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The Irish Catholic

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Irish peacekeepers barred from US after serving in Middle East

EXCLUSIVE

Chai Brady

Irish peacekeepers who have been prevented from entering the United States after serving with the United Nations in the Middle East say they are being “punished” for their work with vulnerable communities overseas.

A priest serving as a chaplain with the Irish Defence Forces is amongst the latest to be refused permission to enter America under the Visa Waiver Programme (VWP) by US immigration officials due to having served in Syria.

Officials told *The Irish Catholic* that the issue is becoming more pronounced with hundreds of Irish soldiers serving in the region every year, each group accompanied by a chaplain.

After serving in countries such as Syria supervising a fragile truce, peacekeepers may face long delays and many have been refused entry under the US Terrorist Travel Prevention Act 2015, *The Irish Catholic* can reveal.

A soldier, who preferred to

remain anonymous, told *The Irish Catholic* that the troops are being unfairly “punished” rather than rewarded, describing the situation as an obvious “blind spot” for US authorities.

“Can you imagine finishing overseas, you have two months free for yourself and maybe for the first time you would like to visit your family in America? Having difficulties with that is a nightmare because for so many guys it’s the first time in their lives they have 7-8 weeks for themselves,” he said.

“Even taking children to Disneyland, seeing American history, visiting family - it’s unfair you are punished for something you should not be punished for, you should be rewarded.

“I know how Americans respect their own army. Their soldiers are recognised very well there but we are penalised as the Irish army,” he said.

Citizens of countries such as Ireland that are part of the US’s VWP can usually travel to the US without a visa for up to 90 days. However, they need to

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Members of the 119th Infantry Battalion returned home to their delighted families after a deployment with the United Nations (UN) in the Middle East this summer.

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Managing Editor: Michael Kelly, editor@irishcatholic.ie

Deputy Editor: Chai Brady, chai@irishcatholic.ie

Northern Correspondent: Martin O'Brien, martin@irishcatholic.ie

Multimedia Journalists: Ruadhán Jones, ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie
Jason Osborne, jason@irishcatholic.ie

Newsroom: news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026

Books Editor: Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie

Advertising: advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874094

Accounts: accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874020

Magnificat: magnificat@irishcatholic.ie

Shop: shop@irishcatholic.ie

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Irish peacekeepers barred from US after serving in Middle East

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have a valid ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation). An ESTA is denied if a person has travelled to countries such as Iran, Iraq or Syria, and several others, on or after March 1, 2011 under US anti-terrorism laws.

Irish soldiers continue to be affected by this despite there being "limited exceptions for travel for diplomatic or military purposes in the service of a VWP country" in US law.

A spokesperson for Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence Simon Coveney told *The Irish Catholic* that the department is "aware that some members of the Irish Defence Forces have recently been unable to obtain a US visa waiver (ESTA) for travel to the United States".

He said that the US immigration regulation and operations are a matter solely for the US authorities, and the department is not in a position to intervene in decisions taken in relation to ESTA applications.

"However, the department is engaging with the US Embassy on the broader question of Irish Defence Forces personnel who may have difficulties travelling to the US because of international travel related to their peacekeeping

duties," the spokesperson told *The Irish Catholic*.

He added that any applicant who is denied an ESTA for the US can still apply for a visa through the US Embassy and that "ineligibility for an ESTA based on an applicant's previous travel, does not necessarily constitute an ineligibility for a visa".

However, this newspaper understands that soldiers refused an ESTA are facing difficulty in securing an appointment at the US Embassy with immigration officials unwilling to discuss the matter further.

In a statement to *The Irish Catholic*, the US embassy highlighted that there is a waiver for military service and the ESTA form gives an option to apply for a waiver for this reason.

A spokesperson said: "Prospective travellers do not apply separately for a waiver. Travelers can apply for an ESTA and whether they are eligible for a waiver will be determined on a case-by-case basis as part of the ESTA process, consistent with the terms of the law."

There are currently 130 Irish soldiers from the 66th Infantry Group on a six-month deployment to Syria as part of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). They were deployed earlier this month.

Saving our parishes from becoming well-run but dead bureaucracies

One of the great sadnesses shared with me when I speak at parish missions and novenas around the country is the absence of young families. Often a grandfather and grandmother will be there with cheerful grandchildren, and at the cup of tea afterwards will share their dismay that their grown-up children – the parents of those cheerful children – don't attend Mass.

And it's not just about the perfunctory attendance at Mass, their children often don't nourish the spiritual sides of their lives at all. "It's as if that side of them doesn't exist at all," one woman said to me not so long ago.

This particular woman is hugely devout and her living relationship with Christ animates every part of her life. She is one of the nicest, holiest and most wholesome women that I know. And none of her children would reject this characterisation.

Rejected

And yet, it's not as if they find her faith unappealing or have rejected it *per se* – they simply, as the woman told me herself, "couldn't care less".

This is often after years of being raised in a good Catholic home with excellent values where parents have been devout without being preachy or judgemental.

These young people have also attended Catholic schools where the emphasis in religion class has all been on a God of love and experiencing the merciful face of Christ.

In short, none of these young people – who are now themselves parents – have grown up in the harsh Church of the past that we hear constantly caricatured in the media in Ireland. They have had overwhelmingly positive experiences of the Church and of faith.

And yet, what faith they have lies dormant. It would almost make more sense if they had decisively walked away from the Church, but the Church, the parish and life of faith is quite simply irrelevant to how they live their lives.

Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

And they're not bad people – they are often people with excellent values who, imbibed with Christian virtues, serve their families and communities selflessly.

Challenge

The challenge for the Church is to help people to animate the spiritual side of themselves that many do not even know exists.

How will the current synodal process contribute to this? Well, the jury is still out on that. The danger is that the synod becomes overly bureaucratised and obsessed with meetings and processes and structures.

All of these things are important, but they're not important in and of themselves. Things like par-

ishes, dioceses, committees and even synods are only worthwhile in as much as they help the Church and our parishes complete the mission entrusted to them: bringing the Gospel to people, and helping people realise a meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ where they experience themselves to be loved and want to share that with those around them.

Unless we calibrate everything we do by this standard, then we really are doing little more than worrying about where to put the deckchairs on the Titanic.

Rationalising this, or clustering that or streamlining something else does nothing to slake the thirst of the human spirit.

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Govt not treating Church equally over emergency energy grants, say priests

Ruadhán Jones

The Government is not giving equal treatment to churches over proposed energy grants, a number of priests have said, warning it could lead to church closures.

Churches will not receive grants to be given to businesses, schools and public amenities proposed as an emergency measure to tackle the energy crisis.

"I think it's wrong," said Fr Gerry Kane PP in Foxrock

and Newtownpark Avenue, Dublin. However, the fact that the Church was left out didn't come as a surprise, he added.

"Go back to the pandemic, the way they clandestinely maintained the right to close the churches – what can we expect?" he asked.

Fr Michael Toomey, Adm. in the parishes of Ardfinnan, Ballybacon and Grange, Co. Tipperary, criticised the Government for its unequal treatment of churches.

"We pay business rates

on our electricity and gas," Fr Toomey said. "We should automatically be getting business grants, we should be treated equally."

He stressed that the Church isn't looking for "special favours", adding that the Government should offer the same grants to other faiths.

"We should be treated just like everyone else."

Fr Toomey pointed out that churches in Great Britain are already receiving emergency funding, and some are offering their

buildings as 'warm hubs' to the poor.

"We are facing the real prospect that we will have to close churches over the winter, or churches will be very cold. We can't have the heating on for 20-30 people coming to Mass, it's just not possible," Fr Toomey finished.

Fr Pádraig Ó'Cochláin Moderator of Arklow family of parishes, Co. Wicklow, told *The Irish Catholic* that it's "sad" that the Government are being "a bit mean" in the distribution of energy grants.

"They'll be the losers in the end," he added. "The Church really helps the State by promoting order and good values."

Fr Ó'Cochláin said he is determined to keep his church open "even if there are icicles hanging from the ceiling".

Lack of clarity over youth synod letter at bishops' meeting

Jason Osborne

Confusion reigns over whether a letter by more than 500 young Catholics challenging a perceived desire among young people for liberal reform was in fact discussed at the recent meeting of the hierarchy as planned.

This newspaper previously reported that the organisers of the letter were assured by the bishops' conference that the letter was on the agenda for the next meeting of that body, which took place in early October.

However, despite repeated attempts over the last week to contact the Catholic Communications Office at Maynooth emails remained unanswered and phone messages unreturned.

The letter in question raised concerns regarding calls arising in diocesan

reports for changing Church teaching on human sexuality, marriage and women priests.

"As young faithful Catholics we fully accept and joyfully embrace Church teaching and practice, and do not wish for Church teaching to be changed or reformulated," the letter reads.

More than 500 young, committed Catholics signed the letter in the space of a week, before it was sent to the Irish bishops.

"The letter was a grass roots movement passed on from individual to individual," Oisín Bridges, one of the letter's organisers, told this paper in August.

"It just goes to show how many young Catholics are embracing the Church's teaching," he said.

The Irish Catholic will continue to request an answer from the Catholic Communications Office.

Dublin's streets alight with joy...



The Brazilian community in Dublin process through the capital's streets with a statue of Our Lady of Aparecida as they celebrate her feast day, October 16. Photo: Facebook/Fr Severino Pinheiro.

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Halloween habit mix-up is a chance for evangelisation

Chai Brady

An Irish Dominican priest has said he regularly gets mistaken for a Halloween reveller in costume when walking the streets this time of year.

Dublin-based Fr Conor McDonough OP said that he gets a lot of compliments for his very authentic 'costume' but the interactions can be good opportunities for evangelisation.

Taking to social media Fr McDonough mentioned the "intense awkwardness" of people when they realise their gaffe.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* he said the mix-up happens "quite often this

time of year, that religious wearing habits in public are mistaken for people in Halloween costumes".

“Fr McDonough mentioned the ‘intense awkwardness’ of people when they realise their gaffe”

"I've experienced it myself quite a bit. Often it comes in the form of a compliment on the 'realistic' outfit!"

However, Fr McDonough, who is in his 30s, said: "I see it as an opportunity to engage in a bit of gentle

evangelisation. When they realise I'm a real Dominican friar, they'll often say something like, 'Oh, it's not often you see a young priest', and I take that as an opportunity to tell them about the great young men who are continuing to join our order, and I always tell them they're welcome to pray in our church."

He added: "The habit is always a good conversation-starter, but at Halloween it's

even more effective than usual!"

Despite a landscape in which vocations to religious life are in sharp decline, the Dominican order has been particularly successful at attracting new vocations. *The Irish Catholic* reported earlier this month that with recent new novices, the total number of student brothers in formation for the Dominicans is 16.

Bishops shoot down ACP arbitration panel proposal

Ruadhán Jones

The Irish bishops' conference have shot down a proposal to set up regional arbitration panels to help priests when they face canonical or legal issues.

The panels, proposed by the Association of Catholic Priests (ACP), would have facilitated "respectful dialogue" between priests, "competent experts in relevant disciplines" and bishops.

In a letter sent to all bishops on March 8, the ACP said the panels "can result in a simpler, fairer, more effective and less stressful procedure for all involved".

However, only one bishop responded, Fr Tim Hazelwood told the ACP's AGM held last week.

He added that they did receive a response from the Irish bishops' conference following their summer meeting, which said that such a structure, the council of priests, already exists.

Fr Hazelwood said he had never heard of a priest's issue being brought up at the council, continuing: "It wasn't and wouldn't be the place."

The ACP's proposal "is still on the table", Fr Hazelwood said in his 'Care of Priests' presentation in the Radisson Blu Hotel, Athlone, October 19.

"All we're asking for is that a more synodal approach to that kind of work happens," he finished. "We're still asking for it... we see this as a possible solution going forward."

No hospitali-tea from Diarmuid Martin, says ACP

Staff reporter

The hierarchy of the ACP have criticised Archbishop-emeritus Diarmuid Martin for not offering a cup of tea when they visited the archbishop's house.

The retired Archbishop of Dublin was praised at first for his engagement with

priests, with Fr John Murphy PE describing him as "an extraordinarily generous man".

He added later that bringing his issues to Dr Martin "was pushing an open door", and asked the panellists at the ACP's AGM if that was their experience of him.

In response, Fr Tim Hazelwood and Fr Brendan Hoban of the ACP recounted

their own negative engagement with Dr Martin.

"I'll give just one example. A few of us went for a meeting in the archbishop's house in Dublin," Fr Hazelwood began.

"Brendan [Hoban] came from Mayo, I came from Cork. We didn't get a cup of tea, not to mind listening. We were dismissed, there was no listening."

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On this rock...



The McCarthy family from Ardmelode, Milltown, are pictured at the Mass Rock Milltown, on Sunday, October 23. Ted and his mother Shelia McCarthy were honoured during Mass by bringing the gifts to the Mass Rock, the original chalice of Fr Thaddeus Moriarty OP being one. Pictured from left: Millie, Ted, Luke, Linda, Shelia McCarthy and Nora Barrett. Photo: John Cleary.

It was a case of never on a Sunday...

The BBC is celebrating its centenary this year – it was founded in 1922 (Radio Éireann, the ancestor of RTÉ, came along in 1926) – and has certainly become an institution with a global outreach.

Those who have worked for the Beeb, as it's sometimes known (which included my late sister, in New York City), are always aware of the influence of its effective founder, Lord Reith.

John Reith, a serious and deeply-religious Scottish Presbyterian, had some high-minded views of what broadcasting should entail: to entertain, to inform and educate in an edifying manner were his aims. He would not allow the employment of divorced persons, and although the corporation was open to clever women from the beginning, married couples were not permitted to work together (in case they might exercise undue



Mary Kenny

influence as a partnership).

Reith ensured that there was a strong religious element in broadcasting from the beginning, and in the early years of the Beeb, he forbade anything frivolous or disrespectful on Sunday. His idea of Sunday broadcasting was a continuous performance of Bach fugues, interspersed with services of worship. The notion of sport on Sunday – or, heaven forbid, horse-racing! – was abhorrent to this earnest Sabbatarian. He disapproved of 'smut' and double-ententes, and the phrase 'winter draws on' was banned in the Reithian spirit (comedians might use it as a naughty allusion, although the naughtiness is fairly innocent by today's measures.)

In time, Lord Reith died and

values changed: and broadcasting developed in vast new ways, via many channels and different outlets. And yet Reith embedded in public service broadcasting a tradition of leaving space for religion, through daily worship, and the sacrosanct 'Thought for the Day' on the BBC's flagship Radio 4. Like 'The Angelus' on RTÉ, secularists constantly complain about having a religious slot right in the middle of the news, but they've never managed to get rid of it.

And if Reith is sometimes disparaged now as narrow-minded, or even a hypocrite (he may have had a homosexual relationship with a male friend) there remains a certain respect for the lofty ideals he upheld, and the faith values which shaped his standards.



Italy's incoming prime minister Giorgia Meloni. Photo: CNS

President Emmanuel Macron has sought to enshrine abortion rights in the French constitution – indeed, he would like to see the European Union copper-fasten abortion as a 'human right'.

The French senate voted against Mr Macron's proposal last week; it was pointed out in the course of debate that other human rights are involved in the termination of pregnancy.

The French government is hard-line on abortion. The French PM Elisabeth Borne is deeply hostile to Italy's Giorgia Meloni for her pro-natalist views.

Legacy's long shadow

It's always great to see legacy being celebrated and explored, and I'm honoured to be included in the speakers at the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Autumn School in Bruff, Co. Limerick this weekend October 28-30.

The Kennedy family are famously associated with New Ross in Co. Wexford, but the Fitzgeralds hailed from Co. Limerick – leaving Ireland in the wake of the Famine era, in the 1850s. The family didn't have an easy time when they arrived in Boston, and according to Rose's biographer, Gail Cameron, Irish Catholics were scorned by the New England Yankees as "the scum of creation".

Senator Henry Cabot Lodge castigated these "latter-day immigrants, inferior peoples whose prolific issue threatened the very foundations of Anglo-American civilisation". But Rose's father, John F. 'Honey Fitz' Fitzgerald worked his way to becoming Mayor of Boston and was a legendary community leader despite the prejudice from the 'Boston Brahmins'. He adored his daughter, Rose, who became the first woman in history to see three of her sons elected to the US Senate and one become president.

After she lost two sons to assassinations, Rose had Padraic Pearse's famous poem, *The Mother* – foreseeing the

sacrifice of the Pearse brothers – framed and pinned up at her home in Hyannis Port.

Bruff is near to the renowned lake of Lough Gur and a place of exceptional archaeological interest. The life of Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy is a historical link with this part of Co. Limerick and a portal to exploring its cultural and biographical heritage. The speakers at the autumn event will include Robert Kennedy's daughter Kerry Kennedy, Thomas Fitzgerald of Boston, Richard O'Donoghue TD, the writer Manchán Magan, among others. For more information email: events@rosefitzgeraldkennedyschool.ie

It is world news that Rishi Sunak is the first British prime minister from an Indian background. He is also the first observant Hindu. Hindus are strongly attached to family values, and are particularly keen on marriage – an

Indian marriage is a major festival, often lasting days. Whether these heritage ideas will influence prime minister Sunak's administration remains to be seen: Britain is currently at its lowest level of marriage in history.

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Ukrainian bishop: Irish State must make EU aware of housing situation

Jason Osborne

Ukrainian bishop Kenneth Nowakowski has praised the Irish response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis, and said that it's important to raise awareness of the current accommodation difficulties before people arrive.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, the Ukrainian apostolic visitor to Ireland Bishop Nowakowski said that there's nothing he

can say that would be critical of the Irish people and the Irish Government.

His comments come as 43 Ukrainian refugees were left without accommodation since Friday.

Bishop Nowakowski said that the Irish Government and people have been "very generous" in the welcome extended to Ukrainian refugees, but that they understand "that there's a limit".

"I think one of the things that is important is that people be told in

advance of arriving in Ireland that housing has become critical, and it's not quite as easily available," he said.

"I think it's not just a responsibility of the Government, I think that in general we need to be making people aware who are still in Ukraine or in other European countries, the challenges that the Government of Ireland is having. I think that communication is important – if people have an understanding that they'll arrive and everything will be given to them as has been over the last

eight months," they'll become disappointed, Bishop Nowakowski said, continuing, "and I don't think anybody wants that to happen".

"I think if people are aware of that, they can make their plans. And so if they do arrive, they shouldn't be disappointed if housing takes longer to find, if there are more challenges than there were before."

Despite the recent challenges, the bishop said that he doesn't think "anybody has experienced the feeling of I'm not being welcomed".

"We're very, very grateful for everything that the Irish Government has done in accommodating such a huge number of Ukrainians fleeing harm's way in the last six to eight months, and we understand that accommodations are starting to be stressed.

"The very robust welcome that Ukrainians received still is there, but it has to have its limits, and so I think that we need to be looking at solutions for this, knowing that the war in Ukraine is continuing," he said.

Parish hails boxer after huge Irish success in European Championship

Chai Brady

The parish priest of Castlerea, Co. Roscommon, said there was "huge excitement" when boxer Aoife O'Rourke returned to the town following her gold medal win.

The middleweight European champion was warmly welcomed by hundreds of people back to her hometown following

her success over the weekend.

Fr John McManus told *The Irish Catholic* "there's a lot of excitement", and that Aoife and her sister Lisa are both very successful athletes and boxers.

Fr McManus praised the sisters saying: "They are very encouraging of young people. It's a message they send out, they use their platform to encourage young boys and girls to stay

in sports and stay active and healthy."

He added their family are well-known in the area and the parish.

Including Ms O'Rourke Ireland has three new gold-medal European boxing champions after their historic wins in Budva, Montenegro. Kellie Harrington, an Olympic champion, and world champion Amy Broadhurst.

Ms O'Rourke became the first Irish female fighter to successfully defend a European title since Katie Taylor.

Ireland won a record total of seven medals: three gold, two silver and two bronze in the tournament. There were also other honours, with Ms Broadhurst being named Boxer of the Tournament and Team Ireland named as Team of the Tournament.



Aontú reveal 357 homeless people died in Dublin since 2018

Staff reporter

Statistics released to Aontú under the Freedom of Information Act show that 357 homeless people have died in Dublin since 2018, with 70 deaths recorded in the capital so far this year.

Commenting on the finding, Aontú leader Peadar Tóibín TD said that the housing minister should feel a "deep sense of shame".

"He should be losing sleep over this. We talk about the housing crisis day in and day out in the Dáil. This is the harsh reality on paper – 357 homeless people have died over the

past five years in Dublin alone.

"What does that fact say about our Government and our society? When asked in the Dáil about the state of O'Connell street last week the Taoiseach indicated that it was an issue for the city council. The government cannot relegate all these issues to the council," Mr Tóibín said.

An Irish welcome...



Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin extends Ireland's famous hospitality to Ukrainian refugees staying in St Mary's Drumcar, Co. Louth, where the St John of God brothers formerly carried out their ministry.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Benedict XVI: Vatican II was necessary

The Second Vatican Council was "not only meaningful, but necessary", Pope-emeritus Benedict XVI said in a recent letter to a conference about his theological work at the Franciscan University of Steubenville in the US.

A theological understanding of the world's different religions, the relationship between faith and reason and, especially, the nature and mission of the Church in the modern world were challenges the Catholic Church needed to face, the retired pope wrote in the message read October 20.

In his letter to conference participants, the retired pope said he hoped their discussions and an understanding of his theological work before, during and after Vatican II would "be helpful in the struggle for a right understanding of the Church and the world in our time".

Pro-life hero to address PLC National Conference

Irish born pro-life hero Dr Dermot Kearney will be the keynote speaker at the Pro Life Campaign's National Conference taking place on Saturday November 12 in the RDS, Dublin.

Dr Kearney, a London based cardiologist, came to prominence recently for his work in helping mothers to reverse the effects of taking the first abortion pill, thereby saving the lives of the babies from certain death.

He was recently cleared by the UK's General Medical Council following a series of complaints made against him by abortion supporters.

At the conference, he will talk about the numerous lives saved as a result of Abortion Pill Reversal and plans for the future to make the treatment more widely available.

Nuala O'Loan

The View



Giving in to eco-extremists would mean ordinary people could not afford fuel

We live in a world which can seem almost as if it is imploding. On the global front we see developments in China which are a cause of great concern as Xi Jinping cements his power; we are watching the systematic destruction of much of Ukraine by Russia; war is being waged in Afghanistan, Yemen, Ethiopia, and there is conflict across about 60 other countries in the world. At the present moment there is a fear of a nuclear attack resulting from the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

“In these circumstances, life is getting very difficult for so many people”

Economically too, there are grounds for huge concern. The costs of the borrowing necessary to support the funding which was made available by governments during the Covid-19 period has created huge debt which must be funded and ultimately repaid. Public services are crumbling under the parallel effects of increased population demands (in the past ten years the population of the North has increased some 100,000; the population of the Republic has increased by some 500,000) and the increasing demands on the public purse.

Shortages in supplies can be seen regularly in our supermarkets and food, energy and other prices are increasing in a way which could never have been anticipated by most of us.

In these circumstances, life is getting very difficult for so many people.

Faith tells us that the Lord is always with us and that all will be well, even in such difficult circumstances, but that demands of everyone in the world that they play their part in ensuring that people do not go hungry, that services are maintained and even improved and that we get our economies back on an even keel.

At times like this our faith challenges us – we



A specialist team removes a man who glued his hands to the road during an Extinction Rebellion climate protest in London. Photo: CNS

must act justly and love tenderly all those whom God has made. We must care for our world in a reasonable and proper manner. We must ensure that people have warmth and food as the winter approaches. Energy sources like oil and gas can be managed in a way which will not kill the environment, as some harbingers of doom suggest. We can produce oil and gas for general consumption. We should do so.

Extreme views

It would be totally wrong for us to yield to the extreme views of that minority who are currently gluing themselves to pavements, blocking roads, defacing property and preventing people from going about their lawful purposes. Many of these acts constitute criminal offences and we have recently learned that some, at least, of the protesters are being paid to do this to the rest of us. The results of their demands would be that people will not be able to afford fuel and will be very cold during the winter and industry and hence employment would suffer. This would be absurd when we have access to the necessary resources to warm our people and fuel our industry. Yet there are those in our midst who live lives of great poverty

– something which is very destructive of the spirit and which is caused in part by the unequal distribution of the world's resources.

God made the world. The world which he made is full of wonders: the wonders of the effect of the moon on the tides, of the ability of nature to regenerate itself after fire, of the ability which the world has to feed all our people if we but distribute food properly and do not waste it; of our ability to utilise the natural energy sources of the world in a responsible way, of our ability to develop scientifically and technologically so that we can have access to warm homes, water on demand, sewage systems, communication, travel, medicine, great construction projects – all of which were unthinkable even 100 years ago.

“As we contemplate what is happening in our Church though, we have much cause for concern”

Our challenge surely must be to ensure that we have not become so obsessed by the continuous consumption of the world in which we live, the endless distractions of the extensive barrage of communication which we face, the temptations inherent in our world, that we lose

sight of God who made the world and whose Son came to earth and died to redeem us. There is a danger that, distracted as we can be, we will drift away from the practices of prayer and community worship, from ensuring that our lives are focussed on God who made us, who loves us and to whom we belong.

As we contemplate what is happening in our Church though, we have much cause for concern. The Church was established by Jesus Christ to provide that community of love in which we can live, where we can be nourished by the Word of God and by the Eucharist and the other sacraments, as we make our way through this world. Yet the numbers of those who profess faith and want to be part of that community of faith are dwindling rapidly. Why is that?

Rapid reduction

The Church across Ireland is consulting on the future – a future which will include a rapid reduction on the number of priests and religious living lives wholly dedicated to God, where there are no financial rewards, as such. A priest's vocation is to guide and help us as we live, so that we will ultimately be reunited with our Lord and God.

Our Church is facing the time when there will be so few priests that we will not

have the benefit of the celebration of the Eucharist at our most difficult moments – when our loved ones die, when there is serious illness or other awful problems in our lives.

“There can be no better way to spend a life”

We will not be able then to receive Jesus Christ into our hearts. My experience throughout my relatively long life has been that that ability to be in the real presence and to receive Christ as we now can, has enabled, strengthened, heartened, and consoled me and really made life

possible.

Perhaps the most important thing we can do now is to ask the Lord to send priests into this, his vineyard, and to ask the Holy Spirit to open the minds of those whom he calls, to enable them to hear that calling and to answer the call with courage and commitment. There can be no better way to spend a life. At times like this we need these men to walk with us through a world which is becoming increasingly perilous, and to help us to understand that in the richness and blessings of faith we can live a life of love of God and of our fellow men, a life in which we will know both joy and peace.

JOE WALSH TOURS



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'A lot of people will die', warn Irish missionaries in South Sudan

Ruadhán Jones

Irish missionaries have warned that many people could die of starvation in South Sudan if they don't receive food and medicine urgently.

They have called on Ireland to aid the most vulnerable "to keep them alive".

Flooding and the legacy of a bitter civil war have left the African nation facing "hard times", Irish Spiritain Fr John Skinnader told *The Irish Catholic*.

Flooding "has destroyed crops, we need help now to help people keep alive until the next crop", said the missionary based in South Sudan.

The issue has been compounded by the World Food Programme scaling back food distribution to South Sudan and the shortage of grain resulting from the war

in Ukraine.

Almost two-thirds of the country's population are now vulnerable due to hunger and the threat of famine, said Fr Skinnader.

We need help "with the most vulnerable to keep them nourished and looked after for the foreseeable future", he added.

There are many groups with particular vulnerabilities, Fr Skinnader continued, including the blind and the leper community.

Lay missionary Noeleen Loughran cares for a leper colony in South Sudan, which is facing stark difficulties she says.

"There's no doubt about it, a lot of people are going to die. There's no question of the matter if I don't get food and medicine urgently," Ms Loughran said. "It's soul destroying."

"We are completely and utterly caught. I fear there is going to be terrible, terrible starvation."

"A few of the people from the leper colony have already died because of lack of medicine."

Meanwhile, the bishop of a diocese in South Sudan is appealing for food as his region in the country's south has been hit by rebel atrocities.

In a video message, Bishop Alex Lodiong Sakor Eyobo of Yei said the militant Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition had committed atrocities, particularly in Morobo County, within Central Equatoria state.

"The people are fleeing the affected areas due to these meted out atrocities by these militant rebels," the bishop said, adding they are in desperate need of food.



Displaced South Sudanese are pictured waiting at a World Food Program outpost where thousands have taken shelter in Malakal, South Sudan. Photo: CNS/Denis Dumo, Reuters

NI Secretary's commissioning of abortion called 'heavy-handed'

Jason Osborne

Iona Institute NI spokeswoman Mary Lewis has described as "undemocratic" and "heavy-handed" the Secretary of State's announcement that the UK government will commission abortion in the North.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Ms Lewis said that many in Northern Ireland

are "overwhelmingly against" the introduction of abortion, and that it's clear that NI Secretary Chris Heaton-Harris has "not consulted with anybody except himself".

Taking to Twitter, Mr Heaton-Harris MP said that the UK Government will commission abortion services in Northern Ireland "following continued inaction" from the department of health.

"For too long, women and girls of Northern Ireland have been denied access to basic healthcare," he said.

Ms Lewis said: "The bottom line is I think he's describing this as healthcare – it's so far removed from healthcare."

"It's a totally disingenuous description of the subject matter. The idea of healthcare, it's not caring for the baby in any case, and it's certainly

we would say very poor care for the mother".

Ms Lewis also criticised the UK MPs' recent vote in favour of exclusion zones around abortion clinics, saying that it was a threat to the "right to protest, and even to have silent witness".

"In some cases, I think if you look at this legislation, it may even mean that you're not allowed to bless yourself within that particular vicinity," Ms Lewis said.

This Christmas, give a gift that speaks volumes

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Popular Cork-born nuncio to Greece dies



Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong, Edwin 'Buzz' Aldrin and Michael Collins, accompanied by their wives, meet with Pope Paul VI at the Vatican, October 16, 1969. Archbishop Patrick Coveney is pictured on the left of the Pope.

Staff reporter

Archbishop-emeritus Patrick Coveney (88), who served as Papal Nuncio to Greece and New Zealand, has died, the diocese of Cork and Ross have announced.

Perhaps Archbishop Coveney's greatest claim to fame came when he acted as interpreter for Pope Paul VI during the visit to the Vatican of the first astronauts to land on the moon (see picture).

He had a long and distinguished ministry after he was ordained in Rome in 1959, first with the Secretariat of State, before acting as secretary to the Apostolic Nuncio from

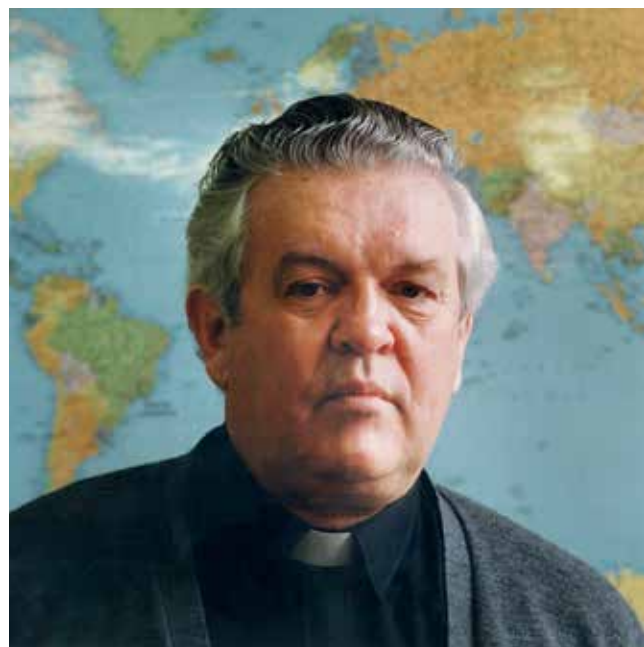
1972-76.

Archbishop Coveney was consecrated as Titular Archbishop of Satrianum in the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne in Cork in September 1985 and was appointed as Apostolic Pro Nuncio to Zimbabwe and Apostolic Delegate to Mozambique until 1990.

He subsequently served in Ethiopia, New Zealand, the Marshall Islands, Samoa and lastly as Apostolic Nuncio to Greece from 2005 residing in Athens until his retirement in 2009.

Archbishop Coveney returned to the Diocese of Cork and Ross to reside in Crosshaven parish.

“A legacy of *incredible* humanitarian significance”



Fr. Aengus Finucane.

Fr. Finucane's legacy

Fr. Finucane is the cornerstone behind much of what Concern has become today. It was he who expanded its aid work into 11 countries and dramatically increased its fundraising.

Tom Arnold - Concern's CEO from 2001 to 2013 - says:

“There can be few Irish people of his generation, or of any other generation, who have contributed as much to improving the lives of so much of humanity.”

“He inspired a whole generation of Concern overseas volunteers.”

Fr. Finucane continues to inspire as his legacy still influences Concern 12 years after his death.

“Do as much as you can, as well as you can, for as many as you can, for as long as you can.”
– Fr. Aengus Finucane

In 2020 Concern worked in 23 countries, responding to 78 different emergencies, helping 36.9 million of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.

Concern's vision, mission and work continues to strive to end extreme poverty, whatever it takes. The charity believes that no-one should live in fear of not having enough food.

The devastation of climate change

Today one of the primary causes of acute food insecurity are weather extremes.

Climate change is increasing hunger levels and pushing even more people to the brink of famine. With multiple famines predicted, there are currently 41 million people teetering on the edge of starvation.

Extreme weather caused by climate change is having a devastating effect on the most vulnerable people in the world's poorest countries.

And these calamitous weather conditions are now more frequent and varied. No sooner has one disaster struck than another arrives. People don't have enough food for months, sometimes years on end.

In Malawi droughts, floods and strong weather patterns are a regular occurrence – placing huge stress

on land and crop production resulting in food shortages and hunger.

These weather extremes affect an already vulnerable population where 80% source their livelihoods from the land, 71% live below the poverty line and an estimated 20% are living in extreme poverty.

People like Yona Lambiki and his family.

Yona, a farmer, lives in Nkhambaza village with his wife and five children. He was always able to support his family with the crops and food he grew providing them with a healthy balanced diet. Any excess was sold, with some of the money used to pay for his children's schooling. But two years ago everything changed ...



Crops destroyed by Cyclone Idai.

In March 2019 Cyclone Idai caused devastating floods and loss of life in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The floods completely destroyed crops just weeks away from harvest – food people were relying on for survival.

Although his house wasn't affected, like thousands of others, the crops Yona was about to harvest were completely washed away. There was nothing for his family to eat, let alone any to sell.

Help for now and the future

But thanks to Concern's generous donors and Yona's hard work he is now able to look after his family again.

Yona immediately received a vital cash transfer from Concern. With this he bought food and other basic necessities his family needed to be safe and free from hunger.

Yona received seeds including maize, tomatoes, beans, three bundles of sweet potato vines and other vegetables to grow so he could, once again, support his family. He also received, fertilizer and a hoe to help him grow his crops. As well as five goats for milk and manure.



Photo: Jason Kennedy / Concern Worldwide.

“I would really love to meet everyone that is behind this support so I could thank them in person.” – Yona Lambiki

Like other families in his community, Yona planted the seeds he received in his home garden. What they harvest is used to feed their families, any excess is sold to improve their livelihoods.

But Concern do far more than simply give communities plants, seeds and tools. They provide training in Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) to ensure long term, inter-generational support.

providing support for years – possibly decades – to come.

On speaking about the people who support Concern and make our work possible, he said, **“I'm so very happy with the support I have received from Concern. My life and family's life is healthy and can afford everything we could not afford before. I'm so happy and thankful to Concern.”**

Will Fr. Finucane inspire you too?

There's a way you, just like Fr. Finucane, can leave the world a better place. And help improve the lives of families like Yona's both now and for future generations.

How? By leaving Concern a gift in your Will.

When you leave a gift, your legacy lives on - helping for years to come.

“I know that this is a very personal decision. But I assure you, gifts in Wills have had a phenomenal impact in reducing extreme poverty, hunger and suffering around the world. Today, as the catastrophic combination of conflict, climate change and COVID-19 have plunged so many people into the grip of crisis, your gift will help us to be there in their time of need.”

– Dominic MacSorley, CEO, Concern Worldwide

Gifts in Wills are a vital source of funding for Concern.

Your legacy will help families like Yona's reverse the many struggles caused by Climate Change ...

... will provide the tools and knowledge they need to not just survive but help themselves – a gift from you they can pass down for generations.

To find out more about how a legacy gives a safe, secure future, please request your complimentary copy of 'A World Without Hunger' – Concern's legacy booklet.

You'll learn of others who desperately needed help, and how legacies from people just like you have done so much.

There are also answers to common questions people ask about leaving a gift in their Will. And explains how to get started.

Requesting your free booklet does not oblige you to do anything else.

The Irish Catholic looks at a rich and varied life lived in the service of others and of God.

Fr. Finucane was ordained as a Holy Ghost Priest in 1958. In his first assignment in Uli, Nigeria, Fr. Finucane found himself involved in the bitter civil war between Nigeria and Biafra.

Following Biafra's attempt to secede, this widespread conflict had displaced millions. What's more, there was a blockade of food, medicine and basic necessities by the Nigerian authorities.

At the height of the crisis in the summer of 1968, it was estimated 6,000 children died every week.

An Irish effort

In response to the Biafrans' terrible plight, Concern Worldwide – originally called Africa Concern – was founded and began raising awareness and funds to help those suffering.

On 6th September 1968, the 600 tonne, Columille set sail for Sao Tome – a Portuguese island close to West Africa. The cost of chartering the ship and its vital cargo of powdered food and medicines was all paid for with donations from the people of Ireland.

To circumvent the blockade, the supplies were then flown from Sao Tome to Biafra overnight. The following day in Uli, Fr. Finucane was among the Holy Ghost priests who would help distribute the life saving supplies.

With his commitment and

that of the Irish public and priests, this operation grew into one flight a day for 11 months.

Fr. Finucane was deeply committed to helping the poorest of the poor. So after leaving Biafra, in 1972 he became Concern's Field Director in Bangladesh after its war of independence from Pakistan – the war had left millions in desperate need of food.

The period after Fr. Finucane's time in Bangladesh was particularly testing. In Thailand's Kampuchea refugee camps he saw the desperation of Cambodians who had fled the Khmer Rouge's genocide.

And in Uganda the horror of HIV in Kampala, where even in the best hospitals one third of the children born were HIV positive.

Fr. Finucane worked tirelessly to alleviate suffering, and recognised his responsibility to help the poor and underprivileged.

Concern appointed Fr. Finucane as its Chief Executive in 1981.

During his 16 years as the head of the charity he was 'on the ground' during many of the world's worst disasters. These included the 1983-1985 famine in Ethiopia and the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

Relinquishing his post in 1997, Fr. Finucane became Honorary President of Concern Worldwide US. He held this post until his death on 6th October 2009.

To receive your free, no obligation booklet – in complete confidence – please contact Concern's Legacy Manager, Siobhán O'Connor. Call **01 417 8020**, email **siobhan.oconnor@concern.net**, or write to 52-55 Lower Camden Street, Dublin 2



The case that changed everything...ten years on



The death of Savita Halappanavar did not justify repeal of the Eighth Amendment, writes David Quinn

The road to the repeal of the Eighth Amendment was paved by hard cases, often know by letters like 'X' or 'C' or 'D'. The most famous was that of Savita Halappanavar who died in tragic circumstances in Galway University Hospital ten years ago this month. The case came to light the following month, sparking an enormous debate about the Eighth Amendment. It was blamed for her death, even though this was highly questionable.

A big reason why the Halappanavar case became so famous is that we finally had a face and a name to put on a hard case.

Savita and her husband, Praveen, were an Indian couple who had moved to Ireland some years before the tragic events of October 2012. Savita was a dentist, described by her friends as "very cheerful".

When she was brought into Galway University Hospital she was 17 weeks pregnant and in pain. At first, she was sent home, but then she returned to the hospital and the staff confirmed she was miscarrying. She was admitted to a bed.

Summary

The Life Institute has put together an excellent summary of what happened in the following days based on three official investigations into the events that resulted in her death.

The three investigations are a catalogue of missed opportunities probably caused in part by the fact that the hospital was short-staffed at the time.



Savita Halappanavar pictured on her wedding day.

Early on, a key sign that Savita was in severe trouble was not properly recorded by the hospital.

“A big reason why the Halappanavar case became so famous is that we finally had a face and a name to put on a hard case”

Quoting the coroner's report, the Life Institute article explains that a blood test was taken which "showed an elevated white cell count of 16.9, well above the upper limit of normal of 10 or 11. In what would turn out to be a key system failure identified by the coroner in this case, this result was not noted in Savita's chart. This meant that the first indication that an infection could be brewing somewhere in Savita's body was missed."

What would have happened if the hospital had realised early enough that Savita had a potentially deadly blood infection? Could the miscar-

riage, under Irish law at the time, have been expedited rather than let it occur naturally? The answer is yes, an absolutely crucial point that has been almost totally lost on the Irish public.

Routine practice

We know this for a fact, because Irish hospitals were expediting miscarriages as a matter of routine practice when women developed sepsis.

Dr Sam Coulter-Smith, former Master of the Rotunda Hospital, told an Irish Medical Organisation conference in 2013, that in 2012 alone, the year of Savita's death, his hospital had performed terminations in four instances where a woman had developed sepsis. In each case, he said, the mother had survived.

In 2007, a case involving a lady named Tania McCabe made the headlines. She was brought into Our Lady of Lourdes hospital in Drogheda. She had developed sepsis. Even though she was six months pregnant with twins, the hospital did not feel impeded by the Eighth Amendment and doctors terminated the pregnancy by delivering both

babies, despite their extreme prematurity and therefore the big danger to their life and health.

One of the babies died, and the other was left with severe disabilities. Tania herself also tragically died, despite the babies being delivered. Ending the pregnancy in these cases does not always save the mother because sepsis is such a dangerous infection even with modern medicine.

“What would have happened if the hospital had realised early enough that Savita had a potentially deadly blood infection?”

In countries like Britain and America, which have had liberal abortion regimes for years, pregnant women still die of blood poisoning, and Ireland's maternal death rate, prior to the repeal of the Eighth, was low by comparison with many other parts of the West.

We can never know what would have happened to Savita if the miscarriage of her baby had been expedited. But we do know that if the hospital knew about her infection, the Eighth Amendment was not standing in the way of her medical team ending the pregnancy.

Quick judge

However, the Irish media, pro-choice campaigners, and most Irish politicians were very quick to judge the case, and blame the 8th amendment, especially when *The Irish Times* broke the story by quoting a nurse who told Savita that the pregnancy could not be terminated because "this is a Catholic country".

Those words sealed the fate of the 8th amendment almost immediately. They became seared into public consciousness. The subsequent official reports made almost no impression on the public mind partly because they were not given proper coverage.

It is likely that almost none in Ireland knows that terminations were already allowed to take place under an Eighth Amendment regime when a woman presented with sepsis.

What the Eighth Amendment did prevent was an abortion where a woman was miscarrying, and her life was not in danger. Most of the time, international medical practice allows miscarriages to take their natural course.

The immediate result of the death of Savita was the passage in 2013 of the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act, which effectively legislated for the X-case, where a young woman was deemed suicidal. This had nothing to do with the Savita case per se.

But this was not enough for pro-choice campaigners who wanted virtually all protection for unborn human life removed from our law, and they got their way in 2018.

“The Irish media, pro-choice campaigners, and most Irish politicians were very quick to judge the case”

India itself has allowed abortion since 1971, partly as a population control measure. About 16 million abortions take place there annually, which accounts for around one pregnancy in three, a very high rate. Girls in particular are likely to be aborted because of a cultural preference for boys.

But at the time of the Savita case, our abortion law was being compared unfavourably with the allegedly more 'humane' law in India.

The Irish public were never probably informed about the consequences of liberal abortion laws in other countries. They were left unaware of the sheer number of terminations taking place elsewhere, the routine aborting of babies with disabilities, or the fact that infants could be left to die in hospitals when they were born alive after a termination. This now happens in Irish hospitals and has received almost no coverage.

Nothing is ever reported that might undermine support for abortion or that highlights the many hard cases caused by abortion laws.

Since the repeal of the 8th amendment, over 20,000 terminations have taken place in Ireland. The case of Savita Halappanavar should have led to a review of procedures in certain hospitals. It is a moral calamity that it helped to bring about the liberal abortion law we now have.

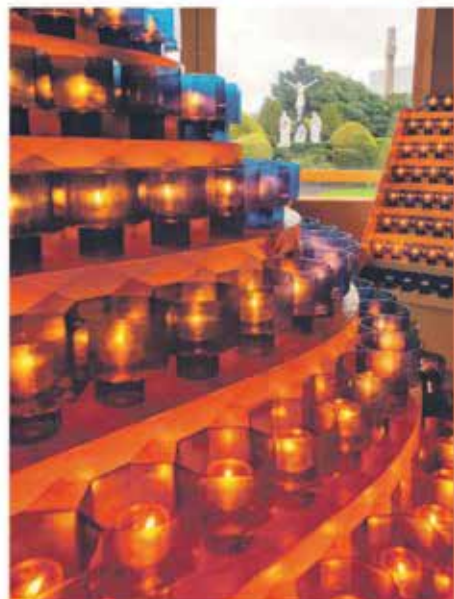


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Faith Renewal

WINTER & ADVENT

In November, We Remember
They are not gone from us, but gone before us.



November Candles for the Deceased

For the month of November, we are offering an opportunity to send a list of your deceased loved ones to us and a candle will be lit each day for your list throughout the 30 days of November.

Find out more at
www.knockshrine.ie/light-a-candle/

Weekend of Remembrance 5th & 6th November

SATURDAY 5TH NOVEMBER

'Resting in the Arms of God'



**DAY RETREAT WITH
DEIRDRE NI CHINNÉIDE
TIME: 10AM – 4PM
FEE: €30 PER PERSON**

*"There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity
under the heavens." – Ecclesiastes 3.*

November brings an invitation to reflect on love and loss as we remember our loved ones and times of letting go. We listen for the whispers of God, guiding us through uncertain and uncharted waters. This retreat offers time to meet and be with others, sharing a faith journey and pilgrimage in and through the heart of the Celtic Christian tradition. Resting in the arms of God guiding us towards an adventurous time of change, we will explore the call to listen through scripture, music, reflection, and prayer.

📞 For Booking details, see www.knockshrine.ie

SUNDAY 6TH NOVEMBER - 12 NOON KNOCK BASILICA

Memorial Mass

November affords us a time to pause, reflect and remember all those who have died and gone before us into the loving arms of God. Continuing our weekend of remembrance, we will celebrate a special Memorial Mass to pray for all who have died.

FRIDAY 2ND, 16TH, 19TH DECEMBER

Advent Prayer Vigils

*Dark November will soon be past...Journey forth
into Advent*

Reflections, Silence, Prayer

Journey through Advent at Knock Shrine with our series of Prayer Vigils for Advent - an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of Advent and this special time of Hope, Faith, Joy and Peace. The Vigils will take place from 9pm in the Parish Church.

DECEMBER 7TH/ 8TH

All-Night Vigil

Beginning with Confessions from 10pm-12 Midnight in the Chapel of Reconciliation, followed by Vigil in the Basilica with Rosary, Candlelight Procession, Stations of the Cross and Holy Hour. Concelebrated Mass will take place at 4am.



SATURDAY 18TH DECEMBER, 8PM

Carol Service

Bring peace and joy into your heart with our festive offering of Christmas Carols for all the family to enjoy! Brought to you by Schola Cantorum Basilicae, directed by Úna Nolan, with the ConTempo String Quartet and Organist Mark Keane. The evening will include a collective of classic Christmas Carols such as 'O Holy Night', 'Joy to the World', 'In the Bleak mid-Winter', 'Christmas Lullaby' and many more well-known festive favourites.

For further details of upcoming events see www.knockshrine.ie
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New public face for Jesuits in Belfast



Hopes that new Jesuit Centre can be a hub of welcome and faith formation, **Ruadhán Jones** hears

While most of the news about religious orders in Ireland of late has been about closure and retrenchment, the Jesuits in Belfast have launched a new venture with high hopes.

The Jesuit Centre, which opened officially on Saturday, October 22, marks a leap-forward for the order, who have ministered in the area since the summer of 1988.

"We have a little community up in North Belfast, near the water-works, and we've been operating out of the front room for the last 34 years," Fr Gerry Clarke SJ tells *The Irish Catholic*.

The Jesuit's ministry in Belfast has provided Spiritual Direction, retreats, and training in Ignatian Spirituality to many lay people and clergy. The community has also played an integral role in supporting the diocesan seminary, the chaplaincy in Jordanstown and the Living Church office.

Following a time of discernment and with the encouragement and blessing of Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor and Jesuit Provincial Leonard Moloney SJ, this centre offers a public face for the order's works.

“We bring this spirituality into the wider human context as we strive for social justice, peace and dialogue”

Fr Clarke will be the director of the new centre, which will focus on ministering to young adults by providing faith formation training as well as cultural and social activities.

Fr Tom Layden SJ, Fr Brendan McManus SJ and Fr Piaras Jackson SJ make up the rest of the centre's team.

For Fr Clarke and his confreres, this day has been a long time in the making, with Covid-19 upending their plans.

"We really decided along with Bishop Noel Treanor that we'd like to have premises to run more activities," Fr Clarke explains, "to



From left Fr Tom Layden SJ, centre director Fr Gerry Clarke SJ and Fr Brendan McManus SJ are pictured outside the newly founded Jesuit centre in Belfast. The centre was launched on Saturday, October 22, by Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor and Jesuit Provincial Fr Leonard Moloney SJ.

draw in more people and excite people about things like spiritual companioning, Lectio Divina, adult faith formation, a weekday Eucharist in a small setting. Basically be a centre of welcome for the young and old to help grow in faith."

The opening of a Jesuit Centre in the premises at the old St Patrick's Schools, Donegall Street, expands the activities and the outreach of Peter Faber Community still based at Brookvale Avenue.

Known

The Jesuits are well known for their educational, missionary and charitable works, but it is their practical approach to spirituality that centre director Fr Clarke hopes to promote.

"We want to be able to give young adults the tools to make better decisions," he says, "from our rich tradition of reflection and self-awareness, that speaks to people of all faiths and none."

"Jesuit spirituality is all about 'finding God in all things'. A personal encounter with a loving

God is at the heart of our mission. Our spirituality is grounded in the conviction that God is active in our lives and that we can discern or uncover God's presence, especially through reflection, which will influence our compassion and outreach to others.

"We bring this spirituality into the wider human context as we strive for social justice, peace and dialogue. In true Jesuit style we want to create places of encounter and dialogue, where people can ask questions about their lives and critically examine the issues of the day."

"We have a wide range of spiritual and social activities. We can't do everything, we're only four and our key is involvement of laypersons."

In a press release announcing the launch, the Jesuit Centre outlines just some of the activities they plan on hosting.

Creative

These include creative writing and processing trauma, and weekly worship with music, as well as a

book club on Pope Francis' reform of the church, using reflection to "channel your inner fire".

“We want to be able to give young adults the tools to make better decisions”

Austen Ivereigh, who is biographer of the Pope, "as up to date and as close to Pope Francis as an English speaking, and Spanish speaking, journalist can be", says Fr Clarke, was the keynote speaker at the centre's launch. He gave an address on Pope Francis' concept of overflow, Fr Clarke explains.

"It's the fruit of the Aparecida conference, where Pope Francis schooled himself and learned to recognise polarities," he continues.

"And let's face it, it might be the Conservative party in England, it might be the Church in the United States, but there are polarities everywhere at the

moment and Pope Francis would see his mission as bringing them together. We hope to be part of that mission with Pope Francis."

One of the key focuses for the new centre's outreach will be on Scripture. This is in line with Pope Francis' call "to put Scripture at the heart of everything we do", says Fr Clarke, adding: "We want to form or train to be disciples; to be what Pope Francis is calling us to be, a Church that goes out."

All the works the centre conducts will be in the Jesuit mould, drawing on their four-fold apostolate.

"Number one, to help people find God. Number two is to listen to and empower young people in their faith. Number three is to walk with the marginalised and the wounded. Number four is to promote the care of our common home," Fr Clarke says.

He added: "We are grateful to Fr Eugene O'Neill PP St Patrick's Parish on Donegall St, who is facilitating the welcome of the Jesuit Centre in the old school building next door to the Church."

As the Jesuits already have a strong base in the area, with links to Iona in Portadown and to Ulster University through Fr Clarke's chaplaincy work, they have high hopes for their ambitious project.

“The Jesuit's ministry in Belfast has provided Spiritual Direction, retreats, and training in Ignatian Spirituality to many lay people and clergy”

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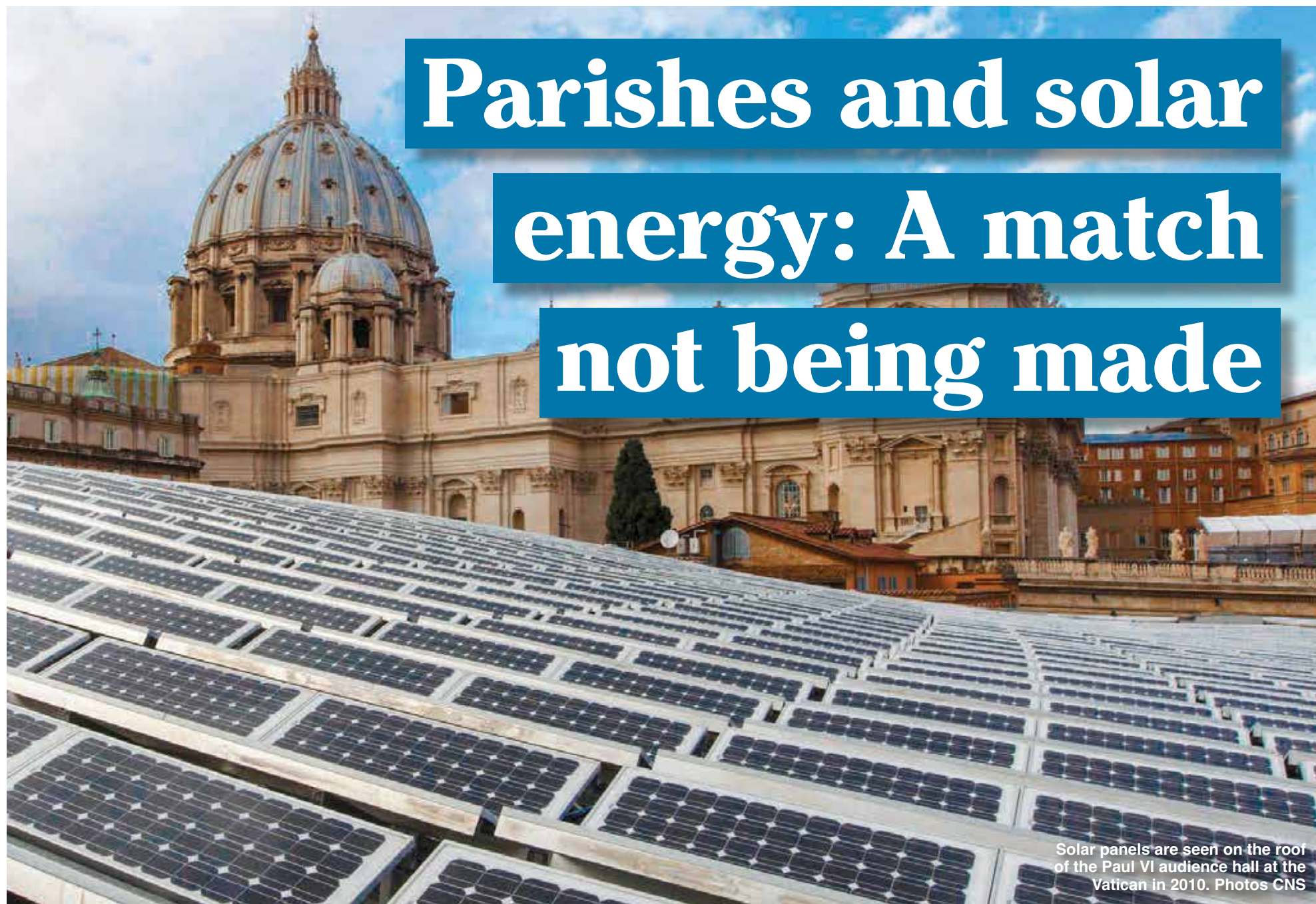
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Parishes and solar energy: A match not being made



Solar panels are seen on the roof of the Paul VI audience hall at the Vatican in 2010. Photos CNS



New Government grants aimed at harvesting the sun may not be enough of a push for parishes, writes Chai Brady

Rapidly increasing energy costs are on everyone's mind in Europe as Russia's illegal war against Ukraine continues to rage, driving up the price of gas. It's somewhat of a perfect storm for consumers since fuel is such a driver of the economy – from heating to haulage – that energy price hikes affect everything.

There has been a lot of discussion about cost-saving measures as well as Government interventions aimed at alleviating pressures on hard-hit households, businesses and the voluntary sector.

In the Republic, parishes will not receive any direct, specific Government support to pay for energy bills during the winter. However, they may benefit from a scheme supporting non-commercial buildings to invest in solar panels, announced last month. It allows buildings, such as churches and other Church-owned buildings, to avail of a grant of up to €2,400 towards the cost of installation.

Whether parishes will be able to afford solar panels, in spite of the scheme, is in question particularly due to the effects of the Covid-19 lockdown which decimated parish funds.

Invest

Regardless, so far parishes have not been quick to invest in solar power technology, despite the Church's overall push towards sustainability and sustainable power – instigated by Pope Benedict XVI and intensified under Pope Francis and outlined in his encyclical on the environment *Laudato Si'*.

The Vatican began installing solar panels in 2008 with the aim of moving the world's smallest country to net zero emissions. In Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* he states: "There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example,

“In the Republic, parishes will not receive any direct, specific Government support to pay for energy bills during the winter”

substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy.

“There has been a lot of discussion about cost-saving measures as well as Government interventions aimed at alleviating pressures on hard-hit households”

“Worldwide there is minimal access to clean and renewable energy. There is still a need to develop adequate storage technologies. Some countries have made considerable progress, although it is far from constituting a significant proportion. Investments have also been made in means of production and transportation which consume less energy and require fewer raw materials, as well as in methods of construction and renovating buildings which improve

their energy efficiency. But these good practices are still far from widespread.”

Despite this, it does not seem to be an issue the majority of Irish Catholics are concerned about, at least according to the national synthesis report of the synodal process. The environment was noted as being “not strongly present” in the consultation of the 26 dioceses as well as some religious congregations and interest groups.

Concern

It stated: “Despite the Church's concern for the care of our common home, the main submission regarding environmental issues came from the *Laudato Si'* Working Group with only nominal mention across the diocesan syntheses.”

The Irish Catholic spoke to several priests who have already installed solar panels and asked their opinion on parishes' commitment to sustainability.

Fr Martin Magill PP of St John's on the Falls Road in Belfast installed solar panels in a previous parish

more than ten years ago.

He said: “I don't think churches have been particularly good at leading the way on renewable energy. I think we could do so much more. I think there are questions we need to ask, like how come we have not been leading the way?”

Fr Magill admitted the initial cost can be expensive despite government assistance. There can also be other obstacles to consider, with Fr Magill saying: “Part of the difficulty for us is that we have major problems with our roof, so it probably wouldn't be wise for us, however there is the parish house and I'm wondering if we can install them there. It's perfect, it's south-facing it would get a lot of sun and it would certainly make a difference: It's not just church buildings, it's parish houses as well.”

Encouraged

He encouraged people to watch *The Letter*, a film about the environment featuring Pope Francis which is available on YouTube.



An American priest in Virginia, Fr John Grace of Immaculate Conception Church in Hampton, stands among an array of solar panels the parish installed in 2019.

Fr Magill added: “I would be disappointed if parishes installed solar panels simply to cut down on their energy bills... We are all aware of the damage that has been done in our use of fossil fuels, the damage to our common home, I think that’s an even more important reason. Yes it will make a difference to our energy bills in the long term. It shouldn’t be primarily about saving on bills but saving the environment.”

“While his energy bills decreased due to the solar panels, this has been offset by rising energy costs”

Columban priest Fr Seán McDonagh SSC who has written extensively on ecology and climate change, installed solar panels in June this year at Dalgan Park. It cost €9,000 in total and the society received a €2,400 grant. He believes that the cost is stopping parishes taking the solar power plunge and the Government must make a bigger investment.

“There’s no way people are going to be able to put them in unless they get more serious help,” Fr McDonagh said, “They’re talking about a real problem having electricity here this winter. By using solar panels you’re generating electricity locally so it should be at least 50/50 percent Government grant, you don’t have to be a genius to work that out.”

While his energy bills decreased due to the solar panels, this has been offset by rising energy costs.

In order for the Government to be serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions and halving them by 2030 – as set out in the

Climate Action Plan 2021 – renewable energy should be prioritised, according to Fr McDonagh, who predicts if the current trajectory continues the targets will not be met.

Enviroment

Theologian Msgr Dermot Lane of Balally parish in Dublin has also written extensively on the environment. He launched his new book *Nature Praising God* last week, which investigates the relationship between faith and nature.

He also believes cost is the main problem stopping parishes from investing in solar energy. If it was €2,400 plus €10,000 he said it may be outside the range for some parishes – but not for others – as Church finances strained at the moment.

Msgr Lane installed solar panels in his parish about seven years ago, they heat the water in their entire pastoral centre.

Speaking about the Government scheme, he said: “My impression and understanding is that most parishes would welcome this but would want to see the detail because all parishes in the light of the teaching of Vatican II are committed to the greener way, to a sustainable future, to a future that follows the teaching of *Laudato Si’*.”

Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications Eamon Ryan’s announced the solar panel scheme last month, which is the extension of Government supports of up to €2,400 for the installation of solar PV panels for non-domestic buildings – aimed specifically at businesses, public organisations and community groups.

The grants are administered through the Sustainable Energy

receive payments for surplus electricity that goes back into the grid.

“Msgr Lane installed solar panels in his parish about seven years ago, they heat the water in their entire pastoral centre”

“This means that the installation can pay for itself quickly – thus helping to protect businesses and organisations across the country against rising energy prices into the future. Solar PV is also one of a range of measures funded under the SEAI Communities Energy Grant Scheme which makes grant funding available to improve the energy efficiency of the building stock and is open to domestic and non-domestic applications. To apply for a grant, non-domestic applicants should visit www.seai.ie and follow the outlined steps,” he said.

Budget

How much could this cost a parish? Anthony Pryce of Wyse Solar Systems told *The Irish Catholic* that first and foremost if a parish wanted to install solar panels on a church they would need expert advice and a budget of between €12-15,000.

“A lot of the older churches would be protected structures so you’re going to have to go and get planning on them,” Mr Pryce said.

“But a lot of the newer ones won’t so really the best way to go is to employ a consultant to look at the building and see what’s feasible and what’s not and to do up a tender document and then put it out for pricing. That would be the best way to do it.”

The *Laudato Si’* Officer of Trócaire, Jane Mellett encouraged parishes to explore the possibilities in terms of increasing their use of renewable energy.

She said: “We are in the midst of a devastating environmental crisis and an energy crisis which is driven by the continued use of fossil fuels. By switching to more

renewable sources of energy, parishes would be answering the call of *Laudato Si’* to care more deeply for our common home and to live out the Gospel message of love for neighbour.

“We must curb our emissions in order to limit climate change impacts. Church communities have a very important role to play in this. It is a powerful witness to embrace such projects and over time, such projects can lower the cost of energy for a parish. This action also fulfils some of the criteria set out by the *Laudato Si’* Goals which Pope Francis launched last year and which each parish and diocese is invited to embrace. It is the right thing to do at this time.”

Ms Mellett added that some parishes have embraced the ‘Eco-parish award’ which includes efforts to lower the energy consumption of parish buildings, with many making efforts to reduce heating costs by a “significant margin”.

“A lot of the older churches would be protected structures so you’re going to have to go and get planning on them”

“For example in Shankill parish they have installed Airus fans which gently recirculates the heat down to the floor in the church and help to keep the heat at floor level, rather than having it escape through large church roofs,” she said.

“The SEAI (Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland) can also provide parishes with information on how to access grants and advice on where to begin. It is a minority of parishes who are engaging in such projects – we certainly could do more. The technology and expertise are there. With leadership on this at diocesan level, much could be achieved.”

Ms Mellett encouraged people to visit www.laudatosiactionplatform.org for more details.



Solar installers are seen working on a residential home.

Ancient Biblical manuscripts on display in Dublin



The oldest surviving codex containing the four canonical Gospels is open for all to see, Ruadhán Jones hears

Given that Christianity is two millennia old, it is not surprising that documents from close to the time of its inception are hard to come by.

How fortunate we are, then, to have ancient Biblical manuscripts dating to as early as the second century AD going on display in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.

The *First Fragments: Biblical Papyrus from Roman Egypt* display, which opens on October 28, includes the earliest example of the four canonical Gospels and the Acts bound together in one volume.

Also on display will be a Folio from the Pauline Epistles, the oldest surviving example of the Apostle Paul's writing.

It is rare that these items go on display due to their fragility – the last time was the year 2000 – and exhibition curator Dr Jill Unkel is excited to open them up to the public.

Really important

These manuscripts “are really important”, Dr Unkel tells *The Irish Catholic* ahead of the exhibition's launch. “There are very few manuscripts that survived from before the 4th Century, that time when the idea of what is considered Christian scripture is in flux.

“On display will be a Folio from the Pauline Epistles, the oldest surviving example of the Apostle Paul's writing”

“They were written at a time before the Gospels had been solidified as those four canonical Gospels, as the one's that would be included in Christian Bibles. We have an example of them being written together as one book. So there is certainly evidence of them being considered a collection or a group of manuscripts or books that should be included together, earlier than the solidity or confirmation of canon.”

Some 70 items will be going on display, including Coptic (Egyptian) bindings, fragments of

ostraca (pieces of pottery used for writing) and illuminated Coptic manuscript pages.

Fascinating

In addition to the interest of the text's themselves, Dr Unkel says they provide fascinating insight into the communities who created them, how they did so and how they used them. For instance, scribal marks on the papyri to indicate line counts hint at the “the earliest evidence of payment given to scribes in a Christian context”.

“Probably professional scribes are writing some of these books,” Dr Unkel explains. “We also see errors and corrections, people leaving out text and having to add it in the margins. You get that sense of human error, that natural thing of, if I'm hand copying something over lots and lots of hours I'll probably make some mistakes and then I'll go back in and correct them.

“But also the idea of how these things were accessed. Because they were written at a time when not everybody is able to read.

Most people are accessing them through listening to a reader who is reading these books out loud. Most reading, in fact, at that time was done out loud, even privately.

“There are very few manuscripts that survived from before the 4th Century, that time when the idea of what is considered Christian scripture is in flux”

“They're written in Greek and without any punctuation. So the words run into each other, there's no spacing. But what we do have is someone going back in a little bit later on and adding what we call breathing marks.

“What it seems to be is that possibly someone who was doing the reading or performing was saying, ok, this is where I pause so that I say it with the right emphasis,” Dr Unkel says.

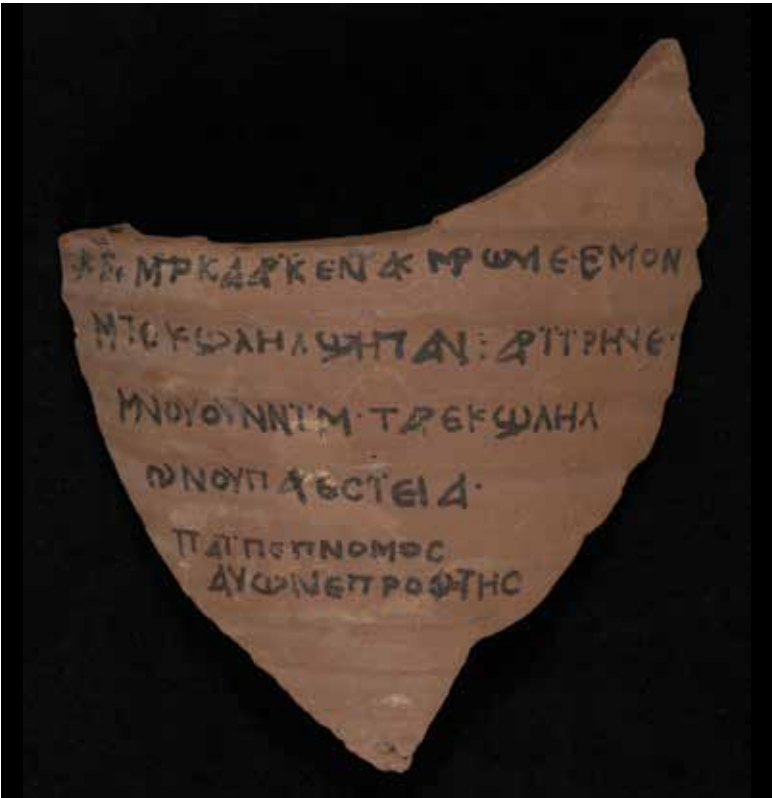
The exhibition is free to the public, opening on Friday, October 28 and running until September 2023. It includes a free audio tour, as well as interactive elements for children.



Canons of St Basil (detail), 9th or 10th century AD, Egypt. Basil of Caesarea (330–379AD), also known as Basil the Great, was a theologian and bishop in Turkey. He is referred to as one of the Great Church Fathers and one of the Eight Doctors of the Church. Both his brother Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–395) and his sister Macrina (c.327–380) were also important figures in early Christianity; Macrina, in particular, for the development of Christian monasticism. Macrina established a monastic community with strict ascetic observances. These observances formed the basis for Basil's Canons. These monastic rules later become a source for Coptic Church law and the Rule of Benedict of Nursia (c. 480–550), a guideline for monastic life.



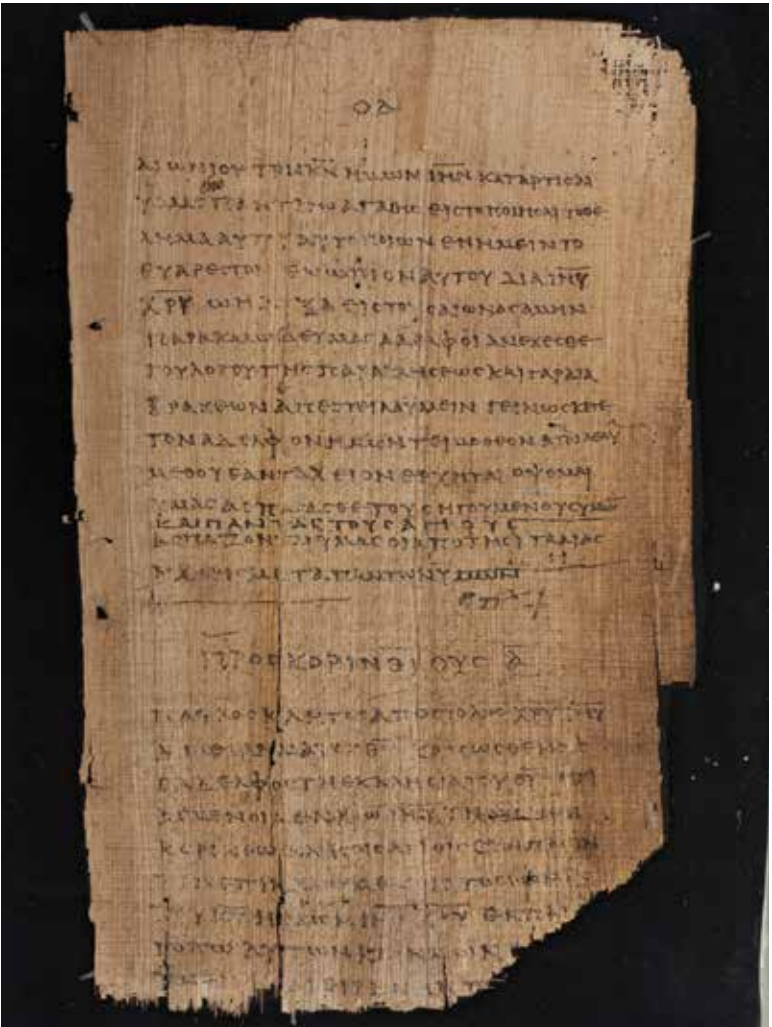
Bifolio (sheet) from the Gospels and Acts, third century AD, Egypt. Bifolio from the Gospel of Luke from a codex containing the Four Gospels and Acts, written in Greek with ink on papyrus. This manuscript is the earliest undeniable example of a four-gospel codex and 30 of the original 112 leaves survive. The Gospels here were probably ordered according to the 'Western' sequence: Matthew, John, Luke, Mark.



▲ A staurogram is a Christian symbol derived from a ligature, the combination of two or more letters into a single glyph, in this case Tau (T) and Rho (P). The staurogram is one of the earliest Christian visual motifs, a precursor to the iconography of the crucified Christ. It became a standard opening to Christian documentary texts written in Coptic, as seen on this pottery fragment. The text that follows reads, “Blame no man, except that you have prayed... Be at peace with everyone in order that you might pray in Paradise (?). This is the Law of the Prophets.” Photos: ©The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

► Representation of angels from the folio from a Coptic parchment manuscript, 3rd to the 7th Century AD, Egypt. The descriptions of angels in biblical texts are vague; they are described only as brilliant, fiery and shining. As a result, their appearance in art had to be invented. The earliest representations of angels in Christian art show wingless figures. Winged angels only appear in the 4th Century, their images derived from Roman Victories or winged genii (protective spirits).

▼ Hebrews 13 Folio from the Pauline Epistles, 3rd Century AD, Egypt. Folio from the end of St Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews and the beginning of his First Letter to the Corinthians, from a codex containing the Pauline Epistles, written in Greek with ink on papyrus; made in Egypt and dated c. 200 AD. The manuscript is the oldest surviving almost complete copy of the Pauline Epistles; 86 of its original 112 folios survive.



Boards from a wax tablet notebook, 4th Century AD, Egypt. The central recesses of these boards (tablets) are filled with wax, the surface of which was inscribed with a stylus. As the wax could be ‘erased’ and reused, these boards were especially useful for student exercises or accountancy. A rough notebook, produced by fixing two or more boards together took the name *caudex* which originally meant ‘block of wood’. This term was later adopted to describe folded books, a codex.

Where faith is ever-present... but useless



Pádraic and his miniature donkey Jenny.



Martin McDonagh's new film confronts us with the ultimate reality that each and every one of us will die, writes Michael Kelly

It's hard not to be touched by the marvellous beauty on display in *The Banshees of Inisherin*, which opened at cinemas at the weekend to critical acclaim.

This article is not intended to be a review, more just this writer's impression. Nor, will there be any spoilers – so readers need have no fear if they haven't yet seen the film.

Set on an island off the west coast during the Civil War, the film was shot largely on Inishmore and Achill Island and it makes for a captivating picture.

Martin's McDonagh screenplay and direction is masterful while performances by Colin Farrell, Brendan Gleeson and Kerry Condon are exceptional.

The film is dark, and very affecting. It touches on the piercing loneliness that can be part of the human condition and the writer

almost seems determined to prove Thoreau's point that "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation". Present too is the violence, bullying and self-harm that can so easily be part of inward-looking communities.

Pádraic Súilleabháin (Colin Farrell) and Colm Doherty (Brendan Gleeson) have been friends for a lifetime. Pádraic, a small dairy farmer, lives with his sister Siobhán (Kerry Condon) and after tending to his animals every morning his day is punctuated by a two o'clock rendezvous with Colm for a trip to the local pub. That is until Colm, the much older man, decides one day that the two can no longer be friends because the former now finds Pádraic "dull".

“The film was shot largely on Inishmore and Achill Island and it makes for a captivating picture”

As if suddenly confronted by his own mortality, Colm thinks life too short to listen to his friend who he now describes as “a limited man”.

Pádraic is crushed by this and the angst it brings to his once-content life. Imagining Colm to be suffering from depression, he persists only to be met with appalling violence.

There is plenty to ponder at an existential level, though Colm lives perfectly happy on the surface. Asked by his sister Siobhán if he ever gets lonely before the rupture with Colm, Pádraic seems surprised at the very thought – though Siobhán's very question hints at her own isolation which is only slaked by her interest in books.

Death looms inescapably over the villagers and Inisherin's own banshee, Mrs McCormick (Sheila

Flitton), freely doles out ominous predictions while smoking a pipe.

Colm – a musician increasingly obsessed about writing meaningful tunes – seems perturbed at the prospect of his own death and the fact that he might leave nothing behind. Pádraic is content to be “nice” and in a drunken moment of honesty recalls how he misses the “niceness” of his late parents.

Antidote

One wonders if “niceness” might indeed be the antidote to the harshness with which the villagers often treat one another in the claustrophobic world of lonely bachelors and spinsters. There is something almost saintly in Pádraic's child-like appeal for decency and niceness to characterise more of life.

As in lots of Martin McDonagh's work, priests and religion loom large. The parish priest (David Pearse) travels to the island each Sunday to celebrate Mass and hear Confession.

“How's the despair?” the priest asks Colm during Confession on one occasion. “It's back a bit,” Colm shrugs. “I'm not going to do anything about it.”

The priest is not an unsympathetic character, but in one particular scene is portrayed as being as well able to dole out the misery on the island as everyone else. It points to a cruel and harsh time.

“Pádraic is crushed by this and the angst it brings to his once-content life”

Confession, like the wider presence of religion in the film, brings no consolation. Catholic imagery is everywhere – but while ever-present, people appear to remain untouched by it. There are crosses in all the homes, and a large statue of the Mother of God gently guides the comings

and goings of the villagers. But, God is portrayed as aloof almost indifferent to the needs of the community.

Distracted

At Mass, dutifully attended by all, the priest rattles through the prayers and parishioners seem distracted, the rituals seemingly not penetrating enough to offer meaning in a bleak existence.

Religious as a child, Martin McDonagh says he lost his faith at the age of twelve. “I started questioning, partly as a reaction to just being around priests in my school,” he says of it.

Yet, *The Banshees of Inisherin* is haunted by a religious sensibility like so much of Martin McDonagh's work, but religion without faith is useless. The absence of the sense of God's closeness is acutely felt and with it the inability to show mercy, forgive and bear with one another patiently and with kindness.



Pádraic and Colm had been best friends.

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Changed, changed utterly: Poland's embrace of Ukraine



Polish society has been transformed forever by the number of refugees it's accepted from neighbouring Ukraine, writes **Jason Osborne**

A stroll around the streets of most Polish cities now will see your ears pick up nearly as much Ukrainian as they do Polish. In my case, the city of Szczecin in Poland's north-west, a walk around the parks, shops, a trip to a restaurant and the local swimming pool over the weekend saw my wife and I commenting on the omnipresence of Ukrainian everywhere we went. At Mass on Sunday evening, the announcements made now-customary mention of Ukrainian-specific services and activities, as those who've made their way here since the end of February have sought to recreate community as best they can with their fellow refugees.

Remarkable

The figures are truly remarkable – according to data from the Polish Ministry of the Interior and Administration, within three months of the outbreak of the war, over 3.6 million people arrived in Poland from Ukraine (not including those who transited through on their way to Germany and further on into western and southern Europe).

“Pre-war, the number of Ukrainians living in Poland wasn't insignificant”

From the period of March 20 until May 10, the number of daily arrivals consistently hovered between 17,000 and 36,000 people. However, the highest intake in a day came on March 6, when over 140,000 refugees entered in a single day. Almost 95% of those entering Poland were women, children and the elderly, and that can be entirely corroborated by experience – the Ukrainian I hear as I make my way to and fro is from the mouths of mothers to their children, and vice-versa. What men you do encounter are those who lived here



Sr Angelica of the Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross talked with a visually impaired refugee student from Ukraine at their monastery in Laski, Poland, May 20. Photo: CNS/Lisa Johnston.

before the war kicked off, and who didn't return.

Pre-war, the number of Ukrainians living in Poland wasn't insignificant, either, with Poland then, as (more so) now, home to the largest Ukrainian community in the EU. Approximately 1.6 million Ukrainians are believed to have called Poland home prior to Russia's current attacks on Ukraine, and there are many reasons for this.

Proximity

Foremost among these reasons is the geographical proximity of the two nations and the pre-existing personal, political and economic ties between Poland and Ukraine. While relations haven't always been good between both countries – at times, and indeed relatively recently in the early to mid-20th Century, they were murderous – recent decades have gone a long way towards bridging the gap, with many Poles living in Ukraine and vice-versa.

At this point, about 1.16 million Ukrainians have returned home, in nearly as large a drive as they came – roughly 15,000 a day were returning to Ukraine prior to Russia's renewed bombardments of western cities in Ukraine, which had largely come to be viewed as relatively peaceful, with much of the recent fighting taking place in the east of the country. Many of the Ukrainian men that were living in

Poland returned home to fight the war, while women returned out of a desire to be close to friends and family, and to reunite their children with their friends.

My parents-in-law along with their friends co-hosted 14 Ukrainian refugees – four women with children of various ages under 18 – from early March through to August, when they decided to return home to Kyiv in an attempt to regain some semblance of normality.

“Many of the Ukrainian men that were living in Poland returned home to fight the war”

People of my parents-in-law's generation and above cobbled together communications with their Ukrainian guests using what Russian they remembered from their days of the enforced-learning of it in school under communism. While it wasn't always clean, and plenty was lost in translation, a balance was reached that enabled them to communicate the necessities while allowing the women and their children the space and privacy they needed.

Not everyone has decided to return however, with an estimated 2.5 million Ukrainians still firmly ensconced in Poland, trying to

make the best of a bad situation. Making the best of it, they are, with *Business Insider Polska* reporting recently that Ukrainians have started almost 10,000 businesses since February 24. A remarkable statistic, it would make almost every tenth business in Poland Ukrainian-owned, with most of their enterprises in industries where Poland is facing labour shortages – such as construction, IT and transport and logistics.

Safe

If it was safe to say at the outbreak of the war in February that not only Ukraine, but Poland will be changed forever by the biggest movement of people in Europe since World War II, it's even safer now. According to the *Report of the fact-finding mission to Poland* by Ms Leyla Kayacik, the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees, 60-70% of the arrivals from Ukraine have been settled in Poland's 12 biggest cities, with the majority being housed in Warsaw – 750,000 people.

As in the case of my parents-in-law and a couple of members of the wider family over here, Ms Kayacik notes, most of the refugees have been hosted by “private individuals”, who until July 1 were financially supported by the Government so as to avoid creating large, permanent refugee camps.

The question Poland now faces is how to prepare for the medium to long-term, having coped commendably, according to Pope Francis, with welcoming its stricken neighbours at such short notice.

“Approximately 1.6 million Ukrainians are believed to have called Poland home prior to Russia's current attacks on Ukraine”

Ms Kayacik identified housing, access to the labour market, education and the linguistic integration and inclusion of both adults and children as being highest on the agenda, when the situation is considered with an eye to the future. In addition, continuing work on providing counselling and trauma assistance, combatting human trafficking and safeguarding human rights against violence and abuse have been marked as vital amid the massive movement of people.

While the data tells a stunning story, on the ground, it's a story of Polish signs being accompanied by Ukrainian as a matter of course, hearing Ukrainian in urban centres with an astonishing frequency, and news from Ukraine being received as anxiously by Poles as though it were from their own nation.

Out&About

Families on a mission



LOUTH: Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin welcomes families from Ireland, Italy and Spain who have come to live in Dundalk as families on mission, bringing the joy of the Gospel to others, October 17.



BELFAST: St Vincent de Paul (SVP) members from across Belfast were invited into the Lord Mayor's parlour in Belfast City Hall for a reception celebrating the work of SVP volunteers across the city by Lord Mayor Cllr Christina Black.



TIPPERARY: The Benemerenti medal was presented to John Joe Buckley for a lifetime of service at the golden jubilee of renovations of the Church of Holy Spirit, Youghalarra.

IN SHORT

New Catholic school for Belfast

The North's Education Minister Michelle McIlveen has officially opened the new £8.3 million Saint Patrick's Primary School in Belfast.

The new school, which has 21 classrooms, was formed following the amalgamation of Edmund Rice Christian Brothers and Star of the Sea primary schools.

Speaking at the opening ceremony the Minister said: "This is a great day for everyone at Saint Patrick's Primary School and the wider community in Belfast."

"The significant investment of £8.3 million has created a fantastic new school equipped with modern and high-quality facilities which, I know, will be enjoyed by pupils for many generations to come."

Michael Keenan, Director of Education Catholic Council for Maintained Schools

(CCMS) expressed his delight at the "realisation of such a praiseworthy project".

"As an organisation, the CCMS firmly believe that no child should be left behind, he said."

Kilmore launches spirituality courses

The Kilmore Diocesan Pastoral Centre has launched two new spirituality courses, encompassing contemplative prayer and psychotherapy.

'Alive and Active', taught by Bishop-emeritus Leo O'Reilly and Fr Darragh Connolly, combines contemplative prayer with scripture.

This course "offers a light examination of the thinking of Jesus Christ, to both know him better and ponder where his thinking intersects with your life".

Meanwhile, 'Backpack for Adults' (Introduction) is presented by psychotherapist James Burke, B.Ed, Dip., MSc. It covers psychology, neuroscience and the need for spirituality.

The 'Alive and Active' course will run on Thursdays for six weeks starting on October 27, 7.30pm-9pm.

The 'Backpack for Adults' (Introduction) will run on Tuesdays for six weeks starting on October 25, 7.30pm-9pm.

For more information on either course call (049) 437 5004, extension 101, or email pastoralcentre@kilmorediocese.ie.

Recruit for Ireland's Equestrian Order

Chevalier Gary Brian Sullivan was invested into the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sep-

ulchre of Jerusalem – Lieutenancy of Ireland on October 15.

His investiture at the hands of Archbishop-emeritus Michael Neary took place before the 'Western Mass' in St John the Baptist Church, The Neale, Co. Mayo.

Following the investiture, a number of promotions were awarded to the following members:

Chevalier John Thomas Kennedy KSG to the rank of Grand Officer (Mayo).

Chevalier Leonard Charles 'Glenn' Kieley (Mayo/London) to the rank of Knight Commander.

Chevalier Peter Oliver Moylan (Clare) to the rank of Knight Commander.

After the ceremonial Mass, lunch was held in Ashford Castle.



DUBLIN: Redemptoristine postulants Nilima and Anusha show off snuggle bunnies made for the Dublin convent's store, October 16.



ROME: James McGloughlin of Clogher Diocese and Gerard Gallagher are pictured at the international planning meeting for next year's World Youth Day.



MAYO: The 'Western Mass' of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, Lieutenancy of Ireland, took place on October 15 in St John the Baptist Church, The Neale. Pictured before the Mass are: Chevalier Raphael Kelly, KC*HS (Dublin); Chevalier Sean Kenna, KCHS (Ballina); Chevalier Brian O'Sullivan, KHS (Atlanta); Chevalier Glenn Kieley, KCHS (London); Chevalier Mark Kane, KCHS (Tuam); Chevalier Peter Moylan, KCHS (Ennis).



MAYO: Attending the Dominican Pilgrimage at Knock Shrine on Sunday, October 9, are Bro. John Melvin OP, Donegal, with his parents Gearoid and Siobhan and his brother Tom. Photo: John Cleary.



OFFALY: Gerry Dolan of Birr receives the Brendan Medal from Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan for over 70 years dedicated service to liturgical music in Killaloe diocese. He is pictured along with Paddy Quigley and Brian Kennedy.



BELFAST: The official opening of St Patrick's Primary School took place on October 18. Pictured at the opening are (from left): Principal Margaret Neeson, Education Minister Michelle McIlveen, Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor, Chair of Board of Governors Brian White and P1 pupils Rayah and Odin.



MONAGHAN: Fr Peter Corrigan PE celebrated his golden jubilee Mass in St Laobhins Church, Killeevan on Sunday, October 9, before a packed church in the presence of the Bishop of Clogher Larry Duffy. Bishop Duffy and Fr Corrigan are pictured here after the Mass. Photo: Peter Cassidy

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



LIMERICK: Brendan O'Neill (centre) receives his 20 years of service medal from Limerick Knights' chaplain Fr Joe Hayes SJ and Bro. Liam Ryan, CFC (Congregation of Christian Brothers) and Knight of St Columbanus.



LIMERICK: Ger Stack (centre) is presented with his medal for long service for the Knights in Limerick.



LIMERICK: Limerick members of the Knights of St Columbanus are pictured after the presentation of medals of service to two knights in recognition for their work for the lay apostolate.



LONDON: Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey paid a visit to the Irish community in London and is pictured on October 14 with some of the Little Company of Mary sisters, the same order who ran the hospital in which he was born.



DOWN: St Patrick's College Dungannon's year 14 pupils were up bright and early, spending their morning in the Mourne Mountains as they prepare for their Duke of Edinburgh Award, October 15.

ANTRIM

A monastic weekend experience with the Cistercian monks of Our Lady of Bethlehem Abbey, Portlone, takes place Friday November 4 to Sunday November 6. Contact Fr Aelred on frmagee@yahoo.co.uk or 0044 28 258 21 211.

Beginning Experience is offering a programme of bereavement support in St Bride's Hall, Derryvolgie Ave., Belfast on Saturday, October 29 and November 26 for those grieving the loss of a partner through death, separation or divorce. Booking essential. To find out more, contact Phil: 02890 207645 or Marie 07896119669 or email belfastbe@yahoo.com.

CARLOW

The 6.15pm Mass in Carlow Cathedral will be celebrated in Irish on the first and second Saturdays of each month from October to May. Singers and musicians welcome to Cór an Aifrinn. New Readers welcome. Enquiries to 087 2857048.

CAVAN

'Alive and Active' course mixing contemplative prayer and reflections on scripture will run in the Kilmore Diocesan Pastoral centre on Thursdays for six weeks starting on October 27, 7:30pm-9pm. For more information on either course call (049) 437 5004, extension 101, or email pastoralcentre@kilmorediocese.ie.

CORK

A marriage enrichment weekend takes place Friday November 4-Sunday November 6 in the International Hotel, Cork Airport. For more information or to book, visit www.marriageencounter.ie.

Youth 2000 Prayer Meeting each Tuesday at 7pm for young adults 18-35. The group meet in the conference room of the North Cathedral, guests are asked to enter from the Roman Street side entrance and the door closes at 7.15pm.

Medjugorje prayer meeting every Wednesday at 8pm in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in Holy Trinity Church, Fr Matthew Quay, Cork city.

DERRY

Termonbacca Carmelite monastery will celebrate a triduum of Masses November 2-4 at 7.30pm each evening to pray for the souls of family or friends who have died. Wednesday November 2 will focus on deceased mothers, Thursday November 3 deceased fathers and Friday November 4 deceased children.

DONEGAL

God's Mercy in the Gospel of John, a silent retreat, takes place in the Divine Mercy Centre, Letterkenny, November 25-27. To book or for more information contact 074 916 9934 or dvmletterkenny@gmail.com.

FERMANAGH

November Service for the Dead will take place in St Michael's Church, Enniskillen, on Sunday November 6 at 3pm.

GALWAY

A day of prayer and reflection takes place in Emmanuel House, Clonfert on Saturday November 5 at 11am. It will be led by Eddie Stones and team. Day will include Confession, adoration, healing service, rosary, music and Mass. Please bring a packed lunch.

KERRY

Gianna Care are hosting a charity black tie ball and gala dinner in the Killarney Plaza Hotel and Spa, Saturday, October 29, at 6pm. Tickets cost €100 per person. To purchase, contact Catherina 087 919 5609 or Shane 087 123 9396.

KILKENNY

The rosary is said at 2:30pm on Fridays in the Grotto Graiguenamanagh.

LIMERICK

Theology on Tap returns October 18 at Bobby Byrne's pub, with guest speaker Paul Cesar. Starts at 7.30pm. Contact vocations@limerickdiocese.ie for more information.

LEITRIM

Ballinamore prayer group meet on Tuesdays 8:30-9:45pm, in St Brigid's Parish Centre, Ballinamore.

MAYO

Catholic Men's road trip retreat takes place November 18-20, walking/cycling from Knock, Co. Mayo to Rossnowlough, Co. Donegal. Cost €80, for men aged 16 and up only. Daily Mass, food and accommodation included. Text 083 389 1105 for more details.

OFFALY

Youth 2000 weekly prayer meeting on Thursdays from 7-8pm in the Day Chapel, Tullamore. Tea and chat in the Parish Centre from 8-8.30pm. For 18-35 year olds.

TYRONE

Omagh Charismatic Prayer Group meet in the Pastoral Centre on Thursday evenings with Rosary at 7.40pm, followed by prayer meeting at 8pm.

WATERFORD

Renewal Workshop for RE teachers on how to use Christian meditation and/or Lectio Divina in the classroom takes place Saturday, November 12, 10am-1pm in the Sacred Heart Convent, Cedar Lodge, Newtown Rd. Visit waterfordandlismore.ie/education to register.

All Saints party takes place on the vigil of All Saints, 4pm, Monday, October 31, in St John's Pastoral Centre, St John's Hill. Please bring a small plate of food for a shared table. All ages welcome, come dressed as a saint.

St Mary's Abbey, Glencairn, the only Cistercian monastery for women in Ireland, is hosting a monastic experience weekend October 28-30 for women discerning their vocation.

WESTMEATH

Charismatic prayer meeting takes place Tuesdays at 7pm in Mullingar Parish Community Centre.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the Cathedral of Christ the King from 2.30-7pm Monday-Friday.

WEXFORD

Padre Pio healing Mass celebrated by Fr Bryan Shortall OFM Cap. and Fr Paddy Cushen PP takes place in Ferns, October 28, at 7.30pm. Followed by individual blessings with a first class relic.



World Report

IN BRIEF

US bishop renews plea to launch mental health ministry

● After announcing Bishop John Dolan lost his sister to death by suicide, the Diocese of Phoenix renewed his “urgent plea to get mental health ministry underway”.

“Our hearts are breaking as we make known the loss of Mary Elizabeth Dolan, youngest sister of Bishop John P. Dolan of the Diocese of Phoenix,” the diocese shared on its social media pages October 19.

“Mary, who from her days in college suffered from mental depressive disorder, was found on October 16 to have died by suicide,” the statement said.

The diocese also shared that Mary is the third of Dolan’s eight siblings to die by suicide, “underlining his urgent plea to get mental health ministry underway in the Diocese of Phoenix”. He also lost a brother-in-law to suicide.

Pope Francis to visit relatives in northern Italy

● The Vatican announced October 19 that Pope Francis will pay a private visit to his relatives in northern Italy next month.

The Pope will travel to the Italian town of Asti, outside of Turin, November 19 to celebrate the 90th birthday of his cousin, according to Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni.

Following the private meeting with family members, the Pope will stay overnight in the

Piedmont region to offer a public Mass in the Asti Cathedral for the Solemnity of Christ the King on November 20.

The weekend visit will bring the 85-year-old Pope back to the Italian diocese where his father, Mario José Bergoglio, lived before emigrating from Italy to Argentina in 1929. The Pope’s maternal grandparents also immigrated to Argentina from northern Italy.

Fatima’s Sister Lucia one step closer to beatification

● The cause for beatification of Sr Lucia dos Santos, the eldest child to witness the Fatima apparitions, has taken a step forward.

In a meeting at the Vatican, the postulators for Lucia’s cause submitted the *positio* document containing testimonies and information detailing her heroic virtues to the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints.

Fr Carlos Cabecinhas, the rector of the Fatima shrine, announced the update on the October 13 anniversary of the Miracle of the Sun, the last Marian apparition in Fatima in 1917.

The *Positio* on the Life, Virtues and Reputation for Holiness of Sister Lucia de Jesus dos Santos will now be examined by nine theologians.

European court rules in favour of feminist claiming to ‘abort Jesus’

● The judges of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) have ruled unanimously that a feminist who simulated aborting Jesus on the altar of the Parisian church of La Madeleine, bare-breasted, was exercising her “freedom of expression”.

In an October 11 decision, the ECHR condemned France for having pronounced a suspended prison sentence against Eloïse Bouton, a former member of the group Femen, for acts of sexual exhibition.

Ms Bouton entered the famous Parisian church topless in December 2013, covered in pro-abortion slogans, interrupting a rehearsal of Christmas carols.

As local media reported, the feminist stood in front of the altar, wearing a blue veil to mock the Virgin Mary, arms open in a cross with pieces of animal liver supposed to represent a foetus. She then mimed an “abortion” of “Jesus” before urinating on the ground in front of the astounded Faithful.

Pope urges French politicians to reject push for euthanasia

As France begins a national debate on euthanasia, Pope Francis urged politicians from the country’s northern region to reject the “throwaway culture” and instead focus on providing care and relief to those nearing the end of their lives.

“I dare to hope that on such essential issues the debate can be conducted in truth to accompany life to its natural end and not to get caught up in this throwaway culture that is everywhere,” the Pope said October 21 as he met with mayors and other elected local, regional and national officials making a pilgrimage sponsored by the Archdiocese of Cambrai.

French President Emmanuel Macron, who met with Pope Francis October 24, announced in early September the beginning of a nationwide discussion about allowing euthanasia in some cases; he called for local debates, country-wide consultations with health care workers and discussions with political parties to reach a decision in 2023.

Pope Francis began his talk to the pilgrims by noting how much the region and people of Cambrai had suffered with shuttering of coal mines, steel mills and textile factories, and he urged the officials to pay particular attention to the region’s poor and needy.

“Welcome and care” must be the guiding principles of their public policies, the Pope



Archbishop Vincent Dollman of Cambrai, France, gives Pope Francis gifts during a meeting on October 21 in the Consistory Hall of the Apostolic Palace. The archbishop led a pilgrimage of mayors and elected officials to the Vatican. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

told them. With northern France hosting thousands of immigrants, Pope Francis urged them to be welcoming of “the most disadvantaged people, primarily migrants – and you know how crucial this issue is and how close to my heart”.

But he said he also was thinking of people with disabilities. “They need more structures to facilitate their lives and the lives of their loved ones and, above all, to demonstrate the respect that is due to them.”

Policies to promote their inclusion also must strive to help them find jobs, he said. “It is more necessary than ever to continue to set as a priority goal access to work – for everyone!”

But the heart of the Pope’s remarks were about the care of the sick and elderly, especially at the very end of their lives.

The elderly in nursing homes and those who are dying, he said, must be accompanied and given palliative care.

“Caregivers, by their nature, have a vocation to

provide care and relief,” the Pope said. While it is not always possible to heal a patient, “we cannot ask caregivers to kill their patients, which is kind of the programme of the throwaway culture.”

Pope Francis repeated what he had told a French journalist on the flight back from his trip to Kazakhstan in mid-September: The more people find a justification to kill someone, the more they kill.

“This is a mathematical progression,” he said.

Priests abducted in Cameroon plead for release

A video has emerged on social media that shows five Catholic priests, a nun, and three others who were kidnapped last month in Cameroon’s Mamfe Diocese pleading with their local ordinary to secure their release.

On September 16, unidentified gunmen attacked St Mary’s Catholic Nchang Parish of Mamfe Diocese in Cameroon. Nine people were abducted and buildings on the parish premises, including the church, were burned down.

The attackers kidnapped Fr Elias

Okorie, Fr Barnabas Ashu, Fr Cornelius Jingwa, Fr Job Francis Nwobegu, Fr Emmanuel Asaba, Sr Jacinta C. Udeagha, Nkem Patrick Osang (an assistant catechist), Blanche Bright, and Mme. Kelechukwu.

In the 45-second video circulated October 19, Fr Jingwa, one of the abductees, provides updates about their welfare and pleads with Bishop Aloysius Fondong Abangalo to do “everything possible” to secure their release.

“So far it has not been easy. If you look at us, you will see our faces are very dismal,

very unhappy,” Fr Jingwa says in the video.

He adds: “It is quite difficult and we are only begging my Lord that you do everything possible to get us out of here.”

“It is a matter of do or die,” the priest laments.

“You see for example, I have been very sick, my brothers too are not feeling fine at all,” he continues.

“Please kindly, my Lord, help get us out of here. Do whatever it takes to listen to this voice and do what they ask of you. Thank you.”

Pope hails new Catholic-Jewish study centre in Poland

Pope Francis expressed his hope that a new centre for Catholic-Jewish relations in Poland will “foster appreciation of the common heritage, not only of the two religions, but also of the two peoples”.

Speaking to Polish pilgrims at his weekly general audience

October 19, the Pope noted the inauguration two days earlier of the Abraham J. Heschel Centre for Catholic-Jewish Relations at the Catholic University of Lublin, Poland.

Susannah Heschel, a professor of Jewish studies at Dartmouth College in Hanover,

New Hampshire, spoke in Lublin at the inauguration of the centre named after her father, a well-known rabbi and scholar in the United States, who had fled Poland just before the Nazi invasion of the country.

With the Holocaust, she said, “Judaism in Poland was

nearly destroyed, but its spirit was preserved in my father’s writings.” She expressed her hope that the centre would encourage research and excellence in teaching, but “above all, cultivate a new spirit of awe at the holiness of different faiths”.



Edited by Jason Osborne
jason@irishcatholic.ie

Mummies going home



Peruvian Foreign Minister César Landa Arroyo, centre, and Cardinal Fernando Vérgez Alzaga, president of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State, look at the mummies that will be returned to Peru. The two signed a formal agreement for the mummies' repatriation October 17 in the Vatican Museums. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media.

Vatican movie night: Popcorn, beer, rosaries and Russell Crowe

As soon as the lights dimmed for the start of the show in the tiny Vatican movie theatre, the crack of beer cans being opened joined the quieter crunch of popcorn.

After all, when there is a private showing of *The Greatest Beer Run Ever*, starring Zac Efron and a green duffel bag full of Pabst Blue Ribbon beer, organisers made sure an impromptu concession stand in the theatre was stocked with the Italian counterpart, "Nastro Azzurro," mineral water and small buckets of popcorn.

Moviegoers also were treated to a visit and photo

opportunities with the film's co-star, Russell Crowe, who was in Rome for a festival promoting another one of his films and who was honoured by the city of Rome October 14 as "Rome's ambassador in the world," two decades after his Oscar-winning performance in *Gladiator*.

Based on a true story, the *The Greatest Beer Run Ever* follows the adventures of John "Chickie" Donohue. Played by Efron, the young Irish Catholic Marine veteran sneaks into war-torn Vietnam to deliver beer to his friends to show them their small Manhattan neighbourhood was still

supporting them despite the quickly deteriorating public support for the war. A neighbourhood mother also asks him to bring a set of rosary beads to her son – who is one of Donohue's best friends.

It's a story of "faith and friendship during the war," said Oblate Fr Andrew Small, who has a brief cameo in the film as the neighbourhood's parish priest.

The event October 17 was organised by the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, which Fr Small serves as secretary. The commission invited members of the papal Swiss Guard and the

Vatican gendarme corps to attend the screening of the film, which was released by Apple Studios in September.

Among those attending were 16 new recruits of the gendarme police force who were the first group of gendarme recruits to receive safeguarding training provided by the commission.

Fr Small told *Catholic News Service* October 19, "Those serving on the front lines, in whatever way, are strongly motivated by a desire to protect others. What keeps them going if not the bonds of friendship and memories of loved ones who care for them?"

Eritrean authorities detain bishop without explanation

Eritrean authorities are continuing to detain Catholic Bishop Fikremariam Hagos Tsalm of Segheneity, who was arrested at the Asmara International Airport October 15.

After the Catholic Church queried about the situation and his whereabouts, government authorities confirmed the bishop, who turned 52 October 23, is in their custody.

Bishop Tsalm was picked up soon after returning from a trip to Europe,

but as of October 18, government authorities had not given any reasons for his detention.

Fides, news agency of the Pontifical Mission Societies, said Bishop Tsalm and two other priests were being held at Adi Abeto prison. "We have received this ominous news (of the arrest) with immense pain and bewilderment at what is happening in our country," Fr Mussie Zerai, a Catholic priest of Eritrean origin who works with

migrants, told *Catholic News Service*.

"Our hope (is) that all priests and the bishop currently in custody will be released as soon as possible." On October 11, security agents arrested Fr Mihretab Stefanos, the priest in charge of St Michael's Catholic Church in the diocese.

Another Catholic priest, identified as Capuchin Abbot Abraham, was detained in the western town of Teseney.

Vatican roundup

Academy for Life defends appointment of economist despite abortion posts

● Convinced that poverty, inequality and economic systems are killing millions of people each year and threatening the dignity of many more people, Pope Francis appointed an economist to the Pontifical Academy for Life.

But the nomination of Mariana Mazzucato, a professor of the economics of innovation and public value at University College London, raised concern in some quarters because of her retweets or positive comments on tweets in June criticising the US Supreme Court decision to overrule *Roe v. Wade* and affirm that there is no constitutional right to abortion in the United States.

Ms Mazzucato's nomination, as well as the nomination of six other new members, was announced by the Vatican October 15. In the wake of the criticism, Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the academy, told *Catholic News Service* October 20 that all the members, including Ms Mazzucato, "have at heart the value of human life in their area of expertise. They are not all Catholics and do not profess all the tenets of the Catholic faith. And we know there are differences on the level of ethics, but they defend life in its entirety".

A statement from the academy October 19 said, "The Pontifical Academy for Life is a body of study and research. So, debate and dialogue take place among people from different backgrounds." However, it added, when a document is prepared for publication by the academy it is first reviewed by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Vatican to return three pre-Columbian mummies to Peru

● The Vatican October 17 returned three pre-Columbian mummies to Peru, which had been loaned for the 1925 Universal Vatican Exposition and have since been kept in its Anima Mundi Ethnological Museum.

The repatriation of the remains was made official through the signing of an agreement October 17 by the president of the Governorate of Vatican City State, Cardinal Fernando Vergéz, and the minister of foreign affairs of Peru, César Landa.

"Thanks to the good disposition of the Vatican and Pope Francis, it has been possible to carry out the return, as is appropriate. I came to sign that document. In the coming weeks they will arrive in Lima," the Peruvian foreign minister told the local press.

According to Vatican News, the Vatican Museums will study the skeletal remains to determine their period of origin.

The mummies were found at an altitude of 9,800 feet in the Peruvian Andes.

"The feeling shared

with Pope Francis is that these mummies, more than objects, are human beings. Human remains that must be buried with dignity in the place where they come from, that is, in Peru," Mr Landa said.

At the Vatican, the Peruvian foreign minister met with Pope Francis and then with Secretary of State of the Holy See Cardinal Pietro Parolin and with Cardinal Paul Richard Gallagher, the secretary for relations with states.

The Anima Mundi Ethnological Museum has more than 80,000 objects and works of art.

According to the museum's website, the collection holds "thousands of prehistoric artefacts from all over the world and dating from over two million years ago, to the gifts given to the current pontiff; from evidence of the great Asian spiritual traditions, to those of the pre-Columbian and Islamic civilisations; from the work of African populations to that of the inhabitants of Oceania and Australia, and the indigenous peoples of America".



LetterfromRome



Cindy Wooden

Saying it is committed to “respectful dialogue” with China’s communist government and to “fostering the mission of the Catholic Church and the good of the Chinese people,” the Vatican announced it has renewed its agreement with China on the appointment of bishops.

“In the past four years only six bishops have been named and installed under the terms of the agreement”

The “provisional agreement,” forged in 2018 and renewed in 2020, has been extended for another two years, the Vatican announced October 22.

The text of the agreement has never been made public, but Vatican officials said it outlines procedures for ensuring Catholic bishops are elected by the Catholic community in China and approved by the Pope before their ordinations and installations.

In the past four years only six bishops have been named and installed under the terms of the agreement.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, interviewed by Vatican News on October 22, noted that the achievements of the agreement also included the lifting of the excommunications or irregular status of seven bishops who had been ordained with government approval, but not the Vatican’s consent and, he said, “the first six ‘clandestine’ bishops have also succeeded in being registered and thus have had their position made official, being recognised as bishops by public institutions”.

Many dioceses are still without bishops or have very elderly bishops, he said, but the process is continuing.

However, Cardinal Parolin also acknowledged “there are dioceses in which, despite all efforts and good will, no fruitful dialogue exists with local authorities”.

The agreement is still “provisional” because “we are still in the experimentation phase,” the cardinal said. “As is always the case, such difficult and delicate situations require adequate time for implementation in order to then be able to verify the effectiveness of the result and identify possible improvements.”

“Pope Francis – with determination and patient foresight – has

Vatican and China renew their agreement on appointing bishops

A poster of Chinese President Xi Jinping hangs next to a crucifix on the wall of the house of a Tibetan Catholic on Christmas Eve in Niuren village, in China’s Yunnan province, in this 2018 file photo. Photos: CNS/Tyrone Siu, Reuters



“Cardinal Parolin told Vatican News that the agreement is not primarily about diplomatic relations with China”

decided to continue along this path, not under the illusion of finding perfection in human rules, but in the concrete hope of being able to assure Chinese Catholic communities, even in such a complex context, of the guidance of pastors who are worthy and suitable for the task entrusted to them,” Cardinal Parolin said.

Freedom and security

The cardinal reaffirmed what Pope Francis and Vatican officials have said all along: giving up full control over the choice of bishops is not what the Vatican would have hoped for, but it seemed to be a good first step toward ensuring greater freedom and security for the Catholic community in China.

The deal, however, has been criticised by several prominent figures, including by Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, retired archbishop of Hong Kong, who said the agreement would “kill” the unofficial or underground Church in China,

whose leaders refuse to register with the state-run Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.

Cardinal Parolin told Vatican News that the agreement is not primarily about diplomatic relations with China. Rather, he said, “it mainly concerns aspects that are essential to the daily life of the Church in China. I am thinking, for example, of the validity of the sacraments celebrated and the certainty for millions of Chinese Faithful that they will be able to live out their faith in full Catholic communion, without thereby being suspected of not being loyal citizens to their country”.

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, whose maternal grandfather was Chinese, told Fides, the news agency of the Dicastery for Evangelisation, that in China “historical events had led to painful wounds within the Church, to the point of casting a shadow of suspicion on the sacramental life itself. So, there were things at stake that touch the inti-



Clergymen depart following the installation Mass of Bishop Stephen Chow Sau-yan at Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Hong Kong December 4, 2021.

mate nature of the Church and her mission of salvation”.

The agreement attempts “to safeguard the valid apostolic succession and the sacramental nature of the Catholic Church in China,” Cardinal Tagle said. “This can reassure, comfort and enliven baptised Catholics in China.”

“The joy of some and the perplexity of others ‘is part of the process’”

As a by-product of its dialogue with the Chinese government, he said, “one of the wishes of the Holy See has always been to foster reconciliation, and to see the lacerations and contrasts opened within the Church by the tribulations it has gone through, healed. Certain wounds need time and God’s consolation in order to be healed.”

The Vatican is not naive, he said. “The Holy See has never spoken of

the agreement as the solution of all problems. It has always been perceived and affirmed that the path is long, it can be tiring and that the agreement itself could cause misunderstandings and disorientation.”

Suffering

In addition, the Vatican would not and does not ignore or minimise the suffering and the different reactions of Chinese Catholics to the agreement, he said. The joy of some and the perplexity of others “is part of the process. But one always has to dirty one’s hands with the reality of things as they are”.

“Many signs attest that many Chinese Catholics have grasped the inspiration followed by the Holy See in the ongoing process,” he said. “They are grateful and comforted for a process that confirms before all their full communion with the Pope and the universal Church.”



Jonah McKeown

A study that claims to be the largest national survey of Catholic priests conducted in more than 50 years has found that despite relatively high levels of personal well-being and fulfilment among priests as a whole, a significant percentage of priests have issues with burnout, distrust in their bishop, and fears of being falsely accused of misconduct.

Conducted by The Catholic Project, a research group at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, the study released at an October 19 press conference used survey responses from 3,516 priests across 191 dioceses and eparchies in the United States.

The study also draws on in-depth interviews with 100 of those priests and a survey of US bishops, 131 of whom — or about two-thirds of the total — responded.

The study is framed in part in the context of the landmark 2002 norms known as the Dallas Charter that came in response to the clergy sex abuse scandal in the US.

"Two decades after the implementation of the Dallas Charter, priests in the United States remain supportive of its core policies and confident in the Church's effectiveness at safeguarding the vulnerable," the report states.

Vocations

"American Catholic priests continue to demonstrate that they are flourishing in their vocations," it notes. "However, this good news is tempered by concerning indications of burnout among younger priests, a lack of confidence in existing due process protections for priests accused of misconduct, and a corresponding lack of trust in bishops who have come to be seen less as fathers and brothers than as administrators."

“The study is framed in part in the context of the landmark 2002 norms known as the Dallas Charter that came in response to the clergy sex abuse scandal in the US”

A large percentage of the priests and bishops surveyed reported high levels of well-being: 77% of priests and 81% of bishops can be categorised as “flourishing,” based on a measurement called the Harvard Flourishing Index.

"Priestly formation equips priests with regular practices to cultivate closeness with God and healthy relationships in their community. Such practices are important contributors to the well-being of priests," the report notes.

The high levels of well-being found in this survey contrast with that of an unrelated recent major



US study of priests reveals array of challenges

survey of priests released in late 2021, which suggested a more “pessimistic” view of the Catholic Church among US priests today as compared with 2002. That study found that 72.1% of priests in 2002 said they were “very satisfied” with their life as a priest, down to 62% saying the same in 2021.

The Catholic Project's findings acknowledge that priests are under strain, however.

"Among priests' very real professions of contentment and fulfilment in our interviews, we found ample evidence of their challenges and stresses. Some of these stressors contribute to burnout in priestly ministry," the report states.

On the topic of burnout, the report says that 45% of priests surveyed reported at least one symptom of ministry burnout, unevenly distributed between diocesan (50%) and religious (33%) priests. Only 9% exhibited severe burnout, the report says, but the report's authors cautioned that younger priests were significantly more likely than older priests to experience burnout.

Trust issues with bishops

Turning to the topic of trust, the report states that on average, 49% of diocesan priests overall today express confidence in their bishop. Levels of trust varied considerably across dioceses, and the data show that the level of trust was down from 63% in 2001 — the year before the sexual abuse crisis, which included many revelations of bishops mishandling abuse cases, exploded in the US.

"Diocesan priests report significantly lower levels of trust in their bishops than religious priests do in their major superiors. Trust in

the US bishops as a whole is low among priests overall, with only 24% expressing confidence in the leadership and decision-making of the bishops in general," the report says.

The researchers said they would not be releasing information on which priests from which dioceses participated, citing confidentiality agreements.

Trust issues between priests and their bishop are associated with an 11.5% reduction in that priest's level of well-being, on average. There was also a disparity between perceptions of whether bishops would help priests with personal struggles. Ninety-two percent of bishops said they would help a priest with personal struggles “very well,” while only 36% of diocesan priests said this of their bishop. In addition, a small majority of priests said they view their bishop primarily as an administrator, as opposed to as a spiritual father.

Most of the priests surveyed lean on their parishioners and lay friends for support, more so than their bishop, the report notes.

"A trusting relationship with one's bishop is robustly associated with every dimension of priests' well-being ... priests who have greater trust in their bishops are doing far better than any others," the report reads.

Fears about false accusations

In terms of the Church's response to the sexual abuse crisis, 90% of priests see their dioceses as having a strong culture of child safety and protection, and nearly 70% of diocesan priests see the policy as positively demonstrating the Church's values and important for rebuilding trust with the wider public.

At the same time, however, 40% of priests see the “zero-tolerance” policy for misconduct as too harsh, and many fear that a single false allegation of sexual abuse could ruin them, the report states. Among the priests surveyed, a large majority — 82% — said they regularly fear false allegations. And many diocesan priests fear being abandoned by their diocese and bishop should they find themselves falsely accused, more so than religious priests.

"Living in constant fear of a life-ending accusation definitely puts a cloud over the priesthood," an anonymous diocesan priest told the researchers.

“Most of the priests surveyed lean on their parishioners and lay friends for support, more so than their bishop, the report notes”

"And honestly, I think most priests have that. Because the life-ending accusation doesn't have to be based in any reality. You know, it can just come out of somebody's three years of recovered memory, therapy, and have no ground in anything that ever really happened, but you're still doomed when it happens," the priest related. "And everybody knows that."

Some priests also expressed worry about relatively recent developments in the Church to strengthen the protection of “vulnerable adults” as possibly being overly broad and leading to a lack of due process for priests accused of misconduct involving vulnerable adults.

"Pursuing the Dallas Charter's goals of creating safe environments, providing healing and reconciliation and justice for victims of clerical sexual abuse, and holding abusers and enablers accountable, ought not be seen as incompatible with affording support and due process for priests," the report says.

"Justice demands the Church protect the innocent, including innocent priests," the report emphasises.

Ideas for moving forward

The priests interviewed by researchers offered several recommendations for improving priests' trust in their bishops and superiors.

They recommended that bishops strengthen their relationships with priests in a familial manner, rather than in the manner of a CEO or employer; knowing priests' names, authentically engaging with priests in social events, and finding ways to relate to priests with humility and in a non-bureaucratic manner.

The priests also requested more open and clear communication about matters such as planning and finances.

"Priests also emphasised the need for transparency about the review process for allegations of abuse, ensuring due process, providing more clarity around allegations made against priests, and treating accused priests as innocent until proven guilty," the report says.

Finally, many priests also emphasised the need for bishops to rebuild trust with priests and the laity. Recent instances where Church officials dealt with abuse accusations quietly or leniently have eroded priests' trust in the accountability of their bishops, the report says.

Letters

Letter of the week

Children on frontline of sex-ed proxy war

Dear Editor, Despite deep disquiet, expressed in a recent National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) public consultation, it is now almost certain, that a new intensified mandatory sex-education programme will be imposed upon schools. It will be part of an expanded SPHE module.

This is the third wave of sex-ed programmes, each of which has been accompanied by ever increasing, devastating outcomes in our society; personal, relationship, social.

The first wave sought to evade the natural biological consequences associated with separating sex from marriage; neglect of babies and lifelong sexually acquired diseases. The second wave tried to diminish the emotional

and mental health issues that arise from deliberately ignoring our innate sense of morality, modesty, and sense of self-worth, which is crushed by the casualisation of sexualised relationships. Teachers speak of 'difficult classroom conversations' because they fail to impart a worthy vision of marriage and to equip students with the confidence and means to make it a reality.

The third wave now being unleashed is a contrived gender-identity ideology which disregards both the science and the social aspects of what it means to be human.

The most fundamental objective of a school having a Catholic ethos is that the children would have the opportunity of putting on the 'mind of Christ'.

However, our Government (through the NCCA) is seeking to eradicate this and replace it with a hyper-consumeristic identity mindset. They are kowtowing to vociferous atheists, activists, and self-appointed unaccountable experts, who monetise the misery of our 'spun-out' youth.

We are witnessing the outworking of a proxy war, where our children irrespective of the school's ethos, are on the front line, while teachers are being induced into the service of this fatally flawed ideology. They are counting on us parents, grandparents, etc. to be complicit by our silence.

*Yours etc.,
Gearóid Duffy,
Lee Road, Co. Cork*

More prayer would create overflowing seminaries

Dear Editor, The shortage of priests has nothing to do with celibacy. St Paul VI made this clear in his encyclical letter on priestly celibacy in 1967, June 24 (available online).

The Lord encountered a similar shortage in his time. His response was to command everyone to pray for this precious gift to the Church.

If everyone did this once a month, the seminaries would be overflowing.

*Yours etc.,
Fr Noel Mc Keown OP
Newry, Co. Down*



Adult faith formation and information 'seriously lacking'

Dear Editor, As I read the reports, summaries and suggestions from the synodal process, it has become very evident to me and to many others that we desperately need catechesis regarding our faith. Most adults have had very little opportunity to study any aspect of their faith beyond what they learned in RE classes as teenagers.

Those younger Catholics calling on fidelity to Church teaching regarding sexuality, marriage and other issues are the fortunate ones that have been involved in movements like Y2K, Holy Family Mission, Ignite, Net Ministries, Radio Maria etc.

In these movements teaching is given from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and all areas of doctrine relating to authentic Christian living.

Their voices need to be heard and shared with others less fortunate who have had very little opportunity to study faith. Adult faith formation and information have been seriously lacking and needs to have priority as the Church reflects on pathways in the future. Pope St John Paul II was very emphatic on the need for information and formation.

In his encyclical *Ad Petri Cathedram* Pope St John XXIII called for knowledge of the truth, pointing out that ignorance of the truth is the cause of many evils in humanity. Pope Emeritus Benedict prays that the Church of the future will be a Church where Jesus Christ is known, loved and

followed. He also wrote the Church of the future will once again, as always in the past, be shaped by the saints.

We ask the saints and the holy ones to help us follow the spirit of truth, wisdom and knowledge so that our Church will be a place of openness and welcome to all God's people. We pray a blessing on Pope Francis as he calls us all to keep in mind that we are all one big family – brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Finally, may we be true disciples of Jesus with hearts open to learn and discern God's will as we journey on this very important synodal path. God bless.

*Yours etc.,
Sr Susan Evangelist
Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal*

Stopping the enemies of Christianity

Dear Editor, One-hundred years of independence and still, Freemason-inspired capitalism, communist-inspired liberalism, European Union socialism, man-hating feminism, and totalitarian political correctness are waging war on old world Ireland and Christian Ireland.

Years after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and the international left-wing is still spreading its wings, through support for abortion and war, as can be seen from Ukraine.

But be sure of this: if we do not stop the enemies of Christianity then our God surely will.

*Yours etc.,
Berrard Isaac
Turner's Cross, Co. Cork*

facebook community

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

'Draconian' prison-time proposal for pro-life activists condemned

Speaks loudly of them and little of pro-life campaigners. And the political chattering classes will be pleased. – **Eamonn Mcgrady**

People of Ireland need to raise their voices for democratic society. – **Jacinta Newell**

People pushing a border poll should reflect on the chilling effect of this type of authoritarian yearning. – **Charles Glenn**

Certainly the Republic is becoming more authoritarian against those who disagree with policy. – **Caroline Hendron**

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

Term 'theological literacy' open to interpretation

Dear Editor, Peter Keenan [*The Synodal Times*– October 6, 2022] may be correct in implying that many schools categorised as Catholic have ignored selected Catholic teachings in recent decades, and that "theologically literate Catholics" follow suit. The term "theologically literate" is open to interpretation. By far the greatest growth in conversion or reversion to Catholicism and growth in religious vocations occur today in the context of a theology akin to that of Popes St John Paul II/Benedict XVI. The people concerned do not deem the latter "pretentious" or a "discredited model of authority" as Mr Keenan adjudges. Their behaviour doesn't substantiate the adaptation to change Mr Heenan prescribes for Catholic Church survival. Binding oneself in obedience to something higher than oneself is countercultural today.

Catholic Faith derives from the existence of a being known as God. Catholicism is meaningful to the extent it is considered true – not in a small, quiet way, but as God's revelation: the truth that both transcends and underlies all truth. Rather than relying on dominant liberal assumptions regarding reality, Catholicism threatens liberal complacency. The new small, scattered, even 'fashionable' interest in Catholicism seems to arise from a genuine desire for a more demanding and inspiring moral system than either liberalism or wokeism can provide.

The intellectual discipline of theology is a necessary feature of Catholicism. But knowledge of God is not dependent on it. Doing the rituals – routinisation of prayer and the sacraments, warding off temptation and directing thoughts heavenward – trumps theological literacy and cultivates the sense of the truth. Any conjoined programme in catechetics requires "a solid grounding in the Faith". The bishops' initiative is well founded.

*Yours etc.,
Neil Bray
Cappamore, Co. Limerick*

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, October 27, 2022

Personal Profile

Cork's youngest priest is excited to begin

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Deciding to be decisive

Have you ever stood in a packed supermarket aisle and struggled with what should be an easy choice? Which type of cereal? Which type of milk? Which type of bread? Nearly every item in your average supermarket comes in a multitude of variations, some of which are very difficult to distinguish between. If you have, you're certainly not alone.

Or to take a bigger, potentially life-altering decision in Ireland: the CAO. I can't be the only one who felt totally overwhelmed browsing the dizzying range of courses offered by a number of colleges and universities around



Greater choice than ever before has made it more difficult to make a decision and stick with it, writes Jason Osborne

the country? It's fortunate there are deadlines when it comes to making this choice, or I fear many of us would never make it at all.

The point being, we live in an age of plenty, on a number of levels. Never before have humans had so much 'stuff' to choose between, and neither has there been such an array of lifestyles or professions. From top to bottom,

our lives seem to have become a matter of choosing from near-unlimited potential.

There are a lot of pros to this development, of course, but there are also some major cons. When faced with an overwhelming number of choices – particularly when it comes to more important matters like who to marry or what to do for a living – paralysis

is a common response. Many of us, whether we want to or not, opt not to choose at all, and delay solving the issue for some future, better version of ourselves to deal with.

The difficulty is that that person is born choice by choice, and if we refuse to be decisive and commit, we seriously risk getting stuck in our tracks. A loss of time as we struggle to decide on what to buy in the shops is innocuous enough, but the toll is weightier when, for example, we struggle to commit to another person in a relationship because 'the one' might still be out there.

For all of these reasons and more, it's worth cultivating an

ability to choose; a certain decisiveness when the moment calls for it.

What does it mean to be more decisive?

To be decisive doesn't always mean to make the right choice – although of course that's what we're trying to do. Even when you make a choice and it falls flat, you can take comfort in knowing that God can make better use of our failures than he can of our inability to act when the moment calls for it. This isn't to promote a restless activism, out of fear of leisure or idle moments, but

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Family News

AND EVENTS

MARADONA 'HAND OF GOD' FOOTBALL TO GO FOR OVER €2.8M

The football that was at the feet – and hand – of Diego Maradona as he shocked the world with acts of both gamesmanship and breathtaking skill in Mexico 36 years ago has been put up for auction and is expected to sell for at least €2.8million.

The ball in question is from the 1986 World Cup quarter-final between Argentina and England, in which Maradona scored six minutes into the second half by sneakily punching the ball over England goalkeeper Peter Shilton into the net, a goal he said afterwards had been helped by the “hand of God”.

Just four minutes later he dribbled from his own half past a number of England players to score a sublime second that regularly tops polls as the greatest goal in World Cup history.

The ball is being sold by Tunisian referee Ali Bin Nasser, who officiated the match.

JAPAN TO SCRAP REMARRIAGE RESTRICTIONS ON PREGNANT WOMEN

Japanese cabinet ministers have approved the scrapping of a law that stipulates women pregnant at the time of a divorce must wait 100 days before marrying again.

The law, in place for more than a century, does not apply to men and was originally intended as a way to aid the identification of the father who is financially responsible for a new-born baby.

Critics have campaigned for a withdrawal of the 1896 law – which had banned remarriage for six months until being revised in 2016 – calling it outdated and discriminatory.

The change will also remove a rule that grants parents the right to “discipline children to whatever necessary extent”.

The government will submit the revised civil code to the current parliamentary session that ends on December 10 and the change is expected to be enacted in 2024 if passed, local media said.

HUMAN BRAIN CELLS IMPLANTED IN RATS OFFER RESEARCH GOLD MINE

Scientists have successfully implanted and integrated human brain cells into newborn rats, creating a new way to study complex psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia and autism, and perhaps eventually test treatments, AFP reports.

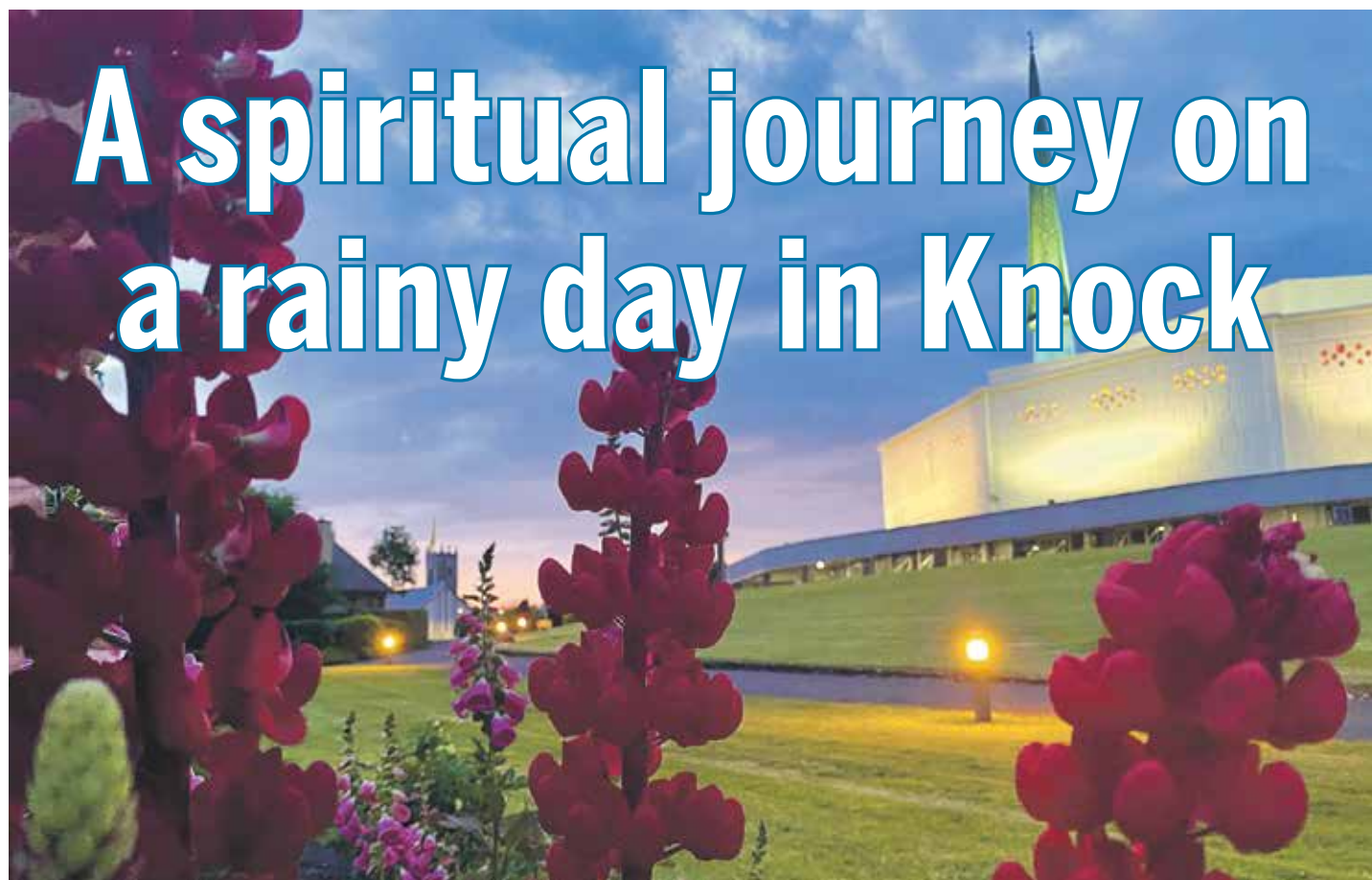
Studying how these conditions develop is incredibly difficult, as animals do not experience them like people, and humans cannot simply be opened up for research.

Scientists can assemble small sections of human brain tissue made from stem cells in petri dishes and have already done so with more than a dozen brain regions.

But in dishes, “neurons don’t grow to the size which a human neuron in an actual human brain would grow,” said Sergiu Pasca, the study’s lead author and professor of psychiatry and behavioural sciences at Stanford University.

And isolated from a body, they cannot tell us what symptoms a defect will cause.

A spiritual journey on a rainy day in Knock



For the second year running, my daughter and I got up at the crack of dawn to head off on the annual Dominican Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine in Co. Mayo. I’m sure others who are more used to the early rise would laugh at my definition of an early start but, in our house, we are all night owls so a Sunday morning lie-in is the norm. We soon shook off our tiredness and felt quite excited at the prospect of our adventure.

“Fr John Harris OP, Prior Provincial, recounted a humorous meeting with some visitors from San Francisco during his celebration of Mass”

Everything was carefully laid out the night before: we had our provisions all packed, rosary beads in our bags and extra bars of chocolate and cartons of juice included to keep our energy levels up throughout the day. You’d imagine that we were headed off on some long trek up a mountain or through a forest instead of enjoying the pleasant comforts of our modern tour bus. I always love bus travel, having many happy, childhood memories of accompanying my mother and older brother on the bus to Dublin for a day’s shopping followed by sausages, chips and Fanta in Arnotts. Going on a pilgrimage is in a different league altogether but I felt that same sense of anticipation and enthusiasm. A pilgrimage is generally considered to be a journey undertaken to a sacred or holy place.

For Catholics, a pilgrimage is a lot more than journeying to historical sites and viewing



A parent's perspective Maria Byrne

religious objects; it’s a journey with a deep spiritual significance. Knock Shrine is our very own Lourdes or Fatima, attracting pilgrims from all over the world including Pope John Paul II in 1979, Mother Teresa of Calcutta in 1993 and Pope Francis, as recently as 2018.

Pope Francis referred to pilgrimage as “an impetus to conversion”. Leaving one’s daily worries and cares behind and setting off on a spiritual journey to a place of prayer, worship and conversion is good for the body, as well as the soul. In years gone by, many of these holy pilgrimages were long and arduous with the dangers and hardships of the routes providing ample opportunity to do penance for one’s sins. I can’t say that our pilgrimage to Knock offered the same opportunities for penance but we did have to suffer the inclement weather as the rain came down in buckets. Fr John Harris OP, Prior Provincial, recounted a humorous meeting with some visitors from San Francisco during his celebration of Mass. They were asking if it was always raining in Knock and he quickly responded that if Our Lady didn’t complain about it, we shouldn’t either. On the night of the apparition in August 1979, it was also raining.

During the packed Mass in the Basilica, the homilist spoke on the topic of inclusion. It struck me afterwards that inviting people and including people was at the heart of what

that rainy day in Knock was all about.

Community is central to the mission of the Church and the atmosphere of community and Christian camaraderie, during the trip to and from Knock and while at the shrine, was most inspiring and encouraging. On the stop off for breakfast in



the Longford Arms Hotel, I got talking to some people about how they had heard about the pilgrimage. It was great that those from all walks of life, young and old, and with all their various circumstances and stories, felt the draw of the Gospel message and were attracted to come and worship at our national shrine. One man had never been to Knock before and spotted the post on social media. Many others had been on the pilgrimage before. It was only my second year to attend and, on both occasions, I brought my teenage daughter. She was 16 this year and I could have missed out on asking her to come with me if I’d presumed that she’d only be interested in

a solely youth-focused event. We ended up having a lovely mother/daughter experience while we rushed around trying to fit as much as we could into the day. My sister and nephew were there also so it was an enjoyable family occasion too when we all took a trip down memory lane over lunch in the Knock House Hotel, a place we stayed some years ago as a celebration of my father’s 80th birthday. He had really wanted the whole family to go for a pilgrimage to Knock and, all these years later, we were keeping up the tradition.

Glorious day

In spite of the weather, we had a glorious day. It was great to see the crowds at Mass and to enjoy the celebration of the Eucharist with the Dominican family. The throngs of people queuing for Confession in the Chapel of Reconciliation was very heartening. As you walked around, the joy and exuberance of the young Dominican novices was plain to see and we benefited from the words of wisdom of those Dominicans who were of more advanced years. As we raced to fill our holy water bottle with Knock water, grab a few souvenirs and say a last prayer in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, there was a real sense of having achieved our mission. Listening to the calming voice of Bro. Benedict giving out the Rosary on the way home and, joining in the singing of ‘Lady of Knock’ with our fellow pilgrims, I could really feel the grace of God at work. The next time you see a notice or advert for a pilgrimage to Knock, I highly recommend that you sign up. You won’t be sorry.

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it is to attempt to correct a slight imbalance that seems to be forming in the collective consciousness, which is the belief that the right thing for you won't pass you by. The reality is it absolutely will pass you by unless you become the kind of person that's capable of reaching out to take advantage of the many, many invitations to greater responsibility that God sends our way. Here are a couple of suggestions about how to do just that!

“Apportion an appropriate amount of time to a decision based on its importance, and stick to it”

Start small

It's unlikely a switch is going to flip and that you're all of a sudden going to be able to figure out all of the big choices you face. Instead, you should settle for steady progress – as we have to do in every other area of life – by harnessing your decision-making capacity in smaller arenas for the moment.

Find yourself wasting time in shops as you struggle to choose? Set a time limit on yourself and make your choice. Same goes when it comes to deciding what to watch on the streaming platform of your choice. It's become something of a joke/cliché in the internet age, the length of time it takes to settle on something to watch, whether we're sitting there alone or with others. With more films and shows at our fingertips than ever before, we're keen to invest our time wisely.

Well, the best way to do that is by refusing to waste half an hour in choosing the night's entertainment. Apportion an appropriate amount of time to a decision based on its importance, and stick to it. It isn't worth more than that.

Stop overanalysing

Another popular, modern trope is asking yourself whether you're the kind of person that makes this or that choice. “Am I the kind of guy that wears tan trousers?”, “Am I the kind of person who watches a comedy over a piece of serious cinema?” Maybe, maybe not, but if you allow these questions to paralyse you, you are the kind of person who struggles with little decisions.

Make a choice and live with the consequences. It's easier for us to figure out what we really want once we've made a choice and start to receive feedback from our own experience and others, than it is to try and envision different realities before we've made the decision.

Prioritise

I'm a firm believer in having your priorities in order, which does wonders in helping you make difficult decisions. To take a modern example – a keen struggle for many people today – the dating scene is astonishingly hostile to finding someone to settle down with.

However, you can make this easier on yourself by asking yourself



early on: what am I doing this for? For fun? Well, this somewhat removes the decision-making element from the picture, as you're not looking for someone to establish a life with. For a spouse, though? If you're looking to meet someone with similar values, as you probably should be, who's eager to marry, chances are you've already limited your choices significantly – which is actually a good thing.

“We're often afraid to choose for fear of the consequences of our choices, but as Catholics we can entrust ourselves to God's providence and mercy”

Sharpening up your aims and sense of direction will automatically refine the choices laid out before you, as options irrelevant to your goals will start being filtered out.

Be bold

Our faith exhorts us to boldness, and we ought to live as such. We're often afraid to choose for fear of the consequences of our choices, but as Catholics we can entrust ourselves and our decisions to God's providence and mercy.

“Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened,” Jesus tells us. Our choices are motivated by our desires, and if we're desiring the right things, God won't lead us astray, even if we make a wrong choice or two along the way.

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



The world has gone mad. That's what people used to say before the world actually went mad. Now that it has, people don't joke too much about the madness. I think that's because, when the world has actually gone insane, it's no laughing matter.

To take but one example of our distinctly unfunny modern madness, people seem to simply be stunned into silence by the enormity of the fact that a nuclear war in Europe is now a realistic possibility.

Yet the other way that contemporary madness creates silence is when ideologues impose silence, in an authoritarian fashion. Truly mad ideologues cannot tolerate being exposed to debate or dissent, so dissenters must be threatened into silence.

I recently saw a news report of a sex crime allegedly committed by a “woman” who committed it with “her penis”. Most people cower quietly in silence in the face of such profound linguistic distortions, since to contradict the official narrative can nowadays involve threats of a police investigation for “hate speech”.

Enforced silence is the order of the day when true madness takes hold, lest the madness itself be exposed and thus dethroned. Ireland's government is busy creating hate speech legislation, which will surely chill legitimate dissent and debate. Nowadays, political parties increasingly seek to avoid the very sort of open debate upon which democracy hinges.

It is a strange task to have to gradually introduce children to such a world. Yet what is encouraging about Ireland, is that most ordinary people see straight through all the nonsense. The madness is held at bay – in rural Ireland, in particular – by the simple expedient of ignoring it. Transparent ideological nonsense is simply dismissed out of hand or laughed off. Children also have a way of seeing through lies, and of sensing when they are being subjected to propaganda and agendas.

Stating the obvious is now an act of rebellion against the strange new tech-enabled regimes that increasingly oversee our thought and speech. Thankfully, a quiet rebellion happens every day

across Ireland. You won't read much about it, but the truth is that the traditional Irish way of life – with its decency, kindness and common sense – remains surprisingly resilient.

However, as the children get older, they cannot be shielded completely from the madness in the world. One child came home to tell me that all the kids in school



were talking about a Russian nuclear submarine which was unaccounted for. They seemed to expect an attack on London. Their imaginations are now haunted by the possibility of nuclear war, or a wider military confrontation with Russia, which could involve these islands. Such notions also pertained in my childhood, at the very end of the Cold War. Yet the old Soviet regime was a model of rationality compared to the Moscow leadership of today, as it unleashes ever greater evil on civilians in Ukraine.

One of the refugees we took in earlier this year returned to Ukraine at the end of the summer, as she missed her family, and the war had gone quiet near her city. The kids were very fond of her and so, when news reports came in of missile attacks on her very neighbourhood, to the kids, those missiles seemed to be exploding close to home, as they threatened our friend. She survived, thankfully, but the children's innocence must sadly be eroded as they grow up to learn what evil humans are capable of, and some of the horrors which are happening on our own continent.

I take some solace that we have provided them with the peace of our family's little world, our old farmhouse in a small rural valley. This serves well as a safe haven, even as the wider world fragments around us.

Cork's youngest priest is excited to begin

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

Fr Ronan Sheehan (28) went straight from finishing his Leaving Certificate into seminary. While some people said he was too young to start, he has no regrets and is "excited" to begin his ministry as curate to the Cork family of parishes Ballincollig, Ovens and Ballinora.

“His decision to join the priesthood didn't come as a surprise to Fr Ronan's friends”

Growing up in Newcestown, Co. Cork, Fr Ronan remembers that he and his fellow students at Bishop Galvin Central School “would march down to Mass” every first Friday. The local PP Fr Finbarr Crowley was very interactive, inviting Fr Ronan to become a reader at Mass and encouraging his own explorations of the Faith as a child.

“I thought, maybe I could be like him, a priest. That was the beginnings of it,” he tells me. “Then I went to secondary school... and most of my class, they were a bit sceptical. I met my first atheist there and I was like, if he's an atheist then maybe I can be too.”

This thought led to Fr Ronan considering his faith more deeply,

asking himself “do I believe in God, what's my position? Am I going to be in or out?” But he quickly realised that he believed in God and it was something he couldn't get away from. From there, he took his next step forward in the Faith which came when he was in his mid-teens.

“I came across some literature probably on the rosary or something like that,” the 28-year-old priest explains. “It led to the first opening into personal prayer in my life. That gave me the space to hear more about my faith. It went from there.”

“I went to Easons and bought my first Bible. The only one I could afford was the King James Version. It was all ‘the Lord speaketh thiseth’. I read the psalms and

some of the gospels and I like to look back on that Bible every now and then to see what struck my 16-year-old self.”

Decision time

Then after secondary school, it was decision time. The sense of vocation “was like an itch that wouldn't go away”, Fr Ronan says. He just had to explore it and so entered a dialogue with the vocation's director of Cork and Ross diocese.

“I went into seminary then the September after my Leaving Cert,” he says. “Some people said, ‘oh you're too young to start’. But I was almost 19 and for me it was the right time to go in. I've no regrets or hang-ups about it. I deliberately set out to have other experiences. I

took a year to work full-time in the hospital about half way through my formation. And I went to Canada for six months to work there in more recent times.”

His decision to join the priesthood didn't come as a surprise to Fr Ronan's friends. He jokes that some of them may even have spotted before him that he has “a bit of the priest about him”. They were all very supportive and around the time of his ordination in September of this year he got messages of congratulations from South America, Dubai and Australia.

“Being a young priest, there is an expectation that he will be a man of the modern world – including having his own TikTok account”

“They want to do the 12 pubs of Christmas. I don't think I'll manage 12 pubs, but I'll try to meet them,” he says.

Medicine was one of the fields he, along with his friends, considered before Fr Ronan decided on the priesthood. He found the work as hospital chaplain a particular privilege: “I loved visiting the sick. There's something about being with someone when they're ill or dying. When visiting the terminally ill, I know this person has lived a long and interesting life and I'm one of the last people they'll see. It was quite a privilege.”

Every seminarian has to do at least one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) – Fr Ronan ended up doing four, as well as spending the summer of 2021 ministering in the Bon Secours hospital Cork. “It was a lovely summer, but when you're in a hospital and you gown up in the full

thing – oh my God, you're sweating buckets while trying to listen to what this person is sharing.”

Being a young priest, there is an expectation that he will be a man of the modern world – including having his own TikTok account. Fr Ronan laughs when I ask him if he's an avid user, saying that's a story that has grown legs.

“I have Tik Tok. But I don't post anything, I just watch videos on cooking and DIY things, that kind of stuff. If you read [an earlier interview], you'd think I must be posting things like, ‘morning guys, here's my daily routine’ and all that – I don't.”

Now that he has been ordained and appointed to a family of parishes, Fr Ronan is looking forward to getting stuck in. There are a lot of practicalities involved, including purchasing furniture. “I haven't a table or a chair to my name,” he admits.

Then, there are the introductions, meeting new people every day in what is a large town on the outskirts of Cork City. He finds his youth is quite a good conversation starter, provoking questions. “People are so used to having a priest in their 60s or 70s, it can turn heads when they see a priest in their 20s or 30s,” Fr Ronan reflects.

The diocese is moving into a new structure, with priests being appointed to families of parishes. It's a change Fr Ronan and his fellow priests are still coming to grips with, he explains. But much of the day-to-day remains the same, and he spent last week heading into primary and secondary schools in the locale.

“You still get a very warm welcome. The onus is still very much, what have you to offer us. That's where the dialogue begins,” he says. “I'm quite excited about the whole project here. The people have been very welcoming.”

Fr Ronan Sheehan.

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



Children's Corner

Chai Brady

A volatile eruption worth creating

A very popular experiment which always delivers quite spectacular results is the Diet Coke and Mentos geyser. It's a lot of fun and sure to amaze your friends and family (assuming you do it outside rather than inside your house).

Apparatus:

- Large bottle of Diet Coke
- About half a pack of Mentos
- Geyser tube (optional but makes things much easier)

Method:

- Make sure you are doing this experiment in a place where you won't get in trouble for getting Diet Coke everywhere. Outside on some grass is perfect, please don't try this in your living room!



- Stand the Diet Coke upright and unscrew the lid. Put some sort of funnel or tube on top of it so you can drop the Mentos in (about half the pack is a good amount).

- Time for the fun part, drop the Mentos into the Diet Coke and run! If you've done it properly a huge geyser of Diet Coke should come flying out of the bottle, it's a very impressive sight. The record is about nine metres (29 feet) high.

What's happening? The thing that makes Coke fizzy is the carbon dioxide that is pumped in when they bottle the drink at the factory. It doesn't start leaving the liquid until you open the lid (more if you shake it up beforehand). This means that there is a lot of carbon dioxide gas just waiting to escape the liquid.

In the Diet Coke bottle the Mentos provide a rough surface that allows the bonds between the carbon dioxide gas and water to break more easily, helping to create carbon dioxide bubbles. As the Mentos sink in the bottle, it causes the production of more and more carbon dioxide bubbles, and the rising bubbles react with carbon dioxide that is still dissolved in the carbonated drink to cause more carbon dioxide to be freed and create even more bubbles, resulting in the eruption.

Because Mentos are rather dense, they sink rapidly through the liquid, causing a fast, large eruption.

The experiment works better with Diet Coke than other carbonated drinks due to its slightly different ingredients and the fact that it isn't so sticky. Diet Coke that has been bottled more recently works better than older bottles that might have lost some of their carbon dioxide sitting on shop shelves for too long, so just check the bottle for the date.



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



The temptation of power looms large

The media's obsession with the 'far right' tends to give the far left a free pass, which just might be the whole purpose.

I'm three episodes into **The Walk-In** (UTV, Mondays), a gripping true-life drama about efforts to expose the far right group National Action in the UK. Stephen Graham plays campaigning journalist Matthew Collins, a reformed racist activist and the 'walk-in' is the mole who feeds out inside information about the group. Things get very tense as you wonder when or if the 'grass' will be rumbled. High-profile events like the murder of MP Jo Cox feature every now and then and archive footage adds context. While agreeing totally with the anti-racist sentiment, I did find it a bit smug and preachy at times. Most of the far right activists are stereotyped nasty, and not enough attention is given to how they got to be that way. On the plus side there are those who question the tactics and are turned off by the violence, even as they see no major problem with their racist views. The violence and the racial slurs make for uneasy viewing – especially the violent attack on a group of mothers at a library. Add in the frequent foul language and it's pretty grim stuff.



The return of Boris Johnson didn't materialise.

Enthusiastic

I last mentioned **Lord of the Rings: Rings of Power** (Amazon Prime) after two episodes and I wasn't too enthusiastic. I did stay with it, enjoyed it and finally finished the last episode of the current series. It built up to an impressive episode six – full of tension, action and important plot developments. The absence of Harfoots/Hobbits helped! Things eased off for the final two episodes, with fallout from episode six, the return of

the Harfoot/Hobbit sub plot, some interesting revelations and much setting up of the next series – rings appear at last! There were subtle religious elements – various rituals and one scene looked downright Eucharistic as a good wizard wielded a monstrosity-like staff. There was much reflection on duty, selflessness, sacrifice and the temptation of power.

Universal themes

Those themes are universal – how much the temptation

of power or the desire for service was motivational in last week's political circus in the UK? The Boris distraction was just that, and we learned that 'the markets' are way too powerful. It was bizarre and entertaining, but the stakes are serious, including outcomes for Northern Ireland. Sound and wise leadership will also be vital for the ongoing challenges in Ukraine. The news and current affairs programmes last Monday morning were reporting Russian claims that the Ukrainians were going to drop a 'dirty bomb', with nuclear fallout, on themselves! Ukrainian counter claims were more credible and worrying – "Russia may be planning attack with radioactive material", as the scrolling updates on **BBC News** had it. Vladimir Putin would want to watch which way the wind is blowing, meteorologically and politically.

The UK coverage pushed such important stories to the edges as the race to replace Liz Truss as prime minister became frenetic. There are so many outlets in the UK it's hard to keep up. The field is particularly crowded on Sunday mornings – last weekend for example I heard Penny Mordaunt MP not answering several questions on **Sunday With Laura Kunsberg** (BBC One) and Steve Baker MP being quite

PICK OF THE WEEK

SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC One Sunday October 30, 1.15pm

Sean Fletcher embarks on a personal journey across London and south Wales, reflecting on the people, places and music that have shaped his Christian faith.

TIME

RTÉ One Thursday (night) November 3, 12.20am

Sean Bean and Stephen Graham star in gripping and humane prison drama series. Siobhan Finneran plays a sympathetically portrayed chaplain. (Ep 2)

BEYOND THE BULLETS - REAL LIFE DURING THE CIVIL WAR

RTÉ One Friday November 4, 8pm

This series uses text, archive, data, dramatic reconstruction and music of the period to paint a vivid picture of what life in Ireland was like during the Civil War.

frank and forthcoming on **Sophy Ridge on Sunday** (Sky News).

Politics

When all the Sunday morning politics shows are over the perfect lunchtime antidote is **Songs of Praise** (BBC One). Last weekend the focus was on Armagh, ecclesiastical capital for Catholics and Anglicans, a city of two cathedrals. We heard much about the history of St Patrick – Armagh Hill is reputed to be the site of his first stone church. The crypt of the Anglican cathedral was particularly interesting. There was a family who prayed as they harvested their apple crop in this 'orchard county', the Armagh observatory with its historical telescope and a 'non-denominational'

church whose members distribute free furniture to those in need. It got a few mentions and was glimpsed in the effective drone photography (the better kind of drones!) but the Catholic tradition didn't get much of a look in which was a pity.

The music, however, was particularly good – including a beautiful version of *Be Thou My Vision* by Keith and Krystin Getty and band at Orangefield Presbyterian church in Belfast and a song of gratitude *Count My Blessings* sung by *Voice UK* winner Blessing Annatoria.

I was counting.

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



Film

Aubrey Malone



Sensationalistic slant sullies Synge-song scenario

When the inimitable Sam Goldwyn was asked once what was wrong with the American film industry he famously replied, "We need some new clichés".

Writer/director Martin McDonagh, in his ambition to be the Irish Quentin Tarantino, has spent the last number of years providing us with his version of these. He's unpicked stage-Irishy with some alternately revolting and uplifting sagas. In the process – aided by blasts of pretty graphic violence – he's created a set of post-modern stereotypes.

The nosey postmistress, the foreboding soothsayer, the donkey in the kitchen, the ignorant Garda, the fulminating priest – all these caricatures appear in *The Banshees*

of *Inisherin* (16) like the left luggage of a Celtic Twilight yesteryear, piggybacking on McDonagh's grim tableaux in an algorithm that doesn't quite fit.

Flaws

Everyone has been going into ecstasies about this but it has serious flaws. It starts off as *The Playboy of the Western World* and ends like *Calvary*. In between we get a bevy of intriguing (and beautifully photographed) scenes. The performances of a top-notch cast – Colin Farrell, Brendan Gleeson, Barry Keoghan and (particularly for me) Kerry Condon – resonate.

The plot concerns a rift between two former friends (Farrell and Gleeson) on a



Colin Farrell and Barry Keoghan in a scene from *The Banshees of Inisherin* (2022)

remote island off the west coast. This serves as a microcosm for the Civil War that's pitting brother against brother on the mainland.

Gleeson, a fiddle player, acts like he's composing Carolan's Concerto. Allied with his intellectual snobbery is a Sar-

trean ennui. Farrell's nascent goodness decays into a terrible venality in the denouement.

This is the stuff of Jacobean tragedy but McDonagh's nod towards retributive justice plays second fiddle (pardon the pun) to his quasi-primitive theatricals. The reason for the

rift is ridiculous (Farrell's 'niceness'). Gleeson's penchant for self-mutilation also stretches credibility to breaking point.

Existentialism

McDonagh goes for the 'Wow' effect, peppering his existentialism with one-liners that are often the stuff of poor black comedy.

The problem with the film, as with his work in general, is the disjunction between the nonchalant and the shocking. Gleeson goes ballistic over Farrell's niceness but when he burns down his house, he takes it in his stride. Where's the consistency? And how can a person lop off four fingers and, instead of losing consciousness, manage to turn up at the local pub for a *seisiún*?

Such inconsistencies spill over into the film's script. Did 1920s people use terms like 'tough love', 'nut job', 'up himself', 'change tack', or even 'Yeah'? Would an unschooled person like Keoghan say things like 'Touché'?

And how is it that Farrell, a similarly simple soul, knows what 'epitome' means but not 'ensconce'? Even some of the expletives seem anachronistic. They sound like outtakes from *Fr Ted*.

When this is good it's very good but all too often McDonagh goes from tragedy to farce for the cheap laugh. His 'dramedy' (comedy-drama) all too often morphs into melodrama and spoils what, in another director's hands, could well have been a masterpiece.

Allowing ourselves to be loved by God

In this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 19:1-10), Jesus calls Zacchaeus by name and brings salvation to his house. Zacchaeus was the one above who looked down while Jesus was the one on ground level who looked up.

Jericho was a wealthy town - set in a green, fertile oasis between the River Jordan on one side and a brown, barren wilderness on the other side. Furthermore, it was on the trade route between Jerusalem and the east. Zacchaeus was representative of that prosperity. As superintendent of taxes, he was very wealthy because there were many sources of taxation there.

Yet for all his wealth, there was something missing, something that money could not buy. On one side of his territory was the fertile land. On the other was the barren desert. He had climbed to the top of the ladder but he was sensing that he had climbed the wrong wall. He was anxious to see what kind of man Jesus was.

Conversion

Luke gives us a perspicacious account of the inner movements of his conversion. There is a note of energy in the way Luke tells us how "Zacchaeus made his appearance." There was something driving him, his inner emptiness surely. He was short and could not see Jesus because of the crowd. Perhaps this is more than a statement of his physical stature. He was also short of self-esteem because the popular estimation of tax collectors left him with little hope of God's favour. His anxiety to see Jesus drove him to throw caution to the wind in an action quite undignified for a man of his position: he ran ahead and climbed a tree to look down for a glimpse of Jesus through the leaves.

If Zacchaeus was a man who had climbed up, Jesus was the one who had come down. He came down from heaven to stand with us on the ground-level of life. This is the level of the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor, blessed are the gentle, those who work for justice, those

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



who are pure of heart..."

As St Paul expressed it: "Although he was rich, he became poor for your sake, so that you should become rich through his poverty". Pope Francis calls the Beatitudes the identity card of a Christian. "In the Beatitudes, we find a portrait of the Master, which we are called to reflect in our daily lives." Zacchaeus was called to come down from the false ladder he had climbed in his career.

“Luke gives us a perspicacious account of the inner movements of his conversion”

Zacchaeus must have wondered how Jesus knew his name. But God knows each one of us by name and loves each one with a personal love. "Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you: I have called you by your name, you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1).

It is significant that the Sacrament of Baptism begins with a ceremony of naming. It is a pity that very often nowadays the name has no Christian association. What used to be called one's Christian name is now called your 'first name', a sign of the times we live in.

When Zacchaeus hears his name and experiences the eye of Jesus, it is a moment of grace, what T.S. Eliot called "the point of the intersection of the timeless with time".

Some 50 years ago, Peter G. Van Breemen published a book entitled *Called by Name* which touched the right button for a multitude of readers. What moved readers in a special way was the chapter entitled *The Courage to Accept Acceptance*. God's love for us is not conditioned by our worthiness or by what we have merited. Jesus himself said that there is more joy

in heaven at the return of one sinner than at the 99 others who have no need of repentance. Zacchaeus' repentance was total, promising to give half his money to the poor and to repay anybody he cheated four times as much.

As we have noted several times in these weekly reflections, in Luke's Gospel Jesus is never far away from a table. True to form, Jesus told Zacchaeus to hurry down because he intended to dine in his house. He took the initiative because he was aware that Zacchaeus, regarded as a sinner, would not be in a position to invite him. In the eyes of the strict legalists, it was bad enough to speak with sinners but to eat with them was a total scandal. They must have overlooked the Book of Wisdom which supplies our first reading today.

"Yet you are merciful to all, because you can do all things

and overlook people's sins so that they can repent.

Yes, you love all that exists, you hold nothing of what you made in abhorrence,

for had you hated anything, you would not have formed it."

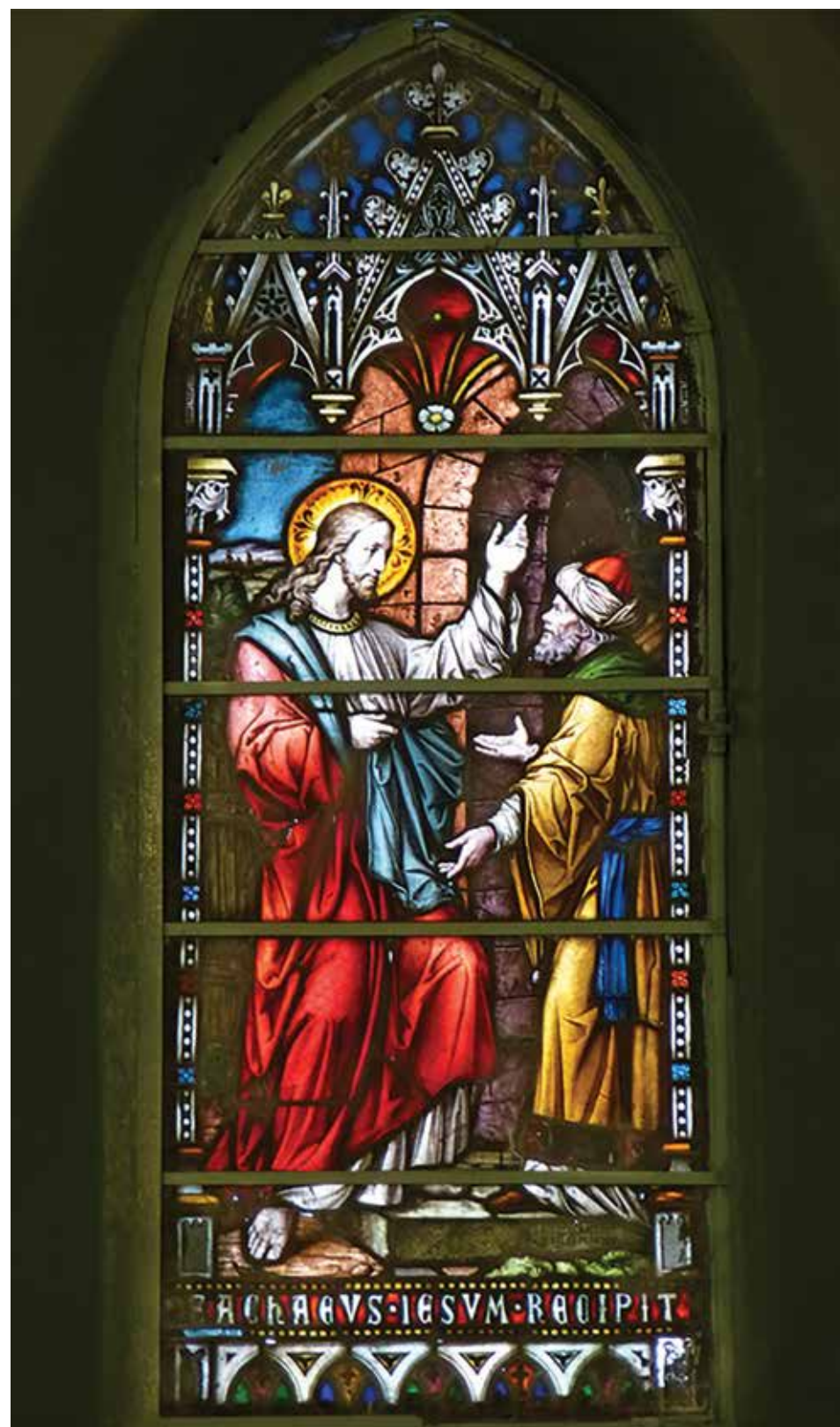
Salvation, not condemnation, came to Zacchaeus that day.

Promote

The first major document that a new Pope issues, is a key to what he intends to promote during his papacy. Pope Francis began with *The Joy of the Gospel*. It starts off with the invitation of Jesus to develop a strong personal relationship or at least to give it a try. As with Zacchaeus, Jesus calls us by name to open the door of our lives to invite him in. At least, give it a try. Invite the Lord to your mind, your heart and your hands.

Open your mind to God. Open the door to your inner room. Turn off television, radio, phone and allow space for God every day.

Open your heart to God. As Pope Francis expressed it, allow yourself be loved. You are called by name. You



Zacchaeus receives Jesus depicted in a stained glass window at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Jericho in the Holy Land.

are Christian, belonging to Christ. He is your Saviour. He wants you to accept his love.

Open your hands to God, as Zacchaeus did when he resolved to share with others. Christ has no hands now but yours. He is counting on you.

Prayer

The Lord is kind and full of compassion, slow to anger, abounding in love.

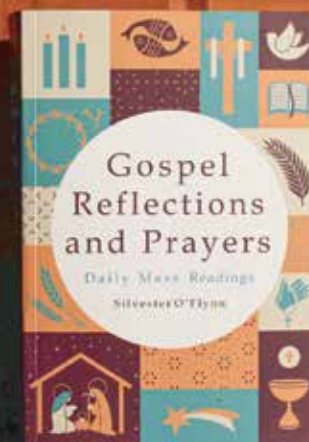
How good is the Lord to all, compassionate to all his creatures.

All your creatures shall thank you, O Lord, and your friends shall repeat their blessing.

They shall speak of the glory of your reign and declare your might, O God.

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“God knows each one of us by name and loves each one with a personal love”

Risking God's unconditional mercy

Shortly after ordination, doing replacement work in a parish, I found myself in a rectory with a saintly old priest. He was over 80, nearly blind, but widely sought out and respected, especially as a confessor. One night, alone with him, I asked him this question: "If you had your priesthood to live over again, would you do anything differently?" From a man so full of integrity, I fully expected that there would be no regrets. His answer surprised me. Yes, he said, he did have a regret, a major one: "If I had my priesthood to do over again, I would be easier on people the next time. I wouldn't be so stingy with God's mercy, with the sacraments, and with forgiveness. You see what was drilled into me in my formation was the phrase, 'The truth will set you free', and I believed that it was my responsibility to challenge people to protect that. That's good, but I fear I've been too hard on people. They have pain enough in their lives without me and the Church laying further burdens on them. I should have risked more God's mercy!"

“As every year goes by in my own ministry, I feel more inclined to the old priest's advice”

I was struck by this because less than a year before, as I took my final exams in the seminary, one of the priests who examined me, gave me this warning: "Be careful," he said, "never let your feelings get



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

in the way of truth and be too soft, that's wrong. Remember, tough as it is, only the truth sets people free!" Sound advice, it would seem, for a young priest beginning his ministry.

Advice

However, as every year goes by in my own ministry, I feel more inclined to the old priest's advice. We need to risk more God's mercy. Admittedly, the importance of truth may never be ignored, but we must risk letting the infinite, unbounded, unconditional, undeserved mercy of God flow freely. The mercy of God is as accessible as the nearest water tap and we, like Isaiah, must proclaim a mercy that has no price tag: "Come, come without money and without virtue, come everyone, drink freely of God's mercy!"

What holds us back? Why are we so hesitant in proclaiming God's inexhaustible, prodigal, indiscriminate mercy?

Partly our motives are good, noble even. We have a legitimate concern over some important things: truth, justice, orthodoxy, morality, proper public form, proper sacramental preparation, fear of scandal, and concern for the ecclesial community that needs to absorb and carry the effects of sin. Love needs always to be tempered by truth, even as truth must be moderated by love. However, sometimes our motives are less noble and our hesitancy arises out of timidity, fear, jealousy, and legalism – the self-righteousness of the Pharisees or the hidden jealousy of the older brother of the prodigal son. No cheap grace is to be dispensed on our watch!

“What holds us back? Why are we so hesitant in proclaiming God's inexhaustible, prodigal, indiscriminate mercy?”

Misguided

Nevertheless, in doing this, we are misguided, less than good shepherds, out of tune with the God that Jesus proclaimed. God's mercy, as Jesus revealed it, embraces indiscriminately, the bad along with the good, the undeserving with the deserving, the uninitiated with the initiated. One of the truly startling insights that Jesus gave us is that the mercy of God cannot not go out to everyone because it is always free, undeserved, unconditional, universal in embrace, reaching beyond all religion, custom, rubric, political correctness, mandatory programme, ideology, and even beyond sin itself.

“If I had my priesthood to do over again, I would be easier on people the next time”

For our part then, especially those of us who are parents, ministers, teachers, catechists, and elders, we must risk proclaiming the prodigal character of God's mercy. We must not spend God's

mercy, as if it were ours to spend, dole out God's forgiveness as if it were a limited commodity, put conditions on God's love as if God were a narrow tyrant or a political ideology, or cut off cut access to God as if we were the keepers of the heavenly gates. We are not! If we link God's mercy to our own assessment of things, we then link it to our own limits, wounds, and biases.

It is interesting to note in the gospels how the apostles, well-meaning of course, often tried to keep certain people away from Jesus, as if they weren't worthy and were somehow an affront to his holiness and purity. Repeatedly, they tried to send away children, prostitutes, tax collectors, known sinners, and the uninitiated of all kinds and always Jesus over-ruled their attempts with words to this effect: "Let them come! I want them to come to me."

Little has changed. Always in the Church, we, well-intentioned persons, with the same motives as the apostles, keep trying to keep certain individuals and groups away from God's mercy as it is available in word, sacrament, and community. God doesn't need (nor want) our protection. Jesus wanted every kind of person to come to him then and he wants them to come to him now. God wants everyone, regardless of morality, orthodoxy, lack of preparation, age, or culture, to come to the unlimited waters of divine mercy.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Making the cure with a local healer

Ireland's Hidden Medicine: An exploration of Irish indigenous medicine from legend and myth to the present day by Rosarie Kingston (Aeon Books, €19.99/£16.99)

J. Anthony Gaughan

This book will be compelling reading for those interested in folk medicine, also known as indigenous or traditional medicine.

Such ideas are an important part of our heritage, for some of these ideas must predate the Celtic invasion in 300BC, and come down from much earlier times by word of mouth.

Division

At the outset the author divides medicine into biomedicine and indigenous medicine. The former is based on the scientific study of the human body's biological

system. The latter is the term to describe the range of healing methods used by any indigenous community which are transmitted orally from generation to generation and are coloured by local beliefs and the environment. The conduct of this folk medicine in Ireland can involve plant medicine, physical manipulation and charms, prayers, rituals and practices known as *piiseogs* (superstitions).

In an early chapter, Rosarie Kingston provides a history of folk medicine in Ireland from Pre-Christian times to the present. One of the legendary peoples of Ireland were the Tuatha De Dannan and their God of health was Déin Chécht. Two of his children were herbal physicians and surgeons.

Legends

The legends, which featured the Red Branch Knights, record those wounded in battle being plunged into medical herbal baths. *Lebor Gabála Arenn*, the origin story of the Irish people, describes a hospital near the present-day Armagh City. The arrival of the Christian missionaries in the fifth century introduced a whole new raft of folk medicine associated with relics, pilgrimages, prayers, rituals, blessings and holy water.

The scientific age, which was ushered in by Galileo, Descartes, Bacon and others, marked the beginning of a radical decline in a belief or interest in folk medicine. That trend has continued into the digital age. Hence folk medicine is today for the most part confined to rural districts

in just a few parts of the country.

Today in Ireland a practitioner of folk medicine is generally known as a 'person with a cure'. He or she may have a cure for eczema, TB, skin-cancer or a haemorrhage. Belonging to a particular family, their 'gift' is handed on from one generation to another. The different types of cures they purport to provide can be classified into plant medicine, physical manipulation and charms, prayer and rituals.

“In an early chapter, Rosarie Kingston provides a history of folk medicine in Ireland from Pre-Christian times to the present”

Many 'healers' have 'a bottle'. This will contain specific plants, about which the healer is very secretive, and can be applied or taken. The most popular practice in the Irish healing tradition is that of physical manipulation.

Some of those engaged in either physical manipulation or administering



Whooping cough cure.

the bottle seem to have had extraordinary success. One such person was Séan Boylan, onetime coach of the Meath Senior Football Team. The third area of folk medicine is that of charms, prayers and rituals. Their efficacy, of course, lies in their placebo effect.

Famine

The author describes the negative effect the Famine, the National School system of primary education and the Catholic Church had on folk medicine.

She also charts how economic progress and



Bullaun cure.

Words and images: the creative world of Neil Jordan

Neil Jordan: Works for the Page, by Val Nolan Jr. (Cork University Press, €39.00 / £35.00)

Peter Costello

Neil Jordan's career as an artist has been a curious one. He started, as so many writers do, by publishing a slim book with a short-lived and long vanished Irish publisher. But then a period of time working for the film director John Boorman, principally in shooting a documentary on the making of one of Boorman's own films, transferred his vivid talents into a new medium, in which he has evolved as one of

the most remarkable directors to come out of Ireland, and has achieved an international reputation.

However Val Nolan, an Irish academic currently based in Wales, who has several studies of Irish writing to his credit (and a foray into science fiction) thinks that the initial creations in prose by Neil Jordan should not be forgotten. Especially as he has returned to prose fiction in more recent days.

Irish culture

This book ought to be read by anyone interested in the evolution of modern Irish culture which has taken directions unimaginable back in the 1960s. Val



Neil Jordan's image of Michael Collins in action.

Nolan, so to speak, catches a literary imagination in full flight towards an unknown destination. But now that

slim volume of his youth has been reissued in the new century, and will it seem survive, but now as a

work of the imagination by the acclaimed director of that bravura film *Michael Collins*.



Sweat house cure.

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.



upward social mobility turned people away from folk medicine because of its association with the peasant culture of the past.

In today's scientific and technological-orientated world there is little room for folk-medicine. Thus

those who practise biomedicine (real medicine) regard folk-medicine as at best to be merely inconsequential. However, as is indicated in this book, the services folk medicine can provide, and has provided in the past, are not to be lightly dismissed.

“At the outset the author divides medicine into biomedicine and indigenous medicine”



The devious-minded Duchess of Death

Agatha Christie: A Very Elusive Woman

by Lucy Worsley
(Hodder & Stoughton,
€23.99/£25.00)

Peter Costello

Dr Lucy Worsley has become very much a fixture on our small screens, with a distinct penchant for dressing up in period costumes, which to some leaves an impression of history as mere fancy dress with a modern accent, rather than the deep well of pain and suffering it all too often was.

She has been involved in a long series of television documentaries, which have proved very popular, as well as a stream of associated books.

A thread in her recent work on screen and in print has been about British murders of the past. So it was perhaps inevitable that she should be asked to write a biography of Agatha Christie, the most widely read detective story writer of all time. However, due to a lack of fresh materials on Agatha Christie, or Lady Mallowan, as she might be better called, the creator of Poirot and Miss Marple is a difficult subject.

Again inevitably, Worsley devotes much attention to the notorious “missing 11 days” of the writer's life in 1926, when she simply disappeared from her home and nearly two weeks later was found in a hotel in Harrogate.

Breakdown

Worsley sees this, as do many other writers, as a case of a psychological breakdown. However, the difficulties she had in her marriage belong very much to the traumas left over from the Great War working themselves out in the social turmoil of the 1920s. She was then only in her mid 30s and had published her first novel only in 1920.

Emerging from the event she had a new publisher and brought out *The Mur-*

der of Roger Ackroyd, truly an astonishing landmark in detective fiction, as all her readers will know. This book was a major best-seller, over here and in America. She never looked back again as a writer, a new “Christie for Christmas” became a regular feature of the publishing year.

She had become in a sense a new person. And that person was a woman of varied achievement, which all the attention to what happened in 1926 detracts from. She became during the Great War years a qualified pharmacist and expert on poisons, which stood her in good stead later. She became, too, a truly professional writer in varied genres.

Her new publisher elevated her to “the Queen of Crime”, purely a marketing device. But a French expert on crime fiction more appropriately called her *la Duchesse de la mort*, the Duchess of death, which seems a far more appropriate title. But she was not so much elusive, as Worsley suggests, as intensely private, a deeply damaged victim of modern celebrity culture, who became wary of any kind of publicity or press intrusion. The public has no right to expect anything but new books from those who write.

“Worsley sees this, as do many other writers, as a case of a psychological breakdown”

But after 1930, when she married Max Mallowan, some 16 years her junior, she became an accomplished archaeological worker on her husband's expeditions to the Middle East as a photographic artist and a specialist in the reconstruction of the shattered pots of ancient cultures that play such an important part in the modern system of archaeological dating. She has Poirot comment in several novels on the similarity of outlook, or should it be insight, of the detective and the archaeologist.



Agatha Christie with a few of her many novels.

But what her biographers rarely allude to, and which would indeed enlarge our ideas about her moral universe, is her religion. She was a believing Anglican and Christianity inspired much of her overall outlook without obtruding too greatly into her books. But her faith provided her with a moral horizon that affected her views on life, death, and justice.

Golden Age

This was not in the era of her best work such a rare thing. A stream of Christianity runs through Golden Age detective literature. We should not forget GK Chesterton, Freeman Wills Croft, Dorothy L. Sayers, PD James and others.

Religion is an element in Agatha Christie's work that most of those who write about her shy away from, perhaps from a fear of upsetting the readers of recent decades who love murder, mayhem, and Nordic noir, but don't care much for religion. But I suspect her quiet undemonstrative faith may be a way into her mind and soul which biographers should not neglect. Though Poirot is sup-

posedly a Belgian Catholic, his imagination like his creator's is permeated by the words and images of the King James Bible as well as English nursery rhymes.

I also think that anyone who wants to approach and understand “the real Agatha Christie” should be sure to read *Agatha Christie and Archaeology*, a magnificent book by Charlotte Trumpler and others (British Museum Press, €15.99) which explores the dimensions of her work, life and writing in the Middle East with her second husband.

Achievement

Sir Max's last great achievement was the excavation of the ancient city of Nimrud in Upper Mesopotamia (now in modern Iraq), which he published in two large books as a boxed set through Collins, his wife's publishers, to which he was able to give a more elaborate presentation to than is usual for books of this kind. One suspects the royalties of his wife rightly subsidised this monument to his career.

Alas news now comes that the terrorists of Islamic State are destroying the remnants of this great city from “the age of ignorance”, as they refer to pre-Islamic times. They have stripped out such mobile pieces of art as can be shipped off through the international black market to Paris, London and New York to fund the continuing operations of IS. Thus do rich art collectors subsidise crime.

It would have broken the hearts of the redoubtable couple who worked so hard to reveal the ancient city of Old Testament times to the modern world. Age of ignorance indeed.



Sir Max (left) and Lady Mallowan in later years.

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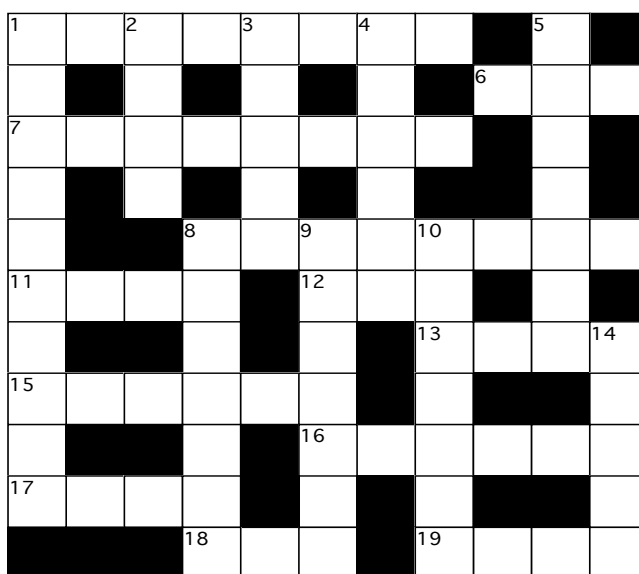
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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Children's 456



Across

- 1 'Like trying to find a needle in a _____' (8)
- 6 A crayon or a candle might be made of this (3)
- 7 Race that is over 42 km long (8)
- 8 Practice for a play or concert (8)
- 11 The capital of Italy (4)
- 12 Part of the body between your shoulder and your wrist (3)
- 13 These fish look a bit like snakes (4)
- 15 Ran away to get married (6)
- 16 Shining (6)
- 17 County in Ulster (4)
- 18 A joke, or what you tie in someone's mouth to stop

them talking (3)

- 19 It's usually the last word of a prayer (4)

Down

- 1 The strangest-looking shark of all (10)
- 2 'The grand old Duke of _____' (4)
- 3 The name of a book or film (5)
- 4 Not as warm (6)
- 5 Sun-protector that looks a bit like an umbrella (7)
- 8 Gathering a harvest (7)
- 9 You might keep your purse and other things in this (7)
- 10 The USA is the United States of _____ (7)
- 14 This material is always shiny (5)

SOLUTIONS, OCTOBER 20

GORDIUS NO. 581

Across — 1 Duo 3 Wheelbarrow 8 Vienna 9 Teenager 10 Sighs 11 Yarn 13 Picks 15 Testate 16 Revives 20 Hoods 21 North Sea 23 Grand 24 Frequent 25 Girder 26 Bite the dust

Down — 1 Devastation 2 On Eagle's Wings 4 Extinct 5 Annoy 6 Reggae 7 War 12 Nessun Dorna 13 Patch 14 Steps 17 Verandas 18 Jostled 19 Priest 22 Haunt 23 Guilt 24 Fob

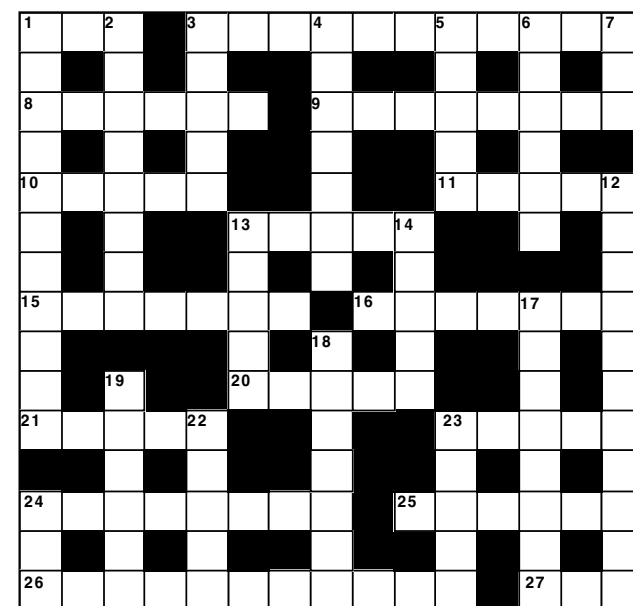
CHILDREN'S No. 455

Across — 1 Ace of clubs 7 Tweed 8 Ditches 9 Ewe 11 And 13 Ages 15 Internal 16 Lamb 18 Tralee 19 Rowing

Down — 1 Artist 2 Elephant 3 Fiddle 4 Little 5 Bathing 6 Visits 10 Winter 11 Angry 12 Deals 13 Allow 14 Elm 17 Bug

Crossword

Gordius 582



Across

- 1 Trashcan (3)
- 3 Use milk when preparing and serving this beverage (5,6)
- 8 Relax (6)
- 9, 10a, 16a & 25a Jesus' admonition to be charitable - when feeding the ducks? (4,4,5,4,3,6)
- 10 See 9 across
- 11 Requirements (5)
- 13 Economic depression (5)
- 15 Point of view (7)
- 16 See 9 across
- 20 It gets wetter as it dries (5)
- 21 Misgiving (5)
- 23 Australian wild dog (5)
- 24 Part of an army (8)
- 25 See 9 across
- 26 Rowan tree (8,3)
- 27 Archaic form of 'your' (3)

Down

- 1 Aristocratic (4-7)
- 2 The capital of India (3,5)
- 3 Abated, as the moon does (5)

4 Diplomatic, heedful of

potential offence (7)

5 Frequently (5)

6 Duped (6)

7 The 'E' of 'ENT' (3)

12 With vigorous exertion, laboriously (11)

13 Yell (5)

14 Relating to the Pope (5)

17 Part of a church at right angles to the aisle (8)

18 Add sugar to do this (7)

19 Chinese martial art (4,2)

22 Entice (5)

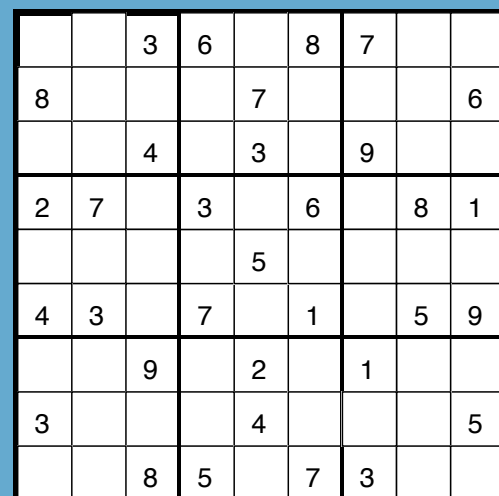
23 Demise (5)

24 Drink made from molasses (3)

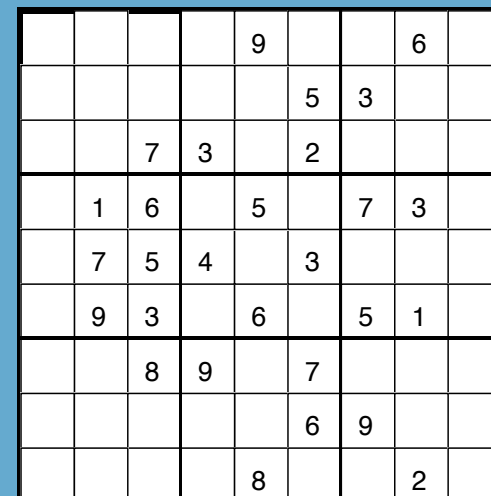
Sudoku Corner

456

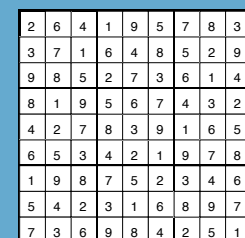
Easy



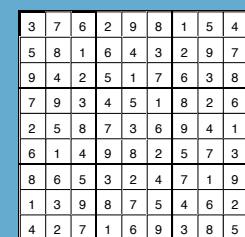
Hard



Last week's Easy 455



Last week's Hard 455



Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock



Mass, music and memory in Spain sojourn

OVER THE PAST two weekends, I had the opportunity to celebrate Vigil Masses. Hardly unusual or particularly newsworthy, were it not for the fact the Masses were in Spain! I left Tubbercurry at 3.20am and celebrated evening Mass at 5pm, in a hotel function room in Torremolinos. I returned home, in both cases, the following day! For jet setters, this may just be another day at the office but for me, it was out of the ordinary and I am thankful to two of our priests who allowed me the freedom to do this by celebrating weekend Masses in Tubbercurry and Cloonacool.

The invitation to celebrate these Masses was extended to me some months ago by Jimmy Buckley who, at the time, was organising two weeks away with his "fans"! Many in the music and entertainment industry arrange similar getaways; offering to music lovers the chance to have a holiday in the sun, enjoy good food and accommodation and, perhaps most importantly, enjoy music and dance. When Jimmy asked me, his intention was that I might go for the few days and enjoy the time away as well. As it turned out, when I heard the dates involved, it was not possible for me to travel other than overnight. In



Country music star Jimmy Buckley.

fairness to Jimmy, he was fine with that and facilitated me. Again, I am thankful to his team for making that happen.

Different

It was undoubtedly a different experience, and I was not sure what to expect or who to expect at Mass. As it transpired, it was hugely enjoyable and indeed prayerful. I was amazed the first evening to see, close on 400 people gathered in a room where the night before and later that night, they gathered to dance. Now they sat with friends and fellow music lovers, at tables arranged throughout the function room and prepared to celebrate evening Mass away from home.

On that evening, we remembered the people of Creeslough as the final funerals were celebrated by local priest Fr John Joe Duffy. Two of those participating in the Mass were amongst the first responders who attended that tragic scene. Now, a week later, with all of us they remembered in prayer those who lost their lives and those left to try to make sense of the senseless, attempting to continue with life in the wake of the funerals of loved ones, family members and friends. One of the first responders led us in the Prayer of Intercession and the other read a poem written in memory of those who died. There were many people from Co. Donegal in the room but, in many ways, we were all from Donegal that evening, in the sense that the grief was shared and the realisation real for us all – life is fragile. It seemed so appropriate that we remember in this way, be united in this way, with the very real pain experienced by too many around Creeslough those days.

The choir was made up of Jimmy's band members and guests with Jimmy too adding his voice to the words of praise. A young Donegal girl sang 'Lady of Knock' and her voice was as sincere as she was

herself. It was truly lovely to hear these words from the mouth of one so young: "All our cares and troubles cease, as we kneel with love before you, Lady of Knock; our Queen of Peace."

Transformed

People from all over Ireland were in that room and for that little while, they were transformed like the lifted wafer, into the Body of Christ. No longer fans, now a congregation, they responded in faith to the prayers of the Mass and to the invitation to be there. Alongside notices around upcoming acts, hotel facilities, mealtimes and events, a simple message read "Mass at 5pm with Fr Vincent Sherlock". It was a simple message and intended invitation. Thankfully so many people read one and responded to the other. Truly heart lifting and so encouraging, to see so many people there and together in faith and in prayer.

There was a kindness in people too and many of them thanked me for celebrating Mass and Jimmy for including Mass in the week's itinerary. I was happy to be there and pleased, with them, that Mass was seen as a key moment in a week of togetherness, family and friendship. The way it should be.

If we had a man like you...

As mentioned, sometimes I find myself in other churches for Mass. I always enjoy the experience and it is good to see other faces and places. It is easy enough to shine on a day or a night but to be in a parish 52 weeks of the year for countless years can truly test all of us. People sometimes remark, by way of compliment: "If we had a man like you in our parish, the church would be full – all the young people would be there." I find myself responding: "They have a man like me where I am and it's not – they're not!"

Churches are difficult to fill but your own priest is trying his best – maybe the timely compliment wouldn't go astray.



LITTLE WAY PAKISTAN FLOODS APPEAL

Flood-hit victims urgently need our help

Bishop Khalid Remat, of the Apostolic Vicariate of Quetta, is urgently asking for our help for 3,600 of those in great need as a result of the very heavy monsoon rains. He writes to The Little Way Association: "Those whose homes were damaged or destroyed need above all food and clean water. Polluted water is likely to cause, especially to children and pregnant women, pneumonia, diarrhoea, dengue fever, on top of the malnutrition they are enduring.

"Our project, upon which ten volunteers and ten members of staff will work free of charge, will aid flood victims in the districts of Sibi, Loralai and Pashin. With your help 600 families will be provided with food items such as wheat flour, cooking oil, sugar, tea, pulses, rice and milk packs. The families will be given drinking water, high energy biscuits, soap, washing powder and other hygiene products."

PLEASE GIVE WHAT YOU CAN TO HELP SOME OF BISHOP KHALID'S PEOPLE

THE SITUATION IS DESPERATE. Your gift will be forwarded **WITHOUT DEDUCTION** to Bishop Khalid to provide food, and basic essentials to help the flood victims to overcome their sorrow and hardship. Please give whatever you can. Thank you.



"Our Lord does not look so much as the greatness of our actions, but at the love at which we do them."

~ St Therese

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