

# The Irish Catholic

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# Vatican pays tribute to the 22 missionaries murdered last year

Brandon Scott

In situations of extreme poverty, war or civil tensions, 22 Catholic church workers were murdered in 2021, according to Fides, the Vatican's missionary news agency.

The 13 priests, one religious brother, two religious sisters and six laypeople gave witness to their faith "in impoverished, degraded social contexts, where violence is the rule of life, the authority of the state was lacking or weakened by corruption and compromises and in the total lack of respect for life and for every human right," Fides said announcing the tragic toll this week.

"From Africa to America, from Asia to Europe, they shared daily life with their brothers and sisters, with its risks and fears, its violence and its deprivations, bringing in the small daily gestures Christian witness as a seed of hope," Fides said.

The 22 include Nigerian Fr John Gbakaani Yaji of the Diocese of Minna, who was killed in January by armed men who attacked his car; his body was found near the road, tied to a tree.

And Frenchman Fr Olivier Maire, provincial superior of the Montfort Missionaries, who was killed in August in the provincial house of Saint Laurent sur Sèvre, in France, by a Rwandan migrant he had offered housing to.

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'Where there is despair in life, let me bring hope...'



A statue of St Francis in Louisville in the US state of Colorado, stands in the remains of homes destroyed by wild fires. Nearly a thousand homes were destroyed and three people killed. Photo: CNS.

MARTA OSBORNE

Make praying together a resolution

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RUADHÁN JONES

We're all called to be apostles

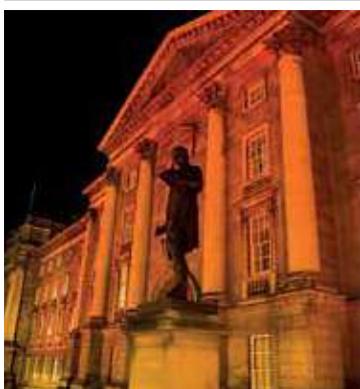
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CHRISTINA MALONE

Trusting and believing everything will be okay

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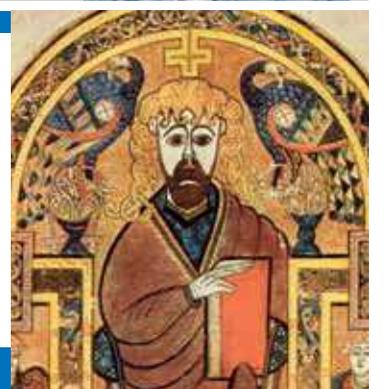
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# Church outreach is vital, but has to face a painful truth

**"I**t's not you, it's me..." has to rank as one of the worst – not to mention corniest – lines to use in a relationship breakup.

Mercifully, I've never had it said to me – but evidently it is intended to ease the dumpee's feelings in the sure and certain knowledge that it was not their fault, but rather the fault of the dumper.

The moral of the story? Sometimes there is absolutely nothing one party can do to save a relationship if the other party is not interested.

Think about it in an ecclesial sense with Catholics who have walked away from the practise of their Faith. Can the Church do anything to reanimate that felt need for a relationship with Christ mediated through the Church?

The short answer is, of course, yes – but not always.

## Falloff

The Church in Ireland, and in many western countries, has experienced a dramatic falloff in recent decades. The decline has happened more quickly in Ireland than in other places with pews emptying at a rapid rate and shifts that took decades to emerge abroad, manifesting themselves in just a few years here.

**"The Church in Ireland, and in many western countries, has experienced a dramatic falloff in recent decades"**

A lot of this is to do with abuse scandals, some of it do to with sexualism and disaffection with Church teaching is certainly a cause of drift for many.

**"Think about it in an ecclesial sense with Catholics who have walked away from the practise of their Faith"**

The one common thread – and this is perhaps the greatest failing of the Church in Ireland – is that the entire crisis is borne out of a failure to nourish people and give them the tools to construct an adult faith.

Such a mature faith, tested often and comfortable with periods of wilderness and doubt as authentic experiences of a relationship with a loving God, withstands the various vicissitudes that come our way.

## Editor's Comment

### Michael Kelly



Survey after survey reveals that many Irish Catholics, whether they are regular Mass-goers or not, have a poor understanding of the Church's teaching. There are others, of course, who have a very good understanding of particular teachings but reject them or simply believe the Church to be wrong. But we have to be honest that the vast bulk of people have not taken the time to understand the teaching or they have found it a difficult teaching and therefore set it aside.

## Reality

Any talk of concepts like a *sensus fidelium* (sense of the faithful) that does not flow from this reality is disingenuous. People who often argue that more challenging Church teachings should be dropped to appeal to more people are not really appealing to any *sensus fidelium* in the sense of a supernatural appreciate of faith aroused and sustained by Holy Spirit, but more a popularity contest.

To come back to the dating analogy, we also need to be honest that many people who have walked away have done so for reasons that the Church will never address. I'd hazard that the number of people sitting at home on a Sunday morning banging their fists on the kitchen table saying "If only the Church would do x, y or z I'd be more involved..." is very small. The Church has a divine mandate from the Lord himself to "go teach all nations" and this is an obligation that has to be taken seriously. There is also a constant need for creative

ways to reach out to people so that anyone who wants to take the faltering steps on reacquainting themselves with the Faith can find the space to do so. But, we also have to face the painful truth that in a culture where belief in God is no longer axiomatic but one choice among others, people will exercise their God-given free will to opt out and say they're simply not buying what the Church has to offer.

**"Many people who have walked away have done so for reasons that the Church will never address"**

In a country like Ireland that was one traditionally almost universally Catholic, sometimes too much of our energy goes into creating some kind of utopian vision where every single person wants to be at the heart of the Church. Many don't, and won't change that stance regardless of what the Church does or how creative the outreach is.

Maybe, to paraphrase the title of the best-selling 2004 self-help book, we need to face up to the fact that some people are just not that into us.

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# Vatican pays tribute to the 22 missionaries murdered last year

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The women on the list are Sacred Heart Sisters Mary Daniel Abud and Regina Roba, who were killed in August, along with several other people, when their chartered bus was attacked on the road between Juba and Nimule, South Sudan.

In publishing the list, Fides – which means faith – said it was not looking only at Church workers killed in traditional mission territories and it was not proclaiming any of them as 'martyrs' in the technical sense of having been killed out of hatred for their faith.

While not included in the count, the report also paid tribute to the 35 "innocent civilians, all of whom were Catholic," who died on Christmas Eve, reportedly at the hands of the Myanmar military in Mo So village in Kayah state as they were fleeing fighting in the area. The victims, including elderly women and children, were shot and then their bodies were burned.

"The fact that the bodies of those killed, burned, and mutilated were found on Christmas Day makes this appalling trag-

edy even more poignant and sickening," said Cardinal Charles Maung Bo of Yangon. "As the rest of the world celebrated the birth of Christ with joy, the people of Mo So village suffered death, shock and destruction."

The full breakdown shows that in Africa, seven priests, two nuns and two laypeople were murdered. In Angola Fr Manuel Ubaldo Jáuregui Vega. In Nigeria, Fr John Gbakaani Yaji. Fr Ferdinand Fanen Ngugban was killed also in Ngeria while Fr Alphonsus Bello also lost his life in that country as did Fr Luke Adeleke.

In Burkina Faso, Fr Rodrigue Sanon was murdered while in the Central African Republic 20-year-old missionary Omer Dalyom Dallet was killed.

In South Sudan, Sr Mary Daniel Abut and Sr Regina Roba, of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, were killed during an ambush. Peter Bata, head catechist, was killed along with other people on October 26, 2021 during the assault by an armed group on the Catholic parish of Mupoi. In Uganda, Fr Joshephat Kasambula

was murdered in August.

In the Americas, four priests, one religious and two laypeople were killed.

In America 4 priests, 1 religious, 2 lay persons were killed. Bro. Luigi Manganiello lost his life in Venezuela, while in Mexico Fr Gumersindo Cortés González was murdered as was Fr Juan Antonio Orozco Alvarado and Simón Pedro Pérez López, a lay catechist. Also murdered in Mexico was Fr José Guadalupe Popoca.

In Peru, Nadia de Munari, an Italian lay missionary was murdered while in Haiti Fr André Sylvestre was attacked and killed.

In Asia one priest and two laypersons were killed. In The Philippines, gunmen killed Fr Rene Bayang Regalado. While in Myanmar two young 18-year-old Catholics, Alfred Ludo and Patrick Bo Reh, who were working to bring food and humanitarian aid to displaced people fleeing the conflict between the Burmese regular army and the popular defense forces, were killed.

The only death Fides records for Europe is that of Fr Maire.

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# Recently bereaved sports commentator Marty Morrissey finding strength in afterlife

## Brandon Scott

Renowned sports broadcaster Marty Morrissey has recently spoken of how his belief in the afterlife has increased since the death of his mother, Peggy, in a car accident last December.

Speaking to comedian Tommy Tiernan on his RTE Radio One show, 'The Marty Morrissey Show' on Monday, Mr Morrissey expressed how in spite of the anguish that he has encountered in the past month, he 'wants for there to be afterlife' as the family tragedy has instilled a greater belief in the concept.

## Personal faith

Mr Morrissey's comments came after maverick comedian Tommy Tiernan expanded on his own personal faith and how he finds best to practice it. "I'm born and raised in a Catholic country, so by design I'm Catholic," Mr Tiernan said. "That's how I'd describe it. I love churches. I love the idea of Mass. If my wife wanted

to take me for a weekend to Lough Derg. I'd go or if my brother wanted me to climb Croagh Patrick with him I'd do that."

Discussing the concept of eternal life, both Mr Tiernan and Mr Morrissey revealed that they both believe in life after death, with Mr Tiernan expressing unreserved certainty on the matter. "I do absolutely, 100% believe that there is a wonderful, eternal, infinite, vitality that we will be welcomed back into when we die," Mr Tiernan said. "That's something that I don't have to think about; I have a very strong sense of that. It doesn't make life easier or anything; I just know it."

"Recent events in my own life have made me believe even stronger that there is an afterlife, Mr Morrissey interposed. "I want there to be an afterlife. I really hope you're right."

"I am Marty, I am", Mr Tiernan reassured. "We'll be returned to the source. I absolutely sense it and I sense it strongly."



Marty Morrissey with his recently deceased mother, Mrs Peggy Morrissey.

# Priest pleads for Tyrone road upgrade after triple tragedy

## Ruadhán Jones

A priest at the funeral of the third victim of a road crash in Co. Tyrone said his community has paid a great price for the failure to upgrade the A5.

Fr Michael O'Dwyer made his comments as hundreds of people gathered for the funeral of Nathan Corrigan (20).

Petey McNamee (20) from Sixmilecross and Peter Finnegan (21) from Clogher were buried on New Year's Day.

Fr O'Dwyer called on the authorities to prioritise the long-promised upgrade of the A5 road in the wake of the crash.

"The deaths of Nathan and Peter Finnegan and Petey McNamee have highlighted again the danger that the present A5 road poses and the need for an upgrade," he said.

Meanwhile, at the funeral of Petey McNamee, Fr Colum Curry reflected on his feelings after he witnessed the scene of the tragedy.

"As I stood there outside Garvaghey chapel in the aftermath of the terrible accident, the words of the Hail Holy Queen flashed through my mind.

"I recalled the phrase 'to you do we cry mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.' Then I thought of the families of the young men, all of whom had not

yet been identified.

"I realised that their families would soon be facing into that dark and difficult valley, mourning and weeping," he said.



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# Positive news for Catholic radio as Radio Maria sees engagement with station triple during pandemic

**Brandon Scott**

Although the long-established impact of Covid-19 on faith and worship has been extensively documented, positive news has emerged as Radio Maria announced that it has seen texts, calls and general engagement triple when compared to figures compiled before the pandemic, with the station being used as a faith-based resource by those who were deprived of contact with their local churches during the pandemic.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, managing director of Radio Maria, Aidan O'Rourke, commented on how the station has seen a marked increase in public interaction during the pandemic. "We kind of feel it here in terms of the amount of people ringing, texting and calling. Engagement with the station has tripled just before the pandemic to now.

"We have recently surpassed 20,000 monthly online streaming listeners in Ireland and around the world and a further estimated 20,000 listeners via Saorview TV. We have

also seen a dramatic rise in people listening into Masses via phone, with over 1,600 callers. These figures were significantly lower before the pandemic."

Radio Maria's status as a beacon of hope for those seeking faith-based programming during lockdowns is something that Mr O'Rourke is aware of and representing the unrepresented amid such challenging times has added greater responsibility to the station as many depended on it in times of anxiety and loss during the pandemic.

"A lot of the feedback we get is from people who probably felt lonely and isolated during the lockdown and they couldn't connect then," Mr O'Rourke said. "It kind of kept the flame of faith alive and helped to kindle that flame during a difficult time.

"Radio Maria exists and we're here to serve people during difficult moments, especially when people can't physically get to the church, they could be bed bound or in hospital and we want to reach out to these people," he said.

## Don't fight battles of the past, Bishop McKeown warns ahead of Bloody Sunday anniversary

**Ruadhán Jones**

In "fighting the battles of the past, we learn little", Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown said in his new year's homily, ahead of the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday.

Bloody Sunday – also called the Bogside Massacre – happened January 30, 1972 in the Bogside area of Derry, when British soldiers shot and killed 14 unarmed civilians during a protest march.

Quoting Pope Francis' new year's address, Bishop McKeown said that "we can be firmly rooted in the present, and from here, revisit the past and look to the future".

"To revisit the past in order to learn from history and heal old wounds that at times still trouble us... to look to the future in order to nourish our enthusiasm... Together, we can learn from one another," the Pope said in his address.

Dr McKeown described this as "good advice" for the city of Derry.

"Fighting the battles of the past, we learn little. Being trapped in the past and its pain, we grow little.

"Peace will grow from dialogue between experience and hope. And that is what we do each day around the altar where we remember the pain of Calvary as the source of new life.

"With the power of Emmanuel, God with us, we can face whatever challenges 2022 bring," Bishop McKeown concluded.

## Downpatrick school raises money for charity with Christmas recording

**Staff reporter**

St Mary's High School Downpatrick's Choir are raising funds for Catholic charity Cuan Mhuire "during this time of desperate need".

The school choir would typically visit Cuan Mhuire's Newry residents at Christmas, but this couldn't go ahead in 2021 due to Covid-19.

Instead, the choir released a recording of the carol *See Amid the Winter Snow* to raise funds for the charitable drug, alcohol and gambling rehabilitation organisation founded by Sister of Mercy Sr Consilio.

"As a school we are very proud of our Mercy ethos and we are all aware of the needs of others especially at this time of the year," said St Mary's principal Caroline Caldwell.

Mrs Caldwell added that any support to raise "funds for a worthy cause, especially during this time of desperate need" is greatly appreciated.

Donations can be made at [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/online-appeal-2021-2022](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/online-appeal-2021-2022) to help support the work Cuan Mhuire do and you can watch the performance on the school's Facebook page @stmarysdownpatrick.

## Fond farewells



Archbishop-elect of Tuam Francis Duffy celebrated his final public Mass in Longford cathedral, January 2, before taking up his new archbishopric. Archbishop Francis was joined by Bishop-emeritus Colm O'Reilly, Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo and Fr James MacKiernan Adm.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Radical change is coming in the Church - Archbishop Dermot Farrell

Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell recently spoke of how "radical change" is coming in the Church, a change which he believes will bring forth a renewal of energy and new forms of ministry.

"With a powerful commitment from clergy and lay faithful, across the full range of the life and ministry of parish communities, we are going to experience a renewal of energy and

the adoption of new forms of outreach and ministry," Archbishop Farrell said.

"We are not helpless in the face of the future. The changes that will occur we will do together as a diocese. Our parish structures need to be fit for purpose into the future. Renewal needs to be rooted in reflection, prayer and conversion, if it is to inspire and support a living faith."

### Derry monastery launches Sr Clare Crockett youth programme

St Joseph's Termonbacca Discalced Carmelite monastery in Derry is launching the 'All Or Nothing' youth programme January 16.

The four-week youth programme will look at the life of St Clare Crockett, a Derry nun who died at a Home of the Mother convent during an earthquake in Ecuador, and will examine what Sr Clare has

to say to young people today.

"We hope that through fun, games, discussions and prayer that together we will discover more about Sr Clare and faith in general for young people today," the monastery said in a release.

The programme is aimed at young people aged 11- 17 and will gather on Sunday evenings from 6:00-7:15pm.

## ! Christmas crossword

Due to a production error, an additional column of clues appeared in the December 23 instalment of the Christmas crossword. Readers are advised, that if they use the first set of clues (103 to 115 down) they will have the answers.

Apologies for any confusion or inconvenience caused.

## Crimes and misdemeanours – they're not the same thing...

The French Catholic sociologist Olivier Roy has pointed out that many previous concepts of 'sin' and 'transgression' have been transferred, in modern secular states, to the law, and are re-classified as 'crimes'.

A vivid example arises with the new proposed Scottish law against 'hate crimes', due to come into force this year.

To hate someone, to say nasty things about people in private, was previously considered wrong, unchristian and uncharitable. But if the government at Edinburgh has its way, expressing 'hatred' will soon be a crime. Even possibly, expressing an opposing view to official policy in some spheres will qualify as a legal offence, when the Scottish *Hate Crime Act* becomes law in 2022.

Prosecution could take place even if these 'hate' conversations occur in private, or within the home.

Offenders found guilty of expressing 'hatred' could face up to seven years in prison. A new offence of 'stirring up hatred' is likely to be brought onto the statute books, too.

Some of this is aimed at silencing women who say that single-sex spaces – public toilets, prisons, changing



Mary Kenny



Prosecutors eventually dropped controversial charges against Marion Millar

rooms – should be restricted to biologically born females, and not open to transgender women, or men who simply 'identify' as female. Speech which is considered abusive of transgender people will be criminalised.

Anyone who claims that biological sex is immutable and cannot be changed by choice or surgery could face prosecution. A Scottish feminist, Marion Millar, was indeed prosecuted last year for expressing such views on her Twitter account: the case was dropped after a long legal procedure, but the new law will make it easier to prosecute and convict people for such opinions.

It is obvious that it is uncharitable to be unkind to transgender people, and unchristian to express hatred of any individual. But this example of translating a virtuous ideal of kindness into the full force of the criminal law will surely be evidence that the law can be an ass, as well as a dangerous tool to introduce into personal and home life, at every opportunity.

When the state is monitoring private conversations with a view to prosecution, we're in trouble.

Let's hope Helen McEntee's proposed hate crime legislation doesn't imitate the Caledonian neighbours.

### The taint of scandal

It has often been observed that the cultural role of the monarchy in Great Britain was akin to the traditional position of the Catholic Church in Ireland. That is – aside from any issue of religious faith – it represented a historic continuity, a sense of identity, and a position of respect.

We are aware of how the Church's position in Ireland has been stained by the clerical scandals, as well as the mother-and-baby homes reports. We have seen how the admirable service and selfless dedication given by the many good clerics and religious have been harmed by the minority who did wrong.

In parallel, something similar may be happening to the British monarchy, with the ongoing accusations made against Prince Andrew. Whether or not he faces judicial charges of rape, he is irredeemably shamed by his association with the paedophile Jeffrey Epstein, and Ghislaine Maxwell, found guilty by an American court of trafficking young girls.

Comment about Andrew is vicious: he has been described as an 'oaf', a person whose arrogance, bad judgement, ill temper, concupiscence and selfish immorality could irretrievably damage the monarchy, especially among

a sceptical younger generation. There are calls for him to be stripped of every title he enjoys, including colonel of nine military regiments, and his 'HRH' honorific, while charities of which he was patron are disassociating themselves from his name.

He may well deserve punishment for his behaviour, and yet it isn't pretty to behold the way in which the world so quickly turns against those previously favoured. "They flee from me who did me sometime seek", wrote Thomas Wyatt in the 16th Century. It was ever thus.

● According to *The Economist's* authoritative survey for 2022, Ireland is one of the richest countries in Europe, if not the world.

Ireland's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a measure of a country's wealth and growth, stands at \$107,490. By contrast, Finland's is \$53,820, Denmark's is \$69,700, France's is \$46,170, Switzerland \$87,880, Italy \$36,330 and the United Kingdom \$50,590. Russia and Bulgaria linger around \$12,000.

Ireland's growth continued during the pandemic at 5.5% - better than most other EU countries. But, *The Economist* boffins warn, an international tax treaty could diminish investment. We are not told how much of Ireland's wealth really is based on foreign investment.

Ireland also has the lowest old-age dependency of any EU country, which means that there are more younger people to support pensioners, which is an economic strength.

This is because Ireland began limiting family numbers later than other countries, and Irish fertility didn't begin to fall until relatively recently. As the Americans say – go figure!

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# Irish bishops look ahead to 2022

Fireworks explode over the Chao Phraya River during New Year celebrations in Bangkok January 1, 2022. Photo: CNS.



## The bishops' new year addresses called for dialogue and education around elections, commemorations and the vaccine gap, writes Ruadhán Jones

**A** number of Irish bishops dedicated their new year's addresses to questions of justice and peace in Ireland in 2022. The year ahead will see elections in Northern Ireland, centenaries and commemorations across the island of Ireland, and the ever-pressing issues of the vaccine gap and the climate crisis.

January 1 was designated as the World Day for Peace by Pope St John Paul II in 1986. It has become a day when the Church reflects on the obstacles to and opportunities for peace around the world, and prays for a greater commitment to peace by all people.

### Young people

The primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin said young people must be central to the conversation about Irish reunification in his new year's message. Archbishop Martin also warned that victims of the conflict in the North cannot be denied access to justice by controversial proposals from the British government on legacy issues.

"As we begin a new year, conversations are already taking place about what constitutional change and greater sharing on this island might look like," the archbishop said in his message. "Intergenerational dialogue has much to offer these conversations – balancing reflection on the past with hope for the future."

On dealing with the past, the Archbishop of Armagh insisted that

"the issues of legacy and the reality of trauma experienced by many families here must be included and handled sensitively in these conversations".

The British government announced plans in July for a statute of limitations that would end all prosecutions for Troubles-related incidents prior to April 1998. The move has been widely criticised by campaigners representing those affected by the conflict.

### “Brings home in a new way the centrality of justice in human life: justice in all its inter-related dimensions”

Dr Martin warned that “victims have spoken about the importance of continued access to justice, together with meaningful opportunities for truth and information recovery.

“No line can easily be drawn on our past and there is clearly much work to be done in exploring and building a unity of hearts and minds towards a shared vision for our future in this island,” he insisted.

Reflecting on the service of remembrance to mark the centenary of partition in October – which provoked controversy when President Michael D. Higgins announced he would boycott the ecumenical event – Dr Martin said Church leaders were heartened by the involvement of younger generations.

“We were blessed that so many young people took part in that service in Armagh and they made such a refreshing and positive contribution – their presence and their youthful voices and singing were full of confidence and hope that they can be the ones to help to build the bridges necessary to overcome the mistrust and divisions of our past,” Archbishop Martin said.

### Climate change

Dr Martin added that people of faith have a major role to play in addressing climate change, a subject addressed at length by Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell in his own new year's address. Archbishop Farrell warned that the climate crisis “brings home in a new way the centrality of justice in human life: justice in all its inter-related dimensions”, adding that the crisis “is both an environmental crisis and a human crisis”.

“It affects our planet and our future, but it has its roots in our approach to poverty,” Dr Farrell continued, “and the way we treat the vulnerable and those on the margins of life, both here in Ireland, and across the world.”

The issue is not limited to the developing world, it includes “the hidden poor and disadvantaged in the developed world as well... There will be no solution to the climate crisis, without facing up to our obligations to our sisters and brothers whom the West has left behind,” Dr

Farrell said.

The archbishop of Dublin also addressed the issue of vaccine justice, warning that our “abject failure to vaccinate people in the developing world is now coming back to haunt us”.

“The common good, which in this instance is the protection of people, must have a global dimension,” Archbishop Farrell said. “The problem ultimately lies in the fairness of distribution rather than scarcity of vaccine doses.

“We need to put the human person, no matter what their colour or nationality ‘at the centre’ of all political, social and economic activity. It is our faith, our living faith, that links us to the millions of people who cannot receive a vaccine,” Dr Farrell said.

### “Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran also reflected on Pope Francis’ message for World Peace Day”

Meanwhile, peace in the North was on the mind of Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor, as Northern Ireland faces into an election year. Bishop Treanor drew on Pope Francis’ main points for the new year, describing them as the “ingredients for building a lasting future for all”. The three points were:

“Dialogue between youth and age which fertilises future hope with the wisdom of experience;

“Investment in education and training for youth and for all stages of life;

“And calling upon our political leaders to do everything possible to promote economic development and so create jobs and employment and a future for families.”

Dr Treanor added that while we continue to witness suffering and oppression around the world,

“humanity is not powerless” and lasting peace can be achieved.

Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran also reflected on Pope Francis’ message for World Peace Day. Bishop Doran emphasised the important role dialogue – particularly between generations – plays in fostering peace, and how this has been highlighted by the pandemic.

“The pandemic has simply brought into sharper focus the need we have all the time, to understand one another and to appreciate one another’s gifts,” Dr Doran said.

“Everybody has something to bring to the table. Pope Francis writes: ‘young people need the wisdom and experience of the elderly, while those who are older need the support, affection, creativity and dynamism of the young’.

“Some of us, perhaps, have felt that the way to avoid potential conflict between the generations was to avoid dialogue altogether,” Bishop Doran continued. “Without dialogue, however, there is no understanding and we just drift in different directions.”

### Respect

“Dialogue is built on mutual respect and it takes courage and patience. It is about being confident to share our own wisdom, and humble enough to recognise and receive the wisdom of others, including those much older or much younger than ourselves.”

The bishop of Elphin stressed the significant role inter-generational dialogue can play in the Church’s synodal process in Ireland, saying it “requires that we create opportunities for listening and understanding, which will include anyone who wants to be included”.

“If, as Christians, we advocate dialogue as the way to resolve conflict and to build a lasting peace, then we need to show that we believe in it ourselves,” Bishop Doran said.

# Breda O'Brian

## The View



# Synodality begins with us supporting our parishes

**T**he pandemic has left an already battered Church facing even more challenges, including financial woes.

Great uncertainty hangs over 2022 but that is true of every year. Do we have unrealistic expectations of safety and comfort? Our ancestors had lower expectations of life because they knew disaster could strike at any moment. I have been struck this year, for example, by the number of saints whose lives were affected by various plagues.

**“He was not imprudent and declared that Mass should be celebrated outdoors and that separate holy water fonts should be used by the infected victims”**

Catherine of Siena nursed others during a plague in the 1370s that was so catastrophic, those afflicted in the street often did not make it back home alive. Charles Borromeo famously returned to Milan when the secular authorities fled the plague in the 1570s. Having put his affairs in order, he plunged into daily contact with the afflicted.

He was not imprudent and declared that Mass should be celebrated outdoors and that separate holy water fonts should be used by the infected victims. He demonstrated tremendous courage and leadership. He borrowed money to feed between 50,000 and 60,000 people a day. Despite his best efforts, 17,000 people died, although more than double that number died in Venice, a smaller city.

More recently, our parents and grandparents were not surprised when life turned out to be a 'vale of tears'. It was not uncommon for children to die in infancy or childhood. Tuberculosis ravaged Ireland until the advent of medications like streptomycin. Lots of hospitals like Ardkeen (now University Hospital Waterford) and Cherry Orchard in Dublin, originally catered for TB cases. There were about 7,000 cases a year in Ireland in the 1950s and the death rate was high. Having an affected family member could even affect marriage prospects and social standing.

One would think that our

history, including colonisation, famine and contagious diseases would have made people fearful or even morbid. Instead, it tended to make them philosophical and grateful.

My own father-in-law spent almost a year in a Galway TB facility, watching people die on a daily basis. He described pausing to pray for some young man who had died and then resuming a card game. Death was such an everyday occurrence that life simply had to go on even in the face of death.

He did not grow callous but developed a tremendous sense of gratitude for life. His favourite prayer was 'Deo Gratias, Alleluia'. He, too, was a beneficiary of the new and potent drugs and was acutely thankful for his second chance at life.

We need some of that spirit of gratitude as 2022 dawns. Certainly, there is grief, fear and worry but there is also much for which to be thankful. These realities can co-exist.

It is not simply a matter of positive thinking but rather a realisation that God remains active in the world. We are His hands and feet. We are, in the words attributed to Teresa of Avila, although not found in her writings, "the eyes through which he looks compassion on the world".

### Buzzword

The local parish is as good a place to start as any. The buzzword now is synodality, the process of consultation that seeks to move the Church forward into more effective ministry.

What would more effective parishes that reflect the compassion of Christ look like? They would be places of welcome, places where the poor are a priority. They would be places of challenge and community.

What small steps could each of us take to make that a reality? We can support what is already happening and encourage others to do so, too. The most basic level of involvement is weekly Mass-going. Can we mention that we are attending and encourage others who are out of the habit to attend, too?

We can support initiatives such as talks and seminars. Given that many events are still online, this requires minimal investment of time. It still helps to build community if we see others turning out for online events and on-



The Eucharist should be the centre of our parish and we shouldn't feel afraid to invite people to come. Photo: CNS

line chat can still build connections and affirm faith.

The financial woes of parishes might prompt us to more generosity if we are in a position to contribute more.

The local St Vincent de Paul no doubt needs new volunteers, too.

**“Promoting The Irish Catholic is another way of building community as it is one of the few publications with a Christian ethos”**

Many parishes are now actively involved in welcoming migrants and refugees. From Meath to Cork, communities are rallying and becoming places of welcome. It has the wonderful side-effect of uniting parishioners with more secular neighbours, which provides Christian witness at a time when it is badly needed.

Promoting *The Irish Catholic* is another way of building community as it is one of the few publications with a Christian ethos. Imagine if every regular reader encouraged just one other person to subscribe? Or encouraged people to advertise in it?

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# Fulfilling our call as apostles in 2022



People want and need the faith, so we should offer it to them, writes **Ruadhán Jones**

**T**owards the end of last year, this paper reported on a new survey which found that 51% of 18 to 34-year-olds pray regularly, compared with 24% of over-50s. This news, we were told, is a hopeful sign and should be seen as an opportunity to reach out to those outside of the Church.

**“As with many people of my age, she had been raised a Catholic, but had largely given up the faith of her youth”**

It's only one survey, of course, but the story it tells doesn't come as a surprise to me. In college, I was the one of only two practising Catholics in my overwhelmingly-atheist class of film students. While there were a few who scorned my faith, they were in the minority. Most were surprised to find you could be both reasonable and devout, and this led to intriguing conversations.

A number of these encounters stuck in my mind, two in particular. The first was with a young woman I knew to be a staunch supporter of gay marriage and abortion, to the point of celebrating the result of the 2018 referendum. As with many people of my age, she had been raised a Catholic, but had largely given up the faith of her youth.

And yet, in a conversation we were having about religion, she casually told me that in her darkest moments she prays to the Virgin Mary.

The second was with a young woman I knew only tangentially. She was in an open relationship, and was again typical of her generation in her support for abortion, gay marriage and so forth. Through a friend, I ended up at the house she and her boyfriend shared.

That night, a group of us stayed up late talking. At one point, I ended up being effectively grilled on the contents of my faith – it was a combative exchange and afterwards the young woman talked to me, explaining that she had been quite religious all through her teenage years. However, without

the support of her parents and in the face of a hostile culture, her practice faded away.

I could go on with similar reflections, but these are enough to make my point – in a deeply secular culture, religious needs are still felt and expressed by young people. Though a belief in the supernatural has declined – or shifted back toward superstitious practices like tarot or astrology, the emotional need for support and the intellectual desire for truth continue.

## Frank Duff

This leads me to my next point, one which has been driven home to me in recent months by the writings of Frank Duff. If we want to capitalise on people's desire for religion, we will have to get over what Duff calls Catholics' "strange reluctance" to talk about or publicly demonstrate our Faith.

In part Mr Duff puts it down to an imbibed cultural conviction that religion is a personal or private thing. You shouldn't 'show it off' publicly, the culture around us discourages it. Even more importantly, you shouldn't force it on anyone else and God forbid that you should consider converting someone! Personal choice and autonomy is curiously circumscribed when it comes to religion.

On the side of the Church, he raises two concerns. Firstly, that a view has developed whereby all religions are seen as being of equal value in the eyes of God. If that is so, why should we reach out to people whose lives are materially and psychologically comfortable?

**“But, as Mr Duff points out, Christ's firm injunction to all the Baptised is to go out and convert all peoples of all nations”**

Secondly, he considers that the corporal works of mercy have been placed ahead of conversion as the highest goal of the Church. He does not scorn this work, and you only need look at his devotion to helping the poor and the marginalised to recognise this. But, as Mr Duff points out, Christ's firm injunction to all the Baptised is to go out and convert all peoples of all nations. This call to convert the nations is our primary duty as a Catholic. Mr Duff himself desired nothing less than the conversion of the entire world and was critical of praesidia (the local councils) in the Legion of Mary – his own creation – if they strayed too far from this task.

Frank Duff's analysis stands up today and is perhaps more pertinent as the Catholic community has grown smaller and the atheist larger. The survey results I began by referencing are good news. But what use are they if we don't act on them? It is surprising how people will open up to you if you're willing to engage with



A woman prays with a rosary at Knock Shrine. Photo: CNS

**“Perhaps we could add it to our list of new year's resolutions for 2022, to heed Christ's call to bring the Good News to people of all nations”**

them. The interest is there, and it's not far beneath the surface.

Not only the interest, but the need. After all, we are offering them their salvation! But even before this, we are offering them the support of a community devoted to their care and the psychological support faith provides. Unlike society, the Church does not fetishize independence; by giving room to suffering, not shunting it off to the peripheries, the Church gives people room to be dependent on each other.

## Practical man

Frank Duff was a practical man, and knew that most people would be daunted by the thought of converting nations. However, he says, our mission could begin with a question as simple as, "By the way, have you ever considered joining the Catholic Church?" No doubt Duff would have approved the teaching of St John Cantius, who often told his students this philosophy again and again, to talk about the Faith with people "but do it with good humour, patience, kindness, and love. Harsh-

ness will damage your own soul and spoil the best cause."

It can't hurt to ask – just consider the two young women I described, and the need they felt to talk. As I say, the interest is there, barely beneath the surface. Given the good we have experienced in the Church, why wouldn't we want to share it "with good humour, patience, kindness and love".

Perhaps we could add it to our list of new year's resolutions for 2022, to heed Christ's call to bring the Good News to people of all nations.

# The Irish Catholic

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# Rosary rally brings 'true joy' of Christmas to the streets



## Chai Brady

A lay Catholic organisation held three rosary rallies in Dublin in the run up to Christmas to bring the "true joy" of Christmas to people, and to oppose secularisation.

The Irish Society for Christian Civilisation (ISFCC) held the Christmas rallies on O'Connell Street on December 4, 11 and 18.

The participants prayed the rosary and sang traditional Christmas carols such as *Silent Night* and *Angels We Have Heard on High*.

The leader of the ISFCC rally, Damien Murphy, said, "We're here today for two

reasons. First, to bring the true joy and peace of Christmas – which is Our Lord Jesus Christ – to people who walk by us and, also, to oppose the secularisation of Christmas in Ireland

"The rosary strengthens us. Through the rosary, God gives us the wisdom and prudence to solve our problems because at the heart of every crisis in the world today lies a moral problem. A corrupt society will never be able to succeed but slowly sink into chaos."

Mr Murphy added that they hold monthly rosary rallies from May to October and that around 200 people attended their last rally in October.



# The Irish Catholic

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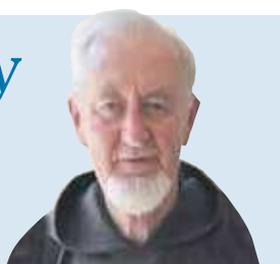


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# Set the world on fire

## The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



**T**his Sunday we celebrate the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan, marking the beginning of his public ministry. He has emerged from the 30 years of what we call his hidden life. Since Jesus was without sin, he did not need to submit himself to the ceremonial bathing that John the Baptist offered as a sign of repentance. In Matthew's Gospel we read how John tried to dissuade Jesus, saying that he should be baptised by Jesus. But Jesus replied, "Leave it like this for the time being; it is fitting that we should, in this way, do all that uprightness demands." By entering the water in solidarity with repentant sinners, he was showing that the mission he was about to begin would be one of mercy, forgiveness and hope.

### The Holy Spirit

John the Baptist, the one who was to prepare the way, told people that he baptised with water, but the one coming after him would baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire. This year, our Sunday Gospels will be taken mostly from Luke who is the evangelist of the Holy Spirit, of prayer and mercy. He has already told us of the coming of the Holy Spirit to Mary, Elizabeth, Zechariah and Simeon. Luke tells us that Jesus, after his baptism, was at prayer when the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily shape, like a dove. Our ceremony of baptism begins with asking the name of the child. A voice from heaven named Jesus as the Beloved Son of God. With this identification he is ready to commence his public mission.

### Pentecost

On Pentecost Day the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples in the form of tongues of fire. They were transformed by the fire of wisdom, the gift of tongues, extraordinary courage and enthusiasm. The mission of Jesus had now become the mission of the newly-born Church. The apostles were sent to the ends of the Earth to preach to all people and to baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son and

the Holy Spirit.

The ceremony of baptism is sometimes called Christening. This is a more powerful name. A person is christened, now sharing in the life of Christ and his mission. "But to all who did accept him he gave power to become children of God" (John 1:12). To become means to grow continually just as an acorn becomes an oak tree. After the baptism with water, a person is christened by anointing with the oil of chrism. Then a flame taken from the paschal candle of the Risen Lord sets fire to one's personal candle. The grace received in baptism is a tiny spark that has to be fanned into flame. St Paul encouraged Timothy to "fan into flame the gift of God that you possess through the laying on of my hands. God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but the Spirit of power and love and self-control" (II Timothy 1:6-7). Have we fanned the tiny flicker of our baptismal candle into a life of fire and light?

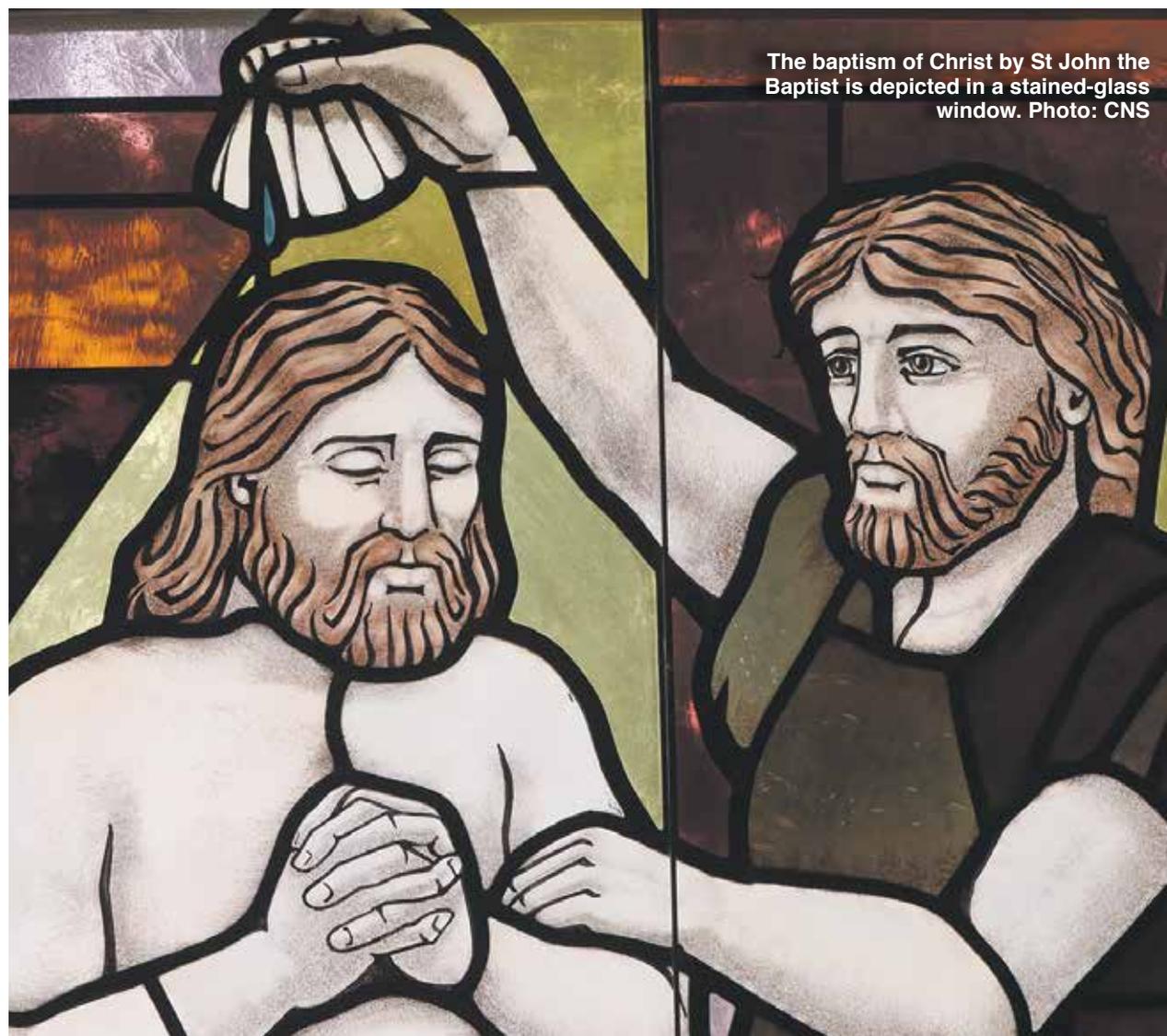
### A question

Here is a question to ponder. If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence in your life to convict you?

Writing at the start of the new millennium, 22 years ago, St John Paul II identified three problem areas that would have to be faced in pastoral planning: mediocrity, settling for a minimalistic ethic and a shallow religiosity.

An example of mediocrity can be seen here in Ireland in wanting the fast Mass, coming in late and leaving before the last blessing. Did you hear about the man who was asked, "What was the sermon about today?" He replied, "About ten minutes!" The clock was more important than the message. That's mediocrity in a nutshell.

The minimalistic ethic guy says that if he can get past St Peter by his fingernails, that will do. Shallow religiosity is a certain curiosity about spiritual matters without any commit-



The baptism of Christ by St John the Baptist is depicted in a stained-glass window. Photo: CNS

ment. "I'm very spiritual but not religious." There is a warning message in Revelation. "I know about your activities: how you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were one or the other, but since you are neither hot nor cold, but only lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth" (Revelations 3:15-16). Jesus told us that if the salt loses its taste, it is good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden underfoot.

### Turning the tide

Here in secularised Europe, the Church is experiencing a winter of recession. But it is important to remember that in other parts of the world the Church is flourishing. When Covid-19 is eradicated, how many will return to Mass? There are very few priests under the normal age for retirement and only a tiny number of seminarians to fill the gaps.

The tide is still going out. When will it turn and flow in again? Will it turn? I believe it will. The ebbing tide has produced a world of addictions, anxiety, boredom, suicides, lack of direction, living in the

virtual or fictional world more than the real world. The tide will turn when people see what faith has to offer, what direction, meaning and hope it offers. Nothing can stop an idea that has reached its time. The history of the Church shows that the lowest times produced the greatest saints and reformers. The Holy Spirit will inspire people.

### Spirit-filled evangelisers

Pope Francis calls for Spirit-filled evangelisers. "Jesus wants evangelisers who proclaim the good news with words, but above all by a life transformed by God's presence... How I long to find the right words to stir up enthusiasm for a new chapter of evangelisation full of fervour, joy, generosity, courage, boundless love and attraction!"

Dare to dream! Go forward in hope! "You are the light of the word", said Jesus, "let your light shine before people so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). If everyone lit

just one little candle what a bright world it would be. At Pentecost a wind shook the house and tongues of fire transformed the

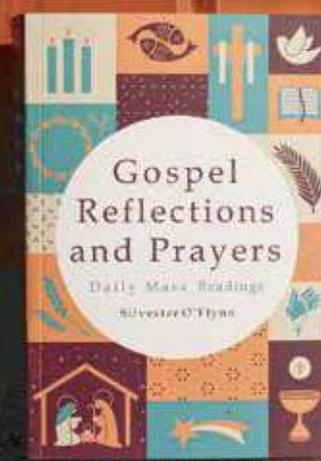
Apostles. It's the wind that causes a tiny spark to start a forest fire. In God's time the Spirit of love will once again set the world on fire.

### Prayer

Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth. Enkindle within us the fire of your love.

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# The unjust war on Mother Teresa's disciples



**Hindu nationalists falsely accuse missionaries of exploiting the vulnerable to win converts, writes David Quinn**

**M**other Teresa is one of the most loved figures of the 20th Century, and in the eyes of millions of Catholics, a saint. It's probably for this reason that she also comes under continual attack.

The most famous of the attacks was by the writer and journalist, the late Christopher Hitchens, who called her 'Hell's Angel' for allegedly preying on and exploiting the poor.

Much more recently, a series of interviews were run with former members of the order she founded, the Missionaries of Charity, unfairly accusing it of cult-like behaviour.

But within India itself, she sometimes comes under attack as well, often from militant atheists but increasingly from Hindu militants.

India is currently ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist party led by Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. It promises Indian and Hindu renewal. Many of its followers are hostile towards other religions, in particular Islam and Christianity, even though Christians make up only 2% of India's population of 1.3 billion people.

**“The order has helped countless numbers of India's poorest and most destitute for decades”**

As part of a general crackdown, the Indian government has just refused the Missionaries of Charity permission to raise money overseas. The congregation is appealing this, but if the move is upheld, it will hit the Sisters and their work hard.

In the financial year ended March of last year, the order raised €13million overseas for its work in India. The sisters do not say how much they raise in total annually, so it is impossible to calculate how big a share this is of their total donations, but €13million is a considerable sum and will harm their work helping the poor and the sick.

## Rejected

Fr Cedric Prakash SJ said “The Missionaries of Charity nuns care for thousands of the rejected of India without counting the cost. Stopping the flow of funds to them, in simple

terms, means depriving the poorest of the poor in India – humans whom no one cares for.”

He said the move would deny destitute people “the basic human need of shelter and food, not to mention the acceptance, warmth and love which they desperately need and which the sisters and brothers give them so ungrudgingly.”

But Hindu nationalists see things differently. They accuse the nuns of exploiting the vulnerability of those they care for to win converts.

Only two weeks before the moves against the Missionaries of Charity (MC), police in Gujarat, Prime Minister Modi's home state, began investigating the congregation for alleged ‘forceful conversion’ of Hindus to Christianity.

**“Within India itself, she sometimes comes under attack as well, often from militant atheists but increasingly from Hindu militants”**

The ruling BJP party is dedicated to defending Indian culture and identity against ‘foreign’ influence even though both Islam and Christianity have been in India for centuries, and Christianity there goes back almost to the time of Christ and certainly predates the arrival of the faith in Ireland.

But it is not only minority religions that are being targeted in various ways, including by bans on foreign funding. For example, Amnesty International has had to close its offices in India after the Government froze its bank accounts.

## Issue

Of course, the issue of foreign funding of domestic organisations is a vexed one. In Ireland, there is a ban on political donations from overseas for use in referendum campaigns.

This arose prior to the abortion referendum when Amnesty International in Ireland was told to hand back a donation of €137,000 from Open Society, which is funded by the Hungarian-American billionaire, George Soros.

The money was for the explicit purpose of changing Ireland's abortion law.

During the abortion referendum itself, Google stopped running all ads from organisations on both sides of the debate in case they were being funded from overseas. But this meant they couldn't be paid for out of domestic sources either which disproportionately affected the pro-life side. It hoped to use social media advertising to combat media bias against it.

During the 2016 American presidential election there were regular accusations of foreign interference, especially by the Russians.

Hindu nationalists in India would simply say their concerns mirror



Pope Francis celebrates the canonisation Mass of St Teresa of Kolkata in St Peter's Square at the Vatican on September 5, 2016. Photo: CNS.

those of Western politicians. They don't want undue outside interference in their country either.

But this argument does not hold water because the BJP and many of its supporters go much further in carrying out their aims. The Missionaries of Charity cannot be compared with a political organisation seeking to influence the outcome of domestic politics using foreign funding.

The order has helped countless numbers of India's poorest and most destitute for decades. What harms the Missionaries of Charity harms the poor and marginalised of India as well.

But perhaps this is what both-

ers some Hindu nationalists most deeply. A Christian organisation helping Indians regardless of their religion might cast Hinduism in a bad light in their eyes and therefore is to be regarded with suspicion.

## Tradition

Hinduism does not have the same tradition as Christianity of groups of men and women founding large-scale religious orders all over the world aimed at helping the poor and the sick and providing education.

The move against the Missionaries of Charity is also part of something even worse, namely direct

attacks on Christians (and Muslims) by Hindu militants.

As the *New York Times* has reported, “Anti-Christian vigilantes are sweeping through villages, storming churches, burning Christian literature, attacking schools and assaulting worshippers”.

Aid to the Church in Need regularly highlights these attacks, which are worsening.

Archbishop Leo Cornelio of Bhopal has written to Prime Minister Modi about the need for the government to take measures to protect Christians from attacks.

In October, Prime Minister Modi invited the Pope to visit India. The Pope should make acceptance of the invitation conditional on the Indian Government rescinding the move against the Missionaries of Charity and then make any visit the opportunity to highlight the growing attacks on Christians in the world's biggest democracy.

**“As part of a general crackdown, the Indian government has just refused the Missionaries of Charity permission to raise money overseas”**

# A time of the Spirit or spirit of the times?



Organisers hoped the 2018 visit of Pope Francis could be a catalyst for renewal in the Church in Ireland, but tangible benefits have been difficult to discern. Photos: CNS



There is no guarantee the proposed synod will rekindle the Church's missionary zeal, writes Kingsley Jones

The Covid-19 pandemic has been a crisis for Catholics in more ways than one. Not only have we had to deal with a medical emergency, but we've also been ambushed by the spirit of our times. While our right to practise our faith was denied, the dogmas of this new age took to our streets, unchecked by reason or

by the agents of the State.

And so, as our fear that our Church was on the verge of erasure from the public sphere was ignored, we were abandoned to our anxious vigil as the virus threatened to complete the work of the Church's adversaries.

## Announcement

Anyone haunted by this spectre, then, must be relieved by the Irish bishops' announcement that they will convene a synod of the Catholic Church here in five years' time, for it is clear now that something has to be done to arrest the Church's decline in this country. Perhaps we can also take comfort from the fact that 'synodality' is now so fashionable among the movers and shakers of the Church, carrying as it does the imprimatur of Pope Francis.

For instance, Cardinal Mario Grech, advisor to the Pope and Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, in a virtual address to the Irish bishops, commended their decision, a sure sign that the Vatican endorses the synodal path. And in the ongoing synod of the Church in Germany we have a concrete example of this new spirit on the move.

But can we be as confident as these proponents of synods that

this new spirit is also a manifestation of the Spirit they invoke? Unfortunately, the German synod has been controversial, for while some have praised it for fearlessly following the Spirit wherever it leads, others have complained that it is merely the pretext for our final capitulation to the spirit of the times.

**“In turn, the bishops claim, these have provoked a cry for greater transparency in the Church and for enhanced opportunities to participate in its life”**

While the Pope and his advisors clearly believe that the synodal process will become the keynote of this papacy and a new Pentecost for the Church, we can't take it for granted that a synod will reunite a divided Church or be the spark to rekindle its dwindling missionary zeal. If then a synod of the Church in Ireland is as likely to uncover divisions as to heal them, what can we do to ensure that it



Leaders of the secretariat of the Synod of Bishops are pictured at the Vatican during an online meeting with presidents and general secretaries of national and regional bishops' conferences.

becomes the catalyst for the renewal we all long for?

Since this synod is our bishops' initiative, the starting point for the answer to our question must surely lie in their conception of it. The bishops made their announcement in their spring statement for 2021. In it, they declare that their decision had been inspired by the Pope's call for prayerful discernment of the best way for all the Faithful to proclaim the Gospel in the world, and that therefore they had also decided to institute a synodal pathway to it.

They also acknowledge the challenge the Pope has set before the Church of reaching out to those on the periphery of society who long for the Good News, a call which is not only to inclusivity but also to an experience of a new Pentecost for the Church.

They then explain that the Church faces a series of challenges in Ireland that include: 50 years of secularisation of the country (a process aggravated by scandals in the Church); the continuing political division of our island; and the ever increasing ethnic and cultural diversity of the Republic. In turn, the bishops claim, these have provoked a cry for greater transparency in the Church and for enhanced opportunities to participate in its life.

## The little Church

But they also highlight the opportunities for a new spring in the Church: the revival of the Faith in the family, 'the little Church', apparent already in the various lockdowns; the energy and optimism of young Catholics; and the participation of so many women in the Church.



Pope Francis arrives to lead a meeting with representatives of bishops' conferences from around the world at the Vatican in October to launch the synod on synodality scheduled for 2023.

But even these beacons of hope have their shadows: for example, the faithfulness of Catholic women has been the Church's bulwark, but their exclusion from its formal structures has been a canker and a rallying point for all who feel excluded from the Church. However, the bishops assure us that they wish to hear these voices too, but even the commendable desire to listen to others is not without its complications.

**“If then the synod is to produce solutions that will genuinely renew the Church, we will need not just faith but also judgement”**

As Michael Kelly has pointed out in these pages, a determination to address the inequities of the treatment of women in the Church risks blinding us to an even starker reality, the absence from it altogether of laymen. It also flirts with the temptation to abandon the quest for authentic renewal in favour of the true spirit of the times, the righting of the historical wrongs of gender politics.

But he also quotes Pope Francis' remedy for these ailments, the search for other and better ways of transcending divisions in the Church, ways that as yet we may have failed to imagine. Apparently, it is this that the Irish bishops are invoking when they describe the synodal pathway as a period of prayer, discernment and consultation, the heeding of the inspiration of the Spirit not just by the bishops, but also by the entire body of the Faithful.

However, this audacious vision is not without its problems. If neither the Pope nor the bishops are going to lead the synodal process, how are we to discern the inspiration of the Spirit? We have multiple problems to contend with and conflicting options for their solutions, and in those circumstances discernment without guidance is hardly likely to produce solutions which are unanimously accepted.

How can we distinguish genuine inspiration from the inopportune, the inappropriate or even the downright fraudulent? What we need is not just inspiration but also the criteria for evaluating it.

If then the synod is to produce solutions that will genuinely renew the Church, we will need not just faith but also judgement. But haven't the bishops provided us with the criteria for judgement in their contextualisation of the synodal path? Yes, but at the cost, if we go down that path, of predetermining the outcome of our discernment, which would take us back to the top-down leadership that they want to avoid.

### Spirit

Is any other criterion available to us? Pope Francis suggests that the mark of the Spirit will be precisely that we are pushed in directions that we could not have imagined beforehand. This is both plausible and authoritative, but can it be a practical criterion?

**“How can we distinguish genuine inspiration from the inopportune, the inappropriate or even the downright fraudulent? What we need is not just inspiration but also the criteria for evaluating it”**

An unexpected occurrence is a surprise, and if the Spirit is pushing us in an unexpected direction, surely its mark will be our surprise; so this might be the practical test that we are looking for. But if we apply this to the bishops' list of evangelical priorities and contextual challenges and opportunities, do any of them cause surprise? Are they any more than responses to the spirit of the times?

Perhaps, then, we should identify the movement of the Spirit with the spirit of the times? But then that commits us to believing that every prompting of our spirit that concurs with the spirit of the time is a movement of the Spirit, and that will make each of us the measure of our own inspiration, surely the essence of the spirit of our times!

In his *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Pope has urged us to overcome this type of impasse by “a resolution which takes place on a higher plane and preserves what is valid and useful on both sides” and to be open to a “greater gift” from God in which “there will pour forth as from an overflowing fountain the answers that contraposition did not allow us to see”.

This is inspiring rhetoric, but it still leaves unresolved problems such as: how do we recognise the gift when there is conflict? And what do we do if it's not immediately forthcoming?

For example, on the question

of priestly celibacy, how are we to synthesise the best of the two positions contested at the recent Amazonian synod, the one holding that priestly celibacy is a universal obligation and the other that it is not? Our only option seems to be to permit different parts of the Church to come to different conclusions, but that seems less like an inspiration of the Spirit and more like compromise with the spirit of the age.

### Consultation

The Irish bishops have offered us the solution of two years of prayer, discernment and consultation, but commendable as this kind of spiritual aspiration is, how are we to resolve the outcome of this process if it eventuates in conflicting ‘inspirations’? Will it be the case that he or she who prays or discerns the loudest will win or will the victor be the inspiration that most closely resembles the criteria laid down by the bishops?

If at this point you feel we are floundering, fear not, a solution is at hand: it is our own Christian tradition and history. In the past 2,000 years, the Church has faced every crisis imaginable and survived. Indeed, the core of the Church's self-understanding is that, guided by the Spirit, she will survive all the storms of history.

Thus, as we find ourselves in yet another of those periods of acute crisis for the Church, our best course will be to look for compa-

rable stages in her history from which we can learn how to overcome the crisis we face.

Indeed, that long history includes lessons on how to identify faults and flaws in the Church, on discernment of the movement of the Spirit within her and on fruitful engagement with the spirit of the times, whether amenable or hostile. It also includes the tools, such as councils and synods, that the Church has found essential to her development.

**“Now, looking at our situation, one thing we can say with confidence is that we have come full circle and have returned to the condition of the early Church”**

Here then we have the nucleus of a programme for a pathway to an Irish synod: compare our situation to that of the Church in similar periods and see what we can learn from her experience of the Spirit at work within her; in the light of that experience, identify the faults and flaws in our recent history that have led us to our current predicament; and look for similar signs of the Spirit moving in the Church now and confirm that these conform to the principles that the Church has used to overcome previous crises in her history.

And since synods are the way forward that the Church has chosen, pay special attention to the role these have played in the history of the Church and assess how far what is proposed now is compatible with the Church's traditional understanding of a synod.

Now, looking at our situation, one thing we can say with confidence is that we have come full circle and have returned to the condition of the early Church. We are now a misunderstood and persecuted minority, surrounded by an immensely powerful and energetic culture, dominated by a state that is both sophisticated and ruthless. So, a legitimate question for us is how did the early Christians in their powerlessness overcome the hostility of such a state and such a culture?

Through her sufferings, the early Church developed a profound understanding of how to distinguish the movement of the Spirit from the spirit of the times and as we face similar challenges, we would be wise to avail of that wisdom. After all, in the early Church discerning the inspiration of the Spirit was often a matter of life and death, for the Church and for her members.

That the early Church could prevail under such conditions, should fill us with the confidence that, if we can emulate her example, we too can successfully distinguish the prompting of the Spirit from the fleeting impulses of the day. In turn, such discernment can provide believers with the firm ground on which to withstand the spirit of the times with the inspiration of the Spirit.

# The centenary of the Dáil vote on the acceptance of the Treaty

Peter Costello

Rather than cover the signature of the Treaty on December 6, 1921 this year the pages devoted to the past will reflect upon the Dáil vote to accept the Treaty, the centenary of which falls tomorrow on January 7.

This may well be, in the fuller retrospect

of history, a far more important date, it being the first serious vote made by that democratic body. In thinking about these events, we have always to bear in mind that given all that happened in Ireland and Europe in the century that followed, Ireland became and remained a democratic state.

This was undoubtedly, given all we have seen in the wider world as well, a very great

achievement. It has become one of that small number of states, along with Sweden and Canada and some others, trusted on a global scale as peacekeepers and election observers.

It has also managed to transform what was in 1922 a poor nation undermined by emigration, into an attractive place to live and do business. To understand Ireland's

full achievement we have only to listen to the Afghans who have come here in the last few months, and found Ireland could be, for such dispossessed people, not just a refuge, but a safe and desirable future home.

The new State began as a democracy, and despite all that happened here and elsewhere across Europe in the century that followed since, it remains a democracy.

## The Anglo-Irish Treaty, 1921: two studies of an unhappy compromise – how the latest books see the event



Michael Collins at work at the acceptance of the Treaty.

**Birth of a State; the Anglo-Irish Treaty,** Micheál Ó Fathartaigh and Liam Weeks (Irish Academic Press, €19.95/£17.99)

**The Treaty: the gripping story of the negotiations that brought about Irish independence and led to the Civil War,** Gretchen Friemann (Merrion Press, €16.95)

Felix M. Larkin

Part from two commemorative stamps issued by An Post, the centenary of the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 has passed without celebration by the Irish Government.

This is hardly surprising since, as Micheál Ó Fathartaigh and Liam Weeks note in the introduction to their book, *Birth of a State*,

the Treaty “is sometimes seen as a mild embarrassment, an acknowledgement of the failure of the Irish revolutionary movement”. This has been the dominant narrative even among historians since the appearance of Frank Pakenham’s account of the Treaty negotiations, *Peace by Ordeal*, in 1935.

That narrative is challenged in Messrs Ó Fathartaigh and Weeks volume and in a complementary study, *The Treaty*, by Gretchen Friemann. Both books were published last year, just before the centenary of the Treaty.

It is abundantly clear

from these two books that what the Irish delegates achieved in the Treaty negotiations was “most likely the best that could have been achieved given the circumstances”, to quote Messrs Ó Fathartaigh and Weeks.

### Freedom

Ms Friemann’s study charts the course of the negotiations in detail – blow-by-blow – but in a very lively style. In her hands, it is truly a gripping story. She does not, however, analyse the issues in depth other than to remark in her concluding paragraph that “in the end, the Treaty proved,

as Collins predicted, a stepping stone to freedom”. With hindsight, nobody can deny that – but it was not obvious in the immediate aftermath of the Treaty negotiations.

Messrs Ó Fathartaigh and Weeks cover a wider canvas in their book. Their account of the actual negotiations is quite summary – just one chapter of 41 pages – but they then examine in subsequent chapters the TDs who ultimately decided the fate of the Treaty, the Dáil debates on the ratification of the Treaty, the new Irish Free State in relation to the other British dominions and the political legacy of the

Treaty in Ireland. A further chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of each article of the Treaty. Their book aims, in their own words, to “set the tone for a reappraisal of the Treaty” – and their reappraisal is largely, but not entirely, favourable.

### Negative side

On the negative side, they note firstly that the persistence of ‘civil war politics’ – the division over the Treaty – “inhibited the development of parliamentary democracy in the Irish State... preventing the emergence of ‘normal’ party competition [and] holding back the

left”. The force of this criticism is, however, blunted by their observation that “compared to the bloody and long-lasting effects of settlements reached in the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent, the legacy of the Anglo-Irish Treaty could have been an awful lot worse”.

### “Prospects for some reversal of partition at the Treaty negotiations”

Secondly, they argue that, while the Treaty did not impose partition – that had been effected by the *Government of Ireland Act (1920)* – the failure of the negotiators on both sides to find an alternative to partition meant “that this aspect of the Irish question

**“That narrative is challenged in Messrs Ó Fathartaigh and Weeks volume and in a complementary study, *The Treaty*, by Gretchen Friemann”**

did not disappear". That is, of course, correct. However, it seems to me that they are mistaken in their belief that there were "prospects for some reversal of partition at the Treaty negotiations".

**“Irish commentators tend to focus on how much the Irish delegates gave away, but forget the issues on which the British yielded ground”**

Ms Friemann's more detailed account of the negotiations shows that James Craig and his government in Belfast resolutely refused to engage with the Treaty negotiations in any way. David Lloyd George – as prime minister in a coalition government that was largely Conservative in composition and dependent upon the Conservatives in the House of Commons for survival –



did not have the freedom of action to coerce the unwilling Ulster unionists into an accommodation with a parliament in Dublin.

### Compromise

Lloyd George did compromise on other matters. Irish commentators tend to focus on how much the Irish delegates gave away, but forget the issues on which the British yielded ground. As both these books emphasise,

even entering into discussions with the Sinn Féin rebel administration was a concession on the part of the British government – albeit one forced upon them by the fact that, as Ms Friemann succinctly puts it, “the IRA had won the guerrilla war simply by not losing it”.

Austen Chamberlain, one of the British negotiators, reminded the Irish delegation at an early stage in the negotiations “of the risks we

**“Ms Friemann’s more detailed account of the negotiations shows that James Craig and his government in Belfast resolutely refused to engage with the Treaty negotiations in any way”**

are taking with our whole political future” – and, in fact, none of the British negotiators except Winston Churchill had any future success in politics, and this was largely because they were regarded as having capitulated to gunmen.

### Home Rule

Although the Irish delegates failed to win their desideratum of the republic as proclaimed in 1916, nevertheless the Treaty fractured the United Kingdom – something which Home Rule, the only measure of freedom for Ireland previously on offer, would not have done. This was a huge concession by the British, and probably only a politician as wily as Lloyd George could have persuaded the British parliament to accept it. Messrs Ó Fathartaigh and Weeks are right when they say that “the astonishing thing is not that

the British did not relinquish more, but that they relinquished what they did”. Both sides lost something in the negotiations, but that is the nature of negotiation.

**“Treaty ‘was less an object of congratulation than a festering sore at the heart of Irish political life’”**

The outcome was an unhappy compromise, not celebrated today – and, as Messrs Ó Fathartaigh and Weeks point out, not celebrated either in 1921. They write that “while there had been success where previous generations of revolutionaries had failed, the sense of anti-climax was palpable”. In a similar vein, Ms Friemann quotes the opinion of

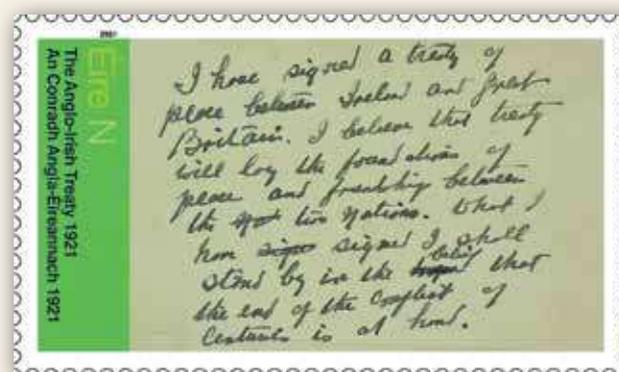
historian Deirdre McMahon that the Treaty “was less an object of congratulation than a festering sore at the heart of Irish political life”. Maybe these two books will lead to a more positive consensus on what is, whether we like it or not, the founding document of the independent Irish State.

Gretchen Friemann is an Australian journalist, and she brings to her study of the Treaty the welcome detachment of an outsider. Micheál Ó Fathartaigh and Liam Weeks are Irish academics in the fields of history and political science, based in NUI Galway and UCC respectively. In 2018 they co-edited another book on the Treaty, a collection of essays by various scholars entitled *The Treaty: Debating and Establishing the Irish State*.

## An Post has issued two stamps to mark the centenary of the Treaty

The stamps, and a commemorative First Day Cover (FDC) envelope, were designed by leading designer Ger Garland. The first features the signatures of the Irish Treaty delegates – Arthur Griffith (leader), Michael Collins, Robert Barton, Éamon Duggan and George Gavan Duffy, and the British representatives – David Lloyd George (Prime Minister), Austen Chamberlain, Lord Birkenhead and Winston Churchill. The second is a poignant reproduction of Arthur Griffith's aspirational message after the treaty signing.

These stamps seem however to some familiar



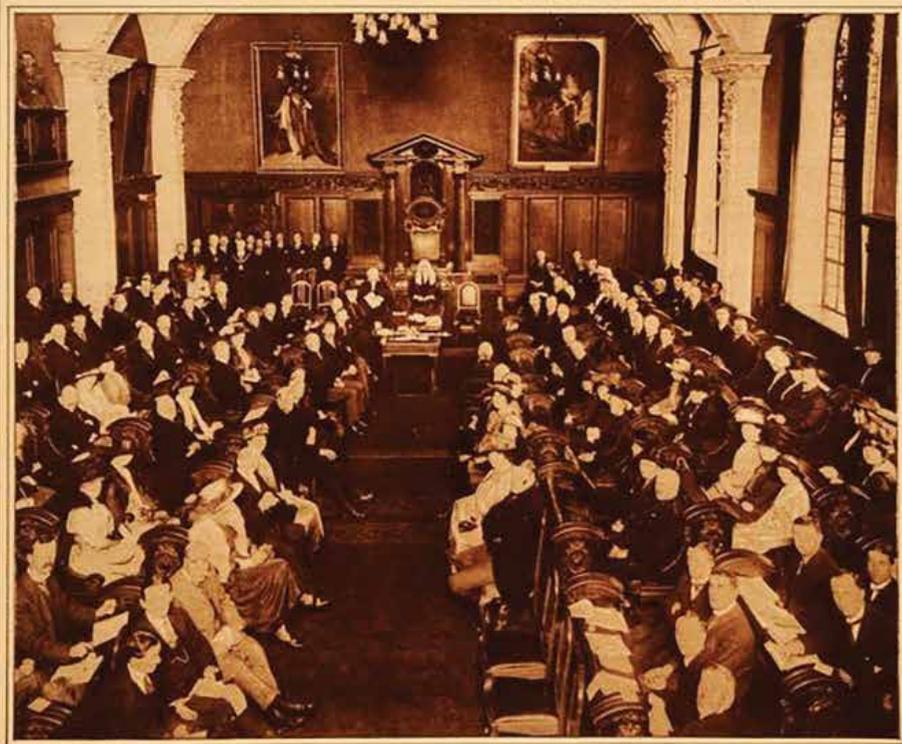
with the matter, to have received far less attention from both the newspapers and from An Post compared with the Christmas stamps. The Treaty stamps are, however, very fine collectors

stamps, well worthy of the occasion, and will undoubtedly be a best-selling item to philatelists, and to those who are putting away memorabilia of the Decade of Commemoration.

### Ulster Parliament and the Dail Eireann in Session



THE DAIL EIREANN IN SESSION IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN, DURING THE DEBATE ON THE TREATY THAT CREATED THE IRISH FREE STATE. DE VALERA, THE LEADER OF THE IRRECONCILABLE ELEMENT, IS SEEN ON LEFT OF TABLE WITH HEAD RESTING ON HIS HANDS.



THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ULSTER PARLIAMENT JUNE 8, 1921, WAS A HISTORIC OCCASION AND MARKED THE BEGINNING OF BETTER RELATIONS AND A MORE COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

# The Treaty as the Church saw it: Archbishop Byrne and the Dáil vote

Thomas Morrissey

**O**n January 3, 1922 the recently-appointed Archbishop of Dublin, Edward J. Byrne, wrote a personal letter to the president of Dail Éireann, Éamon de Valera. He was concerned lest the bitter differences over the Treaty might lead to division and disunity during the forthcoming critical debate on the Treaty. He wished to proffer a suggestion that would avoid division. He did so with care and sensitivity.

“A Chara”, he commenced, “it will be fresh in your memory that the bishops at their meeting, mainly owing to your request, refrained from making any public pronouncement on the Treaty.” He, Byrne, had followed the same course. Consequently, in putting a suggestion before him now he was not activated by any partisan feeling but rather by most friendly sentiments. Prefacing his suggestion, Byrne continued: “I venture to put before you the following considerations:

## Assembly

“The Dáil is a representative assembly.

Apart from its representative capacity it has no other *locus standi*.

The country so far as it has spoken – and it has given no uncertain voice – seems overwhelmingly in favour of the Treaty.

Your conscience and honour will not allow you to vote for the Treaty.

A formal vote on the Treaty will have one of two effects. The Treaty will be ratified or not. If the Treaty is rejected the Dáil will be acting against the will of the country; if the Treaty is ratified, you and those who act with you will be placed in the position of acting against the will of the nation. No one doubts your honour and sincerity.

Responsibility for the Treaty does not lie at your door. You have done everything for the wider settlement. Conscience and honour demand no more.”

With that, he put his suggestion: “To save those with you from acting against the declared will of the people and to make it possible for them to act with old friends and to avoid a miserable split in the national forces when all should act in consolidating what has been gained, even if that

is not all that has been desired – that you should avoid pushing matters to a division...Could you not, having made your dignified protest, let things go through without any division, without you or those acting with you taking any part in the ratification. It is division that will create the split.

## Gesture

“A significant gesture such as I suggest”, Dr Byrne concluded, “will enshrine you in the hearts of the people. They will recognise that you have done your best. Those who act with you will, if not at present, shortly, be thankful to you that you have not cut them off from public life. Ireland cannot spare a single man of you all.

**“Responsibility for the Treaty does not lie at your door. You have done everything for the wider settlement. Conscience and honour demand no more”**

“I commend my suggestion to your serious consideration and pray that Almighty God may give you his help to come to a right decision.” [UCDA. De Valera Papers, P 150/2903. Byrne-de Valera, 3 Jan. 1922]

The archbishop’s letter had little effect on the outcome. On January 7, there was a division in the Dáil and the Treaty was approved by a small majority of seven, 64 votes to 57.

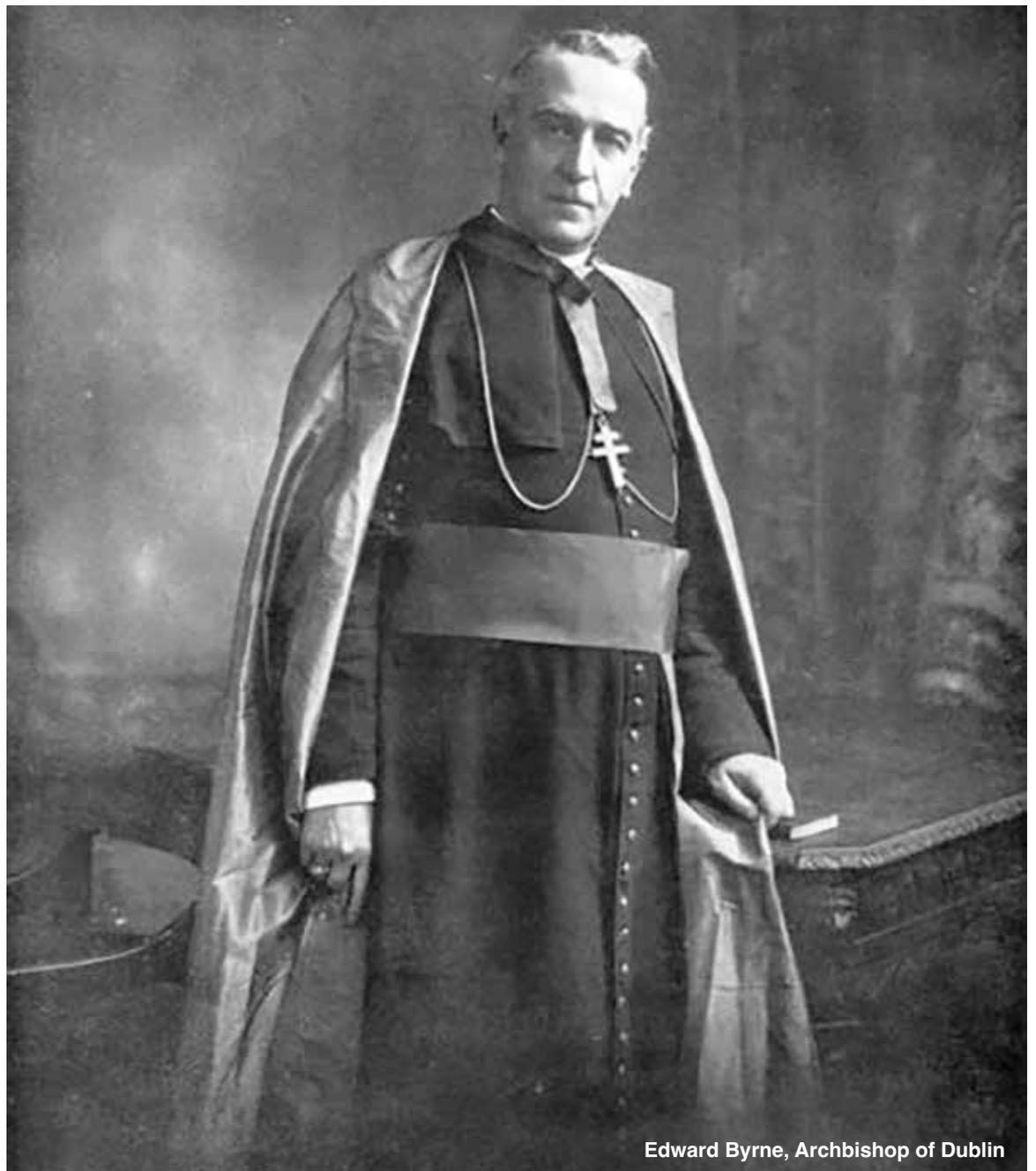
Two days later, de Valera resigned as president of Dáil Éireann and then stood for re-election. Opposed by Arthur Griffith, he was defeated by just two votes.

The archbishop continued to work to prevent the division resulting in civil war. He appears to have had some private meetings with de Valera, and then, together with the popular Lord Mayor, Laurence O’Neill, met with the leaders of both sides in conference over a period of three weeks.

Their efforts were largely in vain, foundering on divergent political views and personal animosities.

**Historian Dr Morrissey is the author of biographical study, *Edward J. Byrne: The Forgotten Archbishop* (Columba Books, 2012)**

**“The country so far as it has spoken – and it has given no uncertain voice – seems overwhelmingly in favour of the Treaty.**

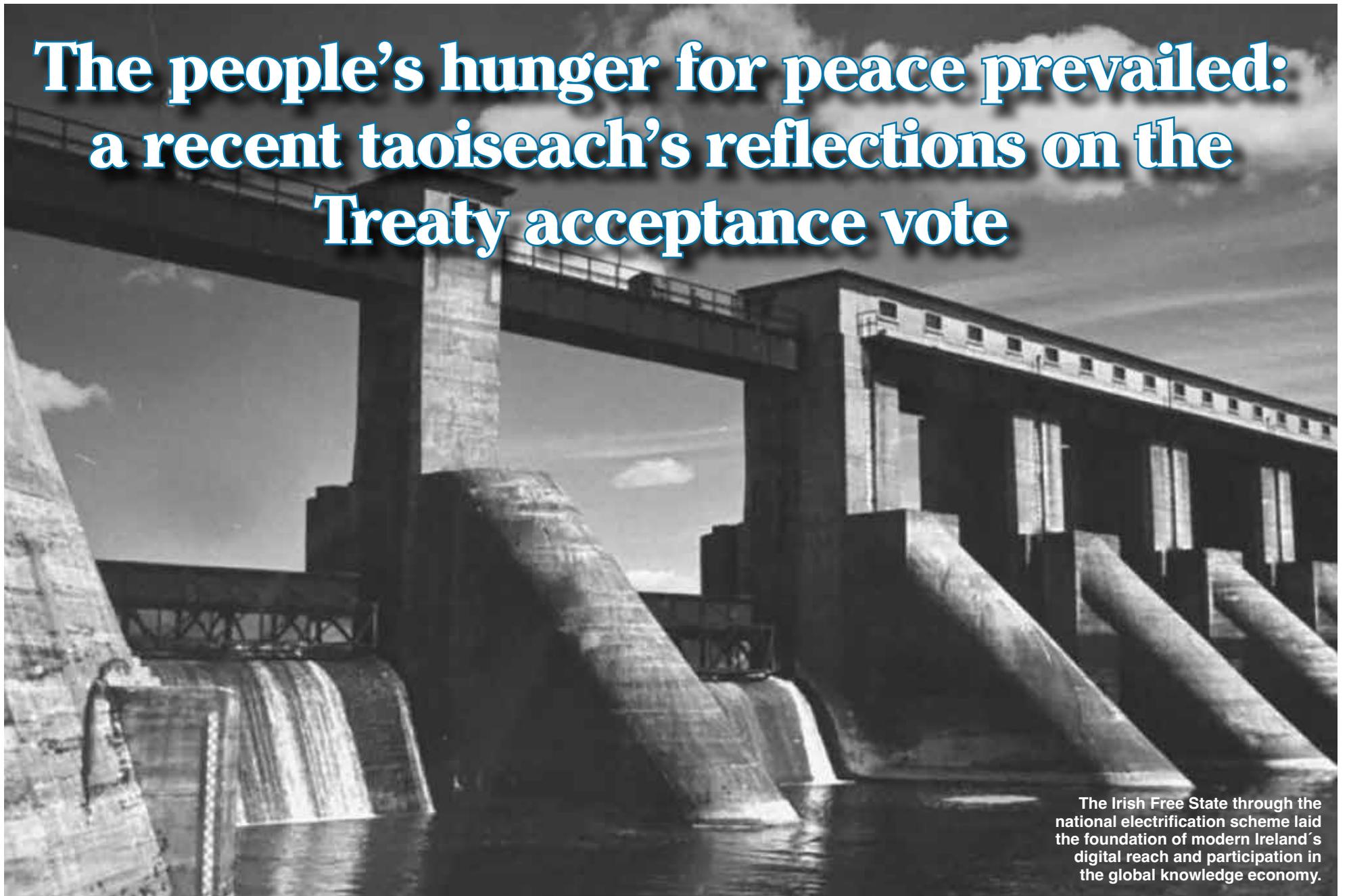


Edward Byrne, Archbishop of Dublin



Éamon de Valera and Cathal Brugha leaving UCD after the Treaty vote.

# The people's hunger for peace prevailed: a recent taoiseach's reflections on the Treaty acceptance vote



The Irish Free State through the national electrification scheme laid the foundation of modern Ireland's digital reach and participation in the global knowledge economy.

## John Bruton

**T**he Dáil debate on whether to accept the Treaty opened on December 21, 1921. The Treaty had been signed early on December 6. The debate took place in the low-ceilinged two room lecture hall, on the second floor of what is now the National Concert Hall.

My memory, as a UCD student who attended lectures in the same rooms over 40 years later, is that it was not a comfortable auditorium, and had poor acoustics.

The opening speech, proposing ratification of the Treaty, was made by Arthur Griffith.

He made his argument on the basis of popular democracy, saying: "It is for the Irish people, our masters not our servants, to say if the Treaty is good enough."

This was not a universally accepted view. Some opponents of the Treaty would argue that the final decision on the Treaty should be made by an army convention of the IRA, the ones who had done the fighting.

## Debate

When, after four full days of debate, concluding on January 7, 1922 the Dáil voted, by 64 votes to 57, to accept the Treaty, opponents questioned the Dáil's authority to make such a decision. The Dáil, they argued had no right to renege on the Irish Republic, proclaimed at the GPO at Easter 1916. The Republic had been proclaimed in the "name of God and dead generations". It did not depend on the con-

tingency of mere majorities in Dail Eireann, or anywhere else.

Éamon de Valera said after the Dáil vote that the Republic could only be disestablished by the Irish people. Notwithstanding the Dáil vote, "The Republic goes on" he said.

To Griffith, he said: "You may snatch an election now but the Treaty will renew the contest".

The origins of the later civil war lay in sentiments like this.

**“Some opponents of the Treaty would argue that the final decision on the Treaty should be made by an army convention of the IRA, the ones who had done the fighting.**

The fact is that Griffith's view on the Treaty prevailed in the Dáil vote, and in subsequent general elections. These outcomes affirmed that it is the Irish people of the day, through the exercise of the franchise, who are the ultimate democratic authority, not dead generations, or abstract principles.

The Treaty debate commenced with two full days before the Christmas break of 1921, and was resumed for two more days in early January 1922.

It appears that TDs, who returned to the constituencies over the Christ-

mas break, faced a lot of pressure to back the Treaty from their war weary constituents.

Why were people war weary by the end of 1921?

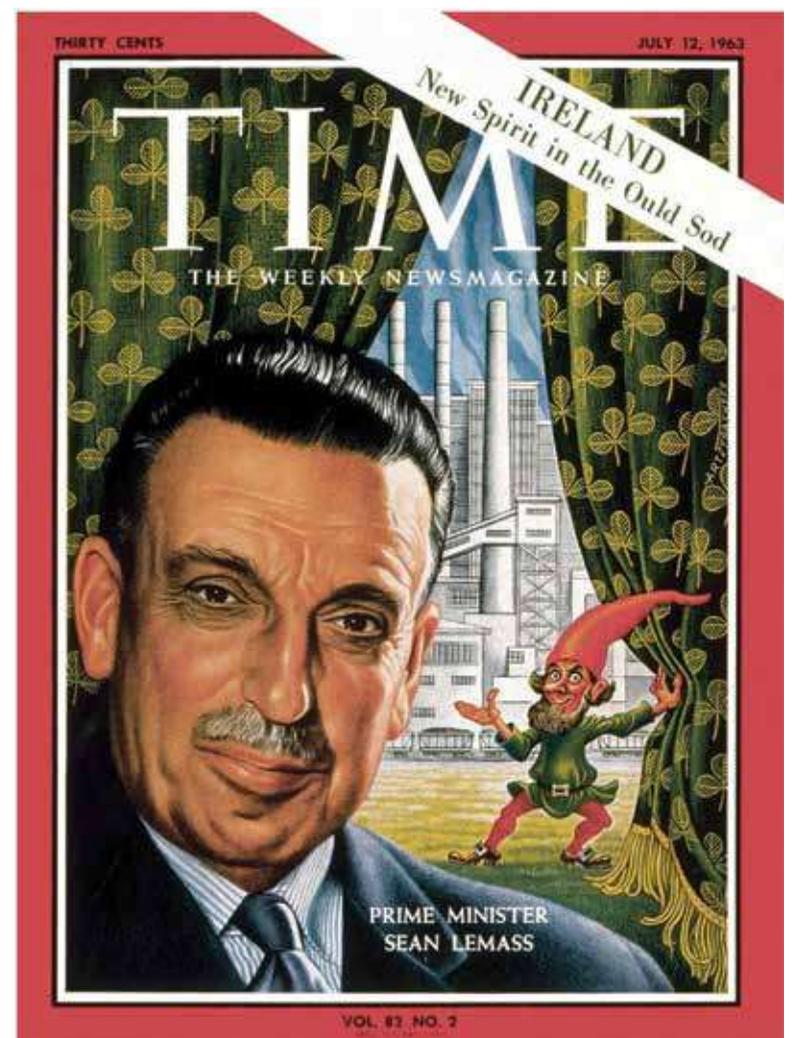
Anyone who wants to understand this, should look up *The Dead of the Irish Revolution*, by Ó Halpin and Ó Corrain. This book tells how, why, and where, each person was killed for political motives in those years. It names each victim. Many were unarmed. Others were suspected in the wrong of being spies. Yet others died because of grudges. This conflict from 1916 to 1921 was also, in many respects, an Irish civil war, just as was the later struggle, because most of the victims on both sides were Irish.

Although they had been elected without a contest at the previous election, the TDs who voted on the Treaty on January 7, 1922 knew they had to get it right. They knew they would have to face the people in the next election.

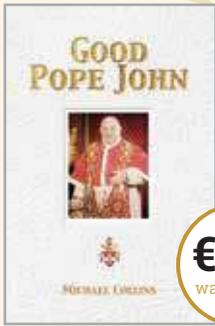
Then there would be a contest, with strong challenges coming from the Labour and Farmers' parties, both of whom wanted peace. If there ever had been a democratic mandate for war, it was fading away by the end of 1921.

The TDs listened. In this sense, on January 7, 1922 it was not so much Griffith and Collins who won the argument, it was the Irish people.

**John Bruton served as Taoiseach between 1994 and 1997; he retired from the Dáil in 2004.**



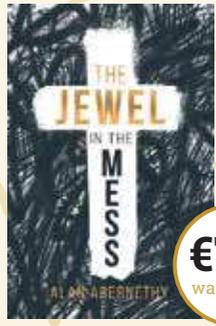
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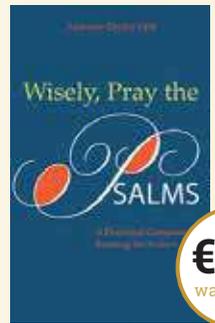


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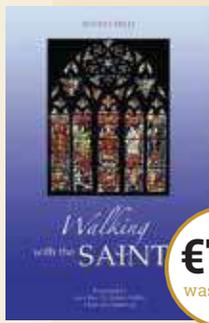
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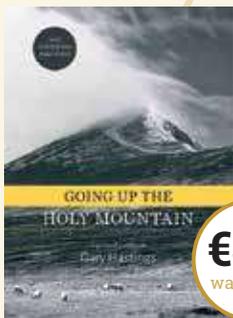
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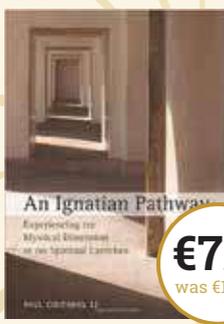


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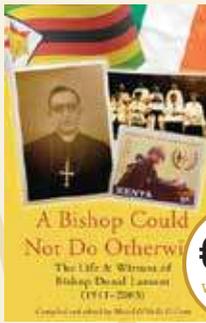


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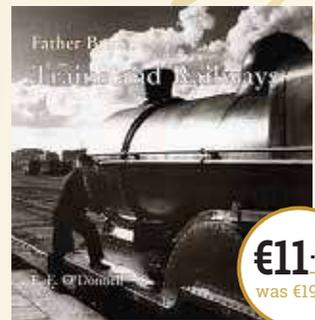


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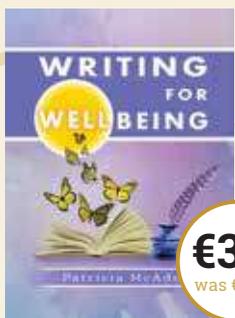


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# Witnessing to the Love of Christ in Algeria



Even in our weak and vulnerable human nature, we have a great capacity to love which can be released through the Holy Spirit, writes **Martin McGee OSB**

**B**lessed Pierre Claverie OP was born in Algeria in 1938 in a lower middle-class district of Algiers. Pierre, the elder of two children, experienced a very loving and secure childhood. Surprisingly, in his youth he hadn't a single Muslim friend. Unlike the European settlers (*les pieds-noirs*) who lived in smaller towns and in the countryside, Pierre never made any Arab friends. He lived in what he was later to call "the colonial bubble". He wrote: "We weren't racist just indifferent, ignoring the majority of the country's inhabitants." They were part of the landscape. Later in life he was to feel angry that the Church had not alerted him to the presence of his Arab neighbours and to the need to recognise and love them. "Love one another..." Yes. 'Love the Arabs also': perhaps people said that to me, but the context of my life didn't allow me to hear it."

## Science

In 1957 Pierre went to France to study science at the University of Grenoble. Having completed his first year, he decided to join the Dominican order. It was as a student in France that the scales dropped from Pierre's eyes and he became aware of the suffering and oppression which the Algerian people were enduring under French rule. On his return to Algeria in 1967, to minister as a priest in his newly independent homeland, he was fascinated by the Arabic culture, language and religion, of which he had known practically nothing in his youth. He quickly mastered Arabic and acquired a thorough understanding of the Qur'an. His warm outgoing personality, and capacity for listening, ensured that he quickly made many Algerian friends.

In 1981 he was appointed Bishop of Oran. By this time a more fundamentalist Islam had begun to take shape in Algeria, seeking to grasp the reins of political power. This movement sought to reclaim Algerian national identity from what, in its eyes, were corrupting Western influences. And then



Trappist monks are pictured in a scene from the 2011 film *Of Gods and Men*, which tells the story of the kidnapping and beheading of seven Trappist monks by a group of Islamic terrorists in 1996. Pope Francis approved the beatification of the seven monks, along with Bishop Claverie and 11 other religious men and women killed by extremists in Algeria in the 1990s. Photos: CNS

"the old Muslim apologetic against atheists, Jews and Christians made its appearance. We then realised the depth of what separated us". The danger which then presented itself, said Pierre, was that of withdrawing into oneself and of hardening one's positions. He saw the need to continue to dialogue with the other, but with greater realism and truthfulness, as both Christian and Muslim sought to encounter God, "this higher Truth who surpasses all of us and whom no one possesses". This kind of dialogue, wrote Pierre, has the added advantage of helping us to "deepen and clarify our own faith".

## Assassinated

Why was Pierre Claverie assassinated? Like all 'foreigners' living in Algeria, he was targeted by the Islamists who wished to create the maximum instability in the country by assassinating foreign nationals. In addition, Pierre was almost certainly targeted on account of his outspoken opposition to Islamic fundamentalism. His life and friendships proclaimed a message which the fundamentalists couldn't abide, namely that what Christians and Muslims hold in common is far greater than what divides them. Children of the one Father, their friendship and love for each other are what ultimately count. In a

homily in Oran Cathedral on October 9, 1981 Pierre had this to say: "I know enough Muslim friends, who are also my brothers, to think that Islam knows how to be tolerant, fraternal and concerned to humanise the world by giving it a soul and a heart... Let us not reject Islam on account of fanatics who serve it badly."

**“He was targeted by the Islamists who wished to create the maximum instability in the country by assassinating foreign nationals”**

As well as being an 'expert' on Islam, having immersed himself deeply in its culture and studied its religious traditions, Pierre was a master of the spiritual life. A gifted retreat-giver and teacher of spirituality, he was above all, by any standards, a holy person. His recent beatification by the Church in 2018, along with the seven Trappist monks of Tibhirine and eleven other priests and religious, recognises his exceptional virtue. Pierre wrote regularly about sanctity and what it means to lead a holy life, especially in the diocesan magazine, *Le*

*Lien (The Link)*. His reflections on holiness give us a good insight into his own way of life and personality because Pierre, more than most, did really practice what he preached.

Pierre remarks that every Christian is called to become a saint by being baptised into Christ's death and resurrection. In the early Church, St Paul called all baptised believers saints and the Church is the communion of saints. Sanctity is not something that we acquire through our own efforts but is a gift from God. The reason for this is simple, says Pierre: holiness is something which pertains to God alone and we become holy by receiving and participating in the holiness of God's own being: "One becomes a saint by disposing oneself to receive the gift of God, by renouncing the effort to justify oneself, to make oneself perfect. It's a question of assuming, in Jesus' footsteps, the condition of a 'servant of God', of 'sons and daughters of God'."

## No pretensions

That is why all the saints, writes Pierre, were poor in spirit, without pretensions, self-importance or claims to be specialists in the life of the Spirit. St Francis was an excellent example of this simplicity of heart: "Through him we can understand that riches (material,

intellectual, spiritual...) isolate, separate, imprison, blind, sadden, cause despair. With him we discover the joy of a simple, poor, devoted, surrendered love." The saints like Vincent de Paul and Jeanne Jugan, observes Pierre, weren't afraid to associate with the poor and rejected of their society, and thereby run the risk of offending the social and religious conventions of their time. They were on occasion thought to be crazy and were criticised for their unconventional behaviour: "They would also sometimes be feared for their very presence with the poor highlighted the vanity of the human condition, with its masks and its gilding, and drew attention to the responsibility of the rich and powerful." The saints didn't seek to shine before others and win their approval rather they lived "for God, through God", under his gaze.

Sanctity, notes Pierre, has got nothing to do with playing it safe, following the rules, calculating risks or conforming to religious or moral stereotypes. God's sanctity overthrows human calculations. Very often the originality and distinctiveness of the saints in their own time have been glossed over in the hagiographical literature: "The hagiographers have done everything possible to efface [their singularity] by often placing these witnesses to divine holiness in mythical stories, sadly repetitive, completely dehumanised, dully fanciful, outside the reach of ordinary mortals. Perhaps that was the aim of these official biographers? Holiness is so disturbing!"

## Passion for God

Sanctity has to do with the folly of love, the folly of the cross: "Without this passion from God,

**“All the saints, writes Pierre, were poor in spirit, without pretensions, self-importance or claims to be specialists in the life of the Spirit”**

without this passion for God, the saints are incomprehensible." And the greatest enemy of sanctity, the thing which kills it even more than pride or vice, is mediocrity. "Pride, vice, can open a wound in a person and bring about painful, but deep, conversions. Mediocrity drowns everything, blunts everything, sends everyone to sleep in a boredom from which we are perishing today." Pierre exhorts us to shun this condition of mediocrity, to leave ourselves behind. As the great Muslim mystic, Rumi, said: "There is only one step to take in order to reach God, a step outside oneself."

### Secret of sanctity

The secret of sanctity is love. All of us, says Pierre, even in our weak and vulnerable human nature have a great capacity to love which can be released in us through the action of the Holy Spirit: "Sanctity is not reserved for statues, for heroes and for 'plaster saints'; it is for everybody, everybody in their own way and that way is the gift of self without ulterior motive. God makes us participate in his holiness when we follow Jesus without ulterior motive and when we learn – with him and through him – to give our life away without counting the cost." And this giving away of our lives will involve the way of the cross. This way of the cross is simultaneously a way both of suffering and of new life. There is nothing morbid or masochistic about it. Every time we leave the self behind and go out of ourselves in the service of others we become more Christ-like, more of a saint. This self-giving is the doorway to eternal life, a way of death which leads to life.

Pierre thinks that there is nothing of the Nietzschean superman to be found in the Christian saint. On the

contrary, their very weakness can become the source of an amazing fruitfulness when it becomes the dwelling place of the Spirit. The fruit which the saints bear is wholly disproportionate to any effort to "change the world" through a tense striving on their part. With St Paul, Pierre teaches that the Holy Spirit works through our vulnerability and weakness: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians 12:9).

**“Sanctity is not reserved for statues, for heroes and for ‘plaster saints’; it is for everybody, everybody in their own way and that way is the gift of self without ulterior motive”**

In reading Pierre's teaching on sanctity, I am struck by how well he embodied it in his own life. He was a person who spoke the truth in love, who abhorred hypocrisy and double dealing, who gave his life selflessly in the service of reconciliation between Christian and Muslim. The key to sanctity for Pierre, as for all the Christian tradition, is love. And Pierre's own life wonderfully exemplifies Jesus' teaching: "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

**📌 Martin McGee OSB, a monk of Worth Abbey, West Sussex, has written a spiritual biography of Blessed Pierre Claverie: *The Certainty of Being Loved: Pierre Claverie, O.P., 1938-1996*, published by Dominican Publications.**



Bishop Pierre Claverie of Oran, pictured in an undated photo, and his driver were killed in 1996 by a remote-controlled bomb left by the bishop's residence.

# Spending your life for others...



**We cannot celebrate the Eucharist without trying to become ourselves gifts and learning to receive the other as a gift too, writes Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP**

**T**he questions that Blessed Pierre Claverie faced then, we face today: How to live with strangers? How to open our minds and hearts to people with beliefs which are different to our own? How to make faithful friendships?

I got to know Pierre long before I met him. My fellow Dominican student in Paris, Jean-Jacques Pérennès OP, worked with Pierre in Algeria for ten years before he came to live with me in Rome, in charge of the development of the order's apostolate. Pierre always stayed with us in Santa Sabina when he came to Rome, and we became friends too.

**“The cathedral was filled with Christians and Muslims, their presence together a fruit of his gift for friendship”**

When the monks of Tibhirine were martyred, Jean-Jacques and I decided that we must immediately go to Algeria to see our brethren. They needed to be assured that they would be supported whether they decided to stay in Algeria, with its growing violence, or leave. All of them decided to stay.

### Dialogue

We stayed in Pierre's simple and beautiful house in Oran where he was bishop. It was he who taught me that dialogue is a way of preaching the Gospel. It in no way reduces discussion of faith to relativism.

Jesus was a man of conversation. He was unafraid of engaging with anyone he met, whether the woman at the well in Samaria, prostitutes or rich Pharisees. Conversation leads to conversion, and Pierre showed us that in a good conversation, everyone is converted.

He took us around the diocese. The terrorists were disguising themselves as members of the security forces and setting up barricades, trying to catch the people whom they wanted, such as Pierre. So, every morning he phoned his friends to see which areas were safer. The Church maintained libraries which Muslim university students could use. After the murder of one of the sisters who was a librarian, Pierre told us as we drove that he found it hard to keep his own diocesan library open. An old friar, Jean-Pierre Voreux OP, sitting in the back of the car, immediately volunteered: "I am old enough to die. I will go to the library." It was clear to us at the end of our stay that it was unlikely that Pierre would live for long.

### Later

A few weeks later I was in my study in Rome about to leave with Jean-Jacques to launch the new International Dominican Youth Movement in Spain. Just as we were leaving for the airport, the phone rang and we learnt of Pierre's murder and of that of his friend and helper, Mohamed Bouchikhi. We flew to Spain and as soon as possible I made my way to Oran for the funeral. When I arrived, I found a sister still collecting the remains of Pierre and Mohamed with a teaspoon.

The cathedral was filled with Christians and Muslims, their presence together a fruit of his gift for friendship. At the end some of us were invited to give our testimonies to Pierre and what he had meant to us. I remember a young woman who had drifted from Islam and become an atheist. She stood up and said that because of Pierre, she had returned to her Muslim faith and that he was a bishop for the Muslims too. Then the cathedral was filled with a quiet sound, as the Muslims murmured, "He was our bishop too". The three subsequent times that I have returned to Algeria since then, I have always found the tomb of Pierre covered with flowers left by Christians and Muslims, flowers in the desert.

The beatification of Pierre and his 18 companions on December 8, 2018 was a sort of miraculous moment. There were barricades again, but this time to protect the friends and relatives of the martyrs. More than 100 Muslim leaders, civil and religious,

attended the ceremony and were thunderously applauded by the congregation. That evening we watched a performance of the play *Pierre & Mohamed*, written by a young French Dominican, Adrien Candiard OP, which explores their friendship. The play was attended by Mohamed's mother, who blew a kiss to the actor playing her son, and hugged the bishop.

As far as I know, this is the first time that the government of a Muslim-majority country gave such an enthusiastic welcome to the Christian celebration of our martyrs. How is this possible? It is because Pierre and the other religious gave their lives to the Algerian people and shared their suffering. The first martyrs were Sr Paul-Hélène Saint-Raymond, a Little Sister of the Assumption, and a Marist Brother Henri Vergès, who were murdered in May 1994. When Archbishop Henri Teissier warned his priests and religious of the danger of staying, Sr Paul-Hélène said, "Father, our lives are already given away." They could not be taken.

**“We stayed in Pierre's simple and beautiful house in Oran where he was bishop”**

Christianity centres on the Eucharist, the gift of Christ's body. How can we celebrate that without trying to become ourselves gifts and learning to receive the other as a gift too? Pierre said: "Giving one's life for this reconciliation [between Muslims and Christians], as Jesus gave his life in order to tear down the wall of hatred that separated Jews, Greeks, pagans, slaves, free persons – isn't this a way of celebrating the sacrifice of Jesus?"

Few of us in the West are ever likely to respond with the full gift of our life as martyrs. But Pierre believed that we all are summoned to what he called white martyrdom: "White martyrdom is what one strives to live each day, the giving of one's life drop by drop – in a look, in being present, in a smile, a gesture of concern, a service, in all of those things that makes one's life a life that is shared, given, bestowed upon others. This is where openness and detachment take on the meaning of martyrdom, of immolation – in letting go of life." That is our vocation, to become a gift. If we do so, what wonderful things may happen?

**📌 Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP is a former Master General of the Dominican order.**

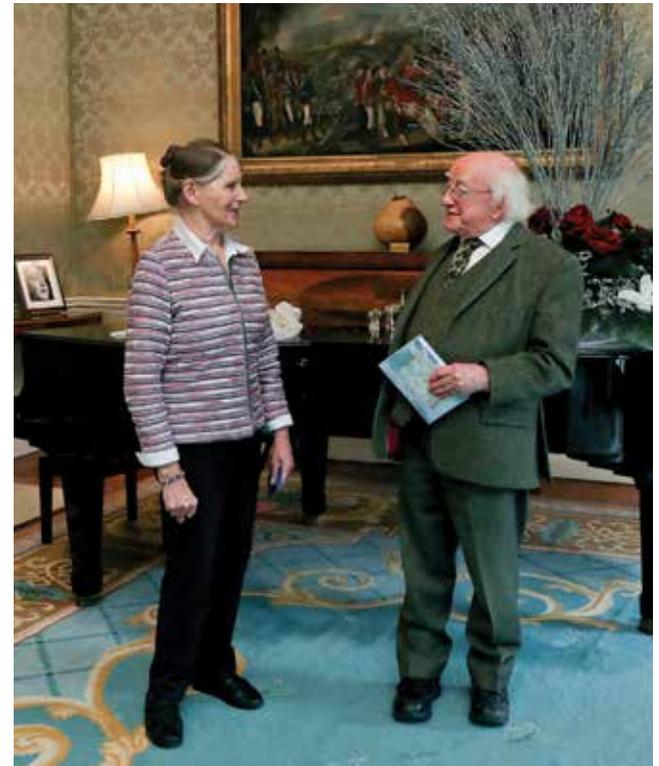
**“The beatification of Pierre and his 18 companions on December 8, 2018 was a sort of miraculous moment”**

# Out&About

## A royal chorus



**DOWN:** Queens University Belfast Catholic Chaplaincy's new sacred music society, 'Canticle', under the direction of award-winning soprano and QUB alumna Marcella Walsh, are pictured after performing at their Christmas Carol festival.



**DUBLIN:** Sr Stanislaus Kennedy presented a copy of her book *Finding Peace* to the President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins, who contributed to the book, at Áras An Uachtaráin.



**ARMAGH:** Archbishop Eamon Martin launched *In His Master's Footsteps – The Way of the Cross in the Company of St Oliver Plunkett* at St Patrick's Cathedral during a ceremony that remembered and prayed for all Christians who suffer for the Faith in our world today. *In His Master's Footsteps* was written by Canon Benny Fee and published by St Pauls Publications.



**CLARE:** Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan blessed the new Marian grotto at Críost Rí Oratory, Cloughleigh, Ennis, December 5.

## INSHORT

### Abandoning sacredness of the family promotes irresponsibility – Bishop McKeown

When a society abandons the sacredness of the family, it promotes a "lack of responsibility and maturity", Bishop Dónal McKeown said on the feast of the Holy Family.

The bishop of Derry warned that "in a secular world, preparation for Church marriages needs to be clear about the divine dimension" of the Sacrament.

"When marriage is reduced to a legal contract, then it remains a human construction that is by definition flawed," Bishop McKeown said.

But the Holy Family tells us "there is something profoundly sacred about human relationships. They are not merely useful and often pleasant".

"The idea of faithful family relationships calls us out of a preoccupation with self and our hurts and challenges us to build bridges," Dr McKeown said.

"A society which encourages and promotes long term stable committed relationships is a healthy society."

Bishop McKeown added that the family can be "a key place" where love, relationships and responsibility are promoted.

"When it is presented as little more than a contract that can be dumped when the going gets tough, then we are all diminished."

### Trócaire warns 2022 will bring 'massive challenges' to the vulnerable

Humanitarian needs are set to escalate in 2022 due to the compounding impacts of Covid-19, climate change and conflict, the CEO of Trócaire said.

The "biggest crisis" facing low-income nations is the "hunger pandemic", CEO Caoimhe de Barra warned.

According to the UN, Covid has already triggered a dramatic worsening of hunger with 811 million people undernourished last year – a tenth of the global population.

"We are witnessing and responding to the devastating triple impact of Covid, climate change and conflict" in 20 countries, Ms De Barra said.

"Due to Covid lockdown measures people have not been able to travel to markets to sell their goods, go in search of daily labour to earn their living, or plant crops. The result is there is no money for food."

Tackling global hunger requires addressing climate change, the political drivers of conflict and responding to Covid in a way that means no one is left behind, Ms De Barra continued.

"All this requires political will and a belief that all of humanity has the right to aspire to the same quality of life."

She thanked the Irish people for their great generosity and "unwavering support" in 2021.

Trócaire is the official overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in  
advance of publication



**CORK:** Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin with Bro. Dermot Lynch Ofm Cap., after celebrating the annual Mass for the Cork Deaf Community in Holy Trinity Church.



**GALWAY:** Norita and Michael Forde are pictured volunteering at the 'Celebrate Christmas at Galway Cathedral'



**LIMERICK:** Linda Ledger, CEO of St Munchin's Community Centre, presented Christmas Gifts to the pupils at CBS Primary School, Sexton St. Limerick. Pictured: Back Row: Ms Ledger, Rose Bourke, Denis Barry and Thomas Liddy. Front Row: School pupils displaying their Christmas gifts.



**MEATH:** Bishop-emeritus of Meath Michael Smith congratulates Sr Louise Horgan after she received the presidential distinguished service award for Irish abroad. Also pictured is Sr Lakana from Thailand.



**MEATH:** The Knights of Columbanus presented a cheque for €5,000 to Navan Meals on Wheels, December 8.



**CORK:** Mrs Irene Dorgan pictured recently after being conferred with the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* (for Church and Pope) Cross by the Bishop of Cloyne William Crean following Mass at Bishops House, Cobh. The cross is awarded by the Holy See to clergy and laity for service to the Catholic Church and the Pope.

### Events

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



# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Priest who led child protection charged in abuse case

● A retired priest of the US Diocese of Arlington, who for seven years oversaw the diocese's programme on protecting minors from clerical sexual abuse, was indicted shortly before Christmas on two counts of sexually abusing a minor.

A trial is scheduled next October for Fr Terry Specht, 68, who now lives in Donegal, Pennsylvania.

The priest was the director of the diocese's Office of Child Protection from 2004-2011. Fr Specht was indicted on two felony counts related to sexual abuse of a child under age 13. The indictment said the assault took place in 2000, when Fr Specht was chaplain and assistant principal at Paul VI Catholic High School in Fairfax.

Two separate allegations about Fr Specht were brought to the Arlington Diocese: one in 2012 and the other in 2019. "The diocese immediately reported each allegation to law enforcement," according to a statement from the Arlington Diocese.

"In 2012, Fr Specht was placed on administrative leave related to the initial allegation and the Diocese of Arlington's Review Board conducted an investigation. The review board found the allegation to be inconclusive, and law enforcement never brought charges related to the 2012 allegation," the statement said.

### As omicron spreads, churches welcome German triage ruling

● Bishop Georg Bätzing, president of the German bishops' conference, has welcomed the decision of the Federal Constitutional Court ordering the parliament to immediately establish rules to protect people with disabilities from losing out in triage decisions made during the coronavirus pandemic.

The German Catholic news agency KNA reported that Bishop Bätzing said it was an important signal for the protection of people with disabilities from discrimination. Triage refers to deciding which patients are to be treated first if medical assistance cannot be provided to everyone. "The community faces the urgent task of learning from the

pandemic and quickly drawing the necessary conclusions to ensure sufficient medical care for the population, even in difficult situations," Bishop Bätzing said.

Bishop Bätzing noted that the state had a concrete duty to protect its citizens and to ensure that no such discrimination occurs. "In addition, it must do everything possible to ensure that the health system is not overburdened in the first place", he said. The court said on December 28 that lawmakers had failed to take precautionary measures "so that no one is disadvantaged because of a disability in the allocation of vital intensive care resources not available to all."

### Date set for former Cardinal McCarrick's hearing

● Proceedings before a criminal trial involving former Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick will continue March 3 in Massachusetts, where he faces three counts of sexually assaulting a teenager in the 1970s.

A second pretrial hearing took place on December 21 to continue on to the next phase in March.

The hearing was preceded by one in October, following the former cardinal's arraignment in early September in Dedham District Court, where he pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Though he was present during the arraignment, McCarrick was not present during the pretrial hearings.

Though he wasn't a priest in Massachusetts, state prosecutors have said the alleged abuses of the teenager first took place at a wedding reception in 1974 on the grounds of Wellesley College, just outside Boston, and continued over the years in different states.

## Vatican sets date for John Paul I beatification

Pope Francis will beatify Pope John Paul I on September 4, at the Vatican, according to Stefania Falasca, a journalist and vice postulator of the late Pope's sainthood cause.

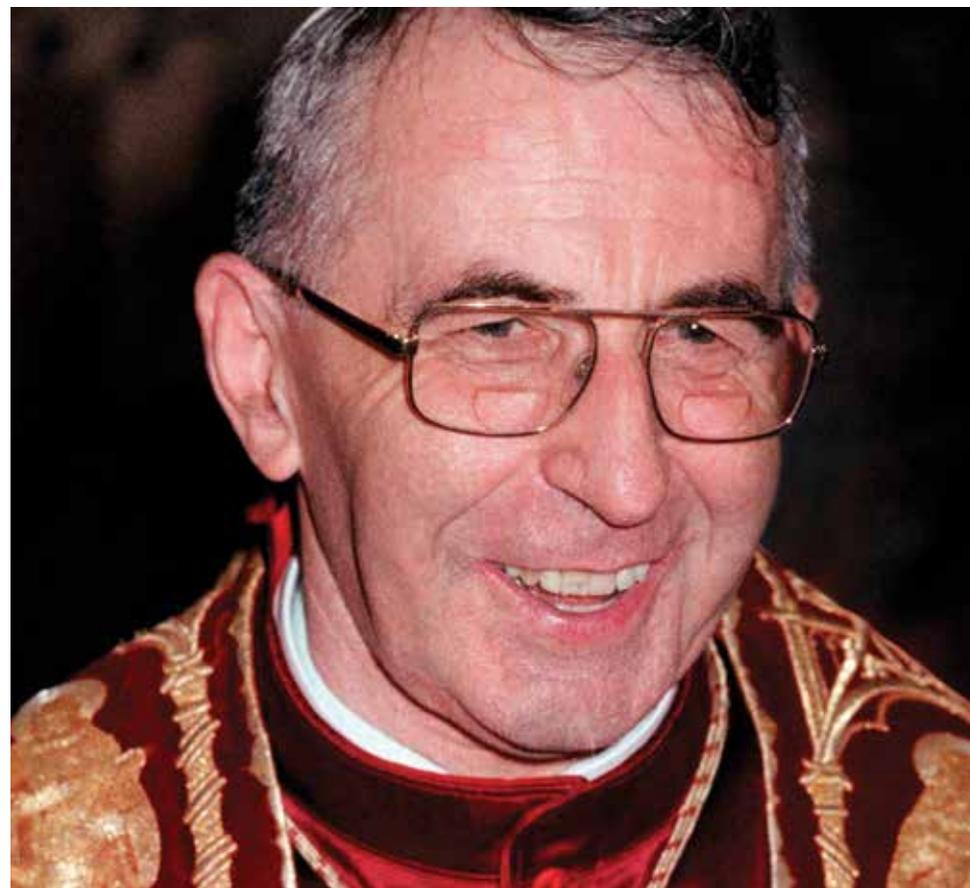
Last autumn, Pope Francis had signed a decree recognising a miracle attributed to the intercession of Pope John Paul I, clearing the way for his beatification. At the time, a date for the ceremony was not announced.

Writing in *Avvenire*, the daily newspaper owned by the Italian bishops' conference, Ms Falasca said the date had been set.

Pope John Paul I, an Italian who was born Albino Luciani, served only 33 days as pontiff; he died in the papal apartments on September 28, 1978, three weeks shy of his 66th birthday, shocking the world and a Church that had just mourned the death of St Paul VI. His secretary at the time was Msgr John Magee, later Bishop of Cloyne.

The miracle approved in his cause involved a young girl in Buenos Aires, Argentina, who developed a severe case of acute encephalitis, experienced uncontrollable and life-threatening brain seizures, and eventually entered septic shock.

After doctors told family members her death was "imminent," the local priest encouraged the family, nurses and others to pray to the late Pope for his intercession, according to the website of the Congregation for Saints' Causes. A panel of experts studying the cause



Pope John Paul I, who served as pope for 33 days in 1978, is seen in this photo released by the Vatican December 7, 2010. CNS

determined there was no scientific explanation for her complete recovery in 2011 and that it could be attributed to the late pope's intercession.

Although his was one of the shortest papacies in history, Pope John Paul I left a lasting impression on the Church that fondly remembers him as 'the smiling Pope'.

Born in the small Italian mountain town of Canale D'Agordo on October 17,

1912, the future Pope and his two brothers and one sister lived in poverty and sometimes went to bed hungry.

He was ordained a priest in 1935 and was appointed Bishop of Vittorio Veneto in December 1958 by St John XXIII. More than ten years later, he was named Patriarch of Venice by St Paul VI and was created a cardinal in 1973.

His surprise election, after St Paul VI's death, did not sway him from continu-

ing his humble manner of living, such as rejecting the use of the traditional papal tiara and calling his first Mass as pope the 'inauguration' of his papal ministry rather than a coronation.

Of 20th Century holders of the Petrine ministry, Pius X, John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II are canonised saints while Pius XII is on the path to sainthood. Only Benedict XV and Pius XI have not progressed on the process.

## Kentucky parishioners ride out tornado in church praying

Jenny and Bill Rush and other parishioners at Sts Peter and Paul Church in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, were nearly finished praying the rosary after an early morning Mass on New Year's Day when an isolated tornado shook the church, much to their surprise.

As the storm roared, the group prayed all the louder, Jenny told *Catholic News Service* January 3.

"We kept praying even though the lights were flickering," she said. "It was exhilarating and terrifying, but at the

same token it was spiritually uplifting to realise that even as we were praying the 'Memorare' she (Mary) was holding us. I honestly believe she was holding us."

Bill watched what parishioners describe as the "great window", expecting it to break "because the storm was so loud". It survived intact.

The storm passed in minutes. Except for a downed tree, a few missing shingles and minor water damage to another building, the church escaped

serious harm, Fr Richard Meredith, pastor, said in an email.

"Lights went out and it passed in under two minutes," the priest wrote, adding that the cleanup in the downtown area and the east side of the city of 31,000 where the storm struck was continuing. No injuries were reported.

Nearby homes and businesses, including Mount Olivet Baptist Church, along the storm's mile-long path, sustained extensive damage, local officials reported.

## Southern Italian diocese temporarily bans naming of godparents

A second diocese in Sicily, where the Mafia has had a significant presence for decades, announced a temporary ban on the naming of godparents for baptisms and confirmations.

In a decree that went into effect January 1, Bishop

Domenico Mogavero of Mazara del Vallo said the ban would be in effect *ad experimentum* (on an experimental basis) until the end of 2024.

"The office of godparent in the two sacraments of baptism and confirmation has lost its original meaning, lim-

iting itself to a purely formal liturgical presence that is not followed by the accompaniment of the baptised and the confirmed on the path of human and spiritual growth," the bishop wrote.

Rather than having godparents or sponsors, he said,

those being baptised, confirmed or welcomed into the church as adults will be joined by their parents or the person who prepared them for the sacrament.

In October, the Diocese of Catania introduced a similar three-year ban.



Edited by Brandon Scott  
news@irishcatholic.ie

## Washington wonderland



The Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement's retreat house is seen after a snow storm in Washington January 3, 2022. Photo: CNS.

## With foreign donation license denied, Missionaries of Charity ration food

Since Christmas, the Missionaries of Charity have been strictly rationing the food and daily use items for their regular 600 beneficiaries at their motherhouse and Shishu Bhavan, a children's orphanage. On January 2, the breakfast of tea, bread, and eggs was cut short by an hour.

"As long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me," said Razia, a beneficiary of the Missionaries of Charity, as she waited for the nuns to give her the weekly provisions. She lives with her two sick children across the road from the

motherhouse and says she visits the tomb of St Teresa and prays for the "difficult times to pass".

Abdul Razzak, a 45-year-old beggar, stays put outside the motherhouse curled in his rags. He has been staying there since Christmas in hopes of getting his share of food and medicine. A few others like him sit along with him to receive their subsidy from the nuns. Since the pandemic began, they received their daily meal from the motherhouse, but now, "Sisters told us that we might not be able to collect the food any longer," said the sick man.

The Indian Home Ministry has not approved the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act license of the Missionaries of Charity on the grounds of some "adverse reports". However, the nuns do not express their disappointment with the central government's action and continue the routine of prayers and service.

A spokeswoman for the order said the nuns are looking into the lack of FCRA approval and will appeal the ruling.

But the uncertainty hanging on the fate of foreign donations has started showing in the organisation's everyday operations.

Sr Dominic Mary, a member of the Missionaries of Charity from neighbouring Orissa state, told *Catholic News Service* that, "The state government of Orissa has confirmed that their supplies will keep going in these difficult times. ... If other state governments also support us, maybe this phase will pass."

On Fridays and Sundays, the poor line up to get their share of essentials at the motherhouse. The nuns have told them now that it might get difficult for them in the coming days.

## Catholics hold funeral after Myanmar massacre

For Christians in Chin and Kayah states, there were no Christmas and New Year celebrations due to fighting. They have borne the brunt of a decades-old civil war and faced oppression and persecution at the hands of the military, reported ucanews.com. On December 29, Catholics in Kayah's Hpruso Township held a funeral for 35 civilians – all Catholic – killed by troops and their bodies set on fire Christmas Eve in Mo So village.

Ucanews.com reported local sources said the funeral was led by catechists, because the military would not allow a local priest to officiate. The killings shocked the world and drew swift condemnation from Cardinal Charles Bo, who called it a "heartbreaking and horrific atrocity. The fact that the bodies of those killed, burned and mutilated were found on Christmas Day makes this appalling tragedy even more poignant and sickening.

"As much of the world celebrated the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, the people of Mo So village suffered the terrible shock and grief of an outrageous act of inhumanity," he said.

Cardinal Bo, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar, urged the military "to stop bombing and shelling innocent people, to stop destroying homes and churches, schools and clinics" and to begin dialogue.



## QR code added to sculpture to educate people about migration

● A life-sized bronze sculpture of migrants and refugees crowded onto a boat has stood in St' Peter's Square for more than two years, but just before Christmas a small QR code was placed on the boat's stern to give onlookers information about the work.

The QR code allows people to use their smartphones to access a dedicated website, the Vatican said in a statement, shortly after Pope Francis had encouraged people at his general audience to pray for migrants and refugees. "Migration today is a reality to which we cannot close our eyes," the Pope said. "It is a social scandal of humanity." Canadian sculptor Timothy Schmalz, well known also for his 'Homeless Jesus' sculpture, created the piece in St Peter's Square after a conversation in 2017 with Canadian Cardinal Michael Czerny, undersecretary of the migrants and refugees section of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, said the website linked by the QR code.

Mr Schmalz titled the migrants' sculpture 'Angels Unawares,' citing Hebrews 13:2, which in one translation says, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

## Pope, patriarch offer prayers as young Europeans hold Taizé prayer online

● Although young adults from across Europe did not pray in the new year together in Turin, they were gathering online to do so and to focus on ways to increase unity in a fractured world. The Turin meeting, already postponed from 2020, has been rescheduled for July, but Archbishop Cesare Nosiglia of Turin decided to go forward with a special exhibition of the Shroud of Turin, the 14-foot-by-4-foot linen cloth many people believe is Jesus' burial shroud. The archbishop and Bro. Alois, prior of Taizé, were joined by young adults from Turin and the surrounding area in praying before and contemplating the shroud. Tens of thousands of young people joined them virtually. The exhibition was part of the Taizé community's annual end-of-year ecumenical prayer gathering, which moved online December

28-31 and was supported by prayers and messages from Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and other leaders.

"Your meeting is taking place at a time when there are many reasons for concern," wrote Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, who assured the young adults of Pope Francis' blessing.

Encouraging the young people to dive deep into the rhythmic calm of the Taizé chants and the long moments of silence that are part of the Taizé prayer, Patriarch Bartholomew told them that expecting everything to happen instantly "profoundly modifies our ability to appreciate and contemplate the beauty of a world which, although immobile, is nevertheless in constant transformation."

## Even when rejected, God seeks out his children, Pope says

● Christians can rest assured that even when they feel unworthy, God is a good shepherd who goes in search of them, Pope Francis said.

Speaking to pilgrims gathered in St Peter's Square January 2 for his Sunday Angelus address, the Pope said God persists with his children "because he does not resign himself to the fact that we can go astray by going far from him, far from eternity, far from the light. This is God's work: to come among us", the Pope said.

"If we consider ourselves unworthy, that does not stop him: he comes. If we reject him, he does not tire of seeking us out.

"If we are not ready and willing to receive him, he prefers to come anyway. And if we close the door in his face, he waits."

# The top five most under-covered Vatican stories of 2021



John L. Allen Jr

Every year, certain storylines dominate news coverage of the Vatican. Some are largely positive, though many tend to be negative, such as the clerical abuse scandals that have been a strong contender for biggest Vatican story of the year for each of the last 20 years.

Reporters being basically pack animals, the inevitable effect of a few stories looking so large is that others tend to slip through the cracks. That's not always a measure of their relative importance, but rather the judgments of news organisations about which stories are more likely to sell.

**“The cases were different, in that Dr Hart faced a dozen separate charges of abuse while Dr DiMarzio was accused by two persons”**

There were plenty of well-covered storylines out of the Eternal City this year, from the Pope's triumphant trip to Iraq in March to his colon surgery over the summer, as well as his highly controversial decision to largely suppress the old Latin Mass. (Given that a



Rabbi Abraham Skorka of Buenos Aires and Pope Francis embrace after visiting the Western Wall in Jerusalem May 26, 2014. Photos: CNS.

subsequent poll of American Catholics found two-thirds unaware Francis had even done anything on the Latin Mass, that development in particular is also a good example of how large numbers of people don't have to be invested in a story in order for it to make a lot of noise.)

At year's end, it's worth a look back at some of the other noteworthy Vatican stories of the year that never quite made the cut, generating some ripples but never a wave in the sea of today's 24/7 media coverage.

## 5. Hart and DiMarzio

In the United States, Bishops Joseph Hart in Cheyenne and Nicholas DiMarzio of Brooklyn had become identified with the clerical abuse scandals, in part because both faced their own charges of abuse. Both, however, were cleared by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Dr Hart in January and Dr Di Marzio in September.

The cases were different, in that Dr Hart faced a dozen separate charges of

abuse while Dr DiMarzio was accused by two persons. In Dr Hart's case, there seemed to be a history of dubious personal conduct that lent some credibility to the accusations.

In the end, the Vatican cleared Dr Hart of seven of the accusations and found that the other five couldn't be proven, but nevertheless rebuked him publicly for what it called his “flagrant lack of prudence” in being alone with minors. In Dr DiMarzio's case, the congregation simply determined that the two accusations lacked “the semblance of truth.”

In any event, the Bishops Hart and DiMarzio cases were reminders in 2021 of an iron-clad law of journalism: When they indict you, it'll be on the front page; when you're cleared, it'll get kicked inside.

Granted, the bitter lesson of the abuse scandals has been that smoke means fire more often than not, and that every accusation must be taken seriously. Bishops Hart and DiMarzio are also reminders, however, that accusation is not the same thing as evidence, and that reality often is far messier and more complex than simplistic narratives would suggest.

## 4. Monsignor Robert Oliver

In itself, the fact that American Msgr Robert Oliver was let go as chief of staff for the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors in April

was no big thing. He'd been in the Vatican for nine years, which is a long run, and his job is among the more frustrating and emotionally draining in the system.

Moreover, it's not as if his departure signaled a retreat on the cause. His successor is British Fr Andrew Small, an Oblate who's a former foreign policy advisor for the US bishops and former National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies. Fr Small is smart, tenacious and on board with the need for reform.

What makes the Msgr Oliver ouster noteworthy isn't the what, but the how. We're talking about a kind, generous, and completely committed worker who gave almost a decade of his life in service to the Vatican. So, when they decided to cut him loose, did someone high up in the system pull him aside and thank him for a job well done? Did they maybe put together a small going-away party, giving him a papal medal or something?

Nope. Instead, Msgr Oliver discovered he was out from a blasé news release, listing people who'd been reappointed to the commission without his name on the list, issued while he was on a brief trip to the States.

In fairness, it's not just Msgr Oliver – that's how the Vatican treats most of its employees, which is why the place suffers from what I've called an “HR pandemic.”

**“Reporters being basically pack animals, the inevitable effect of a few stories looking so large is that others tend to slip through the cracks”**



A woman pushes an elderly woman in a wheelchair to receive a dose of the Moderna vaccine against Covid-19 at the Music Auditorium in Rome April 14, 2021.



A new multifunction room at the Vatican Museums is pictured during the trial of two priests by the Vatican City State court June 7, 2021.

The only reason the Vatican hasn't imploded from chronic abuse and neglect of its most valuable assets, i.e., its workforce, is that for every Bob Oliver, there's an Andy Small ... another talented, dedicated person willing to answer the bell when the Pope calls, no matter how dysfunctional the system may be.

That's a wonderful thing, but, frankly, it's no excuse.

### 3. The Pope and the Rabbis

If you don't even remember this happened during 2021, no need to feel bad, because it attracted almost no interest anywhere outside Israel. However, in August Pope Francis stirred controversy in the Jewish world for his comments on the Torah, meaning the Jewish law.

"The law (Torah) does not give life," the Pope said during a General Audience on August 11.

**Francis is seen as a liberal reformer who favors inter-faith dialogue, so any development suggesting disrespect on his part is played down or ignored"**

"It does not offer the fulfilment of the promise because it is not capable of being able to fulfil it... Those who seek life need to look to the promise and to its fulfilment in Christ."

For some veteran participants in Jewish-Catholic dialogue, such rhetoric smacked of 'supersessionism,' a theological view which holds that Judaism is obsolete now and has been superseded by the Gospel of Christ. The Chief Rabbinate, which

is the supreme rabbinic authority for Judaism in Israel, sent a letter of protest to the Vatican, asking for a clarification so that "any derogatory conclusions drawn from this homily are clearly repudiated."

During a later General Audience in early September, Francis addressed the controversy, saying his comments had been "simply a catechesis...and nothing else." The suggestion was, he didn't intend to declare infallible teaching on Judaism or any other subject, so, really, nothing to see here.

In the meantime, Francis's top deputy for Jewish/Catholic relations, Swiss Cardinal Kurt Koch, sent a letter to the rabbis containing a quote from Francis in 2015: "The Christian confessions find their unity in Christ; Judaism finds its unity in the Torah." Later, Francis also appeared to try to make amends, issuing greetings for Rosh Hashanah in which he prayed the new year be good "for those who walk faithfully in the law of the Lord."

This story is a reminder of how narratives control the way Popes are seen. Francis is seen as a liberal reformer who favors inter-faith dialogue, so any development suggesting disrespect on his part is played down or ignored. Just imagine, though, what the public reaction might have been had Pope Benedict XVI said exactly the same thing, and you'll appreciate the point.

### 2. Lay Movements

In many respects, the Catholic Church is where logic goes to die, and Pope Francis's crackdown on lay movements in June is a good example of the point. In most respects you might think Francis would be a 'let a thousand flowers bloom' kind of guy, and especially favourable to lay initiatives that challenge the clerical grip on power.

of power by leadership. Ensuring turnover and a democratic method of succession is, therefore, a natural administrative response.

Beyond that, many observers believe the lay movements are also the next frontier in the Church's abuse scandals – that dioceses, seminaries and religious orders have largely cleaned up their acts by now, but these semi-autonomous lay organisations, with only nebulous oversight by Church authorities, remain a potential mine field.

In any event, this was an important display of papal power with potentially far-reaching consequences, which didn't really light up the scoreboard in terms of American news coverage because the movements are a much bigger deal in other parts of the Catholic world.

### 1. The Other Trial

When Vatican prosecutors decided over the summer to indict a sitting cardinal and former papal chief of staff as part of their investigation of a London land deal gone wrong, it ensured the subsequent trial would become a cause célèbre, drawing intense interest. They may regret that decision now, since their 'trial of the century' seems as if it might collapse under its own weight, but anyway, people are still paying attention.

In the meantime, the other big Vatican trial of the year sort of flew under radar – the case pivoting on the Pre-seminary of St Pius X, until recently located on Vatican grounds, and featuring charges that one minor seminarian had sexually abused another.

Fr Gabrielle Martinelli, who's now 28, was accused of having sexually abused a slightly younger pre-seminarian, identified only as 'L.G.', between 2007 and 2012, at a time when both were still minors. (Fr Martinelli entered the pre-seminary in 2005 and remained there until 2013.) Also charged was Fr Enrico Radice, the rector of the facility at the time the alleged abuse occurred, and who was accused of hampering the investigation – what, in American parlance, would be known as "obstruction of justice."

In part, many reporters may have decided to take a pass on this story because it was just so complicated.

For one thing, when it's one

minor allegedly abusing another, it's not as clear-cut as when an adult is the alleged perpetrator. For another, 'L.G.' appeared to give shifting accounts of events, raising issues of credibility. To muddy the waters even further, there were apparently deep tensions among the pre-seminarians over the Latin Mass, with Fr Martinelli belonging to one camp (upholding the post-Vatican II Mass) and his accuser to the other (favouring the older rite), and it was impossible to know to what extent those rivalries may have exacerbated things.

In the end, both Frs Martinelli and Radice were acquitted. The court accepted that Martinelli had a sexual relationship with another pre-seminarian, in addition to his accuser, but found no evidence that second relationship was coercive.

**“That’s a worrying insight about the state of reform, and there’s no reason to believe the problem of overlapping jurisdiction to which it points has been resolved”**

Here's why the trial was a big deal.

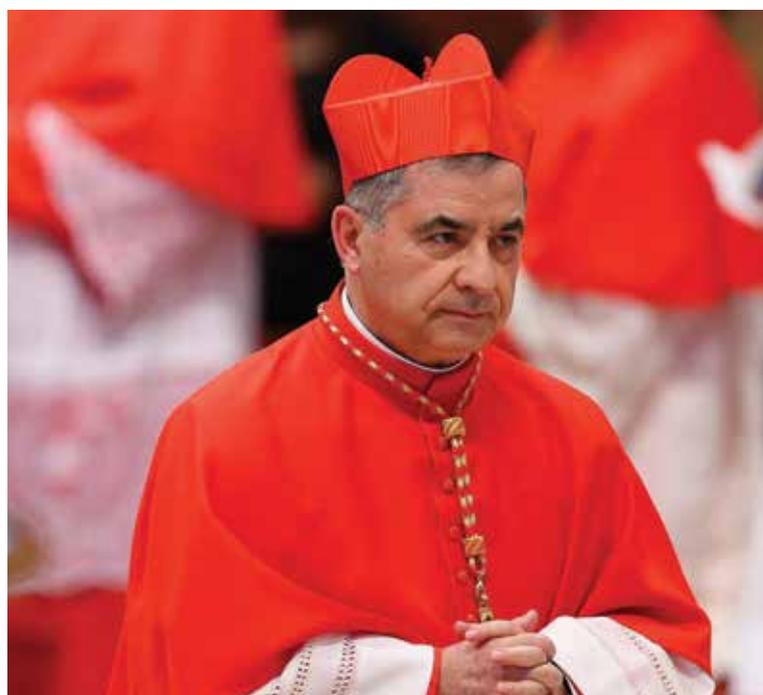
A key point that emerged during the trial was that nobody really knew who was in charge of the pre-seminary. It had been founded by an Italian religious order, the Opera Don Folci, and was sponsored by the Italian Diocese of Como. Yet because it was located on Vatican grounds, most people tended to assume it was overseen by the Archbishop of St Peter's Basilica, or, maybe, the Government of the Vatican City State.

In reality, it was a classic case of when everybody's in charge, no one is. As a result, the pre-seminary operated in a kind of oversight vacuum, in which nobody was minding the store.

Think about the timing: The alleged abuse occurred during the Benedict XVI years, when the abuse scandals were already well known and reform campaigns were allegedly ushering in a new day. Even if there was no abuse, there clearly was a sexualised environment. The lack of clarity about oversight actually persisted all the way up to 2021, when Francis ordered the facility moved off Vatican grounds – making it clear that whoever's problem it is now, it's not the Pope's.

One has to ask how it's possible that the Vatican had a residence for minor boys on its own territory, one in which those boys had regular contact with all manner of older seminarians and clergy, and yet no one in authority, at at least three distinct levels of the Church, apparently took it upon themselves to exercise any quality control until the dam broke.

That's a worrying insight about the state of reform, and there's no reason to believe the problem of overlapping jurisdiction to which it points has been resolved. One can only wonder how many more institutions, schools, movements, and other Catholic entities may be in similar circumstances, albeit not on Vatican grounds – and who's minding the store in those places too.



Italian Cardinal Angelo Becciu is seen at the Vatican in this 2018 photo.

# Letters

## Letter of the week

### God brings good out of evil situations

**Dear Editor,** As the pandemic rolls on and on and as numbers suffering from Covid grow more and more in spite of vaccinations and many restrictions, I feel called to share some thoughts and reflections.

There is clear evidence that the current state of the world is much cause for anxiety and concern among many good people.

Some conclude that the state of today's world must be worse than it has ever been, and they bemoan a lack of leadership from Church and state, and yet, although many modern events are very troubling, a review of history provides examples of many crises that have threatened our world

– God's world. To put it plainly, history shows that evil does not prevail.

God, in his infinite love and mercy, brings good out of evil situations that, in the moment, and viewed without proper historical perspective, might have seemed disastrous and beyond redemption.

Pope Francis is calling on us to be the cry of the poor and of the earth. On Vatican and world news shared on Radio Maria daily, he exhorts us all to pray, to discern and to seek to live as Jesus lived. We need to hear more of these words in other media outlets, which seem to have a concerted effort to ignore God and the things of the spirit.

I ask this Holy Spirit to help all good people share with others the good news that God does not and will not abandon his people. We need to look back at history and see how prayer carried people through so much darkness, pain and suffering.

May God grant us the wisdom to believe God is with us and help us share that good news so that it will enable us to hope and cope in spite of all the sad and bad news we hear. God bless all.

*Yours etc.,  
Sr Susan Teague  
Knock, Co. Mayo*

### Drawing conclusions from meeting between Pope and Biden

**Dear Editor,** In his letter Anthony Redmond [*The Irish Catholic* – November 25, 2021] expresses an assumption that if Joe Biden's account of his private (unrecorded) conversation with the Pope were inaccurate, then the Vatican would have refuted Biden's account. Surely the Vatican would be much wiser than to do such a thing – to publicly suggest the President of the USA is a liar? Imagine the repercussions of that! Many of us are aware of Biden's efforts to cultivate the image of 'a good Christian', for the consumption of US voters. We can all draw our own conclusions regarding the papal audience.

*Yours etc.,  
Eilis McCormack  
Rowanville, Kildare Town*



### Perhaps we will have a 'St Duff' in future?

**Dear Editor,** I have to commend you and your team for a remarkable and inciteful edition on Frank Duff and the Legion of Mary [*The Irish Catholic* – December 9, 2021]. I must admit, I knew a bit about the Legion but

very little about Duff other than he was their founder. The worldwide reach of the Legion of Mary was far more significant than I imagined and the holiness of their founder can't be denied. Currently, the Church is

facing so many challenges, particularly regarding good role models as so many supposedly holy men were involved in horrendous abuses. Duff is certainly a role model and an example to us all.

Perhaps we will have a St Duff in the future? He would certainly be an ideal candidate for sainthood if we can find some miracles!

*Yours etc.,  
Bill O'Mahony  
Dublin 8*

### Use your local church or you will lose it

**Dear Editor,** The fact that 12% of former Mass-goers do not intend to return to Mass is not surprising [*The Irish Catholic* – December 2, 2021]. The pandemic was the final nail in the coffin for those whose faith was hanging on by a thread, and who were just attending Mass due to tradition.

The move to online Mass did not help generally – although it was necessary at a time, and it has improved accessibility for those who are housebound or ill which is positive. The importance of attending physi-

cally should be underlined by the bishops once again, this will strengthen faith communities and support people in their faith. Of course, those who are particularly elderly or who have an underlying health condition should be cautious, and never be made feel guilty for protecting their health, but the message to return must go out. Too many people have grown comfortable watching it on a screen in their pyjamas.

Another concern is the financial aspect. The Church has limited resources and will have to downsize

to survive, this was inevitable, but the pandemic has sped up this process dramatically meaning there's a shorter time limit for decisions that have to be made.

The closure of churches has been regularly mentioned, due to lack of attendance and reduced resources. For those who would be aghast at the thought of losing their local church – you should use it or lose it!

*Yours etc.,  
Ann Walsh  
Dundalk, Co. Louth*

# The Church does not need fixing

**Dear Editor,** Bishop Brendan Leahy's radio reminder that the only proper synodal outcome is that preferred by the Holy Spirit seems entirely realistic.

The general public commentary focuses primarily on submission of ideas by the laity. A dominant narrative aimed at discarding unfashionable Church teachings has emerged. One Irish theologian recently claimed the Church "needs fixing". The Church is the mystical Body of Christ. He doesn't need "fixing".

The Church includes the saints in heaven; they don't need "fixing". She includes the souls in purgatory whose "fixing" is in hand. There remain those on earth who always need some level of "fixing" in the manner previously experienced by those in heaven and purgatory. This includes repentance, ongoing conversion, charity, prayer and the joyful centrality of giving glory and praise to the name of God. This sets the ultimate context for synodality.

Meaningful synodality has to refer to grace; to God's Spirit linking the human agents in synodal process to the source of wisdom and love, trans-

forming their thinking in line with God's healing and teaching action in the ongoing formation of his Church.

Does the dominant narrative dilute the concept "discernment?" Some, including the previously mentioned theologian claim an immediate insight identifying teachings to be discarded. One regional synodal leader has issued an ultimatum in a national daily amounting to "do such and such or I leave". Such incidents tend to come with an assurance that listening, prayer, and discernment will reveal what else the Holy Spirit might desire. Prioritising satisfaction of non-negotiable demands ahead of exercises in discernment has become apparent.

There is no evidence that changing the Church's unfashionable teachings renders the Catholic Faith any less marginal to the ambient culture. We need to avoid imagining "there is a Holy Spirit and he thinks like me".

Otherwise we run the risk of a spectator sport, "just another Winter's Tale".

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

## Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

# 📷 Around the world



▲ **VATICAN CITY:** Young people dressed as the Magi walk in the central aisle of St Peter's Basilica after attending Pope Francis' celebration of Mass on the feast of Mary, Mother of God, at the Vatican on January 1. German, Italian and Swiss young people, called *sternsingers*, carol and raise money for charity between Christmas and Epiphany each year. Photos: CNS.

◀ **VATICAN CITY:** Pope Francis greets children as he participates in an evening prayer service in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on December 31 to give thanks for the past year.



**USA:** People take part in the Polar Bear Plunge in North Beach, Maryland. The annual fundraising event is sponsored by the Ladies of Charity of Calvert County.



**VATICAN CITY:** People walk near St Peter's Square on a foggy day ahead of Pope Francis' celebration of Mass marking the feast of Mary, Mother of God, at the Vatican on January 1.



**AUSTRALIA:** Fireworks explode over the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Opera House during a show to celebrate the new year.



**ITALY:** The cathedral in Milan is seen in the background as people wear face masks amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

# At the Origins of our Universe –

## Jesus and the Big Bang

Recently NASA launched the James Webb Space Telescope into space, the biggest and most expensive telescope ever built. It will take six months for it to travel a million miles from the earth, find its permanent place in space, and then start transmitting pictures back to earth. Those pictures will be such as have never seen before. The hope is that it will enable us to see much further into space than we've ever seen before, ideally to the very ends of our still expanding universe, right to the first particles that issued forth from the original explosion, the Big Bang, that began time and our universe.

**“Out of this seeming nothingness, there was an explosion (the Big Bang) out of which everything in the universe including our planet formed”**

Scientists estimate that our universe began 13.7 billion years ago. As far as we know, prior to that there was nothing in existence, as we understand that today (except for God). Then, out of this seeming nothingness, there was an explosion (the Big Bang) out of which everything in the universe including our planet earth formed. As with any explosion, the parts that were the most intimately intertwined with the expelling force are those driven furthest away. Thus, when investigators try to deter-



Fr Rolheiser

[www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com)

mine the cause of an explosion they are particularly interested in finding and examining those pieces that were most closely tied to the original force of the explosion, and generally those pieces have been blown furthest away.

### Force

The force of the Big Bang is still going on and those parts of our universe that were most intimately intertwined with its beginnings are still being driven further and further into space. Scientists are investigators, probing that original explosion. What the James Webb Space Telescope hopes to see is some of the original parts from that unimaginable explosion that gave birth to our universe because these parts were there at the very beginning, at the origins of everything that exists. By seeing and examining them, science hopes to better understand the origins of our universe.

### Excitement

Looking at the excitement scientists feel around this new telescope and their hopes that it will show us pictures of particles from the beginning of time, can help us understand why the Evangelist, John, has trouble restraining his enthusiasm when he talks about Jesus in his first Epistle. He is excited about Jesus because, among other things, Jesus was there at the beginnings of the universe and indeed at the beginnings of everything. For John, Jesus is a mystical telescope through which we might view that primordial explosion that created the universe, since he was there when it happened.

Let me risk paraphrasing the beginning of the First Epistle of John (1:1-4) as he might have written it for our generation vis-a-vis our curiosity about the origins of our universe:

You need to understand of whom and what I am speaking: Jesus wasn't just some extraordinary person who performed a few miracles or even who rose from the dead.

**“We actually spoke with him and listened to him speak, he who was there at the origins of our universe”**

We are speaking of someone who was there at the very origins of creation, who himself is the foundation for that creation, who was with God when 'the Big Bang' occurred, and even before that.

Incredibly, we actually got to see him in the flesh, with human eyes, the God who created 'the Big Bang', walking among us!

We actually touched him bodily. We actually spoke with him and listened to him speak, he who was there at the origins of our universe, there when 'the Big Bang' took place!

Indeed, he is the One who pulled the switch to set it off, with a plan in mind as to where it should go, a plan that includes us.

Do you want to probe more deeply into what happened at our origins?

Well, Jesus is a mystical telescope to look through.

After all, he was there at the beginning and unbelievably we got to see, hear, and touch him bodily!

Excuse my exuberance, but we got to walk and talk with someone who was there at the beginning of time.

### Knowledge

There are different kinds of knowledge and different kinds of wisdom, along with different avenues for accessing each of them. Science is one of those avenues, an important one. For far too long theology and religion did not consider it a friend. That was (and remains) a tragic mistake since science has the same founder and same intent as theology and religion. Theology and religion have been wrong whenever they have sought to undercut science's importance or its claims to truth. Sadly, science has often returned the favour and viewed theology and religion as a foe rather than as a colleague. The two need each other, not least in understanding the origins and intent of our universe.

How do we understand the origins and intent of our universe? Science and Jesus. Science is probing those origins in the interest of telling us how it happened and how it is unfolding, while Jesus (who was there when it happened) is more interested in telling us why it happened and what it means.

**“Incredibly, we actually got to see him in the flesh, with human eyes, the God who created 'the Big Bang', walking among us!”**

# Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, January 6, 2022

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# How to make and keep New Year's resolutions



**T**he dawn of the New Year is a highly symbolic time, prompting widespread reflection about how the last year went and how the next one could go. It's no wonder, then, that at this time, so many of us focus on our behaviour and what we could do to walk into a better year than the one we just left behind.

A recent cynical trend I've observed is to slate New Year's resolutions as a meaningless fad that don't make any discernible difference in the long run and admittedly, it's easy to see why people come to that conclusion. Most of the time, few, if any of us, stick to many of our resolutions, and fewer still to all of them.

However, as Catholics, we should be aware of the power of a resolute decision to change



**New Year's resolutions can be a meaningless fad or a useful blessing, but it's up to you to decide how they play out, writes Jason Osborne**

our ways. Indeed, the spiritual life itself is based on constant repentance, which is not merely guilt and lamentation over the past, but a conscious decision to take a different course in the future.

As such, New Year's resolutions are a popular trend we can co-opt for the good of our souls, minds, bodies, and those of others. Rather than laugh or point at those who set themselves ambitious targets heading into 2022, let's join them and see if we can

pick up any healthy, and possibly salvific, habits going forward.

### How to make a resolution

What studies I've seen about the success rate for New Year's resolutions suggest, as simple observation of ourselves and those around us might tell us, that resolutions often fail because they're either too vague or too unrealistic. With that in mind, we might search for a resolution or resolutions that are

specific, measurable and doable.

Take one example: prayer. Throughout the year, many of us resolve to pray more and to pay more attention to our interior lives, and the advent of the New Year is no different. However, the resolution to "pray more" isn't particularly compelling, nor is it a goal we can measurably achieve. How much is "more"?

So better examples of prayerful resolutions might be, "I will pray the rosary every day", "I will read the daily readings every day", "I will go to Mass every day," or "I will do 10 to 15 minutes of meditative or contemplative prayer every morning".

Not having had much of a relationship with the rosary, I set myself the challenge at the end of 2020 to pray the rosary every day of 2021, in an effort to pick up

what the Church has forever told me is a good habit. While I wasn't 100% successful, I stuck faithfully to it for what I'd estimate to be around 90% of the year, missing only a handful of days. As a result of my specific and measurable resolution, I ended up praying the rosary far more than I would have if I'd just set myself the goal of "praying more".

### What to focus on

If those are the factors that make for an achievable resolution or set of resolutions, what should our resolutions be about? These days, it seems as though most resolutions are centred on wealth, health or mental well-being in some shape or form. Health and mental well-being

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## Family News



### AND EVENTS

#### EGYPTIAN PHARAOH'S MUMMY DIGITALLY UNWRAPPED FOR FIRST TIME

The mummified body of an ancient Egyptian pharaoh has been studied for the first time in millennia after being digitally “unwrapped”.

The mummy of Amenhotep I, who ruled from 1525 to 1504 BC, was found at a site in Deir el-Bahari 140 years ago.

However, archaeologists have refrained from opening it in order to preserve the face mask and bandages.

Computed tomography (CT) scans have now revealed previously unknown information about the pharaoh and his burial.

“We got to see the face of the king that has been wrapped for more than 3,000 years,” Dr Sahar Saleem, professor of radiology at Cairo University’s Faculty of Medicine and lead author of the study published in the journal *Frontiers in Medicine*, told the BBC.

#### NASA'S WEBB TELESCOPE LAUNCHES TO SEE DISTANT WORLDS

NASA’s James Webb Space Telescope launched at 7:20 am EST Christmas Day on an Ariane 5 rocket from Europe’s Spaceport in French Guiana, South America.

A joint effort with ESA (European Space Agency) and the Canadian Space Agency, the Webb observatory is NASA’s revolutionary flagship mission to seek the light from the first galaxies in the early universe and to explore our own solar system, as well as planets orbiting other stars, called exoplanets.

“The James Webb Space Telescope represents the ambition that NASA and our partners maintain to propel us forward into the future,” said NASA Administrator Bill Nelson.

“The promise of Webb is not what we know we will discover; it’s what we don’t yet understand or can’t yet fathom about our universe. I can’t wait to see what it uncovers,” he said.

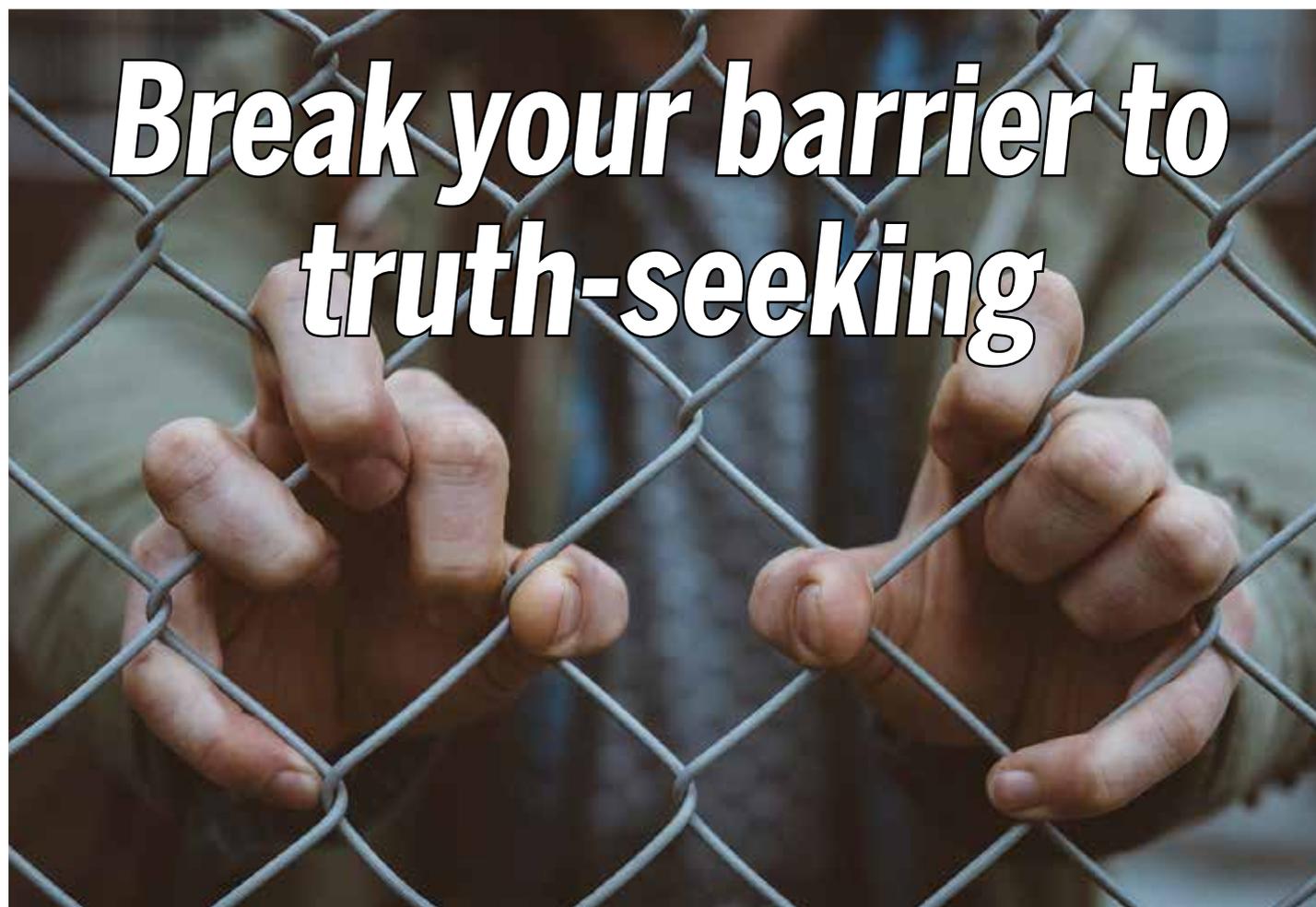
“I want to congratulate the team on this incredible achievement – Webb’s launch marks a significant moment not only for NASA, but for thousands of people worldwide who dedicated their time and talent to this mission over the years,” said Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator for the Science Mission Directorate at NASA Headquarters in Washington.

#### ANCIENT DNA REVEALS THE WORLD'S OLDEST FAMILY TREE

Analysis of ancient DNA from one of the best-preserved Neolithic tombs in Britain has revealed that most of the people buried there were from five continuous generations of a single extended family.

By analysing DNA extracted from the bones and teeth of 35 individuals entombed at Hazleton North long cairn in the Cotswolds-Severn region, the research team was able to detect that 27 of them were close biological relatives. The group lived approximately 5700 years ago – around 3700-3600 BC – around 100 years after farming had been introduced to Britain.

Published in *Nature*, it is the first study to reveal in such detail how prehistoric families were structured, and the international team of archaeologists and geneticists say that the results provide new insights into kinship and burial practices in Neolithic times.



# Break your barrier to truth-seeking



## Everyday philosophy Ben Conroy

If you think about the intellectual virtues needed to be a good philosopher, or just a good thinker, ‘humility’ doesn’t immediately spring to mind. The way philosophers conduct themselves may have something to do with this, but it’s also just not the most intuitive or obvious answer. ‘Curiosity’ comes to mind before it (Plato and Aristotle both wrote that philosophy begins in wonder). So does ‘attentiveness’, and ‘open-mindedness’. So why humility? Humility is good for thinking precisely because those other virtues are good for thinking and you need humility to properly have them. Take open-mindedness. I’ve written before about how essential it is to be able to change your mind if you’re seeking the truth. Newman wrote that “In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often”. But to change your mind you have to admit you are wrong, and that takes humility. There are people I know, otherwise highly intelligent, who I have never once seen admit that they were wrong about anything. It’s not that I rarely see them admit error: I never do.

“It’s easy to get overawed by people or to try to impress them by agreeing with them, and that’s not good thinking either”

This is a devastating handicap to truth-seeking. If you’re so afraid of looking stupid that you’ll never admit you’re wrong, you become a heavy, sluggish thinker, easily immobilised in the quagmire of your current opinions. Being able to recognise when you’re wrong

and acknowledge it without taking a huge blow to your ego makes you adaptable and nimble, able to easily discard wrong ideas for the right reasons and move closer to the truth without wasting time. There’s such a thing as being too willing to change your mind, of course. Or rather, there’s such a thing as being willing to change your mind for the wrong reasons. You can be suggestible and flighty rather than truly open-minded. It’s easy to get overawed by people or to try to impress them by agreeing with them, and that’s not good thinking either. Neither is underrating your own ability to think. But that’s not true humility, any more than recklessness is true courage.

#### Humility

Humility is also useful when it comes to learning things in the first place, for very similar reasons. Have you ever had someone explain something to you, and kind of vaguely nodded when they said something you didn’t understand? Instead of asking them to clarify you just let it pass? I have, and the reason is almost always a lack of humility. It happens very quickly, but what’s going on is that I figure I ought to understand what they’re telling me about and could probably figure it out from context if they just keep talking – all without having to admit my ignorance. But often I either look like a big-

ger idiot when the fact I didn’t know what was going on comes out anyway, or I just continue on without a proper understanding of what’s being discussed. Either way I’m at least implicitly dishonest.

Though he might be a strange role model for avoiding dishonesty, I decided to stop doing this



after reading a feature about Bill Clinton. As president, Clinton would apparently always ask the experts and officials around him open, searching questions to fill in gaps in his knowledge. He didn’t mind asking very basic questions, and didn’t try to bluff more knowledge than he had. In this one respect (perhaps just this one) he was humble, putting the pursuit of

the knowledge he needed to do the job ahead of the risk of looking uninformed. The civil servant being interviewed for the feature said that most people were impressed rather than the opposite.

Here humility is helping assist curiosity, helping you gain knowledge in the first place rather than just in changing your mind. Humility is essential when it comes to spreading knowledge. If someone asks you a question, replying with some variant of “what sort of idiot doesn’t know that?” or laughing might give you a moment’s satisfaction, but it comes at the price of crushing another person’s curiosity. If you care about truth, you want more people to have access to it.

“Of course, explaining too can be a way of boosting your own ego: it ought to be about helping them and not taking the chance to show off”

Often in explaining something you discover something new about it yourself, and there’s also just a satisfaction in helping other people understand new things. (Google the webcomic XKCD’s strip ‘Lucky 10,000’ which features the joy of introducing someone to the diet coke and mentos trick.)

Of course, explaining too can be a way of boosting your own ego: it ought to be about helping them and not taking the chance to show off.

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are worthy goals to aim for, but being *The Irish Catholic*, I would also make a pitch for the aforementioned spiritual resolutions.

Adopting and sticking to a spiritual, mental or physical resolution that is specific, measurable and achievable is a good way to ensure that your 2022 will be better than your 2021, regardless of whatever may be going on globally. How do we know what is most worth our time, energy and attention though? It's worth scanning our lives for detrimental or bad habits that we could disrupt with a positive resolution.

**“If that approach is too cold-turkey, perhaps resolving not to use social media on a specific day of the week is a more manageable goal”**

An example of this might be that you've noticed over the past year that you're spending far too much time checking social media throughout the day, and that it's affecting your other duties and obligations. A good resolution might be, then, not to use social media during the week or at the weekend (whichever you prefer or would find more useful).

If that approach is too cold-turkey, perhaps resolving not to use

social media on a specific day of the week is a more manageable goal. Regardless, cutting down on bad habits will feed into a life with more time, energy and attention available for use in 2022.

It need not be bad habits that our resolutions originate from, though – a long-held desire might also be a suitable prompt in our goal-setting. If you've wanted to learn a language, play an instrument, read more books get in better shape, or whatever else you can conceive of – each of these goals and more can be worked towards with specific, measurable resolutions. How that might work out would look something like this:

- Resolution – Learn a language: Take one online lesson a week/ do 15 minutes of vocabulary flashcards a day/ Read a page or two of a beginner's book each day.

- Resolution – Play an instrument: Practice for at least 15 minutes every day, or more if you're up for it.

- Resolution – Read more books:



Read at least 10 pages a day, or more, if time or motivation allows (which would result in 3650 pages in a year, which is a decent number of books for the average reader)

- Resolution – Get in better shape: Go to the gym or running twice a week, or cut out unhealthy foods at the weekend

While there are many different approaches that could be taken to each of these goals, the overarching point is that anything we might be interested in pursuing can be pursued in small, manageable steps.

### Catholic resolutions

While a Catholic can of course make any of the above resolutions, the start of the year can be a good time to institute spiritual practices that will see us loving God and others more this time next year. A couple of ideas to achieve just this are:

- Attend daily Mass this year.
- Pray the rosary every day.
- Spend 10-15 minutes in silent prayer every morning this year.
- Go to Confession once a month this year (or however often is needed).
- Do 15 minutes of spiritual reading a day.
- Visit the Blessed Sacrament at least once a week for prayer in God's physical presence.

The list could be endless, but the idea should be clear: Short, specific and doable New Year's resolutions are no laughing matter, and will see us in much better shape spiritually, mentally and physically come 2023.

## Faith — IN THE — family



Christina Malone

**L**ike many other families we went for a walk after Christmas. The rain from Christmas Eve and Christmas Day had turned the streets/paths into a pool of puddles to the delight of my children. It was a fantastic distraction as they would walk five kilometres easily jumping from puddle to puddle. As the children were running, jumping and laughing, I wondered what the journey was like for Mary and Joseph. I wondered what they were talking about. Just married. Mary was about to give birth. Was she in pain? 'Normal' parents to be might have talked about what name to give their first-born, wondering if it is a boy or a girl. Would the baby have daddy's eyes? But the journey of Mary and Joseph was different. Maybe both were holding on to the message from the angels "Do not be afraid".

After the birth of our Lord Jesus the angels appeared to the shepherds and they also were told "Do not be afraid". The shepherds left their fields and went on a journey. They began the journey knowing what they would find at the end, Mary and Joseph and the baby, who was lying in the manger. And once they had seen it with their own eyes, they spread the Good News.

Next, we have the three wise men who went on a journey. They must have been excited to know "the Word became flesh and lived among us". However, they stopped at the "wrong place". Herod, the king, was not impressed and we all know what happened next. Many innocent children were killed. However, the three wise men did what they had set out to do and worshipped the Lord "*Venimus Adorare Eum Emmanuel*, ("We have come to adore him, Emmanuel" – World Youth Day song Cologne 2005).

In the year 2022 we, as the Church, are going on a journey. Over the next few weeks and months, we will hear a lot more about the synod. Pope Francis said: "Celebrating a synod means walking on the same road, walking together." Furthermore, he uses words like encounter, listening and discernment to describe the synodal process.

Looking at my three children I wonder what that means? We were on the same road. I was walking the same direction. My children choose to jump into every puddle, the bigger the better. I used a lot of energy trying to keep my feet dry (feeling sorry for myself that I did not wear my wellies). My children came up with a competition finding which puddle was the deepest. The joy and the laughter from them was much louder than the rain falling down on me. The memories this road had given the children was like a dream.

What is the road of the synod going to be like? I wonder who is trying to 'keep their feet dry'. I wonder who is having the most fun and who is realising they left something behind (like I did, my wellies).

Pope Francis is adamant that we are all journeying on the same road. Some might be ahead, some shout for joy, others in agony. Others walk behind and see where it is safe to go next. Some ask the wrong person for directions. But we are asked to encounter wherever people are at. We are asked to listen and to trust in the Spirit.

Perhaps we are invited to find courage in Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the three wise men. We have to trust and believe that all will be well. We have to trust the angels saying "do not be afraid". No one is alone on the road.



# Helping young people encounter Christ

## Personal Profile



**Ruadhán Jones**

**T**ony Foy is executive director of Net Ministries Ireland, a Catholic youth ministry organisation and part of the 'parallel (or para-)Church' which Tony says helped foster his own faith. From his youth to his adult life, Tony encountered Christ in a variety of lay organisations, that worked parallel to the sacraments.

Brought up in a Catholic family, Tony explains that his dad's reconversion to the Faith had a major impact on his own faith life.

**“His personal love of the Faith continued to grow during his teenage years and while at college”**

“He was faithful before that and went to Mass, as everybody did in the country at that stage,” Tony continues. “He was doing this marriage encounter weekend with my mother. It wasn't for couples with problems, it was just for couples who wanted to get better at their marriage. He had a big conversion and started to go adoration.”

“I could see the difference in him. He started to tell us he loved us, which for a man in rural Ireland at the time was most unusual. It had a big effect on me personally and on the rest of the kids. He'd go to adoration and I'd go with him. I gradually began to realise that this stuff is real.”

His personal love of the Faith continued to grow during his teenage years and while at college. Again, the 'para-Church' had a major influence on Tony's development.

### Local thing

“There was a local thing, basically a teenage version of the marriage encounter my parents went on,” he begins. “I was invited to go away on the weekend and I went and, again, it had a profound effect on me. I really felt the peace of God in a profound way in my life. Others around me did as well, who still have faith

to this day. For me, it's a lesson to all of us.”

This lesson stayed with Tony, that to expect young people “to have faith just from going to Mass is not a realistic thing to do” any more. “They need to have the benefit of other people and the need to be in a place where they can encounter the Lord in a powerful way,” he says.

After college, Tony went and worked in Dublin, where he met his future wife at a prayer meeting. They lived in Texas for a time, and there they “could see the Church alive”, he explains. However, while Texas

is a “heartland for the Faith now”, back then the lived Faith in Ireland was stronger, Tony says and so they decided to come back to Ireland to marry and raise their children.

“It's become much more difficult to bring your kids up in faith in Ireland then it has in the US. Be that as it may, we got married back in Ireland. Somebody invited us to a 'Life in the Spirit' seminar and we did that. That was another key moment in our faith lives. Then we got involved in a charismatic Marian prayer meeting, for the first 10 years of our marriage.

**“While they had been living in America, the Foys volunteered for Life Teen, a Catholic youth ministry aimed at bringing young people to the Faith”**

“That was just amazing. We'd go once a week and that would clean out the tubes and bring us closer again to God, along with the sacraments. They were a given but this was something that just brought us deeper in faith.”

While they had been living in America, the Foys volunteered for Life Teen, a Catholic youth ministry aimed at bringing young people to the Faith. From that experience, Tony knew he and his wife had something to offer the Church in Ireland.

“But nobody was interested here in what we had to offer... In the Church here, young people were still coming. We knew that they didn't really have faith just by the nature of what we could see. But we didn't realise the decimation of what would actually happen over the next 20 years,” Tony explains.

“Fast forward to 2004 and 2005, we came across these Net missionaries that came to Ireland. They were

really amazing, they were able to express their faith in a way that was inspiring and I was invited to the first board of Net Ireland in 2006.

“I was involved in business, and the board asked me would I consider being the executive director. I thought it was a ridiculous idea, out of the question. Then the crash happened in 2007-2008 and both my wife and myself started thinking, what is it all about at the end of the day?

“So we started taking it seriously and thinking about it. In 2011 we put our hat in the ring when the then director headed back to Australia. I've been the director ever since. It's really been a blessing. I'm not saying I'm brilliant but having an Irish person in charge of an organisation, in charge of Net, has been a real game changer because I understand the culture in making Net an Irish organisation with international connections.”

Tony says it is “my privilege to work with Net, to work with amazing people throughout the years”. He says that they know “people are frustrated, they can see that young people are walking away from their Faith. We walk in somewhere and do something about that, something that is actually really positive. We give them an opportunity to support us, through prayer or their young people, financially – whatever they want to.”

### Evangelisation

Drawing on the theories of evangelisation of Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, Tony believes we are now in a “lay wave” of evangelisation, “where the lay people are bringing the Faith to each other”.

“It's not like it's an exclusive thing where the lay people are the only people doing it. It's the lay people and the clergy. You can see that with the movements coming out of the Faith in America, to give one example,” Tony finishes.

## Love Notes



**Marta Osborne**

## Make praying together your New Year's resolution

**T**he Christmas season can be a very reflective and prayerful time when after all the preparations we finally stop and consider the great mystery, the Word became flesh, God became man. As our hearts are rejoicing at the birth of our saviour this might just be the perfect time to commit to a more disciplined prayer routine in our marriages and relationships.

We all know that prayer is good. It brings us closer to God and it helps us develop a relationship with him. Most of us also know that we don't find enough time to pray. In our busy schedules prayer is often the first thing we skip. Have we not heard it so many times before “if you make time for God your first priority, everything else will fall into place”? We know it and yet we lack the willpower to simply “get up and pray”. There

is just always something more important and pressing that we need to do.

Praying together with our spouse can be very helpful to overcome prayer procrastination. Your spouse can become your accountability partner. We all have better and worse days, but it is much more difficult to say ‘no’ when we're saying ‘no’ to another person, and not simply justifying the lack of time for prayer in our own minds. There is also a better chance you'll find and take the time to pray if it's something you've discussed and both agreed should become a priority in your daily schedule.

### How to pray together?

Praying together is also a great way to spend some quality time with your spouse. What could be a better way to grow in love for one

another than by sitting down to spend time with him who is love itself? Praying together can take different forms and you can try different things and see what works best for both of you. My husband and I like to read the daily readings out loud and simply sit in silence next to each other for even a few minutes. We often then both speak to God out loud and pray for each other, for our families and for our openness to God's invitations throughout the day. It is often the perfect opportunity to apologise and ask for forgiveness from God and our spouse.

It isn't always easy and it requires vulnerability but praying together can improve communication and help you and your spouse understand and love each other more. Maybe the beginning of the New Year can be a good time to try it and see how it can benefit your relationship with both your spouse and God.



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## A sober reminder of the reality of domestic violence

Maybe it's a bit of a grim start to the first media column of the year, but the topic of domestic violence never ceases to be important.

It has been highlighted recently in adult dramas such as *Angela* (ITV), *The Maid* (Netflix) and *The Other Girl* (BBC One) and plot-wise can be both gripping and disturbing. But it strikes home most when it features in real life. I stumbled on an interview on **Difficult Conversations** (GB News, Thursday) when Nana Akua interviewed abuse survivor Samantha Billingham, founder of SODA (Survivors of Domestic Abuse). I reckon her story is typical – she met a guy who was charming and moved in to his flat two weeks later – she now realises this was too soon, a red flag but one she didn't notice at the time (a lot to be said for traditional dating and getting to know a prospective partner!) Slowly the controlling began, subtle at first but increasing in seriousness – she was discouraged from seeing her parents and friends, she became increasingly isolated and eventually he locked her in the flat and wouldn't let her go to work. Finally, it deteriorated into physical violence but then he was all remorse and crying which made it more difficult for her to take action.



Pope Francis at Mass on January 1 at which he highlighted the scourge of violence against women. Photo: CNS.

### Domestic abuse

She wanted domestic abuse education in schools to raise awareness. I'm thinking that would have to be approached very carefully – there's enough fear instilled in children these days, and perhaps a good starting point would be a concentration on showing respect, kindness and love for others – taught and modelled by teachers. She also wanted a reform of the law in this area to favour vic-

tims and survivors, but I'm wondering if the law should be in the favouring business – needing instead to be even handed, objective and impartial, while showing care, compassion and empathy with victims.

Then on New Year's Day, Pope Francis spoke of the evils of violence against women, as reported throughout the day on **RTÉ News** he made "a clarion call for an end to violence

against women, saying it was insulting to God." The occasion was his address for the solemnity of Holy Mary Mother of God as well as the annual World Day of Peace.

The subject also surfaced on last Monday morning on **Catholic View for Women** (EWTN). It took an unusual angle, domestic violence among churchgoers, but the issues are pretty similar in all situations. Presenter Teresa Tomeo thought the issue wasn't spoken about enough in Church circles and that a sense of shame was something that women felt in that context. She teased it all out with Janet Morana of Priests for Life and Vanessa Denha Garno, described as a communications evangelist. They thought that the issue wasn't highlighted enough in homilies, in the pastoral training of priests and deacons and even in parish bulletins. Some priests were either unaware or in denial or had a kind of 'not in my parish' attitude. They'd like to see more Catholic 'safe houses' for victimised women and children, and drew attention to several scriptural references that were applicable to the situation.

### Extra issue

For churchgoers there was the extra issue of the commitment to the sacrament of marriage (I'd like to have heard more about that),

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### Mass

RTÉ One Sunday January 9, 11 am  
Fr Paddy Byrne celebrates Mass in the RTÉ studios, Donnybrook with students and staff of Heywood Community School, Ballinakill, Co. Laois and Julianne Woods as Musical Director.

#### SONGS OF PRAISE

##### BBC One Sunday January 9, 1.15pm

Sean Fletcher is in Liverpool to learn more about the importance of baptism for Christians and to find out how Jesus' baptism is celebrated by different denominations at this time of year.

#### VULNERABLE – THE EUTHANASIA DECEPTION

##### EWTN Sunday January 9, 4pm

Heart-wrenching testimony and expert analysis reveals the shocking impact of laws allowing euthanasia and assisted suicide.

which in one sense made dealing with the problem more complicated and in another way provided a framework to set higher standards. It was usefully pointed out that there can also be domestic violence against men and it was on the rise. There was also the relevant point that Covid-19 lockdowns had increased family tensions and domestic violence. More obvious factors referenced included addictions to drugs alcohol and pornography, a toxic cocktail for sure. Money figured large – it was typical enough that men controlled the finances, especially if the wife was working in the home.

They drew attention to useful resources on the web-

site [catholicsforfamilypeace.org](http://catholicsforfamilypeace.org) and to their own site [catholicviewforwomen.com](http://catholicviewforwomen.com)

Finally, I'm not a great fan of Marty Morrissey, but I was moved by his touching tribute to his mother at the start of his New Year's **Marty Morrissey Show** on RTÉ Radio One. In her 90s, she had been killed in a car accident a few weeks previously while driving on roads in Clare she frequented regularly. Perhaps he was becoming emotional so he remembered what his mother would say – "cop on now Marty don't let me down, just get on with it!"

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# Film

## Beginning the new year with a bang

When you cut off sound, everything you hear afterwards becomes more precious. Maybe that's why *A Quiet Place* resonated with so many people. Or why we laughed so much when mime artist Marcel Marceau spoke the only line of dialogue in Mel Brooks' *Silent Movie*.

Tilda Swinton has all but cornered the market on quirky films. In *Memoria* she continues that trajectory. She plays a Scottish botanist who travels to Bogota to visit her sister who's in hospital there.

One morning she's awoken by a loud bang. It's the precursor to a smorgasbord of intriguing sounds she experiences while navigating her way through the jungles of Colombia.

Masterpiece? Pretentious? Beware. This atmospheric film won't be to everyone's taste.

\*\*\*

Playing lovable eccentrics is eating and drinking to Benedict Cumberbatch. In *The Electrical Life of Louis Wain* he's a 19th Century artist who starts painting cats after his wife (Claire Foy) dies. A real-life person, Wain was diagnosed as schizophrenic. That diagnosis has been disputed but one thing is certain. He changed people's perception of cats – and art – irrevocably.

\*\*\*

You'd be hard put to find four higher grade actresses than Jessica Chastain, Diane Kru-



Emily Blunt and Noah Jupe star in a scene from the movie *A Quiet Place Part II*. Photo: CNS.

ger, Penelope Cruz and Lupita Nyong'o. So, what are they doing in middle-of-the-road pap like *The 355*? It's a spy yarn about a secret weapon (yawn) falling into the wrong hands. Do the makers think we're all

so zonked from seasonal festivities that we'll settle for any old junk to get out of the house?

\*\*\*

Of somewhat more substance is *Munich: The Edge of War*.

Aubrey Malone



invaded Poland. Then Britain declared war.

The rest is history. Chamberlain resigned in 1940 and died later that year. Posterity hasn't been kind to him. He's generally seen as having been duped by the Fuhrer. But maybe he bought time for Europe to gird its loins for the carnage of the next five years.

Churchill may have won the war, at least as far as revisionists are concerned, but the doughty Neville did his bit in winning the peace.

\*\*\*

And so to remakes...

Do we really need another *Cyrano*? Even with the estimable talents of Peter Dinklage?

Or of *Scream*, Wes Craven's 1996 chiller? The 25th anniversary has given rise to a reboot.

Afraid I didn't go for it the first time either.



# Leisure time

## Operation Smile

Charity Regulatory Authority No. 20054588 Revenue Number: CHY 15661

**By remembering Operation Smile in your Will, you are leaving the gift of a lasting smile for a child born with a cleft condition.**

Operation Smile envisions a future where health and dignity are championed through safe surgery. Get in touch with Kristen Bell, Legacy & Fundraising Manager, on

**01 667 6659** or [kristen@operationsmile.ie](mailto:kristen@operationsmile.ie) or visit [operationsmile.ie/LastingSmile](http://operationsmile.ie/LastingSmile)

## The Gift Of A Lifetime

Be there for others after you're gone.

A gift of just 1% of your estate to Irish Hospice Foundation can help us ensure no-one faces death or bereavement without the care and support they need.

Email Clare Martin at [clare.martin@hospicefoundation.ie](mailto:clare.martin@hospicefoundation.ie) or call 01 679 3188



[www.hospicefoundation.ie](http://www.hospicefoundation.ie)



Homeless & Drugs Services



## Your heart for the homeless

Merchants Quay Ireland reaches out with kindness to people living on our streets, sleeping in doorways, suffering and alone.

Your legacy, of any amount, can enfold the most vulnerable and lonely in wrap-around supports. You may wish to keep the details confidential. But we want to give you this little wooden keepsake, made by a client, for you.

This is your heart for the homeless and those on the road to recovery.

**To receive your little wooden heart and information on remembering**

Merchants Quay Ireland in your will, ring Emma Murphy, Legacies Manager at 01-524 0965 or email [emma.murphy@mqi.ie](mailto:emma.murphy@mqi.ie)

## Will the MSC Missions

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

**Please help us with a gift in your Will**

Contact:

MSC Missions Office, PO Box 23 Western Road, Cork. Tel: 021-4545704 Email: [info@mscmissions.ie](mailto:info@mscmissions.ie)

[www.mscmissions.ie](http://www.mscmissions.ie)

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

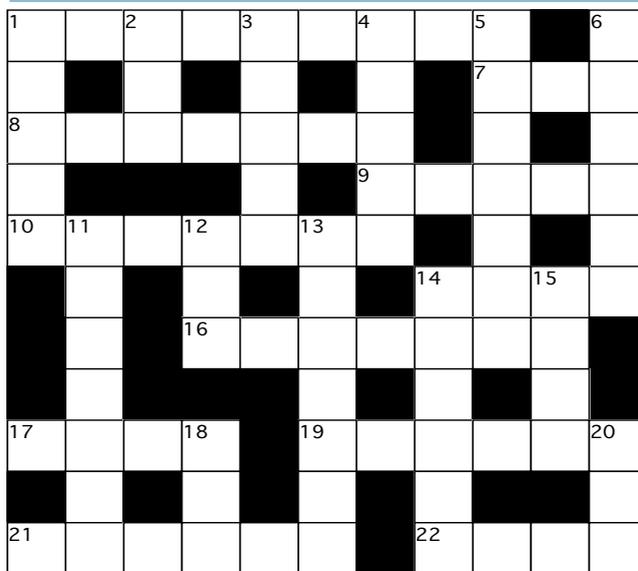


It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call **Grace Kelly** on 01 629 3333, email [grace.kelly@trocaire.org](mailto:grace.kelly@trocaire.org) or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

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

## Crossword Junior

Gordius 414



### Across

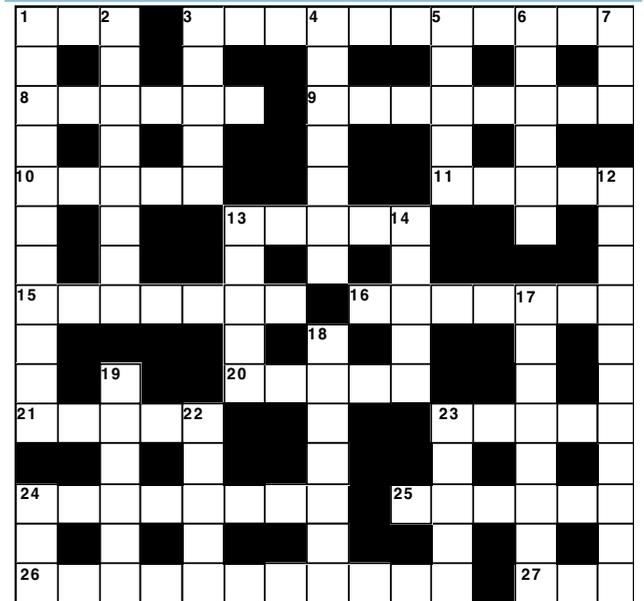
- Shoot the ball between them for a goal in soccer (9)
- Black substance poured onto the road (3)
- Doing as one is told (7)
- You keep a rabbit in one (5)
- The world's highest mountain (7)
- You \_\_\_\_ milk from a jug (4)
- 'Strictly Come \_\_\_\_\_' (7)
- Call out when you see a pair in this card game (4)
- Gets on someone's nerves (6)
- Academy Awards, given to people in the movies (6)
- The opposite of hot (4)

### Down

- Ball-shaped map of the world (5)
- It's usually the best card (3)
- How much you must pay to buy something (5)
- The sense we get by using our eyes (5)
- Where to get on a train (7)
- A person who uses a bow and arrow (6)
- In history, these raiders sailed in longboats (7)
- Crimson (3)
- You might wear them on your feet in the summer (7)
- Outdoor meal (6)
- Like Cinderella's two step-sisters (4)
- Vegetable which grows in a pod (3)
- Unhappy (3)

## Crossword

Gordius 540



### Across

- Scam (3)
- Item of headgear associated with graduation ceremonies (11)
- Boats I sent around to character from the Book of Tobit (6)
- Religious feast, celebrated on January 6th (8)
- Swords of one type used in Olympic fencing (5)
- Whimsically humorous (5)
- Cereal crop (5)
- Retains mixture that's even more unlikable (7)
- You might sprinkle it on your chips (7)
- The Christian name of Pope John Paul II (5)
- Small songbird (5)
- Paint around a ship that travelled with Columbus (5)
- Believable (8)
- Swiss-style breakfast food (6)
- Evade responsibility (4,3,4)
- The closest star (3)

### Down

- & 6d Wife of Henry VIII and mother of Mary I of England (9,2,6)
- No bagels can be made of an inert chemical substance such as argon! (5,3)
- Intends (5)
- Multiplied by three (7)
- Two-legged creature (5)
- See 1 down
- Twenty-four hours (3)
- The application of oil or grease (11)
- Destroy (5)
- Legal proceedings, or an experimental test (5)
- My angst's dispelled by these graceful competitors (8)
- Wise saying (7)
- Goes in (6)
- A robbery, especially in the USA (5)
- Remove feathers from a bird (5)
- Trophy or drinking vessel (3)

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## Sudoku Corner

414

### Easy

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

### Hard

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

### December 16 Easy

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

### December 16 Hard

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



Fr Bernard Cotter

Notebook

# Priesthood: motivation to continue

**I AM ABOUT TO** misquote Oscar Wilde (or use his sentence structure for my own ends); please bear with me. To get away for four days with all the priests of the diocese for a retreat in the midst of a global pandemic might seem lucky, but to do it again the following month for a diocesan conference must be nothing short of miraculous. [Thanks, Oscar.]

In October the priests of Cork and Ross left the diocese for four days retreat in Garryvoe; in November, we repeated the mass evacuation, for a diocesan conference, our first in 17 years. Some colleagues in other dioceses are probably saying under their breath “weren’t they lucky?” Part of me agrees, for we were left to our own devices over those years. But this also left us adrift, and our fraternity weakened. We needed to get to know each other all over again, and that was what our November conference did for us.

**New future**

Its title was ‘Stepping Stones to a New Future’. I misunderstood its purpose entirely. I imagined we would be planning for a future with fewer priests and more challenges. It wasn’t like that at all – it was much better. Priests are one group in a diocese, and a significant group, but not the



only one. We could not make wide-ranging plans without involving others: the permanent deacons, and all the laypeople directly impacted by whatever the diocese decides to do.

These ‘Stepping Stones to a New Future’ brought questions for our ministry as priests. The predictable future is, well, predictable: there will be fewer of us. So how will we sustain ourselves, what will motivate us to continue, what are our dreams? These were the kinds of questions we probed.

For me, the climax of the conference came on the day when we put our dreams on paper. We each had

to reflect and then fill in the dots at the end of this statement: “No Matter What, I Stand for the Possibility of a Church Where...” We did this individually, we shared our hopes with one or two others, then came together around shared dreams – and these eventually turned into

the tasks we brought home with us (thanks to the very able and perceptive facilitators, Maria Garvey and Judith King).

**Aims**

Six groups resulted, reflecting our six aims:

- To cultivate a culture of welcome and diversity;
  - To honour the unity in our diversity and the diversity in our unity;
  - To re-imagine and renew our sacramental ministries (especially baptism, confirmation and Eucharist);
  - To engage in synodal conversations in Christ-centred and Word-centred communities;
  - To work with one another and lay people to create models of church and ministry relevant at this time and place;
  - To live with uncertainty;
- The last group attracted the most

● I noticed a big drop-off in the numbers of Christmas cards sent this year; my postman observed the same. It’s probably because of many different reasons. Some people were just not in the form to send cards, probably feeling deflated by the continuing pandemic; the good wishes sent for New Year 2021 had turned to dust. The higher cost probably put some people off, and others those An Post stamps. I had very few candidates for a ‘naughty or nice’ stamp. My solution: I passively-aggressively put the stamp on upside down (it would be a shame to waste it!)

members (what does that say!); I joined the first group. We have brought the tasks home to Cork, are meeting in groups and trying to incorporate these dreams into the existing structure. Pray for us.

● Even though Christmas cards may be dying out, they are still a pleasure to receive. I particularly appreciate the words people add to the card. They can really mean a lot, can lift the spirits and give much-needed encouragement. Words written in cards can bring a smile too, but one I got this year brought me a belly-laugh. It came from a classmate/colleague; it simply contained his name and mine - and in between, in this era of parish amalgamations, clustering, families of parishes etc, the hilarious question: “How many parishes is Santa bringing YOU this Christmas?”



## COULD YOU HELP TO SAVE A POOR HELPLESS CHILD

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

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

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

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

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:  
 €..... **NEEDY CHILDREN**  
 €..... **NEEDS OF MISSIONARIES**  
 €..... **MASS OFFERINGS**  
 (Please state no. of Masses \_\_\_\_\_)  
 €..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

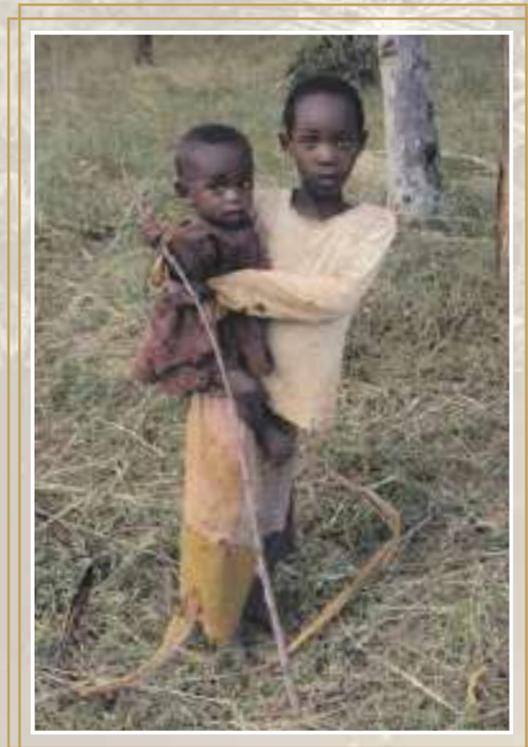
Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss) \_\_\_\_\_ (Block letters please)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

To donate online go to [tinyurl.com/lwadonations](http://tinyurl.com/lwadonations)

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

IC/01/06



**As 2022 begins, please consider making a gift to The Little Way Association’s fund for children.**

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

**Thank you, and may God reward your generosity.**



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

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

May St Therese reward you in a special way for the sacrifices you make to support our work, and may she obtain all the blessings and graces you need for 2022.

**Daily Mass for your intentions**

You and your intentions are remembered in a special Mass offered in the Missions for all Little Way benefactors and friends.