

The Irish Catholic

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Thursday, August 27, 2020

€2.00 (Stg £1.70)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

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Catholic schools confident of full welcome back for students

Teachers look forward to meeting pupils' needs in very difficult times

Ruadhán Jones

Following a summer of hope and hard work, management and staff at Catholic schools are looking forward to welcoming back students after an "extraordinary" effort to reopen schools.

Primary and secondary schools are set to reopen at full capacity over the next two weeks having spent the last two months working to meet HSE and Department of Education guidelines.

It comes as Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy has appealed for communities to "be supportive and patient with the key task of getting schools up and running".

John Curtis of the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) for Catholic secondary schools said management and staff have worked "extraordinarily hard" to overcome the challenges 2020 posed.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Mr Curtis said: "Our schools have been faced with a myriad of challenges this year and the work by management and staff at school level has been exemplary."

Challenges

Mr Curtis described the reopening of schools as just the "third chapter" in a series of challenges schools have had to overcome.

"Number one was remote learning, number two was the exams and number three was reopening schools," he said. "I can't speak highly enough of the work management and staff have done."

Schools are looking forward to welcoming students back, Mr Curtis said, despite the obvious difficulties and changes it will entail.

"I think all of us, throughout the summer, have hoped

» Continued on Page 2

Postmen step up to ensure IC gets through



Pictured is 89-year-old Jerry Daly standing in the entrance of the Church of the Sacred Heart, Drinagh in Co. Cork. Mr Daly – a longtime promoter of *The Irish Catholic* – is flanked by local postmen Patjoe O'Mahony (left) and Tadhg McCarthy (right). The postmen have been assisting Mr Daly by delivering the newspaper every week during restrictions to regular customers (see page 3).

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DIGGING DEEP FOR FAITH

Unearthing Ireland's religious past **PAGES 14 & 15**



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Magnificat: magnificat@irishcatholic.ie
Office hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
9.30am–5.30pm
Shop: shop@irishcatholic.ie
Managing Director: Garry O'Sullivan

Annual Subscription Rates: Ireland €145. Airmail €250. Six months – €75.
ISSN 1393 - 6832 - Published by The Irish Catholic,
Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford,
Dublin 18, D18 K277.
Printed by Webprint, Cork.

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* Names changed to protect identities.



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

Cork parish digs deep to provide for Kenyan sister town

Ruadhán Jones

Work is almost complete on a new maternity ward in Turkwell, Kenya, following a donation of €105,000 by a Ballineaspig Parish, Cork.

Clare McCutcheon of Ballineaspig's Faith in Action (FIA) group was involved in organising the "huge fundraising" drive for the ward.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, she said the project "evoked generosity in people I've not seen in a long time".

"We had some especially generous donations from particular people as the cause resonated with them," she said.

"We invited people to sponsor a piece of equipment to commemorate family members and loved ones and that worked really well.

The timing was good for some reason."

The parish, also known as Dennehy's Cross parish, has been twinned with Turkwell since the early 2000s where Cork priest Fr Oliver Noonan used to minister.

The idea for the maternity ward came after Ballineaspig's FIA group contacted Fr Noonan in 2019.

"We asked him what was their hearts' greatest desire," Ms McCutcheon explained. "He said they had a big dream of having a maternity ward attached to the health clinics."

The cost of building the ward would be around €70,000 or €80,000, so Ballineaspig decided to go for a "big fundraising drive".

"We decided to do it properly, we produced a brochure for it and we got that spon-

sored and distributed it with an envelope to every house in the parish and immediate area," Ms McCutcheon said.

They began distributing the brochures in early October 2019, setting themselves the target of €90,000. By Christmas, they had exceeded their goal.

Connection

"There's a very strong connection with Turkwell in people's hearts," Ms McCutcheon said.

The final €15,000 came from donations by staff of the ESB and the HSE.

The maternity ward is one of a number of projects the parish has supported, such as irrigation schemes and health clinics.

They continue to take up annual collections for Turkwell's most urgent needs.

INTO calls out Medmark's treatment of medically vulnerable

Jason Osborne

The Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) has called out the teachers' occupational health service Medmark for advising that teachers with underlying conditions return to schools as they re-open, describing the move as "grossly unfair".

INTO has further called on the Government to intervene so that members can appeal against their Medmark decisions, and have the opinion of their treating doctor taken into account, rather than the Department simply adopting the view of the Department of Education's health advisor.

In a press release issued this week, INTO said: "As our members return to the front lines this week, urgent and swift action from Government is now required to review existing public health guidance and ensure it remains fit for purpose."

They also wrote to the Taoiseach, seeking clarity on the expert public health guidance in relation to primary and secondary schools.

They reminded the Taoiseach that 100 children have tested positive in the last fortnight, and as such it is vital that priority access be given to everyone in the education sector for the testing and tracing process.

"Priority access to testing must be made available to any asymptomatic teacher who requests it. This will help build confidence in the safety of schools as workplaces....prolonged absences from schools awaiting tests benefit no one."



Fr Tom Hayes PP of Enniskeane and Desertserges has been appointed as Vicar General of the diocese of Cork and Ross.

Online Mass 'a poor substitute'

Staff reporter

Watching Mass at home is a poor substitute for full participation in the liturgy, Bishop Donal McKeown has warned.

He also said that the Church is held together "not by human strength but by God's providence and plan".

In a homily at the weekend, the Bishop of Derry expressed the "hope that we will soon be able to gather again in good numbers".

"Worshipping from home may be the best that many can do at present. But it is a poor substitute for the sacramental inti-

macy that Jesus wants us to share with him and with each other each Lord's Day."

He also said that parishes need to become more dynamic. "The Gospel challenge is not to get people accustomed to a parish that offers less because there are fewer clergy. The real call is to work with passion to train parishes for an energetic confident proclamation of Jesus in a new situation.

"We can proclaim Christ's missionary grace, which is at work in every generation, only when we stop our timid joyless narrative getting in the way. This is Christ's Church, not ours," he said.

Welcome back for students

» Continued from Page 1

that we would be in a position to have our students back in school," he said. "It's the nature of the pastoral care that we give to our pupils that's most important.

Mr Curtis believes that schools have an important part to play in helping students overcome this difficult time.

"In looking after the students and looking to their needs in every way shape or form, be that academic, pastoral, spiritual, we welcome the fact that we now have the opportunity to have our students back with us," he said.

Meanwhile, Seamus Mulconry of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association said he is confident schools will reopen at full capacity.

"Everybody is committed to a safe reopening and people are anxious to get started," he told *The Irish Catholic*. "It's going to be a very different environment and we're going to need everyone in the community – teachers, parents and children – working together to keep schools open."

Review

Speaking about Government support for schools, Mr Mulconry said the resources provided needed to be reviewed "on a constant basis" once schools start.

"No plan survives contact with reality," he said. "Challenges will emerge which people haven't anticipated, or which were underestimated. We need to keep the level of resources under review so that if there are new and emerging challenges, these are addressed in a timely fashion."

Bishop Leahy said that "while there is a natural quiver of nervousness around what lies ahead, we should all strive to create an atmosphere of mutual support".

For rugby ace Billy, Christ is No.1

Jason Osborne

England and Saracens star No.8 Billy Vunipola has attributed his reluctance to kneel as part of the English Premiership's anti-racism protest to his Christian Faith.

Before a recent clash between Saracens and Bristol, Mr Vunipola stood, while the majority of his team-mates took a knee.

Explaining his decision on *The Good, The Bad, and The Rugby* podcast, Mr Vunipola said: "Though I am a person of colour, I'm still more a person of Jesus.

"What I saw in terms of that movement was not aligned with what I believe in," he added.

This is not the only occasion that has brought Mr Vunipola's Faith into the spotlight – he has waded into the public arena on social media, too.

The England forward received a severe backlash for a social media post he wrote in defence of Australian rugby star Israel Folau who has been widely criticised for referring to homosexuality activity as a sin.

Asked on the podcast whether he regretted the post or the positions he supported, he replied: "I wouldn't go about it the same way, it would be more of a conversation from my point of view... if it happened again now and they said, 'Billy do you stand in support of it?' I would have to say 'yes', because I've made my position clear."

He continued by saying: "To have forgiveness or to go to Heaven, or to not go to Hell – the centre of it all is believing in Jesus Christ and essentially that's what I wanted to get across."

Mr Vunipola's Faith has a firm foundation. Having come from a religious family, it wasn't until he felt life's stresses that he started to take God seriously himself.

"The older I've got and the more responsibilities, like your house, your wife, your kids – you find that the only person that can help you carry those burdens or ease those stresses in life is God," he told Premier Radio.



Jerry says a big thank you

Staff reporter

Corkman Jerry Daly has said he would not have been able to continue distributing *The Irish Catholic* during the Covid-19 crisis if it were not for the help of local people – including local members of the An Post team.

Mr Daly (89) has been a promoter of *The Irish Catholic* in Drinagh for many years. He and his family have ensured that parishioners have always been able to keep up to date with the latest news and views from

the Church in Ireland and abroad.

He told the newspaper this week that as soon as the churches began to shut in a bid to slow the spread of the coronavirus, he had to think of creative ways to get the newspaper to people.

"I knew that a lot of people didn't want anyone calling to their house except the postman," he said. "So I spoke to the local postmen and they were delighted to help out".

Mr Daly was assisted by postmen Patjoe O'Mahony

and Tadgh McCarthy. However, he said that "many other people have been very helpful in getting the paper out to people".

"I think it is so important to people to get *The Irish Catholic* to promote and spread the Christian message," Mr Daly said this week.

"I really appreciate the continued support of regular customers who purchase the newspaper weekly as part of the promotion of the Catholic Faith in the community," he said.

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one day,
 my grandchildren
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Senator Mullen calls on Government to end discrimination against fee-paying schools

Staff reporter

Senator Rónán Mullen has called on Minister for Education, Norma Foley, to reverse what he has described as a “discriminatory move against fee-paying schools”.

He further asked that fee-paying secondary schools be allowed to access the Covid-19 re-opening fund on the same basis as schools in the free scheme.

Earlier this month, a Department of Education circular stated that fee-charging schools would not be eligible to receive any of the €375 million that has been allocated to schools to help them enlarge schools, employ extra staff, and pay for all other safety measures.

Shortly after, the Department revised its position and said that fee-paying schools could apply for the funding, but that the decision would be made on a case-by-case basis.

However, Senator Mul-

len has taken issue with the Department’s lack of “transparency”, and the fact that its approach puts an unacceptable amount of administration on the shoulders of schools already struggling with re-opening safely and on time.

Bullying

“The Department has given school managers – principals and deputy principals – a virtually impossible task. The Minister should keep in mind that giving someone more work than they can reasonably do is one of the definitions of workplace bullying,” Mr Mullen said.

“Children attending fee-charging schools already receive less support from the State for their education. But this is the first time a decision has been taken that could give some schools nothing.”

“Health and safety must be the priority now, not ideological moves on school fees,” Mr Mullen said.

Places of worship attacked every three days in North

Jason Osborne

There have been over 600 attacks on places of worship in Northern Ireland in the past five years, prompting calls for action to protect churches and other religious buildings.

Following a Freedom of Information request to the police, Christian Action Research and Education (CARE), have discovered that since 2014/15, there have been 601 crimes recorded as criminal damage to religious buildings, churchyards, or cemeteries in the North across the 11 policing districts.

This breaks down as, on average, an attack on a place

of worship every three days for the past five years.

Belfast has seen the vast majority of these, with 173 attacks – over a quarter of the total number.

Speaking of the attacks, CARE policy officer Mark Baillie said: “More than 600 attacks in the last five years is a reminder that places of worship, which should be safe spaces for worshippers and congregants, are all too often targeted by vandalism and violence.”

He continued: “It is a human right for individuals to live out and practice their religious beliefs and attacks on places of worship offend against those rights.”

Rev. Aaron McAlister, Rector of Derriagh Parish Church, echoed these sentiments, but on a more personal level.

“In November 2019, our Church was broken in to and vandalised.

“Significant damage was caused to our vestry and our sanctuary.”

Effect

Speaking of the effect these actions had on his community, he said, “It left many of my parishioners deeply upset. An attack on a place of worship is an attack on the community that worships there.”

Going off these figures, CARE NI has exhorted the

Executive to consider policies to ensure places of worship are properly protected following lockdown, as churches return to worship services.

The charity has previously called for a scheme similar to those in England and Wales to be set up, which provides financial resources so that places of worship can buy security measures such as CCTV, fences, and lighting.

Commenting on the scheme, Mr Baillie said, “The scheme in England and Wales is a practical step we could introduce here to equip places of worship to invest in adequate security to prevent criminal damage.”

Jesuit priest ordained in Dublin



Irish Jesuit Fr Niall Leahy SJ was ordained to the priesthood at the weekend in St Francis Xavier Church, Gardiner Street, Dublin. The ordaining bishop was Alan McGuckian SJ, the Bishop of Raphoe. Due to coronavirus restrictions, the numbers of guests and concelebrants were limited.

Cork parishes pilot online donation scheme

Ruadhán Jones

Eight Cork parishes will be the first to provide a secure online donation system in the diocese of Cork and Ross.

In an online statement, the diocese explained that the new measures were being trialled to combat the “substantial reduction” to priests’ salaries and parish incomes.

Before the pandemic, “people have

made it possible for parishes to meet all their bills and priests have been supported also with offerings”, the statement said. “But a lot has changed since March of this year.”

The statement explains that parishioners will now have four methods to support their local parish and provide income for their priest(s):

- Contributing to the collections taken up at Mass.
- Returning envelopes for clergy

offerings or Station Dues.

- Using the parish’s new online donate facility.
- Setting up a standing order on their bank account.

The parishes selected to pilot the new donations system are Bandon; Blackpool, The Glen and Ballyvolane; The Cathedral; Clonakilty; Douglas and Rochestown; Frankfield, Schull and Ss Peter and Paul’s Parish, Cork.

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Yes, there will be suffering...

A Co. Kildare doctor, Adrian McGoldrick, who is recovering from the coronavirus, has warned others that an attack of Covid-19 can leave them with heart conditions and other health issues.

“Don’t think that you can get the virus and that you will not suffer,” he has said. “Treat this virus with respect...this is going to be with us for years to come.”

Dr McGoldrick, aged 67, felt drained of all energy when he succumbed to the virus. He was so fatigued he couldn’t hold a phone in his hand. Subsequently he was diagnosed with myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle which can affect Covid-19 patients. He is recovering but still spends up to 12 hours a day in bedrest.

A salutary caution to anyone who takes an overly casual view of the pandemic: if you get it, you will suffer.

But even if you don’t get it, you will suffer from something else. Hasn’t Dr McGoldrick read the famous saying of the Buddha: “Life is suffering”?

Looking back over my own stretch of years, I can perceive that in every life there has been suffering; sometimes of physical illness, and towards the end of life, nearly always so.

“Don’t take coronavirus lightly, or dismiss it as a touch of flu”

And often with emotional, spiritual and mental illness too – loneliness, loss, terrible bereavement by sudden accident or even homicide, addiction or psychotic conditions, plus divorce, abuse, abandonment, suicide of a loved one.

I saw my husband decline over 12 years, through a series of strokes, changing him from an active man to a helpless



Mary Kenny



Guard against the virus: everyone can catch it.

invalid. My best friend was killed by an arsonist, leaving a young son. Another close friend was murdered, along with his daughter, by his own schizophrenic son, causing a series of family tragedies. My beautiful niece died in her prime from a brain tumour. I’ve seen suffering by cancer, Parkinson’s disease, bewildered dementia and late-onset blindness.

Suffering is the human condition: “Take up your cross and follow me.”

This is not to diminish the valid point that Dr McGoldrick makes: don’t take coronavirus lightly, or dismiss it as a touch of flu.

But the truth is that there is always suffering in this life – a truth that has been studiously evaded in a culture which prioritises

comfort and ease. We need to know that truth, and to develop fortitude to face it.

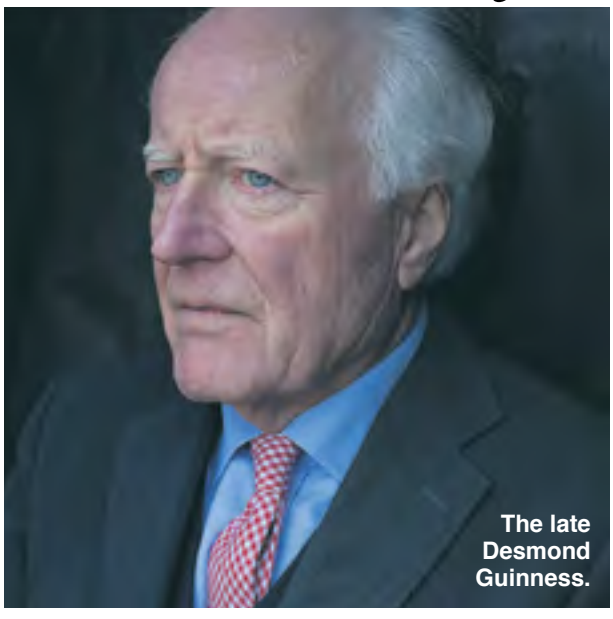
Guinness certainly did ‘good’ for Irish society

● The passing of Desmond Guinness is a moment to reflect on what he did for Ireland’s Georgian heritage. With his German-born wife Mariga, Desmond galvanised the forces that preserved a heritage that was otherwise neglected, or destroyed.

Apart from the great houses, Mountjoy Square in North Dublin is, for me, his monument, saved from the wrecking ball by his and Mariga’s endeavours. These are amazing houses – the proportions inside the front hall, alone, are breathtaking.

I only wish the Irish Georgian Society could have saved those former tenements in Lower Gardiner Street, where Seán O’Casey set his most memorable plays. They could have been restored for housing purposes.

Preservation
Back in the 1960s, I was alerted to the Georgian preservation cause by the campaigns of the Jesuit, the late Fr Michael Sweetman, who was deeply involved with housing for the urban poor



The late Desmond Guinness.

– but also campaigned to save Ely Place, just off St Stephen’s Green.

Fr Sweetman didn’t see the cause of preservation of housing stock as ‘elitist’ – it was part and parcel of housing and history. He was attached to St Francis Xavier’s in Upper Gardiner Street, and he elected to live in nearby Summerhill, then regarded as a slum area.

Desmond Guinness was the son of the phil-anthropic Lord Moyne and

the more controversial Diana Mitford, who subsequently married the British Fascist leader Oswald Mosely.

It was said of Desmond, who could be mischievously amusing, “that the Good Guinness and the Wicked Mitford battled in those blue eyes”. The Good Guinness usually won.

He certainly did good for Ireland’s architectural heritage.

A kind neighbour is a great friend

● In my enforced absence from Dublin – I was officially warned not to travel to my native city during the summer – the studio flat that I rent has been broken into. I am an unrewarding object for a burglar since I possess little of material value. My jewellery is cheap and cheerful bling, I have no TV and my technology is 1970s – CDs and even cassette tapes.

However, what I do have is a wonderful, kind and altogether Christian Catholic neighbour who takes care, takes responsibility and helps to sort things out with sunny competence, and that is more valuable, surely, than rubies.

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CURRACH BOOKS

Social workers call for adult safeguarding legislation

Jason Osborne

The Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW) has said that the Government must push ahead with legislation to protect nursing home residents in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis where many of those who died were vulnerable people in homes.

Welcoming the expert panel report on the issue, the social workers' body insisted that "access to social work services for older people is essential as many older people have to negotiate difficult life altering decisions and transitions".

Statement

In a statement, the group said that during the pandemic, safeguarding social workers have continued to investigate harrowing cases involving the rape, sexual assault, physical abuse, financial abuse and neglect of residents in nursing homes.

"The message from the social work profession to Government is clear – without adult safeguarding legislation and investment in our safeguarding social work teams, social workers cannot adequately protect and support older or vulnerable adults in nursing homes," it said.

They also took aim at the failure to implement previous measures, and called for an immediate implementation plan from the Government to ensure rights of access to social work services for all residents in private and public nursing homes.

Challenges

Dr Sarah Donnelly, Assistant Professor of Social Work in UCD, said: "The challenges facing social workers in safeguarding work in residential settings provide ample evidence that adults who are vulnerable to harm in Ireland require the same level of legislative protection we afford to children.

"Until legislation is progressed, we will continue to fail to protect and uphold the human rights of adults who are vulnerable to harm," she said.

People shouldn't be afraid to challenge priests to live by Gospel – archbishop



Fr Shane Costello is pictured after his ordination to the priesthood with Archbishop Michael Neary and some of his fellow priests who attended. The ordination took place at the Basilica at Knock.

Staff reporter

Archbishop Michael Neary has urged parishioners to challenge priests to ensure that they are living up to their vocation.

He was speaking in Knock Shrine on Sunday as he presided at the ordination of Fr Shane Costello.

Pointing out that seven priests of the Tuam Archdiocese have died in the last year, Dr Neary said the ordination "demonstrates how much Faith is alive in a local Church, the hope-filled

courage and strength it gives the young priest to entrust himself to the Lord's service in the knowledge that the faith of the people of God will support him in it".

Referring to Fr Costello, Dr Neary said that "in many ways the responsibility entrusted to him is counter-cultural".

"Our society today places such an emphasis on self-fulfilment, on autonomy, on doing one's own thing. As a priest of Jesus Christ you will proclaim his message, you will do so utilising

your gifts, interests and insights but it will always be his message not your own preferences or prejudices," he said.

Privilege

Underlining the fact that priesthood is first and foremost about service, Archbishop Neary addressed Fr Costello: "In your priestly ministry you will have the privilege of welcoming, working with and encouraging people who are open to and led by the Spirit.

"You will rejoice and celebrate with them as together you build up the Kingdom of God.

"You will have to be patient and make allowances for others who see things differently from yourself," the archbishop said.

He said that "As the people of God and a community of faith we have a responsibility to you to pray with and for you, to encourage, support and at times challenge you to live up to the standards of Jesus Christ which you embrace on this your ordination day".

Well-known philosopher Fr Donal Daly dies

Staff reporter

Tributes have been paid to a late priest-philosopher who helped form generations of both priests and lay students at Maynooth.

Fr Donal Daly SVD – who was 84 – died "peacefully and patiently" after what *confrères* described as a long illness.

Born in Fermoy in Co. Cork in 1936, he entered the novitiate of the Divine Word missionaries (SVD) in 1954 and was ordained in 1962. After postgraduate studies in Rome, Dr Daly taught at the

society's seminary in Donamon and was appointed a permanent member of staff of St Patrick's College, Maynooth in 1971. It was just at the time when the hierarchy had decided to open the college to lay students as well as aspirants to the priesthood. He remained at Maynooth until his retirement in 2002.

Pillar

A statement from his missionary society said that Fr Daly was "first and foremost a committed Divine Word Missionary priest and a pillar of his community".

"At Provincial Assemblies and Chapters, his skill as impartial chairman was put to great use. A member of the SVD community, Maynooth for almost half a century, he was regularly elected to the House Council. During the summer vacation, he regularly did pastoral work in various English parishes where supply was needed.

"He is survived by his nieces and nephews and their families. He will be greatly missed by his family, former students, and his *confrères* in the Society of the Divine Word."

'Inspirational' Irish priest drowns in US

Ruadhán Jones

The body of a Belfast priest was recovered from Detroit river five days after a freak accident capsize the boat he was travelling on.

Fr Stephen Rooney, PP of St Joseph's, Trenton, Michigan, and one other passenger went missing on Sunday, August 16.

Their fishing charter overturned when it hit a submerged rock in the Detroit river's channel, throwing all 14 people aboard into the water.

A passing boat rescued 12 of the passengers, but Fr Rooney and another parishioner were swept away in the current.

The Archbishop of Detroit, Allen Vigneron, described the Irishman, who served in the US for 33 years, as "an inspirational priest".

Fr Rooney grew up on Belfast's Short Strand and members of his family still live in Northern Ireland.

One of the survivors was Msgr Charles Kosanke of Detroit's Holy Trinity Parish. Speaking to the *Detroit Catholic* newspaper, he described the accident as an "unspeakable tragedy that has affected the lives of many wonderful people".

Would you like to see your parish photos published in *The Irish Catholic*?



If you're present at a celebration or event in your parish, why not take a photograph and email it to:

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Photos in jpeg format are fine.

Maria Steen

The View



Covid-19 provides a fresh focus on benefit of home-schooling

Between this week and next, schools across the country are due to reopen. Parents will be sending their children back to a school building for the first time since March, but this September many will be wearing a new uniform: a face mask. Children will be told to keep their distance from their friends, to avoid contact or touching books or other items others may have touched. Now add in the likelihood of interruption in continuity of tuition, due to requirements for teachers to self-isolate. If you think that this is a stressful environment in which to expect children to learn efficiently, you'd be right.

We were initially told by the former Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, that the imposition of lockdown was to “flatten the curve”. The mathematical difficulty this presents is that if you flatten the curve, you also lengthen it. Some time ago, I wrote an article on home-schooling during the lockdown. I said that a few weeks or even a couple of months out of school was not going to seriously disadvantage a child. I still hold to that view. But if the disruption of a child's education continues during this year and even into the next – particularly for secondary school students – it will begin to affect a child's chances and potential.

Opportunity

The lockdown period provided an unlooked-for opportunity for many parents, who might otherwise never have contemplated it, to give home-schooling a try. Given the continued uncertainty regarding the return to ‘outside’ school, some may now be considering continuing the experiment. If this is you or someone you know, here are some things you might like to know.

The right to home-school – or educate your child outside a recognised school – is a constitutional right in Ireland. Article 42 of Bunreacht na hÉireann acknowledges the family as the primary and natural educator of the child and



guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide for the education of their children. It further provides that parents shall be free to provide this education in their homes.

Article 42.3.2 provides that the “State shall, however, as guardian of the common good, require in view of actual conditions that the children receive a certain minimum education, moral, intellectual and social”. For that reason, if you decide to home-school and your child is between the ages of six and 16, you must register your intention with Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. An application form is available on their website.

You will have to speak with an assessor from Tusla and describe the education you are providing to your children. So long as you can show that you are providing a “certain minimum education”, the State has no further right to intrude upon your efforts.

One of the great draws of home-schooling is the ability to create your own curriculum; you are not tied to the school or State curriculum. This brings a certain freedom for students who may be interested in different areas of learning, and might otherwise be limited to the subjects on offer in any particular school. Some home-schooling families opt to follow a planned curriculum; there are many available, such as the Mother of Divine Grace School. Others prefer a less structured approach where they follow the children's interests; a hybrid approach can also be used.

For those at secondary

level, this flexibility also means that you have much greater choice when it comes to a final school exam. Other opportunities open up: instead of being bound to the leaving certificate, the A-levels, American SATs, or international baccalaureate are all options. Of course, some students might prefer to do vocational courses and can do so without ever having to sit an end-of-school exam.

“Some people home-school because their children have special needs”

The home-schooling community in Ireland is a broad church and people home-school for many different reasons. Some educate their children at home for lifestyle reasons, some are bohemian, some want more flexibility in their family schedule. Others do it for philosophical and educational reasons, wanting to escape the ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach of the schooling system, or preferring an alternative educational approach. Some home-school because their children have special needs, or find that their children's talents or needs are not adequately catered for in the school system. Others do so for religious and moral reasons. Some may now do so due to Covid-19.

Whatever the reason, it is important to find support among other home-schooling families, if possible. Home-schooling can be an isolating experience, and if you're going to stay the course, you'll need support. Ask

around your parish to find out if there are other home-schoolers in your locality.

In addition to the many advantages of home-schooling, an added bonus in these times is that your child gets to learn in the comfort and safety of his or her own home, without being troubled by wearing a mask all day or having to studiously avoid touching surfaces that others might already have touched. If we really want our children to learn well in comfortable learning environments, this is a not insignificant factor in their daily lives.

Some may say that they would like to home-school but cannot. Although home-schooling families come from all kinds of different socio-economic

backgrounds, the truth is that the education of children in the home receives no State support, unlike education in schools. Given the times in which we live, with job losses and great uncertainty around the school system, and given the Constitution's statement that the “State shall provide for free primary education and shall endeavour to supplement and give reasonable aid to private and corporate educational initiative...with due regard, however, for the rights of parents, especially in the matter of religious and moral formation”, perhaps it's time that home-schooling families let the Government know that our children deserve better.

Children from low

income families attending schools enjoy State support in relation to the purchase of school-books, clothing and footwear and assistive technology for students with disabilities. School children also enjoy health screening for hearing, eyesight and dental problems. The same should apply to home-schooled children. An even more significant contribution would be the abolition of tax individualisation, which penalises families where one parent foregoes a salary by remaining in the home. For the State to make good on its Constitutional promises, parents who take their children's education upon themselves should be supported, not discouraged.

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Applying both mercy and standards to 'Golfgate'



While we think we have become a less judgemental society, we have simply found new things to be judgemental about, writes **David Quinn**

The revelation that 81 people, including some sitting politicians and other

very senior members of the Irish establishment attended a golfing dinner in Clifden recently has caused understandable outrage among many members of the public.

It was organised by the Oireachtas Golf Society, something most of us didn't

know existed before now. Agriculture Minister, Dara Calleary was forced to resign almost immediately. Several senators in both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael had the party whip withdrawn from them. Huge pressure has been placed on EU Commissioner,

Phil Hogan. Supreme Court justice Seamus Woulfe now faces a probe by the Chief Justice. Ironically, as Attorney General under the Fine Gael-led Government, Mr Woulfe helped to draw up the law that imposed lockdown on the country.

He has escaped the same level of opprobrium so far that has been meted out to the politicians partly because the judiciary must be independent of the Oireachtas, but there has been a notable silence from his legal colleagues, such as senior barristers or retired judges. They could easily speak out if they wanted. Is this a lawyerly version of clericalism, that is, the tendency to protect your own?

Outrage

The reason for the public outrage is that what happened in Clifden appears to be a very clear illustration of the old adage, there is one rule for the powerful and another for the rest of us.

Only a few days before the golf dinner, the Government had announced new restrictions to curb an increase in confirmed cases of Covid-19. How could so many members of the establishment then think so little of attending an event that broke the rules, even though, in fairness, the hotel hosting the dinner had divided the guests into separate dining areas?

People have had to postpone weddings, very

limited numbers have been able to attend funerals of loved ones, visits to family members in nursing homes were put on indefinite hold, cancer treatments and heart surgery have been postponed, tens of thousands have lost their jobs. The sacrifices have been huge, but the Clifden event went ahead anyway. You can see why there was so much anger.

And yet, it still brings up a very important issue, namely where does mercy fit into the picture? As we know, this has been a key theme of the pontificate of Pope Francis. Pope Francis wants the Church to show more mercy to those who fall by the wayside, and to apply the rules less harshly than in the past. He wants the Church to 'accompany' people, rather than simply condemn and judge them when they do something wrong.

“The minister's resignation should have been enough. He had paid the price. Why keep him in public stocks afterwards?”

By 'accompany' he means lead them gently to where they really need to go, rather than to hound and dismiss and make an example of them. But clearly we have decided to make an example of the likes of Dara Calleary. No mercy has been shown there. Francis does not intend that his comments about mercy be applied to the Church only, but to society as a whole. So, how should we apply what Pope Francis has to say about the subject to what has become known as 'Golfgate'?

It is no easy task because within society there is always a need to balance mercy and standards. Even within families, parents have to work out the right balance between 'accepting love' and 'transforming love'.

The former accepts a person, a child say, as they are and doesn't try to make them into what they can never be.

“Clearly we have decided to make an example of the likes of Dara Calleary. No mercy has been shown there”

Transforming love tries to make them into a better version of themselves, but such love can't be too controlling. Again, there is a balance to be struck.

But what we are often talking about out in the wider world has nothing to do with love, it is simply about punishment. A certain standard has been set, and if it is not met, it must be dealt with ruthlessly and harshly.

Standards exist so that society can function. New standards have been introduced recently to protect public health. Many of our ordinary freedoms have been taken away in the name of the common good. We have been asked, and in some cases forced, to give up some of our freedoms in order to protect the lives of others. The vast majority of people, especially in the early days when we thought tens of thousands of us might die, were happy enough to obey the new rules.

It seems as though it will be a long time before we can go back to normal and therefore restrictive measures are going to come and go depending on how widespread the virus at any given timer.

If too many members of the public began to disobey the new laws and the new rules, it might spell disaster.

If politicians are allowed to get away with breaking the rules they themselves have set, then the message to the rest of us will be clear; we can break them too.

The trouble in the case of Dara Calleary isn't so much that he had to resign, it is that the condemnations kept rolling in afterwards. His resignation should have been enough. He had paid the price. Why keep him in public stocks afterwards?

Here is where the lack of mercy is really on display and it shows that while we think we have become a less judgemental society, it really isn't true. We have simply found new things to be judgemental about, in this case public health.

If Pope Francis was somehow forced to comment on 'Golfgate', he might well say that those who set the rules should have to obey those rules, but then that once they pay the price, we should be content with that and in the name of mercy, leave them alone and not continually hound them.



Dara Calleary TD.

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As parishes adapt to new ways to celebrate rites of initiation, technology is easing the transition, writes Jason Osborne

In the current climate, preparation for the sacraments has been grievously complicated. The Catechetics Council of the Irish Bishops Conference, convened by Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick Diocese, identified a gap in the preparation of school children all over the country, and with the help of *iCatholic*, set about catering to that need.

Bishop Leahy told *The Irish Catholic* that there was a strong sense that while Confirmation ceremonies were getting underway there was a need to focus on the sacramental preparation that would normally have taken place in the classroom.

"While children have been working away, there was a sense that, when we'd come up to the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, it would be good to provide the children with some material that, as it were, was more immediate preparation for the celebration of the Sacrament," Bishop Leahy said.

"But first of all, we have to acknowledge that the children had already a preparation done in school. They'd been following the *Grow in Love* programme since they went back to school last September, so they had September to March. Nevertheless, we thought it would be a good idea because, when the celebration was to come, it probably would be beyond school time and it would be something more linked with the parish," he said.

Preparation

The bishop decided to set up a small group of people with the idea of working with Fr Bill Kemmy from *iCatholic* on three videos to help children prepare.

They looked to RTÉ's *Home School Hub* for inspiration as an example of how video learning has become increasingly accessible.

"In part, the school hub series that was very successful on RTÉ, that engaged children during the months since March with various materials for school – that kind of gave us a line; it was something that appealed, given it worked very well for the children during those months.

Learning as we go



Johanna and Eleanor who feature in the *Grow in Love* programme on *iCatholic*.

"We felt something similar, that you would have two teachers and also the priest in this case, engaging with some of the material, but also, engaging in a classroom-dialogue style, with the children themselves and their families. So, as well as being very upbeat and modern in presentation, they also help the children think and they also provide worksheets, so I just think it's quite interactive as an approach, and I think that's good," Bishop Leahy explained.

Put in charge of the vision and direction of the production, Fr Chris O'Donnell pulled together a number of elements in the hope

of offering a series of educational value.

Speaking to this paper, he said: "I just had to try as best I could to try and put a few lessons together and then there was others who reviewed the lessons, to make sure, you know, to help get them right.

"I'd to get two people, two teachers who are also actors as well to deliver the lessons and so there was that sort of combination, and then the local school here in Kilmallock happily provided us with the space to film the lessons in. They were very kind to us."

Fr Chris's background in education, and his work

with *Veritas* on the *Grow in Love* programme, made him ideally suited to helm this project.

"I worked in *Veritas*, in Dublin, for a couple of years on the *Grow in Love* programme, so I suppose the lessons were shaped by what is normally in that programme, and also by work that others had put into that programme. So, basically, I just had to just see what the children would normally have been covering in the *Grow in Love* programme and try and shape that into three half-hour lessons."

“Come Holy Spirit has already received thousands of views on each episode, with individual dioceses playing their part by sharing the link as well”

Not content to produce rote recitals of the textbooks, the *Come Holy Spirit* series features actresses uniquely suited to convey the topics at hand.

"So, they're two girls from Limerick, Johanna and Eleanor, and their acting – it's a major passion, actually. One of them has already been in *Fair City*, and they've both been in various productions. I know Johanna is going to be in a series that's coming out on Apple TV next year, so acting is in their veins, thank God," Fr Chris elaborated.

The series has pleased families, with Bishop Leahy sharing the response to this point. "So far, people have said to me they've been delighted, including teachers, because some teachers are also

actually helping, at this stage, the preparation, and some parents too. They've felt that this was something they were really looking for, and this has really helped them. So, I'm delighted with that."

The feedback Fr Chris has received echoed the same sentiments. "Thankfully, all I wanted us to do was be credible, because obviously you're worried that you don't know how any of these things will be received, but I've received a lot of positive feedback from people who've watched it."

Novel approach

Come Holy Spirit has already received thousands of views on each episode, with individual dioceses playing their part by sharing the link as well. The success of the series bodes well for the three-part series currently airing, titled *Come to the Table of the Lord*. This series is directed towards children, and those preparing the children, prepare to celebrate Confession and Holy Communion for the first time.

Asked about whether or not this novel approach will have a role to play in the Church going forward, Fr Chris replied: "I suppose we will see how this goes in the sense that they're exceptional circumstances that brought this about, but there may be a lesson in it about how we can do things in the future.

"The goal was purely to meet the need, the current need and situation," he continues, "but as always in life, the learning as we go could be that actually this might be a good way to try and engage with people around Faith and sacraments in the future too."

“So far, people have said to me they’ve been delighted, including teachers, because some teachers are also actually helping, at this stage, the preparation, and some parents too”

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Out&About

A step along the road to Knock



ARMAGH: Fundraisers left Armagh early this month on the next stage of a walk to Knock to help raise support for Mary's Meals.



CORK: The Society of St Vincent de Paul thank parishioners in the SMA parish in Wilton who raised €1410 throughout the month of July. Ellmarie Spillane-Dowd, South-West Regional Membership Support Officer, receives the cheque from parish priest Fr Michael O'Leary SMA and Michael Dowd, SVP volunteer.



UGANDA: A 40-tonne container of emergency supplies was handed over by Irish Ambassador to Uganda, William Carlos, to Trócaire Country Director for Uganda, Ian Dolan, before making its delivery to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

INSHORT

New initiative offers fertility hope for childhood cancer patients

The Irish Cancer Society has invested €420,000 in a project aimed at giving children being treated with cancer a chance at a future family.

Over 200 children are diagnosed with cancer each year in Ireland, with the necessary treatment often damaging their fertility and impacting their chances of being able to have children in future.

Ireland currently lags behind other European countries in having no state-funded fertility preservation service for children and adolescents with a cancer

diagnosis.

The charity's new Childhood Cancer Fertility Project delivered in association with Merrion Fertility Clinic aims to give hundreds of children, adolescents and young adults a chance at future parenthood through the use of fertility preservation methods.

The Childhood Cancer Fertility Project is designed to be the forerunner for a new national fertility preservation programme on its completion.

The three-year project represents a €420,000 investment as part of the charity's commitment to childhood cancers in its new five-year strategy.

Irish Cancer Society Director of Services Delivery and Innovation Donal Buggy said: "A cancer diagnosis in childhood can have a devastating impact on the future

ability to have a family. We believe it is vital that all children and their parents have the opportunity to discuss fertility preservation options and have access to appropriate specialist services.

"Due to lack of availability of publicly-funded specialist fertility services here, families of young children who have just received a life-changing cancer diagnosis can be left with the agonising choice of seeking assistance abroad and all the associated costs, or taking a chance on their child's future fertility after treatment.

"We know the ability to have a family is hugely important for cancer patients' quality of life after treatment, so this project will make a big difference for children who may not have been given that chance in the past.

Mr Buggy added: "It will also provide

counselling for patients and their families to help them understand and explore fertility options available to them, improve the referral process for such treatments, and empower healthcare professionals to inform their patients about the availability of these services."

Project clinical lead Prof. Mary Wingfield said: "Loss of fertility is one of the less visible side effects of cancer treatment and it can have a devastating effect on survivors – on their quality of life, their mental health and their relationships.

"This funding grant will make such a difference to so many children, adolescents and their families, and I am so grateful to the Irish Cancer Society for enabling this service."

Edited by Chai Brady
chai@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



TIPPERARY: A group of pilgrims are pictured at Silvermines at Kilmore graveyard, the former site of St Odhrans 6th-Century monastic settlement. They set out from St Mary of the Rosary Church Nenagh on a 125km, six-day Camino from St Mary of the Rosary Church Nenagh to the 12 Churches in St Odhrans parish cluster. The walk was organised by Aonach ar Siúl walking club.



CARLOW: The voluntary team in Tinryland sanitise their church between morning Masses.



DONEGAL: The children of Scoil Cholmcille, Termon make their First Holy Communion in St Columba's church.



INDIANA: Fr Bill Dailey CSC, former Director of the Newman Center for Faith and Reason in Dublin who recently returned to the University of Notre Dame in the US, celebrated the opening of the school year Mass in Notre Dame Stadium last week.



DONEGAL: James and Brid Breslin affirmed the vows they took about 50 years ago in the presence of their family in St Mary's church in Kincasslagh parish. Their son in Australia was able to participate virtually.

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.

Unearthing Ireland's religious past

Navan Fort



New technology offers a fascinating insight into the religious nature of the early Irish writes **Jason Osborne**

The veil of time has been pulled back and a direct glimpse into Ireland's pre-historic past was offered as a joint team of archaeologists from Belfast and Aberdeen unearthed what they believe to be evidence of a series of monumental complexes at Navan Fort. Navan Fort is located in Co. Armagh and boasts deep ties to many of the island's oldest myths, sagas and legendary figures, such as the

Táin Bó Cúailnge, Cú Chulainn, and Conchobar mac Nessa. Known as the 'Emain Macha' in Irish, it served as the headquarters to the Red Branch Knights of Ulster in early Irish mythology. Beyond this, it is reputedly one of the prehistoric provincial capitals, based on information granted us by early sources. Tara, Knockaulin, and Cruachan were identified as the centres of the others.

Despite Navan Fort's firm rooting in both the Irish landscape and its history, the fort continues to influence and shape the minds of those seeking to discover its secrets. Foremost among these is Dr Patrick Gleeson, Senior Lecturer in Archaeology at the School of Natural and Built Environment at Queen's University Belfast and leader of the recent, revealing survey.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, he offered a glimpse behind the curtain of Ireland's ancient ways. "I'm a landscape archaeologist which means most of the time, I'm interested in the ways in which people use places. So, the specific periods

that I'm interested in are the later prehistoric period and the medieval period in northern Europe, and to date most of my work is in Ireland and focuses on cult landscapes, royal places and kingship." These areas of interest make Dr Gleeson uniquely suited to interpret many of the relics of Ireland's past, with the country being a tapestry of religious and political history.

“The necessity of the multifaceted approach is made clear: “These are incredibly laden places”

"I work at quite a lot of places around Ireland and I work with colleagues in other places too, but probably the places your readers would be most familiar with would be places like the Rock of Cashel in Co. Tipperary, places like Lagore Crannóg or Tara in Co. Meath. And then we

work in places like Dunseverick on the north coast and Navan Fort obviously in Co. Armagh, and a few other royal and religious places around the island, but those would be the main ones."

International Team

Dr Gleeson does not work in isolation, but rather is joined by an international team as they attempt to piece together the shape of northern Europe's past: "The work at Navan was funded through a project that we have with colleagues in the University of Aberdeen led by Prof. Gordon Noble, in Aberdeen, and that's called the Comparative Kingship Project. What we're interested in for that project is the origins and evolution of kingdoms in northern Europe, particularly in Ireland and Scotland, so there's a number of ongoing projects in places like Burghead, Rhynie, and Tap O' Noth in Scotland, but the Irish work is focused on the Rock of Cashel, Dunseverick on the north coast of Antrim, and Navan Fort."

This recent survey of Navan Fort provided researchers a unique

opportunity to probe the largely hidden nature of the monument. They used techniques that are revealing increasing amounts as they become more widely used. "There hasn't really been this sort of large-scale remote sensing survey previously at Navan Fort. These are techniques that are used quite regularly, and it's become relatively standard practice in recent decades. The technologies are completely non-invasive which means we can cover quite a lot of ground with relatively few resources and get some good results. It has been used to great effect in places like Brú na Bóinne or the Newgrange landscape, around the Hill of Tara, or places like Rathcroghan. Also at the Rock of Cashel, we've done some work there previously too. So, this is kind of the first attempt to use those methods at Navan and they've thrown up some really interesting results," he says.

Dr Gleeson shared more about technology's role in helping us to understand a prehistoric age: "This allows us to map the below-ground archaeology by measuring the magnetic signatures and the electrical resistance of the soil, and allows us to basically detect what archaeology exists below-ground for which there is no above-ground trace."

Fieldwork wasn't always so cutting-edge, however, with the

“The work of an archaeologist may play out like that of a detective in a thriller; a site may appear to have yielded up all of its secrets”



initial exploration of Navan Fort being done manually through excavation, Dr Gleeson says: “There was a long history of research at Navan and that includes excavations from the 1960s onwards, and then in the 1990s there were the last excavations, and they identified a whole series of buildings from the Iron Age period; the early Iron Age and possibly the later Iron Age, too.”

Navan Fort

If the inhabitants of Navan Fort built atop the work of those who came before, throughout the centuries, so too are the archaeologists today. As is the way of the scientific method, their research continues the story that others started decades ago. “Our research shows that the earthworks that stand on the site today aren’t, as was previously thought, the final phase of activity at the site. The site was told in medieval sources as having grass growing and abandoned, but actually it’s part of a much, much longer history. We’ve added a new monumental phase in the early Iron Age where the previously excavated buildings can be shown to be part of a much larger ritual complex, and then we’ve also added activity in the medieval period, so in say the first millennium AD and the start of the second millennium AD. Particularly, we’ve added knowledge that was previously unknown at any of these royal centres: is Tara, Rathcroghan, etc., for what it possibly royal residences. So a large, timber building and large enclosures that possibly belonged to a medieval residential phase, that would

explain the past of Navan as a place associated with the kings of Ulster in myths and sagas in the medieval period,” he explains. The history of politics is evident at Navan Fort, but that is not the only area that these findings shed light on; the survey added significant data which hinted at “a series of massive temples, some of the largest and most complex ritual arena of any region of later prehistoric and pre-Roman Northern Europe,” Dr Gleeson revealed in a statement shortly after the announcement of the findings.

“There are many mysteries surrounding Ireland’s progression through the ages, and Dr Gleeson and the rest of the team on the project remain committed to solving them”

He says this pronouncement further as he spoke to *The Irish Catholic*: “So the reason that places like Navan and Tara are famous is because we’re told in medieval sources that they are the ancient capitals and seats of kings of the five provinces of Ireland. That was probably the reason that they started to be studied from the 1960s onwards; to understand these residential places and these royal places, but the evidence that was uncovered didn’t really fit that mould.”

The work of an archaeologist may play out like that of a detective in a thriller; a site may appear to have yielded up all of its secrets, before fresh evidence is turned up to reopen the case. “There was a lot of Iron Age activity and even some older activity uncovered, but the vast majority of it seemed to point to ritual and ceremonial functions for these places. Now that’s been debated, and shifted to and fro over the last couple of decades too, but it does seem now the case that these aren’t just royal residences in the later prehistoric period, in say, the Iron Age; they are more likely regional centres of ritual and ceremonial activity for their respective regions if not, kind of, super-regional, and centres of authority and spiritual significance as well,” he says. “At Navan, that seems to be the case, particularly what we’ve identified with the figure of eight-shaped buildings that had previously been excavated. They sit in a much, much larger monumental complex that is also perhaps arranged in a figure of eight shape. So instead of just being residential structures, they now seem to be, to us at least, ritual structures that have some sort of cosmic significance associated with their shape and their form.”

Picture

Findings like these help to build up a picture of Ireland’s ancient past. If the religious shape of a previous society can be accurately formed, that affords researchers more insight into the ways of life on every level. Fortunately for those operating in these rugged and mysterious isles at the edge of the Atlantic, a trail is appearing that promises greater understanding of the past. “The figure of eight

buildings are quite significant because there’s been a small handful of those that have been excavated, but they are only found at those royal centres that I’ve mentioned previously, so places like Tara and Knockaulin, so they do seem to be associated with these particular types of sites. There has been some suggestion that there might be some evidence for them in places in Britain, but they do seem to be slightly different and it’s not the same sort of character. In places like Stanwick or in places in Aberdeenshire, there’s similar forms of architecture to that which you find at some of the Irish sites, but they’re very different in others. It does seem that they are some sort of common currency in terms of the architecture of religious or ritual space that is used in the Iron Age in Ireland, so that is one of the reasons we think they’re significant buildings. To contextualise them further with the same sort of symbolism and format in a much, much larger monument does suggest that that is significant,” Dr Gleeson Says.

Organised Society

These trends and threads paint a rich picture of Ireland’s past, one in which we see an organised society on at least the religious and political levels. However, much more work needs to be done before a comprehensive understanding is acquired: “To a certain degree, it confirms some of the recent suspicions about these places in terms of how we understand and re-interpret some of the evidence that had been excavated previously. I suppose it also gives us new information too, especially identifying the much larger monumental complex. It is some new evidence that we’re still sifting through, but there isn’t a huge amount of comparison on the island of Ireland for that, in terms of its scale and complexity. There’s maybe a couple centring around those royal sites but they are, relatively speaking, unique centres.”

“These trends and threads paint a rich picture of Ireland’s past, one in which we see an organised society on at least the religious and political levels”

While some parts of the picture remain highly fragmented, others show signs of coming together nicely. Dr Gleeson explains: “The other element with our research that is quite significant, in terms of understanding religious significance and change, is that as a part of the article that we’ve published, we’ve suggested that one of the buildings that had previously been excavated is actually much later in date, probably belonging to the seventh century AD, so the conversion period of Ireland to Christianity. Alongside that, we’ve also identified medieval activity at the site which wasn’t known previously, so we can show that the site continued to be used

throughout the first millennium AD and perhaps later.” Here we appear to have a tenuous, but real, link between the past and the present, a sentiment with which Dr Gleeson agrees: “So it’s no longer a, kind of, grass-grown, abandoned pagan place. When Christianity comes to Ireland, it seems continuous.” The idea of St Patrick living and working alongside a society unaccustomed to the message he carried is one from which all Catholics can draw inspiration, and the firmer the ties between past and present become, the clearer a story there is to look to from which to draw hope and nourishment. It takes many hands to draw Ancient Ireland out of the murky past, and Dr Gleeson’s project has involved many: “Our project is interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary, so we have historians, people like Nick Evans, that work on the project. The fieldwork element in this context is led by my colleague James O’Driscoll who’s a specialist in geophysical survey.”

“If the religious shape of a previous society can be accurately formed, that affords researchers more insight into the ways of life”

Mythology

The necessity of the multifaceted approach is made clear: “These are incredibly laden places. They’re laden very much with mythology and saga, and that means they’re very, very rich places to study. But that can also come with its problems, where if you rely too much on that, it can give you expectations, or influence the way you might understand the structure. For instance, when the structures were first excavated back in the 1960s, they were understood as residences because the texts told us that these were residential places, and now we’re feeling that that isn’t the case. So for us really, we wanted to try and understand these places as an archaeological complex, and understand how they developed archaeologically first, and then hopefully at a later stage we will be able to engage with the mythology and the saga and the symbolism associated with the site and the stories in a much greater degree.” There are many mysteries surrounding Ireland’s progression through the ages, and Dr Gleeson and the rest of the team on the project remain committed to solving them: “So they’re all the questions that we’ve yet to really answer, but I suppose the important thing for us at this stage is to try and let the archaeology speak for itself and try and understand that first.” As Ireland struggles to form an understanding of itself in the fluidity of the modern age, the work of Dr Gleeson, and all those who unearth the past, provides a valuable piece in the puzzle of the country’s identity.

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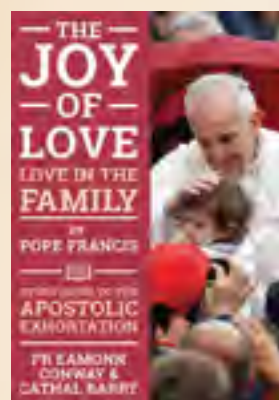
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The Irish Spirit

August 27th, 2020
Issue No. 13

Looking back on the 2018 Papal Visit

Patrick Bergin
discusses performing for
Pope Francis at Croke Park

Two pages of photos from Knock Shrine,
Phoenix Park and more

PLUS

Coping with anxiety
And obtaining a peaceful heart

Our Lady of Mount Carmel,
Patroness of the Carmelites

A flower in the vase

Chai Brady discusses spirituality and the arts with Patrick Bergin, two years after he performed for the Pope in Dublin



Two years on from his performance for Pope Francis in Croke Park for the World Meeting of Families in Dublin, well-known Irish actor and musician Patrick Bergin sat down with The Irish Catholic and discussed the importance of spirituality and the arts in people's lives.

Mr Bergin is no stranger to the stage and has been in theatre, acted in critically acclaimed films and as a musician has toured across Europe, but 2018 was the first time he had ever performed in front of a pontiff.

Francis' visited Ireland from August 25-26 and as well as Croke Park, for the Festival of Families, he fitted in visits to Áras an Uachtaráin, Dublin Castle, Dublin's St Mary's Pro Cathedral, the Capuchin Day Centre, Knock Shrine and, of course, the Phoenix Park.

During the Festival of Families Mr Bergin was singing when the Pope first entered Croke Park. The star-studded line up included Riverdance, Daniel O'Donnell, Andrea Bocelli, Nathan Carter, Celine Byrne and more.

There was an orchestra in excess of 50 musicians; over 700 Irish Sean Nós and contemporary dancers, including 500 from Irish dance schools across the country; a 1,000 strong choir; 100 community groups, and 300 flag bearers. The crowd numbered about 80,000.

"It was an extraordinary experience as you can imagine, just playing in front of so many people. I've had the experience of being in Croke Park once or twice at some events, it's a very powerful place and of course, with the arrival of the Pope, it was just an extraordinary atmosphere there," Mr Bergin said.

"It was very, very interesting, there was a delay in the Pope's entrance. He had been delayed by a few minutes and they said I should go on anyway and just as I was coming to the pertinent lines in the song he arrived."

Mr Bergin jokes saying he thought "who's upstaging me?", adding "it was an honour to be there."

Spiritual

The spiritual life has never been a distant idea for Mr Bergin, with his father always saying that the three things a person needs are a roof over their head, food on the table, and a flower in the vase.

Patrick Bergin Snr, who had a profound influence on him, was a Labour Party politician who studied with the Holy Ghost Fathers before deciding to go into politics rather than the religious life.

Mr Bergin says: "His main concern was social justice and social equality if you like. He had a very simple philosophy in life. I asked him once about what did it mean, the flower in



“The spiritual life has never been a distant idea for Mr Bergin, with his father always saying that the three things a person needs are a roof over their head, food on the table, and a flower in the vase”

the vase, and he said that is your spiritual, artistic life, a person needs some form of spirituality."

There is a need to return to the basics of religions and spirituality, he says, "I remember we had a thing called genuflection, on a Sunday morning in the church in Drimnagh the genuflection was barely a nod, the men with hangovers came into the back of the church, this was their genuflection to the great power in front of them

"All religions have to go back to basics and all spirituality has to go back to the basics, first of all you have to orientate yourself, then centre yourself and acknowledge a greater power and humble yourself to those powers.

"If you wanted me to summarise my position it would be that, I think it's the duty then of communities, like the

Catholic community to encourage that kind of behaviour and to keep people with a roof over the head, with food on the table and to supply a place where they can have the flower in the vase."

St Patrick is Mr Bergin's favourite saint, and not just because they share a name, St Patrick's Breastplate is his favourite prayer and he starred in a film about the saint.

"St Patrick's prayer is very much part of my vocabulary, I promote it quite a lot, especially the simplified version," he says, adding "I'm very aware and conscience of my upbringing as a Catholic."

Speaking of the film he says: "There was a moment in it when my character, St Patrick, had to bless some children and there was no dialogue and I said to the director, 'excuse



me, would it be interesting if I said St Patrick's prayer at this moment when I'm blessing the children?"

"And he said, 'how does it go Patrick?' he was American, and I said well it goes Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ within me, Christ... he said 'stop right there Patrick, that's too many Christs we'll never be able to get it on American television.'"

"It's gas," he laughs.

"St Patrick was in all intents and purposes a slave and found some spiritual insight studying in Auxerre and places like that. Religious shrines and religious centres are important, but again, it's important for each individual to, even under the umbrella of a bigger organisation, find their centre."

Films

Having appeared in over 100 films and series, including his appearance as Aidan Maguire in *EastEnders* and the acclaimed 'Sleeping with the Enemy' which he co-starred in with Julia Roberts, Mr Bergin has a lot of experience in Hollywood and the film industry in general. He said although there is a certain hedonism in people of all professions, "there is certainly a hedonism in Hollywood, it's one that you can easily get engaged in no question".

"Whether it's somewhere you'd want to live... I stayed there quite a lot but never had any inkling to actually live there. No matter where, you have to be on your guard against The Fall."

The 69-year-old was born in Dublin's Holles Street, was raised in Carlow and moved to London when he was in his late teens, while there he set up his own 'arts lab' near Kilburn. The passion he had for the arts has continued throughout his life, he says: "Your voice and ability to speak is part of being, say, an actor for sure, and song, I started writing songs and performing songs, I toured the whole of Europe with my guitar, language, art, song, theatre, that's a little bundle that's been with me all my life."

His influence behind setting up the arts lab was his father. Mr Bergin Snr "set up a little theatre in Carlow called the Little Theatre," he explains, "one of the reasons he was involved in that was he felt that theatre helped people to learn how to walk and talk basically at the same time."



"He was trying organise the farm labourers into a group and being able to stand up and speak, it's crucial."

Instilling children with an appreciation and love for the arts is another of his interests, which he continues to do to this day.

After a tragic incident in Tallaght, Co. Dublin, in which a young boy whose father Mr Bergin knew was killed, he tried to help the community.

"We set up a charity there to help his contemporaries to have a focus and a place to grow and help buy the equipment that might help them to play," he says.

"I'm still doing something like that in a sense, I'm doing it in Powerscourt. We're encouraging young kids to come to Powerscourt to write poetry through their experience of nature, as we speak it's happening right now, it's called Poetry in Bloom."

Initiative

The Wicklow-based poetry initiative at Powerscourt was developed by Powerscourt in partnership with the creative writing organisation Fighting Words and supported by Mr Bergin.

It invites anyone aged over seven to create a poem or write lyrics inspired by nature observed at Powerscourt Gardens throughout August and September, up until September 30.

All submissions are online and will be automatically entered into an open prize draw to win a variety of prizes. More info can be found at <https://powerscourt.com/poetryinbloom/>

Describing it as "very, very worthwhile," he adds that he also has an "ancient qualification" in poetry.

"My name in Irish is Amhairghin, he was the chief of the Milesians who conquered the Tuatha Dé Danann, 2000 years BC. Poetry and identity, language, all of these things are very much part of my interests and make up.

"Very much part of Amhairghin's poem is the association of nature and spirituality and trees in particular, each tree would have a particular quality, which are natural qualities of strength, agility and each line of his poem would be associate with one of these qualities.

"Just the mere mention of that opens up a channel in children's minds where they can start thinking about those sorts of words and their meaning. It's important that we understand and discuss words and meaning in all kinds of spirituality."

“St Patrick is Mr Bergin’s favourite saint, and not just because they share a name, St Patrick’s Breastplate is his favourite prayer and he starred in a film about the saint”

He adds: "I firmly believe if there were more outlets for poetry in their lives there would be less murder."

Mr Bergin recently sold a property that used to be an old Church of Ireland church, he also owns a 15th-Century castle near Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary.

The old church is situated on the banks of Lough Derg in a place called Coolbawn, which he used as a poetry centre.

"It was a beautiful place... We used to have poetry walks through the woods, where we'd read poetry in the woods and I'd have poetry competitions and have entries from all sorts of wonderful people including the president," he says.

In the context of the coronavirus pandemic which has caused huge amounts of uncertainty for the global population, it's unclear what will happen in the coming months for the majority of industries who could not have seen it coming. For Patrick Bergin, this definitely extends to film and music, with no clear answer in sight.

"It's a very challenging time for the arts no question, I don't particular know how it's going to pan out, people are trying to investigate ways.

"It is possible according to the directors and producers to actually do it and remain within the framework of protection, of course ultimately it comes down to money and the insurance companies have yet to be convinced and that's a problem.

"It's very hard to know, musicians can go on the dole as well, it's not a place you necessarily you want to be. I put out the occasional new song on Facebook or things like that so you can share it at least with a number of people but it's nothing like a live gig and one misses it."

He explains his life can almost be "divided into stages", with a period when he was in a band called The Spirit Merchants. From theatre and acting, poetry, music and more, it seems Mr Bergin continues to live an a life full of art and creativity.

Looking to the future, Mr Bergin says: "Hopefully I'll be able to continue to start writing, to be happy with Helen and to keep above ground and to continue on a daily basis to acknowledge a higher power, be humble and to be as happy as possible."

Pope Francis in Ireland



Left: Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade; Simon Coveney TD, his wife Ruth and his daughters Jessica, Beth and Annalise greet Pope Francis at his arrival at Dublin Airport. Photos: Maxwells/WMOF2018

Top Right: Patrick Maughan Sr and Patrick Maughan Jr (6) awaiting the Pope's arrival.

Bottom Right: A group of 120 children, including members of the Palestrina Choir, perform the song True Friend.



Pope Francis gives the thumbs up to a group of young Irish dancers at Croke Park. Photo: John Mc Elroy



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Top Left: Priests move out to distribute Communion.

Bottom Left: Pope Francis makes his way through the crowds at Croke Park.

Top Right: The crowd outside Knock Basilica cheer as Pope Francis passes in his popemobile.



Crowds at Knock Shrine wave as Pope Francis passes in his popemobile.

The worries of tomorrow

Exploring the themes of justice, forgiveness, compassion and more, *A View from the Pew* reflects an earnest endeavour from Louis Hughes OP to connect with the individual in the pew and an equally earnest response from one of those individuals, Paul Balfe.

Homily

by Louis Hughes OP

The room was too warm and I asked the attendant to switch off the heating. He offered to open the window instead. That was a kind of no-no for me. First, switch off the heating – then open the window! We now take energy conservation more seriously, not just because of the cost, but because of the damage that burning carbon does to the planet. A house for sale has to be subjected to a Building Energy Audit, which establishes the amount of energy needed to keep it warm for a year. Then, by means of insulation, energy consumption can be reduced.

If our homes need a Building Energy Audit, it is no less true that our lives could do with a Psychic Energy Audit to address the question: how much energy do we waste through worry? Things like: should I invite X? What present will I bring? What will I wear? Will the taxi arrive in time or will I miss my train? Is my money safe in the bank? Will my pension be enough to live on? How can I meet the mortgage repayments, or the electricity bill? Or the nursing home when I am old and sick? What will the doctor tell me next week? Will I have to undergo that painful medical procedure? How will I die?

In the gospel Jesus tells us, 'Do not let your hearts be troubled.' We rarely experience an untroubled heart. We are so easily disturbed by what or who we fear, desire, resent or envy. We are prone to anger, guilt, depression. We cannot let go of the past, and we fear the future. The truth is that tomorrow's problems cannot be solved, for the simple reason that they do not exist. Only the present moment is real, and we need to live our lives in it. So, why not go down to the park and watch the ducks for a while? It will bring you into the now. Or come into your body, sense the flow of the breath in and out. Become aware of your heartbeat.

A key driver of our worries is the DVD collection that we keep in our minds and that, mostly unknown to us, shapes our life. It is when we sit in silence that we really become aware of these videos and what they do. They cover our entire life history – everything that we have ever seen, heard, felt, done or suffered – plus an infinite number of fictional alternate life stories. They play over and over, and give rise to feelings of sadness, anger, fear, lust, resentment or jealousy. They exhaust and depress us. We feel powerless to stop them running. Yet we do not have to be their victims.

Becoming free of our inner videos requires quiet time. As we sit still, we become aware that a video is running. We can then go on to note the feeling it stirs up. We then have the option of stopping that video and moving our mind on to something else. Here, a short repetitive prayer word can be an invaluable tool. All of this calls for perseverance in the practice of meditation or mindfulness.

At the end of the day we can stop worrying and truly let go only if we believe deep down that we are being taken care of by a God who loves us infinitely and unconditionally. God is love and cannot act other than in a loving way towards us. There is nothing I can do to stop God loving me. Of course, I may choose not to accept that love, but then the refusal is on my side, never on God's. If I can receive the gift that God offers me, I will have a peaceful heart. I will be in tune with the words of Jesus, 'Trust in God still and trust in me.'



A View from the Pew

by Paul Balfe

As the homily opens on the theme of energy conservation and the environment, it is apt to reflect a while on this most important of issues and our responsibility as custodians of the earth's resources. In particular, to reflect on the latter in terms of the Christian message.

Regardless of creed, colour, ethnicity or tradition, there are two inescapable realities: one, that however vast earth's resources may appear, they are all finite and exhaustible; and two, that the population demands on these finite resources are increasing exponentially. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the population of the earth was around 2 billion. By the end of that century, it had more than trebled to over 6 billion. The most conservative estimate of population growth will see this figure rise to somewhere in the region of 9 billion by 2050 with other more pessimistic forecasts estimating that it could rise to 11 billion by that date. In the inimitable words of the song 'Something's Gotta Give'. Yes, but what? We now have a situation where everyone, it would appear, aspires to the freedoms and lifestyle of modern western democracies. And why wouldn't they – political stability, personal freedom, economic growth (mostly), literacy, education and so on. But can the planet with its finite resources sustain 9 or 11 billion people living or aspiring to such a lifestyle? The answer is clearly not. And yet we in the West and in the emerging consumer giants of China, India, Russia and South America behave as if the world's resources were infinite. Indeed, our entire economic model is predicated on year-on-year growth fuelled, of course, by ever increasing consumerism. It's simply not sustainable.

There are those who will argue that new technologies (Genetically modified food, cleaner cars, etc.) will be the panacea and while I have little doubt that they will play a part, that part will pale into insignificance when set against the predicted burgeoning in population over the next four decades. While I would not wish to denigrate for a moment the genuine intentions of individuals and states, the international protocols and treaties such as Kyoto have been largely aspirational with major powers failing to sign up. Despite all the evidence, there are still those who deny the contribution of human endeavour to climate change. But even if they were right, we are still left with the reality of the finite nature of the earth's resources set against the consumer-driven model of economic development which underpins modern liberal democracies.

What's to be done then? Well, from a humanitarian and sustainability perspective, there can be no doubt that the issue of population growth needs to be addressed. This can be a very emotive topic particularly



when religion is brought into the mix as inevitably it involves countenancing, inter alia, artificial contraception. Unlike nature where populations are kept under control through natural disasters (Acts of God) and attrition of the weak, humans have displayed enormous ingenuity in overcoming many of these problems to the extent that the global population has more than trebled in little over one hundred years.

Not only have we managed to massively decrease the incidence of perinatal, maternal and infant mortality but we have now reached a point where children born today in the developed world have a life expectancy of one hundred years or more. As medical advances come on stream, this can be expected to increase even further. But again, these developments are not without their cost or social/moral implications. It is simply not acceptable to stand idly by and let things take their course – because take their course they will with increased poverty, famine, wars, polarisation, conflict, closing of borders in the developed world to the huge number of people in the third world seeking refuge there, etc. We have a moral responsibility to tackle the issues of energy consumption, population growth and resource utilisation if we are to have something worthwhile (or indeed anything at all) to pass onto the next generation and the one after that and the one after that and so on.

If we are to believe that there is a divine creator then I am absolutely sure that he or she would wish us, the guardians and custodians of his/her creation, to nurture that which has been entrusted to us. Look around you, look at your children, look into your own heart and ask yourself the question 'Can we continue as we're going in the world?' We will have failed the Creator and our children if we don't face up to the stark realities staring us in the face and take some remedial action in terms of the way we live as individuals and as a society. There can be only one unavoidable conclusion – radical changes are needed at individual and, more importantly, at international level, if we are to step back from the brink.

Anxiety

The pronouncements of modern 'philosophers' and social commentators would have us believe that we live in a state of perpetual anxiety fuelled by the so-called 24/7 culture of modern western society. They have mused as to the apparent contradiction of a world characterised by increasing affluence

“Regardless of creed, colour, ethnicity or tradition, there are two inescapable realities: one, that however vast earth's resources may appear, they are all finite and exhaustible”

and simultaneous increasing anxiety. Why should this be so? What sets our generation apart from previous ones? Were the Victorians or people living in the Middle Ages more relaxed and less addled? I doubt it very much when you consider the pervasive abject poverty, infant and maternal mortality rates, the complete absence of a safety net in terms of a social state, little or no labour law, no healthcare system worth talking about, no electricity, poor sanitation, little or no education for the vast majority and so on. Let's put the record straight. There has never been an idyllic age yet we collectively buy into the notion that our ancestors' lives were less characterised by anxiety than ours. Not true – we never had it so good.

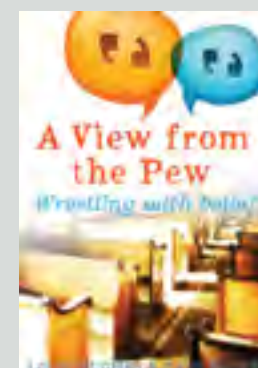
The simple fact is this – we're hardwired to worry, to be anxious. It is as human as eating and sleeping. We are no different from previous generations – we just worry over different things. If our material needs aren't met, we worry over these. As soon as these are secured, we move up the ladder and worry about education, status, etc. As soon as that is out of the way or off the agenda, our worry genes focus on such concerns as security, health and so on. Maslow formalised this many years ago in his famous 'hierarchy of needs'. But, even when every conceivable need is apparently addressed, we still find something to worry about – existential angst, mortality, etc. It is simply part of what we are.

But, we have an intrinsic capability to rise above our instincts and predilections which we commonly refer to as discipline. We all possess this capability but vary in great measure in terms of our ability or indeed preparedness to deploy it. In the same way that we can discipline ourselves to avoid certain foods to lose weight or to quit smoking, we can similarly discipline ourselves to set aside some time each day/week to evaluate or audit ourselves, what we're doing, what we're thinking, what our mindset is and why we're anxious. Effectively to pull over onto the hard shoulder to take stock,

to check our roadmap and alter direction if need be as against anxiously hurtling along on autopilot.

When it comes to an alarm bell sounding off in our own lives, we have an uncanny knack of ignoring it even when it is blaring. Why? Well, for one, most of us don't want the trouble of having to address the issue because it requires time and effort. Secondly, and most importantly perhaps, the process of addressing alarm bells will likely require change and we don't like that as it tends to be painful even when it's for our long term benefit.

From a Christian perspective, there's the consolation of a caring, compassionate God who cares for us every minute of every day, always there to catch us when we're about to fall and to point the way when we've lost our bearing. This can only happen though if we listen, if we seek to discern. But to do so we need to make some space in our busy lives – just like all good friendships. And, like all good friendships, the effort is well worthwhile.



A View from the Pew

by Louis Hughes & Paul Balfé

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Our Lady of Mount Carmel

From the book *Meeting God*

The Carmelite Order has always been regarded as Marian by the People of God. In addition to devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel throughout the Church, there is also apparent reinforcement in apparitions which allude to the title or image of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, or which have significant appearances on 16 July.

Early history

At the beginning times of the Order, the Rule specified that there be an oratory in the middle of the hermit cells; the Carmelites chose to dedicate this church to St Mary. She thus becomes the Lady of the Place. In medieval culture this amounts to the choice of Mary as Patron: Carmelites will serve her; she will look after them.

When the Carmelites came to Europe they found there was already a rich culture of devotion to Mary. Quite soon Carmelites were called 'Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel.' By the end of the 14th century the Carmelite family looked to two inspirational figures, Mary and Elijah; they were its foundational figures in the sense that all the Order sought was seen to be already incarnated in the lives of the Prophet and the Mother.

Devotion

Devotion grows by reflection, prayer and study. It may be strengthened not only by saying prayers or invoking Mary's intercession, but also by doing things in her honour. Medieval devotion emphasised simple gestures like bowing at the mention of Mary's name, as well as processions, candles, etc. Carmelite art, like the La Bruna (The Brown Lady) image in Naples, shows a special tenderness in the depiction of Mary and her Son. A true Carmelite vision will never separate Mary from Jesus.

When we survey the rich Marian tradition of Carmel, we might summarise it by saying that Mary is a gentle presence, always there with the Carmelite. Sometimes we feel her presence as Mother; at other times as Sister, Patroness or Model. One of the most common titles given to Mary in the Order is Mother and Beauty of Carmel. A vision of her beauty can always be refreshment for us in the harshness of secular society.

The Brown Scapular

Medieval devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel spread outside the friars, nuns and Third Order members, especially through the scapular. It was a reduced form of the Carmelite habit. It was a sign of affiliation to the Order, often made more public through the Arch-confraternity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The details of its origins are far less significant than its approval by the Church over many centuries. A recent document of the Holy See on popular devotions has strongly commended the scapular. It noted that its use is very diffuse and often independent of the life and spirituality of the Order. The Vatican document also notes: 'It is an external sign of the filial relationship established between the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother and Queen of Carmel, and the faithful who entrust themselves



“Devotion grows by reflection, prayer and study. It may be strengthened not only by saying prayers or invoking Mary's intercession, but also by doing things in her honour”

totally to her protection, who have recourse to her maternal intercession, who are mindful of the primacy of the spiritual life and the need for prayer.'

Carmelite saints

All the saints of Carmel in their own ways are characterised by devotion to Mary. Carmelite mystics like St Teresa of Avila have enjoyed visions or locutions, that is, words from Mary. St Thérèse of Lisieux had a deep familiar relationship with the one whom she described as 'more Mother than Queen'. Bl Isidore Bakanja was a farm labourer in Belgian Congo (Zaire). An atheist employer flogged him for wearing a scapular and a rosary around his neck. He died from his wounds in 1909. Coming from a Jewish culture and being an early feminist, St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) gives us rich insights into Mary as mother and as woman.

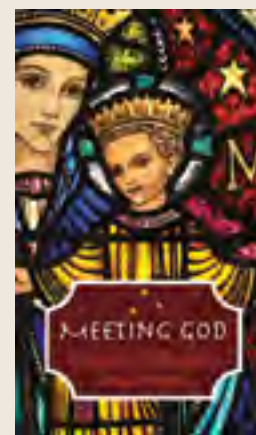
Presence

A renewed devotion to Mary is not primarily a matter of saying more prayers to her. It implies a relationship with her, which will be established by prayer and reflected in imitation. There is a huge difference between knowing about a person, and really knowing them. Renewal in our Marian life is not a matter of prayers or information, but a loving knowing.

Such a knowing loving, or loving knowing, lies behind the idea of presence. We know that we are always in the presence of God, who sustains us, keeps us in being. But we may not be alert to

this presence as we go about our daily lives. It is good to stop occasionally and reflect that we are always in God's presence.

The gentle presence of Mary is found in her caring for all the Church, in her continuous prayer for us, 'now and at the hour of our death'. We can become aware of her presence if we think of her now and again, speak to her, ask for her guidance, and consider how she would act in the circumstances in which we may find ourselves. We can go further and enjoy and relax in her presence. Every age in the Church finds new insights into God's plan unfolded in the Mother of the Son of God. The Carmelite Order also continues its own exploration of its Marian heritage.



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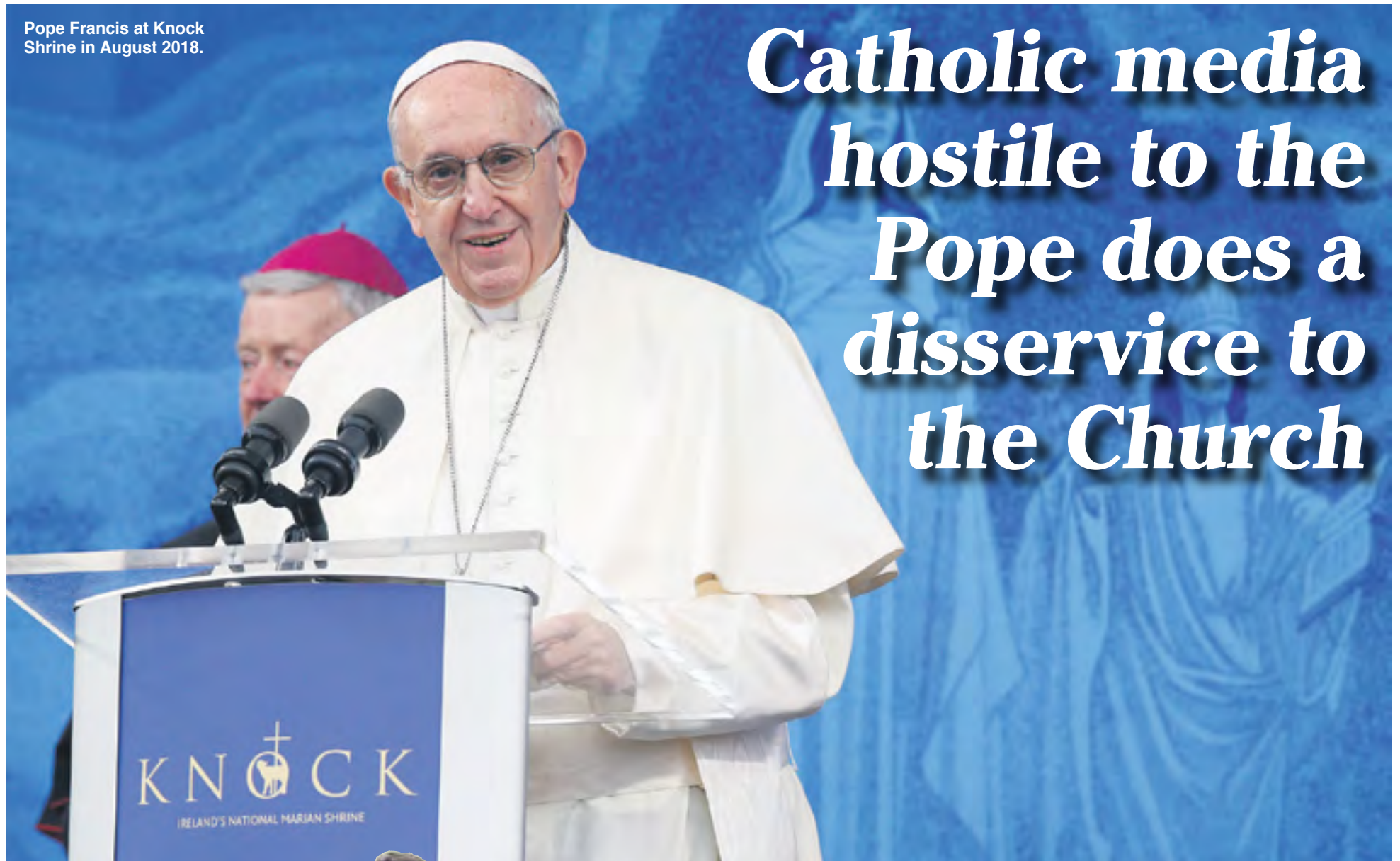
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Letter from America

Pope Francis at Knock Shrine in August 2018.

Catholic media hostile to the Pope does a disservice to the Church



In a moving essay published earlier this month in *America* magazine, the writer Mike Lewis chronicles how the division in the Church over Pope Francis has divided his own family, with his elderly (now deceased) mother spending her final years on earth saying that Francis has confused the Church.

"My mother, who never read anything Pope Francis actually wrote, became convinced he was a heretic by her friends at church, members of her Catholic book club and through watching *The World Over Live*, a weekly talk show on EWTN hosted by Raymond Arroyo, which often features outspoken papal critics," writes Mr Lewis, who runs the first-rate blog *Where Peter Is*.

Four years ago I offered a similar reflection lamenting the fact that as a convert from Protestantism, part of what drew me to the Church was the unity she offered, in large part due to the authority of the Pope.

Conversion

A decade ago prior to my conversion it was the likes of EWTN and similar media outlets that were quite formative and shaped my introduction to the faith, so it's been all the more painful to see them fueling so much of the recent division within the Church.

"As someone who continues to



Christopher White

be inspired by the life and legacies of Popes John Paul II and Benedict, it's been all the more disheartening that such behaviour has arisen from the very writers, thinkers, and publications that paved the way for my early exploration of Catholicism," I wrote in 2017. "They were once the first to proclaim that

the cafeteria was closed. Today, not only does the cafeteria seem to be open, but some of those figures are encouraging a food fight."

“It was nearly impossible for those of us in the press to even appreciate Francis’ long, beautiful silence and prayer at Knock”

All of this comes to mind as I reflect on the two year anniversary of the World Meeting of Families. While I have the most fond memories of happy times in Dublin

(including much of it being time spent with the writers of this paper), the whole meeting was overshadowed not by the clouds and rain (though there was plenty of that) but by a letter penned by Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, the former papal representative to the US, that was released on the morning of Francis' final day in the country.

In that letter, Archbishop Viganò – the disgruntled and now discredited former Vatican employee – accused Francis of ignoring clerical abuse cases, particularly that of former Archbishop Theodore McCarrick of Washington, and went as far as to call for Francis' resignation.

* * * * *

It was nearly impossible for those of us in the press to even appreciate Francis' long, beautiful silence and prayer at Knock on that Sunday morning because of the distraction of that letter.

Part of the reason the Church has invested so heavily, both in terms of man hours and financial resources on major events like World Youth Days and World Meetings of Families, over the last three decades is that they have historically served as unifying, galvanising experiences both for the local Church and beyond.

Reflecting on the World Meeting of Families two months after the

fact, Archbishop Eamon Martin told me that Archbishop Viganò had "hijacked" the event. That's not to say that the event was unsuccessful and hasn't yielded beautiful moments for the Church worldwide, but for a Pope who came to Ireland to help catapult his pastoral letter on the *Joy of the Family*, it's not an exaggeration to say that he was overshadowed at best.

For more than seven years, Francis has been met with continued resistance by those made uncomfortable by his push for a Church that seeks to go out from itself, to stand in solidarity with the marginalised in new and creative ways, and for its priorities to be refocused to those on the peripheries of society, not those in the center of the spotlight.

Catholic media and those in the pews that are hostile to this mission do a disservice to this Pope and the Church. Two years on from Francis' visit to Ireland, it's a lesson the global Church must reconsider anew – because it's hard to talk credibly about the "joy of the family" when one's own house is in disarray.

① Christopher White is the national correspondent for the National Catholic Reporter and is based in New York. Follow him on Twitter @CWWhite212



Pope Francis greets the crowd as he visits the Knock Shrine in August 2018. Photos: CNS



World Report

IN BRIEF

WHO leader supports Pope's call for fair access to vaccine

● The head of the World Health Organization, which has been strongly advocating rapid, fair, and equitable access to potential Covid-19 vaccines worldwide, has voiced support for Pope Francis' similar call for global protections.

The Pope made appeals both on Twitter and at his weekly general audience insisting that any vaccine developed for the novel coronavirus help everyone, not just the wealthiest or one nation over another.

"The response to the pandemic is therefore dual. On the one hand, it is essential to find a cure for this small but terrible virus, which has brought the whole world to its knees. On the other, we must also cure a larger virus, that of social injustice, inequality of opportunity, marginalisation, and the lack of protection for the weakest," the Pope said on Twitter.

"I couldn't agree more with Your Holiness," the WHO's director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, replied as he retweeted the papal tweet on his account.

JP II rose added to White House Rose Garden

● A rose named for the late Pope St John Paul II has been included in a renovation of the White House Rose Garden. The Pope John Paul II rose [pictured], a white tea rose cultivar, is included in a redesign of the Rose Garden overseen by First Lady Melania Trump, which was unveiled August 22.

The Rose Garden, a space of about 1,700 square feet, sits outside the Oval Office.

The Pope St John Paul II rose was bred by American horticulturist Keith Zary in 2006. It has since been planted in the Vatican Gardens. The rose, which produces large white blossoms, is said to be among the most fragrant of rose cultivars.



Catholic Church in Belgium sees rise in adult baptisms

● The Catholic Church in Belgium has reported a significant rise in adult baptisms.

CathoBel, the website of the Catholic Church in Belgium, reported that 305 adults will be baptised this year, an increase of 61 compared to 2019.

The number of adult baptisms has grown steadily from 143 in 2010, to 180 in 2015, to more than 300 in 2020.

Although the majority of Belgium's 11.5 million population are baptised Catholics, Sunday Mass attendance is below 7%.

The largest number of adult baptisms will take place this year in the Diocese of Tournai, a primarily French-speaking area in western Belgium. The diocese will baptise 127 adults, compared to 93 in the Archdiocese of Mechelen-Brussels.

Peruvian bishops announce programme to improve Covid-19 response

● Peru's Catholic bishops have stepped up their response to the Covid-19 emergency, announcing a new pastoral program and moving ahead with projects to improve the country's health response.

The bishops presented an open letter to the country that coincided with the rollout of the sweeping pastoral program, 'Arise Peru Now', designed to coordinate actions as the coronavirus continues to spread in the country.

The letter, which plays on the Spanish word for resurrection, highlighted the important efforts that have been made to reduce suffering from the pandemic. Peru is now sixth in the world for Covid-19 cases, with more than 588,000 as of August 20. The virus has already claimed nearly 27,000 lives.

Turkey turns second historic Istanbul church into mosque

A month after the former cathedral Hagia Sophia was converted from a museum into a mosque, another Istanbul church-museum, renowned for its exquisite Byzantine mosaics, will undergo the same transformation.

Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has ordered that the 700-year-old Chora Church – currently the Kariye Museum – be turned into a fully functioning mosque.

The building's history mirrors that of the famous former Byzantine cathedral Hagia Sophia.

Holy Saviour in Chora is a 4th-Century Greek Orthodox church whose structure was originally part of a monastery in Byzantine Constantinople.

The church's current form, instead, dates from the early 14th Century. It is highly valued for its masterful mosaics and frescoes.

Worship

After the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul in 1453, the church was taken for Muslim worship, and the wall paintings and mosaics thinly covered with dye and lime.

In 1945, the secular Turkish republic declared the building a national monument, and extensive restoration and conservation work



The Kariye Museum.

was carried out on the former church's artworks before it opened as a museum in 1958.

Like Hagia Sophia, the building is designated a UNESCO World Heritage site.

In November 2019, Turkey's top administrative court, the Council of State, ruled the structure should return to use as a mosque, on the basis that the museum was unlawful for violating the Ottoman declaration that the building be used for Muslim worship.

This ruling was used as precedent for the court's controversial July decision to convert the former cathedral

Hagia Sophia from a museum back into a mosque.

Erdogan ordered on August 21 that Chora church, a much-visited site in the Fatih district of Istanbul, be turned into a mosque and opened for Muslim worship.

Other church-museums in Turkey, including less notable Hagia Sophias in the towns of Znik and Trabzon, have also been converted back into mosques in recent years.

Reconversions

Historian Fabrice Monnier told French newspaper *Le Figaro* that he believed the situation with Chora church

was different from that of other mosque reconversions, because of the size of its paintings and mosaics.

"Its beautiful mosaics and frescoes cover almost all the church's walls and domes," he said.

"It would be hard to imagine it being returned into a mosque without totally covering them over."

The Hagia Sophia and Chora decisions are thought to be an effort by Erdogan to appeal to Muslim voters after the president's party, AK, lost the Istanbul mayoral election in 2019.

Catholic archbishop prays outside of prison for detained Belarusian protestors



The archbishop of Minsk prayed outside of a prison in Belarus where detained protestors were reported to have been tortured.

With a rosary in his hands, Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz [pictured] walked the streets in front of the Akrestsin Street pre-trial detention centre at 3pm on August 19, reported the website of the Catholic Church in Belarus.

After praying the chaplet of Divine Mercy, the archbishop spoke with released protestors who had been detained at

Akrestsin Street.

The detention centre itself became the site of protests following Belarus' disputed presidential election in which government electoral officials announced that Alexander Lukashenko – who has ruled the country for five consecutive terms since 1994 – had won 80% of the vote.

An estimated 6,700 people were arrested in the protests in which demonstrators clashed with police forces. Many protestors were released on August 13. A number of released

protestors made allegations of torture and ill treatment, according to the United Nations' representative in Belarus.

Archbishop Kondrusiewicz called on the government of Belarus to allow priests to visit imprisoned protestors earlier this week and appealed to the country's interior minister to release the detainees.

The archbishop himself was barred from entering the Akrestsin Street pre-trial detention centre after his prayer.

Colombian bishops pray for peace following 13 murders

The Colombian Bishops' Conference appealed for peace following two brutal massacres of young people last week in the country. In a statement, the bishops expressed their "deep grief and concern" over the killings.

"We pray to God for the victims and we express our closeness and solidarity with their families, the inhabitants of the cities where these crimes occurred, and the ecclesial communities of the Archdiocese of Cali and the

Diocese of Ipiales," they said.

According to local media reports, eight young adults were killed by a group of armed men in Samaniego as they were having a conversation in a home on August 15.

The massacre of the eight

young adults, mostly university students, comes less than a week after the bodies of five young people were discovered in a sugar cane field in the Llano Verde neighbourhood of Cali on August 11.



Edited by Jason Osborne
jason@irishcatholic.ie

O Lord, hear our prayer



Fr Michel Abboud, president of Caritas Lebanon, prays before celebrating an outdoor Mass near Beirut's port area.
Photo: CNS

Nuncio and bishops call on Nigeria to protect its citizens

Archbishop Antonio Filipazzi, Papal ambassador to Nigeria, has said the government was not doing enough to protect its citizens from violence, insurgents and other social vices. He also said the people being killed were not just Christians, but also Muslims.

Speaking at a news conference as part of the finale of year-long celebrations of the silver jubilee of the Diocese of Osogbo, he said the federal government must awaken to its responsibilities of protecting citizens.

"Although southern Kaduna is an area where Christians and Catholics are mostly affected...it is important to note that many Muslims are also being killed in other parts of the north, such as in Maiduguri, Borno state, where Boko Haram had bombed many mosques," he

said. Boko Haram is a Muslim militant group active in northeast Nigeria.

Archbishop Filipazzi advised the government to focus its attention on protecting citizens from the various vices ravaging the country instead of creating antagonism and divisions between Christians and Muslims.

Gunfight

On August 18, Boko Haram attacked the village of Kukawa in Borno state. Many of the residents had just returned to the village after spending two years in camps for internally displaced persons. BBC News reported that after a gunfight with security personnel, Boko Haram abducted dozens of residents. At least seven security personnel were killed.

Bishops in the Kaduna region met

and issued a statement that said: "The dark clouds of violence have enveloped our land. Our country is in the firm grip of the grim reaper"

"Today, almost the entire northern states are in the grip of these purveyors of violence and death.

"In the last three years, we have witnessed the relentless attacks and ransacking of entire communities by bandits in states like Benue, Kebbi, Plateau, Kaduna, Katsina, Nasarawa, Niger, Sokoto, Zamfara.

"Thousands of lives have been lost to these bandits, who have operated with relentless abandon," the bishops said.

The bishops credited state governors with trying to negotiate with criminals but criticized them for trying to appease them with money.

Rare discoveries shed light on secret Catholic life in Tudor house

A restoration project at a country house in Norfolk, England has uncovered items that shed new light on the steadfast faith of a Catholic family in the wake of the English Reformation.

The discoveries include a fragment of a 15th-Century illuminated manuscript found by a builder in the eaves

of Oxburgh Hall, a moated manor house in the village of Oxborough, the National Trust conservation charity announced during the week.

The builder's eye was drawn to the parchment by the glint of gold leaf and the blue illuminated initials, which remained bright

though the text had lain for centuries amid debris.

Researchers believe that the manuscript may have been used during secret Masses celebrated at the country house, which has been home to the Bedingfeld family for the past 500 years.

Russell Clement, general manager at Oxburgh Hall,

said: "These objects contain so many clues which confirm the history of the house as the retreat of a devout Catholic family, who retained their faith across the centuries.

"We will be telling the story of the family and these finds in the house, now we have reopened again following lockdown."

Vatican roundup

Academy unveils effort to fight Mafia's 'deviant spirituality' of Mary

Given the many criminal organisations and gangs worldwide that have distorted the true role and image of Mary, a pontifical academy has unveiled a new department dedicated to fighting "this deviant spirituality".

The Pontifical Marian International Academy will be working with the Italian government and law enforcement on a number of initiatives through the department dedicated to the "analysis, study and monitoring of criminal and Mafia-related phenomena" and to promoting "a theology of liberation from the Mafia", according to its website.

Pope Francis praised the "important initiative" in a letter sent to Franciscan Fr Stefano Cecchin, the academy's president, on the feast of the Assumption of Mary.

"Marian devotion is a religious-cultural heritage whose original purity needs safeguarding," the Pope wrote, according to an excerpt of the letter published by *Vatican News*.

Protecting the heritage includes "liberating it from superfluous elements, powers or social conditioning that do not comply with the Gospel criteria of justice, liberty, honesty and solidarity", the Pope wrote.

Pope Francis: make coronavirus vaccine available to all

A potential Covid-19 vaccine should be made available to all, Pope Francis said at the general audience Wednesday.

"It would be sad if, for the vaccine for Covid-19, priority were to be given to the richest! It would be sad if this vaccine were to become the property of this nation or another, rather than universal and for all," Pope Francis said.

His comments followed a warning by the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) on Tuesday that some countries may hoard vaccines.

Speaking in Geneva, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom

Ghebreyesus appealed to world leaders to avoid what he called "vaccine nationalism".

In his address, the Pope also said it would be a "scandal" if public money were used to bail out industries "that do not contribute to the inclusion of the excluded, the promotion of the least, the common good, or the care of creation". He said that governments should only help industries that met all four criteria.

The Pope was speaking in the library of the Apostolic Palace, where he has held his general audiences since the coronavirus pandemic struck Italy in March.

Cardinal Pell speaks on maintaining his hope during prison detention

Cardinal George Pell, who was acquitted this year after becoming the highest-ranking Catholic cleric ever to be convicted of sexual abuse, spoke this week about how he maintained hope during his 400 days in prison.

"The virtue of Christian hope is different than Christian optimism. No matter what your circumstances are in this life, eventually all will be well. A good God is in charge, even though terrible things happen," Cardinal Pell, 79, said in an interview.

The cardinal was initially convicted in Australia in 2018 of multiple counts of sexual abuse. On April 7, 2020, Australia's High Court overturned his six-year prison sentence. The High Court ruled that he should not have been found guilty of the charges and that the prosecution had not proven their case beyond a reasonable doubt.

He spent 13 months in solitary confinement, during which time he was not permitted to celebrate Mass.

Cardinal Pell said despite the discomfort and humiliation of being in prison, he was often surprised by the decency and professionalism of the majority of the prison officers, who conversed with him and other men in solitary confinement.

Letters

Letter of the week

Need to respect Church authority

Dear Editor, I cannot be alone in noticing a worrisome phenomenon amongst some people who describe themselves as Catholics to reject and denigrate all legitimate authority within the life of the Church.

This used to be a phenomenon exclusive to those who would view themselves on the 'left' of the Church rejecting such teachings as the inadmissibility of women for Holy Orders and the ban on artificial birth control asserted by St Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae* in 1968.

More obvious now, however, is the spectacle of self-appointed conservatives haranguing and harassing the pastors of the Church to foster what can only be described as

a spirit of discord within the Church. The scenes of protesters shouting the Holy Rosary through loudspeakers outside Croke Park during Eid while attacking the car of the Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin were truly shocking.

The archbishop was participating as a sign of interreligious friendship much in the pattern set by St John Paul II, Benedict XVI and now Pope Francis. At a time when people would seek to use differences between the Abrahamic religions as a pretext for conflict this is a powerful witness.

Conservative elements need to be honest in their agenda and in their approach to authority within the Church. Are they sedevacantists who

reject papal authority? Do they reject the reforms of the Second Vatican Council? Have they set themselves up in opposition to the legitimate authority of the Church entrusted to Peter and his successors down to Pope Francis?

These are important questions, because if they are such rejectionists, they are certainly not Catholic but Protestant and have no business commenting on the affairs of the Catholic Church much less acting as judge and jury over those whom Christ has raised up to teach, govern and sanctify.

*Yours etc.,
Mary White,
Athy, Co. Kildare.*

A tough choice coming for American voters

Dear Editor, I very much enjoyed reading Breda O'Brien's excellent analysis on the coming US presidential election [IC 20/8/20].

It is indeed an unenviable choice for Catholics in America when being asked to choose between the repulsive Donald Trump and the enthusiastic pro-abortion Joe Biden. Mr Biden describes himself as a Catholic, and at an ethnic level this is certainly true. But, at the same time, Mr Biden has clearly substantially the faith of his childhood in favour of the growing fanaticism in favour of abortion that now reigns within the Democratic Party.

Much like in Ireland, Catholics who are serious about their faith in the US find themselves politically homeless. Some make the prudential judgement to support Mr Trump based on his stated pro-life views and the fact that he has used his administration to push pro-life causes including appointing voices opposed to abortion to the Supreme Court.

At the same time, any Catholic voting for Mr Trump would have to do so with a heavy heart given the fact that many of his policies – including those around immigration – are fundamentally opposed to the Catholic worldview which is predicated on welcoming the stranger rather than trying to ostracise them.

In the end, I for one am thanking God that I do not have a vote in the US and am therefore not required to make a choice. What I am sure of, however, is that we should pray for American voters that God will guide them with wisdom.

*Yours etc.,
Noel Dunne,
Tallaght, Dublin 24.*

Is there room for mercy?

Dear Editor, Former Minister for Agriculture Dara Calleary has paid a heavy price for his recklessness in attending the golfing dinner in Co. Galway. Along with Mr Justice Séamus Woulfe, Senator Jerry Buttimer, Commissioner Phil Hogan and the others, he displayed a huge lapse of judgement at a time when people have made huge sacrifices for the sake of the common good.

At the same time, I can't help feeling uncomfortable at the media feeding frenzy that went on in the aftermath of the revelation of the dinner. Sure they deserve to be punished (Deputy Calleary lost his job) but some people seem to want to destroy them completely. Public health expert Dr Gabriel Scally even went so far as to suggest that everyone involved in the dinner should retire definitely from public life.

It would seem that in modern secular Ireland where everything is permissible, nothing is forgiven. Is there no room for mercy?

*Yours etc.,
Patricia Brown,
Cobh, Co. Cork.*

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.

The hijacking of Catholicism

Dear Editor, I cannot be alone in finding the recent resurgence of extreme nationalism in Ireland a worrying phenomenon. Even more worrying is the strange symbiosis that seems to appear in the minds of some who associate Catholicism and nationalism.

This is despite the fact that Catholicism and nationalism do not make bedfellows. In fact, Catholicism and nationalism are arguably incompatible because nationalism tends to deify the State rather than applying worship to God alone.

As Catholics we need to be extremely vigilant in ensuring that we do not allow our faith to be hijacked by those who see it as little more than a vehicle to promote their often-xenophobic agenda.

Unchecked nationalism leads very quickly to totalitarianism since it replaces the worship of God with the worship of the nation-state. As former Pope Benedict XVI put it: "Nationalism absolutises what is relative (the state) and relativises what is absolute (God)."

We need to be unafraid of calling this out and be willing to face down the bullies who are trying to divide rather than unite people.

A spirit of division is not a spirit that

comes from God – but from the prince of lies.

*Yours etc.,
Maura Walshe,
Athlone, Co. Westmeath.*



The missing piece of the jigsaw

Dear Editor, I very much enjoyed your coverage of the death of the late, great John Hume. I appreciated the focus very much in your paper on Mr Hume's pivotal role in the civil rights movement and challenging a culture at Stormont which brazenly treated Catholics in the North as second-class

citizens.

I was puzzled by much of the coverage in the mainstream media which mentioned Mr Hume's role in setting up the credit union movement and then fast forwarded to his role in setting up the SDLP and bringing Sinn Féin to the negotiating table.

Memories – at least for

some – appear short of the crippling injustices that were faced by Catholics in the North as dictated by policy from the regime in Belfast once famously described by the then Prime Minister of the North James Craig as "a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people".

The conflict that erupted

in 1968 in the North had very little to do with the idea of a united Ireland and everything to do with the systematic and systemic oppression of a minority community to a supremacist ideology.

*Yours etc.,
John Reid,
Newry, Co. Down.*

Back in church is a mixed blessing

Dear Editor, It is wonderful to be able to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist once again after the long Lent of having to follow the Mass online.

I was anxious about going back to Mass as I am one of what the politicians like to call the 'vulnerable', but I have been truly impressed by the huge efforts that have taken place in my parish and

others to ensure that we all feel safe.

I miss the chat after Mass and the opportunity to catch up on the news about what has been going on, but the one thing that I do not miss from the pre-Covid liturgy is the exchange of the sign of peace.

They say that God can write straight with crooked lines; well, if

the pandemic leads to an end to the unhealthy practice of strangers shaking hands with one another having just wiped their nose, I for one will thank God for the mixed blessing of the coronavirus.

*Yours etc.,
Billy Kelly,
Belfast, Co. Antrim.*

Around the world



PERU: A health care worker tests an indigenous woman in Lima as the Covid-19 pandemic continues. The virus has caused the death of more than 27,600 people in the country.



GERMANY: Lutheran Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, president of the Protestant Church in the country, speaking at the christening of Sea-Watch 4, the rescue ship for refugees, in Kiel. Photos: CNS



▲ **MEXICO:** Fr Sergio Jorge Garcia Llanos prays at a Mass at Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Mexico city. The parish established a soup kitchen serving 400 meals a day for those hit hard by the pandemic, and the priest said parishioners have met people they did not even know who need help.

► **BEIRUT:** A Caritas employee is pictured standing in front of a destroyed home following the blast in Beirut's port area earlier this month.



COLOMBIA: A priest wearing a protective mask celebrates Mass in a parking lot in Chia during the Covid-19 pandemic.



VATICAN: Pope Francis leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking St Peter's Square at the Vatican on Sunday, August 12. The Pope prayed for people persecuted for their Faith, remembered the victims of the 2010 San Fernando massacre in Mexico and prayed for the victims of pandemic.



'Jesus and Nicodemus'
by James Tissot.

The invitation to courage...

Courage isn't one of my strong points, at least not one particular kind of courage.

Scripture tells us that as John the Baptist grew up he became strong in spirit. My growing up was somewhat different. Unlike John the Baptist, as I grew up I became accommodating in spirit. This had its reasons. I was born with what Ruth Burrows would describe as a "tortured sensitivity", an over-sensitive personality, and have never been able to develop a tough skin.

That's not the stuff of which prophets are made. When you're a child on the playground you better have the raw physical strength to challenge a situation that's unfair or you better let things alone so as not to get hurt.

You also better develop razor-sharp skills at avoiding confrontation and in the art of peace-making. As well, when you aren't gifted with superior physical strength and challenging situations arise on the playground, you quickly learn to walk away from confrontation. On the playground the lamb knows better than to lie down with the lion or to confront the lion, irrespective of the prophet Isaiah's eschatological visions.

Tough skin

That's not all bad. Growing up as I did didn't make for the tough skin and raw courage it takes to



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

be a prophet, but it did give me an acute radar screen, namely, a sensitivity which at its best is a genuine empathy (though at its worst has me avoiding situations of conflict). Either way, it's hasn't particularly gifted me with the qualities that make for prophetic courage.

I want, habitually, not to upset people. I dislike confrontation and want peacefulness at almost any cost, though I do draw some lines in the sand. But I'm no John the Baptist and it's taken me many years to learn that, admit it and understand why – and also to understand that my temperament and history are only an explanation and not an excuse for my cowardice at times.

In the end, the virtue of courage is not contingent upon birth, temperament or mental toughness, though these can be

“In the end, the virtue of courage is not contingent upon birth, temperament or mental toughness, though these can be helpful...courage is a gift from the Holy Spirit”

helpful.

Courage is a gift from the Holy Spirit and that's why one's temperament and background may only serve as an explanation and not as an excuse for a lack of courage.

I highlight this because our situation today demands courage from us, the courage for prophecy. We desperately need prophets today, but they are in short supply and too many of us are not particularly eager to volunteer for the task. Why not?

Prophetic voice

A recent issue of *Commonweal* magazine featured an article by Bryan Massingale, a strong prophetic voice on the issue of racism. Massingale submits that the reason we see so little real progress in dealing with racial injustice is the absence of prophetic voices where they are

most needed, in this case, among the many good white people who see racial injustice, sympathise with those suffering from it, but don't do anything about it.

Massingale, who lectures widely across the country, shares how again and again in his lectures and in his classes people ask him: but how do I address this without upsetting people? This question aptly expresses our reticence and, I believe, names both the issue and the challenge.

As Shakespeare would say: "Ah, there's the rub!"

“Jesus didn't let Nicodemus off easily just because he confessed his fears. Nicodemus had to do a public act to bring his Faith into the light, he had to claim Jesus' dead body...”

For me, this question touches a sensitive moral nerve. Had I been in one of his classes I would no doubt have been one of those to ask that question: but how do I challenge racism without upsetting people?

Here's my problem: I want to speak out prophetically, but I don't want to upset others; I want to challenge the white privilege which we're so congenitally blind

to, but I don't want to alienate the generous, good-hearted people who support our school; I want to speak out more strongly against injustice in my writing, but I don't want multiple newspapers to drop my column as a result; I want to be courageous and confront others, but don't want to live with the hatred that ensues; and I want to publicly name injustices and name names, but don't want to alienate myself from those very people.

So this leaves me still praying for the courage needed for prophecy.

Several years ago, a visiting professor at our school, an Afro-American man, was sharing with our faculty some of the near-daily injustices he experiences simply because of the color of his skin. At one point I asked him: "If I, as a white man, came to you like Nicodemus came to Jesus at night and asked you what I should do, what would you tell me?"

His answer: Jesus didn't let Nicodemus off easily just because he confessed his fears. Nicodemus had to do a public act to bring his Faith into the light, he had to claim Jesus' dead body. Hence, his challenge to me: you need to do a public act.

He's right; but I'm still praying for the prophetic courage to do that. And aren't we all?

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, August 27, 2020

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“The priest showing
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Coping with binge eating disorder

Many of us might have felt the urge to padlock fridge and cupboard doors over lockdown. Boredom, stress and the ready availability of food were a tricky trio to overcome. But while that kind of eating might be frustrating, it wouldn't qualify as an eating disorder.

Using food for comfort only becomes a serious problem if becomes a habit, an automatic or 'go to' behaviour that turns into a compulsion underpinned by a sense of a loss of control. When a person feels compelled to disordered eating, this is the realm of an eating disorder.

Roughly 4% of the world's population is likely to suffer from



**There's a fine line between
disordered eating and
an eating disorder
writes Ruadhán Jones**

an eating disorder in their life. There are three main types, the most well-known are anorexia and bulimia, but a third disorder has been identified in recent years – Binge Eating Disorder (BED).

What is BED?

BED involves regularly eating large portions of food all at once

until you feel uncomfortably full, with episodes marked by feelings of a lack of control. Someone with BED may eat too quickly and even when he or she is not hungry.

Episodes are often followed by feelings of guilt or upset, leading them to conceal the episodes. They typically occur once a week

over an extended period. The disorder affects around 3.5% of women and 2% of men.

The reason this disorder has only been recently identified is due to its similarity with bulimia. This involves similar periods of binge eating, but whereas bulimia involves compensatory episodes of purging, BED doesn't – though periods of dieting may be involved. As a result, obesity and weight gain are frequently associated with BED.

What are the signs?

The main symptom of BED is eating large amounts of food in a short time, often in an out of control way. This isn't always the case, however, as binges may be

planned in advance. Binges almost always occur in secret and an appearance of 'normal' eating is often maintained in front of others.

While it might seem counter-intuitive, one of the major 'tells' for an eating disorder is a fixation on dieting and fitness. One of the precipitating factors of BED is a period of dieting. This has a physical and a psychological effect.

When your body is in starvation, it will give you strong cravings for food because it's not receiving enough nutrition. It keeps food on your mind. Psychologically, this can lead to a fixation and raises the risk of a loss of control. A minor slip from the diet can lead to completely

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Family News



AND EVENTS

PARENTS TO BE REIMBURSED FOR ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL TRANSPORT IF STUDENTS UNABLE TO SOCIAL DISTANCE

Minister for Education Norma Foley has announced that parents whose children cannot social distance on school buses can be reimbursed for organising alternative transport.

The Department of Education has scrapped plans to run buses at full capacity for secondary school students when they reopen.

The buses will now run at 50% capacity with work ongoing between officials and Bus Éireann to realise the plans.

But Mrs Foley has admitted the extra capacity needed will not be ready in all schools in time for reopening, saying the process is a “huge logistical challenge”. To help ease capacity issues, she said if parents “can provide their own transport we will recompense them if they are ticket holders on the bus”.

“We must recognise that this is the department being proactive and recognise that as we journey through Covid we must be flexible, we must be resilient,” she said. She added: “We’re doing all that needs to be done.”

SECONDARY SCHOOL CONCERNS

Secondary school pupils have “critical concerns” over the implementation of guidelines aimed at safely reopening schools from this week, according to a students’ union.

In a letter to the Minister for Education, the Irish Second-Level Students’ Union (ISSU) has requested clarification on what it says are unanswered questions regarding school re-openings.

It wants to see any official guidance which outlines the rationale for allowing different social distancing rules in schools compared with wider society. The union has also questioned how students with medical problems can be expected to travel to school and attend classes.

It also called for the publication of a threshold number of coronavirus cases which will determine when schools need to close on a local or national basis.

“Students, families, teachers and all in the school community recognise the necessity to return to school and want to return to education, having been out of the classroom since early March,” according to the letter from ISSU president Reuban Murray.

“However, this requires clearer communications on the health and safety protocols expected within schools. To ensure an effective transition in the reopening of schools it is pivotal that guidance and clarification is provided on...areas of concern.”

It's all in the gut

Hippocrates is credited with the ancient quote that ‘all disease begins in the gut’. While modern medicine casts a different light on factors underlying most diseases, recent research has highlighted the complex and interesting role our gut may play when it comes to general health.

But how exactly might the gut influence this? In addition to processing food and nutrients and excreting waste, up to 70% of our immune system is housed here and it's also home to about 100 trillion microbes that have a wide range of functions.

“Microbial diversity is generally a good indicator of a ‘healthy gut’”

Gut bacteria are required for the breakdown of plant derived carbohydrates we can't digest. Through a fermentation reaction they produce short chain fatty acids (SFA's) such as acetic and butyric acid which are a fuel source for gut cells as well as other bacteria that may protect against disease. These acids can also suppress inflammation, modulate the immune system and play a role in releasing hunger suppressing hormones that may be important in regulating weight. Furthermore, they promote glucose use by the gut and liver which may help stave off diabetes. In fact, studies show that a higher production of these fatty acids correlates with lower diet-induced obesity and reduced insulin resistance.

Bacteria are also involved in many other metabolic reactions. For example, they act on bile acids making them less effective at breaking up fats and so may regulate energy intake. They also produce trimethylamine

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



from compounds in dairy and meat which is metabolised in the liver to the TMAO - a chemical strongly associated with risk of hardening of the arteries. In fact, in a study of 4007 people those with the highest TMAO levels had 2.5 times the risk of cardiovascular disease and levels in diabetics also predicted vascular events independent of blood sugar control.

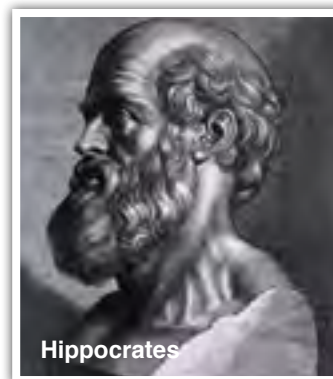
Gut microbes are also involved in the activation of anti-oxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds like polyphenols found in foods such as fruit, vegetables, cereals and coffee. They also metabolise the amino acid tryptophan to 5HT, the precursor to serotonin which is the chemical that antidepressants increase. While this might only have local effects, there is two way traffic between the brain and the gut via the vagus nerve which constitutes the “gut brain axis”.

There are five main groups of bacteria in the gut but there are many more species and the relative proportion of each can vary. In general, microbial diversity is generally a good indicator of a “healthy gut”. But what factors affect this?

Studies suggest that diet explains about 10% of the variation. For example, enrichment of gut microbes has been associated with diets where there is a good

intake of fruit, vegetables and fibre whereas western diets are associated with reduced biodiversity. Dietary fibre has been shown to reduce insulin resistance with clear links to a shift in gut microbiota and increase in beneficial metabolites such as butyric acid. Vegans and vegetarians also have a different bacterial profile in the gut and it may also be affected by smoking, alcohol and artificial sweeteners.

What's often overlooked is the effect of medications. In particular, broad spectrum antibiotics can knock out a lot of good bacteria. Indeed, *Clostridium difficile* colitis can result from antibiotic use and in more difficult cases can be treated with a ‘faecal transplant’ replenishing healthy bacteria. However, other drugs such as proton pump inhibitors used for acid reflux as well as laxatives can also alter gut bacteria.



Hippocrates

Ethnicity and/or genetics may also play a role. A recent study in Ireland found that Travellers have a gut microbiome which differs strikingly from that of the non-Travellers. In fact, Travellers had an ancient “non-industrialised” type profile. However, in those who had adapted to a more settled lifestyle it was similar to the “industrialised” type that is associated with disease.

But how might altered gut bacteria affect me? An abnormal change in gut microflora may contribute to obesity, diabetes and intestinal disorders eg colitis, colorectal cancer and irritable bowel syndrome. Indeed, most studies of overweight people reveal a lower gut biodiversity which has also been found in longterm care residents and in those with bowel disorders. Long term weight gain (over 10 years) has also been correlated with low microbiota diversity and differences in microbial composition also influences glucose response to foods as well as to some chemotherapy and immunotherapy.

“Gut bacteria are required for the breakdown of plant derived carbohydrates we can't digest”

Can I do anything to optimise gut microflora? In general, a diet with adequate fibre promotes a good mix of gut bacteria. Eating yogurts might also be beneficial. Probiotics (supplement that contain live bacteria) have been found to reduce bowel complaints but some may not establish properly and more studies are needed to determine which species and doses are optimal. Prebiotics are food components that we can't digest but can promote bacterial growth though studies are limited. Importantly, the food we eat and it's interaction with bacteria in the gut may play an important role in several diseases.

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

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abandoning the diet and going too far the other direction.

Most binges can be divided into four stages: tension build up, tension release, post-binge and new beginning. The tension could come from a known or unknown source, but regardless it will cause an unsettled feeling that will increasingly call for release.

Binging provides an apparent release of the tension, blotting out negative thoughts and feelings. This is short lived, however, being followed by a post-binge 'hangover'. Symptoms may include headaches, nausea, diarrhoea, lethargy and fatigue. The final stage is followed by a period of determination to improve and perhaps a strict diet.

What are the causes?

The causes of eating disorders are quite varied and largely depend on the individual's personal habits, their social and cultural background and their family situation.

“If your eating disorder is quite severe or if you find that the underlying issues it results from are difficult to address”

Typically, however, those who suffer from eating disorders tend to show certain psychological characteristics. Low self-esteem, depression and feelings of ineffectiveness or powerlessness often precede the onset of eating problems.

Another psychological trait is a predisposition to think about the world in 'all or nothing' terms. They tend to set high standards for themselves in areas like academic or professional achievement and a related tendency to be self-critical.

Social, cultural and familial backgrounds can also play a part. An overemphasis on physical appearance and particular body types can influence how the person views themselves. Parents who have issues with weight and body image can, often unconsciously, transmit these concerns to their children.

The result of these combined causes is that responses to stressors become unhealthy. For those suffering from BED, binge eating becomes a coping mechanism.

How to treat it?

Broadly speaking, there are two approaches to treating BED. One is seeking professional support, the other is self-help. Depending on the

seriousness of the eating disorder, a combination of both may be required to overcome it.

When treating BED and other eating disorders, it's important to remember that to achieve long-lasting change may be difficult. It will require you to understand and address the underlying factors in order to combat BED.

But that doesn't mean you can't address it in the short-term – by focussing on the factors that are maintaining the binge eating, it is possible to change your eating habits. In fact, gaining control over your eating habits in the short term can help you identify the underlying issues and it will be easier to deal with them.

Helping yourself

Self-help is a good place to start when addressing an eating disorder. By educating yourself about the disorder, it can help bring to the fore the unconscious thoughts and feelings which are fuelling your disorder.

When trying to help yourself, it's advisable either to use a self-help manual or else to work in conjunction with a professional consultant. The first piece of advice specialists recommend following is to stop dieting. While our first thought when we're putting on weight might be to go on a new, faddish or more serious diet, for those with BED is an unhealthy pattern of fasting and binging.

What is recommended instead is to gradually replace this pattern with a more regular meal plan. This is a better means for controlling weight gain and loss, allowing for natural variations without overreacting. Once you begin to eat regularly and healthily, you will be able to achieve a healthy weight that is comfortable for you.

Along with a regular meal plan, a good idea is to start a food diary. When trying to address eating disorders, your head can quickly become filled with thoughts of food. Using a food diary helps you to give these thoughts, which are quite natural, a proper focus and release.

Equally, by keeping a food diary, you can develop an overview of how

you are eating. By this, I mean how much you are eating; how often; when; and if you felt in control while you were eating. While the temptation will be not to write in when you've had a binge, it's important to do so in order to become aware of your eating patterns. Identifying your individual eating pattern is essential to recovery.

“Binging provides an apparent release of the tension, blotting out negative thoughts and feelings”

If you're looking for a self-help manual, Bodywhys.ie have a useful self-help booklet on their website which can be accessed here: <https://bodywhys.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/BEDBookletUpload.pdf>.

Professional treatment

If your eating disorder is quite severe or if you find that the underlying issues it results from are difficult to address, it can help to seek professional advice. If you do decide to go down that route, there are a number of options open to you.

A trusted General Practitioner (GP) can be an important source of support in these circumstances. He or she can advise you on the severity of your condition and can refer you onto the relevant support. If necessary, he or she can provide ongoing monitoring or advise on a course of treatment to take.

If you are struggling to come to terms with managing your BED in the short-term, working with a dietician may help. Though it won't address the underlying issues, it will give you the scope to do so by helping you gain control over the immediate effects of BED.

If it is the case that psychological or therapeutic counselling is necessary, you may wish to visit a psychotherapist. This kind of treatment is often referred to as 'talking therapy' and gives you the space to work through your feelings and emotions. Bringing your concerns out into the open can help clarify them and allow you to develop new strategies for coping.

For further information, go to Bodywhys.ie or visit the HSE's website here: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/mental-health/binge-eating-disorder/binge-eating-disorder-treatment.html>.

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



Even in August, the growing darkness of autumn silently approaches. Even after gloriously long days spent at the beach, the ever-earlier dusk surprises us. An ambush by an usually wintry wind presages the equinoctial gales to come.

For the children, this has been the longest summer. As soon as the schools were closed last March, so began one of the sunniest, driest springtimes on record. Those remarkably summery months, spent out of school, then melded into the regular summer break, thus creating the longest school holidays ever experienced by Irish schoolchildren.

Our youngest was only adjusting to junior infants, when her new school routine came to a juddering halt. Even the older kids seem to have almost forgotten what school is like. While they look forward to meeting friends, they express anxieties too. They wonder how social distancing restrictions might change their school day. They wonder if another lockdown might suddenly send them back to homeschool.

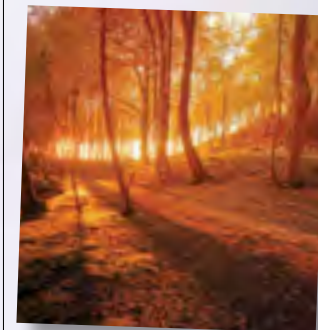
They are wary of the coronavirus itself. They know it does not usually affect children badly, but they know that it is still circulating. They fear bringing it home to make others sick, especially their beloved grandparents.

The Taoiseach recently announced the return of more stringent restrictions - which immediately impacted our six year old's birthday party. We parents cannot shield our children from these strange new realities. Their parties, playdates, clubs, hobbies and schooling have all been radically affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Many nowadays seem to simply ignore the government advice, but we follow it as best we can, not least since my wife works in the medical sphere, on the frontline.

The general fatigue with the coronavirus restrictions is now palpable. During our holidays in West Cork and Kerry, it seemed like everyone had also decided to take a holiday from the pandemic. There were pubs selling rounds of drink merrily and most of the restaurants had little or no meaningful social distancing in place. You can understand the need for businesses which had been shuttered for months to make hay while the sun shines. Jobs were on the

line - yet the problem is that the virus has also made hay.

I confess to wearying of the whole thing at times too, and perhaps subconsciously even wishing it away. While on holiday, more than once, the kids expressed their discomfort in a restaurant. I'd look at where we were sitting to notice that we were sharing a large table closely with another group, that all the dishes from the previous customers were still on the table and that we were sitting just a couple of feet from all the people passing in and out of the restaurant. In one way, it was good that the kids were alert, but it also saddened me that they had to be. Worst of all, their words betrayed their inner anxieties.



Our kids had cause to be more anxious than most, with their mother working in the hospital during the pandemic and treating patients with the virus, before coming home and decontaminating and then reading their bedtime stories. While we avoided letting the kids watch news bulletins, the older ones were surely aware of doctors and nurses in the UK and Italy dying from the virus. Kids are little detectives, and little spies – they pick up far more information than we want them to.

Since the lockdown ended, taking the kids out meant training them in using hand sanitiser and in social distancing. Yet, now, having drilled that into them, we adults are telling them to go back into school where there will in reality be no meaningful social distancing. Even the government admits that outbreaks in schools are "guaranteed". Kids are bound to be confused and anxious as they traipse back to school this year. This autumn, kids will need more support than usual in readjusting to school. Nor can any of us know what the autumn will bring, as temperatures drop and we increasingly gather indoors. By then, these relatively carefree days of summer may well seem a distant memory.



“The priest showing the Church’s fresh face”

Personal Profile



Jason Osborne

Fr David Vard represents a face of the Church that is not often seen in the western world today: that of a young man's. Rarer still is the face of a young priest. While youth Catholicism has its vibrant strongholds around the country, it is yet to bear much fruit on the vocations front. In Fr Vard, we're offered a glimpse of the future.

A young man with a thoroughly relatable experience of Irish adolescence not long behind him, Fr Vard spoke to *The Irish Catholic* about the making of a priest in modern Ireland:

“The road to priesthood was not without its bumps, however, just as no vocational road is ever straightforward”

“I’m from Newbridge in County Kildare. I suppose I grew up in a typical Irish, Catholic family. As in, I was baptised, I made my first Holy Communion, and did my Confirmation and that was really it. After Confirmation, I didn’t really want anything else to do with the Church. I was quite happy not to darken the door again. And then when I got to transition year, I made a promise to myself to say “yes” to everything that came along and that involved then the principal of my school, the Christian Brothers in Newbridge, he asked myself and another of my classmates if we would go to Lourdes, to represent the school on the parish pilgrimage. I reluctantly

went along on the pilgrimage and that really opened my eyes to the life of Faith, I suppose,” he shares.

Experience

The experience of a nominally Catholic youth is a ubiquitous one for Irish youths growing up in the quickly receding shadow of a predominantly Catholic Ireland. They are exposed to just enough Faith to raise questions, and just too little to answer them. Fr Vard was presented with an opportunity in Lourdes to deepen his understand-

ing of the Church as it was, rather than as he thought it was.

“One of the stand out experiences was having a conversation with the parish priest who came along on the pilgrimage....We started asking him questions that I suppose, at the age of 16 you always wanted to ask a priest, but you might have been too afraid to. Like, you know, did he ever want to have a family? Did he ever want to get married? Had he ever a girlfriend? How much money do you make? It was all those questions really, but

they really opened my eyes to the priest as a normal person.”

Coming to see the figure of the priest as “normal” proved a transformative experience, one which Fr Vard is keen to share with other young people in the position he found himself in back then.

“The experience of a nominally Catholic youth is a ubiquitous one for Irish youths growing up in the quickly receding shadow of a predominantly Catholic Ireland”

Path

This started Fr Vard down the path he finds himself on now, but it didn't just happen: “Going to Mass every day and beginning to understand, “Actually, what does the Church believe?” and, “Maybe the Church isn't this big, bad institution that I always thought it was”, the institution that I grew up hearing about in the media.” He had a lot of misunderstandings to work out before entertaining the priesthood, and he had a relationship to develop. It was this filial relationship with God which proved the decisive point in transforming his conversion into a vocation.

“I suppose it really started with, “I am a beloved child of God”. Knowing that. And also knowing that, you know, my mother always said to us growing up that, “What's for you will not pass you.” Really, in my Faith, believing that God has a plan for each of us. It's up to us then, to discover that plan, and discern that plan, and that question that came to me in Lourdes didn't leave me and this was over a year. “David, maybe you could be a priest.””

The road to priesthood was not without its bumps, however, just as no vocational road is ever straightforward. Speaking of his imminent entry to the seminary, he said, “This was at the time of the Dublin

report, the Ferns report, the Cloyne report, all these reports were coming out that the priests weren't good people.”

But the nature of Faith is that it overcomes, and God provided what Fr Vard needed in order to be convinced, “And yet God was putting in front of me priests from my parish and nearby parishes of my diocese who were good priests, who I developed a relationship with, and they were really good spiritual fathers to me. God was saying, “Listen, this is where I want you to go,” he remembers.

Ministry

A few years into his ministry with the Church, Fr Vard reflects on how best he can draw people like himself back into the Church:

“I know, especially dealing with people my age, I know the gripes they have with the Church, because I had those gripes....And, you know, I don't want to be a reflection of what they think the Church is; I want to actually be what the Church is and try my best to be Christ-like.”

“I reluctantly went along on the pilgrimage and that really opened my eyes to the life of Faith”

For him, it all comes back to the relationship at the heart of it all, “If someone comes away from one of my Masses or if someone comes away from talking to me, and if they feel, you know, “He thinks that I'm a beloved child of God,” that's fantastic.”

“I'm also a chaplain to a hospital here in Portlaoise and sometimes I'd come to a person in a bed and they'd say, “Oh, would you send me a real priest?” There's funny stuff like that as well,” he laughs.

Fr Vard is more than ready to love the Church as he's found it, but it may be a while before the Church grows accustomed to the youthful face he presents.

Living Laudato Si'

Jane Mellet



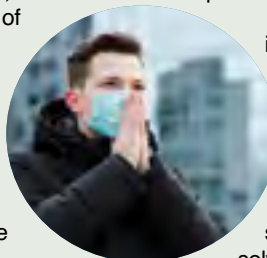
Our Common Home

September 1st marks the World Day of Prayer for Creation and the beginning of the Season of Creation. This season, which is now part of the Church's liturgical calendar, runs until October 4th, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, patron Saint of ecology.

The Season of Creation in an ecumenical season which unites the world's 2.2 billion Christians around one shared purpose – caring for and praying for our common home. This Season of Creation is even more significant as we are celebrating it in the middle of a pandemic. The COVID19 crisis has reminded us of just how interconnected we are with all of God's creation. It has highlighted the interconnectivity of the environment with human health, economic systems, food production chains, political systems and more. It has lifted the veil on many injustices in our society and shown once again that it is the poor who suffer the most when disaster strikes.

As we continue to work together to fight this virus, we are also given an opportunity to reflect on how we can ‘build back better’. What type of world do we want to return to once this crisis has passed?

For human beings to be healthy and flourish, our planet, our common home, must also be healthy, for it sustains and nourishes us. We are completely dependant on it.



The theme for the Season of Creation in Ireland this year is “Cultivating Hope”. How can we cultivate hope in the middle of COVID19 and during an environmental crisis that has not gone away? In Laudato Si' we read: “Hope would have us recognise that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems...All it takes is one good person to restore hope.” (Laudato Si', 61, 71).

So in your parish setting, faith community and family settings may I encourage you to mark this season in some way through spending time in prayer, considering ways to inhabit our common home more sustainably, and reflecting on what is truly important.

Pope Francis encourages us in Laudato Si' to return to a simple prayer of gratitude before meals: “I ask all believers to return to this beautiful and meaningful custom. That moment of blessing reminds us of our dependence on God for life; it

strengthens our feeling of gratitude for the gifts of creation; it acknowledges those who provide us with these goods; and reaffirms our solidarity with those in greatest need.” (LS, 227). Creation themed sacred spaces in our churches and homes remind us of the gift of creation and are ways of giving glory to God for this gift. Spending more time in nature, noticing beauty is another simple action that helps us develop a sense of awe and wonder for creation. This in turn, renews in us a desire to protect it. Many parishes have planted native Irish trees to mark this season, perhaps your community could do the same? We start where we can. It is through small actions that we cultivate hope.

There are many wonderful resources for prayer and action available on the Irish Bishops Conference website and on the Trócaire parish resources page. Whatever activity you plan, do share it on social media using the hashtags #SeasonOfCreation or #LiveLaudatoSi

Wishing you a joyful Season of Creation. Blessings on your actions! “Truly, much can be done!” (LS, 180).

Jane Mellett is the Laudato Si' officer with Trócaire.

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Plenty to 'like' as Facebook turns serial thriller

The boundary between traditional and social media is still pretty clear, but there are some interesting things going on in the blurred border area.

Facebook Live, for example, merges TV and social media very effectively. It gathers video content that people have posted on Facebook and lets you watch them in one place.

Last week I had a look around to see what this platform has to offer. While plenty of performers (including gospel singers and liturgical composers) post videos, and there are Masses and other services, some of the most interesting shows are the Facebook Live Originals.

I checked out the drama series **Sacred Lies** – the half-hour episodes are unusual for a crime drama, but the production values are on a par with mainstream TV. This one looks promising – a young girl escapes from a cult and an FBI psychologist tries to piece together what happened.

Too often religion is portrayed in drama as weird, but so far it's a little more nuanced here. The FBI guy says he investigates "religious crimes" – he wants to find out "why people hurt each other in the name of God, and try to stop it from happening".

The young girl is described as "a crazy cult person", she has no hands, can be vio-



Elena Kampouris stars in **Sacred Lies** which can be seen on Facebook Live.

lence, says she attacked a man because she thought he was God and wanted to kill God. She firmly denies she's a Christian, not surprisingly. As a regular cop puts it, referring to the cult leader: "What kind of nuts follow a prophet named Kevin?"

It is a dark show and I don't know what direction it will take, but I'll find out.

Positive work

Another Facebook original, **Returning the Favour** is a documentary series highlighting people who do positive work in society and in one recent episode, 'The Woman Who Changed the Foster Care System', presenter Mike Rowe visited Ronda Paulson in Elizabethton, Ten-

nessee, a woman who works tirelessly with children to improve their experience of being taken into foster care.

She works to reduce the trauma for these often neglected children by providing them with a comfortable, homely environment while they await being placed in a foster home – otherwise they'd be waiting hours or days in the offices of the Department of Child Services.

She has set up several of these half-way houses with her group Isaiah 117 – inspired by the Scripture verse Isaiah 1:17: "Learn to do good, search for justice... be just to the orphan."

Clearly she is a woman of faith with a vocation – she felt God saying "these are

my children, what are you gonna do?" The show was good-humoured and inspiring, enhanced by Rowe's unfussy, empathic and cheerful approach. It's another one I'll be following up.

Back on regular TV, the film **Hope – Our Lady of Knock** (EWTN, Friday) marked the anniversary of the apparitions of 1879. Directed by Campbell Miller it was a historical docudrama and regular readers know I'm not a fan of the genre, preferring either documentary or drama, but this was quite acceptable.

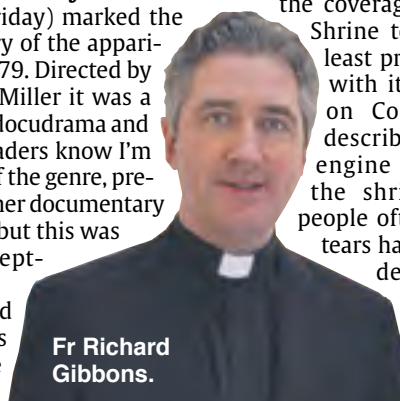
I liked the scenes where we saw the

witnesses giving evidence and trying to be as accurate as they could be. A scene where a tenant farmer saw his potatoes turning to mush in the Famine was effective, and the subsequent eviction scene was suitably unsettling, but I wasn't a fan of the uninspiring background music that seemed rather randomly added – it was especially irritating during interviews.

The interviews were quite effective and interesting – speakers included Archbishop Eamon Martin, the Rector of Knock Fr Richard Gibbons, as well as staff members of the shrine and museum at Knock, including the youth ministry.

I liked the way the historical context was set, with special emphasis on the Famine, though at times I felt a little too much time was spent on that.

I found the latter sequences about the investigations and miracles particularly engaging, as was the coverage of Knock Shrine today (or at least pre-Covid-19) with its emphasis on Confession – described as "the engine room" of the shrine, where people often leave in tears having unburdened themselves and received absolution. This



Fr Richard Gibbons.

PICK OF THE WEEK

SUNDAY

BBC Radio 4, Sunday, August 30, 7.10am

A look at the ethical and religious issues of the week.

MASS

RTÉ One/Radio 1 Extra/LW252, Sunday, August 30, 11am

In honour of Seán Ó Riada, today's Mass is celebrated in Irish by Fr Donal O'Brien. Music comes from Cór Bhaile Mhuire, directed by Aileen Flanagan.

COUNTRY MUSIC

RTÉ One, Tuesday, September 1, 11.10pm

Absorbing series by Ken Burns – of course, Gospel music features.

sequence has huge catechetical application, as has the theological analysis of the apparitions.

It's great to see these EWTN original movies. In times of poor leadership (#golfgate!) it's good to see lives of modern saints and holy people back in the lime-light.

✉ boregan@hotmail.com, @boreganmedia

Film

Aubrey Malone



Adventure, animation, road rage...it must be Hollywood

Going to 'the pictures' during the pandemic isn't much different for film reviewers. We usually experience social distancing at press shows anyway – what's different is the hygiene regimen, the sanitisation, the often eerie silence.

And of course the contactless payments. I feel like Jeff Bezos flashing my Visa card around. It will be difficult to go back to hard cash if and when this terrible pestilence ends. I've had a fiver in my wallet since February that must have cobwebs on it by now.

Now that we're apparently in the 'second spike' – depending on who you ask – everyone is going around the streets looking like bank robbers. We're all washing

our hands like Lady Macbeth. And if you feel brave enough to venture into a multiplex, you'll find lots of old favourites popping up.

The crippling effect of the virus on the industry has forced distributors to go back to films like *La La Land*, *Jurassic Park*, *The Shawshank Redemption*, *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*, *A Star is Born*, etc. to fill the gap. If you haven't seen these during their first run you might find them worth a look.

In terms of new releases, *Tenet* is a time-travelling espionage tale about a man journeying through a twilight zone. He's armed with just a single word, the palindromic one of the film's title. It's directed and written by Chris-



John David Washington is one of the stars in *Tenet*.

topher Nolan. Nolan gave us the recent *Dunkirk* as well as *Interstellar* and *The Dark Knight Rises*.

In more light-hearted vein,

Pixie is a comedy thriller about a girl who masterminds a heist to avenge the death of her mother, fleeing across Ireland afterwards.

Unhinged is a violent and often ludicrous road rage film. Caron Pistorius plays a recently-divorced woman who has the misfortune to annoy the murderous Russell Crowe in what she regards as an innocuous altercation on the motorway – he doesn't, though. Cue much over-the-top revenge histrionics. Crowe is not, repeat *not*, the kind of man you want to give out to for delaying you at the traffic lights.

In *Black Water Abyss*, five friends exploring a remote Australian cave become endangered by a crocodile.

Onward is an animated comedy set in a suburban fantasy world. Two teenage elf brothers try to meet their father – he died many years ago – for one precious day in this endearing fable.

Dreambuilders is another animated film. It features a

Caron Pistorius stars in *Unhinged*.



young girl who has the ability to control other people's dreams. She misuses it here to put manners on her annoying stepsister.

Last but not least, this is the 70th anniversary of arguably the greatest film ever made about Hollywood, Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*. Gloria Swanson is sublime as the faded diva locked into a solipsistic world of memories and self-delusion. William Holden is her reluctant inamorato in Wilder's gothic melodrama.

Swanson was cruelly denied an Oscar for her performance but it's grown with stature over the decades. If you haven't already seen this you have a treat in store.



A peace-loving English fugitive recounts his climb of Croagh

Summer outings (No.6 in a six-part series)

Peter Costello

This book, edited from Tim White's Irish diaries, was published in 1959, the year after the compilation of his separately published Arthurian novels appeared in one volume, *The Once and Future King*.

This book became a major best seller here and in the Americas. It provided the source material for the musical *Camelot* (1960), so beloved by the Kennedys, and made White a very great deal of money in contrast to the couple of hundred pounds that the rapacious Walt Disney paid for the films rights to the first volume of the series, *The Sword in the Stone* (1939), money that provided some comforts in White's last care-worn years.

The earlier Arthur books had been completed in Ireland. White recalled walking down the corridor of Healion's Hotel in Belmullet, thinking of the day's fishing to come and the how to deal with the love story of Lancelot and Guinevere.

However, the episodes from his diary also reveal his changing attitudes to Ireland. Some of what he wrote later in his comic novels did not amuse some Irish readers. But the episodes from his diary reveal his earlier feelings for the West of Ireland just as Europe once again went to war.

He began to learn Irish, and gave serious thought to becoming a Catholic. Here he writes of climbing Croagh Patrick during the great midsummer pilgrimage in 1940...

The first 2,000 feet were easy, like any other mountain. We took them flippantly, relishing and marking our fellow pilgrims, into whose line we had become absorbed.

They scrambled up, five or six yards apart, in ones and twos and threes, while a thinner line of returning visitors swung freely down, accomplished, hallowed, pleased with themselves or amused at us climbers.

It dawned on me that we were back in the *Canterbury Tales*. No wonder Chaucer was good-humoured. For the mountainside was in a state of fellowship – it was happy, *bonhomous*, mutually congratulating. Although the population of Éire was counted in millions, people kept meeting others whom they knew. And when they met, they stopped. They encountered with a great handshake. They teased and joked and laughed, far from holy or hushed. They were the very characters out of Chaucer, vulgar and surprising.

Determination

There was the Wife of Bath, closely resembling Mrs Reilly, but now black in the face with agony and determination. And there, coming down, was an acquaintance from our own village, Inspector Ryan, saluting us with welcome.

Six elderly peasants from

Shrataggle, friends of ours and famous for having won some money in the Irish Sweep-stake, were tramping gaily past. The eldest, the actual holder of the winning ticket, shook my hand with compliment, averring that after this we should doubtless meet in Heaven. He qualified it by adding that – at least – one of us might get there. This was a beautiful tease. He had said it as if he meant that I was the good one, he the reprobate.

“Next there was the old, old lady going down. She was past 80, and could not put one foot in front of the other”

Yet he knew quite well that I was a Protestant, and thus he could leave me, in high good-humour and a slight aura of whisky, to puzzle it out.

Then there was the bookie from Belfast! There was no slightness about his aura. It rose from him in a visible mist, which would have exploded in a blue flame if he had struck a match. He was wearing a thick winter overcoat, which he had forgotten – and this was the sunniest pilgrimage in the 40-odd years since the chapel had been built.

He reeled from side to

side “of the break-neck path”, singing and exhorting himself. His scarlet face was covered with carbuncles. He had been drinking whisky in the train since midnight.

When we asked him whether he thought he would get there safely, he replied: “I’m from Belfast, I am. Och aye!”

Next there was the old, old lady going down. She was past 80, and could not put one foot in front of the other. She could advance a foot, and draw the other up to it, but that was all she could do. Or was this perhaps for a vow?

She had started at one o'clock the previous night, heard Mass at dawn, and would be home at about ten. There she went softly and surely, foot up to foot, carrying her 80 years patiently down a gradient of one in four – such a morsel of light old

bones that she strayed and drifted like thistledown.

There was also the photographer from Dublin, a young fellow of 30 or so, but a city man with feet as tender as your face. He had been on the pilgrimage 14 times, and loved the mountain. This time, he had decided to go barefoot. We stopped beside him for breath, and noticed that the naked foot which he was putting down on the sharp flints was trembling from the pain. It shook in an agony of agony, as he, at a snail's pace, moved on in torment.

The last 500 feet were the worst. The tireless Jack, always as fit as a flea, led up like a will o' the wisp, while I dragged my clumsier body over the torrent of flint which had to be taken on hands and knees. Jack said: “Don't look up. If you look, you will lose heart.”

The pilgrims, slithering down, seemed likely to sweep us back to the foot.

I began to pray.

“At last there was the blessed top...with the tiny, weather-worn chapel”

People in *extremis*, even agnostics we are told, generally do pray – but I was not so far gone as that. I had not come on the pilgrimage for exalted motives.

I enjoyed mountains, I wanted to see what the festival was like, and, in a moment of aberration, I had once mentioned to Mrs O'Callaghan that one day I would take her. The beatific expression on her face, when she heard this promise, had seemed impos-

sible to disappoint.

But I was praying all the same. It was partly like the curses uttered by men in desperate struggles, and partly, I am ashamed to say, it was to impress Jack. I moved my lips so that he could see. On the other hand, less ignoble, how could one not pray when everybody else was doing so? Surely it is better to be with people than against them, and would it not have been churlish to resist the hospitality of faith which surrounded us?

At last there was the blessed top – all 2,500 feet of it – with the tiny, weather-worn chapel on its small table-land, and the whole world at prayer also in the sunlight above Clew Bay.

We parted and began to make our circuits of the chapel separately. We were



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.

from World War II Patrick in 1940



a rosary, presenting my soul and all others to the God in whom I did not believe at sea level.

The point was that it was not possible in that bright air to pray for yourself or for other individuals: not even for Mrs O'Callaghan, who was always praying for me. It was hardly possible to pray for the human race even – for its peace or forgiveness or anything like that – because it seemed wrong to pray for anything.

You could hold it out to its maker – like a man who has been run over, mutely displaying his maimed stumps.

As we moved round and round so strangely, with the 365 islands of the bay like toys at our feet, and Clare Island a peep-show and the White Cow Island beyond – with Corslieve 50 miles to the north, and Achill hinting a shoulder, and the universal sea about, it was only possible to hold out the tragic filth of the human race for God to see – not feeling contempt for them, nor expecting anything to be done for them – without petition or sarcasm or confusion of mind.

I thought how the world had never been at peace. Even when Europe was not at war, China would be fighting. If China had peace, the strife would move to South America or somewhere else. Such was the human species that the whole globe had probably never been bloodless since men invented agriculture. And here we were, members of it along with

Pilgrims climbing the Reek in the 1940s. Photo: Tomás Ó Muircheartaigh; left, Croagh Patrick in all its remote splendour.

“At any other time, it would be wiser to hide. But there, today, together, perhaps men could say: ‘Look. Look at the pickle we are in, please God’”

the other members, revolving the top of a holy hill and not knowing what to ask. It was possible to think of the unfathomable wickedness of man, his carnivorous ferocity. It was possible to think of the other beasts, rooks and ants and mackerel and bees and wolves, 500,000 species perhaps, among whom there were only about eight kinds who indulged in warfare like man.

It was not possible to feel superior or bitter to one's fellows about it, for we were all in the same boat.

But, in the high sunshine, it did seem within the bounds of possibility that we who were there walking, now innocently occupied for the few moments of this pilgrimage, might humbly and not despairingly regard ourselves as presentable. Presentable. There was nothing we could ask. But now, for this moment in the year, those of us who had got there could presume to draw attention to our condition.

At any other time, it would be wiser to hide. But there, today, together, perhaps men could say: “Look. Look at the pickle we are in, please God.”

So I tramped round, telling the beads and presenting my species to the infinity which surrounded us, and which also governed the half-moon, just visible in daylight, hanging part way up the dazzling blue over remote Nephin.

📖 Edited from passages in *The Godstone* and *The Blackmore* (1959) by Terence Hanbury White. © 1959 the Estate of T. H. White.

An outstanding Dominican preacher recalled by friends

Herbert McCabe.

Recollecting a fragmented legacy

by Franco Manni, foreword by David B. Burrell
(Cascade Books, £50.00/\$26.98)

Frank Litton

One man in his time can touch many minds and souls. Anthony Kenny, Alasdair MacIntyre, Stanley Hauerwas, David B. Burrell, Brian Davies, Rowan Williams, Denys Turner, are among today's most eminent philosophers and theologians. All have produced major academic works. And all acknowledge the significant influence of the Dominican Herbert McCabe on their work.

Herbert McCabe (1926–2001) was not an academic. He published only four books in his lifetime, none of which were traditional academic treatises, replete with footnotes. What he was, as his order required, was an exemplary preacher.

What is good preacher? Obvious, surely: they make the word of God come alive in the hearts of their listeners. It is a little more complicated, at least, for Catholics. The word always comes to us as interpreted. The understanding of the early Christians whose witness we read in the New Testament was, like ours, limited and conditioned by the circumstances of their time. We cannot share their point of view.

What we do share is their Faith and that of the many generations that come between us who pondered that witness as they put it into practice in their particular place and time. A good preacher is a ‘traditionalist’, loyal to the institution that sustains that tradition.

Tradition

We need tradition because change is inevitable. The work of tradition is the never-ending translation of what we have learnt into terms that guide us in the new landscapes into which our journey takes us. The task may be seen as the merging of horizons. What is seen in one horizon is placed in a new horizon. It remains what it is but is now seen in a new perspective.

McCabe excelled at this. To give two examples. He placed Aquinas in the philosophical horizon opened by Wittgenstein to provide a robust restatement of classical theism. He gave new life to ‘virtue ethics’. He made a distinction between a manual and a rule book.

A learner of a game is greatly

assisted by a manual that explains good moves and the skills required to execute them. They also need rule book to teach what is forbidden because it is not playing the game. The Utilitarian and Kantian strands that dominate ethical discourse focus on the latter. McCabe brought the Aristotelian tradition as developed by Aquinas to new life in putting human flourishing and the virtues that served it centre stage.

Scripts

He prepared his sermons, lectures, papers with meticulous care and always spoke from a script. He was a lucid, precise, speaker, illustrating abstract concepts with witty examples. (I can testify to this; McCabe had many Irish friends and visited Dublin regularly. I had heard him speak several times in the 1970s.) After his death, his confrere Brian Davies OP, now a professor of philosophy at Fordham University, assembled these scripts for publication in six volumes.

“All the major items on the theological/philosophical agenda are included, ably summarised by Manni”

These, together with interviews with academics and friends provide the basis of Franco Manni's invaluable study. He provides us with an epitome of McCabe's work. Its extent, range and coherence is impressive. All the major items on the theological/philosophical agenda are included, ably summarised by Manni with well-selected quotations that convey McCabe's arresting style.

The foundations of our modern world were laid in the 17th Century: philosophy by Descartes, politics by Hobbes, science by Galileo. The complex interweaving of these elements was always a work in progress producing new and unexpected patterns. The tapestry has been unravelling for some time. The rate of its undoing increases under the impact of globalisation and climate change.

Reading Manni's pages, one recognises just how relevant McCabe is in this context. This book is a sure guide to McCabe's own writings where readers will discover for themselves why he was admired not only by so many eminent academics, but also many more ordinary Christians, whom he saw as his main audience.

supposed to go round seven times, saying the rosary. Five hundred people were doing the same thing, in a whirligig of worship, people of every age, in every kind of suit, lost in their own errands of petition or atonement.

“If China had peace, the strife would move to South America or somewhere else”

It must have been the altitude which made me pray, or the glorious weather, or the superabundant feeling of health and happiness which comes after exertion, or the vastness of the view, or the common unconsciousness in which my miniature ego was now submerged. At all events I sauntered along with

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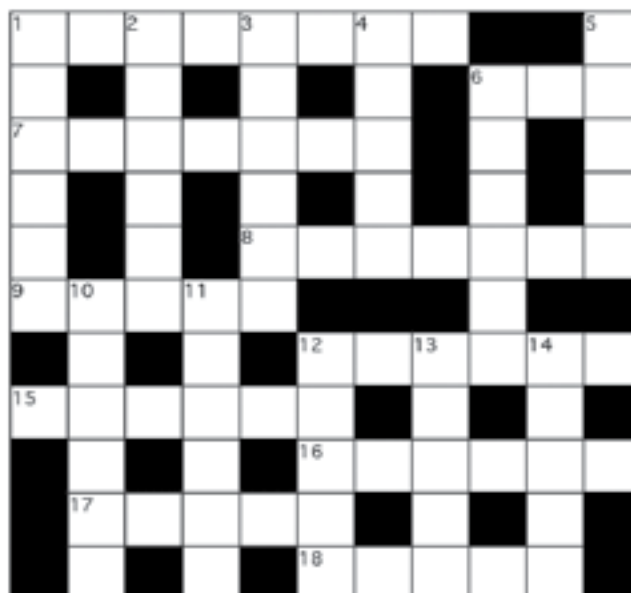
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Crossword Junior

Gordius 347



Across

- 1 Dishcloth (3,5)
6 You might find this moisture on the grass early in the morning (3)
7 This baby grows up as part of a pride (4,3)
8 JK _____ wrote the Harry Potter books (7)
9 Exams (5)
12 Use it to take photographs (6)
15 Spud (6)
16 You can see your reflection in this (6)
17 Where a person is buried (5)
18 Elephants have them (5)

Down

- 1 There is a TV show called 'Britain's Got _____' (6)
2 Oak nuts (6)
3 Academy Awards, given to people in the movies (6)
4 Joint in the arm (5)
5 Fun piece of playground equipment (5)
6 Make your mind up (6)
10 As much as is needed (6)
11 Pop this into the teapot or cup when you are making a cuppa (3,3)
12 You might see one blazing as it travels through space (5)
13 Female horses (5)
14 Chambers (5)

SOLUTIONS, AUGUST 20

GORDIUS No. 469

Across — 1 Nap 3 Megalomania 8 Nebula 9 Clerical error 11 Yield
13 Virgo 15 Enlarge 16 Bavaria 20 Lorna Doone 21 Round
23 Hanoi 24 Take over 25 Barack Obama 26 Garden party 27 Lit

Down — 1 Non-believer 2 Pub crawl 3 Molar 4 Archery 5 Marry 6 Nickel 7 All 12 Dream ticket 13 Vigil 17 Rainfall 18 Eritrea
19 Bunker 23 Heady 24 Teg

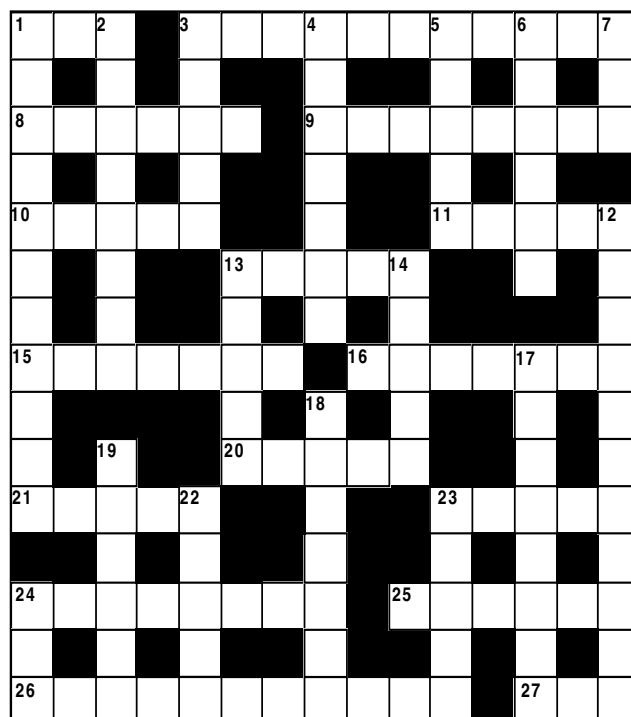
CHILDREN'S No. 346

Across — 1 Battleship 7 Camping 8 Eel 9 Sir 10 Giraffe 14 Root
16 Wimbledon 17 Either 18 Gather

Down — 1 Backstroke 2 Tomorrow 3 Lying 4 Sugar 5 Ice 6 Blue
11 Iceberg 12 Attempt 13 Flood 15 Tight

Crossword

Gordius 470



Across

- 1 Immature newt (3)
3 Attempting charitably to assemble a collection of note! (11)
8 Type of insect (6)
9 & 21a A large dollop of retail therapy (8,5)
10 & 25a Blue gemstone (5,6)
11 Has she a right to take wool? (5)
13 That maxim is grand, Count Von Bismarck (5)
15 & 16 How in order it is for them to challenge the refectory's 'isms'! (7,2,5)
20 Beer makes one glare, unfortunately (5)
21 See 9 across
23 Avarice (5)
24 How is the side able to have gone down so precipitously? (8)
25 See 10 across
26 The leading character has distributed what's in a roasting pot (11)
27 Embrace (3)

Down

- 1 Enhances this (literally) with Lee (bless him!) (11)

- 2 Intrude, encroach illegally (8)
3 Tumbled to the south of the uplands (5)
4 Scatter seed around the pit, notwithstanding this (7)
5 Those Zulu warrior units - if they got hot they would become mischievous! (5)
6 Flowers seen in the eyes (6)
7 Joke (3)
12 Four decades on, celebrate - matching jockey Walsh (4,7)
13 Wall painting (5)
14 Bid, tender (5)
17 Got up before George W identified a flowering plant (4,4)
18 East African person and a gnu found wandering (7)
19 Style of art involving wet plaster (6)
22 Heather is in some bother, I can see (5)
23 Subvention (5)
24 A parish priest can use it on the phone (3)

Sudoku Corner

347

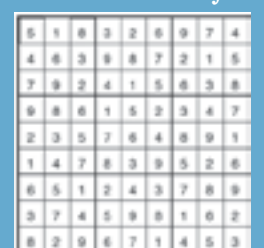
Easy



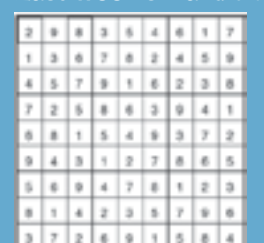
Hard



Last week's Easy 346



Last week's Hard 346



What the pandemic denies us, technology makes up

DURING THE WEEK we re-scheduled a date for First Holy Communion. It is another re-scheduled date in a year of cancellations, postponements, and disappointments. The hope is that the new date will go ahead and that the day the children have waited for will come, be lived, enjoyed and forever remembered. That, of course, remains to be seen.

On a webcam in May, I spoke to the children on the day we had originally planned to celebrate their First Holy Communion.

A few days earlier I had invited them to send me in some pictures that I might use at the Mass. They did so, and their work was precious.

Among the pictures was one that looked like a snake. I struggled to find the connection but then realised it was not a snake, but a shawl spread out over the ground.

There was a small, matchstick woman, holding it and a speech bubble from her mouth: "Now can I have my piece of land?"

Legend
I realised that the image was of St Brigid and that the 'snake' was her cloak and that it all went back to



Fr Paul Dempsey.

the legend of the chieftain telling her he would give her as much land as her cloak would cover. She spread it out, the legend goes, over Co. Kildare.

That cloak from Co. Kildare reaches across Ireland this weekend and, at 3pm on Sunday, August 30, it goes all the way to the sanctuary of the Cathedral of

the Annunciation and St Nathy, Ballaghaderreen when Fr Paul Dempsey, a priest of Kildare and Leighlin, will be ordained the bishop of Achonry.

Paul comes to our diocese from Newbridge where he served for the past six years. He is welcome! May his cloak gently cover our diocese as he makes it his home.

“By Sunday evening our diocese will have a new bishop. He will truly need his friends as he begins this journey”

Like our First Holy Communicants, this was not to be Paul's day. That was planned for April 19, but his script too was re-written in the ink of Covid-19. There was disappointment around that, of course, and some difficult decisions too.

Most of these were around people and letting them know that guidelines and restrictions meant a reduced attendance at the ceremony and that people who were to be there, were asked not to come.

For Paul, I have no doubt, this

was especially difficult. It was not easy for the diocese either, but the safety of people had to be the concern.

By Sunday evening our diocese will have a new bishop. He will truly need his friends as he begins this journey. New friends to be made in the parishes that make up our diocese, new friends among the priests and religious of Achonry, new friends among his neighbours in our Western Province but he will truly need the old friends as well. Those who know him best will have a vital role to play.

Friendship

That cloak of friendship will need to be fully unfurled now, to cover the ground – the Holy Ground of Ministry.

The ordination ceremony will be streamed live on achonrydiocese.org and all are truly welcome. What the roads deny, what the numbers dictate, what the pandemic demands must be respected but there is a place today for a virtual presence, a meaningful prayer and the spreading out, from east to west, of the shawl of friendship.

Off the record...

● A man was ordained a bishop and, at the reception, he told two jokes that went down very well. Afterwards, a journalist commented on this and said it was quite unusual to hear a bishop tell a joke. He said it was refreshing. The bishop agreed but went on to say that they were the only two jokes he had and that he would use them again so he asked the journalist not to include them.

Next day the report spoke of the ordination, who was there, what happened and what was said.

The report concluded with a reference to the bishop's jokes: "At the reception the bishop told two jokes but unfortunately we cannot reprint them here."



Patients in the waiting room of the Spiritan Health Care Centre, Borana, Ethiopia, whom you can help by funding medicines and other supplies.



PLEASE HELP THE LITTLE WAY TO PROVIDE MEDICINE FOR CLINICS IN DEPRIVED AREAS

The Little Way Association has been asked to help support a clinic in Ethiopia. Fr Kenneth Iwunna CSSp of the Spiritan Health Care Centre, Borana, writes:

"When the religious sisters who were running our clinic had to leave in 2015, our bishop agreed to pay the staff's salaries. However, I am asking your kind supporters to provide funds for the medicine and supplies that we need to keep the clinic functional." The centre helps the Dhadim people, who are poor farmers. They suffer from Aids, tuberculosis and other diseases. Fr Iwunna adds: "Most of them cannot afford to pay for their hospital bills, so many times, we give them free medical treatment and those who can afford to pay, they pay little. The clinic is the only one in this vicinity."

The covid crisis is making matters worse for people in already-deprived areas, so projects like the Spiritan Health Care Centre need our help more than ever.

Your kind gift will be gratefully received and forwarded without deduction to provide urgently needed medicines for clinics in deprived areas.

Every penny or cent of your gift goes to missionaries without deduction.



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Your kind gift will be forwarded intact and gratefully received.

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