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Archbishop in the dark on nuns' maternity hospital plans

Canon law may still block proposal

Greg Daly

The Archdiocese of Dublin has been left in the dark over plans by the Religious Sisters of Charity to relinquish control of the St Vincent's Healthcare Group and enable the building of a new National Maternity Hospital.

According to a diocesan spokesperson, there has been no contact between the sisters and the archdiocese around the issue, despite religious orders needing permission from the local ordinary – in the case of St Vincent's Hospital, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin – or even the Vatican when seeking to dispose of property above certain values.

The diocesan admission comes against a background

of reports that the planned move of the National Maternity Hospital to St Vincent's has become bogged down following a new demand from Health Minister Simon Harris that the State should have a 'public-interest director' on the board of the new institution. The two hospitals have jointly warned that contracts to begin moving infrastructure to St Vincent's must be signed by the end of this year if building regulations are to be met.

This deadline does not allow for the possibility of the diocese or Holy See vetoing a plan that would entail disposing of Church property to facilitate abortions and other actions contrary to Church teaching.

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Church put a Spring in star's step...



Most people know 'the Boss' Bruce Springsteen for his timeless music, but very few know about his commitment to the Faith. The Irish-American star over the weekend revealed that he regularly attends a small Catholic church at his childhood home where he was an altar boy, and that he feels the imprint of Church on him rather strongly.

Parish 'delighted' as Newman set for canonisation

Chai Brady

Parishioners at the Dublin church founded by Cardinal Newman are "delighted" that a second miracle attributed to him has been recognised by the Vatican, paving his way to sainthood.

Blessed Cardinal Newman founded and designed Newman University Church which has brought "many great experiences of Faith and worship to people" according to the parish priest.

Fr Bill Dailey told *The Irish Catholic* there was a sense of excitement from parishioners, saying: "I got texts and notes of congratulation and people letting me know they'd seen the story."

"I think everyone who has been coming to the church and enthusiasts of Newman's legacy will be quite delighted."

» Continued on Page 2

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The curious case of Simon Harris

Minister for Health Simon Harris is part of a breed of politicians who get into the game at a young age. He has never had a job outside of politics. Before running for election himself, he served as an assistant to Francis Fitzgerald. At the tender age of 25, Mr Harris was elected to the Dáil following the collapse in support for Fianna Fáil.

As a fresh-faced deputy, he was chosen by Fine Gael to nominate Enda Kenny for appointment as Taoiseach. I say appointment, it was more of a coronation since the Fine Gael-Labour coalition held 115 of the 166 seats in the house.

Mr Harris' rise to power has been meteoric. In an era when virtually everyone goes to college, a man without a university degree serving as Minister for Health is quite an achievement.

Mr Harris has certainly guaranteed his place in the history books. When the story of the early part of 21st Century comes to be written he will be remembered as the man who spearheaded the campaign to remove the right to life of unborn children from Bunreacht na hÉireann.

Human rights

It's not an achievement anyone serious about human rights would be proud of. But, it's all the more curious given the fact that it appears to be an extraordinary *volte-face* on the part of Mr Harris.

When the deputy was first seeking election to the Oireachtas in 2011 and quite unsure of his fate, he sent an email to the Pro-Life Campaign claiming that he was a committed



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

supporter of the right to life and would oppose any legislation to introduce abortion. He concluded his missive by pleading with the Pro-Life Campaign to ask supporters to vote for him as he would be a reliable pro-life voice in the Dáil.

“He has stubbornly resisted even modest amendments to the abortion law now going through the Oireachtas”

Early signs seemed promising. When Savita Halappanavar died in 2012 after doctors failed to notice that she was suffering from sepsis, Mr Harris wrote in the *Sunday Independent* that her death should not be used by those seeking to change the law on abortion and remove constitutional protection from the unborn child.

So, what happened to turn Mr Harris into an enthusiastic supporter for abortion? Well, only Mr Harris knows for sure. Like many politicians, he claims that he has been on a journey on the issue. He has, he claims, changed his mind on the issue and recanted of his previously articulated conviction that the taking of innocent life is wrong.

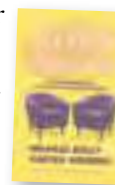
Were Mr Harris a reluctant supporter of abortion in rare

circumstances that might be a lot more plausible. However, he has not just recanted what he previously claimed were deeply-held principles, he has become almost evangelical in his support for abortion. Add to this the fact that he is venomous in his reaction to his supposed erstwhile fellow travellers in the pro-life movement.

He has stubbornly resisted even modest amendments to the abortion law now going through the Oireachtas including around conscientious objections for pain relief for the unborn babies who will be killed under the proposed legislation.

The U-turn is so profound it's hard to explain. Mr Harris claims that he was once pro-life and claims to have had a conversion experience. But, set that against the fact that he shows no ability to understand or empathise with where pro-life people are coming from. If, at some stage in the past, he believed that the killing of an unborn child was wrong, why is he so uncompromising with those who still hold that position?

i Michael Kelly is co-author of a new book with Austen Ivereigh *How to Defend the Faith – Without Raising Your Voice – it is available from Columba Books*
www.columbabooks.com



Newman canonisation a source of joy

» Continued from Page 1

With two more steps to go – a commission of bishops will have to meet to approve his canonisation and the Pope must declare him a saint – it could be as early as next year that he is canonised.

“We will await anxiously the news of the details of canonisation which is

expected and we'll work with the archdiocese to have some fitting celebration at University Church,” said Fr Dailey.

Newman's second miracle concerned the healing of a pregnant American woman who prayed for his intercession at the time of a life-threatening diagnosis. Her doctors have been unable to

explain how or why she was able to suddenly recover.

This miracle was investigated by the Archdiocese of Chicago, and was subsequently confirmed.

The prominent academic is best known in Ireland for founding UCD, his lectures, books and founding Newman University Church.

Cruelty cases up

● Cases of child cruelty and neglect in Northern Ireland have increased by almost 350% over the last five years, figures suggest. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) said 579 child cruelty and neglect offences were recorded by the PSNI in 2017/18, up from 132 in 2012/13.

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Homeless must not be forgotten at Christmas – campaigning priest

Colm Fitzpatrick

While Christmas is usually a time most of us look forward to, social justice campaigner Fr Peter McVerry said homeless people dread the festive season.

Speaking to the paper as the trust launched its 2017 annual report, Fr McVerry said that Christmas is the most “depressing day of the year” for homeless people as

they feel isolated from the rest of society celebrating the Christian holiday.

“Christmas is a horrible time. A lot of homeless people tell me they would love to go to sleep on December 1 and wake up on January 1. It’s a time, not only of enormous pressure but financial pressure because homeless people want to have a set of new clothes to wear on Christmas day – it’s part of their self-esteem and dig-

nity,” Fr McVerry said.

He added that homeless people also like to buy presents for their “brothers and sisters or children” at Christmas but that it’s also a time when you become acutely aware of your own aloneness.

“This is a time where the perception is – the reality is often different – but the perception is that everyone is at home enjoying themselves with their family pulling

crackers and eating turkey, and you’re excluded from that. And maybe on Christmas day if you’re on the street, it’s the most depressing day of the year,” he said, pointing out that homeless people have nowhere to go on the day because the streets are empty and shops are closed.

Aloneness

“There’s nowhere open where you can even go in

to sit down and have a cup of tea. There’s no transport, the streets are deserted, so you really feel your aloneness much more acutely at Christmas and on Christmas day than you do the rest of the year.”

He added that although the Peter McVerry Trust is striving to reduce homelessness, the homeless crisis is ultimately a problem that the Government has to tackle.

Record-breaking figures for homelessness charity

Staff reporter

The Peter McVerry Trust has revealed that a record-breaking number of people suffering financially have availed of the charity’s services this year.

In its 2017 annual report, published on December 4, the charity said it has been supporting almost 5000 people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Some 313 people progressed out of homelessness while 4,791 people in total were supported by the organisation through services including emergency accommodation and rent advice. This is an 8% increase year-on-year, and a 40% increase in the amount of people supported by Peter McVerry Trust since 2011.

Initiative

This week the charity also launched a new social housing complex with 13 units in Dublin’s city centre as part of an overall plan to deliver a total of 120 social housing units by the end of year.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* about the initiative, Fr Peter McVerry said: “Giving homeless people permanent accommodation is like a dream come true for them. Many people have been homeless for a long time, individual people may be homeless for many years, families could be in hotels for up to two years or even longer so just getting their own place, you see the joy on their faces.

“It’s just a dream come true for them and especially at this time of year when they know they will have their own place for Christmas.”

Youth Choir’s new album

Christ the King Youth Choir launch their new Christmas CD, *O Holy Night*, which is a collection of old and new Christmas classics. The CD will be launched in Christ the King Church, Strathroy, Omagh on Sunday, December 16 at 7pm where the choir will be joined by Cappagh Parish Pope John Paul II Award Participants for a journey through the traditional Nativity story through drama and song. Further information is available on the choir’s Facebook page www.facebook.com/Christ-TheKingYouthChoir



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Offer students a person, not just a package – priest

Colm Fitzpatrick

Wellbeing programmes in Faith schools could do more to help protect students from mental health issues, a leading Irish theologian has said.

Tuam-based priest Prof. Eamonn Conway and Dr Kerry Greer of Limerick's Mary Immaculate College have said that emerging resilience programmes in Irish schools lack a scientific basis, and that the notion of Christian hope has been largely ignored in this type of teaching.

In a paper entitled 'The Commodification of Resilience: Rediscovering the Virtue of Christian Hope for a Troubled World', the authors say that hope can contribute to developing resilience, and that overlooking this prospect encourages students to believe that religious faith is "irrelevant and superfluous".

Challenges

"Clearly religious education has much to contribute to building resilience in young people and for those who are Christians, a relationship with God, a relationship with Christ with the companionship and promise that holds should be the ground on which they daily stand and enable them to respond to various challenges which are inevitably part of life," Fr Conway told *The Irish Catholic*.

In the new Junior Cycle wellbeing programme, he added, religious education is afforded a "very marginal role" and only in so far that

it contributes to human rights and social justice education, rather than how it invites people into a personal relationship with God.

He said that this practice has schooled people into believing that religion has "nothing to contribute" to building their resilience.

Echoing these sentiments, Bernadette Purcell, a chaplain at IT Tallaght, told this paper that for students, faith in God is like an "energy or power in their life" that

allows them to navigate through difficulties they're experiencing. She added that a spirituality of wellbeing is vital as Christian hope allows young people to realise that the present is only temporary and that there is a "future of possibilities" for them.

In light of this, Fr Conway is urging schools to reconsider their current wellbeing programmes following the rise tide of mental health challenges students are fac-

ing today, stressing that Christianity is not a product or a package but a person.

"I'm encouraging faith-based schools to evaluate critically the resilience programmes that are being rolled out, to evaluate them critically, and to see in what way they need to be complemented or substituted by programmes that reflect that characteristic spirit of those schools," he said.

See Pages 31 & 33.

Priest praises Ballymurphy Massacre families at memorial

Chai Brady

Those guilty of the shooting of 10 innocent people in Ballymurphy showed "sneering contempt" and "lack of repentance" according to the parish priest at a memorial service.

Relatives and friends of the victims held a candlelit vigil in memory of their loved ones who were killed in West Belfast in 1971.

The Ballymurphy shootings occurred as the British army attempted to arrest IRA suspects after the Stormont administration introduced internment, imprisonment without trial.

At the Mass which was held on the first Sunday of Advent, Fr Paddy McCafferty told the victims' families that they have "stood firm" and patient while telling the truth.

"What is required now, as a matter of justice, is that their innocence be declared to the whole world; and the true nature, of what was perpetrated here in our parish by the Parachute Regiment, be unequivocally accepted, by the British Government, as an unjustified and unjustifiable murderous outrage," he said.

After telling the truth for 47 years, he said of the families, their desire is for their "innocent loved ones be vindicated as a matter justice and truth".

The inquest into the killings began on November 12 in Lagside Court.

This comes as an anonymous soldier, referred to as M3, this week gave evidence from behind a screen apologising to the family of one of the victims, Eddie Doherty (31).

The ex-Royal Engineer said: "I can't even begin to think how it affected them, horrendous."

"I just can't believe, I just can't understand how...for a mad 30 seconds to last a legacy like this."

Joy from the choir



Palestrina Choir members Simon Maughan, Oliver Maughan and Charles Vincent Nunala-Maloney help release the choir's latest CD *Joy to the World* featuring a selection of Christmas carols and choral music for the festive season. It was recorded in Dublin's Pro Cathedral. Photo: John McElroy

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A classic that misses the point of Christmas



Mary Kenny

It's now 175 years since Charles Dickens published his phenomenally successful *A Christmas Carol*, in 1843 – so successful that it has almost come to define modern Christmas. It has spawned endless editions and many and diverse movie versions, and its allusions have gone into the language: we all know what a 'Scrooge' is, and we all think him a mean-spirited killjoy for his catchphrase, "bah! Humbug!"

Dickens wrote four more Christmas books, but none ever reached the iconic status of *A Christmas Carol*, with its recognisable

characters of the poor but good Cratchit family with their disabled son, Tiny Tim, pitted against the horrible slave-driver Scrooge, who, when asked for charity replies that there are prisons and workhouses aplenty for those in need.

“Dickens recognised that *A Christmas Carol* was a form of propaganda”

Who could not cheer for the sweet-natured and amiable Cratchits against the dastardly – and of course lonely – Ebenezer Scrooge?



Dickens himself admitted that he had over-egged the morality of the tale – he even described it as a “sledgehammer”, driving home his message, which to

some extent, was a sermon against the Protestant work ethic which had traditionally frowned upon holiday merriment. (Some ultra-Protestant sects, such as the Plymouth Brethern, do not celebrate Christmas to this day, considering it more pagan than Christian.) Dickens recognised that *A Christmas Carol* was a form of propaganda: on the positive side, it was

propaganda for kindness and thought for others – “Many thousands are in want of common necessities, hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts”, as the reader is reminded.

Truthful

On the somewhat more questionable side, it was propaganda for easy sentimentality which is not really truthful; characters

like Scrooge seldom suddenly change overnight from nasty old misers to jovial philanthropists. But it is written so engagingly, with Dickens' genius for storytelling and charm, that it would take a heart of stone not to be impressed by it.

“For Christians, Christmas is essentially about the Nativity”

Still, while admiring *A Christmas Carol*, I retain an element of scepticism – not so much about the story itself, as about the way it has been manipulated over the past 175 years to create a phoney, slightly blackmailing approach to spending at Christmas.

Yes, we should all be kind and generous to those less fortunate, but Christmas is not just sentimental Victoriana: for Christians, it's essentially about the Nativity, and in Dickens' world, that aspect of Christmas scarcely ever appears.

A spurned opportunity to honour Eva

It was disappointing to learn that the Irish-born poet, Eva Gore-Booth, had been rejected for a “blue plaque” commemorating her life in England. Described as “an Edwardian trade unionist and suffragette”, Eva was deemed not famous enough by English Heritage, the body that makes these decisions.

In Ireland, Eva is of course very well known not just for her poetry, but as the sister of Constance Markievicz, who, on December 14, 1918, was the first woman to be elected to the House of Commons.

Eva, the younger sister, was a gentle, spiritual person, very committed to the cause of Christian socialism and to women's suffrage and equality, who lived for most of her adult life in Manchester with her companion Esther Roper. Yeats's wonderful poem

'In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markievicz' opens with those lovely lines recalling the sisters at Lissadell in Sligo: “The light of evening, Lissadell/Great windows open to the south/Two girls in silk kimonos/Both beautiful, one a gazelle.”

Monologue

Eva died in 1926, aged 56, to the desolation of her sister Constance. She is buried at St John's Church, Hampstead, North London, which has a noted graveyard, part of a heritage tour. I've written a monologue about Constance's letters to Eva, 'Dearest Old Darling', and when it was performed at the Irish Embassy in London last week (by Jeananne Crowley), the Vicar of Hampstead attended – almost on behalf of Eva.

There's a good biography

of Eva Gore-Booth, *An Image of Such Politics*, by Sonja Tiernan.

I heard it suggested that the rejection by English Heritage might have been anti-Irish, but I think it is more likely to be down to the cult of celebrity. Eva Gore-Booth doesn't have enough of the 'celeb' factor now.

Others who were very famous in their day were also turned down on the grounds that to the modern eye, they are now too obscure: the once-renowned Hollywood *matinée* idol Ronald Colman and the once-celebrated test cricketer Albert Trott were similarly rejected. Whereas Peter Cushing, the horror-movie star, and Mary Travers, who was the author of *Mary Poppins* and herself the subject of a movie, were accepted for blue plaque commemoration.

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Parishes can 'lead' on climate change as UN summit kicks off

Chai Brady

Parishes can be a "shining example" to the community if they become actively involved in tackling climate change, according to a parish pastoral worker for the Archdiocese of Dublin.

Speaking from the Czech Republic while on pilgrimage to Poland Jane Mellett said she believes the Church can be a "leading voice" on the issue of working towards a more sustainable world.

"There's the eco parish awards which is run by Eco Congregation Ireland and it's a fantastic way to be a shining example in a community if a parish receives an award like that. It's not an overly complicated thing to achieve," she said.

Ms Mellett is currently taking part in a 'Climate Pilgrimage' to Katowice. This is where the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United

Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change began on December 4.

The talks have been billed as the most important since the Paris climate change accord in 2015. Over the next two weeks, the aim is to make an end-of-year deadline for agreeing a rule book on how to enforce global action to limit further warming of the planet.

The pilgrimage was blessed by Pope Francis in the Vatican where it began on October 4 and is organised by the Global Catholic Climate Movement.

People from across the globe are talking part, with Ms Mellett saying hearing the first-hand experiences of people suffering the effects of climate change has been "transformative".

"One factor that we could engage more with is hearing these climate stories and really seeing the faces of the people who are deeply affected," said Ms Mellett.

"We talk a lot about climate justice, and from a justice perspective it's not a fair situation where the lifestyles of one part of the world are deeply affecting and causing the suffering of people in another part of the world."

Ireland was ranked second worst performing EU member in tackling climate change in summer 2018 by Europe's largest NGO climate change coalition, Climate Action Network.

In addition to engaging with the eco parish awards, reading the Pope's encyclical on the environment *Laudato Si'* can also give people a better understanding of the worsening issue Ms Mellett said.

She added: "They're two very simple things and I think once you start on an issue like this, it can snowball and more people in the community become involved, schools and local environmental groups."



Fr Bryan Shortall of Halston Street Parish blesses the Christmas stalls along Henry Street and Mary Street in Dublin on Monday. Photo: Karen Bowen

**WMOF
organisers
scared crowds
away from
Papal Mass –
Labour TD**

Staff reporter

Organisers of Pope Francis' visit to Ireland frightened people away from attending the papal Mass in Dublin's Phoenix Park, according to former Tánaiste Joan Burton.

Speaking at an Oireachtas committee the Labour TD said organisers "scared most older people in Ireland into thinking that they could not do a two-mile walk".

"Those in charge of health and safety went overboard. People in wheelchairs were not allowed on the main avenue. Buses, which could have picked up many participants, were not allowed on the main avenue," she said.

Asking whether Church organisers were responsible for this, she was also highly critical of ticket arrangements which divided up family groups.

"For many, these destroyed the visit because where a family booked four tickets, they got one ticket for one gate, a ticket for another gate and a further ticket for yet another gate," she said.

Around 150,000 people are believed to have attended the Mass, despite organisers planning for 500,000.

Dublin diocese out of loop on maternity hospital plans

» Continued from Page 1

Under canon law, Irish religious bodies need permission from the local bishop when disposing of assets worth over €348,460. Permission is needed from the Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life when assets being disposed of are valued at more than €3,484,595. The congregation would typically not approve of such disposals without at least receiving

confirmation from the local bishop that he does not object to the religious body's plan.

Statement

The sisters issued a statement in May 2017 stating that they were ending involvement in the St Vincent's Healthcare Group and would neither own nor manage the new maternity hospital to be built on the grounds of St Vincent's Hospital in south Dublin, with Sr Mary Christian, the sisters' Congregational Leader, saying

the proposal was "subject to implementation of all necessary legal, financial and regulatory matters".

Although 18 months have passed since the statement's publication, *The Irish Catholic* understands the sisters have not contacted the Archdiocese of Dublin about the matter, with a diocesan spokesperson having previously told this paper that in matters such as this "canonical requirements are examined only when due process is underway and

they cannot be determined in advance".

Obligations

One canon lawyer, speaking on condition of anonymity, raised the question of whether the sisters had even considered their obligations under Church law when proposing to dispose of the healthcare group, instead seeking only the advice of civil lawyers.

"My experience with civil lawyers is that they don't

really understand or even think of canon law," he said, explaining that the sisters have a duty to go through the proper channels.

"It's very much on the nuns – it's their property, so it's up to them to go through the correct canonical process to alienate," he continued.

"If it goes to Rome, and is not allowed to happen for immoral purposes, the whole thing could come down on them like a tonne of bricks."

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Team ministry should give parishes best of both worlds

Greg Daly

A new model of 'team ministry' across parishes will allow parishes to pool talents while keeping their own distinct identities, according to Limerick's Bishop Brendan Leahy.

In a pastoral letter last weekend, Dr Leahy mapped out a plan to arrange the Diocese of Limerick's parishes into 'pastoral units', groups of parishes served by teams of priests. These teams will include parish priests and a 'co-parish priest' who will move around the unit, with each unit having one pastoral council and one baptismal team.

"The pastoral units model is a way of recognising the value of the local parish but also encouraging co-operation with neighbouring parishes," Dr Leahy told *The Irish Catholic*.

Pointing out that "local identity is always important", Dr Leahy stressed the need to prepare for a time in the future when numbers in each local parish will be lower.

"It will be to the benefit of all that parishes can start pooling talents, ideas and initiatives," he said. "What one parish might not be able to do on its own, it might be better helped when working with others."

Citing how initiatives for families, young people, or parents who want their children baptised might be better done across pastoral units rather than purely on a parish-by-parish basis, he stressed that these plans are not simply administrative proposals.

Arrangements

"The structural side of the new arrangements will have to be accompanied by renewal also on the spiritual, intentional and missionary dimensions of our faith. Structural changes on their own are never sufficient," he said, adding that prayer to the Holy Spirit would be necessary not merely for the sake of pastoral units and their teams, but also to prompt a heightened sense of spirituality and faith experience among the people

within the units.

The new team ministry approach was originally flagged during the 2016 Limerick Diocesan Synod, and while Dr Leahy says it has been necessitated by declining numbers of clergy, he emphasised in a statement that this is in line with a global realisation that collaboration is profoundly necessary.

Citing how Pope Francis speaks of a need for a more synodal Church, he said: "We journey to God together. We need to promote arrangements that encourage greater co-operation and exchange between parishes."

High praise for Galway author on *Late Late Toy Show*

Ryan Tubridy, always a huge advocate for reading and someone with a great love of Irish books, gave high praise to *Mythical Irish Beasts* on the *Late Late Toy Show* on Friday night.

Published by Currach Press, the book explores the mysterious and fantastical creatures of Ireland's mythology. Mr Tubridy presented the book in the ever-popular Book Corner of the show, and said: "All the way from beautiful Connemara...the reason I love this so much is because it is so very Irish but it also taught me so much about creatures I had not been familiar with and the illustrations are absolutely gorgeous, and we are big fans of buying Irish and supporting our own."

Going beyond the realms of just the most famous folklore, such as leprechauns, the author Mark Joyce dives into local myths and legends, uncovering fantastic creatures and enchanted beasts from all over the country.

A gift for the Pope



Ennis parish priest Fr Tom Ryan (left) presents Pope Francis with an advance copy of *Go Make Disciples of All Nations*, which chronicles the stories of priests and religious from the parish of Ennis who offered their lives in the service of the Gospel. Fr Tom was accompanied by Msgr Seamus Horgan in the Vatican on Sunday. The book will be launched on December 6 by Bishop Fintan Monahan in the Ennis Parish Centre.

Veritas closures 'purely strategic'

Staff reporter

The decision by the publishing wing of the Irish Church to close three retail outlets by the end of next month is a strategic move coming against the background of a positive year, the company's director has said.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Veritas Director Aidan Chester said the decision to close the shops in Sligo, Monaghan and Naas was "a purely strategic decision".

Describing the last year as

"another very, very positive year for Veritas", in which online trade has increased by 52%, Mr Chester said that the three shops being closed are small ones in areas where business is not high.

"We're investing in our online business which has seen huge growth this year," he reiterated, adding "the rest of the business has been very, very positive as well".

The decision comes against the background of Veritas returning to profitability in 2016 after several years of serious losses and an inability

to pay long-term debts without the support of the Bishops' Conference. Although 2016's profit of just €15,801 was tiny when compared to that year's more than €6 million turnover, it nonetheless marked a serious improvement in the company's fortunes.

The Companies Registration Office (CRO) had not released Veritas' 2017 accounts at the time of going to press, but Veritas assured *The Irish Catholic* that the accounts have been suitably filed with the CRO.

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Tales that are as old as time



Today's PC versions of fairy tales may date very quickly, writes **David Quinn**

It's Christmas and so that means its panto season. Thousands of parents up and down the country will bring their children to a version of timeless, classical fairy tales like *Snow White* at the Tivoli Theatre.

But wait, are they timeless and are they classical, or are they really deeply harmful stories which for generations have



been brainwashing girls into seeing themselves as passive victims of circumstance waiting for some Prince Charming to rescue them, marry them and 'live happily ever after'?

This view of fairy tales is now taking hold and that

is why we are now seeing a reworking of them in a more feminist image. Therefore, in the version of *Snow White* at the Tivoli, it is Snow White who proposes to the handsome prince, not the other way around.

The *Sunday Times* reports

that in *Aladdin* at the Cork Opera House, Jasmine laughs at Aladdin when he first proposes to her and says she can rescue herself.

At the Helix, Will Scarlett is no longer part of Robin Hood's band of merry men. He has been replaced by the warrior woman, Scarlett.

Meanwhile, the Gaiety is showing the *Snow Queen* and the unicorn is neither male nor female, but 'gender-fluid'.

Defending the new version of Jasmine, Siobhan Howe of the Cork Opera House told the *Sunday Times*: "We are quite aware of the responsibilities we have, with 60,000 people coming to see our panto, and how we can influence young children. This year we have decided to go more feminist than frills when casting our female lead Jasmine."

Well, that's great, but doesn't Siobhan think parents are already aware of the responsibilities they have when bringing their children to see a classic like *Aladdin*, or for that matter *Snow White* or *Cinderella* or *Sleeping Beauty*?

Haven't they already thought about the elements of these stories and know perfectly well what they are getting themselves into?

Central character

When you think about it, the central character in many fairy tales is female. The male characters are often peripheral and undeveloped. In *Cinderella*, her father is dead and the prince she eventually marries appears only fleetingly.

In *Snow White*, the two main characters are female – Snow White herself and the witch – and the prince does not appear until the end.

In *Sleeping Beauty*, again the prince does not appear until the end.

In each case admittedly, the prince plays a rescue role but in a way the men are marginal characters in many of the classical fairy tales. Without the rescue role they would often have no role at all, not even as villains.

In other words, fairy-tales are dominated either by female characters or by children. Think of the more minor ones (in the sense of being shorter and simpler) like *Goldilocks* and the *Three Bears* or *Little Red Riding Hood* or *Hansel and Gretel*; these involve children, and three out of the four main characters in the stories just mentioned are girls.

“Will modern versions of fairy tales still be told in 100 years-time, 200 years?”

What fairy tales deal with to some extent is the vulnerability of women and children compared with men because men are physically stronger than either women or children. Children need protecting from danger in fairy tales, and so do women. The world is full of evil things that wish you harm. The evil forces at work in fairy tales are often very great. In *Sleeping Beauty*, the evil queen transforms into a dragon that the prince must risk his life to defeat.

Feminists argue that the role of the heroine in fairy tales is passive, but the role of the men is simply to rescue the damsel in distress. The men, to some extent, are the servants of the women. They risk all for them and then they complete each

other in marriage.

If you remove these core elements from fairy tales have you actually made them unrecognisable? What is the role of the man in these new versions? He is not the central character in many of the original versions, and if he has no role in dealing with physical danger in the new versions, or a greatly reduced one, he is rendered obsolete in almost every way. What does that tell boys?

“What deep well of human nature do they tap into? Remember, a story will never be enduring unless it does this”

The producers of these new, feminist pantos need to ask themselves why these fairy tales are popular in the first place. Why have they appealed to generation upon generation of children (and adults)? What deep well of human nature do they tap into?

Remember, a story will never be enduring unless it does this. It must appeal to something deep inside of us. Feminists find it extremely troubling that stories consisting of women being targeted by evil and ultimately being rescued by a man of action who appears at the last moment are so popular.

Fairy tales seem to appeal especially to little girls and the same kind of fairy tales appear again and again across cultures and time. Little girls love the idea of being princesses which is why, incidentally, royal weddings are so popular and almost all public attention is focussed on the bride, not the groom.

Feminists may wish this was not true, but it is. As people like the psychoanalyst Carl Jung made clear, fairy tales are archetypal, meaning they conform in a deep, subconscious way to human nature.

Will modern versions of fairy tales still be told in 100 years-time, 200 years? Doubtful. But what might happen is that no fairy tales at all get told because the revised ones will have ripped the heart and soul out of the existing ones, negating them and consigning them to a memory hole, and perhaps that is exactly what some of their critics seek.

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The eventual successor to Archbishop Diarmuid Martin faces many immediate challenges writes **Michael Kelly**

In an era of flourishing faith, plentiful vocations and widespread esteem for the Church, being a bishop in Ireland was an attractive prospect for any ambitious cleric. It used to be said that when a priest was elevated to the Episcopate two things would happen: he would never eat another bad meal again and he'd never again be told the truth.

Fast forward to 2018 and now the gallows humour in clerical circles holds that anyone who wants to become a bishop deserves it. At a time when respect for the Church is not what it was and vocations are as rare as hens' teeth, the Pope's man in Dublin, Papal Nuncio Archbishop Jude Okolo, has his work cut out to select the men that will lead the Church in the capital in the next decades.

If it were ever the case that bishops in bygone eras were shielded from the truth, they certainly aren't now. One of the most pressing tasks facing any new bishop is meeting seemingly endless pastoral commitments with fewer and fewer priests.

While Achonry, Clonfert, Clogher, Dromore and Cork & Ross are awaiting new bishops, eyes are increasingly focused on succession in the sprawling Archdiocese of Dublin.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin's hint, even before the World Meeting of Families, that he may well step down before he is due to in April 2020 has turned attention towards his potential successor. The Papal visit – interpreted by many as an underwhelming experience – has shone a light on the

Church in Dublin and the depth of the crisis.

It's a challenging diocese. Dr Martin has been criticised

by some for being too pessimistic. People mightn't like that he frequently references the fact that Mass attendance in some parishes is as low as 2%, but he's not making the figure up. The numeric challenges facing his successor are real. While attendance in middle-class areas is relatively stable, it has collapsed in many working-class communities.

Indications

Some years ago, the Dublin Council of Priests sponsored a survey by an independent firm of actuaries, based on current statistical information, that looked at numbers of priests and at indications about the size of future congregations in the year 2030.

The best-case scenario predicted a decline in priest numbers of 61%, from 369 priests down to 144 in 2030, provided religious orders maintain their current level of commitment in parishes in the diocese.

If religious orders were to relinquish the parishes they currently serve, due to the age profile of their own priests, the drop by 2030 would be 70% leaving just 111 priests carrying out parish ministry across Dublin's 199 parishes. Almost 60% of the priests currently serving in Dublin are over 60 years of age and this is projected to increase to 75% by 2030; the findings predict that just one new priest under the age of 40 will join the priesthood in Dublin every year up to 2030.

Other research findings include a predicted drop in Mass attendances in Dublin by 33% by 2030.

Despite this, Archbishop Martin – who is notoriously prickly and thin-skinned about criticism – has not moved to take any radical action across the diocese. He has stretched priests thinner, appointing many to serve multiple parishes. He has also appointed lay pastoral workers with varying degrees of success. The permanent diaconate is growing as a ministry, but a lot of priests are sceptical.

In terms of the future of the diocese, there is little consensus amongst the priests except that a change would be no bad thing. Most Dublin priests are fair to Archbishop Martin when asked. They generally extol his virtues including the fact that he is widely-liked by parishioners

and the fact that his decisive handling of clerical sexual abuse has gone some way to restore credibility in the Church.

“Almost 60% of the priests currently serving in Dublin are over 60 years of age”

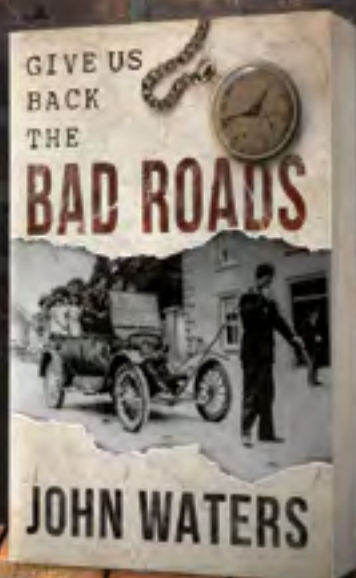
But, they also speak of feeling unsupported, of a sense that the archbishop is not as available to them as they think he should be. Some priests speak of letters about important subjects going unanswered. Others grumble about a lack of appetite about making tough decisions. Overall, with a few exceptions, there is a sense that there is somewhat of a chasm

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Pope Francis prays in front of a candle in memory of victims of sexual abuse during his visit to St Mary's Pro-Cathedral in Dublin in August.



between Dr Martin and the priests of the archdiocese.

So, what of potential successors? The nuncio is charged with preparing a list of three candidates for Pope

Francis. Sources believe that the powerful head of the Vatican's Congregation for Bishops Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet will have a huge say in the succession. He knows Dublin from his role as Papal legate to the 2012 Eucharistic Congress.

* * * * *

The first name that invariably comes to mind amongst priests is the Rome-based Bishop Paul Tighe. A priest of Dublin, the 60-year old has been in the eternal city for more than a decade serving in the Roman Curia. Before being sent to Rome in 2007, he served as Director of Public Affairs for Dr Martin and is a close confidant of the archbishop's.

Bishop Tighe is seen as a competent administrator whose vision of the Church would be seen as in the same mould as Diarmuid Martin's.

He would be seen as an accommodationist rather than confrontational in his approach to the Church's role in the public sphere. His first pastoral appointment was to the Dublin suburb of Ballyfermot and he later taught moral theology at the now defunct Mater Dei Institute of Education. Contemporaries and former students describe him as approachable and friendly. Though, one former colleague questioned whether he had



Bishop Paul Tighe (right) is seen as a competent administrator.

the breadth of vision the diocese needs.

Currently secretary of the Pontifical Council for Culture, Bishop Tighe would be seen as Archbishop Martin's chosen successor and knows the diocese inside out.

Another name that comes up is that of Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy. A native of Dublin, 58-year-old Dr Leahy is a qualified barrister and known for his association with the Focolare lay movement.

He has been Bishop of Limerick since 2013 where locals say he has excelled at pastoral outreach. He is credited with a collaborative style of lead-

ership and won praise for his initiatives to involve more laypeople in the running of the Church.

He pioneered a diocesan synod in Limerick and has faced challenges like the declining number of clergy head on. He has just launched a new programme based on team ministry where priests will work in pastoral units where teams of clergy will minister in each unit but existing parish identity will be preserved.

Interventions

Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin is another former Dublin priest who is spoken about by

some clergy. His high-profile interventions in referenda on same-sex marriage and abortion were in stark contrast to Dr Martin's more reserved style.

He is pastoral and approachable and combines a keen intellect with humility.

His outspoken nature might rule him out for Dublin. One priest friend describes Dr Doran as "not lacking courage, but perhaps lacking caution".

But, then again, caution is not exactly a Christian virtue.

The next Archbishop of Dublin will have to articulate a vision of the Church that will lift priestly morale

Some priests who spoke to *The Irish Catholic* speak well of Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin. He is seen as a pastoral bishop who is not afraid to get his hands dirty – what Pope Francis might describe as having "the smell of the sheep". Fifty-five-year-old Dr Nulty has served as a member of the bishops' conference for over five years now and is regarded as a good leader. He has moved to include parishioners more in the decision-making process in Kildare and Leighlin and recently announced plans for

a new diocesan-wide pastoral council.

Another name in the mix is Capuchin provincial Fr Adrian Curran. Some priests who spoke to *The Irish Catholic* believe the appointment of someone like Fr Curran, a priest not of the diocese but serving in Dublin, could bring much-needed perspective to the task of leading Dublin in the future. Fr Curran is well-respected both within his Capuchin order and in wider Church circles. At a time when homelessness is on the rise in the capital, his order is amongst the most well-known when it comes to the Church's social action.

Whoever Pope Francis appoints to Dublin will have an immediate job of work to reorganise the diocese to cope with the declining number of priests.

He will also have the job of selling off a lot of the Church's infrastructure. He will have assistance in this given the fact that Dr Martin has recently invested in training priests to deal with what Church law describes as the alienation of temporal goods.

Above all, the next Archbishop of Dublin will have to articulate a vision of the Church that will lift priestly morale and excite jaded congregations anew about the joy of the Gospel.

The Man Beneath the Bridge: A Merchants Quay Ireland Christmas Story

In the hearts of us all at Christmastime, there lives a dream... to lift another up. To give a little of ourselves, for all this life has given us. But what could the young lad with nothing and nobody give to the man beneath the bridge.



He shifted his weight from one foot to the other, nervously. It was the evening meal service at Merchants Quay Ireland (MQI) and demand among our homeless and hungry, especially during the dark months of winter, is high. Countless holes dotted his jacket – he seemed so young.

My friend in need

At last he summoned the courage to speak. "I know I've had my meal for the evening, but please could I bring an extra sandwich to my friend beneath the bridge? It's been so cold and he's terrified to leave for fear that he might lose his place." This is the hidden world of Ireland's homeless and hungry, the men and women you see asleep on the pavement and in doorways and under bridges, who turn to MQI for help and hope

and who – as impossible as it seems – still find a way to lift one another up when they can... sometimes, literally.

Christmas grace

It is half seven on a frigid morning. A moment of grace. Two men, shaking with cold themselves, carry another through MQI's door. They tell us the man has spent the night in a doorway because, as is so often the case, there was no room left at the hostel.

As a prank someone coming out of a bar had stolen his shoes. His feet are bare and purple. He has fallen unconscious from the cold... and yet, these homeless men have found him – carried him here.

At Merchants Quay, since it was founded more than 40 years ago by two Franciscan friars, and thanks to the generous support of caring people across Ireland, those who are at their most vulnerable

can come in for a hot meal and a helping hand.

Tender mercies

If you can picture living even one day at Christmas, in the dead of winter, exposed to the elements for twenty four hours, you begin to get a sense of the tender mercies that even the humblest donations to Merchants Quay Ireland provide.

Mary, one of the staff at MQI's Riverbank homeless centre, paints a vivid scene:

"I've often had to take two hot eggs out of the kitchen and place them in their hands just to get the heat into them. They aren't even able to hold a cup from shaking..."

They're just out there on the street – sleeping in doorways, on the pavement. It's terribly sad to see anybody like that, with no spare socks or underwear, no thermals or boots."

Hope in the wee hours

The support of everyday people across Ireland means that MQI is able to open earlier – and later – than any other service. They are precious hours indeed for men and women who face life on the streets.

Brenda, who managed the Night Café when it first opened 3 years ago, explains. "I wish everyone could see what it's like when we are packed to the rafters, people grateful and chatting over cups of tea, who without the help of our supporters might have been shivering and alone in a doorway, exposed to the elements. That coldness just strikes me, sleeping on frozen pavement. It is heartbreaking."

800 year old ethos

The grace and generosity of the Irish people has always been woven into the fabric of



MQI's work says pastoral carer Br. Phillip, it's part of an 800 year old Franciscan ethos still felt at Merchants Quay Ireland today – that no one would ever be turned away.

Beneath the bridge

The young lad who stood before MQI staff that winter evening wasn't judged... or shamed... or shunned. Instead he was welcomed. He left that winter evening with an extra sandwich for his friend beneath the bridge – a blessing to share, gently cradled in the pocket of a warm, second-hand winter jacket that someone had donated.

The simplest gifts

Yes, it seems an impossible thing that in this day and age a gift of five or ten or twenty euro could still do intimately touch the life of another. Or a donated jacket, clean and warm.

Yet at Merchants Quay Ireland it is these gifts that matter most. A bit of hope – a jacket, clean and warm – a donation to provide an extra sandwich. In the end these gifts, each in their own way, hold all that is good and right and glorious about Christmas...

... And from all of us at MQI, we thank you for being part of it.

Your insert describes how MQI staff and volunteers do whatever it takes to move clients from the streets into long-term housing. To help this lifesaving, life-changing work, please donate whatever you can to MQI today by using the insert response or online at www.mqi.ie/Christmas or by phone at 01-5240139.

We need a law that protects doctors

Hundreds of general practitioners from all over the country attended an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) held by the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) in Malahide at the weekend.

They were hoping to have an open discussion regarding the abortion services that Minister for Health Simon Harris has insisted will be GP-led and rolled out on January 1. However, only half an hour into the meeting over 100 GPs stood up and left as they were not allowed to suspend the agenda and have a vote on the motions that 650 GPs had signed in a petition to the ICGP less than six weeks ago.

Electronic

The signatures were electronic, so were not deemed valid by the college. Hand-written signatures were required, they insisted.

One of these motions included asking the ICGP to protect doctors full freedom of conscience by not being obliged to refer a pregnant woman on to a colleague if he or she did not want to provide the abortion service.

This is the big problem with the termination of pregnancy legislation as it stands. For the sake of so many GPs who don't want

Freedom of conscience is a human right and should not be thwarted by any government or body, writes **Dr Aisling Bastible**



any part in providing this service, a service for various reasons they disagree with having in general practice, one of which includes conscientious objection, this legislation needs to be amended by Minister Harris.

The next step is to call for another EGM meeting, with 650 hand-written GP signatures this time, and propose these motions. These are primarily to keep abortion provision in a community setting outside of general practice;

to have an 'opt-in' service for those GPs that do want to provide the service; for those doctors that don't 'opt-in', that the ICGP agree to protect them by not being prevented in advancing their careers or training; for full freedom of conscience to be respected (including transfer of care) and for a 24 hour helpline to be established with non-directive counselling for pregnant women and not merely signalling to other providers.

These motions, can and will be

“One of these motions included asking the ICGP to protect doctors full freedom of conscience by not being obliged to refer a pregnant woman on to a colleague if he or she did not want to provide the abortion service”



discussed and voted on by doctors, at the next EGM meeting in an open and democratic fashion.

This, I believe, is the way forward. January is only around the corner so doctors need full freedom of conscience enshrined in law to protect them from being subject to 'the law of the land', and therefore to be able to continue to practice and care for their patients with care and compassion as they

always strive to do.

Freedom of conscience is a human right and should not be thwarted by any government or body.

This is particularly significant when it applies to protection of the unborn and the doctors who care for them and their mothers.

i Dr Aisling Bastible is a general practitioner.

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Pro-life advocate is driven by deep Faith and personal experience, writes Martin O'Brien

When Pope Francis came to Dublin for the World Meeting of Families, Tracy Harkin, the articulate and indefatigable spokesperson for Iona Institute NI was a key figure in the EWTN Ireland team covering the event for a global Catholic television audience of numerous millions in every continent.

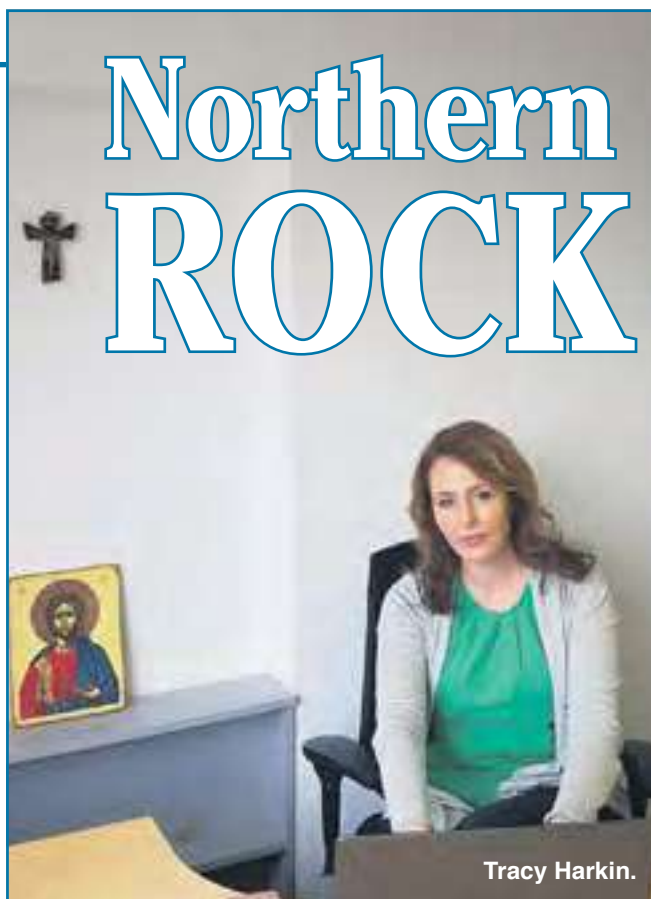
Since her appointment as inaugural spokesperson for the Iona Institute in Northern Ireland on its establishment in March 2017, Mrs Harkin, (née Brennan) a 45-year-old mother of eight who hails from near Newcastle in Co. Down, has established herself as a gifted advocate in the Northern media for both the Christian understanding of marriage and the pro-life cause.

During the referendum campaign Mrs Harkin was a regular correspondent for EWTN's *News Nightly* programme and in broadcasts since has explained how "the battle for life", as she has put it, has moved to the North given the impetus the referendum result has given those advocating abortion rights there.

Students

A graduate in sociology and social policy, married to Tom whom she met when they were students together at Queen's University, Belfast, she was gutted by the decisive vote to remove all constitutional protection for the unborn baby.

The result was all the harder for her to bear as her fifth child, the 11-year-old Kathleen Rose, was diagnosed shortly after birth with Trisomy 13, also known as Patau syndrome, a rare condition that causes mental and physical disability. The Harkins were told Kathleen Rose would not survive for more than a year, and so returned to Ireland from Seattle, where Tom worked as an engineer



Tracy Harkin.

with Boeing, so their daughter could die at home.

Mrs Harkin recalls her doctors assuming she and her husband would not wish to have any more children, but thinking "you are wrong".

"It is heart-breaking that a country like Ireland...voted for the removal of constitutional protection from the unborn"

She says "great healing" has come from God's gift of three further children and as a strong advocate of natural family planning, believes the communication it brings between spouses promotes growth in the relationship.

"Kathleen Rose has utterly turned our lives around," she adds. "Although she is in fragile health, and we take each day as it comes, she is a very happy child, a pure soul in our home, a little saint incapable of any sin, who is very affectionate, loves cuddling while being unable to communicate verbally."

She's written of how Kathleen Rose has taught her much about what's truly important, but that it saddens her to think of how for some legislators and campaigners, children like Kathleen Rose have less of a right to life than children without a disability.

"It is heart-breaking that a country like Ireland, knowing full well the awful consequences that abortion has had in other countries, voted for the removal of constitutional protection from the unborn," she says.

"The scenes of jubilation at Dublin Castle following the vote and in particular the images of [Sinn Féin lead-

ers] Mary Lou McDonald and [Michelle] O'Neill holding 'the North is next' placard will, I believe, remain etched in the minds of most ordinary Irish people as a most shameful moment in Irish history".

She is also critical of the SDLP and its leader, Colm Eastwood, in relation to both abortion and same-sex marriage, observing that the SDLP may claim to be "pro-life" following a special party conference in May that decided to give public representatives a free vote on all abortion-related issues, this is a hollow claim given Eastwood's support for the repeal of the Eighth Amendment.

"The SDLP can't say they are pro-life with Colum Eastwood coming out for a 'Yes' vote because what will result from that vote is, by any stretch of the imagination, a very liberal abortion regime. Mr Eastwood cannot pretend the resulting legislation will just cover the 'hard cases'."

She adds that the SDLP came out in support of same-sex marriage without a proper debate within the party and says that nowadays "nationalists who are very pro-life and very pro-marriage have no nationalist party to vote for".

She accepts that the referendum result "gives added momentum to the already loud and increasingly extreme pro-choice lobby in Northern Ireland".

"My hope is that democracy will be respected, that Stormont gets up and running again and that locally-elected politicians here will continue to resist attempts to liberalise our laws."

Her Faith, meanwhile, has long driven her.

She was around 15 years old, in the late 1980s, when she joined a teenage prayer group at Tobar Mhuire, the Crossgar Passionist centre

and "got a beautiful shock, I hadn't experienced before, a sense of God, while reading the Scriptures before a Taizé Cross".

There followed "a pivotal moment" when she was taken on pilgrimage to the grotto at Ballinspittle, Co. Cork, of "moving statue" fame.

"It sounds so ridiculous, I saw the statue move, and that beautiful feeling of overwhelming peace. I remember feeling no fear, an overwhelming beautiful feeling that God was there."

She dismisses any suggestion it was a figment of her imagination and says others with her also had "phenomenal experiences".

More significant for her family were several subsequent pilgrimages to the grotto at Mount Melleray, in Co. Waterford, where Our Lady is said to have appeared over nine days in August 1985, and where her own mother "had a profound experience" which led to "a wider conversion experience within our family circle".

"What was really important was not what people were seeing but what they were feeling in their heart,

and that was an overwhelming feeling of God's love and His mercy, an overwhelming outpouring of grace," she says.

In her own life she has been inspired by Matthew Kelly, the Australian author, speaker and founder of Dynamic Catholic, who stayed at her family home on an Irish tour while they were both about 20.

"I saw the statue move, and that beautiful feeling of overwhelming peace. I remember feeling no fear"

"I was struck by his giftedness as a speaker and his courage and humility in sharing his testimony of conversion at such a young age. We stayed in contact for a while and then lost touch," she says.

For many years Tracy, as an ordinary Catholic, felt too few lay Catholics were publicly explaining the Faith, and so applied for Catholic Voices training in 2015.

Bearing in mind her ongoing experience of Kathleen

Rose, she felt particularly motivated to speak up for unborn babies with so-called fatal foetal abnormalities, and contacted the pro-life group, Every Life Counts, cutting her media teeth through appearances on *Morning Ireland* and *Prime Time*.

An admirer of David Quinn's Iona Institute work, she asked if there was an Iona branch in the North and ended up being invited to help set it up and become its first spokesperson.

"At Iona NI we will continue to engage pro-actively in media and other forums, undertaking and sharing research and advocating for laws that uphold marriage and the wellbeing, health and dignity of both mother and baby even in the most difficult of circumstances," she says.

Tracy Harkin, a woman whose sense of inner peace is palpable, and who never takes herself too seriously, relishes her work, and is clearly sustained in it by her Faith.

"God is very close, He is a real living person I can chat away with," she says.



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Out&About

40-year celebration in Roscrea



TIPPERARY: Brendan and Cronan Pastoral Area choirs celebrate 40 years in Roscrea last week.



DUBLIN: Bishop Eamon Walsh is pictured with some members of his Pastoral Area team for their annual autumn gathering in Tallaght. During the meeting four workshops took place. Photo: John McElroy



MONAGHAN: Canon Philip Connolly, PE Doohamlet, the oldest priest in Clogher Diocese, celebrates his 90th birthday at which he was described as “an inspiration and a counter-cultural role model”.

IN SHORT

Oldest Clogher priest celebrates 90th

The oldest priest in the Diocese of Clogher, Canon Philip Connolly, PE, Doohamlet, celebrated his 90th birthday at the end of November.

Diocesan administrator Msgr Joseph McGuinness described Canon Connolly as “an inspiration and a counter-cultural role model” for today’s world, a world in which many paint the life of priests in such negative terms.

Msgr McGuinness said Canon Connolly was worthy of admiration and deserved all the love and support that the people of Clontibret parish – and the Doohamlet community in particular – give to him.

His positive outlook, his prayer-filled life of closeness to Christ, his deep knowledge and love for all the people is a great example of what the priesthood is about he said.

Canon Connolly celebrated his birthday with people from the Parish of Clontibret, the community of Doohamlet in particular, joined with his family, Msgr McGuinness and many priests of the diocese. They paid tribute to his 63 years of ministry and service

to communities in Monaghan, Fermanagh and Tyrone.

Born in the Parish of Latton in 1928, Canon Connolly was ordained in Maynooth in June 1955. He served in nine parishes across the diocese over his 63 years of ministry: Garrison 1955-58, Mulleek 1958-62; Castleblayney 1962-64; Doohamlet 1964-66; Clones 1966-67; Clogher 1967-69, Tydavnet 1969-1984 and as PP of Clontibret 1984-2004 and PE Clontibret (resident in Doohamlet) since 2004.

Muckno parish welcomes new PP

The people of Muckno parish celebrated their new Parish Priest Canon Shane McCaughey who was installed in the role by the Diocesan Administrator of Clogher, Msgr Joseph McGuinness, in St Mary’s church, which was packed to capacity.

Canon McCaughey is a native of Trillick, Co. Tyrone and members of his family were present in Castleblayney for the event. Canon McCaughey was ordained to the priesthood in 1989 and has served in the parishes of Donagh, Tydavnet and Aughnacullen East. He has also been President of St Macartan’s

College since 1993 and has assumed the role of Diocesan Secretary and Chancellor since the retirement of Bishop Liam MacDaid in 2016. In addition to his responsibilities in the Parish of Muckno and at diocesan level, he is also the administrator of the parish of Aughnacullen East.

At the Mass Msgr McGuinness commended the “selfless and generous service” that Canon McCaughey has given in other parishes and to the diocese. He said that both Canon McCaughey and Fr Stephen Duffy, the other new priest in the parish, were blessed by the welcome they received in Muckno. He was confident that Canon Shane would be a model of Jesus Christ, “the faithful shepherd, knowing his people, guarding them and providing for all their pastoral and sacramental needs”.

At the end of the Mass, Msgr McGuinness announced that Pope Francis has bestowed the Papal Medal ‘Benemerenti’ on the Parish Sacristan and local man, Michael Murphy, in recognition of more than 30 years distinguished service to the parish and to the wider Church. The medal will be presented to him by Msgr McGuinness at the 6pm Vigil Mass on Saturday, December 1 in St Mary’s Church, Castleblayney. Michael will be the

second person in the long history of the Parish of Muckno to have received such an award.

Launch of new Mass setting Mass of the Presentation of Mary

A new Mass setting, Mass of the Presentation of Mary, composed by Marie Dunne was launched in mid-November in the Church of Christ the King, Turner’s Cross, Cork. Last year Marie was commissioned by the Presentation Brothers to compose the Mass for their General Chapter in Rome. This was the first public occasion for the Mass to be sung in Ireland.

Along with Brother Francis Agoah, Congregational Leaders and the community of Presentation Brothers present on the day were school staff, parents, friends and included the Lord Mayor of Cork, Mr Mick Finn. The music for the Mass was sung by a combined choir from the Presentation Brothers’ Schools. Boys and girls from up to eight schools participated in this special liturgy. Katie O’Flaherty, guest soloist, sang ‘Mary Temple of the Lord’ also composed by Marie as part of this special Mass setting.

Edited by Chai Brady
chai@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



KERRY: Parishioners visit and pray at the statue of Christ in Christ the King Park in Ballymullen, Tralee.



MONAGHAN: Canon Shane McCaughey is pictured with family and priests at his installation as parish priest in St Mary's Church in Castleblayney.



TYRONE: Highland Radio's Pío McCann with Ann and Michael Kelly enjoy the recent Christmas tree lighting ceremony in Omagh. Photo: Pat McSorley



WICKLOW: John Welsby (Chair, PPC), Donal Harrington, Fr Bernard Kennedy (PP), Sally Phalan (PPC), Kathleen Manning (PPC) and Lisa O'Connell attend the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish assembly in the Summerhill Hotel, Enniskerry. The Assembly was facilitated by Donal Harrington, Diocesan Coordinator of Catechetical Formation, who guided the group through a process of reflection.



DUBLIN: Parishioners from Rathfarnham parish funeral ministry team meet for a training and planning session at the Church of the Annunciation.



ANTRIM: Bishop Noel Treanor of the Diocese of Down and Connor is presented with *Silent Night Holy Night, 200 years of a Catholic Church in Antrim* by Brendan Smith, sacristan, along with Fr Sean Emerson PP and Fr James O'Reilly CC at St Comgall's Church.

ARMAGH

An evening of Advent Meditation in music, prose, poetry and prayer will take place in The Market Place Theatre on Tuesday December 11 at 7.30pm. The question is: 'How do we live for the Kingdom in a time of turmoil and how do we get our priorities right?' Prof. Francis Campbell will join reflection. Free event but please contact the Market Place Box Office for tickets on 028 37521821.

CLARE

Youth 2000 prayer meeting every Friday at 7pm in the Poor Clare's Oratory, Ennis. Join other young adults for prayer and reflection followed by tea and chats in the Friary.

Mothers' Prayers in Cloughleigh Church every Tuesday evening from 7-7.45pm. During Mothers' Prayers there is prayer for children and all who need prayers. New members are always welcome. Info contact Noreen at 085 1530051.

St Columba's Church of Ireland, Ennis: Festival of Christmas Trees. Display of themed trees dressed by various groups, schools, individuals and more takes place from December 14-16 and December 21-23 from 11am-6pm. Programme of carols and concerts. Admission free.

CORK

Medjugorje prayer meeting in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament every Wednesday night at 8pm in Holy Trinity Church, Fr Matthew Quay. Prayers for healing are on the first Wednesday of every month.

DERRY

Dungiven Parish: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Monday to Friday, 8am-noon and 3-9pm.

DUBLIN

Adoration Hour of prayers for healing and individual blessings in St Laurence O'Toole Church, North Wall parish (www.north-wallparish.ie). Monday nights at 8pm until December 17. In the presence of the Blessed Sacrament there will be reflective music, prayers, and silence.

Life to the Full (Jn 10: 10) Book Club on Thursdays in St Paul's Church, Arran Quay 7-8.30pm. Join other 20-30-year-olds to meditate, share and discuss life, faith, purpose and how to live life to the full. Info: st.pauls@dublindiocese.ie or www.facebook.com/lifetothefull-bookclub

Our Lady of Knock prayer meetings take place on the last Thursday of every month in St Gabriel's Nursing Home, Glenayle Road, Raheny, Dublin 5, from 8pm-9pm.

First Friday Novena and Mass to Santo Nino (Holy Infant) on December 7 at 5.10pm St Joseph's Church, Berkeley Road.

FERMANAGH

A Mass to St Peregrine for all the sick is prayed each Wednesday evening in St Patrick's Church, Derrygonnelly at 7.30pm. ww.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly

KILKENNY

A Candlelight Rosary Procession leaves the Parade at 8pm on Saturday, December 8. It goes down the main street and proceeds to the Black Abbey for Benediction. A statue of Our Lady of Fatima will be carried through the streets. Candles and holders will be available before the procession at the Parade.

Mass in the Extraordinary Form in St Patrick's Church (opposite St Kieran's College) every Sunday at 5pm.

LIMERICK

Eucharistic Adoration takes place each Friday in Raheen church following 10am Mass until 10pm, Crecora on Thursdays, following morning Mass until 12noon and from 6-10pm, and in Mungret Church on Wednesdays, from 10am to 12noon.

LOUTH

Mass in reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary will take place at 10.30am every first Saturday of the month in St Malachy's Church, Anne Street, Dundalk. Organised by the Legion of Mary, Presidium of Our Lady of the Listening Heart. Spiritual Director Fr Bede McGregor OP.

A Centre Prayer Meeting is held at Mount Oliver (near Ballymascanlon Dundalk) every Wednesday evening at 7.30pm. Contact 00353 863623361 from the North of Ireland or 0863623361 from the Republic of Ireland.

A Holy Hour with music and reflections to be held in St Mary's Church James Street, Drogheda on Wednesday December 12 at 8pm.

MAYO

Next Latin Mass in the Extraordinary Form – Old Rite (Tridentine) – takes place on Sunday December 9 in the Old Church Knock at 5.30pm.

MEATH

Enfield Prayer Group meets every Monday evening at 7.30pm in the parish centre.

OFFALY

Clonmacnois Prayer Vigil in Cluain Chiarain Prayer Centre every third Friday. Mass at 9pm. Adoration and Prayers follow until 2.10am. Enquiries Dave: 085 7746763.

ROSCOMMON

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St Croan's Church, Ballymoe, every Monday, 10-11am and Thursday, 8-10pm. Also at St Bride's Church, Ballintubber, every Wednesday, 7.30-8.30pm.

WICKLOW

The Glencree Parish Group hold a special Mass for healing in St Kevin's Church, Glencree on the first Saturday of the month.

St Patrick's Prayer Meeting, Tuesdays, 7.30pm in the De La Salle Pastoral Centre beside St Patrick's Church, Wicklow Town.

Out&About



WESTMEATH: Meath Diocesan Pioneers hold their November Matt Talbot Novena in Rochfortbridge, which was celebrated by Fr William Coleman PP. The Novena will be held every month for nine months to pray for those affected by alcohol.



CORK: Schoolchildren from Gael Scoil Uí Riada join PP Fr Michael O'Leary in St Joseph's Church, Wilton, to stand in solidarity with persecuted Christians across the globe on Red Wednesday last week. Fr Sebi of the Indian community and Fr John Bowe from the Society of African Missionaries also attended. The occasion was made more significant as the SMA priests prayed for Italian priest Fr Luigi Maccalli SMA who was abducted in mid-September in Niger by suspected jihadists. His whereabouts are still unknown.



CLARE: Rice College 5th year students, accompanied by Bishop Fintan Monahan, receive their John Paul II awards in Ennis.



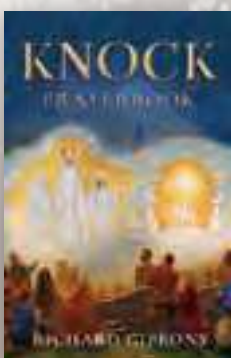
KILKENNY: Attendees at the conference of laity and priests of the Diocese of Ossory, held in St Kieran's College, discuss the future of the diocese.

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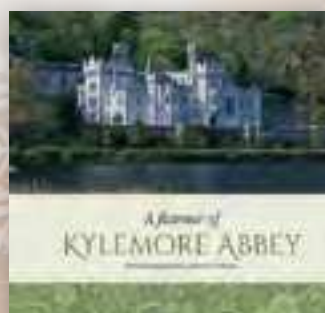
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Events deadline is a week in advance of publication

Kenya missionary sister honoured with presidential award

A member of the Sisters of Mercy has been presented with a Presidential Distinguished Service Award in recognition of her development and humanitarian work amongst the poor and marginalised in Kenya at Áras an Uachtaráin in Dublin.

Hailing from Dublin, Phibsboro, Sr Mary Killeen received the award last week. Her missionary work in Africa began in 1976.

Speaking about her award Sr Mary said: "I accept the award not for myself but on behalf of all the people who work with me now and in the past, and the donors and volunteers who have made my work possible for the marginalised and poorest of the poor. The greatest reward is to see deprived children being given an opportunity to explore their God-given talents and to live with some degree of dignity and respect."

Sr Mary entered the Mercy convent in Blackrock at the age of 20 and trained as a teacher at Carysfort College. She studied theology at Milltown Park and catechetics at UCD during the 1970s while teaching at primary schools in and around Dublin.

She went to Kenya as a primary school teacher to join the staff of Our Lady of Mercy primary school in Nairobi. Close by were the large slum settlements of Mukuru where she became involved in helping children unable to go to school.

She initiated a programme of education, health, and community services in Mukuru slums where 600,000 people live. Starting with a primary school, she developed the Mukuru Promotion Centre (MPC). The project now comprises of four primary schools with 5,600 pupils and skills training in masonry, carpentry, plumbing, art, crafts,

dressmaking, knitting, hairdressing, beauty, cookery, catering, hygiene, and vegetable growing.

The programme includes a school for special needs children, a secondary school for 660 students, health clinics that have treated 800,000 people, social work services, street children rehabilitation, a support group for HIV/AIDS and business training. With a strong focus on personal empowerment, she has educated over 170,000 people – many of whom are now self-sustainable.

Sr Mary's involvement also extends to other organisations working in Mukuru, including: St Marian's Children's Centre, St Mary's Viwandani Secondary School, and Mukuru Slum Development Project.

She was chosen to represent the slum populations of Nairobi in addressing their issues to Pope Francis during his visit in 2016.



DUBLIN: Mercy nun, Sr Mary Killeen, is presented with a Presidential Distinguished Service Award by President Michael D. Higgins. The award recognises her development and humanitarian work amongst the poor and marginalised in Kenya since 1976.



► **DUBLIN:** Louise Shiels and Danny Waldron, members of the L'Arche community in Dublin, help launch the group's 'Through L'Arche Eyes' campaign which aims to challenge perceptions about people with intellectual disabilities and highlight their contributions to society.

► **MAYO:** The Faithful attend a special Mass which was held in the Apparition Chapel at Knock to mark Red Wednesday last week, organised by Aid for the Church in Need Ireland and The Knights of Columbanus, Knock & Claremorris.

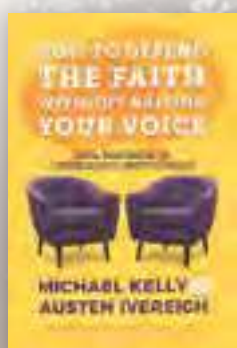


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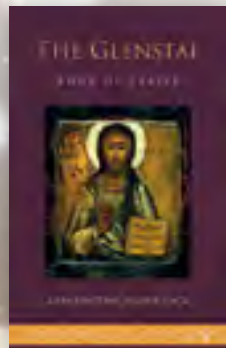
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World Report

IN BRIEF

S. Korea launches YouTube Bible lessons

Seoul Archdiocese in South Korea has launched a Bible lecture channel on YouTube to help people quickly learn about the Gospels.

The Online Bible Channel was opened following the direction of Cardinal Andrew Yeom Soo-jung of Seoul.

Three priests will give the weekly lectures which won't exceed six minutes. The content is made for everyone to understand.

"Lots of faithful want to learn the Bible but it is hard for them to find the time. The channel was opened for them to learn the Bible during their commuting hours," said Communications Director Fr Mattias Hur Young-yup.

Hundreds of India's Christians denied vote in elections

Hundreds of Christians, including a Catholic archbishop, were turned away from polling booths in India's Madhya Pradesh state because their names were not on the voter list.

Christian leaders claimed there was foul play in the November 28 poll.

Archbishop Leo Cornelio of Bhopal and hundreds of Christians couldn't vote to elect 230 legislators, despite having election identity cards and other relevant documents.

Christian leader Saji Abraham, seeking an investigation, flagged a petition to election authorities.

He and other Christian leaders suspect that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has ruled the state for 15 years, influenced officials to remove from voter eligibility lists the names of Christians traditionally considered supporters of the BJP's arch rival, the Congress Party.

Two clergy released by Chinese govt

● An underground bishop and priest have been released by authorities in China's Zhejiang province.

Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin of Wenzhou and Fr Lu Danhua of Lishui were freed in late November.

Bishop Shao was taken by authorities on November 9 and detained for 14 days while Fr Lu was taken on December 29 last year and detained for 11 months.

Father Lu, who was ordained by Bishop Shao in 2016, is the only priest in sparsely populated Lishui Diocese, which is adjacent to Wenzhou.

According to sources authorities did not specify the reason for taking away the bishop but just said "going out for a talk", while Fr Lu was detained for illegally holding a Mass at Qingtian Catholic Church.

Ukrainian Catholics fear war with Russia

Catholics in Ukraine said people fear a full-scale war with Russia, after a naval confrontation prompted the imposition of martial law in Ukraine's eastern regions.

Meanwhile, an official with Caritas Ukraine said local inhabitants had begun hoarding food, water and candles in preparation for a "sudden escalation" in events.

Fr Grzegorz Semenkov, chancellor of the Church's eastern Kharkiv-Zaporizhia Diocese, said Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko had justified martial law as a necessary precaution against "new threats from Russia" adding that its planned 30-day duration would not affect Ukraine's elections. However, he said, some Ukrainians were asking why martial law had been declared now, "rather than earlier, during more than four years of war in eastern Ukraine".

US diocese releases list of clergy credibly accused of abuse

The US diocese of Wheeling-Charleston has released the names of clergy who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors.

The West Virginia diocese said the release of names last week pertains to the 'Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People', approved by the US bishops in 2002, and the diocese's own policy on sexual abuse in place since 1985.

Gay priests who aren't celibate should leave clergy says Pope

The Catholic Church has been slow to recognise the presence of homosexual men in the priesthood, which is why superiors must exercise care in helping gay candidates prepare for a life of celibacy or leave the seminary, Pope Francis said.

"Homosexuality is a very serious matter, which must be discerned adequately from the beginning with candidates, if it is the case. We must be demanding," the Pope told Claretian Fr Fernando Prado in the new book-interview, 'The Strength of Vocation: Consecrated Life Today'.

Excerpts of the Pope's interview with Fr Prado, which was conducted in August, were printed in newspapers at the beginning of Advent ahead of the book's release.

In 2013, Pope Francis had told reporters: "If someone is gay and is searching for the Lord and has goodwill, then who am I to judge him?"

Some media outlets contrasted that remark with what Pope Francis told Fr Prado, even though Pope

Pope Francis leads an audience with members of a volunteers association from Sardinia in Paul VI Hall at the Vatican. Photo: CNS



Francis made it clear in the new interview that he was talking about homosexual activity among priests and religious who make vows of chastity and celibacy.

"In consecrated life or that of the priesthood, there is no place for this type of affection," the Pope said. "For that reason, the Church recommends that persons with this deep-seated tendency not be accepted for ministry or consecrated life."

"Homosexual priests, religious men and women should be urged to live celibacy wholly and, especially, to be perfectly responsible, trying to never create scandal in their communities or for the holy people of God by living a double life," the Pope said. "It would be better if they left the ministry or consecrated life rather than live a double life."

Pope Francis told Fr Prado that today "in our societies it

seems that homosexuality is fashionable, and this mentality has in a way also influenced the life of the Church".

Seminary and religious formation programmes, he said, must be updated to take the issue seriously, help seminarians and aspirants understand themselves and the obligations of celibacy, promote maturity and enable discernment about whether a candidate is ready and able to live a celibate life.

Extra testing as South Africa Church marks World AIDS Day

The AIDS Office director of the South African bishops has said significant progress is being made in the AIDS response in South Africa.

On the 30th World AIDS Day anniversary on Saturday, December 1, Mrudula Smithson who works for the Southern Africa Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACB) said: "South Africa has the largest ARV programme in the world. This has resulted in reducing child mortality by 20% and reducing the rate of new infections by 44%.

"However, the rate of new infections among young people remains alarmingly high."

The SACBC AIDS Office is marking

the anniversary with Candle Lighting, prayers for those affected by HIV and distribution of information leaflets to the public.

"To date, significant progress has been made in the AIDS response for reducing the impact of the HIV pandemic in South Africa. In 2017, of the 7.9 million people living with HIV in South Africa, 60% are on ARVs. Our next task is to find the remaining 40% through intensive testing campaigns and link them to treatment, quality care and prevention services," Smithson said.

HIV testing has been an important component of the commemoration of world AIDS day.

"HIV testing is essential for expanding treatment and ensuring that all people living with HIV can lead healthy and productive lives," she said.

"Access to confidential HIV testing is still an issue of concern. Many people still only get tested after becoming ill and symptomatic."

This year's theme is 'Know your status'.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said that today four in five people living with HIV in the African Region know their status.

Currently more than three in five people are accessing life-saving antiretroviral therapy.

Chilean president signs gender identity law

Chilean president Sebastián Piñera signed into law a bill permitting people aged 14 or older to change their name and gender in the civil registry.

The law defines gender identity as "the personal or internal conviction of being a man or woman, in the person's self-perception, which may or may not correspond

with the sex and name verified on the birth registration certificate".

It was first introduced in 2013 during the administration of Michelle Bachelet under the name 'Recognising and Giving Protection to the Right of Gender Identity'.

Although some legislators filed an appeal with the Constitutional Court to declare

the measure unconstitutional, this was rejected in October, the law was signed in last week.

From 18 years of age, a person will be able twice to "obtain the rectification of the name and sex" in the registry.

Minors aged between 14 and 18 will have to process the request in family court and have the approval of at

least one of their parents or guardians.

Lacking that, the minor must ask a judge to intervene to proceed with the change of name and sex in the civil registry.

Once the minor makes the change, they will not be able to retract it until turning 18.

Minors under 14 were not included in the law.



Edited by Chai Brady
chai@irishcatholic.ie

Advent burning brightly



Worshippers hold candles during an Advent service on December 2 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Lindenhurst, New York. Photo: CNS

CAR bishops hold day of mourning on eve of Advent

The bishops of the Central African Republic (CAR) have set aside the day before Advent as a day of mourning and prayer for victims of ongoing violence in the country.

December 1, is significant, as it marks the anniversary of CAR's establishment as a republic after French colonial rule.

In a statement, the bishops urged "men and women of good will to refrain from celebrating December 1, as a sign of mourning". On the following day, the first Sunday of Advent, prayers were held in memory of the victims of violence in the country. The bishops said all donations collected would be given to support victims and their families.

The Central African Republic has suffered violence since December 2012, when several bands of mainly Muslim rebel groups formed an alliance, taking

the name Seleka, and seized power.

In reaction to the Seleka's attacks, some Central Africans formed self-defence groups called anti-balaka. Some of these groups, mainly composed of Christians, began attacking Muslims out of revenge, and the conflict took on a sectarian character.

Violence

According to *Reuters*, the violence has displaced more than 1 million people and brought the country's food security to a level four in the international food security classification system, one step away from 'famine'.

The UN humanitarian chief for CAR, Najat Rochdi, said nearly 3 million of the country's 4.6 million population are in need of aid. More than half of them are in desperate need.

"If the situation is remaining the same and people are not going back to work their fields...it means that, yes, in very few years we will have a famine in Central African Republic," Rochdi said.

Recent acts of violence include the torching of several Christian internal displacement camps. At least 42 people – many of whom were refugees – died in a November 15 attack on the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Alindao.

Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalainga, the archbishop of Bangui and president of the CAR bishops' conference, spoke at a press conference with the bishops last week and pointed to the Constitution of the Central African Republic which states: "The human person is sacred and inviolable. All public officials, all organisations, have an absolute obligation to respect and protect it."

question his integrity".

He added: "Bishop David has already answered clearly and equally all these allegations."

Archbishop Valles said the country's bishops can vouch that Bishop David, a Bible scholar and critic of Duterte's anti-narcotics war, is a "very good bishop, a dedicated shepherd and father of his flock".

Archbishop Romulo Valles, head of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, said Church leaders are "saddened and disturbed" by the president's recent statements.

Archbishop Valles of Davao, a friend of Duterte, said he was surprised by the president's pronouncements "that allege that Bishop David had committed actions that

Philippine Catholic bishops are standing by Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan after he was targeted by President Rodrigo Duterte's recent tirades.

The controversial president accused the Kalookan prelate of giving Church donations to his family. Duterte also said he thought the bishop might be into drugs and threatened him with hanging.

Vatican roundup

Advent Sunday: 'Pray for children in Syria'

Pope Francis lit a candle, a symbol of hope, to pray for children affected by violence and war in Syria and across the Middle East.

"Advent is a time of hope. At this moment I would like to make the hope for peace of the children of Syria, beloved Syria, mine," the Pope prayed on December 2, the first Sunday of Advent.

From a window inside the Apostolic Palace, he lit a large pillar candle, decorated by a craftsman in Damascus with the photos of around 40 Syrian children. "This flame of hope and many flames of hope disperse the darkness of war," he said.

Pope Francis prayed that Christians will be helped to stay in Syria and the Middle East "as witnesses of mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation" and noted his desire that the "flame of hope" would reach every person who is suffering from conflict around the world.

"The prayer of the Church helps them to feel the proximity of the faithful God and touches every conscience for a sincere commitment to peace," he continued, adding: "God, our Lord, forgive those who make war, those who make weapons...and convert their hearts."

Victory awaits cancer sufferers 'on horizon' says Pope

It is not easy living with cancer, but there is always some kind of victory that awaits each person on the horizon, Pope Francis told young oncology patients from Poland on November 30. "Your journey in life is a bit difficult, dear children, because you have to get treated and overcome the disease or live with the disease. This is not easy," he told them, their parents and health care specialists at the Vatican.

But with the support of family, friends and others, "there is no difficulty in life that cannot be overcome", he told the children who

are being treated at an oncology clinic in Wroclaw, Poland.

God has given everyone a guardian angel so that "he may help us in life", Pope Francis said.

"Become accustomed to talking to your angel so that he may take care of you, give you encouragement and always lead you to victory in life."

"Victory is different for each person; everyone prevails in his or her way, but prevailing is always the ideal, it is the horizon for moving forward. Do not get discouraged," he added.

Pope praises slain Catholic Pakistani politician

Commemorating the witness of Shahbaz Bhatti, Pope Francis expressed his hope that the Pakistani Catholic's death will be a source of inspiration and hope for persecuted Christians.

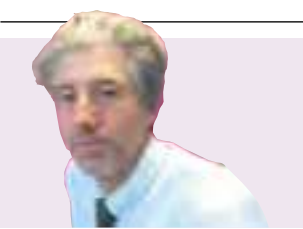
Speaking to members of the "Missione Shahbaz Bhatti" association, the Pope said the group can help overcome barriers and create "dialogue, understanding and reconciliation" among different people and different faiths.

"One of the fruits of the sufferings of Christians is the multiplication of groups and associations – like yours – that build bridges of fraternity throughout the world, overcoming differences in language, culture and sometimes even religion," he said.

Bhatti, who served as Pakistan's minority affairs minister, was gunned down in 2011 after he said he would seek the reform of blasphemy laws to stop them being misused to persecute innocent Christians.

The Pope paid tribute to Bhatti and said he was pleased "to know that today he is loved and esteemed by many in Pakistan and that his sacrifice is bearing fruits of hope".

He also encouraged the association to continue to proclaim the Gospel and aid "victims of false accusations".



Aid worker Kevin Byrne reflects with Kevin Jenkinson on 30-years helping the world's poorest people

Seasoned aid worker Kevin Byrne has been on the frontline of many of the world's largest human catastrophes with Concern Worldwide – which has been fighting extreme poverty for 50 years.

Known affectionately as 'the Clareman with the Dublin accent,' Kevin (59), originally from Sixmilebridge, but living in Rathmines, has seen the worst of humanity, but is and has worked with the best of it too in his 30-years with Ireland's largest aid agency.

Former spray painter Kevin, who joined Concern in November, 1988 under the leadership of the late Fr Aengus Finucane CSSp, has gone from working directly with starving people – and often during major conflicts – in countries across Africa, Asia and the Middle East, to back in the organisation's headquarters on Camden Street, Dublin in the 'donor care' team, assisting those making generous donations.

He was in Jordan for the refugee crisis during the Gulf War in Iraq – when fighter jets used to terrify those in the camp – and in Liberia during a hunger crisis in 1991 before responding to famine in Somalia and managing a refugee camp in Tanzania just over the border with Rwanda in 1994, arriving just a week after the bloody genocide that resulted in over 800,000 people being killed.

Above his desk today hangs a photograph of an emaciated child he and others had tried to save from disease and starvation, which was taken by well-known Limerick press photographer Liam Burke

'What you were getting coming in was skin and bone. Like what you see in Yemen now'



Concern's Kevin Byrne at his desk in Concern Worldwide's Dublin office.

during the devastating famine in Somalia in 1991.

"The poor child never made it," said Kevin, sombrely, as he recalls his experience with Concern.

The boy was pictured leaning forward on the ground after arriving at a feeding centre with his mother and was suffering from chronic diarrhoea. Kevin alerted a Concern nurse to the boy and they desperately tried to bring him back to health, but he sadly passed away after five days.

"He looks about two or 18 months, but that child was five years old," Kevin

recalled. "What you were getting coming in [to the feeding centres] was skin and bone. Like what you see in Yemen now."

The iconic image of that Somali boy reminds Kevin of the importance of what he and the other staff at Concern are doing as children continue to suffer today from hunger and extreme poverty in countries like Somalia.

Kevin had just worked in Liberia as a logistician helping thousands of starving people who fled conflict there when Fr Finucane asked him and a colleague to travel to

Somalia and set up Concern's relief work there in response to a horrific famine – again caused largely by civil war.

“Next thing I heard ping, ping, ping. Now, we were in a jeep and I said, ‘what’s that?’”

"Liberia was troubled with a lot of starvation, but nothing on the scale of what was happening in Somalia," said Kevin.

On their stopover in Nairobi, they met Fr Jack Finucane (Aengus's brother

and another legendary figure in Concern) – who had just made an assessment of the needs in Somalia – and were able to get a briefing from him. Upon landing, they quickly realised for themselves how desperate and dangerous the crisis had become. "There were guns everywhere," said Kevin.

"I remember in the first few days we were squatting in the UN house. We had nowhere else to go while we tried to find a safe place to set up accommodation, which was going to be as near to the UN compound as possible. That was where all the NGOs settled.

"I got a small property there and used the house next door as our stores. We couldn't take the chance of having the stores near the port because everything there was being looted. They were even shooting the oil drums at the port and burning them.

"I remember I went down to do a food distribution in Mogadishu Port with the UN. We had a former Concern person there...and he was working for the UN World Food Programme and he asked if I would like to go to a food distribution from a warehouse in the port.

"Next thing I heard ping,

ping, ping. Now, we were in a jeep and I said, 'what's that?' He started roaring at the driver and we went 100 miles per hour in reverse. We had to get away from the ricochets coming from fellas shooting nearby."

Kevin said shooting in Mogadishu only stopped around 6am for breakfast, which was when he took the opportunity to buy cigarettes from a stall about 200 yards from Concern's building. "It was the only peace I got," he said.

"The seller would just stand there and stare at me every morning as if was I crazy. I'd walk over and say, 'packet of cigarettes please'. We'd smile and I'd give him his money and I'd come back. It was just from experience that I knew there was never a shot fired at that time."

Concern soon set up one of the first feeding centres in a rural area just outside Mogadishu where staff were completely overwhelmed by the numbers of people arriving for food and looking for help to save their children from dying.

"We cleared out an old warehouse that had been abandoned and got local permissions from warlords because there was no functioning government there at all.

"When we opened the feeding centre we expected a couple of hundred people, but there were thousands upon thousands. The word went out that we were there. Bush telegraph. Now, there were four of us there at that time, and Liam Burke the photographer, but we did our best."

Concern – which had previously worked in Somalia in 1986 – saved thousands of lives during its emergency operation during the 1991-1992 famine.

A total of 32 expatriates worked alongside 1,000 staff recruited locally in Somalia – and in Ireland an incredible IR£15 million was raised by the public.

A visit to Somalia by then President of Ireland Mary Robinson in September, 1992, during which she was brought to tears at a press conference, helped focus the attention of Ireland and



Concern's Kevin Byrne (second from right) with local staff in No Man's Land.



Concern's Kevin Byrne, fourth in from left, waiting to meet then President Mary Robinson and her husband, Nick in 1992.



Kevin Byrne with President Michael D. Higgins.

the world strongly on the famine.

* * * * *

In 1994, Concern expanded into Central Africa in response to the refugee crisis created by the Rwandan Genocide when Kevin managed a camp in Tanzania just over the border with Rwanda.

From there he witnessed the horrific aftermath of the slaughter with bodies floating down the Kigera River – and his own life came under threat too during several food riots when some men tried to steal food to sell on the black market.

"The genocide happened just a week before I arrived. It was horrific," he said.

“We are on the ground and we can see what is happening to donor's money”

The Clareman said he knew from his first day in Concern that it was where

he wanted to work, having previously been unhappy working in the motor trade.

"It wasn't about the money. I just loved what they were about and I still do," said Kevin, who also does churchgate collections for Concern in Donnybrook.

"I saw a different side to life and the enthusiasm from the workers and how dedicated they were and we would always remember at that time [in 1988] that if we wanted commercial wages we all knew were the front door was."

Part of Kevin's job today is talking to people wishing to make donations to Concern and he said he is proud to inform them of the agency's high level of good governance and transparency – for which it has won multiple awards – and how nearly 91c in every €1 goes to relief and development work in the 25 countries where Concern works today.

He is also able to say how he has seen for himself where the money is spent

and what it is spent on and he also reminds new staff travelling overseas where Concern's funding comes from.

"No matter who they are or what they are doing I would always tell them: 'Don't you forget that the money that is helping us to do that work overseas and whatever expenses you need to incur, that that is coming from a donor and every cent has to be accounted for to the donor.'"

"When I am talking to people on the phone and they talk about administration costs I mention the 90.8%, but I also add that I worked for Concern on the ground and I have been there and I can guarantee you we manage our own programmes and projects. We are on the ground and we can see what is happening to donor's money."

Kevin is Concern's Legacy Administrator and he said people can contact him in confidence to discuss any query they may have. This year's Concern Christmas Appeal is asking members of the public to donate what they can to help provide life-saving emergency nutrition to displaced families in Somalia.

Famine was averted there last year thanks to a large humanitarian response, but the population still faces insecurity and malnutrition, despite better rains.

The aid agency said a €26 donation could provide food sachets to a child for two weeks while €120 could provide an entire family with food for two months.

❗ To support children in Somalia this Christmas visit www.concern.net or call 1850 410 510.

AN URGENT APPEAL FOR SOMALIA

OVER 55,000 CHILDREN IN SOMALIA ARE AT RISK OF DYING FROM HUNGER THIS CHRISTMAS.

The brutal conflict and drought in Somalia has left thousands of children like Nala suffering from severe malnutrition. Without your help, many of them could die before Christmas. We urgently need your help to provide the therapeutic food that can keep them alive.



€13 could provide a child with therapeutic food sachets for one week.

Will you send an urgent gift of €13 today?

☎ 1850 410 510 🌐 www.concern.net



Fill in the form below. Thank You.

All income raised will go towards our work in Somalia.

I'd like to give €_____ to help provide a severely malnourished child with sachets of therapeutic food.

Please make your cheque payable to Concern Worldwide OR Debit my: ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa

Card no:

Expiry Date: / CVV no:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____ First Name: _____ Surname: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone no: _____ Mobile no: _____

We would love to keep you updated about our work and let you know how you can change lives. Please tick the boxes and provide your details below to confirm that we can contact you by:

☐ Email ☐ SMS ☐ Phone

We will also keep you updated by post. You can update your preferences at any time by contacting us at preferences@concern.net

Please return this form to: Concern Worldwide, 52-55 Lower Camden Street, Freepost F1906, Dublin 2

ARAD18-02/005

Pictured: Nine month old Nala pictured with her mother Hani in a Concern supported health centre in Mogadishu, Somalia.
Photo: Jennifer Nolan/ Concern Worldwide (2018)

CONCERN
worldwide

Letters

Post to: Letters to the Editor, The Irish Catholic,
23 Merrion Square North, Dublin 2,
or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

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

Should the crib be displayed in public, or should nativity scenes be private?

I actually don't think people of other religions have a problem with the crib being displayed. This is an excuse pedalled by atheists and secularists who don't want any visible signs of any religion in society. They won't be happy until all religions are outlawed. – **Frank Bradley**

Of course the crib should be displayed as everyone, irrespective of their religion or none, should respect the traditions and celebrations of others. Surely we don't have to pander to intolerant people. If they are offended, that is their problem and is not something that should be encouraged. If people are going to live together then they must learn to respect each others' beliefs and customs. Put up the cribs. – **Mary Murphy**

What are we celebrating at Christmas if it isn't the Nativity and why do we have to bend over backwards to please everyone else? – **Eilish Higgins**

It's called Christ-mas for a reason. We Christians are celebrating the birth of Christ. If you don't want the visible representation of that event (crib) that's fine, let's cancel Christmas lights, trees, baubles, Santa, big feeds and expensive presents! At least that would be honest! Simple really: all or nothing. – **Annie O'Reilly-Taaffe**

I have the only outside crib in my town, Barton upon Humber, UK. Everybody loves it and remarks upon it. Often when I say where my house is, people ask me if it is where the Nativity scene is. I do not take it down until February 2, so now all the neighbours know when Candlemas is. So, get your cribs out and display them. Whether Christmas is commercialised or not is up to us. – **Gertrude Morrissey**

It is beautiful to see a Nativity Scene set up in a public place as is our tradition here in Ireland, from the beginning of Advent until after January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany. Even today there was a crib in the shopping centre where I usually shop, and I stopped for a short while to see the innocent babe and His family. It makes me happy and I have never yet met anyone who finds a crib offensive. – **Jane Hensman**

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

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Letter of the week

Charities ask for support that's needed

Dear Editor, I am very dismayed about a letter published last week (IC 29/11/18) which said that high profile human welfare charities are addicted to their public self-importance. The author, John Tierney, concluded: "But we must never forget the adage; charity should be given without being asked for."

I think this perspective is very cynical and doesn't take into consideration the important good Irish charities are doing for vulnerable people every year, week and day. To suggest that charities are more focused on preserving their self-image

than carrying out their aims of caring for those in need is a farcical idea and wrongly lumps all charities into one big, corporate conglomeration with no distinctiveness.

While it's true that some charities may be interested in their own image, most are run by genuine people who care for the marginalised and are aiming to improve society.

But apart from this idea, what concerns me most is the statement that charity should be given without being asked for. There are hundreds of problems people face daily, be it financially, physically or mentally,

and without the ability for charities to communicate these issues, those suffering would not be heard.

Charities act as a platform where concerns can be raised in a real and influential way so that people of goodwill can offer their help and services to alleviate the problem. I prefer the adage: "If you don't ask, you don't get" – if charities aren't asking for support, I doubt people will be aware that the support is needed.

*Yours etc.,
Barbara Hogan,
Belfast,
Co. Antrim.*

Keep pressure on to identify killer of archbishop

Dear Editor, On December 29, 2018 it will be 15 years since Archbishop Michael Courtney, Titular Bishop of Annaghdown, was brutally assassinated in Burundi. Since that time no person or persons have been convicted for that assassination.

It appears that neither the Church or our Government have tried to find out who murdered him. He was well known and respected and during his visit to Annaghdown he won the hearts of all those who had the privilege of meeting him.

I have over the years written to our Dept of Foreign Affairs only to get the same reply: "The Dept will continue to monitor developments in Burundi."

I appeal to all your readers to write to the Dept of Foreign Affairs and

the Church and ask why we have not heard why he was assassinated or who assassinated him.

*Yours etc.,
Desmond Nolan,
Annaghdown,
Co. Galway.*

No harm in being reminded of charity

Dear Editor, I was appalled to read John Tierney's letter on Christmas charity (IC 29/11/2018). Has he never read Matthew 25? Yes, of course we should be willing to give without being asked, but sometimes we need reminding, and is there a better time of year to be reminded of the good we can do than when we're preparing to celebrate the birth of Our Lord?

*Yours etc.,
Frank O'Leary,
Dundalk, Co. Louth.*

Lack of formation

Dear Editor, Breda O'Brien (IC 29/11/18) writes about the need for "some kind of formation programme" for young people who are welcomed into our parishes as a matter of urgency. She states correctly that all Catholic teaching is "of a piece". All of it, in a nutshell, is grounded in the twin mandate to love both God and neighbour. To be a Catholic, meaningfully and authentically, is to be aware of the Church's teaching and to endeavour to follow it.

Induction programmes are very good and useful but they serve a limited purpose if they do not open to a fuller vista of what serving God in our Church and in our world fully means.

It is not just young people who lack formation in the faith. It is a sad reality that formation seems to be a patchy part of the Church's pastoral strategy at all levels.

*Yours etc.,
Margaret Hickey,
Blarney, Co. Cork.*

A very good habit to tap into

Dear Editor, I was intrigued to read about the "cashless" Mass collections being introduced in the Netherlands (IC 29/11/2018). Card payments seem to be everywhere now, particularly the tap cards which allow little transactions to happen almost without thinking. In London, if you want to hop onto a bus all you need to do is tap your card, no fussing around buying tickets.

A friend was recently on the continent on business and reported that even toilets in a train station would take a card if a 50c coin wasn't handy! In such an environment it's not surprising that the collection basket should suffer.

A card terminal in a church

lobby, not to mention one being passed around the pews, may be a strange sight but it does make a certain kind of sense. Perhaps it would also encourage people to think about their contribution a little more deliberately, rather than simply fishing out whatever few spare coins they have.

Whether or not this technology comes to Ireland any time soon, being aware of our habits around cash and cards is a very good thing. In the absence of a technological solution, planning a bit of time to visit a bank machine before Mass might be a good habit to build!

*Yours etc.,
Conor Fitzgerald,
Clondalkin, Dublin 22.*



A DIFFERENT Kind Of BUCKET LIST



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

What's still unfinished in your life? Well, there's always a lot that's unfinished in everyone's life. Nothing is ever really finished. Our lives, it seems, are simply interrupted by our dying. Most of us don't complete our lives, we just run out of time. So, consciously or unconsciously, we make a bucket-list of things we still want to see, do, and finish before we die.

What do we still want to do? A number of things probably immediately come to the fore: we want to see our children grow up. We want to see our daughter's wedding. We want to see our grandchildren. We want to finish this last work of art, of writing, of building. We want to see our 80th birthday. We want to reconcile with our family.

Important

Beyond these, more important things, we generally have another list of things we were too busy, preoccupied, or economically disadvantaged to do earlier in life: we want to walk the Camino, travel to the Holy Land, see the historical sites of Europe, backpack through parts of Asia, travel the country with our grandkids, enjoy our retirement.

But in fantasising about what's unfinished in our lives there's the danger of missing out on the richness of what's actually going on in our lives and our real task in the moment.

The better question is: how do I want to live now so as to be ready to die when it's my time?

In a wonderful little book on contemplation, *Biography of Silence*, Spanish author Pablo d'Ors stares his mortality in the face and decides that this is what he wants to do in face of the inalienable fact that he's one day to die. Here's his bucket list: "I have decided to stand up and open my eyes. I have decided to eat and drink in moderation, to sleep as necessary, to write only what contributes toward improving those who read me, to abstain from greed, and never compare myself to others.

"I have also decided to water my plants and care for an animal. I will visit the sick, I will converse with the lonely, and I will not let much time go by before playing with a child. In the same manner I have decided to recite my prayers every day, to bow several times before the things I consider sacred, to celebrate the Eucharist, to listen to the Word, to break bread and

share the wine, to give peace, to sing in unison. And to go for walks, which I find essential. And to light the fire, which is also essential. And to shop without hurry, to greet my neighbours even when I do not like seeing their faces, to subscribe to a newspaper, to regularly call my friends and siblings on the phone. And to take excursions, swim in the sea at least once a year and to read only good books or reread those that I have liked.

“That prognosis clarified my thoughts and feelings as nothing ever before”

"I will live for those things according to an ethics of attention and care. And this is how I will arrive at a happy old age, when I will contemplate, humble and proud at the same time, the small but grand orchard that I have cultivated. Life as cult, culture, and cultivation."

Life as a cult, culture and cultivation: I'm a two-time cancer survivor. When first diagnosed with cancer seven years ago, the prognosis was good. I had a scare, but time still stretched out endlessly before me. But when the cancer returned four years ago, the doctors were less optimistic and told me, in unequivocal terms, that my time was probably short, no more endless days. That prognosis clarified my thoughts and feelings as nothing ever before. Stunned, I went home, sat down in prayer, and then wrote this mini-creed for myself, with a different kind of bucket-list:

*I am going to strive to be as productive as long as I can.
I am going to make every day and every activity as precious and enjoyable as possible.
I am going to strive to be as gracious, warm and charitable as*

possible.

I am going to strive to be as healthy as long as I can.

I am going to strive to accept others' love in a deeper way than I have up to now.

I am going to strive to live a more-fully "reconciled" life. No room for past hurts anymore.

I am going to strive to keep my sense of humour intact.

I am going to strive to be as courageous and brave as I can.

I am going to strive, always, to never look on what I am losing, but rather to look at how wonderful and full my life has been and is. And, I am going to, daily, lay all of this at God's feet through prayer.

Not incidentally, since then I have also begun to water plants, care for a feral cat and feed all the neighborhood birds.

Life as cult, culture and cultivation.



Gift the Faith!



Family members often struggle with encouraging younger ones to take a genuine interest in their faith. Why not start them off by gifting them a subscription to the digital edition of *The Irish Catholic*? Nudging them to keep abreast of what is happening in the Catholic world digitally may prove to be the push they needed all along!

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**2018
Online Advent
Calendar**

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daily multimedia
goodness!

Page 29

Blessed is She

The Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin, celebrated Mass with over 250 women from Ireland and parts of Europe at a women's retreat in Dublin last weekend. The two-day 'Blessed is She' retreat, the largest of its kind in Ireland, took place at the Emmaus Centre in Swords, Co Dublin on November 23 and 24.

The retreat was organised by Emma Sisk, 28, from Ballyporeen, Co Tipperary, who invited a women's ministry from the Diocese of Phoenix called Blessed Is She to host one of their retreats outside the US for the first time. Blessed is She is an online Catholic women's ministry devoted to Scripture, the Sacraments and sisterhood.

At the Vigil Mass for the Feast of Christ the King on Saturday afternoon Archbishop Martin told those on retreat that in Scripture it is a woman who, more than any other, shows us what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. The Arch-

bishop said: "Mary the mother of Jesus pondered the words and actions of her Son. She remained faithful until the end. She was given to us as a mother and as one who can lead us faithfully into the reign of her Son, through her humility and obedience to that reign".

"The theme of the retreat was 'Wild'. It was drawn from John 3:8 which says: 'The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit'."

Ms Sisk concluded: "The Blessed Is She retreat in Dublin was a phenomenal success. We had women come from all over Ireland and others who flew in from parts of Europe. The feedback I received over the course of the retreat tells me there is a real thirst for this to become an annual retreat. Most importantly it also shows the need for an authentic Catholic women's ministry here in Ireland".



Editor's Note by Eoin Walshe



Advent-ure

As we conclude a month of remembrance, we begin a season of preparation. Let this advent be a time of preparation to welcome; first and foremost the birth of our Lord, but also to welcome many people who will walk through the doors of our parish churches on Christmas Day. Let us be intentional and authentic in our welcome, and our witness, from the door to the homily and from the music to the mince pies. Let it be a time of reconnection, for our own relationship with Jesus, for our parish

community and let it be time when we prepare to best facilitate a reconnection with God and the parish for all this Christmas. Let this advent be an advent-ure of faith, family and fun!

This week's Cornerstone has an Advent theme with a family focused piece from Dominic Perrem, a report of a parish reflecting and preparing for the future as well as Fr. Joe McDonald's reminder

that the greatest present we will get this Christmas is the presence of our Lord.

A month ago, we featured 'Blessed is She' in our fish and tips section for daily ideas for disciples. It is with delight that the front page story this week notes that over 250 women from Ireland and parts of Europe took part in a women's retreat in Dublin. The two-day 'Blessed is She' retreat, the largest of its kind

in Ireland, took place at the Emmaus Centre in Swords, Co Dublin on November 23 and 24. More on this story next week!

Also this week: Dr Fáinche Ryan continues her series on the Eucharist, the weekly 'People of God' profile to hear about a little bit about one of our sisters or brothers in Christ and, this week's 'Fish & Tips.' Once again, we have next Sunday's Second Reading - reading what was being said to encourage and challenge early Christian communities in order to hear what is being said to us today.

What is Cornerstone?

A cornerstone is the first stone set in the construction of a building from which all other stones will be set in reference to, thus determining the entire structure. The Irish parish of tomorrow should be built "in reference to" the Church's cornerstone: Jesus (Ephesians 20-22). The focus of Cornerstone is building tomorrow's parish today; inspired by the Great Commission, each week there are features relating to Scripture, sacraments and service as well as shining a spotlight on vibrant pastoral ideas being realised in parishes around the country and beyond. Our aim is to help every parish best answer the call to 'saying, doing and

being' Christ in their context; sharing the good news! Whether actively involved in parish ministry, feeling disconnected from your parish or both; Cornerstone is for you. Cornerstone, bringing together best practice and resources from parishes around the country and beyond can help to encourage and energise local parishes. Every week there is a mix of input from well-known experts and those involved in hands-on ministry, providing a new, weekly one-stop-shop for parishes looking to actively engage in mission and ministry. How does your parish enable and encourage belonging and believing?

Please spread the word and join us on the journey of the building tomorrow's parish today – a familial community of faith, fostering authentic, intentional discipleship. If your parish is engaged in something exciting or innovative, contact us and let us know! Email me on eoin@irishcatholic.ie

PARISH INITIATIVES

Preparing together

A little over a year ago, our Parish Pastoral Council initiated a process of listening and dialogue with the wider faith community, to get a feel for the Parish and its current needs. Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish is an atypical parish of the Dublin Archdiocese; for example, it encompasses a very large geographical area – over 100 square kilometres – and stretches from the N11 in the east to Kippure Mountain in the west. It has four churches: Enniskerry, Kilmacanogue, Curtlestown, and Glencree, each with its own quite distinct surrounding community and unique history. The PPC agreed that the most practical way to consult with the wider parish community was through a series of local meetings.

“This consultation process began with a day of renewal and reflection for those involved in various parish ministries.”

This consultation process began with a day of renewal and reflection for those involved in various parish ministries. This was led by

Aideen Darcy, Pastoral Coordinator for Bray/Enniskerry, and held in the Glencree Reconciliation Centre.

“Unless the Lord build the house, in vain do the builders labour” (Ps. 127).

The first of the local meetings was a gathering of the St. Mochoinog’s community in Kilmacanogue in May. A second gathering, for part of the St. Mary’s church community in Enniskerry, took place in June. The plan to hold further local meetings was overtaken by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin’s request, in the wake of Pope Francis’ visit in August, that parishes hold assemblies to look at the challenges of renewing our faith communities, and how to pass on our faith to the next generation.

Our plenary Parish Assembly was held on Tuesday evening, November 20th in the Summerhill Hotel, Enniskerry. We were fortunate that the Hotel management offered us the use of a large room, including tea and biscuits, and without charge. There is no parish centre in Enniskerry. The warm, attractive ambiance was heaven-sent and suited the work of the evening perfectly. After a brief time of socialising around the cuppa, our priest,

Fr Bernard Kennedy, welcomed everyone and set the spiritual tone for the evening. He reminded us that this whole enterprise must be grounded in prayer and that “unless the Lord build the house, in vain do the builders labour” (Ps. 127). Donal Harrington, Diocesan Coordinator of Catechetical Formation, facilitated, moving us into a time of reflection. The participants sat in small groups, and, as questions were read out, wrote down their responses on Stick-It Notes. This was followed by discussion time allowing every participant an opportunity to speak. The small groups then fed back to the whole Assembly and open discussion followed.

Three questions were considered: 1) What is working in our parish? 2) What is not

working in our parish? and 3) What is missing in our parish? Each question was then repeated with a special focus on young people.

The written responses, including numerous useful insights and suggestions, were collected and will now be analysed to form the basis of ongoing dialogue and future planning. As a next step, a detailed summary of the responses will be distributed to all those who participated.

Among the many positives, there was consistent praise for the programmes of

sacramental preparation, for the core of committed parishioners who give so much in service, for good priests (some visiting), and for the very strong community spirit which exists throughout the Parish. On the negative side, people spoke of failure to provide for young people after Confirmation, or to attract young families to come weekly (timing of Mass is an issue); failure to reach out and connect with young people in general and provide for their spiritual needs – linked with that, a call for adult

faith formation and support for young parents; failures in communication within our existing structures, with the need to update our website and weekly newsletter; and a recognition that we could do much more to reach out, as a Christian community, to those in need in our parish and beyond.

While the difficulties and challenges we face were not denied, the Assembly was characterised by an overall atmosphere of warmth, harmony and positive engagement. We feel this was an experience which, in itself, has contributed to the upbuilding of the Parish. We are also aware, that it is only a first step in a long journey of renewal. The work will continue.



Scripture

Reflecting on Scripture is an important part of the Christian faith. Often, however, we Catholics do not allow ourselves the time to really reflect on the Word of God. This weekly series will explore the Second Reading from the coming Sunday’s Mass. While originally written to the early church communities, Scripture is the living Word of God, so each week we can read what was being said to encourage and challenge early Christian communities in order to hear what is being said to us today.

Philippians 1:4-6,8-11

Every time I pray for all of you, I pray with joy, remembering how you have helped to spread the Good News from the day you first heard it right up to the present. I am quite certain that the One who began this good work in you will see that it is finished when the Day of Christ Jesus comes; and God knows how much I miss you all, loving you as Christ Jesus loves you. My prayer is that your love for each other may increase more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception so that you can always recognise what is best. This will help you to become pure and blameless, and prepare you for the Day of Christ, when you will reach the perfect goodness which Jesus Christ produces in us for the glory and praise of God.

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Spend some time in prayer with the reading.

1. Find a quiet place, and give yourself fifteen minutes without distractions. Read the section once, and then pause for reflection. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts and response to the passage.
2. Read the passage a second time. Ask yourself: What do I find challenging about this reading? Is there anything that I can try to do differently in my life as a response to it? What is the message in this reading for our parish? Write down anything that comes to your head.
3. Pause in silent reflection, and then read the passage a third time.



How are you preparing this Advent?



Dominic Perrem examines how we can best prepare our families to experience Advent as it's meant to be

I don't know about you, but every year Advent sneaks up on me out of nowhere. Don't get me wrong, we get signs of Christmas coming months in advance- but that's mostly the shops putting out trees and chocolates the day after Halloween. There's a great pressure on people this time of year - to get every present right, attend all manner of social functions, navigate family politics, offer hand-made baked goods, and spend all the money. Christmas day itself ends up being everything but a 'silent night'!

“There is wisdom in seeing Advent as a penitential season, a ‘little lent’ as it used to be called, but the penitential aspect of Advent is very easily lost because of the festive excesses going on around us.”

How can we see the wood from the trees, if you'll pardon the expression, and focus on what matters most this season? We need to create some quiet space in our

lives and shut down some of the noise, which can be very loud outside, but, also, inside us. There is wisdom in seeing Advent as a penitential season, a 'little lent' as it used to be called, but the penitential aspect of Advent is very easily lost because of the festive excesses going on around us. We need to be creative with our penitence, finding ways to fast, pray and give alms while making the most of this time of year which lends itself so well to hospitality and fellowship. It's a bit of a balancing act, and it will look different from person to person and family to family.

“It could be something to bring the family together, like giving up screens in the evenings.”

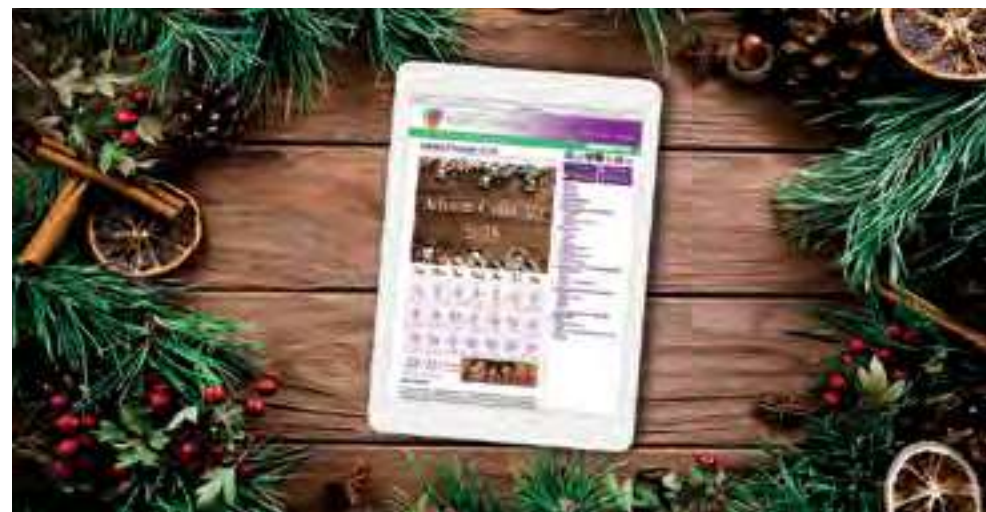
There are wonderful traditions, like the Advent wreath or the Jesse Tree, which can build prayer into our lives as a family and create a sense of anticipation. We like singing the traditional hymn "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" every night with our children, lighting the candles and counting down the days till the celebration of Jesus' birth. We can involve the children in our almsgiving as well, and we try to choose

something to 'fast' from, although this is the hardest one during Advent! It could be something to bring the family together, like giving up screens in the evenings. I bet most of us have some board games stored somewhere that would love to get some action.

But if you can only do one thing this Advent, make it going to confession as a family. It doesn't get any more penitential than that, and what better way can there be to make sure your heart is prepared to celebrate the birth of the Saviour? Jesus himself awaits us in the confessional, ready to offer his unconditional mercy and forgiveness; we know from the Lord's parables that Heaven greatly rejoices whenever a sinner repents from their sins. I am reminded as well about the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, and how the unwise ones did not care for their lamps and ran out of oil while they waited for the Bridegroom. The Bridegroom himself is constantly offering to replenish our oil, through the Sacraments; and it would be very foolish to turn down such a present! Christ gifts himself on so many levels, and this can be the perfect season to meditate on the different meanings of the greatest Gift, and to make space to encounter him and receive him.

Fish & Tips

Daily Ideas for Disciples



2018 Online Advent Calendar

Archbishop Eamon Martin launched the 2018 online Advent Calendar, which went live on www.catholicbishops.ie on the first Sunday of Advent, 2 December. The 2018 Advent calendar provides a special focus on family as part of ongoing reflections following the visit of Pope Francis to Ireland for the World Meeting of Families 2018. Over the coming weeks, there will be family prayers and suggestions for acts of kindness or charity that all of us are encouraged to undertake during the month of December. The Advent Calendar will also share tips on how families can care for our common home by having a more sustainable Christmas. Now in its fifth year, the online Advent Calendar

will offer resources for the parish, school and the home which are available behind a virtual door each day during the season of Advent. Behind each door there will be content aimed at assisting people to pray and to reflect on how best we can keep Christ at the centre of our Christmas preparations during this special liturgical season. A popular feature from last year's Advent Calendar was the audio thought for the day. Contributors this year will include bishops, priests, religious, laity, staff of the councils and agencies of the Irish Bishops' Conference, as well as primary, secondary and university students.

Check it out now at www.catholicbishops.ie/advent-calendar/

The 2018 Advent Calendar will also include:

- Mass Readings and Saint of the Day;
- Family prayers;
- Advent videos: blessing of the crib in the home, blessing of the advent wreath in the home;
- The Words of Pope Francis from WMOF2018;
- Acts of kindness in the family, school and parish
- Suggestions to make Christmas more sustainable so as to care for our common home;
- Advent music;
- Seasonal prayers;
- Multimedia thought for the day;
- Resources for Advent including books and music;
- Advent events in dioceses and parishes;
- Information on Trócaire's Global Gifts for 2018 as well special appeals to help families in need.

People of God

Amy Luttrell (40)

Parish: St. Thomas More, Austin Texas, USA (formerly Church of the Assumption, Dalkey, Co. Dublin)

Occupation: former music teacher/singer, homeschooling mum

What ministry/service/role do you have in your parish? In Texas -- cantor, religious education teacher, led adult faith formation groups, RCIA sponsor, homeless ministry. One-to-one evangelization and mentorship.

In Dalkey – PPC. Work with the parish priests and community leaders to bring a focus of parish-wide renewal and discipleship. I began by hosting an American musician/youth minister for outreach to schools and to build momentum within the parish, then began a "vision group" to explore ideas and foster



lay parish leadership. Youth and young adult ministry. Worked with other parishes and schools to build connections and foster relationship.

How/why did you get involved? My faith journey was awakened when I was about 5 years old and I had an experience of the Holy Spirit. I and my family eventually quit going to church, but in college the Spirit led me back. During a retreat at age 18 the Holy Spirit captured my heart for good. I am happiest when

I am living a life of faith and using my gifts to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

What helps keep you connected to your parish?

Texas parish - dozens of ways to be involved at any particular time. The community God has built for us gives us a sense of home and commitment to the parish.

Dalkey Parish - the fact that the parish is right in the heart of the village connects the Catholic community to the local community. We have beautiful friendships within and outside the active parish community, but they all are a part of our community.

Favourite ways to nourish your faith Tell us more...

Daily prayer and scripture reading, the sacraments, and Eucharistic adoration. Talking with others about faith and the interior life, whether they believe the same way I do or not, makes me come alive.

EVANGELISATION

No greater present...

'We have tested and tasted too much, lover –
Through a chink too wide there comes in no wonder.
But here in the Advent – darkened room
Where the dry black bread and the sugarless tea
Of penance will charm back the luxury
Of a child's soul, we'll return to Doom
The knowledge we stole but could not use'

From 'Advent' by Patrick Kavanagh



Fr Joe McDonald looks ahead to the Christmas period

The colour worn at Advent and Lent is the same. Purple or violet. For me, whilst I love the colour and I see it as a rich and royal hue, it has its penitential note. Of course Lent is much more full of penance and fasting, yet as Kavanagh hints, Advent has also got the shades of abstinence. If the chink is too wide, if the feast is too large,

and too often, we quickly get overload. It's too much. Excess kills our appreciation and enjoyment. To have too ready, and too available knowledge, kills off wonder. Wonder is the great casualty of our time. We are saturated with knowledge. Delay used to sharpen our wonder. Now there is no delay. Everything is instant. Everything is immediate. All knowledge is now literally at our fingertips. There was a great joy in anticipation. There was a

great joy in savouring. Anticipation and Savouring do not get much of a look in now. We are in too much of a hurry. We have no time. This is the age of the instant. Wonder and its cousin, Awe, are all but stifled. Wonder and Awe are gifts of the Holy Spirit and when these are lost the

Spirit is throttled. Of course the Holy Spirit survives and indeed thrives because it is part of the Triune God.

“It is meant to be a purposeful creative period of preparation.”

There is much debate about the waiting that we engage in Advent. It is certainly not a passive twiddling of the thumbs waiting. It is meant to be a purposeful creative period of preparation. Despite the readings recently that speak clearly of Christ's return and indeed in Matthews gospel the Final Judgment, we need to remember that God's judgment is merciful. We do not in fact get what we deserve in accordance with our sins but rather his

clemency. The Lord does not want our Advent waiting to be characterised by fear and trembling. Yes we are clearly called to be good to one another, especially those who have little or nothing. Having said this our Advent waiting is to be joyful expectation. We are waiting for the Lord Jesus who loves us.

We will give time to turkey and tree, to pudding and pie, and Christmas may come and go in the great flurry that is the custom but what will remain? Leftovers and Hangovers? Will the party have become a brawl? Will we be paying off Christmas to St. Patrick's Day? Is it possible that we can make it different this year? There are no bridges burning, we enjoyed ourselves, we reminded ourselves of what, and more importantly who, matters and more than all this we glimpsed Jesus. To

make Christmas that little bit different this year depends on the plans and decisions we make now in Advent by way of preparation.

Let's park the fear and embrace a freedom to enjoy. Let's not allow the glitz and razzmatazz to take over. Let's enjoy ourselves. Let's remember the baby born in the feeding box for animals, the Saviour of the World. Let's be instruments of his peace. Let me be the one who plans for joy. Let me be the one who recognises the trouble spots and steers things away from them. Let me be the one who shows a bit of courage and a little leadership reminding ourselves that it is having our loved ones around us that is the real richness of the season. There is no greater present than the Presence of Jesus himself.



Sacraments

Ite missa est

Dr Fáinche Ryan

The Mass is central to being a Catholic. But what is the Mass besides a gathering of people, led by a priest, who mumble some prayers and sit and kneel and stand at strange times? Were aliens to land on earth and observe a Mass I wonder what they might think? Or indeed what do people not brought up in a religious ritual tradition think about the Mass, about prayer, about liturgy? The Mass only makes sense if understood in its correct context, and this context is the people who try to continually retell the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection so that it will never be forgotten, a story which is slowly changing

them into a holy people, a people worthy of the title 'Christian', follower of Christ. Many people, especially children and young adults, claim that they find the Mass boring. Perhaps this is because their experience is too often that of a poorly celebrated ritual? Maybe they do not understand, as they have never really been taught, the rich significance of celebrating the Eucharist? The words and actions may be familiar, but perhaps not the meaning. The Mass can only make sense to a believer because it is always about thanksgiving, about giving thanks to God. The term Mass (*missa*) became the popular word for the celebration in the Church in the seventh century,



after the time of Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604). In the early days of Christianity many terms were used such as the 'breaking of bread' (*fractio panis*), 'The Lord's Supper' (*coena dominica*), the 'Sacrifice' (*prophora, oblatio*), 'the gathering together' (*synaxis, congregatio*), 'the Mysteries', and 'the Sacrament of the Altar'. A variety of names were used to speak of the same thing. Simi-

larly, today many terms are in use among Christian Churches such as the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, and Holy Mass. The word *missa* comes from the Latin word *missio*, simply meaning a 'dismissal' (*dimissio*). This phrase, *missa est*, was originally used to release people from attendance at the emperor's courts, reminding us of how we adapted some facets of 'imperial' practice

when it became legal to be a Christian (with the emperors Constantine and Theodosius in the fourth century). With the Mass this phrase brings the formal prayer to a close – *Ite missa est*, 'Go forth, the Mass is ended'. Indeed all our concluding rites command us to 'go', we are now to make incarnate in our lives that which we have just celebrated, we are to live as Christians.

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, December 6, 2018

Youth Space

A once-in-a-lifetime experience

Page 34



*All
will be
well...*



In a world that is becoming increasingly characterised by conflict, confusion and uncertainty, the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity is a value more prized than ever before. While it's easy to ignore our own failings or struggles and coil back into ourselves, the capacity to recover from hardship and learn from that experience is foundational to living a happy and more meaningful life.

Given the importance of this quality it seems obvious that schools should be focused on developing resilience in young people, especially in light of increasing trends of bullying and mental health issues. Without this character trait those who are suffering at the hands of others,



Christian hope and resilience go hand in hand, writes Colm Fitzpatrick

or even in their own minds, are at risk of harming themselves physically, socially, and psychologically. But are emerging school resilience programmes living up to their highest standards, or is there an element missing in them that diminishes what is being taught?

This is the question that Tuam-based priest Prof. Eamonn Conway and Dr Kerry Greer of Limerick's Mary Immaculate

College have asked, arguing that wellbeing programmes in Irish schools lack a scientific basis, and that the Christian notion of hope has been largely ignored in this type of teaching. In a paper entitled 'The Commodification of Resilience: Rediscovering the Virtue of Christian Hope for Troubled World', the authors say that hope can contribute to developing resilience, and that overlooking this prospect

encourages students to believe that religious faith is "irrelevant and superfluous".

"Clearly religious education has much to contribute to building resilience in young people and for those who are Christians, a relationship with God, a relationship with Christ with the companionship and promise that holds should be the ground on which they daily stand and enable them to respond to various challenges which are inevitably part of life," says Fr Eamonn.

The argument is straightforward: Christian hope is a vital resource in developing resilience – more so perhaps than other methods – and therefore should be integrated into wellbeing

programmes, especially in faith schools, given its current absence. It's a reasonable suggestion to make but really hinges upon whether Christian hope is advantageous for resilience development.

Fortunately, there is evidence aplenty to back this claim. For example, one 2016 multiwave study that embraced nearly 800 adults from 42 countries in an effort to establish whether any of seven personality strengths did promote resilience – the seven being: hope, grit, meaning in life, curiosity, gratitude, control beliefs and use of strengths – revealed that only the personality strength of hope emerged as having a statistically significant

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Family News

AND EVENTS

Have a Lullymore Christmas!

With the Christmas holidays well and truly arrived, it's that time of year where children finally get to meet Santa Claus! Father Christmas will be greeting visitors, both young and old, at Kildare's Lullymore Heritage and Discovery Park up till December 23. The 2018 Christmas visit will include a gift from the Elves' workshop, as well as a festive train trip.

The road train – The Christmas Express – will take you on a magical trip through ancient woodlands, glassy lakes and a beautiful peatland landscape. There'll be an Elf Hologram in a new stone age house in the woodlands and a Christmas fairy hologram in an old-style thatched cottage.

Make sure to also visit the crib scene while you're there. Animals such as donkeys, goats and miniature horses will be in paddocks beside the centre. Have a merry time!

COFFEE, ANYONE?: Having a desk job during the winter season can be a nightmare – especially with the cold commute into work and the icy breeze from opening and closing doors.

One thing which offers solace and comfort during these freezing months is a warm cup of tea or coffee that can keep you replenished and toasty for the whole day. Unfortunately, hot liquids like these tend to go cold quickly resulting in numerous trips back to the kettle.



However, there is a gadget that provides a quick fix to this problem – a mug warmer. These prevent your freshly-poured brew from cooling off too soon by providing a roomy, warm perch for your mug.

They heat up to keep your coffee at the perfect temperature so there'll be no more running back and forth.

This is something that will make you wonder how you ever lived without it!

Don't trade your traits

While we're always told that having a good personality can take you a long way, this statement might be truer than we have realised, given new findings which indicate that those with positive personality traits live longer.

Researchers analysed the adaptive traits of thousands of people who were high school students in 1960 and then looked for links between these traits and lifespans of the individuals. According to their analysis, those individuals who scored highly on calmness, social sensitivity (empathy), tidiness, sense of curiosity, and degree of maturity, but scored low on impulsivity, appeared to have a lower relative risk of all-cause death over the 48-year period.

The research, however, is limited in so far that the associations between certain personality traits and longevity do not necessarily indicate a cause-effect relationship since the study was observational.

A need to doubt our doubts



Philosophy is having a bit of a moment in Ireland. It became a Junior Cert short course in 2016, and there are moves afoot to make it a Leaving Cert subject. The Philosophy Ireland organisation is running more workshops every year, in schools, workplaces and prisons.

Our President made the promotion of philosophy a key part of his first term. And every so often the papers will run a thinkpiece about how philosophy and 'learning how to think' will help us avoid the next housing crash, or compete with China, or fill the void in the national soul.

As a *bona fide* philosophy nerd (I did a weekend course in it when I was eight, which tells you all you need to know), this is all great as far as it goes. The love and pursuit of truth – what's not to like? At the same time though, I worry. An education in philosophy is great if people are actually thinking, actually learning, actually dedicating themselves to the pursuit of the truth. But it's completely possible to identify as a thinking person without ever having to do any thinking.

In fact, it's easy. Boosting philosophy will help no-one if all it does is produce a legion of what I think of as 'Bold Questioners'.

Common sense

What is a Bold Questioner? First, think of his nemesis, the genuinely uncritical person – call him the common-sense thinker. The common-sense thinker is the archetypal man on the street. He lives what Socrates would call the unexamined life. He is a faithful disciple of the conventional wisdom.

The Bold Questioner defines himself in opposition to this apostle of the ordinary. He challenges orthodoxies, is



Everyday philosophy Ben Conroy

sceptical of authority, and is not going to be hoodwinked. He is a great believer in expertise, and reckons he's got a decent amount of the stuff. He's armed with philosophical knowledge, and he knows how to use it. He's a level above.

The trouble is that the Bold Questioner is only one level above. He's questioned the views of the common-sense thinker, and he's not wrong to do so, but he's stopped right there, content to swap the settled views of the masses for the set of views of the people who question the masses.

“The Bold Questioner is what happens when ‘thinking person’ becomes an ideology rather than a practice”

There are different versions of these: less sophisticated Bold Questioners tend to like Daniel Dennett or Neil DeGrasse Tyson, while the more sophisticated ones prefer Hume or Nietzsche.

But the Bold Questioner is what happens when 'thinking person' becomes an ideology rather than a practice. The dangerous thing about the Bold Questioner ideology is that unlike Marxists, Monarchists, or Mennonites, BQs don't know they've adopted an ideological position: they have 'disinterested, empirical pursuer of truth' baked into their self-conception.

And this is fatal to real thinking and real philosophy. Let

me illustrate.

I was vaguely involved in an argument with a writer on Twitter recently – a blue-checkmark verified account who had bylines in *Salon* and *Rolling Stone* – who was accusing someone else of trying to “impose parochial stigmatization of harmless behaviours as prior to crucial categorical imperatives and rule



utilitarian principles”. What?

First of all, rule utilitarianism is a consequentialist ethical theory. As the name suggests, consequentialists think that the morally best action is always the one that produces the best overall outcomes.

By contrast, the categorical imperative is from Kantian philosophy, a generally non-consequentialist school of ethics. Non-consequentialists think that ethics is about more than just consequences: an action – say torture – could be intrinsically wrong regardless of what outcomes it leads to.

I'm massively oversimplifying

here (stay tuned for future columns, dear reader), and it's more than possible that my verified friend subscribes to one of the galaxy-brained ethical systems that in some way combine the two schools.

But if he does, I have no idea what it is, because during the entire interaction he never once explained what his imperatives and principles actually were. Instead he just kept repeating the phrase “categorical imperatives and rule utilitarian principles” in tweet after tweet, as though he expected their mere invocation to cast out all ethical error.

“Philosophy in the hands of a Bold Questioner becomes a club to beat down the BQ's ignorant opponents”

What resulted was less of an argument and more of a Gilbert and Sullivan musical. (Utilitarian maxims! *Im-peratives categorical!* I am the very model of a modern major general!) Philosophy in the hands of a Bold Questioner becomes a club to beat down the BQ's ignorant opponents rather than a shovel with which to unearth the truth. And the worst part is, they don't even know it: they genuinely think they're being brilliant.

I know this particular habit of thought because in many ways I was this guy (but with Keith Ward and Thomas Aquinas instead of Dawkins or Hume). And there's more than a bit of the Bold Questioner inside me still, and I wager inside anyone who fancies themselves a philosopher.

But if we're to get serious about real thinking and real philosophy, we owe it to ourselves to kill it with fire.

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potential to promote it. Indeed, an earlier study has shown that mortality rate increases in those highest in hopelessness, even after age and prior health has been taken in account. Of course, these results must be treated with caution, but for Fr Eamonn, studies like these show that the construct of hope has more potential than most to help deal with a troubled world – and “troubled” is certainly the best way to describe it.

Foundations

Fr Eamonn and Dr Greer point out that some 13% of all humanities students, for instance, suffer from mental health problem, which tend to lay the foundations for later medication dependency. They add that the Irish State is now looking to schools and to teachers in the classroom to address this rising tide of mental health challenges in our society.

It has even been reported recently by school principals that significant numbers of primary school children as young as four are presenting with serious mental health difficulties such as anxiety, depression and self-harm.

“Young children in primary school are facing mental health challenges...and this does raise many fundamental questions about what is happening in society, what is happening in the family and you know, in a sense, this is what we should be good at as a Christian community – helping people to stand up to challenges and in a sense to be hopeful and to be signs of hope for others in society,” Fr Eamonn explains.

While it's unclear about how effective resilience programmes currently are in faith schools, Fr Eamonn believes that the multivalent problems faced by young students today could be better dealt with by introducing programmes which teach the Christian message of hope, rather than solely focusing on the provision of coping tactics, techniques and practices.

“Fr Eamonn is calling on Irish faith schools to reform their current wellbeing programmes by recognising the importance of religious education and Christian hope”

“My concern is that what is proposed, for instance, in the new Junior Cycle wellbeing programme which when it is eventually rolled out will run to 400 hours for students with Civil, Social and Political Education (CSPE), Physical Education (PE) and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) as the main contributors, affording only a very marginal role to religious education. There's Religious Education in so far that it contributes to human rights education, social justice education but nothing in terms of how it invites people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ,” Fr Eamonn says.

Living out the virtue of Christian hope when confronted with adversity that we cannot control



or overcome, he and Dr Greer say, allows us to dig deep to unearth a level of confident patience and perseverance that will sustain us.

It can also give us the courage to resist, challenge and triumph over adversity and so circumstances that seem hopeless to some people will seem less so to those living in accordance with this virtue. This is because as Christians, death no longer needs to be considered as the moment of our annihilation and similarly, in moments of crisis and adversity we can come to know that we are held by a love that is stronger even than death itself.

Very much in line with the famous adage of mystic Julian of Norwich – “All will be well” – Christians have the ability to remain joyful in all circumstances, however difficult, because of their knowledge that God gently guides history and cares in an intimate way about us. The task of Christian education then, is to deepen young people's trust that their lives are safe in God's hands, that God has a plan for them and to help them to discern their future according to this plan.

In light of this, Fr Eamonn is calling on Irish faith schools to reform their current wellbeing programmes by recognising the importance of religious education and Christian hope, which offers not

a product or a package, but a person, the resurrected Christ.

“I'm encouraging faith-based schools to evaluate critically the resilience programmes that are being rolled out, to evaluate them critically, and to see in what way they need to be complemented or substituted by programmes that reflect that characteristic spirit of those schools.”

“In moments of crisis and adversity we can come to know that we are held by a love that is stronger even than death itself”

But this isn't just a problem only schools and academic institutions should be tackling, but all Christians who, by living out this Christian hope daily, can inspire others to realise that most things aren't worth worrying over.

“I think the best way we can promote hope is to live hope – it is up to ourselves to live knowing that our lives, even in the most difficult moments, are held in God's hands and that our lives are protected, shaped and guided by God's hands and to live trusting in that and believing in that,” Fr Eamonn says.



Julian of Norwich.

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



Our minibus was packed to the gunwales with four children, furniture, bedding, tools, clothes and toys. Hundreds of miles of road and two sea crossings lay ahead of us. I felt like writing ‘Cork or bust’ on the side of the bus.

With my wife on maternity leave, and with my having the opportunity to work remotely some of the time, we had decided to take an extended Christmas break in Ireland. That way we could catch up properly with family and friends, and at the same time renovate our old farmhouse in West Cork. The kids were even going to attend the local school for a few weeks. All I had to do was get us there.

This was going to be a big adventure for all of us. I had even bought the older children little diaries, so they could keep a record of their trip. They were going to tell their classmates all about school-life in Ireland when they got home. As we drove along, in between games of I spy, I was teaching the kids to count, as Gaelige, and key phrases such as, “an bhfuil cead agam dul amach go dtí and leithreas”.

The journey took us from the Isle of Wight, across the Solent, through the New Forest and the rolling hills of Wiltshire and Somerset.

We stopped in Bath for lunch, and for a visit to the famous Roman baths, which fascinated the older kids. They could even touch and taste the warm mineral water from the ancient hot spring. Nightfall saw us pull into a quirky self-built cottage in South Wales. The next day we sailed to Ireland.

Fleeting trips

After three years living on the Isle of Wight, with only fleeting trips back, it felt like a homecoming as the lights of Wexford appeared on the horizon. After a few hours driving – and several stops to feed the baby – we eventually rolled up at my parents' house.

The kids gleefully jumped out and ran into their arms. The next day, we arrived at our 18th-Century farmhouse, which stood strong, despite five years of being rented

out. It had been home to the older kids, and it retained a talismanic quality for them as the ‘special house’, and their true place in the world.

The old house embraced us warmly, like an old friend. The rambling old place provided a bedroom for everyone. My eldest girl looked like the cat that got the cream when she learned that she would not have to share with her little sister, who does not quite share her housekeeping standards, shall we say.

We kitted out her bedroom nicely, and there was even room for a sofa overlooking the garden – perfect for a girl who spends hours sitting quietly, lost in books.

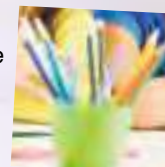
Even though it was only for a few weeks, we wanted the kids to fit in, and so we bought them uniforms for school. These were not your modern, comfortable tracksuit top and polo-shirt uniforms, I was glad to see. These were proper, traditional Irish school uniforms: an itchy woolly v-necked jumper, an uncomfortable hard collar and a school tie.

There was also proper, traditional Irish weather as we walked the kids to school on their first day: torrents of West Cork rain bucketed down around us as we waded through puddles to the gate.

On arrival, the kindly head teacher showed us to their classroom. The arrival of two new children mid-term was big news in this small rural school. Kids wandered up and said hello. Some initially stared at them as though they were museum exhibits.

The class teacher arrived and settled them nicely, but we could see how overwhelmed they were by the situation. Would this be a disaster? An anxious morning followed, but all our fears vanished as they skipped sunnily out of school at home time, full of chat about all the new friends they had made – one boy even stopped to give my boy a high-five. As I tucked him in that night, my son smiled and said: “I love my life here.”

All had changed in a few short days, but all was well.



Youth Space



Dan Pender reflects on the unforgettable impact of the papal visit

On a changeable Summer's day in the Phoenix Park amidst a sea of memorabilia, crucifixes and 'Lollipopes' I got to see the Holy Father himself, Pope Francis. Back in April when my classmates and I were asked to volunteer for the Pope's visit I was delighted to be honoured with the opportunity to partake in a truly historic experience. In total, 40 students and ten teachers from Presentation College, Carlow made the journey up to the papal Mass in the Phoenix Park.

After a bus trip to the Phoenix Park from Carlow on Saturday morning, my classmates and I received our training along with thousands of others, before making our way back to our CEIST host school. What I expected to be a night on the cold, hard floor of a school gym turned into an enjoyable evening with my friends. The opportunity to meet with other young people from all over Ireland and make new friends was great, through quizzes and board games and this was all on the first evening!

Preparation

After a quick sleep, the morning had arrived and all of us were on our way by 6am. We wandered with bleary eyes and an excitement that battled the rain, as it could do nothing to dampen our spirits. We arrived and began helping

out immediately, assisting with the preparation of the Eucharist and helping to set up the sub chapels. There was an incredible atmosphere in the tent, one of both reverence and excitement.

“The gentle aura that surrounded Pope Francis as he passed by made you feel at ease”

As we completed our set up, we had time to wander around the park and take in our surroundings. Thankfully, as if through the sheer power of people's positivity, the rain began to clear up and the hours slipped by and before we knew it, people were arriving in droves.

Eventually, Pope Francis himself

arrived to great fanfare and it felt as if the crowd were rushing towards him. When he passed by me, it was an experience quite unlike any other, people were cheering, clapping and waving their papal flags with great enthusiasm. The gentle aura that surrounded him as he passed by made you feel at ease, and he gave the impression that he was quite content, at home and enjoying himself.

When the Mass began, I finally had the chance to look out across the park. I laid my eyes upon a kaleidoscope of colour and all around me was a cacophony of sounds, as people responded to the prayers and jostled to get a better view. It was a great display of Catholic unity that such a large crowd attended the papal Mass.

I was awe-struck that so many people, a number I have never seen before nor am I likely to ever see again, would turn out and brave the elements. The young, the old, the infirm, all to see one man: our Holy Father.

I was honoured to have even attended the papal Mass, but to have the opportunity to act as a Eucharistic Minister at the Mass was an unforgettable experience. The day itself is forever etched in my memory and I always recall it with great fondness.

The World Meeting of Families for me was about making new friends, creating great memories as well as having the opportunity to partake in a once-in-a-lifetime experience.



Students and staff from Presentation College at the Phoenix Park for the papal Mass.

Georgina Maher, teacher at Presentation College:

The fact that students put themselves forward to volunteer for this amazing life event gives me great hope and pride in young people today. They are willing to give their time and to help others to take pride in their own faith and values and to be confident in their own skin.

“The day itself is forever etched in my memory and I always recall it with great fondness”

As a Religious Education teacher, I encourage my students to engage in charity work, community and parish volunteering. I have been humbled over the years with the pride that young people have in their own faith, traditions, morals and values. It is wonderful that our young generation are sure of what is important to them, and are not afraid of who they want to be.

The World Meeting of Families was an amazing opportunity for us all to feel connected and to be part of a community. It had a huge positive impact on both teachers, staff and students involved. Friendships and everlasting memories were made during this experience.

It has created many opportunities for our students and ignited the flame for their love of helping and caring for others, so much so that some of the students have now registered to volunteer in Lourdes with their parish and diocese in the summer of 2019. This also speaks volumes about their own characters and selflessness during their summer holidays.

I am immensely proud of our school, both students and staff, in their commitment and involvement in the World Meeting of Families 2018, and no doubt we will relive the stories and memories in the future again.

Compromise is key to a peaceful Christmas day

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

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

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

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

do you want to alternate each year with family or do you want to do your own thing? Do you want to do Christmas Day in one house and St Stephen's day in another? This is your decision to make as a couple, it's all part of the importance of 'leaving and cleaving' you have left your family and now this is your family. Once you have made your decision

you need to communicate it to your respective families in a loving way. Be prepared, you might be met with some protests like "but darling, we have been doing X tradition for the last 30 years".

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

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

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

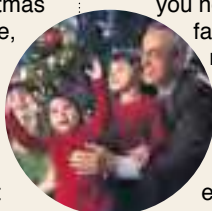
Sure you might have exchanged presents in a different way or ate dinner at a different time, so decide what traditions you want to keep for yourselves and what ones you want to start anew.

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



Love Notes

Wendy Grace



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



What's wrong with challenging consensus?

I have quite a few interesting interviews to pore over this week, with some new voices featuring and an older voice retiring.

On last Thursday night's **Tonight Show** (Virgin Media 1) I was impressed by writer and lecturer Dr David Thunder, who spoke of the media creating a narrative that served only the liberal side in debate, especially in recent referenda. He saw certain views being promoted in media as the "right" ones, and those who didn't agree being demonised or marginalised. I'd like to have heard more from him, but the item was too short, there were three others on the panel and he wasn't inclined to butt in and speak over people.

Kitty Holland of the *Irish Times* gave a spirited defence of her newspaper, but in a way proved Thunder's point by regarding the referendum results as showing "a new consensus", though later backpedalled somewhat by referring to "a new majority way of thinking". Thunder pointed out that there was no way that having just two in three agreeing on something could be described as "consensus".

Actually this attitude only serves to make the one third invisible and wouldn't you think journalists might be more at home challenging consensus? Holland thought



George Hook has signed off from his Saturday radio show.

that conservative viewpoints might in fact be overrepresented in the media! Former Rose of Tralee, Brianna Perkins, from Australia, thought Ireland one of the safest places for free speech, suggesting that no journalist's life was under threat (that's a low bar!). Wendy Grace didn't want journalists broadcasting opinion as news, and lamented the way public discourse was being tribalised.

During that debate when issues related to the referendum on the Eighth Amendment arose, guest presenter Sinead O'Carroll of *The Jour-*

nal said "we don't want to have that debate again", and I thought why not? If the other side had lost you can be sure we'd be having that debate over and over.

And it wasn't the first time I've heard that line. On last Thursday's **Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk) guest presenter Jonathan Healy had a very timely interview with midwife Mary Fitzgibbon about conscientious objection relating to the abortion bill currently going through Dáil Éireann. At one stage he said "I don't want to re-open a debate"...but earlier in the

show he was effectively re-opening the Brexit debate, with remainder Alistair Campbell. It felt like two pals discussing the issue and both having the same viewpoint. What happened to journalist's neutrality – surely you should thoroughly interrogate the views of those you agree with as well as the views of those you don't?

Partisan

The abortion related item was flagged earlier, referring to nurses and midwives 'who object to treating patients on moral grounds' – but surely to call abortion treatment is to take a partisan position? I presume the objecting midwives have no problem with "treatment"; it's just that they don't want to be complicit in the destruction of babies.

If you wanted an entirely laughable example of media bias on the issue you could look back on last weekend's **Sunday Show** on Vir-



Alastair Campbell.

PICK OF THE WEEK

MY FAITH AND ME

BBC1, Sunday, December 9, 11.30am

Invictus Games medallist JJ Chalmers reveals how his faith and support of his family and friends helped him to overcome devastating injuries.

ADVENT REFLECTIONS

EWTN, Sunday, December 9, 2.30pm (also Monday, December 11, 7.30pm and Friday, December 14, 9am)

Fr Marius O'Reilly encourages Catholics to take Advent as seriously as they do Lent. From St Mary's Church in Cork.

THE SIMPSONS

Channel 4, Tuesday, December 11, 11.05am

Bart casually sells his soul to Milhouse and is surprised at the drastic consequences.

gin Media 1. It was an early review of the year, and so the abortion referendum figured prominently.

The panel consisted of prominent pro-choice repealers Senator Catherine Noone (FG), Louise O'Reilly TD (SF) and Stephen Donnelly TD (FF). Presenter of the show was Dr Ciara Kelly, who was speaking at Doctors For Choice meetings before she took over George Hook's lunchtime show on Newstalk. The clips shown by way of introduction were all of the 'Yes' side.

Last Monday morning on the **Pat Kenny Show** Dr Tieran Murray of Doctors for Choice was given a 20-minute interview to discuss last weekend's controversial EGM of the Irish College of General Practitioners. A texter complained that we were only getting one side of the issue,

but Kenny pointed out that a pro-life doctor had given the other side earlier on Newstalk Breakfast. I checked, and Dr Andrew O'Regan had got a six-minute interview.

Finally, I was sad listening to George Hook's final **Saturday Sit-In** (Newstalk). I was an emotional show with lots of heartfelt tributes from regular guests – Teresa Lowe in particular became quite choked up. I wasn't always a fan of Hook's views or style but his show differed from the mainstream, didn't suffer from the usual suffocating group think and got me listening to the radio earlier than is natural on a Saturday morning.

📧 boregan@hotmail.com



Pat O'Kelly

Music

Delicious choices of the oddly seasonal *Messiah* afoot

Not surprisingly, December reaps its usual crop of Handel's *Messiah* even if the work relates to Christ's Passion and Resurrection as much as to His Nativity. *Messiah* covers the Church's year from advent with *Christ Triumphant* as its magnificent coda.

Along with the Irish Baroque Orchestra, the choral group Resurgam, directed by visiting English conductor Robert Hollingworth, takes the oratorio to the National Opera House in Wexford this evening (Thursday, December 6), Dublin's St Patrick's Cathedral tomorrow (Friday, December 7) and Galway's Cathedral on Saturday, December 8. Resurgam's soloists are Anna Devin, William



Robert Hollingworth.

Purefoy, Dean Power and Alex Ashworth.

Belfast's Philharmonic Choir joins the Ulster Orchestra at the city's Waterfront Hall also tomorrow evening under Handel connoisseur Laurence Cummings. The Phil's soloists comprise Irish soprano Ailish Tynan, Dutch mezzo Cécile van der Sant, English tenor Nicholas Mulrow and Norwegian bass Njår

Sparbo.

Continuing its long association with *Messiah*, Our Lady's Choral Society presents three performances at the National Concert Hall on December 12, 13 and 14. Under music director Proinnsias Ó Duinn, the indefatigable RTÉCO supports Sarah Brady, Patricia Bardon, Andrew Gavin and Padraic Rowan.

My earliest memories of *Messiah* bring me back to childhood and Dublin's Capitol Theatre. Taken by a dear aunt to an Our Lady's Sunday matinee I can't recall the actual performance, but I remember a front-of-house usher, on seeing me, courteously informing the aunt: "No pictures I'm afraid today,

Mam." With the somewhat imperious response, "I am well aware of that", the good lady guided me to the balcony.

Main stay

Among other seasonal events the Goethe Institute Choir, under its conductor John Dexter, will be at the NCH on Monday, December 17 making *Cantatas 1, 3 and 4* from Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* the main stay of its programme. Accompanied by the Goethe Ensemble, the soloists are Katy Kelly, Christina Whyte, Eoghan Desmond and Gyula Nagy.

Written in Leipzig in 1734, Bach's *Oratorio* opens with high trumpets and stirring

timpani in the exuberant *Jauchzet, frohlocket!* (Rejoice, exult!) – one of the glories of the choral repertoire.

Neither Bach nor Handel find a niche in Chamber Choir Ireland's Christ Church Cathedral concert on Sunday, December 16. Instead, conductor Paul Hillier prefers Thomas Tallis (1505-1585) and his setting of the Mass based on the plain chant Christmas introit *Puer natus est nobis*. The programme also offers Britten, Pärt and traditional carols.

CCI's recent *Before Bach and After* programme in Dublin's St Ann's Church brought three related, and fascinating, pieces by Maynooth-born David Fennessy.

I find *Letter to Michael* haunting, unsettling and, at times, beseechingly innocent. Slow and soft to begin *Ne reminiscaris* (Remember not), which pays homage to renaissance Orlando Lassus, gradually rises to an ecstatic apex before the final Japanese inspired *Hashima Refrain*. Disquieting on the one hand and consolatory on the other, CCI responds with unfailing assurance and virtuosity to Fennessy's ingenious blending of simplicity and complexity in each piece.

Fennessy (b. 1976) studied with John Feeley at DIT's College of Music before moving to James MacMillan at Glasgow's Royal Conservatory where he is now a lecturer.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Wonderful children's books

Books Editor

At this time of the year the book shops are flooded with books for children and young adults, all hoping for great sales over the few weeks of the year when people go on a splurge of holiday related book buying. But like a puppy, a good book isn't just for Christmas. On these pages we present a selection of those that, one way or another, seem the most relevant, the most interesting ...and the most entertaining.

Younger children

Guess How Much I Love You: Here I am! A finger puppet board book

by Sean McBratney, illustrated by Anita Jeram (Walker Books, €10.99)

Previously a highly popular picture book, this new adaptation highlights the bond between parent and child, and as a finger puppet book is perfect for reading and playing together, involving as it does the affectionate life of Big Nut Brown Hare and Little Nut Brown Hare.

Animalphabet, by Julia Donaldson illustrated by Sharon-King Chai

(Two Hoots, €16.99)

Filled with all kinds of animals, this is an exploration book of an intriguing kind, by the ever popular Julie Donaldson, who has long been a Christmas favourite.

Happy Christmas Pigín

by Kathleen Watkins, illustrated by Margaret Ann Suggs (Gill Books, €14.99)

A new book from a celebrity

author, with the emphasis on author.

Here Pigín and badger go Christmas shopping in Dublin, seeing all kinds of familiar

streets and shops.

A visit to Clarendon Street Church to see the Christmas crib – a lovely touch, which many will appreciate – leads to a treat in Bewley's. Truly a Dublin filled book.

Grandpa Christmas



by Michael Morpurgo, illustrated by Jim Field (Egmont Books, €11.99)

Rather than buying presents Grandpa shares his memories of his own childhood with his granddaughter. But these days many of things he enjoyed in the world of nature seemed to be endangered. A warm hearted book, that carries a warning to all about helping to preserve the world as it ought to be. This is a tale for smaller children by the author of Warhorse, founded in familial love.

Oi! Duck-Billed Platypus

by Kes Gray, illustrated by Jim Field (Hodder Children's Books, €14.99)

Using the strange names and often stranger appearance of animals, this funny, rhyming, read-aloud picture book, will amuse both children and parents and perhaps inspired a few poets in the making.

The President's Cat

by Peter Donnelly (Gill, €14.99)

Author Donnelly's first account of the fun events in the Áras was a great suc-



cess last year. Here the saga continues. And after the re-election of his Mr Higgins, is likely to continue for some years to come. The wandering presidential cat has difficulty getting home, but thanks to an assortment of people in many iconic places, all is well in the end. Delightful, locally inspired entertainment.

Older children

Mythical Irish Beasts

written and illustrated by Mark Joyce (Currach Press, €22.99)

Assembled from ancient myths, medieval legends, and local traditions it is a delightfully mixed bag of Irish monsters of all kinds. They are called monsters, but really in many cases they might well have been quite imaginary, or real creatures misunderstood. But this is just the thing for all

those caught up in the present day fantasy trend. And who knows it might even inspire a few cryptozoologists of the future. A list of suggestions of sources and further reading would not have come amiss.

Dr Hibernica Finch's Compelling Compendium of Irish Animals

by Rob Maguire, illustrated by Aga Grandowicz (Little Island, €18.99)

The know all Irish professor, channelled by Rob Maguire, explores with readers the extraordinary world of Irish wild animals, illustrated by a very talented artist who can really paint. A fine introduction to what for some will be a lifelong joy.

The Great Irish Weather Book

by Joanna Donnelly, illustrated by Fuchsia MacAree (Gill, €19.99)

Author Donnelly, familiar from TV as she works for Met Éireann, knows her isobars from her stratocumulus. As weather nowadays looms ever larger in all our lives, learning early about what it really is, and isn't, and how it changes, is a very good idea. The large size means it is a stay-at-home book, and not for use out and about.



The Dog Who Lost His Bark

by Eoin Colfer, illustrated by P.J. Lynch (Walker Books, €12.99)

Both author and artist grew up aware that life is not always kind or even fair. In this book a boy and a dog, who have their own separate losses, become united and create a new life based on affectionate love.

A moral fable for our time by the renowned Wexford writer, but a lovely tale too, illustrated by an admired artist from troubled Belfast, who finds the best in places and people and dogs.

Young adults

Island of Adventures: Fun things to do all

around Ireland designed and drawn by Jennifer Farley (O'Brien Press, €16.99)

This will be of immense help to children (and parents) in putting down the little media mind grabbing monsters, and getting out and about to explore, discover things, and have lots of activity based fun. Ireland is the sort of country where even the rain cannot discourage people from chasing about the place. Just the thing for the car or the bicycle carrier bag.

Secret Science: The Amazing World Beyond Your Eyes

by Dara Ó Briain (Scholastic, €14.99)

Comedian Dara Ó Briain has created for himself from his



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.

for Christmas

...and don't forget the classics

Now that Greek and Latin have been abandoned by Irish schools and parents, younger readers should be encouraged to make some contact with the literature of past ages. But not I think through books like Stephen Fry's meretricious new book. *The Odyssey*, after all, is quite approachable by any child between 10 and 26 (which seems to be the age at which childhood ends for some these days).

But what about Thomas Kinsella's translation of *The Táin* – that too is very readable and enhanced by Louis le Brocq's evocative drawings? Then there is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as an introduction to the Arthurian saga, Dorothy L. Sayers translation of *The Song of Roland* might lead on to tasting (if not consuming) her magisterial translation of the *Divine Comedy*. Then on to Magnus Magnusson's Viking sagas, or Vladimir Nabokov's translation from the medieval Russian, *The Song of Igor's Campaign*.

When we enter the great era of the novel as work of art from



– which Irish publishers so often seem in a conspiracy to keep out of print. But that is what second hand bookshops are for.

An introduction to the joyous serendipity of book hunting and finding something remarkable to read that even your parents have never heard of cannot begin too early. Shopping on the internet just doesn't do it.

Adulthood

And certainly no young person, girl or boy, should grow to adulthood without having read the full text of *Robinson Crusoe*, itself an epic of human endurance, creativity in adversity, and resolution in the face of misfortune. That one book is an education itself – as Gabriel Betteredge claimed in *The Moonstone* (1868) by Wilkie Collins, a book which a great poet (T. S. Eliot) once called “the first, the longest, and the best of modern English detective novels in a genre invented by Collins and not by Poe ...”

There is just so much to read in the world who could ever be bored.

about 1800 to 1940 there is a world treasury to open. So don't let any child just read what are often shabby derivatives of the truly great and marvellous that fill the bookshops today.

If anyone is to enjoy Emily Dickinson in later years they should at some time (boys and girls) have read Louisa Alcott's *Little Women* and *Jo's Boys*. Nothing quite beats the classics, for in a sense they are all interconnected.

Then there are the classics of Irish literature – everyone on from Canon Sheehan to Patricia Lynch

own interests a second career as a popular presenter on TV. This book, derived from his kids science show, wants to show readers that science isn't stuff that goes on among daft boffins in secret labs, it happens everywhere.

Once this would have been called ‘understanding the world around you’, but now, what with the distraction of commercial interests that surround children, it has to be made a little more hectic and fun to become absorbing. Given those wonderful presentations at the annual science fair a book like this is a great idea.

I am the Seed that Grew the Trees

edited by Fiona Waters & Fran Preston-Gannon (Nosy Crow Books / The National Trust, €23.99) This anthology provides a poem for every day of the year, even leap years. They are drawn from a remarkable range of poets, but are all accessible to children. Lots of old favourites are here, William Blake, Emily Brontë, Walter de la Mare (what anthology could be without him – a great anthologist in his own right).

But also more challenging choices ancient and modern from Shakespeare to Robert Frost. This is the sort of book

“It is never too soon to learn that our literary heritage is for all, and is not just the preserve of teachers and experts”

that, encountered early on, may become a life changing standby for good and bad days.

Focused readers

100 Poems by Seamus Heaney (Faber & Faber, €12.99)

This collection may make young readers realise that Seamus Heaney is not just a poet for study at school, but a man whose voice might come to mean something very special to them in other areas of their life. It is never too soon to learn that our literary heritage is for all, and is not just the preserve of teachers and experts.

Unlock Your Imagination: 250 Boredom Busters (DK Childrens Books, €16.99)

Aimed at children seven to nine years old by the publishers, this is a compendium that might be enjoyed by a wider audiences. It encourages readers to leave their phones and screens and do something, making and exploring, playing games for groups, enjoying messy but rewarding crafts and challenges.

The book comes with

a free double-sided board, counters and a press-out dice that can be used to play chess, draughts, and snakes and ladders; now there is a case of back to the future...

Adventures in Philosophy: Stories and Quests for Thinking Heroes

by Brendan O'Donoghue illustrated by Paula McGloin (Gill Books, €19.99) The aim of author and philosopher Brendan O'Donoghue is to put an end to the thoughtless child. Philosophy has not much place in Irish schools, or indeed Irish life one often feels. This is in contrast to our friends in Europe. Here is a remedy in which the joys of curiosity and problems solving and learning about life will be encouraged. A very welcome initiative indeed.



A great sporting victory...and its consequences

Stand Up and Fight: When Munster Beat the All Blacks

by Alan English (Yellow Jersey Press, €14.00 / £9.99)

J. Anthony Gaughan

Presently the Irish team is enjoying first place in the pecking-order of world rugby. This has not resulted from a meteoric rise from rags to riches. For decades rugby has been played in Ireland to a high standard.

To find the source of last month's victory, when Ireland defeated the All Blacks in Europe for the first time since 2012, we need look no further than the victory of Munster over the much-vaunted All Blacks in 1978, recounted here in a 40th anniversary edition of a famous book.

Between October 10 and December 16, 1978, that touring All Blacks team played 18 matches, including internationals against England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. They won every one of those games, except one – against Munster at Thomond Park, Limerick, on October 31, 1978.

Alan English provides a blow-for-blow account of the game and pen pictures of the players on both sides who played in it and describes the crucial role of Tom Kiernan, manager of the Munster team, in crafting the historic victory.

“Camaraderie and solidarity are qualities found in all good teams. There was no short supply of it in Thomond Park on that fateful day”

Rugby was introduced into Ireland more than 140 years ago. It was part of the British colonial cultural outreach. Rugby and soccer clubs and leagues were established in the garrison towns across the country. British army and navy personnel were mainly involved in those early clubs and leagues.

Apart from members of the armed forces, rugby was the preserve of the middle-class, soccer that of the working-class. However, as Mr English notes, from the outset the natives of Limerick adopted rugby as

their own and its fans have always been drawn from all sections of the community in the city.

The author does not eschew ‘rugby's elephant in the room’ – the appalling rate of injuries, some devastating, suffered by those who play it. The consequences of these injuries can persist for many years even when players have ceased playing the game.

Just a few of those who featured in the celebrated match

in Thomond Park escaped without injuries from their playing days. The author catalogues those injuries.

The two Kerry men who starred in the historic win in Thomond Park have been ‘up front’ about the consequences of their playing rugby.

Retirement

Moss Keane in his autobiography musing about his retirement wrote: “My shoulders were shagged; my lower back was crooked; I also

had a lot of knee trouble. I had only 70 percent rotation in my neck...and the many stories of terrible rugby injuries troubled me!” Donal Spring's rugby career was cut very short by a severe back injury which bedevilled him for the rest of his life.

Camaraderie and solidarity are qualities found in all good teams. There was no short supply of it in Thomond Park on that fateful day. It persisted for decades among those Munster players and even between their respective families.

In the more than 100 interviews conducted with players, fans and citizens of Limerick, Mr English brilliantly captures the atmosphere surrounding the match.

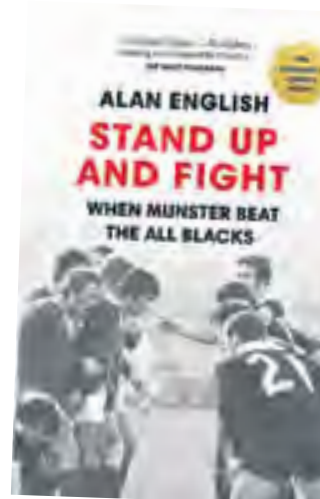
He also provides a fascinating socio-economic cameo of the Limerick of that time.

English adds two valuable appendices, ‘Record of the legendary Eight All Blacks Tour 1978’ and ‘Munster's Record against Overseas Teams 1905-78’.

The latter includes a comprehensive list of those who represented Munster on all those occasions.

The preliminary pages include comments from a score of well-known sports journalists in Britain and Ireland praising Mr English's account of Munster's heroics in Thomond Park.

His book has rightly been called a classic of sports writing. And so it is, one just right for Christmas.



Classifieds

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KINGSCOURT PARISH PILGRIMAGE in Footsteps of St Paul to Malta from 15-22 September. Special booking offer €975 before December 14 with MAP Travel 01 8783111 or patricia@maptravel.ie

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The Irish Catholic

Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 261



ACROSS

- 1 Time in early history when people made things from rocks (5,3)
 6 Vegetable which grows in a pod (3)
 7 Cotton or linen, for example (8)
 9 Creepy-crawlies (6)
 10 This vegetable might make you cry when you cut it (5)
 12 High army rank (7)
 14 Puts a question (4)
 16 Write this to include all the lines to be said in a movie (6)
 18 Book of maps (5)
 19 The son of the king and queen (6)

DOWN

- 1 Surname shared by Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa and Maggie (7)
 2 You might feed them to a horse (4)
 3 Pieces of jewellery you usually buy in pairs (8)
 4 What forms the pane of a window (5)
 5 Sun-protector that looks a bit like an umbrella (7)
 8 Dangerous, stinging desert creature (8)
 11 A hurtful thing someone might say (6)
 13 More pleasant (5)
 15 Hand over money (3)
 17 Part of the foot (3)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

GORDIUS No.379

Across – 1 Rub shoulders 7 Law 9 Bone idle 10 Nation 11 Well 14 Creel 15 Chain stitch 16 Scot 18 Arrow 21 Poach 22 Arise 23 Elton 24 Dunk 25 Offal 26 Image 34 Leak 37 Silent prayer

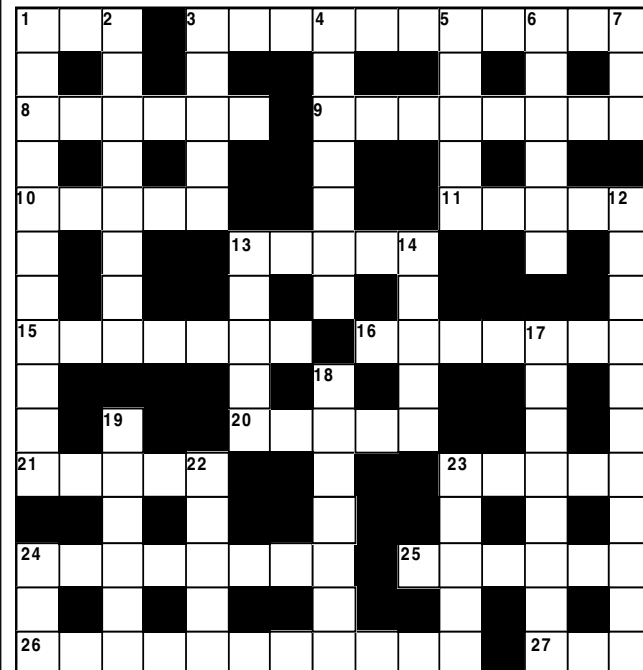
Down – 1 Rho 2 Beet 3 Hang 4 Utter 5 Drove 6 Sloe gin 8 Walk the plank 9 Black pudding 12 Canaan 13 On the wagon 14 Chant 17 Cliffs 19 Rane 27 Mitre 28 Got it 30 Lens 31 Char 32 Clay 35 Air

CHILDREN'S No.260

Across – 1 Robin Hood 7 One 8 House 9 Denmark 11 Evening 15 Amen 16 Acid 17 Paste 18 Dinner
Down – 1 Rehearsal 2 Bounce 3 Needle 4 Oven 5 Dora 6 Neck 10 Mandarin 12 Vanish 13 Nodded 14 Tidier

Crossword

Gordius 380



ACROSS

- 1 Part of the mouth - or cheek! (3)
 3 Conjurors' magic word (11)
 8 & 9 Here one will find many openings before Christmas! (6,8)
 10 Pantomime ladies might make me sad (5)
 11 Unearthed (3,2)
 13 The custom of a monk or nun? (5)
 15 He had to change, being such a short-tempered type! (7)
 16 A car or van, perhaps (7)
 20 Work out the answer (5)
 21 Proscribe broken bread (5)
 23 Brownish-yellow (5)
 24 Veering sharply (8)
 25 With love, one gets the girl to return - that's useful in getting the black stuff up! (3,3)
 26 Make the writer paste up a naiad (5,6)
 27 Placed (3)

DOWN

- 1 Just witness how to handle blood differently! (2,3,6)
 2 Sidewalk (8)
 3 A high priest from

- Jesus' time, involved in Machiavellian nastiness (5)
 4 Attribute this - but not to a pharisee? (7)
 5 Great fear (5)
 6 Spanish wine shop (6)
 7 A short year on the west coast of Scotland (3)
 12 Desk accessory with the gravitas of the Irish Catholic? (11)
 13 Cures (5)
 14 Subject, connecting topic (5)
 17 An agricultural source of readies, as grown by the late Johnny? (4,4)
 18 A second-class lumberjack, but prolific on the internet! (7)
 19 A thing (6)
 22 Natural watercourse (5)
 23 Versatile Mediterranean fruit (5)
 24 Female pig (3)

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Sudoku Corner

261

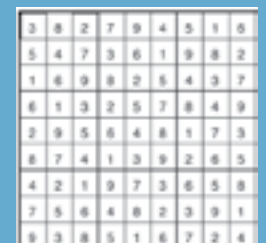
Easy



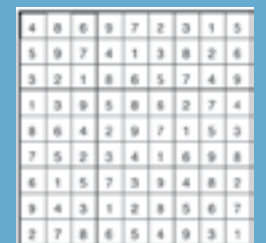
Hard



Last week's Easy 260



Last week's Hard 260



Which events have shaped your 2018 nest?

BLACK FRIDAY is the new December 8! For many years there was a great Irish tradition of the pre-Christmas shopping season beginning on the Holy Day, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. People from all over the country would flock to Dublin or their nearest shopping town to take in the festive atmosphere. In more recent times that link between the Holy Day and the beginning of the festive season has been lost as the secular Advent has been brought forward to just after Halloween and Black Friday has become the new Holy Day of Shopping Obligation.

The challenge for people of Faith at this time of year is to somehow 'keep' and 'celebrate' the Christian season of Advent without becoming a Christmas grinch decrying the many enjoyable 'secular' aspects of the build up to Christmas.

Over the years one of the people who has helped me to celebrate Advent is the writer Joyce Rupp. Joyce writes beautifully about all the seasons of the year but her imagery for Advent is particularly evocative. As we look high up in the bare trees on these December days we can see little bunches of



twigs, dry grasses, pebbles, mud and feathers. Some birds use moss and spider webs while thrushes make their nests from a mixture of clay, decayed wood and cow dung.

Fragments

Those everyday fragments reflect what Patrick Kavanagh referred to as the "bits and pieces" of our everyday lives: "The twigs of our trials and tensions, the pebbles of our patience and pain, the straw of our struggles and strivings, the mud of our humanness and growing, the dry grass of our surrender and daily dyings." These are the building materials of our Advent nests where God asks us to hollow out a welcoming space for him this Christmas.

Inspired by Joyce Rupp I think of Advent as a season of nesting. My 2018 nest will be shaped by the happy and sad events of this year, the memories created on beautiful summer days, the connections with family, friends and parishioners, the loss of two close friends.

Jesus comes to be born amongst all those fragments. Emmanuel you are most welcome!

nests everywhere. Those nests are a beautiful image of Advent.

As the birds have worked hard to prepare the nest which will be welcoming for an egg and the future young life our task is to get a Christ-home ready within our own lives.

THE MILE HIGH CLUB: An atheist was seated next to a little girl on an airplane and he turned to her and said: "Do you want to talk? Flights go quicker if you strike up a conversation with your fellow passenger."

The little girl replied: "What will we talk about?"

"How about why there is no God, or no Heaven or Hell, or no life after death?" as he smiled smugly.

"Okay," she said. "Those could be interesting topics but let me ask you a question first. A horse, a cow, and a deer all eat the same stuff – grass. Yet a deer excretes little pellets, while a cow turns out a flat patty, but a horse produces clumps. Why do you suppose that is?"

The atheist, visibly surprised by the little girl's intelligence, thinks about it and says: "Hmmm, I have no idea."

To which the little girl replies: "Do you really feel qualified to discuss why there is no God, or no Heaven or Hell, or no life after death, when you don't know that?"

● **AN ADVENT PRAYER FROM JOYCE RUPP**

Looking high into winter trees
I see the distant nests
Cradled in arms of branches.
Nests: round, full of warmth,
Softness in the welcoming
center,
A circle of earth's tiny goodness,
Flown from the far corners,
Patiently pieced together,
And hollowed into a home.
Nest: awaiting the treasures of
life,
Simple, delicate dwelling places
From which song will eventually
echo
And freedom of wings give
flight.
Advent has been on my mind.
Prepare the nest of heart.
Patch up the broken parts.
Place more softness in the
center.
Sit and warm the home with
prayer.
Give the Christ a dwelling place.



THIS ADVENT CAN YOU HELP A POOR RURAL COMMUNITY IN PERU INAUGURATE THEIR NEW CHURCH IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS?

Father David, an Irish priest working in south-east Peru, has contacted The Little Way Association for financial aid. "This small town has a population of only 1,500, but they are a very active and faith-filled community," he writes.

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