

The Irish Catholic

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Priests face severe cuts as pandemic takes toll

Chai Brady and Róise McGagh

Hard-pressed priests are facing cuts to their already modest salaries as church closure have led to a severe fall in income for parishes and dioceses across Ireland.

A number of priests have told *The Irish Catholic* they are concerned about having to rely on their families for support.

The Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois has informed priests that their income will be cut by 41% due the coronavirus crisis, from €1,700 a month to €1,000. It was said this will continue until September, when there's another collection for priests.

Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe told *The Irish Catholic* that he is currently consulting priests regarding a salary cut this week. "Like most dioceses, yes, we've been looking at it, last week the Council of Priests suggested that I explore with the priests the idea of taking a pay cut for the duration of the crisis," he said.

"I think it's a good thing to have a gesture of a cut,

it's in solidarity with people who are in trouble financially because many others are, it's also to help the reserves that are there," Bishop Monahan said.

He said that similar to many dioceses there are four collections a year for priests in Killaloe. With the prospect of missing the Easter and possibly the summer collection "that's when you're getting into a little bit of bother".

"With time we'll know whether we're playing for a long-term cut or a short-term cut, it's all for exploration at the moment," he added.

Concerns

Meanwhile, Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin has also written to priests of the Armagh Archdiocese addressing concerns about a potential fall in the small amount that priests are paid.

He said that "a number of dioceses around the country have already taken the decision to reduce the monthly stipend because of the almost complete fall-off in revenue from the normally weekly

collections".

A meeting of their Council of Priests will be held at the end of this month in which they will discuss their options after hearing from the archdiocese's priests.

In the Diocese of Ferns parishes are financially independent, with priests being paid from their local parish. Diocesan Communications Officer Fr John Carroll said

that the money coming into parishes has all but "dried up".

"In cases where priests have no other income the advice has been to apply for the Covid-19 payment – that's only when priests have no other income," Fr Carroll said.

He said that a lot of older priests are already relying on the State pension.

Fr Carroll said that some

priests have already applied for the Covid-19 payment and are receiving €350 a week, provided by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection for those who have lost their income. Fr Carroll added that diocesan funds are expected to drop by approximately 25% for the year due to the lack of parish collections.

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Fr Jason Murphy blesses Joan McKiernan in Rosskeeragh, Belturbet, Co. Cavan on her 90th birthday as all her neighbours took part in a drive past her house.

Cardinal Pell acquitted after legal system 'disaster' caused conviction

Staff reporter

Cardinal George Pell was acquitted of all convictions of child abuse by Australia's Supreme Court following claims "bias media" and a legal system "disaster" was to blame for his initial conviction.

The former Vatican treasurer walked free from jail this week after convictions relating to the sexual assault of two teenage choirboys in the 1990s were quashed.

Cardinal Pell was charged by police in June 2017. Following an initial trial that lasted for four weeks last August and September that resulted in a hung jury, a second trial last November resulted in a unanimous guilty verdict.

Campaign

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Irish priest Fr Brendan Purcell who is based in Sydney and has known Cardinal Pell for 20 years, criticised the police who dealt with his case and said there was a "media campaign" against him.

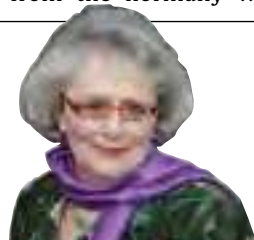
"So many people have been victims of media cam-

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Michael Kelly's Editor's Comment will return next week

While Easter, with its beautiful liturgy, is a joyous feast, that same liturgy without sacrifice is false worship. The 'Triduum' is rooted in human suffering, and to encounter it is to encounter Christ. Easter is painfully recognised and experienced mainly in broken places and broken people.

It is with the flawed image, the damaged beauty, that God does great things. Only what is fallen can be raised. Here are three stories from friends about meeting the Risen Christ in deep disguise.

Gerry Straub is a famous American film-maker and author. In recent years he has visited Haiti many times, and often wept at what he has seen. "On my desk in my library", he recently wrote, "I have a mud pie I brought home from Haiti. I could never imagine being so hungry and so broke that I had to resort to eating something made from mud and contaminated water, something so vile it could make me very sick or even kill me...mud pies are baked in ovens of anguish and hopelessness."

"I will never forget my first visit to Cité Soleil...The devastation, the tin shacks, the rotting trash, the spewing sewage, a little girl urinating in the garbage...naked kids with bloated bellies running barefoot through pig-infested mud...And then there was the fetid and nauseating stench from rotting garbage that was intensified by the blistering heat..."

"And then, all of a sudden and totally unexpectedly, something fun and joyful caught my eye and filled me with hope. It was a make-shift kite fashioned out of

'Darkest, meanest mud and muck of things'

Fr Daniel O'Leary

a plastic garbage bag. It seemed to laugh and dance in the Caribbean breeze...it showed me how imagination could lift the human spirit out of the muck of sadness and hopelessness...and so mud pies and kites came to symbolize the death and resurrection that is a daily event in Haiti."

Prayers

Tom O'Connor, a Kiltegan Father, works in São Paulo. "It was Holy Saturday night", he wrote, "and the crowd was unusually small. It was raining as we tried to light the paschal fire. I had no torch, so it was difficult to read the prayers in Portuguese. Nothing was going right. At the high point of the Church's liturgy, we were completely out of step with the incredible mystery we were so inadequately trying to celebrate. There was no converging of life and grace. Nothing was rhyming."

"With more Faith than finesse I began the Exultet. Suddenly there were raised voices. Oh no! Not at this vital moment. My spirits sank. Up the aisle walked a stranger with two howling children hanging on to him. I felt distracted and quite irritated. Then the small congregation turned towards them. One of the children

had taken ill. For the rest of the Mass there was constant and distracting movement at the back of the church.

"As I was quickly taking off the vestments to rush off to another church I noticed the stranger waiting for me. O God, just what I needed! More trouble and delay. Impatiently I turned to him. 'Father,' he said, 'I need to talk to you. Life has changed for me since my wife, the love of my life, recently died. I am now alone, trying to bring up these two boys without her. It is so hard.

The one who calls in even though there is nothing he can really do to help"

"Tonight we were sitting at home and the older lad said, 'Daddy, can we go to Holy God's house now?' It then dawned on me that it was Holy Saturday night. I used to be a catechist. I'm so sorry about the noise. But I do want to start again. The little sick one is getting better. They are both so happy that I brought them to Holy God's house."

"I was left speechless and ashamed in the presence of this man of Faith. Tears welled up in my eyes. I will never forget that Holy

Saturday night – the night I experienced in the depths of my being the very graces of the Easter liturgy I had just celebrated."

Gillian Coxhead grounds grace in her experiences as a mother of four sons, as a nurse in the accident and emergency department of a children's hospital, as a volunteer with her local L'Arche home, and in her association with a Carmelite community.

She finds Easter love living at unexpected addresses in the streets of an ordinary town. "It is [found]", she writes, "in the moment of the group of teenage boys caring for their intoxicated friend – one holding the vomit bowl, another rubbing his back; in the moment of the elderly mother caring for her alcoholic daughter; in the moment of the elderly frail husband who wakes many times every night to turn his wife as she is unable to move for herself; it is the moment of the next-door neighbour who pops in several times a day to check on a sick acquaintance, and to stay a while even though there is nothing he can really do to help."

Three stories about the earthly reality of the heavenly life. Three raw and disturbing reflections that strip the covers from routine ceremonies, that reveal the human mess that must forever lie at the heart of real liturgy.

Theologian Karl Rahner insisted that until they are incarnated into the empty tombs of terrible nights – such as those in Haiti – into the bleeding wounds of humanity – like those touched by Thomas and Fr Tom in their doubts and even despair, into the compas-

sionate Emmaus encounters with strangers along the risky roads of our lives, then all the paschal liturgies in the world are worthless. Liturgy without sacrifice is false worship.

The focus on the extreme pain of the Good Friday killing will forever keep before us that the Easter life is truly experienced in 'the darkest, meanest mud and muck of things' as the poet Emerson put it; that the Risen Life is something we painfully flesh into the routine and often shocking experiences of our precarious but ever-graced lives. This indeed is hard to take in. It threatens our comfort.

Challenge

But there is no dualistic escaping the challenge of this weekend's Triduum. There are no half measures in our following of a totally and fiercely committed Saviour. We, too, are called to incarnate in our lives the liturgy of Easter, and, like he did before us, to actually become sacrificial resurrection for others.

The poet Harindranath Chattopadhyaya was once aware of the power of his work to move, inspire and 'win the hearts' of his followers. He rejoiced in this fine accomplishment. One day he realised this was not enough:

*But now through new-got knowledge
Which I had not had so long,
I have ceased to be the poet
And have learned to be the song.*

1 This is an extract from Fr O'Leary's book *Treasured and Transformed* available from Columba Books www.columbabooks.com. Fr O'Leary died in January 2019.



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Were you involved in pro-life campaigning, activism or work in the 1980s and 1990s?

I would love to speak to you about your memories.

I am an historian researching the history of the pro-life movement in Ireland. The voices of men and women who took part in pro-life activism have been left out of the historical narrative and there is no balanced account of their work. It is really important that the experiences of people who took part in this work are recorded, especially for future generations.

If you are interested in taking part in an oral history interview with me or would like more information, please email L.e.kelly@strath.ac.uk, or write to: Dr Laura Kelly, School of Humanities, University of Strathclyde, Level 4, Lord Hope Building, 141 St James Road, Glasgow G4 0LT, Scotland.

Interviews can be anonymous if you wish and your memories will be treated with the utmost sensitivity and respect.

Priests criticised for allowing Muslim call to prayer in church

Chai Brady

A priest's decision to allow the Muslim call to prayer to feature during a Mass in Mayo was "misguided", according to an expert on the Church in the Arab world.

Fr Stephen Farragher of Ballyhaunis Parish organised for members of the Muslim community in Ballyhaunis to say the final prayer at 10am morning Mass last week, broadcast on Midwest Radio.

It was said they would join Fr Farragher to seek a blessing for all frontline healthcare workers and frontline workers generally during the pandemic and also pray for the eradication of Covid-19.

Good intentions

Fr Michael O'Sullivan M.Afr., who spent decades in the Middle East and has recently returned to

become the new director of World Missions Ireland, said: "While recognising the good intentions of the Ballyhaunis priest to further interreligious dialogue and comprehension, such 'acts of solidarity' are certainly misguided and will only be seen by many as a counter witness."

A video of the event showed the Islamic call to prayer being sung in the church. The Mass took place last Friday.

"The Muslim call to prayer boldly proclaiming 'I profess that that there is no god but God, I profess that Muhammad is God's prophet', can have no place in a Catholic Eucharist," said Fr O'Sullivan, who is a fluent Arabic speaker.

"There are many ways of furthering dialogue with Muslims which today should only be recommended and encouraged.

"For obvious reasons,

inviting the Islamic call to prayer to be made from the lectern in a Catholic church is not one of them."

However, Fr O'Sullivan said that interreligious dialogue and solidarity and peace between Christians and Muslims is more important than ever.

Analogy

"The situation in which we find ourselves: it's almost like caring for the Earth if you like, if I could use that analogy, in that whether we like it or not we are living with the Earth and we're called to be friends of the Earth. I would say in a way the same is true of our relationship with Muslims in general," he said.

Fr O'Sullivan added that this calls for: "Promoting a discourse of dialogue, of understanding, and I suppose fighting ignorance."

Dundrum to offer drive by hope this Easter



Staff reporter

While the country's best-known shopping centre may be shut, the parish church in the Dublin suburb of Dundrum remains open and will be offering a gift of holy water this Easter.

Fr John Bracken – co-PP – lives next door to the church and is able to keep it open daily for private prayers and reflection.

"On Easter Sunday and Easter week we will be making available small bottles of holy water for people to collect and bring home and to a neighbour who may be staying safe.

"I will stand outside church

on Easter Sunday afternoon from 2-3pm if anybody wants to send a relative/neighbour for a drive by collection," Fr Bracken told *The Irish Catholic*.

The parish has also set up a cross of hope and connection. It is located within the view of the webcam congregation and, according to Fr Bracken, is "a visual reminder to the celebrant of the many watching at home on the webcam".

"For the last five weeks, people have placed prayers in the baskets or sent them by phone/email, etc. Their requests are prayed for at every Mass, and I read a few intentions every day at the end of prayers of the Faithful."

Priests facing severe financial cuts

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Fr Joseph Tynan of the Diocese of Cashel and Emly said they use a salary fund that all parishes pay into. However, he said that many parishes do not have reserves and are "living hand to mouth".

Fr Tom Hayes in Cork and Ross said he believed it was too early to put something in place to offset the consequences for the parishes or clergy in terms of the fall in donations. "Some

parishes whose budgets are very tight may have cashflow issues but I think they can be resolved locally and parishes will help one another," Fr Hayes said.

Incomes

"Our incomes are down for this period, but I haven't had any of my colleagues raising an issue, we have enough to get us through," he said.

When contacted by this paper many of Ireland's dioceses

either declined to comment or said they had not considered the matter of priests' income yet.

Regarding the Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment, which entitles a person to receive €350 a week from the State in the Republic, there was some confusion among priests whether they were eligible.

The department stated: "Clerics of all religions are eligible for the Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment."

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Church can't bury head amid virus fears – priest

Aron Hegarty

Laois-based priest Fr Paddy Byrne has said that priests must continue to give a message of hope in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

"This will pass," he said of the Covid-19 crisis. "It's about getting the message out that there is hope and I am very proud and encouraged by how communities are connecting, both locally and nationally."

The clergyman said he and many of his fellow priests are reaching out to communities – offering chaplaincy, cleaning and feeding resources to the sick at local hospitals.

He feels the Church's contribution at this time is "necessary and greatly appreciated", and that all Christians should be proactive and reach out to others.

Big moment

"This is a big moment for Christianity and indeed for the Catholic Church in Ireland," said Fr Byrne.

"It's very important that we do not 'bury our heads in the sand' and that we remind ourselves of our calling to serve others.

"We must be seen as necessary frontline disciples of the Lord and show leadership to our communities as well."



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Shannon Parish launches creative writing competition

Róise McGagh

Fr Arnie Rosney PP in Shannon has recently launched a creative writing competition that will end on April 19.

Fr Rosney has invited people across the island of Ireland to compose a prayer, a reflection, a short story or a poem while they are spending time at home. He asks that the piece reflects the need to pray for protection for ourselves and those we love at this time. He will be awarding prizes in each category.

Fr Rosney said that he wanted to encourage creativity in the current crisis: "With so many people spending so much more time at home these days, I thought that it might be a good idea to ask them to explore their creative side.

"Creative writing can be very therapeutic and calming and I am inviting people to connect the emotions they are experiencing these days with their faith and find new ways of expressing the desires of their hearts."

It is open to all ages and there are no restrictions or word limits. There will be two €50 book tokens awarded to winners in each of the categories: prayer, poem, short story, reflection.

"The hope is if we get

enough entries we would be delighted to put them into a book form and the proceeds would then go to charity. Also maybe if we look back from a historical perspective it would be, well this is what the people of Ireland, while they were at home, joining with their

parishes and prayer of all faiths and none wrote down prayers and reflections during the coronavirus crisis, so there's a twofold dimension to it.

"It's to engage people at home, there are loads of activities going on but this is one to maybe engage a sense of reflect-

ing on things in general."

The closing date for receipt of entries is 12 midday on the April 19, 2020.

Entrants can email office@shannonparish.ie or Fr Arnold Rosney PP, Parish Office, Shannon Parish, Co. Clare.



Fr Richard Gibbons PP, Rector of Knock Shrine, lights candles at the outdoor candelabrum. Candles have been requested from all over the world.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bocelli to sing 'Music for Hope' on Easter Sunday

Italian tenor and global music icon Andrea Bocelli will give a solo performance devoted to love, healing and hope at the Duomo Cathedral in Milan this weekend.

There will be no audience present and no access for the public, but the concert will be streamed live globally on Bocelli's YouTube channel at 6pm Irish time on Easter Sunday.

"I'm honoured and happy to answer 'Si' to the invitation of the City and the Duomo of Milan," said Bocelli.

"I believe in the strength of praying together; I believe in the Christian Easter, a universal symbol of rebirth that everyone truly needs right now."

● Live streaming on youtube.com/andreabocelli, Easter Sunday, 6pm.

Charity calls for online donations to support vital services

A disability charity is facing a potential loss of €1.5 million this year due to the coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis and has called on the public to make online donations to support essential services.

Enable Ireland is part-funded by the State and each year requires over €2 million to meet the costs of delivering their services to families and adults with disabilities.

"The ongoing contact and support is vital at a time when many people with disabilities are feeling very anxious and vulnerable to Covid-19," said John O'Sullivan, Enable Ireland CEO.

Millions watch church services online

A company in Co. Tyrone says more than 12 million people from 43 countries tuned in to its webcam services to watch Mass at churches last Sunday.

MCN Media, which has installed webcams in hundreds of churches across Ireland and the UK, is expecting the recorded 12.3 million figure to surge even higher for Easter weekend.

The number is a huge increase to the one million viewing figure which would have linked into the service prior to the pandemic.

Doctor rebukes fainting at Mass research findings

Dr Kevin McCarroll has discredited a recent study on fainting at Mass published by the Irish Medical Journal, saying going to Mass is a "community thing" and "significant" to one's health.

"Bare in mind that, in this particular study, half the people were aged over 76 and a quarter had significant blood pressure drops." "It would be a bit unfair to say that Mass causes people to faint and the number (62) is significantly low over a 10-year period, given that thousands of people go to Mass every week," Dr McCarroll of St James' Hospital Dublin said. Those frail or ill should refrain from attending Mass and instead could watch services online.

Legal 'disaster' caused conviction

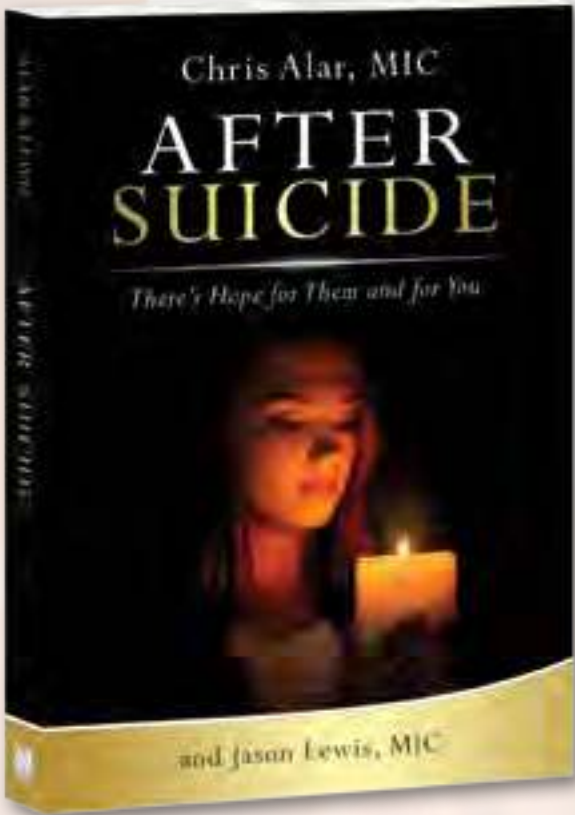
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paigns against Cardinal Pell, it's hard to find anyone who didn't have an opinion about him."

Regarding the decision by the Supreme Court, Fr Purcell said: "It was a justification of the Australian justice system, just in time, because it was just a disaster up to now."

● See Pages 6 and 24.

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AFTER SUICIDE:

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In this Catholic best-seller, Fr. Chris Alar, MIC, and Jason Lewis, MIC, address the hard issue of suicide simply and pastorally. Drawing from the teaching of the Church, the message of Divine Mercy, and their own experience of losing a loved one, they offer readers two key forms of hope: hope for the salvation of those who've died by their own hand, and hope for the healing of those left behind. This book is a must-read for all those trying to make sense out of such a difficult subject. Remarkably, the spiritual principles of healing and redemption apply not only to a loss from suicide, but by any means of death.

Vist your local Catholic bookstore or go to VeritasBooksOnline.com to obtain your copy.



The virus and the ‘patriarchy’

Even the grimmest times – as this Holy Week will be for many – bring revelations. And one of the aspects of the coronavirus (Covid-19) that most puzzles experts and scientists is – why are men much more likely to fall victim to the pandemic than women?

Men in their 40s and 50s are more than two-and-a-half times more likely to be victims than women in similar age-brackets. According to one study in *The Lancet*, 80% fatalities were men and 20% women.

This trend was first noticed in China, at the outbreak of the pandemic. But the WHO ascribed it to the fact that men smoke more than women, are more likely to have cardiovascular disease, and have more unhealthy lifestyles.

However, the same social conditions do not apply in Italy, which, as we all know, has been horribly hit by the coronavirus. In Italy, as in most parts of Europe, there is a much smaller difference between male and female smoking habits. But men are still the majority Covid victims.

Difference
The boffins are now turning to an entirely new idea – or perhaps I should say an entirely



Mary Kenny

Many Columns to celebrate

● There are several Irish saints called Colum – according to Pádraig Ó Riain’s lengthy *Dictionary of Irish Saints* which situates ancient Irish saints within their locality – including a female Colum, daughter of Neas.

There are saintly Colums in Offaly, Kinsale and Longfordpass. But the April Colum is he of Inishkeen in the barony of Rosclogher in Co. Leitrim, although he may have had some links with Moycullen in Co. Galway. This Colum may also have been known Mochamóg, and his feast day is April 13.

April 14 marks the feast day of St Cilléan. He was an abbot at Birr, Co. Offaly, and a signatory of the cáin, a significant ‘Law’ of the year 697. His name is sometimes rendered into English as Killian.



old idea which has been dismissed by modern thinking: they are suggesting that men and women are biologically different. Who’d have thought it!

Females are born with two ‘xx’ chromosomes – males with an ‘x’ and a ‘y’ – and it is

the ‘x’ chromosomes, it is now suggested, that gives women a more robust immune system.

Moreover, the more testosterone a male has – that’s the male hormone – the more vulnerable his immune system will be. Testosterone is associated with both virility and

aggression, and yet, the paradox is that these tough, strong guys may well have weaker immunology.

Nature gave males bigger physiques and greater strength, but compensated women with superior powers in other areas – women can also have greater powers of endurance.

This throws into question the accepted wisdom of our times: that men and women are not only equal, but any differences perceived are merely ‘social constructs’ – that is, created by society. The American academic and influential feminist Judith Butler is the main source of this orthodoxy.

Politics

It has led, among other things, to a whole new field of ‘transgender’ politics, whereby males and females may ‘choose’ their sex. Damagingly, quite young children have been being instructed in this idea.

But now this pesky virus comes along, creating havoc, illness and death: but turning the boffins minds to question of fundamental male and female difference in basic biology.

A new avenue of research is opening up. The affirmation in Genesis that “male and female created he them” may well turn out to be a predictive pointer!



The loss of social conservatism

● My son Ed West has written what I think is a very amusing book (‘a Mammy writes’!) about the way in which social conservatism has lost ground over the past 40 years.

He describes growing up with somewhat Bohemian parents (an understatement) in the Notting Hill Gate area [pictured above] of London where there were two choices of schools: a highly-disciplined Catholic comprehensive school and a trendy progressive school where pupils were allowed do as they pleased. Guess which one was over-subscribed by local parents desperate to get their kids in?

The book is called *Small Men on the Wrong Side of History* – that was a phrase used by President Obama to describe the unfashionability of conservative thinkers.

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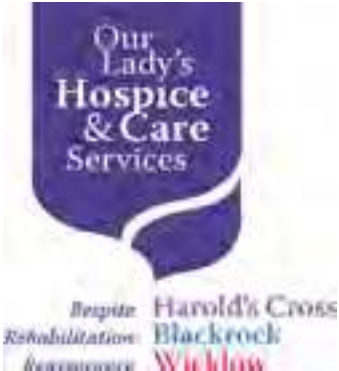
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‘Incredible media bias’ led to Cardinal Pell’s false conviction

Chai Brady

The conviction of Australian Cardinal George Pell of sex abuse sent shockwaves across the Church and around the world, but his acquittal by the country’s highest court this week, vindicating the prelate of all convictions, has heightened criticism of how his case was treated

The former Vatican treasurer walked free from jail after convictions relating to sexually assaulting two teenage choirboys in the 1990s were quashed.

Cardinal Pell was charged by police in June 2017. Following an initial trial that lasted for four weeks last August and September that resulted in a hung jury, a second trial last November resulted in a unanimous guilty verdict.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Irish priest Fr Brendan Purcell, who is based in Sydney and has known Cardinal Pell for 20 years, criticised the police who dealt with his



case and said there was a “media campaign” against him.

Commenting on the “incredible bias of the media”, Fr Purcell said

“they never liked Cardinal Pell which is fair enough”.

“But they were very much part of the story in Victoria, he wasn’t able to get a trial by just judges alone which in Ireland they are used for things like IRA cases where the jury could be got at or messed around with, so effectively from being more or less let off in the first trial, the jury then were unanimous the second time around.”

Campaigns

“So many people have been victims of media campaigns against Cardinal Pell, it’s hard to find anyone who didn’t have an opinion about him.”

The reverse decision comes after Cardinal Pell was convicted in a jury trial in December 2018 and sentenced to six years in prison last March. His appeal to the Supreme Court of Victoria was rejected last August in a 2-1 ruling upholding his original conviction.

Cardinal Pell had spent over 400 days in prison before his release, with Fr Purcell saying he had visited

Cardinal George Pell who was cleared of all convictions by the Australian Supreme Court this week.

the cardinal in prison in January and he was “in good form”.

“He lived doing penance for many mistakes the Australian church has made, I think he accepted that he was in a sense a victim, but nonetheless suffering for the Australian Church,” Fr Purcell said.

“He called it a retreat, he wasn’t speaking of anger or vengeance. He was in great form, he was in prison garb, reading and writing away, not wasting time.”

Regarding the decision by the Supreme Court, Fr Purcell said: “It was a justification of the Australian justice system, just in time, because it was just a disaster up to now.

“It doesn’t matter whether people like Pell or not, the fact is he should be judged on the merits of the case and this particular case seemed to me it had no merits.”

Fr Purcell said he had lived with Cardinal Pell for a number of years and is “very fond of him”, saying he was a “wonderful person to live with”.

“He won’t be able to walk the streets of Melbourne because of the ‘hatewaves’”

“Obviously it was an incredible shock to see him accused of these things. Most accusations as we all know tragically have been true,” he said.

“But yet I’ve known one very painful case of a priest in my own class in Dublin who was falsely accused and several priests here who I’ve known personally have been falsely accused, and the accusations where shown to be so.

“Some accusations are not true. And I will certainly say that this particular accusation against Cardinal Pell wasn’t true so in that sense I’m so glad for him.”

It’s believed Cardinal Pell will now go on retreat during Holy Week to a convent in Melbourne.

Fr Purcell added: “He certainly won’t be able to walk the streets of Melbourne because the ‘hatewaves’ are so strong. He’s already a very marked man.”

i See Page 24.

Christ is risen – alleluia!

Sunday's Gospel



Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.

Ilike the story about an ageing flower-lady with an outdoor stall. Her clothes were old and shabby, her face weather-beaten and wrinkled. A regular customer asked how she was always in good form. “It’s my friend Jesus,” she replied. “Good Friday was the worst of days. Three days later, Easter Sunday, the best of days. So, when I have a problem, I know that if I wait three days, Jesus will overcome it for me.”

If ever the world needed a message of light and hope it is this year of the Corona epidemic.

The flower-lady knew that Easter is not just an event of past history but her friend Jesus is a living reality.

Pope Francis tells us: “Christ’s resurrection is not an event of the past; it contains a vital power which has permeated the world. Where all seems to be dead, signs of resurrection suddenly spring up. It is an irresistible force. Often it seems that God does not exist: all around us we see persistent injustice, evil, indifference and cruelty.

“But it is also true that in the midst of darkness something new always springs to life and sooner or later produces fruit. However dark things are, goodness always re-emerges and spreads.

“Each day in our world beauty is born anew, it rises transformed through the storms of history. Such is the power of the resurrection, and all who evangelise are instruments of that power” (*The Joy of the Gospel*, p.276).

Challenge

The epidemic is proving to be a challenge bringing out the extraordinary goodness of people. Good neighbourliness has returned to our society.

Volunteers are sprouting up everywhere. Chefs out of work have come together to cook delicious meals for the housebound. Some individual starts a project to raise funds and the response is overwhelming. Factories change production so as to supply medical equipment. Retired medical staff volunteer to come back. The list of goodness is endless. Love is the greatest proof of God’s presence.

We are told that we are living in a post-Christian society. But the evidence before our eyes is that the Christian inspiration is alive and well.

Christ is risen. But the story is not complete until Christ is risen in you and me. And when each one holds just one little candle what a bright world it will be. Take the light of Christ and spread the light of Christ. Alleluia!

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- C.S. Lewis

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O Most Holy Virgin Mary, Queen of the most holy Rosary, you were pleased to appear to the children of Fatima and reveal a glorious message. We implore you, inspire in our hearts a fervent love for the recitation of the Rosary. By meditating on the mysteries of the redemption that are recalled therein may we obtain the graces and virtues that we ask, through the merits of Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Redeemer.

AMEN



Prayer to St. Michael

Saint Michael Archangel, defend us in battle, be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil; may God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl through the world seeking the ruin of souls.

AMEN

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Breda O'Brien

The View



Covid-19 is neither God's will nor Earth's response...it's a call to help

A thoughtful friend of mine asked me whether this pandemic had been sent for a reason. Was it, she wondered, some kind of message from God that we were getting things badly wrong and needed to change our ways? Did we need to return to basics, like loving others and praying?

I see the same kind of question, although it is more often an assertion, from environmentalists. This pandemic is Mother Earth shouting at us that enough is enough. We are encroaching more and more on the planet, coming into intrusive, unnecessary contact with species we should not be in contact

with at all. No wonder diseases are leaping from the animal world to the human.

To me, there are problems with both approaches, though I understand my sensitive friend's question. I believe that God does not 'send' us tragic, unnecessary deaths. At best, He permits them because, in order for us to have the ability to make free choices, we have to also have the freedom to make bad choices.

Now, if it is established that Covid-19 emerged from China's so-called wet markets where exotic animals are slaughtered next to the fruit and vegetables, did God send

that? Or did he, instead, permit it to happen so that human beings could also use their free will to freely choose him? A world where that could never happen would also be a world where people were puppets without any real personal freedom.

It may be a *cliché* but I love this saying: God writes straight with crooked lines. God draws good out of every circumstance if we co-operate with his grace.

But for someone with a parent in a nursing home whom they cannot visit, this will be scant comfort. (I know of several nursing homes where there already have been deaths which the GP attributes to Covid-19. However, due to the slowness of testing, these cases have not yet been included in the official figures.)

Loneliness

The prospect of someone dying alone is terrifying for families and an explanation that God did not cause this but simply permits it will bring very little comfort. They are facing the prospect of a mother or father dying with no family member to hold their hand as they slip away.

God does not just permit. We believe that the son of God experienced desertion and excruciating loneliness in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed the ancient words of Psalm 22 on the cross: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

Good Friday tells us of a God who does not stand outside our humanity but enters into it fully to the point of experiencing torture and a cruel form of capital punishment. God enters into our suffering and experiences it with us. He is not a detached deity. He suffers alongside us. His love enters into everything we face.

In relation to whether this pandemic is the revenge of Mother Earth, I hate the way we exploit and abuse the planet, usually at the cost of the poorest peoples. But while it may be useful to personify Earth for poetic or other reasons, Earth is not



a sentient being planning revenge.

In fact, pandemics were a regular fact of life long before industrialisation. St Catherine of Siena and members of her Mantellate (laywomen akin to what we would now call a Third Order) nursed victims of the Black Death in Siena in 1374. It struck with terrifying speed. People infected on the street sometimes died before reaching their homes.

Sometimes families fled, leaving the decaying bodies behind in their houses. Catherine through her prayers to God effected some miraculous healings, including that of Raymond of Capua, later Master General of the Dominican Order. However, most of her work was dirty, tiring

nursing or baking bread for the starving poor.

“Doing God's will in a pandemic involves social distancing, for sure, but never distancing ourselves from feeling compassion for others”

Estimates of deaths from the Black Death range from 25 to 50 million. Long before that, there was the plague of Justinian in 542, which killed up to 10,000 people a day in Constantinople and took over a century and a half to subside completely. Pope Francis' concern

for the environment is a shining example, but he looks on the earth as God's creation. When we mistreat creation, it is the little ones, the poor, who suffer most. So it is in this pandemic; we understandably worry about intensive care facilities in Ireland, but in parts of the developing world there is neither water nor soap available for simple handwashing.

Doing God's will in a pandemic involves social distancing, for sure, but never distancing ourselves from feeling compassion for others.

Unlike St Catherine, most of us will not be called to nurse, but we are all called, according to our means and abilities, to reach out and help others.

“It may be a *cliché* but I love this saying: God writes straight with crooked lines. God draws good out of every circumstance if we co-operate with his grace. But for someone with a parent in a nursing home whom they cannot visit, this will be scant comfort”

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With all eyes on the threat of Covid-19, an even greater killer is given more access, writes **David Quinn**

At a time when we are trying desperately to save lives, to the extent of effectively shutting us all in our houses, both parts of this island have just made it easier to deliberately kill the very youngest among us, namely the unborn.

In the South, we have ordained that women can now obtain the abortion pill without having to physically see a doctor. In the North, they have just commenced a new abortion regime of truly hideous proportions, even worse than the one in the rest of the UK. It is one of the most radical in the entire world.

The new measure in the South was introduced as part of the emergency legislation recently passed by the Oireachtas in response to the present health crisis.

Under the abortion law passed in December 2018, following the referendum in May of that year, a woman seeking to obtain the abortion pill first had to physically visit a doctor. His or her job was not to consider the life of the child in the womb – in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy that now counts for absolutely nothing – but only to consider whether the woman might have some underlying health condition that could make it risky for her to take the abortion pill.

“The question is whether it will go back to the original law, requiring a physical visit to a GP when this emergency is over”

Remember, in almost every case, the woman takes the pill at home and has what amounts to a deliberate miscarriage possibly involving much bleeding.

North and South both move to liberalise grounds for abortion



Patients who don't have coronavirus (or its symptoms) even in the present pandemic are still permitted to go to their GPs. They might be very sick, or else have a blood pressure or diabetic condition that needs regular monitoring. They don't have to stay at home. They can physically see their GP or nurse.

So even if you have no moral objection to abortion, the Government could, if it wanted, still insist that a woman go to a doctor before being prescribed

the abortion pill. But no, it decided to further liberalise our already very liberal law.

The question is whether it will go back to the original law, requiring a physical visit to a GP when this emergency is over.

If what they have done in the South is bad, what has occurred in the North is far, far worse. When we passed our horrible abortion law in 2018, it meant that Northern Ireland was the only part of either of these islands, Britain or Ireland, to have a very restrictive law allowing

abortion only in very rare circumstances.

Our repeal of the Eighth Amendment greatly emboldened abortion campaigners in the North, and in Britain, and with the Northern Ireland Assembly suspended, they took full advantage, passing a measure through the British Parliament that paved the way for the new abortion regime that took hold last week.

New regime

The new regime effectively

allows abortion-on-demand up to 24 weeks of pregnancy and up to birth if the baby has a disability. The disability need not be fatal or life-limiting. It could be something like Down syndrome.

It also decriminalises abortion, something the rest of the UK, or the Republic, has not done. Indeed, few countries have completely decriminalised abortion, which is what makes the North so extreme now. In one fell swoop it has passed out most countries where

abortion has been available for years.

The regulation distinguishes between 12 weeks, up to which abortion is available “without conditionality” (as in the South), and between 12 and 24 weeks, when it is permitted “where the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or girl, greater than the risk of terminating the pregnancy”.

This is so-called ‘Ground C’ in Britain. In Britain a ‘health’ reason (mental or physical) must always be given before an abortion takes place. But this apparent restriction does not stop 200,000 abortions taking place there each year, amounting now to one abortion for every three babies born. In other words, while in theory abortion in the North will be restricted after 12 weeks, in practice it will not be.

“You do not have to show you are suffering from a diagnosed condition such as say, depression, in order to obtain an abortion on the mental health ground”

Furthermore, the newly published regulations actually specify that “no diagnosis of a prescribed mental health condition is required in order to access the risk to mental health ground”.

In other words, it appears that you do not have to show you are suffering from a diagnosed condition such as say, depression, in order to obtain an abortion on the mental health ground.

It seems that it will be sufficient for a woman to merely say she could not mentally cope with the demands of a newborn baby. This is certainly the case in other countries. It means that in practice the North will permit abortion-on-demand during the first six months of pregnancy.

Who knows what kind of increase there will now be to the abortion rate in the North? Given the present emergency and given that there are currently far fewer opportunities for people to meet one another, the chances are there will be no increase for the time being. There might even be a drop.

But in time, this terrible law will certainly cost far more lives than Covid-19, as will the South's awful legislation.

“Our repeal of the Eighth Amendment greatly emboldened abortion campaigners in the North, and in Britain, and with the Northern Ireland Assembly suspended, they took full advantage”

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‘Chaplaincy new and different in crisis’, say healthcare experts



Healthcare chaplaincy and pastoral care are undergoing a process of transformation during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, writes **Aron Hegarty**

Several leaders in the profession spoke on World Health Day (April 7) about how the nature and delivery of their service, and even the study of the practice, is virtually meeting needs in a crisis. One of these is Fr John Kelly, Director of Pastoral Care at Tallaght Hospital in Dublin, who told *The Irish Catholic* of the ways in which chaplaincy is changing.

“It’s a new climate that we are in and a new situation,” he says. “But our work in pastoral care carries on and is supplemented in a different way. “Supplemented by being with people now through e-chaplaincy and talking to people over the phone to limit, but not do away with, our presence.

“We are working in a field type of hospital situation now and we are trying to respond as best we can through e-chaplaincy.”

He continues: “Chaplaincies are generally small departments of small teams within a large organisation,” says Fr Kelly. “To use resources on a small team, we have now moved towards

e-chaplaincy which is providing online conversations.

“We are in a climate where no families can visit a hospital. So what we are doing, while we are with the patient, is we are connecting them with their family and making a phone call to the family, so that we can show them we are with the patient and trying to get them to talk to the family if they are able to.

“Not every patient has a smartphone or access to a phone, so we facilitate chaplaincy in a time of crisis and we are on the frontline of this emergency”

“Not every patient has a smartphone or access to a phone, so we facilitate chaplaincy in a time of crisis

and we are on the frontline of this emergency.”

Chaplaincy, according to Fr Kelly, is “very different” in the present circumstances and gives an example of such a situation where this can be seen.

“You can imagine a family who can’t see their mother because she’s had a stroke or some other situation, and they are hospitalised and the family can’t visit.

“You can imagine how a family would feel that you phoned them when you are with the mother.

“I have prayed, talked and done pastoral care with them,” adds Fr Kelly.

“You can just imagine the tears of joy the family would have that somebody was with their family member and, because we were there, we can either Zoom or have a teleconference with them at the bedside or simply phone the family.”

E-chaplaincy

The online realm, says Fr Kelly, offers patients another means of seeing loved ones in instances where visits, in the physical sense, are rare

or, in the current situation, prohibited.

“We are working with all patients, even those who are Covid-19 positive and, virtually or by phone, we bring families to their bedside, so we are supporting the patient and their family in a different way.

“E-chaplaincy, or ‘telechaplaincy’ as I call it, has opened up because of the regulations that have been brought about.

“But it is also being used because there are patients who have no routine visits from family. We though can visit them, and provide soulful, pastoral care for the patient and their family.”

Faithful health workers

Fr Kelly describes the coming together of healthcare and frontline workers as one “big machine”, and assures the faithful they are operating “beyond their capability” to deal with the virus.

“All the professionals here are using the best of their abilities and skills to care for the patients, and all we see is a big machine working,” he says.

“Everybody here (at Tallaght Hospital) is working 100% beyond their capability; it is all ‘hands-on deck’ with people being pulled from every aspect of a hospital to deal with this crisis.”

He adds: “People and healthcare workers of every discipline are all working together in harmony trying to provide the best care, knowing that they are working in an environment where there

are people who have been confirmed as Covid-19 positive, knowing we are working in that environment where we are potentially at risk ourselves, to our own colleagues, to our patients and to their families and friends.”

Emotional needs

Times of crisis can be “emotional”, according to Dr Kelly, who says pastoral care is being revised to met these needs online.

“It is very emotionally-charged at times and we are adapting to meet the needs of people through telechaplaincy,” he says.

“But I can only imagine the emotional needs that will be there afterwards because people aren’t able to grieve the way they normally would grieve.”

Fr Kelly adds: “Sometimes family members call into the chaplaincy and say that they can’t visit the ward where their mother or relative is and ask if could we just tell them that they were asking for them. They are very spiritual people, and appreciate prayers and support.”

World Health Day

In his response to what World Health Day represents, Fr Kelly replies: “More than any other year, this year shows how we are all connected with one another.

“It shows the need for resources throughout the world - rich and poor countries, so we are very mindful at this time of our colleagues throughout the world who are providing medical care in a time of crisis.

“The world is united in its response and you can see the outreach, even here locally, someone opened a local school, pulled out all the goggles that students use in the science lab and brought them to the hospital to protect healthcare workers.

“This whole communion of support and of community being responsible and acting to care for each other is very visible. I see people arriving here at the hospital and leaving cleaning material. To see how the larger community is supporting the healthcare sector is beyond comprehension.”

He concludes: “There is a generosity of spirit in the community supporting healthcare and as chaplaincy, we have a part to play in it.”

Rev Paul Robinson, Chaplain at St Luke’s Home in Cork, too feels the response to the crisis is going “really well” and that government regulations have prompted chaplains to work differently.

“We are able to livestream services from our chapel to our residents in their rooms and in their sitting areas as well”

“We are looking at different ways of being in Church and what we are doing here,” he says.

“We are able to livestream services from our chapel to

our residents in their rooms and in their sitting areas as well.

“We are trying to do our pastoral care within the regulations of social distancing and administered in ways which adhere to the guidelines we have been given, so it’s been working differently but quite well.”

Robinson, who came to Ireland in January this year from the UK, feels the Covid-19 outbreak has made healthcare professionals even more aware of working with others.

“It’s a new and different way of working,” he says when asked of the challenges faced working under restrictions due to the crisis.

“What all of us, not just those of us in chaplaincy, have got to be wary of is physical contact; shaking hands, putting a hand on a shoulder to give people that reassurance they need.”

World Health Day, according to Robinson, is about caring for our communities and looking after those who need looking after.

“We would normally give thanks to God for the all the help work that is done and the healing the Church offers,” he says on what the day usually entails.

“This year though our thanks and prayers go out to all those out on the frontline giving care including nurses and healthcare assistants who work in nursing homes and in the community.

“It (World Health Day) is a day of giving thanks for all the good stuff that is going on and for the sheer hard work that people are doing, at the moment especially, but each and every day of their lives.”

“My prayers and blessings go out to everybody who is working in our healthcare system - be it in hospitals, nursing homes, in the community - who are doing just an amazing job”

Robinson, a rector and Board of Education member in the Diocese of Liverpool, praises the frontline staff in this country for doing an “amazing job”.

“Everybody is doing a fantastic job within the guidance that we have been given,” he says.

“From my experience, I have just seen everybody do a truly amazing job; pulling together, working as a team and just doing the best that they can.

“The people we serve are just taking it in their stride and recognising that things are just a bit different at the moment.



“My prayers and blessings go out to everybody who is working in our healthcare system - be it in hospitals, nursing homes, in the community - who are doing just an amazing job.”

Virtual church

In terms of academia, Rev Dr Thomas Grenham, Assistant Professor of Chaplaincy Studies at Dublin City University (DCU), says there is a growth in the virtual practice and delivery of chaplain work.

“Since the outbreak of the coronavirus and the closure of the university, we are teaching the course online and students are having their placements virtually, through Facebook and Zoom, which seems to be working very well.

“A lot of academic work has gone online and the actual face-to-face work can be conducted through Zoom to keep a virtual presence, which is making up for not being there physically.”

He adds: “It seems to be very much appreciated by everybody, keeping in touch and having a relevant and meaningful presence on the web, which is very helpful.

“People are very appreciative of it during the prayer services for rituals, music, listening and talking to others, and even letter writing can be handled online, so it’s working out ok.”

The priest feels that frontline workers require the help of chaplains, be it virtually, to continue the “spiritual and emo-

tional” battle against the virus.

“Healthcare is very difficult at this time on frontline people and they do need support - spiritual and emotional - and chaplains are busy dealing with that,” he says.

“Many of them are doing this remotely and some chaplains may not have access to patients due to the current restrictions on movement and travel.

“I have two students involved in healthcare and they were able to do their work remotely, virtually via the chapel and could reach out to the whole hospital, but it is very tough times for healthcare workers.”

Students

Dr Grenham, who is Head of the Professional MA in Healthcare Chaplaincy programme at DCU, describes how Covid-19 has affected the coursework of his 26 students and study of the field.

“They are able to do assignments and are discovering new things about chaplaincy - that it is not just in physical spaces, but that chaplaincy is beyond borders”

“The first week was very strange, but now that we are a few weeks into it they (the students) are finding it better,” he explains.

“They are able to do assignments and are discovering new things about chaplaincy - that it is not just in physical spaces, but that chaplaincy is beyond borders.

“Through using the web, chaplaincy can reach a far bigger audience and have a far bigger impact,” he continues.

“I have one student who is doing their research project on virtual chaplaincy because there are people who may find face-to-face more intimidating, and may find the virtual space much easier for them to find meaning and purpose.

“That’s pretty new at the moment and more of that will be happening.”

A new way of chaplaincy

Despite the hardship and suffering, Dr Grenham believes that the crisis is making people develop a “new way of thinking” about “traditional” societal norms.

“It’s nice to have a positive coming out of this, with there being so much negativity and difficulty for people,” he says.

“On the academic side of things, it has definitely opened up new areas of research and in terms of chaplaincy, we are going past the traditional ways.

“We can see this in parishes and churches for Mass

and services where people cannot attend physically but can go virtually with priests using the webcam, Facebook or radio to reach people.”

He adds: “It’s opening up a whole new way of thinking about how we relate to one another and how we have relationships and how we have communities, virtual communities.

“There’s a whole lot of things there to be explored and see how these things can be furthered.”

“There’s going to be huge change after this crisis passes over and there are a lot of good things that could come out of this bad situation”

Although the pandemic is forcing us to alter how we work and the way we work, Dr Grenham feels there will always be a need for the “social element” in chaplaincy.

“There’s always a place for the face-to-face and there’s always going to be that social element there,” he says.

“The other thing is working from home with more and more people working remotely, which is changing how we are working and how communities are working

together, which is better for the environment and climate with less emissions.

“There’s going to be huge change after this crisis passes over and there are a lot of good things that could come out of this bad situation.”

The gift of health

On being asked what he thinks World Health Day symbolises, Dr Grenham responds: “The first thing it signifies is how important health is.

“How much of a gift health and life is, it makes us realise how vulnerable we are and, especially this year, we are learning that human beings are very vulnerable to nature, sickness and illness.

“World Health Day makes us realise how important our health is and to appreciate and take care of it, and to take care of others as well which is another thing coming out of this pandemic; that we need to look out for one another and their needs more.”

Dr Grenham believes the virtues of religion are still essential in a crisis and that chaplaincy can provide “spirituality” to those fearing uncertainty.

“Spirituality, religion and how it is expressed in virtual reality, the notion of hope and faith are all coming to the fore,” he says.

“People are very fearful and are turning to spirituality as a meaningful purpose, and I think chaplaincy is providing that.”

Jimmy Buckley on faith and how it helped him endure his road to fame



Róisín McGagh chats to country music star Jimmy Buckley about his career and his strong sense of faith

Jimmy Buckley is a well-known name in many households. As one of the biggest stars in Irish country music for many years he has a long standing career in his industry. This didn't come without a winding road with ups and downs and he accredits his strong sense of faith to keeping him going.

The singer is best recognised for his bestselling hits *Your Wedding Day*, *My Mother*, *The Kingdom I Call Home*, *Noreen Bawn* and *Blue Ridge Mountain Girl*.

After *Your Wedding Day*, written by Henry McMahon was released, Jimmy established himself as a country singer Ireland and the UK and has been busy on the road since then. As well as his solo work he forms one third of *The Three Amigos* music and comedy show, alongside country stars Robert Mizzell and Patrick Feeney.

Every January he is booked out for 22 days of *The Three Amigos* shows and on the average month he could have 16 shows around the country, at the minute, like many he's on an unplanned break.

While it might seem to a lot of people as if he made it big when he appeared on Bob Brolly's *Big Charity Show* in the Symphony Hall Birmingham in June 2003, it was the beginning of a long road in a difficult industry to crack into.

"It's been very tough at times, sometimes in the early days I felt like giving up, it was so hard to make it.

"I suppose it was genuinely my faith kept me going," said Jimmy in an interview with *The Irish Catholic*.

He was brought up in a typical Irish household in Doon, Co. Limerick. "I suppose like all Catholic upbringings in Ireland

you're brought up with a sense of faith because of Mass going every Sunday, prayers and a little bit of religion at school."

He says he hasn't been a regular church attendee over the years, but he has a strong sense of Faith and an affinity for Our Lady. He said he prays to her often, and Padre Pio too.

"I would pray myself on a regular basis and I have done before most of my life. I would certainly feel that it would have shaped an awful lot of what I've done - in the way of keeping me on the right track and keeping me safe keeping me away from evil if you like."

Jimmy who now lives in Co Galway, but didn't always, used to often call into Knock Shrine on his way home from gigs, "I'd call in at maybe three or four o'clock in the morning on my way home and I would say my just do little prayers or talk to God."

He is not ashamed to talk about his faith and he thinks that people can find comfort in prayer, especially at the minute, no matter what that prayer looks like.

"I'm praying a lot more lately since this happened. I dip in and out of prayer and sometimes, like everybody else, maybe I pray a bit more when I want something more. But I apologise to God when I've done that, I haven't if clocked in in a while," he said.

"Everybody has different faith, there's nothing wrong with anybody's way as long as they have faith, in whatever they have faith in. And certainly, you have to believe in something.

"I just think that if people pray on their own way that it's amazing the comfort that it can give."

Jimmy's talent is music, mainly singing as he said "I only kind of trick around with the guitar, I wouldn't



be in any way accomplished guitarist. But singing was really my instrument it was my voice and singing different range of songs and styles and that kind of thing and I got my own style from that". He said he feels that it is important that he uses that gift in a positive way.

"I believe that everyone is given their own gift by God and it's their duty to do as much with it as you possibly can."

He recalls many times over the years where would be asked to sing a song for

someone to help them in some way. "You might just have to sing for somebody's birthday, or you might have to just ring somebody. They know you from the music and they might be feeling down and you might be asked to ring them send them a message or a video message."

"Music moves people, it's a great gift to be given and I really believe it's a gift. Everyone gets their own gift and my one happened to be music.

"I think you have to do as much with it as you can, I'm

not saying that play by the rules all the time, but I try to keep it in the forefront of my mind."

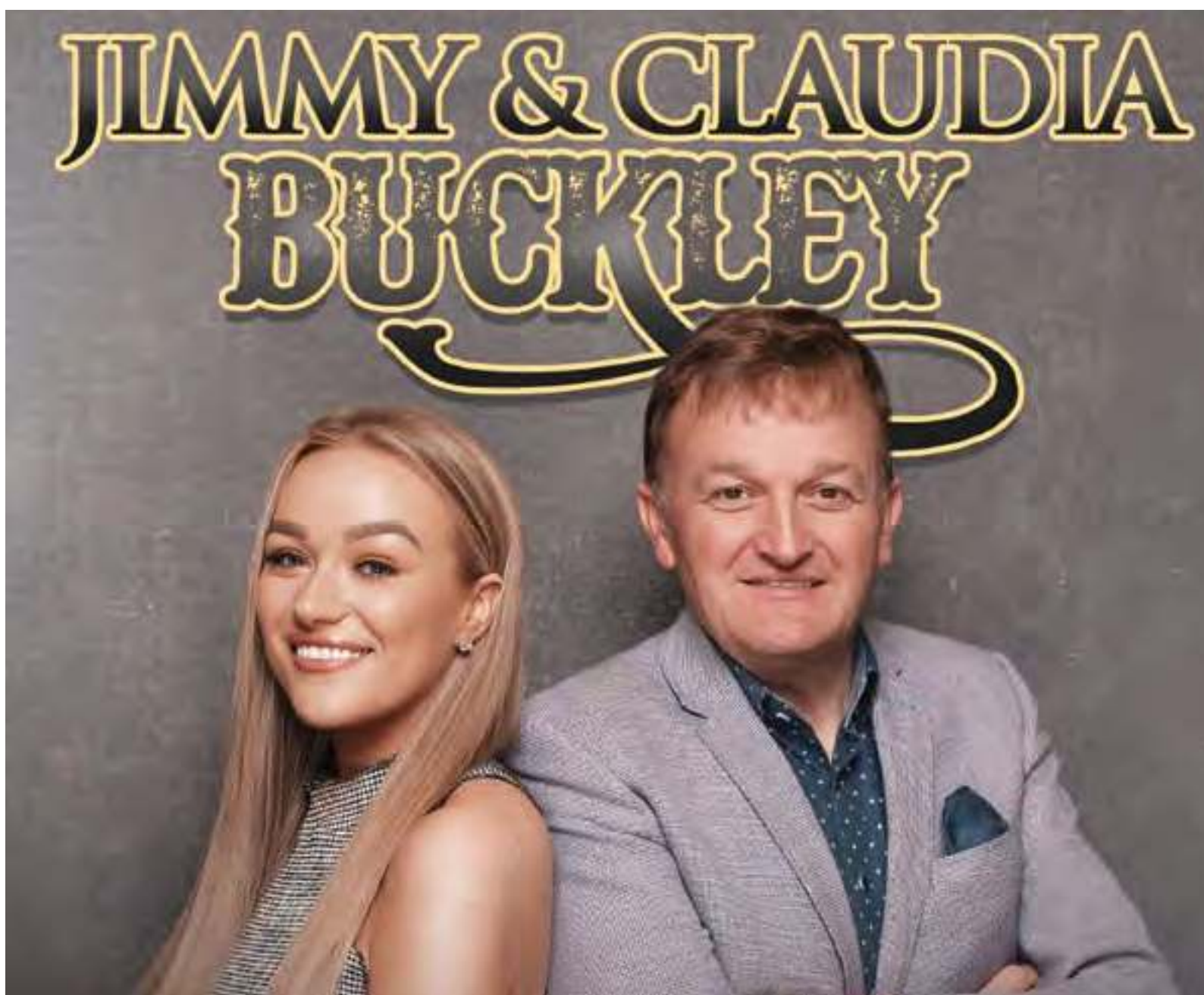
While making music is how he makes his living and that is always something that he has to consider, at the same time he would be more than happy to sing a song for someone if he thought it would cheer them up. He says it's a tough career to make a living in: "There's an awful lot of ups and downs and I certainly do believe that the more you make of your gift the

better God will be pleased with you."

Jimmy says that he sometimes feels humbled that so many people enjoy his music and want to meet him or take pictures with him when he is just using the gift he was given, and music just happens to lift people up and make them feel good.

"I'm always amazed by the way my music can mean so much to so many people," Jimmy said, talking about the many special moments he has had with audiences

“Everybody has different faith, there’s nothing wrong with anybody’s way as long as they have faith, in whatever they have faith in”



over the years. "The fact that you would do a foreign trip and have hundreds of people that come on the trip because it's your trip. People that will come to The Three Amigos concerts or our own concert and they want their photograph afterwards and they want to talk to you."

There are stand out moments every week, said Jimmy. "I try and make them (his fans) happy with the music and I happen to make my living from it as well and don't get me wrong it can be tough going as anyone will tell you, but still at the same time it very rewarding from a self-satisfaction point of view."

"It's a nice thing I'm passing on to my daughter now as well. She has more or less the same kind of scenario is me; she's gifted at music and she wants to carry it on."

Claudia Buckley, the eldest of his three children is following in her father's footsteps and pursuing a career in country music. She recorded a song with Jimmy when she was just 15 and now in her 20s, she regularly joins him on show nights as a special guest.

"I'm excited for her I'm proud of her but I'm also like any parent would be.

I'm afraid for her in certain ways," he said, knowing the lows and the highs of the business he would have the same fears he had for himself when he started out, "It can be the best place in the world and it can be the most lonely place in the world doing what we do. You're going out there and you're in front of the public who can form any kind of an opinion on you because that's their right to do."

“It's a nice thing I'm passing on to my daughter now as well. She has more or less the same kind of scenario is me”

Claudia recently released a new single Blame It On Your Heart and on Thursday last week she posted a video of her and Jimmy wishing everyone well and signing a song on Facebook which gained over 1,000 likes in just a few hours.

Jimmy was born in November 1971 bringing him to the end of his 40s now. He met Claudia's mother on a Ryanair flight many years ago. "I

persuaded her to meet up with me and we went on a date or two and then we've been going on dates ever since." He has been entertaining people for over 25 years now. In his younger years he always wanted to be where he is today.

"When I was going to school, I'd always be playing the guitar and singing songs and I liked early rock and roll, and I liked some country music stuff."

In his teens he grew to like country music even more and then started up his own one man show. "Then I went on the Gerry Ryan Secrets show at the time and it was like a competition on national TV and I got on that. I got a call back to the final and I won it and that kind of shaped to my life from then on."

Not long after that, he managed to get a band together, "This was before I social media and all that, so I just built up my name over all the years, there were many pitfalls and some good things as well." Jimmy said it doesn't feel strange to be recognised by people now because it built up his fame so slowly over a long time.

"When I started after a couple of years, when it was getting very difficult to

try and make a living at the music, I worked as a sales rep and I did that for a while. I still kept up the music.

"It's very tough business to establish yourself in so you have to be very optimistic," he said, which his faith helped him with. He also been a lot of motivation from a young age.

Jimmy's uncle, Chris Buckley, was also a country musician. "My late uncle Chris was a wonderful country singer, a great exponent of Merle Haggard and all the country stuff he was really talented and died young man."

"I suppose I would say I would have taken it from him or it's kind of in the genes that way,"

Jimmy said he would have taken a lot of inspiration from him, but he also had a lot of motivation of his own from an early age.

"It's all ever wanted to do, I remember when I was in school when I was 16. I worked in one of those big cash and carry stores and I would be constantly singing while I was doing my job, stacking

shelves up and I'd be singing.

"I remember I used to travel to work on a motorbike in the morning. And the thing was when you had the helmet on it was like you had your own little in ear monitors or your own little headphones, I'd be singing,"

"I was always daydreaming about being on stage or entertaining people and I always

would take every opportunity to pick up the guitar and sing for people or to entertain."

To this day that is what he's doing. In 2007 Jimmy released his "Live In Concert" DVD. It won "DVD of the year" in the Irish World awards and shown on TV in the US. He also visited Nashville that year and was inspired by his visit to the home of his idol, Elvis, in the Gracelands.

The next year, in February 2008 Jimmy worked on a Caribbean cruise and then in the spring he toured with Charley Pride.

His second live in concert "The Grand Tour – Live" was released then in November 2008. He is constantly working on new music. Every year he has a tour in Scotland and one in Spain – "Craic on the Costa".

"Obviously everything at the moment because of the crisis is totally on hold, it's the same for everybody so I suppose we just have to see what happens when we get through all of this," said Jimmy.

"It's unprecedented what's been going on in the world at the moment, basically I'm at home every day." In his spare time, he breed greyhounds, so at the minute he is tending to them "I go down to my pups every day and go for walks in the country which kind of clears my head"

Despite the unexpected brake he is staying positive. "It's a welcome break in one sense but under the circumstances I would rather if it wasn't brought about by such circumstances as the Covid-19 crisis I'd rather be off just taking time and the normal run of things. It's surreal what's going on everywhere and it's very difficult for an awful lot of people, so I can't be seen to be complaining."



Choosing what truly matters and what passes away

In 2009, I was diagnosed with a nasty form of eye cancer. Given that there was a likelihood of metastasis, my oncologist said that from now on my life would be a kind of high-wire act. He compared my situation to that of a fireman who daily has to scale dangerous ladders; the fireman knows that disaster might strike at any time but gets used to living with the risk.

Thank God, the cancer hasn't recurred, yet the first few years in particular were marked by a profound sense of vulnerability and anxiety, especially coming up to scans and check-ups. I had taught classes on the theology of death, but for the first time I had to reckon with the reality that I myself was 'mortally wounded'. I recall a book of that title by Michael Kearney, founder of the hospice movement in Ireland, that was particularly helpful at the time.

I wrestled with the usual 'why me?' questions, and a period of self-pity. Eventually, this gave way to a trust in God's mercy and a sense of God's presence that was more profound than before. What seemed like a disaster turned out to be a moment in which I received a gift: my faith became less idealistic, more real and practical.

Divine providence

I also began to understand what is meant by divine providence, which is the conviction that our Creator has not abandoned us but continues to guide and protect us. The theologian John Macquarrie said that we only ever really come to know God's providence through concrete 'happenings', that is, experiences we have and events we live through that bring home to us the reality that our lives are in God's hands.

These happenings reveal that "in all things God works for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Providence is not to be confused with fate or fatalism. Fatalism is the notion that whatever happens, whether good or bad, has been determined by God in advance. Fatalism leaves no scope for human freedom or responsibility. Providence, on the other hand, accounts for both, yet allows scope for divine freedom and responsibility as well.

Macquarrie gives us this analogy: God is like "a strong chess player who, whatever move his opponent will make, can still bring

What seems like disaster can turn out to be a gift of Faith, writes
Fr Eamonn Conway



the game around to the way he intends it to go."

One of the earliest biblical texts demonstrating divine providence at work is the story of Joseph (Genesis 45). Betrayed and sold into slavery by his brothers, it turns out that he is the one upon whom the whole future of his tribe comes to depend.

The story of Easter is divine providence at work *par excellence*. Jesus, God's own Son, is betrayed and handed over to be crucified. To the disciples this seems like a disaster. Yet God raises Jesus from the dead and his betrayal and crucifixion become the means by which God's unconditional love is revealed to the whole human race.

We would all like to know what has caused Covid-19, not least if it helps avoid such disasters in the future. Yet that knowledge, if and when it comes, will not determine the meaning of this awful tragedy for us. This is something we have to determine for ourselves.

“If Covid-19 has shown anything it is the illusory nature of many of our claims to power and to personal autonomy”

There have been claims that it is God's punishment. Such claims are not new. For instance, when thousands were killed in an earthquake in Lisbon in the eighteenth century some people argued that it was divine retribution. Voltaire (1694-1778) responded: "Did God in this earthquake select the 4,000 least virtuous of the Portuguese?"

If Covid-19 is a punishment then it is a cruel and unjust one, afflicting the weak and the most vulnerable, on the one hand,

“In this world, that you love more than we do, we have gone ahead at breakneck speed, feeling powerful and able to do anything...we were not shaken awake by wars or injustice across the world”

and those with the courage and selflessness to care for them, on the other. What would that say of God? Covid-19 is not God's punishment.

At the heart of Christian Faith is not a God of revenge and retribution but one of resurrection and new life. A number of New Testament texts record Jesus specifically severing the connection between suffering and guilt (see Jn 9:3; Lk 13: 2-3).

Are we human beings ourselves responsible for Covid-19? It is getting difficult to know where to draw the line between so-called call 'natural evil', for which we humans would not be responsible, and 'moral' evil, for which we would. Fintan O'Toole, for instance, has argued that we have "made an Earth that is subject, not just to our genius, but to our foolishness, our rapacity and our inability to imagine consequences until they are lapping at our doors."

* * * * *

Along similar lines, in his deeply moving *Urbi et Orbi*, Pope Francis said: "In this world, that you love more than we do, we have gone ahead at breakneck speed, feeling powerful and able to do anything... we were not shaken awake by wars or injustice across the world, nor did we listen to the cry of the poor or of our ailing planet. We carried on regardless, thinking we would stay healthy in a world that was sick."

Unlike Fintan O'Toole, however, Pope Francis recognises the inextricable link between the ecology of nature and human ecology: "the environment, life, sexuality, the family, social relations, and so forth" (*Laudato Si'*, n. 6). "Thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into



A blessing without people – common practice in churches during the Covid-19 pandemic in Ireland.

thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation" (*Laudato Si'*, n. 155). If Covid-19 has shown anything it is the illusory nature of many of our claims to power and to personal autonomy.

This is, according to Pope Francis, "a time of choosing". Perhaps we can see it as such in two important ways.

The first choice is to do as he asks, that is, to respond to this crisis by differentiating between what truly matters and what passes away; to distinguish between what is absolutely necessary and what is not.

Cocooning

When the time comes to emerge from our quarantining and cocooning, perhaps we will re-evaluate our family life and invest time and energy in what really matters. We might also re-evaluate our work-places and practices. We might rely less on policies, procedures and processes, many of which have proven to be relatively useless as we scrambled to adapt to a world on-line, and instead cherish the gift of honest and genuine face-to-face human interaction.

In my world, that of Catholic education, I would like to see some thought going into how we can do more than merely to provide students with techniques for

coping with stress and instead to examine how we can accompany them in exploring the deeper questions of ultimate meaning that inevitably arise at this time.

These are the questions that should always be at the heart of any educational system or institution that considers itself Catholic.

This is, as Pope Francis says, "a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others".

The second choice we can make is to recognise that whether we like it or not our lives are always lived as a kind of high-wire act. Writing at the outbreak of World War II, C.S. Lewis remarked that "the war creates no absolutely new situation: it simply aggravates the permanent human situation so that we can no longer ignore it." So too with Covid-19.

Perhaps that's the gift in this awful tragedy: we are confronted, personally and communally, with the reality that we are "mortally wounded".

If so, it is a good space to be in as we celebrate Easter because it not only sharpens our appetite for resurrection but has us craving it.

Fr Eamonn Conway is professor and head of Theology & Religious Studies at Mary Immaculate College.

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Build Christian-Muslim dialogue



The new director of World Missions Ireland speaks to **Chai Brady** about the need for dialogue with Islam and dangers of coronavirus for the developing world

Dialogue between Christians and Muslims is more important than ever, not only in the Middle East but across Europe according to the new director of World Missions Ireland (WMI).

WMI officially announced last week that Fr Michael O'Sullivan of the Missionaries of Africa, commonly known as the White Fathers, is their new national director.

Following more than 25 years of missionary service in the Middle East, Fr O'Sullivan M. Afr. returned to Ireland and was subsequently offered the position by the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples in Rome.

Fr O'Sullivan specialises in the Church in the Arab world and has extensive knowledge of Christian-Muslim relations, he told this paper his missionary work has given him valuable insights.

"Obviously my speciality is in the Arab world and dialogue with Muslims. I think this is one area which is very important all over Europe at the moment, whether it be in France or in Germany, but even here in Ireland as we know," he said.

"I look forward to be able to contribute, to help the Catholic Church have an openness towards Islam and enter into dialogue as well with Muslims."

Fr O'Sullivan, a fluent French and Arabic speaker, comes originally from Kiltrush, Co. Clare. He became more interested in pursuing life as a missionary after his studies at the Cistercian College in Roscrea. From there, he joined the White Fathers of Africa in Templeogue.

Following further studies in Dublin and Switzerland, Fr O'Sullivan completed two years of formation in Algeria, which led to additional theological studies in Toulouse.

Ordained in 1991, he spent a year in Algeria at the beginning of the civil war before further studies led him to Rome. Fr Michael has held roles in Sudan,



Fr Khalil Jaar hands out snacks to Marka School Children. In 2019 school children in Ireland helped World Missions Ireland send funding to Fr Kahil's organisation 'Messengers of Peace' based in Jordan. It provides medical help, food and education programmes to displaced families from Iraq and Syria.

Lebanon, Jerusalem, United Arab Emirates (UAE) to name a few and was last year the local coordinator of the Holy Father's historic visit to Abu Dhabi.

This extensive experience has brought him to believe that "dialogue is the only way".

Fr O'Sullivan said: "We are condemned to dialogue if you like, I would almost see that in a positive light. The situation in which we find ourselves: it's almost like caring for the Earth if you like, if I could use that analogy, in that whether we like it or not we are living with the Earth and we're called to be friends of the Earth. I would say in a way the same is true of our relationship with Muslims in general."

“Fr O'Sullivan specialises in the Church in the Arab world and has extensive knowledge of Christian-Muslim relations”.

He said this calls for: "Promoting a discourse of dialogue, of understanding, and I suppose fighting ignorance."

It's well known that the number of Christians in the

Middle East is continuously decreasing, particularly in certain regions that have been affected by conflict and religious intolerance. Regarding Christian persecution he says it most certainly happening, but there are also several other factors that need to be taken into account in order to fully assess the situation.

Fr O'Sullivan said: "I would say obviously when we're talking the Middle East, it's like talking about Europe, we're talking about vast regions, in some countries things are better than others. If you're talking about Christians in countries like Syria and Iraq, they have found themselves between civil wars two separate ideas of Islam. Obviously in that way they're persecuted."

"I'm a small bit wary of the persecution Christian discourse, which sometimes is a small bit simplistic, if you look at the Syrian, or Iraqi situation at the moment the number of Christians obviously has diminished by 50-60-70% in some regions." He said that civil war and conflict is a major factor regarding the decrease of Christians in the region.

He added: "In Sudan Christians are discriminated against and persecuted against, I would even say in Egypt, I don't think it is always in the interest of Christians



Sr Veronika is pictured with school girls who attend her education programmes supported by WMI on the Solomon Islands in Buma, where only one in three people have access to clean water. Their families are too poor to send them to other schools.

that we continually cry wolf if you like. Very often political, economic, sociological issues are more profound."

Founded almost 200 years ago, World Missions Ireland (Pontifical Mission Societies) is the Pope's official charity for overseas mission. It is part of a global network of 120 offices, many known as Missio, under the coordination of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Rome. Together they are the Holy Father's chosen instrument for sharing the Gospel and building the Church throughout the world by helping everyone in need - regardless of their background or belief.

One of the key focuses is on supporting missionaries abroad who are doing life-saving work.

WMI's financial resources go to Rome, who have the resources to study the requests for funding and to distribute accordingly. Where support is needed most urgently is the "100-dollar question", according to Fr O'Sullivan, as the work of the Church is global.

He explained: "The needs of countries in Africa, Asia or even in South America are enormous because there you have vibrant churches, you have a lot of young people wanting to become Catholic and very often the structures aren't very solid so it is there that are contribution is important."

"There are 55 countries in Africa but many of the countries receive funding from Pontifical missions in one way or the other."

and help our missionaries



Sr Veronika (30) pictured with children from The Solomon Islands, she is currently on mission in the village of Buma which has been wracked by poverty due to natural disasters and political unrest. WMI first met Sr Veronika in 2018. They support her work leading education programmes for girls.

Particularly in seminaries and in many institutions run by sisters like orphanages.

"Same way as they have been here in Ireland, looking after the disabled, the deaf, the orphans, looking after HIV sufferers, whether they be adults or particularly children."

In his own experience Fr O'Sullivan said Sudan was a particularly difficult country to work in during his time there.

"I spent seven years in Sudan, obviously Sudan is a difficult country, because you had a civil war going on, I wasn't in the war region. Since independence in 1954 Sudan has been at war for most of its time under different regimes. At the time I was in the north, but the war was going on in southern Sudan – this was southern Sudan before it became independent.

"Sudan obviously was very challenging, a lot of poverty and a difficult regime as well. As we

know many of the countries in Africa suffer from poverty but also suffer from the weight of military regimes."

Fr O'Sullivan was based in Khartoum where most of the southerners had fled the war in the south and they were living in camps around the desert in Khartoum. He said the refugees were "living in appalling conditions with temperatures of 42-43C".

"At the moment it's the hottest time of the year in Sudan with temperatures of up to 45C, very often with no running water or electricity in all this."

Despite this, he said: "In the Sudanese situation, in our parish in the outskirts of Khartoum, we were providing primary education for up to 1,200 young kids in basically bamboo schools, which was totally funded by the Church. We were also providing a free meal a day of basically lentils or whatever."

"In my new role, one of my main roles is supporting our missionaries. We support our missionaries on two fronts. First of all through prayer, and we invite the local churches to pray for our missionaries and with Missionary Children we have programmes inviting children to pray for our



Iraqi refugee children in class at the Marka School run by the organisation 'Messengers of Peace' in Jordan. This school offers 400 refugee girls and boys aged 6-14 an education and is supported by World Missions Ireland.

missionaries," he said.

"Of course, another very important aspect is through financial support and one of the main sources of financial support is the Mission Sunday collection every year, which is one of the three collections for the universal Church."

Currently many Catholic institutions are challenged for funding in Ireland, he said, due to a "growing secularisation and I suppose a distancing from the Church".

"So this is obviously one of our biggest challenges, and the fact that we rely solely on the contributions of the faithful.

"Ireland is one of the unique countries where there's a real separation of Church and State even more of a separation than you would find in so-called secular countries like France where there is no contribution from the state for our religious activities," he said.

Ireland has made tremendous progress in recovering from the financial crisis in 2008, Fr Michael says, and is one of the most affluent countries in the world despite its size.

Despite this, with the onslaught of the coronavirus pandemic which is having a catastrophic global impact, Fr O'Sullivan said that even in Ireland "we see how difficult it is to support our basic hospital and medical services".

"You can imagine what it's like in poorer countries where the average salary might be €50-60 per month. That's why we believe that in next few weeks when the coronavirus hits countries in Africa particularly there will be a lot of requests for help."

It (coronavirus) will certainly have an impact he said, but at the same time "we know how generous the Irish people are, we've seen it

before during tragedies whether it be famine, earthquakes, tsunamis, we have seen how particularly generous the Irish people are when they're called upon. I think as a race we're extremely generous".

"I suppose we're generous because we have known these things ourselves, we have known famine, poverty, ourselves and in that way I am confident that people will respond very positively to appeals for support from poorer countries when we're out of the thick of this crisis."

Looking to the future of World Missions Ireland, Fr O'Sullivan says that in the short term one of the changes will be to the organisation's name. By summer it is expected to be called Missio Ireland.

He says during his time he won't be "reinventing the wheel", but hopes to encourage more lay involvement in the promoting missionary work abroad.

ve less and less religious missionaries who are leaving the country but the mission of the Church goes on and I think there are more and more lay people involved in mission awareness and bringing the mission of the Church to the Church in Ireland," he said.

"I think would be very important and what I would like to see happening during my time would be more lay involvement in raising missionary awareness and this is something that we're working on at the moment, training teams of lay people in the dioceses, to raise missionary awareness of the situation of the Church and Christians in poorer countries."

Fr Michael's appointment, which is renewable after a five-year term, was part of a rigorous nomination process. The appointment was made by the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples in Rome after the presentation of a terna (a list) of three candidates by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Apostolic Nunciature.

He succeeds Fr Martin Kelly, who was acting National Director of World Missions Ireland, following the death of Fr John Kilcrann.

“It’s well known that the number of Christians in the Middle East is continuously decreasing, particularly in certain regions that have been affected by conflict and religious intolerance.



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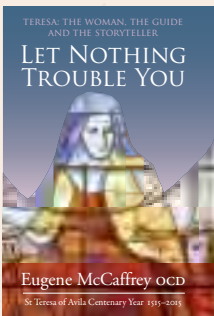
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Sending Positive Vibes
Fr Bryan Shortall

A Dublin man through and through, Fr Bryan Shortall's memories and reflections are interspersed with prayers, stories of Saints, and give a rare insight into the lives of the priests and religious who work so tirelessly about us – a stark reminder of the good that the religious continue to do in modern Ireland.

was €12.99 €8.99



Let Nothing Trouble You
Eugene McCaffrey OCD

Explore the remarkable story of St Teresa of Avila and the influence of this charming, attractive, witty woman, who fits as easily into the twenty-first century as into the sixteenth. Teresa belongs to everyone. She openly shares her humanity with us and teaches us how to make our own dreams come true.

was €9.99 €6.99



Hallelujah: Memoirs of a Singing Priest
Fr Ray Kelly

In 2018 Fr Ray Kelly auditioned for Britain's Got Talent and made it to the semi-finals of the show, demonstrating his astonishing ability to connect with people through his singing. This is his memoir, describing his fascinating journey from parish priest to fame and showcasing his passion for singing with his dedicated work as a priest.

was €16.99 €11.99

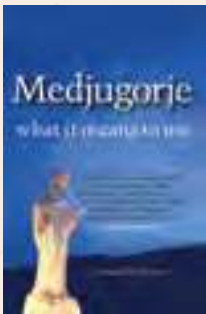
EMBARK ON A LITERARY PILGRIMAGE



Vicka...Her Story
Finbar O'Leary

In conversation with Finbar O'Leary, Vicka, the eldest of the six visionaries, tells of her special relationship with Our Lady and relays many of the Messages which the 'Queen of Peace' has given to her. Vicka also discusses her own physical and mystical sufferings and the journeys on which Our Lady has brought her.

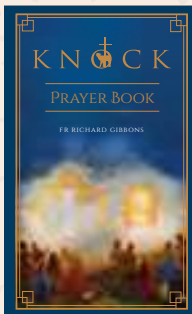
was €9.99 €6.99



Medjugorje: What it Means to Me
Editor Louise Hall

Deeply personal stories detail how individuals found themselves visiting Medjugorje, their experiences and encounters with God whilst there and the impact it has had on their lives today. It is for both those who already know of Medjugorje and those who have never heard about the village or the apparitions.

was €11.99 €7.99



Knock Prayer Book
Fr Richard Gibbons

The rector of Knock Shrine, Fr Richard Gibbons, has personally chosen this collection of prayers which are inspired by the life lived in Knock and what Knock means to all the pilgrims, visitors, volunteers and parishioners that make up its story. They range from Novena prayers to Our Lady to prayers for workers, families, hospitality, nature and even dogs!

was €14.99 €10.49

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DIVE DEEPER INTO THE FAITH



Freedom from Evil Spirits
Pat Collins CM

Written from personal experience, this book by Fr Collins is a guide on how we can free ourselves from the many debilitating influences that can take a stronghold in our lives. He attempts to offer practical advice to readers on how to overcome fear, addiction, and oppressive evil spirits.

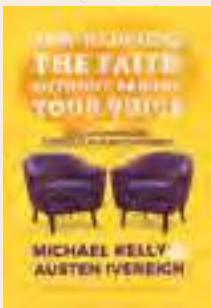
was €12.99 **€8.99**



Early Irish Saints
John J Ó Ríordáin C.Ss.R

These short essays on fourteen well-loved saints present a very readable and informative mix of historical fact and folklore. Fr John Ó Ríordáin's introduction provides a most helpful commentary on what the authors of the early lives of the saints saw as their function – something very different from the function of a modern-day biographer!

was €12.99 **€8.99**



How to Defend the Faith
Michael Kelly & Austen Ivereigh

Within these pages, Michael Kelly and Austen Ivereigh aim to answer some of the most common criticisms of Catholicism to help Catholics and non-Catholics alike understand where the Church is coming from on controversial topics like abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriage and the use of condoms in the fight against HIV.

was €14.99 **€10.49**

FIND PEACE AND TRANQUILITY



An Astonishing Secret
Daniel O'Leary

Think well before starting on this book because it will take you in many directions and much of it may be new to you. But it will not be new to your heart. Your heart is already familiar with the mysteries Daniel O'Leary explores, so keep your eyes wide open and heart free as you read.

was €14.99 **€10.49**



Where I find God
Cora Guinnane & Joanne O'Brien

Escape to beautiful landscapes and thought-provoking entries from many of Ireland's finest thinkers about where they have found, and continue to find God in their lives. This beautiful book is truly a treat for the soul, a work that will cause you to pause and reflect on your own unique spiritual experience.

was €24.99 **€16.99**



Mindful Meditations for Every Day
Sister Stan

Sr Stan presents us with this gem of a book, filled with meditations and reflections based on her own life and role as a mentor in mindfulness. Mindful Meditations for Every Day carries you through the calendar year, with daily meditations, mindfulness exercises and scripture for each month.

was €14.99 **€10.49**



Out&About

Gospel truth



DUBLIN: Fr Alex Conlan had this banner produced for his church on Harold's Cross Road. He said: "It is a way of reaching out with a message of hope and reflects the message of Pope Francis: 'Be not afraid.'"



ARMAGH: Cathal Doherty, Year 13, of St Joseph's High School Crossmaglen, drops off a donation of goggles to the Renal Unit of Daisy Hill Hospital. The donation was part of the school's effort to support NHS staff.



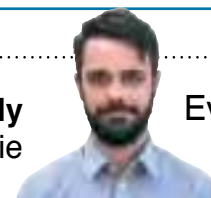
DERRY: A sacred space created in a house opposite a hospital in Derry with healthcare workers in mind.



MAYO: A shrine sacristan lights candles in Knock Shrine. In addition to daily Mass, Knock's 'Light a Candle Online' facility allows people to place a request online and have a real candle lit for them in the Shrine outdoor candelabra. The lighting of candles is carried out daily by the Shrine sacristans. In the last week of March alone they received more than 4,000 candle requests.

WEXFORD: Lily, a four-year-old dachshund and family pet of the Mahon family in Barntown, watching local parish priest Fr John Carroll celebrating Sunday Mass.

Edited by Chai Brady
chai@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



MAYO: Archbishop of Tuam Michael Neary celebrates the 10am Mass from St Mary's Church in Westport on the local radio and webcam. Photo: Frank Dolan

IN SHORT



Young boy (9) writes letter of admiration to Dublin nurse

A nine-year-old Dublin boy has written a letter of admiration and support to a nurse who is working with homeless people during the Covid-19 crisis.

Louis Greville's letter is entitled 'Somebody I admire'. The nurse, Jess Sear, works to support the health needs of those experiencing homelessness, even during the current pandemic. In his letter Louis, who lives in Dublin 7, spoke of his admiration for the work Jess does and how she inspires

him to "be more helpful to homeless people".

Louis wrote: "Somebody I admire is a nurse called Jess. I know her because my parents are friends with her. The reason I admire her because right now she is working so hard to keep people safe from the coronavirus and the people she works with are homeless and that's why I admire her. She inspires me to be more helpful to homeless people in the future."

Louis' parents, Joan and Michael, said: "Louis took it upon himself to write the letter to Jess. We have been friends with Jess for some time and Louis has always been interested in Jess' work. He wanted to

write something to show her how he feels about her work and how she inspires him, particularly during this crisis. Jess is one of the many health care workers on the front line who are putting their own health at risk to support others.

"To keep delivering services and supporting vulnerable people is something to be truly admired."

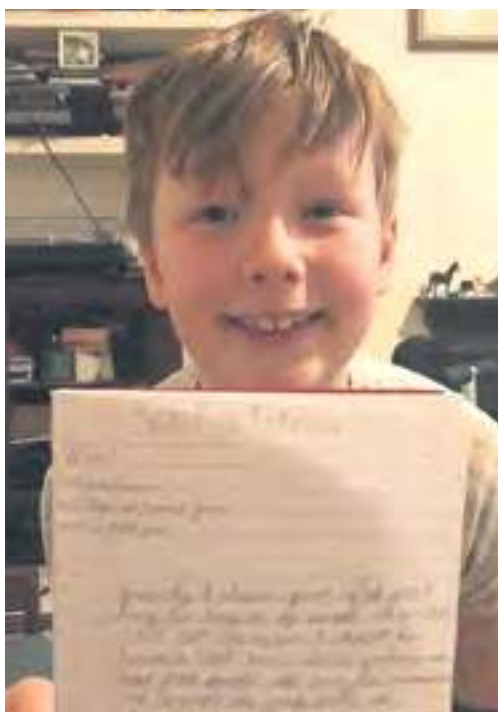
Jess Sear, Clinical Nurse Manager with homeless charity Depaul, said: "It has been an extremely busy time as we react to the health needs of those experiencing homelessness and seek to protect them as this crisis unfolds.

"To read Louis' letter gave

me a huge boost. My focus has been on protecting the most vulnerable and doing all I can, both individually and working with others, to keep people safe at this very uncertain time.

"To get Louis' letter gave me a chance to take stock and to realise how I am helping. To know what I am doing is inspiring a little boy is a wonderful feeling to have."

Together with Depaul, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE), Jess has been working to help coordinate the health care response for homeless people during the current crisis.



Louis Greville (9) from Dublin 7 stands with a letter he wrote to nurse Jess Sear who is helping homeless people during the current coronavirus pandemic.

Jess Sear (left), Clinical Nurse Manager with homeless charity Depaul, said reading the letter she received from nine-year-old Louis Greville entitled 'somebody I admire' gave her a "huge boost".

CLARE

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

CORK

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

A Pro-life Mass is held on the last Friday of every month at the Poor Clares Monastery, College Road, at 7.30pm.

DERRY

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

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

DONEGAL

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

DUBLIN

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

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

FERMANAGH

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

GALWAY

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

KERRY

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

KILDARE

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

KILKENNY

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

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Church of the Assumption, Urlingford, every first and third

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

Friday, from 2.30-5.30pm.

LOUTH

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

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

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

MAYO

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the Church of St Joseph and the Immaculate Conception Bohola every Wednesday from 10am until 10pm.

MEATH

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

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

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

ROSCOMMON

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

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

WESTMEATH

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

WEXFORD

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

WICKLOW

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



World Report

IN BRIEF

Pope appoints new archbishop in South Africa

● Pope Francis has appointed a new archbishop for Bloemfontein in South Africa after the post became vacant.

Dehonian Bishop Zolile Peter Mpambani, 63, of Kokstad was transferred to the Free State province as the region's archbishop.

The appointment, made last week, came after the Holy Father accepted the resignation of Oblate of Mary Immaculate Archbishop Jabulani Adatus Nxumalo, who reached the canonical retirement age of 75.

Bishop Mpambani, who was consecrated Bishop of Kokstad in 2013, is responsible for formation, life and the lay apostolate within the South African Bishops' Conference.

Taiwan Embassy provides aid to sisters, the homeless, Vatican

● The Embassy of Taiwan brought food, medicine and surgical masks to the quarantined convent of the Daughters of St Camillus, the homeless and Vatican last week.

They gave the Camillian Sisters supplies, 600 tuna cans for the poor and delivered 4,000 masks to the Vatican pharmacy.

"Over the past few weeks, Taiwan has been helping Italian missionaries who dedicated their lives to the Taiwanese," said Begonia Tsai of the Taiwanese Embassy to the Holy See.

"Now they and their brothers and sisters are suffering, especially in northern Italy. This is why we Taiwanese want to do something for them."

Indonesia Catholics welcome decision to free 30,000 prisoners

● Catholics were among several rights groups backing the Indonesian government's move to release thousands of inmates to prevent the spread of coronavirus (Covid-19) in jails.

Prisoners are to be freed on conditional release, particularly those whose jail terms are due to end between now and December 31.

Groups including Amnesty International Indonesia, the Franciscan Justice and Peace Commission, Asia Justice and Rights, and Merauke Archdiocese in Papua supported the decision.

"We welcome this but we also urge the government to be fair and indiscriminately apply the decision," said the groups in a joint statement.

Religious leaders in Canada unite to send message

● More than 80 Canadian religious leaders have issued an interfaith message to "all who call Canada home" during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

The common message was initiated by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops with the support of other faith groups in the country.

"In spite of present sufferings, the flames of hope cannot be extinguished," read the message.

"Love, which gives life its fullest meaning, continues to seek out the common good in spite of individual difficulties."

The message advised Canadians of "the hope we share, the reasons we have to give thanks, and the ways we can act together for the good of one another".

Church in Mexico calls for faithful to practice charity

● The Church in Mexico has launched an urgent appeal to the population to practice charity and support the most vulnerable during the country's health and economic crisis.

Fr José Manuel Suazo Reyes, Archdiocese of Xalapa, said: "In these times, we try to strengthen actions of charity, because there are many people who live day by day."

"These people are the ones who will suffer the greatest impact, and the consequences of this situation."

The Mexican Bishops' Conference recently published a *vademecum* calling for priests to be a "great bridge of union between God and his children".

Cardinal cleared of sex abuse charges in Australia

One of the Church's most senior members has walked free from prison in Australia after the country's High Court decided to quash his child sex abuse conviction this week.

Cardinal George Pell, 78, was acquitted of sexually assaulting two teenage choirboys in the 1990s, allowing him to be released from jail on April 7.

The High Court ordered his convictions to be removed and verdicts of acquittal to be entered in their place, ending the most high-profile case of alleged clerical sex abuse.

He was acquitted on all five counts of sexually abusing the 13-year-olds when the court overturned earlier decisions of a jury and lower appeals court.

Proof

Cardinal Pell, a former finance minister of Pope Francis, has maintained his innocence throughout.

A jury had convicted him of the offences in December 2018 before that decision was upheld by a three-judge panel in Victoria State's Court of Appeal last August.

The former Vatican treas-



Cardinal George Pell.

urer was jailed earlier this year, but Australia's High Court found there was "a significant possibility that an innocent person has been convicted because the evidence did not establish guilt to the requisite standard of proof".

All seven judges unanimously found that the lower court had "failed to engage with the question of whether there remained a reasonable possibility that the offending had not taken place, such

that there ought to have been a reasonable doubt as to the applicant's guilt".

Cardinal Pell said his acquittal remedied "a serious injustice", but that he held "no ill will" towards his accuser.

"I do not want my acquittal to add to the hurt and bitterness so many feel; there is certainly hurt and bitterness enough," he said.

He added that his trial "was not a referendum on the Catholic Church; nor a

referendum on how Church authorities in Australia dealt with the crime of paedophilia in the Church".

The prosecution's case had relied almost entirely on the testimony of one of the boys, who testified in a closed-door hearing that he had been sexually assaulted in a cathedral while Cardinal Pell was Archbishop of Melbourne.

The second boy, who is not known to have ever spoken of the abuse, died of a drug overdose in 2014.

Improbabilities

Cardinal Pell's lawyers had argued there were "compounding improbabilities" in the case, including that he would not have had the time or opportunity to molest the boys in the priests' sacristy after Mass.

The High Court found that though the jury had "assessed the complainant's evidence as thoroughly credible and reliable", evidence from other witnesses required the jury "acting rationally" to have "entertained a reasonable doubt as to the applicant's guilt".

Fear of 'Islamist mindset' stopping Christian return, says Iraqi bishop

A Catholic Bishop in Iraq believes the "Islamist mindset" which persists in the northern part of the country has made Christian refugees "afraid to return" to the region.

Despite the fall of the Islamic State in northern Iraq, Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Najeeb Michael Moussa of Mosul says the fear of seeing a "renewed growth of Islamic fundamentalism" prevents Christians from returning to their former homes.

In an interview with Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), Archbishop Moussa said Christians in Iraq remain active and hopeful about the future, but feel

threatened by a resurgence of Islamic extremism.

Before the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, around 1.4 million Christians lived in the country. At present, fewer than 250,000 remain – a drop of 80% in less than two decades.

Under the Islamic State, Christians were often offered a choice between conversion to Islam and death; at best, they were expected to pay a special levy to ISIS in return for their lives.

Around 15,000 Christian lived in Mosul prior to ISIS's rule over the region, however none remained by the area's liberation in 2017 and few have returned.

Archbishop Moussa said numerous economic and legal barriers are faced by Christians in Iraq, citing "certain unjust laws, for example, the forced conversion to Islam of young underage girls, if one of the parents should become a Muslim".

Christians, he added, are often denied equal opportunities at work, with some jobs simply closed to non-Muslims.

He hoped for the establishment of equal rights and equal duties for Christians living in the war-torn region to be able to live "on exactly the same basis as the other Iraqis and not as second-class citizens".

Internet access causing 'digital divide' in Pakistan

Catholics in Pakistan have joined internet rights groups in warning the country's government that a digital divide will widen inequalities amid the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

In a statement, the Digital Rights Foundation and Bolo Bhi, an organisation engaged in advocacy, policy and research in digital rights, said those most vulnerable to

economic and social upheaval will be left behind.

"We urge the government, businesses and civil society to recognise internet access as a basic fundamental right," the groups said last week.

Internet access in Pakistan stands at around 35% and Waqar Naeem, a Catholic researcher and freelance writer, said it remains a luxury for marginalised groups.

"Minorities and low-income groups can't afford expensive internet packages to join online classes or do office work from homes," he said.

"The government should come up with a comprehensive plan to ensure affordable internet connectivity for communities who can't afford it. Owing to Covid-19, we are now realising the importance

of digital equality."

Samson Buta, editor of Agahi, the official weekly newspaper of the Archdiocese of Karachi, also called on the government to ensure internet access for everyone.

"It is our main source of information during the time of a deadly plague. People want to stay updated," said Buta.



Edited by Aron Hegarty
aron@irishcatholic.ie

The innocence behind the mask



An internally-displaced Syrian girl wearing a protective face mask walks past as members of the Syrian Civil Defence Force sanitise the Bab Al-Nour camp. Photo: CNS

Survey finds 55% of US adults prayed to end Covid-19 crisis

More than half of adults in the US say they have prayed for an end to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, according to a new survey.

Pew Research Center, who surveyed 11,537 US adults, said that a large number of Americans who pray daily (86%) and US Christians (73%) have taken to prayer during the outbreak.

The findings even show that some of those who say they seldom or never pray, and people who say they do not belong to any religion, have done so (15% and 24% respectively).

Among US adults, who said they attend religious services at least once or twice a month, most (59%) now say they have scaled back their attendance because of the virus.

"This does not mean [religious peo-

ple] have disengaged from collective worship entirely," said Pew.

"A similar share (57%) reports having watched religious services online or on TV instead of attending in person.

"Together, four-in-10 regular worshippers appear to have replaced in-person attendance with virtual worship (saying that they have been attending less often but watching online instead)."

The survey found that nearly nine-in-10 adults say their life has changed at least a little as a result of the outbreak, including 44% who say their life has changed in a major way.

Four-in-10 working-age adults aged 18 to 64 report having worked from home because of coronavirus concerns.

Regarding American religious attitudes in the time of the pandemic, two-

thirds of Catholics (68%) and mainline Protestants (65%) say they have prayed for an end to the outbreak.

Even adults who say they follow "no religion in particular" have admitted to resorting to prayer, with 36% saying they have prayed about the virus.

"More women than men say they have prayed for an end to the spread of the disease, and more black respondents than white and Hispanic respondents say the same," Pew said.

"Older people are more likely than younger adults to say they have prayed for an end to the virus, and more Republicans than Democrats have prayed about the outbreak.

"These patterns are consistent with overall differences in the religiousness of these groups."

China keeps religious places shut fearing virus relapse

China continues to place restrictions on religious sites in Hubei despite easing curbs on the province where the coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak started.

Authorities lifted curbs on the region at the end of March, with its capital Wuhan, the original epicenter of the virus, being eased on April 8.

However, the Chinese government has not permitted churches to open for regular

liturgical programs on the grounds that a concentration of people could cause a relapse of Covid-19, according to Fr Zhang.

"Churches have not opened their doors," he said. "Local government authorities are not permitting it. In the case of an outbreak, they are afraid of being held accountable."

Fr Zhang said a parish near him, which held Masses on the last two Sundays, was

reported by villagers.

"Authorities came and put a notice on the church door prohibiting services," he said.

"I'm not sure if they are worried about the coronavirus or trying to suppress the Church."

With no official information on when churches can function regularly, Catholics in China remain uncertain if they can celebrate Easter.

Paul Zhao, a Catholic of Wuhan Diocese, said the gov-

ernment did not let his local church open.

"Even now, if the churches are open, not many will dare to go. It will take some time for churches to have normal attendances ... maybe a year. No one want to invite trouble," he said.

Juan Liu, another member of Wuhan Diocese, feared that if church closures and fear of gathering in churches continue that "everyone's faith is going to slide".

Vatican roundup

Pope asks faithful to follow Mother Teresa's lead in crisis

● Mother Teresa's example should inspire us to seek out those whose suffering is hidden during the coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis, according to Pope Francis.

At the start of his daily Mass, the Pope said he had seen a photo in a newspaper of homeless people sleeping in a parking lot, referring to a 'viral' image of homeless people lying six feet apart at Cashman Center in Las Vegas.

In his homily via livestream from Casa Santa Marta, the chapel in his Vatican City residence, Pope Francis asked the faithful follow in the saint's footsteps. "These days of pain and sadness underline many hidden problems," he said. "In the newspaper there is a photo which moves the heart: many homeless people from a city lying in a parking lot, under observation...there are many homeless people today.

"We ask St Teresa of Calcutta to reawaken in us the sense of closeness to so many people who, in society, in normal life, are hidden but, like the homeless, in a moment of crisis, are pointed out in this way."

Vatican Secretary of State pleads for global solidarity

● Cardinal Pietro Parolin has called for a commitment to international solidarity and says the Church is close to those affected by the coronavirus (Covid-19).

The Vatican Secretary of State, in an interview with Vatican Media, said that now is not the time to "shut ourselves off" from others during a global pandemic.

"We are sharing this difficult moment with everyone," he said.

"It is an opportunity to feel more united and to nurture the spirit of solidarity and sharing among all countries, among all peoples, among all men and women in the world.

"We need one each other, communities and societies, to help us care for one another."

Cardinal Parolin said the Vatican was maintaining contact with all churches during the crisis and advised the faithful to stick together in Holy Week.

"Christian faith is God irrupting in human history...I believe this is an opportune moment to return to God with all our hearts.

"The family is a domestic Church," he added. "We can pray and prepare ourselves for Easter by following the liturgies and prayers on television."

Vatican Tribunal hearings suspension extended to May 4

● The Vatican Tribunal has prolonged the period in which hearings are suspended after a rescript was signed by the Cardinal Secretary of State.

Pope Francis gave his consent that the date of April 3, on which the Vatican's Tribunal was originally earmarked to resume normal activity, would be prolonged until May.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, who signed the document, explained that the decision was taken "in order to counter the Covid-19 epidemiological emergency, and to contain negative effects surrounding judicial activity".

Also suspended are all deadlines for completing any step in the procedural process.

In addition, any dates that had been set to initiate any judicial process which land during the period of this suspension will be postponed until after the suspension period is over.

Furthermore, all "statutes of limitations" shall also be suspended for all intents and purposes, subject to certain exceptions. There were certain exceptions provided for civil and criminal proceedings, while the President of the Tribunal could also limit access to and opening hours of judicial offices.



Letter from Rome



Matteo Salvini holds a rosary as he gives a speech to rally Italian Catholics behind his nationalist message in Milan, Italy. Photo: CNS.

Easter debate ongoing as Holy Week is held under lockdown conditions

With Easter just days away, debate continues to swirl about how accessible churches and pastors should be on the holiest day of the Christian calendar – and whether Easter ought to be celebrated this Sunday at all.

Although Italy appears to have flattened the curve of the pandemic with projections currently suggesting that some regions may reach zero new infections by mid-April, the death toll continues to mount and authorities insist it will be some time before a strict national lockdown can begin to be rolled back.

Despite that, Italian politician Matteo Salvini, leader of the far-right Lega party, called in a television interview on April 4 for churches across the country to be open for Mass on Easter Sunday, saying it would be a chance to entrust the struggle against the coronavirus to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

"I support requests for those who are asking, in an orderly and compact way and with full respect



John L. Allen

for public health, to be able to go to church, even in groups of three, four or five people, for Easter Mass," Salvini said.

"You can go to the tobacco shop because people couldn't make it without cigarettes, but for many, taking care of the soul is as fundamental as the body.

Appeal

"This is an appeal to the bishops to allow believers in limited numbers to go to churches just like in the supermarkets, respecting distance, with masks and gloves," he continued. "Easter is the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and for millions of Italians it could be an important moment of hope."

The populist Salvini is well-known for invoking Catholic

symbols, including praying his rosary of the Madonna of Medjugorje during sessions of parliament and brandishing it at political rallies, despite routinely clashing with Church authorities and Pope Francis over issues such as immigration.

His proposal to open churches for Easter brought swift reaction, including priests who took to social media to express opposition.

"A number of Italian priests have reacted with interest to a call from Ghana for churches there to set their own date for Easter this year"

"Dear Salvini, today the churches are closed because we priests respect the law of our country," wrote Fr Dino Pirri of Grottammare, located in the Marche region on Italy's Adriatic coast. Pirri is a well-known figure with over 35,000 Twitter followers, hosting a popular Saturday evening program commenting on the next day's Gospel readings for TV2000,

the official television channel of the Italian bishops.

"We obey our bishops, not you," Pirri wrote. "We don't use our people, we love them. We're not looking for popularity but the common good."

Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti of Perugia, president of the Italian bishops' conference, told *Corriere della Sera*, Italy's paper of record, that "this is a time for responsibility, not polemics, and we'll see who's capable of it".

A different proposal wouldn't open churches for Easter ahead of a green light from health officials, but rather delay Easter altogether until that green light comes.

A number of Italian priests and clergy have reacted with interest to a call from the Rev. Kwabena Opuni Frimpong, a Presbyterian and executive director of the Alliance for Christian Advocacy for Africa, for churches in his native Ghana to set their own date for Easter this year at the end of a four-week national lockdown imposed by Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo.

The idea is that because Easter

is already a movable feast, varying each year according to the lunar calendar, in principle it could be delayed until conditions allow for people to return to churches.

Supporters of not celebrating Holy Week under quarantine cite a 1988 document from the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Paschalis sollemnitatis*, which held with regard to the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday: "Following a very ancient tradition of the Church, on this day all Masses without the people are prohibited."

They also appeal to the Old Testament's II Chronicles, chapter 30, which describes a decision by the King Hezekiah of Israel and his assembly to delay celebration of Passover by a month because "the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient numbers, and the people were not gathered at Jerusalem".

"If we're living in extraordinary times, and it seems clear to me we are, then we can also make extraordinary decisions"

"What sense does it make to celebrate Easter without the people?" said Fr Gennaro Matino, a well-known priest and theologian from Naples.

"Maybe it would be better to delay the feast and wait for a better time, when the emergency is over," Fr Matino said.

"If we're living in extraordinary times, and it seems clear to me we are, then we can also make extraordinary decisions."

German Jesuit Fr Ulrich Rhode, however, a professor of canon law at Rome's Gregorian University, is dubious. "Theoretically it's possible, but we don't know the future of this epidemic and you can't take for granted that it'll be over by May or June," he said.

Practically, Fr Rhode said, a postponed Easter also would mean an extended Lent, "which would create problems from a liturgical point of view".

"Besides which, it should be said that Easter celebrates the risen Jesus, which is valid even in dark times such as this – in fact, maybe in such cases it's truly a feast of consolation," he said.

While a back-and-forth about delaying Easter may continue, there's no evidence Pope Francis is considering it.

The Vatican previously announced the Pope's plans for Holy Week on March 27, and there's no indication he won't lead Easter Mass in a nearly empty St Peter's Basilica next Sunday at 10am Irish time, followed by the traditional *Urbi et Orbi* blessing in a deserted St Peter's Square.

John L. Allen is Editor of Cruxnow.com

Catholic charities braced for Covid-19 impact on the poor



Elise Ann Allen

Experts say the spread of the coronavirus (Covid-19) across Africa, Middle East and Latin America could lead to a collapse of already strained economies and healthcare systems in those regions.

According to Dr Peter Hotez, professor and dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, a major crisis could be in the works.

"Many of these places were unprepared for the surge of patients requiring ventilation or other intensive support," he said, saying that as the virus spreads, he is increasingly worried about poor and developing countries in Africa and South America, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea.

"How do you practice social distancing in the crowded slums of São Paulo or Manila?" he asked.

Such questions are precisely what international Catholic charities are currently trying to tackle. Aid agencies such as Caritas International and the AVSI Foundation are trying to get in ahead of the game, launching awareness-raising campaigns, fundraising and partnerships with local projects already in place.

Short supplies

Flavia Chevallard, AVSI representative for Syria, said "there's a lot of fear" about just how bad things are. Nine years of civil war has left only half of the country's hospitals fully functional, testing is inconsistent and supplies are short.

"This is the uncertainty now, there are very strong measures in Syria for the number of cases we have, but there are not that many tests, so we are all aware that there are more cases," she said.

Since March 12, Syria's borders have been closed and schools, universities and mosques shut down. A curfew was implemented, barring citizens from going out for large parts of the day. However, with a large percentage of the population living in poverty, self-isolation in crowded houses without a paycheck is impossible.

"There are many people who live day-to-day, either day jobs or a daily salary, so by now they are not working for several days. It's not a sustainable situation," Chevallard said.

Hunger is growing, she said, as people crowd around bread shops



Medical workers oversee the disinfection of the streets to prevent the spread of coronavirus in Qamishli, Syria. Photo: CNS

that sell at a discounted price.

"There are some people, if the bread is not at that price, who cannot eat," meaning that in the struggle to get to the front of the line, no one is paying attention to social distancing.

"This is a big problem. There will also be an economic crisis in Europe, but here it's a question of hunger from day one. This is the difference," she said, noting that Syria is currently "on its knees". With the financial crisis in neighboring Lebanon, "the economic situation is like a bomb that could explode, because people are really at their limit".

* * * * *

For the past three years AVSI has run an 'Open Hospitals' project in partnership with the Holy See and the Hungarian government aimed at providing healthcare to poor families and individuals who cannot afford payment but require treatment, regardless of ethnicity or religion.

In addition to the on-the-ground support AVSI provides, Caritas

International is also offering assistance to Syria in the same ways it is other at-risk countries: awareness campaigns, door-to-door visits to see what the biggest needs are, and handing out food and hygiene kits.

Caritas is also offering additional help to countries such as Venezuela, where it is trying to open soup kitchens so children and the elderly can find nutritious meals. They are also working with migrants and refugees throughout Latin America, the Middle East and Africa and are lobbying with the United Nations to ensure adequate funds are available for an adequate humanitarian response.

Speaking to journalists at an April 3 virtual press conference using Zoom, Aloysius John, secretary general of Caritas International, said the organisation is particularly concerned about the humanitarian situations in warring countries in the Middle East, as well as South Sudan and Central Africa, "where an outbreak of the pandemic could lead to a major humanitarian disaster in countries

already fragile due to war and violence".

"We advocate for non-diversion of humanitarian assistance which will pose a massive threat on communities that are surviving on aid," John said, adding that "we need to be more active in building creative solidarity to be with the people. I think the needs are going to be very high."

“What is important to understand here is, the needs will be immense, and the solidarity has to be at the expectation of these needs”

Africa is a particular area of concern, he said, noting that various projects aimed at fighting poverty and providing a crucial water supply to areas that otherwise would not have it, need to be updated and "scaled up" in order to be prepared for a worse coronavirus outbreak.

"Water is going to be a major issue," he said. In addition to targeting sanitary problems in some areas, Caritas is now focusing on how to provide a steady water supply should a lockdown occur.

"I think we need to be really proactive, and there is a new wave of solidarity coming and I think we

need to keep it up," continued John.

"What is important to understand here is, the needs will be immense, and the solidarity has to be at the expectation of these needs."

Suzanna Tkalec, humanitarian director of Caritas, told journalists the organisation is "really working to integrate and look at lessons learned by Africa and the Church with the Ebola outbreak".

"Caritas today throughout Africa, together with the Church, is extremely active in messaging and awareness raising," she said, adding that they are also working with local organisations on the ground in South Sudan to meet ongoing humanitarian and sanitary needs.

In addition to their work in Africa and the Middle East, Caritas is also partnering with local organisations and projects in India and Bangladesh to raise awareness and promote proper hygiene, especially given the thousands of refugees still camped out along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.

The efforts being made, according to John, consist of "not just waiting for things to happen", but their offices "are already doing things (and) trying to be creative" in getting in ahead of the curve in at-risk areas.

i Elise Ann Allen is a Senior Correspondent for Cruxnow.com

“There will also be an economic crisis in Europe, but here it's a question of hunger from day one. This is the difference”

Letters

Letter of the week

A beautiful message from GAA stars

Dear Editor, It was wonderful to see your front page (IC 2/04/2020) in which prominent GAA figures advocated for the vulnerable during our current pandemic, particularly priests and religious. It is now more than ever that we need to make sure our priests and religious feel they are being looked out for by the parish community and further afield. It is difficult to be Catholic never mind a member of the clergy in our modern Ireland.

Not being able to go out and continue doing their pastoral ministry as they always have must be very dispiriting. I know many are trying to do this in a different way – some very successfully so – but the absence of face-to-face contact with those

needing guidance and spiritual nourishment just can't be the same.

In addition, the growing age demographic of Ireland's religious means that huge numbers are having to cocoon due to the new Government regulations. This isolation is tough on everyone over 70. However, I absolutely welcome the call to pray for our priests and religious at this difficult time, and do all we can to rally around them including by offering practical supports (while adhering to Government guidelines of course).

We see nursing homes are being hit particularly badly by Covid-19: there seems to be several 'clusters' where the virus has spread. There are many

religious orders that have a number of elderly people living together around Ireland, perhaps not even half as much as their used to be, but it must be a particularly frightening time for them.

Let us not forget those who have given their lives completely to God, whose devotion is an example to us all in a time of growing secularisation on our island, whose witness is a breath of fresh air as people drift from our Church.

Theirs is a frontier that must not fall. We must stand with them.

Yours etc.,

Christina O'Doherty,
Greystones, Co. Wicklow.

Keep churches open and keep praying

Dear Editor, I totally agree with John Williams (IC/26/03/2020) that in these unprecedented times as we are facing a worldwide pandemic which will take the lives of so many people, it is vitally important, more so than ever before, that every

Church across Ireland is kept open for daily prayer.

Every Church here in my native is open for prayer every day and I visit one of them to pray and to spend time in the presence of God. A prayer is a prayer, no matter how short or

how long and all prayers are answered. The most powerful weapon which can destroy this pandemic is the power of prayer so, to reiterate, it is vitally important that all Churches in Ireland are kept open every day. Pray for all priests,

bishops, nuns, sacristans, Ministers of the Word (which I am very privileged to be) and all people who need our help.

Yours etc.,

Ray Cleere,
Kilfera, Co. Kilkenny.

Image quality of online Mass must be improved

Dear Editor, During the coronavirus pandemic surely we should be able to view a well-produced Mass where the celebrants, readers, etc. can be clearly seen and heard

Use of subtitles and sign language would also be helpful.

Also, is there any reason why we cannot have some hymns and sacred music, even if it is supplied from a CD?

Maynooth is close to Dublin and RTÉ where there are excellent TV production facilities available.

The Church of Ireland service from Maynooth last Sunday was an excellent example of best practice indeed. Given the large numbers watching Mass online, providing such services is a good commercial proposition for RTÉ. Time for the hierarchy to up their game.

Yours etc.,

Liam de Paor,
Carrickane, Co. Cavan.



Let's talk about dying and coronavirus

Dear Editor, I have not read or heard media coverage about when, whether, how to talk about dying in relation to Covid-19. Hospice websites have advice. An open

discussion could be helpful.

Yours etc.,

Andrew Furlong,
Dalkey, Co. Dublin.

RTÉ must up their game with televised Masses

Dear Editor, In excess of 162,000 people tuned into Mass on RTÉ on Sunday, March 22 [IC 26/03/2020]. In these days of social isolation as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, Catholics are unable to attend church, but still wish to unite in prayer remotely.

My son and I were deeply disappointed last Sunday, March 29 when no Mass was broadcast on RTÉ television. It is obvious that there is a demand for this service, especially on a

Sunday, based on the above figures.

I acknowledge that the RTÉ News Now channel broadcasts Mass and services during the weekdays at 10.30am, but not everybody has access to that channel, or know how to access it.

It is even more surprising then that Mass was not broadcast on Sunday. I would ask that Mass on Sunday be broadcast on RTÉ1 or RTÉ2.

This is a small comfort for the older

age group who do not have access to computers, iPads or smartphones, and do not have access to Mass via these media.

Please be so good as to broadcast Sunday Mass during this troubled time and cater for the needs of those being 'cocooned' and people in hospital and nursing homes.

Yours etc.,

Nuala O'Hara,
Arda Thir Oilean, Co. Galway.

facebook community

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

Senator Rónán Mullen tops poll and is re-elected to Senate

Delighted for you, Ronan. Our country badly needs decent, hardworking politicians of your calibre. – **Mary Murphy**

Blessings in abundance for you, Senator Mullen. – **Aurelian O'Dowd**

Thank you Senator Mullen – you have only good in your heart. Take care. – **Eileen Harkin**

Bishops 'dismayed' as extreme abortion regime imposed on North

Dreadful time. Appalling regulations. – **Eamonn McGrady**

Hope our doctors and nurses give them the answer they deserve. – **Peter McNamee**

So what are they going to do? I would hope they do something other than making a statement to say they are dismayed. – **Adrian Quinn**

Older priests to 'cocoon' as some test positive for Covid-19

Sadly, the Government at the moment has little respect for the Church or the clergy. They have brought about this abortion act and they seem to think they are God. So, so sad. They are slowly edging out Catholic schools too. – **Sheila Boyle**

Italy has lost many priests. Hopefully Ireland will be spared. However, many priests who are active are well past their 70s. The Catholic Church after this shall start a massive campaign of recruitment to vocations. Late vocations shall be encouraged. People need priests. No priests, no sacraments, no Confession, no Mass, nothing. – **GR Roy**

We also need to think about the income of our clergy. I hope that lay led diocesan and parish finance committees will take the lead in these matters especially in rural dioceses and parishes where if we were ever to see the books we might find things very tight indeed. Easter dues may be problematic. – **Alan Whelan**

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

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Around the world



▲ **GHANA:** Divine Word Fr Andrew Campbell poses with a woman with Hansen's disease at the Weija Leprosarium in Accra.

◀ **INDIA:** People hold their ears while doing squats as a punishment for breaking the rules of a Covid-19 lockdown in Chennai. Photos: CNS



IRAQ: An Iraqi man wearing a protective face mask and gloves gives a bottle of water to a homeless man in Basra.



EL SALVADOR: A father and daughter wait for their palms to be blessed before a Palm Sunday procession in Suchitoto.



SPAIN: A man gives a box with protective face shields to a nun at a school during the coronavirus pandemic in Ronda.



PHILIPPINES: A hospital worker wearing a protective mask rests in a pew at a funeral chapel in Manila.

'The Second Denial of Peter' by James Tissot.



The meaning of Jesus' death

Jesus' death washes everything clean, including our ignorance and sin. That's the clear message from Luke's account of his death.

As we know, we have four Gospels, each with its own take on the passion and death of Jesus. As we know too, these Gospel accounts are not journalistic reports of what happened on Good Friday but more theological interpretations of what happened then. They're paintings of Jesus' death more so than news reports about it and, like good art, they take liberties to highlight certain forms so as to bring out essence. Each Gospel writer has his own interpretation of what happened on Calvary.

For Luke, what happened in the death of Jesus is the clearest revelation, ever, of the incredible scope of God's understanding, forgiveness and healing. For him, Jesus' death washes everything clean through an understanding, forgiveness and healing that belies every notion suggesting anything to the contrary. To make this clear, Luke highlights a number of elements in his narrative.

Bitterness

First, in his account of Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, he tells us that immediately after one of his disciples struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear, Jesus touched the man's ear and healed him. God's healing, Luke intimates, reaches into all situations, even situations of



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

bitterness, betrayal, and violence.

God's grace will ultimately heal even what's wounded in hatred.

Then, after Peter denied him three times and Jesus is being led away after his interrogation by the Sanhedrin, Luke tells us that Jesus turned and looked straight at Peter in a look that made Peter weep bitterly.

Everything in this text and everything that comes after it suggests that the look from Jesus that caused Peter to weep bitterly was not one of disappointment and accusation, a look that would have caused Peter to weep in shame. No, rather it was a look of such understanding and empathy as Peter had never before seen, causing him to weep in relief, knowing that everything was alright and he was alright.

“Jesus turned and looked at Peter... it was a look of such understanding and empathy as Peter had never before seen, causing him to weep in relief, knowing that everything was alright and he was alright”

And when Luke records Jesus' trial before Pilate, he recounts something that's not recorded in the other Gospel accounts of Jesus' trial, namely, Pilate sending Jesus to Herod and how the two of them, bitter enemies until that day, “became friends that same day”.

As Ray Brown, commenting on this text puts it: “Jesus has a healing effect even on those who mistreat him.”

Finally, in Luke's narrative, we arrive at the place where Jesus is crucified and as they are crucifying him, he utters the famous words: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” Those words, which Christians forever afterwards have taken as the ultimate criterion as to how we should

treat our enemies and those who do us ill, encapsulate the deep revelation contained in Jesus' death.

Uttered in that context as God is about to be crucified by human beings, these words reveal how God sees and understands even our worst actions: not as ill-will, not as something that ultimately turns us against God or God against us, but as ignorance – simple, non-culpable, invincible, understandable, forgivable, akin to the self-destructive actions of an innocent child.

“Jesus' death washes everything clean, each of us and the whole world. It heals everything, understands everything and forgives everything”

In that context too, Luke narrates Jesus' forgiveness of the “good thief”. What Luke wants to highlight here, beyond the obvious, are a number of things: first, that the man is forgiven not because he didn't sin, but in spite of his sin; second, that he is given infinitely more than he actually requests of Jesus; and finally, that Jesus will not die with any unfinished business, this man's sin must first be wiped clean.

Finally, in Luke's narrative, unlike the narratives of Mark and Matthew, Jesus does not die

expressing abandonment, but rather dies expressing complete trust: “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”

Luke wants us to see in these words a template for how we can face our own deaths, given our weaknesses. What's the lesson? Leon Bloy once wrote that there is only one true sadness in life, that of not being a saint.

At the end of the day when each of us face our own death this will be our biggest regret, that we're not saints. But, as Jesus shows in his death, we can die in (even in weakness) knowing we are dying into safe hands.

Luke's account of the passion and death of Jesus, unlike much of Christian tradition, does not focus on the atoning value of Jesus' death.

What it emphasises instead is this: Jesus' death washes everything clean, each of us and the whole world. It heals everything, understands everything and forgives everything – despite every ignorance, weakness, infidelity and betrayal on our part.

In John's passion narrative, Jesus' dead body is pierced with a lance and immediately ‘blood and water’ (life and cleansing) flow out.

In Luke's account, Jesus' body is not pierced. It doesn't need to be. By the time he breathes his last he has forgiven everyone and everything has been washed clean.

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, April 9, 2020

Personal Profile

The life of a lay missionary from Ireland

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Home Experiments



Many parents are finding it difficult to help their kids to stay occupied and take some interest in their school work since everyone has been sent home. Some kids might not have been sent home with a sufficient amount of work and some of it might just genuinely be not very engaging.

What can be a great way to keep your child learning is to use a different approach. Something that is done a lot in home schooling is self-directed learning. This is an inquiry-driven approach which places the responsibility of what and how to learn on the student. The idea is for the student to approach any learning situation with a set of objectives, a knowledge of



Got a curious mind? Róise McGagh looks at the benefits of informal learning and lists ideas to spark some creative experiments at home

what resources and strategies are available to them, and an understanding of how to assess their own learning.

A great way to begin to spark some ideas and get this process going for kids is science experiments. They can be great fun and can create an interest in different topics and then they might be inspired to take control of their learning and put time into looking at what is of interest to them. Of course this isn't

exactly course work, but it can be a catalyst for bringing more creative methods into helping your kids learn while they are away from school.

Science is something that is present in our lives every day, it explains how we breathe, why bread rises, why things fizz and why the sun goes up and down. So there are many ways to make it come alive by just using what you have in your home and your back garden.

Let's start with a classic, the at home volcano.

This should be done outside or in a large basin so as not to cause a mess, you are literally setting off a volcano after all.

What you need is 10ml of dish soap, 100ml of cold water, 400ml of white vinegar, food colouring (optional), half a cup of baking soda mixed with half a cup of water and an empty two litre bottle. What can make it even better is if you use the bottle as a paper mache base and create a volcano shape then paint it so it looks just like the real thing.

When your volcano and ingredients are ready to go, combine the vinegar, water, dish soap and two drops of food colouring into the opening at the top. Then quickly pour your

baking soda and water mix into the volcano and stand back!

What happens is a chemical reaction between the vinegar and baking soda creates a gas called carbon dioxide. This is the same kind of gas used to make fizzy drinks fizz and you know what happens when you shake that up. The gas gets excited and tries to spread out. Isaac Newton's third law of motion comes in – every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Since there's not enough room for it to spread out it shoots up through the opening, causing an eruption!

You can mix it up and see if different measurements make for different kinds of explosions.

For this next one all you'll need 50 small pieces of paper, a pencil

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Family News



AND EVENTS

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

High blood pressure in pregnancy, or pre-eclampsia, an already established threat to a mother, has been found to increase the risk for several developmental problems in children. The study published by JAMA Psychiatry, using a Norwegian health database, observed 980,560 children. Of these, 28,068 were exposed to pre-eclampsia in full-term pregnancies. The researchers followed each child for five years on average and as long as 14 years in some cases. There was a 50% increase in the relative risk for epilepsy and the same for intellectual disability to those exposed to pre-eclampsia. For 21% there was higher risk of sight or hearing loss and increased risk for cerebral palsy, ADHD and autism spectrum disorder. Dr. Allen J. Wilcox, senior author, explained that the total risk for full-term babies having developmental disorders is very small, so the potential increase in cases would also be small. The study showed only an association between pre-eclampsia and these issues not a proven cause.

SWEETER DREAMS

One of the things that has been shown to be helpful for sleep issues as well as those suffering from insomnia, chronic pain conditions or restless leg syndrome, is a weighted blanket. The pressure is said to help reduce cortisol, the stress hormone and encourage the production of happiness hormones like serotonin. They have also been shown to have benefits for those with depression or autism. Weighted blankets are blankets filled with beads of plastic or glass, making them heavier and most are designed, not to replace a duvet but to add on top. You would ideally want a blanket that is around 10% of your body weight or slightly heavier. They come at a variety of different weights, from 5lbs to 30lbs and the price ranges from €25 to over €100; with the sweet spot between quality and affordability at around €50.

OBSTACLES THAT DON'T STOP THE FUN

One creative way to get everyone energised, laughing and exercised for the day is an obstacle course. You won't need to go and source any equipment and it's better when parents and kids get involved. You could start off running backwards, doing jumping jacks or another physical challenge. Then take an old sack or a cardboard box and hop to the next exercise. You could then spin around five times and 'walk the plank' and try and balance your way across a beam (maybe the edge of a flowerbed or just a plank slightly elevated by a few bricks). You could then crawl through a tunnel or limbo under a blanket between two chairs. You could create a spider web with rope strung over and back between two posts (on a swing set, between trees, on your stairs) and try and get through it without touching the web. These can be adjusted for indoors and outdoors and there are plenty of ways to set new challenges, like completing it wearing wellies or hopping on one foot!

Despite coronavirus people must go to hospital if necessary

As we wade deeper into the coronavirus pandemic our healthcare system is feeling the surge in cases of Covid-19. A virus that may have emerged out of a market in Wuhan, China a little over three months ago has infected over one million people in over 170 countries, in what has been described as the worst global crisis since World War II. It's a vista that's hard to have foreseen but there may be some small comfort in predictions that it may be edging towards a peak in Ireland in the next two weeks.

Our hospitals are bracing themselves for the increasing numbers of Covid-19 patients but have at least had some time to prepare for the surge – increased ICU beds and ventilators, Covid-19 designated wards and onsite coronavirus testing at some centres. However, the overall attendance at the emergency departments in many hospitals had at least initially dropped, presumably as some patients try and avoid coming in for fear of contracting the virus. Indeed, at the moment, up to half or more of presentations to hospital seem to be Covid-19 related.

In fact, paradoxically and possibly for the first time in some of our hospitals – in what only could be described as brief "calm before the storm", there were vacant beds as general admissions decline, elective procedures are cancelled and hospitals discharges are prioritised. But this is a transient lull that may be obliterated beyond any measure in the coming days.

There is obviously great concern and fear amongst older adults as age is the one of the biggest risk factors in predicting more severe illness. Of those hospitalised nearly half are aged above 65 and indeed the

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



majority of deaths due to Covid-19 are those over 80. But the presence of other co-morbidities such as lung and heart disease are also a big driver of mortality too. It's hard to gauge a true sense of what the mortality is in older people but for those that end up on ventilators death rates are very high.

“The overall attendance at the emergency departments in many hospitals had at least initially dropped”

The body's immune response as it mounts war on the virus is a factor. Even in some who are young, a massive release of chemicals (cytokines) as part of the attack on the virus can lead to major lung inflammation. This type of reaction might in part be related to high viral loads in our body early on as well as individual genetics. In fact, this 'cytokine storm' is also the target of potential drug treatments.

Older adults may also have an atypical presentation with Covid-19 and may be more likely not to develop a temperature but to get other non-specific symptoms including confusion. However, in those who are over

80 and are fit and healthy with no significant underlying illness, it can also take a relatively milder course.

But patients are also still getting sick from non-Covid-19 related illnesses and failure to get medical attention for some could prove detrimental. Hospitals have been configured in as far as is possible to have only have Covid-19 patients on designated wards so as to keep exposure at a minimum.

Last week, concerns were raised by doctors in different hospitals that fewer patients than usual were presenting with strokes or were coming in too late to receive crucial treatments that need to be delivered early.



Stroke is an acute medical emergency that requires investigations in hospital. For example, in up to 15-20 % of cases it results from blockage of an artery in the brain from a clot that may be dissolved with drugs or removed mechanically. When it comes to stroke, 'time is brain' and with every minute millions of brain cells are dying. Correcting blood flow can prevent further damage and even lead to recovery in brain areas already affected. While such strokes are often larger and are more likely to present, smaller ones can give rise to

non-specific or milder signs which may not be brought to medical attention.

Slurring of speech, difficulty finding or understanding words, unsteadiness, or incoordination and weakness in the face, arm or leg are all signs of having a stroke. Even if there isn't a blocked artery, identifying what type of stroke it is, controlling factors like blood pressure or giving medications to thin the blood can be important. In a similar way, chest pain that could be due to angina or even a heart attack could be overlooked.

“There is obviously great concern and fear amongst older adults as age is the one of the biggest risk factors in predicting more severe illness”

On a positive note, a study, published recently showed that in five patients with severe symptoms, administering antibodies derived from people who had recovered from Covid-19 appeared to eradicate the virus with treated patients also improving clinically. This also suggests that checking antibodies at a population level may be good measure of immunity. While it's going to take many months, the race for a vaccine is also unparalleled and promising.

Make sure to keep safe during this pandemic but don't put off going into hospital if you become otherwise unwell – it could change your life for the better.

Dr Kevin McCarroll is a Consultant Physician in Geriatric Medicine, St James's Hospital, Dublin.

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and some coloured crayons. Have you guessed what it is? A flip book!

First think of what animated thing you want to draw and what will happen throughout out the flip book – keep it simple because you will have to draw it many times over.

Drawing your first picture, on the first small piece of paper.

The next few steps are the same except this time take a new piece of paper and lay it over the last image, then trace the picture. However leave out the part that you want to move. For example a hand is waving in the new image then don't that hand, draw a new hand in the position you want. When you're finished all the images then you can colour, but make sure the colours in each image match. Don't forget to number each image so you can stack them the end, back to front.

“Some kids might not have been sent home with a sufficient amount of work and some of it might just genuinely be not very engaging”

Then flick through your book and watch the image move. How does it work? Our brains are able to fill in the motion between frames or different images. So as we view the image broken by the pages moving, the imagery is no longer blurry. It is basically an optical illusion that is known as persistence of vision. This can also be done with a zoetrope which is a simple device from before animation even existed. The viewer looks through the slits in a spinning cylinder and sees an animated image. They are a bit more complex to make but you can also try it at home.

Here's another one: have you ever wondered how plants know which way to grow? Do seeds have 'this

side up' written on them in really small letters? Plants will always grow towards the sun and the effect, phototropism, is something you can easily experiment with at home. All you need is a potato that's beginning to sprout, a shoe box, a scissors, and some obstacles: that's right, you're going to set up a maze for a vegetable.

Start by cutting a hole about the size of a €2 coin in the side of the shoe box. Take the lid off the box and put the sprouting potato on the further corner from the hole. Place a number of obstacles between the potato and the hole, but make sure to leave a path for the roots to get through and replace the lid.

Leave your potato maze on a windowsill or somewhere else that it will get plenty of light. You can either wait a couple of weeks for the potato to sprout from the hole or check it every few days to see how your spud is getting on. Whatever you decide, the potato sprout will find the light and you'll have proven phototropism in your own home.

All you need for this last one is an empty Pringles, a marker, a ruler, scissors, a thumbtack, masking tape, aluminium foil, and a bright sunny day.

You take the plastic lid off the Pringles can and clean it. Draw a



line with the marker all the way around the can, about 5cm up from the bottom then cut along the line so the tube is in two pieces. With the thumbtack, poke a hole in the middle of the metal end on the shorter bottom piece.

The plastic lid will be used as a screen. If your lid is clear, you may need to put a piece of tissue paper or tracing paper on it to make it translucent. Put the plastic lid onto the shorter piece. Put the longer piece back on top and tape them all together.

“A great way to begin to spark some ideas and get this process going for kids is science experiments”

Use the tinfoil to wrap around the tube twice and tape it in place and tuck away any extra bits into the top, the inside needs to be totally dark so you might have to wrap your hands around the end of the tube when you bring it to your eye.

Go outside on a sunny day. Close one eye and look through the tube with the other.

Look around the lid makes a screen that should show upside-down colour pictures.

Light from the scene you're looking at passes through the pin hole and projects an inverted image onto the lid in the tube. This is known as a camera obscura which is Latin for “dark chamber”.

These are just a few ideas to get you started, there are a huge amount of online resources for these kinds of experiments that you can do with a minimal amount of materials. And they might just get your kids enthusiastic about learning.

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



It's been a lovely lockdown so far. The sun has shone kindly over our pleasantly shrunken world. Life is simpler and there's no longer any rush to school, to clubs or birthday parties. There are no weekend breaks or daytrips. There's something pleasant about not having to decide what to do, for the only thing we may do is stay at home. I'm rationing the news, and am deliberately allowing my cares to confine themselves to the little rural valley in which we live.

We are fortunate to live in the countryside at a time like this. The kids can even go fishing in the stream during their breaks from home school. They have embraced online learning and, after playing in the garden each morning, they happily go to their laptops to start their work for the day. Their teachers have been fantastic. They start each day with positive and friendly messages to the kids, before providing the day's work, with links to useful and interesting resources. Some teachers are also providing their lessons by video. My mother, a retired primary school teacher, is also giving the kids lessons online, which they love. In between lessons, the kids fly out into the garden, or up to the woods to play games and build camps.

“Life is simpler and there's no longer any rush to school, to clubs or birthday parties”

They've learned about density by building little boats and slowly filling them with pebbles before they sink. They've learned about gravity by flying down the hill on a toy tractor. When play is used for learning, learning becomes play.

My mother-in-law is staying with us for the duration of the lockdown. More accurately, she's staying isolated in an apartment to the side of our house. So that she could be fully isolated, we needed to have a bathroom built. As my wife works in the emergency department of our local hospital, we felt at greater risk than most of bringing the virus home. Increasingly anxious about this risk, we put a call out

for a plumber on social media, and received a number of offers of help within minutes.

Two amazing local lads spent an entire weekend working on the project, until 10pm at night, until the bathroom plumbing was up and running. My wife's anxiety levels dropped the moment she knew her mother was safe, and no longer had any need to enter the main part of the house for the bathroom. Two incredible Polish handymen then started building the bathroom and they are cheerfully plastering and tiling the shower as I write. This awful situation is bringing out the best in people. Out of a bad situation, a lot of kindness and decency has emerged.



All our lives have now changed and we can only make the most of our new realities. We saw in having to stay at home the opportunity to fulfil our longstanding ambition of having a family dog. With the kids at home every day, there's always someone around to entertain the puppy, or to train it. The kids have loved getting to know him. When he came home initially, they even took turns sleeping alongside him, so that he wouldn't be too lonely without his brothers and sisters.

Despite the fears we all have about the coronavirus outbreak, the world is in some ways better for having quietened. On those rare occasions when I must go out to get something essential in the shop, I notice that people are kinder, and that strangers more readily smile and acknowledge each other – from a 2m distance, of course. The kids have not left our garden for three weeks now. While they miss friends and trips to the beach, they seem in many ways happier for their confinement – for now, at least.

The life of a lay missionary from Ireland

Personal Profile



Róise McGagh

“What keeps me going is just a strong faith and belief that this is what Christianity is about,” says Sally Roddy, long-time member and current President of Viatores Christi (VC).

She has spent years working on staff and volunteering with VC, the lay missionary group who this year are celebrating their 60th. She is now retired and works in her present roll in a voluntary capacity.

Sally had always known she wanted to be a missionary as long as she can remember. She had an aunt who was one of the Medical Mission Sisters (MMS) and worked in Nigeria.

“It was part of our Christmas outings that we went to the Mansion House. We met our aunt and all the other medical missionaries. I got quite fascinated, they used to show slideshows of their work and Africa and that really captivated me.”

Her interest was also spiked when VC visited St Louis in Rathmines where she was in school at the time. “It was around 1965, but I remember keeping it in the back of my mind that you can be a missionary and you don't have to be a nun. I wasn't sure that id make a great nun really even then.”

When she left school Sally went to work in the civil service for five years and there she met VC at a careers day. While working for the Department of Agriculture and then Education.



She completed her degree and higher diploma at night in University College Dublin and then worked as a teacher for year before eventually going to Thailand with VC.

“I went on the training course in early 1972. In about two more years that will be 50 years ago.” She says the nine month course was inspiring and full of insightful discussion. “It really opened up so many new areas of development, justice and personal development, and responsibility for the world.”

“It was just after Vatican II and the whole idea of the Church being for the world and the Church being the people of God, we were very much on fire with all that stuff at that time.”

She then went to Thailand so spent four years there in the 70s. She taught English in a school run by a French missionary order as well as doing pastoral and community work.

When she came back she got involved in the organising team in VC, then in 1980 she was taken on as staff to work in promotions. “Those were the years when we had the most people working overseas, it was normal enough to have 50 or 80 people at a training course.” The numbers are not as strong now “mission nowadays is a difficult one because young people are not as involved in things to do with the church.”

During the three years she worked for VC she met Colm Roddy who was a trainee there. They got married at the end of 1981.

“In mid 1983 we went to work in Ethiopia as a couple,” she says. That was where they adopted their first daughter.

Colm was an engineer and Sally worked there in community development and pastoral work for four years on a mission made of a group of congregations

including the Spiritans, the Missionaries of Mary and Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa in a Province which was about the size of Ireland and had very few roads.

“It was called Gamo Gofa and we lived and worked in a place called Arba Minch, which means 40 springs,” said Sally, they were located between two lakes one of which was home to crocodiles and hippopotamuses.

They met Elsa in the local hospital “She wasn't exactly abandoned but her mum had died and her father wasn't in a position look after her so she ended up with her granny, then she was malnourished and in the local hospital,” says Sally.

“Elsa is now a real Irish woman, she's 35 and she works at the food cloud hub. She did a degree in international development in Maynooth.”

In the mid 90s Sally and Colm returned to Ethiopia, this time to Tigray which had been badly hit by the famine in the 80s.

“We worked there with the Jesuit relief service, while we were there we adopted two more children. They're brother and sister and their parents has died.” (All pictured in Ethiopia in 1995) Their names were Mel, who has recently opened an Ethiopian supper club and Susie, who is now a nurse in Tallaght Hospital.

“I think nowadays people are recognising that there is a lot of missionary work to be done here at home as well”

“Now they're worrying about their aging parents, the roles are somewhat reversed,” says Sally.

Being a lay missionary had a huge impact on Sally's life and she says she is very passionate about lay people being involved in mission work.

“I feel that I was equally on a mission when I worked with the organisation here at home because our idea was to bring back what we had learned and try to bring it to other people and give them the opportunity to go to work overseas. But also to get involved in important social justice and global justice issues at home because we always believed as an organisation that mission was everywhere, not only far away in Africa,” she says.

“I think nowadays people are recognising that there is a lot of missionary work to be done here at home as well, and development work and outreach to people who are marginalised and poor and oppressed.”

Living Laudato Si'

Jane Mellett



A time to reflect on God's creation

In May 2015, Pope Francis published the encyclical *Laudato Si'* – Care for Our Common Home inviting everyone into a conversation about what is happening to our environment, God's creation. This year we celebrate the fifth anniversary of its publication and Pope Francis has invited all of us to mark this special anniversary in some way.

So much has changed in our lives in recent weeks as another global crisis unfolds before us. It is hard for many of us to comprehend this extraordinary moment in history. And yet there is a lot of light and love shining through the darkness as people 'come together while staying apart': many manufacturers and businesses are turning their industries over to providing key worker resources; priests, pastoral workers and volunteers are all finding new ways to reach out to the most vulnerable in our Church communities; neighbours are looking out for one another.

We are more aware than ever before of just how deeply connected we are as the Covid-19 crisis has shown us that what happens in one part of the world, affects all of us as a human race.

We belong to one another. We are in this together. This is the type of global solidarity which is needed to fight not only Covid-19 but also the environmental crisis, which has not gone away. In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis calls for a “conversation which involves everyone because the environmental challenge we are undergoing and its human roots, concern and affect us all.” (LS, 14) As we hibernate, the Earth rests. When we emerge from this ‘cocooning’ will we return to business as usual? Or will we be changed in some way?

As we strive to protect our families during this worrying time, we have also been given an

opportunity to consider what we truly value and what is really important to us. Let this time be an opportunity to reflect on our relationship with God's creation and with one another.

As we stay at home during this crisis, we can find ways of living *Laudato Si'* in our homes:

- Connect again with nature noticing the birds, the trees, the soil, the gift of water, becoming more aware of God's presence in all of creation.
- Does the recycling need more attention in your house? During this crisis we may all have slipped back into bad habits. You can try to reuse, reduce, recycle and encourage family members to do the same and access tips here: www.mywaste.ie
- Read *Laudato Si'* in preparation for its fifth anniversary in May. You can access a copy for free on the Vatican website.
- For parents and teachers, you can access our parish and school packs at www.trocaire.org (see resources).

Jane Mellett is the *Laudato Si'* officer with Trócaire.

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Life's poorer without people and sacred places

I wonder what would be filling our news programmes if it wasn't for Covid-19. Yes, I've got FOMO – fear of missing out! Yet it's a serious question as significant events creep under the radar – it shows how important it is to check out and support reliable newspapers, to get a more rounded sweep of what else is going on.

With so many media discussions of Covid-19, it's welcome to hear some dealing with related spiritual and ethical concerns. Last Friday, on **Thought for the Day** (BBC Radio 4), journalist Tim Stanley spoke of how painful it was not being physically present at Mass. He started the reflection saying he went to church for the service, not for the people, happy if it was just himself and the priest. But through the experience brought on by the virus crisis he appreciated that people experience their Faith "together as a community of believers". Life, he suggested, was impoverished without a sacred place to go to and others to communicate with.

Later that morning, ethical concerns figured on **The Morning Show** (Spirit Radio) when Rónán Johnston interviewed Prof. Tobias Winright, theologian and ethicist from St Louis University, USA. They discussed the ethics of triage, where the urgent needs of patients might be greater



Now on the Disney Plus streaming platform – all episodes of *The Simpsons*.

than the available resources which were finite. When prioritising was necessary it was suggested that it was important for choices to reflect values and that discrimination, prejudices and biases should be avoided – for example people shouldn't be refused treatment just because they were, say, over 60.

Prof. Winright said that age was just one of many relevant factors – there was a "constellation of variables". This wasn't a new situation of course, there had been pandemics before. It struck me that similar dilemmas

occurred in times of earthquake or famine when rescue workers or medics at feeding stations had to decide who got the limited food, medicine and other resources. In these situations it was never suggested that any patient be killed to relieve the problems of others, yet in debates on abortion that unmerciful approach is often the one taken.

I've been trawling again through the new Disney Plus streaming platform – there's a seven-day free trial which should be enough to see what's available. Most *Star*

Wars films and spin-offs are there, except for the most recent film, *Episode IX: The Rise of Skywalker*. As for spin-offs (*Rogue One* is the best). I had missed it on cinema release and had heard some negatives, but I enjoyed *Solo: A Star Wars Story* – there were eye-popping action scenes, a reasonably engaging story and enough linking with the main *Star Wars* story arc to please the diehard fans. I thought the violence was stronger than usual and there were moral complexities that might make it unsuitable for the very young.

Crude

Though not originally a Disney show, all seasons of *The Simpsons* are there – it's very funny but is not a children's cartoon, can be moderately crude and is sometimes jaundiced towards religion. Yet it can be interesting on religious matters though very inclined to skewer the foibles of believers.

I remember episodes where God teaches valuable lessons to Homer and one where Bart sells his soul thinking it's insignificant but learns its true value the painful way. All the *Muppet* films are there too (*Muppet Treasure Island* is one of the best) though unfortunately the original TV series is not.

Also funny but questionable as a children's show, **Young Sheldon** (E4, Thurs-

PICK OF THE WEEK

EASTER SUNDAY MASS

RTÉ1, Easter Sunday, April 12, 10am

Eurovision Mass from the Dominican Convent of St Jacques (St James the Great) in Paris. Commentary by Fr Thomas McCarthy OP.

HEAVENLY GARDENS

BBC1, Easter Sunday, April 12, 1.50pm

Alexander Armstrong and Arit Anderson visit gardens expressing hope, joy and renewal.

GUNS AND ROSARIES

RTÉ1, Thursday, April 16, 10.15pm

Repeat of fascinating documentary on Fr Patrick Peyton, the Irish 'Rosary priest'.



Tim Stanley.

day) explored the matter of prayer. In the episode 'Slump, A Cross and Roadside Gravel' (this Friday, RTÉ1) Missy, Sheldon's twin sister, was doing poorly at baseball so she prayed about it, much to the delight of Mary, her mother.

She even was willing to

wear a cross that was special to the mother. All was going well until it turned into superstition – Missy's game improved and the cross became a talisman – she was even rubbing it on the other players' sporting equipment!

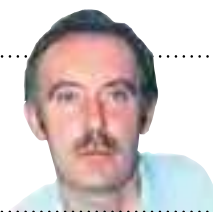
At one stage the mother got frustrated – in her prayer space in the garden she lamented that she had one child who didn't believe in God (young Sheldon), one who thought God was a magic trick (Missy) and one (Georgie) who wasn't interested because God was not a teenage girl!

I liked her parting words – "Lord...give me the strength to keep guiding my family to you, I can't do it on my own."

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Film

Aubrey Malone



Christian films to watch when you can't leave home

In these strange times when people can't get to the cinema I thought it might be an idea to let you know of an American channel where you can watch Christian films at a low cost. It's called the New Faith Channel and you can join up for \$5.95 a month, or the euro equivalent.

There's a 14-day free trial. You can cancel any time you want. It's \$29.95 for a half year's subscription and \$59.95 for a yearly one. You can stream the films to your television if you have Chromecast or Apple Airplay.

If you don't have these devices there's an alternative. You may have a HDMI connection on your television. If you do, you can connect your computer (presuming you

have one) directly to the television using this.

The films are suitable for all the family. There are titles like *Highway to Heaven*, *The God Question*, *Altar Egos*, *Wild Faith* and *The Book of Genesis*.

Highway to Heaven is a box set with 30 discs in its physical manifestation. It stars Michael Landon and Victor French, both of whom you may remember from *Little House on the Prairie*. The plot deals with a handyman (Jonathan Smith) who's actually an angel with a mission from God.

He's accompanied by a former policeman (Mark Gordon) whose life he turned around. He travels the country guiding the lost towards



Brady McDaniels (left) stars in *Letters to God*.

"the highway to heaven."

Letters to God concerns a young boy who's suffering from cancer. He sends

daily missives to God, who becomes a kind of celestial pen pal to him. But what will the postman (Brady McDan-

iels) do with them?

Until Forever also has a cancer theme. The plot has a couple, Michael and Michelle, looking forward to a life of love together when Michael is struck down by the disease. In hospital he faces some tough challenges to his faith.

One of the other patients is an atheist. His brother suffers from depression and attempts suicide. Is there light at the end of the tunnel? Will his faith see him through the dark time? Watch and see.

Army duty

God Bless the Broken Road centres on a woman whose husband has died on army duty. She has to find a way to cope with the tragedy by using her Faith.

Of particular interest to children, especially around Easter, is *The Miracle Maker*. This has a star-studded cast in Ralph Fiennes, Julie Christie and Richard E. Grant. It uses a mixture of animation and real footage to tell the story of Christ through the eyes of a child. Fiennes plays Jesus. As his popularity grows, enemies plot his downfall. Grant is John the Baptist.

These films can also be ordered from Amazon if you don't have the ability, or inclination, to become a member of the New Faith Network. It has a huge list of titles. I'm just giving you a smattering of them.



BookReviews

Peter Costello



Thoughts on sharing in the Holy Thursday reflections

Eating Together, Becoming One: Taking up Pope Francis's Call to Theologians

by Thomas O'Loughlin
(Liturgical Press Academic,
\$US29.95/£19.99; ISBN:
9780814684580, 8458,
available in several
formats, search www.litpress.org.uk; orders@
norwichbooksandmusic.co.uk)

Peter Costello

This is the latest book by well known historian Thomas O'Loughlin, the prominent Irish theologian and liturgist, who was elected president of the Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain in 2016. He is currently the Professor of Historical Theology in the University of Nottingham.

"My specialism is the origins of Christianity, but, more widely, I am interested in how Christianity has been transmitted down the centuries, and how its expressions have changed in that process,"



he said. This concentration is very relevant to this new book.

According to the author himself, it explores various ways of thinking about what Catholics do in the liturgy that should lead them to see intercommunion between Christian denominations as enhancing their participation

in the mystery of the Church and the mystery they celebrate as the central feature of their religious lives.

Purpose

Here for once, an author gives an exact account of the occasion and purpose of what he is writing. Professor O'Loughlin writes: "The idea of this book

can be traced to a few off-the-cuff remarks that were made in a Lutheran church in Rome in November 2015, when Pope Francis replied to a question about intercommunion and suggested that theologians should address the question!

"I had by then lost count of how many times I had

been asked a version of that question in churches, in class, in meetings with clergy and even once while waiting for a plane in India: why will the Catholic Church not allow other Christians, whom they acknowledge as Christian, to share their table?

"I then recalled that I could not think of a single book that

presented the arguments in favour of a change in Catholic practice – the very sort of examination Pope Francis was calling for.

"So the idea took root, and I desired a small book that would address the several dimensions of the question (theological, liturgical, and pastoral) in a unified way."



Lean days and seasons of plenty – food for thought in

The Miraculous Draught of Fishes,
James Tissot, ca 1886.



Food, Feast and Fast: The Christian Era from Ancient World to Environmental Crisis
by P. Fintan Lyons OSB
(Columba Books, €19.99)

Peter Costello

Reading Fr Lyons' title, one's mind turns back at once to Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream of seven fat and seven lean cows, and seven ears of corn ripely full, and seven ears thin and blasted (Genesis 41:1-36).

We have all an idea that in history food was like that: there was either a feast or a famine. The 'idea of progress' abolished this notion, preferring to think that there should always be seven full years, always be years of plenty. But we all know that on a global scale this has, even in the last century so, proved impossible.

As the production of food has ceased to be a matter of personal, loving attention (as it is for pastoralists and farmers), it has become an often dehumanised

industrial process.

But we are told how can it be otherwise when we have so many urban populations to feed who cannot produce their own food? But when famine comes it is the poor and the rural who are most deeply affected.

The book is a long survey in which in Fr Lyons gives a clear overview of the developing theology of food and its relations to belief and liturgy, but it will be for the reader to deepen his understanding of the unmentioned detail on the basis of this framework. But his long perspective is very revealing. Many will find this book an important statement of the theological development of our attitudes to food today.

Concern

One concern I would have is that this concentration on the Christian era and the Christian perspective leaves a very great deal unsaid, and unexplored. There are two references to China,

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.

Eucharist for

This concise book is the result. It is indeed a short book, as some theological books go, the main text running to only 158 pages. But it is densely packed with detail, presented in a clear and well articulated form.

The aim is less legalistic than pastoral, which is very much what is needed today. The author writes, he says, from within the broad stream of Catholic theological tradition: the ideas he advances are well established, and central rather than extreme. He writes for a general audience of readers, who like his students at Nottingham and elsewhere will be from a wide range of religious backgrounds, and of no faith at all, who are interested in the human phenomenon of religion.

Old situation

I was reminded on encountering this book of the old situation where Catholics were prevented from attending a Protestant funeral service. This within families was the cause of great pain, even to the point of public scandal where government ministers declined to attend the funeral of President Hyde but stayed

outside St Patrick's Cathedral in their cars.

Today we cannot image such a situation which went against all the traditions of Irish attitudes to funerals. Intercommunion has already been the cause of controversy here in Ireland. So perhaps future generations will look back with wonder and disbelief from a time when such ceremonies will be commonplace.

“When we sit down at home to our family meals, we do not say to strangers in the house this is not for you”

This book is a first response to the Pope's query. Others from different viewpoints ought to follow. But the book ends on the sober note that that it is time the matter was dealt with. It is perhaps a question of now ... or never.

Think about it. The Passover that Jesus was celebrating with the Apostles was for them, as it is for Jews today, essentially a family meal. When we sit down at home

to our family meals, we do not say to strangers in the house this is not for you, it is ours only. No, we ask them to eat with us. And those we eat with are embraced into the family circle.

So too with the Eucharist that derives from the events on Holy Thursday; this, too, Thomas O'Loughlin argues on the basis of his reading of history, is for the Christian family to share among themselves.

This new book ought to be read in tandem with the author's earlier book from 2015, *The Eucharist: Origins and Contemporary Understanding* (T&T Clark £95.00) where he argues that in recent decades, historical research and new discoveries have changed our view of the origins and the development of the Eucharist.

By bringing history into a fruitful dialogue with sacramental and liturgical theology, he shows “not only ways how theology and practice can be brought closer together again, but also how current ecumenical divisions can be overcome”.

An article about the cover of the artwork on the cover of this book will appear on this page next issue.

The World of Books

By the books editor

The traditional egg at Eastertide

This year we are celebrating Easter in a time of trial. With so many of us being isolated, or rather ‘cocooned’ we have to celebrate much as the very early Christians did, just within the family circle – and indeed as Jews today still celebrate the Passover.

In the ‘old days’, by which I mean the 1950s, in our family circle it was the custom to paint eggs for eating on Easter morning. From my father's drawing office an array of brightly-coloured drawing inks used for marking up his engineering plans would be brought up. This gaily assorted array was just the thing to catch the eye of small children. Decorating the eggs was an around-the-kitchen table activity.

It struck me that this year, with so many of us not going out, we could do nothing better than to revive the custom.

Commercialised chocolate eggs are only a late-Victorian creation of commerce. On the other hand, painted eggs are an age old tradition, so old indeed that controversy over their origin and meaning happily engages the minds of countless scholars.

The best book by far about this whole topic is Venetia Newall's *An Egg at Easter* (London, 1971). Taking down my copy of this classic I was surprised to be reminded that the front of the jacket was a panel that simply showed an array of decorated eggs covering several centuries. A well-travelled journalist, she was President of the Folklore Society in 1984-87.

Her long, delightful book traces the use of eggs in tradition, religion and custom over many centuries, all over the world. But at this time of the year of especial interest is a chapter devoted to ‘Christian eggs’.

“She tells us too that art critics who have made a study of medieval symbolism showed that the egg often represented the Immaculate Conception”

Here one reads that Henry VIII, while still a Catholic, received from the Pope an Easter egg enclosed in a silver case. But elsewhere ostrich eggs, which are exceptionally large, were thought fit to hold the relics of SS Benoit, Thierry, Aman, Crespian and Crespinianin. St Rupertus, Bishop of Salzburg, who died in 718, has a basket of eggs as his symbol.

She tells us too that art critics who have made a study of medieval symbolism showed that the egg often represented the Immaculate Conception. Painters like Bosch and the theologians like Albertus Magus refer to this symbolism.

The symbolic egg “lay at the very heart of Easter Story”. The 16th-Century *Codex Sander* “makes the comparison more direct:



the white of the egg is Christ's pure soul, the gold yolk his godliness”.

Maundy Thursday on the eve of Good Friday was not a suitable time for celebration. So in Spain and other countries, the feast of Corpus Christi, she notes “has a close link with Easter, for it commemorates the institution of the Eucharist, an essentially joyful event, which cannot be suitably celebrated on Maundy Thursday”.

She concluded this particular chapter by noting: “When the egg can so closely be taken as a symbol of the Eucharist, it is logical enough that it was once the Christian duty of Catholics to eat one at Easter time.”

Much of this long European tradition and its customs have been overwhelmed by the commercialism of the modern American ‘Easter bunny’ nonsense. This seems to have been brought into that country not from these islands, but from Germany, and to have perhaps a more direct pagan than traditional Christian origin.

In any case, as eggs were often not eaten in Lent – the last of them having been used up in making the pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, Easter Sunday morning was the first time that they could be happily eaten again.

Certainly in our house we boiled and opened and ate the painted Easter eggs.

But as from those that were eaten others would be created for the sheer pleasure of doing something creative and to recall in a small way some of the ancient and early Christian ideas about eggs.

Of course, if an egg is to be decorated to keep it will have to be blown, as egg collectors used to blow their specimens. This is simple – a straw or glass tube is used to blow air into the egg through a small hole, through which the fluid contents are expelled.

hard times

none to India or Africa. Can a theologian writing today about the human situation ignore the great mass of humanity one wonders? Theologians in invoking the cosmic should not forget the global for fear they remain lodged in the swamps of the local and particular.

He speaks of the impending environmental crisis. There is no “impending crisis” today. Rather there has been an ever present and continually developing one since Columbus reached the West Indies in October 1492. The crisis is not to come. It has long been here, but has been ignored. Seduced by the glamour of gold, Europe thought it could happily ignore future dangers.

Far from reaching a mere conclusion, this book opens up aspects of the theology of food production that will certainly demand further exploration by Fr Lyons.

The author should consider a second part dealing with the theology of



food production. This could be quite simply shaped by dealing with the elements of the Eucharist – the bread and the wine – and how they have changed over time.

Fr Lyons is a theologian, and this long book is written from a theological point of view. It leaves to one side anthropological issues, and there is (as I say) no extended discussion of food production; that his has moved from deep personal involvement in the production of food

to the mere purchase of industrially produced food in an increasingly urbanised world. It has been dehumanised, and as a result “cursed is the earth in thy work” (Genesis 3: 17).

In view of the Pope's re-orientation of the Catholic mind to ‘green issues’, ecology and ethology should never be neglected in a book about food. We should remember that plants and animals are as important as we are. To say other is to deny the cosmic order.

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"GOD IS HERE, STAND FIRM" PRAYER

(To be attached to the inside of the doors of houses, in order that the inmates may be preserved from cholera, plague and other misfortunes)

PRAISED BE
JESUS CHRIST



MARY WAS
CONCEIVED
WITHOUT SIN

Holy Mary, Virgin Mother of God, who wast conceived without sin, I choose Thee this day as the Lady and Mistress of this house; I beg Thee by Thy Immaculate Conception, to preserve this home from pestilence, cholera, plague, fire, water, thunder, tempests, earthquakes, thieves, schisms, heresies and sudden death.

Bless and protect, O Holy Virgin, all the persons who dwell in it, obtain for them the grace to be preserved from sin, and from all other misfortunes and accidents.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

May our Lord Jesus Christ be ever adored, blessed and praised in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Lord, in Thee have I hoped; let me never be confounded.

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee.

(This old Irish house prayer was considered very powerful and worth of being made known in these difficult times.)

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Classifieds

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The Miracle Prayer

Dear Heart of Jesus,
In the past I have asked for many favours.

This time I ask for a special one. (mention here)

Take it, dear Heart of Jesus, and place it within your own broken Heart where your Father sees it.

Then, in his merciful eyes, it will become your favour, not mine. Amen.

Say this prayer for three days.

M.T.D.

The Miracle Prayer

Dear Heart of Jesus,
In the past I have asked for many favours.

This time I ask for a special one. (mention here)

Take it, dear Heart of Jesus, and place it within your own broken Heart where your Father sees it.

Then, in his merciful eyes, it will become your favour, not mine. Amen.

Say this prayer for three days.

S.D.

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Then, in his merciful eyes, it will become your favour, not mine. Amen.

Say this prayer for three days.

I.F.

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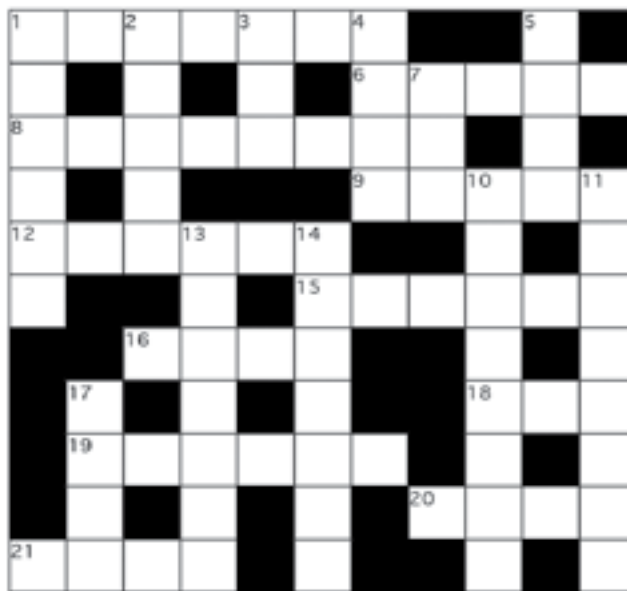
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One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

Crossword Junior

Gordius 327



Across

- 1 Sport in which you try to knock over ten pins with a ball (7)
6 The language of ancient Rome (5)
8 Pussy that lives in laneways (5-3)
9 He lives in Hell (5)
12 James Bond was in '____ Royale' (6)
15 Cut some bread, for example (6)
16 You tie it with string or rope (4)
18 Rub-a-dub-dub, three men in a ____ (3)
19 Scared (6)
20 Having little or no money (4)

- 21 'I saw a flock of sheep and a ____ of cattle' (4)

Down

- 1 Part of a tree (6)
2 Cardiff is in this country (5)
3 Plant that grows up walls and trees (3)
4 Happy (4)
5 Flightless bird from New Zealand (4)
7 Gobbled (3)
10 Holiday (8)
11 Insect with spots (8)
13 Paid no attention to (7)
14 The world's largest bird (7)
17 You put flowers in this (4)

SOLUTIONS, APRIL 2

GORDIUS No. 449

Across – 1 Screenplay 6 Shia 10 Edged 11 Lie in wait 12 Beer mug 15 Audit 17 Owed 18 Haft 19 Exile 21 Astound 23 To let 24 Kepi 25 Hugo 26 Elope 28 Trotsky 33 Beersheba 34 Latin Mass 35 X-Ray 36 Team spirit

Down – 1 Suez 2 Regretful 3 Eider 4 Pilau 7 Heard 8 Antithesis 9 Invaded 14 Go to pot 16 Chatterbox 20 Ice skater 21 Atheist 22 No-go area 27 Opera 29 Realm 30 Tulip 31 Fete 32 Gnat

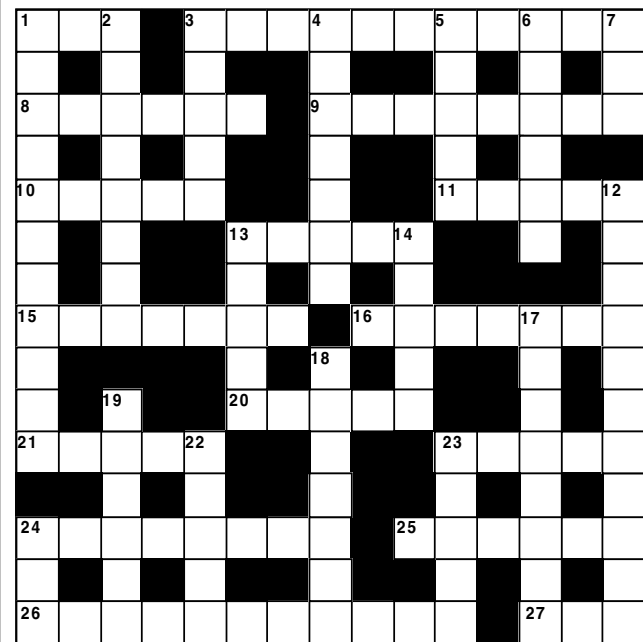
CHILDREN'S No. 326

Across – 1 Round Table 5 Naughty 6 Van 8 Talk 9 London 12 Yes 14 Leaf 16 Capital 17 Tray 18 Pastry

Down – 1 Ring tone 2 Usually 3 Totals 4 Lived 7 Nun 10 Needles 11 Officer 13 Empty 15 Stop 16 Car

Crossword

Gordius 450



Across

- 1 Cry, seeing only banshees at first (3)
3 As the child says, has the coney burnt any bib, perhaps? (5,6)
8 Natural substance chopped up by a war axe (6)
9 Foreshadowed dear Peg's confusion (8)
10 What bosses call when a coin is tossed? (5)
11 Unassertive (5)
13 & 16a Arab bar Satan relocated to a Californian city (5,6)
15 Annihilate Desmond in front of the besieged city (7)
16 See 13 across
20 & 25a Seismic event affecting the Metro? Rather! (5,6)
21 Delay giving the saint everything (5)
23 Type of confection (5)
24 Is this special time possibly the whole key to the Paschal experience? (4,4)
25 See 20 across
26 Changed completely (11)
27 Fish that expects to be paid on delivery? (3)

Down

- 1 Sheepish female (11)
2 Garrison buildings - or shelves of pubs? (8)
3 Smiles at rafters (5)
4 The Roman god of the sea (7)
5 Tessa turns up with something worth having (5)
6 That large girl is involved in matrimonial two-timing (6)
7 Fr Crilly has written a letter to the editor (3)
12 Vanished (11)
13 Will the cardinal manage at this latitude? (5)
14 Waterlogged, overflowing (5)
17 A studious type might literally aid Mecca (8)
18 Lorry driver (7)
19 Traditional Spanish rice dish (6)
22 Hebridean island found beside the Isle of Morse? (5)
23 How one got on with Distance Learning? (5)
24 This item of headgear has ancient tribal origins (3)

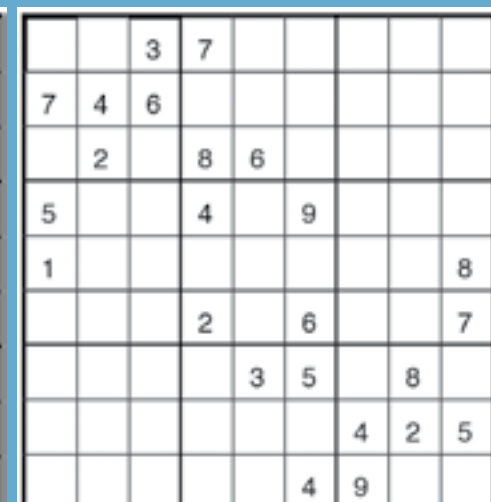
Sudoku Corner

327

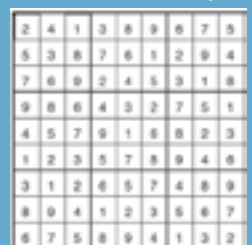
Easy



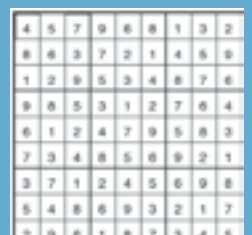
Hard



Last week's Easy 326



Last week's Hard 326



We all need to revisit the tomb and find it empty

HAVE WE EVER washed our hands so often? Someone sent me a WhatsApp message recently and it had a picture of a man who said he had washed his hands so frequently that the notes he wrote on them for his Leaving Cert exam 30 years ago had re-appeared!

Nearly every TV or radio programme ends with the words ‘stay safe and wash your hands’. It cannot be said often enough, or loudly enough and, thankfully, we seem to be listening. It is a small price to pay to save a life.

There was a hand-washing moment recalled this week that always strikes a chord with me. It was that moment when Pilate requested a bowl and jug to wash his hands, having condemned Jesus to death. He had been warned by his wife that he should have nothing to do with Jesus and, in fairness, he tried all in his power to let Jesus go. All in his power, except the use of his power.

He folded to the roar of the hostile crowd and, against his own heart, his own mind and the warning words from his wife, he said: “Let him be crucified”.

The washing of his hands, in that setting was a wasted exercise and, like the man’s Leaving Cert



would not ease his conscience.

It is often the final and definitive moment in a relationship or argument when someone says ‘I wash my hands of you/him/her/them/it’ – akin to the ‘I’m out’ in *Dragon’s Den*. There seems to be no coming back from that.

Washing is meant to be cleansing, not damaging – a new and fresh start, not an end.

So, washing our hands, by way of excuse or to distance someone cannot be an option for us. On the contrary, I think the gesture of washing our hands is one of welcome – so that we can offer a clean and welcoming hand to another in friendship and support, so that we can tend to another, feed another and be truly supportive.

These are difficult times for us all when, even with washed

hands, we are not allowed reach out to another or allow them reach out to us. It has been a long Lent and the road to Calvary this year was all too real for all too many. Everything we may all too easily have taken for granted has been turned upside down and inside out to a point where even the familiar is barely recognisable.

“On this Easter Day, we need to hear that familiar voice...to have our Faith restored”

“They have taken my Lord out of the tomb,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him. Can you please tell me so that I can go and get him?”

Even the familiar was unrecognisable on that Easter Day. ‘Mary’ was all he had to say

to restore he vision, her Faith and her hope. Just one word but it was spoken with a familiar voice and, in truth, enough was said.

Washing our hands is necessary, helpful and life-saving. We can and will take advice from experts, from our Government and from HSE but on this Easter Day, as we stand at the tombs of so many who have died in recent weeks, we need to hear that familiar voice. We need to have our Faith restored. All of us, perhaps, need to go to the tomb on Easter Sunday and realise again that it has been opened – that he is not there, that he is risen.

But we need to look for him in this uncertainty because he has carved us in the palm of those hands that were washed clean for our sake 2,000 and more years ago. He washed his hands for us, not of us.

Keep washing!

notes, the stain of that day’s work would engrain itself and become part of his handprint from that day forward. Washing his hands, might get them clean but could not and

The truth must be said – Lent was a struggle

● I’m not proud of it but Lent collapsed for me! I’m a bit old for going off sweets but that was among the bits I tried to do and I failed miserably. I also went off Twitter and, there were a few times I’d like to have used it, but I didn’t – apart from one retweet. I did a little bit on the parish and diocesan Twitter but not my own account.

It was a bit like the joke told about two brothers who used to go out for a pint every evening. One of

the brothers moved away but promised his brother he would have a pint with him every evening. So, he’d go to the bar and order two pints. He explained why.

A few months later he came to the bar, ordered one pint and the barman noticed. “Is your brother okay?” he asked. “Yes,” the man replied, “why?”

“I see you only ordered one pint.”

“Oh yes, I know. I’m off it for the Lent!”





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