, and yet it was exactly this tiredness and indifference that Christ came to heal. It’s our job to bring that light to the world today.

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he told this paper. Particularly worrying is the number of parents of young children and teenagers.

“They have quietly told me that they have chosen not to eat themselves in order to keep the heat on for the children, and so that the children themselves can eat,” Fr Bartlett said.

In Kerry, the regional president of the SVP Mary Behan, warned that she is concerned that rising fuel costs could “trap people in their houses”. “Fuel poverty is a big, big issue this year,” Ms Behan said. “Even just today and yesterday we’ve had several requests for fuel.”

“Rents are high too, and the first thing people try to do is pay the rent and that means they struggle with food and fuel.”

Ms Behan has also seen a number of people now seeking fuel vouchers, particularly for hospital visits and appointments. “We have very poor public transport services in rural areas, a lot of people are trapped in their homes really,” she said.

Dublin archdiocese to seek insurance payout over Covid disruption

Jason Osborne

Dublin archdiocese is hopeful that parishes could be in line for an insurance payout to make up for lost collections when churches were forced to suspend Masses by the Government.

According to the recently-filed 2020 financial report for the parishes, the archdiocese "considers there is a valid claim under the business interruption clause of the insurance policies for the parishes."

"A claim is currently being compiled and is due to be submitted in the near future," the report reads.

This paper understands that other dioceses are not currently considering such a step. However, it is understood that the Dublin approach will be watched carefully.

Earlier this year, parishes received a rebate from insurance operator Allianz, who provides much of the Church in Ireland's insurance cover.

Parishes received the rebate based on the "reduced possibility of a claim under their Public Liability and Employers Liability Covers", an Allianz spokesman told this paper at the time.

The rebate was provided as a percentage of each parish's premium, with each parish receiving the same percentage rebate.

It is likely that the archdiocese's pursuit of a business interruption claim is intended to offset a collapse in the archdiocese's finances as a result of the pandemic, the 2020 financial report for the parishes revealing an 80% drop in collection income in a three-month period.

The archdiocese of Dublin's 2020 financial report detailed a continued fall in the diocese's finances over the last year, a trend accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions put in place to slow its spread.

The 'Parishes of the Diocese of Dublin' report, covering the financial statements of the combined parishes, the clerical fund, the common fund and the share fund reported a deficit of €4.3 million for 2020, whereas 2019 saw a surplus of €7.7 million.

The results for the 189 parishes of the diocese are combined in the report, but the "net movement in the funds" for the parishes worked out at €1.5 million in 2020, compared to €6.3 million in 2019.

Catholic Olympian's silver medal bid pays off



Maria Andrejczyk

Staff reporter

A Polish, Catholic Olympian who auctioned her silver medal in August to pay for eight-month-old Miłosz's heart surgery, was reunited with the happy boy earlier this week following the successful surgery.

Maria Andrejczyk, a devout Catholic, who credits her adherence to the Faith to her upbringing, offered to auction off the silver medal she won at the Tokyo Olympics this year in the javelin to raise funds for Miłosz's surgery.

Miłosz's parents had acquired half the required amount, but Ms Andrejczyk's medal raised the required remainder – the

medal purchased by Polish convenience store chain, Zabka.

In a twist which touched the hearts of onlookers on social media, the store chain decided to re-gift the silver medal to Ms Andrejczyk.

"We have decided that the silver medal from Tokyo will remain with Maria, who has shown her greatness," Zabka said in a statement on social media, commenting that they were moved by the "beautiful and extremely noble gesture" of Ms Andrejczyk.

Posting a picture of their meeting on social media, Ms Andrejczyk said Miłosz is "safe and sound" and described him as a "little fighter".

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Research finds vast majority believe abortion alternatives should be offered

Jason Osborne

A recent poll found that the majority of people believe that women should be informed about alternatives to abortion before going ahead with the procedure, with Pro-Life Campaign spokesperson Eilís Mulroy saying women are currently being “kept in the dark about abortion alternatives”.

An Amárach poll commissioned by the PLC found that 89% of 1,000 people surveyed believed that women should be offered the

option of information about alternatives to abortion before the procedure takes place.

“They simply aren’t being informed about other options. This appalling situation cannot continue,” Ms Mulroy said at the launch of the PLC’s *End the Silence* report, which took place outside Leinster House on Tuesday.

The event was focused on the Government’s three-year review of the abortion law, and the changes the PLC want to see delivered as part of the review.

“Women have a right to be informed about

alternatives in an open and transparent way prior to the abortion. People may be under the impression that this already happens but it doesn’t.

“There cannot be informed consent in relation to abortion unless women are presented with the full facts,” Ms Mulroy said.

The second poll finding released on Tuesday revealed that 77% of people support the abortion law being amended to ensure that babies who survive the abortion procedure are given medical care.

“The Government’s three-year review also needs to address horrific situations like the fact that babies sometimes survive late-term abortions and are left to die unaided, without receiving any palliative or medical care. The Minister for Health has acknowledged in the Dáil that he’s aware of the information that has come to light on this issue but disgracefully he has done nothing to end this barbaric treatment of babies who survive abortion,” Ms Mulroy said in relation to the finding.

Irish bishops to carefully consider Latin Mass changes

Ruadhán Jones

The Irish bishops’ conference has confirmed that each individual bishop will give “careful consideration” on how to implement *Traditionis Custodes*, the Pope’s *motu proprio* on the Traditional Latin Mass.

The conference’s press office stated that the *motu proprio*, which introduced new restrictions on the TLM or Extraordinary Form, was discussed by the Irish bishops at their general national meeting during October.

“It was noted that practice in Ireland in relation to the use of the Extraordinary Form of the Mass varies significantly from diocese to diocese,” a statement sent to *The Irish Catholic* said.

“The conference recognised that the responsibility for the implementation of the requirements of the *motu proprio* lies with each individual bishop, and that each bishop would be giving careful consideration to the application in their own diocese of the provisions of the *motu proprio*.”

This paper understands that so far no changes have been made to the celebration of the TLM across the country, aside from some bishops requesting the establishment of parish councils which would include representatives from both English and Latin Masses.

Although *Traditionis Custodes* states that the TLM should not be celebrated in a parish church, the practise continues in Ireland due to the unavailability of other facilities.

Talk of taking religion out of politics ‘annoys’ Arlene Foster

Chai Brady

The former First Minister of the North of Ireland Arlene Foster has said that having a strong Christian faith means “you can’t just leave it at home” as a politician.

Speaking at the St Patrick Centre in Downpatrick, Co. Down, Ms Foster said: “Christianity doesn’t call you to be neutral. It calls you to be salt and light about what you believe in.”

“It does annoy me when people say you

have to take religion out of politics and leave it at the door... like it only happens at the weekend. It is part of who you are. Your Christianity and your faith is something that is with you all the time. You can’t just leave it at home on Sunday night and go out without it on Monday.”

Ms Foster was in conversation in front of a live audience with former UTV presenter Gerry Kelly. She opened up about her faith journey, her political career and the Troubles.

New knights dubbed for Christ the King



Dr John O’Keeffe and Ronan McDonagh are pictured with Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan at the Cathedral of Christ the King, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, following their investiture as Knights of the Equestrian Order of St Gregory in recognition of their generous service to Sacred Music. Photo: Fr Robert McCabe

More diocesan re-organisation on the cards

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top priority”. However, they said that it was likely the most inevitable end in most cases.

“The Holy See wants to be flexible, the Irish bishops know what is best for Ireland but we need fewer dioceses,” the source said.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Bishop Duignan said that it is no secret the Church in Ireland “faces many challenges at this time”.

“When it comes to challenges in general, we can either passively let them come our way or with a confidence in the Holy Spirit take a rational proactive approach to them. In life, I have always believed the latter to be the best plan of action,” he said, adding that “it is in this proactive spirit that I welcome the intention of uniting” the two dioceses.

This is not an amalgamation or suppression of either dioceses, he said, describing it as a “mild form of union” that acknowledges the venerable heritages involved, preserves local identity and provides a model of union, “which in my opinion has a very good chance of success”.

Asked whether he believes the process could be mirrored in other parts of Ireland he said he did not know but while it is new to Ireland it has been done in many other parts of the world.

He added: “It will take time to step into that model, to dialogue and discern together in order to sensitively make it work to the benefit of both dioceses. I am sure that many dioceses in similar situations will look at this development with great interest.”

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'Pray to stay' – a conversion deceit?

They've dubbed it, sarcastically, 'Pray to Stay': that's the description given to some refugees from the Middle East and North Africa who have converted to Christianity in Britain. The implication is that the 200 or so asylum seekers who have become Christians may have done so for manipulative reasons: so as to have a better chance of staying in Britain.

Light

The tragic and distressing case of the 'Liverpool bomber', Emad Al Swealmeen, has brought this issue to light. Mr Swealmeen, whose bomb exploded in a taxi outside Liverpool's Women Hospital, had converted to Christianity while seek-



Mary Kenny

ing asylum in England, and had been confirmed at Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral in 2017. But it's believed that subsequently, he reverted to Islam, fuelling the theory that this was a 'conversion of convenience'; it is supposed that the planned target of his bomb attack was the nearby Anglican Cathedral where he was confirmed.

It has also been revealed that a people-smuggling network has suggested, on social media, that converting to Christianity can be a successful ruse in gaining asylum.

Those who facilitated Mr Swealmeen's apparent Christianity are now being described as naïve, and 'holy fools'. Malcolm Hitchcott, an Evangelical Christian, who shared his home with Mr Swealmeen, aged 32, for a time said he had seen the Jordanian as "really blossoming in regards to his Christian faith. He really had a passion about Jesus that I wish many Christians had." One of the assistant bishops of Liverpool, Revd Cyril Ashton, also defended Mr Swealmeen's confirmation, saying he would have been



Emad Al Swealmeen.

crossed the Channel in small boats this year – the Churches, Catholic, Anglican and Evangelical (usually meaning Protestant), have sought to bring succour and support to these desperate people. It is, genuinely, the Christian thing to do.

“He really had a passion about Jesus that I wish many Christians had”

Mr Swealmeen's last act was a terrible one – he was the only fatality, as it happens. But even if the Churches suspect that 'Pray to Stay' is being used cynically or instrumentally, they have to continue to reach out to every individual, literally, in good faith.

thoroughly prepared.

Perhaps these ecclesiastics have been naïve in not probing Emad Al Swealmeen's motives more forensically – or examining the motives of other such converts. And yet, a cleric cannot, and should not, turn

away anyone who seeks to be instructed in the Christian Faith.

Migrant crisis

In the migrant crisis currently troubling Britain – more than 24,000 migrants and asylum-seekers have

“Those who facilitated Mr Swealmeen's apparent Christianity are now being described as naïve, and 'holy fools'”

The campaign against God

Roisín Shortall, Social Democratic TD, is campaigning to take God out of the oath which the President of Ireland traditionally swears, as do the Councillors of State – constitutional advisors to the President – on taking office. She wants a referendum on the issue.

I don't see why there shouldn't be an alternative way to take a serious oath of office if that is sought by an individual. Quakers, who are religious believers, do not take oaths and refuse to swear on the Bible in courts of law. So, they have been accorded an alternative – they may affirm according to their conscience.

But since Ms Shortall objects to the mention of Almighty God, wouldn't it be more honest to start with the preamble to the Irish Constitution, which begins "In the Name of the Most Holy Trinity, from Whom is all authority..." – and thereafter alludes to "our obligations to our Divine Lord, Jesus Christ, Who sustained our fathers through centuries of trial"?

While she's at it, why not erase the 1916 Proclamation of the Republic itself, which so famously begins: "Irishmen and Irishwomen – in the



name of God and of the dead generations..."?

Ms Shortall and her co-litigants took the presidential oath case to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) but their plea was

rejected, on grounds that no one had been victimised. But the greater campaign, to cancel God and remove all historical mention of the sacred from the public realm, will no doubt continue.

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● Are the cast of *Mrs Brown's Boys* (aka Brendan O'Carroll) the last Irish characters to refer to the family matriarch as 'Mammy'? Or, to put it another way – is the 'Irish Mammy' now more a figure of legend, satirical or comedic, rather than real?

I now seldom hear Irish people calling their mothers 'Mammy'. Sometimes 'Mam', but more usually now 'Mum', occasionally 'Mom'.

Words change over the years. In my own mother's generation, they used the more formal 'Mother' – and 'Father'. I've also heard the Latin version invoked – 'Mater' – although with a touch of irony.

'Mum' was seen as British rather than Irish, but today, it seems to have become culturally neutral – it's certainly more ubiquitous.

At least it's good news that Stonewall, the influential campaign group which now focuses on transgender rights, has dropped its crusade to replace Mams, Mums, Moms and Mothers with the title of "female parent".

Catholic conference seeks to shed light on Covid vaccines

Jason Osborne

An upcoming conference, *Concerned about Covid-19 Vaccines?*, is seeking to dispel the confusion that's gathered around the safety and morality of Covid-19 vaccines from a Catholic and scientific perspective, according to one of the panelists, Dr Orla Nolan.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Sen-

ior Clinical Pharmacist and experienced medical safety assessor Dr Nolan said that "there's a lot of stuff out there" and it's causing a "great deal of confusion".

Internet

"I have spent a lot of the last year and a half fielding questions and looking at YouTube videos and going, 'Well, the entire premise behind this is wrong', but people are soaking it up and believing it,"

Dr Nolan said, adding that, "anyone can put anything on the internet, and they do".

"I'm trying to give people as accurate information as I can, in as simple language as I can, so that they can make whatever decisions they want to make."

Dr Nolan said she isn't going to be telling people what they should or shouldn't do, rather she's "coming at this from a point of view that you have the

right to make your own decision, but you need to have accurate information to actually make it, and there just isn't accurate information out there".

An erosion of trust

Diagnosing one of the current problems "in the whole information highway" as "an erosion of trust", Dr Nolan said there is pressure now on people to find out for themselves, without

having the time or the ability to say "Well, this is good quality data and this is bad quality data, and then to dig into it and see what the data means".

"It's easier for me to make that assessment. At least I know where to look and I know what quality the data is," Dr Nolan said.

Dr Nolan said the moral element of the vaccine will largely be addressed by a theological consultant on

the panel, Dominican and contributor to this paper, Fr Conor McDonough.

Conference

The conference takes place Saturday, November 27, from 7:00-8:15pm, and will feature a range of experts in the fields of science, medicine and theology. Register at: bit.ly/3nph6sX

Syro-Malabar bishop to intervene in Cork dispute

Ruadhán Jones

A bishop of the Syro-Malabar Rite is set to intervene in a dispute within the Eastern Catholic community in Cork, *The Irish Catholic* understands. The move comes after a protest by members of the congregation took place last Sunday outside a Cork church where they gather for liturgy.

Cork

The bishop is to arrive in Cork next month, when he

will meet with Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin, to settle a disagreement over the establishment of a trust to pay for the Syro-Malabar community's pastoral needs, such as catechism classes.

Dispute

This paper understands that the dispute arose over the cost of classes and the necessity of providing and filling out forms to access pastoral services.

Some members of the community think that in effect the trust privatises

access to standard pastoral services and some members say they feel exploited.

However, the community does not have a church of its own and as a result has to hire and pay for a hall for the classes.

According to a statement from one of the organisers

of the protest, Lijo Joseph, members of the community have contacted the diocese, but have not received any response.

"It is terrible, at the moment, children are not getting any catechism classes," Mr Joseph told *The Irish Catholic*.

Christianity to India

The Syro-Malabar Church is an Eastern Catholic Church largely based in India. In full communion with Rome, it traces its origins to the Apostle St Thomas who tradition records brought Christianity to India in 50AD.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Last 'Of Gods and Men' priest dies

Fr Jean Pierre Schumacher, one of two monks who survived the Tibhirine abbey massacre in Algeria in 1996, has died at the age of 97.

The Tibhirine monks' story was the subject of 2010 French film, *Of Gods and Men*, which won the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival.

Fr Schumacher died in Morocco, where he had been living in a Trappist monastery in Midelt, on November 21, the feast of Christ the King.

He served as the night porter of the Tibhirine abbey on March 27, 1996 when members of the Armed Islamic Group kidnapped and later beheaded seven of the monks.

The kidnappers, who entered the abbey through the basement, did not pass the front door where Fr Schumacher was stationed that night.

Kylemore Abbey receives insurance payout

Kylemore Abbey and Gardens in Galway were the recipients of a near-€1.5 million insurance payout on the grounds of business interruption due to Covid, *The Irish Times* reported.

Accounts seen by *The Irish Times* showed commercial revenues fall from about €7.4 million to €1.6 million.

Entry fees to the abbey and its walled gardens dropped from more than €3 million to €630,000, while shop and restaurant sales fell from about €4.3 million to below €1 million.

Including other income from grants and donations, the trust that owns the abbey saw its total income fall to €3.6 million, which includes the insurance payout from Allianz.

A box of hope



Students from Killeslin NS, Co. Carlow, celebrate a successful Team Hope Shoebox Appeal. The school received 116 boxes and they are now on the way to vulnerable children overseas.

Cork diocese calls for funeral ministry teams in every parish

Staff reporter

New guidelines on funeral ministry in the diocese of Cork and Ross call for the introduction of funeral ministry teams in all parishes.

The guidelines also update regulations around the repose of the deceased in a church, warning that churches are not to be used as funeral homes.

The changes come after extensive collaboration between clergy, parishes and funeral directors, said Fr Bernard Cotter, who helped create the *Ministry to the Bereaved: A Mission*

for us all policy document.

"Sometimes people forget that funerals take an immense toll on priests once they give themselves to the ministry and really support and help people," Fr Cotter said. "It's great to have the help of others in this challenging, but very rewarding work."

Speaking on changes around the repose of the body in the church, Fr Cotter stressed that "the church is supposed to be a place of worship, not a funeral home", acknowledging that "it's a decision that people will find difficult to accept".

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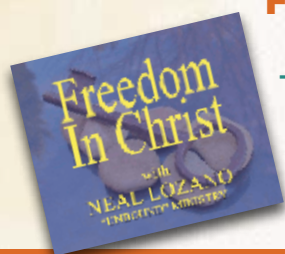
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Nuala O'Loan

The View



We must allow priests to fortify the suffering...even if it is a crime scene

Over the years I have been involved in the investigation of many murders which resulted from terrorist shootings and bombings, and deaths in violent situations. Such events are without question, terribly traumatising for those who are left behind - the family and friends of the person who died. My involvement has very often come years after the event which caused such pain. That pain often has the effect almost of freezing a person in the immediate trauma of the murder or death. There are questions which can be so very difficult for the bereaved person to ask, particularly when that person is the husband, wife, mother, father, or sibling of the person who died. The moment of death is a very sacred one, even when the cause of death is sudden and inexplicable violence.

Benefit

Northern Ireland has seen the cost and the benefit of the presence of a priest on so many occasions. I think most people will remember the terrible murder of the two corporals, Derek Wood and David Howes by the Provisional IRA on March 19, 1988 in West Belfast. Fr Alec Reid CSsR of nearby Clonard Monastery attended them as they lay dying. His prayers at that most savage moment were enormously important for so many. Earlier two Belfast priests died attending to their parishioners who had been shot. Fr Hugh Mullan was shot dead attending a man who had been shot during the Ballymurphy massacre in 1971. Fr Noel Fitzpatrick died in 1972 when, accompanied by a parishioner Paddy Butler, who was waving a white handkerchief, he attempted to reach wounded men during sustained and heavy gunfire. I remember one of our priests telling me how Fr Fitzpatrick had not been on duty that day but had offered to go out when the call came, rather than stay and eat his tea. He never came back. He died as did Paddy Butler and three teenagers Margaret Gargan (13), David McCafferty (15) and John Dougal (16). These priests and so many others like them across the world working in all sorts of difficult situations, were brave men living their call to sacramental ministry without counting the cost, following

the example of their divine Redeemer.

During my work I have repeatedly been asked two questions about deaths in such circumstances: did he or she suffer? Was there a priest there?

It can be profoundly difficult to provide the answers to those questions. The question of whether and for how long a person suffered can only be answered by those who are medically qualified, and the answer may cause profound and lasting distress, yet it must be answered. A positive answer to the second question may have the effect of alleviating some of the pain, for, as Catholics, we believe that where the last rites, the final sacraments of a person's life can be administered, they will bring comfort and grace to the person who is dying. The Church teaches that the effects of this Sacrament are the strengthening and comfort of the soul, the remission of sins, and the possible restoration of bodily health.

“Northern Ireland has seen the cost and the benefit of the presence of a priest on so many occasions”

Where serious injury or death has been caused by terrorist acts, as was the recent death of Catholic MP, Sir David Amess, the situation will be profoundly difficult. Equally difficult will be the situation where someone is seriously injured or dies as a result of other violent crime. To their credit, the police both north and south in Ireland seemed to manage such circumstances well, particularly during the Troubles. However, when Sir David died the priest who rushed to attend him was denied access. Perhaps there can be some learning from this terrible case which might ease the path of others in the days to come.

We are told that we live in a post-Catholic world. I do not believe that, but I do accept that there will be situations in which police officers and others attending such a crime scene may have no faith at all, and not understand why the presence of a priest is so

important. There is an opportunity now to make formal provision for such events in the guidance offered to emergency personnel so that the request by a priest does not come as a shock and does not result in a refusal of access.

Situation

In almost any situation in which someone has suffered a terrible injury there is the possibility that a crime has been committed and therefore, of course, the location of that injury will become a crime scene. Current police procedures are very specific about the management of such scenes and actions taken in those first minutes may be critical to resolve any crime which has been committed. The responsibility lies with the first officer(s) to attend. Access to such a scene is necessarily limited. A scene log will be created to manage and record all activities within the crime scene. However, a variety of people do gain access - they include ambulance and medical personnel, undertakers, photographers and scenes of crime officers. They all have a legitimate purpose in being at the scene, but not all of those purposes relate to the maintenance of the integrity and provenance of any material which may be recovered from it. Crime scene officers are required to ensure that persons entering the scene are wearing suitable protective clothing to prevent contamination of the scene, and to ensure that they are protected from any hazards present.

So, it is possible to provide safe access for clergy which will not in any way contaminate or inhibit an investigation.

Action can be taken now by An Garda Síochána and the PSNI to clarify the rules on attendance by priests to minister at such crime scenes. Such action should be taken to ensure that priests can administer the last rites at this most sacred moment, to someone who is seriously injured, dying or dead. This will not only benefit the dying person, but also their family and friends, who may be enormously comforted by the fact that a priest was allowed to attend them. Otherwise, sadly, what happened to David Amess and his family may very well happen to someone else when another atrocity occurs.



Britain's ambassador to Ireland Paul Johnson remembers Sir David Amess at a memorial Mass organised by Oireachtas members in St Teresa's Church, Clarendon Street, Dublin last month. Photo: John McElroy

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Don't focus on 'winning a debate' during synod



Pope Francis leads a meeting with representatives of bishops' conferences from around the world at the Vatican October 9. The meeting came as the Vatican launches the process that will lead up to the assembly of the world Synod of Bishops in 2023. Photos: CNS.

what a synod is and, crucially, what it is not. "The responsibility for us is to communicate to people around discernment and that it's about deep listening, respectful dialogue," she said.

Dr Brady and the steering group want to share good news stories about the Church in Ireland, to create a space where people can share what is important to them, what they love about their faith and the ways in which they have seen God at work in their local Church community and beyond.

“From his election, the Argentine has emphasised one of the great unfinished works of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65): the theme of synodality.”

She adds: "Of course there is also the space for people to share their hurts, their concerns and their fears but it is a hope-filled process and for something to be hope-filled it needs to engage with the difficult realities that are there but open up the space in which we commit to working together for a better future."

Dr Brady, has a wealth of experience in ecumenism and interfaith dialogue and hopes she can bring this to the process. "You do find that when you create a space for honest, respectful dialogue that people do get a sense of being lifted up by that shared Christian witness. They are lifted up by the feelings of solidarity that bring people together to engage in those issues and it helps them and it strengthens them in their faith and it strengthens them in their motivation to get out there and work for healing of relationships, bringing people together and sharing the 'good news' in a society that is increasingly secular, increasingly multicultural and finding that solidarity and standing together help support people in their leadership journey," she said.

Struck

So far in the synodal process Dr Brady was struck by the number of people who have been inspired by Pope Francis' leadership and his call to be a Church that goes out to the existential margins.

"I've gone through the consultation responses that were sent in when the bishops opened the public consultation and it's a recurring theme," she said, "for a lot of people that's one of the most important elements of this,

was not a new one with firm roots in the early Church, but the council sought to breathe new life into the process.

Fast forward to 2021, and the Pope has now set the entire universal Church on a synodal path. Dr Nicola Brady, who has been appointed to lead the process in Ireland, admits that there have been fears and apprehension as well as enthusiasm since the Irish hierarchy announced a synod for the Church in Ireland.

However, she is adamant that through engagement any fears can be dispensed.

“We want people to bring their hopes about the future of the Church, we want to create a space in which people can share their concerns”

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* Dr Brady said that: "Certainly people have fears and apprehensions about the process and some of those are based on people not having experience of what synodality is and thinking that it's about parliamentary style debates – that the people who have the best arguments or the most votes are going to win".

A key part of the work of her steering group will be ensuring that people know



The Pope's call for a more collaborative Church inspired by the margins is winning hearts and minds, one of the organisers tells **Chai Brady**

It's no secret that Pope Francis has been met with a mixed reaction since his election in 2013. Many people have hailed his emphasis on a humble Church listening to those on the existential margins. Others have despaired of what they have perceived as the Pontiff's lack of engagement in the so-called 'culture wars' around issues like abortion and same-sex marriage.

From his election, the Argentine has emphasised one of the great unfinished works of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65): the theme of synodality. The concept

The Irish Catholic

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that we are taking up the call and following that leadership example that has been set by Pope Francis. They see this as a really important opportunity for the Church in Ireland as a whole, to follow that lead and really just embed that kind of outreach."

Asked about doctrinal issues such as women's ordination – which Pope Francis has emphasised is off the agenda – Dr Brady would not say whether she felt the synod should and would stray into this territory, despite being repeatedly asked, but said "At this stage, all voices are welcome". However, she added that the synod is not about "winning a debate" or "pushing a particular policy".

Hopes

"We want people to bring their hopes about the future of the Church, we want to create a space in which people can share their concerns and it's really important that those spaces are as inclusive and representative as possible so the most important thing at this point is for people to get involved," she said.

"We're asking the big questions: we're asking what God is saying to the Church in Ireland at this time and therefore it's not about a limited number of issues, it's about the journey that we're on together

as a Church so we need to create a space in which all of those issues can be raised but we can't lose sight as well of the fact that we are working towards a long-term Spirit-led transformation in the Church in Ireland.

“A year ago, the bishops announced that they hoped the process would lead to a national synod of the Church in Ireland within five years”

"We hope that as people engage, they will benefit from that engagement in lots of ways and understand that it's not about winning a debate, it's not about pushing a particular policy but getting involved in a process of reflection, discernment, dialogue," she said.

In terms of what will happen through the synod, Dr Brady said there are many different ways the results of discussions can be implemented.

"I would hope that people who step up and make the effort to get engaged will not be disappointed because they will see there are lots of ways that we benefit through this engagement and a lot of that

Irish Catholic bishops have chosen Nicola Brady to head up preparations for a national synod of the church in Ireland, due to be held in the next five years. Photo: CNS.



is around understanding our faith better, thinking about how it's communicated, how we connect with people and how we bring that Christian witness into the wider society."

Shadow

Like so much else, Covid-19 continues to cast a shadow on the work of the synod process. Dr Brady insists that there is a

need to be sensitive as it has "brought so much suffering".

"There's such a keen awareness of that at local level because of the pastoral support to the bereaved and the various different forms of community outreach that parishes and faith-based organisations have been involved in, so we're very aware of all the ways people have suffered

through bereavement, people experiencing isolation, those who have experienced financial difficulties and there are also obviously the feelings of loss from the times when we couldn't come together in the local parish church and people couldn't be present in person for Mass... the process has to be really sensitive to that," she said.

A year ago, the bishops announced that they hoped the process would lead to a national synod of the Church in Ireland within five years. At the same time, the Irish process will feed into the continental phase of the Pope's universal synod, a key plank of which will be next year's Rome-based 'synod on synods'.



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Getting the structures fit for mission



In opting for a softly-softly approach to diocesan reform, Rome may simply be delaying the inevitable, but has to start somewhere, writes **Michael Kelly**

The old saying goes that 'you can please some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time – but you can't please all of the people all of the time'. It is true, of course, and politicians and Churchmen who try often end up pleasing no-one.

The Vatican has taken the first tentative steps in the long-talked-about reform of Irish diocesan structures which have been acknowledged by almost everyone to be in need of a radical shake-up for many years.

A carefully-drafted statement from the Diocese of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora and the neighbouring Diocese of Clonfert noted tersely: "We have been informed by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, that in the near future the Holy Father Pope Francis intends to appoint a single bishop" to run both ecclesiastical territories.

Autonomy

It was quick to point out that the "form of union of two dioceses under one bishop is not an amalgamation and does not suppress either of the two dioceses."

"Both dioceses will continue to maintain their own integrity and autonomy as is but will work closer together, where possible, through the person and ministry of a single bishop," the statement added.

A Roman solution to the fact that Irish bishops have, for decades, resisted any reform of the dioceses and subsequent loss of their influence? Perhaps. But it is also more-likely a stop-gap and an acknowledgement by Rome that amalgamation – at this



Which direction now for the Church in Ireland? A religious sister at Knock Shrine in Co. Mayo. Photo: CNS

point – might cause unnecessary annoyance among clergy where certain dioceses might be seen to be suppressed.

However, few people I have spoken to in ecclesiastical circles see this as anything other than an amalgamation in almost everything but name. And it seems obvious that this is only the beginning.

“The papal nuncio signalled that consolidation was well underway. ‘The process of amalgamation has already started’”

In an interview with this newspaper two years ago, the papal nuncio signalled that consolidation was well underway. "The process of amalgamation has already started," he told *The Irish Catholic* in December 2019.

Following the high-profile 2010-2012 Vatican investigation of the Church in Ireland, one of the themes that emerged was a strong desire from many people to reduce the number of dioceses from 26 to as few as a dozen to streamline bureaucracy and reduce red tape.

It was felt that a leaner structure would make the Church more fit for mission in an increasingly secularised Ireland. However, it is understood that some senior bishops deeply oppose the move, opting instead for the status quo.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Archbishop Okolo said in 2019: "All I can say is that the process of amalgamation has already started".

"It will be slow and steady – to avoid hurts, shocks, and surprises. Everyone implicated in the matter will be involved. The people will effect the amalgamation, work out the details of the cohesion, and inform the Holy See," he said.

Adamant

Dr Okolo was adamant at the time that Rome wants the process to proceed from local consultations rather than imposing a top-down solution. He also said that the Holy See is conscious of the local sensitivities.

"I want to be discreet about it, in order not to go ahead. Because if I say it has begun, and the people will say, 'but we don't know about it.' Yes, it has begun."

"The amalgamation begins from the grassroots. The communities, the meetings. In all the dioceses today, there are consultations going on... some don't want to hear it," he said.

Conversation

Clergy and parishioners in both Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora and in Clonfert will continue to be part of the conversation. But, what is clear is that they will soon be governed by one bishop – *in persona episcopi*. Since Bishop Brendan Kelly has already passed the mandatory retirement age of 75, it is likely to be Michael Duignan (51) who will become the new – take a deep breath – Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh, Kilfenora and Clonfert.

In the new arrangement, the diocesan structures, institutions and resources of each of the respective dioceses

are left unaltered. The only change – for now at least – is that instead of each diocese having its own respective bishop, one sole bishop exercises the pastoral governance of both dioceses equally.

Each diocese maintains its own identity and priests will not normally be asked to minister beyond their own diocese. This was seen as crucial in getting 'buy in' from clergy in particular. In my experience, distinct diocesan loyalty is rarely felt among laypeople. It is more a feature of clerical culture often fostered in the diocesan boarding school system and bolstered by friendly inter-diocesan rivalries in

Maynooth. Most parishioners have a great sense of parish, but the wider loyalty is to a county – partly as a feature of GAA structures.

But, is there wisdom in stopping short of full amalgamation? If the point is to consolidate resources and avoid duplication, surely this compromise does exactly the opposite and instead maintains an illusion that nothing either has changed or has to change to meet a new reality and that the status quo – albeit with a few less bishops – is sustainable?

At the same time, Rome has always proven adept at adopting a *piano piano*

(softly, softly) approach to reform when there is resistance. Reflecting on 2,000 years of Church history gives one perspective, I suppose. As far back as 2011, this newspaper reported that Irish bishops had reacted badly to Rome's suggestions at downsizing, even if a commission to investigate the matter was eventually established. If outright amalgamation was going to cause upset, a gradual process might be in everyone's interest. After all, when the number of dioceses in Italy was reduced by 100 in 1986 it was done so on a rolling basis.

“It will be slow and steady – to avoid hurts, shocks, and surprises. Everyone implicated in the matter will be involved”

So, what might the future hold for the other parts of the Church in Ireland? Well, Dromore Diocese has been without a bishop for almost four years and seems likely it will remain a part of Armagh under Archbishop Eamon Martin – even if not formally amalgamated. The same may be true for Ossory where the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty has been presiding as apostolic administrator for almost a year.

Large

If anything, Dublin Diocese is probably too large, but others that could see themselves working under one bishop in the future might be Derry and Raphoe when Bishop Donal McKeown retires in a little over three years' time. Clogher and Kilmore would seem like a natural fit while Tuam could see Killala and Achonry added. Elphin would seem like a natural home for the now vacant Ardagh and Clonmacnoise. In these circumstances, it would be hard to see Co. Cork sustaining two bishops bringing Cork & Ross and Cloyne together while Kerry would seem like a natural fit for Limerick and, perhaps, also Killaloe. In the South East, a bringing together of Ferns, Waterford & Lismore and Cashel & Emly would form a manageable population.

All of this remains speculation, of course. But if Rome is serious about rationalisation, it will happen sooner rather than later. Some will inevitably think it too radical, others not radical enough. The bottom line is that if the Church is to be fit for mission, it must be leaner and part of that is working closer together.



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Stay awake, praying at all times

The First Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of the liturgical year. The Gospel of the day is about the end of time (Luke 21:25-28.34). It might seem odd that Advent begins, not with preparation for the coming of Christ at Christmas, but his coming for us at the end of life's journey. Our usual idea of time is sequential: we move forward like water in a river. But the Church's liturgy sees time as a circle in which the line ends precisely where it started. Life is a journey from God our Creator back to God our final destiny. When this circle of life is forgotten, life is in danger of becoming a directionless succession of unconnected moments. The digital watch represents the minds of many today as it shows no past or future but only the dancing digits of the present moment. Without roots in the past or vision of the future, one lives only for the present moment. And if this collapses, as in a broken relationship or a defeat, everything falls apart.

The Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath symbolises the circle of life. It is made from evergreen leaves which withstand the winter of decay in order to express the virtue of hope which survives darkness and coldness in the winter of Faith. Each week in Advent, an extra candle is lit before the white candle in the centre expresses the coming of Christ, the light of the world. Christmas is the mid-winter feast of the light which conquers all darkness.

Stay awake, praying at all times

As a preparation for the final coming of Christ, the message of today's Gospel is "Stay awake, praying at all times." What does this "praying at all times" mean? Saying prayers 24 hours? Hardly that. What is meant is an attitude of prayerfulness or attentiveness to God rather than just saying prayers. In fact, saying prayers or repeating well-known prayers will sometimes be an obstacle to prayerfulness: if we talk too much and never listen in silence; or if saying prayers causes such a smug complacency at having the job done that we never get to the heights or depths of thirsting for God.

Thirsting for God

There is a beautiful description of thirsting for God in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2560. A woman comes to a well in Samaria

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn
OFM Cap.



where Jesus is waiting. "If you knew the gift of God. The wonder of prayer is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: there, Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us. Whether we realise it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him". Personally, I found this text opened my eyes. Prayer does not start when I am ready. No, prayer has already begun because God was waiting for me, reaching out to me, but I wasn't attentive.

“As a preparation for the final coming of Christ, the message of today's Gospel is 'Stay awake, praying at all times'”

The woman at the well had a painful background of broken marriages. Jesus would be the seventh man in her life and seven is always a divine number in John's Gospel. What Jesus wanted from that woman was her empty bucket. He is waiting for us to bring our minds empty of trivialities and our hearts thirsting for God. Call it attentiveness to God's presence. Those who master this sensitivity are saints. In the words of T.S. Eliot:

"But to apprehend the point of intersection of the timeless with time, is an occupation for the saint."

But for the rest of us there is only the "unattended moment, the moment in and out of time."

Tuning in to Radio God

Think of God as a great radio station broadcasting to us on many wavelengths. Wherever you are, as you read these words, the air is carrying the broadcast of dozens of radio stations, but the sounds, mercifully, are on a frequency too high for the human ear, unaided, to hear. But switch on a receiver, turn the tuning



dial, and you will pick up a plethora of sounds. Radio God broadcasts daily on many wavelengths; through our reflection on life, scripture, nature, inspirational people, sharing the cross, our favourite symbols and so on.

“The Advent wreath symbolises the circle of life. It is made from evergreen leaves which withstand the winter”

Obviously, if we are tuned into every and any other station except Radio God, then prayer will not happen for us. The very least we can

do is to create space in our minds and time for God. And then learn the wavelength where we can best listen to God. It will be wellnigh impossible if we allow the sensitivity of the soul to be "coarsened with debauchery, drunkenness and the cares of life", as today's Gospel puts it. These sensual gratifications only draw a veil over the huge abyss in the heart which can be filled by God alone. The experience of Saint Augustine taught him that the heart is made for God and will know no rest until it rests in God.

Christmas has been commercialised

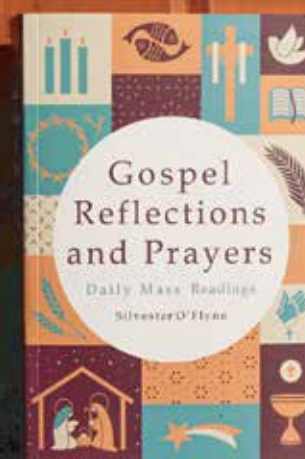
In preparation for Christmas, the colourful street-

lights cheer us up during the dark days of winter in the northern hemisphere. Yet it is a pity that the commercial side of Christmas has devoured the great lessons of Advent. It prepares us for the threefold coming of Christ:

his coming in past history at the Nativity; his future coming at the end of life; and his everyday coming to us as he sits by the well, thirsting for our approach in prayer as we bring our empty bucket.

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In Ireland nostalgia is not allowed



Narrating the past is really about controlling the present direction, writes David Quinn

Is it a good or a bad thing to be nostalgic about the past? If the latter, then the Irish need not worry, because we are one of the least nostalgic countries in the world about our history according to a new international study.

The survey, called *Global Trends 2021*, conducted by IPSOS, includes countries as diverse as China, India, the US, Britain, Italy, Australia and Brazil.

“Who would want to go back to that past? Only 24% of Chinese do”

A variety of statements were put to respondents, and they were asked if they agreed or disagreed with them. One of them was: “I would like my country to be the way it used to be”.

Only the Chinese were less likely than us to agree with that statement.

The Chinese, of course, have an excellent reason not to wish to return to the past. They were far more likely to be living in extreme poverty. That only began to change from the 1980s on. In addition, the country was in turmoil for decades. In the 20th Century, it had to contend with western imperialism, then an extremely violent Japanese invasion, then civil war, then the communist take-over, a man-made famine that killed millions followed by the ‘cultural revolution’ in which millions more lives were upended. This period of continual upheaval lasted right into the 1970s.

Who would want to go back to that past? Only 24% of Chinese do.

This compares with 82% of Thai people who prefer the way their country used to be, 78% of Nigerians and 74% of Indians.

These results are surprising to me. Those three countries are trying to climb out of poverty. Why would they be nostalgic for a poorer past? It is hard to know unless you have direct experience of those countries. Maybe they think life used to be simpler? Perhaps they are very disillusioned with their rulers?

In Ireland, 41% of people would prefer if we were the way we used to be, as against 49% who disagree.

Explaining why we don't want to go back to the past is easy. We were poorer a few decades ago and many of us had to emigrate. In addition, we associate the past with the Catholic Church and the institutions and the scandals. Many of us regard ‘old Ireland’ as cruel, backward, priest-ridden, inward-looking and intolerant. Who would want to go back to that?

Nostalgic

But despite the continually bleak way in which the past is depicted, 41% would prefer if things were the way they used to be, and that rises with age, meaning the people with direct experience of that time are the most likely to be nostalgic about it.

How is this possible? Surely older people above all should have bad memories of the past? Aren't they the ones who saw friends and family emigrate, who lived through economic hardship, who saw the cruel attitudes and had some awareness of the institutions?

On the other hand, maybe they hanker for the deeper sense of community that existed then, the neighbourliness, the strong family bonds, the lack of violent crime, the fact that people were more polite to each other. They might believe that things were simpler, even though money was scarce. They might think that even though many of us have more money now, we have also become more materialistic. Perhaps they believe we have become less spiritual and have a less keenly developed sense of personal right and wrong, and also that we have become too individualistic.

At an official level, Ireland does not permit nostalgia at all. How many documentaries have you ever seen on RTE that show the past through rose-coloured spectacles? There are some that invite us to admire those who fought for independence, but none I can ever remember that inclined us to believe there was anything good about social attitudes in the past, chiefly because of the Church.

Given this, it is astounding that 41% of the Irish would still prefer if life was the way it used to be. That percentage might be one of the lowest anywhere in the world, but given



People wave as they watch the St Patrick's Day Parade in Dublin in 2019. A new survey shows that Irish people are among the least nostalgic of countries surveyed. Photo: CNS

the way the past is constantly depicted, it is amazingly high.

It is often said that whoever controls the past controls the future. What is meant by that? Primarily it means that if you understand your history in a certain way, you will also understand the present in a certain way also, and wish your country to move in a particular direction in the future.

“Nostalgia is therefore regarded as something very dangerous because it might stop ‘progress’”

If you take pride in your country's history, you might fear something is being lost in the present and you might want to recapture old glories.

Opponents of Brexit believe too many Britons are nostalgic about their past and regret that Britain's place in the world has fallen. Brexiteers think leaving the EU will allow Britain to rise up again.

On the other hand, if you are ashamed of your country's past, then you will want to ensure that everything in the present is changed so as to erase that past and create a supposedly better future.

In the case of Ireland, that means eradicating the influence of the Church over Irish society (unless it agrees to be a servant of ruling class values) and overturning all traditional attitudes starting with our understanding of the family and the right to life.

For this reason, we cannot be permitted to believe anything in the past was better than anything in the present.

Nostalgia is therefore regarded as something very dangerous because it might stop ‘progress’.

But what is at least as dangerous is refusing to allow any sense of nostalgia at all because that makes us very pliable in

the hands of those who keep promising us a better future. It is actually possible that some changes do make things worse and that some things in the past were better.

In fact, if we are led to believe that everything today is

better than it was, and nothing has got worse, then it becomes harder to criticise and present and look at it objectively. Of course, that suits the people who run the country today very well indeed.



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Hear Her Cries



Conn McNally

Every year, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) Ireland during the Week of Witness and Red Wednesday, invites the faithful across Ireland to join us in witness to the faithfulness of the martyrs of today and all Christians who suffer and are persecuted for their faith in Christ. This year, the Week of Witness is occurring from 22nd until 26th November, with Red Wednesday falling on 24th November. On Red Wednesday this year, ACN Ireland is launching a report as part of our witness to Christian persecution. The report is titled “Hear Her Cries” and examines one of the most disturbing aspects of Christian persecution in the world today. That is the kidnapping, forced conversion and sexual victimisation of Christian women and girls around the world.

Growing awareness

We at ACN hear about these cases week after week. There is a growing awareness amongst Church leaders and organisations like ACN that this issue is only growing in terms of magnitude and frequency. This problem is pronounced in countries that generally have a poor record on human rights and religious freedom, such as Pakistan

and also in countries where there are ongoing conflicts, such as Iraq and Syria. This background context often gives the “cover” for the targeting of Christian women and girls.

“Farah’s family had great difficulty in getting the police to do anything about the abduction”

In his 2019 independent review for the UK Foreign Secretary of Foreign and Commonwealth Office Support for Persecuted Christians, the Anglican Bishop of Truro, the Rt Revd Philip Mounstephen, specifically raised the issue of the kidnapping and sexual victimisation of Christian women and girls in contexts where Christians are a religious minority. Bishop Mounstephen also stated that more research is required into this specific area to try to better understand the problem and to help formulate an appropriate action in response. ACN’s new report is envisioned as answering this proposal in the Truro review for more research into this issue.

It became clear during researching the report that Christian women and girls are disproportionately targeted for abduction, forced conversion and marriage in many countries around the world. For example, in Pakistan, Christians make

up just over 1% of the population. To place this in the demographic context of Pakistan, Hindus (the country’s largest religious minority) account just over 2% of Pakistan’s population. It was estimated by the Movement of Solidarity and Peace in 2014 that up to 70% of girls from minority faiths that are forcible converted and married each year are Christians, despite there being almost double the number of Hindus as Christians in Pakistan.

Egregious examples

Pakistan does stand out as the country with some of the most egregious examples of teenage Christian girls being kidnapped and placed in forced marriages. This is partly because, in some cases the police and the courts actively side with the kidnappers and prevent the girls from being returned to their families. One of the most shocking examples of this is the case of Christian girl Farah Shaheen. On 25th June 2020, armed men burst into the home of 12-year-old Farah in Faisalabad, Punjab. The men grabbed Farah and forced her into a van. It was declared that Farah was now married to Khizar Amad Ali and had converted to Islam.

“There are many other cases like Farah’s, not only in Pakistan but all over the world”

Farah’s family had great difficulty in getting the police to do anything about the abduction. Farah’s father was insulted and physically abused when he went to the police. The police finally filed a case three months after the abduction, but only after Farah’s father had placed a Freedom of Information Request. Farah was placed by the court in a shelter during the court proceedings. Farah had been horrendously abused while she had been living with her “husband”, being kept in heavy chains most of the time during the captivity. The court was presented with Farah’s birth cert, which showed that she was underaged. Despite this, the



Farah after her release.

court ordered a full medical examination of Farah. The medics declared that Farah was 16-17 and was of a legal age to marry in Pakistan. This claim was clearly false. Eventually, on 16th February 2021, the court ruled that the marriage was illegal, and Farah was allowed to return home. Farah’s kidnappers have still faced no charges,

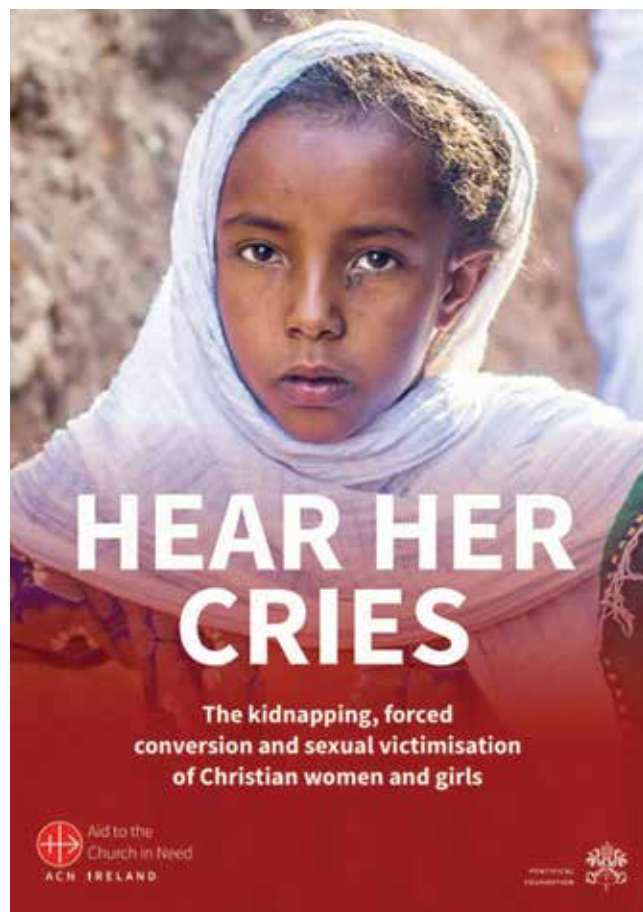
and it sadly seems to be the case that they will never face charges for what they did to Farah and her family.

There are many other cases like Farah’s, not only in Pakistan but all over the world. This Week of Witness and Red Wednesday, ACN Ireland invites you to stand in solidarity, witness and prayer with our

persecuted brothers and sisters around the world. It is important that we are aware of full extent of the plight of Christian girls and women around the world. ACN’s Hear Her Cries report will be available at 3 PM on Wednesday 24th November at the link below.

www.acnireland.org/witness

“It became clear during researching the report that Christian women and girls are disproportionately targeted for abduction, forced conversion and marriage in many countries around the world”



ACN’s new report Hear Her Cries



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Delight in Donegal as children celebrate sacraments



Celebrating their Confirmation are children from St Naul's National School, Keelogs, Co. Donegal with Principal Rory O'Donnell and Fr James Sweeney PP at St Naul's Church, Ardaghey. Photos: Siobhan McGowan.



Children from Killian National School pictured at their Confirmation together with their teacher Rosaleen O'Haire and Fr Sweeney PP.



Children from Frosses National School pictured at their Confirmation together with their teacher Principal Charlie Keeney and Fr Sweeney PP of Frosses.



Fr Sweeney PP and teacher Ms Jordan join schoolchildren from Frosses National School at their First Holy Communion.



Class teacher Finola O'Brien and Siobhan McGroarty, the new principal at Killian National School, join Fr Sweeney PP to celebrate children of Killian National School's Confirmation.



Teacher Seán McDermott and Fr Sweeney PP of Frosses join children from St Naul's National School at their First Holy Communion.

Climate fear is seeing people turn against life itself



Jason Osborne

The COP26 climate summit in Glasgow is over and has widely been received as not having delivered enough. Climate activist Greta Thunberg lambasted the talks as a “failure”, echoing the sentiments of many commentators since the conference’s close.

Climate fight

The perceived failure of humanity’s ‘last, best hope’ in the climate fight is unlikely to do anything to soothe the rampant climate anxiety taking root in younger generations. A recent study conducted by the University of Bath surveyed 10,000 young people between the ages of 16 and 25 in ten countries. It collected data on their thoughts and feelings about climate change and government responses to it to date.

The findings make for stark reading regarding the current mental landscape around climate change. Those surveyed said they were worried about climate change, with 59% reporting

extreme worry, while 84% reported at least moderate worry. Over 50% said they felt “sad, anxious, angry, powerless, helpless and guilty”, while over 45% said their negative feelings were impacting on their daily life and functioning.

With such a potent combination of emotions swirling in society, particularly among the young, in the face of what is consistently presented as the apocalypse on steroids, it’s no surprise, then, the nihilistic philosophy of anti-natalism is enjoying something of a rebirth.

“There are surely many factors to be considered when a couple discusses their family, but this burgeoning philosophy is the very antithesis of ‘open to life’”

Anti-natalism is the position which views procreation as morally wrong. Traditionally, this was because suffering was viewed as so intrinsic to existence that you spared a potential child that evil fate by refusing to have it in the first place (and you lessened your own suffering by choosing not to undergo all of the trials and tribulations inherent in raising and loving children).

However, it has taken on a new dimension in the 21st Century. While that same old vilification of being and life is there in many cases, a social dimension has been added as a result of the looming threat of climate change. Extreme climate activists have taken to arguing that the greatest contribution a person can make in the struggle against climate change is to forgo having children at all – or limiting family size as much as possible.

The position isn’t exactly unpopular, either, with such high-profile proponents as Prince Harry and Megan Markle saying they’re limiting their family to two children, and US representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez musing in an Instagram livestream whether it’s still ok to have kids. Scores of articles on the internet ask the same question, while a 2019 survey revealed a notable minority of 30% of respondents agreed with the notion that climate change should be considered when deciding whether or not to have children.

Factors

There are surely many factors to be considered when a couple discusses their family, but this burgeoning philosophy is the very antithesis of “open to life”. Instead, it condemns life as no more than the suffering and evil that often afflict it – a fact that is expressed nowhere more clearly than Christ’s cross.



“It’s to open ourselves up ever more generously to life, trusting in God’s goodness and the goodness of his creation”

The proper response to this, as Jesus showed us, isn’t to clam up and admit evil’s triumph over good – as the anti-natalists are doing. It’s to open ourselves up ever more generously to life, trusting in God’s goodness and the goodness of his creation. When God sent humanity forth to be fruitful and multiply, he didn’t set a limit on it. The solution to climate change isn’t to decide not to have children, or to stick to a

one or two child policy. It’s to raise a family centred on Christ, trusting that he’ll lead them to proper treatment of his creation.

Nitty-gritty

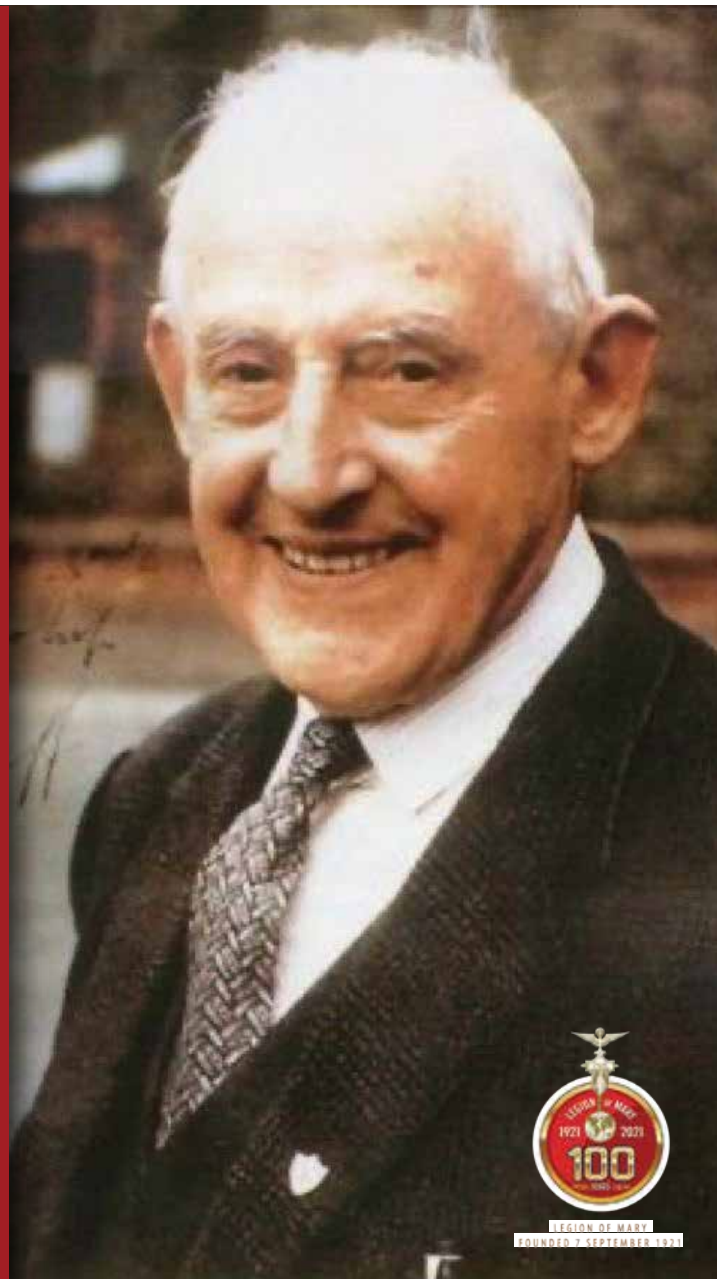
Legislation and conferences are surely an integral part in the nitty-gritty of solving the world’s problems, but they must never lead us from a fundamental trust in the goodness of God and his creation.

The Irish Catholic

celebrates

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For 100 years, the Legion of Mary has worked tirelessly in service of the Church. The volunteers have served their parishes by visiting families and the sick and missionaries have gone abroad to share the joy of the Gospel. To celebrate their ongoing contribution to parish life in Ireland, **The Irish Catholic** will publish a special edition of the paper December 9th.



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Out&About

Gifts of love



DUBLIN: Two-year-old Ailbhe Tuohy from Co. Kildare helped Trócaire launch a range of life-changing Christmas 'Gifts of Love' which will help vulnerable communities combat the devastating impacts of climate change, Covid-19 and conflict, November 14. Photo: Mark Stedman.



ARMAGH: Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin prays during a special celebration that took place in St Patrick's Cathedral to remember all the dead and especially those who have died in the past year.



GERMANY: Sr Kathleen McGarvey OLA, Irish provincial of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles and founder of the Women's Interfaith Council (WIC), is pictured with WIC Muslim Coordinator Hajija Daharatu Aliyu Ahmed, WIC Christian Coordinator Elizabeth Abuk and WIC Executive Director Sr Veronica Onyeansi OLA after receiving the Aachen Peace prize, November 13.

IN SHORT

Trócaire launches campaign for people vulnerable to climate change

The Church in Ireland's development organisation launched their 'Gifts of Love' Christmas campaign to help vulnerable communities combat the devastating impacts of climate change, Covid-19 and conflict.

Launching the 'Gifts of Love', Trócaire CEO Caoimhe de Barra said that "currently an estimated 235 million people around the world – 47 times the population of Ireland – need humanitarian assistance and we are relying on the public more than ever this Christmas to support our work".

Ms De Barra added that the COP26 Climate Summit "put the needs of people in the developing world who are battling to survive the effects of climate change in the spotlight.

"Our gifts aim to ensure that people don't reach the traumatic point where they have to rely on emergency humanitarian aid."

The 'Gifts of Love' collection includes water filters (€40) and emergency water supply (€20) to support communities in developing countries hit by ongoing drought, as well as dignity packs to help young girls out of period poverty (€10) and mental health support for women and children traumatised by the ongoing conflict in Gaza (€50).

The gifts can be purchased online at trocaire.org/gifts or by calling 1850 408 408.

Historic bridge becomes living nativity scene for homeless

A Victorian railway bridge in Co. Louth is being transformed into a Christmas stable where families and groups can sleep out and raise funds for the homeless.

The Advent Sleep Out – under The Bridge at Bush – is a partnership between Cooley Parish on the Cooley Peninsula and the Peter McVerry Trust, the national housing and homeless charity.

The sleep-out begins November 28, the first Sunday of Advent and runs until December 23.

"This is an opportunity for our parish community to keep homeless people at the very

heart of our preparations to celebrate the birth of Christ," said parish priest Fr Malachy Conlon.

"This brings to life the Christmas story. It's an opportunity to bring us out of our materialism and selfishness and a chance for people to express their solidarity with the homeless people."

Peter McVerry, Founder and Board Member of the Peter McVerry Trust, thanked parishioners for their support: "This will be a tremendous boost to us and will enable us to continue to serve homeless people."

More information is available on the Facebook page of Cooley Parish or contact Jene Bolton 087 282 4802 or Fr Malachy on 087 238 5940, or online <https://www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/cooleyparishsleepout>.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



CAVAN: Oisín Murphy sits in quiet prayer in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Belturbet, as his brothers Cillian and Eoghan light candles for their deceased granny Maureen on a November evening.



LOUTH: The Augustinians Ireland welcomed two pre-novices to the community, Fearghal Caden from Maynooth and Adeel Abid from Pakistan. They are pictured November 14 with student master Fr Colm O'Mahony OSA and Fr Peter Emoiti OSA from Kenya.



WICKLOW: Keith Carroll from Coolfancy is pictured with his family after receiving his John Paul II award.

CORK: St Mary's Dominicans in Cork City welcome Fr Matthew Farrell to the community of St Mary's. He is pictured with Fr Finian Lynch after his assignation letter was read out.



ARMAGH: Maura Kelly of Armagh Parish presents Trócaire Ambassador Geraldine Turley with a cheque for £8150 from the people of Armagh Parish, to help respond to the current crisis in East Africa, November 12.



MONAGHAN: Fr Tom Quigley is pictured at the garden of remembrance in St Patrick's church, Bawn. The garden was created by local people to remember their loved ones during November.

Events

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



World Report

IN BRIEF

Catholic charity announces €5M donation to help Lebanon and Syria's Christians

● The Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need has announced that it is donating €5 million to help Christian communities in Lebanon and Syria.

The funds will help establish a project to support young newlywed couples in Syria, who are starting families after 10 years of war in the Middle Eastern country.

Regina Lynch, a project manager for the charity, stated that there were many young people who weren't getting married because "they can't afford to set up home together".

Other projects in Syria funded by the relief package include a meal program for the elderly, fuel for central heating in a students' residence, medical supplies, and academic scholarships.

Church in Italy holds day of prayer for abuse victims

● The Church in Italy held its first national day of prayer for victims and survivors of sexual abuse last week.

Archbishop Lorenzo Ghizzoni of Ravenna-Cervia, president of the Italian bishops' commission for the protection of minors, said that the day was an invitation "to prayer, to support the paths of human and spiritual recovery of victims and

survivors, by whomever they have been injured, so severely, inside or outside the Church, for families and communities affected by grief for their loved ones".

The initiative is in response to Pope Francis' 2016 invitation to bishops around the world to establish a day on which to pray for those subjected to sexual abuse.

Order of Malta's 79th Grand Master to be buried in Maltese cathedral's crypt

● Fra' Matthew Festing, the 79th Grand Master of the Order of Malta, will be buried in the crypt of a cathedral in Malta's capital city following his funeral on December 3.

The order announced on November 17 that the funeral will be held at 2pm local time at St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta.

Cardinal Silvano Maria Tomasi, Pope Francis' special delegate to the Order of Malta, will celebrate the Requiem Mass and

Archbishop Charles Scicluna of Malta will concelebrate.

Mr Festing, who died in Malta on November 12 at the age of 71, will be buried in the cathedral's Grand Masters' Crypt, which was reopened to the public in January 2020 after restoration work. Additionally,

Mr Festing will be the order's 12th Grand Master to be buried in the crypt and the first for hundreds of years.

Vatican archbishop: Traditional Latin Mass 'experiment' not successful in reconciling SSPX

● The Vatican's liturgy chief, Archbishop Arthur Roche, said that Pope Francis issued *Traditionis custodes* as the effort to reconcile the Society of St Pius X (SSPX) and feels that it "has not entirely been successful" and it is necessary to "go back" to what Vatican II required of the Church.

Speaking during an interview in Switzerland, Archbishop Arthur Roche said that "the normal form

of the celebration of the Roman Rite is found in those documents that have been published since the Second Vatican Council.

"It's clear that *Traditionis custodes* is saying: OK, this experiment has not entirely been successful. And so, let us go back to what the [Second Vatican] Council required of the Church", the prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments said.

Nearly 1,000 hate crimes against Europe's Christians recorded in 2020

According to newly published data from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the number of hate crimes against Christians in Europe rose sharply in 2020.

The OSCE data, published November 16, documented 980 incidents against Christians, including arson attacks on Catholic churches, desecration and robbery of Eucharistic hosts, assaults on priests, and anti-Catholic graffiti on Church property by abortion activists.

The OSCE previously reported 595 incidents against Christians in 2019. There was a significant increase in the number of attacks against property last year, from 459 in 2019 to 871 in 2020.

Poland had the most hate crimes reported against Christians with 241 incidents in 2020, the majority of which were acts of vandalism against Catholic property.

The OSCE also reported 172 incidents in Germany, 159 in France, and 113 in Italy. The Holy See submitted data to the OSCE on more than 150 hate crimes against Christians in Europe.

Only 11 of the 57 OSCE states submitted data on hate crimes against Christians, possibly indicating that the figures are higher than those reported.

Here is a breakdown of some of the hate crimes committed against Christians documented by OSCE:



An almost 90-year-old statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is seen after it was destroyed by vandals. Photo: CNS.

Vandalism on Catholic property

There were more than 100 acts of graffiti on Catholic property in Poland in 2020, many of which included anti-Christian slogans. Other Catholic churches were vandalised with LGBTI symbols.

Women's rights activists vandalised a monument to unborn children at night with black paint in a Polish Catholic cemetery in October 2020.

Abortion activists also vandalised a cross at a cemetery commemorating victims of Nazism in the same month, according to the report.

People praying in front of a Catholic cathedral were assaulted by women's rights activists, who threw bottles, stones, and firecrackers, injuring several worshippers.

In Spain, a monastery and four other churches were vandalised on International Women's Day in 2020. At the monastery, a group of women's rights protesters also disrupted Mass with anti-Christian slogans.

Arson attacks on Catholic churches

In one instance in Germany, disinfectant was poured over pews in a Catholic church and then set on fire.

A Catholic cathedral in France was also vandalised with excrement smeared by perpetrators, who then attempted to set the church on fire in February 2020.

Ten masked individuals targeted another Catholic church in France in an arson attack in October 2020 by pushing a car

up to the church and then setting it on fire causing significant damage.

In Switzerland, a Catholic church's organ loft was set on fire in March

Hate crimes and social media

Catholic priests in Spain were sent death threats via social media in November 2020. Catholic priests in Poland felt threatened when an image depicting a shot priest was circulated on social media along with anti-Catholic insults.

In other cases, the perpetrators shared their hate crimes on social media. Women's rights activists in Poland filmed themselves throwing eggs at a Catholic church and posted it to social media in October 2020.

Orthodox archbishop makes historic address to US bishops

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, Chairman of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States, spoke of a "dialogue of love" between the two faiths and the potential for increased unity in a historic address to the Fall General Assembly of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Archbishop Elpidophoros said he had "heartfelt joy" being with his "brother bishops of the USCCB," and that the occasion marked the first time in the history of the United States that Orthodox leadership had been present at the USCCB's general assembly. He was joined by several other

Orthodox bishops who were present as observers.

Archbishop Jose Gomez, the president of the USCCB, and Bishop David Talley, chairman of the committee on ecumenical and interreligious affairs, arranged for the Orthodox delegation to join the assembly. Archbishop Gomez invited Archbishop Elpidophoros to address the assembly.

Archbishop Elpidophoros quoted Patriarch Bartholomew's address to the Ecumenical Reception at the National Council of Churches, where the patriarch stated that a "dialogue of love" between the faiths was the future for the two Churches, and

that the 21st century "should become the century of the restoration of unity".

Continuing, he said that "Since 1965 — at the happy coincidence of the reestablishment of Catholic-Orthodox relations and the Second Vatican Council — this Consultation has produced thirty-two documents, reports, and statements. Some of them became real references for theologians, and for our Churches to walk together towards unity".

These writings, he said, are the "real fruits" of the collaboration between Orthodox and Catholicism, fruits that serve to "nourish both our communities".

Caritas Poland to help needy until Belarus border crisis ceases

The director of Caritas Poland said that the charity will continue to help those in need for as long as the Belarus border crisis lasts.

Speaking at a press conference in Podlipki, north-eastern Poland, on November 18, director Fr Marcin Izycki stressed that the charity was also attentive to the needs of the local community near

Poland's eastern border.

"As long as the crisis lasts, we will be with all those in need. In our Caritas activities we try to remember all groups affected by the crisis: migrants and refugees, the inhabitants of these areas, and the services," he said.

The priest was speaking amid an ongoing standoff between Poland and Belarus

over the presence of thousands of mainly Middle Eastern migrants along the two countries' roughly 250-mile border.

The Polish government, the European Union, and NATO have accused Belarus of helping the migrants to gather at the frontier and enter Poland, an EU member state since 2004. The Belarusian govern-

ment, led by President Alexander Lukashenko, denies the claim.

Polish officials argue that Belarus, a landlocked Eastern European country, is fomenting the crisis in response to sanctions imposed by the EU after Lukashenko declared victory in a disputed presidential election in August 2020.



Edited by Brandon Scott
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Braving high seas



More than 100 Haitians wait aboard a 35-foot sailing vessel about 12 miles east of Biscayne Bay, Florida. Photo: CNS.

Wisconsin tragedy: Catholics among those injured as SUV driven into Christmas parade crowds

US authorities have confirmed that at least five people have been killed, with a Catholic priest, parishioners, and Catholic schoolchildren among the 40 injured when an SUV ploughed into marchers during a Christmas parade in Waukesha, Wisconsin, on Sunday.

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee also clarified that one of the priests in the diocese was among those injured in the aftermath of the attack, with the archdiocese's communications director, Sandra Peterson, saying afterwards that her "prayers are with the people who have been injured and killed during the tragic incident in Waukesha" and to "please join us in prayer

for all those involved, their families, and those who are traumatised from witnessing the horrible scene".

US authorities documented that five people were killed and 40 injured when the driver of a red SUV barrelled through barricades and into a crowd marching down the main street of the Milwaukee suburb just before 4:40 pm on Sunday evening. Videos posted on social media showed a dark SUV racing down the parade route past horrified onlookers moments before marchers were struck, with police in pursuit.

The Waukesha police department said they have a person of interest in custody. The department is also

probing the possibility that whoever was behind the wheel had been involved in an earlier incident involving a knife fight and was fleeing just prior to the vehicle reaching the parade.

Waukesha Police Chief Daniel Thompson also disclosed that an officer opened fire at the SUV in an attempt to derail the driver during the attack and added that police were no longer searching for the vehicle used in the crime.

The Catholic Community of Waukesha held a livestreamed prayer service on Monday at St William Church, and said it is planning to provide counselling and support for parishioners following the tragedy. The community was among those

marching in the parade.

"We continue to monitor the impact of yesterday's tragic event and minister to our injured parishioners and to anyone who was in attendance," the group wrote on Facebook.

"It is in our most difficult hours that we, as a community, turn to our Lord for refuge, strength and love. Please join us and with your community for prayer."

The city's four Catholic parishes have been livestreaming the rosary and Eucharistic adoration every night. The rosary following the incident on Sunday had almost 300 comments, over 250 reactions, and 53 shares.

US archdiocese to pay \$1 million for 'fraudulent' Hurricane Katrina claims

The Archdiocese of New Orleans will pay more than \$1 million in a settlement related to allegations of fraud in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the US Department of Justice announced.

According to the US Department of Justice, the settlement "resolves allegations" that the Archdiocese of New Orleans "knowingly signed certifications for funding that contained false or fraudulent damage descriptions and repair estimates that were prepared by AECOM, an architecture and engineer-

ing firm based in Los Angeles", from a period lasting from 2007 through 2013.

A former project specialist for AECOM first brought the allegations in a 2016 federal lawsuit, which alleged that the Archdiocese of New Orleans, as well as two historically black New Orleans universities, improperly applied for and received millions of dollars in federal funds in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

The archdiocese claimed in June 2020 that they were surprised by the

questioning, and that "every dollar of funds received has gone back into the restoration of parish, school and other properties to serve the people of the Greater New Orleans community.

"We deny the allegation that the Archdiocese of New Orleans knowingly conspired to submit false information. We have cooperated with the federal government's investigation and will continue to work with them as we resolve this claim," they said.

Vatican roundup

Pope Francis: Refugees are ending up in a 'desert of humanity'

● Pope Francis has said that refugees forced to flee their homes often end up in a "desert of humanity".

The Pope made the remark in a message celebrating the 40th anniversary of a Jesuit-run refugee centre in Rome.

"The last 40 years of human history have also not been a linear progression: the number of people forced to flee their homelands continues to grow," he wrote in the letter.

"Many of you have had to flee from living conditions comparable to those of slavery, where at base is a concept of the human person deprived of his or her dignity and treated as an object."

Continuing, the Pope said that he is fully aware of how "terrible and despicable war can be, what it means to live without freedom and rights, watching helplessly as your land dries up and your water becomes polluted. You have no other option but to set out towards a safe place where you can realise your dreams and aspirations, where you can use your talents and skills".

Croatian president raises plight of Bosnia's Catholic minority

● Croatia's President Zoran Milanović highlighted the situation of the Catholic minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina during a visit to the Vatican on Monday.

The Holy See press office said that after meeting with Pope Francis, Milanović held discussions with Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin and "foreign minister" Archbishop Paul Gallagher.

"During the cordial discussions, the parties expressed their appreciation for the good existing bilateral relations, and the intention to further develop collaboration," it said.

The office also revealed that several international and regional issues were

discussed, "including the situation of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina".

Catholics — most of whom are Croats — are a minority in Bosnia, comprising 15% of the population, according to a 2013 census. Half of the population is Muslim and around 30% belong to the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Cardinal Vinko Puljić of Sarajevo said last year that up to 10,000 Catholics leave Bosnia and Herzegovina every year. Reasons for this mass exodus of Catholics usually involve poor employment opportunities and discrimination towards adherents of the Catholic Faith.

Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church leader thanks Pope Francis for Ukraine support amid multiple crises

● The leader of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, expressed his gratitude to the Pope in a private audience at the Vatican.

Archbishop Shevchuk, who has led the largest of the 23 Eastern Catholic Churches in full communion with Rome since 2011, said that in post-Soviet countries the rich were growing richer and the poor even poorer.

He told the Pope that the war in the east of the country was just one of the challenges confronting Ukraine's 43 million people. The middle class was vanishing, he said, as small and medium-sized businesses were swallowed up by a small number of oligarchs.

The major archbishop said that poverty was rising fast and people were afraid of the coming winter amid an energy crisis.

He thanked the Pope for his prayers and his charitable support for Ukraine, which has helped more than one million people.

Pope Francis has repeatedly appealed for peace in Ukraine, where Ukrainian and Russian forces have clashed since February 2014.



Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

T.S. Eliot may well be the greatest of all American poets, and his 1925 poem "The Hollow Men" contains perhaps the most-quoted lines of any 20th century American literary work, usually by people who have no idea where the lines come from: "This is the way the world ends/Not with a bang but a whimper."

By "hollow men", Eliot meant people who are spiritually dead. His line, however, also comes to mind these days with reference to the Vatican's much-ballyhooed "trial of the century", which may itself turn out to be fairly hollow too.

“At issue is whether the Vatican’s Promoter of Justice, the prosecution in the case, has turned over all relevant information to the defence”

The presiding judge, veteran Italian jurist Giuseppe Pignatone, appeared to hint at the possibility that a trial intended to provide a sweeping confirmation of the success of Pope Francis's financial reforms could end before it's even begun, saying, "It's clear we need more time before starting. If we manage to start."

The trial pivots on a failed \$400 million real estate deal in London, one in which Vatican prosecutors allege that defendants swindled the Vatican out of millions, and, for the very first time, features a Prince of the Church among the indicted – Italian Cardinal Angelo Becciu, the former "substitute" in the Secretariat of State, effectively the Pope's chief of staff.

After a hearing last Wednesday in which defence attorneys once again demanded that charges be dropped for prosecutorial misconduct, Mr Pignatone set a deadline of December 1 for the court to issue its ruling as to whether any trial at all is possible given the circumstances.

At issue is whether the Vatican's Promoter of Justice, the prosecution in the case, has turned over all relevant information to the defence.

Back in July, the prosecutors filed a lengthy bill of indictment with the court along with almost 19,000 pages of supporting documentation, including written transcripts of their interviews with witnesses in the case. However, it emerged that in many cases the prosecutors had made audio or video recordings of those interviews.

Among the video recordings were the prosecutors' exchanges with

Vatican's 'trial of the century' could end in a whimper rather than a bang



Alessandro Diddi, right, Vatican deputy prosecutor, speaks during the third session of the trial of six defendants accused of financial crimes. Photo: CNS.

“The Promoter of Justice goes to the Pope to talk about things relevant to the charges, even if the Pope can’t be called [as a witness] and there’s no transcript”

Italian Monsignor Alberto Perlasca, the start witness in the case. Msgr Perlasca had been the head of the financial affairs office within the Secretariat of State, and, in effect, was one of the architects of the London deal. When it fell apart, he got ahead of the curve and volunteered to testify against his former colleagues.

Defence lawyers

Naturally, defence lawyers wanted access to the recordings, arguing that they had a right to compare them against the transcripts and to see if they provided context or nuance difficult to express in print.

Mr Pignatone agreed and ordered prosecutors to turn them over by early August. The prosecutors flatly refused, citing privacy concerns. That was shot down by Mr Pignatone in early October, who once again demanded that the tapes be submitted to the court and made available to the defence. This time prosecutors complied, but the 52-DVD set of recordings they submitted contained 38 separate "omissions," meaning places where material had been cut or obscured, justified only by the vague formula "investigative exigencies".

That set the stage for last Wednesday's hearing, where Mr Pignatone once again insisted that all material be turned over to the court, including the missing bits from the tapes – which could amount to as much as two hours of material.

During the same hearing defence attorneys demanded what amounts to a mistrial, insisting there's no provision for editing evidence in the rules of procedure for a Vatican trial and that, by now, their right to mount an adequate defence has been fatally compromised.

“Naturally, defence lawyers wanted access to the recordings, arguing that they had a right to compare them against the transcripts”

Adding to the unanswered questions, the portions of the recordings that weren't obscured included an interrogation of Msgr Perlasca in which one of the prosecutors, Italian lawyer Alessandro Diddi, makes on off-hand reference to a conversation between officials of the Promoter of Justice and Pope Francis.

"Before doing what we're doing, we went to the Holy Father and we asked him what happened," he said. "I can doubt anything, but not the Holy Father."

The problem is that the reference to a meeting with the Pope had been conveniently omitted from the written summary of the interrogation provided back in August, and it raised questions about whether Msgr Perlasca's testimony had been influenced by threats of negative disclosures from the Pope.

Justice

Defence lawyer Luigi Panella, representing one of the Italian businessmen in the case, put things this way.

"If you watch the video, it's clear that Perlasca's face changes expression [at the mention of the Pope] and he appears upset, devastated. The scenario is this: The Promoter of Justice goes to the Pope to talk about things relevant to the charges, even if the Pope can't be called [as a witness] and there's no transcript. It's unheard of – such a thing has never happened. I repeat, watching the video it's obvious that the impact that the words of the Promoter of Justice on Perlasca were devastating, and it explains why, on August 31, Perlasca appeared without a lawyer and made a series of declarations that were different and contrary to what he'd said in April."

Mr Diddi, for his part, denied there actually was any conversation between the Promoter of Justice and Pope Francis, claiming that his com-

ments to Msgr Perlasca were based on an interview the Pope had given to a journalist in November 2019.

“Mr Pignatone won convictions that were considered the capstone of his career, but Mr Diddi eventually got his client off the hook on appeal”

Mr Pignatone may have special motives for being leery of Mr Diddi's claims, and not just due to anything that's happened in a Vatican courtroom. A few years ago Mr Pignatone and Mr Diddi squared off in a case called "Mafia Capitale," involving charges of collusion between public officials and an alleged mob boss represented by Mr Diddi. Mr Pignatone won convictions that were considered the capstone of his career, but Mr Diddi eventually got his client off the hook on appeal.

Presumably, we'll see what Mr Pignatone and the court make of all this in a couple of weeks. For now, it seems clear that whatever happens, the trial that was supposed to put an exclamation point on a new era of transparency may actually raise more questions than it answers.

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

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Letters

Letter of the week

Article highlights dangers of the synodal process

Dear Editor, Garry O'Sullivan's shocking article on the recent Killala 'assembly' affirms the fact that votes were taken that showed majorities in favour of questioning Catholic doctrine on the sacraments of Holy Orders and Matrimony, and on sexual ethics, and indeed on the very structure of the Church itself. This questioning aims at significant and wide-ranging reversals of Catholic teaching and practice.

The article clearly shows why the 'synodal process' is so dangerous. Even if the bishops (and/or priests, deacons, laity) try to bracket off matters of doctrine, such as the impossibility of ordaining women or of blessing same-sex relationships - the

'hot button' issues - this will be criticised by radical dissenters as a failure to really listen to, and effectively welcome, the whole community. They want local synods/assemblies to be used as a parliamentary-type process to pressure Rome to substantially change Catholic teachings, all on the unsound basis that 'the faithful' have been consulted and a majority of them favour change. But neither Catholic doctrine nor 'the sense of the faithful' are matters of majority vote. Radical questioning of doctrines is not accurately understood or honestly presented as merely the promotion of better 'policy'. Thus, the Killala approach to the synodal process is never going to promote true unity in

faith or genuine participation of all the laity, women and men, in the mission of the Church.

The lesson to be learned from the Killala assembly is not what Mr O'Sullivan claims. Rather than showing that the 'hot button' issues must be discussed with complete openness to effectively reversing Church teaching, it shows that there exists a huge need for teaching Catholic doctrine clearly, wholistically, energetically, and honestly, and calling all Catholics, and indeed all people willing to listen, to personal conversion to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

*Yours etc.,
Dr John Murray
Dublin City University, Dublin 9*

Questions about Pope-Biden meeting

Dear Editor, According to President Joe Biden, who visited Pope Francis at the Vatican recently, the Pope told him that he (Biden) was a good Catholic and he advised him to continue receiving Holy Communion. This has not been refuted by the Vatican.

The US bishops are trying to stop Biden causing scandal by receiving Communion at Mass because of his support for abortion.

Am I the only one who is at a total loss to understand why Pope Francis would offer support to a president who supports abortion rights, like Roe V Wade, and also economic sanctions on the Syrian people which are causing dreadful suffering and starvation in that country? Both Biden and Trump are responsible for this great suffering. Could the Pope not have spoken to Biden about the evil and cruelty of abortion?

Can there be a reasonable explanation that evades me?

*Yours etc.,
Anthony Redmond
Dublin 12*



Heeding the sublime teachings of Christ

Dear Editor, On our TV screens we have gazed with horror at the destruction of the twin towers in New York by cowardly callous terrorists with the loss of thousands of civilian lives, have seen barbaric beheadings, prisons where thousands were caged like circus animals, many of them tortured. Newspapers tell us of a sharp increase in rapes, robberies, domestic vio-

lence, attacks on women and the elderly, child sexual abuse, abortions, sexually transmitted diseases, of millions of people starving because of ongoing wars and threats of reprisals.

What a difference it would make if people all over the world would read, re-read and heed the sublime and unrivalled teachings of Jesus Christ who said, "Love your

enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly. Give to everyone who asks you. Be compassionate." (Luke's Gospel 6:37-36). His teaching is rooted in love. Jesus said: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. You must love your neighbour

as yourself. There is no greater commandment than these." (Mark's Gospel 12:29-31). And in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) the Lord Jesus teaches that our neighbour is anyone who needs our help, no matter what his/her nationality or religion.

*Yours etc.,
Fr Sean O'Shaughnessy CSSp
Dublin 12*

The power to dispense God's mercy and forgiveness

Dear Editor, Fr Ron Rolheiser makes interesting and 'broad-stroke' general points in the article 'Including a loved one in heaven' [*The Irish Catholic* - November 4, 2021].

He makes the point initially that as Christians we have the power to dispense God's mercy and forgiveness. Is this not a requirement for us in relation to others who have hurt us? But, this hardly extends to our being able to forgive oth-

ers for their wrongs against third parties we may not even know.

This raises another question in relation to the Sacrament of Penance and indeed ordained clergy. Are they required?

It's worth bearing in mind the beautiful words we use in the two prefaces at Mass on the feasts of Apostles. Preface 1: "So that it (the flock) may be governed by those you have appointed shepherds to

lead it in the name of your son."

Preface 2: "For you have built your Church to stand firm on apostolic foundations, to be a lasting sign of your holiness on earth and offer all humanity your heavenly teaching."

It looks like they are.

*Yours etc.,
John O'Mahon
Renmore, Co. Galway.*

facebook community

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

'Get Catholics out' Labour Party insult to parents and volunteers

Shocking discrimination. - **Sean Barry**

Disgusting. Only what I would expect from that uppity party. If that was said in UK he would be gone. Some people think they can say what they like about Catholics and their religion and of course get away with it. - **Mary Carroll**

Pray for his conversion. - **John Corcoran**

He would not say it about any of the other religions he would be afraid they wouldn't take it lying down. Time the Catholics stood up like our fore fathers did and defend our religion. - **Eilish Higgins**

Nothing like compromising yourself in public. - **Gearóid Ó Broin**

As bad as FF/FG are and they are bad, a SF/L government would be a disaster. - **Daragh Harmon**

If it wasn't for the Catholic Church these people would have nothing, like Sinn Féin once they got on the political ladder the church not only could go jump but they began kicking it and are not about to stop. - **Annette Devlin**

Hopefully, this display of anti-Catholic bigotry will remembered at the next election. The best way to shut these people up is at the ballot box. - **Hugh Gallagher**

Giving altar servers the support they need

Pre-Covid there seemed to be an ever-increasing decline in the use of altar servers in Kerry parishes, with over 60% of servers being female. Almost all were aged ten to 12 and serving as part of their pre-Confirmation programme. Meanwhile back in London I noticed just how many of the servers were in their 20s, 30s and some in their 60s... they have annual celebrations on December 26 as members of the Guild of St Stephen and are awarded long service medals, etc.. - **Alan Whelan**

How many have been deprived of the opportunity to serve at Mass during the past year and a half. There are some young boys who really want to be trained 'in the service' as one young lad said to me. Why can't they be accommodated one by one? No more risk involved than with lay ministers of the word or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. What might be future vocations should be fostered not denied. - **Eilín Glynn**

We had five new servers commissioned last Sunday in our parish, eight servers and a senior server support graduate involved in that Eucharistic Celebration. It's a joy to see our youngsters involved! - **Colette Furlong**

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

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Around the world



▲ **VATICAN:** Pope Francis exchanges gifts with Rome's new mayor, Roberto Gualtieri, during a private audience.

◀ **ITALY:** Filippo Montemurri, a player on the Vatican team, 'Fratelli Tutti', celebrates after scoring a goal against a team from the World Roma Organisation at the Lazio Training Centre in Formello, near Rome, November 21. Photos: CNS.

NIGERIA: Sr Rosemary Isiatonamba and Sr Dorothy Okoli, superior general of the Missionary Sisters of St John Paul II of Mary, pose outside a Catholic women's religious institute in Nkwelle-Ezunaka.



NEPAL: Sr Martha Park Byongsuk is pictured enjoying a midday meal with the children at St Paul's Happy Home in Pokhara.



USA: Cardinal Seán O'Malley of Boston, president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, leads a sunrise walk to end abuse, November 18.



NEW ZEALAND: Protesters rally against Covid restrictions and vaccine mandates in Wellington.

Dealing with emotional paralysis

Our greatest strength is often our greatest weakness. Sensitivity is a gift, but as any sensitive person will tell you, that gift can be a mixed blessing. Sometimes a thick, calloused skin can save you from a lot of suffering, particularly from heartache.

The popular spiritual writer Henri Nouwen was a highly sensitive person. That was both his gift and his curse. He suffered a lot because of his sensitivity. For instance, several times he fell hopelessly in love with someone, but because he was a vowed celibate and because those deep feelings were not mutual, he was left alone in that obsession, frustrated, emotionally paralysed. These obsessive feelings so overpowered him that (to his honesty and to his credit) he sought clinical help. By his own admission, those were the darkest and most painful periods in his life.

“What’s to be done when some emotional obsession literally paralyses us?”

There are many like him in this world and there is someone like him inside everyone who is highly sensitive. Indeed, one of Nouwen’s heroes was the famed Dutch painter, Vincent Van Gogh, who suffered from acute over-sensitivity for much of his life and at one point, suffering from an emotional obsession in love, cut off one of his



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

ears and sent it to the person with whom he was obsessed. Another person who Nouwen idolised was the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, whose personal loneliness deeply coloured his religious and philosophical writings. It’s no accident that so many highly creative persons (artists, writers, performers) are often caught in the grip of emotional obsession. I suspect that this is true for all of us to some degree.

What’s to be done when some emotional obsession literally paralyses us?

Question

I have twice posed this question to psychologists. In the first instance, it was to the renowned Dutch psychologist Antone Vergote. I twice had the privilege of being in his classroom and in one of those classes, I asked him this question. How do you help a person who is so paralysed by some heartache or other pain that it leaves him

or her suicidal? His response was humble. He began by saying this is singularly the most difficult situation we will ever deal with, inside ourselves, inside our families and friendships, and inside pastoral and counseling situations. He admitted that psychology was still grappling with what a helpful response might be and suggested that we might find some enlightening perspectives by reading the great novelists.

“How do you help a person who is so paralysed by some heartache or other pain that it leaves him or her suicidal?”

Then he offered this: emotional obsession is a form of over-concentration, a fixation that holds us in its grip until we somehow break its spell. What can be help-

ful (if anything can be helpful) is distraction, anything that can take that person’s mind off its fixation. This may sound crass, especially when our perennial religious counsel has been “take your troubles to the chapel”. Shouldn’t prayer be the answer? Yes, it should, but that too has its dangers. If you are in the paralysing grip of an obsession, alone in a chapel might be the last place you need to be. Alone and emotionally paralysed, the darkness might well overpower you. In our darkest moments, it’s the incarnate God, the human touch of God through the care of someone, which constitutes the real chapel to which we need to go.

Advice

The second psychologist to whom I posed this question added this piece of advice. Never stay in this kind of darkness alone. Indeed, never enter it alone. Be with somebody – a friend, a mentor, a doctor, a guide, a fellow-sufferer, anyone. I remember an occasion some years ago when a young man came to me in the grips of this kind of obsession and suggested that he wanted to do was to drive off by himself into the mountains, rent a cabin, and “think this through”. I strongly advised him that it was the last thing he should do, in that being

alone and isolated with his obsession would be dangerous. What he needed, I suggested, were things that could distract him – his work, his friends, his routines, his normal escapes.

“Never stay in this kind of darkness alone. Indeed, never enter it alone. Be with somebody”

Not everyone is Jesus who went into the darkness of his crucifixion alone. Except, he wasn’t alone. He was with his Father. If we trust our faith strongly enough to know that, respective of anything, we will know that God is there for us, then we can risk entering the darkness alone. Then we can take our emotional paralysis to the chapel and to remote cabins in the mountains. However, if we fear how our wounded selves might render us helpless and suicidal, we will want to hold fast to the hand of a trusted friend and look for any kind of distraction that can break the obsession paralysing us.

On one of those occasions when Henri Nouwen had checked himself into a clinic for depression, he wrote a book, *The Inner Voice of Love*, to share how eventually he did cope. What he ultimately learned is that our hearts are greater than our wounds; but we don’t always know that in the darkness.

“There are many like him in this world and there is someone like him inside everyone who is highly sensitive”

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, November 25, 2021

Personal Profile

Sharing a love
of God's Word
in Cork

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Finding a spouse in 21st Century Ireland



Dating is difficult, there can be no doubt about it. Dating in its current form is only a recent-enough development, but finding a suitable spouse has always been a nerve-wracking process I'm sure, even when the process was largely mediated by each person's family.

However, finding that special someone in the 21st Century, and in modern Ireland, have their own peculiar sets of difficulties. Where are you to meet someone when many of the usual venues are no longer in fashion? How do you know how to attract someone when values are changing faster than anyone can keep track of? What on earth is 'Tinder' that every single person seems to be using these days?

While these questions seem



Last week discussed the practicalities of getting married, but a more topical question might be how to date well in Ireland in 2021, writes Jason Osborne

specific to our present age, they all boil down to one, age-old question: How do I find someone I'd like to marry? In your mind, it often seems akin to finding a needle in a haystack, only harder. And if I find someone, what's to ensure it'll work out? I know that these particular questions remain the number one anxiety-inducers among young people today, and with good reason. For the more traditionally-minded out there, opportunities to chance upon romance seem

to be slipping through their fingers – and lockdowns certainly aren't helping to ease this fear. So what's to be done?

Quite a lot, actually. While all good things come from God's hands, he gave you free will that you might get out there and shape the course of your life, too. Your future husband or wife is unlikely to float through your bedroom window; you've got to get to work and find them. Here's a checklist for doing just that.

Develop an accurate understanding of dating

Before trying to do something, it's a good idea to have an accurate understanding of what you're trying to do. There's a popular misunderstanding of dating these days that says 'it's just a bit of fun', or 'it's good experience'. While both of these things can be true (dating can certainly be fun and an experience), it makes all of the difference in the world if that's what you understand dating to be about in the final analysis.

A more useful conception of dating is that it's about finding a suitable spouse. The more people you date, the more likely you are to find someone you'd like to marry, which is ultimately the goal for Catholic relationships. You're trying to find someone you'd like to

strive towards heaven with for the rest of your lives – not using people for a fun evening, week, month or year.

So before setting out on a dating spree, develop a proper understanding of dating. If you're looking for a husband or wife, keep in mind the fact that the person you're dating isn't just an avenue to fun – they may well be the person you could travel through this life with in marriage on the road to heaven.

Become someone worth marrying

Once a suitable understanding of dating is in place, and we're dating to find a husband or wife, it's vital to become someone worth marrying. This phrasing might rub someone the wrong way, as it's true that

» Continued on Page 33

Family News



AND EVENTS

APPLE TO SELL SPARE PARTS TO CONSUMERS TO REPAIR APPLE PRODUCTS

Apple said it will for the first time start selling spare parts and tools to the general public to perform their own repairs on some iPhones and Mac computers.

The self-service repair programme comes after years of pressure from consumer groups which have resulted in Apple providing greater access to repair manuals and genuine parts.

In 2019, Apple started a programme where independent repair shops can buy its parts, tools and manuals.

Apple said there are now 2,800 independent shops in its programme in addition to its 5,000 directly authorised repair providers.

Under the self-service programme, Apple customers will be able to buy those parts directly to perform their own repairs after reading a manual.

RUSSIA ADMITS DESTROYING SATELLITE WITH SPACE MISSILE STRIKE

Russia's defence ministry has admitted to destroying one of its satellites during a missile test but rejected US accusations that it had endangered the International Space Station (ISS).

US officials accused Russia of a "dangerous and irresponsible" strike on a satellite that had created a cloud of debris and forced the ISS crew to take evasive action.

The move reignited concerns about an escalating arms race in space, encompassing everything from laser weapons to satellites capable of shunting others out of orbit.

"The Russian defence ministry successfully conducted a test, as a result of which the Russian spacecraft 'Tselina-D', which had been in orbit since 1982, was destroyed," the military said in a statement.

US officials said they were not informed in advance of the anti-satellite missile test – only the fourth ever to hit a spacecraft from the ground – which generated over 1,500 pieces of trackable orbital debris.

US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said that the danger was far from over and the debris would continue to threaten satellites and activities on the ISS.

TIKTOK TAKES EXTRA STEPS TO CURB DANGEROUS CHALLENGES

TikTok is trying to strengthen the detection and enforcement of rules against dangerous online challenges and hoaxes, the BBC has reported.

Just over one in five teenagers has participated in an online challenge, a survey commissioned by TikTok suggests.

But only one in 50 has taken part in a "risky and dangerous" – and fewer than one in 300 a "really dangerous" – one.

The survey looked at teenagers' broad online experience, without focusing on any one platform.

There has been widespread concern about the proliferation, across various platforms, of potentially harmful online challenges.

Last year, the "skull-breaker" challenge, shared on TikTok, was linked to injuries.

And this year, doctors warned of the risk to life and limb of the "milk-crate challenge", which invited the foolhardy to climb pyramids of milk crates.

The needless horrible suffering of sentient creatures



What do St Thomas Aquinas's position on divine command theory and factory farming of animals have to do with each other?

Plato's Euthyphro dilemma asks whether things are good because God wills them, or whether God wills them because they are good. Divine command theory takes the first position: that the only thing that makes actions morally good or bad is that God commands them. The world is not imbued with inherent moral meanings. Instead, things have moral value only because God has issued certain commands about them.

Now to the Christian this might sound basically right. It's true that God only commands good things, and it's also true that morality is created by and grounded in God. So no problem, right?

“The only reason those things are bad is because in fact God has not commanded them. But he could have!”

To paraphrase St Thomas Aquinas: wrong. Divine command theory is mistaken, said Aquinas, because it makes morality ultimately arbitrary. If there is no standard apart from 'whatever God commands' for what is good or bad, then there is no reason for God to command anything in particular. William of Ockham, a Catholic scholastic philosopher and one of the most notable divine command theorists took this view to its natural conclusion. God could command a person to do anything – commit adultery, murder someone, even to hate

Everyday philosophy
Ben Conroy

God – and it would then be good. The only reason those things are bad is because in fact God has not commanded them. But he could have!

Aquinas thinks this is all wrong. Hating God is bad for us, and for any creature with a will. God simply could not command a creature to do it. Does this mean that Aquinas endorsed the other side of the Euthyphro dilemma? Did he think that there were moral standards that stood above God? No. Aquinas believed that moral truths are an intrinsic part of God's nature. God could not issue commands that would 'make evil good' because to do so would be to contradict his own essential being. For a pithy way to put it I give credit to a Reddit user named 'kjdtkd' (citations can be weird in the internet age): "good is good and bad is bad not because of what God says, but rather because of who God is." I think Aquinas was right on this and Ockham was wrong, and that's been the view of most Catholic moral theologians since.

What does all this have to do with factory farming? I think that once you reject divine command theory, you start seeing the world differently. Every created thing becomes threaded with ethical significance. One does not refrain from destroying a beautiful work of art because of an external command. Instead, if you really understood the work,

one of the things you would understand about it is that you should not wantonly damage its beauty. Our moral duties are responses to the true nature of things, to the deepest truths about the world and God.

This is one of the main reasons why I think we can put any stock at all in our moral



intuitions. We are creatures made in God's image with a basic ability to recognise and pursue the good. Our intuitions can and do err: our moral compasses have been warped by original sin, and it's easy for us to be led astray by the biases of our social group or era. But we are not completely blind. With proper training and the help of grace, there is such a thing as a well-formed moral sense. Our intuitions can pick out the moral truths woven into the world.

I think that we Catholics sometimes argue about how we should treat animals in a way that abandons this picture of the world in favour of the logic of divine command theory. The needless, horrible suffering of sentient creatures, as happens on a grand scale in factory farms, is often greeted with shrugs, because these animals are not human beings, or because they lack the type of rational nature that humans have. This way of thinking treats the presence or absence of human nature as a sort of on-off switch that enables or disables our moral imaginations. We should instead base our treatment of animals on close, attentive observations of their particular form of life.

“I think this is a truth-tracking intuition: a sign of decency and compassion, not squeamishness”

Do humans matter morally more than animals? Yes. But each animal has only its own life to lead. That its suffering is less objectively significant is cold comfort to the brutalised pig or the baby chicken torn up alive by a shredder. Most people cannot look at what goes on in factory farms without experiencing dawning moral horror. I think this is a truth-tracking intuition: a sign of decency and compassion, not squeamishness. Moral truths are woven throughout our world if we pay proper attention. If we did this with animals, we would treat them much less cruelly.

» Continued from Page 31



we're all inherently valuable, sons and daughters of God as we are.

However, life is a messy, tough and effortful affair. When searching for a husband or wife, you're likely to consider people who'll make this long road a little easier. That is to say, you're looking for someone competent and compatible with you. Other people are likely to be looking for the same thing as they consider you, which means you must measure up if you're to impress them.

This is not to say that you must develop the most impressive CV of all time, or become Christ-like overnight. It's more of an attitude adjustment, that sees you willing to grow in virtue and maturity, that you might make a good, loving spouse for someone else one day. This kind of thinking shouldn't be foreign to Catholics anyway, as we strive for sainthood in our day-to-day lives.

We often expect the best in many areas in life, and it's unrealistic to think others aren't expecting the same. It doesn't quite work like this when searching for a spouse, as nobody is perfect, but aiming in the right direction is a world apart from being complacent, or worse, actively engaging in bad behaviour. If you're going to be successful in your search for a spouse, you must become someone who'll stand out in someone else's search.

Friendship first

There is a dread-fear of friendship with someone you're romantically interested in, at least among young people these days. This fear has been summed up in the notion of the 'friend zone', which is when two friends, one or both of whom may have feelings for the other, come to see a relationship as impossible because such a thing might ruin their friendship. This is a valid and understandable fear when such a 'friendship' is based on nothing other than trying to stay in each other's orbit out of the hope that a romantic relationship might take off someday.

However, this is a poor excuse for a friendship. Good friendships are built upon shared values and mutual interests – deeper things than circumstance or simple romantic feelings. If the shared values or mutual interests

are deep enough, they're able to withstand a little awkwardness if romance goes unrequited.

Where are you likely to find such friends? For Catholics, prayer meetings and religious gatherings are where you're most likely to find people with the same values (more on this next). Societies, clubs, groups and other social settings centred on interests and hobbies are good, old-fashioned facilitators of such meetings too.

You're most likely to find good friends gathered around the things you hold most dearly, and who knows? Your future spouse may be one of them.

Search for shared values

The best marriages are those built upon shared values. As this is *The Irish Catholic*, for Catholics that means finding others who follow Christ. "Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock," Jesus tells us in the Gospel according to Matthew. The same goes for marriages; those truly built upon Christ are most likely to remain standing when the winds and rains of life surely come.

This doesn't mean a marriage between people of different professions can't work; it just seems much easier if you're both on the same page about life's important questions. If the purpose of dating is to find a husband or wife, where are you to look for those who believe as you do? While God may have you bump into your future spouse anywhere, it's a good



idea go to those places people with similar ideals to you gather.

Not only is this a good way to make solid friendships (which may blossom into romance), it's also the best way to meet people of the opposite sex who believe as you do. Prayer meetings, social (rather than silent) retreats, societies and communities are the best ways to encounter other Catholics, many in the same boat as yourself no doubt. If there aren't any in your area but you think there might be a hunger for one, set one up.

This is how I met my wife – a weekly prayer meeting. We both attended for a couple of months before even talking to each other, then struck up a deep friendship which revealed itself over the course of the following months as more than that.

In this rapidly changing world, dating apps and websites can no longer be ruled out. I used to be a sceptic, being somewhat old fashioned, but after seeing a very happy marriage come of the website CatholicMatch, and another wholesome relationship struck up on the dating app, Tinder, I've had to revise my stance. Just be sure to be discerning!

Be realistic

Don't search for someone who's going to fill you with joy 24/7 – God alone will bring that about in the fullness of time, and it's unfair to pin this hope on a mere mortal, such as those you're dating.

We all bring our flaws to the table in dating and marriage, and it's best to be honest about your own and about those of the person you're interested in. Marriage is a relationship between two imperfect humans who are both, hopefully, aimed in a direction that's making them saints – but it's a bumpy road along the way. No person will make it less so.

Pray

And finally, pray. We ought to work and strive as though it all depended on us, and pray as though it all depended on God. God will send the right person your way if that's what you need. For our parts, we need to make sure to go out and meet him halfway.

Faith — IN THE — family



Christina Malone

Advent, Advent ein lichtlein brennt... is a famous German saying, meaning "Advent, Advent a light is burning..."

I used to love this time of the year, Advent, as a child but even more now as an adult because I learnt to appreciate the memories my parents created. The traditions around Advent are so wonderful. From Sunday to Sunday a new candle is being lit at the Advent wreath. Growing up it was a family tradition in my home that the whole family would gather to light each candle for the first time on a Sunday. We would sing together and my parents would make a special effort on those Sundays to have time for afternoon tea and biscuits and maybe homemade cake.

Another big tradition was the Advent calendar, 24 little red bags packed with surprises. I am from a big German family. I have a brother and a sister which is quite unusual for my generation. Many of my friends might have a brother or a sister, some have no siblings. (Perhaps it makes you smile calling it a 'big family'). Those 24 red bags would be filled with chocolates and little treats but only every third day it was my turn. I had to share it with my siblings. My sister would start, I followed and my brother would finish. Then it starts all over again. Looking back, I have to laugh. We children would drive my mother mad by asking her why we would only have one Advent calendar while every other family would have one for every family member. Her answer was always the same "because yours is a special one". It was indeed. Some days you would find a chocolate bar, sometimes a lollipop or jellies in those little red bags but to be honest those did not mean a lot to us. We were hoping for a note. Every one of us would have three or four notes hidden inside. Those included "I cook your favourite dinner", "a games night", "you pick the park we will go to", "who would you like to visit". None of those involved money – they

all were time together as a family, eating, playing, having fun – in other words, creating memories.

This year I decided to do the same for my children for the first time (but I had to give in to have a chocolate one each, too). I am wondering how my children will react



when they read – "games night", "where do you want to go for a walk?" Times have changed in the past 20 years and I am not sure if they share the enthusiasm I had when I was a child. However, I am eager to find out. Wondering what others remember about Advent I asked one of my friends, Rachele. I asked her to share her own experience, what was Advent like as a child and now in her own family?

She said: "Every year as children we always were excited at the beginning of Advent. We always had our Advent calendars and little chocolates. Each Sunday we went to Mass and saw the different colour candles being lit. We couldn't wait for the final candle to be lit so Christmas was on its way. "I followed the same tradition with my own children up until Covid arrived. My son asked the other day would we go to Mass to see the Advent wreath. I hope we can and Covid numbers will allow us to go to Mass as a family."

I know every family, every household is different but I guess we have similar wishes: to spend time together as a family, have fun and celebrate as a parish community. The past 20 months have shown how important family and friends are. Maybe this Advent we can make a special effort to reach out to them and share our own Advent stories with each other.

Sharing a love of God's Word in Cork

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

Dr Marian Mortell developed a love of Scripture from her school days, and it was a love the really began to flourish ten years ago. She took early retirement from her teaching career to return to study, and along with other lovers of Scripture in Cork set up the Cork Scripture Group. Dr Mortell recently completed a PhD in Scripture studies from Mary Immaculate College, along with her husband Philip.

Speaking about the Cork Scripture Group, Marian explains that that it began with a group of volunteers simply saying "we'll see how it goes" and continuing from there.

"We were hoping to celebrate our 10th anniversary at the start of lockdown," she explains. "We've been running a course and trying to promote Scripture in the greater Cork area, trying to get people interested in reading Scripture and praying Scripture and stuff like that. It's something that has really caught my imagination in the last 10 years."

Scripture

Her interest in Scripture traces back to her school days, and her time with the Legion of Mary, which she joined at the age of 11 after her Confirmation. "I was very involved in the Legion of Mary when I was in school. Everyone would have joined when they made their Confirmation, it was just the thing you did. Even though there wouldn't have been a big scriptural element, it would have attracted me."

"It gave you practical experience of meeting people where they're at. One of the things it would have taught me,



Drs Philip and Marian Mortell from Ballinlough, Co. Cork, after completing their PhDs with Mary Immaculate College.

I would have gone out thinking we have all the answers and then realising we don't. Everyone has something to bring and everyone is loved and God shines through everyone in different ways."

“All the while that Dr Mortell was furthering her understanding of the Scriptures through study, she was attempting to share its beauty with those she could”

After finishing secondary school, Marian did a BA in UCC and as soon as she started teaching, she did a diploma in catechetics: "We had an incredible lecturer, Fr Ned Goold, he lectured on Scripture for the two

years of the course. Funnily enough, he ended up on the committee for our Cork Scripture Group for a few years recently. He was the most wonderful scriptural teacher, he just brought it to life. He really would have set a very firm foundation.

"Once I started teaching, I taught religion all the time and tried to integrate Scripture into the religion teaching and trying to connect it with life if at all possible. A thing I always emphasise is actually reading the text, not getting the children's bible stuff around the story, actually really grappling with what does it say to me. That has been part of my religion teaching."

It was while she was still a teacher that a friend recommended she and her husband Phil do a diploma in Scripture with the Dominican Biblical Institute (DBI), which proved to be the next stage in her journey of loving God's Word.

"Myself and my husband thought it could be interesting," Marian begins. "Again, we were blessed with wonderful teachers, including Jessie Rogers now with Maynooth and Fr Brendan Clifford OP, people with an incredible love of Scripture who connected it with life."

Masters

"We started that with the DBI, and Jessie Rogers who was working with Mary Immaculate at the time suggested doing a masters. I said, you know what, I'm going to take early retirement. I went back to Mary I then and did a masters on theology, focusing as much as I could on Scripture."

"And then again, Jessie threw out the idea of a PhD. I was saying no way and then all of a sudden, I said I'll try this. Phil, we both followed it and we both ended up graduating the same week."

All the while that Dr Mortell was furthering her understanding of the Scriptures through study, she was attempting to share its beauty with those she could.

"I would have been involved in our parish in Holy Cross Mahon, Cork," she says. "At the time, Fr Sean O'Sullivan had just started off 'Unfolding the Word', which is like *lectio Divina* with a bit more input. It's basically gathering people together to read the scriptures and to pray. We began running a group in the parish, with maybe 14 or 15 people gathering."

“After finishing secondary school, Marian did a BA in UCC and as soon as she started teaching, she did a diploma in catechetics”

"I suppose that was two years before the DBI. Then we went to the DBI and it was a non-stop journey from then on. A number of us got the idea of doing something for Scripture in Cork – there isn't anywhere in Cork specifically focused on Cork – and I'd say every Scripture scholar in the Cork area came to one of the meetings with us."

"They all said they'd love to do a few talks for us, so we began an introductory course for the Bible and ended up with nearly 40 people signing up for it in the city, and 14-15 in West Cork. It went from there. We now run two modules a year, four Monday nights and a Saturday workshop."

So began the Cork Scripture Group, which has gone from strength to strength. Marian explains that they are hoping to expand their reach, having worked on their website corksripturegroup.com during lockdown.

"We're hoping to be able to offer something more to ministers of the word when people are able to meet up again. We're talking about living word, giving people concrete study on Scripture and how do we use it. There's six of us on the committee and we just want to bring Scripture alive."

Tips for a terrific Christmas despite the challenges

This Christmas will be my first Christmas as a married person. Myself and my husband have still not decided where we will spend it but we are getting pressure from both families as to where we should be spending Christmas day.

For some families, who is seated at their Christmas table on Christmas day is of utmost importance, for others they are happy to go with the flow. In nearly every marriage you will find, whatever your respective family's attitudes to certain things, they will be different.

For many couples the Christmas Day dilemma is one of the first litmus tests you might face where you have to dig your heels in. You both come from different families, but now you and your husband are a new family. You have to start your own traditions, you need to set that precedent and make it clear from the start of your marriage that your spouse comes first.

So the first thing to do is sit down with your husband and talk about what you actually want:

do you want to alternate each year with family or do you want to do your own thing? Do you want to do Christmas Day in one house and St Stephen's day in another? This is your decision to make as a couple, it's all part of the importance of 'leaving and cleaving' you have left your family and now this is your family. Once you have made your decision you need to communicate it to your respective families in a loving way. Be prepared, you might be met with some protests like "but darling, we have been doing X tradition for the last 30 years". Sometimes parents can try to

emotionally blackmail us without even realising that they are doing it. Be gracious and thankful for the many years of happy memories and traditions, but now is the time for you to make new ones.

Of course as you discuss this with your husband you might find that you have a different expectation of what should happen at Christmas. This is where the all-important 'C' word comes in: compromise. Try to meet in the middle and come

to a place where you are not just happy but excited about your plans for your first Christmas together. Perhaps he wants to follow the tradition of having Christmas in the wife's family house first but is conflicted about not being in his family's house for the first time in his life. The reality is, it is a big change, being married now means you have to be selfless. Avoid the temptation of comparing how things were done when you were growing up in an effort to 'prove' your family's Christmas was better.

Sure you might have exchanged presents in a different way or ate dinner at a different time, so decide what traditions you want to keep for yourselves and what ones you want to start anew.

Once you make a decision you have to stand firm, you might have to go as far to explain to your parents that you are a new family now, and this is just one of many new traditions and decisions you will make together and you hope they understand and respect that. In a way this sets a precedent for so many things to come so it is important to communicate, compromise and most of all enjoy Christmas together.



Wendy Grace



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Lots of talk on justice: Frank Duff lived it

It's interesting how the concept of justice is used so liberally these days - everything from 'climate justice', a relatively new concept, through 'social justice warriors' whose methods don't always taste of justice, to genuine justice tempered by mercy.

The phrase 'crying out for justice' was used in a timely interview on **Times Radio Breakfast** (Saturday) when Jenny Kleeman spoke with colleague Tymiah Ford about the case of Julius Jones, whose death sentence was commuted last week by Oklahoma governor Kevin Stitt, just hours before the execution was due. That must have been traumatic, but the item also showed empathy for the victim's family - I don't think their interests were really served by the death sentence. Further it seems that the original conviction is questionable anyway, as someone else confessed, even bragged about being the shooter during a car-jacking. Some evidence suggests that Jones wasn't even present but was framed. If that's the case, the work of justice continues.

Plugs

On the same show there were several plugs for a new book, *The Great Post Office Scandal* by Nick Wallis about what was described as one



Frank Duff who founded the Legion of Mary a century ago.

of the UK's worst miscarriages of justice. This was the drastic case where 736 post office workers were criminalised, but it turned out to be a computer error. Their difficulties in achieving justice were previously detailed in a BBC podcast *The Great Post Office Trial* (BBC Sounds). Episode 11, 'The Reckoning' recently brought the story up to date a year after the original series.

Another man infused with a desire for justice was Frank

Duff, founder of the Legion of Mary. The centenary of the Legion is this year, an event marked by an inspiring and informative item on **Bowman Sunday** (RTÉ Radio One) last weekend. As John Bowman put it, this date tended to be lost among all the other dates associated with the foundations of the State. There were fascinating archive contributions from his biographer Finola Kennedy, along with historian León Ó Broin and Fr Michael

O'Carroll, both of whom knew him personally. It was noteworthy that despite his achievements he was a low-key figure, keeping himself in the background - no cultivation of guru status for him! He was described as being ahead of his time, positively combatting prostitution, poverty and misery in Dublin and later worldwide. For example, he set up a hostel for unmarried mothers, ensuring they would have the option of keeping their babies - all this in tandem with devotion to Our Lady and to the Mass.

Prominent

A more prominent figure in this media driven age, Jordan Peterson, was a guest on **Question Time** (BBC One, Thursday). I reckoned there might be sparks flying as the controversial Canadian psychologist and best-selling author seems to rub people up the wrong way, often with the clarity of his thinking, but perhaps also by how firm and sure he is in his opinions. His early contributions were certainly useful and pertinent. Discussing the making and breaking of promises by politicians his concern was that if this was done in a manipulative way it would erode trust in our public institutions and that had serious consequences for society. If it was a genuine situation where prom-

PICK OF THE WEEK

NEW! ADVENT MARANATHA

EWTN Monday November 29, 9pm, also Tuesday 10.30am, Friday 5.30 pm

Advent is the season of preparation, and Maranatha signals the coming of our Lord at Christmas - a chance to receive him by turning away from sin and proactively pursuing good deeds. We have a living hope in Jesus.

CANCELLED

Channel 4 Thursday December 2, 10pm

From entertainment to academia, presenter Richard Bacon examines how cancel culture is affecting our lives.

THE LEAP OF FAITH

RTÉ Radio One Friday December 3, 10.05pm

Second episode of the new season. Topical religious and ethical issues with Michael Comyn.

ises couldn't be kept because of changing circumstances then the politicians should be up front and prompt about admitting it. On the current migrant crisis that the UK is facing he suggested a priority should be to raise living standards in developing countries, presumably because economic migrants especially would be keener to stay at home. Of course, that doesn't solve the problems created by civil wars and autocratic regimes.

The nearest thing to sparks was when the topic of racism was discussed, particularly in the context of recent revelations about cricket. Another panellist took offence when Dr Peterson used air quotes when he mentioned racism. He graciously agreed to be more careful in future, but

his point was that resorting too quickly to claims of structural racism was unwise. First he asked for the specific when, and who of the offences, to ensure accountability. He thought claims of institutional racism showed 'low resolution thinking' and were too likely to pit group against group.

I'd like to have heard more of what he had to say, regardless of whether I agreed with him or not - he provides thought provoking perspectives far above what one panellist called 'knockabout' politics.

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Music

Pat O'Kelly



Despite Covid, the music thankfully continues...

While Covid-19 continues to cast doubts over live music performances, some promoters are battling on. One such has a three-week tour of the country by piano supremo, Finghin Collins, currently in hand. Mr Collins actually began his serpentine journeying on November 13 at Tullyally Castle in Co. Westmeath overlooking Lough Derravaragh, the legendary lake of the Children of Lir.

This evening - November 25 - finds him in Limerick's Belltable; tomorrow 26 at Ballina Arts Centre; Saturday 27 in Sligo's Methodist Church; Sunday 28 in Letterkenny's An Grianán and Tuesday 30 in Roscommon's Arts Centre.



Finghin Collins continues his tour of the country.

The last leg of this meandering zigzag marathon brings Finghin Collins to the Pavilion Theatre in Dún Laoghaire

on Wednesday December 1; Thursday 2 at Glór in Ennis; Friday 3 at the Source in Thurles and Saturday 4 at the Triskel in Cork. The tour concludes in St Brendan's Church, Bantry on Sunday December 5.

Bach

The main stays of Mr Collins' programmes are Bach's English Suite No 3 BWV 808 written, according to the composer, "for music lovers to refresh their spirits"; Chopin's Scherzo No 2, one of his best loved works; Liszt's *Harmónies du Soir*, the penultimate in his twelve *Transcendental Études* with a wonderful sound palette depicting even-tide. Schubert's physically and mentally challenging Wan-

derer Fantasy D 760 is the jewel in this pianistic crown.

Dating from November 1822, when the composer was enduring one of his several emotional crises, the grandiose quasi-orchestral textures of the work meant its continuous four-movement construction having a deep significance for a number of other composers, not least Liszt, Wagner, César Franck and Richard Strauss.

For its principal idea Schubert returned to one of his songs - *Der Wanderer* D 489 - written in 1816 although the connection only becomes plainly obvious in the Fantasy's Adagio where the original *lied* is quoted in the same tempo and mood. The poet was a lesser-known figure,

Georg Philipp Schmidt von Lübeck, a medical doctor by profession.

Fantasy

Schubert wrote the fantasy for a "courteous, wealthy gentleman" - the distinguished pianist of the day, Emmanuel Karl Edler von Liebenberg. Said to be a "celebration of energy and virtuosity", the piece ends with an elaborate fugue that stretched Schubert's own piano technique beyond its limits. Playing it on one occasion, he is reputed to have jumped up from the keyboard shrieking, "let the devil play it"! Without doubt Finghin Collins will take it all in his masterly stride.

As well as these pillars of the repertoire, Mr Collins sprinkles

his programmes with shorter pieces by Elaine Agnew, Bartók, Amy Beach, Debussy, Clara and Robert Schumann and Eric Sweeney.

Thanks to Music for Galway, visiting Navarra Quartet plays Bartók and Dvorák in the city's St Joseph's Church tonight, November 25, while events over the coming weekend has the Fidelio Trio's Winter Festival offering Piano Trios by Korngold and Saint-Saëns among a panoply of other delights in Belvedere House and DCU's Drumcondra complex on Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon, November 27 and 28. The Dublin International Chamber Music Festival has *Music for Friends* in the Chapel Royal on Sunday evening.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



A Kerry aristocrat in the 18th Century

A Man of his Times: The Papers of Robert FitzGerald, 17th Knight of Kerry

by Adrian FitzGerald
(Kingdom Books)

J. Anthony Gaughan

This is a valuable collection of the correspondence of Robert FitzGerald (1716-1781), knight of Kerry. The knights of Kerry belong to an early branch of the mighty Geraldines. There is uncertainty as to exactly how or when they received their title or, more accurately, their distinction.

Traditional accounts attribute the creation of this distinction and that of the white knight and the knight of Glin, to John FitzThomas FitzGerald of Shanid, who was killed at Callan on July 23, 1261. The story goes that he had three illegitimate sons by three different mothers and that he conferred the knighthood on these three sons by virtue of his royal seignory as a count palatine.

Prominent

Although not as prominent in Irish history as the houses of Kildare and Desmond, nonetheless the knights of Kerry played a significant role in both ecclesiastical and civil affairs. Nor had they landholdings as extensive as those held by the houses of Kildare and Desmond, yet they had substantial estates in West Kerry and North Kerry, and in 1752 Robert took out a lease on the majority of the townlands in Valentia Island in South Kerry.

To retain their estates the knights of Kerry conformed to the Established Church. This enabled Robert to qualify as a barrister and to serve as an MP, commissioner of appeals, comptroller of Dingle and judge of the admiralty court. He was witty and convivial, mixed freely among the vice-regal set and enjoyed the friendship of almost all the most distinguished and cultured men of his time. He was a bibliophile, widely travelled and had close friends not only in Dublin and London but also in Paris, such as Marshall Thomond (Lord Clare) of the Irish Brigade and hero of the French victory at the battle of Fontenoy in 1745; and a distinguished Irish priest named Père Mahony.

Robert was an 'improving landlord'. At Dingle and Valentia Island he promoted flax-growing and the

development of a linen industry. He became a trustee of the linen board in Dublin. And the linen industry was to flourish on Valentia Island for many years afterwards.

Ballinruddery

Robert spent his later years at Ballinruddery (town of the knight) near Listowel in North Kerry. Here beside a medieval tower house on the river Feale he built a two-storey thatched house and developed a garden and demesne. Here he received a visit from the renowned travelling economist, Arthur Young, who commented favourably on his progressive farming methods which included feeding his pigs on potatoes and his sheep on turnips. Robert also had a town house in Dublin's fashionable Merrion Square which he occupied during sessions of the Irish parliament, and a summer villa on the coast at Blackrock in south Co. Dublin.

A series of letters in which Robert plagued Lord Townsend, the lord lieutenant, with requests gives one the impression that he was rather naïve. In one letter, he points out that of all the circle of close friends around that dignitary he was the only one not rewarded with high office. On the back of another one of those querulous letters, in the hand of Lord Townsend or his secretary, is an ample list of what can only be described as sinecures which Robert had received for himself and members of his family down through the years. In one of his final exchanges with the lord lieutenant he asks that worthy to make a pension available to him in the name of a friend of his, Maurice Hewson of Ennismore, who can be relied upon to be discreet in such a matter! His not achieving high office in spite of his 'good connections' and the fact that he was generally good-humouredly referred to as 'the counsellor' or 'holy Bob' endorses the impression that he was a combination of dilettante and engaging eccentric.

Students of Ireland's eighteenth century will be greatly indebted to Adrian FitzGerald for harvesting and making accessible these interesting and defining letters of his ancestor. And incidentally revealing, once again, what an extraordinary place Kerry was, and is.

Seeking Jesus in the context of

The Birth of Jesus the Jew: Midrash and the Infancy Gospels

by Peter Keenan
(Columba Books, €14.99/£12.99)

Peter Costello

Peter Keenan is a man with a mission. He styles himself "a post-holocaust Christian", and believes that the outlook of all Christians of every persuasion should be shaped by the fact of the Shoah. This has a bearing on the relations of both Christians with Jews, and relations between Christian groups.

According to the biographical notes with this book "Peter Keenan was born in Dublin. He studied for the priesthood but left before ordination. He holds a BA degree in theology, specialising in history and religious studies. He has lectured extensively at many gatherings of laypeople, clergy, students, and teacher gatherings. Peter has led educational visits/pilgrimages to the Holy Land".

Back in 1986, he was appointed an advisor to the bishops' conference of England and Wales. He served for many years as secretary to its Committee for Catholic-Jewish relations. So Christian and Jewish relations have been at the heart of his activities for most of his career. Hence one main aim of this book, to try to improve those relations.

Another aim of this book, it seems to this reviewer, would seem to be to establish a sort of 'basic Christianity', a sort of Christianity 'degree zero'.

New ideal

This of course is not a new ideal. It is in effect the position of the Unitarians and of the non-subscribing Presbyterians - a miracle-free ethical religion that could be shared widely as a basic foundation. Unitarians were very influential in some places like Boston and Manchester in the 19th Century. But the position is not one that, I suspect, appeals to large numbers of Christians as "a Faith guided by reason and conscience" as the adherents of Ulsterman the Rev. Dr Henry Montgomery declared in the 1820s.

“Peter Keenan has been anxious to make his views as widely available as he can”

Some 'liberal views' of this book have attracted the attention of the popular press - there was no 'first Christmas' as Jesus was not born in Bethlehem but in Nazareth. But these are not really novel, but have been current for generations. They merely come as new to those who are unfamiliar with trends in Biblical inquiry.

(This idea also disposes of the idea of the 'massacre of the inno-



cents', but as I observed in a previous year, the babies Herod needed to kill would have been perhaps not more than half a dozen. In any case Herod's own eldest son Antipater was murdered five days before Herod's own death, only a few months after Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. Even today near eastern leaders are little troubled by killing a few babies.)

Infancy

This book is described as "a short introduction to how the Jewish literary genre of 'Midrash' has shaped the infancy stories in the two canonical Gospels and some apocryphal works. It argues that these important faith testimonies are not 'history' in the sense that we tend to understand that term. The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem is a theological, not historical, statement."

But the traditions of midrashic interpretation flourished from 500 to 1500 of the present era - and are

therefore later than the emergence of the Gospel texts. It is a medieval Jewish method of textual investigation. But interpretation is not a method of *composition*. So the Gospel narratives are primary and the texts are being *interpreted*, not being *created*.

“Some 'liberal views' of this book have attracted the attention of the popular press - there was no 'first Christmas' as Jesus was not born in Bethlehem but in Nazareth”

Peter Keenan has been anxious to make his views as widely available as he can; but in doing so has over simplified the scholarship he relies



Readers should note that *The Irish Catholic* circulates throughout the island of Ireland and the book prices listed are the retail price recommended by the Irish or British publishers, in either euros or sterling, as a general indication of what purchasers may expect to pay.

Hebrew life and culture



on, mainly it has to be said through secondary synthesisers. There are many references to A.N. Wilson and Simon Schama, for instance.

I fear that some scriptural scholars will take the view (as has just happened to me in conversation with one student) that he has oversimplified the major problems involved here. This will be said by many other critics and it will in a sense be unfair to Peter Keenan.

His reason for writing this

book, and it has taken great courage, was to find a basis of religion that the greatest number can share - not alone Christians but also Jews.

Appreciate

He thinks it is incumbent on Christians to appreciate 'Jesus the Jew' - but this is hard, for many find it difficult to grasp the basic notion that Jesus was not himself a Christian. How could he be? Christians are those who follow him. And to do that

they need to know and grasp what it was he actually said in his historical context. This is far from easy. It will call for further application by his readers.

Perhaps rather than worrying about the problems that concern scholars, they should take a firmer hold on what Jesus said (or is reported to have said, if we must) in answering that still vital ethical question put to him by his own critics: "Who is my neighbour?"

“This book is described as ‘a short introduction to how the Jewish literary genre of ‘Midrash’ has shaped the infancy stories in the two canonical Gospels and some apocryphal works’”

The reassuring hand, the warm word, the kindly thought...



Deacon Richard Becker blesses patient Camille Watts on World Day of the Sick at Good Samaritan Hospital Medical Centre in New York. Photo: CNS

Chaplains: Ministers of Hope

ed. by Alan Hilliard, with a foreword by Bishop Eamonn Walsh (Messenger Publications, €19.95/£18.95)

Unheard Voices: Reflections of a prison chaplain

by Imelda Wickham PBVM, foreword by Peter McVerry SJ (Messenger Publications, €12.95/£11.95)

Peter Costello

Our attitudes to chaplains may well depend on our own experiences. One of my brothers, who lived in London, had an unfortunate accident in the hospital where he was being treated. A tracheotomy led to him losing his power of speech, which he never recovered. In this traumatic situation, I suggested that he would - I knew - like to see a priest not for the last rites but for pastoral care. But, I was told by the management that this was not possible as he had not requested it. Now as he was immobilised and speechless this was impossible. It was an instance where the notions of management (often ruled by legal rather than humane consideration) seemed bizarre.

That was in London. A few years later my wife was in hospital here in Dublin in a semi-private room (which she preferred to a private room) because there was always company. The local rector came in one day to bring (as I recall) the Sacrament to one of his flock. He talked to the other patients too, and offered them all an individual blessing, happily accepted.

Differently

Clearly here in Ireland we do things differently. But

there are still problems. These days it is not visiting patients on the wards that poses problems but in the emergency department, where matters have become all the more complex due to Covid-19 overcrowding.

“As chance would have it the same publisher has also recently brought out a book on the experiences of a prison chaplain”

More recently I have been attending the Blackrock Clinic as an outpatient. In the foyer, at the entrance to the spiritual space, there was a small memorial to a former chaplain, Gerry Byrne, one of Ireland's long-standing chaplains.

The articles in this first volume have been commissioned by Fr Alan Hilliard, who is the co-ordinator of pastoral care at the Technological University, Dublin (TUD). These contributions are devoted to what he calls “a number of theoretical frameworks supporting the inspiring work of chaplains”. A book for pro-

fessionals then, but this is work we all benefit from.

As chance would have it the same publisher has also recently brought out a book on the experiences of a prison chaplain. This book came into my mind immediately when the latest report by the Inspector of Mental Health Services Dr Susan Finnerty - who under the *Mental Health Act* has to review a sector of mental health services in the State - was published. This year she chose to look at the criminal justice system. This too provides a vivid account of the context in which some chaplains work.

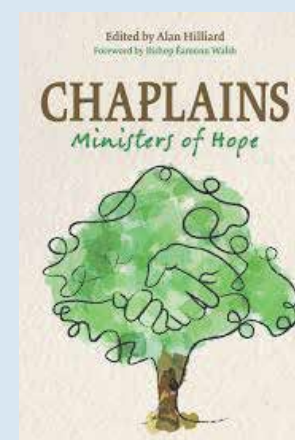
While her report may also be specialised reading, as in some respect is Alan Hilliard compilation. If we do not actually read them, we all need to be alerted to what they are saying.

The highly-literate sort of people who read the pages of this newspaper should keep such things in mind.

Management

But mental health in prison is one aspect of prison management. Literacy levels is another, so helping prisoners with the ability to read and hence to function as citizens (for they are citizens) when they are released is vital. All too often illiteracy lies at the roots of many social problems.

Those who work in all the contexts of chaplaincy and social aid deserve our support, for all too often what problems arise do so out of administrative neglect, as with my brother. With Christmas coming up, some of these issues deserve to be kept in mind while people find themselves bothered by all the burdens of mere commercial pressure at this time of year, they should keep in mind that other people have far worse problems.



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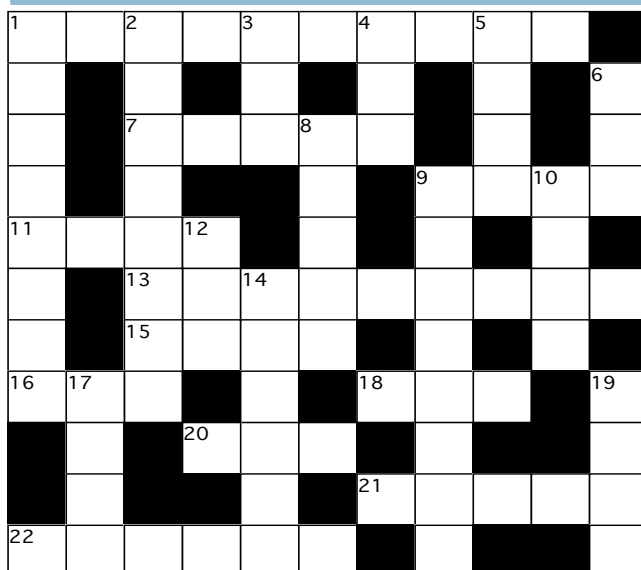
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Crossword Junior

Children's 410



Across

- 1 String small flowers together to make this 'item of jewellery' (5,5)
- 7 Definitely not nice (5)
- 9 It's just below your mouth (4)
- 11 Brave person (4)
- 13 A doctor uses a needle to give you this (9)
- 15 Close to (4)
- 16 Mat (3)
- 18 "I don't want to be seen by all those people - I'm too ____" (3)
- 20 It's blue on a sunny day (3)
- 21 A cobra or adder, perhaps (5)
- 22 Ask someone to a party (6)

Down

- 1 What a girl is to her mother or father (8)
- 2 Paying no attention to something (8)
- 3 The opposite of 'no' (3)
- 4 Dried grass (3)
- 5 It makes you want to scratch (4)
- 6 Part of a shark that sticks up above the water (3)
- 8 Striped cat (5)
- 9 Grabbing hold of (8)
- 10 Use it to get creases out of clothes (4)
- 12 Number that means a single thing (3)
- 14 The top garment of a suit (6)
- 17 'Once ____ a time' (4)
- 19 Made a picture (4)

SOLUTIONS, NOVEMBER 18

GORDIUS NO. 534

Across - 1 Bib 3 Contravened 8 Rasher 9 Brave New World 10 Hoist 11 Dates 13 Votes 15 Outwits 16 Boulder 20 Laugh 23 Cages 24 Confetti 25 Pedalo 26 Blessington 27 Sad

Down - 1 Bartholomew 2 Bassinet 3 Chest 4 Tablets 5 Vivid 6 Ninety 7 Dew 12 Smorgasbord 13 Vital 14 Sloth 17 Diagrams 18 Cunning 19 Prince 22 Dress 23 Clean 24 Cob

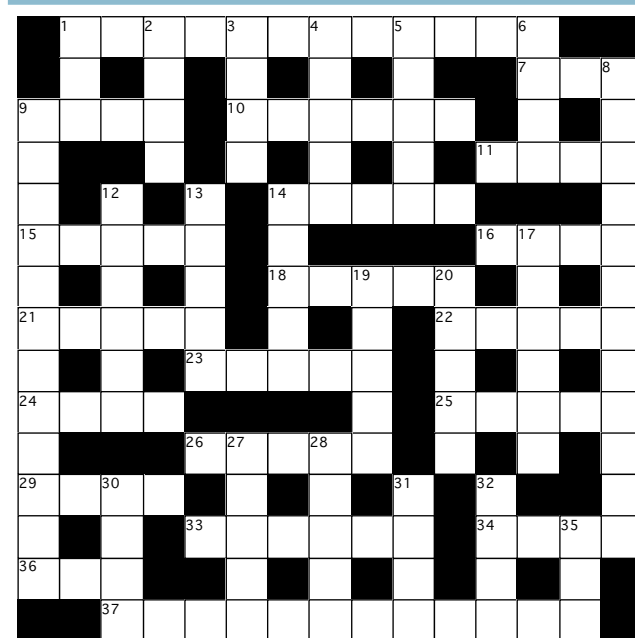
CHILDREN'S No. 409

Across - 1 Doughnut 6 Axle 7 Criminal 8 Last 10 Iced 12 Ryder Cup 13 Nose 15 Entered 17 Skull 18 Piglet

Down - 1 Dictionary 2 Universe 3 Nineteen 4 Tall 5 Teeth 9 Aquarium 11 Dye 14 Adult 15 Evil 16 Test

Crossword

Gordius 535



Across

- 1 The language of a very elderly Athenian? (7,5)
- 7 Little devil (3)
- 9 Type of meat (4)
- 10 & 16a Athletic vegetable? (6,4)
- 11 Pronoun - third person plural (4)
- 14 Members of a gaggle or skein (5)
- 15 Fleeting film appearance or piece of jewellery (5)
- 16 See 10 across
- 18 Impersonate (5)
- 21 Ancient burial site consisting of a pile of stones (5)
- 22 Telling fibs (5)
- 23 It's characteristic of a Texas accent (5)
- 24 Regretted (4)
- 25 & 34a Is it leftover bones one uses for a barbecue treat? (5,4)
- 26 Informal three-wheeler (5)
- 29 Find Mr Murray in some European dynamo (4)
- 33 One usually wears the No 1 jersey (6)
- 34 See 25 across
- 36 & 37 How Saint Therese of Lisieux is popularly known (3,6,6)

Down

- 1 A gorilla, perhaps (3)
- 2 The end of a sleeve (4)
- 3 & 13d American poet swimming in an azure pond (4,5)
- 4 A hint of colour (5)
- 5 Irish dances, or anglers' equipment (5)
- 6 Potassium is hot in this Dublin lighthouse! (4)
- 8 Clients staying in a hotel or B&B (6,6)
- 9 Fruit which is a rich source of vitamin C (12)
- 12 Official who stands beside a GAA goalpost (6)
- 13 See 3 down
- 14 The third letter of the Greek alphabet (5)
- 17 Old Testament prophet who ascended to heaven on a fiery chariot (6)
- 19 Fracas (5)
- 20 Shut (5)
- 27 Roots around for a place for birds (5)
- 28 Ms Minogue played Charlene Robinson in "Neighbours" (5)
- 30 A fight between two people (4)
- 31 Inform or narrate (4)
- 32 Increased in size (4)
- 35 Pub (3)

Sudoku Corner

410

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 409

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

Last week's Hard 409

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

Notebook

Fr Conor McDonough



Dublin mayors and Dominicans: A rich history

ON SUNDAY LAST, the feast of Christ the King, I had the honour of celebrating the annual Mass for deceased members of the Dublin Fire Brigade. It was a pleasure also to welcome Dublin's Lord Mayor, Alison Gilliland, to our church for the occasion, but it was far from the first encounter between the mayor of Dublin and the Dominicans of Dublin.

The long list of Dublin's mayors – 353 of them! – goes all the way back to 1229, but the history of our priory, St Saviour's, goes back just a little further, to 1224, when we took up residence on the north bank of the Liffey, where the Four Courts stand now.

Walls

We were outside the walls of the city, but certainly not beyond the care and attention of the citizens. Already within the first few decades of our presence in Dublin, the mayor and citizens granted us a great privilege: a perpetual share in the city's water supply. Many of these citizens were merchants, so it's no surprise to find the privilege phrased very carefully, in case later generations of friars should take liberties: the pipe into the priory was to be no thicker than a man's little finger.



Lord Mayor of Dublin Alison Gilliland

The city's water system was modernised by a fourteenth-century mayor, John le Decer, a man elected to lead the city on no less than four occasions. He was especially friendly to the Dominican friars. He paid for the repair of a pillar in our church, and for a new high altar, with all its ornaments. Every Friday he had two of the brethren dine at his table. (This practice was known throughout medieval Ireland: an act of charity by the host, and an opportunity

to be edified and entertained – so it was hoped – by the conversation of the friars).

On one occasion, when the Dominicans ran out of food, Mayor le Decer provided us with twenty barrels of corn. In gratitude, the friars of St Saviour's added a line to the nightly litany, inviting all the saints to pray "for the well-being of the mayor, bailiffs, and corporation of Dublin, the best of benefactors of our order, now and in the hour of their deaths".

Almsgiving

Kenrick Sherman, a few decades later, actually died in St Saviour's after retiring as mayor. He left a great deal of money to St Saviour's in his will, but this was simply the completion of a lifetime of almsgiving. As the annals of a contemporary prior of St Saviour's recall, Sherman had paid for many of our windows, for the roof of the church, and for the building of the bell-tower under which he was eventually buried.

Sometimes the kindness of mayors took the form of defending the friars' rights against aggressors. In the later 15th Century, the powerful Knights Hospitaller stole the hay from a field that had been granted

Duties of civic leaders

Apart from our relationships with individual mayors, there was an institutional relationship too. When a newly elected mayor of Dublin took office in the Middle Ages, one of his first tasks was to gather his officers, and to march in procession across the Liffey to the Dominican priory, there to hear a sermon on the duties of civic leaders, and the importance of their work. None of these sermons survive, but we can imagine them drawing on the rich teaching of the Dominican theologian, St Thomas Aquinas concerning the common good, social justice, the purpose of politics, and the virtues proper to political leadership. That teaching is perennially relevant, and made more accessible in recent years thanks to the publication of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. It's ideal reading for our troubled times.

to the Dominican friars. The field, known as Helen Hore's Meadow (now part of the Phoenix Park), was far closer to the knights' headquarters in Kilmainham than to our priory. What could the poor friars do? They turned to the mayor, who assembled a large group of citizens, marched down to Kilmainham, and brought the friars' hay triumphantly to St Saviour's.

The relationship between our priory and the mayors of Dublin broke down, naturally enough, at the Reformation, and even today I'm not sure we should expect major grants or privileges from

the city council, but there remains among the citizens of Dublin and her officials a warm-hearted affection for the friars of St Saviour's, an ancient community at the heart of an ancient city.



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Can you spare a donation for the Sisters?

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"I would travel to every land to preach Thy name, O my Beloved, and raise on heathen soil the glorious standard of Thy Cross."
- St Therese

It was St Therese's vocation to be "love in the heart of the Church, and to assist priests, missionaries and the entire Church", and this has been the continuing inspiration of The Little Way Association. Ever since the death of St Therese on 30 September 1897, countless priests and missionaries have given witness to the extraordinary way in which she has helped them. Let us pray today for the fulfilment of her desire that the Gospel message would be spread throughout the world.

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