

The Irish Catholic

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A roadmap back to Mass

• Editorial Comment •

It is almost two months since most Irish Catholics have been able to attend Mass. This is an unprecedented situation even in a land where the public worship of God by Catholics was forbidden and punishable by death.

Churches in the North remain closed by order of the civil authorities, while according to Government plans in the Republic it will be ten weeks before churches can re-open for Mass.

The closures are draconian and the timeframe of starting public Masses on July 20 lacks ambition. Public libraries, for example, are due to open on June 8 and restaurants are due to open on June 29.

Are we really to believe that churches must wait for weeks and weeks after libraries and restaurants for some semblance of normality to return? The answer is 'no' and Church leaders must lobby the Government for a timeframe that is realistic, ambitious and keeps public health to the fore.

A swifter return to public worship can be achieved if there is the will. It is not appropriate to leave this entirely in the hands of well-meaning public officials many of whom may be unfamiliar with the patterns of liturgy and Church life.

Wellbeing

We need a credible roadmap of our own to present to the civil authorities to show how a return to public Masses can be achieved while mini-

misising the risk to health and wellbeing. We need active planning for a strategy that would allow for a safe and gradual return to public Mass.

As other restrictions start to ease, we need to start having Masses with small groups of people where social distancing can be observed and facilities for hand hygiene are available. In a large church constructed to hold 1,000 people, for example, surely it is possible to have Mass for 50 people?

- The dispensation of the obligation of attending Sunday Mass could continue while people could be invited to attend Mass by townland, station area or street for example. This would not necessarily be a Sunday Mass and a creative way would have to be found for allocating places such as making a reservation via the parish office.

- On the day of the Mass for which a parishioner has a reservation, only one door could be opened in the church and the sacristan or a member of the parish council observing social distancing could have a list of those due to attend.

- Particularly in larger churches, spots could be marked on the pews where the number of people permitted should stand and sit ensuring that these are two metres apart. This will make sanitising after Mass easier.

- Parishioners should not move around the church or spend time at

shrines or side altars to minimise contact.

- All persons attending Mass or any other liturgical function in the church would wear a mask or a tight scarf covering the nose and mouth area for the protection of everyone around them.

- It may not be prudent to have the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass and the tradition of a spiritual

Communion while attending the actual Mass could continue.

There is no human activity which is completely free of all risk. This is true whether there is a pandemic or not. All of us should act prudently for the good of our own health and – in particular – for the good of the health of those with underlying conditions or who may be more vulnerable.

Unless there is a credible plan for a return to public Masses, the civil authorities on both sides of the bor-

der will be content to leave it to one of the last things.

Every other section of society is preparing plans to present for their phased reopening such as bars, restaurants and places of work. Before this pandemic, about two million people on the island of Ireland attended church every week. Their needs and the emotional, spiritual and physical benefits of gathering together for the worship of God should not be relegated to an afterthought.



Pilgrims progress...

Julia Lucey and her brother James visit 'The City' of Shone pilgrimage site, near Rathmore, Co. Kerry. Only locals can make the journey for the month of May because of Covid-19 restrictions. Pilgrims visit the site on the first of the month to 'do the rounds' and collect water from the sacred well. Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan

DAVID QUINN

How Christians behaved in the Nazi era PAGE 8



BEALTAINE CELEBRATION

Some ideas on how to mark this very Irish festival PAGES 31 & 33



ARCHBISHOP EAMON MARTIN

Church must respond to the spiritual needs of the Faithful PAGE 15



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Michael Kelly's Editor's Comment returns next week

Virtual pilgrimage brings Lourdes to Dromore and Armagh

Chai Brady

The Archdiocese of Armagh has begun a 'virtual pilgrimage' to Lourdes today to reach out to the 550 of pilgrims due to travel there this week but due to the coronavirus pandemic the pilgrimage was cancelled.

Organisers have instead decided to conduct it virtually using social media channels.

This will be available to watch through links on their pilgrimage Facebook page: Armagh Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes Facebook. Over the course of the original pilgrimage dates, May 7-12, Archbishop Eamon Martin, Bishop Michael Router and the pilgrimage priests will celebrate daily Masses following the themes that had been chosen for the pilgrimage.

Petitions

The archdiocese has also set up a dedicated e-mail account: armagh Lourdes petitions2020@gmail.com which allows pilgrims to email their petitions. These will be printed off daily and placed in front of the altar at each Mass.

Each Mass will be offered up for these intentions along with those of pilgrims, volunteers and deceased members and friends of the pilgrimage.

The 2020 pilgrimage to

Lourdes for the pilgrims of Dromore, which was to take place directly after the Archdiocese of Armagh's Lourdes pilgrimage, was set to be their 50th trip – the golden jubilee pilgrimage.

A spokesperson for the diocese wrote: "Such an anniversary only heightened anticipation and bookings for the annual trip, and organisation was proceeding at full tilt when Covid-19 quickly spread throughout Europe, and lockdown was imposed. The potential for a pilgrimage to Lourdes soon became impossible, another casualty of the pandemic."

They have instead decided to 'bring Lourdes to Dromore', and go online for their pilgrimage which runs from May 12-17.

Every evening at 7pm via webcam from www.lurganparish.com, St Peter's and St Paul's parishes Lurgan will celebrate Masses, a healing service, a Rosary procession, Stations of the Resurrection and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament for those at home.

They will also "unite themselves in prayer" with the grotto in Lourdes and are encouraging people, and not just those within the diocese, to spend some time there via the live stream of 'TV Lourdes online'.

Thinking of others...



Eloise McDonnell, in her Communion dress, her sister Lucia and mother Caitriona of Kilmovee parish in Roscommon, helped raise over €26,000 for the Mayo-Roscommon Hospice by going on a 10km walk/run. Caitriona, who accompanied them by bike, decided to do it to mark Eloise's First Communion which was cancelled due to Covid-19.

Student gets on his bike for the needy

Aron Hegarty

A student who lost his job last month is now delivering food to families in need six days a week on his bike.

Oscar Little (21) volunteers his services to the Capuchin Day Centre in Dublin, where he drops food to hostels for the homeless and families isolating in their homes.

"My mum is the doctor in the centre so that's how I got into it," Oscar told *The Irish Catholic*.

"She mentioned that the centre was looking for a service that would enable clients, who would usually use the centre, to get food if they had to stay home and couldn't come into the centre.

"So I thought I would offer

my services to get their food and messages to them, otherwise they wouldn't get any of it."

Oscar was working as a bicycle courier delivering documents and packages in Dublin city centre before offices closed down due to Covid-19.

"I am doing my bit and I don't feel the need to be

paid for it," Oscar said, "they offered to pay me but I thought 'they are 100% a charity, they live off and survive by volunteers'.

"If I can help out in any way when this is over, I will stay involved," he adds.

"I like helping people and being able to do things for people that they can't do for themselves."

Senator accuses RTÉ of 'editorialising' on Radio 1

Staff reporter

Independent NUI Senator Rónan Mullen has accused the national broadcaster of editorialising around ethics. A report on RTÉ Radio 1's *Morning Ireland* on Tuesday referred to controversial academic Peter Singer as a "world-renowned ethicist". Reacting

on social media, Senator Mullen described this as "editorialising".

"Some of his views (e.g. on people with disability) are controversial and ugly," Mr Mullen tweeted.

"Let's make up our own minds on what he's saying without hints from RTÉ News," he said in the post on the microblogging site.

Amongst other things, Australian-

born Dr Singer has argued that parents should be allowed to euthanise newborn children.

"Human babies are not born self-aware, or capable of grasping that they exist over time. They are not persons [therefore] the life of a newborn is of less value than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee," he has written.

Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich: 30 years on and still a leader – Pages 18 & 19

Even under lockdown, you can get it off your chest

Chai Brady

A Dublin priest who has been offering 'carpark Confessions' has said there has been a great response with dozens of people coming to receive the Sacrament.

Fr Pat McKinley of Springfield/Brookfield/Jobstown parish, who is the Vicar Forane over Tallaght Deanery, has been offering Confessions in the car park of St Mark's church with another priest to help people access the Sacrament during the coronavirus pandemic.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr McKinley said: "The primary reason was to try to be visible: we weren't expecting to get the response we got. The churches were largely closed, we wanted to try

and create a sense that on one level the physical church might be closed but the Church isn't closed and we're still here and we're available.

"We thought offering Confessions in the carpark would be a good way of doing that," he said.

According to Fr McKinley, "the other element of it was that people want the Sacraments, they're the lifeblood of the Church, normally so many people would go to Confession around Easter time, there were no Confessions available around Easter time because we were all trying to get our heads around how do we do this.

Safe distance

"We thought there was no reason why we couldn't

hear Confessions at a safe distance in a public place in the carpark and offer the Sacrament there and just see what the response would be."

The carpark Confessions have been very successful so far, with dozens of people going. Both priests were kept busy for the whole time according to Fr McKinley.

"At least two people came to each of us last Friday who hadn't been to Confession for years," he said.

"One young woman said to me, 'I haven't been to Confession since I made my Communion', she said she felt pushed across the yard to us, call that what you will, I call it Grace. She had stuff that was really weighing her down."



Fr Pat McKinley hearing Confession in the car park of St Mark's church.

Making the 'First Friday call'...by phone

Róise McGagh

Cavan-based Fr Martin Gilcreest has said that housebound parishioners are delighted that he can still make the traditional First Friday contact using the telephone.

"This is a generation that Faith is very important to. It's their foundation, it's the one thing that keeps them grounded.

"The fact that we're making an effort at all is, they think this is great for them you know, but why wouldn't we do this?" Fr Gilcreest told *The Irish Catholic*.

Fr Gilcreest recites an act of spiritual communion over the phone to those who cannot attend Mass and can now no longer receive Holy Communion at home.

"I've noticed, one of the things that's quite unique is that they're talking a lot more about the situation that they're in now, more than when I was normally calling to them.

"They want to express how they feel, how they're really anxious about the reality and most of the people are in the vulnerable category so they've been self-isolating since this all began," he said, explaining that those he called are also anxious for what their future will look like.



Bro. Chris Gault OP in doctor's scrubs back in frontline medical action. Photo: Mal McCann

Dominican friar returns to medical frontline

Staff reporter

While many priests and religious are in the frontline comforting and consoling those suffering from coronavirus and their loved ones, an Irish Dominican friar who is a trained doctor is back treating patients with Covid-19.

Bro. Chris Gault OP, who has been studying for the

priesthood with the Dominicans, has returned to his native Belfast and donned surgical scrubs to be part of the fight against the virus in the Mater Hospital where he was once a junior doctor.


Having graduated from Queen's University in 2013, and then completed foundation training, the 30-year-old had left this life behind when he decided to answer a call to

enter the priesthood.

"I talked to my superiors and they were happy and encouraging," he said.

"I just volunteered. The trust and the health service is undergoing a lot of change. They are adapting to a lot of change in these current circumstances.


"I never wavered and once the backing came, I was happy to go for it," he said.



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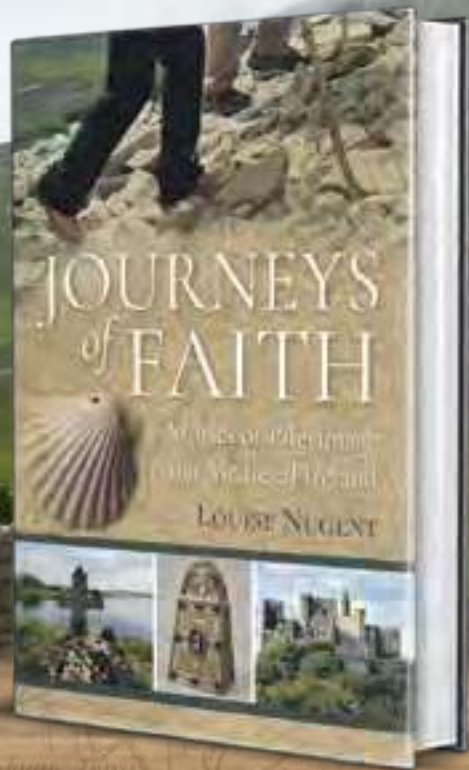
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Rise in racist incidents 'distressing' – Sr Stan

Aron Hegarty

Social justice campaigner Sr Stanislaus Kennedy has said it is "incredibly distressing" to learn of an increase in racist incidents across Ireland this year.

The Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) has just released figures on racist incident reporting on hate speech, hate crime and discriminatory acts in the first quarter of 2020.

Their statistics for January 1 to March 31 show that allegations of racist crime and discrimination cases are up 63% on 2019 figures, with a 33% increase in violent assaults.

"It is incredibly distressing to hear there has been an increase in racist incidents," Sr Stan told *The Irish Catholic*.

"It is especially true in the current climate, when it is

clear the global pandemic is causing such additional strain to the global community, and the best way forward is by coming together and supporting our family, friends and neighbours as we collectively navigate our way through the crisis."

She insisted that "INAR's research underlines just how much words matter when said by leading figures and I would urge everyone to reflect on their attitudes and language and ensure their influence and efforts are used to unite, not divide".

The significant increase in reports relating to media and online content was prompted by social media posts and election literature by some candidates and supporters during the general election.

A number of reports were also made in relation to online commentary fol-

lowing Ryanair boss Michael O'Leary's claim that "males of a Muslim persuasion" who are single and travelling alone pose the largest terror threat to airlines.

Reports were also made in relation to an online video which critics say was stereotyping Romanians, coronavirus-related comments against minorities and memes about Chinese people in the context of the pandemic.

"We are seeing a significant rise in online racism," says Dr Lucy Michael.

"The data shows clearly that this is driven by the ease with which racist materials circulate on major social media platforms.

"However the increase in assault reports is an opportunity now [sic] to provide more effective responses to violent racism."



Bishop Leahy: pandemic can change us for the better

Róise McGagh

Bishop Brendan Leahy [pictured] has said the pandemic has become a time for great personal reflection in his address after midday Mass on Sunday at St John's Cathedral.

He said one thing we have learned is that time is valuable and that we often complain of it disappearing in our modern world.

"Suddenly, with the virus, it was as if someone dramatically slammed on the brakes. And yet, in these past weeks many have said they discovered the beauty of more time with their family, time for personal reflection and thinking about things.. And from all this, time to think about how we really should live our lives," he said.

He continued: "What I want to suggest is that instead of focussing on how am I going to get through the next two weeks or months, or face the personal or family challenges ahead, let's try to keep our eye on doing well what we can in each moment, day by day."

Dr Leahy also suggested for United World Week, that people set aside time to stop, pause and pray for peace at midday.

Mary's Meals to feed over one million African children

Staff reporter

An international school-feeding charity is planning to provide meals to more than one million children at home as part of the Covid-19 response.

Despite school closures due to the pandemic, Mary's Meals will continue to deliver food to children in Malawi and Zambia by inviting their parents to collect rations to cook at home.

Patricia Friel, Executive Director of Mary's Meals Ireland, says staff and community volunteers are aiming to distribute food to around 4,000 villages in Malawi alone.

"Getting the food out to communities [sic] wouldn't be possible without generous support from people all over the world," says Friel.

"We are amazed at the level of support that has continued from the Irish public through these difficult times and are extremely grateful for their generosity and kindness."



What do you think?

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The Way, the Truth and the Life

Many of us are disappointed that very few of the restrictions on our movements have been lifted. Return to any normality will take time. Long term worries remain about unemployment, closure of businesses, national and personal finances.

Can we draw any hope from the Gospel for this Sunday, John 14:1-12? The opening lines should offer you great hope and light: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still and trust in me."

The context is that Jesus is explaining to his disciples that he is going away from them. They are gobsmacked. But he explains that ultimately it will be for their good. His death will be the door to his resurrection. In this way he is going to prepare a place for us, with him, in heaven. Thomas always has a question. "Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know he way?"

The reply of Jesus gives us plenty to

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



ponder. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

Philip seeks a clarification. "Lord, let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied."

Jesus replies: "To have seen me is to have seen the Father". The best way of knowing what God is like is to reflect on the life of Jesus Christ, on his teaching and his example. There we learn the way, the truth and the life.

He is the way in the beautiful moral code that he has left us. All is summed

up in the double commandment of love: to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength; and to love our neighbour as ourself. This means reverence and respect. Reverence for God in thought, word and action. Respect for other people in justice, neighbourliness and caring.

Jesus is the truth for he gives us such a dignified meaning to life. We are children of God, brothers and sisters with all of creation.

Jesus is the life. He offers us a sharing in heavenly life. In his resurrection he has gone before us to prepare a place for us and he will come again to take us to himself. If we follow his moral way and walk in the light of his truth, then we are on the road to sharing in God's life, united once more with our loved ones who have gone before us.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still and trust in me."

Is the coronavirus 'God's judgement' to punish humanity for the errors of its ways? Surely not, and Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick is quite right to describe such ideas as a form of blasphemy. Pope Francis had previously given the lead in dismissing any such notion that the virus is some kind of Old Testament punitive plague.

However, on a secular level, perhaps we shouldn't dismiss the notion of the 'corrective' element in this pandemic. As Pope Francis himself has indicated, that it's a chance for us to judge what is most important to us.

My late husband, who was not a Catholic, believed, in a broader sense, that the forces of nature blow our way telling us when we are living wrongly. He was familiar with Africa and he ascribed some of the modern famines that arose in the African continent to western interruptions of a balance of life that Africans themselves had well understood.

In Ethiopia, the Coptic church had practiced a seasonal rhythm of 'fasting and feasting', whereby fasting seasons were prudently used to spare food anticipated in harvest times. Then the Western way of food distribution – from factory to supermarket to refrigerator,

Not a judgement, but a corrective



Mary Kenny

● **ST SANTÁN OF TALLAGHT**'s feast falls on May 9. He may have been of Welsh or Breton origin, via Howth, North Dublin. There are also links with the Isle of Man, indicating travel between these Celtic regions in the early Christian period. He was, according to O Riain's *Dictionary of Irish Saints*, a saintly "sage, soldier and bishop".

more or less ignoring the seasons – undermined that pattern.

The introduction, by Nestlé, of bottled milk for babies was another example: African women were told it was more 'progressive' and 'modern' to switch from breast-feeding to bottle-feeding, which led to malnutrition and child mortality. Bottle-feeding requires clean water and the sterilising of equipment, which isn't always practical or even available. Breast-feeding had also helped mothers space their children naturally by an average of four years.

Yes, we must have development, and positive

progress: but there was, I think, an element of truth in Richard's view that many catastrophes are caused by the human race abusing or wrongly using nature's resources. Houses are built on flood plains for profit; seas are over-fished; deserts are created by bad husbandry of land. AIDS, though an utter tragedy and affliction for many innocent victims, was undoubtedly spread by sexual promiscuity.

Our way of living

Perhaps the coronavirus is telling us that we need to check our way of living. The last flight I took – perhaps it will turn out to be the

last flight I ever take – was from Belfast to London Gatwick, and a right ordeal it was, too: weary queues everywhere, grim-faced security, flights delayed comfortlessly, then passengers packed like sardines into the aircraft. And everyone so bad-tempered – a young woman at the Costa cafeteria in Belfast coldly refused to refill a water-bottle for me as it was "against security regulations". I loved flying when the going was good, but I did ask myself – is this a way to live?

I dislike the current restrictions which have been imposed – who wouldn't? – but the experience has certainly made me reassess my values. Too much of my life has been spent "getting and spending", and this, as the poet wrote, lays waste our powers.

The virus is not a punishment: but it's one heck of a corrective. Especially in the matter of the treatment of the old, whether in a care home, or being "cocooned" away from those they love.



Marianne (Daisy Edgar-Jones) and Connell (Paul Mescal) from *Normal People* (BBC1/RTÉ1).

Well it's not 'normal' for me!

● Some viewers have been offended by the somewhat explicit sex scenes in the TV drama *Normal People*. I tend to regard such material as 'age-inappropriate' for my demographic, so I switch off. The book was well-crafted, though I found the characters shallow, yet some people think that it represents the narcissism and uncertainties of adolescence accurately.

It may be a consolation to those who feel that explicit TV sex scenes are unacceptable – considering the family context of the TV screen – that these are probably the last such scenes we'll see for a long time. 'Social distancing' now forbids actors to be up close and personal in love scenes. Back to Jane Austen! Hooray!

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Breda O'Brien

The View



The loneliness of loss is magnified by the curtailment of funeral traditions

There was a tragic case recently in Mullingar when the wrong body was given to a family for burial. It was spotted by a mortician when a name on a body bag matched that of someone whose remains had allegedly already been collected by a funeral director.

Imagine the distress of the family when they found this out only minutes before the start of the funeral service. The undertaker had to go immediately to retrieve the correct remains and return the other body.

The HSE has promised a full inquiry. No doubt, there are many families now worrying that they, too, have received the wrong remains.

Someone pragmatic might say that it does not matter to the dead person and since there are no longer any open coffins at funerals, that it should not matter to mourners, either.

Not only does this ignore the natural bonds felt by family and friends, but it also neglects the Christian teaching that bodies are

sacred. They are not just containers for the soul or our personality. The philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty affirms that "the body is our anchorage in a world" and St Pope John Paul II affirmed again and again that our bodies participate in our dignity as human beings.

“It is one of the many sufferings inflicted by this pandemic that proper farewells in person to people who are dying are often impossible”

After the last judgement, we will not be ethereal spirits floating around but instead will have glorified bodies free from the limitations of death and disease.

This is difficult to imagine, even though we have the example of the Risen Lord, who mysteriously passed through locked doors in upper room. The Lord was both himself and somehow



different and harder to recognise, as the story of the road to Emmaus testifies.

Most shocking of all, perhaps, is that his glorified body still has the marks of the wounds inflicted on the cross. His exalted state

did not leave his humanity behind.

Bodies matter. Reverence for bodies matters. It is one of the many sufferings inflicted by this pandemic that proper farewells in person to people who are dying are often impossible.

After death, there is something undignified about bodies being placed in bags. If it were not for the kindness of healthcare professionals, chaplains and priests, many would be even more bereft.

The absence of the traditional Irish funeral magnifies the loneliness of loss.

We attend funerals in great numbers. It is a significant culture shock to many Irish emigrants to discover other cultures regard funerals as private affairs, conducted with the kind of numbers we consider a serious imposition during this lockdown.

“I fear it will complicate the grieving process for many that they are unable to take part in the healing rituals”

It is tremendously sad to see the congregation confined to 10, along with social distancing. It is hard for everyone and it does not matter whether the death is due to Covid-19 or any other cause.

Funerals are a great comfort to the living and the tradition of having something to eat afterwards usually means a sharing

of stories, some of which may never have been heard before by family members.

All of this is now impossible, whether the funeral is for an internationally famous poet like Eavan Boland, buried from Dundrum church recently, or the tragic death of a young person from suicide.

Part of the reverence we have for bodies is expressed through the tactility of funeral rituals. Attending the online streaming of a funeral is far better than nothing but real solidarity demands physical presence, handshakes, hugs and hospitality.

I fear it will complicate the grieving process for many that they are unable to take part in the healing rituals that we have often taken for granted.

One of the important facets of grief is the loss of a role. When a spouse dies, one also loses a role as a husband or wife, and if the relationship was good, the feeling of being the centre of someone's world. The same happens, to a lesser but not insignificant extent, when we grieve any major loss.

There are many kinds of grief other than the loss of a loved one. There is the grief of not being able to hug grandchildren and the grief of lost opportunities and lost employment.

Burying the dead is listed as one of the corporal works of mercy. Now that we cannot be physically with people who grieve due to death, it is more important than ever to find alternative ways of expressing support. The old-fashioned letter or card has a great deal to recommend it and is not easily replaced by a WhatsApp message.

We might also remember to thank and pray for priests and chaplains whose presence and shepherding is more vital than ever during these bleak times.

When this crisis ends, we will be facing an economic crisis which will test all of us. Let's hope that the pandemic will have honed our compassion so that we can truly bear each other's burdens.

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Pope Francis: ‘What am I leaving behind? What did I do?’



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Pope stresses importance of reflecting on your ‘final farewell’

Everyone would do well to reflect on their “final farewell” from earthly life said Pope Francis during a morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae.

“It will do us good,” he added. “What am I leaving behind? What did I do?”

“What did I do?”

Pope Francis isn’t talking about your career, or even your family. He’s asking you to contemplate the difference you’ve made.

One way to ensure you’re always doing some good is to support charities.

“How marvellous it would be if, at the end of the day, each of us could say: today I have performed an act of charity towards others!” – Pope Francis

And it’s clear many people do already generously give to causes close to their hearts. The Irish Catholic’s own research shows 97% of readers regularly donate to charity.

However, with so many different charities carrying out so much good work, choosing one to support is certainly not an easy decision to make.

“Poverty in the world is a scandal. In a world where there is so much wealth, so many resources to feed everyone, it is unfathomable that there are so many hungry children, that there are so many children without an education, so many poor persons.” – Pope Francis.

One charity fighting poverty is Ireland’s own Concern Worldwide. In fact they state their mission is to: End extreme poverty – whatever it takes.

Concern was founded in 1968 by John and Kay O’Loughlin-Kennedy – in response to the famine in the breakaway province of Biafra in Nigeria.

On Friday 6th September 1968 the MV Columcille set sail from Dublin to Sao Tome – a Portuguese island off the coast of Nigeria.

The 600 tonne ship was full of vital supplies of powdered food, medicines and other life saving items for the people suffering the horrific famine in Biafra. This single shipment was only the start of an aid mission which became one flight every day over the next 11 months.

Since then Concern has helped transform lives in 48 of the world’s poorest countries, including:

- Rwanda, 1994: Concern was one of the first Irish charities to respond to the Rwandan Genocide.
- Haiti, 2010: Within 1 year of the earthquake, Concern had helped over 1,000,000

people in the country.

- Syria, 2013 – present: Concern’s emergency programmes meet the urgent needs of people displaced by war.
- Nepal, 2015: After the severe earthquake, Concern provided non food items, kits and material for make-shift accommodation, repaired 14,500 homes and helped almost 80,000 people.
- 2020: As the COVID-19 outbreak continues to spread globally, our teams are mobilising to support the most vulnerable.

As you can see, no matter what the crisis, Concern always helps those in the most desperate need no matter how hard they are to reach.

Last year they responded to 102 different emergencies. And helped an incredible 27.4 million people around the world.

“What am I leaving behind?”

When Pope Francis asked this at the Domus Sanctae Marthae Mass, many may have been wondering about the impact their own lives will have. Perhaps you are too.

One thing you can leave behind is a life changing gift to your preferred charity in your Will. This ensures your legacy lives on, while supporting the charity you care for and helping save lives long into the future.

Just as Fiona from Co. Louth has for Concern. Here she explains why: “I have two children and if they were in need, I would hope that somebody, somewhere would reach out to help them. With my legacy, I will be that person for somebody’s loved ones – you could be too.”

If you join Fiona and leave a gift to Concern, your legacy can help end hunger, for good. And will help people like Nala*.

Nala lived with her mother and two brothers in a camp for displaced people in Mogadishu, Somalia. Her mother was pregnant with Nala when she and her sons fled their village which was attacked. Even in the safety of the camp, Nala’s mother struggled to find food for herself and her children. So Nala never gained weight properly.

At nine months old she was barely bigger than a newborn. Fortunately this was when the family came to a Concern supported nutrition centre.

Nala was diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition and fading fast. She was immediately given therapeutic food sachets.

As you can see after a few months of receiving help, Nala was thriving.



Photo: Jennifer Nolan / Concern Worldwide.

When admitted to a Concern supported health centre in Mogadishu, nine month old Nala was extremely malnourished – and so lethargic she couldn’t open her eyes.



Photo: Mohamed Abdihakab / Concern Worldwide.

Nala a few months later after receiving therapeutic food sachets.

“Charity is at the heart of the Church, it is the reason for its action, the soul of its mission.” – Pope Francis

By leaving a gift in your Will to Concern, you won’t just be giving food to those who desperately need it. Your gift also gives people the seeds, tools and skills to grow their own healthy crops.

Just as our supporters did for Elisabeth. She lives with her husband and their six children in central Burundi.

Elisabeth used to struggle to provide just one meal a day for the family. And could rarely afford the fresh vegetables essential for her children’s healthy development.



Photo: Darren Vaughan / Concern Worldwide.

Elisabeth’s 12-year-old son, Egide, helping at his family’s kitchen garden

Concern gave her the tools, training, seeds and compost she needed to cultivate her own home garden.

Now she prepares well balanced meals of sweet potatoes, beans, rice, maize, cassava, tomatoes and aubergines.

It’s people like you, leaving Concern a gift in their Will, who have helped save Nala, Elisabeth and their families.

To discover about how a gift in your Will can help end hunger:

- ✓ When natural disaster strikes
- ✓ When conflict threatens lives
- ✓ When poverty prevents progress

Please request your complimentary copy of ‘A World Without Hunger’ – Concern’s legacy booklet.

Inside you’ll discover how others who were desperately

in need have been helped by gifts left in the Wills of people just like you.

The booklet also answers many of the common questions people have about leaving a gift in their Will. And explains how to start the process. Naturally, requesting your free booklet does not oblige you to support Concern in any way or do anything else.

“I am proud to know that even when I am gone, by including Concern in my Will, my support will continue to help save lives.” – Colm O’Byrne, Co. Galway.

* Name changed for security reasons.



To receive your free, no obligation booklet – in complete confidence – please contact Concern’s Legacy Manager, Siobhán O’Connor. Call **01 417 8020**, email **siobhan.oconnor@concern.net**, or visit **www.concern.net/bequest**

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**ENDING EXTREME POVERTY
WHATEVER IT TAKES**

How Christians behaved in the Nazi era



Some Christians will never sacrifice respectability to speak out against what is popular, writes **David Quinn**

The Catholic bishops of Germany have admitted in a new document that they did not do enough to resist the Nazis during the war. The 23-page report says: "Inasmuch as the bishops did not oppose the war with a clear 'no,' and most of them bolstered (Germany's) will to endure, they made themselves complicit in the war."

That is a big self-



A historical photograph shows Adolf Hitler, center, greeting an officer in the French village of Compiègne June 22, 1940, after France surrendered to Nazi Germany.

accusation to make. Why do so now? It is because this month marks the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II.

A word like 'complicit' jumps out. It appeared in various headlines around the world. On its own, it makes

it look like the bishops were actively pro-Nazi.

In fact, when you read its context, you see what they really mean is either that they did not do enough to resist the Nazis, or else they contributed to the general feeling of patriotism at

the time, thereby boosting national morale.

We have been here before of course. John Cornwell famously accused Pope Pius XII of being 'Hitler's Pope'.

That was a very dramatic title and gave the impression that Pius was an active Nazi sympathiser, which was far from the case. When you analyse his record, what he can be accused of is not being outspoken enough against Hitler and his monstrous crimes, especially the Holocaust. Pius, rightly or wrongly, took the view that outspoken opposition in the context of the war would do more harm than good.

Justification

The German bishops say in their new document that their predecessors "may not have shared the Nazis' justification for the war on the grounds of racial ideology, but their words and their images gave succour both to soldiers and the regime prosecuting the war, as they lent the war an additional sense of purpose".

We need to go back a step before considering the issue further. Christianity is obviously a creed that is opposed in its very marrow to an ideology like Nazism. Christianity believes in the moral equality and dignity of all human beings. Nazism bases our moral worth on our 'race'.

Nazism also subscribed in the most extreme way to the doctrine of 'survival of the fittest', meaning might is right and power is its own justification. Jesus taught us the antithesis of this, namely that the 'first shall be last, and the last shall be first'.

One reason the German philosopher, Fredrick Nietzsche hated Christianity

so much is because Christianity was opposed to the 'will to power'.

Nazism was also a pagan creed at heart, and Hitler hated Christianity and would gladly have destroyed it if he felt he could. But even he had to make political calculations and one was that too many German were Christians, nominally at least, to seek to destroy the Churches and that is why he moved to suborn them instead. His pragmatic, temporary aim was to recruit Protestants and Catholics to the cause of German patriotism, if not Nazism, and he succeeded in this to too great an extent.

The Catholic Church in Germany had only emerged a few decades before from Bismarck's 'kulturkampf', that is, a cultural war against the influence of the Catholic Church in Germany. He believed Catholicism was an alien presence, opposed to the will of the new, unified German State, too much under the control of the Pope. German Catholics became very sensitive to the accusation that they were not patriotic.

Nazism rose to popularity in the first instance because it promised to restore German pride after the humiliations of World War I, and the Nazi party, embodied by Hitler, identified the German State and German society with itself.

Many German Christians, Catholic and Protestant, including their leaders, allowed themselves to caught up in the patriotic fervour. It was groupthink, German-style. It took courage to stand against the current.

“Right through the war, Von Preysing stood against the Nazis, a terrible rebuke to most of his fellow bishops”

We can see this in the recent movie *A Hidden Life* about the Austrian Catholic Franz Jagerstatter, who refused to swear loyalty to Hitler and was killed as a result. When he went to his bishop for support, he met only cowardice. A handful of Catholic bishops did defy the Nazis, however. One was the Bishop of Berlin, Konrad Graf Von Preysing.

In 1937, he helped Pius XI prepare the anti-Nazi encyclical, 'Mit brennender Sorge' ('With Burning Sorrow'), which was

distributed illegally among German Catholics.

Right through the war, Von Preysing stood against the Nazis, a terrible rebuke to most of his fellow bishops who could not even rouse themselves to properly oppose the savage persecution of the Catholic Church in neighbouring Poland.

The Nazi never dared to arrest Von Preysing such was his standing. That was a further rebuke to his fellow bishops.

“Few Christians rise to the challenge, in any age”

Another defiant figure was Cardinal Clemens August von Galen, 'The Lion of Munster' (a province in Germany), who also helped to draft 'Mit brennender Sorge'.

Von Galen and Von Preysing was both prophets, and if need be, were willing to be martyrs. In every age, Christians are potentially called both to prophetic witness and the ultimate form of witness: martyrdom.

But few Christians rise to the challenge, in any age, just as few people of any creed or political belief do. We cannot really afford to judge German Christians who lived through Nazism if we, in our time, who face no threat of death, or long spells in prison, won't even stand up to the often anti-Christian spirit of our age.

On the other hand, we must make sure to give credit to all the Christians who did stand up to the Nazis, and not just the aforementioned bishops.

As the historian Michael Burleigh points out in his book, *Sacred Causes*: "Virtually all sections of German resistance to Nazism had had a Christian presence, with a third of Catholic clergy coming into some sort of conflict with the regime, in the form of warnings, threats, fines arrest or imprisonment."

When we castigate the failure of Christians in past ages, and our own, to stand up to the evils of their day, we can easily miss the broader point, which is that they are failing their own Christian standard, which sometimes calls on them to go to the extent of laying down their lives for another.

Some Christians will not even sacrifice respectability in order to speak out against what is popular. But many have, and do.

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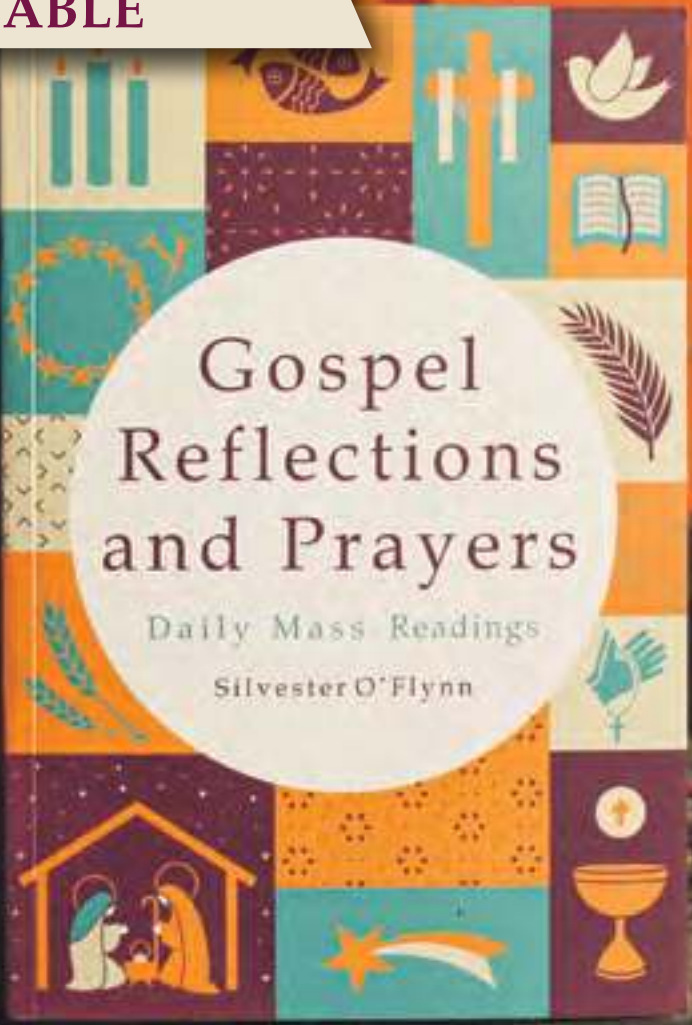
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Chai Brady discusses Mater Dei's findings on the religious feelings of young people North and South

The need for religious education and research on young people's relationship with religion is more important than ever to dispel myths and understand how they really feel, according to the Director of the Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education.

Dr Gareth Byrne, Associate Professor of Religious Education, tells *The Irish Catholic*: "Young people can appreciate RE as a subject, what goes on in the classroom and the importance of the discussion that takes place. Sometimes older people might think that young people aren't terribly interested in that but it turns out they are actually very interested."

Although it may not mean young people are attending church on Sunday, he says, "they're certainly very interested in the issues and the questions, it's not that that's all gone away".

"So for parents who are interested in Church or Catholic schools, the question then becomes well how do we grab hold of that conversation with young people and help them to ask their questions and work with them through the material. That is, I suppose, what I'm interested in as an educator, as a Catholic educator, to try and promote that kind of conversation."

Differences

One of Mater Dei's most recent studies published in April found religious students in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are generally happier than those who weren't particularly religious according to research conducted on older Catholic teens. It also found students in the North have a more positive relationship with religion.

The study, entitled 'Religious affect and personal happiness: are there significant differences between Catholic adolescents in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland?' was published in the *Journal of Religious Education*. It gathered data from thousands of Catholic students aged 16-19 in both jurisdictions supported a "growing consensus" that religious students are happier, but also found there was no

Understanding religion and happiness among young people today



significant differences in happiness on either side of the border.

The authors were Prof. Leslie J. Francis of the University of Warwick, Dr Gareth Byrne, Dr Christopher Alan Lewis of Leeds Trinity University, and Dr Bernadette Sweetman.

“3,015 Catholic students in the Republic attending 5th and 6th year classes and 1,624 Catholic students in Northern Ireland attending sixth-form classes participated”

Dr Sweetman, who also works in the Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education at Dublin City University's Institute of Education, says it was not a "stand-alone" investigation and expands on a wealth of information gleaned in previous studies.

"This particular paper was written drawing on data gathered from a large-scale survey of students conducted in 2011," Dr Sweetman says.

"In fact, the rich data covers lots of areas including beliefs, values and attitudes, of which religious and personal affect is just one facet. The overall study was a replication of a research study which was begun by John Greer in 1968 in Northern Ireland initially only involving Protestants."

"Over the years, the study was extended to include Catholics and then, in 2011, the Republic. After the death of John Greer, Prof. Leslie J. Francis continued the work and in collaboration with the Irish Centre for Religious Education, and more recently, the Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education, we have been engaged in research in a number of different areas of religious education."

* * * * *

Overall, 3,015 Catholic students in the Republic attending 5th and

6th year classes and 1,624 Catholic students in Northern Ireland attending sixth-form classes participated, after taking into account individual differences in sex, age, and personality.

Dr Sweetman says: "One of the key findings of the research, as noted in the conclusion of the article, is the affirmation of earlier research, both in Christian and other religions, that those who are more positively disposed to religion are happier. The data in this study show that those young people who were positively disposed to religion were happier."

The study also revealed that there were differences in the relationship students in the North had with religion compared to the south. It found the students in the North had a "significantly higher" religious affect.

Key questions

One of the key questions for future research, they state, is why students in the North and south both appear to have the same levels

of happiness despite the large difference in religious affect.

The reasons for this, Dr Sweetman says, need more investigation.

However, the study states: "As is well documented, the Catholic-Protestant split in Northern Ireland has resulted in long-standing issues between the two communities, erupting in 'the Troubles' during the period from 1968 to 1998."

"People, there, have continued to be identified, and to identify themselves, strongly with their religious tradition. With older generations shunning violence and hoping for better times for their children and grandchildren, relations between the two communities in the North were subsequently dominated by 'the Peace Process' which has seen people from both traditions, generally, striving for a peaceful resolution of outstanding issues between them."

Regarding this difference in relationship with religion, Dr Gareth Byrne, who was also involved in the research, says: "In the North we still have a closer connection and an identification perhaps because of the history of the North. Young Catholics went to Church and Catholic schools and

“One of the key findings of the research...is the affirmation of earlier research, both in Christian and other religions, that those who are more positively disposed to religion are happier”



dominant now in much of the Western world and beyond.”

It also states that the dominance of the Catholic school system has become a “bone of contention” for some in the Republic of Ireland.

“Many commentators in Ireland today argue that Catholics, as well as building up their own faith community, are called, precisely because of their Catholic faith and through Catholic schools, to contribute positively to the development of a more plural society by engaging enthusiastically in ecumenical outreach, inter-religious dialogue, and intercultural exchange.”

Commenting on the need for ongoing research in these topics, Dr Byrne says: “What I see is the opportunity for us to have an ongoing conversation with young people and the importance of having this conversation.

“Bringing material like this forward gives people real concrete stuff to talk about rather than going by anecdote.”

The reason they do the research, he says, is to “try and help people to break into the realities that are part of their lives, so for the young people themselves, for the parents and for people that are involved in Catholic schools, for example teachers, principals, trust boards and board of management”.

* * * * *

In a study published in his book *Religion and Education: The Voices of Young People in Ireland* published last year, which he co-edited, of 3,000 students aged 13-15 who were asked about religious education 85% agreed that studying religion in school helped them understand people from other religions. Seventy-two percent said it helped them understand people from other racial backgrounds.

Despite this only 56% says religious education should be taught in schools.

Dr Byrne says he believes it’s “very important” for the Catholic Church to maintain its interest in

Catholic education, although he adds not all schools have to be Catholic, which is “part of the conversation in society at the moment”.

“But from a Church perspective I think it’s really important for the Church to continue to maintain that interest in education and in having Catholic schools and contributing to the education of young people in such a way that these kind of questions that we’re talking about would be brought to the fore continually: would be given respect, would be given time in a timetable, because that’s one of the issues, that in other kinds of schools maybe religious education and liturgy mightn’t have the same status, while in Catholic school that would always continue to be the case.

“I think that would be a really significant contribution in the discussion of the next generation and for parents as well.”

Another study in the book, which examined the personal, social and spiritual correlations of atheism among 13-15-year-old boys by the comparing the views of 286 atheists with the views of 719 theists across several domains, found that those who believe in God where much more accepting of other religions.

“You may be at home in your own space but you’re connected with all the other people in the parish who are at home in their space, we’re all connected around Jesus”

Responding to the statement ‘We must respect all religions’, 63% of atheists agreed while 81% of theists agreed. Only 66% of atheists agreed that all religious groups in Ireland should have equal rights compared 81% of theists.

The findings also appeared to point to atheists having a lower level of personal wellbeing, with 42% of atheists saying they felt their life had a sense of purpose compared to 72% of theists. Regarding whether they felt life was worth living, 61% of atheists agreed compared to 81% of theists.

“Those who are religious tend to be more open and reflective and understanding of the idea that people would have religion or different religions or no religion. They’ve reflected as religious people more on that, it would seem,” says Dr Byrne.

He says that sometimes “the impression you’re given by other groups is that Catholic young people would be very closed and inward looking, that’s not the case at all, that’s not the case for religious young people in general, they tend actually to be very open and respectful”.

Findings

Many of the findings, he continued, point to the need for RE in schools. “There’s a lot of chat at the moment

about how well educated Irish people are, and I think that’s true and the media at the moment, through the Covid-19 experience, has educated us very positively, and so we’ve got good information and I think generally speaking people have taken up on that,” he says.

“And maybe you can compare that with other countries, and you wonder, so the point I’m making here is that I think it’s really important that we continue the idea of educating people in religion.

“I think we have some work to do on that, we’ve been kind of nervous of the religion question and the Catholic Church, it’s actually really important in this moment, and we’re learning this through the Covid-19 experience, or I’m reflecting on it again through the Covid experience, the importance of getting good information out there and giving people material to work with and to think about and talk about. That leads into the whole adult education thing.”

* * * * *

The big questions of Faith, life and death have come to the fore during the coronavirus crisis, Dr Byrne points out, and this is an opportunity for many people to engage more fully in these discussions.

“My experience seems to be that while there are definitely people who have disconnected in this period there are also many people who have realised their hunger in this period and are looking for ways to be connected,” Dr Byrne says.

“The other thing I absolutely keep repeating here is, you may be at home in your own space but you’re connected with all the other people in the parish who are at home in their space, we’re all connected around Jesus. You’re not actually on your own, you’re with the Christian community.

“It’s hard to know where it will all end up, but I have a sense that in this moment at least people are being very reflective and it’s making them think about what is the essential in life and what is life about, even the fact that there are so many deaths, and there’s the Covid experience and people are finding ways to talk about that.

“I think it’s actually helping people to connect with the whole question of dying and care for those who are ill and care for the dying and the great work that people on the front line are doing, that’s a real conversation for people. In a way once you get into that conversation you can’t be just on the surface about it, these are big questions for people.”

Those interested in finding out more about the research being conducted at Mater Dei can follow this link: dcu.ie/mdcceNews

the tradition there being a bedrock for them. It does seem therefore that there is a stronger affect for them, a stronger connection for them with Church in the North still.”

“What I see is the opportunity for us to have an ongoing conversation with young people and the importance of having this conversation”

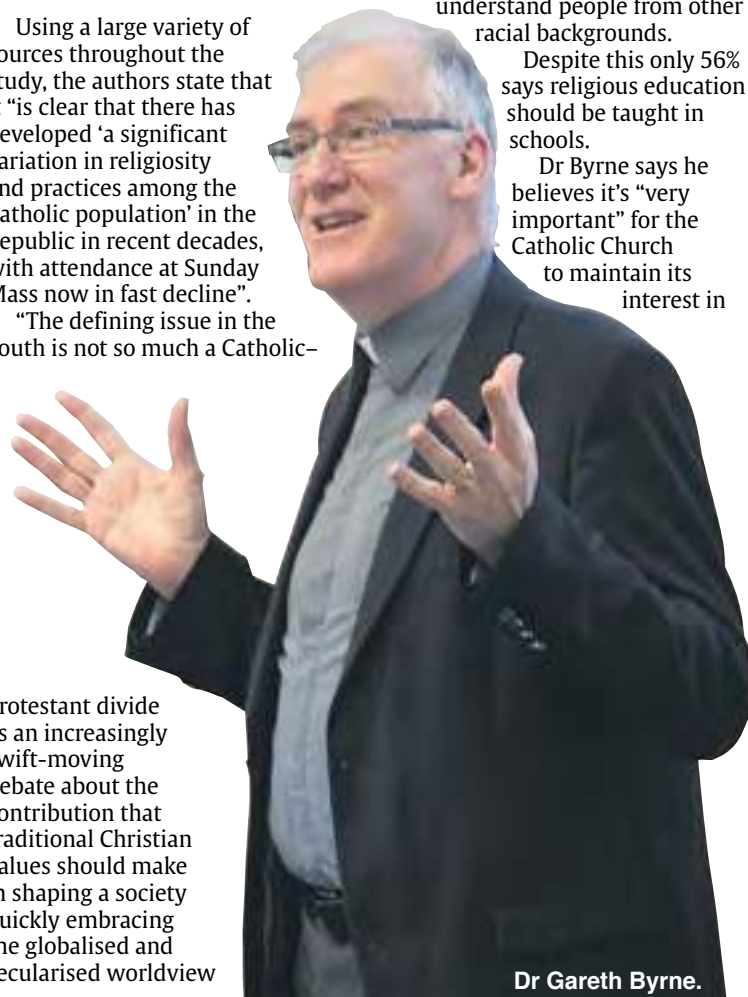
In the North, the study acknowledges that the desire of the minority community to retain faith-based schools is claimed by some as having contributed to division, while others see the Catholic schools’ commitment to justice, peace and reconciliation, as well as to educational excellence, as having been an essential ingredient in creating the possibility of dialogue.

This is contrasted with the Republic, where they note the “sharp” decline in the number of people who identify as Catholic, from 84.2% of the population in 2011 to 78.3% in 2016 according to the Central Statistics Office.

Using a large variety of sources throughout the study, the authors state that it “is clear that there has developed ‘a significant variation in religiosity and practices among the Catholic population’ in the Republic in recent decades, with attendance at Sunday Mass now in fast decline”.

“The defining issue in the South is not so much a Catholic-

Protestant divide as an increasingly swift-moving debate about the contribution that traditional Christian values should make in shaping a society quickly embracing the globalised and secularised worldview



Dr Gareth Byrne.



Our Catholic Faith can prevent us from slipping back into old habits, writes **Bairbre Cahill**

There has been much talk about how we will never be the same again after this Covid-19 pandemic. It seems unlikely – and indeed in many ways undesirable – that we would return to what we previously thought of as normal.

Families are discovering what it means to have time together, what it's like not to be constantly under pressure with after-school activities and that children actually are capable of occupying themselves. So, many of us will be left pondering what sort of life we want to live when restrictions are lifted and 'normality' returns.

There are deeper questions to ponder too though. Scientists and commentators seem to agree that loss of biodiversity, humans encroaching on animal habitats and climate change have contributed to the situation we find ourselves in. Moreover they have suggested that unless we address these issues we will inevitably face further pandemics. Initially there were pronouncements about Covid-19 being 'the great leveller' impacting with impunity on countries around the world.

We have discovered, however, that Covid-19 does not impact on all equally. How do countries without an adequate health system cope with the inevitable influx of cases? How do people practise social distancing in crowded refugee camps and shanty towns? How useful is the advice to wash hands for 20 seconds in places where there is no running water?

Questions

We are left then with questions not just about what sort of life I or my family want to have post-coronavirus but what sort of world we want to live in. This is what Pope Francis has referred to a number of times in recent weeks including in a recent interview with Austen Ivereigh, "What we are living now is a place of metanoia (conversion) and we have

Pondering what sort of *life* we want to live when *normality* returns



A couple wearing protective masks enjoy the view of the sunset along a river in Seoul, South Korea, Below, a man examines a bird box on the premises of the *Laudato Si'* Centre in Manchester, England, Photos: CNS

the chance to begin. So let's not let it slip from us, and let's move ahead."

So how do we engage with this opportunity for metanoia? How do we not simply slip gratefully back into old habits? Does our Catholic Faith have any resources to help us?

“Individualism has no place in Catholic social thought and yet for how many of us has Faith offered us a cocoon”

A word we have heard many times in recent weeks is solidarity. It has been uplifting and powerful to witness the ways in which communities have worked together. People who may expect to encounter few problems with Covid-19 themselves have taken on the restrictions and self-discipline of social distancing for the good of others.

Indeed, that idea of 'the common good' has become very real for us.

Our individualistic culture has been turned upside down and inside out. Public service announcements and television advertisements talk about the importance of connecting even though we are apart. Great creativity and ingenuity is being

invested in finding ways to reach out to each other in the virtual world.

What we may not have considered until now is that solidarity and the common good are vital aspects of our Catholic Faith. Here in Ireland it is unfortunately the case that we have not paid adequate attention to Catholic social teaching. We are not alone. In 1998 the American bishops produced *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*. In it the Church noted that "far too many Catholics are not familiar with Catholic social teaching...many Catholics do not adequately understand that the social teaching of the Church is an essential part of Catholic Faith".

They acknowledged that transforming this situation was a serious challenge for themselves and all Catholics. Perhaps we have been too inclined to presume that as long as others were active in promoting social justice we were covered.

Champions

Here in Ireland we certainly have our champions of social justice – people like Fr Peter McVerry SJ, Bro. Kevin Crowley OFM Cap. and Sr Stan Kennedy RSC. If, however, we are to embrace the opportunity for metanoia or conversion of which Pope Francis speaks we need to explore what role Catholic

social teaching plays in our own lives.

Moreover we need to use it as a lens through which to reflect upon the experience of these recent months.

* * * * *

The key themes in Catholic social teaching – or Catholic social doctrine as it is also called – may offer us a way into exploring our current situation.

The first theme is that of human dignity – that it is simply being human that establishes one's dignity. Individualism has no place in Catholic social thought and yet for how many of us has Faith offered us a cocoon, protecting us from the world, offering us individual salvation, focussing on a 1:1 relationship with God? This first principle encourages – challenges – us to take seriously the value and dignity of every human being. In that context we cannot be at peace with the idea that some people are radically more vulnerable to Covid-19 because of poverty, war, geography or politics.

This connects directly with the second principle – respect for human life. Every life is equally valuable. We have seen the tensions play out on the world stage – which do you protect, life or the economy? Do we consider the lives of those who are old, disabled or otherwise vulnerable to be



less valuable? Whatever our words say, what do our actions proclaim? What of the life of a woman in a refugee camp, a man in a prison cell? What is the conversion of mind and heart demanded of us to create a world in which every human life, at every stage of life, is equally valued and not just in theory but in practice?

We are all missing the usual opportunities to meet up with people, whether at work or in the café, at Mass on Sunday or on the side-lines of the GAA pitch. It seems strange not to be able to reach out to others, to give a hug or shake hands. Elbow bumping is a poor substitute.

Isolation has reminded us just how deeply social we are and that is another key theme. We are sacred not only as individuals made in the image and likeness of God but also

in our relationships and in the realities we create through them, institutions, economics, politics, law and policy.

As people of Faith, we should be able to look at any of these and ask how the Gospel is reflected in them. One of the challenges for us going forward is to ask how the Gospel is reflected in an economic system which functions on the basis of inequality.

The rich can only be rich because they possess more than the poor, more money, more resources, more means to protect themselves from danger.

* * * * *

If we take Catholic social teaching seriously – from Pope Leo XII's *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 on the rights of labour, through St John Paul II's *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* to *Laudato Si'* of Pope

“Here in Ireland it is unfortunately the case that we have not paid adequate attention to Catholic social teaching. We are not alone...”

Francis on integral human development – then it is going to challenge us deeply. Pope Francis articulates the challenge clearly when he says: “We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it” (LS 229).

That shared responsibility challenges us to acknowledge that every person has a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. Why the emphasis on the poor and vulnerable? Because as long as they are excluded from participation in the things we take for granted – productive work, fair wages, education, health care – society will be flawed and the Gospel vision fractured.

This is why Pope Francis constantly reminds us of the need to care in a particular way for the poor and vulnerable and that in them we encounter Christ. He tells us in *Evangelii Gaudium* 178 “God’s word teaches that our brothers and sisters are the prolongation of the incarnation for each of us: ‘As you did it to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it to me’ (Matthew 25:40)”.

We are being invited then to live in solidarity with all of humanity. As the US bishops stated in their reflections (p.5): “Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family...learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that ‘loving our neighbour’ has global dimensions in an interdependent world.”

How true those words ring today and how deeply we need to take them on board.

“As people of Faith we should be both challenged and inspired by the example of medics”

Moreover, it is not enough to leave the social solidarity up to others on our behalf, seeing our own occasional charitable contributions as sufficient. As Archbishop Diarmuid Martin commented in his reflections on *Laudato Si’* at Villa Nova University in November 2014: “Solidarity is not about a few sporadic acts of generosity. It involves constant conversion; it presumes creation of a mindset which thinks in



Plastic bottles and other discarded items float along a river in Rome.

terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods and wealth by the few.”

Constant conversion – again that idea of metanoia which Pope Francis mentions and the implication that only if we are open to such transformation can we build a better future. So how can we engage with that process?

The principle of stewardship reminds us that we can and must take responsibility for protection of the environment. In *Laudato Si’* Pope Francis reminds us that what we need is integral human development, where our progress is not at the expense of the earth or the expense of the poorest and most vulnerable. He speaks of integral ecology as a new paradigm of justice, “which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings” (LS 15) adding that “nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live.” (LS 139) A very practical exercise offered by Pope Francis is that our examination of conscience should include not only how we have lived in communion with God, with others and oneself but also with all creatures and with nature. Really, what we are being called to is radically joined-up thinking, profoundly aware of our connectedness to God, to each other and to this fragile earth upon which we live.

So where does that

leave us now? In his ‘thought for the day’ on April 6, 2020, Pope Francis said, “The tragedy we are experiencing summons us to take seriously the things that are serious and not to be caught up in those that matter less; to rediscover that life is of no use if not used to serve others. For life is measured by love.” We have witnessed that loving service in those who are on the frontline in this pandemic. As people of Faith we should be both challenged and inspired by the example of doctors, nurses and care staff caring for those who are ill. We hear daily about those who have lost their lives,

here and around the world because they continued to do their job. We have come to recognise the supermarket workers, cleaners, postal workers and others as key frontline staff. We applaud them and realise how much we need them. Those ideas of solidarity, community, the common good – they all make sense now, but will we remember?

Amnesia

Will we develop a collective and convenient amnesia when all this is over? We currently have people working in care homes, looking after our elderly citizens, many of them are

on the minimum wage and with little protection for their jobs. If our politicians were to propose an increase in taxation to provide better social services and to create a more equitable society would we balk at the prospect?

At this point, an estimated 178,000 have died due to Covid-19. The figures are appalling and have motivated a seismic shift in how research is carried out. We have witnessed an upsurge in international cooperation with an unprecedented sharing of expertise and knowledge in the pursuit of vaccines and treatment options. This is

what solidarity looks like.

But we cannot sit on our laurels. The reality is that more people will die this year because of malnutrition than because of Covid-19.

In 2018, malaria caused over 400,000 deaths. Again over 400,000 have died in the Syrian conflict. These deaths may not be happening here but they are as relevant, as important and as demanding of our concern. To be a Catholic means to take Catholic social doctrine seriously and that means valuing every human life, wanting every person to participate in the goodness which society offers, making a particular effort to care for and protect the poor and the vulnerable. This is solidarity.

We cannot tackle these challenges on our own. We need to engage in conversation, reflection and action at the level of our own families and communities, in our parishes and dioceses, at national and global levels.

Equality

The question of how we can live differently, more gently upon the earth, how we can create a more equitable world cannot be left to politicians.

The Covid19 pandemic has challenged many of our illusions as to what we need and must have. How we go forward, the future we build, the values which shape society, the extent of our solidarity – that is our next challenge.

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Irish Chaplaincy in London offers free contact service



Looking after Irish people who are away from home remains a key priority writes **Aron Hegarty**

The Irish chaplaincy in London is offering a contact service for anyone in Ireland with concerns about vulnerable, older family members or friends isolated in the city.

The chaplaincy says it will make direct contact, on the concerned persons behalf, and provide links to services and community groups on the ground, local to where an individual is stranded.

Paul Raymond of the Irish Chaplaincy Seniors Project based in London told *The Irish Catholic* the organisation is there to "give support, bring hope and keep spirits up".

"We want to emphasise that we are here for any vulnerable Irish person in London," he says, "whatever type of needs they have - be it spiritual, emotional or practical."

“Furthermore, the Project helps them to reconnect with their families back in Ireland”

"There has been an increase in the demand for our services and supports, and we have responded by increasing the number of calls we make and the supports we offer."

As many Irish people moved to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, the Church in Ireland recognised that moving to another country was no small endeavour and that it would take time for those people to settle in.

In response to this, the Irish Emigrant Chaplaincy was established by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference in 1957.

Their work embraced the core meaning of Catholic, which is 'universal' and 'inclusive', to assist those Irish most isolated and vulnerable, regardless of their religious background.

Today, the Irish Chaplaincy in London (as it is



Paul Raymond with London-based Mary Williamson, 89, who was born in Limerick and grew up in Dublin. Photo: Irish Chaplaincy in London

now known) is a registered charity providing outreach services to three main groups: elderly Irish people - known as the 'Seniors' Project', prisoners and to Travellers.

"Many of those we work with are finding it difficult being isolated," Raymond says, "so we are really going to extra mile and doing what we can to try and help."

"We tell them not to watch too much news, as many of them would be worried about loved ones and not being able to return home."

"Some have lost people close to them during this crisis and are not be able to physically gather with family to mourn, attend funeral Mass or the burial, so it is crucial that we are there to assist them in whatever way we can."

He continues: "A lot of them would not have regular visits from family or friends here (London) or from Ireland, and often - especially during this time - we are their only visitors."

"They rely on our supports and help, it's not easy but we are trying to keep them encouraged, linked and it's really important that we keep their spirits up."

Services provided through the Seniors' Project consist of regular visits to older Irish people in their home, in hospital or residential care home and spending quality time with them to offer positive support and encouragement.

“We want to emphasise that we are here for any vulnerable Irish person in London”

The Chaplaincy maintains regular telephone contact to ensure isolated older Irish have someone to talk to and share their hopes and concerns with.

The service liaises and advocates on their behalf with health and social

care providers and a range of other organisations as required.

Furthermore, the Project helps them to reconnect with their families back in Ireland and explore older people's Faith and spirituality with them, linking them to a local Faith community if requested.

"We are trying to give people access to their Faith and fill the gap of not being able to attend Mass, receive Holy Communion or express their Spirituality."

"Being isolated," Raymond explains, "means they can't physically attend churches to practice their Faith or meet their fellow parishioners in the community through going to Mass as they normally would do."

"Most of them don't have a PC, laptop, mobile phone with internet or access to online resources to be able to stream Mass or watch religious services over the web."

"So what we are doing is we are looking at ways we



can assist with technology, such as using digital radio to tune them in to their local stations back in Ireland or providing them with tablets."

He adds: "What we are also doing is asking local parishes and children from Catholic schools in the area to make notes and drawings plus write cards and prayers for us to give to them."

The Chaplaincy is also the only charity in the UK that offers help to Irish prisoners.

The charity gives support to Irish prisoners through regular visits and provides them and their families with advice and information, keeping in contact by letter and assisting families in Ireland to visit prisoners in England and Wales.

Additionally, the Chaplaincy offers pastoral support if requested, researches, identifies and responds to prisoner needs and work closely with other organisations and prison

departments to care for the welfare of Irish prisoners and their families.

The Travellers Equality Project is another outreach service provided by the Chaplaincy, which works closely with the Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service to provide information, advice and free bespoke resources for practitioners working with Travellers.

Traveller forums are held in prisons, diversity training is offered for support groups and thorough research is carried out to identify the needs of Irish Travellers.

The Irish Chaplaincy in London offers these supports as a free service and contact can be made from Ireland by post: PO BOX 75693 London NW1W 7ZT, by email seniors@irishchaplaincy.org.uk and by phone 0044 (0) 20 7482 3274.

“The service liaises and advocates on their behalf with health and social care providers and a range of other organisations as required”

Church must respond to spiritual needs of faithful – Primate



Chai Brady

Over the weekend the leaders of Ireland's Christian Churches asked the Executive in the North to reopen churches for private prayer, as they are currently closed due to government restrictions despite many churches that can maintain health guidelines in the south staying open for that purpose. It is expected the Church will also be bringing several measures to health authorities to ensure sacramental life can continue once more.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* this week, Archbishop Eamon Martin highlighted the need to listen to the advice of health authorities regarding current restrictions in place to stop the spread of the coronavirus, but also that the Church needs to prepare to be able to give assurances, that as restrictions are eased, social distancing and other regulations can be followed to accelerate the reopening of aspects of Church life that have been unavailable since lockdown.

“Sometimes these sacramental moments are also linked to gatherings and receptions outside of the church setting”

In addition, he said “spiritual, mental and physical health are interrelated”, and the Church has a role in offering people consolation and hope at this time.

“We are asking for our churches to be open to allow people if they choose, to pop in, say a prayer, adore the blessed sacrament, spend some time in the solace of the sacred space that is a church,” Archbishop Martin said.

“This is a particular concern within the Catholic community, because for Catholics, to visit your church during the day, to spend some time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, to light a candle at a shrine, this is very much part of our Catholic culture and tradition, devotion and spirituality, it’s an intrinsic



Archbishop Eamon Martin

part of who we are as Catholics.”

The closure of church buildings for individual or private worship is “particularly painful”, he said and commended the “solidarity” shown by the other churches leaders in agreeing to call for the opening of churches for individual prayer together.

For some of the other Churches, he said, “it is not part of their cultural tradition, they normally would open their church doors for a service or for collective worship and they don’t have the tradition of people coming along during the week to offer a private prayer inside their church building. Whereas for us as Catholics this is part of who we are”.

“So I was quite pleased that all of the Church leaders on this island united to call for the opening of churches for individual prayer and private worship and I personally believe this can be done, I know it can be done because it’s already happening in many parishes around the country in the south where they have continued to keep their church building open, ensuring that there’s good social distancing, ensuring that there’s good sanitary services and hygiene services being provided.”

This is a point Archbishop Martin made to the

First Minister and Deputy First Minister in the North. There was also discussion of the closure of places of burial which was called for by Covid-19 health regulations. Since that meeting cemeteries have been reopened in the North as they were not seen as a threat to public health as long as health guidelines continued to be followed.

Regarding returning to congregational gatherings and collective worship, Archbishop Martin said the Churches are accepting the decision can only be taken in conjunction with the world health situation.

With the south publishing a roadmap for a phased return to somewhat normality, Archbishop Martin said they are currently waiting on a similar roadmap to be published in the North and that when this happens the Church “will be able to study and reflect more carefully on where and when it might be possible to have small gatherings”. In the Republic’s plan, the return to church services is set for July 20.

“I think that it’s probably a little early for us to really understand when the moment might be right for churches to be opened for collective worship, you can see in the roadmap that the government suggestion is that that will not

happen until July 20 which in my view is quite late in the roadmap and I would certainly like to have the opportunity as time goes on to reflect on that and to consider whether it might be possible to have even small gatherings, particularly for the likes of a baptism and a wedding and to allow a little bit more flexibility on that provided good social distancing is maintained and provided,” he said.

“I can understand the nervousness of the Government here, that sometimes these sacramental moments are also linked to gatherings and receptions outside of the church setting, which might be causing them some alarm and concern regarding the spread of the virus.”

“We are asking for our churches to be open to allow people if they choose, to pop in”

The Churches are not “lobbying selfishly” for special circumstances, Archbishop Martin insisted, and they are committed to playing their part “for the common good”.

He said that for him, “allowing access to churches for individual prayer and worship and to allow the

churches some flexibility is to acknowledge the importance of our spiritual health in addition to our physical health. Keeping the body and soul together”.

“I believe that spiritual, mental and physical health are all inter-related and dependant on each other and for that reason I would like to see the Churches, not just the Catholic Church, but all churches playing their part in healing the spirit of the nation, in feeding the soul of the nation at this time.

“I think we’re hearing a lot about anxiety, fear, mental health, and to me to allow the churches space to build positivity, resilience and hope in the communities on the ground and also in the nation as a whole I think is very important indeed and therefore for that reason I would see the spiritual well-being of the people of this island as being a key factor in helping us through the months ahead, assuring our positivity and hopefulness and our resilience because there are many more challenges still to come.”

Archbishop Martin said that there needs to be an open conversation and dialogue between the Church and health authorities, as well as with government.

“Critical to this will be the kinds of assurances that

Churches will be able to give to show that they’re protecting life and minimising any potential danger to health,” he said.

“Therefore I don’t see it as being maybe one sector competing with another sector but what I would say I think it’s very important for us to keep the lines of conversation open between the churches and the state both north and south so that together the best possible relaxing of measures can be taken whenever it is deemed safe for our people to do so. We’re very conscience that we have a lot of work to do in the Church as well, so therefore I’ve already begun the process of inviting priests and parishes to consider how they might begin to open up whenever the Government will allow that to happen.”

“Spiritual, mental and physical health are interrelated, and the Church has a role in offering people consolation and hope at this time”

Currently he said they are asking questions such as where would people sit to make church buildings safer and whether they will continue to keep the Sunday obligation suspended so that people might be able to attend Mass at various times in the week.

“Perhaps at parish level, could we consider the possibility of Masses being available for different areas in the parish at different times of the week?” he asked, “What do we do to ensure our churches are kept clean? Do we need to develop new rotas for cleaning, new cleaning strategies, do we keep our doors open to increase ventilation, do we monitor the ways that we can safely receive Holy Communion?”

“These are all questions that I want our parishes now to begin to engage in, because like many others in society we hope to be able to say to government, and to the health authorities: we have a plan, we can do this safely, we believe it will not compromise the health of our people, particularly maybe some vulnerable people who may be very keen to return to Mass quickly.”



An Irish journalist reveals how working overseas for a global Catholic network cemented his Faith, writes **Aron Hegarty**

I have always been unsettled by being comfortable. I like having something to aim for, something to fight for."

These are words Eternal World Television Network (EWTN) reporter Colm Flynn uses to describe the motive behind his pending move to Rome to become the station's Vatican correspondent.

All that, however, is on hold for the Co. Clare native as the world struggles to deal with the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

In an exclusive interview with *The Irish Catholic*, the much-traveled Flynn talks about how he got to where he is, strengthening his Faith and resisting the anti-Catholic bias of others.

"So the move to Rome is still happening," he says of his proposed job transfer, "but it will just have to wait for another few months.

"I'm excited about this new role with EWTN because I think now, more than ever, people are starting to think about life more and what our purpose is. The interviews I do for EWTN are normally with ordinary everyday people whose Faith has helped to serve them in some big way.

"That's what I'm interested in," Flynn from Ennis adds, "how Faith can be a force for such good in people's lives.

"I hope by helping share these stories, and give a platform to people who feel they don't have that platform on other outlets, it will help people think more about their Faith and what it means to them."

Eternal City

Before the Covid-19 crisis hit, New York based Flynn says the transfer came about after he fell in love with the Eternal City on his first visit, despite rejecting a move there the previous year.

"EWTN approached me last year about moving to Rome to take up the position of Vatican correspondent for their popular *News Nightly* programme which airs five days a week at 9pm Eastern Time [2am Irish time]," he explains.

"But I was having such a good time in New York, and had made

'Covering Church work abroad sealed my Faith', says Catholic reporter



so many friends here, I turned it down. Then in October they asked could I fly to Rome to cover the Synod for a few weeks. This was a meeting of bishops from all over the world, who were discussing issues affecting people in the Amazon region.

"So I went for a month and, of course, had an amazing time," he continues. "It was my first time in Rome and I couldn't get over how beautiful the city was. The team and I worked hard across the

month to cover different stories and it was fascinating to see all the different aspects of the Church, and to meet the different cardinals and bishops.

"At the end of the month-long TV coverage, the EWTN bosses called me up and offered the Vatican gig again. They told me to move to Rome and take it for a year and see how I liked it, and so I accepted."

Flynn had his flights booked and was due to start his new role

on April 1 before the virus spread rapidly in Italy. As the country became one of the worst affected nations in the world, his big move was put on hold.

"So I'm still in New York, which ironically has now become the global epicenter and I'm covering stories for EWTN from here now, while still doing some work for RTÉ and BBC.

"Just the other day I covered a story about a Brooklyn landlord who waived his rent for all his 200

tenants for the month of April.

Flynn, a media graduate of IT Tallaght (now Technological University Dublin, Tallaght Campus), adds: "He was a great Italian-American character and a really genuine guy too. His story went viral with 500,000 views in two days on Facebook, not to mention the millions who would have watched him on EWTN around the world."

* * * * *

As a freelancer, Flynn has produced reports and documentaries for various media organisations such as the BBC World Service before branching into TV for RTÉ's *Nationwide* and *The Today Show* in Co. Cork.

"Ideas and content were the valuable currency," says the former RTÉ Junior digital radio intern. "So I worked hard to make sure I kept coming up with good ideas that shows couldn't turn down, and that I produced really well.

"It worked and I quickly built up a reputation as a solid, reliable reporter for a number of broadcasters. That's when the tide turned," adds Flynn, "and they started coming to me with more offers of work, more than I was pitching to them."

In 2016, Flynn decided that he wanted to do something new with his life and take on a different challenge. "So I moved to New York and continued to freelance for the BBC," he says.



Colm Flynn on location in New York city.

“People thought it was a brave move, to move away from the comfort of steady work at RTÉ on well-known mainstream shows, but in my career I’ve always been unsettled by being comfortable”



Journalist Colm Flynn standing in the shadow of the Vatican.

“Many people thought it was a brave move, to move away from the comfort of steady work at RTÉ on well-known mainstream shows, but in my career I’ve always been unsettled by being comfortable.

“I like having something to aim for or to fight for, and moving to New York to try and get work here was that ultimate challenge. And what a journey it’s been.”

Flynn, who spent five years working on RTÉ Radio 1’s *The John Murray Show*, adds: “I could never have imagined that over the past four years I would have traveled across the United States interviewing so many different people with so many amazing stories to tell.

“The people I’ve got to meet here in America have been incredible, and it’s been wonderful to share their stories on TV, radio and online.”

Growing up as a devout Catholic, Flynn says his family had EWTN in their household, and was well-aware of the network long before he worked for them.

“In RTÉ when I started, some of the programmes I made for Nationwide were as a freelancer. I was allowed to repurpose them for other outlets, so I would often cover a story for RTÉ and then give a re-edited version to the BBC, Radio France and so on.

“But then I started sending



Colm Flynn interviewing 92-year-old Dr Melissa Freeman, a grand-daughter of slaves and who has been practicing medicine since 1961.

programmes to EWTN in the US and they started to buy them.”

He continues: “One of the first programmes I produced for them was on the Monks in Moyross. It was incredible to spend a week with these monks, who had converted two council houses into a monastery and to see how they were really helping the community so much. They were putting their Faith into action.

“Growing up I would hear stories of the great work done by the Catholic Church around the world, and I saw a lot of it in my hometown of Ennis”

“The programme went down really well with EWTN viewers around the world and the network kept asking me to do more and more with them, and the projects got bigger and bigger.”

Flynn would examine the history of the Faith in different countries, and it’s present day form, as the basis for most of his stories.

He says seeing the work of the Church on a global scale was what “cemented” his belief in his own Faith.

“Over the past 10 years I’ve traveled to Australia, Korea, Africa and all over Europe and the US producing programmes for EWTN about different aspects of the Faith.

“This work with EWTN is what really cemented my Faith,” says Flynn.

“Growing up I would hear stories of the great work done by the Catholic Church around the world, and I saw a lot of it in my hometown of Ennis.

“But to fly around the world and see time and time again, the Church feeding the poor, educating children, looking after the sick, fighting for the human rights of millions, it really reaffirmed for me



how beautiful the Church is and how important it is to the world.

On being asked how often he practices his Faith, Flynn says: “I go to Mass every Sunday and pray every day. “Even when I’m walking through New York, I might say an ‘Our Father’ in my head or a ‘Hail Mary’.

“Before going on air or doing something that is that bit extra challenging, I often say a little prayer. It gives me great comfort and makes me feel like I’m wearing a shield.”

On his Catholic upbringing in Ireland, Flynn says he has religious

relatives and family friends, and would always attend Mass.

“My parents Tom and Noreen are Scottish and they, in a very gently and loving way, instilled the importance of Faith in the lives of me and my siblings from a young age.

“I was an altar server in the Friary in Ennis and my parents would often have priests and nuns over to the house.”

He adds: “My aunt is nun and I have an uncle who is a great priest, he was a missionary in Angola in Africa for many years.

“So growing up around priests, nuns and religious persons was very normal for me and I feel very

lucky that I did.”

On the subject of clerical sex abuse, Flynn admits he was “baffled” by how some priests and nuns could commit such “awful acts”.

Despite this, he says observing the work of many “great holy” clergy worldwide has helped him maintain his Faith.

“Like all Catholics, I struggled a lot, and still do, when I read about all the sex abuse that was happening in the Church.

“I suppose how I was able to keep my Faith was, again, for every horrific abuse story I read about, I witnessed hundreds of great holy and hard-working priests. It made me realise that the percentage of those who were committing these acts was small, and probably reflective of society’s numbers at large.”

He adds: “Of course, it’s so much worse when they are religious persons as we hold them to higher standards, and rightly so. But for me, again that instinct of ‘no, this is right’ helped me keep my Faith. Now it’s as strong as ever.”

Claims

Flynn says he has often been ridiculed and sneered on for his Faith, and even claims that being open about his beliefs was looked upon unfavourably by some.

“I quickly realised when I started working in media that to say you had Faith, or to say you were Catholic for that matter, was almost like admitting a crime!

“I came up against a good bit of resistance when pitching ideas and stories that had a Catholic or Faith aspect to them.

He recalls: “I remember one well-known RTÉ presenter asking me did I really believe, when I said ‘yes’, he replied ‘you’ll learn yet.’”

Although Flynn says this attitude towards Catholicism was quite common among his peers in the media industry, he insists that it never phased him.

“I had this really solid, secure foundation my from my childhood, and had met so many priests and nuns, and seen the great work they do, that my gut feeling was always ‘no this is right’.

“So when I heard comments like that, I just laughed it off. But in a way, I think these sorts of comments and this anti-Catholic attitude pushed me to start producing more Catholic content.

“Every now and then I would cover a story about the Church or a person of Faith for *Nationwide* or RTÉ Radio,” he continues.

“And when I would meet people out on the streets or down the country, they would say the same thing again and again; that they really enjoyed the programme and they felt their beliefs, their Faith, was not being represented by mainstream media.

“They sensed an anti-Catholic bias from the media, and I think for the most part they were right.”

“I suppose how I was able to keep my Faith was, again, for every horrific abuse story I read about, I witnessed hundreds of great holy and hard-working priests”

30 years on, people still see Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich as a leader who is one of us

Cardinal Ó Fiaich died after feeling unwell at the Marian shrine of Lourdes. Photo: CNS



The ripple-wave of memory for the late prelate is still strong, and his example continues to motivate and inspire writes **Fr Michael Murtagh**

While wandering through the streets of Lourdes recently, I noticed a photograph on sale in Viron's photographic shop. I thought it had disappeared in recent years, but it appeared in the same position on

the display board that it has taken up for almost thirty years now. The photograph is one of the late Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich, taken while he was celebrating Mass at the grotto, just hours before he died on May 8, 1990. That his photograph should still be in demand almost 30 years later says a great deal. I spoke with the lady in the shop about the photograph and she told me, typically, that her father "had a good relationship" with the cardinal.

I took to thinking why it was that the late cardinal was considered by many to be an exemplary Churchman and leader, and why his image was still in demand. This had been on my mind for many years, as the thorny subject of leadership is analysed and debated as never before. On the 10th anniversary of his death, I had written: "In this age of tribunals and revelations we have grown accustomed to becoming disappointed by our leaders. The much sought-after spotlight of public notice can be cruel. It searches every crevice of a person's life for hidden flaws, shadows, and secrets. Only the utterly transparent survive the

test. The cardinal virtues and demands of leadership now are those associated with integrity. Accountability, transparency and openness are the demands of our time and culture. They are also the hallmarks of the consistent personality or administration. The acceptance of authority is no longer automatic and depends on authenticity. You must live what you proclaim and be what you seem. Those who may accept authority or leadership demand a seamless garment."

To try to understand what some psychologists call the 'mental glue' that binds leaders and followers together, I took to re-reading what I regard as the best contemporary book on leadership *The New Psychology of Leadership. Identity, Influence and Power*. Haslam, Reicher and Platow. In some of the opening remarks in the preface of the

book, I found what I regard to be the key to understanding, in however limited a fashion, the dynamic of the cardinal's giftedness or charism in leading his flock. Most leadership books focus on the 'secrets' of the uniquely gifted leader, without reference to social context or changing relationship. As I studied the book and absorbed its insights, I tried to identify the key markers that made the cardinal's reputation rise so high and last so long. Some of the key insights, as written in the preface of the book, concentrate on the importance of the leader being seen as 'one of us'.

"Effective leadership is always about how leaders and followers come to see each other as part of a common team or group, as members of the same in-group. It therefore has little to do with the individuality of the leader and everything to do with whether

they are seen as part of the team, as a team player, as able and willing to advance team goals. Leadership, in short, is very much a 'we' thing."

Winning hearts and perhaps to a lesser extent, minds, was the gift of the cardinal. I'm sure that most of what he did was unstudied and unconscious in terms of leadership, but it was none the less successful in terms of public relations. He was not the most efficient of personalities, but he was very effective in communicating a message. He did this in a number of ways that I would like to explore. The theorists posit four key rules to effective leadership:

- Leaders need to be 'in group' prototypes. The more representative an individual is seen to be of a given social identity, the more he or she is clearly 'one of us,' the more influential he or she will be within the group;

“I took to thinking why it was that the late cardinal was considered by many to be an exemplary Churchman and leader”



- Leaders need to be 'in group' champions. They must be seen to be working for the group;
- Leaders need to be entrepreneurs of identity. They work hard to construct identity;
- Leaders need to be embedders of identity. The sense of who we are and how we believe the world should be organised needs to be translated into social reality.

Using this paradigm, it is easy to give examples of the four points from the lived life and the later ministry of the cardinal. His proto-typicality, his being, 'one of us', was probably his greatest strength, even if it may have been somewhat contrived on occasion. One of the more common observations is that there was such broad range of people who 'knew the cardinal well', or who claim to have been on friendly terms with him. This identification with him does justice to his success in cultivating the proto-typicality principle above. His social identity was as 'one of our own', in so many ways.

In Co. Louth, where they had relatives, the Ó Fiaich family were known by the family nickname, 'champion'. Tomás was an in-group champion, perceived to be



The cardinal gave voice to the Catholic community during some of the darkest days of the civil conflict in the North. Photo: Pacemaker.

on the side of the people, especially the nationalist population of the North of Ireland. The context, as always, was important and the backdrop to his ministry as bishop was the dark scenery of violence and the political upheavals of the 1980s. On the 10th anniversary of his death, in a homily, I observed: "The cardinal renewed his people in what were some of the darkest days of 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland. He not only gave individuals a name, a place of origin, and an identity. He also gave his people a communal identity.

“Winning hearts and perhaps to a lesser extent, minds, was the gift of the cardinal”

"For a people who had been told in subtle ways that they were nobody, it was a source of strength and dignity to know that we were a people, with a language and a literature and a history; a communal memory which had shaped us. He gave his people strength."

As a constructor of identity, the cardinal's strength became his weakness in the eyes of detractors. He was undoubtedly a romantic nationalist and this was interpreted by some as feeding into the culture of violence or at least identifying with it. Though he made the Church's position clear many times, the perception developed among powerful elites that he had constructed an identity that was historically naïve and currently unhelpful. Most of his flock thought otherwise.

As an embedder of identity, he was adept at using symbolism. His use of the Irish language was gentle and inclusive. His liturgies at Mass-rocks and places of historical interest caught the public imagination. His love of Gaelic games was well-known and his ability to connect name and place has become legendary. The particular personality traits that helped him to carry people along included his linguistic skills. He was a skilled

linguist, but it was as much the cadences in his delivery; the unpolished accent with which he spoke and the depth of knowledge and affection that he expressed, linguistically and non-verbally, that appealed to his audience. He used the 'symbolic reserve' of the past to enrich the present.

He was gifted with an approachability in public that bordered the disinhibited. He moved towards people both symbolically and physically. His rustic gait; his open expression; the warmth of character that he exuded and his ability to bond with strangers were uncontrived. He often expressed himself in a tactile or disarming manner. The non-verbal cues were immediate and positive. People 'warmed to him' because they sensed warmth being exuded. The love of God's people, Pobal Dé, for their deceased cardinal can be explained, I believe, by seeing it as a mirror-image of his own love for them. This love of people was the greatest gift the cardinal possessed. He really only came alive in the presence of others. His charisma was his ability to

excite and enthuse people by the exuberance and enthusiasm of his personality. *Cor ad cor loquitur*, as the recently canonised Cardinal Newman's motto expressed it. Heart speaks to heart.

“As a constructor of identity, the cardinal's strength became his weakness in the eyes of detractors”

No book on leadership is complete without a list of secrets, or as this work calls them 'principles'. To sum up and to aid our reflection, I finish with the four principles enunciated in the preface to the work cited. However helpful or unhelpful they may be, it is important to note that 30 years after his sudden death in a Toulouse hospital, the ripple-wave of memory for the late cardinal is still strong, and his example continues to motivate and inspire. That, in itself, is suf-

ficient testimony to his qualities of leadership.

Four principles:

- Leaders must be seen as 'one of us'. They have to be perceived by followers as representing the position that best distinguishes our in-group from other out-groups. In order to be effective, a leader needs to be seen as an in-group prototype;
- Leaders must be seen to 'do it for us'. Their actions must advance the interests of the in-group;
- Leaders must craft a sense of us. They should be actively involved in shaping the shared understanding of who we are. Good leaders need to be skilled entrepreneurs of identity;
- Leaders must make us matter. The point of leadership is not simply to express what a group thinks, but rather to take the ideas and values and priorities of the group and embed them in reality.

Fr Michael Murtagh is parish priest of Dunleer, Co. Louth. This article first appeared in the May 2020 edition of Intercom and is reproduced by kind permission.



Cardinal Ó Fiaich leading an ecumenical Way of the Cross with his Anglican counterpart on Armagh in the 1980s Archbishop Robin Eames. Photo: PA

'Bring flowers of the rarest



The month of May is traditionally a month of devotion to the Mother of God. In many homes, people erect May altars to honour and venerate Our Lady. It is also a beautiful time in nature as many blossoms – the flowers of the May – come into bloom. Send us your pictures of you with your May altar or in the garden with your flowers to news@irishcatholic.ie and we'll print a selection each week to celebrate this special time dedicated to the Blessed Virgin.



▲ The May altar created in Creevy National School, Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal.

▲ Greenlough parish in Derry put together their own May altar.

▼ Another May altar in Greenlough parish in the Diocese of Derry.

▼ The May altar on show in Lavey parish, Co. Derry.



Lillyrose from St Mary's Primary School, Killyclogher, Co. Tyrone.



The May altar in the parish of Graiguecullen and Killeslin at Holy Cross church in Co. Carlow.

for the Queen of the May'



Ronan, Holy Family Primary School, Derry.

Gemma Mulligan, Diocesan Plan Coordinator of Ossory diocese helped prepare this altar.



The May altar in Portlaoise parish, Co. Laois.



From Killina National School, Carbury, Co. Kildare.



From St Patrick's College, Maghera, Co. Derry.



The May altar in Scoil Cholmáin Tuairíní, Maigh Cuilinn, Co. na Gaillimhe.



The May altar set up by Zara McCool (10) from St Theresa's Primary School, Glebe, Co. Tyrone.



Out&About

Galway sisters get together



GALWAY: A contemplative order of nuns based in Galway City, the Poor Clares, offer a message of solidarity: 'In this together', in a video posted on social media.



◀ **CAVAN:**
Seamus and Louise Lynch of Kingscourt parish celebrate their silver jubilee.

▶ **ANTRIM:**
People gathered outside their homes as Fr Paddy McCafferty passed through the area by car giving Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament in west Belfast. Photo: Mal McCann



ANTRIM: A woman, with her hand to her heart, uses her phone to record Fr Paddy McCafferty passing through the area by car giving Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament in west Belfast.



ANTRIM: Fr Paddy McCafferty PP of Corpus Christi parish in Ballymurphy gives Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament from a car in west Belfast. Photo: Mal McCann

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Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



TYRONE: Archbishop Eamon Martin visits St Joseph's Grammar School in Donaghmore where he was given a tour of their workshop, which has produced 13,000 face shields, by principal Geraldine Donnelly. They are being distributed for free to residential homes, hospitals and community groups.



ARMAGH: Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh archdiocese visits the Simon Community and prays with staff and residents.



CORK: CCIT student Jamie Ward holds a sign promoting this year's 'Big Rebel Sleep Out' in aid of Focus Ireland. Mr Ward took part in the initiative which raised over €50,000. It usually takes place in a public space but due to Covid-19, participants were asked to sleep in their back gardens or on the couch.

IN SHORT

Pieta House launch 'Darkness into Light' appeal

Due to Covid-19, Pieta House's well-known Darkness into Light charity walks won't happen as planned this week; instead a Darkness into Light 'Sunrise Appeal' is taking place on May 9 instead.

It encourages people to donate what they can and to come together while remaining apart by getting up at 5.30am to watch the sunrise and to show community and solidarity with those impacted by suicide. Pieta are also asking people to spread the

message and offer hope by sharing their sunrise moment using the #DIL2020.

Elaine Austin, CEO of Pieta said: "As a result of Covid-19, our helpline has seen an increase in calls from people all over the country who are in crisis right now with many others presenting with high anxiety.

"Our bereavement counsellors are supporting people who have lost loved ones and who are struggling to come to terms with their loss in a world where friends and family cannot grieve together as a result of the lockdown.

"Funding from the public has never been more vital to keep Pieta's door open. The Darkness into Light walk will hopefully take place later in the

year, but we can't wait – we're urgently asking people to donate, whatever they can. This will help fund our services, ensuring we can continue to support those in their darkest hours and to keep delivering our one-to-one counselling.

On May 9 she asked that people "wear yellow or a previous year's t-shirt that day to show support for those impacted by suicide".

Recent research has shown that one in five Irish people are experiencing clinically defined levels of depression. Even before Covid-19 the public need for Pieta's services was on the increase, with calls to Pieta's helpline up 49% year on year while text messages to Pieta had increased by 46%.

CLARE

Cloughleigh Oratory will continue to pray the Novena Prayer to St Anthony every Tuesday morning at the 9.30am Mass.

CORK

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

DERRY

Dungiven Parish: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Monday to Friday, 8-12pm and 3-9pm.

St Maria Goretti Prayer Movement: Prayer for healing for victims of abuse and reparation for the Church. First Holy Hour of prayer in the Immaculate Conception Church, Trench Road, at 8.15pm led by Fr Sean O'Donnell on the third Tuesday of every month.

DONEGAL

Holy Face of Jesus prayer meeting: The oratory St Mary's Buncrana, Tuesdays following Rosary after 10am Mass. Contact: 085 252 5612.

DUBLIN

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

Adoration Hour for Healing during Lent in St Laurence O'Toole Church, Seville Place, Dublin 1 at 8pm every Tuesday in Lent. Periods of silence, reflective music, individual prayers for healing all in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament www.northwallparish.ie

FERMANAGH

A Mass to St Peregrine for all the sick is prayed each Tuesday evening in St Patrick's Church, Derrygonnelly, at 7.30pm: www.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly. There is also a St Peregrine Novena Mass in Holy Cross Church, Lisnaskea on Tuesday nights at 7pm. www.churchservices.tv/lisnaskea

GALWAY

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

KERRY

Weekly Monday prayer meetings led by Ben Perkins, from 8-9.30pm in the Ardfert Retreat Centre.

KILDARE

Praying, reading and sharing the following Sunday's Gospel in Resurrexit, Kilmeague, every Wednesday from 8-9.30pm. See www.resurrexit.ie for details, or ring 087-6825407.

KILKENNY

Traditional Latin Mass every Sunday at 5pm in St Patrick's Church, College Road, Kilkenny (opposite St Kieran's College).

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Church of the Assumption, Urlingford, every first and third Friday, from 2.30-5.30pm.

LOUTH

Eucharistic Adoration takes place each Friday in Raheen church following 10am Mass until

● **In the current Covid-19 crisis, readers are advised to check with local organisers to ensure events will take place. If organisers have put in place alternative arrangements, please email us the details and we will publish same.**

10pm, Crecora on Thursdays, following morning Mass until 12pm and from 6-10pm, and in Mungret church on Wednesdays, from 10-12pm.

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

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

MAYO

For the duration of the Covid-19 crisis, Mass is being streamed live at 10am every Sunday on Facebook from the Church of St Joseph and the Immaculate Conception in Bohola. The church is open daily from 10am-8pm. The parish newsletter is available at the rear of the church, at the post office and can be found online at <https://www.mayo.ie/news/category/connect/parish-news/>

MEATH

Enfield Prayer Group meets every Monday afternoon from 2.30-3.30pm in the Oratory, Enfield, for Adoration, Rosary, Chaplet and petitions. Also once per month a Lay Apostle meeting. However, all meetings are presently suspended because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Adoration in St Patrick's Church, Stamullen, after 10am Mass every Thursday until 5pm, and in St Mary's Church, Julians-town, on Wednesdays from 9am and after 10am Mass.

Dunshaughlin & Culmullen parish. Sunday Mass live on Facebook (Dunshaughlin.Culmullen.Parish), 12pm. All welcome.

ROSCOMMON

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St Bride's Church, Ballintubber, every Wednesday, 7.30-8.30pm.

Eucharistic Adoration takes place in Drumboylan Church on the first Friday of the month from 9am-11pm.

WESTMEATH

Holy Face of Jesus prayer meeting: La Verna retreat centre beside private hospital Ballinderry, Mullingar. Thursdays at 7.30pm. Contact: 085 2525 612

WEXFORD

Taizé prayer services every first and third Friday at 8pm in Good Counsel College Chapel, New Ross.

WICKLOW

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



World Report

IN BRIEF

58-year-old archbishop appointed in Uganda

● Rt. Rev. Lambert Bainomugisha, the Auxiliary Bishop of Mbarara, was appointed by Pope Francis as the new Archbishop of Mbarara last week.

Archbishop Bainomugisha takes over from Most. Rev. Paul K. Bakyenga, who retired after 22 years in the role having reached the canonical retirement age of 75.

His 58-year-old successor was born in Kashumba and was ordained a priest in 1991.

He carried out his pastoral ministry in Rubindi, Mbarara before going to Canada in 1994 to complete his doctorate in Canon Law.

Upon his return, he served from 2000 to 2005 as chancellor of the archdiocese then auxiliary thereafter.

Myanmar extends public Mass ban until May 15

● Church officials in Myanmar have extended the suspension of daily and Sunday Masses plus other liturgical ceremonies until the middle of May.

State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi announced the extension of the rules and directives issued by the national central committee on the prevention, control and treatment of Covid-19 last week.

"Catholics are urged to participate in Sunday Masses spiritually from home and to say the rosary, read the Bible and pray," Bishop John Hsane Hgyi of Patheingyi said.

Bishop Alexander Pyone Cho from Pyaw, meanwhile, urged parishioners to participate in Masses online this month.

Bishop launches campaign to welcome home Venezuelans

● A new campaign has been launched by a bishop in Venezuela to encourage hospitality towards citizens who are arriving home from neighbouring Colombia.

Alto Apure, Bishop of the diocese of Guasdalito, said the reason for the 'I do not mind, he is my brother' campaign in collaboration

with Caritas and the diocese of Arauca in Colombia is to motivate solidarity to those in need.

"We can turn into an opportunity," he said. "We must awaken the sensitive heart we have and share from our poverty, from our need. 'We want to invite this people, who are hospitable by nature, to be welcoming.'"

Indonesian diocese defends 'cheated' villagers

● Ruteng diocese in Indonesia's East Nusa Tenggara province has attacked government plans to give an operating licence to a limestone quarry and cement factory.

Fr Marthen Jenarut says indigenous people in Lingko Lolok and Luwuk are being cheated out of their land and could be left homeless.

"The Church is not against investment," he said, "but the Church wants to make sure that justice is upheld, human dignity is respected and the environment is not damaged."

The priest claims villagers were duped into accepting just US\$669 each as a down payment for their land and that no effort had been made to resettle or offer them an alternative livelihood.

Catholic groups in Chile help stranded Bolivian workers

● Shelter, food and aid is being offered to hundreds of Bolivian seasonal farm workers in Chile by Catholic groups after their country closed its borders.

Red CLAMOR coordinated with networks like the Chilean Catholic Institute for Migration, Archdiocese of Santiago and Caritas Chile to arrange for shelter and meals at local parishes for the locked out Bolivians.

"It's our Gospel duty to welcome the stranger," said Auxiliary Bishop Cristián Roncagliolo of Santiago. "But we know that's not enough because there are many more people that still need to be in lockdown in order to later return to their country."

Indian state subsidises and unites religious communities

Religious leaders of different faiths and inter-religious organisations in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh have united and tightened a collaboration agreement to help contain the spread of Covid-19.

In a joint declaration, the groups say they "want to play a constructive role for the common good by uniting people of all faiths".

Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh leaders intend to "speak with one voice", concentrating their efforts on service and unity as the country faces the pandemic.

The religions aim to "avoid prejudice, a sense of exclusion, superstition and fanaticism spread in the name of religion", allowing "the scientific approach to combat the virus" to prevail, continuing in one's spiritual and material commitment.

"Religion is probably the most powerful means of mobilising human conscience to serve the common good: we unite as a single force to give impetus to action to overcome the pandemic", says the agreement.

"Religion has often been cited in both positive and



Christians in India are joining with other faiths in helping contain the spread of the coronavirus.

negative contexts.

"On the one hand, in this moment of uncertainty, people have turned to religion out of hope, strength and spiritual resilience.

"Faith has inspired people with a sense of solidarity and a desire to serve others, especially the most vulnerable. At the same time, the name of religion has also been used to emphasise a sense of separation and exclusivity, to cultivate prejudice, to reject science and marry superstition.

"It is an urgent imperative that we [sic] reaffirm those principles common to all religions that have the greatest impact on our response to the current crisis," says the statement, noting that "spiritual and moral teachings of all religions are identical".

"All religions must seek ways to promote unity and solidarity so that humanity fights this collective challenge. At the heart of all religions is a spiritual conception of the human being that tran-

scends the material body.

"Religion teaches that all humanity is interconnected and interdependent: it is a family and cells of a single body," concludes the statement.

Subsidy

Prime Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy of Andhra Pradesh has announced a special subsidy for all temples, mosques and churches in the state.

The economic contribution, which amounts to 5,000 Indian rupees (€60), is a recognition for the material and spiritual work that all religious communities are carrying out to contain Covid-19.

In addition, he has stated that his government intends to be present with all the people and organisations carrying out programs for the well-being of people, regardless of religion, caste and region.

The State has already made a contribution of 1,000 Indian rupees (€12) to each family and also supplies food rations three times a month to the most needy families.

Founders of Catholicism in Australia honoured on 200th anniversary

The founding fathers of the Catholic Faith in Australia were honoured by the Sydney Archdiocese via live-stream Mass last weekend.

The Mass took place on Sunday, May 3 at Saint Mary's Cathedral and marked the 200th anniversary of the arrival of the country's first sanctioned priests – Irish-born Fr John Joseph Therry and Fr Philip Conolly.

The priests sailed from Co. Cork on a convict ship to celebrate Mass in the New South Wales (NSW) colony after decades of hostility from the NSW government. Public Mass then was forbidden despite the growing number of Catholics among the soldiers and

convicts.

While Fr Conolly moved onto ministry in Tasmania, Fr Therry spent more than 40 years as a priest in Sydney and established the first church where the cathedral now stands.

"He [Fr Therry] is a great personal inspiration to me and to many Catholics in Sydney," said Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney Rev Terry Brady.

"He was tremendously hard-working and resilient and really laid great foundations for the Church in Australia."

Bishop Brady also spoke of Fr Therry's advocacy for the fair

treatment of Indigenous Australians saying he "had a great commitment to social justice" ensuring that "Aborigines could access education and a good standard of accommodation".

Legacy

Australian Catholic Church historian, Fr Edmund Campion, said Fr Therry's legacy to the Church was profound.

"When he first arrived in Australia, he said he'd only stay here for four years. But instead he ended up staying for a remarkable 44 years and he really became the Church for the Catholics living here at that time."

Church defends human rights despite threats against priests

Priests in Mexico have been threatened with death by phone calls from alleged members of the Jalisco Nueva Generacion Cartel (CJNG), according to local media reports.

The diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas informed authorities last week that Fr Marcelo Perez, his family and

members of the Parochial Council of San Antonio of Padua were threatened with death if they did not obey the requests of the CJNG.

According to the threatening call, the Church through its priests must "align" and recognise the CJNG as master of the territory.

In return they offer to keep

the peace in the area, otherwise there will be blood in the community.

The CJNG seeks to intimidate rural areas with fear, but Chiapas is an area where 18 municipalities have united through social pastoral care in defence of human rights, according to information from the diocese.

Bishop Rodrigo Aguilar of the diocese states that despite these threats, the work of Catholics in the region will not stop because it is a "successful commitment after so many years of commitment of the diocese with the population".



Edited by Aron Hegarty
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Surviving the deluge in Kenya



Residents wade through floodwaters in Budalangi, Kenya where at least 100 are dead and thousands homeless after heavy rains and thunderstorms led to severe flooding and landslides. Photo: CNS

Vatican closes investigation into missing Italian girl

The Holy See says a Vatican judge has formally closed an investigation on missing Italian teenager, Emanuela Orlandi, which was opened last year.

The investigation authorised the opening of two tombs in the cemetery of the Teutonic College, which sits on Vatican-owned property, at the request of the family of the girl who disappeared in Rome back in 1983.

Scientific tests carried out in July 2019 on bone fragments, found in connection to the investigation, revealed the bones to be too old to be Orlandi's remains, according to Vatican statements at the time. "Hence the request for dismissal [of the investigation], that closes one of the chapters of the sad incident, in which Vatican authorities have offered, since the beginning, the widest collaboration," stated a press release last week.

The Vatican statement said the dismissal of the investigation allows the Orlandi family to carry out further investigations on discovered bone fragments privately should they wish to do so.

Speculation

Orlandi was the daughter of an envoy of the Prefecture of the Pontifical House and a citizen of Vatican City State.

Her disappearance at the age of 15 in June 1983 has been one of Italy's biggest unsolved mysteries and, since it occurred, the subject of international intrigue, including speculation about the Vatican's role.

The Vatican City State's promoter of justice authorised the opening of the tombs of two noblewomen in 2019 after Orlandi's family received an anonymous note alleging a clue to the

girl's disappearance could be found in the tombs next to a statue of an angel in the Teutonic College cemetery.

The tombs were found to be empty of any human remains when opened on July 11, 2019. Two ossuaries filled with partial bones and bone fragments were subsequently found under the pavement of a room in the college adjacent to the tombs.

The bone fragments were analysed by forensic anthropologist Giovanni Arcudi and his staff in the presence of an expert appointed by the Orlandi family.

On July 29, 2019 the Vatican communicated that the bones were all found to pre-date the 20th Century – and therefore could not be those of the missing girl.

China suspends all Church activities and pilgrimages in May

All public Church activities, including Marian pilgrimages, have been suspended in China until the end of May.

The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) and its bishops' forum, the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China, jointly announced the delay last week.

This measure "aims to avoid gatherings as part of measures to check the Covid-19 pandemic". The notice also

delays the opening of seminaries and religious institutions.

However, several Catholics suspect the Chinese Government is using the pandemic as a cover to suppress religion as the move comes amid administrative claims of dissipating Covid-19.

Markets

Chinese cities and towns report normal life has returned and most busi-

nesses, including markets and tourist attractions such as The Great Wall have reopened.

China had banned all public gatherings, including public religious worship, since January when Covid-19 began to spread.

However, the state-controlled Church notice says that pilgrimages can "significantly increase the risk of importing the virus".

The notice also asked all dioceses and parishes to sus-

pend all pilgrimage programs.

Beijing parishioner Li Xue questioned the decision to cancel pilgrimages claiming that several tourist attractions have not only reopened, but also engaged in various promotions.

"The government has [sic] too much control over religion," she said. "The authorities are using the epidemic as an excuse to curtail religious freedom, and that's the scary part."

Vatican roundup

Pope Francis phones Amazon Archbishop in solidarity

● Pope Francis has made a telephone call to Archbishop Leonardo Steiner of Manaus in the Brazilian Amazon region to express his concern and closeness to those affected by the coronavirus.

During their conversation last week, the Pope expressed solidarity, closeness and concern to inhabitants of the Amazonian city of Manaus and for indigenous, traditional and poor people of the region.

According to the daily Covid-19 monitoring carried out by Repam (the Ecclesiastical Pan-Amazonian Network), the Manaus region is the one hardest hit by the pandemic in the Amazon region.

The Archbishop thanked the Pope for his "words of comfort and consolation", and told the Pope about what the archdiocese is doing to care for those living on the streets, distributing food to those in need, reaching out to people who are suffering, and caring for migrants.

At the end of the conversation, Pope Francis thanked the archdiocese, the religious and the priests for what they are doing to alleviate the suffering, assured his prayers for the deceased and their families, and sent a special blessing to the Amazon.

Pope sends condolences for deceased Order of Malta leader

● The Pope has given his heartfelt condolences following the death of the Grand Master of the Sovereign Order of Malta, Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre del Tempio di Sanguinetto. In a telegramme to the Lieutenant *ad interim* of the order, Grand Commander Fra' Ruy Gonçalo do Valle Peixoto de Villas Boas, the Pope described Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre as a "zealous man" of culture and Faith, and recalled his integral fidelity to Christ and the Gospel.

The Holy Father also paid tribute to his commitment to serve the Church and his dedication to the most vulnerable.

Pope Francis concluded

his message by offering prayers to the late Grand Master's family and the Order of Malta.

Giacomo Dalla Torre, 75, was elected the 80th Grand Master of the Order in May 2018, but had been ill for some time prior to his passing last week.

The Order of Malta said that he would be remembered as someone who assisted the disadvantaged, and for his cordial and affectionate manner.

Grand Commander Fra' Ruy Gonçalo do Valle Peixoto de Villas Boas will remain head of the Sovereign Order until the election of the new Grand Master.

Peter's Pence collection postponed until October

● The Holy Father has postponed this year's Peter's Pence collection until October as the Vatican confronts the economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic.

The collection, which traditionally takes place in churches across the world on June 29, the feast of St Peter and St Paul, has been moved to October 4, the feast of St Francis. Vatican spokesperson Matteo Bruni said the date change was due to "the current health emergency situation".

"The Holy Father has decided that, for this year 2020, the Peter's Pence Collection, which traditionally takes place around the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, on 29 June, will be transferred throughout the world to the XXVII Sunday of Ordinary Time, October 4, the day dedicated to St Francis of Assisi," Bruni's statement read. Peter's Pence is the Papal charitable fund supported by annual donation appeals in Catholic parishes around the world.

Projects funded by Peter's Pence included US\$500,000 (€460,000) to assist migrants from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador stranded in Mexico and €100,000 in aid after flooding in Iran.



Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

Pope Francis is attempting to hold the nation of Italy together by appealing for political unity at a time when political opposition are threatening to sabotage Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's plan for gradually easing coronavirus restrictions by issuing their own decrees.

Yet at some point, when this is over, the Pope will have to face the fact that his own house needs some work too.

A communique issued by the Vatican Press Office last week announced that "individual measures for certain employees of the Holy See" had been taken after earlier ones adopted as part of an investigation into "financial investments and the real estate sector of the Secretariat of State" expired.

What Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni did not say out loud was that the five employees in question had been fired – and, no less, just hours before Francis would use his daily livestreamed Mass on the Italian Labour Day and the Church's feast of St Joseph the Worker to pray for workers' rights.

"Let's pray for all workers, so that no one is without work and all are justly paid," the Pope said.

Investigation

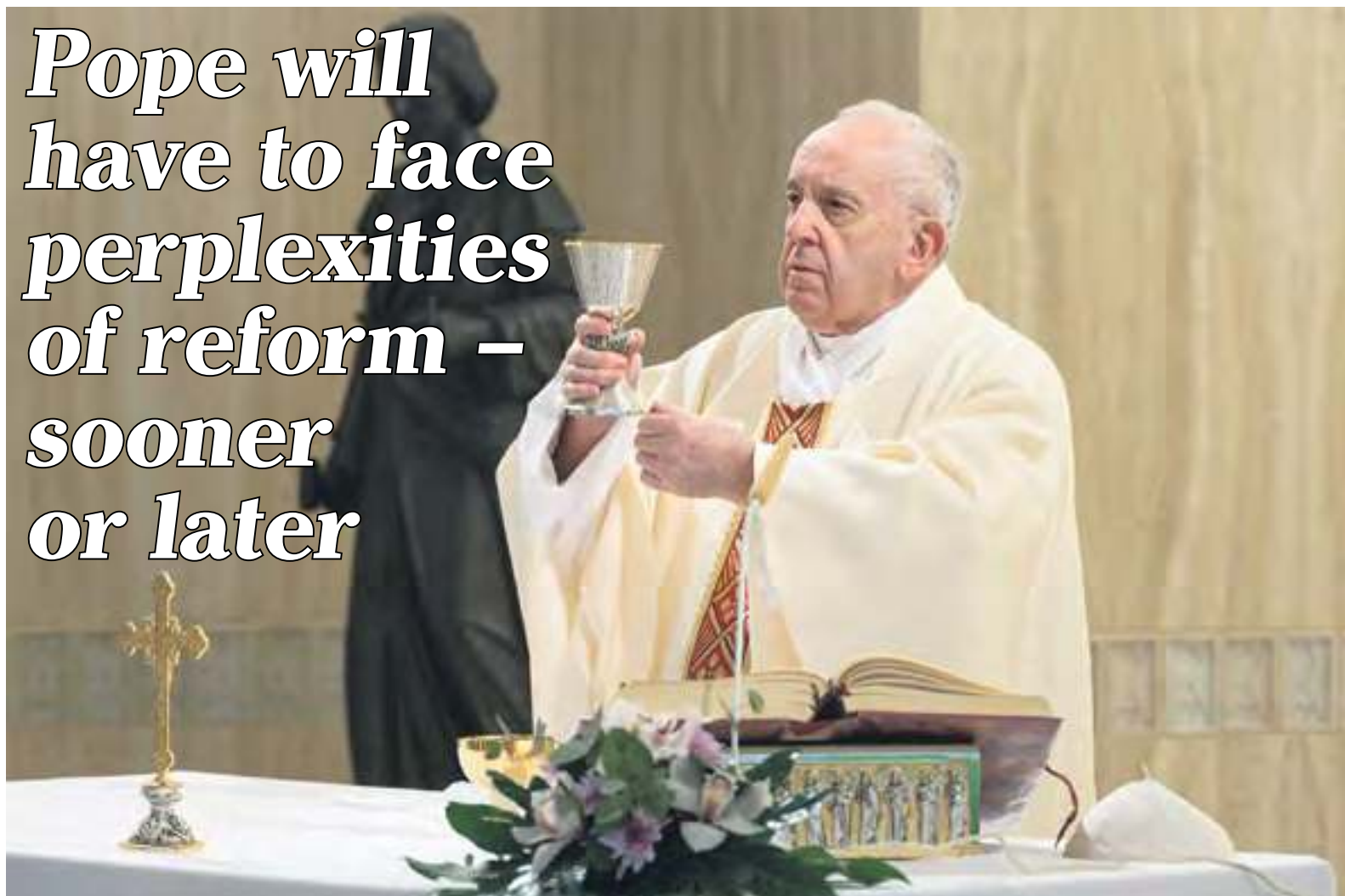
The firings came directly from Pope Francis, who obviously decided not to wait for the results of the ongoing investigation, despite the fact that at least one of the employees reportedly hasn't even been interrogated yet.

The termination notices the five received did not offer an official motive, presumably to avoid the possibility of appeal.

The five employees include three lay officials and two clerics, all of whom were flagged last October as suspects in a land deal in London in which the Vatican's Secretariat of State used US\$225m from the annual Peter's Pence collection to buy part of a former Harrod's warehouse in the Chelsea neighbourhood slated for conversion into luxury apartments, and then requested an emergency loan from the Vatican Bank to purchase the remaining share after they soured on the Italian financier who originally brokered the deal.

To those five, a sixth eventually was added, Italian Monsignor Alberto Perlasca, who had been in charge of the Secretariat of State's

Pope will have to face perplexities of reform – sooner or later



Pope Francis preaches about the dignity of labour and justice for workers during his morning Mass on the feast of St Joseph the Worker on May 1. Photo: CNS

financial investments until he was appointed last July to a position with the Apostolic Signatura, the Vatican's Supreme Court.

One of those original five was Italian layman Tomasso di Ruzza, former director of the Financial Information Authority, the Vatican's anti-money laundering watchdog. Di Ruzza had been vigorously defended by his former boss, Swiss anti-money laundering expert René Brühlhart, who conducted his own internal investigation, and frustration over the case led to Brühlhart's ouster last November.

Brühlhart had been the Vatican's main conduit with Moneyval, the Council of Europe's anti-money laundering agency, which is due soon to conduct another review of the Holy See. The Swiss lawyer has street cred in that world, having been the former vice-chair of the Egmont Group, a global network of financial intelligence units, and whose claim to fame was having restored Saddam Hussein's private jet to the people of Iraq after having followed the late dictator's money.

To date, no evidence has been produced to suggest that di Ruzza or the other four employees were guilty of wrongdoing. In any event, the deal for which they were being

investigated had been approved by superiors in the Secretariat of State and, eventually, the Pope himself.

Veteran Italian Vatican journalist Gianfranca Soldati noted the coincidence that the firings came just after the three-year anniversary of the unexplained sacking of another Vatican employee, Eugene Hasler, who was for years a senior official in the Government of the Vatican City State. On March 28, 2017 he was fired personally by Pope Francis, and ever since he's been asking for an investigation to be opened to show what he did wrong.

“Many observers here can't help wondering if the scapegoat dynamic is at work for at least some of the five people”

Recently, Hasler suggested that certain unnamed parties had falsified information to cause the Pope to lose confidence in him, and then wrote: "After three years some things are coming to light, others will need more time, but we need to know. Almost all these people, and I emphasise almost all, are still in command and, in part, hold

even more prominent positions (for example, promotions). They are not just lay people..."

Hasler's clear implication is that he was made a scapegoat for senior clerics in the system with something to hide, which is more or less the same thing that Libero Milone, the former Vatican auditor, suggested when he was arrested and forced to resign in 2017 – by the then-head of the Vatican gendarmes, Domenico Giani, who would later himself be forced out over the London scandal.

Many observers here can't help wondering if the scapegoat dynamic is at work for at least some of the five people investigated over the London deal, such as Caterina Sansone, a lay woman who worked at the Secretariat of State and who apparently was flagged solely because she acted as a figurehead to facilitate the bureaucratic paperwork.

Vatican insiders know it's a time-honoured practice here for laity to take the fall when clerical superiors are in trouble, and that script has been widely applied with regard to the firings.

Two things seem clear, especially for a Pope who has repeatedly committed himself to

transparency as a cornerstone of reform.

First, the reasons for the firings need to be explained. If these five people are to be judged responsible for whatever went wrong on the London deal, it also needs to be explained how they could carry out such a manoeuvre without the approval of people much higher up the food chain.

Second, the Vatican recently announced that the Peter's Pence collection, generally taken up around the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul on June 29, has been moved to October 4 because of the coronavirus. If parish priests around the world are supposed to stand in front of their congregations and appeal for support for Peter's Pence, they too are owed an explanation of what happened.

In the end, perhaps there was nothing particularly amiss about the investment – which, according to reports, actually has tripled in value in the post-Brexit period. But if that's so, then it's all the more mysterious why five people apparently lost their jobs over it.

Pope Francis was elected on a reform mandate, and from his own rhetoric it's clear how much he abhors corruption. Right now, however, many observers would say the Vatican's finances are more opaque, less transparent, and more in the hand of the old guard than when he started – and for that pandemic, unfortunately, the curve doesn't appear to be flattening.

1 John L. Allen Jr is Editor of *Crux*

“All were flagged last October as suspects in a land deal in London in which the Vatican's Secretariat of State used US\$225m from the annual Peter's Pence collection to buy part of a former Harrod's warehouse in the Chelsea neighbourhood...”

Dutch religious prepare for 'one-and-a-half-metre' church



Some people enjoy the sun in front of their homes as Dutch flags fly over empty streets on King's Day in Amsterdam. Photo: Peter Dejong/AP

The Netherlands recently announced a gradual relaxation of the 'intelligent lockdown'. Elementary schools will be open again soon and outdoor sports are also allowed under certain conditions.

Meanwhile, the Dutch Catholic community wonders: when will we be able to go to Mass again?

In an opinion poll of the Dutch Catholic weekly *Katholiek Nieuwsblad* this week, almost 60% of the participants indicated that they think it's perfectly safe to do so.

The Dutch Government in The Hague, however, begs to differ. There is a ban on religious services of more than 30 people, which is maintained until at least May 20. And probably longer, according to Daniëlle Woestenberg.

Woestenberg is the secretary of the Inter-Church Contact in Government Affairs (CIO), a platform that represents the interests of around 30 churches, including the Catholic Church, with the Dutch Government.

Unlike in Germany and France, where the bishops have expressed sharp public criticism of political leaders who have kept churches closed for what the bishops say is an unnecessarily long time, the Dutch churches have opted for silent diplomacy.

The consensus-based 'polder model' for which Dutch politics is internationally known, also governs



Anton de Wit

the relations between Church and State.

"Our working relationship with the Ministry of Justice and Security is particularly excellent," Woestenberg said. "We hold informal meetings every week."

But this hasn't led to a relaxation of coronavirus measures for the churches. "The Dutch Justice Minister Ferd Grapperhaus has made it very clear to us: even if a further relaxation of the measures would be imminent, this will certainly not be the case for churches."

“It is appropriate for our church-state relationship that no protocols are imposed on churches by the government”

Woestenberg said that the CIO is trying hard to make clear to the government the importance of the "two vital processes of the churches". On the one hand worship, on the other hand their support of the vulnerable and lonely in

society.

However, Woestenberg said she can also understand why the government has a different perspective.

"Contrary to popular belief, it's not 'all about the money.' I really do believe the importance of public health outweighs the economic interest for politicians in The Hague," she said.

"So whatever we may think of it, the political considerations are rather pragmatic: the average age of churchgoers is high, these are often vulnerable groups. It is obvious that the churches will not be the first in line when it comes to a relaxation."

This gives the Dutch churches more time, Woestenberg added, to be ready for the post-lockdown 'one-and-a-half-metre church' – the official standard for social distancing in The Netherlands.

"I think it is appropriate for our Church-State relationship that no protocols are imposed on churches by the government. That is why we at the CIO have also informed all national church boards that they are responsible for this themselves. They must draw up protocols and show their good will."

* * * * *

Last week, the CIO sent a first concept for a "guideline for a protocol for church life at one-and-a-half-metres" to the Justice and Safety Ministry. This document mentions things such as the number

of churchgoers allowed in church buildings, the ventilation of church buildings, the use of choirs, the marking of walking lines by stripes on the ground, and so on.

"It is only a rough framework," Woestenberg said, "not a definitive protocol. There cannot be one central protocol for all Dutch churches, there are too many differences between denominations and local situations. It makes quite a difference whether you gather in a neo-gothic cathedral with five entrances, or in a back room in a village." Such a protocol will have to be established as well for churches in the Netherlands, and the bishops' conference is working on it.

“In all churches in the Netherlands this problem is taken very seriously”

"We are in constant dialogue with the CIO, also about the framework for protocols that they are currently discussing with the government", said spokesperson Anna Kruse of the Secretariat of the Roman Catholic Church in The Netherlands. "It also includes Roman Catholic interests."

Kruse emphasised that until further notice – at least until June 1, right after Pentecost – churches will continue to apply the measures previously announced by the bishops: no public services whatsoever, except for funerals and

weddings, that are allowed with a maximum of 29 people present.

The Dutch bishops preferred the stricter guidelines used in Italy and agreed to by the Vatican over Dutch government policy that would allow any type of religious service with a maximum of 30 participants.

Ultimately, the Dutch churches want to send the signal to the government and society that they cooperate fully and unreservedly in the fight against the coronavirus.

Woestenberg pointed out that there's a popular misconception within the highly secularised Dutch society that churches are full of weird people who think that the Holy Spirit will protect them against the coronavirus. "Which is just absolute nonsense, in all churches in the Netherlands this problem is taken very seriously, and there is a great willingness to take appropriate measures," she said.

"It is highly questionable whether there will be relief of the measures for the churches in May," Woestenberg added. "Based on what I'm hearing now in political circles in The Hague, I am almost certain that this will not be the case. But the government can never say it is the churches' own fault. The willingness is there, the guidelines are there, so we will be ready when the churches are allowed to open again later."

Anton de Wit is a Special to Crux

Letters

Letter of the week

Church jobs and plans should adapt due to coronavirus

Dear Editor, Surely there is no better time than the present to review our diocesan development planning process. If our current lockdown is to be seen as part of God's plan for our Church, we need to be listening and learning from our very real present experiences.

Diocesan development plans need to be working documents addressing real issues and areas for development. As part of that process all groups within a diocese should be consulted separately to include for example priests and deacons, diocesan and

parish councils, the Legion of Mary, charity groups, youth groups, pilgrim groups, parish welcoming groups, etc.

These groups should be central to putting ideas forward as developments or concerns for them. Each group should have a responsible person to ensure review and implementation of the policy.

An important part of good development planning is the regular reviewing of job descriptions of personnel employed by the dioceses or parishes. This should reflect the changing needs of the parish or

the diocese. Consideration could be given to the employed sacristan post including responsibility for technology. This lockdown has seen many priests struggling to set up YouTube, webcams, and more. Some churches were excluded by virtue of not having the technological facility to reach out to the wider community.

This needs to be addressed before the next inevitable lockdown. God certainly has no boundaries.

*Yours etc.,
Kate Whelan,
Beaufort, Co. Kerry.*

Jesus is never far from home

Dear Editor, With most of our churches closed at the moment and no interaction with our fellow parishioners, some people are not feeling the presence of God.

Thanks to our clergy the Eucharist is celebrated daily throughout the country. Wherever you live, Jesus, present in the Eucharist, is not far from your home.

During the day turn to him in the Eucharist present in your parish church and receive his love, power, healing and protection into your heart and home.

Jesus is dwelling among us, the same Jesus who is risen from the dead.

*Yours etc.,
Anne McGrath,
Rathfarnham,
Co. Dublin.*



Church strategy needed to restore sacraments

Dear Editor, All the signs are that this coronavirus will be with us for a long time. It would good to hear of parishes who are thinking outside the box in order to see how our sacramental life can be restored. Without the sacraments the Christian community

cannot thrive. We need an exit strategy and a roadmap for where the Church might be in the foreseeable future.

*Yours etc.,
Fr Paddy Gleeson,
Mount Merrion, Dublin.*

We must not allow triage scenarios in hospitals

Dear Editor, I read with interest, and growing concern, Martin M. Lintner's article on triage in one of your recent editions [23/04/2020].

The thought that we may reach a point in Ireland in which health professionals have to choose who live and who dies due to a patient's prognosis, if there aren't

enough resources to care for patients who are in dire conditions, is horrifying. That of course could happen if our health system becomes overwhelmed.

I've seen some of the reports from Italy in which doctors are having to use their finite resources to care for patients they think have a better chance at survival.

Who would have thought it would ever have come to this in this day and age? I pray that this is a situation no one in our healthcare system will be presented with.

In the coming weeks, it is up to the people of this country to take these health regulations seriously, as they are there to save lives

and allow everyone to be treated with the same level of quality healthcare.

We do not need to be in a wartime scenario. Stay at home, wash your hands, be safe.

*Yours etc.,
Margaret Delaney,
Galway city, Co. Galway.*

Our Government has failed the vulnerable

Dear Editor, Yours and David Quinn's articles on the Government's failings regarding people in nursing homes which appeared one after the other in the last two editions of the paper [IC 23/04/2020 and IC 30/04/2020] were very enlightening and something that has not been highlighted enough in other media.

Why did the Government fail to provide adequate equipment and protections for staff and residents

of nursing homes when it became blatantly clear – even weeks before this coronavirus hit Ireland like it has now – that elderly people were by far the most vulnerable?

Of course the elderly are always going to be in danger of seasonal flu and other viruses, but as we have seen, the amount of cases of the virus in nursing homes has been catastrophic. Did they just dismiss the elderly and vulnerable in their calculations? Did

those leading Ireland's reaction to the coronavirus forget they were there?

There needs to be an explanation and that's why journalists exist, to get answers to difficult questions and it doesn't seem like many are interested in doing that at the moment.

*Yours etc.,
Gerry Murphy,
Tallaght, Co. Dublin.*

facebook community

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

It's time to re-open our churches again for prayer

Our churches should be open for private prayer and so anyone can slip in to light a candle. Please God we will soon be able to do this. Meanwhile I will continue to do my Rosary daily in my garden helped by this beautiful weather. – **Sheila Meyler**

Mine has been open all along and we follow all HSE guidelines. – **Peter O'Reilly**

Definitely time to open churches. There is plenty of space for social distancing in any church any day of the week. Miss visits to the Blessed Sacrament so much especially when we have no Mass. – **Mary Kelly**

What would have been wrong with having Masses based on Station areas or other groupings where small numbers could get Mass at least once a month? Just asking. – **Sheelagh Hanly**

St Anne's Church Sligo has been open throughout lockdown. Not open for Mass but people can go in and pray, seats are taped off they have really catered well for the parishioners. In my opinion still think it's too soon for Mass, we can hold out for a little longer. – **Mary McGowan**

Bashing Britain is cold comfort for Ireland's afflicted

There is a reason Ireland had the lowest number of ICU beds in Europe and you are looking at it. – **Peter O'Reilly**

A welcome antidote to all the Dublin mutual back slapping. Being better than Boris Johnson is not the same as being 'good'. – **Charles Glenn**

Welcome for decision to reopen cemeteries

Can't see why they were closed in the first place. This will bring comfort to lots of people. – **Sheena McMullan**

Church urged to put plans in place for lockdown relaxation

As a Church and as a nation, this is the greatest challenge we have faced in a century and we need nothing less than superb Spirit-inspired leadership if we are not to fall into ruin. – **Peter O'Reilly**

Few sermons mention abortion in US Christianity research finds

That's a pity, because some Catholics think they can support abortion. I think at this stage references to 'protecting life' are a bit vague. People need to hear the word abortion. It needs to be spelled out sometimes. – **Adam Conroy**

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

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Around the world



▲ **GERMANY:** A priest gives Holy Communion to a man in a church in Kevelaer during the first public Mass in the city since churches were closed because of the coronavirus.

◀ **GREECE:** A migrant woman and child are seen outside their tent in a makeshift camp on the island of Lesbos.



MEXICO: Men sit down to a meal in the Aid Center for Deported Migrants in Nogales. The project is part of the Kino Border Initiative, a binational Church ministry to migrants.



PHILIPPINES: Fr Eduardo 'Ponpon' Vasquez Jr (centre) wears protective gear as he rides with others in a van to a morgue in Manila.



USA: A masked demonstrator in a car holds a sign demanding that restrictions on public Masses in churches be lifted during a protest in Maryland.



BRAZIL: Jose Antonio Dias Toffoli, president of Brazil's Supreme Court, in Brasilia. The Court has rejected a plea to decriminalise abortions by pregnant women infected with the Zika virus.



There is no Easter Sunday without Good Friday



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

sitting in on a series of lectures by the renowned Polish psychiatrist, Kasmir Dabrowski who had written a number of books around a concept he termed, “positive disintegration”. His essential thesis was that it is only by falling apart that we ever grow to higher levels of maturity and wisdom.

Once, during a lecture, he was asked: “Why do we grow through the disintegrating experiences such as falling ill, falling apart, or being humiliated? Would it not be more logical to grow through the positive experiences of being loved, being affirmed, being successful, being healthy and being admired? Shouldn’t that fire gratitude inside us and, acting out of that gratitude, we should become more generous and wise?”

“Why do we grow through the disintegrating experiences such as falling ill, falling apart, or being humiliated? Would it not be more logical to grow through positive experiences?”

He gave this response: ideally, maturity and wisdom should grow out of experiences of strength and success; and maybe in some instances they do. However, as a psychiatrist, all I can say is that in 40 years of clinical practice I have never seen it. I have only seen people transformed to higher levels of maturity through the experience of breaking down.

Jesus, it would seem, agrees. Take, for example, the incident in the Gospels where James and John come and ask whether they might be given the seats at his right hand and left hand when he comes into his glory.

It is significant that he takes their question seriously. He does not (in this instance) chide them for seeking their own glory; what

he does instead is redefine glory and the route to it. He asks them: “Can you drink the cup?”

They, naïve as to what is being asked of them, responded: “Yes, we can!” Jesus then tells them something to which they are even more naïve.

He assures them that they will drink the cup, since eventually everyone will, but tells them that they still might not receive the glory because being seated in glory is still contingent upon something else.

What? What is ‘the cup’? How is drinking it the route to glory? And why might we not receive the glory even if we do drink the cup?

“There is no route to depth and wisdom except through suffering and humiliation. The connection is intrinsic”

The cup, as is revealed later, is the cup of suffering and humiliation, the one Jesus has to drink during his passion and dying, the cup he asks his Father to spare him from when in Gethsemane he prays in agony: “Let this cup pass

from me!”

In essence, what Jesus is telling James and John is this: there is no route to Easter Sunday except through Good Friday. There is no route to depth and wisdom except through suffering and humiliation. The connection is intrinsic, like the pain and groans of a woman are necessary to her when giving birth to a child.

Compassion

Further still, Jesus is also saying that deep suffering will not automatically bring wisdom. Why not? Because, while there is an intrinsic connection between deep suffering and greater depth in our lives, the catch is that bitter suffering can make us deep in bitterness, anger, envy and hatred just as easily as it can make us deep in compassion, forgiveness, empathy and wisdom. We can have the pain, and not get the wisdom.

Fever! The primary symptom of being infected with the coronavirus, Covid-19, is a high fever. Fever has now beset our world. The hope is that, after it so dangerously raises both our bodily and psychic temperatures, it will also reveal to us some of the secrets that are hidden from health. What are they? We don’t know yet. They will only be revealed inside the fever.

John Updike, after recovering from a serious illness, wrote a poem he called, *Fever*. It ends this way: “but it is a truth long known that some secrets are hidden from health”.

Deep down we already know this, but as a personal truth this is not something we appropriate in a classroom, from parents or mentors, or even from religious teaching. These just tell us that this is true, but knowing it does not itself impart wisdom. Wisdom is acquired, as Updike says, through a personal experience of serious illness, serious loss or serious humiliation.

Agnostic

The late James Hillman, writing as an agnostic, came to the same conclusion. I remember hearing him at a large conference where, at point in his talk, he challenged his audience with words to this effect: think back, honestly and with courage, and ask yourself: what are the experiences in your life that have made you deep, that have given you character? In almost every case, you will have to admit that it was some humiliation or abuse you had to endure, some experience of powerlessness, helplessness, frustration, illness or exclusion.

It is not the things that brought glory or adulation into your life that gave you depth and character, the time you were the valedictorian for your class or the time you were the star athlete. These did not bring you depth. Rather the experience of powerlessness, inferiority, is what made you wise.

I recall too as a graduate student

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, May 7, 2020

Personal Profile

James Kilbane
on Gospel music
and Faith

Page 34



Bealtaine

Bealtaine is the word for May in Irish, it marks an ancient festival, one of the most significant historic dates in Ireland. It is also known as a month to celebrate and pray to Our Lady.

At the moment, gathering for Bealtaine is off the cards anyways and bonfires are of course illegal apart from burning untreated wood, trees, trimmings, or similar materials generated by agricultural practices after notifying the local authority. However, there are still a few things you could do to celebrate the tradition and deliver some active history to your family.

Beginning on the first day of the May which has passed,



Róise McGagh gives some ideas on celebrating the ancient Irish festival of Bealtaine

for thousands of years we have celebrated the cross quarter day which marks the halfway point between the spring equinox and the summer solstice.

These moments were pivotal for our ancestors who celebrated the changes of season – of upmost importance when their main occupation was low technology farming. The equinox

marks the halfway point between the summer and winter solstice – the longest and shortest days of the year – and meant the beginning of days being longer than nights.

The celebration of Bealtaine falls exactly six months from Samhain, or what we now know as Halloween. It pinpoints the end of weather unsuitable for farming

in the Northern Hemisphere and symbolises the beginning of the summer months.

It is not known how far celebrations went back, or in what way the turn of the season was once celebrated. It first appears historically in a Irish glossary said to be written by the King of Munster or Bishop of Cashel, Cormac úa Cuileannáin in the 9th or 10th Century.

Near Raphoe in Donegal lies the Beltany Stone Circle dating from around 2100-700 BC, later in the Bronze Age. It is a Stone Circle made up of 64 large standing stones with a diameter of 145ft enclosing a low earth platform.

Only one of the stones is decorated with cup-marks which

face into the inner circle. This stone on the north-east side of the circle aligns with the sun as it rises during Bealtaine.

It is said that the festival is derived from Pagan rituals and was adapted into Catholic ones, whatever the case we have developed a uniquely Irish set of traditions.

Fire is a big part of the tradition, speculated to be a symbol of the return of the sun after winter. In ancient Ireland the main festival fire was said to be lit at the Hill of Uisneach in Westmeath, at the centre of the country.

Through the winter in these times, when most people resided in thatch cottages, the fire was

» Continued on Page 33

Family News

AND EVENTS

BEATING BOREDOM WITH ONLINE EDUCATION

In these days of lockdown, it can be a headache for parents to keep children occupied due to the need to stay indoors for long periods. Children aren't able to go outside and play with their friends so boredom can become a powerful adversary. There are multiple online resources that are both entertaining, educational or both. Topmarks is a website that gives children the opportunity to learn online, through safe, fun and engaging games and activities. The website states it features educationally sound online resources and is a safe environment for children because they include trustworthy, reliable educational content. It can be accessed at www.topmarks.co.uk. Nessy.com is another educational resource that has won awards for its achievements in helping children read, write and spell in a fun way. The OxfordOwl website provides free eBooks at home.oxfordowl.co.uk for children to choose from. There are plenty of other resources out there, but these are certainly a good place to start.

UL TO STUDY EFFECTS OF 'LOCKDOWN LIFE'

The idea that 'lockdown life' has led to major disruptions to people's lives and threatens wellbeing, has prompted researchers at the University of Limerick (UL) to research its effects. A team of experts will explore how children, teenagers and their families are coping during the health crisis. The study, entitled Co-SPACE (Covid-19 Supporting Parents, Adolescents and Children during Epidemics), will focus on those aged 4-18 and their families. The researchers aim to track children and young people's mental health throughout the crisis to identify what advice, support and help can protect mental health. Dr Jennifer McMahon, lecturer in Psychology of Education at UL, said: "Anecdotal reports suggest that many families and students are struggling with the restrictions imposed by Covid-19 and while general mental health supports are available there is a distinct lack of information about what type of supports could be most effective in the context of Covid-19."

KEEP CHILDREN ACTIVE DURING RESTRICTIONS SAYS STUDY

Parents should ensure that physical activity is part of the routine for children and families during the Covid-19 lockdown, according to an international study involving the University of Strathclyde. The study covers 15 nations and found that time spent in places such as parks, beaches and community gardens reduced by nearly a third between February 23 – before the World Health Organisation declared a pandemic – and 5 April. The researchers make a number of recommendations to families, health professionals, teachers and policy-makers on promoting healthy activity, including taking the opportunity to go outdoors, while observing distancing regulations, incorporating physical activity into children's daily routines – supported by use of electronic media – and breaking up extended sedentary periods every 30 to 60 minutes, keeping children's bedtime and rising time consistent and making sure screens are out of the rooms where they sleep.

Many nursing homes are not equipped for Covid-19

The death toll from Covid-19 in Ireland has exceeded 1,000 with almost two months passing since the first reported mortality. The number of deaths is more than triple that of even a bad flu season and would be manifold greater if not for restrictions and social distancing.

While huge focus was placed by the government on the preparedness of our acute hospitals to deal with Covid-19, the same can't be said for nursing homes where a real crisis now exists. For an illness which has its worst effects on frail, older adults with underlying medical conditions, the poignant question of how or why more wasn't done has taken centre stage. Indeed, about 50% of all deaths due to Covid-19 have been in nursing homes yet the allocation of resources to deal with the issues they face were disproportionately small and the overall response slow. There were also similar failings in other countries including France, Spain, Belgium, Canada and parts of the US where between 40-60% of all Covid-19 deaths were in care homes.

“Trying to isolate confused patients with Covid-19 who tend to wander is also clearly a big challenge”

In fact in Ireland, Covid-19 has affected about 40% of all long-term care facilities in what has amounted to over 200 clusters of cases. Indeed, the gravity of the situation was reflected by the HSE designation of about 70 nursing homes as 'status red' indicating a major threat to provision of adequate care.

The absence of a coherent strategy early on to address the

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



basic issues in nursing homes is the key factor. Firstly, it was crucial that residents were tested and diagnosed promptly with Covid-19 allowing for appropriate isolation and contact tracing. Lack of access to testing, delays in getting results and shortage of PPE severely hampered containment measures that could have reduced contagion to other residents and staff. Nursing homes (public and private) were effectively de-prioritised and left to compete with hospitals for PPE and resources, in some cases trying to source them from private providers.

Indeed, when staff contracted Covid-19 or had to avoid work due to contact isolation, a crisis of manpower arose where there was simply too few on the ground to provide basic care to residents. There was also likely confusion and fear among staff as to what constituted a close contact with Covid-19 and whether they should continue to work. So bad were staff shortages, that some nursing homes felt they had no choice but to consider sending their residents to hospital prompting a scramble by the HSE to deploy hospital staff or contract agency carers for those facilities.

There are of course a number of factors that helped to compound the problem. For

example, older adults often do not present with typical symptoms such as fever, making early diagnosis more difficult. In fact, as we learned many patients who have no symptoms initially showed significant levels of virus yet can go on to develop severe disease. For this reason, there is now more widespread testing in nursing homes.

Trying to isolate confused patients with Covid-19 who tend to wander is also clearly a big challenge. Indeed, some units, particularly public ones, operate in buildings which are too old for modern day purpose meaning the separation of Covid-19 positive patients into other areas may not have been viable. Unfortunately, it is also not uncommon for residents in nursing homes (both public and private) to share rooms making the spread of the virus all the more likely.



Another important issue relates to the care of nursing home residents with Covid-19. Many older people in care homes will survive coronavirus but timely access to the appropriate medical input and guidance on palliative care may have been challenging for some facilities. Indeed, most patients can be managed appropriately in what is effectively their 'own homes' rather than transfer

to hospital. However, many nursing homes do not have oxygen on site which some patients would have required.

“The absence of a coherent strategy early on to address the basic issues in nursing homes is the key factor”

The Covid-19 pandemic has also brought into discussion the model of healthcare delivery in nursing homes in Ireland. There are about 29,000 older adults in long term care facilities in the country. About one third of these are run by the HSE, with most of the remainder managed privately and a small proportion run by the voluntary sector. Public units have medical officers responsible for the oversight of the medical needs of residents. However, elsewhere this is provided by GPs on an individual patient basis. Despite the great effort of many GPs, this model of care can lead to inconsistencies in coverage with regional variations and varied levels of geriatric expertise. Many public nursing homes are also still awaiting improvements in their physical infrastructure on the recommendations of HIQA. Finally, Covid-19 has heightened our awareness of the importance of adequate infection control, yet in this day and age we need to consider why it is, that many older people in long term care still share bedrooms with others.

① Dr Kevin McCarroll is a Consultant Physician in Geriatric Medicine, St James's Hospital, Dublin.

» Continued from Page 31



The Beltany Stone Circle. Photo: Mark McGaughey

never put out – until the celebration of Bealtaine. They were all quenched then on May Day and then re-lit from the main Bealtaine bonfire - torches from this main bonfire would pass from one locality to the next and light each set bonfire.

Passing fire between two bonfires was supposedly a rite of purification - herds of cattle were driven between two fires in many villages. It was also considered lucky for people from the community to pass between the fires, some dared to leap over the bonfire in order to ensure their fertility for the year.

The fire, once lit in the homes was not allowed to leave the house – even its smoke – so that the luck that it brought did not leave with it. Other things like products made on the farm or anything that made a profit was not given away, as it could give away the profit for the year.

Decorating a bush or a tree is a May Day tradition that is prevalent in different parts of Europe as well as Ireland”

While lighting fires on the eve of Bealtaine is an old tradition it has survived in local areas in many parts on the country. Lighting a fire in your hearth for one last time in May could be a nice thing to do to ring in the summer with your family, as well as an opportunity to gather around and tell the kids some stories about the history surrounding the holiday.

Something that is synonymous with the month is creating a small shrine for Mary. Many primary schools will have a small shrine in the classroom at this time of year and teachers will ask students to pick

flowers for it. This can be nice to replicate at home since everyone is out of school.

A small shrine can easily be created by placing a cloth over a small table and putting a statue of Mary accompanied by whatever you and your family want to put there, rosary beads, fresh summer flowers or a picture of Mary. Flowers are also often laid at grottos if you have some to spare after you go picking.

These moments were pivotal for our ancestors who celebrated the changes of season”

There is a link to history in the picking of flowers too. At dawn on May 1 people would collect flowers and branches from the mountain ash or rowan tree make boughs for hanging over doorways outside their windows.



Photo: © Kenneth Allen

Interestingly on May Day, visitors used to be turned away at the door as anything that was taken from the home could be used for spells against the household. Under

different circumstances this year, we will be following that tradition!

At this time of year water taken from local holy wells was said to be particularly potent and flowers left at those wells on May Day to be restorative. It was thought that the dew from the morning of May 1 offered a cure for the rest of the year. People would wash their face with or walk in the first dew of May Day, believing it to have curative properties.

Decorating a bush or a tree is a May Day tradition that is prevalent in different parts of Europe as well as Ireland. A tree, often one near the home or the holy well where people would go to collect water, would be decorated with ribbons or shells. Usually the tree was white thorn, which flowers in May and was said to be a type of faery tree – these branches were not meant to be brought to the household for fear of bad luck however.

While lighting fires on the eve of Bealtaine is an old tradition it has survived in local areas in many parts on the country”

There are some other Bealtaine traditions that you might have heard of; walking a ring around one’s property, taking time to repair fencing and boundary markers and lets not forget having a feast, a dance and a few drinks.

While some of these rituals seem very odd and we can’t or wouldn’t perform them now, it is still a lovely time to ring in the summer and remember the traditions of times gone by.

Dad’s Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



In those dim and distant pre-lockdown days, I remember having the liberty to take non-essential journeys. One such frivolous expedition saw me set out on a beautiful spring morning for Tipperary. When the kids asked where I was going, I fobbed them off with an excuse. In fact, I was going to see a man about a dog.

My wife and I are dog lovers, both having previously owned dogs. However, since we married, our work and family commitments had taken us from Cork to Dublin to England and back again for the course of a decade. Between night shifts, small babies and living in rental properties, it had never been the right time to get a dog. Now that we were home for good, it felt like the right time to take the plunge.


My wife and I are dog lovers, both having previously owned dogs”

We went in with our eyes wide open, knowing all the joy that a dog can bring to a family – but also knowing all the disruption and mess a puppy brings. We’d been researching the best breeds for children, and stumbled upon a cross-breed Irish Wolfhound with standard poodle – a ‘Wolfdoodle’ – known for its calm temperament, good nature and trainability. When a litter became available, it seemed like now or never.

It’s a remarkable moment when you choose a puppy from a litter, for whichever one you take home will become a member of the family and a companion for years to come. Out of the melee, one pup came towards me, seeming familiar. I took him up in my arms, where he was relaxed and affectionate. This was the one. I then double checked that it was a boy, for we have an imbalance of the sexes in our household. I have three daughters, a wife, a mother-in-law and two female cats. Against this horde stand myself and my son – badly outnumbered and in need of reinforcements.

I felt awful taking him away from his litter, but he was ready for the next stage in his life. The journey was long, and there were occasional whimpers from the back, which I attempted to

soothe. When I arrived home, my wife and kids were playing in the garden in the sunshine. She assembled them at the front door to tell them we had news. When the squeals of excitement eventually subsided, we told them to be calm as we opened the boot to reveal their new puppy. He seemed glad to see us. He was certainly very happy to get out of the car and begin exploring the garden.



In the weeks since his arrival, the dog – named Seamus by common consent – has already become a much-loved member of the family. Loved by all except the cats, that is. During his first week, my son slept on the kitchen floor next to him so that he would not be lonely after his littermates at night, and to let him out when nature calls. My wife and I have been busy clearing up the inevitable accidents, but he has responded very well to training for such a young pup. Within a week he could sit, come and go down on command.

I felt awful taking him away from his litter, but he was ready for the next stage in his life”

He is a good companion and playmate for the kids, and everyone enjoys stroking him and being greeted by his enthusiastically wagging tail in the morning. He is teething and has chewed everything from shoes to sofas to wallpaper. We’ve gone through vast quantities of kitchen roll and disinfectant. Our holiday plans will forever be complicated by his presence. Yet all this is overtaken by the joy and fun he brings to the family, and the simple pleasure of taking him for a walk before breakfast each morning, and watching him revel in the fresh new day.

James Kilbane on Gospel music and Faith

Personal Profile



Róise McGagh

“I was being put up on a barstool in a pub when we came home to Achill from about 1975 to sing for my grandfather's buddies at the bar,” says James Kilbane.

The Gospel and Country singer spoke to *The Irish Catholic* about his upbringing and his thoughts on faith.

He says from the age of three, when he was living in London, he would listen to music through the living room door or sneak in to watch Top of the Pops. His family moved to Achill Island where James still resides.

There he started national school where he sang in the school choir. He had learning difficulties and only was recently diagnosed with dyslexia. “The Mercy nuns down through the years may have gotten a lot of criticism but I often think of the order and when they came to Achill island at the turn of the 20th Century. There was nobody else at that stage, they were greatly needed to start giving a certain amount of education.”

Learning hymns was sometimes a struggle, he says, recalling a moment when he felt his Faith become connected to his music. He says that when he was aged seven: “I was put to doing a solo called Be Not Afraid and that was my first big solo, getting it completed and singing in front of a congregation of 400 or 500 people.”

He remembers at that age an elderly nun who, despite his educational issues, realised his

talent for singing. She took him aside and gave a tutorial on how to sing and some exercises to practice to improve it.

“She did certain things that later on in life as an adult, I learned from speech therapists. They were amazed that this elderly nun was using these techniques way back in the 70s with me. She had an interest and she identified that I had something special.”

When he got into his teenage years James kept up with the music through singing in folk bands and the church choir. He says that at around age 14 he felt some depth to his music.

“There was a very young sister, Philomena was her name, she started a folk group with the secondary school ones and some of the nationals school ones and by that stage I was at secondary

so I was going to the discos on the Friday night,” says James.

“I made my first pound, back in the day it was punts, from the age of 13 playing in the folk group.” They began playing for audiences and competing in Scor Na Nógs.

By the time he was 15 he started singing in some local bars. There he began to explore country music in different ways: “In my teens I was listening a lot to John Denver, I would have been listening to Kris Kristofferson, his song *Why Me Lord* or *Sunday Morning Coming Down*. They were part of my nurturing of a certain amount of spirituality in country music,” says James. He would sometimes then play these kinds of songs if people requested a certain artist and he saw that people liked what they heard.

It took James some time to commit fully to his music, he first pursued his third level studies after

being unemployed for a period of time. He trained as a typist, which was huge for him looking back now knowing more about his learning difficulties. He entered the course through the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) and ended up performing to a high enough standard that he qualified to do a diploma course and then entered into a degree course in the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT).

One evening around 2001, James had recently been offered to do a Higher Diploma course, his wife Christine asked him if he was going to go ahead with it or down the path of music.

“I was thinking about doing something and I turned to her and I said ‘I’m able to sing everything Christine but what music is the key music that really reaches people when I sing it?’” and she responded

to him saying there was something special about when he sang Gospel music. He decided then that he would do a Gospel album, he felt he had something to contribute.

“I did research on recording Christian music. My college training came to me, where you just don’t sit down throw together anything, you think how you’re going to approach it and do it in a professional way.”

He said he invested a lot of money in it, and then put it in the drawer for a while. Until he auditioned for *You’re a Star* in 2004. He placed as runner up, and it kick-started his successful career in music.

“My life isn’t all about Gospel and Christian music because this is the life that God wants me to live”

“As history goes I remember coming out of the audition and Christine ringing me and me saying ‘I feel our lives will never be the same again’.”

Raised as a Catholic, James still practices his faith. However he says that he sees the benefits of understanding and interacting with different types of Christianity other than his own. He enjoys going to all types of Christian services, performing in different churches as well as writing hymns that are tailored to different churches and also fit them all.

This May he says he will be doing something for Mary’s month, whether that’s new music or something else online. “My life isn’t all about Gospel and Christian music because this is the life that God wants me to live. I’m convinced of that absolutely he has made things very clear to me at different times.”

Living Laudato Si’

Jane Mellet



Gearing up for Laudato Si’ week

My hope today is that you and your family are all safe and well. Many people are commenting on how they can hear the birdsong more clearly these days, how everything is so quiet, how there are more bees around this year, how they are planting in their gardens or noticing flowers beginning to bloom.

We have slowed down; our pace of life has changed. For some this pandemic is almost like a retreat they never planned. For others it is a very stressful time. However, we are experiencing it, let it be a threshold moment, a transformative moment. The Covid-19 crisis has reminded us all of just how deeply everything is connected and tragically, this health catastrophe has a lot in common with the ecological catastrophe. Both are global emergencies that will affect many people. They are experienced most deeply by the poor and vulnerable of our world and they expose the deep injustices in our societies. Also, they will

both only be solved through a collaborative effort that calls on the best of the values we share.

From May 16-24 this year, Catholics all over the world have been called to celebrate Laudato Si’ Week. It is the fifth anniversary of the publication of Pope Francis’ encyclical on Care for Our Common Home. In a message to all of us the Pope has renewed his urgent call for a more sustainable future for everyone. Nevertheless, we are being asked to celebrate this week in whatever way we can in our homes and to share our actions with others. This is a key moment for each of us to reflect on what kind of world we want to live in when this pandemic has passed. How can we reshape that world? Can we use this time as an opportunity to start afresh and encourage a greener and more just world?

I would encourage you to take a look at www.laudatosiweek.org which has many activities and

suggestions for families and communities. You can even add your own ideas to a global map of action. It would be great to see many events fill up the Ireland part of that map. There are beautiful prayer resources and ideas for things we can do in our own homes during this time such as we are all invited to pray the special Laudato Si’ Week prayer at noon on May 24. As a family you could set up a sacred space, pray with and for creation, for all those affected by the Covid-19 crisis and the ecological crisis.

I will be joining with others on Sunday 24 May at 8pm for an hour of music, prayer and reflection to celebrate Laudato Si’ online. Everyone is very welcome to join and you can register by emailing me at jane.mellet@trocaire.org

This webinar is being organised by the Laudato Si’ Working Group of the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference.

Let us use this opportunity to move forward together into a lighter way of walking on the earth. *Jane Mellett is the Laudato Si’ officer with Trócaire.*



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



No sentiment just facts in Fatima TV treat

This August a new feature film, *Fatima*, is due in cinemas. It stars Harvey Keitel and the trailers look really interesting. Readers may well remember the 1952 version, *The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima*, starring Gilbert Roland. I saw it years ago and was impressed.

The 13th Day (EWTN, Sunday) from 2009 was another more recent take on the story of the apparitions. Written and directed by Ian and Dominic Higgins it was a visual treat. Each frame of the film would make for a beautiful still picture – mostly it's black and white, with colour being used when Our Lady appears and Heaven touches the earth. The style reminded me of arty YouTube videos, European cinema, and even *The Blair Witch Project* (visual effect, not content!).

The film was almost surreal in its presentation, which made it quite captivating. It seemed to tell the Fatima story faithfully, framing it by using the reminiscences of Sr Lucia as she writes her memoirs. However it was somewhat episodic, always a potential problem when filming real life events.

I also felt also that there was too much narration and not enough dialogue given to the actors which made it difficult for them to really inhabit their roles. That being said, the girl who played the young



Portuguese shepherd children Lucia dos Santos, center, and her cousins, Jacinta and Francisco Marto, are seen in a file photo taken around the time of the 1917 apparitions of Our Lady at Fatima.

Lucia, Filipa Fernandez, had a striking screen presence, crucial when she was the central personality of the film.

There was one rather scary angel and a disturbing vision of hell which might make it unsuitable for very young children, but the scene of the miracle of the sun was quite striking and captured the

essence of the film.

One thing the filmmakers have achieved is to present this timeless story to a modern audience in an idiom they can understand and relate to. I didn't find it corny or preachy or sentimental, and these are also traps that a religious film can fall into.

Now, after that brief res-

pite, it's back to the Covid-19 world. This is a time when we've all had to make sacrifices, and put up with severe restrictions on our activities. But one thing has bugged me – the way our Government has contrived, after all this, to ease restrictions on abortion, facilitating those unsafe home abortions that they warned against as a wedge to bring in legal abortions in the first place.

At a time when solidarity has rightly been the order of the day, living unborn children have been ignored, abandoned or sacrificed yet again on the altar of choice.

As we willingly give up 'bodily autonomy' in so many areas of our lives, the pro-choice activists seek and are granted even more freedom. Despite consuming too many hours of media coverage I haven't heard anyone being challenged on this anomaly/scandal.

Definition

Last Monday morning on the **Today** programme (BBC Radio 4) there was an item on how, in some states in the USA, abortions were banned along with other elective or non-essential medical procedures. As the Attorney General for the state of Texas Ken Paxton said, by the very logic of pro-choice activists abortions were a matter of choice, and therefore by definition, elective.

PICK OF THE WEEK

CRASH COURSE IN JPPII

EWTN, Saturday (night), May 9, 2.30am

Leading up to the 100th anniversary of his birth, a review the life and legacy of St Pope John Paul II, a series continuing nightly.

FATIMA, THE ULTIMATE MYSTERY

EWTN, Sunday, May 10, 9pm

Did the miracle at Fatima alter the course of history? This documentary film reveals strange coincidences and ignored events that support that conclusion.

DANA, THE ORIGINAL DERRY GIRL

RTÉ1, Monday, May 9, 9.35pm; BBC1, 10.45pm;

BBC4, Friday, May 15, 11pm

An emotional and honest look back at her life from winning Eurovision to entering Irish politics.

The reporter said Paxton "played with the semantics" when he followed the logic of the pro-choice language. The item was thoroughly biased in favour of the pro-choice view, with the inevitable hard being case used to manipulate emotions.

It was undeniably sad – a woman pregnant with twins learned that one had died and that the other had a life limiting condition. She didn't want 'that' to be allowed to continue, and, abandoning the language of choice, decided she 'had to' have an abortion.

Then, from a 'reproductive health' (!) clinic in New Mexico, we got an interview with Dr Eve Espey who was given the opportunity to get in an unchallenged dig at anti-abortion activists.

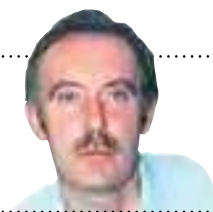
The BBC let itself down as

it frequently does when covering this issue.

Finally, on last weekend's **Sunday Sequence** (BBC Radio Ulster), *The Irish Catholic* editor Michael Kelly spoke of the "emotional wrench" suffered by priests who were not able to give the usual full support to families suffering bereavement. Older priests were often the ones who knew the deceased best but many of them were in isolation, while younger priests were in short supply and had to take up an increased workload.

The necessary social distancing went against their every instinct.

✉ boregan@hotmail.com,
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Aubrey Malone

Film

Welsh horse opera not without its share of pastoral charm

Dream Horse (PG)

In these dark times we need a 'pick me up' film to revive our spirits – this is it.

They say nobody can celebrate like the Irish. Is that because we win less things than the bigger nations? As such it means more.

After seeing this wistful elegy to an affectionate little community in 'the valleys', I realise we have a competitor in the OTT celebration stakes: Wales.

Toni Collette is Janet, a bartender leading a humdrum life. She decides to breed a racehorse to give herself a reason to get up in the morning. Unfortunately she has no experience in this field...and no money.

She asks her neighbours to chip in to fund her ambition. Her pathologically laidback husband Brian thinks she's mad, and so do the neighbours. But after some morale-boosting meetings in the local snooker hall they're up and running. So is the horse which they name Dream Alliance.

I thought its early success was a mistake. It takes some of the juice out of later victories. In these kinds of films it's mandatory for the horse to lose its first few races, isn't it?

This one does well from the start. Janet cheers so much I thought her face would crack.

On the other hand it's refreshing to get a break from the Rocky formula of the 'slow burning fire'. That's been done to the death.



Toni Collette stars in *Dream Horse*.

The small town syndicate never had it so good but trouble awaits: Dream breaks a leg. What's to be done? They

shoot horses, don't they? But hardly this one. Not after it's done so much for them. It's payback time.

Can an operation get it back on track? Wait and see.

The story is based on fact. Director Euros Lyn captures the pulse of the community with some neat touches. I was reminded of that other valentine to a closely-knit community in Wales, *Very Annie Mary*. *Dream Horse* has much of its salty humour – and eccentric characters.

Accent

Collette does the Welsh accent as well as you'd expect her to. She's always been in the Meryl Streep league as far as accents go.

The film exudes a strong Disney vibe. It will recall *National Velvet* for viewers of my generation. The 'realisation of the impossible dream'

formula for lovers of the sport of kings has almost been exhausted by film-makers. Lyn gives it a fresh twist here with his frolicsome cast.

It's nice to see Sian Phillips among them. She's from a previous era. I wasn't even sure if she was still alive. She's very much so, and still able to whoop it up with the young 'uns.

I dare you not to be trilling *Delilah* (preferably out of tune) as the film ends. The group rendition of it outdoes the national anthem. This is sung shortly before at the Welsh Grand National. Katherine Jenkins eat your heart out.

✉ The film is being streamed on Pupamedia.



BookReviews

Peter Costello



Recent books in brief

The Jewel in the Mess

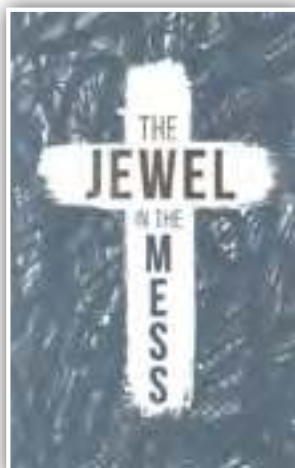
by Alan Abernethy
(Columba Books, €12.99 / £12.99)

Out of danger comes hope: this is the theme of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Down and Connor's new book. He has suffered in recent years from depression and well as prostate cancer.

But in these dark hours he has recovered a sense of the faith that brought him into the Church and to his ministry.

In this book he is concerned with God and Jesus free of the trappings of institutions. He sees church organisation, what he alludes to as "bureaucracy", as standing in the way of a pure image of what the Bible says.

He connects, as everyone must do who reads the gospels, with a humble Jesus, a Jesus of daily life and everyday experience. But this brings him closer to those aspects of mission which deal with suffering, want and illness. An excellent book, which would, in a paradoxical way, make ideal reading at this present time.



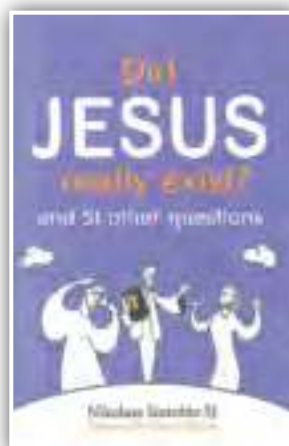
Did Jesus Really Exist? and 51 other questions

by Nikolaas Sintobin SJ,
foreword by Gareth Byrne
(Messenger Publications, €12.95)

The question may startle some, but the author has a point. All too often what we read these days is strained through an American sieve.

Here, however, is a European voice, reflecting both an older Catholicism, but also one keenly aware of where the church really is today, a participant in the modern world, a church that must explain itself in simpler, more accessible, more everyday language. This is an excellent book to put into the hands of those young people about whom so many parents and grandparents harbour deep worries, often left unexpressed.

A visit to his website www.seeingmore.org will continue the conversation.



A Mother's Love: Upon Angels Wings

by Mary Harrington
(Carrowmore Publishing, €15.00 / £14.99, ebook £4.99; for more information about buying the book visit the publisher's site or Amazon.uk.)

One of the great changes in recent years is the ability of quite ordinary people to publish their own books, stating what they themselves want to say.

This has brought into the market a great many foolish things, of course, but also a great many accounts of deeply moving experiences of life and Faith. Mary Harrington, who describes herself as a retired teacher, mother of four, grandmother of eight, and actively involved in the life of her community, here recounts, through prose interspersed with her poems, her spiritual journey since the death of her mother in 2001.

This has been a difficult pilgrimage, but one which she feels has been spiritually enlightening, and which she wishes to share with others, not just with her family and community, but hopefully many others in the wider world. Such efforts as hers should be encouraged, but they often face difficulties from those in what Alan Abernethy (see above) calls "the bureaucracy".



Oberammergau: drama a gift of

Passion Play: Oberammergau 2020

by Christian Tüeckl and others
(Theatre der Zeit, £30.00; ISBN-13: 978-3957492845)

Peter Costello

The village of Oberammergau lies some 45 miles south of Munich in the Tyrol.

In many ways it is a remote place, but in time of war and plague, no place is truly remote, in the sense of being totally cut off. Today, it is the focus of many visitors, especially every 10 years when the famous Passion play is enacted.

Local tradition tells of the play's origins. Back in the time of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), part of the terrible struggle between Catholics and Protestants for mastery of Europe, the armies of several belligerent nations marched back and forth across the German landscape. After the destructive soldiers came the ravaging plague.

Out of all the mountain villages of the Bavarian highlands Oberammergau remained free of the plague for a while, thanks to a strict quarantine. This was strictly enforced, the roads in and out patrolled by guards. No one was allowed to leave, not a living thing to enter.

But then Caspar Schuchler, a native of the village who had been working in nearby Eschcenlohe, where the plague raged, longed to enjoy his normal family life again.

Guards

One night he crept in behind the backs of the for once inattentive guards. He got to his house, embraced his wife and his children. Three days later he and the family were dead, the village was infected, and the disease was ranging up the Ammergau Valley.

His one selfish act had killed many and endangered the rest. And all because Caspar Schuchler had longed for "things to be normal again": the story might well be a moral fable for our times.

When the plague at last lifted, the good people of the village of Oberammergau vowed that in thanksgiving for that relief they would present every decade a Pas-



A scene from a dress rehearsal of the Oberammergau Passion Play in the theatre of Oberammergau, southern Germany.

sion play in remembrance of a term of trial. The vow was made in 1633, the play first enacted in 1634.

Passion plays had been common back in the Middle Ages before the Reformation. But by then were much rarer. The text of the play was the work, so it seems, of the

monks of an abbey further up the valley — the ability to write was a rare talent in these days. Their script was based, however, on earlier ones and followed the traditional form.

In 1662 a new text was by Sebastian Wild. Again in the 1750s the text was revised by

Fr Rosner, a Benedictine, after the model of the then influential Jesuit theatres. In 1780 yet another revision was made by another Benedictine.

Music

Finally, Fr Joseph Alois Daisenberger, who died in 1883, produced a finalised



The Benedictine Abbey Ettal Monastery, Oberammergau.

Readers should note that *The Irish Catholic* circulates throughout the island of Ireland and the book prices listed are the retail price recommended by the Irish or British publishers, in either euros or sterling, as a general indication of what purchasers may expect to pay.

sacred the plague



simplified version, shorn of earlier encumbrances, converting the poetry into prose, but retaining the music which had been composed by the local school master, back in 1814.

There were some hundreds of parts in the play, allowing most the villagers of the time to take part. From the beginning the actors were on a stage open to the weather, so in some years they would be drenched. Only in the early 20th Century were the audience seats closed over.

Yet despite these difficulties, one critic of the time observed, "the artistic and dramatic nature of the performance were very striking".

Attention

For the first two centuries the play received little attention, the village being so remote. But in 1850 Edward Devrient, a star of the Munich Opera and a theatre historian, brought Oberammergau firmly to the attention of the wider world, as an example of early music drama.

Visitors began to arrive in

larger numbers, thanks to the developing train services that were transforming Europe. By 1890, Cook's of London was running excursions across Europe to the village.

The pastor's revised text was in response to this new situation. The drama began to receive well known writers, people such as Sir Richard Burton the explorer and Arabist, who was curious (so he said) to compare it with events at Mecca! Others included J. K. Jerome, in a more light-hearted (but still serious) manner, and F. W. Farrar, the Anglican Dean of Canterbury, famous for his widely read *Life of Christ*. So Oberammergau had an appeal to a wide range of visitors. It has never lost this appeal.

The late 19th-Century script was still in use up to 1960. But some emendation to its language had to be made later in the light of Vatican II's revision of the anti-Jewish sentiments that had crept into the liturgy and were no longer deemed appropriate.

The passion play's stage (which Sir Richard Burton

describes in great detail, down to a plan of the theatre, with the costs of the seats) was modelled on the old plays. In the drama there were 18 acts and some 40 scenes, for each stage of Christ's passion is prefaced by a tableau of an Old Testament incident relevant to it (much as the readings during Mass are arranged).

It began at 8 in the morning, and after midday break of an hour and a half for dinner, ended about 6pm.

“To criticise any part of it as uninteresting, is like saying that half the Bible might very well be omitted...”

Many people, used to the ways of the commercial theatre everywhere, found all this tedious, as a theatrical event, and said so. But it was pointed out for the people of Oberammergau, and most of the visitors, this was not a theatrical event.

What was on show was not intended to be an entertainment, as even Jerome noted, "but a religious service. To criticise any part of it as uninteresting, is like saying that half the Bible might very well be omitted, and that the whole story could have been told in a third of the space."

A solemn religious service is what it was and is and will remain. The news that this summer's presentation of the Passion Play at Oberammergau has been cancelled came as no surprise in the present situation. The drama, however, has merely been postponed to 2022. The remarkable presentation will, like most aspects of normal life, return in due course.

But in the light of what Europe is passing through now, the history of the drama is revealing in other ways.

In the preparations for this summer's event the book of the play had already been printed, and remains available. It perhaps worth buying it now, so that anyone planning a visit in the summer of 2022 will be fully grounded in the background and the nature of what they are going to see.

Douglas Hyde – a President for all

Douglas Hyde: A Maker of Modern Ireland
by Janet Egleston
Dunleavy & Gareth W. Dunleavy
(University of California Press, £48.00)

J. Anthony Gaughan

Douglas Hyde/Dubhlás de hÍde served as Ireland's first president from 1938 to 1945.

This was the very highest distinction which the new state and the people of Ireland could bestow. Hyde himself was a man who had been one of those shaping Irish culture since the 1880s. He had been all his life a scholar, never a politician, never a lawyer. He set a headline for the position which has not always been followed since.

He was born on January 17, 1860. His father, Rev. Arthur Hyde, was the Church of Ireland rector of Kilmactranny, Co. Sligo. A few years later the family transferred to the Manse at Tibohine, near Frenchpark in Co. Roscommon. After an unhappy experience at a prep boarding-school in Kingstown (now Dún Laoghaire), Co. Dublin, Douglas was educated at home by his father.

Douglas entered Trinity College, Dublin, as a divinity student in 1880 and graduated with a BD in 1885 but did not proceed to ordination. He continued his studies and was conferred with an LLB in 1887 and LLD in 1888 but never practised. Disappointed at not securing an academic appointment in TCD, he spent a year teaching English in the University of New Brunswick in Canada.

Fascination

Douglas had a fascination with, and a gift for, languages. From his earliest years by chatting with his neighbours he acquired a mastery of Irish. He also exhibited an interest in antiquarianism, poetry and nationalism.

He joined the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language in 1877 and the Gaelic Union in 1878. From 1879 onwards he published numerous Irish poems under the pen-name 'An Craoibhín Aoihbhinn' ('the pleasant little branch').

Douglas became president of the National Literary Society in 1892. His inaugural address 'The necessity for de-anglicising Ireland' argued that political nationalism, however necessary, had, by propagating itself through English language media and drawing attention to debates at Westminster, blinded the Irish people to the fact that they were losing their national identity along with



Douglas Hyde the Gaelic scholar, painted by Sarah Purser.

their language.

He declared that the loss of the language had left the Irish people culturally impoverished and degraded. Hence it was essential that they recover their identity by reviving the Gaelic language and re-establish contact with their ancestral traditions.

The lecture inspired the formation of the Gaelic League in 1893 and Douglas became its first president. He proceeded to publish extensively in Irish: folk tales, poetry and plays. His *Literary History of Ireland* treated exclusively with literature in Irish and claimed that the works of Irish writers in English could not properly be called Irish literature.

Douglas was professor of Modern Irish at University College, Dublin, from 1909 to 1932 and during that time was an active supporter of every organisation promoting Irish throughout the nation.

As early as 1899 he was a leading figure in successfully blocking the attempts of TCD academics to remove Irish from the school curriculum. He was again to the fore in the successful Gaelic-League campaign to make Irish compulsory for matriculation in the National University of Ireland.

He served in the Irish Free State Senate in 1925 and the re-constituted Seanad Éireann in 1937. Following the ratification of the new Constitution, his membership of the Church of Ireland and non-party-political status made him a popular choice to act as the country's first president.

In the event he fulfilled the role admirably and established important precedents by referring controversial legislation to the supreme court and by taking advice from his staff before granting a dissolution of Dáil Éireann.

Douglas married Lucy Cometina Kurtz, a wealthy English woman, in 1893. A few years after their marriage she became a chronic invalid. One of his two daughters died prematurely in 1916. He suffered a stroke in 1940 and died on July 13, 1949.

“As early as 1899 he was a leading figure in successfully blocking the attempts of TCD academics to remove Irish from the school curriculum”


Douglas Hyde was one of a select few who made a crucial contribution to initiating and promoting the evolution of the New Ireland. It is ironic that just two incidents from his life-time of public service seem to remain in the public memory.

The first is his resignation from the Gaelic League after the ard-fheis voted to make it a specifically nationalist organisation in 1915. The second is his expulsion from the GAA, of which he was a patron, for contravening the organisation's rule banning foreign games after he attended a soccer match between Ireland and Poland in 1938.

As an *envoi*, may I say that one practical way to deal with such a deficit of knowledge and appreciation of an outstanding patriot would be to place this excellent biography on the reading lists of the history courses in our secondary and tertiary colleges.

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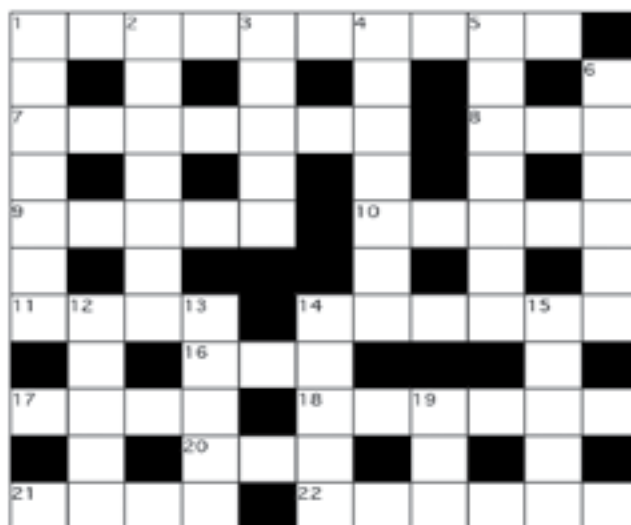
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Crossword Junior

Gordius 331



ACROSS

- 1 Take your puppy for a stroll (4,3,3)
- 7 A ginger nut or custard cream, perhaps (7)
- 8 You wear it round your neck (3)
- 9 Coming from the Emerald Isle (5)
- 10 Sound (5)
- 11 Hens lay them (4)
- 14 City road (6)
- 16 Tart, cake (3)
- 17 Sport played on horseback (4)
- 18 Time when you might receive a chocolate egg (6)
- 20 This traffic light tells us to stop (3)
- 21 Direction opposite to east (4)
- 22 Begins (6)

DOWN

- 1 Its address usually begins with www (7)
- 2 Writing some words on a page, one under the other (7)
- 3 'You should always tell the _____' (5)
- 4 Completely finished off, like the dodo (7)
- 5 Not in a place, but in front of it (7)
- 6 The Sahara is one (6)
- 12 A bird you might see in a farmyard (5)
- 13 A game like hurling or basketball (5)
- 14 Plant them in the ground, and plants may grow (5)
- 15 Vote into power (5)
- 19 Ocean (3)

SOLUTIONS, APRIL 30

GORDIUS No. 453

Across – 1 Jaw 3 Christiania 8 Luring 9 Casualty 10 Yards
11 Trout 13 Lunch 15 Brendan Behan 20 Tools 23 Baloo
24 Doubting Thomas 26 Mothers' ruin 27 Dry

Down – 1 Jelly babies 2 War crime 3 Cones 4 Incline 5 Inuit
6 Nelson 7 Any port in a storm 12 Tchaikovsky 13 Leapt
14 Hooks 17 Inflamed 18 Dowager 19 Go bust 22 Mitre 24 Dam

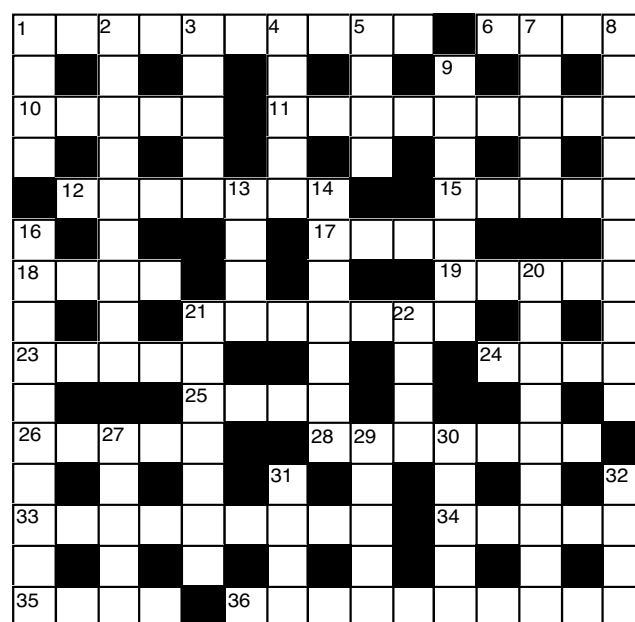
CHILDREN'S No. 330

Across – 1 Tricycle 6 Sam 7 Spur 8 Curtains 9 Dress
13 Cheered 15 Torch 16 Octopus 17 Banjo 18 Stole

Down – 2 Repair 3 Circus 4 Churn 5 Smashed 6 Skip
10 Errand 11 School 12 Report 14 Equal 15 Tubs

Crossword

Gordius 454



ACROSS

- 1 Keep an eye out, cardinal, on the snare It may be worn around your wrist! (10)
- 6 Stone with no friend? (4)
- 10 Helped (5)
- 11 Trea? That's no place to change horses! (9)
- 12 Dozer under the railway tracks (7)
- 15 Together, the artist and the professor have named this gas (5)
- 17 Dine out with Ms Blyton (4)
- 18 Repast (4)
- 19 Happen (5)
- 21 Possibly Moate, or a place to enjoy a beverage (3,4)
- 23 The fourth-largest city in Belgium (5)
- 24 Applaud a novice in headgear (4)
- 25 Rave about the right insect (4)
- 26 & 13d Instruction to the adder from Warsaw to make an Native American structure (5,4)
- 28 Stretches out, occupies an increasing area (7)
- 33 With which to get the post on track - on what drapes behind bridal armour? (4,5)
- 34 Joint on which a door moves (5)
- 35 Natural coral formation (4)

36 Lindisfarne is handy, so I'll move there! (4,6)

DOWN

- 1 Feeble (4)
- 2 Latvia dew transformed to a marine surge (5,4)
- 3 Privet, for example (5)
- 4 The cat will find me some cheese (5)
- 5 & 29d This classic TV puppet slipped quietly between the two little Andrews (4,5)
- 7 Beg for soft metal (5)
- 8 How sweet they are to identify the effect of gravity on citrus fruit! (5,5)
- 9 Great personal fame (7)
- 13 See 26 across
- 14 Rueful feelings (7)
- 16 Such a wee clock is certainly not one of importance (5-5)
- 20 Ali canoed around Old Scotland (9)
- 21 White ant (7)
- 22 Desert poet Khayyam, of many a rhyme, initially (4)
- 27 Banal (5)
- 29 See 5 down
- 30 Mores; set of values particular to a place or organisation (5)
- 31 There was a feline ring to this Roman orator, it seems (4)
- 32 Drink made from fermented honey (4)

Sudoku Corner

331

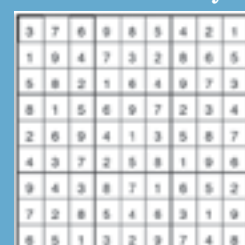
Easy



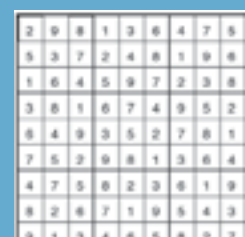
Hard



Last week's Easy 330



Last week's Hard 330



Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock



Hard times...last day of April, 2020

We buried him today in Culmore 10, 15 people there, no more; for we are told that is the way to keep the deadly virus at bay. But it's sad for sure and lonely too far removed from what we do, when parish stops to bow its head and mourn a neighbour who is dead.

To spend some time, to shed a tear remember in story and in prayer, the one who died and left us now hand, in death, taken from the plough.

Distance now just not in death but removed from each other's breath, no hand in hand, touch or embrace to ease the pain of the ashen face of saddened people, hearts ripped apart and ripping too our very heart. we wonder, wonder what's around the bend and will this darkness ever end? On this last April day we beg you Lord for a brighter May, that light return with sun warmed rays ending these worry-filled days, when news recalls those who have gone to be buried with a few just looking on,



like Johnny today, buried in Culmore 10, 15 people there, no more.

I WROTE THOSE lines on Thursday evening, the last day of April, after my second funeral in two days with just a handful of people in attendance.

I've had five since this 'lockdown' began and each reminds me of how incredibly lonely it is for people to bid farewell to a loved on in the absence of wider family, friends and community. Each day I have prayed at Mass for those grieving loved ones, not least in these difficult and strange times.

I think of Jesus visiting the home of Martha and Mary after their brother had died and was buried. "Where have you put him?" Jesus asked. He had to go to

the place and, having found it, we are told "Jesus wept".

That is truly the only response we have to the loss of loved ones. To those who have buried relatives in recent weeks and months, in quiet cemeteries with just a handful of people present, know that we will come to see where you 'put them' and, with Jesus, we will shed a tear and offer a prayer there.

Not a statistic

The lyrics of Danny Boy come to mind – "kneel and say an Ave there for me"...no death should go un-noticed in these times of daily statistics. One Mayo-based woman expressed it well recently when she said, "my sister is not a statistic" and so she's not.

One of the things I have found quite moving is the way people have adapted to these days and quietly show respect as maybe the hearse passes by or arrives at the church. Whilst maintaining distance, people have found a way of letting the bereaved know that they are not alone. There is something very dignified about it and comforting too.

Social distancing is necessary but spiritual closeness is vital.

Mary's month



● Pope Francis is asking us to focus on praying the Rosary this month. In doing this, he is hopeful that families may again feel the call to pray together and share some sacred time. He is echoing the words of Fr Peyton, who said "the family that prays together, stays together" and "a world at prayer is a world at peace".

I mentioned the Pope's call to pray the Rosary during a live-streamed Mass in the parish recently and jokingly added that I wanted to do this because the "Pope looks in every day". Later I met a woman who said: "Isn't it wonderful that the Pope joins us every day?" I had to point out that I

was joking, and I think both of us were a bit disappointed!

Whatever about the Pope tuning into what is happening in Kilmovee, Our Lady is tuned into the world and its needs. "They have no wine," she told him when the Cana reception was in doubt. She will find the words and the way to help us at this time too.



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