

The Irish Catholic

TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

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YEAR IN REVIEW

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We'll never reach united Ireland without bringing unionists onboard – Primate

EXCLUSIVE

Chai Brady

The country's most senior Churchman has warned that a united Ireland will never be achieved unless nationalists are willing to listen to those who are fearful of the prospect of reunification.

In an exclusive interview with *The Irish Catholic* ahead of the 2021 anniversary of the partition of the island of Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin said: "Clearly as a nationalist myself, as growing up in a nationalist community, I would have a yearning that that sense of belonging is something that could be shared by all of the people in the island of Ireland."

However, he warned that understanding where those fearful of a united Ireland are coming from is key. "I think that we will never reach there unless we are open to understanding each other, and I think that 2021 provides an opportunity for greater understanding of where we've come from and indeed where we might go together into the future," he said.

Archbishop Eamon said that the division of the island in 1921 caused "a great amount of sadness: a sense of separation, a sense of loss with the partition of the island," within the broader Catholic/nationalist community.

At the same time, he said that "for unionists and indeed loyalist communities in Northern Ireland, it represents for them a significant moment in the establishment of the Northern Ireland state".

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O come all ye faithful



Parents Wojtek and Cecilia Mroczek with their children Michal, Julia, John and Maria at the nativity scene in Rathmines parish in Dublin. Photo: Chai Brady

DAVID QUINN

In (partial) defence of men

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MARY KENNY

Did it take a mother-of-seven to manage compromise? PAGE 5



SR STAN

Covid-19 must be a turning point for most vulnerable PAGE 6



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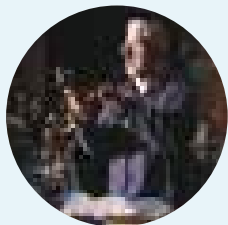
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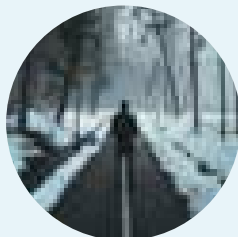
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A new year is a new opportunity

An old Irish superstition is that at the stroke of midnight on December 31, those seeking good luck were recommended to enter their house through the front door and leave through the back. It's not obvious to me how that particular custom arose, but like many superstitions the origins are clouded in a combination of myth and tradition.

“We need to reassert the central importance of the celebration of the Eucharist in the life of our parish communities”

Undiluted

This year is not one which we will look back on with undiluted pleasure. Covid-19 made 2020 somewhat of an annus horribilis. No-one could have imagined at New Year's Eve last year that we would've had the year we had. And yet there are reasons to be optimistic about the year ahead. The days are already getting longer and a vaccine is being rolled out to those who need it most. Before too long, please God, Covid-19 will be something that we will tell future generations about – those of us who have emerged from the pandemic unscathed, that is. Many people have lost loved ones or had their health compromised. Others



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

have lost their livelihoods or equilibrium.

This is not something we can take lightly or be glib about it.

“No-one could have imagined at New Year's Eve last year that we would've had the year we had”

The crisis has also had a deep impact on the life of the Church. From mid-March Mass was just an online experience for many of us. There was a brief respite in the summer months, but as light turned to autumn darkness the churches were again closed in the Republic. Will all the people who went to Mass before the pandemic return? It's not at all clear, but research is suggesting that most will. Probably we will lose people who had – in reality – long since given up Faith, but continued to go to Mass out of habit. Gone too will be the cynics who will have concluded that they have not been to Mass in nine months and the sky did not fall in.

New normal

As things start to get back to normal (not the 'new normal' – there is nothing normal about being locked in our homes unable to attend Mass), parishes will want

to think creatively about how we can invite people back. Perhaps we might think of setting aside one particular Sunday as a day of thanksgiving for those of us who have been delivered from this pestilence. Maybe parish pastoral councils could deliver invites to every home in the parish. An extra special effort could be made in the liturgy and the music, and perhaps those who have become stewards supervising sanitary measures could take on a ministry of welcoming people. It might be an idea to organise a cup of tea afterwards and invite people to stay around and chat with their fellow parishioners. It could be the beginning of a journey for people to explore their faith or the practice of their religion afresh.

“There is nothing normal about being locked in our homes unable to attend Mass”

There's a lot of tiredness in the Church in Ireland, that is understandable – but we cannot allow it to inform our thinking about

everything. “You can be good without going to Mass,” a priest told me a little while ago. Of course, he's right – the point is self-evident. But if people are not attending Mass and participating in the sacraments then they are missing something that Christ willed to help them on the human journey.

Importance

We need to reassert the central importance of the celebration of the Eucharist in the life of our parish communities. Either intentionally or otherwise, the Church's response to the pandemic has given the impression to at least some people that going to Mass doesn't really matter. It is alarming to see that some priests have publicly adopted this position in the guise of an excessive caution. If the message becomes that Mass doesn't matter, don't be surprised if the market gets the message.

Happy new year – come Holy Spirit.

i To join Friends of The Irish Catholic and support Catholic journalism, please phone the office on 01 6874094 for more information or to make a contribution.

Never a united Ireland without unionists onboard

» Continued from Page 1

At the same time, he said that “for unionists and indeed loyalist communities in Northern Ireland, it represents for them a significant moment in the establishment of the Northern Ireland state”.

The archbishop criticised politicians for refusing to engage with the commemoration of the creation of the northern state.

“I would like to see the 2021 centenary as an opportunity for greater mutual understanding, for opportunities to build further reconciliation and peace...I am somewhat disappointed that many of our nationalist and republican political leaders have dismissed the centenary of 2021 altogether because for me I think it's

really important to seize it as a moment to reflect on where we've come from,” the archbishop said.

“If we could accept that people on this island approach their belonging from very different perspectives – that was key to the Good Friday Agreement: that we would recognise legitimate aspirations on the island and that to me is something that we're better not to run away from, but to face.

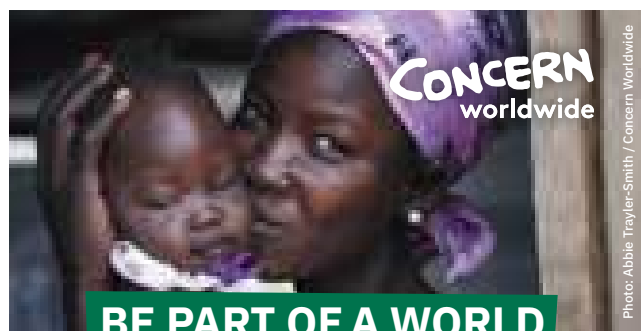
“And if there is ever to be greater mutual understanding and living together on the island of Ireland, then we need to be able to face difficult moments and difficult episodes from our history we need to be able to face it openly,” the archbishop insisted.

See Page 4.

Gifting the future the past



Pictured is Colm Kieran of Kingscourt with his children following the planting of the parish 2020 time capsule and Irish oak tree at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Kingscourt.



Adukual* (18) and her seven-month-old baby, Elizabeth* live in South Sudan, a country torn by years of conflict.

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**ENDING
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WHATEVER
IT TAKES**

Border communities 'thrilled' as Brexit deal done

Chai Brady

There is "huge relief" after negotiations on the Brexit deal were finalised on Christmas Eve, according to a priest based in a border parish.

Fr Oliver O'Reilly PP of Ballyconnell, Co. Cavan, said he was "absolutely thrilled" as the post-Brexit trade agreement aimed at governing the UK and EU's relationship was finalised last week.

The document lays out detail on trade, law enforcement and dispute settlement among other arrangements. The UK will leave the single market and customs union on December 31.

“We have 4-5,000 people employed so all these businesses needed a deal very badly so they could continue trading without any major interruption”

Fr O'Reilly told *The Irish Catholic*: "We are very much a border parish, it's just right on the border and we're closely interlinked. Many people from the North, particularly from Kilmore, from Fermanagh, would come to Mass here in Ballyconnell."

"We have a strong industrial

hub right along the border from Derrylin back down to Ballyconnell, we're very lucky we have 4-5,000 people employed so all these businesses needed a deal very badly so they could continue trading without any major interruption. The businesses and the people that own these various industries are very pleased. There is huge relief, it's actually palpable in the area.

"It's many communities, it's a region with huge employment, it's a region from basically west Cavan, south Fermanagh and south Leitrim, there's huge numbers employed in this area."

Decision

The European Parliament in Brussels will be asked for its consent to the deal in 2021. For the process to be concluded all 27 member states must adopt the decision.

The European Commission has proposed the agreement be applied on a provisional basis until February 28.

Under the arrangements by the end of a five-and-a-half-year transition the number of fish the UK can catch in British waters will rise from about half now to two-thirds. The deal covers trade worth about £660 billion (€730 billion) and means goods can be sold without tariffs or quotas in the EU market.

Giving the gift of life



Pictured is seven-year-old Tomás O'Dowd, a kidney patient from Dunquinn in Co. Kerry at the launch of the Irish Kidney Association's Christmas organ donor awareness campaign, which is supported by Organ Donation Transplant Ireland. Photo: Conor McCabe.

Trinity's prayer ban risks 'raising ghosts of the past'

Jason Osborne

Censoring the prayer activities of the Trinity Catholic Laurentian Society is "not good for the image" of a "progressive, modern and liberal university", a prominent former politician has said.

Former Fianna Fáil politician and Minister of State, Martin Mansergh, writing in *The Irish Catholic*, advised representatives of public institutions, including students, that a "minimal knowledge" of history is necessary to avoid raising "ghosts of the past".

Historic relationship

Mr Mansergh details a memorandum he recently found, which outlines the historic relationship between Trinity College and Catholic students.

In it, a brief history of Trinity is established, which sees an initially exclusively Protestant institution gradually opened up to Catholics.

“Trinity College is thus, probably the only University in the British Isles in which a Catholic can, by statute, be deprived of his rooms for not hearing Mass on Sundays”

The obligation placed on Catholic students to attend Sunday Mass in order to avail of rooms is noted, with the Memorandum saying, "Trin-

ity College is thus, probably the only University in the British Isles in which a Catholic can, by statute, be deprived of his rooms for not hearing Mass on Sundays".

As a result, Mr Mansergh observes, Trinity College was seen for generations as a safe place for parents to send their children.

Vulnerable position

In light of this, "the memorandum throws light on the extraordinary lengths the college then in a vulnerable position was prepared to go to counter longstanding Catholic suspicions" – lengths which now stand at odds with the Central Societies Committee's stance towards the Catholic Laurentian Society.

» See Page 7

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- Peter Kreeft

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Having the courage to honestly look at the past and face the future

Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin.



We cannot run away from the fact that our shared history is contentious and people see things differently, Archbishop Eamon Martin tells Chai Brady

“History,” the poet Maya Angelou wrote “despite its wrenching pain cannot be un-lived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.”

The island of Ireland is no stranger to a painful history and recent centenary commemorations including the Battle of the Somme and the Easter Rising have seen attempts at what might best be described as ‘ethical remembering’. It’s a fact that different people on the same island experienced history in very different ways.

Milestone

This coming year – 2021 – marks a significant milestone on the island with the creation of the northern state. For unionists, it was a triumph. For nationalists, it was akin to a catastrophe. It is a shared history which could prove contentious if not approached with sensitivity.

It’s not off to a promising start. Just before Christmas, the director of the Seamus Heaney Centre at Belfast’s Queen’s University said it did not give permission for an image of the poet in to be used in a campaign to mark the centenary of Northern Ireland.

The inclusion of a colour portrait of the Nobel laureate in the ‘Our Story in the Making: NI Beyond 100’ initiative caused controversy when it was unveiled by Britain’s Secretary of State Brandon Lewis in December.

Mr Heaney, who grew up in rural Co Derry and died in Dublin in 2013, often spoke of his Irish Catholic and nationalist heritage.

SDLP leader Colum Eastwood branded the use of his portrait as “deeply offensive”, describing it as a “cynical attempt to co-opt Seamus Heaney’s image and reduce his work to a branding tool to promote that narrative about partition”.

Primate of All-Ireland and former President of Mr Heaney’s alma mater in Derry St Columb’s College Archbishop Eamon Martin is acutely aware of the sensitivity.

He told *The Irish Catholic* that he hopes 2021 “will be a year which we can use as an opportunity to deepen our relationship and our understanding of each other”.

“Archbishop Eamon sees the centenary as a moment to build relationships rather than highlight division”

Archbishop Eamon said that: “Clearly for people on the island of Ireland the year 1921 represents – for a lot of people – a great amount of sadness: a sense of separation, a sense of loss with the partition of the island”.

At the same time, he said that “for unionists and indeed loyalist communities in Northern Ireland, it represents for them a significant moment in the establishment of the Northern Ireland state”.

Archbishop Eamon sees the centenary as a moment to build relationships rather than highlight division. “I think for all of us

in this island, given that we want to build a future together on the island of Ireland and indeed with Brexit looming, we have to work very closely on our relationships between these islands.

Opportunities

“I would like to see the 2021 centenary as an opportunity for greater mutual understanding, for opportunities to build further reconciliation and peace...I am somewhat disappointed that many of our nationalist and republican political leaders have dismissed the centenary of 2021 altogether because for me I think it’s really important to seize it as a moment to reflect on where we’ve come from,” the archbishop said.

The Primate speaks of 1921 as a “hinge year”.

“From that moment onwards, communities on this island became polarised and the legacy of 1921 cast a shadow over the full century to follow.

“I think it’s really important for us to seek to understand the impact that the year 1921 had on Ireland as an island and on these islands and the legacy that ensued, which was one of greater polarisation of the communities, increasing distrust between north and south and between east and west,” he said.

Reflection

For Archbishop Eamon, self-reflection and asking uncomfortable questions is key to building mutual understanding on the island. “I would like to think that in 2021 we are courageous enough to engage in critical self-reflection so that we can work more urgently to build peace and mutual understanding – because if there is ever to be a future of Ireland, it has to be one where we know each other intimately. Where we know our shortcomings and indeed, it’s even important for us in the Church to understand and accept the part that we may have played in the distrust in the polarisation and



The image of Seamus Heaney used in the ‘Our Story in the Making: NI Beyond 100’ campaign.

the lack of understanding which followed 1921,” he said.

“I would see it as an opportunity year, and I would be disappointed if it went and all we did was try to keep our head down for the whole year because we’re afraid to face the reality of the separation and suffering which in many ways hinged in the year 1921,” he said.

“The archbishop has in the past put on the record his desire to see a united Ireland”

But what about the fact that competing aspirations remain? Unionists saw the Good Friday Agreement as copper-fastening the North within the union. On the other hand, nationalists saw the agreement as a stepping stone towards unification.

The archbishop has in the past put on the record his desire to see a united Ireland. “Clearly as a nationalist myself, as growing up in a nationalist community, I would have a yearning that that sense of belonging is something that could be shared by all of the people in the island of Ireland,” he told *The Irish Catholic*.

However, he warned that understanding where those fearful of a united Ireland are coming from is key. “I think that we will never reach there unless we are open to understanding each other, and I think that 2021 provides an opportunity for greater understanding of where we’ve come from and indeed where we might go together into the future.”

Northern Ireland

“In some ways, we have to – I have to – accept that there are people who will want to mark the significance of the establishment of the Northern Ireland state in the year 2021. They too must accept that for me I see 1921 as having been a moment of great separation and loss on this island.

“If we could accept that people on this island approach their belonging from very different perspectives – that was key to the Good Friday Agreement: that we would recognise legitimate aspirations on the island and that to me is something that we’re better not to run away from, but to face. And if there is ever to be greater mutual understanding and living together on the island of Ireland, then we need to be able to face difficult moments and difficult episodes from our history we need to be able to face it openly,” the archbishop insists.

Did it take a mother of seven to manage compromise?

Were I asked to do so, I think I would propose Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, as my Person of the Year.

Leadership

As the head of the operational side of the EU, she has shown leadership, grace under pressure, and when the EU-British deal was pronounced done, a cultural hinterland in quoting both Shakespeare and T.S. Eliot.

From Shakespeare, she described Britain's exit with "parting is such sweet sorrow". And from T.S. Eliot, a profoundly Christian voice (he was Anglo-Catholic), she cited that thoughtful but enigmatic line from Little



Mary Kenny

Gidding: "What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning."

But it is not just for her stewardship of what was sometimes a grouchy and ill-tempered series of negotiations that Frau von der Leyen deserves praise. She has also proved a significant point for women, and a positive example for feminism.

It has been regularly claimed that being a mother, and especially being a mother of a

large family, is a serious hindrance to a woman's ambition and achievement. From Simone de Beauvoir onwards, pregnancy has been identified as the main obstacle to women's equality in the working world.

French President Emmanuel Macron even once said that no woman would choose to have a large brood of children.

Supports

Well, step forward President Ursula von der Leyen: mother of seven.

It's evident from her CV that certain supports are needed for women to achieve in their working lives as well as having children. These are: education (she's attended good schools and universities, and holds a PhD); support from parents and the social capital that goes with it: marriage to a supportive husband; and yes, the financial structures which may underpin it.

But when society provides the backup for education, a career path, and motherhood, it can all be combined harmoniously.

And incidentally Ursula von der Leyen has indicated that raising seven children has given her enhanced



Ursula von der Leyen with Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

psychological experience in managing complicated multi-lateral negotiations. I'll bet! (She spent some years, in the 1990s, as a stay-at-home mother.)

Like Amy Coney Barrett – the US Supreme Court judge, and also mother of seven – and the City of London expert, Dame

Helena Morrissey, mother of nine, these women are role-models for a younger generation, and evidence that with the appropriate supports, women don't need to reject having babies to fulfil their working lives.

A stable marriage is highly recommended, and religious affiliation often

seems to figure, too – the Von der Leyens are members of an Evangelical Lutheran church.

Would the EU-British deal ever have happened under the leadership of Jean Claude Juncker? Or did it take a mother of seven kids to move the dial to a compromise agreement?



US Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett.

Placing truth at the heart of the crib

The Christmas Crib, with its sweet composition of Mary, Joseph and the Infant Jesus, surrounded by the shepherds, the ox, the sheep and the ass, is central to the Nativity scene. In Continental Europe, where Epiphany is traditionally more emphatically celebrated, the Three Kings are added on January 6.

But looking at the Christmas crib in our local church (and even the figurines in my own small crib in the house), it occurs to me that these days we

need to update the images. In short, some of the representations of the Holy Family really are a little too white.

I don't go along with all the objectives of Black Lives Matter (defund the police, and the poor will be unprotected, while the rich will hire their own security personnel), but the campaigners have made us more sensitive to issues of colour.

The Holy Family would have looked like Syrians, Palestinians – or Middle Eastern Jews, which they

were. The creamy-white complexions of the statues in the traditional crib do seem a little outdated.

The Three Kings (or Three Wise men) are usually seen as more multi-cultural. Edward Burne-Jones's beautiful 1894 tapestry of the Magi depicts one as white, one darker-skinned, and one black.

It's usually said that Melchior came from Persia (Iran), Caspar came from India and Balthazar from Arabia.

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● December 29 was the 850th anniversary of the murder of St Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral, in 1170. Thomas was murdered by knights at the behest of the King of England, the French-born Henry II, who had so famously murmured "who will rid me of this turbulent priest?"

St Thomas is a symbol of all martyrs: but he is also, surely, an example of why the church should never be under the power of the state, since the state will always be tempted to subjugate faith to political ends.

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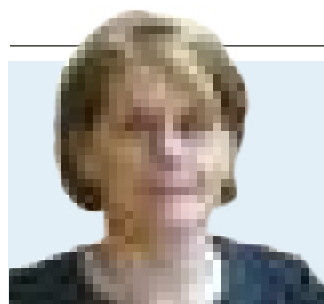


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Singer and Actor Paul Byrom with his dog Bradley took part in a bucket collection for Focus Ireland in Dublin City Centre in the run up to Christmas. Photo: Leon Farrell/ Photocall Ireland

Covid-19 must be a turning point for most vulnerable



The Government should seize the moment and set a deadline for an end to homelessness writes St Stanislaus Kennedy RSC

Focus Ireland has been working harder than ever this year in partnership with the State and together we have helped over 800 families to secure a home and leave homelessness behind. There has been great work done during the Covid-19 pandemic to keep people safe. We have also helped to reduce the number of people homeless from a record high of over 10,000 people to 7,685 people.

None of us would ever wish for this pandemic but we must make sure that Covid-19 is a real turning point in the battle to end homelessness. I can remember back in 1987, which was the International Year of Homelessness, predicting that within six or seven years, we would end long-term homelessness. It could have happened, except that governments reneged on commitments to provide houses. And so the numbers of people experiencing homelessness grew and grew, up until it was way beyond crisis.

“None of us would ever wish for this pandemic but we must make sure that Covid-19 is a real turning point in the battle to end homelessness”

However, it is really positive that the number of people now homeless is the lowest it has been for a few years. I would stress though

there is much work still to be done. As the country starts to emerge from lockdown, there is still much uncertainty ahead. Many people are suffering job losses and there will be a recession which means every action needs to be taken to ensure we not only stop the numbers homeless rising again.

No family should ever have to go through the trauma of losing their home and being homeless. No child should ever be born into homelessness. Families and individuals lose their homes because they can't afford to pay the rent or the house is sold or repossessed. They have been called 'the new homeless'. That is the people who become homeless for purely economic reasons. I believe that, as a country, we have a duty to look after all our citizens, especially those who are most vulnerable. We must cherish all our children equally and ensure that no child suffers from being homeless.

Realistic solutions

Focus Ireland will continue to develop realistic policy solutions to help end homelessness. We also work through over 80 front-line services in Dublin and across the country so we are there when people need us the most. This amazing work is done in partnership with the State, as well as through kind support from our generous donors. All of us at Focus Ireland firmly believe that homelessness can be ended.

As I write this, we are still dealing with the Covid-19 public health emergency and Focus Ireland is working more closely than ever with the State and partner organisations to protect people who

are homeless. Welcome steps, such as the temporary ban on evictions and the rent freeze, had a big impact in cutting the numbers becoming homeless. We have helped to move record numbers of families and individuals out of homelessness in this period.

“No family should ever have to go through the trauma of losing their home and being homeless. No child should ever be born into homelessness”

Focus Ireland is also set to soon launch a campaign calling on the Government to set a deadline to end homelessness. This commitment to a deadline to end homelessness must be backed up by a realistic plan and timeline to achieve this.

We believe this is important as no country has ever managed a significant reduction in homelessness without having a firm commitment to ending it. When there was a previous Government commitment to ending long-term homelessness by 2010 this led to the lowest ever level of homelessness in Ireland.

That success was swept away by the economic crisis. We can, and must, do better next time.

Sr Stanislaus Kennedy RSC is founder and life president of Focus Ireland. www.focusireland.ie



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"One of the few things in life that cannot possibly do any harm in the end is the honest pursuit of Truth."

- Peter Kreeft

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Martin Mansergh

The View



Trinity's censoring of prayer is not good for the image of a progressive and modern university

Year's end is a time, when newspapers publish archival documents that may reveal discreetly hidden or long forgotten aspects of governance.

Representatives of public institutions, even students, should have some minimal knowledge of their history, to avoid unnecessarily raising ghosts of the past. The report in *The Irish Catholic* (November 26) that the Trinity College Central Societies Committee is trying to censor Catholic prayer activities of the Laurentian Society is not good for the image of a progressive, modern and liberal university.

“At the beginning of each term the provost sends to the vice-chancellor, who is a Catholic, a list of all the Catholic students in residence”

In sorting through papers of my father, Nicholas Mansergh, Irish and Commonwealth historian, as well as British wartime civil servant, I came across about a year ago a document entitled ‘Memorandum on the Faith and Morals of Catholics in Trinity College’, probably dating from 1944. There is an end-note, which states: “This memorandum was drafted by some of the Catholics in Trinity College for the information of their friends”. My belief is that the copy was passed to my father by his friend and contemporary the Regius Professor of Greek and future Senator W.B. Stanford, son of the Rector of Dundrum, Co. Tipperary, whom he had known since the early 1920s.

Memorandum

The memorandum begins with a brief history of Trinity, how originally it was exclusively Protestant by law established, i.e. Church of Ireland, but that after the *Catholic Relief Act* in 1793 all courses and degrees were opened up to Catholics. While not eligible for scholarships

or fellowships, “very distinguished Catholics took their degrees in TCD, e.g. Michael Slattery, Catholic Archbishop of Cashel, Denis Caulfield Heron, Sergeant at Law, Judge O’Hagan, Judge of the High Court, Synan, an MP, Cogan, a Privy Councillor, Michael Morris, Lord Chief Justice, James Charles Mathew, Lord Justice in England, Christopher Palles, Lord Chief Baron, and numerous others”.

The paper went on to relate that during the 19th century restrictions on Catholics and Presbyterians were gradually removed, so that they could gain access to (non-foundation) scholarships from 1854 and the parliamentary vote (Dublin University being a constituency that returned two MPs). In 1873, all denominational bars were removed, and shortly afterwards Presbyterian instruction was provided. Offers to provide Catholic instruction and to build a Catholic chapel, which still stood in the 1940s, had not been taken up.

Observance

The kernel of the Memorandum followed: “For about 20 years the following rules to promote proper observance by Catholics of the duties required by their religion have been in force:

- No Catholic can be given rooms in college until he has appeared personally before the provost and promised to hear Mass on Sundays and named the church he will attend.
- At the beginning of each term the provost sends to the vice-chancellor, who is a Catholic, a list of all the Catholic students in residence, the numbers of their rooms and the names of their tutors.
- The vice-chancellor sends the list to the church which the students promise to attend.
- In the case of serious illness of a Catholic student the Head Porter’s Lodge has

a standing order from the provost to telephone at once to the clergy of the Catholic parish church of the college in Westland Row.

“It is a statute of the College that the provost has the power to deprive students of rooms for not attending on Sundays the services of the church to which they belong. Trinity College is thus, probably the only University in the British Isles in which a Catholic can, by statute, be deprived of his rooms for not hearing Mass on Sundays.

“Enquiries are made at intervals concerning the Catholics living in registered houses of residence to ensure that they attend Mass on Sundays.”

The memorandum addressed the charge sometimes made that methods contrary to Catholic practice were advocated in the Medical School in TCD. This was false, and teaching was

exactly the same as in every other medical school in Ireland.

“Women are forbidden to visit college rooms at any time unless accompanied by their parents or guardians”

On safeguards for morals, “intimately bound up with the disciplinary rules of the college as a whole”, every student had tutors to supervise their studies and discipline of which the Junior Dean had overall charge. This system safeguarded against “the two principal evils of Irish students’ life, drunkenness and gambling. These two vices inevitably lead to cheating of parents”. There was evening roll-call, and no women were allowed in

college after 6pm, unless to attend societies “properly chaperoned”.

“Women are forbidden to visit college rooms at any time unless accompanied by their parents or guardians”. In the light of all this, parents for generations had felt it safe to send their children to Trinity College.

Concluded

The memorandum concluded: “The attitude of the Catholics of Trinity College to their recent condemnation by His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin is one of unhesitating submission as required by their religion. While they may consider their condemnation is harsh by reason of the fact that they and their parents have chosen the best course available to them to obtain a university education and at the same time to retain their Catholic Faith and morals, they continue to

accept the teaching of the Catholic Church. They are praying that the additional safeguards His Grace the Archbishop mentioned in his regulations will be provided and are having the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered in the intention that the ban on Trinity may be removed”.

The hierarchy’s ban, now almost exclusively associated with Archbishop John Charles McQuaid, was intended to boost the National University of Ireland, which, in a post-colonial independent Ireland, still had to contend with the historic prestige of Trinity, a Protestant and largely unionist institution, where teaching and intellectual influence was outside Catholic control. The ban was lifted in 1970, when ironically the pressure of the Laurentian Society eventually bore fruit. The memorandum throws light on the extraordinary lengths the college then in a vulnerable position was prepared to go to counter longstanding Catholic suspicions, but also on the awkward conflict of loyalties of Catholic students attending TCD.



Trinity College Dublin Parliament Square. Photo: Patrick Theiner.

“I came across about a year ago a document entitled ‘Memorandum on the Faith and Morals of Catholics in Trinity College’, probably dating from 1944”

In (partial) defence of men



What we now refer to as the patriarchy was only too well aware of the dangers of toxic masculinity, writes **David Quinn**

A teacher was sacked recently from Eton College in England, the country's poshest school. His error? To post his ruminations on the topic of the 'patriarchy' on the internet and to leave it up in defiance of the wishes of the school principal. He has appealed and who knows where the case might finally end up?

Is this a free speech matter? On one level, yes. He is being punished for something he said. On the other hand, he works for a particular establishment with particular values. If a teacher at a Catholic school posted a pro-abortion video, refused to take it down and was then sacked, would we think that was fair enough?

“Unfortunately for the teacher in question, Will Knowland, his video presentation was clumsy and poorly-judged”

But how did a video about 'patriarchy', that is a defence of 'male values' and a man's world violate Eton's values? It is a boy's-only school, after all and for centuries has extolled traditionally manly virtues like physical courage. It is also a bastion of social class-based privilege and elitism.

On the other hand, this is exactly the image the school is now trying to shake off, although given its sky-high fees, that will prove impossible. But if it can't shake off its deserved elitist reputation, then maybe it can become more 'inclusive' in other ways. This would



extend to doing its best to avoid accusations of sexism.

Unfortunately for the teacher in question, Will Knowland, his video presentation was clumsy and poorly-judged. One of the things that struck me about it is how it seemed to glorify male violence, not a good thing. It had a strong 'survival of the fittest' undertone.

One reason

This is one reason why the headmaster asked him to take it down. When Mr Knowland repeatedly refused, he was sacked. But apparently, he is a popular teacher at the school and a lot of pupils signed a petition demanding he be reinstated.

Is there any way Mr Knowland could have gotten away with a video on the topic of 'patriarchy', even if he did it better? It's a very tricky, delicate topic. Even defending men without defending the 'patriarchy' as such, is tricky.

I discovered this myself in 2018. The topic of 'toxic masculinity' was back in the news and men were being roundly attacked again. So, I posted the following on Twitter: "The built world around you; men did that. Your house, car, street, plumbing, electric wiring etc. Men. Let's

say something nice about men today."

The counterattack began immediately. The gist of it is that I was being a sexist pig. I appeared on a number of programmes to defend myself and was very happy to do so. I wanted to say something good about men.

What I posted was not an original thought. In fact, it was based on something the feminist, Camille Paglia had once said. Admittedly Paglia is a highly unorthodox feminist who will frequently defend men.

“Recently, in his column in *The Irish Times*, Fintan O'Toole attacked the patriarchy”

Back in 2013, she wrote the following in defence of men in *Time* magazine: "Indeed, men are absolutely indispensable right now, invisible as it is to most feminists, who seem blind to the infrastructure that makes their own work lives possible. It is overwhelmingly men who do the dirty, dangerous work

of building roads, pouring concrete, laying bricks, tarring roofs, hanging electric wires, excavating natural gas and sewage lines, cutting and clearing trees, and bulldozing the landscape for housing developments. It is men who heft and weld the giant steel beams that frame our office buildings, and it is men who do the hair-raising work of inseting and sealing the finely tempered plate-glass windows of skyscrapers 50 stories tall...The modern economy, with its vast production and distribution network, is a male epic, in which women have found a productive role – but women were not its author. Surely, modern women are strong enough now to give credit where credit is due!"

Controversial

Rather than seeming to glorify male violence, Mr Knowland would have been better to quote Ms Paglia because there isn't the slightest doubt that what she says is true and it should not be controversial to point it out, like I did in April 2018.

Recently, in his column in *The Irish Times*, Fintan O'Toole attacked the patriarchy. He accused it of seeking

to control women's bodies. I'm not going to defend 'patriarchy' as such, but sometimes the 'patriarchy' is a term used instead of traditional sexual morality, and I will defend aspects of that.

It's true that traditional sexual morality sought a measure of control over women's bodies but – and it is crucial to point this out – it also sought to control men's bodies. In particular, it wanted us to behave in a certain way in our sex lives.

“It is the sexual revolution that has given men huge sexual freedom with often dire consequences”

Even more precisely, it wanted us to look after the children we had together. It did not want men having sex with all the women they could persuade to get into bed with them regardless of the consequences. It wanted commitment first, and better, marriage first.

In this sense, the 'patri-

archy' was only too well aware of the dangers of toxic masculinity and the need to rein it in and civilise men.

It is the sexual revolution that has given men huge sexual freedom with often dire consequences. I am not referring here to issues of a lack of consent and abuse, as terrible as they are, but to all the men who walk away from their responsibilities when their sexual partner becomes pregnant.

Traditional male

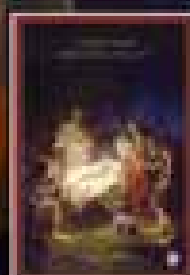
Like most things in life, this is complicated. It is wrong to merely demonise men. We should be allowed to defend traditional male traits like physical courage and risk-taking, and we also must acknowledge that masculinity can become toxic.

It knows that the male contribution to society is positive and good, and it is also knows men need to be civilised.

Christianity acknowledges all these things, of course, because Christianity has a very deep understanding of human nature. It knows that the male contribution to society is positive and good, and it also knows men need to be civilised.

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MAKE 2021 A YEAR TO GO TO THE HOLY LAND

This September and October will see two groups of pilgrims depart on an unforgettable trip to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. In recent years, these trips have become an integral part of The Irish Catholic year with hundreds of pilgrims making the journey from every corner of Ireland to take part in a unique opportunity to visit the sites associated with the earthly life of Christ. The pilgrimage also helps the Bible come alive for people as they visit Nazareth, Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Here are some highlights of this year's itinerary:



The Sea of Galilee.

Day One: Ireland to the Holy Land

Depart Dublin Airport in the evening for an overnight flight direct to Tel Aviv on El Al.

Day Two: Nazareth

Upon arrival in Ben-Gurion Airport, pilgrims will be met by a Marian Pilgrimages representative and guide before boarding our tour coach to Nazareth. En route we will see stunning views of the sun rising over the Galilee region – site of much of the ministry of Jesus. After breakfast, check-in to the four-star Legacy Hotel for five nights with dinner and breakfast.

After time to rest and freshen up, we will walk the short distance to the nearby Basilica of the Annunciation to celebrate Mass. On the lower level of the basilica we see the remains of Mary's house and where the Archangel Gabriel visited her.

Adjacent to the basilica is St Joseph's Church, where we will visit the site of Joseph's workshop and the house of the Holy Family. A short walk from the basilica is Mary's Well here you have the opportunity to draw water from the same well as the Virgin Mary followed by free time in Nazareth before dinner at the hotel.

Day Three: Mount Tabor and Cana in Galilee

After breakfast, we have a short drive to Mount Tabor to ascend by taxi for Mass at the Church of the Transfiguration where Jesus is transfigured and speaks to Moses and Elijah. There is time to enjoy the view of the Valley of Armageddon and the Jezreel Valley – bread basket of the Holy Land.

After time for lunch we take the short coach journey to Cana in Galilee. Here we visit the Wedding Church, the site of the first miracle of Jesus. Couples on the pilgrimage can take part in the special ceremony to renew their wedding vows and there is also prayers and blessings for spouses at home and deceased husbands and wives. In the lower level of the church, we will see artifacts from the site before having an opportunity to taste and purchase some of the famous wine from this sacred site before returning to Nazareth for dinner in the hotel.

Optional Eucharistic Adoration at the Basilica of the Annunciation at 8.30pm.

Day Four: The Sea of Galilee

This morning we make our way to the Mount of Beatitudes overlooking the Sea of Galilee where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, Capernaum and Tabgha. Visit the site of the multiplication of the Loaves and Fish at Tabgha, and the Church of the Primacy of St Peter.

After lunch on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, continue to Capernaum and see the old synagogue and the excavations of St Peter's house before taking a boat trip on the lake, with relevant Bible readings. Before returning to the hotel we visit Magdala, the home of Mary Magdalene, a prosperous fishing village at the time of Jesus.

Optional rosary at the Irish icon at the Basilica of the Annunciation at 8.30pm.

Day Five: Acre – the Crusader capital

We take the short coach ride to the coastal city of Akko, famed throughout history as the Crusader capital of the Holy Land. After Mass, we return to Nazareth for free time in the town of the Holy Family before dinner at the hotel.

Optional candlelit procession at the Basilica of the Annunciation at 8.30pm.

Day Six: Jericho and Bethany

We leave Nazareth and drive south along the Jordan Valley into Jericho. Here we can see the Mount of Temptation and the Sycamore tree of Zachaeus. Continue to the Dead Sea and enjoy a 'dip' near Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. Drive by the Inn of the Good Samaritan, to Bethany to celebrate Mass at 16.00 and visit the Tomb of Lazarus. Continue to Qasr el Yahud, the baptismal site of Jesus on the River Jordan, here we can renew our baptismal vows.

After we drive to Bethlehem and check-in to the four-star Manger Square Hotel, located just a stone's throw from the Church of the Nativity for four nights, with breakfast and dinner.

Day Seven: Jerusalem

We drive to Jerusalem and enter the Old City to the Church of St Anne and nearby, see the Pool of Bethesda. Close by we begin the Via Dolorosa and follow the stations of the cross through the markets and narrow streets of the Old City to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the site of

Calvary where Jesus was crucified and His tomb. Here we will celebrate Mass at 11.00 and take some time to reflect at this sacred site. Enjoy some free time in Jerusalem for lunch before visiting the Western Wall.

We will then drive to Taybeh – a town where Jesus stayed before going to Jerusalem to endure the Passion. It is the last all-Christian town in the West Bank and here we will hear about efforts to keep the local Christian community vibrant, including local wine-making before returning to the hotel in Bethlehem for dinner.

Day Eight: Mount of Olives

Drive to the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem where we take our group photo and enjoy the view of the Old City below. We make our way to the highest point on the Mount of Olives to the Ascension Dome. Continue to visit the Pater Noster Church, Dominus Flevit, the Church of the Assumption and grotto and the Garden of Gethsemane.

In the afternoon we celebrate Mass at 15.00 in the Church of St Peter in Gallicantu or 'cock's crow', where St Peter denied Jesus

three times and see the dungeon where Jesus was held the night of Holy Thursday. We walk around Mount Zion and visit the church of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Tomb of King David and the Room of the Last Supper. Return to the hotel for dinner.

Day Nine: Bethlehem

After breakfast we take the short walk to the Church of the Nativity and celebrate Mass at 10.00. Here you can visit the birthplace of Jesus, and the Holy Manger as well as the chapels of St Joseph, St Jerome, the Holy Innocents and the Church of St Catherine.

Visit the Milk Grotto before lunch and meeting with members of the local Christian community in Bethlehem. Afterwards, we take the short drive to the Shepherds' Field and Ein Karem to the Church of the Visitation before returning to the hotel for dinner.

Day Ten: Emmaus

After breakfast at the hotel, we have some free time in Bethlehem before boarding the coach for the journey to Emmaus where we will have Mass and lunch before proceeding to the airport for the direct flight back to Dublin.

PRICING NOTES FOR THE PILGRIMAGE

The package on offer is all inclusive of the following:

Travel and accommodation

- Flight from Dublin to Tel Aviv;
- Transfer on arrival from Tel Aviv airport to the hotel in Nazareth with guide assistance;
- Five nights in the four-star Legacy Hotel in Nazareth
- Four nights in the four-star Manger Square Hotel in Bethlehem;
- Breakfast and evening meal served each day at hotels;

- Transfer to Tel Aviv airport for return flight;
- Flight from Tel Aviv to Dublin;
- Luxury air-conditioned coach throughout the itinerary;
- Guiding audio system (earphones for listening to the guide).

Tours and religious programme

- Full religious programme with a spiritual director including daily Mass;
- Services of Marian Pilgrimages representative.

- English-speaking guides throughout the pilgrimage;
- Full day guided tour of Jerusalem including visits to the Western Wall, Dome of the Rock, Church of St Anne, Via Dolorosa, Holy Sepulchre and Shrine of the Book;
- Complete programme of sightseeing and visits to sites of interest in the Holy Land;
- Boat ride on Sea of Galilee;
- Return taxi transfers to Mount Tabor.

Entrance fees included

- Dominus Flevit;
- Capernaum;
- Mount of Beatitudes;
- Muhrakha;
- Qumran.

Optional

- Travel insurance €25 for passengers up to 85 years. Please note that an additional insurance premium of €25 is charged for persons aged 86 to 94 years;

passengers 95 years and over should secure private travel insurance.

- Price per person sharing twin/double/treble rooms with private facilities. Passengers are entitled to check in one standard piece of luggage subject to airline's conditions. Single rooms are subject to availability at a supplement.
- Taxes, charges and government levies are included.
- Porterage at hotels are included in the package price.
- All tips and gratuities everywhere are included.

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Bringing schoolchildren on 'A Pilgrim Path'



Dispelling myths and prejudices, Chai Brady hears about young people and their relationship with God

Schoolchildren have a "great hunger" to discuss and engage in discussions about God and they must be given this opportunity, according to a retreat facilitator that has worked with multiple schools.

Anita Phelan, who has a degree in applied psychology, a diploma in guidance and counselling, a postgraduate diploma in Education and a diploma in youth retreat facilitation, told *The Irish Catholic* that although young people she has worked with were nervous about discussing God, "they actually really desired and were hungry for that information".

"It just made me realise we can't feed into that perception that young people don't want to come into a relationship with God because it's a false perception"

Ms Phelan put together a programme called 'A Pilgrim Path' after a Dublin school contacted her expressing interest in a walking tour. Going a step further, A Pilgrim Path is both a walking tour of Dublin city's churches and an insight into their history, while also being an invitation for students to engage in stillness, inward reflection and prayer as they journey from church to church.

"I certainly would have been of that opinion initially that young people had disengaged completely from a desire for a relationship with God and the need for Mass and so on," she explains.

"When I first started delivering retreats, I have to say that when I went into schools initially I felt I had to be very measured, I didn't want to overwhelm them with talking too much about God and their faith but it very quickly became obvious to me that they actually

really desired and were hungry for that information."

Desire

"Oftentimes it wasn't obvious, like they're slow to talk about it, they're nervous talking about it. But if you give them a chance to talk in pairs or write it down; it was just powerful that desire to know God and how to go about to know God.

"It just made me realise we can't feed into that perception that young people don't want to come into a relationship with God because it's a false perception. I'm not there to bring the faith to them, to bring God to them, he's already with them. I think we have a responsibility to support them on that journey and not shut the door," she adds.

"You're welcome here any time, God dwells here and he would love to see you coming and it doesn't matter what you've done"

Ms Phelan is no stranger to working with young people, having served as a guidance counsellor in both boys' and girls' schools while also experiencing the role of a classroom teacher in the subjects of Careers, English and SPHE. Anita has been an active member of her church and young adult faith groups throughout the years and felt the growing need to equip herself with the skills to assist young people in their relationship with God.

She says: "What I love about A Pilgrim Path is that even though it's a brilliant forum to have those conversations – I don't have to shy away from what it is we're doing, I can very much engage with it – it's done in a way that can also be described as gentle because you have that lovely experience of being out, people experiencing these beautiful build-

ings, familiarising themselves with their churches, with their locality, with their history which is also interesting for them but also then having that medium as well, that forum to say: 'You're welcome here any time, God dwells here and he would love to see you coming and it doesn't matter what you've done.'"

There were many "beautiful" churches "tucked away" in Dublin that were even new to her which she discovered during her research. Although the churches were enthusiastic about the idea of schoolchildren being brought on pilgrimage to visit, Covid-19 restrictions got in the way and it had to be put on hold.

When the lockdown meant churches were closed for public Mass and some closed completely



John's Lane Church on Thomas Street in Dublin City Centre.

to the public even for private prayer, Ms Phelan said she was "absolutely heartbroken".

"In the first few weeks of lockdown when we weren't able to do anything, and I'm sure a lot of people would feel the same, the importance of churches, of Mass, was highlighted to me more than ever. I never before felt such a hunger to be in Mass, to have the Eucharist, and as soon as the churches were opened, I was back as often as I could," she says.

Sacred space

Explaining what A Pilgrim Path entails, she says: "We'd visit our first church and the students get an opportunity to hear a little bit about the hopes for the day and the introduction and then they're also given a booklet which gives them a chance to journal their thoughts throughout the day and reflect on the experience within each church.

"So as we go from church to church they hear a little bit about the history and about how essen-

tially the churches are intertwined with the social and political fabric of Dublin, and then ultimately I suppose the main message would be to have an appreciation for the church, the history and the architecture, but ultimately really emphasising that this is a place where God dwells, if they would like to find that element of peace within a sacred space, a place where they can be still and engage with the stillness and the peace that churches offer: that this is a place that they can do that."

With the groups that she has already taken, Ms Phelan says initially she felt there was some resistance but that throughout the day there were clues they were enjoying the experience.

Meditation

"For instance, the meditation seemed to be something they absolutely loved, you could hardly hear a pin drop when we were in the church," she says.

"They were so engaged with it and these are students who would

say they didn't have much experience of something like that, of that five minutes of silence, so throughout the day they were compliant, they were happy, they seemed engaged but again I was really just handing it over and saying God help me here, I hope they're getting from it what I would love for them to get from it."

Ms Phelan also expressed an interest in creating similar programmes outside of Dublin, whether that would be her going to facilitate or help schools do it themselves, possibly even helping students to spearhead and facilitate the programme themselves. She has some school bookings for A Pilgrim Path in the New Year and is hopeful more schools will engage in the coming months.

For those interested in A Pilgrim Path they can find out more at <https://www.iam-retreats.com/> Anita Phelan can be contacted by email at iamretreatsinfo@gmail.com



Anita Phelan

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Reflecting on a year that was on the Hook



Controversial pundit George Hook talks to **Chai Brady** about faith, the politics of outrage and advice for modern Ireland

Undoubtedly the year 2020 will go down in history, with the extent of the worldwide response to stop the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic unprecedented and severe. For that reason there has been an abundance of disagreements and approaches throughout society and if there's one man to give his unfiltered take on the subject, it's George Hook.

“If you live by the sword you probably die by the sword”

With his rediscovered Catholic faith and a lot of opinions, Mr Hook spoke to *The Irish Catholic* about the challenges the Irish population faces and what he sees as the many political faux pas along the way, both due to the pandemic and before.

Having been let go from *Newstalk* just over two years ago after making one too many controversial statements on his show, Mr Hook said he's become a very relaxed old age pensioner. However, he has certainly not lost his flair for critique. After 16 years at the station he explained he has no problem with how it ended: “If you live by the sword you probably die by the sword.”

Mr Hook says that for a year after he left the public eye, he had a “gnawing feeling”, a need to somehow prove himself. “Then interestingly it was my family, one by one they all took me out for lunch, my children and said ‘cop on and forget about it’. And I did and I became a very, very relaxed old aged pensioner and I don’t miss it,” he reflects.

However, another reason he wouldn’t miss being a presenter nowadays, he says, is that when any journalist steps “out of line” they are severely criticised.

“You’re seeing this now in every aspect of our life, anybody who steps away from the mainstream view, and we’re seeing this with Covid, is hammered,” Mr Hook insists.

“So if you went into radio or television now, and we’re seeing this every day and night, everybody is afraid to step out of line. Like Ciara Kelly stepped out of line on Covid on *Newstalk Breakfast*, the abuse she received on social media was beyond belief. So why would you want to put your head above the parapet for that?”

“I didn’t survive. I did for long enough, but now I think it’s a very different place and I think people are afraid. People in media are now afraid, they’re afraid of losing their job or reaction on

Twitter or whatever and particularly now since Covid came up there is only one view and it’s the view of the scientist and there’s no other view and you cannot question that scientific view.”

Speaking of the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Tony Holohan, Mr Hook says he’s running the country rather than the Government.

“I doubt the vast majority of the population would recognise the Minister for Health if they passed him in the street, he wears a mask in the Dáil anyway just in case anybody would recognise him. How can the Minister for Health be missing in a pandemic? It’s incomprehensible,” he says.

“Regarding the more severe restrictions imposed by Government due to the pandemic, Mr Hook says they set a precedent that is ‘dangerous beyond belief’”

“I tell you when history is written it will be very unkind first of all to the chief medical officer, it will be unbelievably critical of him but it will be equally critical of our Government, our Government have failed miserably.

“Never in history has a civil servant run the country, my knowledge of the civil service is based on ‘Yes Minister’ on the television. The civil service comes to the minister and might persuade him or whatever, but the civil servant then doesn’t go out on the street and tell people this is what we’re doing, the minister goes out. There’s nothing wrong with this Government that a little testosterone wouldn’t fix.”

Mr Hook also called into question the actions of some politicians in the Dáil, mentioning in particular Independent TD Peter Fitzpatrick’s call in November for the army to police the border to limit travel between the North and the Republic because of the disparity of Covid regulations between the two jurisdictions.

“When I hear, and it was said in Dáil Éireann, that they might bring the army in relation to rules being broken. It is incomprehensible that in parliament, in a democracy, that any one of the 166 people in Dáil Éireann would talk about bringing the army in,” he says.

Regarding the more severe restrictions imposed by Government due to the pandemic, Mr Hook says they set a precedent that is “dangerous beyond belief”.

He criticises some politicians regarding the furore that arose around ‘GolfGate’, which revolved around 80 people going to a dinner at a hotel as part of an Irish parliamentary golf society event which many high-profile figures attended despite it breaching Covid-19 guidelines.

With several politicians calling for heads to roll in the Dáil, Mr Hook says that was “all about trying to make political capital”.

“Meantime we have a pandemic sweeping the nation, we have the economy going through the toilet, the next time we see Dublin it’ll be used for a cowboy movie as a ghost town and all they’ll have to get is tumbling tumbleweeds to make it look right,” he says.

Worship

The ban on public worship he described as “outrageous”. “Worship for us in Ireland hasn’t been banned since the penal laws, that was the last time that worship was banned and in fact what [Archbishop] Diarmuid Martin should have been doing is going up the mountains and he should be saying ‘if anybody wants to have Mass I’m holding it up in Tic-knock’”, Mr Hook insists.



Mr Hook’s show was a popular fixture on *Newstalk*.

George Hook and his wife Ingrid.



Gift of the Gab

Only discovering his gift of the gab could secure him a prime spot as a radio presenter much later in life, George Hook took to it like a duck to water. His faith journey is a different story, growing up in the 1940s and 1950s when Catholicism was much more widely practiced and influential, he says: “When you think about it, I was born in ‘41, the State wasn’t 20 years old when I was born, you have to put that in perspective. For anybody now, that era is as far away as the middle ages.

“That was a period of Confession every Saturday night, Communion every Sunday morning and you had to go to Communion before 10 o’clock because they didn’t serve Communion after 10 o’clock Mass. And then Christmas, it was commercial but poor. There were all the usual Christmas things but in terms of Christmas Mass it was just very special.”

Mr Hook completed his Leaving Cert in Presentation College Cork. His parents worked hard to make sure he was able to attend the prestigious private school. “I always say to people if they want to understand

me, they would have had to have met my mother. I was my mother’s son, I adored her, she thought I was born in a stable in Bethlehem and I could do no wrong,” says Mr Hook.

“It was after he finished up in school that he travelled to London to make some money for university”

“I was very close to both my parents, both my parents had an extraordinary effect on me for two people who were poor, who left school at 14 and made extraordinary efforts to get me to a private school in Cork, Presentation College Cork when nobody, or at least very few people on the area went on to Leaving Cert,” he explains, “I went on to Leaving Cert and was in a fee paying school to boot, that was the area I came from. I didn’t see running water in the house until I was 14, and cold running water.

“I didn’t have a bath in a house I lived in until I went to London and was in a flat. So that’s where I came from, but because my mother understood the value of education, because I had an education it enabled me to achieve more than I could have ever dreamt of doing.”

It was after he finished up in school that he travelled to London to make some money for university. While working there he recalls going to Mass on Ash Wednesday before work and how his colleagues were all asking him “you know there’s dirt on your forehead?”

“So it was quite hilarious really. The other thing was it was an incredible effort to go to Mass in London, when I was living in Cork or Dublin or whatever the church was just around the corner it was no big deal to go to Mass. The church was still fairly close in London but life was quite different and particularly like on a holy day of obligation,” he says.

Commitment

“Sunday wasn’t too much difficulty but a holy day of obligation was, because there were no evening

Masses so you had to get to Mass and you had to get to work so there was quite a commitment to your faith. Then like most people, sadly, I kind of disappeared from the faith you know? My commercial career is well documented, all sorts of trouble. And then the only time I went to church then was if the children were doing like Communion, Confirmation whatever.

“Like so many people the actual Catholicism in terms of practice really disappeared. I never really lost it in a sense, I never became an agnostic or an atheist but I did become non-practicing.”

Mr Hook was successful in a sales position he got in Ireland when he returned and decided to set up a catering business which he describes as a “complete disaster”, saying that any money he earned was in the space of 20 years after he got his “first real job” at the age of 54.

If there’s any advice he would give young people who are concerned about their future, it’s “not to listen to your parents”. This is a topic which Mr Hook feels very strongly about and nailed home concerns about the expectations that are placed on young people and how this could affect their future.

“The increase in the number of universities in Ireland and the push for young people to go into third level is leading to courses that don’t lead to jobs Mr Hook opines”

“That’s the first and most crucial decision because parents have expectations for their children, like in Cork in the 1950s everyone mother wanted to have a priest in the family, you know what I mean?”

“A lot of impressionable young men became priests because their mothers wanted them to become priests. In Britain every mother wanted a soldier in the family so just don’t listen to your parents because they’re not neutral.

“So you do what you want to do, so if actually what you want to be is a fella working for Tesco or Dunnes Stores or whatever because that’s what you like and you like retail and everything else then don’t go to university, go to Dunnes, or go to Tesco and be trained in retail because you’re not going to get any training for retail in university,” he advises.

Giving journalism as an example, he says the number of students studying journalism at third level in Ireland would be enough for the “world’s press” and due to the decline of sales for print publications jobs are not forthcoming.

He says: “So if somebody came to me and said I want to be a journalist I’d say no, I certainly wouldn’t do a degree in it, if you want to be a journalist get a job. There used

to be a thing in newspapers where fellas went in at 18 to the *Irish Press* or the *Irish Independent* and all they did was wander around the place emptying dustbins or whatever they were doing but they learned their trade. You don’t have to go to university for four years to be a journalist you need to be at a newspaper or a radio station, that’s where you learn.”

The increase in the number of universities in Ireland and the push for young people to go into third level is leading to courses that don’t lead to jobs, Mr Hook opines.

“I pray for my children and my grandchildren I pray for them economically as well as physically, I pray that they’ll come out of this”

“They have to get people into the universities, they have to, therefore what better way than have courses. So now we have courses to study the sex life of the Patagonian ant,” he jokes, “so we have all these courses that don’t lead to job”.

“What young people have to think about is: ‘what I’m going to study now, am I going to get a job?’ That’s what they have to think about. Not ‘I’m going to the technical institute in Ballyhaunis or wherever to do some oddball degree’.

“Don’t go to university, the greatest university of all is the university of life that’s the greatest learning you’re ever going to get and that’s where it all comes from so that’s what I’m telling young people, do what you want to do, don’t be doing what your parents want to do, don’t be doing what the fella in the seat next to you in class wants to do.” He adds that university-centred thinking is creating a culture in which anyone who doesn’t go to university is seen as a “failure”.

Pillar

Regarding how he has got through the pandemic, he says it is his wife Ingrid has been a “pillar of strength” and he can’t imagine life being the same without her.

“Every single night since St Patrick’s Day she’s cooked a meal for us, she’s just been a tower of strength. My children have been unbelievable, by Zoom calls and ringing me up and asking how I am and all this sort of stuff,” he says.

George Hook says he prays every day for his family: “The first thing is I pray and I think of my parents all the time because I’m looking forward to meeting them. But I pray, like I don’t kneel or I don’t formalise it, but not a day passes that I don’t pray to God that my children and my grandchildren are going to survive this because if Ingrid and I get it we’ll just die. But I pray for my children and my grandchildren I pray for them economically as well as physically, I pray that they’ll come out of this.”

Crafting crosses and thinking of Christ



A productive lockdown leads a Belfast man to carving crosses for Christians, writes **Chai Brady**

Although the start of Jim Deeds' wood carving journey had a few hiccups – his dog ate one of the first crosses he made – he's now receiving orders across Ireland and as far away as Malta and the US.

Wood carving

Mr Deeds never had a history in wood carving but says it could be in his blood as his grandfather was a master carpenter. Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* he says: "It's so surprising because it's never been part of my plan and yet particularly since the lockdown it really has taken legs in a different way, I'm just going along for the journey."

“However, he turned the wood carving into a prayerful activity that helped him through the lockdown”

It was during the lockdown that he began to amass more tools and became a “wood geek” after his normal job as a pastoral worker, both freelance and for the Diocese of Down and Connor, was majorly impacted due to Covid-19.

“Two things happened, first thing my freelance work disappeared, all my freelance work is about bringing people together in a room and I would be big into discernment, so I would lead groups in communal discernment about their mission or strategic plans, so that disappeared. So a third of my work just stopped

and then I also work for the diocese and I was furloughed from that so I found myself with a lot of time,” Mr Deeds explains.

Prayerful activity

However, he turned the wood carving into a prayerful activity that helped him through the lockdown. He says: “It's so good for my mental health, it slows me down, it keeps me in the moment. I have chosen to make it a contemplative prayer activity. I love to know who I am making the cross for because I can hold them in my prayers and my thoughts.

“It would give me great consolation to know that wherever my cross goes it went into the right hands, and often people would come back to me and say there's just something in the shape of that wood or there's something in the grain structure of the wood that really spoke to them at a time when they needed.”

“In terms of my own personal faith, what I found really hard was not receiving the Eucharist”

His first project was a cross for his mom which he decided to make one sunny Saturday afternoon when his family were out.



“I found a piece of skirting board of all things and I made this cross and my mom still has it, God love her, she puts it on, it's on the windowsill of her living room. It's the most rudimentary looking mess, it was awful but I gave it my best. That was the first one,” he recalls.

“And then I thought, well sure, I'm made one there, I'll make a wee cross for wearing around my neck and I'll get one of my friends to

bleed it. So I did that and then my dog ate it, my dog Charlie. I was getting changed up the stairs and he came into the bedroom and ate my cross, blessed and all by the hands of a holy priest. He's a rascal.”

“But it was a real ache to be outside the door and not able to receive the Eucharist”

Despite that setback he “started to get into it” and now “really enjoys it” and was soon making crosses for his friends and then others started contacting him about the crosses. Mr Deeds says that some people ask him if he does other carvings, which he has but admits he's not really interested in making secular designs.

He makes crosses people can wear, holding crosses and then some bigger ones that can be about five inches with some of the wood he uses being salvaged; offcuts from furniture makers.

Solace and peace

While his new pursuit has given him some solace and peace over the lockdown and afterwards, Mr Deeds still found it very difficult not to attend public worship.

He says: “In terms of my own personal faith, what I found really hard was not receiving the Eucharist. I'm a great devotee of Lough Derg, I do a bit of work for Lough Derg on and off, I'm really privileged in that I can visit the island a lot. I was one of four people who did Lough Derg during lockdown, it closed so Msgr La Flynn and myself and two other men did Lough Derg so that there would be bare feet on the island, as it would have been the first time in 1500 years that nobody did it.”

He used to go to his local parish church and in the style of Lough Derg walk around the church saying the Rosary, he says, “but it was a real ache to be outside the door and not able to receive the Eucharist. Like everybody else I began to access spirituality in a different way”.

Between his prayer and worship routines and wood carving Mr Deeds certainly had a productive lockdown, and with growing interest in his crosses around the world, the new year seems pregnant with possibility.



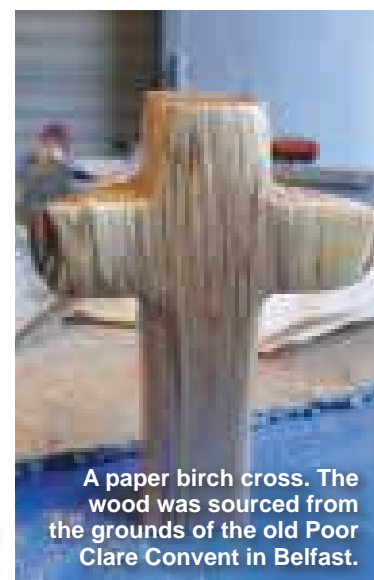
Jim Deeds.



Two-inch pocket cross with a base in case the owner wants it to stand on a table or desk. The wood is spalted beechwood. The cross was sent to a buyer in Saul, Co. Down.



A cross being formed at Jim Deeds' garage workshop.



A paper birch cross. The wood was sourced from the grounds of the old Poor Clare Convent in Belfast.

“His first project was a cross for his mom which he decided to make one sunny Saturday afternoon when his family were out”

2020 Review of the Year

Hopes young people are rediscovering Confession after Christmas upsurge



'Horror' at prospect of State commemoration for RIC Committee chair defends plan



Guns, drugs and killings need urgent Irish response – clergy

'Surprise' as top Catholic college rejects course in Catholic ethics

Bishop expresses alarm at rise in racist election commentary: Plea for Catholics to put homeless, health crisis and youth at centre of vote

JANUARY

The year began with hope as Irish priest reported a notable upsurge in people availing of Confession during Christmas 2019. Limerick-based Fr Gerard Moloney CSsR told *The Irish Catholic* that the much talked about "demise of Confession" is "slightly exaggerated": "We have heard hundreds here in Limerick over the last few days, of all ages and backgrounds," he said.

The country's largest Catholic College – Mary Immaculate College (MIC) in Limerick – rejected a course on Christian ethics in healthcare, much to the surprise of professors. Prof. Eamonn Conway – head of theology and religious studies at MIC – told *The Irish Catholic* that he was "surprised by the college management's decision to disallow" the course.

A number of prominent Irish priests expressed deep disquiet about the Government's plan to commemorate the Royal Irish Constabulary. The RIC are historically tied with violence and the Black and Tans Fr Paddy Byrne of Abbeyleix said that it was "a step too far" to commemorate them, as public objection rose.

The spate of gang violence, brutal killings and spread of drugs and guns which wracked Ireland provoked condemnation from clergy across the country who called for more Garda funding and that illegal drug users "wake up" and stop enabling violence.

As the clock ticked towards election time, Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin called on Catholic voters to reflect deeply before casting their vote. He insisted that Catholics had an absolute right to bring their faith to elections.

Primate calls for border poll-Archbishop says plan must proceed slowly with consideration

All pro-life TDs retain their Dáil seats while repeal candidates miss out



Call for parishes to put fresh focus on the youth Hundreds of young Catholics gather to celebrate Faith football'



FEBRUARY

Archbishop Eamon Martin said that politicians must work towards a poll on Irish unification, but that it was something which must proceed slowly and with all voices considered. "I would be along the lines of those who think that this is something we must work slowly towards," Archbishop Martin said.

Youth 2000 – which celebrated 30 years in existence this year – played host to almost 300 young Catholics at the annual St Valentine's Day Ball in Co. Kildare. It was almost double the number of people who attended last year. Prominent pro-life politicians who were vocal during the abortion referendum retained their seats while prominent pro-choice candidates lost theirs. Overall, 15 TDs who voted against abortion retained their seats, including Peadar Kirby, leader of new political party Aontú.

The Pope may have to fast-track a replacement for Archbishop Diarmuid Martin in Dublin or face the prospect of the country's largest diocese not having a bishop for up to a year. Speculation continued to grow as the year proceeded as to who his replacement would be.

The horrific revelation of the sexual abuse perpetrated by L'Arche founder Jean Vanier "shocked" and "angered" Irish L'Arche Community Leaders, who felt betrayed by their leader. Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, they said they were committed to continuing the organisations good work for those with intellectual difficulties. At the end of February came the first signs of 2020's maelstrom, Covid-19, as priests around the country began to take precautions due to the threat of the flu and Covid-19.

L'Arche will endure says 'shocked' Community Leaders

Clergy cautious over flu and coronavirus warnings

Appointment of new Dublin archbishop to be fast-tracked

2020 Review of the Year

MARCH

So it begins – the tidal wave of headlines that represent Covid-19's sweep across the world. The final edition in February hinted at what was to come. The front-page headline on March 5 talked about being “poised” for action, and at that stage Confirmations were to go ahead. The “radical steps” the Irish bishops were considering did not include banning public Mass, they told *The Irish Catholic*.

Archbishop Eamon Martin called on Irish people anxious or frightened by the coronavirus outbreak to pray St Patrick's famous breastplate prayer. Meanwhile, leading theologians warned against the immorality of panic buying and selfishness against the common good.

With Mass cancelled, Pope Francis pleaded for churches to remain open. Bishop Phonsie Cullinan of Waterford and Lismore said that churches were important places of prayer, but parishes must be prudent. MCN, which provides streaming services for many Irish parishes, confirmed that approximately 12 million people watched Masses online over the weekend (March 14-15) using their platform.

March ended on a hopeful note, as *The Irish Catholic* reported that the crisis can be an opportunity for parishes to creatively reconnect with people who have lost touch with the Church. Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan said that “the engagement online has brought a lot of prayer initiatives that wouldn't normally get attention”. The following week, RTÉ reported that 162,000 viewers turned in for Sunday Mass on RTÉ One. A third of people watching television in Ireland on Sunday at 11am were watching Mass.

Church poised for ‘radical action’ on coronavirus crisis

Crisis helps parishes reach unchurched

‘Pray like St Patrick’ says Primate as outbreak worsens-Panic buying described as immoral



Plea for churches to remain open as millions tune in for online Masses from Ireland



162,000 tune in to RTÉ TV for Sunday Mass

APRIL

Prominent GAA figures – including Mickey Harte and Dublin footballer Bernard Brogan – made calls to help older priests and religious who were isolated and in need of spiritual and practical assistance after all those over 70 were ordered to be ‘cocooned’ in a bid to save them from Covid-19.

Hard-pressed priests faced cuts to their already modest salaries as church closure led to a severe fall in income for parishes and dioceses across Ireland. A number of priests told *The Irish Catholic* they were concerned about having to rely on their families for support.

There were calls for a Derry-born nun – Sr Clare Crockett – who died while ministering to orphans in an earthquake in Ecuador, to be put on the path to sainthood. On the 4th anniversary of her death, Bishop Phonsie Cullinan of Waterford and Lismore said he would be “delighted” to see her cause for canonisation opened.

Priests on the frontlines at the height of the pandemic revealed the ‘heart-breaking’ ministry they were undertaking. Fr Seán Maher described ministering to patients isolated from their loved ones as visiting “the wounded Christ in our world today”.

The Irish bishops began to make plans for the post-lockdown period. Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry said the Irish Church had to come up with a plan to show health authorities that social distancing can work in parishes when restrictions start to ease. A number of other bishops joined the call for “careful planning and co-ordination” so that a safe return to public worship could be conducted.

GAA stars call to rally round isolated religious ‘They’ve cared for us, now it’s our turn’ – Mickey Harte

Priests face severe cuts as pandemic takes toll

Calls for heroic Irish nun to be made a saint

‘Touching the wounds of Christ’ Priests tell of ‘heart-breaking’ Covid-19 ministry

Britain ‘exceeded power’ imposing abortion on the North



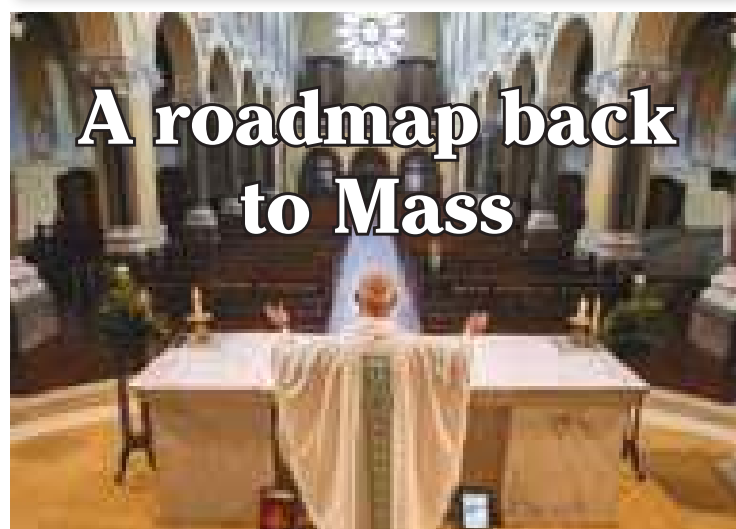


Prelates express hopes of a return to Mass before Government stipulated date of June 20

Virtual pilgrimage brings Lourdes to 550 pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Armagh

Vatican approval of land gift for hospital 'shocking'

Stay safe – pray safe Relief as closed churches re-open for prayer



A roadmap back to Mass



Church lays out a draft roadmap back to public Masses

MAY

On May 7, *The Irish Catholic* proposed a roadmap back to Mass after it appeared public worship would not be allowed until late July. Church leaders must lobby the Government for a timeframe that is realistic, ambitious and keeps public health to the fore, it was argued.

The Archdiocese of Armagh got ahead of the pack with a 'virtual pilgrimage' to Lourdes to reach out to the 550 of pilgrims due to travel there.

Bishops expressed their hopes that Mass would return much sooner than July 20, the date stipulated by Government. Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin diocese said that he was disappointed that the "congregations would not be permitted to gather for Mass until July 20". To the surprise of pro-life Catholics, the Vatican approved the Sisters of Charity gift of lands to the State worth €200m for the new National Maternity Hospital.

In Northern Ireland, the restrictions had been stricter than in the South, where places of worship were closed even to private prayer from March 28 onwards. It was with great relief when their doors opened again in late May, with Bishop McKeown of Derry describing himself as "delighted".

The Irish Church revealed its 88-point programme for a safe return to public worship to *The Irish Catholic*. The plan aimed to ensure that all preparations were made so that churches were ready to move as soon as the civil authorities gave the green light to public Masses.



Call for GAA clubs to help parishes return to Mass

Call for parish councils to take the lead in re-opening for Mass-Virus lockdown has increased people's faith

Govt push for exclusion zones dubbed 'vindictive'

Catholics urged to fight any plan to target Faith schools

Archbishop warned Taoiseach of public anger over delay to Masses



JUNE

A lockdown report from Queens University Belfast – *People Still Need Us* – carried out amongst priests and ministers north and south suggested parish councils would be central to getting back to Mass. The report also noted "an intensification or invigoration of faith, including examples of people praying more" over lockdown.

Wexford GAA stalwart Tony Dempsey called on Gaelic clubs to team up with local parishes to ensure a safe return to public Masses. It came as the Church published guidelines for Masses to be open to a congregation from June 29.

Prominent Catholic theologians called to fight any plans to target faith schools. The Programme for Government called for a citizens assembly on education, which Dr John Murray of Dublin City University feared would "be used to give the illusion that there is a huge desire for a State takeover of education". Meanwhile, the Government indicated in their manifesto it would push for exclusion zones around abortion clinics. Niamh Uí Bhrian of the Life Institute described the move as "vindictive".

Four days before Masses restarted across the country, *The Irish Catholic* revealed the work done behind the scenes by Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin during lockdown. The archbishop wrote to the Taoiseach on May 7, saying: "There is growing dissatisfaction in Catholic Church circles about postponing the generalised opening of churches until mid-July, without there having been an opportunity for the Church to present its position."



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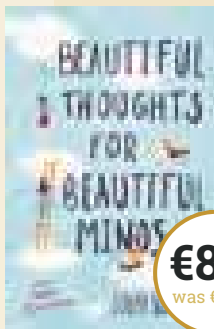
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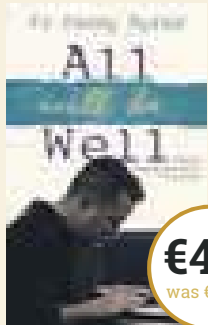
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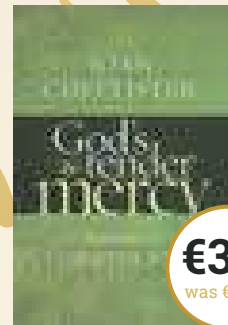
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2020 Review of the Year

JULY

Irish Catholics returned to the Eucharist after a fast unprecedented in their lifetime. Photos flooded in of congregations young and old, as well as stories testifying to the hard work of local priests and parishioners. Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin described the re-opening as a "great moment in Church life".

A number of senators and theologians protested against Government plans that could "kick the Church out of education". Catholics feared that the Government could use a proposed citizens assembly as a means to a referendum to violate Christian parents' right to an authentically Christian education for their own children.

Aontú leader Peadar Kirby insisted that the failure to protect residents in nursing homes from coronavirus must be fully investigated. Of the 1,743 Covid-19 deaths in the Republic, it was estimated that over 62% of those deaths occurred in nursing homes – the international average was 25%.

The Vatican's Congregation for Clergy issued a new instruction on the role of laypeople which also offers guidance in parish reforms and restructuring. Msgr Andrea Ripa, undersecretary of the Congregation for Clergy, insisted that laypeople must be consulted when changes are afoot in the Church.

Comments made by Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett criticising the Sisters of Charity after the order moved to wind down a Dublin nursing home have been described as "blinkered". Historian Gabriel Doherty told *The Irish Catholic*: "I think the most charitable commentary is that they are simply the reflex of an individual who appears to view every situation through the lens of anti-Catholic bias".

Joy as Irish return to Mass

New Govt could 'kick Church out of education' warns Senator

Citizens' Assembly is merely 'a means to shape public opinion' and cut constitutional thread

More than 7,000 Irish abortions carried out new stats reveal



TD accused of being 'blinkered' and 'biased' in criticism of religious sisters

Call for inquiry into 'national scandal' of nursing home deaths

Vatican warns bishops to consult laity on reform

AUGUST

Ireland said goodbye to a titan, prophet and peacemaker at the start of August. Derry man John Hume made it his life's mission to deliver an island of peace. Bishop Donal McKeown described his mixed feelings: "One was great sorrow at the death, the other is pride in what he was able to achieve," Dr McKeown said.

Beirut was rocked by a deadly explosion that killed hundreds of people and was widely blamed on political corruption. Amid a wave of protests and accusations of "disregard for the value of life", the entire Lebanese government resigned. "It was almost like the buildings on either side of the street inhaled... then the buildings all exhaled and exploded glass on to the street," said Anna Sophia Gallagher, formerly of Antrim, who was in Beirut when the explosion occurred.

The cult of Sr Clare Crockett continued to grow. The Irish nun who died while helping children flee an earthquake in Ecuador was hailed as a saint for a new generation of young Catholics as devotion to her continued to spread.

Following a summer of hope and hard work, management and staff at Catholic schools were looking forward to welcoming back students after an "extraordinary" effort to reopen schools. Schools are looking forward to welcoming students back, Mr John Curtis of the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) for Catholic secondary schools said, despite the obvious difficulties and changes it will entail.

Derry's pride Ireland bids farewell to a prophet and a peacemaker



Irishwoman tells of 'desperation' in wake of Beirut horror blast

Catholic schools confident of full welcome back for students Teachers look forward to meeting pupils' needs in very difficult times

Derry woman a 'saint for the new millennium'

New mural unveiled as devotion to Sr Clare grows





Bishop Martin Hayes warns of increased tensions in border areas if there's a no-deal Brexit

Embrace Pope's vision and highlight positives of Faith – youngest bishop



Border bishop warns of fresh anxiety over 'no-deal' Brexit

Insurance windfall as parishes to get Covid-19 rebates
Premiums refund because of closures

'Wake-up call' as 19% of Mass-going Catholics unsure if they'll ever return



Financial pressures sees massive departure of Dublin diocesan staff

SEPTEMBER

The Irish Church's newest and youngest bishop, Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey, called for a new approach to evangelisation, positive and uplifting rather than concentrating on negatives. In order to bring people back to the Church, "the challenge is to be creative and imaginative in trying to present that message with a sense of joy," Bishop Dempsey said.

Hard-pressed parishes feeling the effects of financial pressure due to Covid-19 restrictions were to receive rebates on their insurance premiums. The rebate was to be provided as a percentage of each parish's premium, with each parish receiving the same percentage rebate.

In response to financial pressures, Dublin Archdiocese cut its diocesan staff. The parish pastoral worker programme – once hailed as a bright dawn on future lay involvement in the Church – was slashed by two thirds in recent years with a source claiming that just 11 pastoral workers are now left out of 33.

Up to a quarter of previous mass-goers may not return to Mass, even once the pandemic passes, research carried out by Amárach revealed. Bishop Paul Dempsey said it was a great cause for concern, while theologian Fr Eamonn Conway said it should be a "wake up call" for parishes.

Brexit and the question of a hard border rumbled on quietly during the pandemic. The threat of a no-deal meant border communities were fearful of a return to tensions in the region, especially if Britain goes ahead with a threat to break a treaty agreeing a frictionless frontier, the new bishop of Kilmore Martin Hayes warned.

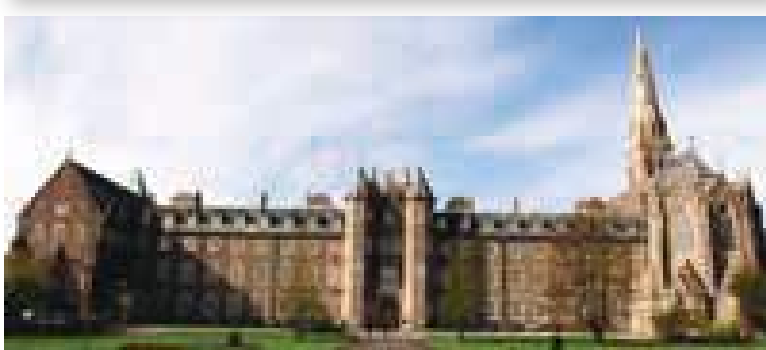
Govt urged to heed public frustration over Mass ban

Border parishes warn Covid-19 can't overshadow Brexit chaos



Covid takes toll as three times more priests die than last year

Use skills of returned missionaries to rebuild Church – archbishop



Relying on overseas priests is not a solution to crisis

Seminary head Missionaries 'welcome' but it's not a sustainable approach, warns Rector

OCTOBER

In October, *The Irish Catholic* commemorated the many priests who lost their lives during the covid-19 period, which saw an exceptional increase in the number of deaths. The figures were most stark when comparing April to previous years, with 36 deaths this year compared to 12 in 2019, eight in 2018 and 14 in 2017.

The head of the national seminary insisted that importing priests from overseas is not a solution to the vocations crisis. Fr Tomás Surllis was speaking to *The Irish Catholic* after the hierarchy announced that 13 men have begun studying for the priesthood for Irish dioceses this autumn.

Irish missionaries who have returned from abroad are rejuvenating the Church here by bringing new life and skills learnt in countries where the Faith is more vibrant, Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly has said. He said that Irish parishes and communities can learn a lot from the "wisdom" of missionaries who have worked where the Church is small and often struggling.

With Britain stepping up preparation to crash out of the EU, priests who minister in border parishes warned that the coronavirus should not distract attention from the long-term effects of a 'no deal' Brexit on communities.

Bishops warned that they "won't be able to bring people with us" unless the Government heeds the calls of the Faithful for a return of public worship. Mass was banned from Levels 3 to 5, which leaders of the Church felt to be excessive.

2020 Review of the Year

NOVEMBER

As Level 5 was introduced across the country and public worship was again banned, Archbishop of Armagh Eamonn Martin wrote in *The Irish Catholic* that the Church is stepping up the campaign to put pressure on the Government in the Republic to allow people to attend Mass in a safe and physically-distanced way. He urged Catholics to let members of the Oireachtas know that Mass can resume in a way that is safe and that vulnerable people can continue to join online.

A proposal to apply VAT to devotional candles was described as effectively “a tax on prayer”. The 2020 Finance Bill proposed to remove a historical protection on white candles which, according to Fr John Carroll of the Ferns Diocese, was akin to taxing “counselling or stress” given the solace many people feel lighting a candle in a church. A priest in Co. Cork was warned by Gardaí that they would “apply the full rigours of the law”, after he celebrated Mass with a small congregation. The garda involved did not specify what the penalty would be, but insisted that one would be applied.

Priests in Dublin expressed fears that the diocese may run out of money to pay their modest salaries due to a huge shortfall in collections, *The Irish Catholic* revealed. By January, there was expected to be just enough money to cover two months of costs including priests’ pay, but the situation would be much worse if public Masses were not restored in early December.

Let your TDs know ‘we need Mass’ – Archbishop Martin

Cork priest celebrating Mass publicly warned by Gardaí

Govt urged to re-think ‘sneaky’ tax on prayer



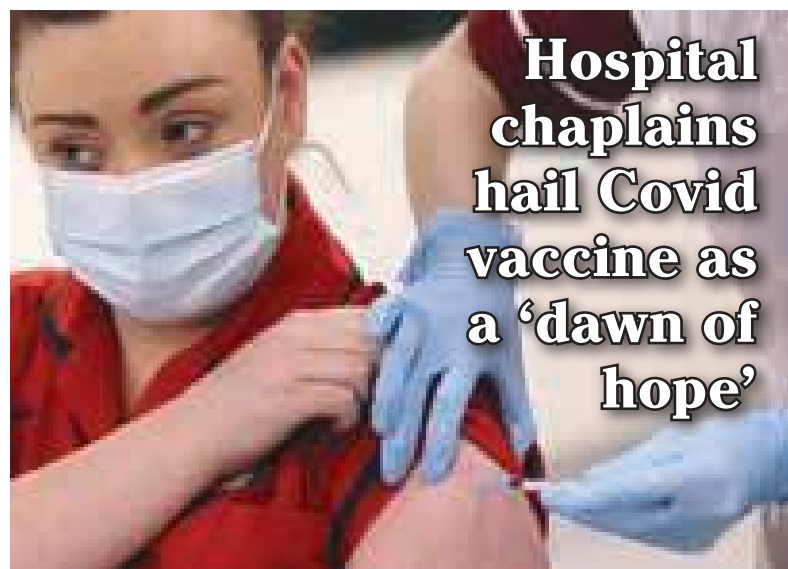
Dublin priests fret over pay as donations are in freefall

DECEMBER

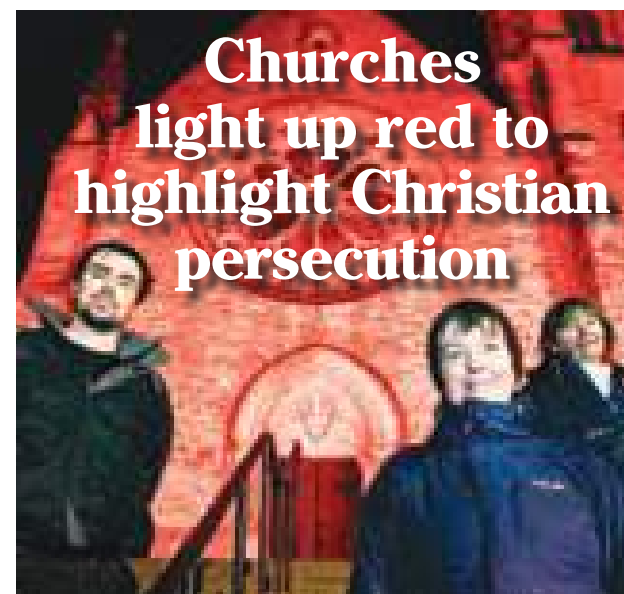
There was widespread relief at a return to public Mass in the Republic, with many parishes turning their attention to the challenge of having as many people as possible present for Christmas Mass. Catholics in the North, however, had to wait until December 11 before a return to public Masses. Churches across Ireland were illuminated red to highlight the continuing persecution of Christians around the world. The initiative was inspired by the charity Aid to the Church in Need which supports Christians facing intimidation, torture and even death. “Our red church on St Patrick’s Avenue has been a reminder that Christians continue to shed their blood for their faith,” said Fr John Murray PP.

As the vaccine began to roll-out in the North and plans were being made in Ireland for the program to begin in January. Healthcare chaplains said they hoped the roll-out of the coronavirus vaccine would be the beginning of a new era of hope for patients and the wider community. A nurse in Belfast became the first person on the island of Ireland to get the vaccine on Tuesday, 8 December – the feastday of the Immaculate Conception.

2,000 Queen’s University Belfast students unable to return home for Christmas because of the pandemic received a care package, thanks to the university’s Catholic chaplaincy and the efforts of local businesses and charities. In the midst of all the Covid-19 related difficulties, it was a moment of charity and grace.



Hospital chaplains hail Covid vaccine as a ‘dawn of hope’



Churches light up red to highlight Christian persecution



‘Relief’ at return to Mass as parishes now face challenge of Christmas

Catholic chaplaincy comes to the aid of stranded QUB students

'If you want to rebuild the Church, make sure the social life of the parish is as active as the spiritual one'



Today's world is confusing, the cure is to think less about ourselves and more about others, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks tells **Michael Kelly**

This interview was first published in the March 12 edition of The Irish Catholic. Rabbi Sacks died on November 7, 2020. May his memory be a blessing.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks is one of the foremost religious thinkers in the English-speaking world. Yet, he wears his considerable depth lightly. When we meet in his home in the London suburb of Golders Green, he is warm and hospitable. The first thing one notices in the house is the enormous dining table. Meals and table fellowship play a vital role in the Jewish faith and the Sacks home is no exception.

Golders Green is a self-consciously Jewish community with some 50 Kosher restaurants under rabbinical supervision and more than 40 synagogues and almost as many Jewish schools in the suburb.

Estimated at 291,000, Britain's Jewish community is the fifth largest in the world. Yet, Jews make up less than half of one percent of the overall population of Britain. This makes Rabbi Sacks' prominence in British public life all the more interesting and at

72 he shows no signs of slowing down. He is a much-sought-after public speaker and has published 30 books on issues as diverse as the future of Anglo-Jewry, the relationship between faith and science and the place of religion in the public square.

He was Chief Rabbi of the UK from 1991-2013 and in 2016 he won the prestigious Templeton Prize and was commended for spending decades "bringing spiritual insight to the public conversation through mass media, popular lectures and more than two dozen books".

Baron Sacks is also a crossbench member of the House of Lords and has used his time in parliament to defend marriage and the family and to oppose assisted suicide.

* * * * *

His latest book *Morality* is published today (Thursday, March 12) and argues that in contemporary society we have outsourced morality to the markets on one hand, and to the state on the other hand.

I put it to Lord Sacks that even a title like *Morality* is controversial since people now often disagree on

what the word even means.

He readily agrees: "I think we're in a period of great confusion, of great error actually. We've been through now a fairly extended period of extreme individualism, and there has been the thought that you can do morality that way. But the comparison I give is: could you decide out of sheer individualism to invent your own language? The answer is, you couldn't. Because language is a vehicle of communication, which presupposes not only a speaker but a listener, and some form of comprehension between them.

"So you can't have a private morality any more than you can have a private law or a private language," he insists.

Lord Sacks sees trust as key to any flourishing society. "I think we've been confused and mistaken as to the nature of morality, and of course, what happens then is that there is a breakdown of trust, because trust is really what morality is about: I trust you, you trust me, because we are part of the same society, the same set of rules, and we're willing, when need be, to put the common good ahead

of self-interest. Without which there cannot be a society, let alone a free society," he says.

Rabbi Sacks is articulating a view that up until relatively recently was not controversial – that morality is an objective thing. In short, that there are discernable things that are either right or wrong and remain either right or wrong whatever the situation.

"I've argued that morality is something shared. Any institution is bounded by certain rules that are shared. So football has rules that are shared, you can't just make up your own rules"

However, Rabbi Sacks thinks that the subjectivation of morality has gone so far that the best that can be hoped for – for now – is a sense of morality being a shared project.

"What I've argued in this book is not that really strong, that ultimate

case that morality is objective. I think for me, right now, that was a bridge too far.

"I've argued that morality is something shared. Any institution is bounded by certain rules that are shared. So football has rules that are shared, you can't just make up your own rules. Are they objective in the sense of, is there a realism about football that in some transcendental realm there's an off-side rule? There isn't, but there has to be an agreement. I'm not proposing a specific agreement, I'm hinting at one. Namely, that the West is the West, because it had the Judeo-Christian heritage.

"That was what shaped [John] Milton and [John] Locke, and liberalism in the 17th Century, that is what shaped the emergence of the market economy. Max Weber argued that Protestant ethic in the spirit of capitalism, Rodney Stark has argued for the Catholic spirit, as did the late Michael Novak. So somehow or other, the Judeo-Christian ethic created not some platonic ideal of the only society there can be, but it did create the society that we had, and we're

» Continued on Page 26

'There is something bigger than us, we are connected

» Continued from Page 25

losing it," he warns.

For Rabbi Sacks, morality ultimately comes down to making choices and taking responsibility for those choices. "We've outsourced the business of making choices to the market. The market tells us we can have whatever we want so long as it's legal and we can pay for it.

"Sometimes we'll make bad choices, and we've outsourced that to the state. The state picks up the pieces of the bad choices we make. So we've split morality into two, and outsourced one to the market and one to the state," he argues.

* * * * *

A key theme in Lord Sacks' new book is that for society to become healthier it must move from a culture of 'I' to a culture where 'we' becomes central once again. He believes that the culture of self-help has gone too far.

"Self-esteem, self-respect, self-fulfilment, self-actualisation, the selfie – almost everything in today's culture is about me," he says.

Rabbi Sacks believes this is acutely felt in politics. "We're looking at the American election, we're looking at the Israeli election, nobody's saying, 'vote for my policies.' They're saying, 'me, me, me. I'm better than that lot.' So suddenly politics has become about personality rather than policies.

"We have these extraordinary cases of CEOs being paid ridiculous sums, and making very bad decisions, which they're able to escape from because they have a golden parachute, but other people pay the price for. They're thinking about I, they're not thinking about we, what is my responsibility, not just to my shareholders, but also to my employees, to my customers, to the communities where our company works," he says.

Freedoms

I put it to Lord Sacks that as societies become less religious, they become less collective and more concerned about individual rights and freedoms rather than the common good.

"I think previous generations were educated to the awareness that there's something bigger than me. There's something bigger than us, we are connected to something vast in space and time. Our horizons have become very foreshortened, and I think our moral imagination and our spiritual imagination have both become impoverished," he says.

Social media is so pervasive now, it's almost impossible to think of a world without networking like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These are powerful tools, but according to Rabbi Sacks no substitute for real human friendships. "I think what's happening is that at least some kids are spending their time on social media instead of going out and meeting friends face to face.

"Actually, you do need to meet friends face to face, to make them

friends. Somebody's been doing research on friendship, a new book just out on friendship, it turns out that it needs between 80 and 100 hours of face-to-face engagement to make a friend. You can't just knock off a Facebook profile or a like or what have you, and think that constitutes friendship."

He also believes that the key to revival in faith communities is to understand that we need to be there for one another. "If you go today to houses of worship, you will find, certainly the ones I go to, communities that are real communities where they are there for you. If, God forbid, you're ill or bereaved, or in a state of crisis community is alive and well in those environments.

"But obviously, the place of religion in society has tended to be eclipsed, and nothing has emerged as strong as a place of worship, as a congregation by way of creating communities, nothing. People think you can have a substitute, you can't. Just like you can't treat Wikipedia as a substitute for memory, it's just not the same thing. Your memory is there even if you're not on WiFi somehow," he says.

"In the end, financial poverty is not the only form of poverty that kids face. They're growing up in very dysfunctional and in some cases abusive families"

As we meet, the British newspapers are full of headlines about family breakdown. A senior police officer has provoked a conversation by expressing the view that, in his experience, fatherlessness contributes greatly to gang culture.

Lord Sacks sees family breakdown and the consequent isolation felt after a ruptured relationship as a huge challenge. "There's a raging problem of loneliness in most countries today. In Britain, they've appointed a minister for loneliness which never existed before, because it's become suddenly very, very real.

"Of course, family breakdown has enormous consequences for children. It's created a whole new form of child poverty, and the government has tried to deal with this financially. But in the end, financial poverty is not the only form of poverty that kids face.

"They're growing up in very dysfunctional and in some cases abusive families.

"According to the police, that is what is behind this surge of youth crime in London. They don't have a male role model, and so the only thing that is there for them is to join a gang.

"So that's really how it works out. Loneliness on one hand, and quite bad youth crime and youth poverty," he says.

It's a bleak picture. Are politicians aware of this, I wonder.

"I think they probably are, but they don't talk about it because they can't do very much about it. The family, like the words morality and marriage is completely out of favour. But, I just think we've got to take a risk of saying stuff that is not politically correct, especially when people are suffering – the very young or the very old.

"Politicians may feel that they can't say these things, in which case we have to say it for them," he insists.

* * * * *

As we meet, 100 British negotiators were in Brussels to meet with European Union officials to try and thrash out a post-Brexit trade deal. Lord Sacks believes that British politics is in deep trouble.

"Since 2016 and the Brexit referendum, British politics has, for much of the time, been reduced to fiasco and farce by the yes/no, hard/soft, deal/no deal drama of Britain's withdrawal from the European Union.

"The government, for much of that time, has failed to present a united front, while the main opposition party showed itself unwilling or unable to confront the highly documented presence of antisemitism in its ranks.

"Both of these phenomena marked new lows in post-Second World War British political history," according to Lord Sacks.

But Britain is hardly the only liberal democracy that is in trouble. Politicians across the globe have adopted and adapted the

concept of alternative facts for their own agenda, I suggest.

"Today what is happening is very, very interesting. Research shows that if people are fed a string of alternative facts, of fake news, they will actually believe the bits that they agree with. The bits they don't agree with, they'll say, 'no, that's fake news.' The end result is not only a breakdown of trust, but a growth of extremism, it's called a confirmation bias. There's a lot of research on this, especially in the United States. People are actually being quite credulous towards something that confirms their prejudices," he says.

A lot of research indicates that phenomenon such as the election of US President Donald Trump and Britain's referendum to leave the European Union came down to people feeling disenfranchised or left out by what went before. I ask Lord Sacks is this an analysis that he shared.

"I think we've got to get back to the we: we're all in this together. That's clearly been lacking.

"You've got a lot of people who feel that everyone else is being attended, but not us, we're being left out. There is huge anger, and that gives rise to what's called populism, and it gives rise to people that they believe are strong leaders in inverted commerce. People begin to get less and less interested in democracy, and more and more interested in strong leadership.

"The enormous power of religion, the enormous power of Christianity, is to go among the vulnerable and welcome them in"

"But strong leadership is always an illusion, because somebody promises, 'I can deal with this.' When they get into office, of course, they discover that they actually can't, because it's more complicated than you think.

"Then you get a really dangerous politics, you try and ride roughshod over everyone, which is happening in America and possibly to some extent in Britain, we'll have to see how it goes.

"Those people who feel left out should have been listened to a long time earlier by a lot more people, because it's quite clear that there are real winners and losers in the global economy. The winners are relatively few and they win very big, and the losers are many and they have not seen any real rise in income since 1970," he says.

Rising tide

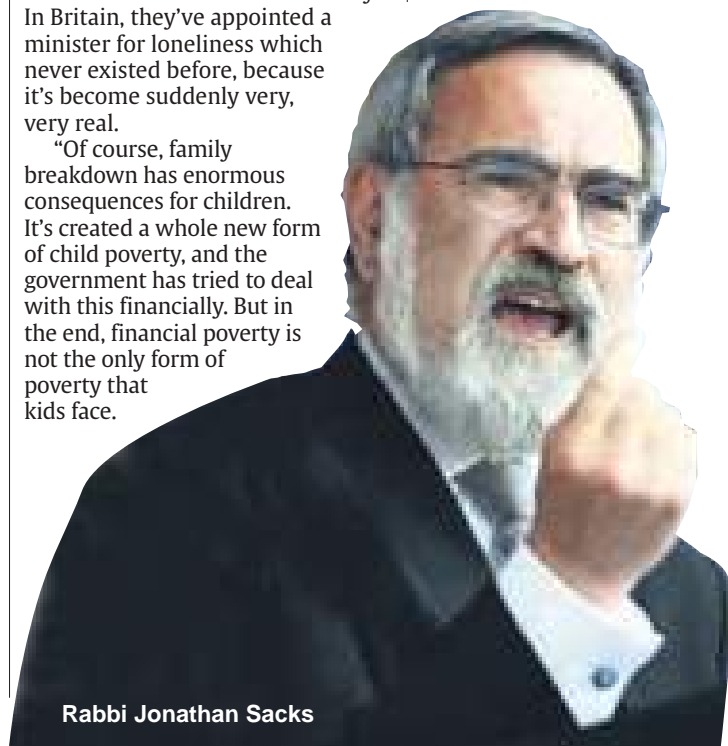
To what extent has capitalism failed? Do people still believe that a rising tide lifts all boats, I ask. His answer is swift: "Anyone can put up with people being successful, if it trickles down and everyone feels, 'I'm better off now than I was a decade or two ago.' But they don't feel that now,



so you get into very dangerous politics.

"Liberal democracy is facing its great trial, and it's going to need leadership that is just a lot more inclusive, that people feel it, that this guy's interested in all of us. We don't have many of those politicians right now. This book is really sounding a warning saying that over the next decade, liberal democracy has got to get real about certain things it's been ignoring for a very long time. One of which is we don't really have this sense of, we are all responsible for one another," he says.

Lord Sacks prefers to paint in broad brush strokes when it comes to politics. His focus is always on the bigger picture rather than personalities or party politics. One can often detect hints of criticism of particular leaders, but then he moves back to the broader discussion. As we meet the British Labour party is in the process of choosing a successor to Jeremy Corbyn. Lord Sacks was a vocal critic both personally of Mr Corbyn's views and his apparent



Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

to something vast in space and time...'



Pope Benedict XVI meets Britain's chief rabbi, Lord Jonathan Sacks, during a meeting of religious leaders in the chapel of St Mary's University College in Twickenham. Photos: CNS

tolerance for anti-semitism in the Labour party.

He said the veteran Labour figure had "given support to racists, terrorists and dealers of hate who want to kill Jews and remove Israel from the map".

Lord Sacks is stark in his warnings about rising anti-Jewish sentiment in Europe. "Not only am I disturbed by the return of antisemitism, every single Jew I know is disturbed by that."

"This is affecting today every Jewish community in Europe," he says.

Lord Sacks also believes that a distinction needs to be made between legitimate criticism of policies of the state of Israel – which is not anti-semitic – and

attacks on Israel's right to exist, which is anti-semitic.

“If you offer a really engaging and energising alternative, people will come. They really will, there are a lot of people who feel lonely today and they would like nothing more than to join the congregation”

"I was in a school a couple of years ago when the children asked, they were 17, 18 year olds, and they asked me, 'is it anti-semitic to

“Lord Sacks believes that a distinction needs to be made between legitimate criticism of policies of the state of Israel and attacks on Israel's right to exist, which is anti-semitic”



Queen Elizabeth II receives a Hanukkah candlesick from Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks at a reception at St James' Palace in London to mark the 350th anniversary of the re-establishment of the Jewish community in Britain.

criticise Israel?' I said to them, 'how many of you think it's legitimate to criticise the British government?' They all put their hands up. 'How many of you think Britain has no right to exist?' None of them put up their hands. If it was clear to them, it should be pretty clear to anyone else. Criticism of Israel is not anti-semitic, a calling to question of Israel's right to exist is undoubtedly anti-semitic.

"This was a state promised in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, ratified by the League of Nations in 1922, and voted on by a two-thirds majority in the United Nations on November 29, 1947. To call into question the right of such a state to exist, and to call into question no other state's right to exist, many of which are much younger – that's anti-semitic: anti-semitic in a really, really fundamental and troubling way," he insists.

Lord Sacks' time as Chief Rabbi witnesses a flourishing of sorts for Britain's Jews with the population increasing. It is a trend that has continued and, despite Britain's increasing secular culture, Rabbi Sacks believes that the voice of Faith still has a vital role to play in public discourse.

"The enormous power of religion, the enormous power of Christianity, is to go among the vulnerable and welcome them in. That's a very, very moving thing. To my mind, whenever I read the prophets, whoever it is, Amos or Isaiah or Jeremiah, and they're telling kings, 'don't think a country is secure by virtue of its army or its numbers or its economy. A country is secure if and only if there is justice and compassion.' Only if the widow, the orphan, the stranger are given shelter and food and respect.

"Somehow or other, religion has always drawn its credibility from the acts of goodness that it undertakes, and it has that credibility with everyone. It doesn't matter how big an atheist you are, somehow or other, if you see a religious person helping the poor, that's very moving," he says.

I ask Rabbi Sacks about the flourishing that the British Jewish community has experienced in recent years and whether there might be a lesson for the Catholic Church.

His immediate answer surprises me somewhat. "The fact is, number one, that we took a leaf out of the Catholic book and built a lot of Jewish schools. Many, indeed most of them, associated with a synagogue. That means the children would bring their parents to synagogue, that's number one, and these synagogues have become much, much more child-friendly places. In some cases, child-centred places, so that's really, really important".

“Do a search and replace operation in your mind, and every time you see the word self, delete it and write other. So instead of self-esteem, other-esteem”

He says that religious communities must not be afraid of being counter-cultural to thrive. "You don't have to be in line with the wider culture, you just don't. The megachurches in America succeed, and these churches with congregations of 40,000 people, and 25,000 is the average attendance on a Sunday.

"They are offering an alternative culture, one that values altruism, values marriage and the family, values the elderly and the very young. They've created an alternative culture, and you have to do this in a very accessible and upbeat way. I don't think anyone's going to listen if you get up and do any finger wagging in the wider culture. Everyone knows the wider culture's there, you don't need to do anything about it.

"But if you offer a really engaging and energising alternative, people will come. They really will, there are a lot of people

who feel lonely today and they would like nothing more than to join the congregation.

"I don't know what a service looks like in the Catholic Church, I have no idea, but as soon as the synagogue service is over on a Saturday morning, it's a long service, three hours, there's a kiddish [celebratory meal]. You sit and you drink and you eat and it's almost a communal meal. I think that's a pretty good 'loaves and fishes' New Testament direction. So if you want to regain the congregations, make sure that the social life of the church is as active as the spiritual one," he says by way of advice.

Co-operation

It's an optimist that has characterised our entire conversation and while Rabbi Sacks' warnings are in parts dire, he remains upbeat. And his formula is surprisingly simple: "Just realise that an important part of life is co-operation, not just competition. That what often matters is not just self-interest, but the common good. And that we are stronger when the 'we' is strong. So any football team of 11 divas is not going to win its matches, but any football team that really works as a team is going to win its matches. So every time there is a really strong sense of the team being bigger than the player, that is when you get the moral sense.

"Do a search and replace operation in your mind, and every time you see the word self, delete it and write other. So instead of self-esteem, other-esteem. Instead of self-respect, other-respect. Just do that, and you'll find that you will be much happier, your relationships will improve, and you will feel that your life is meaningful in a way that it wasn't before," he insists.

It's surely worth a try.

i Morality: Restoring the common good in divided times by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks is out now, published by Hodder & Stoughton.

Letters

Letter of the week

Time to stand with Holy Land Christians

Dear Editor, I was pleased to see that you will – please God – again start bringing pilgrims to the Holy Land in 2021. My husband and I were part of the trip three years ago and it had a very moving impact on our Faith and helped us appreciate the scriptures in a new way.

I have been thinking a lot about those ‘living stones’ – the Christian families we

met in Bethlehem. We heard and know how much they rely on the pilgrims coming for their livelihoods. It was sad to hear from the mayor recently that 800 families have been left without any income. He said that 67 hotels, 230 souvenir shops, 127 restaurants and 250 handcraft workshops have been forced to close in a city that is economically dependent on pilgrims.

They need our spiritual and practical help now more than ever. Thank you for the work *The Irish Catholic* does in highlighting the needs of the Christians in the Holy Land. What a depressing thought it would be to think of the land of Jesus with no Christians.

*Yours etc.,
Mary Mitchell
Inchicore, Dublin 8*

Ellen Coyne needs Catholicism 101 lesson

Dear Editor, you were rather kind to Ellen Coyne in your review of her book on rediscovering Catholicism [IC 03/12/2020]. If Ms Coyne believes that voting for abortion is the most Catholic thing that she has ever done, I suggest a short course in Catholicism 101 would be in order.

*Yours etc.,
Marian Murphy
Cobh, Co. Cork*



We should not fixate solely on abortion

Dear Editor, During the general election all of the candidates in my constituency had liberal views on abortion except two. I looked these up and found that one was a member of a party with neo-Nazi sympathies, the other an Independent who claims that women are inferior to men. In conscience I could not support either of these individuals. Therefore I abstained. As a woman who realises how hard my sex fought for the right to vote I found this difficult.

I have noticed that many people who express pro-life views base their opinion of politicians and others solely on their stance on abortion. This I have

come to believe is dangerous. Would Adolph Hitler have been acceptable if he were anti-abortion? Donald Trump was not overly concerned about the children on the Mexican border or the people who attended his rallies where no Covid safety measures were observed, yet he is more acceptable than Joe Biden because he is supposedly pro-life.

If I were living in the North of this country the only party I should, in conscience, as a Catholic vote for are the DUP, a group of people whose former leader Ian Paisley whipped up crowds to so much hatred at rallies that listeners were inspired to go out and murder

Catholics. Ian Paisley viewed the Pope as the antichrist but agreed with him on abortion. It is surely a strange contradiction in terms when Big Ian could accept the ‘antichrist’ as long as his views on abortion were sound.

If we are not careful we will lose sight of the needs of the people who are born and become so totally fixated on the abortion issue that we will end up paralysed. This was my feeling at the time of the election here.

*Yours etc.,
Marie-Thérèse Cryan
Glasnevin, Co. Dublin*

Welcome statement from the Irish bishops on the new coronavirus vaccine

Dear Editor, I was heartened to see the clear and emphatic statement from the bishops highlighting the importance of the Covid-19 vaccine. There is a lot of misinformation that must be countered – some of it coming from people who are trying to convince us that they are more Catholic than the bishops are.

There are legitimate questions that have arisen that human foetal cell-lines, which have their origins in abortions carried out in the past, are used in the development and production of some of the vaccines for covid-19. The bishops point out that

if a more ethically acceptable alternative is not readily available to them, it is morally permissible for Catholics to accept a vaccine which involves the use of foetal cell-lines, especially if the potential risk to life or health is significant, as in the case of a pandemic.

It is irresponsible and gravely sinful for people to suggest otherwise. Anyone encouraging people not to take this vaccine is acting in a reckless fashion. I'll be first in the queue.

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

Parishes have shown huge strength during 2020

Dear Editor, Parishes across Ireland have shown huge fortitude and dedication throughout a year many of us want to quickly forget. Congratulations are due to so many parish priests and parishioners who have gone above and beyond to make sure churches were safe and even when we went into a second lockdown, they took it on the chin and were raring to go when the restrictions were lifted. There has been so much negative commentary online and in the media and although this is not uncommon, the sheer magnitude of the pessimism and nastiness this year was at a whole other level. This was no doubt because of the restrictions that impacted all of us, and some drastically more than others. We should go into 2021 with hearts full of hope and positivity to counteract the dreadfulness of 2020, people desperately need that.

The one constant solace that is there for us who have faith is God, and without that perpetual presence I would have never have got through 2020.

*Yours etc.,
Jane Donnelly
Cork City, Co. Cork*

Bridging the gap and helping the lost find Christ

Dear Editor, Bishop Paul Dempsey is correct when he says the Government do not take Church organisations seriously [IC 03/12/2020], they are a dreadfully untapped resource. Unfortunately nowadays most politicians don't want to be seen publicly supporting or cooperating with local parishes because of the vehemence they would provoke from those who believe in a complete separation of Church and State and are all too ready to lead a charge against anyone who steps outside their narrow idea of what is acceptable, and what is perhaps, as they would see it, working with the enemy.

It's those kinds of people who would know nothing about the Church's good works and instead maintain a biased and negative view. If they just took a walk down to their local church and spoke to a priest or an engaged parishioner – perhaps dragging their eyes away from social media – maybe they would change their minds instead of living in a bubble.

Speaking of living in a bubble, Bishop Dempsey says the Church can become caught up with internal affairs rather than looking outward: I totally agree, in many cases there is an obvious failure by many to engage with society as a whole. This is integral to spreading the word of Christ and inspiring people particularly in these dark times. In so many communities the local parish is certainly the ‘glue that holds communities together’ as Bishop Dempsey says, but in so many other places they can be a wasteland with no vibrance or influence. There are many reasons for this, in some ways it is because of the large-scale cultural shift in the western world. But I also believe it's because of the scandals of the past which led the Church to become more inward looking, which serves no one. Let us bridge the gap and help those who are lost find Christ.

*Yours etc.,
Donal Keogh
Tralee, Co. Kerry*

AI future sounds like ‘stuff of nightmares’

Dear Editor, David Quinn's article about artificial intelligence is truly terrifying [IC 24/12/2020]. The idea that computers will eventually become more intelligent and start ordering us around is the stuff of nightmares.

If that is indeed how things pan out, I for one will be screaming ‘stop the world and let me off’.

*Yours etc.,
Ann-Marie Walsh
Omagh, Co. Tyrone*

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, December 31, 2020

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Coping with the winter blues



For many Christmas is an oasis of festive feeling, warmth and celebration in the depths of winter. This may feel especially the case this year when on top of long nights and miserable weather we have a pandemic to cope with!

The constant stress associated with the pandemic is likely to exacerbate what is already a common seasonal ailment known as the 'Christmas blues' or 'post-holiday depression'. For some, the Christmas season can be tinged with unexpected feelings of loneliness and unhappiness, continuing into January.

There are numerous potential triggers for such feelings, with



Long nights and isolation leave many of us distressed, writes Ruadhán Jones

some new ones this year. The question of who to visit and whether family members feel safe coming together is a problem specific to our times. More generally, the Christmas blues result from high expectations at Christmas time, fear of the future, and a confrontation of inner emotions that have been ignored throughout the year.

The Christmas blues are not a fleeting emotional burst, with potential repercussions for your mental health and well-being. One study in Queensland, Australia noted that there is a distinct rise in the number of suicides on Christmas Eve and New Year's Day. While the Christmas blues is not necessar-

ily the root-cause in these cases, it can be a trigger.

Mood disorder

It may also be related to a common mood disorder known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). As the name suggests, this disorder relates to a link between bouts of depression and particular times of the year. Although it can occur at any time, most people experience it during the winter months when the temperature drops and the sun shines less.

It's unclear why SAD develops. While various theories have been presented, there is no overriding scientific consensus on the mat-

ter. A popular suggestion is that the lack of sunlight during winter can have a negative effect on the brain. This reduced exposure may, for example, produce higher levels of melatonin which makes the body sleepy, or alternatively decrease serotonin levels which are associated with depression.

Another possible cause may be that your body clock becomes disrupted – we're all used to a daily routine but when days are shorter and darker, your body can get confused and act in an adverse way. Regardless of what its exact cause is, the effects are very real and must be treated seriously.

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Family News

AND EVENTS

PARENTAL LEAVE TO BE EXTENDED TO FIVE WEEKS

The Cabinet has approved Minister for Children Roderick O'Gorman's plan to extend parental leave from two to five weeks.

Mr O'Gorman has also received Cabinet approval to extend the time the leave can be taken from just the first year to the first two years of child's life.

The legislation is set to be introduced in January. The paid benefit is with the Department of Social Protection, which needs until April to update IT systems to reflect the change.

Mr O'Gorman is understood to be examining whether the extended leave can be introduced, with people paid in arrears when the systems are changed.

Speaking about the cabinet decision, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O'Gorman said: "We're committed to ensuring every child gets the best possible start in life, and supporting parents to spend more time with their kids is a big part of that."

NI LAUNCHES ENHANCED AUTISM TRAINING PROGRAMME

Northern Ireland Education Minister Peter Weir has today published an enhanced autism training programme for teachers and the wider educational workforce.

The framework has been developed to equip all teachers, including trainee teachers and Classroom Assistants, with a range of strategies and skills which will enable them to manage the needs of all children, including those with Special Educational Needs (SEN), within the classroom.

The framework will be delivered online with support provided by the Education Authority (EA) and Middletown Centre of Autism (MCA) with separate courses specifically tailored for Early Years, Primary and Post-Primary.

Speaking at Belvoir primary school where he visited their Social Communication Provision, Minister Weir said: "It is a privilege to see at first hand the great work that is carried out in schools such as Belvoir primary school, to support pupils with autism."

"The enhanced training programme will provide all members of the educational community with a clear understanding of policies, procedures and obligations, ensuring pupils with autism have the best educational outcomes."

GOVERNMENT AIMS TO REFORM INSURANCE SECTOR

The Government has published the first Action Plan for Insurance Reform, with actions across Government to make Ireland's insurance sector more competitive and consumer-friendly, supporting enterprise and job creation.

The Plan sets out 66 actions to bring down costs for consumers and business; introduce more competition into the market; prevent fraud and reduce the burden on business, community and voluntary organisations.

Speaking at the launch, Minister for Finance Paschal Donohue said, "the Action Plan for Insurance Reform today represents a clear demonstration of this Government's focus on reforming the insurance sector for our citizens and businesses".

"Its focus on an all-of-government approach is necessary if we are to deliver the key reforms needed. I believe that the insurance industry has a key role in helping to reopen the economy and wider society as we begin to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, and welcome their support of this agenda."

Be the face of Christ for 2021



A quote I saw on Pinterest says: "Dear God, I'm placing 2020 in your hands." I'm not sure if it was written at the start of 2020 or as the year progressed but, it's a very good prayer for what was a strange, strange year. As we head into 2021, we have high hopes for better days ahead. One very important thing for Catholics to consider and focus on is the comfort of knowing that our hope and joy is not decided by external circumstances, no matter how painful or challenging. St Francis of Assisi spoke of hope and how it gets us through: "The hope that I hope for is so great that every suffering becomes for me a pleasure."

"This year, I want to encourage New Year's resolutions in the family that are inspired by the central themes of Catholic social teaching"

The hope we have in our hearts is more than a vain hope that the next year will be better than the last one; it's a hope in God that sets our hearts on fire and keeps us safe from discouragement and dejection.

After the year that we've just endured, we may feel that 2021 is the year to treat ourselves well to make up for what we've missed. A conversation on the social platform, Reddit, asked people what they would most like to do when the pandemic is over. Answers included what you'd expect; most wanted to travel, hug friends, go to the gym or go on a date. One respondent couldn't wait to walk through his local zoo, excited about seeing a new



A parent's perspective Maria Byrne

baby elephant. Then there was the response we can all identify with – "Cry tears of joy". The Christian response wouldn't reject the very natural desire to rush out and sample a little of the good things we've been denied, but that should be a secondary concern. The mission of the Catholic is less about what we'll be doing for ourselves and more about how we reach out to others and work for the common good of all. A novel start to the year would be to throw out the tired old lists with unrealistic plans centred on becoming "the new you" and to become the better person you dream of being by working on giving.

New Year

This year, I want to encourage New Year's resolutions in the family that are inspired by the central themes of Catholic social teaching. This teaching is a great treasure of wisdom which is about protecting and promoting the dignity of every human being. The principles flow from that basic belief in the value of each human life from conception to natural death. Resolutions based on this principle could be something very practical like volunteering for an organisation like Gianna Care which provides support to mothers with unexpected pregnancies. Younger children can help out, buying nappies and supplies to donate, teaching them how respecting every human being calls for practical action. The

topic of assisted suicide and euthanasia is in the news. An undertaking to contribute positively to the debate could include a weekly or fortnightly letter to the papers or texting or ringing into a programme. The call to family, community and participation is another theme that can be translated



into so many positive actions like resolving to assign a few hours a week to family fun activities or trips, while the call to be a loving face of Jesus in society challenges us to go further. Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) talks of "responsible citizenship as a virtue". During 2020, we got used to staying at home but the normal state for Christians is not hiding away but actively participating in wider society. Ask children to think of new ways of participating in their community. Older children can commit to this year being the year to jump into local or national politics. Catholics have a duty not to just sit on the sidelines but to contribute in all fields.

Rights

In the area of rights and responsibilities, the Church is the trailblazer in working to protect human dignity. With the right to life comes the right to everything necessary for human flourishing. Children understand the injustice of people living in luxury while others don't even have the basics like a roof over their head or a hot meal. Every Catholic should read Pope Leo XIII's amazing encyclical *Rerum Novarum* on the plight of workers. It rejects socialism and class wars and urges us to "strive to secure the good of the people" emphasising that "the happy results we all long for must be chiefly brought about by the plenteous outpouring of charity". This is intimately connected to the social justice option for the poor and vulnerable which asks Catholics to look first to those who are in greatest need. Respect the dignity of work and the rights of workers and demonstrate a strong sense of solidarity with all our brothers and sisters of every colour or creed. We are the stewards of God's creation and have a responsibility to look after the goods we've been given.

2021

So, in 2021, look outwards – volunteer at that soup run, write that letter to a local publication, get involved. See the person beyond the problems, join the local community outreach programme, smile at your neighbour. Sit down with your family and choose two or three concrete changes you can make to increase human dignity and work for the greater good of every member of our society. Be the face of Christ in a weak world. Happy New Year!

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Symptoms

This condition isn't exclusive to people with a long-standing mental health problem; SAD also affects those who are relatively psychologically well throughout the rest of the year. Given the effects of the pandemic and lockdown on our mental health, this year the effects could be more acute and so it is important to be aware of the signs and symptoms.

The symptoms may appear suddenly or develop gradually over time and differ from person to person, but according to the NHS, those suffering can experience:

- a persistent low mood
- a loss of pleasure or interest in normal everyday activities
- irritability
- feelings of despair, guilt and worthlessness
- feeling lethargic (lacking in energy) and sleepy during the day
- sleeping for longer than normal and finding it hard to get up in the morning
- craving carbohydrates and gaining weight

The condition is recognised as a common disorder affecting many thousands of people worldwide. Even so, there is a stigma associated with mental health conditions like SAD. Such stigma can be a contributory factor in escalations in depressive episodes, according to Mental Health Ireland.

"Many people's problems are made worse by the stigma and discrimination they experience – from society, but also from families, friends and employers. Nearly nine out of 10 people with mental health problems say that stigma and discrimination have a negative effect on their lives."

Treatment

The first thing to do as a family member or friend of a person with SAD is to recognise that it is a serious condition, and one that can be treated with proper care. There are ways of managing seasonal disorders which, while they may not address the root-cause, will improve a person's mood and quality of life.

A common treatment of SAD is light therapy where you sit or work near a device called a light therapy

box. The box mimics natural sunlight, thereby reducing the negative effects associated with truncated exposure to light during winter. The sessions can be done at home using a rented light box so it's certainly worth considering.

“Equally, while Christmas is a time we like to indulge ourselves, maintaining a balanced diet and staying hydrated are very important”

If this isn't feasible, there are other interventions which can be carried out daily. Improving your diet and taking exercise more seriously can have formative impact on your mood. This advice is usually viewed as a cliché, but numerous studies have shown the benefits that physical activity can have on your body and mind. A recent study published in the American Journal of Psychiatry which looked at samples worldwide suggested that exercise had a protective effect on the risk of developing depression.

While looking out the window and seeing the wind, rain and cold may not make it appear the most appealing thought, exercise has the double benefit of helping you get fit-

ter and getting you out of the house. Equally, while Christmas is a time we like to indulge ourselves, maintaining a balanced diet and staying hydrated are very important.

Loneliness

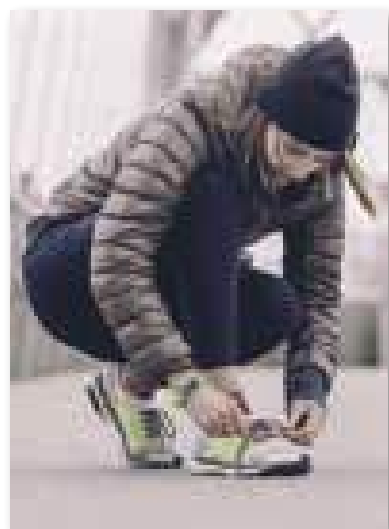
One of the major causative factors in SAD and other mental health disorders is feelings of loneliness that can be difficult to fix without personal interaction with others. Those who are marginalised or vulnerable, such as the elderly, are more susceptible to it, but this year it is an issue for which the majority of us have a greater appreciation.

Moreover, experiencing feelings of nostalgia from Christmases long past and those feeling the loss of a partner can find it difficult to cope with holidays that may look radically different from their usual fond memories. Equally, many will be without family members who live abroad and would typically have travelled home for Christmas.

Typically, the Christmas period is a good time to tackle feelings of isolation as it draws families together. While this year will see much of that curtailed, the restrictions allow up to three households to mix for social and family gatherings in homes, gardens and other outdoor settings. Further, we have all learned the value of social media in keeping us connected while apart.

While we must balance concern for the spread of the virus, the considerations of mental health and well-being are also significant. As such, while observing all the relevant precautions, a good way to aid those suffering from SAD or the Christmas blues is to visit them and encourage them to visit you.

Just talking to a friend or relative can ease the emotional burden sufferers face and make the world seem like a friendly place again. If experiencing SAD is taking too much of a psychological toll and is having a drastic impact on your everyday life, it's recommended that you speak to a counsellor who can offer you clinical advice about your circumstances in the hope of finding a lasting solution. If that's the case, seek out the right help to ensure you make the most of the season and all it has to offer.



Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



I've always loved New Year's Eve. The clock ticks past a threshold in time, and we are suddenly gifted a new beginning. The old year is gone and a new one is born. Anything seems possible in the dawn of a new year.

As 2021 comes into being, we leave a strange year behind us. A new decade began with promise and hope. Yet, before long, rumours of a strange new virus began to circulate. We soon found ourselves thrust into the surreal drama of a global shutdown. Fears of shortages, sickness, economic collapse and death soon swept the world.

The children's lives were impacted, as birthday parties were cancelled, then clubs, and finally school itself. In our little corner of rural Ireland, we hunkered down and made the most of it. Indeed, we even managed to make it a happy time.

During the pandemic, our household expanded to include three new people: a granny, a dog and a boat. I suppose some pedants might argue that two of these are technically not people, but they are to me. My dog certainly identifies as a human and he is bigger than many people, so I wouldn't advise that you contradict his sincerely held beliefs. Sailors have long understood that boats have all the characteristics of a person. They can be beautiful, fickle, temperamental and sometimes dangerous. Dispute their quirks, you grow to love them. Only the ignorant and the profane regard boats as inanimate objects.

This year saw our whole family corralled together for weeks on end during the lockdowns. In the shelter of our home, a deeper closeness grew. With school, clubs, parties and sleepovers often gone by the wayside, the kids were always knocking about the house and garden, making dens in the woods, or helping me in the garden. Even when I was working from home all last spring, they were busy downstairs with home school. Their perpetual presence soon became like air, they was just always around. Being in each other's company all the time meant that I felt a real wrench, if leaving them for even a few hours.

Just once or twice, over summer I had to spend a night or two away from some of the family, in order to keep the boat company. Most often, the older kids came to sea

with me. My most compelling memories of the year, were sailing with them along the coasts of Cork and Kerry. We were together too at sea, out by the Skelligs, sliding down mighty seas, powered by a strong Atlantic breeze. Other nights, we shared the silence of a quiet anchorage, until



the glass calm was broken as dolphins leapt around the boat in the moonlight. Let's hope this year brings more such adventures.

The daily grind is the enemy of time. When we do the same thing week-in week-out, we somehow lose time. When I took the Christmas decorations out of the store before Christmas, it seemed as though I'd only put them away there a couple of months prior. A year of routine had made it seem condensed to a couple of months.

By contrast, in times of adventure and change, time seems to pass more slowly. As a young man, I spent a year travelling the world, from the Himalayas, to New Zealand and the Caribbean, before sailing back across the Atlantic. In my memory, that single year seems longer than the decades either side of it.

Children often thrive on routine. We embrace the daily grind of work and school for them. Even our weekends are filled with the kids' clubs, sports and playdates, which they love. They need this security and stability. We've travelled around enough, and they are happy to be rooted, and establishing friends, identity and a sense of place. Yet our workaday routines must also be balanced by finding time for adventure and exploration. For this world is too beautiful, and time is too short.

Keeping God and community relevant in the digital age

Personal Profile



Jason Osborne

Finding yourself working on the cutting edge, in an industry that has existed for the blink of an eye, Tom Rochfort acknowledges the role both God and community play in keeping you grounded. In his life, he manages to hold working in IT and faith in God balanced. He told *The Irish Catholic* where this came from:

Gradual process

"So, it was more of a gradual process than I think it can sometimes be for people who would convert. I was catechised well enough by my parents and then, later on, by the Legionaries and overall, I got a pretty good catechism growing up. Then, during my teenage years, I'd kind of be more introduced to things that would've been contrary to what I believed, and it would've required me to think about, 'Well, why do I believe this? Does it make sense?'"

“There would have been Mass every day and it was just a great time to build a community feel”

"And so, I always found that I always had people and resources that I could go to find out why we would believe this or such things. It wasn't always super easy. There would have been times where I

would've doubted or times when I just maybe didn't even want to believe because it wasn't convenient for me at the time. But through all that, I always had good people to turn to that I could and I had a good relationship with God growing up so he was always there and I don't think he was really letting me get too far away from him at any point," he laughs.

Community

Tom gives a lot of credit to the community of young men he was privy to from a young age and emphasises the importance of having good examples around you to aspire to.

"I grew up with my parents joining the lay movement in the Legionaries of Christ, which was called *Regnum Christi*, and so when I turned 11 and 12, I started going on these camps where you'd go away for, usually a week in the summer or around Halloween during the mid-term, there was usually maybe three in the year that we'd go to and a bunch of guys would go away, between 12 and 18. It was run by the Legionaries so there were priests called Fr Darren and Fr Fergal both, kind of, running it and there would have been other, maybe some of the kids' dads or other people, helping out so a great group of solid Catholics and just guys hanging out, and it all being done in the spirit

of the Faith. There would have been Mass every day and it was just a great time to build a community feel.

"I think, well, young boys definitely want to see something that they want to aspire to be, and these men who would've been running it, while not perfect, would've definitely been something that you would want to emulate. There was just something desirable about it and you kind of had a real sense of, 'Oh, this is how a man should act,' I suppose. And that, I think as teenagers and young boys, you kind of crave that."

“Having a grounding in both God and community is essential, as Tom works in the fluid and ever-mobile field of Information Technology”

The importance of community amongst young Catholics is something that rears its head time and again, with many confessing it to be difficult to stay strong in a world packed to the brim with distractions. Tom is foremost among those advocating for a sense of "brotherhood".

Brotherhood

"I think there's really a brotherhood that we all need and know it's backed up in scripture about how you need to have a community. It's part of our Faith. Having a community is so important, and with it being just guys, yeah, there's a lot you share in common and you can talk about your struggles more openly and encourage each other."

Having a grounding in both God and community is essential, as Tom works in the fluid and ever-mobile field of Information Technology.

"So what we do is we provide IT solutions for different companies, so

we have a couple of groups of solicitors or we do some work for schools as well, and we manage their IT side of things and we provide solutions for them to get, so they can be the most productive they can be, so sometimes that would involve fixing broken computers but that's not really the main thing. We'll supply them with what they need and a lot of, kind of, cloud solutions and sorting out their office licenses so they can all have office and all save on one drive or whatever way they've decided to set it up. And then we provide the support for them, so if they're ever having IT issues they can give us a call."

God didn't just intend the nations to be evangelised; he intended everything to be referred back to him, including the IT industry along with all other forms of work – a fact Tom is keenly aware of. Asked where he finds God in what he does, he says:

"It's through the small things. There's not much evangelisation I can do in this job – it's a family business and we're all good Catholics. Well, we're all as good as we can be," he laughs.

“So it can be, and you just give it all to God anytime there's anything that's not going your way, or you try to”

"Yeah, it's just through the small things, like St Therese saying it's just doing the small acts with great love. That's basically it. It can be stressful sometimes; like as you know when your computer's not working, it's stressful for you, and that's kind of what we do all the time, you know? So it can be, and you just give it all to God anytime there's anything that's not going your way, or you try to."



Chocolate meltdowns to welcome in New Year



Children's Corner

Chai Brady

Although Christmas day has passed and we look towards the New Year, there's sure to be some chocolate leftover from the Christmas festivities than can be used for scientific purposes.

Enjoy this simple melting chocolate experiment that will keep anyone's attention. No doubt everyone has noticed chocolate melting on a hot day, so let's do some experiments to recreate these conditions as well as a few others before comparing results and coming to some conclusions.

At what temperature does chocolate go from a solid to a liquid? Is it different for white and dark chocolate? It's time to find out.

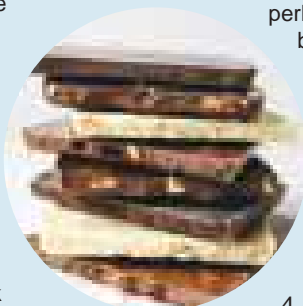
Apparatus:

- Small chocolate pieces of the same size (chocolate bar squares or chocolate chips are a good idea)
- Paper plates

- Pen and paper to record your results
- Thermometer

Method:

1. Put one piece of chocolate on a paper plate and put it in a warm location in the house, perhaps near a radiator – not on top – or beside the fireplace if you have one.
2. Record how long it took for the chocolate to melt or if it wasn't hot enough to melt then record how soft it was after 10 minutes.
3. Repeat the process with a piece of chocolate on a plate that you put in another part of the house with a different temperature. Record your results in the same way.
4. Find more interesting locations to test how long it takes for the chocolate pieces to melt. You could try on top of a hot water bottle or even your own mouth.
5. Compare your results, in what conditions did the chocolate melt and how quickly did it melt?
6. Remember to record the temperatures



of the locations that you put your piece of chocolate using a thermometer. Think about the temperature chocolate melts at.

At a certain temperature your chocolate pieces undergo a physical change, from a solid to a liquid (or somewhere in between). On a hot day, sunlight is usually enough to melt chocolate, something you might have unfortunately already experienced – although there isn't much of a chance of this during an Irish winter. You can also reverse the process by putting the melted chocolate into a fridge or freezer where it will go from a liquid back to a solid.

The chocolate probably melted quite fast if you tried putting a piece in your mouth, what does this tell you about the temperature of your body? For further testing and experiments you could compare white chocolate and dark chocolate, do they melt at the same temperature? How about putting a sheet of aluminium foil between a paper plate and a piece of chocolate in the sun, what happens then?

The year popcorn at the multiplex morphed into Netflix and a cuppa on the sofa

The Joker.

The year had hardly begun when Covid-19 struck. It changed the way we viewed films. Social distancing wasn't as much of a problem in cinemas as it was in pubs or at rock concerts but it still took away from the experience. The 'reel' thing wasn't the 'real' thing anymore.

“People steeped themselves in boxsets, mini-series, popcorn at the multiplex morphed into Netflix and a cuppa on the sofa”

In January the virus was little more than a news story. We watched footage of people walking robotically through Chinese streets wearing masks and we thought: How strange. We saw people stranded on ships that became gigantic maritime hospitals. While we felt sorry for them, we probably didn't feel any more empathetic than we did for anyone else on Sky News that day.

Then coronavirus made its way towards us. We waited for it like a tsunami, like a tidal wave. By now things had changed, changed utterly. Suddenly it wasn't just a news item anymore. It was part of our lives. And our deaths.

By the time it struck, I'd only seen a handful of films - the decidedly odd *Jihad Jane*, the whimsical *Dream Horse*, the Orwellian *Vivarium*.

Oscar ceremonies

The Oscar ceremonies still went ahead in February. South Korean comedy-thriller *Parasite* became the first foreign language film to win Best Picture. Joaquin Phoenix bagged an overdue



Film Review 2020
Aubrey Malone

gong for *Joker*. Renee Zellweger won Best Actress for *Judy* as I predicted. She was sensational.

Afterwards the film world went a bit crazy. There were frantic reschedulings, down-sizings, cancellations. Covid-19 infections surged as a new word entered our *lingua*: 'lockdown'.

People steeped themselves in boxsets, mini-series, popcorn at the multiplex morphed into Netflix and a cuppa on the sofa. The distinction between the 'Big Screen' and the small one became tenuous. Projects gravitated between both. We saw the prioritisation of a character from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in *Ratched*.

Adventure

Marco Pontecorvo's *Fatima* uplifted us. There was retro charm in adventure films: *Project Power*, *Superman: Man of Tomorrow*, *Wonder Woman 1984*.

We were intrigued by biopics like *Radioactive* and *Shirley*, confused by loose adaptations like *Les Misérables* which had little or nothing to do with Victor Hugo's original. Will Ferrell's Eurovision Song Contest send-up, *The Story of Fire Saga*, entertained us...mildly.

There were imaginative thrillers like *Tenet*, *Ava*, *7500*. *Hillbilly Elegy* became cult-

ish for a while. Russell Crowe went bats in an intriguing road rage movie, *Unhinged*. But did we really need the Arthur Conan Doyle mutant, *Enola Holmes*? Or Sacha Baron Cohen's tasteless *Borat Subsequent MovieFilm*?

“We needed to share our views even if we couldn't speak to people in the flesh”

Hugh Grant proved there was more to him than a reconstructed Cary in *The Undoing*. Disney plc tried to take us out of ourselves with *Hamilton*, *Black Beauty*, *Mulan*, *Muppets Now*.

But Covid-19 was at the back of our minds always, not just when we were watching apocalyptic films like Amy Seimetz' *She Dies Tomorrow* which had shades of it. Even romantic films were tinged with darkness - *Hope Gap*,

The Roads Not Taken, *Nocturnal*, *Still the Water*, *Chemical Hearts*.

The merits and demerits

We argued about the merits and demerits of *The Broken Hearts Gallery*, *Rebecca*, *The Crown*. We were vouchsafed revisionist depictions of old classics, sequels, prequels. We got documentaries, mockumentaries. We discussed them on Zoom, on emails, on phone calls. We needed to share our views even if we couldn't speak to people in the flesh. We came together, as the epidemiologists advised, by staying apart.

Sean Connery died in the autumn. There was much 'whataboutery' regarding future James Bonds. Could they be black? That wouldn't have worked for me any more than Dev Patel worked in the remake of *David Copperfield* at the beginning of the year. Especially if Idris Elba got the nod.

I wasn't being racist. Neither was I being sexist in debunking the idea of a female Bond. We needed to be faithful to the character Ian Fleming created. It wasn't Jane Bond.

There was too much emphasis on this aspect of Connery's career. It was only when he got out of Bondage that he shone as an actor. Obituaries were near-hagiographic but then a 1970s interview surfaced where he spoke of slapping women who misbehaved. It put a dent in them.

Dissension

An alleged past sexual misdemeanour by Woody Allen came back to haunt him too. Dissension was reflected in the corrosive reviews of a memoir he wrote, and his (swansong?) film *A Rainy Day in New York*.

Another actor perceived to have been sexually abusive was Johnny Depp. He

lost a libel suit against the media for branding him a wife-beater. The decision will almost certainly affect his career adversely from now on. If you're going to go after a newspaper for such an allegation it's advisable to have the wife in question onside. Amber Heard wasn't.

The case represented poor judgment on Depp's part. He was guilty of 'hubris', the old Oscar Wilde sin. Let's remember Oscar brought tragedy down on his head when he took the Marquis of Queensbury to court for libel. Depp had also initiated the action. Sometimes in life, as they say, we have to 'suck it up' when we get bad publicity. Paper doesn't refuse ink.

Diego Maradona died towards the end of the year. In remembrance of him I re-watched Asif Kapadia's marvellous documentary, *Diego*. Here was another fallen idol like Depp. He recovered from the 'hand of God' goal scandal but not from cocaine addiction or associations with crime bosses.

Genius

I preferred to remember his genius on the pitch. How was it that so many geniuses died young? George Best said he had nothing to replace the high of scoring a goal when he retired. I suspect something similar happened to Maradona.

The world moved on. After nearly a year of praying for a Covid-19 vaccine, four arrived at the same time in late November. It was like the Irish buses, duck or no dinner.

Let's keep our fingers crossed they work. It would mean returning to some sort of 'old' normal in 2021.

And returning to those palaces of dreams we call cinemas.

A still from the Oscar-winning *Parasite*.





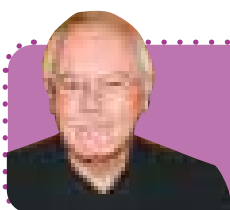
Reflections on a New Year's Eve

When I was a child, New Year's Day was very special. Our family always had a big celebration, complete with a number of rituals.

The rituals began already on New Year's Eve. We didn't go out that evening, but stayed in and celebrated together as a family. Everyone stayed up until midnight and, just before twelve, whatever else we were doing was stopped and my father would lead us in a brief prayer.

“The end of one year and the beginning of a new year are a naturally reflective time”

This prayer never strayed far from a basic theme: My father thanked God for the year that had just passed, for, in the words of his generation, “the graces that we had received”. He thanked God for having protected us, that we were still alive and together in faith and in family. Then he would, very simply, ask for God's blessing and protection for the coming year. Finally, exactly at midnight, when the old year ended and the new one began, we would sing together the hymn, ‘Holy God We Praise Thy Name’. After this there would follow the “Happy New Year” greetings, the hugs, handshakes, drinks and the food.



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

New Year's Day, itself, was, after church, given up mostly to visiting and receiving friends. At the door of each house, everyone was expected to greet each other with a formal New Year's greeting (about 10 lines in length, in German) that had to be memorised and recited, even if you no longer knew German. After this ritual greeting, you were given food, a drink, sweets, and (if you were a child) some money. When you finally completed the round of houses and returned home, you were loaded with treats and money and so, of course, as a child this was a day that rivalled Christmas.

Rituals

My parents have now been dead for over 40 years. Within those years most of these rituals have died. Mobility, the death of most of my parents' generation, the breakdown of the immigrant

sociology of our district, and the natural changes that the passing of time brings, has made for an almost altogether new situation in our old district and in the world at large. Few persons still do the old rituals, and the heart has gone out of them. About the only real continuity lies with the drinks, that ritual survives the changes of time and the breakdown of any sociology. My own family has regrouped around new rituals, but the description and prescription of these is not my purpose here since this is reminiscence, not a homily.

As I get older, what I remember most about those New Year's celebrations, what lies inside of me as a set of sturdy roots that I use to steady myself and to draw a certain sustenance from, is that New Year's Eve prayer by my dad at midnight and the singing of ‘Holy God We Praise Thy Name.’ Our new rituals still include that.

“What lies inside of me as a set of sturdy roots that I use to steady myself and to draw a certain sustenance from”

Socrates once said that “the unexamined life is not worth living”. That could be recast to say: A blessing that is unasked for, unrecognised, and for which thanks is not given, is at best only a half-blessing.

“At the door of each house, everyone was expected to greet each other with a formal New Year's greeting”

When my father prayed his end-of-the-year prayer in which he thanked God that we were all still alive and within which he asked for God's providence and protection for the coming year, Socrates would have been proud. My father was not living the unexamined life, nor was he neglecting Christ's request that we ask for blessings and the Holy Spirit.

Reflective

The end of one year and the beginning of a new year are a naturally reflective time. Anthropology wonderfully conspires with spirituality in almost forcibly highlighting a significant transi-

tion. Our society rightly makes a big deal out of New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

If you come to the end of a year and are still alive, then you haven't had a bad year. If you are still within the family of faith, then you've had a good year, irrespective of personal sickness, economic misfortune, lost relationships, or any other tragedy. Moreover, if there's gratitude in your heart and you can ask God for providence and protection for the coming year, you've entered that year on the right note. If you can follow this by expressing sincere love and best wishes for those around you (the words and embraces that say “Happy New Year”) well, that's all a human being can do to welcome a new year properly.

Blessing

The past year, I suspect, was for all of us a year of mixed blessing. It had its cold bitter moments and more than enough heartaches and headaches. But, for all of us too, I am sure, it had its joys and its newness, its extraordinary blessings and providence. Each of us, in our more lucid moments, knows exactly how many bullets we dodged. If we are still alive and we still have faith, it was a good year. It deserves to be celebrated with expressions of gratitude, affection, and a doxology... and even with another old ritual, drinks!

How can Catholic politicians approach issues like euthanasia and abortion?

For Catholics, true human freedom is possible only inasmuch as reason and will participate or share in God's wisdom and providence writes

Fr Kevin O'Reilly OP

In recent times in Ireland and elsewhere, the legal protection for the unborn has been removed. Same-sex marriage has received constitutional recognition, and now there are moves to legalise euthanasia.

How are Catholics – and particularly politicians who profess to be Catholic – to approach these issues in the public square? Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, speaks of a "rightful autonomy of earthly affairs" (GS 36). Does that assertion mean that Catholics are free to divorce faith-informed reason from their political choices and actions?

“John Paul II's encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor*, flows in the stream of tradition that comes after the Second Vatican Council”

Gaudium et Spes itself provides a clear and emphatic answer: the Church supports efforts to foster human rights so long as these efforts “be penetrated by the spirit of the Gospel and protected against any kind of false autonomy” (GS 41).

With this reference to false autonomy *Gaudium et Spes* distances itself from modern and contemporary (mis)understandings of what constitutes true human freedom. It mentions specifically the erroneous idea that our rights are ensured only when we free ourselves from the demands of the divine law.

Human dignity

What is more, *Gaudium et Spes* asserts that human dignity is destroyed when it is understood in the light of a false conception of autonomy. John Paul II's encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor*, flows in the stream of tradition that comes after the Second Vatican Council. There he critiques this false conception of freedom, which asserts that human beings are free to create their own values.

Human freedom, in this erroneous view, lords it over truth. Its bottom line is that individuals or social groups have the right to decide what is good or evil. Even truth itself is considered to be a creation of freedom.



Leinster House: Church teaching is clear, Catholic politicians must oppose what is wrong.

According to the Catholic Magisterium, as expressed in *Veritatis Splendor*, true human freedom is possible only inasmuch as reason and will participate or share in God's wisdom and providence. This assertion is in keeping with the teaching of Thomas Aquinas concerning the natural law.

Natural law

Aquinas explains that the natural law is derived from or participates in the eternal law. The eternal law is essentially God's providential rule of the universe.

The eternal law and the natural law are two sides of the same coin insofar as human beings are concerned. According to Aquinas, the natural law “is nothing else than the rational creature's participation in the eternal law.” Aquinas argues that God moves rational creatures in accord with their freedom.

“The only morally legitimate way for citizens to cast their votes is to do so in favour of candidates who promote these basic human goods”

Aquinas is very clear: all laws, inasmuch as they are the fruit of right reason – which excludes any law that results from human sinfulness – are derived from the eternal law, that is to say, from God himself.

“Human freedom, in this erroneous view, lords it over truth. Its bottom line is that individuals or social groups have the right to decide what is good or evil”

Human or positive law is no exception. Inasmuch as it disregards the natural law – and thus the eternal law – legislation no longer properly speaking bears the character of law but is rather a perversion of law.

Aquinas likens law-making to art. Much more pertinent to the present discussion however is his idea that something can be derived from the natural law as a conclusion from premises.

The example he gives is that “one must not kill.” This conclusion is drawn from the principle that “one should do harm to no human being.” For Aquinas, the most sublime expression of the eternal law occurs in the incarnation of the Word. The ordering force of God's wisdom and providence have been ultimately revealed in Jesus Christ.

Following St Paul, Aquinas intimates that this wisdom bears the sign of the Cross. It involves suffering. John Paul II proclaims the classic Christian conviction that contemplation of Jesus Crucified, the supreme manifestation of God's wisdom and providential ordering of human affairs, is the highroad to be trodden in the quest for moral maturity.

In the case of a Catholic politician, this suffering will no doubt be entailed by adhering to the tenets of Catholic morality, which tenets are an expression of the faith.

Positive law

The guidelines that the natural law sets for positive law are of course very general. This article cannot discuss the complexities involved.

“Aquinas explains that the natural law is derived from or participates in the eternal law”

This much, however, is clear: one cannot in good conscience directly intend an intrinsically evil act in the political sphere for any end, even if this act were to contribute significantly to the common good. We are in the ambit of conclusions drawn from principles.

In this regard it is imperative to note that to support a serious evil in the political sphere can be taken to intend this evil – notwithstanding the highly confused, albeit sincere, reasoning involved.

The only morally legitimate approach open to a Catholic operating in the public square is openly to oppose attacks on the basic goods of human life and family as founded on heterosexual marriage.

The only morally legitimate way for citizens to cast their votes is to do so in favour of candidates who promote these basic human goods.

Fr Kevin O'Reilly OP is a lecturer in moral theology as the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas in Rome.





David Roberts, *View of Jerusalem*,
9 April 1839 (print 1842)



The Holy Land

For centuries Jerusalem and the Holy Land was a place of great mystique, the hope of pious pilgrims as the object of a once in a lifetime visit. But over the course of the long nineteenth century this began to change: new techniques of image making and reproduction began to alter the ideas that people had of both biblical Palestine under the Ottomans and of the city of Jerusalem.

Along with the growth of archaeology, and of new standards of historical research, the very idea of the Holy Land changed radically. New images of the Holy Land lead, inevitably, to new ideas about early Christianity and about the other religions focused on the same region. Jerusalem then was a city divided among several cultures, cultures which occupied the same land, but did not share it.

Painters

In the early decades of the century the image many had of the Holy Land was derived from painters such as the Scotsman David Roberts (prints of his paintings are still popular - one of a distant view of Jerusalem, hangs framed on the wall of the room where I am writing this).

“With the growth of archaeology, and of new standards of historical research, the very idea of the Holy Land changed radically”

But to aid the reproduction of such paintings, engraving on wood and steel played an important role, in creating illustrations in the increasing number of books, academic and popular about the Holy Land. Some of these were finely made, but they lacked the essential ingredient of colour.

Colour

In the 1830s and 1840s, methods of producing colour picture for books were introduced (see image of Bethlehem on page 36).

But what proved the most important image-making development was the invention of photography, through the very different approaches of William Fox Talbot, Nicéphore Niépce and Louis Daguerre. As was said at the time, “from today painting is dead”.

By the 1850s, photographers were widely at work in the Middle East. But the early photographic methods demanded long exposure times. A scene in Jerusalem might well have had human being in it, but they would only register on the plate if they stood still for several minutes.

“What proved the most important image-making development was the invention of photography”

This gave the impression that Jerusalem (when photographed) was ‘a ghost city’, a dead place empty of people. In reality it was a city thronging with all kinds of human types. But the images did not show this: to some it looked like an empty land.

Photography

However, this was changed by faster photography, by 1870 one could buy not merely large size photographs, which mimicked paintings, but smaller images called cabinets and *cartes de visites*.

Everyone visiting the Holy land would buy these, often from the atelier of the American Colony, a North American evangelical group who worked to support their activities. Their images appeared constantly as book and magazine illustrations. Their collections are now in the Library of Congress.

The major change came with the transfer of photographs to postcards after the 1870s, which by the 1890s had become not only a popular way of communicating, but a lively hobby to rival stamp collecting. Most families had postcard albums of some kind. And a destination such as the Holy Land gave rise to many.



Woodcut, “Bethlehem”, from William Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible* (London, 1863)



Woodcut “Nazareth”, from William Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible* (London, 1863)



Colour process block, from W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book; or, Biblical Illustrations of the Holy Land* (London, 1841)

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.

in early modern images



Palestinian Christians celebrate the Nativity of Christ at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, 1899. Photo: Ysaad Mohamed, *Palestine the Holy Land* website

“By the end of the 1890s, mere tourists were as numerous as pilgrims. Most of these would be equipped with Kodaks so that the images of Jerusalem and the holy places by now ran up into countless millions”

The cost of travel came down as the century progressed. Ordinary middleclass families in Europe and North America could now afford to travel to the region.

Mark Twain, no less, was with the first tourist group to arrive in the Holy Land in 1867. In *The Innocents Abroad* (1869) he gave a typical report on his travels, which I find modern pilgrims are rarely aware of. They ought to be, for some of the schemes to exploit the pious in Jerusalem have hardly changed.

By now Holy Land settlement societies had come into existence, to support not just visits but the creation of actual colonies by German, British, French, and North American groups among others. Small Jewish groups arrived too, often with quite varied ambitions: but their history belongs more properly to the days of the British Mandate. Many visitors were concerned to help their native co-religionists in the Holy Land; the French charity L'Œuvre d'Orient, to aid Middle Eastern Christians, was founded in 1856.

The Holy Land could now be conveniently

Also a railway was built (with German aid) from Damascus - then a more important city than Jerusalem - down to Medina and Mecca. This line eventually connected with a line up from the sea to Jerusalem. By the end of the 1890s, mere tourists were as numerous as pilgrims. Most of these would be equipped with Kodaks so that the images of Jerusalem and the holy places by now ran up into countless millions.



“Ghost city”: collotype of Jerusalem by Auguste Salzmänn, c.1855. Photo: *Foto-Historiana, Leverkusen*

With the coming of moving pictures at the same date, people in Paris, London and New York could see for themselves the huge numbers that crowded the cities of Ottoman Palestine. Under the indifferent rule of the Sultan, the way the country had been transformed was clearly shown in images.

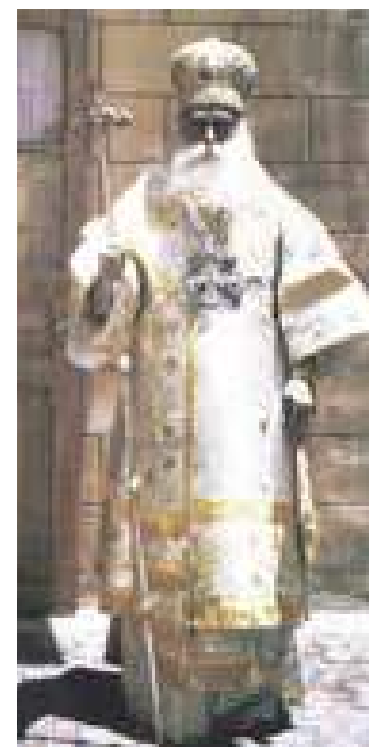
History

There is still a great deal to be learned from these images, historic, professional and amateur. All images of the nineteenth century Holy Land are to be cherished. And they are, for they turn up in the strangest of ways. The Library of Congress was one of the great libraries to which Abdul Humid (Sultan from 1876 to 1909) donated a set of images of his empire, even to its remote corners, he had had specially prepared.

In a collection of autochromes in the Albert Kahn foundation in France many scenes in true colour are also preserved (and can still be purchased today).

Soon after the fall of the Ottoman Empire a photographer of an American magazine photographed Damien I, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem in colour. In a symbolic way this image alone brings the Holy Land out of the long nineteenth century and into the more disruptive and ever-perilous days of the twentieth century.

But the mystique of the Holy Land and Jerusalem, given its role in history, remained very much alive to influence another era.



His Most Godly Beatitude, Damien I, Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem from 1897, during the last days of Ottoman rule, autochrome by M. O. Williams. Photo: Maynard Owen Williams / *National Geographic* December 1927

Books to read

Journey to Jerusalem (1811), by François-René de Chateaubriand; by the Catholic Breton author of the *Genius of Christianity*, this book is a great classic of French literature. By all standards an important book of European culture.

Eothen; or, Traces of Travel brought home from the East (1844), by Alexander Kinglake, in which (according to a critic of the day) the East, meaning here largely the Ottoman Empire, is revealed “in all its vital actual reality.” But very British in outlook.

The Innocents Abroad; or, The New Pilgrim's Progress (1869), by Mark Twain, a briskly humorous yet humane account of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1865, this book is one of the most widely-read American chronicles of travel in modern times.

Catholic travellers should have in hand on their tour the latest edition of the Franciscan guide book to the Holy Land, quite the best there is to the holy places. Also of great use for those interested in the history of the country itself is Fr Jerome Murphy-O'Connor's *The Holy Land: An Oxford Archaeology Guide from Earliest Times to 1700* (OUP, £22.99), to read before you go.

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€1,800 will allow us to give an Irish, in-calf, dairy heifer to a struggling family in Rwanda, completely transforming their lives. Your gift will live on for generations.

Phone the office on
061 414142 or
info@bothar.ie

Who will pass on the flame of faith?

For over 130 years, *The Irish Catholic* has been a voice of hope and inspiration for Catholics in Ireland. Help us pass on the flame of faith, by remembering us in your Will.

Phone 01 6874028 in strictest confidence

Will the MSC Missions

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart bring hope to the poorest people living in over 48 countries worldwide.

Please help us with a gift in your Will

Contact:

MSC Missions Office, PO Box 23 Western Road, Cork.
Tel: 021-4545704 Email: info@mscmisions.ie

www.mscmissions.ie

**When you remember
Trócaire in your
Will, you bring hope
to people living in
the world's
poorest places**

Trócaire

It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call **Grace Kelly** on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

Inspired by the vision and passion of Sr. Stan, many people are choosing to leave a loving gift in their will to support people who are homeless to find safety and a place they can call home.



To join in Sr. Stan's vision please contact eve.kerton@focusireland.ie or phone 1850 204 205

**FOCUS
Ireland**

By remembering World Missions Ireland in your Will you are leaving a gift of hope for all God's children

World Missions Ireland is the Church's official charity for overseas mission

Please help your Church to survive & flourish

**To learn how, call
Eimear on 01 497 2035
or email eimear@wmi.ie**



SERVICES

ALL UNWANTED home waste removed. Cookers, fridges, beds, suites, wardrobes, carpets etc. Removed and disposed of in a proper manner. No job too small or big. Contact Tommy, 087 6406015.

CATHOLIC CONNECTIONS

ANOTHER YEAR GONE by and you are still on your own! 2021 doesn't have to be the same. Make it the year you meet someone special! Call 'Heavenly Partners' on 01 568 6558 and find out just how easy that could be!

LITTLE FLOWER PENNY DINNERS



Little Flower Penny Dinners have been providing meals and services to the homeless and the elderly for over 100 years.

Please help us continue and donate what you can on our website www.LFPD.ie

or by phoning us with your credit/debit card details or by post to Little Flower Penny Dinners, 11 Meath St, D8

Phone 01 4536621 or 01 4546795
e-mail: srbrigid@littleflower.ie

Reg. Charity
No. 6179

Please pray for the beatification of
**Little Nellie
of Holy God**

"May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls proposing Nellie as their model"

— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

Win a trip to Lourdes

- ACROSS**
- 1 The Pope is able to name a member of a religious order (10)
- 6 Satan tours around space travellers (10)
- 11 This German city is some kind of mad spot! (7)
- 14 Quick to pick up a beer, right? (5)
- 15 Fail to notice (8)
- 17 When this winter visitor has flown in, does it cling to ships? (8,5)
- 19 Loud, boisterous (5)
- 20 May one urge Tom to become a foodie type? (7)
- 23 Drink in a steamy setting (3)
- 24 & 49a Pa took china out, upsetting Pan's archenemy (7,4)
- 25 Biblical High Priest seen in the delicatessen (3)
- 26 Mr Westwood provides a Cork river (3)
- 28 Near (4)
- 30 One grasps it sounds like the Messiah composer (6)
- 33 Divine place to sit in the theatre (4)
- 36 Spring flower (6)
- 37 Ring us before the Spanish get the bird (5)
- 38 Dress in orderly fashion, as is the custom (5)
- 39 They sing of Tony and Carmella (8)
- 40 Antenna (6)
- 42 Talented - for the present, Edward (6)
- 44 Longbows from this furnished young English warriors, from the start (3)
- 45 Would the seer risk relocating to a town in Fingal? (8)
- 47 Stiff, inflexible (5)
- 48 How like a wolf to use some Honolulu pineapples! (6)
- 49 See 24 across
- 50 Cry out for the southern elite (6)
- 53 The USA's Pelican State, capital Baton Rouge (9)
- 56 How entertaining it was to see the morning availed of (6)
- 57 Can only twins have this star sign? (6)
- 58 Quote "Clare has taken it in" (4)
- 59 Get more credit for your mobile from some Rialto pupils (3,2)
- 61 Military term of address to a superior (3)
- 62 See tenor Beniamino in concert number fifty-one (5)
- 65 The French point to a statute (3)
- 66 Small drop of alcohol, or a little child (3)
- 67 Being thick-skinned, restaurateurs hate it nibbling onion starters (5)
- 68 Flying saucer (1.1.1.)
- 70 Gulliver found him to be as brutish as some Kenya hoodlums (5)
- 74 & 82d One's old school may cause the team alarm (4,5)
- 75 Touch down on what's burning? (6)
- 77 Drop it differently when it has three legs! (6)
- 78 It seems the conifer is always environmentally conscious (9)
- 79 When ye sail around like this, it's plain sailing (6)
- 80 Its principal attraction is inclined to attract tourists! (4)
- 83 A Chinese dumpling is not very bright when presented with a maths problem! (3,3)
- 84 Be in good condition - that would be appropriate (5)
- 86 Account to the clergyman - be precise! (8)
- 88 Animal with a brush (3)

- 89 Waif found in a church interior (6)
- 93 In legend, the island where King Arthur was buried (6)
- 95 & 99d I sang to a comedian about a walk in Spain (6,2,8)
- 97 It's a 107 down in Haifa, I think (5)
- 98 A cardinal in the wars dons this (5)
- 100 Try and hop around with a cup (6)
- 101 Standard found at either end of Monaghan (4)
- 103 Kennedy's assassin made some owl sad (6)
- 105 A walk here will make Patrick hot (4)
- 106 Fly here? Then fly no more! (3)
- 108 There's beastly craft in "Heart of Darkness"! (3)
- 110 About the bike - find another use for it (7)
- 111 A seer with only one pupil (3)
- 112 Find one from the Upper House involved in treason (7)
- 113 Could you credit how frequently a small farm appears? (5)
- 116 How kind of one to order Monaco pasties! (13)
- 117 Chopped deer shin for a traditional pudding (8)
- 118 Seat (5)
- 119 Moby Dick's narrator has his meal cooked here (7)
- 120 Must the play's debut occur before January 2nd? (5,5)
- 121 Houdini's metier involves a gooey clasp (10)
- DOWN**
- 1 An objective of society during the pandemic or of overweight citizens after the Christmas excesses? (10,3,5)
- 2 Has a dog been round for Daniel's companion? (8)
- 3 Make the moggy bite an aromatic plant (6)
- 4 The tale of a southern Conservative (5)
- 5 Exacted retribution (7)
- 7 A Tempest in China? Nothing to worry about (5,2,1,6)
- 8 At first, only robber barons stole royal spheres (4)
- 9 Melodies about a sari (4)
- 10 & 13d. Make the cascading lion sit out a practice that has characterised 2020. (6,10)
- 11 Get right through to Mr Brosnan (6)
- 12 Sort rope out for the horse-soldiers (8)
- 13 See 10 down
- 16 The pest upsets the 37 across (5)
- 18 Can liquorice flavouring literally be eased in? (7)
- 21 Lukewarm (5)
- 22 Use a spade in part of Verdi Gardens (3)
- 23 & 53d Change Lotto IDs? The tasks I must perform! (2-2,4)
- 27 Get away with the First lady about the Christian era (5)
- 29 Injured, right inside the shack (4)
- 30 Will Adam help configure a car light? (8)
- 31 'Drink' - articles written in both English and French (3)
- 32 Found out about a tragic king, Edward? (7)
- 34 Willow has Rosie upset (5)
- 35 Reject outright (5)
- 36 Come on, you started being arch! (3)
- 41 About history - make a meal of it! (6)
- 43 & 104d Make the worn forester link up with these everyday heroes (9,7)
- 45 Catch a Pole on a horse (4)
- 46 Move hastily to get the cardinal

Christmas Crossword No. 2

Marian Pilgrimages, who have been organising pilgrimages to Marian Shrines around the world for over 25 years, are delighted to offer readers of *The Irish Catholic* the opportunity to win an inclusive pilgrimage for two to Lourdes during 2021.

Along with pilgrimages to Lourdes, now with direct flights to Lourdes, Marian Pilgrimages also offers custom made itineraries to Medjugorje, the Holy Land, Italy, Fatima and Camino de Santiago. For more information, please call them on 01 878 8159 or email info@marian.ie.



How to enter the competition

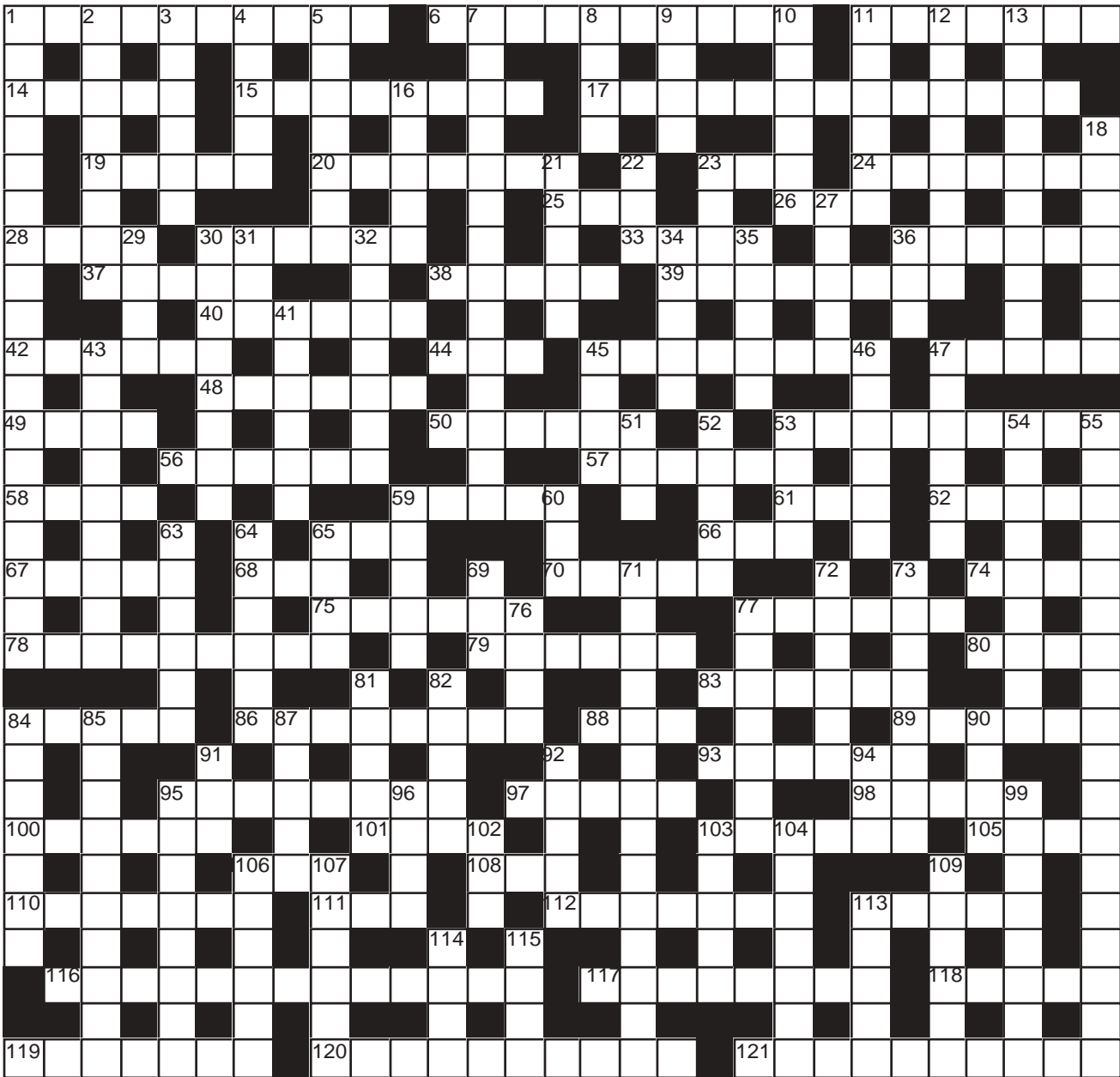
The competition consists of **TWO** crosswords. Crossword No. 1 which was published in last week's edition and Crossword No. 2 which is published this week. All you have to do is answer all the crossword questions correctly on **BOTH** crosswords and your name will be entered in a draw for the pilgrimage. Remember, even if you don't manage to complete the crosswords correctly you will be entered in the draw to win one of the three runner-up prizes of the **Prayer Book Bundle** including *The Knock Prayer Book* and *Sister Stan's Awakening Inner Peace*. When you have completed the crosswords send CROSSWORD No.1 and CROSSWORD No.2 before **Friday, January 15, 2021** to: **LOURDES COMPETITION Marian Pilgrimages, 19 Eden Quay, Dublin 1.**



NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE



- a vindaloo (6)
- 47 Quit upsetting the singer! (6)
- 51 Sound like a cat (3)
- 52 Half a quart o' horseflesh (5)
- 53 See 23 down
- 54 Does this creature swim in a heavenly way? (9)
- 55 & 77d Pantomime involving a seedy password (3,4,3,3,5,7)
- 59 I want to be confused with Tom Sawyer's creator (5)
- 60 Shell out (3)
- 63 No thug around? Nothing then (6)
- 64 Word Archimedes shouted (6)
- 65 Behold, an amount borrowed (4)
- 69 & 71 Does the nickname for the Paris-Roubaix classic refer to an Ulster inferno? (3,4,2,3,5)
- 72 As slim as a mass book can be (6)
- 73 Some dunce Mom shared feelings with (8)
- 76 It's under control, thanks to myself (4)
- 77 See 55 down
- 81 Oriental sleeping mat (5)
- 82 See 74 across
- 84 You could be charged with this - or it might be recharged! (7)
- 85 Using this might clear up where exactly you stand! (10)
- 87 South American country, capital 99 down (5)
- 90 Fishy complaint (4)
- 91 Non-clerical ballad (3)
- 92 Traditional game - belonging to the late Mr Charlton? (5)
- 94 Pussycat fancier! (3)
- 95 Fledgling vegetable? (5,3)
- 96 In this form, the Paraclete plummeted (4)
- 99 See 95 across
- 102 For a month, she was British PM (3)
- 103 Solemn vows (5)
- 104 See 43 down
- 106 Creature that is a supporter of Western art? (6)
- 107 Creed that many are surrounded by meat (6)
- 109 Latin American blanket-like garment (6)
- 113 Dance during a Rosbercon gathering (5)
- 114 Junk email turns up in the charts (4)
- 115 Bird that is rent asunder (4)

Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



Searching for a father after an avalanche

AS THIS DIFFICULT YEAR, characterised by social distance and disconnection, comes to an end I'd like to share a story which created a wonderful memory and celebrates the power of connection.

Andy and Sarah Lawrence live in England near Buxton in the beautiful Derbyshire Dales. Andy's family roots are in the parish of Rathdowney where I live and he and Sarah regularly join our masses via the webcam. Last May, Andy told me of the death of his friend Richard Guilford in Weymouth on the South coast of England. He asked if we could have Mass celebrated here from our church so that Richard's family could participate as they were unable to travel to Weymouth for his funeral. Richard's story is a mixture of sadness and joy.

Fish factory

In the late 1980s when Richard was in his 20s he took time off from studies and went to work in a fish factory in the little town of Sudavik on the west coast of Iceland. While in Sudavik Richard had a romantic relationship with a young local girl. He left Iceland when his working visa expired totally unaware that he was to become a father. His daughter



ter Linda was born some months later. Linda's mother married a local man and they had another little girl.

On 16 January 1995, at 6.25 am a 400 metres wide avalanche hit the village of Sudavik, destroying fifteen homes. Emergency services and the local people of Sudavik searched desperately for those who were missing. After about six hours of being buried beneath the avalanche little five-year-old Linda was found alive by a search dog called Hnota. Next to her was the body of her little eighteen-month-old sister. Fourteen people were killed in the village and eight of them were children. Linda was the youngest child to survive but

she had lost not only her sister but also her grandparents and her best friend. The avalanche in Sudavik was the greatest tragedy to hit Iceland in its history and the whole country mourned.

Avalanche

Sometime after the avalanche Linda was told for the first time that her father was a man who lived in England. When Linda became 18 in 2007 she decided to search for her birth father. As the youngest survivor of the Sudavik avalanche Linda's search for her father became a story of national interest and while on a visit to Iceland, Andy and Sarah Lawrence became familiar with Linda's search and decided to help. In a previous job Andy had assisted people in tracking down long lost relatives and he hoped his experience might help Linda find her dad. Andy and Sarah's intervention was to be crucial. The National TV broadcaster commissioned a two-part documentary on the search without knowing what the outcome would be. For Andy and Sarah it was a huge challenge and it involved them trawling through numerous official records and newspaper archives. Their search

finally brought them to the seaside town of Weymouth. The whole town got involved and eventually, ten years after her search began, Linda was reunited with her dad Richard Guilford. Linda discovered not only her father but also her brother Jake and, having lost her grandparents in the avalanche, she was overjoyed to meet her English grandmother. Richard was thrilled to meet his daughter but also to realise he was a grandfather to Linda's children back in Iceland. I gather there wasn't a dry eye across Iceland when the reunion of daughter and father was aired on national television and across the front page of several newspapers.

Walk again

That was 2017. Sadly, like his daughter Linda, Richard's life had not been easy. He had both of his legs amputated below the knee but had successfully begun to walk again, thanks to his prosthetic limbs which ironically, were made in Iceland. Linda and her dad very quickly built a close relationship. Richard travelled to Iceland to meet his grandchildren and he and Linda skyped each other every week. Sadly on May 19, Richard died suddenly having suffered a massive

A thought for the New Year

Though we live in a world that dreams of ending that always seems about to give in something that will not acknowledge conclusion insists that we forever begin. ...from 'Begin' by Brendan Kennelly

heart attack. The last three years of his life were filled with a joy he had not previously known.

We celebrated Richard's funeral Mass here in our parish church. His family and friends joined us, virtually, from Weymouth, Derbyshire and of course, Iceland. Thank God for webcams, thank God for the power of connection.



COULD YOU HELP TO SAVE A POOR HELPLESS CHILD

The Little Way Association receives numerous requests from missionaries throughout the world asking for help to feed, support and educate needy, deprived children. Due to COVID-19 they are faced with many sufferings. They tell us of orphaned children left alone with no one to love or care for them, of families so poor that they cannot afford to send their children to school, and of street children, totally abandoned, hungry and homeless, experiencing much anguish and hardship during their most tender years. The whole future of these children often depends upon whether a missionary can find sufficient funds to care for them.

Your New Year's gift will mean a chance of health and happiness for a deprived child

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466
www.littlewayassociation.com

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

€..... **NEEDY CHILDREN**

€..... **NEEDS OF MISSIONARIES**

€..... **MASS OFFERINGS**
(Please state no. of Masses _____)

€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

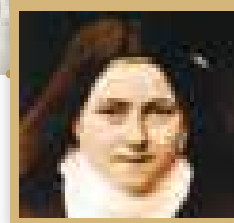
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Address

To donate online go to
tinyurl.com/lwadonations

DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.

IC/12/31



"Jesus wills that we give alms to Him as to one poor and needy. He puts Himself as it were at our mercy; He will take nothing but what we give Him from our heart, and the very least trifle is precious in His sight."

- St Therese

We wish all our friends and benefactors a very happy and peaceful New Year.

May St Therese reward you in a special way for the sacrifices you make to support our work, and may she obtain many graces for all our benefactors during 2021.

In our modern age of materialism and selfishness when so many are searching for an authentic spirituality, Therese's little way of simple love for God and others has a powerful appeal. Perhaps we too can join her on the 'little way'.



As 2021 begins, please consider making a gift to The Little Way Association's fund for children.

Every euro you send will be gratefully received and sent without deduction, to enable a missionary priest or sister to carry the love, care and compassion of Christ to a deprived, abandoned or orphaned child.

Thank you, and may God reward your generosity.