

The Irish Catholic

MICHAEL KELLY

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UP IN SMOKE

How our neglect of convents will come back to haunt us Page 10



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Relying on overseas priests is not a solution to crisis – seminary head

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

Chai Brady

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

The rector of St Patrick's College revealed that in addition to the 13 who will now embark on a pre-seminary year, six men who have already completed the propaedeutic programme have begun studying at Maynooth in recent weeks.

Mission

While many dioceses now have priests serving from central Europe, Africa and Asia, Fr Surlis said this is not sustainable.

"We are receiving back from the countries to which Irish missionaries went in the past, and that's a welcome thing, at the same time, a local Church in order for it to continue its mission into the long term, into the future, can't just rely on vocations from outside," Fr Surlis said.

Vocations

He said that in the midst of the challenges facing the faith in Ireland, parishioners should take heart from the fact that men are still coming forward to discern a vocation to the priesthood and entering the seminary formation programme.

"While they're welcome [priests from overseas] – we can't just be relying on those, and we're not.

"We are still getting – I think this is an important point, despite everything in

» Continued on Page 2

A wheely good blessing



Bella Breen brings her tractor to the celebration of Harvest Mass in the Parish of Ardkeen in Co. Down to be blessed.

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Mass is not an optional extra, for Catholics it is central

Editor's Comment

Michael Kelly



A celebration without people is yet again foisted upon us.

ensure that churches could re-open for Mass. And yet, they now find themselves shuttered once again with public worship banned and nothing but silence from the public health authorities.

when it comes to public health, and everyone want to continue to ensure that places of worship remain safe.

“A literal army of volunteers have assembled across the country to ensure that churches could re-open for Mass. And yet, they now find themselves shuttered once again”

No-one wants to be reckless

It is not good enough – people of Faith deserve better and our Church leaders should raise their voices in the way that Archbishop Diarmuid Martin did with the Government back in the early summer.



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NEWS IN BRIEF

Bishop laments closure of Irish Catholic news website

Bishop Alan McGuckian of Raphoe has expressed his regret following the closure of the online Catholic news website *CatholicIreland.net*, which he said was the “loss of a voice that you could rely on”.

Bishop McGuckian, speaking to *CatholicIreland.net*, said: “*CI News* was

a channel for many really good things that church organisations were doing both in the promotion of faith and in the promotion of justice – it was a channel for them to get their message out, and for many people really interested in that kind of news to receive it.”

Dr McGuckian, who was a co-founder of the news service in 2004 continued: “We always need people who will tell the news with both truth and respect that comes

from charity – that is what *CI News* has always done. It was a tremendous service.”

Followers of Jesus do not have to be successful in “earthly terms” – bishop

Followers of Christ should not seek power, control, or guarantees for the future, Bishop Donal McKeown said in a homily last weekend. Rather, they should seek to “do what is true, noble, good

and pure,” understanding that the God of peace will be with them.

The Bishop of Derry said, “There is a temptation for some in the Church to think that this is a time to fight back and reassert ourselves over against society... Jesus seeks to inspire people with the vision of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit. He wants his followers to feel insecure before the task at hand, not secure in our ability to manage the challenge.”

Relying on overseas priests not sustainable

» Continued from Page 1

terms of the culture and all of the rest – we are still getting men from Ireland who are discerning this call and to me anyway that's a sign of great hope,” he told *The Irish Catholic*.

Maynooth now remains Ireland's only seminary since the Church decided earlier this year not to send seminarians to the Pontifical Irish College in Rome after almost 400 years

of forming young men for the priesthood in Ireland.

In addition to the men at Maynooth, the other aspirants are spread between the Redemptoris Mater in Dundalk, Co. Louth, the Royal Scots College in Spain, the Royal English College in Spain and the Pontifical Beda College and the Venerable English College in Rome.

See page 11.

Canon Peadar Lavin RIP

An tAthair Peadar Ó Láimhín, a priest of the Diocese of Elphin, died on April 17, 2020 and was inadvertently omitted from the listing of priests published in *The Irish Catholic* edition of October 1, 2020 who had died from March-August.

Irish parishes raise €18,000 for struggling people of Beirut

Jason Osborne

Two Irish parishes joined forces to raise money for blast-stricken Beirut. The parishes of Headford and Athenry in the Archdiocese of Tuam teamed up to raise funds for the many thousands

who were left homeless and in need of basic supplies.

Fr Raymond Flaherty of Headford parish, and Fr Gerald David of Athenry parish helmed the initiative, both priests having kept a close eye on the unfolding situation in Beirut. In a statement issued,

Fr Raymond expressed their affinity for Lebanon and its people after a 2019 pilgrimage to the shrine of St Charbel.

Making reference to the close ties the people of Ireland have always had with Lebanon because of the Irish UN peacekeeping efforts, Fr

Raymond said that following special Masses offered in both parishes for the people of Lebanon, they encouraged their parishioners to donate generously in an attempt to help those directly affected by the "devastating blast".

Both priests were "extremely surprised" by the generosity of their parishioners, given the current difficulties brought about by the coronavirus pandemic.

Major factors

Fr Flaherty said: "I think that one of the major factors in the great response by the people in donating so generously was the fact that the funds were going directly to the people on the ground."

The amount of €18,000 was raised between the two parishes, and this was sent directly to the Beirut Archbishop for the Maronites, Msgr Boulos Abdul-Sater, and

to a personal friend of both priests', Lebanese TV presenter Rania Charbel, who is based in Beirut.

Letter

In a letter of thanks to the priests, Archbishop Abdul-Sater said: "The contribution you made in the reconstruction efforts is very much appreciated. The seven thousand euros that you sent are used in fixing the doors and windows of damaged houses

which will enable the people of Beirut to return to their homes before rain."

He went on to explain the situation, saying: "The area hit by the explosion is populated mostly by middle and poor class Christians. Your contribution will help them stay in the capital and will safeguard the true face of Beirut as a society where religious and social diversity is respected."

Nathan pins his hope on a medal



Chai Brady

Country superstar Nathan Carter has revealed his hope that a miraculous medal presented to him by his grandfather which the singer later lost is bringing faith and consolation to whoever found it.

Speaking on RTÉ's *The Meaning of Life* at the weekend, the Co. Fermanagh-based entertainer said that the medal was a cherished possession that his grandfather presented to him on his 18th birthday.

He told presenter Joe Duffy that he was devastated when he lost it four years later.

Mr Carter, now 30, tried to conceal his shame from the grandfather who had presented him with the religious symbol.

However, he said he was relieved when he eventually plucked up the courage to come clean with his grandfather and he was very understanding. "Someone else must have needed it more," was the simple response from his grandfather.

Mr Carter revealed that his childhood Catholic Faith continues to inspire him even though he has gotten out of the habit of attending Mass regularly.

However, he said he also struggles with understanding the Christian teaching that God is all-forgiving. "No matter what you seem to do wrong you can always be forgiven. I find that very hard to believe... it's one of the things I struggle with," he revealed.

Discussing assisted suicide during pandemic 'disingenuous'

Staff reporter

The Bishop of Cloyne has said that to introduce a bill that would allow for assisted suicide during the middle of a pandemic is a "contradiction of an enormous magnitude".

Bishop William Crean criticised the introduction of the 'Dying with Dignity Bill', dubbing it "disingenuous and unnecessary".

In his Homily for the Church's 'Day for Life', he said: "Is it not a contradiction of enormous magnitude to introduce a bill of this nature in the middle of a pandemic?"

"If the frail and elderly were fearful and anxious due to the virus, they have an added legitimate concern as to how much value is really placed on their life and their lifetime's contribution to

society. The Day for Life is the Church's annual flagging of these issues and they will not go away.

"They will not go away because our treatment of the vulnerable is the judgement of our humanity.

"Assisting in suicide is a false exercise of compassion and tolerance of its practice is flawed in its moral judgement."

What do you think?



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Skibbereen Mercy convent a ‘loss’ to community as Gardai investigate blaze

Ruadhán Jones

The former Sisters of Mercy convent in Skibbereen which was gutted by a recent fire has been felt as “quite a loss by locals”, according to a respected architectural historian.

On Tuesday, September 29, a fire burned through the interior of the convent buildings and chapel, leaving only the stone walls standing.

Cork-based architectural historian and consultant Jessie Castle said that the burning of the convent was a great loss, for the community and for its architectural significance.

Association

“There seems to be quite a positive association in the town with the schools and the whole history of the convent,” Ms Castle said. “A lot of people would have been involved with the schools and convent one way or another,

Irish church leaders call for ‘urgency and generosity’ in Brexit negotiations

Staff reporter

Christian Church leaders from across the island of Ireland have called for renewed efforts to strengthen relationships between the UK and Ireland as negotiations reach a critical stage.

The leaders’ warned that “with limited time remaining to prepare for the outworking of Brexit, it is in everyone’s interests to achieve the clarity and security an agreement will provide”.

“We appeal to the negotiating parties to act with urgency and generosity to secure the best possible foundation for that evolving relationship by giving much needed certainty on the economic and social implications,” the statement said.

It is the church leaders’ hope that the Good Friday Agreement “might serve as a source of inspiration and a foundation to build upon as we continue to work through the Brexit process”.

“That framework allowed us to address significant barriers to political engagement, promote greater social cohesion and develop our economy.”

The statement was signed by a number of different church leaders, including Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All-Ireland, Dr Eamon Martin.

it seems to be felt as quite a loss by people who live in the town there. For me, the loss of that sort of architecture is very sad, I do feel those types of buildings are worthy of protection.”

Ms Castle, who is conducting research into the social and architectural history of convents in Ireland, said this

should serve as a reminder of their importance.

Loss

“As we lose each one of these, it’s getting more important that we make the effort to preserve them because you know, it’s easy to say there all over the place, there’s nothing unique about them and then

suddenly there are very few of them left.”

Meanwhile, Gardai have confirmed that there was human involvement in starting the fire, and their technical unit are currently investigating to ascertain if it was intentional or accidental.

The blaze occurred the week after planning permis-

sion had been granted to Remcoll Capital, who were planning a €10m re-development of the convent.

The company are currently examining the buildings to see what can be saved and intend on continuing with the re-development project.

See page 10.

More beautiful trees for Ireland!



President Michael D. Higgins marked National Tree Day 2020 with members of the Easy Treesie Project and ‘Crann – Trees for Ireland’. President Higgins was presented with the 100,000th tree to be planted by the charity’s ‘Easy Treesie’ project by ‘veteran’ tree-planters Sam Harrison (10) and his younger sister Maeve Harrison (8) in the grounds of Áras an Uachtaráin.

Places of worship under threat gain support in Northern Ireland

Jason Osborne

Places of worship under threat of attack in Northern Ireland were offered reprieve last week as the DUP voiced its support for additional help for these centres of worship.

Charity director Tim Martin and policy officer Mark Baille met with First Minister Arlene Foster and

other MLAs to discuss CARE NI’s calls for consideration of a places of worship fund to be created. The fund would mirror a similar initiative in place in England and Wales.

During the meeting, Ms Foster said her party supported additional support for places of worship which are at risk of attack, including the idea of introducing a Places of Worship Security Scheme.

She indicated the DUP would work to see additional support provided.

The meeting came after CARE NI recently published research following a freedom of information request which showed places of worship in NI had been attacked more than 600 times in just five years.

Commenting on the First Minister’s support, Mr Baille said: “We welcome the

DUP’s support for additional support to be provided to places of worship which are at risk of or have been attacked.

“We are reaching out to politicians across the spectrum here in Northern Ireland and are optimistic there’s real support for action to support places of worship which are impacted by attacks.”

5,000 students celebrate founder of Spiritans

Some 5,000 students of Spiritan schools in Ireland and their teachers answered the virtual call to prayer on Friday, October 2, Feast Day of the Spiritan founder, Claude Poullart des Places.

Each classroom across the Spiritan education community created a 15-minute prayer space in its schedule. The online event, led by Fr Paddy Moran CSSp of the Spiritan leadership team in Ireland, was delivered directly to the classroom.

The moment of online prayer goes to the heart of Spiritan education’s value-led programme of educational transformation which invites all students to achieve their best, to bring their talents and gifts to bear on their academic programme and place all at the service of mission.

Migrants

Frontline workers fighting Covid-19 were remembered. Spiritan mission overseas featured as did Spirasi, the Spiritans’ project with migrants in Ireland who are survivors of torture, and An Tobar, the Spiritan Spirituality and Retreat Centre which is located near Navan in Co. Meath.

Due to the ongoing need for social distancing, it was felt that it would be appropriate to gather in a safe way and offer a space of prayer for Spiritan schools, students, teachers and families.

Increase in cancer patients who want to die at home

Covid hospital restrictions have caused a “significant increase” in people wanting to spend their final days at home, according to the Irish Cancer Society (ICS).

In a statement, the ICS stated that it has seen “a surge in requests for home-based palliative care but is currently struggling to recruit nurses to fulfil demand”.

They said that requests for the Night Nursing service have increased by almost 50% in some parts of the country when compared with 2019.

The increase is driven by the restricted visiting arrangements currently in place in hospitals due to Covid-19, according to the Society’s director of services delivery, Donal Buggy.

Would you like to see your parish photos published in The Irish Catholic?



If you’re present at a celebration or event in your parish, why not take a photograph and email it to:

jason@irishcatholic.ie

Photos in jpeg format are fine and please do tell us who is in the photo, the occasion and the parish.

How Derek Mahon saved my life – an act of grace, surely

The Belfast-born poet Derek Mahon, who died last week, aged 78, after a short illness, was rightly acclaimed as one of the finest poets of our time.

I knew Derek (along with his late wife Doreen) as a friend and a neighbour – when our children were young they played together in London's Kensington. The kids all have happy memories of those times. I would later meet up with Derek in Dublin – he had a perch in the tea-room of the Shelbourne Hotel – and in West Cork, where he finally settled.

And it was in Kinsale, West Cork that Derek Mahon probably saved my life. As well, quite possibly, as the lives of others.

Story

It is a shameful story – shameful on my part, heroic on his. After an evening's revelry in Kinsale – this would have been back in the 1980s – I staggered towards my hired car to drive back to the hotel.

This really was a deplorable scene. After an evening's imbibing of alcohol, I was massively over the legal limit. I was sozzled, legless, paralytic, to use the



Mary Kenny

vernaculars. I could hardly find the gear-stick.

Derek opened the door of the vehicle and said: "No, Mary, you mustn't! Stop!"

My mother always used to say that "you cannot reason with a drunk", and so it proved. I insisted I could drive. I told him to get lost, stop ordering me about, stop being a male chauvinist, I was an independent person – all the usual

drivel that drunks blather.

It's not that reason disappears with drunkenness – it's that it becomes totally distorted.

Then Derek acted. He reached into the vehicle and switched it off, taking away the ignition key. Yes, he took away my 'autonomy', and rightly so. "You can't drive, Mary, and that's an end to it!" He then called me a taxi.

The next morning, overcome

● Derek Mahon's poetry was translated into French by a French poet, Philippe Jaccotet (and in turn, Mahon translated Jaccotet's work into English).

Jaccotet asked about the cultural and political context of Northern Ireland and so, Derek [pictured] started to explain it to him. "There are Catholics, and there are Protestants," he said. "And politically, there are Republicans and there are Loyalists – they consider themselves Loyal to the Crown."

Jaccotet took this in, and then concluded: "And naturally, the Protestants are Republicans, and the Catholics are Royalists, yes?"

Well, no! Derek had to explain that it didn't work like that in Ireland.

The Frenchman was drawing on French history, where one of the most ardently Catholic parts of France – the Vendée – had been the most fiercely monarchist. 'Crown and altar' had been linked together elsewhere, too, as in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

European history is complex. The patterns aren't the same everywhere.



with remorse, I rang to thank him. I could have killed myself by driving in such an extreme state of inebriation. Worse, I could have killed, or harmed, others.

Derek understood and was subsequently forgiving of the episode. He had been there himself – he, too, had wrestled with a serious alcohol problem. He had quit and got sober, but he had an insight into the madness of inebriation.

Good deed

Not long after that, I followed Derek's lead. I found my way to sobriety, and have, thankfully, remained sober.

Derek was not a believer – although he grew up in a strict Protestant family – but his decisively good deed was surely an act of grace.

Later, he did give me the recipe, over coffee at the Shelbourne, for a non-alcoholic 'high', if the need for a boost was overpowering. This was: two double espressos, washed down with a Coca-Cola. The caffeine 'hit' is indeed something! But you'd want to make sure your heart is in full, robust condition.

I lift a coffee in homage to you, Derek, in the spiritual afterlife.

Can't beat the human touch

Before all the museums and art galleries sadly closed down in Dublin, I was fortunate enough to see a most rewarding exhibition about St Kevin and Glendalough at the National Museum of Ireland in Kildare Street.

It is stunning what can be done with modern lighting, and computer-generated images, rendered through three dimensions and photographed, as it were, from the air. This exquisite part of Co. Wicklow, in all its rich archeological glory is wonderfully illuminated.

However, I would have liked a little more human 'narrative' about St Kevin (Caoimhín, or Caoimghín), who died in AD 618. His family story is recorded in O'Riain's authoritative dictionary of Irish saints. He came from a dominant dynasty in Co. Wicklow – and in these Irish traditions, the mother's family was as worthy of note as the father's.

Computer-generated images are fabulous, but the curators of exhibitions shouldn't omit the human stories associated with a great pilgrimage site. Hopefully, when present conditions change, the Glendalough show will still be there.

Advertorial

Persecuted, but never abandoned



The Bible Network is bringing hope to believers who are suffering simply because they love Jesus writes John Savage

Year on year, we're seeing a significant rise in the number of Christians being persecuted across many parts of the world, particularly in Asia.

In parts of India, banners hung by religious radicals read: "Christians are not allowed inside." Bibles and study materials are destroyed, and believers are intimidated, beaten or worse.

In southeast Bangladesh, radical Islamic groups have targeted church planters and in the north of the country, Christians have been forced off their land.

Recent anti-conversion laws in Nepal make evangelistic work

extremely difficult and create significant pressure and danger for church leaders and their congregations.

Today, some 2,000 years after Jesus walked the earth, our brothers and sisters across Africa, Asia and the Middle East are suffering daily because they choose to put their faith in Him. They are experiencing everything from acts of violence to death threats to imprisonment, and even rejection by their own families.

“However, as the spiritual battle intensifies around the world, the hope of the Gospel glimmers bright, like “a city on a hill that cannot be hidden.”

(Matthew 5:14)

As religious extremism, governmental oppression and persecution grow aggressively around the world, it's vital we share the gift of God's Word to help strengthen the faith of our brothers and sisters and embolden them to tell others about Jesus.

The Bible Network is passionately doing all we can to support those who are giving so much to serve Christ. Last year, together with our ministry partner Bible League International, we reached 756,752 people with the Gospel in 15 countries across the persecuted church. God

is moving powerfully through this ministry and we would love you to be part of it.

By giving persecuted Christians the Bibles they're desperate for, you're not only strengthening their faith – you are equipping and encouraging them as they spread the Gospel. As one persecuted believer explains: "When a believer receives a Bible from someone in a free country they feel a rushing sense of hope."

They will also be assured, without a doubt, that God is with them. Just as His Word promises: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you." (Deuteronomy 31:6).

God's Word has been a tremendous comfort to me throughout these uncertain times, as I am certain it has been for you, too. Please, will you give that same comfort to a persecuted Christian? There's no greater gift you could give.

Right now, you can show a believer they're not alone in their suffering. You can bless them with the hope and guidance of God's Word.

Visit www.thebiblenetwork.org.uk/emergencyfund to rush your gift of God's Word today. Thank you.



President pays tribute to famed historian and educator Sr Margaret MacCurtain OP

Ruadhán Jones

President Michael D Higgins was one of many who expressed “great sadness” at the death of Sr MacCurtain, who passed away recently at the age of 91.

“I am among the many, in so many parts of Irish society, who will have heard with great sadness of the death of Sr Margaret Mac Curtain, Dominican sister, historian, educator, human rights advocate, feminist and writer,” President Higgins said.

President Higgins added that “there were so many aspects of Irish life, past and

present, to which she made a unique and valuable contribution”.

Born in 1929, Sr MacCurtain joined the Dominican order in 1950, in which she held a number of positions including Prioress of Sion Hill Convent.

Writings

She spent 30 years as a lecturer in history in UCD, and she was awarded the Eire Society of Boston Gold Medal in 1993 for her writings on Irish women's history.

President Higgins described her as being “dedicated to her religious vocation

and inspired by the Second Vatican Council”.

“Sr Margaret MacCurtain displayed her tremendous talent in so many areas, and she will be remembered not only for her academic achievements but also for her tireless campaigning for social justice.

“We owe her a profound debt of gratitude for her advocacy on the abolition of corporal punishment in schools and for the rights of children with special educational needs, and indeed for her academic work in which she highlighted the oft neglected role of women in Irish history.”

Article

In a biographical article written before her death, Sr Margaret wrote that: “The Second Vatican Council (1962–64) brought profound changes to religious life for women,

a growing sense of human rights, a realisation of mission to the poorest...I gradually became aware of other

inequalities, such as the position of women worldwide.

“My determination to write women into main-

stream history, though resisted for years, has succeeded beyond my wildest dreams!” Sr Margaret said.



New deacon Vincent Crowley stands with family after his ordination to the permanent diaconate in the Church of the Holy Rosary, Tullow in Carlow on Sunday. Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin is pictured on the left.

Amnesty’s abortion policy a ‘complete contradiction’ – bishop

Ruadhán Jones

Bishop Kevin Doran has described human rights organisation Amnesty International’s call for universal rights to abortion a “complete contradiction”.

The Chairman of the Council for Life’s statement was in response to Amnesty’s announcement of a new abortion policy. The organisation is calling for abortion-on-demand, for any reason, up to birth and to allow sex-selective abortion.

“We will continue to demand that governments respect reproductive autonomy, and campaign for safe abortion access for anyone who seeks it, without discrimination, coercion or stigma,” a statement from Amnesty reads.

Bishop Doran responded,

saying that in more recent years, “Amnesty International has chosen to identify with the abortion (pro-choice) lobby and to deny the most basic of all human rights to unborn babies. This is a complete contradiction.”

Bishop Doran said that he used to be a member of the organisation, but terminated his membership 20 years ago due to Amnesty’s abortion policy.

“Catholics should not, as a matter of principle, support pro-abortion (pro-choice) organisations,” he said.

In a statement for the ‘Day for Life’ on October 4, Bishop Doran said abortion is a tragedy, “not just for the loss of so many young lives, but the grief that so many women suffer in silence and the extent to which society itself loses its fruitfulness”.

God’s generous invitation to us all

Today’s Gospel (Matthew 22:1-14) is a parable about an invitation to a wedding, not just any wedding, but the royal wedding of the king’s son.

In Michelangelo’s famous fresco on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, the finger of God is reaching towards Adam drawing him into life. It is a picture of invitation and free response. Adam must accept the invitation to life.

God invites but does not force us. Our response to God must be in love and love has to be free. That is the amazing gift of free will allotted to human beings, made in the image and likeness of God. God invites us to come and be part of the divine family as heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

The king issued invitations to his son’s wedding. Matthew addressed his gospel principally to his fellow Jews at the time when the division had widened between the Jews who accepted Jesus Christ and those who did not accept.

Matthew tells us that this parable of invitation and rejection was addressed to the chief priests and elders of the Jews.

The great wedding was in the unification of Heaven and Earth in the incarnation when God the Son is united with us in human flesh. Those who were invited to come to the wedding banquet did not accept. We are told that they were not interested. One went off to his farm, another to his business. I’m sure they regarded these as good excuses.

Excuse

Did you ever hear anybody saying: “I have a poor excuse”? It’s always a good excuse. There is great wisdom in the Irish word for an excuse, leathseal, which literally means half a story. The full truth of this parable is that they were not interested. As the story proceeds, apathy turns into violence as

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O’Flynn OFM Cap.



servants of the king were maltreated and killed. Christian Jews were barred from local synagogues and persecution had begun when Matthew was writing.

The joy of the Gospel

Let us move forward to our own time. Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation called *The Joy of the Gospel*, begins with God’s invitation to us. “The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew” (paragraph 1).

As in the parable of the royal wedding, today also there are dangers causing people to be uninterested in God’s invitation: consumerism, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures and blunted conscience.

“Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God’s voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades. Many fall prey to it, and end up resentful, angry and listless. That is no way to live a dignified and fulfilled life; it is not God’s will for us, nor is it the life in the Spirit which has its source in the heart of the risen Christ” (paragraph 2).

A daily encounter

Pope Francis proceeds to invite all

Christians to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ and to do this every day. “Now is the time to say to Jesus: ‘Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace” (paragraph 3).

This is the embrace of God who is wedded to us in the mission of Jesus. Jesus invited various people to come and follow him. Many did follow but others turned the other way, like those who did not accept his teaching on becoming the Bread of Life for us. Another who turned away was the rich young man who rejected his invitation to sell what he had to share with the poor. His face fell at these words and he went away very sad because he was very rich.

Prayer

The Lord invites us to come in quiet prayer to listen to his invitations. Come to me when your burdens are heavy and I will give you rest. Come to me in your loneliness and I will be your friend, your forever friend. Come to me with your sins and I will grant you merciful forgiveness. Come to me when you feel confused and let me be your way, your truth and your life. Come to me when you feel lost, for I am the Shepherd who searches for the lost. Come to me in your spiritual hunger for, in the Eucharist, I am the Bread of Life. Yes, Lord, I answer, I hear your words and rejoice to accept your invitation, this day and every day.

Extract from Silvester O’Flynn, *Gospel Reflections and Prayers*, Columba Books.

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The View



Good Friday Agreement's lasting gift: the ability to simply move on

Over 50 years, the work of peace and reconciliation in counteracting the ugly and protracted outbreak of violence has been facilitated by patient outreach and genuine effort at mutual understanding engaged in by Christians of different backgrounds. This has often involved painful and self-critical examination of the causes of conflict, where conflict itself has provided new problems and few answers.

A friend and regular correspondent for 40 years died recently in Belfast aged 97. Roderick (Roddy) Evans was a medical doctor, who remained fit well into his 90s. He qualified in Dublin, practised abroad in challenging climates, and resided in Belfast from around 1970.

He and some close friends were involved in a post-war Anglican movement known as Moral Re-Armament, and in the midst of the Troubles engaged in a cross-community Bible discussion group in Clonard Monastery under the guidance of Fr Christopher McCarthy CSsR. A Catholic member of that group Alec McRitchie has written some appreciations of Roddy Evans since his passing.

Legacy

One of the group, Dr George Dallas, a Presbyterian who identified with the tradition going back to Dr William Drennan and constitutionally-minded United Irishmen, gave evidence to the New Ireland Forum. As a cross-community group, they talked to different organisations and governments in Belfast, Dublin, London and Washington. Their work found high-level support from John Austin Baker, Bishop of Salisbury. He first used the phrase 'the legacy of history', which, as something to be overcome, opens the Downing Street Declaration of December 1993 between John Major and Albert Reynolds, which proved a catalyst for the subsequent IRA and loyalist ceasefires.

Roddy Evans published



booklets reflecting the spirit of group discussions, *Where I Sensed the Breath of God: A footnote in Anglo-Irish history* in 2002, and earlier *The second conversion of Dr George Dallas*. What was unusual was the willingness to bring to the table a strong sense of responsibility felt by him to be due from the Protestant and the British side for the northern conflict.

“Neither unionists nor the British government will entertain any doubts about the wisdom of establishing Northern Ireland”

All of us can critique, if we try, opportunities missed and wrong turns taken in our history. Generally speaking, we cannot go back and choose again. We can only go forward from where we are now.

In the 44 years from the first Home Government meeting in 1870 until the outbreak of war in 1914,

“All of us can critique, if we try, opportunities missed and wrong turns taken in our history. Generally speaking, we cannot go back and choose again”

a collective Irish position should have been found. The attempt to block any sort of self-government within the Union was deeply misguided. The political and economic costs of partition, most of all for northern nationalists, were high. World War I came and opened up new possibilities, including complete independence for most of Ireland, since partition seemed to be virtually a done deal.

Partition

Partition could not be made into something that separated two peoples. Northern Ireland deprived a third of the population of the right to participate in an independent Ireland (unless they were prepared to move). The border was always an anomaly, and could be the biggest stumbling block to a Brexit deal, if last year's agreed protocol is repudiated. Treated as an opportunity, the protocol gives Northern Ireland the unique advantage of simultaneous access to the British market, the all-island economy and the EU single market.

Worldwide, there is a

new critical look at the legacy of imperialism. On present form, neither unionists nor the British government will entertain any doubts about the wisdom of establishing Northern Ireland 100 years ago. British ministers talk glibly about the integrity of the United Kingdom. What about the integrity of Ireland? They talk about the four nations, never specifying what the fourth nation is, as Northern Ireland is not one.

Yet, if the nationalist goal is, as John Hume taught, to unite people not just territory, while only lip-service is paid to respecting the unionist tradition, what does it do to the trust needed to build unity, if everything about Northern Ireland is rejected out of hand?

“The biblical comparison that comes to mind is the Persian King Belshazzar's feast”

The Good Friday Agreement has given everyone a chance to some extent to move on. A graphic example of this is provided in the recently published memoir by former President Mary McAleese, who also had much involvement with the Clonard mission. The book is dedicated to the late Fr Alec Reid. The most vivid and arresting part is three chapters on her family's failing struggle to continue living in 1970-72 in a mixed community in Ardoyne, where Catholics were a minority, at the height of the Troubles, where death came very close.

There was a concerted attempt to prevent her, with her background, from becoming President of Ireland, which thankfully did not succeed. She was undoubtedly the right person for the era of the peace process, from the opening of the Messines Tower with the British and Belgian monarchs in 1998 to being host to Queen Elizabeth in 2011. Whether readers agree with her or not, she gives fascinating

accounts of working with the Church and of disagreements.

Humility is a Christian virtue, often conspicuously absent from the actions of public figures. In our day and other days, there are many examples of hubris being humbled. After all he had supposedly done for God, Louis XIV, *le grand monarque*, had three generations of his descendants, bar two, carried off by disease. Impenitence can often be worse than the fault itself.

Supreme Court judges are in the news lately. Southern evangelicals have compared President Trump to King Cyrus of Persia,

who released the Jews from captivity in Babylon.

The Presidential debate with mockery of mask-wearing was followed by audience celebration on the White House lawn of the nomination of a US Supreme Court judge, of whom there are great hopes in the US pro-life movement, but then by a positive diagnosis of Covid-19 amongst several present, including the President and his wife. The biblical comparison that comes to mind is the Persian King Belshazzar's feast. But all thoughtful people wish for their full recovery, so that he and Joe Biden can face the judgment of the American people.

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Charities call on Government to heed Pope Francis’ call for solidarity in budget submissions

Ruadhán Jones

Covid-19 looms large in pre-Budget 2021 submissions, as Irish charities stress the need to support people on the margins at home and abroad.

Budget 2021 will be released on Tuesday, October 13, with charities calling for health, housing and climate change to be the priorities.

A number of the charities said that Covid-19 has exacerbated inequalities and that any planned recovery must include provisions for those worst affected.

Trócaire, the official charity of the Irish Catholic bishops, has called on the Government to maintain its commitment to Overseas Development Assistance (ODA).

Solidarity

Trócaire CEO Caoimhe de Barra said that “global solidarity through overseas aid is more vital now than ever” due to the global crisis, and asked the Irish Government to heed the call of *Fratelli Tutti*, the Pope’s recent encyclical.

“Pope Francis urges us to allow the Covid-19 tragedy to become the moment we remember that we are a global community where one person’s problems are the problems of all,” Ms de Barra said. “The Government must recognise this in Budget 2021 by protecting Ireland’s overseas aid budget so as organisations like Trócaire can continue to save and change lives around the world.”

The submission identifies three key areas on which it believes the Government should focus:

1 – Maintain existing levels of investment in Overseas Development Assistance

(ODA) expenditure in Budget 2021 and work towards achieving the UN target of 0.7% of GNI in ODA through the development of a multi-annual plan.

2 – Continue to uphold Irish Aid’s longstanding reputation for excellence as a humanitarian partner, with high quality, poverty-reduction focused, untied aid, including civil society as a key partner.

3 – Meet Ireland’s international commitments to climate justice by increasing allocations to climate finance in addition to increases in overall ODA.

Housing

Focusing on matters in Ireland, the national housing and homeless charity Peter McVerry Trust called on the Government to ensure that housing and other support needs of the vulnerable are prioritised.

They put a particular emphasis on improving mental health facilities to take account of the impact of Covid-19, especially as a means of ensuring students are not excluded from schools.

The main areas the charity asks the Government to focus on are:

1 – Continuing the growth of the national Housing First programme through increasing targets by 25% over the next three years.

2 – Delivering more one bedroom units to cater for the many single people who are homeless.

3 – Increase levels of funding for the Repair and Leasing Scheme, from €40,000 to €60,000 per unit and reducing VAT on building projects aimed at bringing empty buildings back into use for social housing.

Focus Ireland has also called on the Government to invest in social housing

delivery to protect the most vulnerable from homelessness and to help kick-start the country’s economic recovery from Covid-19 by creating jobs in construction and many other related sectors.

Focus Ireland Advocacy Director Mike Allen said: “Covid-19 has turned life as we know it upside down...in repairing the damage done, there are significant opportunities to effect meaningful structural changes and address some of the hitherto seemingly insurmountable obstacles to a fair, inclusive society.”

Unrestricted joy in Doon!



Boys from Doon CBS Primary School, Co. Limerick, after receiving their First Communion.

Theologian applauds ‘zeal’ of Latin Mass devotees

Jason Osborne

Maynooth Theologian Neil O’Donoghue has applauded the “love of the liturgy” followers of the Extraordinary Form of the Mass, insisting that the Ordinary Form must be studied with the same zeal. However, he also cautioned against “throwing stones at other Catholics who celebrate an approved form of the liturgy”.

In an essay for the journal *The Furrow*, Mr O’Donoghue addressed many contemporary stances taken in the Church today regarding the liturgy,

which often sees followers of one tradition or rite claim its supremacy over others.

‘Practical fit’

Likening the Extraordinary Form to a vintage car in terms of beauty, he said: “I can well understand those who like vintage cars and are willing to invest the time, talent and treasure to keep them on the road, but for my purposes (as well as for the vast majority of people) the Toyota Yaris Hybrid I drive is a more practical fit today.”

He emphasised the accessibility of

the Ordinary Form as a key reason for its success today, while warning against the “gnostic” tendencies to believe that one form of liturgy is more suitable for “true Catholics” than others.

“Liturgical diversity is a wonderful thing but no particular liturgical rite or tradition can contain the whole Christian mystery,” he said.

He concluded by noting that there is much “we can learn from the followers of the Extraordinary Form. We ought to imitate their love of the liturgy and their commitment to its celebration.”

St Gerard Majella Novena goes online

Staff reporter

The annual novena to St Gerard Majella which normally attracts up to 10,000 people each year is moving to online platforms in 2020 as a result of the coronavirus crisis.

Described as a “highlight for the Faith community in Dundalk and many surrounding counties”, by Fr Noel Kehoe, rector of St Joseph’s Monastery in Dundalk, the tradition is set to continue through the available online platforms.

With the event set to take place from October 8 to 16 this year, RTÉ, Church Services TV and Dundalk FM are to broadcast it, across tv, radio and the internet.

The theme of this year’s novena will be ‘Hope in a time of crisis’, with speakers to address the topics of hope for the Church, society and our world in a time of crisis. A talk will also be given on the subject of parenting in a time of crisis.

Minister welcomes new visiting guidelines for nursing homes

Mary Butler TD has welcomed the publication of new visiting guidance for nursing homes. The new guidance aims to further support long-term residential care services (including nursing homes) and residents in planning visitations.

Welcoming the publication, the Minister for Mental Health and Older People said: “This is an important guidance document that provides pathways for safe visiting. We are all aware of the importance of continued social interaction and of the difficulties that have been experienced in maintaining these interactions in a safe manner, especially with older people and those who are medically vulnerable.”

Support

She added: “I encourage all nursing homes to remain familiar with the latest public health advice and support, and to make every effort to continue to facilitate visitors in line with public health advice.”



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Diocese of Clogher seeks new support worker for priests

Chai Brady

The Diocese of Clogher is seeking a support worker specifically for priests in the diocese after their Council of Priests called for the role to be created, with the need being more pronounced since the pandemic.

The 'Diocesan Support Worker' will be expected to visit all priests and build relationships and trust, observe their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing including "whether they are living well".

They will also be asked to provide professional support and expertise regarding care issues in advance of declining mental and physical health, provide care plans and more.

Planning

A diocesan spokesperson said: "The post will be of immense benefit to priests as they will have a designated person to help them cope with planning and supporting their own well-being, as well as someone who will also liaise with the bishop in terms of their welfare.

"This question of well-being has been brought into focus by the Covid-19 pandemic, even though plans for this post were being made well in advance of its onset.

They will be expected to report to the bishop, have a minimum of five years of

experience as a public health nurse, carer or social worker and have a good knowledge of the policies and procedures of the diocese and those of the Catholic Church in Ireland relating to safeguarding

of children and vulnerable adults.

The spokesman added: "The initiative is one from the Council of Priests and it represents very well the collegial effectiveness and relevance of

that body and its role in the diocese. One of its functions is to be a support for priests (and the bishop) and the wellbeing of clergy is a vital part of that.

"The person appointed to

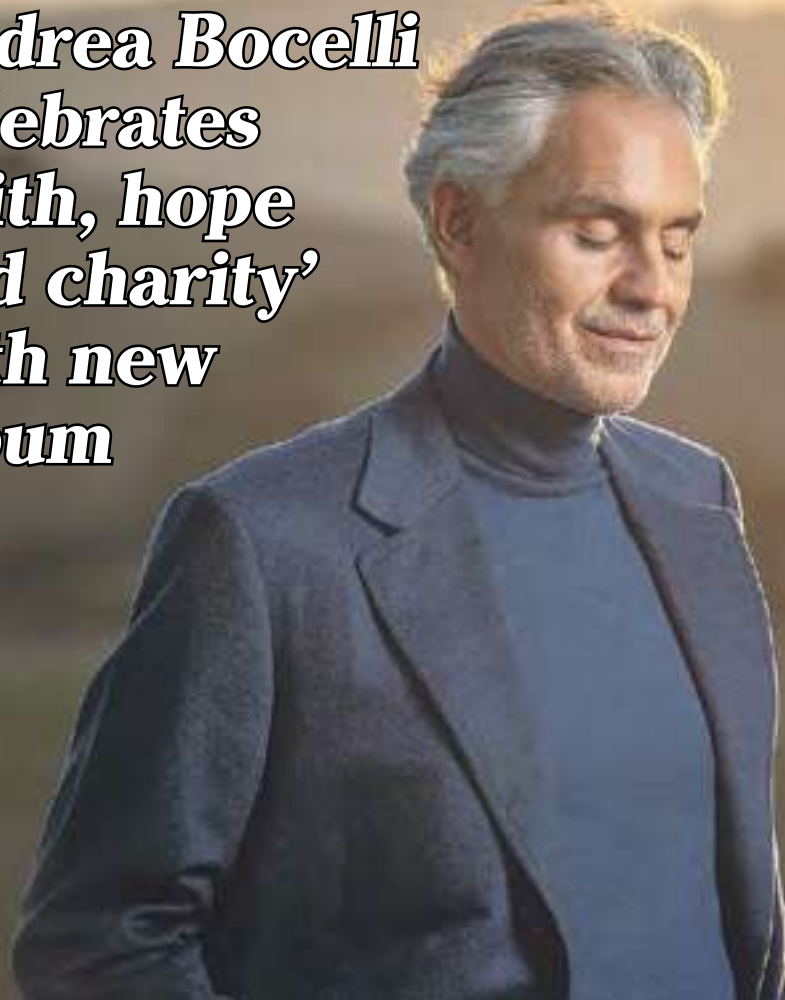
this post will be serving all priests. As priests get older they will need more support in terms of planning for their future.

"That will form an important part of the work done by

the support worker."

Application details, including a job specification, are available from www.clogherdiocese.ie or by phone at 047 81019 or email: diocesanoffice@clogherdiocese.ie

Andrea Bocelli celebrates 'faith, hope and charity' with new album



Staff reporter

World-renowned Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli is set to release his new album *Believe* on November 13, which celebrates "faith, hope and charity".

It follows Bocelli's record-breaking 'Music for Hope' performance during Easter from the Duomo cathedral in Milan which was watched live by millions of people around the globe.

The themes explored in this new recording are deeply personal according to Bocelli, who said: "The concept behind *Believe* is based on three words: faith, hope and charity.

"These are the three theological virtues of Christianity, yet – quite independently of any religious belief – they are also the three extraordinary keys to giving meaning and completeness to the lives of every one of us."

Believe is described as a collection of uplifting songs that have inspired and sus-

tained Bocelli over the years.

There will also be a new composition released which was written by the late Ennio Morricone, a long-time collaborator of Bocelli's, titled *Inno sussurato*, meaning 'Whispered Hymn'. There are also familiar songs on the album including *Hallelujah* and *You'll Never Walk Alone*.

Settings

Bocelli composed his own settings of *Ave Maria* and *Padre Nostro* especially for this record. He said: "I don't consider myself to be a composer, however, I am a musician, and sometimes melodies come to my mind, with essentially complete harmonies... music that knocks on the door of my soul and which I gladly welcome and then set free by putting pen to paper."

There are also melodies like *Mira il tuo popolo* which take him back to when he was a boy, growing up in Tuscany. "They represent the soundtrack to my childhood memories," he added.

Talented pupils scoop top prizes in art competition



Pupils of Ballyforan NS, Ballyforan-Dysart-Tisrara parish, Co. Roscommon are pictured with their school principal, Thomas Murray, parish priest, Fr Francis Beirne PP and teacher, Ms Finlan, and the pupils of Killasolan NS, Ahascragh-Caltra parish, Co. Galway, pictured with their priest, Fr Tensin Perera and principal, Gabrielle Boner, on their recent success in the Veritas sponsored inaugural CREIDEAMH Faith and Friendship Children's Art Competition.

Budding artists of both school communities claimed 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th prizes and the art work of all remaining pupils was highly commended by the adjudicators. The theme of this year's competition was 'The Lord is My Shepherd' and it was open to 3rd, 4th and 5th Class pupils attending primary schools in 17 parishes in the greater Ballinasloe area.

A piece of our past... up in smoke

The Skibbereen convent, which formerly housed nuns from the Sisters of Mercy, was lost to a blaze recently. Photo: RTE

After the penal laws were lifted in the early 19th Century, there was an explosion in the number of convents being built in Ireland. So many were built, that they became a common sight across the country, and to this day many towns in Ireland will have an old convent building as a centrepiece of the landscape.

But familiarity breeds contempt – their ubiquity means that they have long been neglected, both by historians and conservationists, according to architectural historian and consultant Jessie Castle. She is conducting research into the social and architectural history of Irish convents, in conjunction with Irish historian Gillian O'Brien, and has extensive experience in conservation projects through her work with JCA Architects in Cork.

"They are very often protected structures, and they are included in their local authorities list of protected structures," she explains. "With that, there's an onus on the owner to maintain those buildings and to protect them from deterioration, but unfortunately as we all know that's not enforced very often."

Reminder

The Skibbereen convent, which formerly housed nuns from the Sisters of Mercy, serves as a reminder of what we have to lose, says Ms Castle.

"As we lose each one of these, it's getting more important that we make the effort to preserve them because you know, it's easy to say they're all over the place, there's nothing unique about them and then suddenly there are very few

Skibbereen convent fire is a tragic reminder of what we have to lose, writes Ruadhán Jones



of them left. The sad thing about Skibbereen is that there appears to have been a very extensive plan and design to redevelop that building.

"For me, the loss of that sort of architecture is very sad, I do feel those types of buildings are worthy of protection.

"There seems to be quite a positive association in the town with the schools and the whole history of the convent. A lot of people would have been involved with the schools and convent one way or another, it seems to be felt as quite a loss by people who live in the town there."

* * * * *

For Ms Castle, the lack of attention to convents and their architecture does a disservice to their importance in the history of the local communities, as well as overlooking the beauty and distinctiveness of their architecture.

In the case of the Skibbereen chapel, for example, it was designed by architects E.W. Pugin and G.C. Ashlin, two of the foremost architects working in Ireland at the time of its construction in the 1860s.

"That chapel I know had been altered and its original decorative scheme covered over," Ms Castle explains, "but it was actually part of the planning works that these

modern works would be removed to see if there was any of the historic decorative design left.

"If you look at historic photographs and drawings for that chapel, it really was a beautiful example of craftsmanship and if you think of the hours that were spent and the training behind it and the towns people involved. I know there are other examples around, but they are becoming more rare."

Research

Some convent buildings can be traced back 200-300 years, preceding the emancipation of Catholics in Ireland. In the course of her research, Ms Castle discovered that "women were quite involved in the design of these convents, quite an unexpected find, and not something that has been frequently recorded.

"There's Wexford, which was an early convent, and that seems to have been purpose built," Ms Castle says. "It has a very beautiful chapel which was designed by one of the sisters there – she designed and supervised the construction

of the chapel. We know that Nano Nagel supervised the construction of the South Presentation convent (in Cork) herself. She was on site and she was checking the work, specifying what was to be done there."

Ms Castle also stresses that social impact of the convents has been overlooked historically. Many of them, especially those of the Presentation Sisters, were associated with the building of schools, and the they were integral to the economies of many rural towns.

“There is an urgency there to try and see these buildings while they’re still in use as convents, because once they’re not things change very quickly...access is often impossible and unfortunately they can begin to deteriorate very quickly”

"The nuns were quite influential figures in their communities – they're associated with religion and education, but they were also employers," Ms Castle explains. "First of all, you know, they commissioned and paid for the buildings... they often had a lot of

“Women were quite involved in the design of these convents, quite an unexpected find, and not something that has been frequently recorded”

boarding girls there, they had staff, they had cooks, maids, cleaners and then they had novice nuns and sometimes lay sisters living there as well – all these people had to be clothed and fed, trees for the garden – they really did contribute hugely to their local economy.

"This has definitely been overlooked by historians, it just isn't something that has been discussed."

It becomes a vicious circle as a result – because historians have not taken an interest in the convents, they become even more neglected and historians are less likely to ever take an interest. But Ms Castle believes it's important that the work is done now to preserve the buildings and also to analyse and record the influence they had.

"There is an urgency there to try and see these buildings while they're still in use as convents, because once they're not things change very quickly," she says. "Access is often impossible and unfortunately they can begin to deteriorate very quickly if they're not being maintained."

"Also, it's very, very interesting to see these buildings while they're still in use, because you fully understand how these buildings were used, how the rooms were used and, in many cases, very little has been changed. With the early convents it could be 200 years that those buildings have been used in that way."

There are many complications involved in the process of preserving or redeveloping the convents for new use – similarly, the process of recording the vast history is time consuming. But, if Ms Castle is correct, these are both projects in need of urgent attention.

The pandemic has shown that people still need and value their priests

The vocations crisis is rooted in a social, cultural and ecclesial landscape that has changed radically in the last 20 years, writes **Fr Tomás Surlis**



The return to seminary this year was particularly challenging, given the current pandemic. However, we approached the challenge with vigour, since the experience of a common life is central to the experience of priestly formation in Ireland and across the world today.

Living with and for each other helps our seminarians to develop the necessary skills they will need in priestly ministry going forward. In the seminary, the way we live is designed to prepare future priests for the reality of ministry in a changed and changing society and culture.

Skills such as being a generous person for others, being a builder of communion and community, being a team leader and a person who collaborates with lay women and men at parish and diocesan level, as together the people of God exercises its co-responsibility for the life of the Church in our times, such as those called for by the Congregation for the Clergy in its recent instruction on *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church* (2020).

Such attitudes of heart and mind are especially important in an ecclesial landscape that cries out for priests filled with zeal for both ministry and mission.

Configuration

In 2019, the national seminary welcomed 13 new seminarians; eight of these came into the first year of the discipleship stage of philosophical studies and five entered what is known as the configuration stage of the theological studies.

This brought the number of full-time resident seminarians in St Patrick's College, Maynooth to 33, up from 22 in 2018-19. Of the 33, 27 were in formation for Irish dioceses, with a further two being sponsored by an Irish diocese with a view to ministering in that diocese for some time after ordination, before returning to their home diocese. The remaining three were in formation for a diocese outside of Ireland.

In 2020, in keeping with Health Service Executive and bishops' conference guidelines on social distancing and sanitisation, we made ready to welcome 32 resident seminarians. This number includes eight new seminarians.

Five of the new seminarians entered the discipleship stage of philosophical studies, with two of these undertaking a degree in arts (including philosophy) in Maynooth University. The other three entered

the diploma programme in philosophy and arts in the Pontifical University.

Three seminarians joined us in the configuration stage of theological studies, having completed their studies in philosophy outside of Ireland.

Of the 32 resident seminarians in Maynooth at the start of this year, 27 were in formation for Irish dioceses.

There is no doubt that people are sometimes shocked when they hear that there are just around 30 men in formation for the priesthood in the national seminary. People speak of a 'vocations crisis.' They are correct; there is a crisis of vocation in the Church in Ireland and across many parts of the western world, particularly in western Europe.

This is rooted in a social, cultural and ecclesial landscape that has changed radically in the last 20 years.

“The landscape in which future Irish priests will minister has changed significantly, even since 2006”

The current pandemic has exposed some of the real potential that exists for developing forms of collaborative ministry and co-responsibility in the life of the Church.

In the national seminary, we are continuing to energetically implement the insights of the 2016 document on priestly formation called *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*. Together with St John Paul II's seminal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* – I will give you shepherds (1992), this new document has guided the Irish seminaries in formulating a national admissions policy, which was approved as a working document by the bishops at their June 2020 meeting.

The 2016 document has also helped a committee, of which I was a part, to put together a draft of a national directory for priestly formation in Irish seminaries which the bishops are currently considering before it is sent to the Holy See for the *recognitio*. This new directory represents an update of the existing programme for the formation of priests in Irish seminaries (2006).

This is indeed timely, as the landscape in which future Irish priests will minister has changed significantly, even since then.

When I entered the seminary in 1998, I came from a family back-



ground and experience of parish where the vast majority of people attended Sunday Mass. The support I received in my decision to leave a fulfilling job as a teacher in Coláiste Iognáid in Galway to enter formation for priesthood in the diocese of Achonry was strong and heartfelt, from family, from friends and from my students and colleagues in Galway.

Support

To be honest, I almost took such support for granted. If I were entering seminary today, I'm not sure if the same level of support would be there from outside my family circle.

Many of the men entering the seminary today are coming either from third-level institutions or the world of work. Some still come from second-level education but they, and all the others who come into first year, have the experience of one year of seminary formation behind

them, in what is called the propaedeutic stage, before they come to Maynooth.

This is a good thing and a most welcome development. It means that the settling in process takes far less time and that they are already familiar with many of the aspects of seminary life which, in my first year, took quite some getting used to.

“I pay tribute to the invaluable support...that is given to seminarians by the St Joseph's Young Priests Society”

The promise of the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his harvest still holds true. The wonder is not that there are so few responding to the call; the wonder is that there are so many who are able to hear that call amidst the cacophony

of voices that clamour for their attention in our busy and noisy world.

I thank the bishops of Ireland for their continued expression of confidence in St Patrick's College, Maynooth by entrusting the formation of their seminarians to us. I would also like to pay tribute to the diocesan vocations directors who are doing sterling work in vocations promotion, together with the vocations council of the bishops' conference and the national vocations office which is based on the St Patrick's College campus.

Experience

I also pay tribute to the invaluable support (both prayerful and financial) that is given to seminarians by the St Joseph's Young Priests Society and those women and men who pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life all across the country. In Maynooth, we focus on providing the best experience and highest standard of priestly formation possible. Not to do so would be to do a disservice to the men who are here, as well as to the people of God, from whom they come and to whom they will return as servants of the Gospel.

The coronavirus pandemic has shown that people still need and value their priests.

We are doing our very best to provide them with the priests they need: men for others, theactairí Chríost (messengers of Christ), holy men for a holy people.

✠ Fr Tomás Surlis is a priest of the Diocese of Achonry and Rector of the National Seminary, St Patrick's College, Maynooth.

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CURRACH BOOKS

Reflections of a new permanent deacon during the Covid pandemic



Frank Browne

On Saturday August 29, I was ordained a permanent deacon in the parish church of Saggart, by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin for the Dublin Diocese.

The ordination ceremony was an important event for my family. My wife, and children (aged from 10 to 17 years), had some concerns over what my becoming a deacon might mean for them. My boys were not sure if they liked the idea of me wearing the white alb in public. But there was a beautiful part of the ordination ceremony after the laying on of hands and prayer of consecration, when I walked over to my wife who then placed both the stole and dalmatic garments over my head. We embraced for a moment and we instinctively knew that all would be well.

Our celebrations after the ceremony, within our Covid-19 restricted world, consisted of a few words and a wave to those who were able to attend. That evening as a family, we had a takeaway meal together and I watched the movie *Spartacus* with my young sons, who were impressed with the Roman Emperor's robes, and thought it was a little like my white alb.

The next day, I had the honour of taking up my new role as a deacon in my parish church of Ballyroan. It was an emotional but joyous moment to proclaim the Gospel for the first time as a deacon, and to share my homily with those present.

Opportunity

I had a chance to thank many people; parishioners who were so supportive to me over the previous years, my parish priest Fr Peter O'Connor, who had actively mentored me over the previous year by giving me the opportunity to shadow him at baptisms and funerals, as well as to prepare reflections at Mass, and tips on how to use the microphone effectively.

But it was also an opportunity to publicly thank my wife Imelda, who had made so many sacrifices in enabling me to attend lectures, retreats, and parish meetings. It was important for me to remind everyone that my primary vocation is as a married man and my first duty is to care for my family but that I also hoped to be of service to many in whatever parish I work with over the coming years.

That Monday I returned to my day job as a mental health social worker, where I am open about my parish role as a deacon and I think that this does allow a respectful



Deacon Frank Browne pictured with his family after his ordination.

place both for patients and colleagues to consider faith and spirituality in their lives, should they wish to do so.

Wednesday, September 3 was the feast day of St Gregory the Great, and I was able to assist at Mass and share my homily about St Gregory, who was arguably one of the most admired popes in history. Interestingly, while living a strict monastic life, he was called personally by the Pope to the office of a deacon in Rome, from where he began his work of Church reform and evangelisation across Western Europe.

On Saturday, I celebrated the Sacrament of Baptism of four babies in Rathfarnham parish, where my now deceased parents had taken me to be baptised many years previously. I felt their presence in a special way as I celebrated this beautiful ceremony. It was such a powerful experience

to bless the baptismal water and call upon the presence of the Holy Spirit.

“From the joy of family baptisms, to the sadness of a funeral, I supported my parish priest at the funeral service for a woman in her 50s with two teenage children...”

I had the privilege to share my reflections with those present, perhaps some who struggle with their Catholic Faith but still wished to have their child baptised. I wanted them to be open to experiencing the Spirit too. I told them that while we cannot see God, touch God or hear God, we can at times

in our life experience a loving God, perhaps in a quiet place, when we have slowed down a little, and are able to really look and listen to, the beauty of creation, especially the gift of your beautiful child.

I asked those present to pray for their newly-baptised babies every day or night for the next few months. I gave those present a copy of my own father's favourite prayer and one that I hope will be an inspiration for me in living up to the values of arguably, the most famous of all deacons, St Francis of Assisi.

Sadness

From the joy of family baptisms, to the sadness of a funeral, I supported my parish priest later in September at the funeral service for a woman in her 50s with two teenage children. I had the privilege to celebrate for the first time, the rite of committal at her grave.

Despite the tears of sadness, the family participated in all the prayers and there was a sense of hope based on their Christian faith.

The return to the Government Covid-19 restrictions on September 18 in Dublin meant that I had to inform two families that yet again, their baptism ceremony was postponed for a later date. As always with the cycle of life, a few days later I was involved with another funeral, again of a woman in her 50s and this time I celebrated the rite of committal at a crematorium.

The small group of 25 were mostly silent, but for a young child who enthusiastically recited the 'Our Father' prayer. Perhaps this family had lost the practice of their Christian faith, but nonetheless it was an opportunity for me to minister to them, to show compassion, offer a space for them to reflect upon their loved one's life and to encourage them to be open to the loving presence of God at their time of mourning.

It is early days but I hope that through by own prayer life and with the support of my family and parish community, that I can live the words of the St Francis prayer and be an instrument of peace, sow love, faith and hope.

“I had the privilege to share my reflections with those present, perhaps some who struggle with their Catholic Faith but still wished to have their child baptised”



The Pope's new encyclical is a blueprint for a better and more just post-Covid world, writes **Caoimhe de Barra**

Fratelli Tutti, a letter addressed to all people, is an encyclical on human connectedness and follows a series of teachings given by the Pope during his general audiences in August and September which have focused on rebuilding a more just world after the coronavirus pandemic.

The encyclical is Pope Francis' latest significant contribution to the global response to Covid-19. Throughout the pandemic, Pope Francis has shown great leadership. His weekly audiences have focused on themes linked to the pandemic and have offered hope and a way forward for not just Catholics but everyone.

The Pope has been unflinching and courageous in his messages around 'togetherness' and 'inter-connectedness' throughout the pandemic. This encyclical builds on those themes in what amounts to a powerful call for global solidarity and for a Church that actively challenges injustice.

"A worldwide tragedy like the Covid-19 pandemic momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person's problems are the problems of all," he writes. "Once more we realised that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together. God willing, after all this, we will think no longer in terms of 'them' and 'those' but only 'us'."

Justice

As the agency of the Church in Ireland working on justice and human rights in the developing world, Trócaire particularly welcomes the Pope's thought-provoking guidance on subjects including universal human rights, conflict, the treatment of refugees and migrants, the rights of indigenous people and the need to actively pursue a 'better' form of politics. These are areas that Trócaire has worked on for many years and this encyclical provides further validation of that work.

He writes: "In today's world, many forms of injustice persist... while one part of humanity lives in opulence, another part sees its own dignity denied, scorned or trampled upon, and its fundamental rights discarded or violated."

Crucially, Pope Francis sees the

In a world where political leadership has been lacking, Pope Francis has offered hope and guidance



“Francis argues that politics should be ‘re-evaluated’ to focus on serving the common good, not economic interests. The message is clear: politics is failing the poor and it is shameful that political decisions are made that plunge people further into poverty, suffering and despair”

* * * * *

Church taking an active and leadership role in addressing the inequalities that exist in our world. He calls for a Church centred on justice; one that actively encourages a new and fairer political system that provides for all people equally: "The Church, while respecting the autonomy of political life, does not restrict her mission to the private sphere. On the contrary, she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the building of a better world, or fail to reawaken the spiritual energy that can contribute to the betterment of society...the Church has a public role over and above her charitable and educational activities. She works for the advancement of humanity and of universal fraternity."

Francis argues that politics should be "re-evaluated" to focus on serving the common good, not economic interests. The message is clear: politics is failing the poor and it is shameful that political decisions are made that plunge people further into poverty, suffering and despair.

He returns to what has been a core theme of his papacy: the need to reject "a culture of walls...walls in the heart, walls on the land, in order to prevent this encounter with other cultures, with other people".

Politics

Pope Francis warns that people who feel scared and abandoned by

politics or society can find themselves drifting towards groups who are "intolerant, closed and perhaps even – without realising it – racist". He warns: "Those who raise walls will end up as slaves within the very walls they have built."

Fratelli Tutti builds on the themes Pope Francis has highlighted through his weekly audiences throughout the pandemic. At the centre of both the encyclical and his weekly audiences are the theme of 'inter-connectedness'. It is, of course, a tragedy that it has taken a virus to show us how interconnected we are – how an illness that starts in one city can soon impact the lives of all seven billion people who share this Earth. Pope Francis has called for this valuable

lesson to be a legacy of this crisis. It cannot simply be a case of 'business as usual'.

In his general audience of August 19, Pope Francis said: "Many people want to return to normality and resume economic activities. Certainly, but this 'normality' should not include social injustices and the degradation of the environment. The pandemic is a crisis, and we do not emerge from a crisis the same as before: either we come out of it better, or we come out of it worse. We must come out of it better, to counter social injustice."

Pope Francis tells the Faithful that this pandemic is an opportunity to change the structures of the world that allow this situation. He refers to the preferential option for the poor as "the mission of the Church", saying: "Jesus' followers recognise themselves by their closeness to the poor, the little ones, the sick and the imprisoned, the excluded and the forgotten, those without food and clothing."

“Our Church partners around the world are helping people keep safe from this virus by supplying them with soap, water and other basic items”

Last month, he said: "A virus that does not recognise barriers, borders, or cultural or political distinctions must be faced with a love without barriers, borders or distinctions. This love can generate social structures that encourage us to share rather than to compete, that allow us to include the most vulnerable and not to cast them aside, and that help us to express the best in our human nature and not the worst."

These new structures will "cure a larger virus, that of social injustice, inequality of opportunity, marginalisation, and the lack of protection for the weakest."

* * * * *

In a world where political leadership has been often lacking, Pope Francis' words throughout this pandemic have offered hope and guidance. Every day, Trócaire sees the leadership the Church is taking during this devastating time.

Our Church partners around the world are helping people keep safe from this virus by supplying them with soap, water and other basic items. We are also working with the Church to ensure that people have access to food and basic health services.

At this time of crisis, the number of people expected to suffer from acute hunger has doubled, but through the support of parishioners in Ireland, Trócaire is able to provide vital assistance.

This encyclical offers hope in a dark time and a vision of what the future could be: a just world where the dignity and rights of all are respected, promoted and protected.

📞 Caoimhe de Barra is Chief Executive Officer of Trócaire.



The deep Christian roots of fraternity

The Pope is asking the world to tap into the wellspring of the Faith, writes **David Quinn**

Francis' latest encyclical is a call to universal brotherhood and sisterhood, or fraternity. Its title is *Fratelli Tutti* – brothers all, a phrase associated with St Francis of Assisi, after whom the Pope named himself.

The idea of universal brotherhood is one we now take for granted, even if a lot of the time it is observed more in theory rather than in practice. Fraternity is a willingness to see every single member of the human race as our brothers and sisters, as our moral equals to whom we are in some way united, and with whom we have a shared moral bond.

But the concept is actually a deeply religious one. It is very hard to derive the idea of universal brotherhood from atheism or secularism. Yes, an atheist can say we share a common humanity, but it is much harder for an atheist to then conclude that we are all of infinite and equal moral value if we are simply the products of blind evolution, consisting only of matter. If this is so, then where does the concept of our infinite, intrinsic and equal moral worth come from?

Christians, on the other hand, believe we are all made in the image and likeness of God. This makes us more than mere matter, more than the chance by-products of a blank, uncaring universe. If we are all made in the image and likeness of God, then every one of us is also a child of God, meaning everyone is morally and spiritually our brother or sister.

This is what gives Christianity its universal character. The very word 'catholic' means universal. It invites us to look beyond our families, clans, tribes and nations.

Liberalism

Secular liberalism is also a universal creed, because it believes in universal human rights. But this comes from the earlier Judeo-Christian belief that we are all morally equal and possess equal dignity. The idea of universal fraternity comes from this. Secular liberalism rests on a Judeo-Christian foundation even if it no longer admits it and sometimes denies it.

Even the rallying call of the French Revolution, *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* ('Liberty, Equality and Fraternity') has Christian roots. It is



“Today’s racial politics seems to consider nothing but the colour of our skin, and invites white people to see themselves as somehow guilty of racism, or historical privilege, in ways they can’t imagine”

no coincidence that this call arose in a country formed for centuries by Christian thought, even if the French Revolution turned on the institutional Church for being too close to the ancien regime, that is to the monarchy and nobility.

In fact, in his new encyclical, Pope Francis draws attention to a meeting he had in Abu Dhabi last year with the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb. Both men declared that “God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters”.

Pope Francis says: “The present encyclical takes up and develops some of the great themes raised in the document that we both signed. I have also incorporated, along with my own thoughts, a number of letters, documents and considerations that I have received from many individuals and groups throughout the world.”

The great threat to fraternity is always some kind of tribal politics or vested interest.

The ‘tribe’ in this sense can be your nation, or your social class, or your sex, or your ethnic group or your religion.

Both the left and the right can divide people into different ‘tribes’ and encourage tribalism. The right is commonly drawn to nationalism, and at the extremes to racism.

The left is drawn to a politics that divides the world into ‘oppressors’ and ‘oppressed’. Men are seen as oppressors, so are white people, the wealthy, straight people. Christianity, especially the Catholic Church, is often classed as an oppressor.

“America is currently torn between different kinds of tribes on both left and right, and the same type of politics is to be found in much of Europe”

Martin Luther King Jr, a Lutheran pastor as well as a civil rights campaigner, invited us to look past the colour of someone’s skin and consider only the content of their character.

Today’s racial politics seems to

consider nothing but the colour of our skin, and invites white people to see themselves as somehow guilty of racism, or historical privilege, in ways they can’t imagine, meaning they need to be ‘educated’, they need to become ‘woke’.

America is currently torn between different kinds of tribes on both left and right, and the same type of politics is to be found in much of Europe.

This is not to say politics should not include a certain amount of tension. Consensus can be an extremely bad thing if it is the wrong kind of consensus. We can see this in the Dáil right now as it rushes pell-mell towards embracing assisted suicide with almost no debate. On this point, we need far more tension, if by that we mean a proper and healthy clash of views.

Families

We also have to acknowledge that it is a very human thing to relate to your own first, starting with your own families. A parent’s duty to their children is one of the strongest there is, and few object

when a parent devotes far more time and energy to looking after their own children, than to other children.

(An aside: the celibacy of priests and religious means they are deliberately freed from the duties involved in having a family of their own, and can give that same time and energy and sense of fraternity to everyone.)

Our strong obligation to our family does not negate our obligations to others. It simply points out that we have different levels of obligation that begin in most cases with our families, and then fan outwards. Our sense of fraternity starts there, and then extends to our extended family, our neighbours, our friends and so on.

The radical insight of Christianity is that the web of mutual obligations includes absolutely everyone, hence Christ’s exhortation to see his face in everyone.

This is why Christianity throughout its history has set up vast charitable outreaches. Pagan religion and philosophy did nothing comparable because they did not have that same idea of universal fraternity.

Pope Francis rightly invites a divided world to renew its commitment to fraternity. In doing so, he is tapping into the one of the very deepest wellsprings of Christianity.

A vision for a more open world



In the midst of this crisis, the Pope offers a steady and hope-filled message, writes Fr Niall Coll

The recent surge in Covid-19 infections rates and tightening of restrictions throughout the country in its wake have shaken us and the world has been shocked by the news that the President of the United States, Donald Trump, and his wife Melania, are among those who have caught the virus. All around us there seems to be a general feeling of despondency and loss of agency. In the midst of this crisis, it is heartening that Pope Francis' third encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* (Brothers All, better Brothers

and Sisters All) – a term borrowed from the writings of St Francis of Assisi, has appeared, with a steady and hope-filled message which sounds a clarion call to promote a universal sense of human fraternity and social friendship. It is a most welcome and encouraging message at this difficult time.

Open world

Written in a generally accessible style, the document offers an analysis of what the Pope terms the “dark clouds” which hover over our “closed world” before going on to envisage the shape of a more loving and “open world”, in ways which are both compelling and far-reaching. In doing so, Francis draws upon and skilfully brings together many of the themes he has explored in his earlier writings and speeches as Pope.

The document's freshness and acuity are reflected, for example, in the manner of its engagement with the challenges posed to society by the current refugee crisis, developments in digital technology and, of course, the pandemic. As the world struggles to respond to a virus which “has exposed our false securities,” the critique of society in general which Francis has articulated over his seven years pontificate (revisited here) – including such prominent themes as “a culture of walls”, the plight of immigrants and the existence of “globalised indifference” – has an added piquancy.

This is a virus which is no respecter of wealth and social standing, though it still does disproportionately affect the poor. The Pope hopes that our experience of the pandemic may lead humanity to a new realisation of our interdependence and need for fraternity and social friendship. The battle against the virus is reminding us, he adds, that “our lives are interwoven” and are sustained by ordinary people, whom he carefully identifies as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, shopkeepers and super-market workers, cleaning personnel, caretakers, transport workers, volunteers, men and women working to provide essential services and public safety. It would indeed, he argues, be a tragedy, a profound loss of opportunity if, once the health crisis



“This is a virus which is no respecter of wealth and social standing, though it still does disproportionately affect the poor.”

is past, it was followed by a return to “feverish consumerism and new forms of egotistic self-preservation”

It must be said that Francis' outlook throughout this encyclical is grounded in a compelling analysis of global political realities. He pinpoints both the exploitative tendencies concerning the vulnerable which can hide behind populism in politics and a liberalism which is elitist and in hock to the economic interests of the powerful. In one way or another, “in both cases, it becomes difficult to envisage an open world that makes room for everyone, including the most vulnerable, and shows respect for different cultures”. It is absolutely clear that a global community of fraternity requires a better kind of politics.

How then are we to respond? Francis argues that the task involves nothing less than a rediscovery of the dignity of each human person, one which will allow us to contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity. He locates a key to this hermeneutic of fraternity in a reading of the well-known parable of the good Samaritan: “The parable shows us how a community can be rebuilt by men and women who identify with the vulnerability

of others, who reject the creation of a society of exclusion, and act instead as neighbours, lifting up and rehabilitating the fallen for the sake of the common good.” Simply and significantly, he argues that for the Christian belief and worship of God are not enough to ensure that we are actually living in a way pleasing to God – “the passers-by”, the priest and the Levite were ostensibly religious people.

“The guarantee of an authentic openness to God, on the other hand, is a way of practising the faith that helps open our hearts to our brothers and sisters.” Francis draws on St John Chrysostom's challenge to his Christian hearers to elaborate on this point: “Do you wish to honour the body of the Saviour? Do not despise it when it is naked. Do not honour it in church with silk vestments while outside it is naked and numb with cold”.

Friendship

Francis' tone throughout this document is one that is clearly informed by the Second Vatican Council. He demonstrates a wish to promote a culture of encounter and he identifies the need to promote a dialogue and friendship with the world, with the other faiths and the other Christian traditions. Interestingly, he acknowledges that some of the

key themes of this encyclical have emerged from his conversations with the Sunni Islam Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, with whom he is committed to spreading a “culture of tolerance and of living together in peace”.

The direction that Pope Francis sets in *Fratelli Tutti* is one that should be of great interest to the Church in Ireland which has been greatly diminished by the tides of secularisation and fallout from the abuse crisis over recent decades. Wearied by lost political battles regarding marriage and abortion rights over the last few decades, and the ongoing struggle to maintain a meaningful ethos in our schools, our future depends on a better articulation of the Gospel and its values in a society that the Church cannot control but can influence for the good. A Church with open doors that goes forth to accompany life, to sustain hope, to build bridges, to break down walls, to sow seeds of reconciliation, one which is both faith-filled and open to dialogue, may yet have much to learn and say of value in the contemporary Irish context.

Fr Niall Coll is a theologian and parish priest of Ballintra, Co. Donegal.



Belief in God as creator of all has practical consequences, Pope says



Free copies of L'Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper, with the front page about Pope Francis' new encyclical, 'Fratelli Tutti, on Fraternity and Social Friendship,' are distributed by volunteers at the end of the Angelus in St Peter's Square at the Vatican October 4, 2020. Photos: CNS



In the midst of pandemic, the Pontiff is calling us to re-focus on a radical worldview that sees everyone as brothers and sisters, writes **Michael Kelly**

Professing faith in God as the creator of all human beings, or even simply recognising that all people possess an inherent dignity, has concrete consequences for how people should treat one another and make decisions in politics, economics and social life, Pope Francis writes in his new encyclical.

"Human beings have the same inviolable dignity in every age of history and no one can consider himself or herself authorised by particular situations to deny this conviction or to act against it,"

the Pope writes in his encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, on Fraternity and Social Friendship.

Pope Francis signed the encyclical on October 3 after celebrating Mass at the tomb of St Francis of Assisi, and the Vatican released the more than 40,000-word text on Sunday.

The Pope had been rumoured to be writing an encyclical on non-violence; and, once the Covid-19 pandemic struck, many expected a document exploring in depth his repeated pleas for the world to recognise the inequalities and injustices laid bare by the pandemic and adopt corrective economic, political and social policies.

Elements

Fratelli Tutti combines those two elements but does so in the framework set by the document on human fraternity and interreligious dialogue that he and Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo, Egypt, signed in 2019.

In fact, in the new document Pope Francis wrote that he was "encouraged" by his dialogue with the Muslim leader and by their joint statement that: "God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters."

Archbishop Eamon also commended the supplementary resources to parishes

The encyclical takes its title from St Francis of Assisi and is inspired by his "fraternal openness," which, the Pope said, calls on people "to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives."

The title, which literally means "all brothers and sisters" or "all brothers," are the words with which St Francis "addressed his

brothers and sisters and proposed to them a way of life marked by the flavour of the Gospel," the Pope wrote.

Stranger

That flavour, explained throughout the document, involves welcoming the stranger, feeding the hungry, listening to and giving a hand up to the poor, defending the rights of all and ensuring that each person, at every stage of life, is valued and invited to contribute to the community, he said. It also means supporting public policies that do so on a larger scale.

Primate of All-Ireland and Archbishop of Armagh Dr Eamon Martin welcomed the focus of the new encyclical.

"I warmly welcome this timely and provocative message from Pope Francis which reminds us so powerfully of the message of love that is at the heart of the Gospel - a love which reaches out to all of our 'brothers and sisters' who share our common humanity.

"I am conscious that Pope Francis wrote this encyclical during a global pandemic, a time which is reminding us not only of our connectedness around the world but also of our fragility, our shared vulnerability and common need for compassion and love and for the hope that faith in God can bring.

Pope Francis used the encyclical "to consider certain trends in our world that hinder the development of universal fraternity"

"Pope Francis has a real gift for opening up and reflecting on the Word of God - he loves to select a passage from Scripture and 'meditate out loud' on what God's Word is saying to us. This time he chooses the challenging parable of the good Samaritan and he slowly 'breaks open' the wisdom and teaching of that parable for today. Yes, we might agree, we are all 'brothers and sisters'; we are all neighbours sharing this planet. But, 'who is my neighbour? Who is my brother? Who is my sister?," the archbishop said.

"Pope Francis reminds us of how his namesake, St Francis, answered this question. He 'heard the voice of God, he heard the voice of the poor, he heard the voice of the infirm

"Fratelli Tutti has a challenging message for political leaders and Church leaders about dialogue, mutual understanding and combined effort towards practical actions to make a difference in the world"



Pope Francis is pictured with Vatican officials in charge of translations after signing his new encyclical, 'Fratelli Tutti, on Fraternity and Social Friendship,' in the crypt of the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi, Italy, October 3, 2020.

and he heard the voice of nature. He made of them a way of life.’

“In *Fratelli Tutti* Pope Francis therefore makes a special appeal in the name of justice and mercy for the orphan, the poor, the stranger, the migrant, the refugee and all those on the ‘margins’, the ‘peripheries’ of life and society. He envisages an ‘open world’ motivated by what he calls ‘social friendship’ and sincere hospitality towards others. I find it particularly challenging when he mentions that ‘some peripheries are close to us, in the city centres or in our families.’ This of course reminds us here in Ireland to consider who might be left out, who do we tend to shuffle over into the margins of society and perhaps try to forget?

“I sometimes wonder about the impact on us of seeing a homeless person lying on our streets, or watching live pictures on the media of thousands of refugees huddled in camps, or starving children swatting away flies from their faces - how easily we can ‘shift our gaze’, feel sorry for them but never really question our own values, lifestyle, attitudes? This dilemma is at the heart of *Fratelli Tutti*. These days we speak about social distancing during the pandemic. Perhaps the real social distancing is the way that the great majority of people in the world can get on with their lives seemingly oblivious or ‘anaesthetised’ to the tremendous suffering, inequality and neglect of the poor and the most vulnerable among us. Solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, Pope Francis says, means looking into their faces, touching their flesh, sensing their closeness and trying to help them. It never tolerates any assault on human life or the human dignity of any person.

“As expected, therefore, *Fratelli Tutti* has a challenging message for political leaders and Church leaders about dialogue, mutual understanding and combined effort towards practical actions to make a difference in the world. It encourages us to ‘pay attention to the global’ while also ‘looking to the local’, avoiding both global uniformity and local narrowness or narcissism.

“We are called to have a ‘gaze transformed by charity’ which touches our hearts like the Good Samaritan and shows a preferential love to those in greatest need. That gaze ‘is at the heart of the authentic spirit of politics’. It ‘undergirds everything we do on their behalf.’

“At the heart of the new encyclical’s appeal to Catholics is a meditation on Jesus’ parable of the good Samaritan”

“Pope Francis’ questions to politicians might also be asked of all of us who are entrusted with leadership positions. He says: ‘The real, and potentially painful, questions will be, ‘How much love did I put into my work? What did I do for the progress of our people? What mark did I leave on the life of society? What real bonds did I create? What positive forces did I unleash? How much social peace did I sow? What good did I achieve in the position that was entrusted to me?’,” the archbishop said.

Archbishop
Archbishop Eamon described the encyclical as a “must read for everybody”.

“Pope Francis is addressing his new letter not only to Catholics but to all people of goodwill. In terms of its theme it is a natural companion to Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical letter *Laudato Si’*, on care for our common home, which highlights our collective responsibility to manage natural sources and to sustain our God-given environment. But today, at this time of global pandemic, Pope Francis’ calls us to love each other as God loves us by living the parable of the good Samaritan every minute of every day. Our civilisation is not omnipotent,

so we need to respect the innate dignity of each other – from family to stranger - with love and practical support, so that the human race can flourish,” he said.

Archbishop Eamon also commended the supplementary resources to parishes. “These will go a long way to effectively disseminate the letter’s powerful message and help to inform a wide variety of audiences, including educational. This content will be made available soon on a web feature on the home page of catholicbishops.ie,” he said.



Pope Francis signs his new encyclical, 'Fratelli Tutti, on Fraternity and Social Friendship' after celebrating Mass at the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, Italy, October 3, 2020.

Predecessors

Building on the social teachings of his predecessors, Pope Francis’ document once again strongly condemns the death penalty and makes an initial approach to declaring that the conditions once used to accept a ‘just war’ no longer exist because of the indiscriminately lethal power of modern weapons.

St John Paul II in *The Gospel of Life*, published in 1995, cast doubt on whether any nation needed to resort to capital punishment today to protect its people; developing that teaching, Pope Francis in 2018 authorised a change to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to make clear that “the death penalty is inadmissible.”

Signalling the start of a similar effort to respond to the current reality of warfare, Pope Francis in the new encyclical raised the question of “whether the development of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and the enormous and growing possibilities offered by new technologies, have granted war an uncontrollable destructive power over great numbers of innocent civilians.

“The right to private property, and the benefits to individuals and society of protecting that right, Pope Francis wrote”

“We can no longer think of war as a solution because its risks will probably always be greater than its supposed benefits,” one of the main criteria of just-war theory, he said. “In view of this, it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a ‘just war.’ Never again war!”

At the heart of the new encyclical’s appeal to Catholics is a meditation on Jesus’ parable of the



Free copies of the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano with the front page about Pope Francis' encyclical, 'Fratelli Tutti, on Fraternity and Social Friendship,' are distributed by volunteers to the faithful at the end of the Angelus in St Peter's Square at the Vatican October 4, 2020.

good Samaritan and particularly on how Jesus takes a legal scholar's question, "Who is my neighbour," and turns it into a lesson on being called not to identify one's neighbours but to become a neighbour to all, especially those most in need of aid.

"The parable eloquently presents the basic decision we need to make in order to rebuild our wounded world. In the face of so much pain and suffering, our only course is to imitate the good Samaritan," the Pope said. "Any other decision would make us either one of the robbers or one of those who walked by without showing compassion for the sufferings of the man on the roadside."

"The parable," he continued, "shows us how a community can be rebuilt by men and women who identify with the vulnerability of others, who reject the creation of a society of exclusion, and act instead as neighbours, lifting up and rehabilitating the fallen for the sake of the common good."

Encyclical

Pope Francis used the encyclical "to consider certain trends in our world that hinder the development of universal

fraternity" and acting as a neighbour to one another, including racism, extremism, "aggressive nationalism," closing borders to migrants and refugees, polarisation, politics as a power grab rather than a service to the common good, mistreatment of women, modern slavery and economic policies that allow the rich to get richer but do not create jobs and do not help the poor.

“In Fratelli Tutti Pope Francis therefore makes a special appeal in the name of justice and mercy for the orphan, the poor”

"The pain, uncertainty and fear, and the realisation of our own limitations, brought on by the pandemic have only made it all the more urgent that we rethink our styles of life, our relationships, the organisation of our societies and, above all, the meaning of our existence," he said.

Discerning

Anna Rowlands, a British theologian invited to help present

the document at the Vatican, told *Catholic News Service* the text's "golden thread" is about discerning "what gives life" and helps everyone to develop their full potential and flourish.

"The whole theme of the document is about the way in which we're called to attend to the world as Christ attended to the world," paying attention to reality rather than "evading it and avoiding it," and praying for the grace to respond as Jesus would.

“Pope Francis used the encyclical “to consider certain trends in our world that hinder the development of universal fraternity” and acting as a neighbour to one another”

When people ask, "Who is my neighbour?" often what they really want to know is "Who is not my neighbour?" or "Who can I legitimately say is not my responsibility," Dr Rowlands said.

Pope Francis called for catechesis and preaching that "speak more directly and clearly about the social meaning of existence, the fraternal dimension of spirituality, our conviction of the inalienable dignity of each person and our reasons for loving and accepting all our brothers and sisters."

“The whole theme of the document is about the way in which we're called to attend to the world as Christ attended to the world”

He also used the encyclical to strongly reassert a traditional tenet of Catholic social teaching: "the universal destination of goods" or "the common use of created goods," which asserts, as St John Paul said, that "God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone."

Property

The right to private property, and the benefits to individuals and society of protecting that right, Pope Francis wrote, "can only be considered a secondary natural right."

"The right of some to free enterprise or market freedom cannot supersede the rights of peoples and the dignity of the poor, or, for that matter, respect for the natural environment," the Pope said. "Business abilities, which are a gift from God, should always be clearly directed to the development of others and to eliminating poverty," especially through the creation of jobs that pay a living wage.

Pope Francis, Dr Rowlands said, "wants to rehabilitate this idea of social friendship and social peace in the face of an all-pervasive social violence, which he sees running through the economy, running increasingly through politics, running through social media."

The Pope is not despairing, she said, but realistic. "He wants to offer a vision of how you begin from the most local, most every day and most concrete realities to build a culture of peace at every level."

Additional reporting from Cindy Wooden in Rome.



Pope Francis talks with leaders of Franciscan orders at the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, Italy, October 3, 2020. The pope celebrated Mass and signed his new encyclical, 'Fratelli Tutti, on Fraternity and Social Friendship,' at the tomb of St Francis in the basilica.

“Pope Francis called for catechesis and preaching that “speak more directly and clearly about the social meaning of existence”

Renewing parish life with 40 hours of Adoration



Bishop Donal McKeown of the Diocese of Derry with members of the pastoral forum of the parish of Ardstraw East, Martin Kerrigan, Shauneen Kilpatrick and Anne McDonnell, Ashlene Canning and Fr Roland Colhoun.

Chai Brady

The people of Newtownstewart in Co. Tyrone completed their annual 40 hours Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, which was made continuous due to Covid-19.

The church's choice of the number 40 has a biblical origin. The Old Testament and New Testament describe historic events such as the 40-day flood, the 40 years in the wilderness, Christ's 40 days fasting in the Judean desert, the 40 days between the Resurrection and the Ascension, etc.... However, down the years, parishes have reduced the 40 hours to a less demanding period, sometimes just the hours between Sunday Mass and evening devotions.

In light of global anxiety about the Covid-19 virus, the pastoral forum in Newtownstewart decided

to organise a lengthy period of Eucharistic Adoration. The result was 40 continuous hours with the Blessed Sacrament. Exposition began in the Oratory on Main Street at 3pm on a Friday afternoon on September 25 and continued for two days and two nights, ending on the Sunday morning.

There were at least two volunteers for every one of the 40 hours, and some hours had up to 20 adorers. Even throughout the nights, many people knelt in silent prayer. Bishop Donal McKeown of the Diocese of Derry drew the celebration to a close with Sunday Mass in St Eugene's Church, Glenock. Praising the church's tradition, he underlined the importance of Eucharistic Adoration for the renewal of parish life and thanked the people for their generosity in prayer and intercession for forty hours.



Mission Possible



Fr Dominic welcoming his former teacher Sean to the Mission



In Co. Down the small and vibrant parish of Ardkeen has been bursting with creativity during lockdown ensuring that the parishioners knew the loving presence of Christ and the support of the Church, writes **Paula McKeown**

Initially our parish started with weekly 'Faith Survival Kits', the family rosary, a weekly children's Mass that teachers and pupils joined in, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the church grounds, and Facebook live Masses.

Life changed dramatically for us all in March; it was a time of genuine fear and loneliness. At this time, more than ever, people need hope and consolation. Necessity is the mother of invention. Fr Anthony Alexander, knew there was no way to accommodate the typical attend-

ance of 600 socially-distanced in the church - so Mass went outdoors. A new sound system was installed, the carpark became the new pews, sunsets the new stained glass windows and bird song the choir. The people came. Gathering in cars provided people with the safety that they needed to return to Mass and encounter God present in the gathering of people, in his Word and in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. An important part of the mission was the special ceremony for the blessing of tractors.

“Our actions as a Christian people should lavish the community we live in with charity”

The parish mission has often been viewed as a shot in the arm for our faith. As Fr Anthony chatted with parishioners, he floated the idea of a mission and everyone liked the idea. This was an opportunity to give people a time to reflect on all that we have been through and to approach the future with confidence. The theme of the mission was; “and now these three remain faith, hope and love and the greatest is love”. So, while the Covid-19 pandemic has changed our interactions, stripped people of security and continues to generate fear the parish invited people to focus their hearts and

minds on the three virtues of faith, hope and love.

With a full carpark in front of him Fr Martin Graham led the first evening reflecting on faith. We recalled how when the new translation of the Missal came in many of us had to think again about the creed that we rattled off at lightening speed and come to understand what we believe. *Lex orandi lex credenda* – the law of prayer is the law of belief – what we pray as a community reflects our belief. With that in mind we were drawn to consider the beauty of a child-like faith, a faith that doesn't

doubt God's existence, a faith that doesn't doubt God's love for us and a faith that doesn't doubt our own worth. Indeed, the congregation were invited to recognise their giftedness and our role as baptised Catholics as central to the mission and life of the Church. With that in mind the renewal of Baptismal promises took place.

Carpark

Fr Conor McGrath was very familiar with the carpark congregation as he too celebrates Mass outdoors in the parish of Glenravel. Fr Conor led the people to reflect



Fr Conor McGrath and Fr Anthony Alexander

“The people came. Gathering in cars provided people with the safety that they needed to return to Mass and encounter God present in the gathering of people”

on the emptiness that we have experienced during the pandemic; empty shelves in the supermarket, empty skies and airports, empty offices and the empty chair at the kitchen table. We then looked towards the empty tomb. The empty tomb found by the women was to become a source of great hope. While initially Jesus said to Mary “Do not touch me”, something we are familiar with at this time, there then followed encounters with Christ and his reassurance that he will always be with us. It is this certain hope that allows us to know in confidence that despite this current hardship that all will indeed be well.

Love was the theme of the final night. Fr Dominic McGrattan spoke on how love can be an overused word in the English language because there are so many variations surely “I love my Mum” and



A catch up chat in the carpark keeping community alive.



Christopher Lennon giving Rose Reid her bulbs to plant for the spring.

“I love bacon sandwiches” aren’t the same kind of love. And so, we focused on *agape*. We recognised that loving each other requires us to do things that might be inconvenient – like wearing a mask and that as a Christian people we ought to love selflessly and go out of our way for the other. Our actions as a Christian people should lavish the community we live in with charity. With this in mind as people left the mission they were given a red envelope to open at home and a

task of discernment. Each envelope contained the passage from St Matthew’s Gospel with Christ’s challenge to recognise him in the poor and to feed, clothe and shelter all those in need along with a crisp £10 note. And so, people were sent to live out their faith, in a spirit of hope and with acts of charity. It is too early to tell what the fruits of this mission will be but we trust that God is at work and through him all things are possible.



Brothers Dermot and Colm McCarthy enjoying the harvest Mass and tractor blessing.



Tara and Paula arriving to the mission.



Jonathan and Conan McNamara one of the many families who came out to the Mass.



Out&About

On the path of hope with Marie Curie



TYRONE: Friends and family of the late Ann Kelly gathered in Strathroy, Omagh for a memorial walk in aid of Marie Curie Cancer Care. Photo: Jason McCartan



TYRONE: Friends and family of the late Ann Kelly gathered in Strathroy, Omagh for a memorial walk in aid of Marie Curie Cancer Care. Mrs Kelly died a year ago and her son Michael Kelly, Managing Editor of *The Irish Catholic*, her husband Michael Kelly and Sheena Havlin representing Marie Curie.



DUBLIN: Sr Mary Margaret OSsR celebrated her Platinum Jubilee of entrance to Religious life in the Redemptoristine Community surrounded by her religious sisters.

IN SHORT

Archbishop Eamon Martin calls for Rosary crusade against Covid-19

Archbishop Eamon Martin has called for a family Rosary crusade against Covid-19 during the month of October.

In his appeal to Ireland, the Archbishop of Armagh said: "I invite families all over Ireland to pray the Rosary together at home each day for God's protection during this time of coronavirus.

"These past six months have reminded us of the importance of the 'domestic Church' – the Church of the sitting room and kitchen – the Church that meets every time a family stands or kneels down, or sits down to pray together!"

He added: "That is why I am calling for a 'family Rosary crusade against Covid-19' during October – encouraging you to pray

the Rosary, or even a decade of the Rosary, each day during the month of October. Pray for your own family and loved ones and for all those whose health or livelihood is being seriously impacted by the coronavirus crisis."

In an interview with Vatican Radio, the archbishop said that the idea for the crusade was to involve as many people as possible in this "shield of protection" against Covid-19.

He made reference to the concern families have expressed over their wellbeing and that of their loved ones, as well as to the impact that the virus has had on the livelihoods of so many.

Quoting the Pope's *Urbi et Orbi* message from the height of the pandemic earlier this year, Archbishop Martin said: "We're all in the same boat and the storm is out there and we're battling through, and we do not want to feel alone, so the Rosary crusade is an attempt to spread this blanket of prayer over all of us to protect us...to keep us safe under

the protection of Mary during the month of October and on into the winter."

He went on to describe the Rosary as a "pocket prayer book", which people can resort to every day of their lives.

"It can be said at any moment of the day, and it's also a beautiful prayer for the home and for the family," he said, commenting on how it contains "the story of the deepest mysteries of our Faith."

The announcement comes amid ongoing restrictions around the country, with some counties more severely locked down than others.

In two counties at present public Masses have been suspended.

Against this backdrop, the Archbishop has insisted that the Rosary cannot be "a substitute for the Eucharist", but that it "invites us to enter into gathering in small gatherings in our homes".

He said that he hopes this initiative leads

families to "rediscover the wonder and the beauty and the profound depths of the Holy Rosary".

He also expects that it could induce a "new evangelisation".

Desiring to bring the movement online, Archbishop Martin asked families to avail of social media in their promotion of the Rosary crusade:

"Using the #FamilyRosaryCrusade or #OctoberFamilyRosary hashtags, please feel free to share a picture or a short sound clip of your family saying a 'Hail Mary', 'Our Father' or 'Glory Be!' on social media."

The archbishop attributed his inspiration for the Rosary crusade to a visit to the Missionaries of Charity in Armagh, who reminded him of what St Mother Teresa once said: "Cling to the Rosary as the creeper clings to the tree – for without Our Lady, we cannot stand."

Edited by Jason Osborne
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Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



ARMAGH: The Year 11 prefect team of St Patrick's Grammar School begin their duties, pictured alongside teacher Noeleen Gillan.



DOWN: St Patrick's Primary School P1s enjoy relaxing at breaktime after a morning's work.



DOWN: Martina Purdy and Elaine Kelly rest with a group of pilgrims along St Patrick's Way in Newcastle.



LAOIS: Dick and Sheila Reid attend a thanksgiving Mass at Ss Peter and Paul's Church, Portlaoise, celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary.



LONGFORD: James and Ally Cawley celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage in St Mel's Cathedral, Longford Town.

Events

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



World Report

IN BRIEF

US pandemic stimulus bill excludes Catholic school students and their families

● The chairman of the US bishops' education committee said October 1 "it is unconscionable" the HEROES Act stimulus bill proposed in the House is excluding Catholic school students and their families.

The bill includes \$225 billion for education, including \$182 billion for K-12 schools, but "provides no equitable services for students in non-public schools and maintains language that prohibits any funds from being used to provide financial assistance to non-public school children", said a news release about the measure from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

In his statement, Bishop Michael Barber of Oakland, California, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Catholic Education, noted the Covid-19 pandemic "has affected all Americans, including those whose children are enrolled in Catholic and non-public schools".

Mexican archdiocese says phony priests proliferate during pandemic

● A Mexican archdiocese has disavowed people posing as priests during the coronavirus pandemic. The Archdiocese of Toluca, west of Mexico City, said the priests were not in proper standing, but had targeted people wanting to celebrate Mass in their homes and receive sacraments there or at funeral parlours, the *El Sol de Toluca* newspaper reported.

The newspaper reported "dozens of complaints"

from people, some of whom had tried to register the sacraments that they or their family members had received.

Archbishop Francisco Javier Chavolla Ramos of Toluca told an archdiocesan radio program in June that he had noticed an upswing in reports of phony priests identifying themselves as part of the archdiocese, according to the *Milenio* newspaper.

Russia's Catholic Church warns against proposed curbs on clergy

● Catholic Church officials in Russia criticised planned religious law changes that will require all clergy who studied abroad to retrain in a Russian college.

"Like other confessions, we find it absurd to talk of recertifying priests who are already in service and of having to send our archbishop back to seminary for a course in Russian history and spirituality," said Fr Kirill Gorbunov, vicar general of the Moscow Archdiocese.

"Of course, Catholic priests coming here from Poland, Italy or Spain need acculturation and we don't always have the opportunity to provide this. But this shouldn't be regulated by the state," Fr Gorbunov told the Catholic News Service.

Church officials' concerns stem from draft amendments to Russia's 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations, which would bar "clergy who receive religious education abroad" from ministering unless they obtain "recertification within a Russian religious organisation" and "receive additional professional education".

Australian academic Tracey Rowland wins prestigious Ratzinger Prize

● Tracey Rowland, professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame Australia, has won the Ratzinger Prize for theology, often described as the field's equivalent to the Nobel Peace Prize.

The award is a stunning win for the Melbourne, Australia-based academic, who is the first Australian and only the third woman to receive the prestigious award.

The Ratzinger Prize is awarded to two individuals each year regardless of their religious denomination.

Pope Francis announced on October 1 that Ms Rowland would share this year's award with Jean-Luc Marion, a French philosopher and Catholic theologian. The prize is awarded in three areas: the study of sacred Scripture, patristics and theology.

Cardinal accused of sending Vatican funds to Australia during Pell trial

Italian media has reported allegations that Cardinal Angelo Becciu transferred several hundred thousand euros from Vatican accounts to an account in Australia during the trial of Cardinal George Pell.

The cardinal has not responded to the allegation, which international news outlets have yet to independently corroborate.

Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* reported on Friday that the alleged transfer is part of a dossier of evidence being compiled by Vatican investigators and prosecutors against the cardinal, who was forced to resign by Pope Francis on September 24.

According to the Italian newspaper *Il Messaggero*, the allegations were made by Msgr Albert Perlasca, Cardinal Becciu's former chief deputy at the Secretariat of State. Msgr Perlasca and Cardinal Becciu worked together for several years overseeing aspects of curial governance, including the investment of Vatican finances.

Investigation

Msgr Perlasca is believed to be cooperating with Vatican prosecutors as part of an ongoing investigation into financial misconduct at the Secretariat of State over a period of years.



Cardinal Becciu protests his innocence during a press conference.

Il Messaggero reported on Friday that, in discussions with Vatican prosecutors, Msgr Perlasca accused Cardinal Becciu of transferring €700,000 from a Vatican account to an Australian account during the course of Cardinal Pell's trial in Victoria on charges of child sexual abuse. The paper did not specify when Msgr Perlasca first made the accusation, did not give a precise date for the alleged transfer, and did not indicate to whom the account in Australia was supposed to belong.

The substance of the accusation has yet to be confirmed, which is likely to

make global headlines after years of speculation by supporters of Cardinal Pell that the timing of sexual abuse allegations against him was linked to efforts to oppose his reform of Vatican finances.

Court

Msgr Perlasca worked as the head of the administrative office from 2009 until July 2019, when Pope Francis appointed him Promoter of Justice at the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signature; chief prosecutor of the Church's highest ecclesiastical court. Cardinal Becciu served as *sostituto*, the second most senior position in the se-

cretariat, from 2012-2018, when he was promoted to lead the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and made a cardinal.

In February, Msgr Perlasca's home and office were raided by investigators over his participation in the Vatican's investment of hundreds of millions of euros with the Italian financier Raffaele Minicione.

On September 24, Cardinal Becciu was ordered to resign from his role at the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and the rights and privileges of a cardinal, after Pope Francis was presented with evidence of serial financial misconduct by the cardinal.

European financial-crime evaluators make on-site visit to Vatican

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, has thanked experts from Moneyval – the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism – for helping the Holy See in its efforts to ensure transparency and international cooperation in its financial dealings.

The cardinal welcomed the experts to the Vatican on September 30 as they began a regularly scheduled, two-week visit.

In the Vatican, he said, there is underway "a progressive implementation of

systems that allow a greater control of financial flows that could be exposed to the risks of money laundering and terrorist financing", which is why "the interventions and recommendations of the Moneyval evaluators are a resource that we treasure".

Wealth

The Vatican is unusual among the Moneyval members since its economic activity is not "aimed at creating wealth and well-being" for a nation, the cardinal said, according to *Vatican News*. "The funds managed by the Holy See and Vati-

can City State are primarily intended for works of religion or charity."

Moneyval's most recent report on the Vatican, published in late 2017, praised continuing legal reforms under Pope Francis but again expressed concern that the Vatican City State court had yet to prosecute anyone for a financial crime, even if the Vatican's own Financial Information Authority said it had flagged accounts at the Vatican bank for investigation into suspected "fraud, serious tax evasion, misappropriation and corruption".

Salesians raise €8 million for families affected by pandemic

The head of the Salesians announced that the order has raised nearly €8 million to help thousands of families worldwide who have been financially affected during the Covid-19 pandemic.

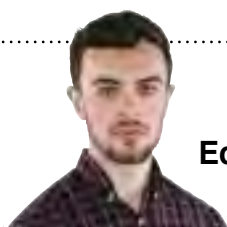
"Specifically, €7.9 million

have been collected, a very significant amount that has reached 62 Salesian provinces around the world, in response to 143 projects in support of very hard-hit families, who have benefited from food and small salaries to support

themselves," said Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, Rector Major of the Salesians.

"I would like to tell you, in the name of Don Bosco, thank you for that solidarity, thank you for the good we do together," he said to all those who donated.

"It's been very beautiful because it has not only been about collecting money to help people, it's also been about putting together reflections, concerns, ideas and initiatives to reach all parts of the world."



Edited by Jason Osborne
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Antonia Salzano, the mother of Carlo Acutis, is pictured in front of his tomb after it was opened in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Assisi, Italy, on October 1. Photo: CNS

Tomb of young Italian opened for veneration

The tomb of Carlo Acutis, a 15-year-old Italian teenager who used his computer programming skills to spread devotion to the Eucharist, was opened for veneration before his beatification in Assisi.

A statement released by the Diocese of Assisi said the tomb will remain open for veneration until October 17. Venerable Acutis' beatification Mass will be held October 10 in the Basilica of St Francis.

The opening of the tomb was followed by a Mass presided by Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino of Assisi.

The diocesan statement quoted Antonia Salzano, Venerable Acutis' mother, as saying she was "overjoyed

that Carlo's tomb has finally been opened" and that those who have been touched by the young teen's life "will be able to see him and venerate him in a stronger and more engaging way.

"We hope that through the exposition of Carlo's body, the Faithful will be able to raise with more fervour and faith their prayers to God who, through Carlo, invites us all to have more faith, hope and love for him and for our brothers and sisters just as Carlo did in his earthly life," she said.

Knowledge

Photos of the remains of the soon-to-be-beatified teen revealed he was buried in jeans and a simple track suit jacket – the attire he was accustomed

to wearing and what is seen in many of the photos taken of him during his life.

Before his death from leukaemia in 2006, he was an average teen with an above-average knack for computers. He put that knowledge to use by creating an online database of eucharistic miracles around the world.

In his exhortation on young people, *Christus Vivit* ('Christ Lives'), Pope Francis said Venerable Acutis was a role model for young people today who are often tempted by the traps of "self-absorption, isolation and empty pleasure.

"Yet he knew how to use the new communications technology to transmit the Gospel, to communicate values and beauty," the Pope said.

Sydney archbishop welcomes plan to protect victims of modern slavery

Archbishop Anthony Fisher and archdiocesan staff welcomed a commitment by the government of New South Wales to enact anti-slavery legislation passed by the Australian Parliament more than two years ago.

The state of New South Wales endorsed the Modern Slavery Act 2018 and supported, in principle, a recom-

mendation to implement the act before the end of the year.

Under the new laws, companies with annual consolidated revenue of over 100 million Australian dollars (€61.2 million) would have to produce public statements detailing how they are keeping their supply chains slavery-free. Modern slavery includes, but is not limited to,

human trafficking and child labour.

Archbishop Fisher said the new laws are long overdue.

"I am grateful to the more than 10,000 people who petitioned the government over recent months, calling for an end to the stalling tactics that were delaying the enactment of these laws," he said.

He also said it was encour-

aging to see the state government appoint an anti-slavery commissioner.

"Our community cannot be indifferent to modern slavery and human trafficking or our responsibility to eradicate it," Archbishop Fisher said.

"Like the good Samaritan, we must reach out with a supportive hand to those in greatest need."

Vatican roundup

US Secretary of State and Vatican officials exchange views on China

● The US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the Holy See's top diplomats had a "respectful" exchange of views on China, the Vatican said October 1.

Responding to questions from journalists, Matteo Bruni, director of the Holy See press office, said that Mr Pompeo discussed China with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State, and Archbishop Paul Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States.

He said: "During this morning's talks...the parties presented their respective positions regarding relations with the People's Republic of China in a respectful, relaxed, and cordial atmosphere."

The meeting, also attended by Callista Gingrich, US Ambassador to the Holy See, took place the day after Secretary Pompeo spoke at a symposium on religious freedom in Rome.

"Nowhere is religious freedom under assault more than it is inside of China today," the secretary said September 30, appealing for the Church to speak out on behalf of those whose religious freedom is being curtailed.

Mr Pompeo's intervention came as the Vatican prepared to renew its provisional agreement with China over the appointment of bishops. The deal, signed in 2018, will expire October 22.

Pope brings seven people closer to sainthood

● Pope Francis has advanced the sainthood causes of four Spanish martyrs, an Italian laywoman and two Spanish nuns who founded religious orders.

The Vatican published the decrees on September 30 saying the Pope authorised their promulgation on September 29. Normally the Pope signs the decrees during a meeting with the prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes. However, its prefect, Cardinal Angelo Becciu, was forced to resign during a meeting with the Pope due to allegedly embezzling Vatican funds –

an accusation the cardinal denies.

The Pope recognised the martyrdom of Father Francisco Castor Sojo Lopez and three other members of the Diocesan Worker Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus who were killed "in hatred of the Faith" between 1936 and 1938, during Spain's civil war.

The decree clears the way for their beatification. Among the other decrees, the Pope recognised the miracle needed for the beatification of Gaetana Tolomeo, who was born in Catanzaro, Italy, in 1936 and died in 1997.

Cardinal Pell arrives in Rome as financial scandal casts shadow over the Vatican

● Cardinal George Pell arrived in Rome on September 30 as financial scandals continue to cast a shadow over the Vatican. The former prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy was pictured in the Italian capital on his first visit to the city since he left in 2017 for Australia to prove his innocence of abuse charges.

On the day of Cardinal Pell's arrival, the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* claimed in a front-page report that Vatican investigators had discovered that £20 million (€22 million) had been withdrawn from an account reserved for use by Pope Francis.

In 2014, the Pope asked Cardinal Pell to take charge of the newly-created Secretariat for the Economy and to lead efforts at reforming Vatican financial affairs.

After charges of sexual abuse were brought by Victoria police, Cardinal Pell took temporary leave of his role in 2017 to return to Australia and defend his name.



Letter from America



Mark Pattison

There were three men of the cloth who didn't know the meaning of the word 'quit' – at least when it came to media.

First, there was Archbishop Fulton Sheen, whose planned beatification last December was postponed by the Vatican. He had a weekly radio show for 20 years when the only kind of radio was AM radio, and there were far fewer stations than today. Archbishop Sheen then moved his show to television.

Life Is Worth Living, his weekly programme, drew 10 million viewers a week against the likes of entertainment heavyweights Milton Berle and Frank Sinatra – winning the prelate an Emmy – and topped out some weeks at 30 million viewers.

Life Is Worth Living even survived its network. When Dumont pulled the plug in 1955, the show was picked up by ABC, where it ran two more seasons. After a four-year hiatus, Archbishop Sheen took to the airwaves again with a syndicated program that aired for seven seasons. And, in keeping up with the latest in the technology of the times, he established a cassette-tape ministry in the 1970s.

Then there's the case of Fr Patrick Peyton, the 'rosary priest' who helped make famous the phrase 'the family that prays together stays together'.

Starting small with a single radio station in Albany, New York, the Holy Cross priest staged a family prayer show on Mother's Day 1945 led by Bing Crosby on nationwide radio that won rave reviews.

To draw more stars to his family prayer crusade, Fr Peyton, now declared venerable, moved to Hollywood and established Family Theater Productions, which produced more than 1,000 radio and TV shows and movies.

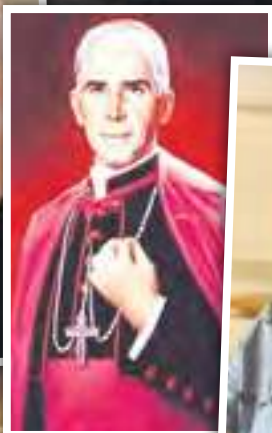
Syndications

Not to be forgotten is Fr Ellwood 'Bud' Kieser, who founded Paulist Productions in 1960. Fr Kieser introduced all 250 episodes of Paulist's syndicated TV drama anthology *Insight*, which ran from 1960 to 1988. It was the longest-running weekly syndicated show on TV until overtaken by *Soul Train*. Paulist Productions also produced the movies *Romero* and *Entertaining Angels: The Dorothy Day Story*.

Paulist Productions continues today, with 500 hours of content

Search for a star

Where are the Fr Peytons, Fr Kiesers and Bishop Sheens of today?



“The TV industry stopped counting the number of eyeballs watching their shows and started focusing on which eyeballs were watching their shows. That's called demographics”

under its belt. So too does Family Theater Productions, which has 1.2 million followers on social media.

But where are the Catholics today – clergy, religious or lay – to make the kind of impact these three had in the secular media environment?

For one thing, media production is expensive. In the heyday of the three priests above, TV and radio production worked under the same constraints. TV dramas were recorded on sound stages; location filming was costly. And colour TV? A nice idea, but too few people had colour TV sets to justify the expense of making a show in colour.

I can remember as a high school freshman watching *Insight* episodes in religion class on Fridays in the early 1970s. The

moral of the stories may have been profound, but it lost on style points as network shows by then were in colour, and consumers had stepped up to buy colour TVs.

Another point: the TV industry stopped counting the number of eyeballs watching their shows and started focusing on which eyeballs were watching their shows. That's called demographics. And if you can't keep people watching your network once a religion-based show ends and something else begins – or the opposite – then some show's going to get the pink slip.

Example

A prime example of this is when CBS cancelled *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Green Acres* and *Petticoat Junction* because its

audiences were too rural for the Tiffany Network's taste, even though they were among the highest-rated shows on TV. There was a severe backlash and it took CBS several years to recover.

A third point is that there's little appetite among programming executives to touch anything that has a religious or spiritual patina. The elimination of virtually all community-service obligations for local TV stations to keep their licenses gives local executives cover as well. Nor are there as many celebrity types willing to wear their religious faith on their sleeve.

“In Archbishop Sheen's day, there were four – then three – commercial broadcast networks. Now there are five, and that's just in English”

Moreover, the media landscape is fractured, almost beyond recognition. Were someone like Archbishop Sheen to come along and pull in 10 million viewers week

after week by just chatting in a stuffy library-looking room for 30 minutes, TV executives would be falling over each other trying to sign him.

But in Archbishop Sheen's day, there were four – then three – commercial broadcast networks. Now there are five, and that's just in English. Throw in cable, satellite and streaming, and you've got a *bouillabaisse* of options.

* * * * *

On radio, there are few scripted shows, but plenty of options on AM and FM – which didn't exist in Archbishop Sheen's heyday – plus satellite radio with its 200-plus channels.

There's also this thing called the internet, which has – use your Carl Sagan voice here – billions and billions of pages.

As a result, while there's no shortage of Catholic voices, they're all fish swimming in smaller and smaller ponds, yet, ironically, being drowned out under a tidal wave of stronger cultural and societal forces.

i Mark Pattison is a correspondent with CNS.

People have right to know how Vatican uses resources, official says

The Vatican's financial situation must be "a glass house" that displays transparency and honesty, letting Catholics know where its revenues come from and go, said the head of the Secretariat for the Economy.

Presenting a detailed budget report of the Roman Curia for 2019, Jesuit Fr Juan Antonio Guerrero Alves said Catholics "have the right to know how we use the Holy See's resources. We are not the owners; we are the custodians of the assets that we received."

"Those who ask for transparency are right. The Holy See's economy must be a glass house. This is what the Pope asks of us," he said in an interview with Andrea Tornielli, editorial director of the Vatican Dicastery for Communication.

The Vatican press office released the interview and the secretariat's 'Consolidated Financial Statement' of the Roman Curia for 2019 October 1, days before the annual Peter's Pence collection was to be taken up in Catholic parishes around the world. The collection, usually taken in June, was moved to October 4 because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

For 2019, Fr Guerrero said that the Roman Curia, which is made up of 64 entities, had a budget deficit of €11 million. The statement showed it had €307 million in revenues, €318 million in expenditures and a total of €1.4 billion in net equity.

Deficit

If the financial statements of Vatican City State, Peter's Pence, the Vatican Bank, various foundations and the Vatican pension fund were added, he said, then net assets would come to about €4 billion and there would be no deficit.

However, he said, that did not mean the Vatican was not facing any difficulties or that things would not get worse because of the coronavirus crisis.

Referring to ongoing news reports about Vatican investments, most notably a London property deal being investigated by the



Carol Glatz

Vatican, Father Guerrero said, "it is possible that in some cases, the Holy See has been not just poorly advised, but also swindled."

"I believe that we are learning from past mistakes or imprudence" and putting into high gear the measures needed to guarantee transparency, controls and collaboration between dicasteries, he said.

Donations, which include contributions made to Peter's Pence, which amounted to €66 million in 2019, covered 35% of the costs of the Curia carrying out the Pope's mission and specific projects specified by the contributors, he said. The Curia's infrastructure and service costs, he added, are covered by other funds.

Peter's Pence, which funds papal charities as well as supporting the Curia and Vatican embassies around the globe, "must be managed with the wisdom of an honest administrator", he said.

Fr Guerrero also said clarity and transparency about the London property deal is essential, particularly because of the confusion and upset it has caused.

In the meantime, he said, "I can say the losses (incurred in that deal) were not covered by Peter's Pence, but with other reserve funds of the Secretariat of State."

Slightly more than half of all revenues for the Roman Curia 2019 came from income generated from assets such as investments and real estate, he said, while donations

"Slightly more than half of all revenues for the Roman Curia 2019 came from income generated from assets such as investments and real estate, he said, while donations from dioceses and Catholic donors totalled €56 million or 18% of revenues"



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"The Vatican must make sure the debt is sustainable and "we do have to find a way to sustain the mission in the long run" with adequate resources and improving returns from investments"

Expenditures totalled €318 million for 2019 with the bulk, €207 million, going to curial offices dedicated to "apostolic mission" work, including the Dicastery for Communication (€46 million) and the apostolic nunciatures around the world (€43 million). Asset management services (including taxes and building maintenance) for the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See cost €66.6 million and "services and

administration", for example, the Secretariat of State, various oversight agencies and the Swiss Guard, cost €44 million.

Because the Holy See does not operate like a business or a country, "it does not seek profit or surplus" he said. "Therefore, it is normal that it be in deficit."

Expenditures

The Vatican dicasteries account for the bulk of the Curia expenditures, he said, but they are providing services that "are not sold or sponsored...avoiding a deficit is not the goal of the Holy See. Its spirit is something else," that is, fulfilling the mission it has been entrusted with, he said.

However, the Vatican must make sure the debt is sustainable and "we do have to find a way to sustain the mission in the long run" with adequate resources and improving returns from investments and real estate assets, he added.

"The Faithful want to contribute to the Church's mission, but it is essential there be a policy of external transparency and communication that can share in detail how we use the money we receive and manage," he said. "This is the objective we want to reach; this is the path the Holy Father has pointed us to."

The Vatican had not released a budget report to the public since 2015.

Pope Francis established the Council for the Economy, the Secretariat for the Economy and a general auditor's office in 2014 and approved their statutes on a trial basis in 2015 as part of a major overhaul of the Vatican's accounting and budgeting procedures.

Starting in 2014, all departments, bodies and foundations of the Holy See were required to report all assets – which totalled €1.1 billion, as well as liabilities – which totalled €222 million.

The Vatican's final figures for 2014 showed a budget deficit of more than €25.6 million on the part of the Roman Curia, but that deficit was offset by a €63.5 million surplus brought in by entities falling under the separate Vatican City State budget.

The Roman Curia again reported a deficit of €12.4 million in 2015, while Vatican City State reported a surplus of €59.9 million, in large part due to revenue from the Vatican Museums.

The interview with Father Guerrero revealed that for 2018 the Holy See had a deficit of €75 million. However, he told Mr Tornielli that figure included some "extraordinary" costs, although he did not specify what they were.

Carol Glatz is a correspondent with Cruxnow.com

Letters

Letter of the week

The Church will not re-make itself in the image of Mary McAleese

Dear Editor, I was getting a little bit concerned about our former president Mary McAleese. It had been several weeks since I had heard her quoted predicting the demise of the Catholic Church. She was clearly keeping her powder dry for a few weeks to maximise publicity for a new book.

Her training as a journalist clearly served her well, and she is a dab hand at clever-sounding little put-downs like her dismissal of the Catholic hierarchy as "little old men".

Given that Mrs McAleese is in her 70th year, I would've expected some greater sensitivity and decorum about ageing.

Mrs McAleese now appears to have

moved on from describing Catholic teaching on the male-only priesthood as "codology" to "pure drivell" before admitting in a recent interview that she "couldn't care less" about the issue of women's ordination or the idea about a female Pope.

The former president certainly has a strange way of behaving if she believes that appearing obsessed about things is showing a lack of interest. Are we really that far through the looking glass?

Mrs McAleese is clearly a very talented and determined person. She has given great service both as a lawyer and our head of state. I don't doubt her sincerity on matters of faith,

but it may well be time for some real soul-searching and a conscientious reflection on whether her happiness and peace of mind is helped by her remaining in an institution that she so rages against.

The Catholic Church is never going to be the institution that Mrs McAleese thinks that it ought to be because it is never going to cease being the Catholic Church. The reformers of 500 years ago understood this and so started their own religion and many Protestants appear to be quite happy with that.

*Yours etc.,
Mary White,
Rialto, Dublin.*

The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world

Dear Editor, I particularly enjoyed Jason Osborne's article 'Ministering medically and spiritually at the margins' [IC 17/09/2020]. Sr Carol Breslin has put her life and times to such great use. This it appears in no small way to be the abiding influence of her dearly beloved mother.

She tells us that as a young girl "the MMM (Medical Missionaries of Mary) magazine was always in the house" and this sparked her interest in the missions.

This reminds me of the age-old adage "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world" and also the abiding importance of the home.

*Yours etc.,
Maureen Bowen,
Innishannon, Cork.*



Priests must be creative in offering Confession

Dear Editor, Apostasy is not a word we hear very often but given that it means the renunciation of formerly held religious beliefs and principles one is forced to admit that Ireland has sadly joined much of the western apostatised world in its abandonment of religious belief and practice.

I wonder how many

know that apostasy is one of the signs that the 'End Times' are nigh. This is well documented in Sacred Scripture.

This being so it is very unfortunate both for believers and apostates that churches are once again closed in many dioceses with no access to socially distanced public Masses.

Even more alarming is the failure in too many parishes to make available socially-distanced Confession. At Easter Pope Francis urged priests to "be creative" in finding ways to bring the Sacraments especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation to the laity.

Many churches have pastoral centres with many

rooms ideally suited for hearing socially-distanced Confessions. I am sure that all priests hear Confession by appointment but this message needs to get out to those whose only contact is Mass on the webcam.

*Yours etc.,
Ann Kehoe,
Castleknock, Dublin.*

Supporting President Trump over his abortion stance

Dear Editor, Dr Cormac O'Duffy quite rightly states that abortion isn't the only issue in US election [IC 24/09/2020] but it is most definitely the most important at this particular time when it is possible to halt its ever-increasing journey throughout the world.

The right to life is the most basic right. In fact, without it no other right can apply. The issues that Dr O'Duffy mentioned, climate change (a popular one which raises no hackles), refugees, the death penalty, etc. are important and have to be addressed also. I have stated previously that there is no one more opposed to the death penalty than I am and I write to prisoners on death row, but, as it now seems possible to

reaffirm the right to life under President Trump, it has to be the determining one in the forthcoming election. More than 60 million babies have been aborted in the US since Roe vs Wade.

It is sad to see Dr Duffy's reference to his local diocese producing 'non-partisan materials to help guide the Faithful' when it is time to stand up and be counted. Perhaps he could look to Ireland and see how that panned out here in relation to the abortion referendum. It is helpful to remember St Mother Teresa's comment that 'the greatest destroyer of peace in the world today is abortion' and it definitely is. It can in no way be justified and it leaves Catholics with no option but to

support President Trump in his efforts to abolish it. He has already done great work in support of pro-life and in trying to defund International Planned Parenthood but has been thwarted at every turn by the Democrats.

Finally, I'm with Mother Teresa in defining abortion as the greatest evil today and I cannot see how any Christian or Catholic can refuse to do everything in their power to ensure that it is eradicated. If I had a vote in the US election, I would not like to meet my maker if I didn't avail of the means of doing just that.

*Yours etc.,
Mary Stewart,
Ardeskin, Donegal.*

How to join the order in Kylemore Abbey

Dear Editor, With reference to Leonie Gallagher's letter, [IC 17/09/2020] we have been offering at the abbey, prior to Covid-19, an arrangement she might be interested in.

Those interested write and are encouraged to visit the abbey or send a curriculum vitae. If the candidate is eligible, they work with the nuns and also in the abbey or wherever help is needed. A minimum stay of six weeks is desirable and can be extended.

Accommodation and meals are provided and everyone is encouraged to join the nuns at prayer and attend Mass. Contact with the community is welcomed and instruction is available if requested.

We have met many fine people over the years who share our lives and work but as I stated above, in view of the pandemic, the scheme is cancelled for the time being and we can only hope to resume it in the future.

*Yours etc.,
Sr Genevieve Harrington OSB,
Kylemore Abbey, Connemara,
Co. Galway.*

Hopes new US judge ends 'Roe vs Wade'

Dear Editor, Dr O'Duffy's assertion that abortion is not the only issue [IC 24/09/2020] has been contradicted by the Archbishop of Kansas, who has said it is the only issue.

The Biden/Harris ticket, fuelled by the evil legacy of judge Ginsburg, has exposed the reality with which a Democratic victory will mean to the unborn: their total eradication!

What the castigating of the Trump replacement for Ginsburg shows is the reality that has been exposed by the brave comments of Fr James Altman and others is correct. One can only hope that this appointment will see the ending of Roe vs Wade.

*Yours etc.,
Fr John McCallion,
Coalisland, Tyrone.*

What minds do legislators have?

Dear Editor, Pieta House recently called for no more suicide. Five minutes later, the gilded elite men in suits in Leinster House have called for the legalisation and facilitation of suicide.

What kind of minds do these legislators have? Weirdos, I say. All this legalisation talk must be a cause of great distress to Minister McEntee and many others.

*Yours etc.,
Colm O'Connor,
Goatstown,
Dublin.*

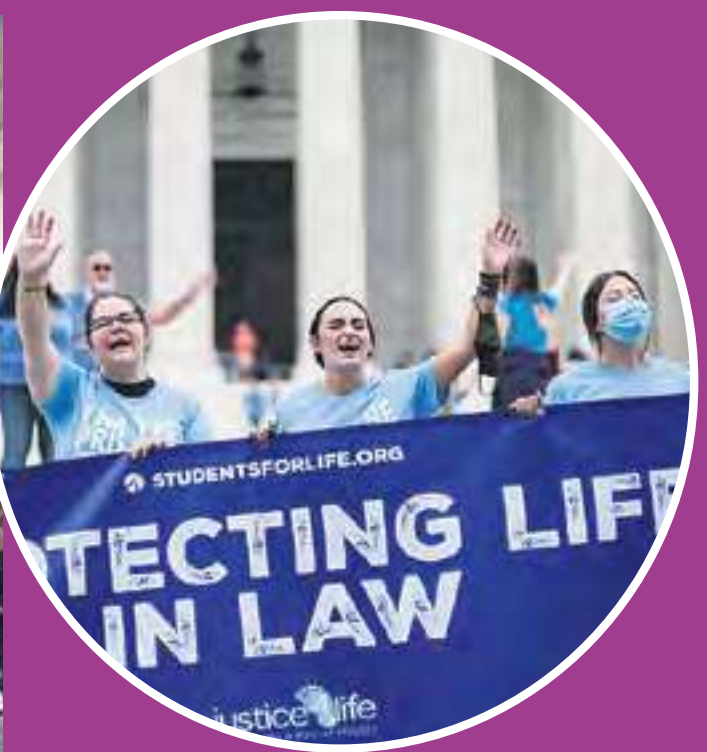
Letters to the Editor

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



▲ **USA:** Protesters demonstrate outside the US Supreme Court in Washington. The court began hearing cases for the new term this week.
◀ **VATICAN:** Pope Francis welcomes 38 recruits to the Swiss Guard at the Vatican along with their family members. Photos: CNS



GUATEMALA: A Guatemalan soldier patrols to prevent a group of Honduran migrants who are trying to reach the United States from moving towards the Guatemala and Mexico border, as they sit outside a migrant shelter in Tecun Uman.



PHILIPPINES: A priest blesses a dog with holy water at a drive-through pet blessing in celebration of World Animal Day on October 4, in Manila.



AUSTRALIA: With images of St Josephine Bakhita as a backdrop, Sydney Archbishop Anthony Fisher poses with members of the Anti-Slavery Taskforce of the Archdiocese of Sydney.



ITALY: The body of Carlo Acutis, who died in 2006, is pictured at the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Assisi, Italy. The Italian teen will be beatified on October 10 in Assisi.

'Abraham's Counsel to Sarah' by James Tissot, ca. 1900.



Spirituality and the second half of life

One size doesn't fit everyone. This isn't just true for clothing, it's also true for spirituality. Our challenges in life change as we age. Spirituality hasn't always been fully sensitive to this. True, we've always had tailored instruction and activities for children, young people and for people who are raising children, carrying a job, and paying a mortgage, but we've never developed a spirituality for what happens when those years are over.

Why is one needed? Jesus seemingly didn't have one. He didn't have one set of teachings for the young, another for those in mid-life and still another for the elderly. He just taught. The Sermon on the Mount, the parables, and his invitation to take up his Cross are intended in the same way for everyone, irrespective of age. But we hear those teaching at very different times in our lives; and it's one thing to hear the Sermon the Mount when you're seven years old, another when you're 27, and quite another when you're 87. Jesus' teachings don't change, but we do, and they offer very specific challenges at different times of our lives.

Exception

Christian spirituality has generally kept this in mind, with one exception. Except for Jesus and an occasional mystic, it has failed to develop an explicit spirituality for our later years, for how we are



Fr Rolheiser

meant to be generative in our senior years and how we are to die in a life-giving way. But there's a good reason for this *lacuna*. Simply put, it wasn't needed because up until this last century most people never lived into old age.

“The Desert fathers and mothers folded the question of how to age and die into the framework of their spirituality”

For example, in Palestine, in Jesus' time, the average life expectancy was between 30 and 35 years. A century ago in the United States, it was still less than

50 years. When most people in the world died before they reached the age of 50, there was no real need for a spirituality of aging.

There is such a spirituality inside the Gospels. Even though he died at 33 Jesus left us a paradigm of how to age and die. But that paradigm, while healthily infusing and undergirding Christian spirituality in general, was never developed more specifically into a spirituality of aging (with the exception of some of the great Christian mystics).

After Jesus, the Desert fathers and mothers folded the question of how to age and die into the overall framework of their spirituality. For them, spirituality was a quest to 'see the face of God' and that, as Jesus makes clear, requires one thing, purity of heart. So for them,

“When most people in the world died before they reached the age of 50, there was no real need for a spirituality of aging. There is such a spirituality inside the Gospels”

no matter your age, the challenge was the same, trying to achieve purity of heart.

“We're developing, more and explicit spiritualities of aging and dying”

Then in the age of the persecutions and the early Christian martyrs, the idea developed that the ideal way to age and die was through martyrdom. Later, when Christians were no longer physically martyred, the idea took hold that you could take on a voluntary type of martyrdom by living the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They believed that living these, like the quest for purity of heart, taught you all you needed to know, no matter your age.

Eventually this was expanded to mean that anyone who faithfully responded to the duties in his or her life, irrespective of age, would learn everything necessary to come to sanctity through that fidelity. As a famous aphorism put it: stay inside your cell and it will teach you all you need to know. Understood properly, there's a spirituality of aging and dying inside these notions, but until recently there was little need to draw that out more explicitly.

Happily, today the situation is changing and we're developing, more and more, some explicit

spiritualities of aging and dying. Perhaps this reflects an aging population, but there's now a burgeoning body of literature, both religious and secular, that's taking up the question of aging and dying.

These authors include many names already familiar to us: Henri Nouwen, Richard Rohr, Kathleen Dowling Singh, David Brooks, Cardinal Bernardin, Michael Paul Gallagher, Joan Chittister, Parker Palmer, Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, Paul Kalanithi, Erica Jong, Kathie Roiphe and Wilkie and Noreen Au, among others. Coming from a variety of perspectives, each of these offer insights into what God and nature intend for us in our later years.

In essence, here's the issue: today, we're living longer and healthier late into life. It's common today to retire sometime in our early 60s after having raised our children, superannuated from our jobs and paid our mortgages. So what's next, given that we probably have 20 or 30 more years of health and energy left? What are these years for? What are we called to now, beyond loving our grandkids?

Abraham and Sarah, in their old age, were invited to set out for a new land and conceive a child long after this was biologically impossible for them. That's our call too.

Which 'Isaac' are we called to give birth to in our later years? We need guidance.

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, October 8, 2020

Personal Profile

The spiritual support: bringing Christ's light to young minds

Page 34



Signs and symptoms of mouth cancer



Here's something that may have slipped by you – September 16 was Mouth Cancer Awareness day. I don't think you would be alone, of course, and a possible explanation for this is that mouth and neck cancers are not as common or as well-known as other areas, such as lung, prostate and breast cancer.

However, there are still more than 700 cases of mouth cancer diagnosed every year and this figure has continued to rise over the last few years. As with other forms of cancer, those numbers are likely to rise as our population ages. Projections from the National Cancer Registry Ireland suggest that cases could rise as



Diagnoses of mouth and neck cancer to increase 30% in 25 years, writes Ruadhán Jones

much as 30% over the next 25 years.

In a statement for the campaign, Dr Eleanor O Sullivan of Cork University Dental School said that, "while this cancer receives little publicity, it is more lethal than breast cancer, cervical cancer or malignant melanoma. Those over the age of 55 who smoke

and/or drink are most at risk. We can turn the tide on this disease by avoiding known risk factors (smoking, alcohol, HPV), knowing the warning signs and encouraging people to be mouth aware and to seek help from their dentist or GP if they have any ulcers or other lesions that do not heal in 3 weeks. Survival and quality of life

is greatly improved when these cancers are diagnosed early and treated quickly."

While mouth and neck cancers can occur at any age, the majority of mouth cancers are diagnosed in the over 55's, regardless of whether or not they still have their own natural teeth or may be wearing dentures.

This year, the Mouth Cancer Awareness campaign is advising the older population and their carers to be particularly mindful of the early signs of mouth cancer and to seek advice and treatment from their dentist or doctor.

But what signs and symptoms should you look out for? And what are the likely treatments you will need to undergo? Here

is the main advice the campaign has produced.

Signs and symptoms

If detected early, treatment for mouth cancer can be more straightforward and have an excellent outcome. Unfortunately for those who are diagnosed at a late stage, the outcomes can be poor and affected individuals can be left with life altering changes to their appearance and their ability to speak, eat and swallow.

There a number of signs of mouth cancer, though they vary slightly depending on the area of the mouth, throat, or nose affected. The website, mouthcan-

» Continued on Page 33

Family News

AND EVENTS

CELEBRATING ARCHITECTURE ONLINE AND ON-SITE

Open House Dublin's annual architecture festival will take place on the weekend of the 8–11 October, with a variety of online and onsite events. The focus of the festival is to highlight the positive impact good quality buildings and places have on people.

Highlights of this year's programme include: 'The Big Debate', centring on issues around wellbeing, climate change, and people-centred cities; an architect-led bike tour from Sandycove through Monkstown to Blackrock village; and a unique series of film shorts celebrating and showcasing Dublin's architecture, featuring DLR's Rosemount Court in Dundrum, Pritzker Prize winners Grafton Architects, as well as an aerial tour of Dublin with Niall McCullough. For children, activities for Open House relate to this year's theme of 'The Extraordinary Ordinary'. The programme will include People's Parktrek and digital activities for primary school aged children.

For full details of the event programme and to make bookings, visit www.openhousedublin.com

DADS WHO SPEND TIME WITH THEIR BABIES HAVE LESS DEPRESSION

A father's involvement in the parenting of an infant is associated with a lower risk of experiencing paternal depressive symptoms during the first year of the child's life, according to a study published in the open-access journal *Frontiers in Psychiatry*.

The issue of postpartum depression – depression following childbirth – is well documented in women, affecting between 10-20% of mothers. However, the effects on fathers are less well-known, despite research suggesting that 8-10% of men suffer similar symptoms to women.

The study's authors found that all three indicators - greater amount of time fathers spent with their new born, parenting self-efficacy and ability to provide material support - predicted lower rates of depressive symptoms in the fathers during the following year.

"Family researchers are recognizing, more and more, the vital roles fathers play in the lives of their children and the functioning of the entire family unit," said Dr Olajide N. Bamishigbin Jr., Assistant Professor of Psychology at California State University, Long Beach, USA, and first author of the paper.

RESEARCH REVEALS MORE THAN A QUARTER OF PEOPLE FELT LONELY DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

Researchers from Queen's University Belfast have found that more than a quarter of people felt lonely during the Covid-19 lockdown.

The results are from the 'Covid-19 Psychological Wellbeing Study' which surveyed the psychological wellbeing of 2,000 UK adults between 23 March and 24 April 2020.

The survey found that 27% of respondents were classified as lonely. Up to 70% of people said that some of the time or often in the past week they had felt isolated, left out and lacking companionship.

Dr Jenny Groake, who carried out the research, said that: "Rates of loneliness during the initial phase of lockdown were high. Our findings suggest that support to reduce loneliness should prioritise younger people, those with mental health symptoms and people who are socially isolated. Support aimed at improving emotion regulation, sleep quality and increasing social support could reduce the impact of physical distancing regulations on mental health outcomes."

Charity at a time of chaos

The line from the poem *Easter 1916* by William Butler Yeats "all changed, changed utterly: a terrible beauty is born" has been in my head a lot recently. Queen Elizabeth famously referred to 1992 as her *annus horribilis*, a Latin phrase meaning horrible year. Like many other families all over Ireland and the rest of the world, my life, and the lives of my family members, has changed utterly. My 21-year-old daughter getting a positive Covid-19 test result is just another hurdle we have to face together. For the next 10 to 14 days, we're all confined to the home turf and will have to face some anxious days waiting for our daughter to recover while the rest of us are tested to see if we've been affected. It's often said that our lives are more about how we react to the situations we find ourselves in rather than the situations themselves.

“Sometimes, when we’re on the receiving end of some kindness, we feel a bit embarrassed, undeserving or even humbled”

I've noticed throughout this whole, unpredictable, chaotic year that the testing times we're in can bring out very different reactions in different people. We have those who've decided to batten down the hatches and focus entirely on themselves and their own immediate requirements; we have the accusatory, the foolhardy and the cynical. We also have those wise souls who don't just absorb and swallow the accepted wisdom but have retained that admirable quality of childhood, questioning



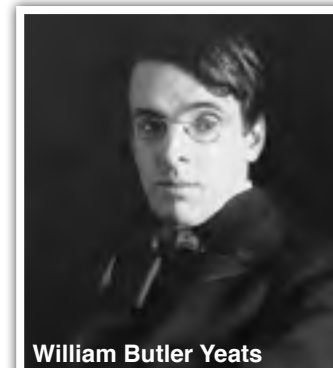
A parent's perspective Maria Byrne

everything and pointing out the times when the emperor has no clothes.

In the midst of all the worry and grief, the debates, opinions and critical analysis, what is the human quality that will help us most in trying to move forward in this totally changed environment? I was chatting to my 31-year-old son, David, about how I could write about Covid-19 now that his poor sister has succumbed to the horrible virus. We were saying that practically everything that can be said on the subject has already been said. In his opinion, it wasn't any of the information of hand washing or social distancing or mask wearing that stood out, it was how we can bring goodness, virtue and kindness into the ordinary circumstances of our coronavirus-dominated lives. For him, one word stood out: charity. He was pondering on how it's a word that he was familiar with from as far back as he could remember. He'd heard it mentioned in homilies and talks, seen it on notice boards and in parish bulletins and in requests for donations to various charities but was questioning what it really means for us in our own lives. He felt that it was easy to talk about the virtue but what does charity look like in our own lives and how do we implement it? Without solid, concrete, bold actions, he felt that charity is just a feel-good word that we throw around.

My son's thoughts and musings on charity were not totally out of the blue. They

were inspired by him being on the receiving end of some unexpected kindness recently when he found himself needing a place to stay at very short notice. Being far from home, and with the restrictions of Covid-19, he was resigning himself to a night sleeping in his car when a kind relative stepped in providing him with a warm bed on her couch, towels, fresh sheets and blankets and even the extra touch of leaving some chocolates on his towel. He was filled with gratitude at the simple, generous hospitality. What may not have seemed like a huge amount to the giver was the difference between him having a good night's sleep, a hot shower and arriving at his meeting well-rested and in top form rather than cold and dishevelled.



William Butler Yeats

When yet another Primetime debate or discussion is over, it'll be charity and kind deeds that will get us through and might save 2020 from its own *annus horribilis* status. Sometimes, when we're on the receiving end

of some kindness, we feel a bit embarrassed, undeserving or even humbled, but another's good gesture can point us in the direction of doing better ourselves. My late mother constantly said that "love is actions, not sweet words". How can we reach out to others and bear fruit in influencing them spiritually if we don't reach them in a very real and experiential way? Charity comes in all sorts of guises; if you can't offer someone a bed for the night, offer them a bit of unscheduled time. If you don't have the time, free up a few hours. There are twenty four hours in everyone's day so if one person can make time for works of charity and mercy, so can we.

“For the next 10 to 14 days, we’re all confined to the home turf and will have to face some anxious days”

As I popped in briefly to chat to my sick daughter, sad in her solitary self-isolation, it struck me that, with most of her creature comforts gone, the kindness of her friends and family would get her through the next few weeks. In the few hours after her positive test she was inundated with thoughtful texts and messages and she herself was eager to do her bit to warn her friends of the dangers of the virus, posting her own public health warning on Instagram. G.K. Chesterton said: "In prosperity, our friends know us. In adversity, we know our friends." A year that could be remembered only for bad news and bad times can be elevated and transformed by the kindness of those who practice the life-changing virtue of Christian charity.

» Continued from Page 31



cer.ie provides a quite extensive list of potential signs and symptoms.

- A sore or ulcer in the mouth that doesn't heal
- An ongoing sore throat, hoarse voice or difficulty speaking
- Problems chewing or swallowing
- White or red patches in the mouth
- A swelling or a lump anywhere in the mouth or neck
- Nose bleeds or a persistent blocked nose
- Problems with hearing or ringing in the ears
- Pain in the face or jaw
- Numbness
- A thickening or hardness of the cheek or tongue
- Unexplained loose teeth

You can check yourself for any of these symptoms by using a torch to check inside your mouth, tongue, lips and throat. You can also check your neck and jaw by gently feeling for any changes.

“There are still more than 700 cases of mouth cancer diagnosed every year and this figure has continued to rise over the last few years”

It's important to maintain an awareness of how your mouth looks and feels. Checking it regularly, while brushing your teeth for example, and maintaining good dental hygiene can help you to identify mouth cancers quickly.

Dental check-ups

As well as maintaining your own good dental hygiene, regular dental check-ups are important. Dentists have a vital role to play in the prevention of mouth cancers by advising on risk factors. When you attend your dentist, a mouth cancer examination should be part of your routine dental check-up. The examination is quick and painless.

A dentist or doctor will examine your mouth, head and neck. If they are concerned, they will refer you to an appropriate specialist who will carry out some further tests. These

may include one or more of the following tests:

- X-rays, MRI scans, Ultrasound
- Endoscopy
- Biopsy

Susan Richmond, a mouth cancer patient from Cork, said she regretted not visiting the dentist more regularly and encouraged people to do so.

“Like a lot of people, I didn't like the dentist,” she said. “I only went if I really had to. I just wish that I had taken that step earlier and perhaps, I wouldn't look and sound as I do today. Be aware of your own mouth. You look at your face daily, you clean your teeth daily. Note any changes in your mouth...and if you do find anything you're not sure about, go to your dentist. I'm proof this can be beaten, life can go on.”

Dr Denise McCarthy of Dublin Dental University Hospital had a similar message: “Early detection and diagnosis of mouth cancer is improved by attending your dentist every year for an examination of your mouth, even if you have no remaining natural teeth. Early detection and treatment of cancer will greatly improve treatment outcome, long-term survival and quality of life.”

Mouth cancer treatment

The treatment for mouth cancer will vary depending on the location and type of cancer and your general health. Your doctors will develop a treatment plan to suit your case which may include one or more of the following treatments:

- Surgery – to remove the cancer



- Radiotherapy – to kill cancer cells using x-rays
- Chemotherapy – to kill the cancer cells with drugs

However, doctors and dentists encourage what are called preventative measures, which mainly involve avoiding factors which increase the risk of contracting cancer. Cancer is caused by a change in genes that control the way cells function. These genetic changes can be caused by external factors and can sometimes run in families.

“While mouth and neck cancers can occur at any age, the majority of mouth cancers are diagnosed in the over 55's”

“Our message on MCAD 2020 is one of hope and self-awareness,” said Dr McCarthy. “Prevention of mouth cancer is helped by having a healthy lifestyle, controlling mouth cancer risk factors by quitting smoking and alcohol consumption and getting the HPV vaccination.”

The most common risk factors are smoking, drinking alcohol, UV exposure from the sun and poor diet. A number of simple steps can be taken to reduce or eliminate these risk factors:

- Do not smoke. If you do smoke, plan to quit
- Limit your alcohol consumption
- Always use a lip balm and face cream with sun protection (SPF 30+)
- Eat a healthy diet high in fruit and vegetables

Ultimately, the best way to avoid and/or diagnose mouth cancers are to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to regularly visit your dentist for a check-up.

i For more information, check the website www.mouthcancer.ie. You can also talk to a specialist cancer nurse on the National Cancer Helpline on freephone 1800 200 700. The opening hours are 9.00am-7.00pm Monday to Thursday and 9.00am-5.00pm on Fridays.

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



All the fun has gone out of the pandemic. It's not that I mean to be flippant about something which has cost a million lives globally, and which continues to cause economic devastation. Yet most people acknowledge that there were real positives to the sudden interruption to normal life imposed by the spring lockdown. This time around, I wonder if we'll manage to be quite so cheerful in the face of adversity.

Last March, we suddenly stopped rushing from pillar to post. The skies turned bluer, as pollution fell. Families spent weeks of uninterrupted time together. We realised that we can have happy holidays without leaving our garden. Many kids became less stressed, by learning at their own pace from home and playing in the garden between lessons. Fun was found in small things. Nobody had ever experienced such a radical alteration to normal life before, outside of times of war. There was much to welcome in this a temporary lifestyle change. The weather played a part, by delivering one of the sunniest and driest springs on record for the lockdown.

“School is up and running and sports clubs are managing to meet, even if it involves Covid-19”

We were wise to try to make the most of it, for the children's sake especially. There was certainly no point in moping fearfully around the house. Yet, in the background, there were daily tales of tragedy as lives were lost and a sinister disease wound its insidious tentacles around the planet. There was fear, since nobody knew when it might strike us. We lived with the knowledge that my wife was close to the virus each day, since she worked in the hospital's emergency department. The novelty of house arrest soon wore off, and by the time the lockdown eventually eased, freedom could not come soon enough.

We grasped at summer as a hiatus. This intermission was made all the more precious by the knowledge that the summer was just a sort of half-time break. It was widely

flagged that autumn and winter would bring a second wave, which could be worse than the first. Despite being forewarned it was surprising how quickly the virus spread in the early weeks of autumn. Case numbers climbed rapidly, even though the weather remained summery. Dublin



and Donegal were the first to re-enter tighter restrictions. Simultaneously, it's becoming clear that large sections of society couldn't be bothered to do much to contain the spread. What will happen when even more people grow frustrated, just as the weather turns colder, thereby helping the virus to spread?

For now, the kids' lives have resumed with some semblance of normality. School is up and running and sports clubs are managing to meet, even if it involves Covid-19 declarations, hand sanitiser and some element of social distancing. There is a strong sense that this approximation of normality hangs in a precarious balance. Schools are already putting in place systems for the eventuality that some, or all, learning may yet have to take place from home. The notion of a lockdown in the depths of winter is a claustrophobic and dreary prospect.

Yet if this winter is to be darker than most, then Christmas is the distant beacon towards which we must now sail. This year, there will be no pantomimes, no nativity plays and no visits to Santa's grotto. Even going to church on Christmas morning looks set to be off the cards. The beauty of Christmas is that it shines brightest in times of adversity. The fires will be lit, and families will gather together warmly, whatever storms afflict the world outside the window. For even as this strange winter approaches, there are happy days ahead.

The spiritual support: bringing Christ's light to young minds

Personal Profile



Jason Osborne

New Pastoral Manager at Queen's University Belfast (QUB) Chaplaincy, Shannon Campbell is rooted in both Catholicism and ecumenism. Having attended QUB to study post-primary education and having been actively involved in the chaplaincy's pastoral team during her years there, time has shown Shannon its circular face.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, she attributed her even footing to a home which was "a happy place" and described how it inspired her to share what she has in her Faith with others.

"Dad is Catholic and mum is Anglican so we were fortunate to have these two Christian traditions enrich our faith experience growing up. This was particularly important in our Northern Irish context where local communities can be sometimes preoccupied with difference, especially in matters of faith and belief," she says.

Well-equipped by these youthful experiences, she describes her choice to do teaching in university as a "natural progression"

While her relationship with Jesus was nurtured at home, she drew deeply from the communities surrounding her, particularly in school, among her peers. Having attended St Catherine's College in Armagh, she found "a lively faith was passed on there by teachers who had a sense of Christian vocation and who were



committed to forming us as well-rounded women capable of making positive contributions to our local communities and wider society."

Her first experience of chaplaincy came by way of the school's lay chaplain, Matthew McFadden, "who provided pastoral and spiritual opportunities and encouraged us to participate in parish-based faith initiatives." This exhortation to local ministry would stay and grow with Shannon.

Community

She enjoyed the sense of community early on through the youth group 'Shyne' in Drumcree Parish.

"Weekly faith gatherings in an atmosphere of faith and friendship helped me develop as a young

confident Catholic committed to service," she tells. Later on, it was the Michaela Foundation in which she found her home, which "promotes values which encourage young people, especially young women, to succeed in life with faith, confidence and fun as their foundation."

Well-equipped by these youthful experiences, she describes her choice to do teaching in university as a "natural progression." During her time in QUB, she was actively involved in the university chaplaincy, "serving latterly as a member of its pastoral team," the team she now finds herself helming.

"The chaplaincy is a vibrant, Christ-centred community of faith and friendship at the heart of campus. During my undergraduate

studies, I experienced it as a safe space and nurturing presence where I felt welcome, listened-to, valued and supported. I was encouraged to grow in openness to others and learn respect for my peers who were on faith journeys different to my own. The opportunities chaplaincy provided for togetherness and recreation helped me develop deep and lasting friendships, a sense of common purpose and a desire to serve," Shannon relates.

She continues: "After graduation, I felt I had more to give to this important ministry. When Ciaran Bagchus, the pastoral manager at chaplaincy, left to pursue studies for priesthood with Down and Connor Diocese, I jumped at the opportunity to serve in this leadership role and took up position this autumn."

Limbo

A young woman not long departed from the undergraduate scene herself, Shannon is aware of the transitional limbo many students find themselves in.

"I know from my work with youth and my experience of teaching in the post-primary sector that transitioning to third level is an exciting and transformative time for most young people, when they experience new possibilities. They learn much about the academic discipline they have chosen and even more about themselves, others, and life in general," she explains.

"Whilst it is a time of growth and self-discovery, it is not without challenge. Students experience unexpected anxieties and vulnerabilities which they don't necessarily have the capacity to resolve on their own. The pastoral care chaplaincy provides can mean the difference between a student seeing through their course with confidence or feeling they have no option but to drop out.

"Students who are vulnerable, facing mental-health and wellbeing issues, or estranged from family, benefit from our support, as do part-time and mature students, especially those who are care-givers," she says.

Shannon has not left the days of study behind her, however, which

further qualifies her to cater to the various needs students might have as they grapple with the often daunting challenge university life presents.

"Alongside campus ministry, I am reading for an MPhil in theology at the Loyola Institute at Trinity College. I feel it is important to grow as a reflective thinker who engages with questions of faith in a critical, reasoned way," she explains.

The opportunities chaplaincy provided for togetherness and recreation helped me develop deep and lasting friendships"

"Not only is this essential for my own personal faith development, but will enhance the service I give to the university community. The pastoral care chaplaincy provides is about more than just helping with an immediate personal crisis. We seek to introduce students to a rich Catholic, intellectual and cultural heritage. We support them to explore the wider world, and consider how they will contribute to it and shape its values and character."

As disruptive in this sphere as it has been in all others, the Covid-19 pandemic has done little to waylay the chaplaincy's efforts to provide for those in need.

"Whilst the coronavirus pandemic has introduced new uncertainties and changed the shape of student life and young adult ministry, I am excited about the future. Chaplaincy is approaching its 50th anniversary...I am working alongside our Chaplain, Fr Dominic McGrattan, to deliver a responsive, dynamic and imaginative vision for chaplaincy. This includes goals like strategic outreach, life-long learning and financial sustainability. We are confident this will put us on a sure footing for the next 50 years and make us well-placed to provide for the faith and pastoral needs of current and future generations of students."



Children's Corner

Chai Brady

How to become a lemon juice spy

Making invisible ink is a lot of fun, from pretending to be a secret agent or just sending hidden messages to friends, you can make all your secret codes and messages unreadable to others. All you need are some basic household objects and the hidden power of lemon juice.

The use of lemons in the creation of ink dates back to 600AD in the Arab world and during the 16th Century in Europe.

The most infamous story of fruit inks has to be that of England's 'Lemon Juice Spies' of World War I. German émigré Carl Muller recruited English baker John Hahn, and together they reported British troop movements to the Germans using lemon juice.

Between the easily detectable ink and the fact that Hahn signed a secret letter with his real name, British Postal Censorship soon caught on. Scotland Yard staged a raid on Hahn's home, finding a lemon poked full of holes by a pen nib. Then the police went for

Muller, who had pieces of lemon in a drawer and a whole lemon in his coat pocket. These lemons, along with the pen nibs degraded by citric acid and clogged with lemon bits, were used as evidence in court.

Apparatus:

- Half a lemon
- Water
- Spoon
- Bowl
- Cotton bud
- White paper
- Lamp or another light bulb

Method:

- Squeeze some lemon juice into the bowl and add a few drops of water.
- Mix the water and lemon juice with the spoon.
- Dip the cotton bud into the mixture and write a message onto the white paper.

- Wait for the juice to dry so it becomes completely invisible.
- When you are ready to read your secret message or show it to someone else, heat the paper by holding it close to a light bulb.

What's happening?

Lemon juice is an organic substance that oxidises and turns brown when heated. Diluting the lemon juice in water makes it very hard to notice when you apply it the paper, no one will be aware of its presence until it is heated and the secret message is revealed. Other substances which work in the same way include orange juice, honey, milk, onion juice, vinegar and wine. Invisible ink can also be made using chemical reactions or by viewing certain liquids under ultraviolet (UV) light.



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Better leaders? Now that's a leap of faith

There have been quite a few changes on radio for the autumn season, with presenters moving around in a kind of media musical chairs, but some things stay the same.

And so I was glad to see the recent return of **The Leap of Faith** (RTÉ Radio One) to its Friday night slot, with Michael Comyn still at the helm.

Last Friday's episode ranged across several upbeat topics, and boy do we need upbeat at the moment. Comyn interviewed Paul Val-lery who has written a book *Philanthropy, From Aristotle to Zuckerberg*. Many philanthropists, he said, were motivated by their religious faith, a "real driver" for their donating.

Not all philanthropy involved giving money away to the poor (only one-fifth, he estimated) – much of it involved rich people funding various institutions like universities. He didn't favour a cynical view – some suggested it involved tax dodging, but he pointed out that these people were still giving away lots of money rather than finding ways to keep it.

He did believe, however, that some used it to consolidate their position in society. He also included in the definition of philanthropy those who, like Bono and Bob Geldof, use their celebrity status as currency to draw attention



Sarah MacDonald with her godson in East Timor, Natalizio, and his parents, who featured on *Doc on One* (RTÉ Radio One). Photo: © RTÉ

to favoured causes.

There were a few issues I'd like to have seen explored but they weren't, e.g. what happens when rich people donate to dubious and divisive causes, or when their money is used to skew the democratic process, ensuring anything but a level playing field?

Source

Then there's the source – if money is accumulated thanks, say, to slavery, is it so tainted that it should be refused? The recent toppling of certain statues would suggest that consolidation of positions can be short lived.

More personally immediate was the story of Secret Street Tours, a Dublin initiative whereby formerly home-

less people give tours of Dublin which shows a different side to the city, more than the usual tourist fare. Comyn spoke to two of the guides, Shane and Kenny, and I was impressed by how articulate and reflective they were.

Both were, to varying degrees, well disposed towards religious faith, and had positive things to say about experience of the Capuchin Day Centre, the services offered by Fr Peter McVerry and the Salvation Army. They were strong on hope and gratitude, and Comyn showed a genuine interest in their improving situation – "you have a voice now".

RTÉ's *Doc on One* series has provided a voice to so many people over the years and has built up an impres-

sive archive. Last Saturday's episode, 'Timor Leste: Coming of Age', followed the story of journalist Sarah MacDonald as she returned to that country, formerly East Timor, after a 20-year absence.

On her original visit she had become godparent to a baby, Natalizio, and was going to meet him again. After initial communication she had lost contact after she returned to Ireland and felt guilty about that. She had been distracted by health issues resulting from side effects of anti-malaria medication.

Back then East Timor had been regularly in the news over here – it had been taken over by Indonesia after the Portuguese colonists left and



Michael Comyn.

PICK OF THE WEEK

THE 13th DAY

EWTN, Sunday, October 11, 9pm

A dramatisation based on the true story of three shepherd children from the village of Fatima, who experienced numerous visions, prophecies, and warnings from the Blessed Virgin Mary.

THE MEANING OF LIFE

RTÉ Radio One, Sunday, October 11, 10.30pm

Joe Duffy interviews Catherine Corless, local historian who investigated the Tuam babies case.

THE CONFESSORS

RTÉ One, Monday, October 12, 9.35pm

A selection of Irish priests, urban, rural and chaplains discuss the sins they've heard that have impacted and stayed with them. They also discuss why they have stayed within the Church.

this was followed by war as the East Timorese struggled for independence. It was good to be reminded of those days and we heard again about infamous massacres in cemeteries and in front of churches.

History

The history of the country was brought up to date – it was the first newly-sovereign state of the 21st Century and MacDonald noticed several changes for the better. She found that there were still huge social and economic problems yet reckoned that the future was "bright but fragile".

She found the people still loyal to their Catholic faith – the Church was the only institution that had stood up for them in the times of oppres-

sion and occupation.

The reunion with her godson was touching but was somewhat low key and anticlimactic – after all, Natalizio had been a baby last time she had seen him. Now she was determined to take up her responsibilities as godmother if he ever came to Ireland.

Finally, I watched the full **Presidential Debate** last Wednesday morning and while it held my attention it was anything but presidential – both were underwhelming and often irritating. How is it, in a country of such talent, that better leaders don't find their way to the top?

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Aubrey Malone

Film

Bringing it all back to the comfort (and safety) of home

While the new NPHET restrictions are of course necessary to get to the bottom of this whodunit we call Covid-19, they do raise the old questions of why the familiar fall guys (churches, cinemas, etc.) have again been targeted. Is the elephant in the room not the secondary schools? They opened in late August and that's when the second surge started. As a former teacher I sympathise with those who feel they're cannon fodder.

Meanwhile, us cinema-starved cinephiles go online again for our entertainment.

Having said that, there are advantages in watching films at home. You don't have to queue in the rain, for instance. Or drink coffee that tastes like tar. Or pay amounts of

money for refreshments that would get you a nice meal in a snazzy restaurant in Temple Bar. Or sit beside someone who's got his elbow on your arm-rest and who keeps laughing inanely at unfunny jokes.

People tell us Covid-19 is an opportunity to get back to the real values. Maybe we're going to too many films, or eating too many refreshments, or drinking too much coffee that tastes like tar.

You have more control over the process of watching a film at home than you have in a cinema. You can view it over and over again for one thing. You can pause it if you want to go out to the kitchen for a cuppa. You can fast forward through the boring bits. You



Hurd Hatfield and Angela Lansbury are superb in the classic *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

can re-wind to see something you might have missed.

Søren Kierkegaard said we can only understand our lives

backwards but we have to live them forwards – not if you have a remote, Søren.

There are religious films

on Netflix and The Faith Channel as I mentioned some weeks ago. You can also order them on Amazon. I recently watched Ralph Thomas' *Conspiracy of Hearts* (1961), a fine drama about a group of nuns sheltering young Jewish refugees in Italy during World War II.

Parable

You might also like *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. It has George Sanders, Hurd Hatfield and Angela Lansbury. All three excel. No doubt you know the story of Oscar Wilde's intriguing parable. Gray sells his soul to the devil in exchange for eternal youth. There have been many remakes over the years but for my money this 1945 version

sits head and shoulders above them all.

Gregory Peck gives a bravura performance in *Keys of the Kingdom* (1944), John Stahl's epic tale of a missionary priest sent to China to set up a Catholic parish there. It's adapted from A. J. Cronin's celebrated novel.

Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* (1957) is heavy going but if you're up to it you'll be rewarded. It features a knight returning home from the Crusades during the Black Death and ruminating on matters existential. The scene where he plays chess with the personification of death is iconic.

If Covid-19 has made you think about the big questions, this is one for you.



BookReviews

Peter Costello



Besieged Christians and their cultures Middle East

The Culture of God: The Syrian Jesus, Reading the Divine Mind, Sailing into the Divine Heart
by Nadim Nassar
(Hodder & Stoughton, £14.99)

Anthony Redmond

Nadim Nassar is the first Syrian Christian to become a priest in the Church of England. This is his first book and it's well worth reading.

He says of his life in the Middle East: "In my short life I have lived through four major wars, beginning with the Six Day War in 1967, which opened the floodgates for violence and open warfare between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

"In 1973, the Yom Kippur War was the first to leave a major scar on my soul: my Syrian homeland, Lattakia, was bombed by Israel and, for three days, night turned into day as huge oil tanks burned close to my home. I heard the bombers overhead, and my house was shaken by the explosions that followed. I remember that, every night, I would sit on my mother's lap for hours, shaking in fear."

Travels

Growing up as a Christian, Nadim always wanted to be a priest. In 1981, aged 17, he travelled to Beirut in Lebanon to study at the only Protestant school of theology in the Levant. The Lebanese civil war was going on at that time. He spent seven years in Beirut living close to death every day.

Of this time he writes: "I am sure many people have

very happy memories of their time at school or university, relaxing or studying in the quiet calm of the library. We literally had to crawl into the library to fetch books because snipers were watching every window. Despite our best precautions, no one could truly be safe. Early during my time at the school, one of my fellow students was killed by a sniper's bullet to the brain."

Nadim Nassar describes the culture of the Middle East and the temperament and character of the people who live there, the culture and environment in which Jesus grew up and lived.

“We lived near the sea, and I cannot remember a single day in the summer when we did not have visitors staying with us”

This atmosphere and character of the people has not changed since Jesus lived there. Hospitality and generosity are essential features of the people of Syria and the Middle East. They greet one another with a blessing.

"The people of the Middle East are so generous" he says. "I grew up as one of six children with a huge extended family. All my life in Syria, I remember very well that our home was open all the time for guests, especially for food.

"We lived near the sea, and I cannot remember a single day in the summer when we did not have visitors staying



Syrian Christians and Muslims pray together for peace at the Greek Orthodox Mariamiya Church in Damascus, Syria, in 2013.

with us."

He goes on to tell us that in the community where he grew up, people rarely invited others 'for dinner'; they simply visited each other without the need for appointments, and food would always be on

hand in case of visitors. This was nothing to do with rich or poor, food was always available.

He comments wisely: "Perhaps this is one of the reasons that God chose to manifest himself in the Middle East."

A very interesting aspect of life in the Middle East that the author describes is the warm, tactile friendship between males there: "We cannot talk about Jesus and his disciples without stopping at the very special relationship that

bonded Jesus with John. What kind of relationship did John and Jesus have, and how can we understand it from two perspectives: the culture of their time, and the culture of God? Having lived my childhood and youth in the Levant,

A forgotten hero of our past brought to life in a book readers

The Old Gunner and his Medals

by Brendan Lynch
(Mountjoy Publishing, €12.00; ISBN 978-0-9513668-3-7)

Peter Costello

Brendan Lynch's novel, published at the age of 80, is (all going well) an Irish classic in the making.

The novel never misses a step. From beginning to end it reads flawlessly as an account of a darker side of Irish history hardly ever mentioned in the past; a darker side, not imposed on

us by strangers, but one we imposed on ourselves.

I read it with growing enthusiasm, and hope that its qualities will be widely recognised.

Certainly every Tipperary person, perhaps brought up on Tipperary's Fighting Story, but now perhaps seeing the past in a different light, will want to read this account of the 'last of the fighting Fusiliers', the story of a soldier who served through the Great War only to return to a changed Ireland, where he suffered at the hands of 'the new men' now to the

fore in his native village.

The story is, as the reader learns in an afterword, drawn in part from life. But the important thing here is not the history.

“He marched away to brass bands and the blessings of the Church”

The important thing is the story. For it would be foolish to argue over *The Old Gunner and his Medals* as if it were a book – it is

'history'; but in the same way that *To Kill a Mocking Bird* (read in all our schools) is American history. This is, as all great novels, a moral fable.

Dan was proud of his service in the Army – in those days and for a long time afterwards most Irish people made a distinction between the Army and the Irish Army. He marched away to brass bands and the blessings of the Church. He returned to find a new regime in place, which cared nothing for what he had done and experienced.

More than that: some of 'the boys' turned up one night and threatened him into turning over the medals, which they hammered apart and took them away. But they were not real medals; the real medals were well wrapped and buried secretly in the fairy rath behind Dan's house.

Time passed, but when he tried to find them again he failed. But in the course of time he retrieves them, aided brilliantly by a neighbour's child and his burgeoning skills. As the poet Pope paraphrased Homer in *The*



Readers should note that *The Irish Catholic* circulates throughout the island of Ireland and the book prices listed are the retail price recommended by the Irish or British publishers, in either euros or sterling, as a general indication of what purchasers may expect to pay.

in the



Fr Dr Nadim Nassar.

a man's life would not be right if he did not have a special close male friend. Such a friendship is vitally important for any man in that region.

Contrast this with other cultures: "...In the West, the word 'intimacy' indicates the absence of barriers but mostly it encompasses sexual relations. In the Levant, intimacy means closeness, total trust, deep sharing and fellowship, and a sense of being soul mates.

“We must liberate the culture of God from our limited understanding...to decide who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’”

and having lived in Europe and the West now for over 25 years, I can see very clearly the difference between the Levant and the West in terms of personal relationships, especially deep friendships between men. In the Levant,

"All my time in the Levant, I experienced, deeply and beautifully, such intimacy in friendships...Levantine men, from the time of Jesus until today, are not afraid to be physical with each other; I remember I used to go to school with my intimate friend arm in arm every day.

"Even teenagers and adult men would walk hand-in-hand or arm-in-arm, or with our arms around each other's shoulders. This type of physical contact had no sexual connotation whatsoever."

What comes across from this book is Nadim Nassar's deep spirituality and love of God. It is a fascinating and thought-provoking book.

"The culture of God also guides us in our relationships with other faiths," he writes. "This culture is not an exclusive club for Christians any more than the Holy Spirit was only reserved for the Jewish community after the Resurrection. As the disciples experienced the work of the Holy Spirit among the Gentiles (the outsiders) we must liberate the culture of God from our limited understanding and the temptation to decide who is 'in' and who is 'out.'"

He dedicates his book to his mother with these touching words: "To you, my mother. When my lips touch your cheek, mum, I know I have kissed the garment of God."

should not overlook

Iliad: "By mutual confidence and mutual aid, great deeds are done, and great discoveries made."

“His richest learning is on his private expeditions to the fairy rath with Old Dan”

This is a novel immersed in changing life: the old man (rather in the position of a grandfather) intent on his search to find his medals,

the boy, his *aide de camp*, aiding him secretly, who grows in insight and maturity all the time, the boy's parents (his father is the local sergeant), his mother who had to leave her teaching job to get married, and is determined that her son will grab all the education he can.

And so he does, but his richest learning is on his private expeditions to the fairy rath with Old Dan, the old soldier whose life has been deranged by the Great War, as were the lives of many millions across Europe. The

concepts of bravery, loyalty, honesty and kindness, and indeed love, are all deftly explored. At the end the Gunner emerges medals and all as something of a hero in a changing Ireland

One may not be a reader of many novels, but let this fine little book be one that you read between now and Christmas. It carries with it the gift of true insight. One would hope that in decades to come it will still be read by young readers the same age as the Gunner's aide as well as by many adults.

A great Irish scholar's essays preserved

Celtic Studies in Europe and other Essays

by Seán Ó Lúing
(Geography Publications,
€38.00/£29.99)

J. Anthony Gaughan

This collection of interesting essays by the late Seán Ó Lúing, the noted scholar, can be categorised under three headings: autobiography, the Irish language and Higher Studies. Those on staff of the Institute of Advanced Studies are particularly valuable. They provide biographies of the renowned scholars who were the Directors of the Celtic departments and accounts of their role in the flowering of European culture.

The introduction is an appreciation of Seán Ó Lúing by the folklorist Bo Almqvist. He records that he first became acquainted with Seán through his publications. He was so impressed by their quality that he was prompted to acquire two copies of each of them. He recalls how his admiration for Seán grew when he co-operated with him in joint projects for the Department of Irish Folklore.

In the first essay 'Retrospective', Seán provides an account of much of his life-story. He was born in Ballyferrier in the Kerry Gaeltacht on May 16, 1917. After attending the local national school he was a boarder in St Brendan's College, Killarney, where he acquired a love of the 'classics'.

On graduation from UCD he spent some years teaching in a number of different schools.

Then he secured a post in the Translation Section of the houses of the Oireachtas in 1943 and served there until he retired in 1982. His role and that of his colleagues was to make the debates in the Dáil and the Seanad available in Irish.

Footsteps

Some of the essays reveal Sean's character and the issues closest to his heart. One such essay is an account of his travels across Germany



Seán Ó Lúing in active old age.

in the footsteps of the renowned philologist Kuno Meyer, the scholar who was mainly responsible for placing Celtic Studies at the heart of European culture.

Seán's first love, however, was the Irish language. Although aware that it would limit the readership, he published his seminal works on Arthur Griffith and O'Donovan Rossa in Irish.

Throughout his life he was a prolific contributor of articles and poems to historical and Irish-language journals and magazines. In one of his essays he describes the vicissitudes of the Irish language from the time it was formally declared to be the official language of the State by the first Dáil Éireann until the mid-1990s. The subtext in the piece – namely his disappointment that the country had not become bi-lingual – is almost tangible.

Apart from his writing in Irish, Seán published important biographies in English such as *John Devoy, I Die in a Good Cause* (Thomas Ashe) and *Kuno Meyer* as well as *The Freemantle Mission*, an account of the escape of Fenians from a penal settlement in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania).

Seán had a profound admiration for the scholars associated with the higher studies on the Celtic languages. He had a

particular regard for those, such as Carl Marstrander, Robin Flower, George Thomson and Marie-Louise Sjoestedt who visited the Blasket Islands of the Kerry Gaeltacht to experience at first hand the purest spoken Irish. Robin Flower, also known as Bláithín, made numerous visits to the Islands.

“This volume of essays is an appropriate memorial to a truly remarkable scholar, and a very special person...”

It was he who prompted Tomás Ó Crithin to write his masterpiece, *An tOileánach*, the straightforward account of life on the Islands.

Seán had the good fortune to meet and befriend the last of those remarkable scholars, George Thomson (Seoirse Mac Tomás). He introduced him to An tAthair Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, that other well-known scholar from the Kerry Gaeltacht, and the two launched a second edition of *Muris Ó Suileabháin's Fiche Blian ag Fás* (published by An Sagart Ma Nuad) at Listowel Writers Week in June 1976.

A *Festschrift* in everything but name, this volume of essays is an appropriate memorial to a truly remarkable scholar, a very special person and a most helpful friend to contemporaries who had a bent for writing history.

Classifieds

The deadline for advertising in the classifieds is 10.30am, the Friday before publication. Contact the Classified Team on 01 687 4094 or email advertising@irishcatholic.ie

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

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For each day of the Novena

7am, 10am, 7.30pm & 9pm

(9pm Session Novena by Candlelight)

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Fr Eamonn Hoey C.Ss.R.

Fr Richard Delahunty C.Ss.R.

Fr Noel Kehoe C.Ss.R.

Br Ryan Holavasky C.Ss.R.

Special Sessions

Sunday 11th October, 3pm

Drive in Blessing of Children & Families

Monday 12th October

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"Parenting in a time of Crisis"

This Year's Theme

HOPE IN A TIME OF CRISIS

The Irish Catholic

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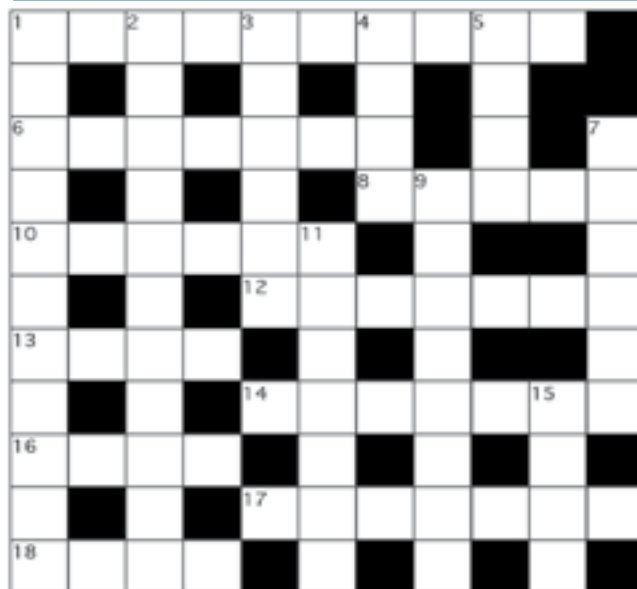
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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 353



Across

- 1 In a book by Lewis Carroll, Alice had strange adventures here (10)
- 6 Baby frog (7)
- 8 Trench at the side of a field (5)
- 10 Depended (6)
- 12 Copenhagen is the capital of this country in Europe (7)
- 13 There was no room in any of them on the first Christmas (4)
- 14 Orange-coloured vegetables (7)
- 16 An oak is one (4)
- 17 Cúchulainn's boyhood name (7)
- 18 In a position behind

everyone else (4)

Down

- 1 You might squirt someone with this toy gun (5-6)
- 2 This neighbour of the Simpsons might say 'Okily Dokily' (3,8)
- 3 Ran away to get married (6)
- 4 Told a fib (4)
- 5 First after this (4)
- 7 Moves something up and down quickly (6)
- 9 Unable to be killed (8)
- 11 Held up or slowed down (7)
- 15 People sometimes call infants Tiny ____ (4)

SOLUTIONS, OCTOBER 1

GORDIUS NO. 475

Across – 1 Dye 3 Calculation 8 Icicle 9 Chill out 10 Ippon 11 Trawl
13 Minsk 15 Tillage 16 Sea bass 20 Louis Walsh 21 Twins
24 Dyslexia 25 Beacon 26 Mass-produce 27 Nag

Down – 1 Driving test 2 Exit poll 3 Colon 4 Cyclone 5 Allot 6 Isobar
7 Not 12 Loose change 13 Mogul 14 Knees 17 Anglican 18 Hugs
and kisses 22 Sleep 23 Where 24 Dim

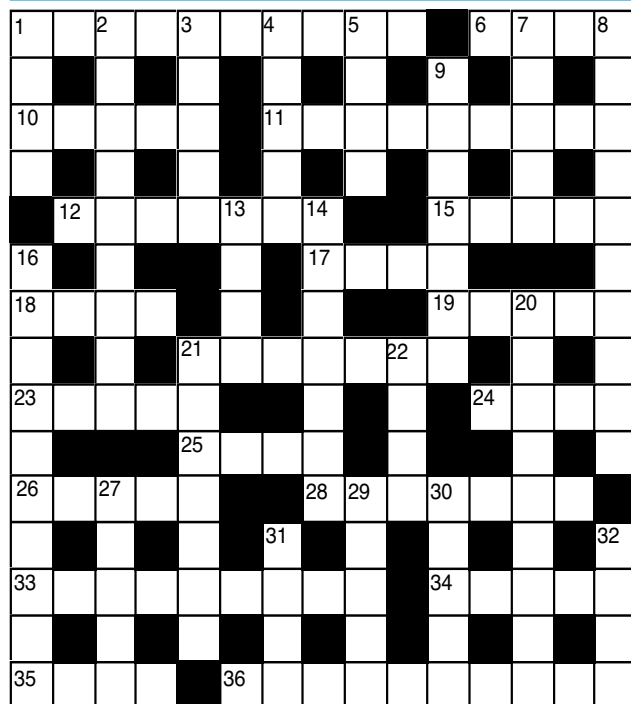
CHILDREN'S No. 352

Across – 1 Milkshake 6 Nearer 8 Lost 9 Cart 10 Tricky 11 Candy
14 Raging 18 Dear 19 Trailer 20 Prey 21 Sewing

Down – 1 Monster 2 Leaping 3 Speck 4 Kilt 5 Untidy 7 Ray
12 Andrew 13 Dragon 15 Actor 16 Italy 17 Gales

Crossword

Gordius 476



Across

- 1 & 24a How an emirate shelled out for Ireland (3,7,4)
- 6 Eye impertinently (4)
- 10 Roman love-god (5)
- 11 Assumed a role and dismantled it (4,5)
- 12 It is said to be the lowest form of wit (7)
- 15 Put money into a Home for Animals (5)
- 17 Plant with edible pods, also called lady's-finger or gumbo (4)
- 18 Wading-bird seen in the hibiscus (4)
- 19 Presented oneself again for an examination (5)
- 21 Wounded with a knife (7)
- 23 Expert from a small department (5)
- 24 See 1 across
- 25 Little devils (4)
- 26 Cruel kind of ailment (5)
- 28 1984 Oscar winning movie about Mozart and Salieri (7)
- 33 It's thought too highly of, perhaps, dear voter (9)
- 34 A different route will make one more edgy (5)
- 35 One inspired by the teachings of Guru Nanak (4)
- 36 Might Helen match up here

in Gloucestershire? (10)

Down

- 1 Cosmetic procedure for Sherwood Forest's friar? (4)
- 2 Stress the sepia hems have become undone (9)
- 3 Get me a Disney dwarf here in France (5)
- 4 Rosters (5)
- 5 Weaving machine (4)
- 7 Part of the body that secretes (5)
- 8 Earnest pleas (10)
- 9 Type of duck (7)
- 13 Female relative (4)
- 14 Kenyan port that makes Mama sob in distress (7)
- 16 & 29d How could a rum malaise be dispelled by this religious pendant? (10,5)
- 20 Bigfoot scatters cash around the squat (9)
- 21 Oriental way to cook (7)
- 22 Finish the article for Mr Kenny (4)
- 27 Sound coming from part of a Roscrea kindergarten (5)
- 29 See 16 down
- 30 Motored right into a bird (5)
- 31 American State most associated with the Mormon religion (4)
- 32 Percussion instrument (4)

Sudoku Corner

353

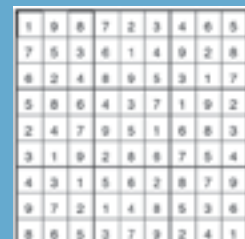
Easy



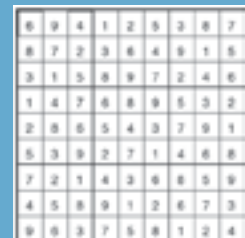
Hard



Last week's Easy 352



Last week's Hard 352



Your heart for the homeless



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

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

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Please pray for the beatification of

Little Nellie of Holy God

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

– Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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Trócaire

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

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

Classifieds: 01 687 4094

The higher power which is available to every one of us

RECENTLY I WAS reading about a little remote uninhabited island off the coast of Scotland. It is one of the Orkney Islands called Lamb Holm. It was there that Italian prisoners of World War II were kept from 1942 to 1945.

They left something behind – a tiny chapel. Among the prisoners was a gifted artist called Domenico Chiocchetti. In a conversation with the prison chaplain the idea of building a chapel emerged.

Under Chiocchetti's guidance, the prisoners built it with their own hands out of anything they could find: scraps of wood and the tin cans from the bully beef they got for their rations. The end result was something of a masterpiece which still attracts many visitors today. But why did these prisoners of war want to build a church? We could hazard a guess that, back home, in normal times, they rarely went to the many beautiful churches around them. But now, far from their families and the warm Mediterranean climate this tiny church became a sign of God, and all that God in Christ can mean.

The chapel and the extraordinary effort by the prisoners to build it from meagre resources



The church at Lamb Holm.

also spoke volumes about their spiritual yearning for God in their lives.

No doubt they were frightened and worried about their fate and the fate of their families back home in German occupied Italy.

Hope

The beautiful little chapel also became a symbol of hope for these men, the kind of hope that can only come from God, a power above them, within them, greater than Hitler and Mussolini and

greater than all their war-time troubles.

Our country was thrown into a form of national panic this week at the prospect of returning to the full lockdown restrictions we all endured in the early spring.

Critics were demanding to see the scientific and medical proof for needing to bring in such restrictions to our freedoms once again. All through this pandemic, we have been told how important science is for understanding the virus and its unstoppable progress

● **PASTORAL PROBLEMS!** There was once a very rough parish council meeting. Strong opinions were expressed and sharp disagreements surfaced. The parish priest was at the receiving end of much of the criticism. The next day, one of the council members felt bad about the whole meeting and asked the PP if he had slept well after the meeting had ended. He replied: "I slept like a baby." "Really?" "Yes, I woke up every hour crying!"

in every area of our lives.

Despite the fact that we have witnessed many scientific and medical experts disagree about some fundamental aspects of this pandemic and how to deal with it, there can be no doubt that these professionals play a vital role in understanding what is happening and how to find solutions. Equally true is, that like no other crisis in history, a big part of the solution lies in the personal responsibility that each one of us takes for our actions.

Science

Beyond the science, the experts and the role of personal responsibility, surely there must now be also the realisation that we, like the Italian prisoners on Lamb Holm, also need to look to this higher power above us and within us.

The words of St Paul to the Philippians last Sunday come to mind. "There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and thoughts."

Fear for the future

Dear God, my guide and protector, fear of the future gnaws at me. Thoughts of what might happen disrupt my equanimity. I long to have a safe and secure life, full of joy and well being. Help me to recognise my fears, to see how they push me around and shove me into deadening corners.

Do not let them have control over me. Protect me from all those concerns that threaten to overwhelm me when I think about this situation. I give myself and all my worries into your wise and merciful care. I entrust to your loving heart my anxiety and my weariness.

You are near, guiding my life. May this truth hold me fast.

– Joyce Rupp



PLEASE HELP TO RE-HOUSE FAMILIES MADE HOMELESS BY THE MONSOON IN PAKISTAN

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate are working to help rehouse families whose homes were damaged by a monsoon

The Little Way Association receives many requests to help the homeless. Fr Basharat Exupear from the emergency department of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Pakistan writes: "Sad news to share with you that during the months of August and September 2020 monsoon rains fell for two to three weeks and water damaged the walls and roofs of our people's mud houses. Almost 300 poor people's homes have been destroyed in St Mary's parish, Derikabad. At present the people are forced to live under the hot sun and in tents which are insufficient to keep the households and to stay inside with eight to nine family members. They cannot sleep outside because it is a desert land and at night insects, wild animals or snakes can attack. "The Oblates have distributed food, medicine and other necessities for one month among the most affected families. We urgently request your esteemed organisation to help us rebuild as many of these families' houses.



The sum of €1,756 will rebuild one house

"We have prepared the budget for one house for one family which is €1,756. This sum will provide the burnt bricks, cement bags, sand, windows, doors and roofing for one house. Please Little Way help us. Yours in the Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary."

All your contributions to our homelessness fund will go intact to this and similar projects which provide shelter for victims of natural and man-made disasters. Please give whatever you can. Thank you.



"I will spend my heaven doing good on earth. I will let fall a shower of roses."

– St Therese

Feast Day: 1st October

WE WISH ALL OUR FRIENDS AND BENEFACTORS A VERY HAPPY FEAST DAY

In gratitude for all your kindnesses a Novena of Masses was offered for your intentions from 23rd September to 1st October.

MAY ST THERESE OBTAIN FOR YOU ALL A SPECIAL BLESSING FROM HEAVEN

WELLS NEEDED

Missionaries constantly appeal to The Little Way for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean water, the lack of which causes much illness and many medical needs. On average, women in Africa and Asia walk around three hours every day to fetch water, often in scorching heat.

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€..... LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES

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IC/10/08