

# The Irish Catholic

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Thursday, April 10, 2025

€3.00 (Stg £2.70)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

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## 'A fair and transparent divestment process could allow for unapologetically Catholic schools' - Bishop

Garry O'Sullivan

Bishop Denis Nulty in a recent address to the Catholic Primary School Managers Association (CPSMA) said that while Catholic schools are inclusive and welcome all "we must also ensure they remain Catholic." Asking how might we support our schools remaining Catholic in the fullest sense he said: "It may mean, being part of a fair and transparent divestment process, when the stakeholders feel they would be better served under a different patronage, but the schools that remain and that will be a substantial number of them, in my opinion, must be allowed to be unapologetically Catholic schools."

Bishop Nulty said that the Catholic ethos must be from the school board down to the classroom.

"Intentional Catholic Schools see the whole person, not the problem that meets us on the corridor, not the messer that cries out for correction, not the young person who carries more troubles than any of us ever dream of, but the person made in God's image and uniquely loved by God." He said where ethos is grounded and lived "you literally smell it from the moment you set foot in the hallway or press the reception bell to gain entry. There is a prayer space there but there also is a space for prayer."

Bishop Tom Deenihan who is chairperson of the Bishops' Council for Education and is a director of the CPSMA asked delegates at the conference Mass, "how many Board members would know what happens in their own school? The Board is responsible for religious education too" he said. "How much time is given to real religious education, food that endures to eternal life in your school? It may be a difficult question and perhaps an unwelcome one but it is an important one and it is our business and our responsibility. What percentage of in-service time, of the annual budget is given to

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### Saying a little prayer for you



Pupils and teachers of St Eugene's Primary School led the Stations of the Cross in St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry. This week Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown celebrates his 75th birthday and reaches retirement age. See feature on pages 12-13.

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## Don't Miss Next Week's Bumper Easter Irish Catholic

Interviews with George Hook, Ann Widecombe, Fr Joe Mullen on his fight with prostate cancer, David Quinn and Martina Purdy, Senator Ronan Mullen, a Letter from Egypt from a Glenstal monk, and the Your Faith section filled with thoughtful reflections and prayers.

## 'A fair and transparent divestment process could allow for unapologetically Catholic schools' - Bishop

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ethos and /or religious education by the Board? To paraphrase the gospel question, has faith now become the prophet not recognized in his own country, literally, the Board agenda?" He asked: "Do Christian values shine through? How would people recognise that your school is Catholic without a saint's name in the title. Is your Catholic school the prophet not recognised in its own country or parish. If so, for God's sake, will someone on the Board ask why?"

Bishop Nulty lamented the low number of Catholic school teachers who profess to be people of faith and stated that a key competency 'Leadership of a faith school' "should be truly embedded in the interview process at primary level.

"Those charged with making appointments" he said "should understand deeply this competency. We need to do much more to encourage the development of faith in our schools and on our leadership teams."

Both bishops said that the Catholic ethos means looking after the most vulnerable. "It is at the heart of our Catholic school ethos that we look after the most needy children.

Creating a space in our school for Special Needs children is the defining moment in how we live and root our Catholic ethos in 2025," said Bishop Nulty.

Bishop Nulty told the conference that ethos also means saying prayers. "I like to see our schools teaching the simplest prayers and doing them well. Let's put prayer at the heart of our school life."

# Chaplains gather in Dublin for annual symposium

Renata Steffens

Healthcare chaplains from across Ireland gathered for their annual symposium in Dublin last week. In its third year, the event gathered 137 chaplains from all the main hospitals, hospices and other care facilities in the Republic and Northern Ireland at The Gibson Hotel on April 2.

Fr Dwayne Gavin, Head of Mission at Bon Secours Hospital Cork and Care Village, who organised the symposium, told *The Irish Catholic* the event aims to "nourish the chaplains who are already in all of our hospitals across the country" and "to try and attract more people to hospital chaplaincy... to provide the best of spiritual, emotional care to our patients. A holistic care for our patients

in line with our Catholic ethos."

He said that because of their "mission at Bon Secours, which is to care for the sick, the dying and their families within a Catholic ethos, that we decided it was worth investing in conferences like these, to reach out to others, our colleagues in other health care institutions, in order to help them to grow and to enrich their profession, vocation, ministry."

The priest said that coming from his understanding of Catholic healthcare, once the healthcare chaplains, especially non-ordained ones as it is different for clergy, "understand, when we have a vision that [the chaplaincy] is Catholic or Christ centred, that it becomes not just a profession, but a ministry."

The priest said that Bishop Michael Router was one of the nine speakers, and they "were

delighted to have [him] with us for the whole day." Another speaker was Sr Maria Cimperman who was part of the Synod Assembly in 2023 and 2024 as a theologian expert and facilitator.

Another Sister who spoke in the third symposium was Sr Mary Haddad, and she talked about the importance of never forgetting the history and contributions Sisters have made to pastoral care in Ireland. "Mercy and Little Sisters of the Poor and Sisters of Charity, all of the founders of what are now our main hospitals in Ireland, like the Mater Hospital in Dublin or St Vincent's and a lot of regional hospitals would have been founded by the sisters," the priest said. "The presence of pastoral care or healthcare chaplaincy is an extension of their ministry."

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### St Bernadette's replica makes its way back to Dublin

An exhibition featuring a life-size replica of St Bernadette of Lourdes, complete with a first-class relic has returned to St Martin's Apostolate. The exhibition will be held from April 14 to April 18, 2025, at 42 Parnell Square West, Dublin 1, D01 P5R7 and is in celebration of St Bernadette's Feast Day on April 16.

This event follows the displays of St Bernadette's replica, which drew large crowds of the faithful in October of last year and again in February of this year. Housed in a crystal casket, the wax figure measures 4 feet 2 inches tall - as St Bernadette was in real life. The exhibition will be open to the public from 11am - 4pm each day.

### Cleric embarks on a barefoot pilgrimage to St Patrick's Cathedral

A Church of Ireland Rector in Clogher Diocese is walking from his church in Fermanagh to St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin barefoot.

Rev. Stephen McWhirter, Rector of Rossorry Parish Church, will be walking from the landmark church on the outskirts of Enniskillen to St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, around 110 miles during two weeks in Lent to be known as 'Soles for Souls'.

He left after morning service in Rossorry on Sunday, March 30 and finish in Dublin on Palm Sunday, April 13 with distances varying from just a few miles to 11 miles.

Rev. Stephen will be raising funds along the way for a community hub at Rossorry as well as the Aisling Centre in Enniskillen which provides counselling and other support services.

## Lough Derg prior pays tribute to local sculptor following his death

Renata Steffens

Lough Derg's Prior Msgr La Flynn paid tribute to local sculptor Brendan McGloin who was the responsible for sculpting the threshold stone at St Patrick's Basilica in the Station Island. Mr McGloin died on April 4 and was buried in St Ninnidh's Cemetery, Bundoran on April 7.

Msgr Flynn said that "apart from his widely appreciated figurative work, Brendan excelled in lettering, as Lough Derg pilgrims can see from his work on the threshold stone at the Basilica laid down to mark the Jubilee Year of Mercy (2015-16)."



For that Jubilee Year, Pope Francis stipulated "that a Holy Door would be opened in every cathedral and in significant places of pilgrimage. In St Patrick's Basilica at Lough Derg, we designated the main door, and to mark it we laid down a new

threshold stone," Msgr Flynn said.

He said that "Brendan worked closely with Prior of the time, Fr Owen J McEneaney and his team, including myself to deliver the stone, with the key text: 'I am the Door, enter and be safe'."

"The tradition of pilgrims walking barefoot on the Three Day Pilgrimage was one of the elements that inspired our choice to mark the Holy Door with an engraved threshold stone, that now remains as a permanent witness to the mercy of the Lord as pilgrims tread across it beginning and ending the Station Prayer and coming to liturgies and devotions that are part of the pilgrimage programme."

"From the outset," Msgr Flynn said, "Brendan 'got' the significance and he brought his skill and his consummate professionalism to achieving the commission with lettering that is truly a work of art in its own genre."

Msgr Flynn said he "spoke with him again about two years ago when I was researching for a different project, and it was then he told me he was undergoing chemotherapy. An exceptionally talented man who has left a lasting legacy through his many, many pieces of art."

"As Brendan now passes through the final door, may he enter and be safe for all eternity."

**Managing Editor:** Garry O'Sullivan, garry@irishcatholic.ie

**Deputy Editor:** Chai Brady, chai@irishcatholic.ie

**Multimedia Journalists:**

Renata Steffens, renata@irishcatholic.ie

Pedro Esteva, pedro@irishcatholic.ie

Renata Milán, renatamilan@irishcatholic.ie

**Newsroom:** news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026

**Books Editor:** Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie

**Advertising:** advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874027

**Accounts:** accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874095

**Magnificat:** magnificat@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874024

**General inquiries:** info@irishcatholic.ie

Annual Subscription Rates: Ireland €199. Airmail €320. Six months €105.

ISSN 1393 - 6832 - Published by The Irish Catholic,

Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandford,

Dublin 18, D18 K277.

Printed by Webprint, Dublin.

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# Bishop McKeown: Church must focus on mission, not power

Chai Brady

On the eve of his retirement, Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry has said in future there will not be a priest in every parish and the faithful must embrace a faith sustained "by committed lay people".

The bishop's 75th birthday lands on April 12, when he must submit his resignation to the Pope. Reflecting on a lifetime of ministry, McKeown sees the challenges facing the Church as an opportunity for transformation.

Having led the Diocese of Derry through a time of growing secularisation, reduced Mass attendance, and evolving parish structures, Bishop McKeown told *The Irish Catholic*: "It's not about defending our status or regaining what we used to have, it's about being ministers of the Gospel. If we are faithful, we will be fruitful."

Rather than lament the decline in clergy numbers, Bishop McKeown insisted: "We've been grouping parishes together, not just because of a drop in clergy numbers, but because

too many parishes relied on one priest to do everything. That's not healthy. We need to foster collegiality among clergy, build relationships with laypeople, and discern together what God is calling us to do.

"Half the world already operates this way. In Africa, in Latin America, they don't have a priest in every parish. The faith is sustained by catechists, by committed laypeople. We need to embrace that model here," he said.

For Bishop McKeown, the Church's calling in this new land-

scape is not to seek strength, but to remain missionary. He draws on Pope Francis's image of the Church as a field hospital: close to the wounded, not being defensive.

The bishop said: "Where there's fear, there's always a temptation to retreat behind walls. But Pope Francis reminds us: we are a Church on mission, not a Church at war."

Looking at the polarisation in politics and within the Church, Bishop McKeown said the Church's credibility will come not from its influence, but its witness. "You can be

more influential from the margins sometimes than you can be in the centre of things," he said. "And you risk being compromised if you play too much ball with powerful forces."

Even when it comes to issues within the Church that have caused much debate and division such as around the Traditional Latin Mass, the bishop said the Church's focus must remain clear: "We have to listen – not just to argue, but to listen with the heart. Our job is to focus on how we bring the Gospel to people."

See pages 12-13 for full interview

## Bishop Router blesses Order of Malta ambulances during Jubilee of the sick



Volunteers are pictured with Bishop Michael Router and Fr Stephen Wilson.

Renata Milán Morales

As part of the Jubilee Mass for the sick and healthcare workers in Dundalk, two new ambulances acquired by the Order of Malta's ambulance corps and volunteers were blessed by Bishop Michael Router of Derry, chair of the Council for Healthcare for the Catholic Bishops, at St Patrick's Church, Dundalk.

The regional Chaplain for the Order of Malta Ambulance Corps and currently Curate at two parishes in Dundalk, Fr Stephen Wilson,

concelebrated the Mass.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* Fr Wilson explained that the event was in response to the Jubilee of the sick and health care workers that took place April 5-6. "[It was] an opportunity for us to recognise those that are carrying the cross of illness as well as the many wonderful people that we have, that dedicate themselves to the care of the sick." The chaplain said that the event "made more real for us," the job of the volunteers.

"He [Bishop Router] prayed the most beautiful prayer

over them [volunteers]. He said, 'bless the arms that have embraced the sick with com-

passion. Bless the hands that have comforted the dying,' concluded Fr Wilson.

## Priest pays tribute to beloved footballer Mick O'Dwyer

Pedro Esteva

The legendary Gaelic footballer and manager, Mick O'Dwyer – affectionately known as Micko, passed away at the age of 88 on April 3, 2025. Fr Seán Jones PP of Dromod/Waterville paid a heartfelt tribute to the man who inspired generations of players.

A sporting icon, Micko won four All-Ireland titles and twelve Munster championships as a player before guiding Kerry to eight All-Ireland victories as a manager. He also left a lasting mark on Kildare, Laois, Wicklow, and Clare. However, Fr Jones made it clear, that Micko's legacy was not just the trophies but most importantly in the lives he touched.

"Micko always had the desire to spread the 'Gospel of the Game,'" said the priest quoting RTÉ's Marty Morrissey. Our lives may be the very encouragement needed for someone to discover their worth," Fr Jones added.

Young players of Waterville and Dromod GAA stood proudly as an honour guard by Micko's statue in the village. These young athletes, the priest remarked, were the "fruit of Micko's missionary work," carrying forward his message to future generations. Even at 79, Micko led an under-14 team to a county title, still living his belief in the power of sport.

Mick O'Dwyer's legacy endures—in sport, in spirit, and in the people he uplifted.

Go ndéana Dia trócaire ar a anam uasal.

## 'Trump like Godfather' - Cardinal



Cardinal Reinhard Marx compared Trump to a mafioso out of the Godfather on German TV, citing a need for supplicants to "kiss the ring."



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# LGBTQI+ people to gather in Limerick in response to Synod

**Renata Steffens**

A group of from the Dioceses of Limerick and Killaloe have been gathering "in response to the Universal Synod invitation to engage with those who feel 'excluded or judged because of their marital situation, identity or sexuality'."

Aiming to create a welcoming environment where LGBTQI+ people, along with their family members and allies can meet, listen, pray and reflect together, a gathering will take place on May 1 in the JPPI Oratory at the Crescent Shop-

ping Centre, Dooradoyle, Co. Limerick.

Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan told *The Irish Catholic* "The joint prayer gathering for members of the LGBTQI+ is an effort between ourselves in Killaloe and Limerick Diocese. [It] is one way among others that we are hoping to address the issue of inclusion."

The bishop said "The idea was proposed by a number of new pastoral ministers in both Limerick and Killaloe and it has been well planned and thought through following discussion, prayer and discernment. It is hoped if the meeting goes well

that there might be opportunities to broaden this important outreach to address some of the pain and hurt that has been felt in this area in the past."

Bishop Monahan said there "have been preparation for submitting a response in advance of the National pre-Synodal gathering this Autumn. Over the past number of weeks, we have been reflecting on the various documents that have emerged from the whole Synodal process over the past number of years."

He said that they "have been taking into account the diocesan and national deliberations as well as the final document

produced as a result of the second synod in Rome last October. It is clear that among the 17 topics or issues identified for discussion and further reflection that the issue of inclusion and welcome in the Church is a very important issue.

"Some people feel judged, excluded and marginalised for a number of different reasons due to difference of one kind or another. Our aim in the long term would be to address this in some clearly identifiable ways to ensure that the Church of the future would be as open and welcoming as possible, in the genuine spirit of Jesus Christ."

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Religious sisters to give €12.97m to mother and baby survivors

The Sisters of Bon Secours has agreed to give €12.97m as a financial contribution towards the cost of the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme.

The Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul offered a contribution of a building and the Sisters of St John of God offered a conditional donation of €75,000 to be used as a donation towards a charitable purpose associated with mother and baby home survivors.

The remaining religious did not offer a contribution. This was revealed in a report published by independent negotiator Sheila Nunan on Tuesday.

### Walled City Passion hits the streets of Derry again

Now in its fourth year, Walled City Passion returns to Derry. Each year reimagines the Passion story through a different lens—this time through the eyes of the Roman guard who proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God. Set against the backdrop of Northern Ireland, the guard becomes a riot officer, wounded by Peter, then healed by Christ. His journey reveals not only Christ's healing power but also the corruption of the system that condemned him as John Burgess, writer said to *The Irish Catholic*.

"I wanted to get away from the swords and sandals spectacle," Burgess said. "People think they know the story but we want to shake it up—make it resonate now."

The immersive promenade performance leads audiences along two-thirds of Derry's walls, blurring the line between spectator and participant. The production runs until Holy Saturday, followed by community discussions on Easter Monday. The goal: provoke reflection, not just retelling.

### The Chosen: Last Supper comes to Irish cinemas this week

*The Chosen: Last Supper*, a powerful three-part cinematic event, arrives in Irish cinemas from April 10–13. Set during the final days of Jesus' life, the film captures the tension as his disciples anticipate triumph—only to witness him challenge both Roman power and Jewish tradition.

Shot in a rich cinematic format, this theatrical release leads up to a mid-April binge event featuring the entire fifth season. The series has found box office success, with Part 2 recently landing in the top five.

In an interview with ChurchLeaders.com, showrunner Dallas Jenkins described filming the triumphant entry into Jerusalem as deeply emotional, with real extras in tears as Jesus rode in. "It's real. It's like an opportunity," Jenkins said.

**More info:** [www.thechosen.tv](http://www.thechosen.tv)

### Close to 600 ministers trained in Galway

The An Ghailíil Centre of Formation for Mission and Ministry created by Bishop Michael Duignan in 2024 to serve both the Diocese of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora and the Diocese of Clonfert, responding to the need for formation and ministry in the context of the Synodal Church, recently trained around 600 Ministers of Holy Communion and Ministers of the Word in Galway City, Gort and Ballinasloe.

The course happened over six nights and trained both new and experienced ministers. Fr Diarmuid Hogan, Galway Diocese's DCO said "each night consisted of input on the Ministry itself, the practicalities of fulfilling each ministry, and the evening ended with a Q&A session," the Ministers "play a significant role in enriching parish life and missionary outreach."

# Millennial soon-to-be saint event sold out in the first week

**Renata Milán Morales**

In the weeks leading up to the canonisation of the millennial Carlo Acutis, a series of events will take place, including an exhibition of Eucharistic miracles in the Bunclody Parish Centre, which started on April 8 and will conclude on Sunday April 13. On April 27, the day of the canonisa-

tion, 'Carlo Acutis Ireland' will hold an event in the Archdiocese of Dublin from 7am to 5pm. The event will take place in Phoenix Park and City Quay Parish.

Tickets sold out within the first week of the event being announced, showing the interest that this relatable saint is arousing among the youth of Ireland. On the same day there will be a pilgrimage from the Papal Cross (Phoenix Park)

to St Paul's Church, Arran Quay, Dublin, a celebration at St Paul's Church, Arran Quay, Dublin with live music, testimonies, blessings, Eucharistic miracles on display, food and the official hymn by Carlo Acutis and a Mass at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church, City Quay with live music afterwards.

**For more information visit [carloacutisireland.org](http://carloacutisireland.org)**

# Sr Carmel earls bids farewell after 34 years of service in Clondalkin

**Pedro Esteva**

After an incredible 34 years of dedicated service, Sr. Carmel Earls, OSF, of the Order of St Francis of Philadelphia, is leaving St Peter the apostle parish in Clondalkin. A native of Wicklow, Sr. Carmel is moving to the United States for her retirement, though those who

know her well say that won't slow her down at all.

A qualified counsellor, Sr. Carmel made a deep impact through her work with children's and adult choirs, religious education, and fundraising events. In 1993, she co-founded the Carline Educational Learning Centre, helping young people outside mainstream education. She also

helped secure land in Balgaddy, Lucan, for a purpose-built facility. She convinced South Dublin County Council to renovate a derelict neighbouring house, leading to the creation of the Beacon of Light Counselling Centre and Family Support Service in 2000.

Still active, Sr. Carmel volunteers with the Society of St Vincent de Paul and remains

involved in parish life. Her close friend, Joan Hughes, recalls their 21 years of trips together, including to Medjugorje last year. "She is a very active person even at 90. Still walking everywhere, still active in the choir."

A special Mass was celebrated by Bishop Donal Roche in honour of her ministry on April 6 at her home church.

# Pilgrim's Path Week 2025

**Pedro Esteva**

"We've engineered difficulty out of our lives, but we only discover ourselves through challenge," said John O'Dwyer, author, walker, and chair of Pilgrim Path Ireland. Pilgrim Paths Week 2025, running from Good Friday, April 18 to April 27, invites walkers to reconnect with nature, heritage, and themselves along Ireland's ancient pilgrimage routes.

Eight guided walks are scheduled to take place across nine days, each led by local community groups. Highlights include the ascent of Cnoc na dTobar in Kerry (April 18), St Kevin's Way in Wicklow, and Cosán na Naomh in Dingle on Holy Saturday. Easter

Monday features Tochar Phádraig, a 15km route from Ballintubber Abbey to Aughagower, as well as walks in the Burren and along Lough Derg. The week concludes with St Finbarr's two-day walk in Cork and Brigid's Way on April 27.

These trails—once forgotten—were revitalised thanks to O'Dwyer's 2012 guidebook and the formation of Pilgrim Paths Ireland. A pilgrim passport encourages participation in five main walks, and some even continue on the 'Celtic Camino' to Santiago, Spain.

"Pilgrim walking isn't about reaching mountain peaks," says O'Dwyer. "It's steady and reflective. You find yourself while walking."

**More info:** [www.pilgrimpath.ie](http://www.pilgrimpath.ie)

## Penal hero priest gets statue in Buncrana



Donegal County Council recently held the official unveiling of the Fr Hegarty Shore Walk public artwork in Buncrana by Charlie McConalogue TD and His Excellency Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor in the presence of Cllr Jack Murray, Cathaoirleach, Inishowen MD, Bisho Donal McKeown, Bishop of Derry, Fr Francis Bradley PP and Fr Damian Polly OP at Fr Hegarty's Rock, Buncrana, Co. Donegal. Fr Hegarty OP was a Dominican friar who ministered in the parish of Fahan and Buncrana during Penal times and was killed for his actions at a spot on the walk known locally as Hegarty's Rock. Pictured in the photo are all the above.



# The moral maze of money...

**H**ere's a thing: I really would like to hear a sermon on the tangled issue of finance. It could be called 'the moral maze of money.'

What are we to make of waking up each morning to the heated discussions about 'the markets'? We tremble to hear that the Nikkei (Japan) has crashed, the Hang Seng (Hong Kong) has plunged, the Nifty (India) is turbulent, and the Dax (Frankfurt) and FTSE (London) are on the verge of a nervous breakdown. And



**Mary Kenny**

there's still Wall Street to come, later in the day.

## Drama

All this drama is, obviously, in the wake of Donald Trump's decisions to levy tariffs on trade, where no such tariffs had existed before. The experts tell us repeatedly "the markets don't like it".

Perhaps I never previously realised just what an influ-

ential role 'the markets' play in our lives. I don't own any stocks, shares or bonds, but it seems that I'm invested, indirectly, with all these markets (they have a direct input into pensions, for example).

Stock markets there have always been, but in an era of what's now called 'hyper-globalisation', we are all involved in what the markets think and do.

What is the Christian interpretation of this situation?

**“The old-style Left used to call betting on shares and bonds ‘casino capitalism’, since they favour the speculator over the honest working man living by his labour”**

Perhaps Christianity has always struggled between its detached view of the material – “consider the lilies of the fields” – and the more practical application of the needs of everyday life. Margaret Thatcher brought this down to her Methodist nitty-gritty by pointing out that the Good Samaritan wouldn't have been able to help the afflicted traveller if he didn't possess the dinari to pay for care.

The Catholic church, too, has always sensibly affirmed when financial support is

required: churches are built, schools run, sacramental and pastoral ministration and charities organised with finance.

## Moral

But are these now-dominant markets moral? The old-style Left used to call betting on shares and bonds 'casino capitalism', since they favour the speculator over the honest working man living by his labour. Nowadays, the Left seems to deplore Mr Trump for upsetting these hallowed markets. Values seem to have gone topsy-turvy.

Are tariffs right or wrong? We may remember the days when we were urged to 'buy Irish', for the benefit of home business and industry. But now, economists tell us that tariffs will only punish the poor, by reducing trade on competitive terms. Then, others say that the 'hyper-globalisation' which has taken place was unjust anyway – businesses might move from country to country according to where

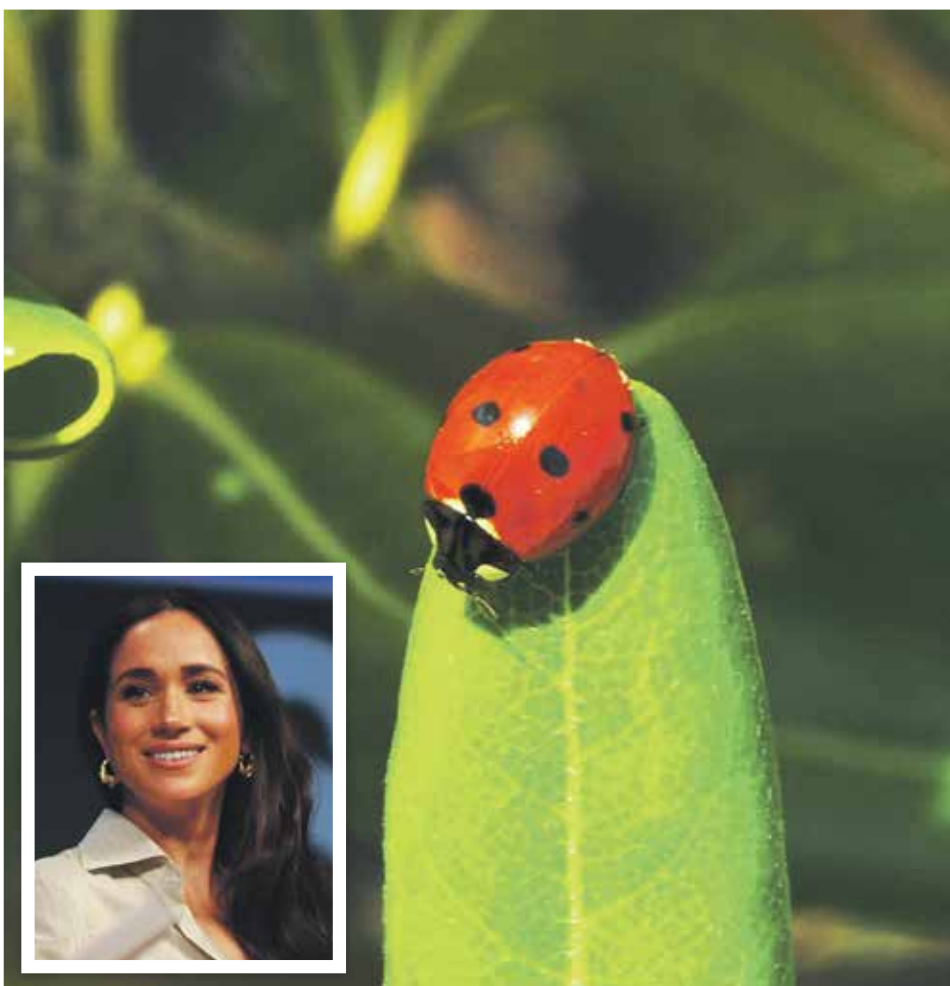
the labour was cheaper.

'Nike', the American company which gives us those rather pricey trainers which have so ubiquitously replaced elegant leather shoes, actually fabricates the product – at \$100 a pair in (Communist) Vietnam – because of cheaper labour costs. Is this good or bad, I would ask some moral theologian?

**“Be charitable. Don't be covetous about possessions or money. Act with honesty. It all seemed so simple”**

Back in my schooldays, we were taught quite decent basics about the morality of money. A fair day's work for a fair day's pay. The labourer is worth his hire. Be charitable. Don't be covetous about possessions or money. Act with honesty. It all seemed so simple. Now it's way, way more complicated, and we need some deep thinking to explore this altogether changed world.

## Little Cow of God



**T**he Duchess of Sussex informs us, via her housewifely cooking programmes, that what British English calls a "ladybird" is, in America,

a "ladybug". Now I learn from a posting by the artist Sara O'Neill that the Irish version is "Bóin Dé" – "Little Cow of God". Sweetly poetic.

**D**r Livia Tossici-Bolt, 64, is an Italian-born retired clinical scientist who has appeared in a British court for holding up a sign outside a Bournemouth abortion clinic saying: "Here to talk. If you want." She's been found guilty of breaching a public space protection order – she was 50 yards from the clinic – and ordered to pay £20,000 in costs.

Her own story is telling. As a young physicist, she became pregnant in difficult circumstances. Her

family disapproved of the man responsible and closed the door on her. She found temporary accommodation, while she was still studying for a post-graduate course. But she persisted with the pregnancy and had a "wonderful daughter".

Dr Livia seems motivated to be there for any woman who might be under pressure to terminate a pregnancy from family, boyfriend, work colleagues, friends. It certainly happens. A GP told me recently that he had frequently encountered

cases where he sensed it was the husband or partner who was pressing for a woman's termination procedure. We know that women can be subjected to "coercive control" in relationships.

Livia Tossici-Bolt has had some support from JD Vance, US vice-president, who criticised the UK, for abrogating freedom of speech. But in Britain itself (as in Ireland) the "buffer zone" around abortion facilities has the protection of the law, so Dr Livia has to pay up.

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**David Quinn, CEO, The Iona Institute**

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# How I became a real life shepherd on retreat



Martina Purdy

A quiet country retreat in County Down last week began rather unexpectedly when my friend and I spotted a sheep caught in some wire at the edge of a field. A couple of city slickers, we were a bit hesitant. But my friend was concerned enough to knock on a local door that Saturday evening. We were not entirely sure we had got the right house but were assured by the kind lady on the doorstep that she would let her husband know. On reflection, I do not think we were accurate in our information.

I had all but forgotten about the sheep when I passed the field early the next morning and saw that the poor thing had in fact been stuck there all night, unable even to lie down.

I went to get my friend. "The wire is now around its

neck," she said. "We need to cut it."

I would have to overcome my embarrassment and knock on a stranger's door.

So mindful of the Good Shepherd, I ran and knocked on a nearby door to ask for some garden clippers. Thankfully, a very gracious young woman answered. I raced back to the field, passing the clippers through the hedge.

I don't know who was more nervous, the sheep or me, as my friend carefully snipped the wire, which had already worn away a big patch of fleecy wool, exposing the creature's pinkish skin. As the wire was cut, four legs started leaping, and the sheep's fleecy body bobbed up and down. Seconds later, it was free. Oh, the relief and the joy of seeing this creature leap away to the next pasture. We decided to nickname her 'Matilda'.

By coincidence, or perhaps not, I had brought a book with me to read on retreat. Intrigued by the title, I had purchased *A Real Life Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* at a second hand book store. It was written by the late, W Philip Keller. First published in 1970, the book has sold millions and is full of fascinating insights!

After herding sheep for many years, spilling his sweat and his blood, Keller was struck by how apt the metaphor of sheep and shepherd is for God and man.

Analysing Psalm 23, he points out the similarities between the nature of sheep and the nature of humans: we share their awkward habits, their timidity and fears, stubbornness and stupidity. We also have their mob instincts: one startled sheep, running in blind fear over the least little thing, can put the frighteners on a dozen others, who will also bolt.

**“A flock that is restless, discontented, always agitated and disturbed never does well”**

Sheep, like humans, will look for the most comfortable spot, perhaps a rounded hollow in the ground without seeing the danger of rolling over on their backs. A sheep, 'cast' on its back, feet in the air, is helpless without a shepherd. And we too are

I spotted an amusing sign the other day. "My coffee looked at me this morning and said. "Sorry I don't do miracles!" Still, a prayer and a coffee are a great way to begin the day!

also prone to wander off and get quite lost.

How many of us are like Matilda - set in a lavish green field, with all we need, and still manage to be trapped in misery by following a foolish desire for a tasty morsel beyond our reach?

Sheep it turns out need "meticulous" care - more care than any other livestock. Keller reveals just how much the welfare of sheep depends on having a Good Shepherd.

In Psalm 23, the shepherd makes the sheep lie down. And, according to Keller, there are four conditions which must be met before sheep will lie down: they must be free from fear, free from friction and competition with others (that is no one is head-butting them), free from pests and parasites, and free from hunger. "A flock that is restless, discontented, always agitated and disturbed never does well," wrote Keller. "And the same is true of people."

## Support

Ultimately Keller points to the greatness of The Good Shepherd, Christ himself who guards us with his very life, because he paid for us with his blood and his sweat. Yet how many of us are willing to trust Christ with our own life? How many are willing to acknowledge that we belong to him? How many realise just how precious we are to The Good Shepherd?

Keller came to see that nothing calmed his sheep more than his gentle presence in the field. In an uncertain world, where disaster lurks, the same is true in the Christian life. "There is nothing like Christ's presence," observed Keller, "to dispel the fear, panic and terror of the unknown."

Keller exposes how a bad or indifferent shepherd keeps sheep that are a pretty sorry sight: thin, weak, riddled with disease, and parasites - an apt metaphor for those who suffer under Satan's tyranny, trapped in sin.

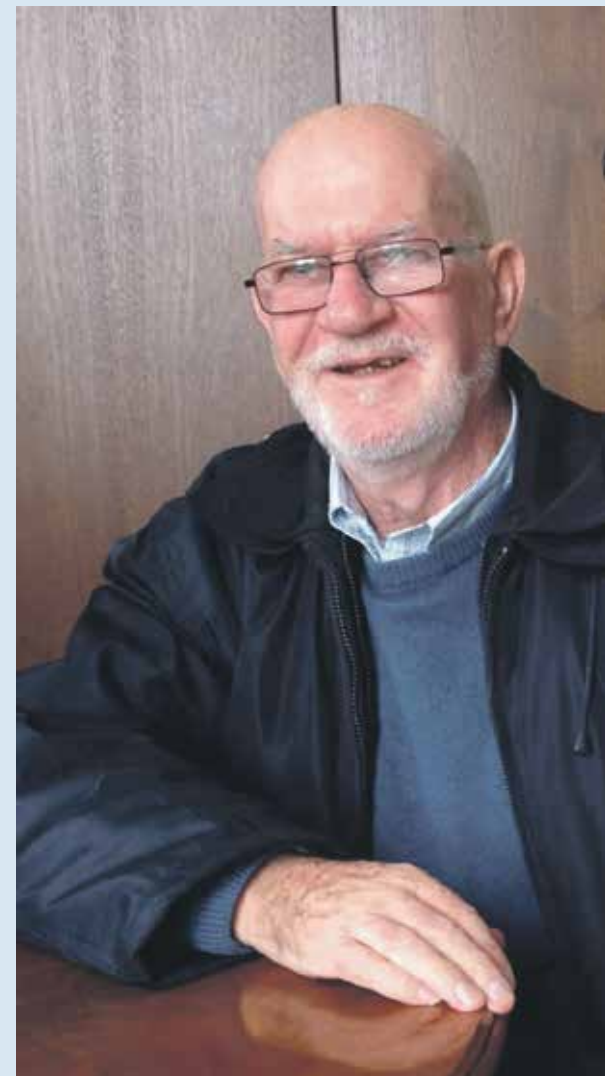
Keller sets out a number of tests for those who truly belong to Jesus: Christ's sheep respond to his authority, his rules, his ownership. Christ makes them free. They are safe, contented, and restful even as they adventure excitedly in adversity and deprivation. Christ's sheep are like St Paul in last Sunday's second reading: they only desire Christ. I asked myself:

They called him Padre Juan, but he was christened Sean Rooney in his native Belfast many years ago. 'Padre Juan's funeral took place in Panama last Thursday in the Basilica of Santa Maria de la Antigua. Monsignor Jose Domingo Uilola Mendieta told the congregation that Sean, who died aged 78, on March 31, was a good shepherd who served with love.

Padre Juan was one of six children, born on July 13, 1946 to Irish parents Thomas, a chef, and Mary. And from the age of eight, he was desperate to be an altar boy. Indeed he insisted on visiting St Teresa's Church in Belfast regularly to ask if he was tall enough. Aged thirteen, the young Sean told his parents he wanted to join the Order of the Brothers of St John of God in Kildare, County Wicklow. He attended junior college, and then the Dublin School of Music, and developed a passion for the piano.

He made his first profession as Brother Gabriel. This Irishman left for Spain, aged 20, and obtained his doctorate in theology at the University of Salamanca. It was there he met an Archbishop who was recruiting potential priests to work in Panama. He went as a deacon intending to serve just one year. But he never left. Indeed he was ordained a priest on August 17, the Feast of Our Lady of Knock, in 1974 - at times he was serving two or three parishes in urban and rural districts.

In 1985, this Irish priest founded a weekly Spanish Catholic newspaper, *Panorama Católico*. It is still thriving. "The Panamanian Church has lost a tireless pastor," the congregation was told, "but his legacy lives on in every edition of the newspaper and in the many lives he transformed with his witness of faith." May God reward Padre Juan, a missionary of the Gospel and true son of Patrick.



Fr Sean Rooney, also known as 'Padre Juan'

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# The threat to children's innocence in schools overseen by Catholic patrons



In Ireland, writes **Maria Steen**, we have a state-sponsored programme of SPHE education that effectively grooms young people to fall prey to sexual abuse

Last weekend, the news broke that disgraced former cardinal and archbishop of Washington, Theodore McCarrick had died on April 3. The former cardinal was laicised by Pope Francis in February 2019, following revelations of his serial sexual molestation of male teenagers and adult seminarians.

For those unfamiliar with his history, as his name suggests, McCarrick came from an Irish-American family, and was educated by the Jesuits in New York. He rose through the ranks of the hierarchy in the United States, was extremely hard-working and effective, spoke five languages, and was very influential both within the Church – where he was known as a “kingmaker” regarding episcopal appointments – and outside the Church as a prolifically successful fundraiser. It would seem that, as with too many others, he was an arch-manipulator and deceiver, with friends in high places, who was able to carry on abusing for years.

## Reformer

He even styled himself as a reformer in the face of the sex abuse scandal in the



Cardinal McCarrick is greeted by Pope John Paul II as he received his red hat. Photo: OSV

United States. A *Washington Post* article from 2002 refers to him as “candid, compassionate and committed to strong reform”, a “national leader” who favoured a “one strike you’re out” policy regarding the abuse of children – although he suggested that some leniency might be appropriate if the victim were an adolescent rather than a small child. Looking back now, it seems astonishing that his predilections were there to be seen – hidden in plain sight.

**“The Vatican published a 449-page report on McCarrick in 2020, detailing just what was known, and when”**

As far back as the 1980s, complaints had been made about him taking seminarians to his beach house for the weekend, but such was his power and the culture of fear and intimidation that he had fostered around him, that nothing was done. There were some letters allegedly sent to various American

bishops complaining about McCarrick from the 1990s onwards, but it wasn’t until 2019, following a Vatican trial, that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) found McCarrick guilty of solicitation in the Sacrament of Confession, and sins against the Sixth Commandment with minors and with adults, with the aggravating factor of the abuse of power. He was dismissed from the clerical state following the CDF penal process – the highest ranking cleric to have been laicised.

## Allegations

The Vatican published a 449-page report on McCarrick in 2020, detailing just what was known, and when. It seems that allegations against McCarrick were made known to Pope John Paul II in 1999 by Cardinal John O’Connor of New York while McCarrick was being considered for the position of Archbishop of Washington. The Pope initially decided not to appoint him, but following a letter from McCarrick – who insisted on his own innocence – he changed his mind. The Vatican report suggests the Pope may have been moti-

vated to do so following his experience in communist Poland, where he witnessed a culture of false allegations being made against bishops to denigrate the Church.

McCarrick’s offences and the scourge of his influence on the Church in America will no doubt be felt for a long time to come, and the scandal and injury he caused is difficult to measure. The CDF does not lightly dismiss someone from the priesthood, and when someone’s behaviour is, on the face of it, as wicked as McCarrick’s, it is often hard to see past the awful ruin he brought to his victims’ lives and the sordid nature of his sexual predations.

But if we are to avoid scandals like this in the future – both inside and outside the Church – then we must look behind McCarrick’s crimes to understand his power and influence on others that allowed him to carry on, if not undetected, largely unimpeded.

**“The abuse within the Church has had the not-often-talked-about result of priests failing to preach the Church’s teaching on sexuality”**

We know enough at this stage to have an insight into how abusers worked in the Church, both here and abroad. Testimonies from victims have a common theme: they were lured in as children or young adults,

their defences were weakened by their abusers ‘getting into their heads’ first, using their positions of authority to win their trust, and then twisting their actions in such a way as to make their victims think it ‘normal’ or even ‘good’. This initial grooming almost always precedes the actual abuse, weakening the victim to an extent that they don’t even object or complain outwardly, because they no longer have the language or intellectual armour to do so.

The abuse within the Church has had the not-often-talked-about result of priests failing to preach the Church’s teaching on sexuality. Though innocent themselves, many feel shame and embarrassment in addressing the subject because of the actions of brother-priests like McCarrick. Silence on the subject is of course just what abusers want, and leads to the kind of environment where abuse can flourish. In my opinion, the perceived loosening of the Church’s teaching on sexuality (because of the failure of priests to preach on the subject) is likely to lead to more abuse, not less. There may be less abuse perpetrated by priests – but young Catholics, and others who are educated in Catholic schools, are still very much falling prey to abuse. Anyone who thinks otherwise has their head stuck in the ground.

## SPHE

In Ireland, we have a state-sponsored programme of SPHE education that effectively grooms young people to fall prey to sexual abuse, teaching them about ‘ethical pornography’, masturbation, oral and anal sex, and gender ideology. There have been complaints by parents, reports of the content of the curriculum in this paper and other outlets, and a whistleblower who revealed the contents of a teacher-training conference in DCU last year that contained material that could only be described as pornographic – and yet the programme continues in our schools. Children who grow up learning that all forms of ‘sexual expression’ are equal, will find it very difficult to say no to those same acts for fear of being labelled ‘judgmental’, ‘transphobic’ or ‘homophobic’.

The natural revulsion or objection they might feel to performing some sexual acts is undermined because

they have been taught – like McCarrick’s victims – that these are natural and even good, so long as there is consent. The really wicked part of this is that consent itself is undermined, while being relied on to protest the innocence of the abuser. How? Because it is very easy to persuade someone to ‘consent’ just by bullying them into it. How many young girls have agreed to sexual activity that they didn’t really want in order to avoid being ridiculed for being frigid or pilloried for being judgmental?

Likewise, those who are indoctrinated in schools into a particular worldview regarding sexuality will be left more vulnerable so that they may “consent” to unwanted activity precisely because the programme has got inside their heads.

**“Do they believe parents or do they dismiss their concerns as extreme or over-the-top? Do they regard parents’ desires for an authentic Catholic education as idealistic or unrealistic?”**

Although the signs were there for a long time for those who were willing to see them, many simply didn’t believe that a priest like McCarrick could be guilty of sexual misconduct and abuse. Complaints to the hierarchy fell on deaf ears or were not acted upon. We have child-protection guidelines and plans throughout the Church now, but are those in charge really listening to the concerns of parents – and some teachers – about the threat to children’s innocence in schools overseen by Catholic patrons? Do they believe parents or do they dismiss their concerns as extreme or over-the-top? Do they regard parents’ desires for an authentic Catholic education as idealistic or unrealistic? Do they fear speaking out because they might be subjected to a nasty editorial in the *Irish Times*, or have their names read from the secular pulpit on RTÉ’s 9 o’clock news? If so, are they falling into the same trap as their predecessors in thinking that this couldn’t possibly be happening?

**“Children who grow up learning that all forms of ‘sexual expression’ are equal, will find it very difficult to say no to those same acts for fear of being labelled ‘judgmental’, ‘transphobic’ or ‘homophobic’”**



# Seizing religious orders assets would be illegal and harmful



David Quinn

One of the most hostile political parties towards the Catholic Church in Ireland today is the Social Democrats. When the announcement was made that the National Maternity Hospital was moving to a new location alongside St Vincent's hospital, there was outrage in certain quarters because at that point St Vincent's was still linked to the Religious Sisters of Charity and fears were raised that the nuns would somehow be working to undermine the country's abortion law.

Among the most vociferous critics of the move were the Social Democrats.

Protestors thoroughly demonised the nuns once again. Posters were seen at some of the demonstrations outside Leinster House that essentially cast the nuns as horror movie villains. The Social Democrats did not object.

In fact, the Sisters of Charity have handed their hospitals over to a trust and when the new National Maternity Hospital finally makes its move from Holles Street it will be impossible for the Sisters to interfere with its operation even if they wanted to. Personally, I don't think they should have agreed to the move or transferred their hospitals to a new trust. The hospitals should have remained pro-life and Catholic.

## Power

Aside from their hostility towards Catholic healthcare, the Social Democrats, in common with some of the other left-wing parties, also want to remove religious instruction from the school day. This seems to be regardless of the wishes of parents.

In 2013, while the Conclave that elected Pope Francis was taking place, Holly Cairns, now the leader of the Social Democrats, was so annoyed by RTE's extensive coverage of the event that she announced on Twitter: "For every minute of air time taken up on the papal conclave I'm gonna get an abortion".

She was 22 at the time, and has since semi-apologised for the tweet. In 2020, she said: "The tone of my 8-year-old tweets was immature and I am so sorry that they have upset



Religious help poor people everyday in lieu of the State doing it. Photo: istock/middelveld.

people," but added, "There is no point in me claiming to now disown my views when it would be dishonest—I am critical of the Catholic Church as an institution."

The Social Democrats are continuing in this vein. When it was announced last week that attempts by the Government to get the religious orders that ran some of the country's mother and baby homes to contribute towards a redress scheme, the Social Democrats were furious.

In a statement, Social Democrat TD, Aidan Farrelly, announced: "It is astonishing to learn today that not one cent has been handed over by the religious orders complicit in the inhumane treatment and systematic abuse of innocent women and children in these institutions over the course of many decades."

He asked: "Why are these orders not being raided by gardai and why are their assets not being seized?"

**“If the State had the power to seize the assets of religious orders, it would have the power to seize the assets of a lot more besides”**

Farrelly was echoing comments made in the Dail by his party colleague, Cian O'Callaghan.

Micheal Martin correctly pointed out to O'Callaghan that the law would not allow them to do this.

In fact, only the worst anti-clerical regimes in history have ever seized religious assets in this way. Think back to Henry VIII, or the French Revolution, or what happened in the com-

munist countries.

A State with the power to do such a thing would not be a liberal democracy in any meaningful sense, because in liberal democracies, the Constitution deliberately places limits around the power of the State. If the State had the power to seize the assets of religious orders, it would have the power to seize the assets of a lot more besides.

However, all this said, questions must still be asked about the moral obligations in respect of the redress scheme of the religious orders that ran most of the country's mother and baby homes, namely the Bons Secours Sister, the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary, Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, the Sisters of Mercy, and the Sisters of St John of God.

The Legion of Mary was also approached about making a contribution to a redress scheme although why this should be so is a bit mysterious when the Legion was the one organisation in Ireland that was doing its best to keep unmarried mothers and their children together.

The State wants to put €800 million into the redress scheme. The total assets of the orders in question come to about €350 million, or almost half of the €800 million, so why don't the orders simply self-liquidate and hand everything over to the State?

## Investment

But it is not as simple as that. The richest of the above-mentioned congregations on paper is the Sisters of the Bon Secours, with net assets in 2023 of €106.8 million. However, nearly all of this is invested in their hospitals. Could they simply sell their hospitals to private companies and then hand

whatever is fair to the redress scheme? The answer is, I don't know, because I don't know in what kind of trust the hospitals are held.

What about the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul? In 2023, they had net assets of €88.9 million.

**“The congregations also did, and still do, much good work that the State would have to provide instead”**

But much of those assets are accounted for by religious residences in which the members of the congregation live, the vast majority of them retired. If they sold some of those residences, the members would have to look after somewhere. The question is where, and at what cost?

The same question applies to all the congregations mentioned in this article. Almost all their members are retired, with many of them receiving nursing care.

In addition, the Daughters of Charity are still engaged in charitable activities. For example, they provide services to people with intellectual disabilities.

They provide social and community services. Beneficiaries include refugees and the homeless.

They provide care to the elderly (not just their own members), to families in need, and are engaged in prison ministry also.

When people think of the religious orders today, they often remember only the negative side of the ledger, but the congregations also did, and still do, much good work that the State would have to provide instead, assuming it could, were these orders, or successor lay trusts, to simply self-liquidate.

I literally do not know what

these orders can afford to give the State that would not badly compromise their ability to provide the sort of charitable services listed above. It is frustrating they we hear so little from these orders. They should give what they can afford to give, whatever that might be.

## Extension

But as we have seen, the orders are not simply sitting on assets that are not being put to good use in the here and now. They don't have vast assets sitting in bank vaults doing nothing. This is a myth which perhaps the Social Democrats actually believe.

The reality is that the orders in question, and many other besides, are doing precisely the sort of work the Social Democrats ought to approve of. Indeed, the Welfare State is itself an outgrowth and inheritor of the sort of work religious congregations have been doing for centuries but that the Social Democrats, among others, seem to have forgotten about.

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# 'Clonard Monastery is open to all – it is a place of ultimate and holy welcome', Rector Fr Brendan Kelly



Brendan Kelly



Installation as Rector

Joanne Savage

**T**he Clonard Solemn Novena started in the late 1970s and it is timed to coincide with the feast day of Our Lady of Perpetual Help on June 27 – the novena always takes place on the nine days prior to this feast in all Redemptorist churches throughout the world, and so as Rector Fr Brendan Kelly explains, it is the same at Clonard, which draws crowds of thousands each year from all over Belfast and across the Province, with the faithful eagerly penning their petitions and engaging diligently in the profusion of Masses that see the neogothic beauty of the Church of Christ the Redeemer attached to the monastery filled with candlelight, heartfelt prayer, a burgeoning congregation and the familiar melodies of much loved hymns. Throughout the year is the perpetual novena which takes place every Thursday.

## Venerated

The icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help is arguably one of the most venerated images of the Mother of God in the entire world, her golden visage and that of the child Jesus fringed with a deep navy blue and emerald green mantel, the features, austere and almost geometrically etched, burning in the frame with a golden luminosity that is easily recognised in even the very furthest reaches of the globe; the Redemptorist

Order received the icon after a mandate from the Pope in the 1800s and the original can be viewed at St Alphonse Liguori Church in Rome.

**“People have always found a certain sense of solace in coming to Clonard and coming to the Novena”**

“Mary Herself is Perpetual Help,” says Fr Kelly, the very busy and altogether affable rector of Clonard as he casts his eye over the iconic image. “And here is Mary holding Perpetual Help in her arms in the form of the child Jesus. This is an image that touches people's lives across the world and people love the Clonard Solemn Novena particularly because they have that opportunity to write down their deepest concerns in a petition to Our Lady in what is a very cathartic act of prayer. People have always found a certain sense of solace in coming to Clonard and coming to the Novena, and I do think that that was particularly important throughout the Troubles when things were difficult and people were turning to prayer maybe in ways that they had not done before, searching for a sense of peace that had eluded this place politically. Clonard, and this is important to us as Redemptorists, is a place of welcome. So even people who maybe don't feel in line with church

teaching or who are living in difficult situations, find that they can come here and the community will always be welcoming to them.”

Fr Kelly's role as Rector of the Church is full-on, overseeing the staff, the members, but he insists that decisions are taken as a community and that currently Clonard are restructuring their pastoral work in order to allow for ever greater participation of the laity. “We are committed to lay partnership in mission and we have seven different commissions overseeing our lives and ministry, one dedicated to interfaith dialogue, which is particularly important here in Northern Ireland and increasingly so as we see an influx of people from other cultures and of different faiths, perhaps not of a Christian background, who have decided to make this their home.”

## Respect

How should we as Catholics meet others of different faiths and none with respect while being true to the beliefs that are sacred to us? “First of all, we have to be secure in our own faith,” emphasises Fr Kelly. “And from that perspective then we can enter into a dialogue with those from other religious traditions, whether from Judaism or Islam and so on. There is no doubt that we can find common ground with other faiths. With the Jews we share much of their scripture, and we recognise that Jesus himself was a Jew, and in the Islamic tradition we have a lot in com-

**“In the eyes of God nobody is excluded from the Church. The Eucharist is not a reward for pious people, it is medicine for everyone to help them in dealing with the particular problems they encounter in a society and culture that increasingly promotes secularism, celebrity, materiality and individualism”**

mon particularly in regard to how we reach out to others, the poor and the abandoned in our society. The Redemptorist Order was founded in order to preach the Gospel to the most abandoned and especially to the poor – that is such an important part of our ministry.”

**“For people who feel that they are not welcome in the Church, I would say come to Clonard and you will find a place of welcome here”**

So how do we build that field hospital of a Church that Pope Francis talks about, a Church that reaches out to those on the margins of society, the aforementioned poor and abandoned in the aim to evermore align the preaching of the Gospel with working toward social action that builds a more inclusive church and by extension a more inclusive society?

“We are about going out to people who feel they no longer need God in their lives. And how do we let the sinful and the outcast know that the

Church is for them as it is for all people a place of spiritual sustenance and succour. For people who feel that they are not welcome in the Church, I would say come to Clonard and you will find a place of welcome here,” adds Fr Kelly.

## Perfect

“None of us are perfect. All of us have done things in our lives that make us feel maybe alienated from the Church, things that make us feel guilty – so the question is how do we make people feeling that way understand that Clonard is a place that is totally open to them if they wish to reconnect with their faith and establish an ever greater proximity to Jesus Christ who is Himself the answer to so many spiritual and political problems here in Northern Ireland and beyond?” finishes Fr Kelly. “In the eyes of God nobody is excluded from the Church. The Eucharist is not a reward for pious people, it is medicine for everyone to help them in dealing with the particular problems they encounter in a society and culture that increasingly promotes secularism, celebrity, materiality and individualism.”

Fr Kelly sees much value in the ideas propounded by liberation theology which

emphasised that Christian faith was redundant unless it did much to ameliorate social inequality and in tending to the poor as a priority – for it is altogether clear that for Jesus the poor and the outcast were recurrently central to his mission, that he derided the high and mighty and monied in favour of a staunch and revolutionary alignment with the have-nots and the marginalised whom he hoped to raise up through the dissemination of the Gospel and by propounding an implicit socio-political philosophy that entailed catering for every man according to his need.

**“Our Lady of Perpetual Help must have witnessed some compelling conversations between gunmen and priests at that watershed moment in Northern Irish history”**

It's also important to remember that Clonard was a place of negotiation even with paramilitary elements throughout the Troubles and





Fr Kelly - Celebration of the Eucharist

that the late Fr Gerry Reynolds and Fr Alec Reid were both instrumental in facilitating dialogue at the monastery that would help contribute toward the peace accord that came with the 1994 IRA ceasefire, dialogue that took place in the very room that Fr Kelly and I are sitting in within the monastery, a room with high windows and that recurrent startling image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help must have witnessed some compelling conversations between gunmen and priests at that watershed moment in Northern Irish history.

Fr Brendan Kelly is from Saul, a little village near Downpatrick, where St Patrick performed his first baptism of a convert in Ireland and there is also a spot there where Patrick celebrated the first Eucharist on Irish soil and where he encountered the first chieftain – from whence you can see Strangford Lough.

### Difficult

Was it difficult for Fr Kelly when he felt like leaving lay life behind and decided upon ministry? “For me the transition towards faith began at school.” He was sent to a Redemptorist Retreat house on the Antrim Road. That was the first time he thought about priesthood. Fr Michael Browne interviewed him and he made a decision to make a go of it with the Redemptorists turning away from applications he had already made to study history at Queen's and at the London School of Economics.

“I was the eldest of 11 of us in the family and my mother was certainly not happy but my father was different and

respected the decision, he had a deep faith but it was a quiet faith that was not in any way ostentatious. I did my formation in Galway where I went to university and my novitiate in Dundalk and theology in Dublin. After taking first vows I had a two-year break and then in dialogue in the order I chose to spend two years in the Philippines as a student. That changed things for me. At that time Ferdinand Marcos was president and ruled the country at the time under martial law, granting himself expanded powers under the 1973 Constitution. It was a difficult time and I was there for the People Power Revolution that overthrew Marcos' regime – it was a peaceful coup in 1986 and Corazon 'Cory' Aquino then became president. It was a time of transition towards more democratic means and for many years the Church was the main voice against Marcos arguing for freedom, social justice and a more equal society.”

**“God is community and in our mission work what we wanted was to build communities of relationship with God but also productive relationships with one another”**

He continues: “I came up in 1986, took my final vows and went back to the Philippines for 27 years working in missions in the island of

Negros establishing Christian communities and very much of our work entailed the ‘conscientisation’ of people in the Sugar Bowl area where people lived on sugar plantations and were paid very poorly – a lot of it was about empowering people to know that God did not want them to live in poverty in sugar plantations when they did not get paid during the off-season living a life of survival from day to day. We did this as a Christian community and this is what the scriptures teach, that the Gospel is a liberating message. What Pope Francis has said is important here that while doctrine is important it is not at the centre of the faith it is all about a relationship with a loving God. God is community and in our mission work what we wanted was to build communities of relationship with God but also productive relationships with one another.”

After his time in the Philippines Fr Kelly spent 13 years in Rome working with the general government of the Redemptorist congregation. He came to Clonard and took on the role of Rector in 2023. He is now almost 50 years as a Redemptorist.

### Environment

“We leave in an increasingly secular environment, where many say that we do not need God in our lives, but at the same time,” adds Fr Kelly, “people are searching, and in my view, tired of individualism and consumerism and celebrity culture and hankering after God. Look at the atomisation, the marginalisation and the loneliness of people who even seem to

have it made because I would say that, across the board, we do see something of a lack of community spirit.

**“Today we are no longer in and out of each-others' houses and that actually for the most part we do not even know our neighbours – yet love of neighbour is central to the Christian message”**

“When I was growing up gathering on Sundays for Mass was important in asserting your membership of the community. At that time, we had a stronger sense, in my view, of identity and community. Without television people connected with each other more, today it is all about social media and we are chained to the screens of our mobile phones and our only interactions are with people doing the same thing. But to me there is no substitute for sitting down with people in real time. Without this, isolation grows. Today we are no longer in and out of each-others' houses and that actually for the most part we do not even know our neighbours –

yet love of neighbour is central to the Christian message.”

He agrees that Christianity is fundamentally about being-for-others. “I mean, Jesus was a man for others, our own founder [of the Redemptorist Order] Alphonsus Ligouri was very much a man for others and he demanded that for members of the congregation. We are told to go out to meet people and the Redemptorists in Ireland were traditionally missionaries, which is why we have so few parishes, because we went out to visit parishes and homes in order to get to know people.”

### Issues

Today, Fr Kelly feels that one of the foremost issues the Church faces is in trying to break through the increasing isolation that people feel. “Look at the number of suicides we have among young people in Northern Ireland today – what does that say about the kind of society we have?” he asks. “Another issue that concerns me at times is our increasing dependency on technology to the point where we become less likely to engage with people in face-to-face contexts in real time. Is the digital world the only world that young people know today? And how do we deal with this? I mean I am the same, I am so reliant on

a cell phone. I think today we all are. But that means we are sacrificing else, a true communitarian approach, and we see an increasing alienation from an organisation like the Catholic Church.”

**“It is the person of Jesus and his message that should set our hearts on fire”**

For Fr Kelly he quotes Isaiah Chapter 9 when asked about his favourite piece of scripture: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. On those who lived in a land of deep shadow a light has shone.” That to me sums up the radiance even in times of darkness and despair that Christian faith can provide,” finishes Fr Kelly, who with that, in his humble habit, walks back through the corridors of the historic monastery at the very heart of west Belfast that is indeed a place of welcome and a place of meeting and dialogue with an importance that stretches all the way back to the very darkest days of the Troubles through to the ceasefire to today. “It is the person of Jesus and his message that should set our hearts on fire,” he observes, smilingly, as he departs.

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**“Look at the atomisation, the marginalisation and the loneliness of people who even seem to have it made because I would say that, across the board, we do see something of a lack of community spirit”**



# Bishop Donal prepares



The Church has always been in the process of change, our job is to read the signs of the times Bishop Donal McKeown tells Chai Brady

**B**ishop Donal McKeown has spent his life walking with the faithful of the North of Ireland, through conflict and peace, through shifting cultural landscapes, and now through the changing face of the Church. As he approaches retirement, his reflections are not those of a man looking backward, but of one still sowing seeds for the future, trusting that the harvest will come in its own time.

Ordained in 1977, Bishop McKeown's early years as a priest coincided with some of the darkest days of the Troubles. Serving in parishes where grief, anger, and division were part of daily life, he learned that faith was not just about doctrine but about presence – being with people in their suffering, offering hope in despair.

While much has happened in the almost 50 years since then, change is nothing to be feared according to the bishop, who has never shied from a debate on challenging cultural and political issues – unafraid to jump in where the fighting is thickest.

Sitting down with *The Irish Catholic* before he reaches retirement age of 75 on April 12, Bishop McKeown reflected on his ministry and the future of the Church. Asked about change, he firstly thought of his father James (1914-1998) who lived through two world wars and saw monumental changes. “So yes, things are constantly changing and anyone who expects them to stay the same actually has missed the whole point,” Bishop McKeown said.

“Things changed for the early Church after the death of Jesus leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem. Everything changed. So change is not some sort of an evil thing or something to be regretted. The Church has always been in the process of change and our job

is to read the signs of the times – as the final document for the synod said – and respond in terms of what the pastoral needs are of changing times.”

Acknowledging the impact of the abuse scandals, he said that times have changed since then and that the Church's focus should not be on itself but on serving those in need. He stressed the importance of reaching out to those who feel lost or dejected, echoing Christ's call to proclaim God's mercy.

**“Belonging and believing are intimately linked, we limp along and we help one another as we struggled down the road”**

Bishop McKeown emphasised that Jesus' mission was entirely focused on the needs of those he encountered, often working to the point of exhaustion. As the one who bore *misericordiae vultus*—the face of the Father's mercy—Christ's purpose was to reveal God's compassion to the world. Likewise, Bishop McKeown said that the Church must not become preoccupied with its own struggles or anxious predictions about the future but instead respond faithfully to the present, trusting God with what is to come.

Looking at the bad and the

good in his life, he said: “There were terrible times during the Troubles when you heard a bomb has killed 10 people or 30 people, or somebody around the corner has been killed. Or when you heard that somebody you knew had been arrested for child abuse. I mean, those are intensely depressing events because your whole set of assumptions are tossed up.”

“On the other hand, I've come across so many great young people who have blossomed into being wonderful adults, and I'm proud of that. Having nephews and nieces and grand nephews and grand nieces and being part of a large family circle has been very helpful. Belonging and believing are intimately linked, we limp along and we help one another as we struggled down the road.”

## Troubles

The bishop went to Queens University in Belfast in 1968, where he witnessed most of the Troubles, describing them as “terrible times”, but that “you had to sort of cope as a young priest in that environment”.

“You didn't just preach about reconciliation; you had to embody it,” he reflects. “People were burying their dead, worried about their children getting caught up in violence. The Church had to be a refuge, a place where people could find peace in a society torn apart.”

This experience shaped his vision of the Church – not as an institution clinging to past power, but as a missionary

force reaching out to those on the margins. “We're not called to defend a status quo,” he said. “We're called to be where the wounds are, to be ministers of the Gospel in whatever context we find ourselves.”

Now, as Bishop of Derry, he faces a different kind of challenge: leading the Church in a time of secularisation, declining Mass attendance, and shifting structures. Yet, for McKeown, this is not a crisis—it is an opportunity for renewal.

“We've been grouping parishes together, not just because of a drop in clergy numbers, but because too many parishes relied on one priest to do everything,” he explains. “That's not healthy. We need to foster collegiality among clergy, build relationships with laypeople, and discern together what God is calling us to do.”

While some lament the reduced number of priests and the increasing role of laypeople, Bishop McKeown sees it as a moment of growth. “Half the world already operates this way. In Africa, in Latin America, they don't have a priest in every parish. The faith is sustained by catechists, by committed laypeople. We need to embrace that model here.”

## Polarisation in politics

McKeown is deeply aware of the growing polarisation in society, both in politics and within the Church itself. “The tectonic plates are shifting,” he says, noting that public debate has often become reduced to “mocking people and tearing them to pieces”.

“Where there's fear, there's always a temptation to retreat behind walls, to defend ourselves. But Pope Francis reminds us: we are a Church on mission, not a Church at war.”

He said: “I think Pope Francis is aware that there are places where the Church militant tends to be the dominant theme, whereas he's saying no, we are a Church missionary.”

“We have to be out there, like Henry Dunant who [co] founded the Red Cross, out in the middle of the battle trying to bring solace to whoever has been hurt and whoever has been injured.”

“It's not about us. It's not about defending our status. It's not about regaining what we used to have. It's about being ministers of the Gospel. If we are faithful, we will be fruitful, rather than scheming how



Bishop Donal McKeown pictured in his office.

can we be strong? How can we regain influence? You can be more influential from the margins sometimes than you can be in the centre of things and you risk being compromised if you play too much ball with powerful forces,” Bishop McKeown said.

This same dynamic plays out in the Church's internal debates, particularly over the Traditional Latin Mass. While some see it as a battleground, McKeown prefers to focus on mission. “We have to listen – not just to argue, but to listen with the heart. People often attach themselves to traditions for deeply personal reasons, not just theological ones. Our job is to focus on how we bring the Gospel to people, not on what we like or don't like in liturgy.”

## Passing on the Faith

One of the greatest concerns for the Church in Ireland is how to pass on the faith to future generations. McKeown believes that young people need role models they can relate to—figures like Blessed Carlo Acutis and Sr Clare Crockett.

“If you can see it, you can be it,” he said, recalling a mother telling him after her young

daughter looked at the statue of Carlo Acutis in Derry's cathedral and asked, “Mummy, can I become a saint too?”

“There's a solid, muscular Catholicism here in Derry,” he adds. “People will walk to Lough Derg, they will walk to Knock, they will pray the Rosary in the city centre. There is faith, but we have to nourish it properly.” Blessed Carlo Acutis will be canonised by Pope Francis on April 27, 2025.

## Young people

The bishop has long been a vocal advocate for young people, and as he prepares to step down his concern for the next generation remains at the forefront.

“My concerns are for young people. The focus is, how do we respond to their needs?” he said, pointing to the widespread dissatisfaction many feel with the secular worldview that dominates society today.

“Life is difficult for those with addictions, with fear of the future, with the whole question of almost a fear of bringing children into the world because they feel it would be bad for the environment or the future might be too bad,” Bishop McKeown said.

For the Church, he insists, the challenge is to present an alternative vision – one that provides young people with a sense of identity, purpose, and hope. “Our job is to say: ‘How can Catholic education offer a vision for who we are as human beings and who we are as soci-



Bishop Donal McKeown stands outside St Eugene's Cathedral in the Diocese of Derry. Photos Chai Brady

**“Our priests are constantly burying young people who die for want of a reason for living. And no one says boo”**



# to say farewell to Derry



ety?" and model that as well as we can in our communities of schools."

Bishop McKeown is clear that this vision is under pressure as secularism champions diversity but often excludes religious perspectives from the public sphere. "There's really no sense in the secular society, saying it wants us to celebrate diversity at all levels but absolutely no diversity in terms of worldview." He references Karl Marx's observation that "the ideology of any society is the ideology of the ruling class," warning that while today's dominant ideology may be different from that of the past, it is no less intolerant of alternative perspectives.

**“Bishop McKeown insists that the Church must be ‘a friendly critic’ of modern culture”**

He said that the Church must continue to offer a holistic, integrated worldview that helps young people find meaning across all areas of life – “science, art, music, literature, mathematics, and physics” – all within what he calls “a particular transcendental horizon.” He draws inspiration from Pope Francis’ recent encyclical *Dilexit Nos*, which critiques the “one-dimensional liquid society”.

“There’s a dominant ideology now, different from what we were in the past. But it is as intolerant as Catholicism ever was intolerant of dissidence, ‘How dare you say this’... ‘I feel offended by you saying that’, and all of that. There really is no room, or little room,” Bishop McKeown warned.

At a time when many young people struggle with self-harm, addiction, and “reckless behaviour”, Bishop McKeown argues that the Church must take on a prophetic role. “Our priests are constantly burying young people who die for want of a reason for living. And no one says boo.” He critiques the shallow messages society offers: “If all you can tell young people is ‘Have fun,’ ‘Life is too short to say no,’ ‘Let’s feel good’... no wonder they will say, ‘What on earth is this whole living thing about?’”

Ultimately, Bishop McKeown insists that the Church must be “a friendly critic” of modern culture, unafraid to point out where the dominant worldview is failing young people adding that “our job is to critique what the strong would like us to promote”.

## Pro-life challenge

McKeown has never shied away from difficult conversations, including the ongoing debate over abortion. However, he is careful to frame the issue in broader philosophical terms.

“Somebody said that God is not dead in our secular society, the adult individual has become an infallible God. ‘I

decide what is good and bad, what is right and wrong’. And the question is really how do we develop a theology and a philosophy which talks about the rights of the individual and the fact that we are social beings as well and getting a balance of those rather than being completely skewed in the past and certainly in Marxism – nothing matters except the body corporate. Stalin could kill millions in the service of the common good as far as he was concerned, now the emphasis has gone completely on the rights of the individual. So that’s the philosophical argument I think we have to have rather than when should you allow abortion to take place, or should you allow abortion to take place. It is all part of the culture where life’s too short to say no.”

## Future

As talk of a united Ireland grows, McKeown insists that any political change must be about more than just redrawing borders. “What will actually be different?” he challenges. “Will it still be a base for international capitalism? Will it still be riven with drugs, homelessness, despair?”

Rather than taking a political stance, he believes the Church must ask deeper questions. “De Valera had a vision, however flawed. John Hume always reminded us: you can’t eat flags. The real issue is: what

will help human flourishing?”

Similarly, which has been covered in this paper, he is sceptical of merging the dioceses of Derry and Raphoe, despite their geographic proximity. “On paper, it looks fine. But pastorally, it would be a disaster. We need bishops who can focus on Northern issues – education, legacy, Stormont, Westminster – not just managing large territories.”

**“Pastorally it would be disaster. I think it also could be seen as pre-empting a border poll”**

He said: “You need bishops who will offer Church leadership on a regional basis, on a Northern Ireland basis, and to expect someone to try and bring together a diocese in the EU and a diocese outside the EU as a cohesive unit – going from the river Bann at Coleraine to Gweedore – you’d have an enormous task to do that would distract you from being available for almost anything within the sub-bishops’ conference that is Northern Ireland... dealing with education, dealing with legacy, dealing with Stormont, dealing with Westminster, dealing with social policy, with all of those.

“You need Church leaders

who are available to deal with specific Northern Ireland issues as all-Ireland issues and to be tied up at this juncture whilst trying to bring two substantial geographical areas together I think on paper it looks grand, pastorally it would be disaster. I think it also could be seen as pre-empting a border poll.”

This process has been halted due to his intervention with the Papal Nuncio and the Vatican.

## Questions

The bishop believes the Church is being called to break out of its comfort zones and engage with the world in new ways.

Looking to the early Church, he highlights moments from the Acts of the Apostles – Pentecost, the martyrdom of Stephen, and Peter’s encounter with Cornelius – to illustrate how God continually pushes his people beyond their expectations. “If the apostles had sort of thought, ‘Well, Pentecost Sunday, are we ready for this?’ Of course, the answer was no, but we have the Holy Spirit booting them out,” he said. He sees parallels today, where the Church is once again being called to trust rather than retreat into fear or nostalgia.

For Bishop McKeown, this spirit of discernment is central to the ongoing synodal process. He describes it as “an exciting time” in which God is “trying to burst open the shell that we felt very comfortable and cosy in and sending us out to actu-

ally trust in the guidance of the Spirit, and to discern the Spirit together”. This means shifting the focus from personal agendas to the communitarian dimension of the Church, one that embraces accountability and mission.

Quoting Timothy Radcliffe – “The only thing I know about the future of the Church is that it has one” – he underscores the need for faith. Just as the apostles in Jerusalem could not have imagined they would be in Rome within decades, the Church today must trust that God has a plan, even if it is not yet clear. “Rather than saying why don’t we have X, Y and Z and why don’t we change that particular rule, ask what does the Lord want of us in order to bring the Gospel to the streets of Dublin, the streets of Derry or the streets of Belfast,” Bishop McKeown insists.

For Bishop McKeown, the Church’s future is not about maintaining structures for their own sake but about following where the Holy Spirit leads.

The bishop acknowledged the tensions surrounding synodality, with some fearing where it may lead and others frustrated that it isn’t moving fast enough in their preferred direction. However, he insists that synodality is about trusting that the Holy Spirit is guiding the Church, rather than imposing personal agendas.

He said that tradition is not a prison, but a storeroom – a source of wisdom and insight from which the Church can grow. While tradition has its flaws, dismissing it as outdated in favour of untested modern ideas is misguided.

Bishop McKeown warns against the temptation to conform to secular trends for the sake of relevance. “Jesus never followed any popular agenda,” he stresses, pointing out that Christ’s vision for discipleship was radical, demanding self-sacrifice rather than public approval. The Church must indeed “read the signs of the times” and respond to modern challenges, but not by compromising its core identity.

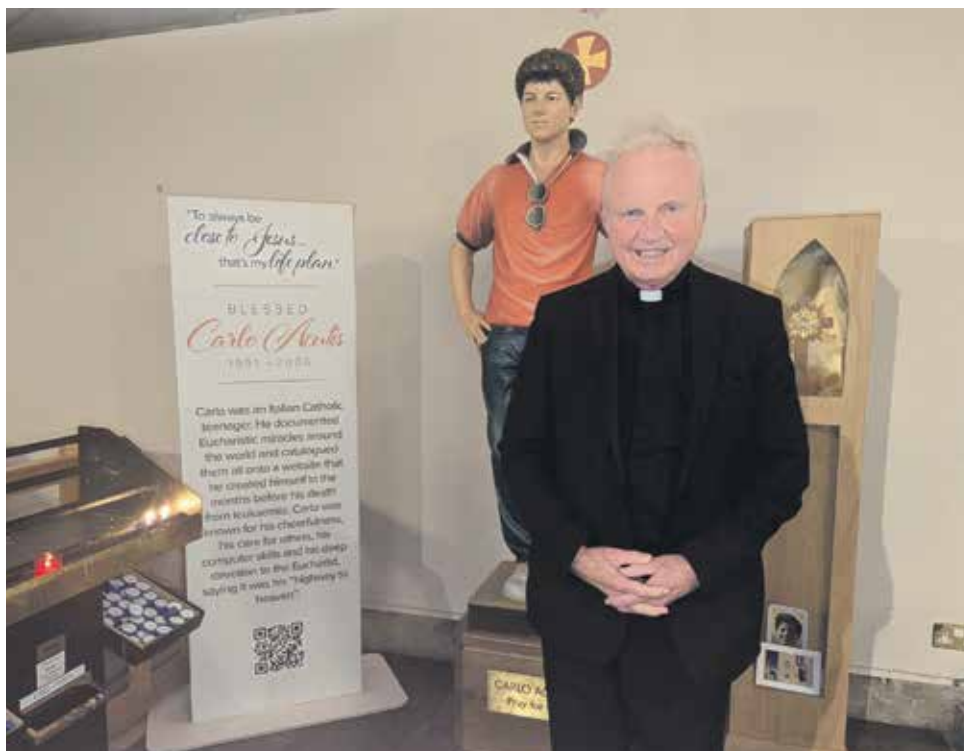
Ultimately, he calls for renewed trust in God’s vision for the Church. “Our job is to be available for God’s agenda, not for our agendas,” he said.

## Retirement?

At 74, McKeown will soon submit his letter of resignation. But retirement, as he sees it, is just a transition to a new kind of service.

“I don’t want to retire and tour the world or go on cruises. I just want to find somewhere to live and continue serving as a priest. I could be dead by then, who knows? But whatever the Lord has in mind, I’ll face it when it comes,” he said.

**“This means shifting the focus from personal agendas to the communitarian dimension of the Church, one that embraces accountability and mission”**



Bishop McKeown stands beside the statue of Blessed Carlo Acutis in St Eugene's Cathedral, Co. Derry.



# Out&About

## Irish Youth learn the Franciscan way in Assisi



**ITALY:** The Franciscan Friars in Galway and a group of young people who wanted to learn more about St Francis and the Franciscan Charism went on a four-days pilgrimage to Assisi.



**DERRY:** Year 8 pupils from St Cecilia's College joined Fr Gerard Mongan Adm. in the St Clare's Retreat 10am Mass on April 1 in St Columba's Church, Long Tower. St Cecilia's College Choir provided music for the Mass.



**TYRONE:** Monica McGeary and Fr Lito facilitated the Parish of Dungannon Gathering of the Synodal Pathway on March 29 in the Scout Hall, Charlemont St.

### IN SHORT

#### Students' art project displayed in National Museum

Art installation created by 450 primary school children on display in The National Museum of Ireland in Turlough Park, Castlebar. The SWARM project is the result of the 10-month collaboration of 25 primary schools in counties Mayo, Sligo and Galway.

The project was thought by the Education Department at the National Museum of Ireland, Turlough Park, and Mayo-based artist Cas McCarthy, and was developed in association with the temporary exhibition 'The Murmur of Bees'.

It all started with a visit to 'The Murmur of Bees', when the pupils learnt about ecology, biodiversity, the wonders of the natural world and Ireland's bees and their role in the ecosystem. Inspired by what they learnt in the visit, they constructed and painted paper insects using their imagination, colour, patterns and different designs.

Liam Scanlon, Castlebar Educate Together NS teacher told *MayoLive* "the project provided both a learning experience and a creative opportunity and the children are very proud to have

their work on display in the National Museum at Turlough Park."

#### Irish Wheelchair Association and Irish comedians raise awareness to accessibility barriers

The Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) is using humour to highlight and raise awareness to the struggles people with disabilities face on a daily basis. For it, three wheelchair users are joining three Irish comedians on a social media campaign.

On a series of videos showcasing real-life access fails, Conor McAuley (Mornington, Co. Meath) partners with Owen Colgan of Hardy Bucks; Connie Richardson (Fairview, Dublin) partners with comedian David McSavage; and John Fulham (Donabate, Dublin), Public Engagement Manager for IWA, partners with Anna Clifford to call out "ridiculous accessibility oversights".

Rosaleen Lally, National Access Programme Manager with IWA said: "IWA has been working in this space for many years, and we have been listening to our members. We have developed the *Best Practice Access Guidelines* and the *Great Outdoors*, A

*Guide to Accessibility* guidelines which are free for organisations and businesses to use. These guidelines provide best practice recommendations for accessibility in Ireland".

#### Community gathers for town clean-up

The community of Tourin, Cappoquin in Co. Waterford gathered recently for the annual community clean-up. After the work was done the volunteers got together for a cup of tea and chat.

The Tourin Community Hall Committee thanked on a Facebook post the "Tourin crew (especially the youngest helpers Tess and Gearoid), Cappoquin Tidy Town members and the Deepark residents who all assisted in clearing the rubbish from our roadside hedges."

The volunteers cleaned the way from Tourin Hall to Coople's Quay, along the Quay to gateway, Tourin Hall to Cappoquin Graveyard, from the graveyard to the Red Bridge and from there to Kilbree and on to McGrath's Corner.

"A fabulous multi community effort," the Committee said.



Edited by Renata Steffens  
Renata@irishcatholic.ie



If you have any stories, photos, or events you wish to be considered for publication, email a week in advance of publication



**ROSCOMMON:** The Catholic Primary Schools Managers Association recently celebrated the golden jubilee of the formation of boards of management for primary schools. At a dinner in the Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone, a presentation was made to Florence Conroy, who served as office manager of CPSMA from 1969 to 2022.



**GALWAY:** Bishop Michael Duignan celebrated Mass and preached at the St Mary's Church, Claddagh for the Youth 2000 Connaught Retreat Day.



**KILDARE:** (L/R) Fr Liam Merrigan, Geraldine Mullan, Ann and Ted Rooney Suncroft. Ms Mullan, a mother who lost her husband and 2 children tragically, shared her story as a guest speaker on April 1 at the Novena in Sts Peter & Paul Church Monasterevin.



**DERRY:** Many gathered for the first day of the Sr Clare retreat in Long Tower on March 31. The annual event took place from March 31 to April 6 and provided insightful talks each day.



**SLIGO:** The Diocese of Elphin gifted a new Tabernacle to St Michael's Church, Tubbercurry Cloonacool Parish. The Blessed Sacrament was transferred on March 29 at Confirmation Mass. (L/R) Fr Vincent Scherlock PP and Bishop Kevin Doran.



**ANTRIM:** Fr Dominic McGrattan Chaplain at Queens University Belfast recently received the friend of Chaplaincy and senior Knight of St Columbanus, Charlie Clarke to explore ways the Order can continue support the Chaplaincy men's group the Frassati Fellowship QUB.

## ANTRIM

'The Passion Story: A Work of Infinite Love', takes place on April 12 from 9.30am to 4pm in Drumalis Retreat Centre. A day of prayer and reflection with Fr Aidan Troy CP who will lead the day entering into Holy Week, where all are invited to immerse in this story of hope and unconditional love. See more on [drumalis.co.uk](http://drumalis.co.uk)

## CORK

The annual Divine Mercy Novena will be held in St Patrick's Cathedral, Skibbereen on April 27. Confessions commence at 2.30pm and Novena prayers commence at 3pm. All welcome.

## DERRY

'Chat and a cuppa for seniors' takes place on Tuesdays from 10.30am to 12noon in Fairhill Youth Centre. For more info contact Noeleen on 075 9066 5460 or Kate on 077 1283 6511.

## DONEGAL

'Sing for a Joy! – A Day of Music and Ministry' takes place on April 26 at Lough Derg. A day of music, praise, faith, friendship and more. Boat departs at 9.30am. The event for 18–35-year-olds is free to attend. Registration is essential at [bit.ly/SingForJoy](http://bit.ly/SingForJoy).

## DOWN

Magheralin Parish invites the youth of Dromore Diocese (13 to 20+ yrs) to celebrate the life of Carlo Acutis on April 13 from 2pm to 5pm at Dromantine Conference Centre. Join for workshop, testimony, pilgrimage, blessing with his Relic, and more. For more information contact Caitriona on 07979 725564.

## DUBLIN

The feast of divine mercy will be celebrated on Sunday, April 27 in St Vincent de Paul Church in Marino with holy hour at 3pm during which time confessions will be heard, followed by holy mass at 4pm.

'Easter craft fair and bake sale' takes place on April 12 from 10am to 1.10pm in the Church

of the Nativity of Our Lord's pastoral centre, Beaumont Parish. Free entry. Raffle on the day.

## LEITRIM

The Sweet Spirit Country Gospel singers will perform in St Patrick's Church, Aughawillan, Ballinamore on April 11 at 8pm. Come along and support the charity 'Aware' who provide support for people suffering with mental health issues.

## MAYO

Breakthrough Cancer Research invites you to climb Croagh Patrick on May 17 to help raise funds for people affected by cancer. A professional trained guide will provide support before and during the climb. To book a space in the climb email [edel@breakcancer.ie](mailto:edel@breakcancer.ie).

## MONAGHAN

Crocus Cancer Support Centre invites people who have lost loved ones to join the monthly support group. To book a place contact the office on 047 62565

## SLIGO

'Afternoon with Priests & Religious' hosted by the Sisters of Life takes place on May 9 from 2pm to 4pm at the Clayton Hotel Sligo, Clarion Road. There will be two talks, Q&A and an opportunity to connect over tea/coffee. To register access [sistersoflife.org/event/visit-ireland/](http://sistersoflife.org/event/visit-ireland/)

## TIPPERARY

The Relics of Padre Pio will visit Holycross Abbey, Thurles on May 24-25. The welcome Mass is at 10am on May 24 and the evening prayer farewell is at 7pm on May 25 with the church closing at 8pm. For the whole schedule contact 0504 43124.

## WEXFORD

'Easter Camp' with Net Ministries for children aged 6-9yrs takes place for free on Monday 14 from 11am to 2pm in St Michael's Pastoral Centre. Arts & crafts, music, games and more. Permission form needed. Email [goreyparish@gmail.com](mailto:goreyparish@gmail.com) for the form.



# Young people find language for their faith



**Pedro Esteva**

Since 2014, the Order of the Knights of St Columbanus has organised a public speaking competition titled, 'Young People Find Language for Their Faith.' This year's All-Ireland Final took place at the Carlton Hotel near Dublin Airport, with teams from six schools across the island participating. Each school was represented by a team of three students, who presented on a chosen topic, supporting their arguments with references from scripture, Church documents, Papal Encyclicals, and Exhortations.

Speeches from the students cover themes of peace through dialogue, human dignity and justice, faith, and spiritual growth, with a focus on human trafficking, compassion for the poor, and the courage to follow Jesus, and the personal call to each individual by name.

The participating schools were: Ursuline Secondary School from Thurles, Castlereagh Community School, Summerhill College from Sligo, Killina Presentation Secondary School Tullamore, St Dominic's Grammar School Belfast, and Assumption Grammar School Ballynahinch.



Summerhill College receive the prize as runners up. Photos: John McElroy.



Runners up Assumption Grammar Ballynahinch pose with their prize.



Pupils from various schools hankering after the title.



The winning team from St Dominic's Grammar Belfast take home the trophy for Ulster.



Castlereagh Community claim the title for Connaught.



For Leinster, teams from Killina Presentation school were both winners and runners up.



The two teams from Ursuline Secondary School claimed both the Munster winners and runners-up titles.

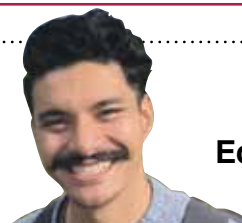


Pupil from Killina Presentation addressing the audience.





# World Report



Edited by Pedro Esteva  
pedro@irishcatholic.ie

## IN BRIEF

### Ailing Pope surprises pilgrims during Jubilee of the Sick

● With thousands of infirmed people and those who care for them gathered in St Peter's Square, Pope Francis, seated in a wheelchair and wearing a nasal cannula, made an unexpected appearance to greet the crowd. "A happy Sunday to you all, many thanks!" the pope said to them with a strained voice. Appearing at the end of the closing Mass of the Jubilee of the Sick and Health Care Workers April 6, the pope shocked the thousands gathered in the square who broke out in cheers upon seeing his nurse, Massimiliano Strappetti, wheel him out of St Peter's Basilica and into the square. After his brief greeting, doctors in white lab coats, some wearing red clown noses, and infirmed people in wheelchairs applauded as Pope Francis was taken through the crowd to leave the square. The appearance marks the first time Pope Francis had been seen in public since he was discharged from Rome's Gemelli hospital.

### Archbishop encourages hope as death toll in Myanmar surpasses 3,000

● Burmese Archbishop Marco Tin Win of Mandalay said that despite the suffering caused by the deadly earthquake, the people of Myanmar are clinging to hope in God's mercy. In an interview with *Fides*, Archbishop Win said that the suffering of his people has brought them closer to God and that "today, our people have hope in God's mercy, in the certainty of his love."

According to the governing military junta, as of April 3, the death toll stands at 3,145,

as well as 4,589 wounded and 221 still missing. The earthquake struck at a time of uncertainty due to the ongoing civil war between resistance groups and Myanmar's governing military junta, which overthrew the previous democratically elected government in 2021. While it had rejected initial calls for a pause in military operations from resistance groups, the government declared a ceasefire from April 3-22, *The Associated Press* reported.

### Filipino religious superiors honour families of Duterte drug war victims

● Filipino religious superiors honoured families of drug war victims in a thanksgiving Mass held three weeks after former president Rodrigo Duterte's arrest by the International Criminal Court. Organised by the Conference of Major Superiors in the Philippines (CMSP), the gathering, titled Rising at the Table of Hope, took place at the Minor Basilica of San Pedro Bautista in Quezon City.

CMSP, known for its activism since the Marcos dictatorship, reaffirmed its solidarity with victims of extrajudicial killings, saying their "grief is not erased by legal actions alone." Around 30,000 Filipinos reportedly died under Duterte's drug war. During the emotional ceremony, families offered portraits and white roses, blessed in front of a painting of "Jesus the Poor." Tears flowed as CMSP leaders recalled the silence and fear of Duterte's rule, calling his arrest a "flame of hope." The Mass also marked CMSP's 70th anniversary and anticipated the Church's upcoming Jubilee Year of Hope in 2025.

### Vatican, Russian foreign ministers discuss ending war in Ukraine

● The Vatican and Russian foreign ministers discussed "initiatives aimed at stopping the military actions" in Ukraine during a phone call April 4. The call, held between Archbishop Paul R. Gallagher, Vatican foreign minister, and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, "was dedicated to the overall picture of world politics, with particular attention to the situation of the war in Ukraine," the Vatican said in a statement. "The willingness of the Holy See to continue its humanitarian effort in matters regarding the exchange of prisoners was reiterated," it added. The Vatican said that the foreign ministers also discussed "matters regarding religious life and, in particular, the situation of the Catholic Church in the Russian Federation."

## Lourdes veils Rupnik mosaics after abuse scandal

KNA

Victims of abuse can now visit the pilgrimage site of Lourdes without coming into contact with the works of artist and ex-Jesuit priest, Marko Rupnik. His mosaics in the French pilgrimage site have been covered up. Rupnik is accused by at least 20 women of having seduced and sexually exploited them.

"It seemed to me and my colleagues that another symbolic step should be taken to facilitate entry to the basilica for all those people who cannot cross the threshold today," explained the Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes, Jean-Marc Micas, in a statement on the pilgrimage site's online portal on Monday.

Bishop Micas justified the timing of the covering of the mosaics saying, "the two side doors were covered this Monday and the two large central doors will be covered in a few days before the pilgrimage season begins in Lourdes." All of this was done with the upcoming start of the pilgrimage season and the Day of Prayer for Victims of Sexualised Violence in the Church, which was celebrated in France on Friday. In the current Holy Year, Micas had designated the pilgrim-



The soon to be covered facade of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary is pictured here at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, France. Photo: OSV News/courtesy Greg Erlandson.

age site of Lourdes as one of two places in the diocese "to experience the Jubilee Year and obtain plenary indulgence". He added, "passing through the entrance doors of the basilica should do justice to the symbolism of the moment."

In July 2024, Micas declared that the first step would be to no longer highlight the mosaics with special lighting during the evening

Marian procession. This was preceded by the appointment of a working group in April 2023 to discuss the continued existence of the works of art on the façade of the Basilica of the Rosary.

The renowned Slovenian artist Rupnik had fallen into disrepute due to various allegations of sexual harassment and spiritual abuse. The Jesuit order and the

Vatican imposed punitive measures on him. In June 2023, the Jesuit order also expelled Rupnik "for persistent disobedience" because he ignored requirements. In Lourdes, Rupnik was commissioned to create mosaics on the theme of the rosary for the façade of the basilica in 2008 to mark the 150th anniversary of the Marian apparitions there.

## Teen's tumours disappear after prayers to Blessed Solanus Casey

"We rejoice in Mary Bartold's healing, we give thanks to God for it, and also note the family's sincere belief, held with a significant degree of supporting evidence, that Mary's recovery was procured through the intercession of the much-beloved Blessed Solanus Casey but, as you'd expect, ultimately, we defer to the judgement of Rome on such matters," said David Kerr, spokesman for the Diocese of Lansing, in a statement to *The Irish Catholic*.

Blessed Solanus Casey, the son of Irish

immigrants, is known for helping found the Capuchin Soup Kitchen as well as his ministry to the sick.

In April 2024, Mary was diagnosed with two ovarian tumours, one measuring 7.3 cm, which caused her great concern. After consultations with Catholic physicians, doctors scheduled surgery to remove the tumours.

In the meantime, the Bartold family embarked on a pilgrimage to Blessed Solanus Casey's tomb in Detroit. Susan Bartold, Mary's mother, organised a

novena with friends, family, and their church community, asking for Casey's intercession. After weeks of prayer, Mary underwent a pre-surgery MRI on Casey's feast day. The following day, doctors called to cancel the surgery, reporting that the tumours had disappeared.

Fr Ed Foley, vice-postulator for the cause of canonisation of Blessed Casey, refused to comment specifically on the case but mentioned that the Vatican takes the cause for canonisation with the utmost seriousness.

## Assaults on priests increase in Poland

KNA

A new study by Poland's Church Statistics Institute reveals that Catholic clergy increasingly face aggression. Of 614 priests surveyed, half reported experiencing hostility in the past year. Common forms included mock-

ery, threats, and online abuse, with 4% facing physical attacks. Nearly 20% noted attacks on churches or religious sites, and 15% reported disruptions during services. Property damage and grave desecration were also mentioned. Most incidents went unreported, deemed not serious enough.

Despite rising hostility—90% said aggression has increased over the past decade—81% still feel safe in their parishes when wearing clerical garb. Outside, only 57% feel secure, and 17% feel unsafe. Over half now avoid wearing cassocks in public to prevent confrontation.

Respondents blamed

negative media portrayals and ideological tensions for the hostility. Three-quarters believe aggression stems from people feeling wronged by clergy. The non-representative survey, conducted in 2024, was the first of its kind, with participation from two-thirds of Poland's dioceses.







# Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, April 10, 2025

The  
afternoon of  
Christianity

Fr Rolheiser

Page 32



## The other 'son of the Father'



Christ before Pilate,  
Mihály Munkácsy

**T**he events surrounding the Passion and death of Jesus feature many interesting characters who show up and are then entered into legend. Joseph of Arimathea, Simon of Cyrene, the centurion. But among the secret believers is one who is not, one who in fact seemed to be the opposite of Jesus and that is the ironically named Jesus Barabbas (though it is disputed whether his name is Jesus).

In the first volume of *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict XVI notes that Origen, an early Church Father, claimed many Gospel manuscripts identified Barabbas as 'Jesus Barabbas' until the third century. 'Barabbas' means 'son of the father,' a title often attributed to messianic figures. The Gospel of Matthew further describes Barabbas as a "notorious prisoner," suggesting he held a significant place in the resistance. Pope Benedict argues that Barabbas was likely the leader of the uprising that led to his imprisonment. A murderer, a revolutionary, a zealot.

### Deliverer

These details suggest that Barabbas, like Jesus, was considered by some to be the awaited deliverer of the Jewish people. Not only were both men accused of the same crime, but



**Every soul is presented a radical choice: to embrace the suffering Christ or to turn away, says Pedro Esteva**

they may have shared the same first name and the same title. However, only Jesus of Nazareth truly claimed and fulfilled this role. The crowd's choice of Barabbas over Jesus reflects a deeper struggle: they preferred a saviour who promised liberation through armed struggle rather than one who proclaimed that true life is found in losing oneself.

The contrast between Jesus and Barabbas is striking. Barabbas, whose name means 'son of the father,' represents a worldly messiah—a revolutionary who seeks political freedom through violence. As the Gospels recount, the people chose Barabbas over Jesus (Mt 27:21), a choice that symbolises humanity's repeated preference for immediate power over the mysterious and sacrificial path to true salvation. Pope Benedict notes that this choice is not merely between two men but between two types

of messianic hope: one that offers earthly power and another that brings redemption through humility and suffering. True kingship, he argues, comes not from force but from submission to God's will, even unto the Cross.

### Fascinate

But the figure of Barabbas has continued to fascinate scholars and writers alike. One of the most notable literary explorations of Barabbas is Pär Lagerkvist's novella *Barabbas* (1950), which imagines his life after his unexpected release.

In Lagerkvist's depiction, Barabbas is haunted by the man who took his place. He is struck by the innocent looking Jesus who was to take his place on the cross. Though he follows Jesus' procession to the cross and witnesses the darkness that falls at his death, he cannot bring himself to believe. His fasci-

nation with Jesus leads him to seek out his followers, but they reject him—except for Peter, who treats him with kindness.

Barabbas continues to drift on the margins of belief, drawn to Christians but unable to embrace their hope. He wanders Rome, seeking a Christian meeting place, still haunted by their doctrine of love. When he sees flames consuming the city, he interprets it as the apocalyptic return of Jesus, believing that Christ has come at last to bring judgment. But instead of worship, Barabbas responds in the only way he knows—by spreading the fire.

**“Lagerkvist presents Barabbas as a man trapped in the tension between belief and doubt, drawn to Christ yet unable to surrender to him”**

He sees himself as finally acting for Christ, though his actions are violent rather than faithful. His confused sense of purpose leads him to destruction rather than redemption. He is then imprisoned

and sentenced to death on a cross. The final image of Barabbas is one of darkness. As he is crucified, he at last gives up the ghost, echoing the darkness that descended when Jesus died. He utters the words, "To thee I deliver up my soul," leaving it unclear whether he has finally turned to Christ or not.

Lagerkvist presents Barabbas as a man trapped in the tension between belief and doubt, drawn to Christ yet unable to surrender to him. His story is one of missed opportunities, of standing on the threshold of faith but never stepping through. The contrast with various Christian martyrs is stark: they embrace suffering with hope, while Barabbas sees only despair.

### Meditation

Through *Barabbas*, Lagerkvist offers a meditation on doubt, grace, and the nature of belief. Barabbas represents all who stand at the crossroads, confronted by Christ yet unable to fully accept him. His story is tragic, but it serves as a reminder of the radical choice presented to every soul: to embrace the suffering Christ or to turn away. In the end, Barabbas' journey is a reflection of the choice made by the crowd at the trial—between a messiah of force and a Messiah of love.



# Building community through Youth 2000



After each retreat, I left with feelings of immense peace and renewal in faith, writes **Bláthnaid Gunawardana**

**I**n the busy life of a young person trying to juggle school, work, hobbies, family and our social lives, sometimes we might forget the importance of stepping away from the constant hustle and bustle of life and giving time to reflect on spiritual growth and reconnect with God. Yet, this is often exactly what we need, a break from the demands of daily routines to focus on what truly matters.

When I first heard about Youth 2000, I was sceptical. It was my dad who told

me about this youth retreat, described by his friends and their children as “life changing” and “magical,” but I just felt nervous about the whole idea of it. While I knew it would be a wonderful opportunity to meet other Catholics my age, the idea of going away for four whole days to a place where I knew no one made me feel like a fish out of water. Perhaps you, too, are a Catholic youth, and if so, you will probably know the struggle it is to meet others who share your faith. At the time I didn’t have friends who had the same beliefs as me, and at Mass, everyone there was in an older age range than me, making me feel secluded. Despite my nerves, I had already signed up and I decided to go.

**“These friendships also help strengthen our relationship with Christ”**

When I walked into Clongowes Wood College that Thursday afternoon for their summer festival, I arrived knowing no one. Though seconds after entering the girls’ dorm, two girls struck up a conversation with me,

they are now two of my best friends. Half an hour later, I was walking down to the main hall for the retreat introduction with a group of seven new friends and wondering, what was I so worried about? This retreat, along with the Leinster and the Christmas retreat, were some of the most memorable and cherished weeks of my year.

As it turns out, the main aspect that I was worrying about, came to be my favourite part of the Youth 2000 experience, the lifelong friendships you make. Everyone from the team of incredible volunteers to the staff, to the people attending, were so welcoming and kind. My best friend’s today are people I met at youth 2000, I think it is so incredibly valuable to have friends in faith. Not only do they embody good virtues such as: loyalty, kindness and many more. They also have the Fruits of the Holy Spirit. They continuously showing God’s love, encouraging us to be our best selves and fulfilling our need for fruitful, faith filled friendships. These friendships also help strengthen our relationship with Christ. As the Bible says in Matthew 18:20, “For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.”

## Strength

Another highlight of Youth 2000, and arguably the most important part of a Catholic retreat, is the way it strengthened my faith. The retreat offers a variety of prayerful experiences



Fr John Harris addressing attendants at Youth 2000 retreat in 2023.

such as: adoration, Confession, healing service, talks, workshops, Mass, rosary and prayer. I, along with many others, felt the strong presence of Jesus and his intimate and personal love for all of us, throughout this retreat, especially in adoration and the healing service. The talks and workshops given provided a deeper understanding of various aspects of my faith. One talk that particularly stuck with me was given by Fr John Harris, in which he talked about ‘exploring the garden of our own interiority.’ Imagine your soul as a hidden, secret garden where the Lord, like a gardener, works in secrecy to cultivate virtues and bring forth an abundant harvest that

nourishes others around us. By allowing Him to tend to this inner garden, you invite transformation and grace, which will overflow in your life, though it remains a holy secret between you and Him.

**“Through their engaging talks and fun filled activities, Youth 2000 truly lives out their mission”**

After each retreat, I left with feelings of immense peace, renewal in faith and a circle of new friends. When I asked my friends how they would describe their own

experience at Youth 2000, they described it as: life-changing, joyful and indescribable.

Through their engaging talks and fun filled activities, Youth 2000 truly lives out their mission of ‘youth leading youth to the heart of the Church,’ by fostering a deep sense of community in Christ, and guiding fellow young people in building a meaningful connection with Christ. If you are looking for a place to meet friends in faith, deepen your understanding of the values of the Catholic Church and strengthen your relationship with God, Youth 2000 is the place for you. I hope to see you at the next retreat!

## Galway sees Faith rising at Youth 2000 retreat

**Matthew Roche**

**R**ecently, the Youth 2000 regional Spring retreat for Connaught took place in The Claddagh, Galway. Facilitated by Youth 2000 National Leader, Helena O’Shea and organised by Connaught Youth 2000 leaders, Kathryn Freney and Stiofán Mac Brádaigh, the tone was set for the one-day retreat by final-year psychology student, Kieran Barrett-Gomez. Kieran, a convert to Catholicism, reminded all present that “God has a lot in store for us” and that the Holy Spirit led all to the retreat for various reasons.

Máire Ní Éineacháin, 34, a medical device factory worker from Castlegar, Co. Galway, said she went to “spend some time with Jesus in the setting of a Youth 2000 Mass where I knew the hom-

ily would be spot on”. Máire said she believes that more young people are searching for reason to life and that “it is important for the Church to stand up in these times, to hold firm to our faith and our teachings and be available to those who are searching for God.” Máire said she encountered Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament when she first went to Youth 2000 in her twenties and said, “My life changed and I began to follow Him.”

Mass was presided by Bishop Michael Duignan, Bishop of Galway and concelebrated by Fr Conor McDonough OP, Fr Matthew Farrell OP and Fr Chris Garrett (Elphin Diocese). Bishop Michael gave encouragement to all present during the season of Lent reminding that “the season of Lent holds out to us a special spiritual space to quit the procrastination,

stop the dilly-dallying, and to seriously tend to the work of sorting out and renewing our own lives” and that “God is a God of new opportunities, a God of many chances and new beginnings”.

Fr Conor McDonough gave a talk on ‘Mary, our Mother’. Here he gave practical tips on praying the Rosary including using YouTube videos, the Hollow app, praying while walking, using imagery and praying in different languages. A talk was given by NET missionary, Brendan Gormely. After lunch at An Tobar Nua café, the attendees went to the Poor Clares in Nuns’ Island for a talk on Jesus in the Eucharist by Sr Faustina (OSC) and Sr Colette (OSC). Sr Faustina, the community sacristan, described the Real Presence with an emphasis on the importance of an eye for detail as she explained the importance of



(L/R) Matthew Roche, Bishop Michael Duignan, Kieran Barrett-Gomez (MC for event). Taken at entrance to Claddagh church. Photo: Fr Chris Garrett

using corporals and purificators, palls with chalices, patens and ciboria. Sr Colette reminded all of the rays of love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament then quoting Pope

Francis’ recent encyclical letter on the human and divine love of the heart of Jesus, *Dilexit Nos* encouraging all to “Mission, as a radiation of the love of the heart of Christ, requires missionar-

ies who are themselves in love and who, enthralled by Christ, feel bound to share this love that has changed their lives.” The last talk was on reconciliation by Fr Matthew Farrell.



# Discussing faith and vocations with



I think we need a change in our culture and in our acceptance towards young people going into religious formation, hears **Matthew Roche**

**C**urrently based in the parish of Castlereagh, Co. Roscommon and recently appointed as administrator of Sligo Cathedral parish by Bishop Kevin Doran, Fr Chris Garrett was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Elphin in May 2023 in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Sligo, by Bishop Kevin Doran. His mother was Irish, and his father was American. He spent his childhood years in Texas followed by his teenage years and early adult years in Dublin. During this time he studied medicine in UCD. He spent most of his medical career in the US where he specialised in oncology. He is the nephew of Bishop Christopher Jones, the former Bishop of Elphin.

#### What is your vocation story?

I was a physician for 28 years. There were a lot of religious in my family. I volunteered at Church; prison ministry, homebound ministry and homeless ministry. All of this was in Houston, Texas. I was a lector and extraordinary minister in the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Houston, Texas. I had two uncles who were priests and two aunts who were religious sisters.

#### Could you tell us about your experience with young people?

We have six primary schools and a secondary school in Castlereagh so there is much need for youth ministry. I have experience in Youth 2000 and Camp Veritas. We have a Youth 2000 group in Sligo which I help out at. I have been touring the Catholic schools of the diocese with Fr Pat Lombard, Fr Raul Ino and the CFR Sisters. So far, we went to Ursuline



Matthew Roche with Rev. Chris Garrett as a newly ordained deacon in Castlereagh on Saturday September 17, 2022.

**“The challenges that the Churches in both countries face are quite similar and are a consequence of an increasingly secular culture”**

College (Sligo), Mercy Convent (Sligo), Abbey College (Boyle), Castlereagh Community School and Coláiste Chiarán (Athlone).

#### Do you think the infrastructure is there to get vocations and what needs to be done?

Do I think the infrastructure is there? Yes. I think we need a change in our culture and in our acceptance towards young people going into religious formation. I think we should have a healthier attitude towards young people spending some time in religious formation whether they get ordained/professed or not. Parents must be more encouraging towards this.

#### As a newly appointed vocations director, what advice do you have for someone discerning a vocation?

In the past, many young men went into seminary and found it to be a seminal formative experience

in their lives. It made them who they are today. The vast majority went on to married or lay single life but with a strong spiritual foundation. So, spending time in seminary can only benefit you. Many young people get this spiritual foundation in Holy Family Mission or through NET Ministries. People must remember that less than 30% of those that enter seminary become ordained to ministerial priesthood. I laughed one day when I saw a newspaper headline saying, to the effect, that a certain

person by entering seminary was going to be a priest. We have this rather fixed idea that discerning a vocation in seminary is an irreversible and fixed life changing decision. When the exact opposite is true. Seminary life is a time to discern your vocation with the help of professional staff. So, if anyone wants to discern a vocation, or even just deepen their faith, I would talk to a priest that you know and are comfortable talking to. My personal sense of being a Vocations Director is more about getting to know young people in my community and helping them on their spiritual journey and less about me finding vocations for the priesthood. It is a soft form of young adult evangelisation. If vocations come out of that work, well then, that is the work of the Holy Spirit.

**“We have this rather fixed idea that discerning a vocation in seminary is an irreversible and fixed life changing decision. When the exact opposite is true”**

#### In what ways have your experiences of the Catholic Church in Ireland and the US been similar?

Culturally, the Catholic Church in Ireland and the United States are very similar. And, why not? Many US Catholics come from Irish descendants. For that reason, the appearances of many of the churches and the style of liturgy are quite similar. I remember going to Mass in St Patrick's Church in San Francisco, across the street from the Moscone Centre, with all of the stained-glass windows funded by different counties in Ireland and representing the Irish saint of that county. Even with the congregation being majority Filipino their lay faithful had a strong devotion to St Patrick and sang Irish songs throughout the year. Traditions surrounding funerals and baptisms,

as well as First Holy Communion and Confirmation, are remarkably similar between the two countries, possibly because of immigration. The challenges that the Churches in both countries face are quite similar and are a consequence of an increasingly secular culture. However, the emerging use of social media as a method of evangelisation, especially of younger people, is notable in both countries.

#### In what ways have your experiences of the Catholic Church in Ireland and the US been different?

Lay participation in the Church is far greater in the United States and the lay faithful are much more empowered to make decisions. They have had deacons in the US Church since 1968 and now there are roughly 20,000 permanent deacons; actually, 40% of all the deacons in the world come from the US. Because of that deacons play a much more significant role in liturgy and in the Church as a whole. Unfortunately, politics has been very polarised in the US, and that has bled into Church politics. Priests in the US have very strong and divergent political viewpoints. In my own diocese of Elphin the priests are remarkable similar in liturgical, religious and political outlook and are less consumed by the day-to-day political theatre that dominates the news cycle. The United States is very multicultural and has citizens of many different religious backgrounds. These different faith backgrounds can subtly change the US Catholic Church in ways I feel are largely positive. For example, Christian Evangelical and Pentecostal music is frequently used in youth gatherings in the US that I personally believe it is a positive addition, and something that we are seeing more commonly in Ireland.

#### What was your experience of assisting with the medical team in Ireland during the Covid-19 pandemic?

I was a vaccinator in the Knocknaree Sports Centre in Sligo during the summer break from seminary in 2021. It was a brilliant experience working with pharmacists and the defence forces. There was a great *esprit de corps* with everyone pulling together to make it happen. The organisation around it was astounding; impressive. The Presbyterian minister in Sligo town, David Clarke, is a pharmacist, and was vaccinating



# Fr Chris Garrett



Dr Chris during his time as a seminarian on June 2021 at ATU Sligo Knocknarea Arena Covid Vaccination Centre. Pictured with Rev David Clarke, Sligo Presbyterian minister (also a pharmacist). Photo: Chris Garrett.

at the same time! It helped that everyone coming in was very happy and appreciated to be vaccinated. Also, all our clients were young and in good health, so we moved people through at a pretty fast clip. My favourite part was people telling me they were nervous, and I would start asking them a lot of questions to distract them, and when they asked me to let them know before getting the jab I would tell them I'd already done it! Some of them didn't believe I had already administered it, and I remember joking with more than a few that I would give them a second one if they really wanted it. My last day they gave me a parting gift and an honour guard which touched me.

## In what ways has your medical experience enriched your outlook on priestly ministry?

Communication and listening are key in both vocations. I strongly maintain medicine is a vocation in the same way ministerial priesthood is. Silent listening can be a very powerful tool. Trying to figure out what is motivating people and what their concerns are is always challenging. Sometimes the things that are troubling people is not always what

**“If society determines that it is a legal right to take your life if you have a terminal illness, why shouldn't you have the same legal right if you do not have a terminal illness”**

they tell you at first. There are often layers of concerns and it can take time to discern what is the root cause of their anxiety. Naturally, the onset of physical illness brings with it an existential threat and consequently spiritual concerns come to the fore when this happens. It helps to have a sense of how serious a medical problem is as well as an understanding of what patients go through when the experience an illness.

## As euthanasia/assisted suicide has been debated in Ireland in recent months, what advice have you, as a doctor, for politicians in this debate?

Simply put, we must emphasise as physicians that physician-assisted suicide (PAS) is simply suicide. Making suicide 'physician-assisted' is supposed to give suicide a patina of societal acceptability. Proponents of PAS are trading on the largely

positive view patients have of their doctors in order to make suicide more palatable to the public. Research studies have shown that in states in the United States that have legalised PAS, over time, all forms of suicide increase, including non-assisted. Legalising PAS would effectively mark a cultural shift in the way we view suicide. We have come too far as a country in trying to prevent suicides and to help people thinking of suicide to allow PAS to normalise and legitimise suicide. It is clear that PAS would undermine efforts to maintain state-of-the-science palliative care. PAS also specifically threatens and discriminates against those who have a mental illness or economic deprivation. The detrimental effects of PAS cannot be safeguarded against legislatively and will become apparent if it is legalised. After all, if society determines that it is a legal right to take your life if you have a terminal illness, why shouldn't you have the same legal right if you do not have a terminal illness? Why are we restricting this so-called freedom? My belief is that PAS is a graduated slippery slope to eventual legalised suicide for everyone and would be a harm and threat to society.

# Centenary of Sr Diane Roche OP in Fatima

Sean Byrne

In the deep peace of Monastery of Pius XII in Fatima the Dominican Sisters of the Perpetual Rosary are rarely seen behind the grille as they devote their contemplative lives to prayer and meditation.

On February 5, however, the convent was buzzing with excitement and merriment as the Sisters came forth to celebrate with joy the 100 birthday of their sister Diane Roche OP, together with her family and friends. The celebrations began with a Mass of Thanksgiving concelebrated in their chapel by seven priests from the adjoining Dominican Priory.

Sr Diane was born Bridget Agatha Roche on February 5, 1925, near Enniscorthy Co. Wexford, second youngest of the seven children of Edmund and Sarah Roche. In the early 1930s, the five girls in the family, Anna Maria (Nano), Irene, May, Sarah and Breda (as Bridget was known) cycled from their farm to secondary school in Loreto Convent, Enniscorthy. Three of the sisters, Irene, May and Breda, entered religious life. Irene became Sr Camilla IBVM. She was appointed principal of several Loreto schools and opened the first Loreto-sponsored community school in Milford, Co. Donegal. May became Sr Mary Dolores of the Presentation Order and taught in the Presentation primary school in Enniscorthy.

Breda took a secretarial course and worked in a number of posts including a period as secretary to the chief psychiatrist in St Otteran's Hospital, Enniscorthy. She followed her sister Irene to the Loreto novitiate in Rathfarnham, but discovered that she was drawn to a contemplative life rather than a teaching career and left the novitiate after a year. She continued to hear the call to life as a contemplative nun. In 1952 she learned that the Dominican Sisters of the Perpetual Rosary, founded in the nineteenth century by the French Dominican priest Fr Damien Marie Saintourens, were seeking vocations. She joined the Order as a novice, serving her novitiate in Glasgow and Rome, and became Sister Diane OP. She took the name of St Diana del Andalò, a thirteenth century Italian Dominican nun who established a convent in Bologna with the blessing of St Dominic.

1954 was declared the Marian Year by Pius XII to commemorate the centenary of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception revealed by the Virgin Mary to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes in 1854. In June of the Marian Year, Sr Diane, OP became a founder member of the Dominican Convent of the Sisters of the Perpetual Rosary

at the Monastery of Pius XII in Fatima.

On February 5, Sr Diane celebrated her 100 birthday and the seventy first anniversary of her arrival in Fatima. The concelebrated Mass ended with the hymn 'Hail Glorious St Patrick', at Sr Diane's request. The nuns were joined by several of her Irish nieces, nephews, Irish and Portuguese friends. At the lunch party Sr Kathleen IBVM (a friend of Sr Diane's late sister, Sr Camilla IBVM) sang several Irish songs, including Sr Diane's favourite, 'Boolavogue'.

The Sisters of the Perpetual Rosary in Fatima are an international community devoting themselves to a life of contemplation. They pray for the intentions of anybody who asks them, and depend largely on donations from the faithful. Until recently, Sr Diane, who is proficient in Portuguese, earned funds for her community by translating theological and religious works from Portuguese into English. She frequently contributed to the 'Friends of Fatima' newsletter produced by her community. The Sisters have a guesthouse where pilgrims may stay for whatever payment they can afford. They are delighted to receive Irish visitors, who are treated to the scones and Barry's tea with which Sr Diane's and Sr Angla's Irish friends keep the community supplied.

When Sr Diane entered the convent at Fatima, she did so in the belief that she would never visit her home near Enniscorthy again. After Vatican II in 1963, the rules for contemplative orders were relaxed and Sr Diane was allowed several visits home, visits which gave great happiness to her and her circle. She last visited Ireland in 2014, an occasion for a memorable gathering, including her siblings Sr Camilla, Sarah McNamara and William Roche. Sr Diane regularly sends beautiful handwritten letters to her relatives and friends in Ireland.

In the Prayers of the Faithful at the Mass of Thanksgiving for her 100 birthday Sr Diane's friends gave thanks to God for her vocation and her gift of contemplation and asked God to give to others the fruit of contemplation, especially in the Holy Rosary.

Sr Diane on her 100 birthday could truly say with St Paul that she has 'finished the race and kept the faith. Now there is in store for her the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award her on that day—and not only to her, but also to all who have longed for his appearing'. (2. Timothy 4, 7-8)

**i** The sisters pray regularly for vocations. The Sisters of the Perpetual Rosary can be contacted through their web page at [fatimadominicans.com](http://fatimadominicans.com)



**“Naturally, the onset of physical illness brings with it an existential threat and consequently spiritual concerns come to the fore when this happens”**





# The afternoon of Christianity



Fr Rolheiser

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

**W**here might we experience Jesus today in a world that is seemingly too crowded with its own concerns to allow a space for him?

The renowned spirituality writer Tomas Halik, in a recent book entitled *The Afternoon of Christianity*, makes this suggestion. As the world makes less and less explicit space for Jesus, we need to search for him more and more in those places where he is “anonymously present”. Halik’s counsel: “Let us search for him ‘by his voice’ like Mary Magdalene; let us search for him in strangers on the road like the disciples on the road to Emmaus; let us search for him in the wounds of the world like the apostle Thomas; let us search for him whenever he passes through the closed doors of fear; let us search for him where he brings the gift of forgiveness and new beginnings.”

The invitation here is to better respond to the signs of the times, given that we are living now in what he calls “the afternoon of Christianity”.

What is the afternoon of Christianity?

## History

He distinguishes three periods in the history of Christianity. He sees the morning of Christianity as the time before 1500 AD, the pre-modern period, the time before secularisation. The noonday of Christianity, for him, is the time of secularisation and modernity, basically from the 19th century until our own generation. The afternoon of Christianity, for him, is our time today, the post-modern world, where we are wit-

nessing a breakdown of much of the world as we once knew it with the effects of this on faith and religion. And for Halik, the effect of all of this is that the Christian faith has now outgrown previous forms of religion.

Wow! That’s quite a statement! However, what Halik is proposing is not that the faith is dying, that Christianity is dying, or that the churches are dying. Rather, for him, Christianity today finds itself in a certain cultural homelessness, in a time where so many social structures that once supported it are collapsing, so that the Christian faith is now needing to seek a new shape, a new home, new means of expression, new social and cultural roles, and new allies.

**“For him, the challenges that Christianity faces today invite us to bring faith into a new space, like Paul did when he brought Christianity out of the confines of the Judaism of his day”**

And how will that turn out? We don’t know. But here’s Halik’s hunch: Christianity will not, as many fear, lose its identity and become a non-religious faith. It will not disintegrate into some vague, doctrineless, boundaryless, privatised spirituality. Rather, the hope is that (paradoxically) the very dynamism and diversity that frightens many Christians is the incubation phase of the Christianity of the future.

**“We need to recognise his voice in the caretaker at the cemetery; like the discouraged disciples on the road to Emmaus, when we no longer have the answers, we need to recognise his presence in strangers whose words make our hearts burn inside us”**

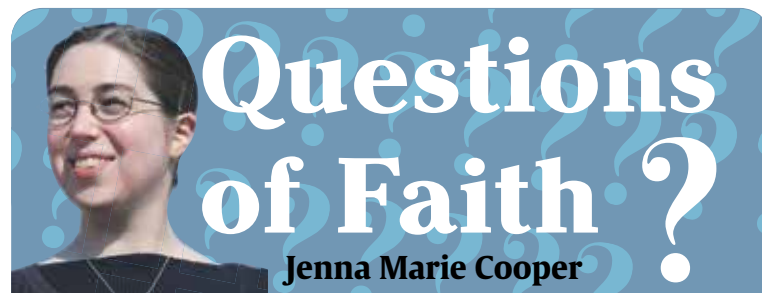
For him, the challenges that Christianity faces today invite us to bring faith into a new space, like Paul did when he brought Christianity out of the confines of the Judaism of his day. Here is how Halik puts it: “I believe that the Christianity of tomorrow will be above all a community of a new hermeneutic, a new reading, a new and deeper interpretation of the two sources of divine revelation, scripture and tradition, and especially of God’s utterance in the signs of the times.

How is this all to happen? That’s the thesis of the book. Chapter after chapter lays out possibilities of how we might more courageously read the signs of the times and rather than water down any of the substance of the Christian faith, let the signs of the times lead us to a deeper understanding of both scripture and tradition, especially so that we might bring together in better harmony the Christ of cosmic evolution with the Resurrected Jesus; and then recognise that they are both not just present in what is explicit in our Christian faith and worship, they are also anonymously present in the evolution of our culture and society.

## Search

Consequently, we need to search for Jesus Christ not just in our scriptures, our churches, our worship services, our catechetical classes, our Sunday schools, and our explicit Christian fellowship, though of course we need to search there. But, like Mary Magdalene, we need to recognise his voice in the caretaker at the cemetery; like the discouraged disciples on the road to Emmaus, when we no longer have the answers, we need to recognise his presence in strangers whose words make our hearts burn inside us; like the doubting Thomas, we need to overcome our doubts about his resurrection by touching his wounds as they are now manifest in the poor and the suffering; like Jesus’ first community who barricaded themselves behind a locked door out of fear, we need to recognise him whenever, inside our huddled fear, something expectedly breathes peace into us; and we need to recognise his presence inside us every time we receive forgiveness and are empowered to begin again.

This isn’t a time of dying, it’s a time of *kairos*, a time when we are being invited to open our eyes in a new way to recognise the Christ who is walking with us in some unfamiliar forms.



# Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper

## Can I attend a non-Catholic wedding?



**Q: Recently my cousin got engaged and is in the planning process of her wedding. She is a baptised Catholic and has received both first Communion and confirmation. Over time my cousin slowly fell away from the Faith. The man she is marrying is a great guy - however, he is not Catholic. From the looks of it, the wedding is not going to be in a Catholic Church and more along the lines of a beach wedding or at a fancy hotel.**

**The wedding will be presided over by what looks to be a friend. I am worried now about the rift that might happen in my family if we decline to go to my cousin's wedding. I also do not want to go against my Catholic beliefs. I guess after all that my question is: What are the 'rules' around attending a non-Catholic wedding of a Catholic and a non-Catholic?**

**A:** Very strictly speaking, the Church does not have the kind of formal ‘rules’ you are looking for on this issue, but the choice of whether to attend a problematic wedding requires serious personal discernment.

For some background, Catholics and only Catholics are required to marry “according to canonical form,” which for the most part means marrying in a Catholic ceremony. If a Catholic neglects to observe canonical form in their wedding, this is not only illicit but also leads to an invalid marriage. And for the purposes of marriage, a person is considered ‘Catholic’ if they were ever baptised Catholic or formally entered the Church at any point, even if they are now no longer practicing.

It is possible, however, for a Catholic who is marrying a non-Catholic to obtain a ‘dispensation from canonical form’, which is special permission from the local bishop to marry in a non-Catholic ceremony. These dispensations are granted on a case-by-case basis for serious pastoral reasons, and it allows for a Catholic to contract a valid marriage even in a non-Catholic context.

If your cousin has been granted a dispensation from canonical form, then as long as the officiant was qualified to witness a civilly valid marriage, there is nothing problematic about the wedding from a Catholic perspective, and there would be no issue with you attending such a wedding. It could be that your cousin did request this kind of dispensation - or if not, perhaps you might suggest she meet with a priest from the closest parish to ask about this as a possibility.

Things are more complicated if your cousin has no intention of requesting a dispensation from canonical form. In that case, the marriage would be straightforwardly invalid.

The Church does not have any stated clear prohibition on attending a wedding you know to be invalid, but there are good reasons why a Catholic may decide in conscience that they could not be present at such a wedding.

One such reason is a basic sense of truthfulness. If a Catholic attends a clearly invalid wedding in the normal festive spirit, they are celebrating something which is, at least objectively ‘on paper’, a falsehood.

Another issue is the potential for scandal. Technically ‘scandal’ doesn’t mean something ‘shocking’; it means causing others to stumble. If a Catholic - especially one with a ministerial or teaching role, like clergy or catechists - were to attend an obviously invalid wedding, this could send the message that it’s not a big deal to ignore the Church’s marriage laws.

At the end of the day, you personally need to weigh the need to avoid causing scandal with potential concerns about family unity, keeping in mind what is truly best for the souls of those involved. I would suggest discussing your situation with a good priest who knows you well in real life.

**❶ Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News.**



# Where love and suffering meet



Entry of Jesus Christ  
into Jerusalem  
by Pietro Lorenzetti

Lk 19:28-40  
Is 50:4-7  
Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20,  
23-24.  
Phil 2:6-11  
Lk 22:14-23:56 or Lk  
23:1-49

## The Sunday Gospel

Fr  
John McCarthy



**T**he dramatic Passion according to St Luke is proclaimed at all Masses throughout the Christian world today.

In a sense you could say that in our physical standing for the Gospel we stand FOR Christ when so many fell away, and we stand with those who suffer this day in Ukraine, Gaza, Syria and elsewhere. It is a gesture of unity and

solidarity as a praying Church with all who suffer.

It is an opportunity for us to reflect on how we can and ought to show compassion, and to perhaps identify with all those - mostly women - who exercised compassion amidst so much noise, confusion and cruelty as the Passion of Christ played itself out. The Passion goes on in the lives

of all who suffer around us - where are we for them?

The Passion evokes so many emotions in us - from sadness to outrage. Our reaction is one thing. What is our response?

As we leave our churches today, tired after the 'Long Gospel' we realise that 'Passion' is where love and suffering meet, and that 'compassion' is our loving accompaniment with those who suffer. As we reflect on all those named individuals who exercised compassion towards Christ may we may be named among those who on the last day Christ will address with the words "You did it to Me."

## Seanmóin Domhnach na Pailme C

Tá scéal dramatúil na Páise dá insint i ngach séipéal ar fuaid an domhain inniu.

Scéal na Páise amháin - níl insint ar an t-Aiseirí fós.

Le fírinne, is fuirist dúinn an Pháis d'aithint inniu nuair a airímid na h-uafáis atá ag tárlúint ar fuaid an domhain go laethiúil ach go háirithe san Ucráin, Gaza, Syria agus áiteanna eile.

Níl ómós dá thabhairt ag an insint seo do Chríost ach amháin ag tosach agus deireadh an scéil inniu.

Is comparáid mór an grá agus cneastacht óna ghasra beag cáirde is creidimhigh seachas an fotharam is buillí is uafás atá i lár an scéil.

Táimid ag seasamh sa séi-

péal inniu ag aithris na páirteanna éagsúla sa scéal - páirt Íosa, páirt an Scéalaí, an Slua agus na Daoine Eile.

Tá an Pháis dá aithris go rialta ar fuaid ár ndomhan agus ár n'Eaglais.

Ach conas tá dá chaitheamh le Corp Críost an Eaglais féin?

Cá bhfuil an éagcothram seo ar Chríost dá imirt inniu - dá imirt ar mo chomharsan?

Ar nós Críost, ar mhothaíos uaigneas, aonrú, daorú, magadh, feall?

Cuimhnímid inniu ar na babhtai sin nuair a thugamar uainn nó go mhothaíomar an cruáltacht sin.

Ach leis, cuimhnímid ar na uaireanta sin gur bronnadh

orainn nó gur bhronnamarna trócaire.

Léiríonn Scéal na Páise an dá chosán sin. Bronnadh an cruáltacht agus an grá ar Chríost ciúin é féin.

Tugann gach lá seans agus ócáidí dúinn chun an Trocaire do chleactadh

inár smaointe, ár bhfocla ár ngníomhartha, agus trinár bpaidreacha.

Nuair a thiocfaidh an Lá Deirneach - Lá an Bhreithiúinis ní bheidh Críost ina thost.

Scrúdóigh sé ár saol agus deirfigh na focla sin "is ormsa a dheinis é sin"

Cad a fheicfigh Sé ar an lá sin?

Sea, tosnáimís arís.

# Who do you say that I am?

Scott P Richert

**T**he idea of union with God is, for most people, alternately attractive and terrifying.

Attractive, because no matter how far we have fallen through the sin of Adam and our own personal sins, we cannot shake the feeling that such union is what we were made for by the very God to whom we desire to be united. Terrifying, because our awareness of those sins reminds us constantly of how far we are from such union, and our attachment to the things of this world makes us wary of the idea that we are called to move beyond it, to embrace with our whole heart and mind and

soul and strength a spiritual reality that we cannot see or touch or taste or even imagine, because our imagination is bound up with the matter of our five senses.

If the created world is good, why would we be called to move beyond it? How do we take the leap into what a 14th-century English author called "the cloud of unknowing," placing ourselves beyond the everyday material of our senses - indeed, beyond reason - in a pure relationship of "naked being" with the God who is, above all else, existence itself?

"There is no name, no experience, and no insight so akin to the everlastingness of God than what you can possess, perceive, and experience in the blind, loving awareness of this

word, is - writes that same author in another work - "*The Book of Privy Counselling*."

The awful (that is, awe-full) mystery that God revealed to Moses from the burning bush is "I AM WHO AM." His name makes it clear that he is being itself, the very ground of our existence. But if he is the ground of our existence, then that union with God that we desire already lies at the heart of who we are. Our work to remove all that keeps us from embracing that union fully.

"He is your being and in him, you are what you are, not only because he is the cause and being of all that exists, but because he is your cause and the deep centre of your being. Therefore... Think of yourself and of

him in the same way: that is, with the simple awareness that he is as he is and that you are as you are."

To the Jews, when Christ uttered the name of God, he blasphemed; but we who have accepted Christ's self-revelation know that Christ was not appropriating to a mere man the name of God but truly is the Son of God. And we, who through our baptism have died with Christ, are united to Christ in his resurrection, and through him to the Father.

"As all men were lost in Adam when he fell from the love which made him one with God, so all those, who, by fidelity to their own path in life, manifest their desire for salvation, will receive salvation through the passion of Christ alone," the

medieval author writes in *The Book of Privy Counselling*.

As Christians, we boldly speak the name of our Savior, and in doing so we both acknowledge him as God and dare to utter the divine name, for the word Jesus means "I AM saves." As St Paul, on the Areopagus, testified to the Athenians, "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28) and the recognition that we are because he is - that I am because "I AM" - should awaken in us the desire to be united with him beyond this passing life.

All that I am I offer you, O Lord, for you are all that I am.

Scott P Richert is publisher for OSV.



# The trial of temptation and the good fight



Jason Conroy

Everyone loves a good 'battle-between-good-and-evil' - luckily, it's not just for the movies, it's for all of us! Like Solzhenitsyn said, the battle line between good and evil runs through every human heart. Our enemy is the devil and his demons; our comrades, the angels and saints; our captain, the Lord. Exciting stuff!

But most of the time, life seems pretty humdrum, no? Well, this battle isn't like one you'd see in Marvel's Avengers: we fight by resisting temptation.

Aquinas says, "The temptation which comes from the enemy takes the form of a suggestion" in our mind. "Now a suggestion cannot be made to everybody in the same way; it must arise from those things towards which each person has an inclination... because vices begin by insinuating themselves into the mind under some plausible but false pretext." Scary stuff! Unsurprisingly, we try to avoid temptation as much as possible - but, strangely enough, there is one way in which we actually face temptation intentionally- just as Our Lord did.

**“By fasting ‘some men, indeed, are brought at once nearer to God; but others find it scarcely more than an occasion of temptation’”**

John Henry Newman writes fascinatingly about Jesus' temptation in the desert, and how we join in His battle against evil by fasting:

"I observe that our Saviour's fast, instead of its simply arming Him against temptation," actually "exposed Him to it... Satan made use of His fast against Himself." Christians should know this, that it will be the same with themselves when they try to imitate Christ

"else they will be discouraged". By fasting "some men, indeed, are brought at once nearer to God; but others find it scarcely more than an occasion of temptation."

We know this from experience, that it's often harder to be virtuous if you're fasting. For starters, when you're hungry, it's easier to become irritable; your mind is a bit more sluggish and can't throw off bad thoughts as easily; you become a bit more listless and inattentive, and it's harder to pray or work with proper concentration. So, our fasting results in conflict with the Devil, just as it did with Jesus.

In His case, as in ours, fasting opened the way to temptation. And, perhaps, this is the truest view of such exercises, that in some wonderful unknown way they open the next world for good and evil upon us and are an introduction to somewhat of an extraordinary conflict with the powers of evil.

"Let it not then distress Christians, even if they find themselves exposed to thoughts from which they turn with abhorrence and terror. Certainly it is a trial, to have ideas secretly suggested within, from which we shrink... but has not One gone before us more awful in His trial, more glorious in His victory?" He concludes that, no matter how low we feel, we 'are still Christ's soldiers, sword in hand, fighting a generous warfare, and knowing that we have that in us which devils tremble at, and flee."

## Sufferings

Whenever we share any of Jesus' sufferings, He also shares with us the power of His grace - so when we get tempted because we're imitating His fast, we also gain His power to rebuke Satan and cast him out! Now, isn't that cool?

We have this confidence in our inner battles because our captain in the fight is Christ. Aquinas gives four great reasons why Christ willingly faced temptation from the Devil:

first, to conquer our temptations by being himself tempted;

second, to warn us that no matter how perfect you are, no one is above struggling against temptations;

third, to teach us how to overcome temptations - an ancient tradition of

the desert fathers involves speaking some chosen Bible verse to yourself every time a bad thought or temptation occurs to your mind, and this is precisely Jesus' strategy against the Devil! - and, fourth, to fill us with confidence in his mercy, since we have a God who was 'tempted in all things like we are, but did not sin,' - we can be sure he'll be sympathetic and help us, no matter our slip-ups, since he knows from experience how hard it is.

**“The true-life stories of Christian heroes resemble our own experience: they fought and won; they fought and lost; and then, repentant, they returned to the fray”**

It's in Christ that we have the victory! I've always been inspired by St Josemaria's words on what our attitude should be: "I am not and never have been a pessimist, for the Faith teaches me that Christ has conquered once and for all. He has given us, as a pledge of His victory a commandment which is also a commitment: 'Fight'."

"Let us not deceive ourselves: in our life we will find vigour and victory, AND depression and defeat. The true-life stories of Christian heroes resemble our own experience: they fought and won; they fought and lost; and then, repentant, they returned to the fray. If we love God and are humble, the defeats will never be very important."

Aquinas agrees: the righteous, "however often they fall, yet rise again, in the end. Consequently, good comes of their falling, because they arise more humble and more enlightened. Since the more careful and humble we are, the more we remain in grace steadfastly."

Because of all these things, let's be like Theodore Roosevelt's "man in the ring": let's fight the good fight, and not be afraid of the possibility of failure: "thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord!"



The Confession, Giuseppe Molteni

## The power of a good Confession

So, when we fall, we can bounce back even stronger than before - and most of all when we go to Confession! Aquinas writes that, in the sacrament of Confession, you can receive "a greater or lesser grace" depending on how repentant you are; you can even 'rise to a greater grace than that which you had before your fall.' Astounding! He goes on: "Considered in itself, [Confession] has the power to bring all defects back to perfection, and even to advance man to a higher state of virtue"

The sacrament of Confession contains all the grace of Christ's passion and death for us. It's so powerful, that it has even been called 'second baptism' by some saints, because one confession can take us from zero to hero - from sinner to saint! - if we're rightly disposed to receive it. It always comes down to our disposition: how much do we love God? How sorry are we for our sins? For most of us, this is a journey of a lifetime, learning how to love God and receive his graces more and more fully. However, there are some concrete factors we can look at, which make our disposition better!

For starters: not sorry for your sins? No

problem! You can pray to have a proper sorrow - not out of wounded pride, but out of love for God and the people you've wronged, and insight into the true ugliness of sin - like Peter's sorrow after his three denials of Christ. Christian sorrow is not about brooding over the past, but is a "moderate sorrow", says Aquinas, that focuses on making things right for the future instead. Of crucial importance is a good honest resolution not to sin again. 'In what does a good resolution consist? In a determined will not to commit sin for the future and to use all necessary means to avoid it', especially avoiding 'the occasions of sin' - that is, staying away from places, people, and things that have led us to sin before, like Matt Talbot steering clear of the pub on his commute after he gave up his alcoholism.

Finally, we should have a mighty faith in the love of God for us in this Sacrament, that He really does 'cast our sins into the depths of the sea' and makes our souls 'white as snow', and that He says to us: 'I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud, and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you.'



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## The confusion of heritage and holiness

I've often wondered if 'Cultural Catholicism' is better than no Catholicism. It may be more a matter of routine and cultural identity than deep faith, but at least people are arguably, however superficially, on the right track, which may eventually lead them to something deeper. As Doris Day sang: 'Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps'.

This becomes especially an issue around First Communion and Confirmation time, when the media turn their attention to the peripherals of the sacramental events. On **The Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk, Thursday), the host asked if all the fuss was worth it – a strange question – depends on what angle you're coming from. We heard from freelance journalist Niamh O'Reilly, whose son had recently made his First Communion. She said that "there is a vibe of the mini wedding about Communions in general," with emphasis on "the merch." She felt social media tended to make things more competitive. Inevitably the haul of money was discussed. Though the son didn't go to a Catholic school and her family are lapsed Catholics she tried to stress to her son that he was making a commitment, and so they've been trying to go to Mass more regularly. They had to make an individual effort and work with the local parish, as he was the



The Newsreader

only one in his class making the sacrament. I was surprised that she felt there was a lot of guilt involved, though this was more about the First Confession. She wondered about the long-term effects of this on the children, but also said "equally it could just go over their heads." More diverse voices, including those of parents fully committed to the faith would have made this a better item.

Cultural Catholicism was also evident on **Son of a Critch** (RTÉ One, Friday). This is a nostalgic comedy show about growing up in Newfoundland, Canada, in the 1980's, but, as I've observed before it's not as

warm or as appealing as the similar *Wonder Years*. Young Mark Critch attends Catholic school and has a history of faking illness to stay at home. But when he volunteers to do a reading at the papal visit of Pope John Paul II, he gets a genuine illness and can't do it. He was interested mainly if not entirely in the TV exposure he'd get – he's an aspiring showman. Archive footage of that papal visit is cleverly woven into the story, though eventually an actor plays the Pope but we see him only from behind.

There's very little real faith in evidence. The cynical grandfather sells tacky papal

souvenirs like Pope-on-a-rope soap and holy water – "so holy you can practically walk on it!". This earns a rebuke from Mark's mother as she calls for respect. The Pope is referred to as "the Catholic Elvis", our old friend Catholic Guilt gets a mention, and the local radio stations vie for the most prominent coverage – 'Tell your biggest sin to win' says one DJ launching a competition. Yet, no direct disrespect is shown to the Pope – we see him blessing the fishing boats and meeting Polish fishermen. His blessing is valued. There are touching family moments as the children learn to appre-

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC One Sunday April 13, 11:30am

Women of the Easter Story: Inspiring hymns and songs, together with uplifting stories of faith from around the UK and beyond.

#### FILM: REDEEMER

EWTN Sunday April 13, 9:30pm

(1959) Dramatic presentation follows Jesus through the last days of His life.

#### REBUILDING NOTRE-DAME: THE LAST CHAPTER

BBC 2 Monday April 14, 9pm

Five years after the fire, Lucy Worsley revisits the cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris as the historic church enters the final stages of its restoration, ahead of its reopening.

ciate their parents more. There is a sourish note, reminiscent of a scene in *Young Sheldon*, when Mark, newly impressed by his mother's determination to get him a papal blessing, says "Who needs faith in God, I have faith in Mom" – a false dichotomy, as if they were mutually exclusive.

Reliving the 80's is also the theme of **The Newsreader** (RTÉ 2, Thursday) back for a third season. This one is based in Australia, and like the previous show interweaves archive footage, e.g. of the Lockerbie plane bombing and the Australian media awards (the 'Logies'). It is set in the cut-throat media world, where

backstabbing seems to be a way of life. Helen is back from some journalism work in the UK, while Dale the newsreader grows in popularity at home. Maybe they will re-kindle their relationship, but Dale is gay and hiding it to avoid messing up his career. Though this is a strong plot element, I didn't feel it was preachy or that I was being hammered over the head with an agenda. The emphasis is on people's humanity, though not always the best of it. It is an adult show, with bad language and some unsavoury elements to do with male prostitution, though it's not graphic, so far.

# Music

Pat O'Kelly



## The colourful and 'in crescendo' art of Ravel

This year celebrates the 150th anniversary of the birth of French composer Maurice Ravel. Born in the Basque country very close to its border with Spain on March 7, 1875, Ravel died in Paris on December 28, 1937.

His mother was also Basque with his father coming from Switzerland. The family was culturally rich, with music playing an important role in the household. The boy Ravel studied piano at the Paris Conservatoire from the age of fourteen, having had lessons at home prior to that. At the Conservatoire, he was greatly influenced by Gabriel Fauré.

Ravel left the Conservatoire in 1895, as musicologist Dr Gabriela Mayer in the current edition of the music magazine *Sound Post* informs us, "to focus on his own way of writing music." But Ravel

returned to the Conservatoire in 1897 this time studying composition with Fauré. It took Ravel some time to establish himself, but his *Pavane pour une Infante défunte* of 1899 and *Jeux d'eau*, written in 1901, brought him a measure of fame. His *String Quartet* of 1903 secured his place in French music.

As Gabriela Mayer also tells us "controversy surrounded the competition for the coveted Prix de Rome composition award at the Conservatoire. Debussy had won it previously and Ravel entered the competition five times unsuccessfully. On the last occasion, in 1905, his piece was eliminated in the first round causing quite a scandal and referred to as *L'Affaire Ravel*."

The finalists were students of a jury member, and the Director had to resign follow-

ing outcries from the public as well as critics who might not even have been fans of Ravel's music but who recognised the unfairness of the elimination.

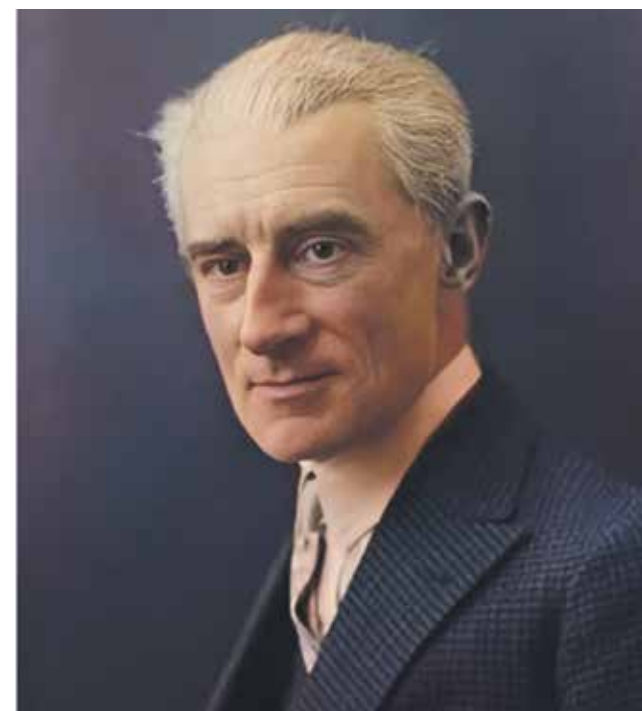
At the Conservatoire Ravel was introduced to the Spanish pianist Ricardo Vines who promoted contemporary music as often as he could and was particularly helpful to Ravel. After WWI pianist Ravel extended his music-making activities to include conducting and undertook extended tours of Europe and the USA in that role.

Ravel's compositions are relatively limited but among them the ballet *Daphnis et Chloé*, commissioned by Serge Diaghilev and completed in 1912, ranks among the pearls of his output. Ravel, who never composed what might be termed 'a symphony' in the classical sense, referred to

*Daphnis et Chloé* as his 'choreographic symphony'. His famous *Bolero*, where a single melody is constantly repeated in a crescendo of colour, was written in 1928 for the Ida Rubinstein ballet company.

Besides his *String Quartet*, Ravel wrote a small number of other chamber works not least two violin sonatas, a violin and cello sonata, a piano trio and his Introduction and Allegro for an ensemble comprising harp, flute, clarinet and string quartet. There are two short operas – *L'Heure espagnole* and *L'Enfant et les sortilège* where the range of musical styles is remarkable.

Again Dr Mayer reminds us that Ravel maintained a distance between his private and professional lives, preferring to keep the spotlight on his music. As he famously stated, "My only mistress is music."



Maurice Ravel





# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## Olympian, Cleric, Brigadista: the Enigmatic Life of Robert Hilliard

**Swift Blaze of Fire - Olympian, Cleric, Brigadista: the Enigmatic Life of Robert Hilliard,** by Lin Rose Clark (Lilliput Press, €18.95 / £14.95)

Fergus O'Donoghue SJ

**O**n February 22 1937, Reverend Robert Hilliard died of his wounds at Castellón, in eastern Spain. It was a singular end to the life of a remarkable Church of Ireland clergyman. There are brief references to Hilliard in published accounts of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War, most recently in Giles Tremlett's comprehensive study, published in 2020.

Lin Rose Clark, one of his many grandchildren, sets out to explore the life and ideas of Robert Hilliard, facing the challenge of the lack of his personal papers, which were destroyed by his widow in her old age.

The eldest of five children, Robert was born into a Killarney-based manufacturing family in 1904. He attended Middleton College, Cork Grammar School and Mountjoy School (in Dublin), before entering Trinity College in 1920. The background to his school and university education was local and national unrest.

### Socialist

By the age of 16, Robert had become a socialist and would soon evolve into an Irish nationalist and an anti-Treatyite. At Trinity, he became a keen debater and boxer. Idealistic far above the average, he never lacked the support of a loving family. Robert competed for the Irish Free State at the Paris Olympics in 1924.

Robert left Trinity, without a degree, in 1925 and, in October 1926, married Rosemary Robins, a beautiful young English woman, who was already expecting their first child. A man of many talents and enthusiasms, Robert had no formal qualifications, so he made a living as a jobbing journalist in London. This drew him into a very macho lifestyle, whilst Rosemary struggled to care for their two small children.

A conversion experience



Fighters at the battle of Jarama

was influenced by the then very important and earnest Oxford Group. In 1930 Robert was back at Trinity College, studying divinity and preparing for ordination. In hindsight, it would have been better if he had chosen the Church of England, because he and Irish Anglicanism were unsuited; the strong social ministry in England would have accommodated him.

**“The outbreak of Civil War in Spain presented an opportunity to serve freedom and defend social justice, so Robert set out for Spain on December 21, 1936”**

Rosemary was a Christian socialist. Ministry in Northern Ireland was not the best assignment for a supporter of Fianna Fáil. Made a deacon in 1931 and ordained a priest the following year, Robert was convinced that political expediency and the refusal to advance social justice meant that the Irish Church did not emphasise Christ's message.

Trying to live on a very small salary, and by now the father of four children, Robert returned to London in 1935, having already lost his house in England through gambling. Perceptively, his granddaughter writes that “he had lost faith in himself rather than in Christianity.”

Living with a girlfriend in London and becoming a member of the Communist Party, Robert lacked political sophistication, but, as ever, he sought a greater cause. The outbreak of Civil War in Spain presented an opportunity to serve freedom and defend social justice, so Robert set out for Spain on December 22, 1936.

### Courage

His courage and his sense of humour, as well as his unusual background, made him very popular amongst his comrades in the International Brigades. Wounded in the Battle of the Jarama, he died after less than two months of service. Being Irish, he would have appreciated his magnificent funeral.

“Swift blaze of fire” is a quotation from Brendan Behan, another frustrated idealist. Robert's idealism is unquestionable, but those close to idealists often pay a high price, so his many changes of course in a short life were very hard for Rosemary and their children.

The lack of personal papers leaves Robert somewhat elusive, so we don't often hear his own views and he is seen here mostly through his family's story. We are told that it's “probable” that Robert took part in the Battle of Cable Street, in October 1936, when Jews, Irish and others fought off a Mosleyite fascist incursion into the East End of London, but we have no

evidence that he was there.

During Robert's lifetime, Irish Catholics and Protestants moved in different circles, so it is not surprising that he seems to have had no Catholic friends or contacts, apart from some cousins in New Zealand.

Undoubtedly, this played a part in his reaction to the Nationalist uprising in Spain. Lin Clark writes of “the oppressive conservatism of traditional Catholicism” in both Ireland and Spain, but this is a false equivalence.

The Second Republic in Spain had made a point of discomfiting Catholics, thereby weakening the many moderate and Republican groups within the Church. Once the Civil War began, Anarchists unleashed appalling savagery on the clergy (killing nearly seven thousand), on conservatives and on church buildings.

Robert Hilliard seems to have noticed none of the crimes of his own “side.” The International Brigades have been praised for their courage, but bad leadership cost them many lives and it is doubtful if they made any difference to the outcome of the Spanish War, nor significantly slowed the rebel advance.

The Reverend Robert Hilliard is portrayed as an attractive personality, who was far ahead of his time. He was a most untypical Anglican clergyman, whose story has been overlooked. Lin Rose Clark has done a fine job of telling us so much about her grandfather.



The idealistic Robert Hilliard as a young man.



The trenches of the Civil War that still scar the face of modern Spain.



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.

## Killester where 'the fields lie sleeping underneath'



Killester Mansion house painted by H. G. Leask.

**Killester: From Medieval Manor to Garden Suburb**, by Joseph Brady and Ruth McManus (Four Courts Press for Dublin City Council, €17.95 / £14.95)

**Peter Costello**

This book is one in a series being created under the auspices of Dublin City Council entitled 'Shaping the Suburbs' - the old city, say within the circle of the two canals, having perhaps absorbed so much popular and academic attention.

Living in Donnybrook, as I do, I am conscious of the fact that until the 1850s Morehampton Road was green fields.

To describe this phenomenon I long ago borrowed an expression recorded by the topographer Gillian Tindall, which she saw cut in the old bricks above a Victorian lintel in Kentish Town: 'The Fields Lie Sleeping Underneath'.

This is true as well of the area of urbanisation described in this book. For James Joyce in one of his earliest poems Donnycarney was still a place of flowery rural delights. This is no longer the case, and this book explains why.

It is arranged in three parts: the first by Ruth McManus deals, with the evolution of Killester from early and medieval times; the second, by Joseph Brady, is on the Killester Garden Village; and the third, again by Ruth McManus, describes the suburbanisation of Killester in the twentieth century. So a lot of ground is covered here, so to speak.

Much of the medieval and early modern history is tied up with the demesne and the manor house. This building survived down to the 1920 when it was burned down in the revolutionary years; the ruins were later razed following the accidental death of a young boy there searching for a strayed goat.

The history of the manor in recent centuries was centred on the family lands of the Newcomens of banking fame. Later these lands passed to the Luscombe family.

The manor house was a rather charming *cottage orné*, nicely placed in the middle of its own extensive lands. But those lands are not lost, for as happens everywhere the old divisions of land and roads impose themselves silently on those who follow after.

The next step for the area, as Prof. Brady recounts, was an outcome not so much of the Irish revolution as the aftermath of the Great War.

**“Ireland was notoriously not as a nation of villages, but of single farming homesteads: so the garden suburb idea did not take root quite as well in the sandy soil of North Dublin”**

It was taken up into *Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust*, which was intended to provide

'the homes for heroes' so often talked about by post-war planners. The development was given some of the shape and style of the English 'Garden Suburb' movement. (The visions and experiments of this movement are accessibly described by Mervyn Miller and A. Stuart Gray, in their book *Hampstead Garden Suburb* from 1992.)

But Ireland was notoriously not as a nation of villages, but of single farming homesteads: so the garden suburb idea did not take root quite as well in the sandy soil of North Dublin.

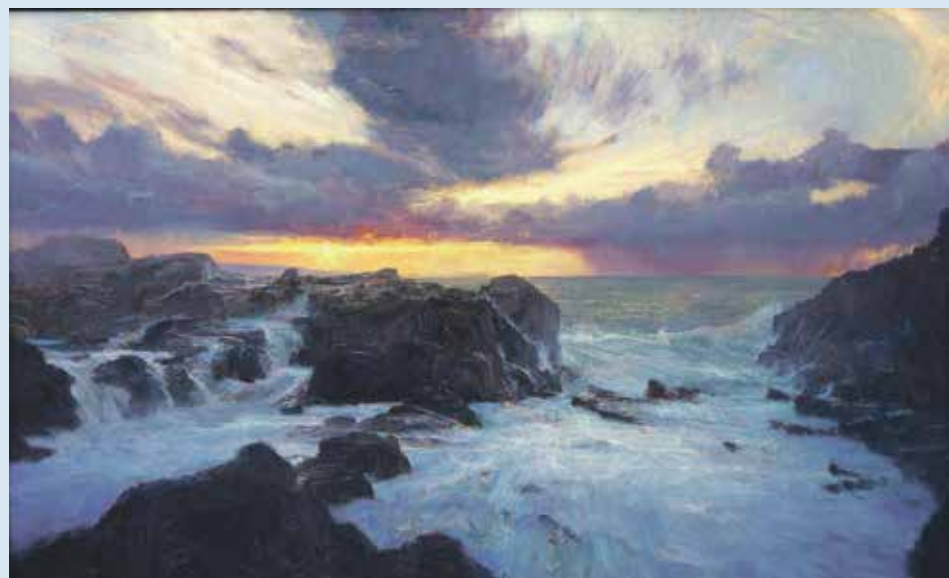
Here again the authors provide a rich mix of social history and architectural development which makes for fascinating reading. The Trust decayed in a mixture of social, political and nationalist agitations. The experiment finally was abolished by legislation in Britain and Ireland in 1980s: society had changed and a different approach was being followed to meet the always ever increasing need for housing in Dublin.

### Emergence

The next stage of development saw the emergence of the area as we see and know it today that is investigated in the third chapter; though clearly it is not actually the end of story, but merely a stage on the way to an unknown future. Ruth McManus describes these changes, but points out that similar changes are going on all around not just Dublin, but many provincial cities and towns, such as Cork, Galway, Tullamore and Gorey.

Those people now moving into the Killester district

## Rugged images from Rathlin Island



14 'Dusk and Heavy Seas, Rue Point'



Kitchen Portrait-Victor.

### Rathlin, Portrait of an Island and other works

by Kenny McKendry, current exhibition at The Gorry Gallery Dublin, 20 Molesworth Street, Dublin 2; contact gorrygallery@icloud.com, or by phone 01-676-319.

**Peter Costello**

The offshore islands of Ireland have long exerted a fascination over many Irish people, with their interest being focused on the islands of our wild western coasts.

However, the new exhibition at the Gorry Gallery, devoted to paintings by Ulster artist Kenny McKendry, presents very different scenes from the north-east coast, startlingly different views in fact. Though the exhibition ends soon, the artist exhibits elsewhere, mostly in London in recent years, and should be looked out for, as his work can be seen in many Ulster collections.



Caledonian Autumn Sun.

McKendry is the only Irish member of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters. The portraits included in this exhibition are mostly of small size, reflecting a close intimacy with the poets, such as Derek Mahon and others, captured. Most striking of all though is a portrait of the artist's daughter (pictured).

There are also evocative paintings of standing stones which evoke an ancient connection with the Neolithic cultures of these northern regions that are so important in Irish and European history. But the artist's eye is concentrated largely on rugged sea-stormed Rathlin and its remarkable geological masses.

It is the sea and the skies of the North in many moods that dominate the show. The gathering dusk captured off Rue Point (pictured) is a powerful example of the painter's minutely observant eye and delicate technique. For McKendry the sea around Rathlin Island is a constantly changing, constantly present experience.

will be delighted to find in this book a record of some nine hundred years or so of continuous changes. We talk in Ireland a great deal about tradition; but that may well be just a neat way of describing the memory of five generations; otherwise change seems to be really the order of all human life.

The book by the way is splendidly illustrated by means of maps which for once are used to relate a large part of the story. One thing does strike me about Killester (and the same is true of a place like Churchtown)

that there was a time when those planning and building these developments made provision of playing fields, schools, shops, a hall or two for community use, and so on. And usually at the heart of it all, a church or two.

### Nowadays

Nowadays the developers of our own day, as at Cherrywood in south Dublin, fill up the space they have with construction that will provide for revenue flow rather than social improvement.

To return for a moment to those 'fields that lie sleep-

ing beneath'. Once those flat acres that stretched away northward to Malahide were some of the country's prime growing land, used to produce for the capital all kinds of fruits and vegetables in their season, especially as I so happily recall, real "New Potatoes". But that is not anymore. Today so called new potatoes come to us from Cyprus or Egypt, in exchange for our Irish meats. Perhaps it is all for the good, but there must be many people who still miss in spring time the lovely taste of real Irish new potatoes.



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goodness is as great as your power.

Amen

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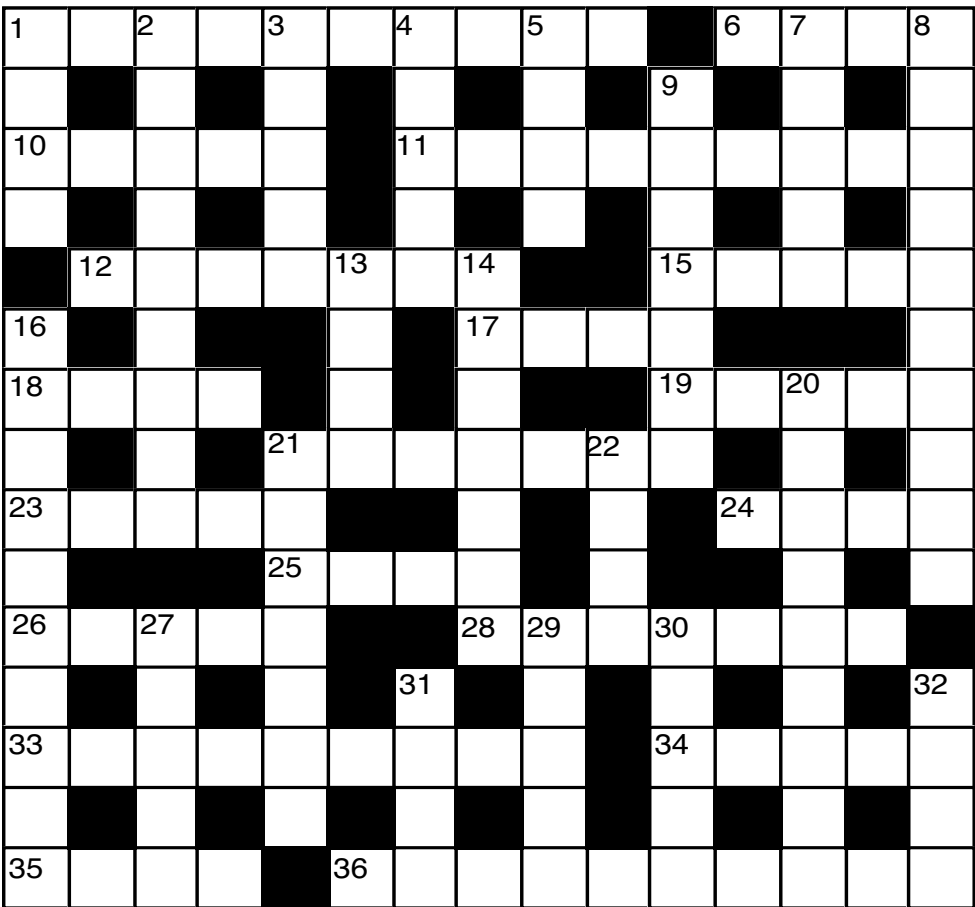
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Crossword

Gordius 710

- Across**  
1 Multidisciplinary sports competitor (10)  
6 Unwanted plant (4)  
10 Devil, fiend (5)  
11 Innocent (9)  
12 You may place this under your pint (7)  
15 Unit of length (5)  
17 Cinema great Ms Hayworth, perhaps (4)  
18 Regretted (4)  
19 Potential dangers (5)  
21 A reverse impeding your progress (7)  
23 Saltpetre (5)  
24 Type of fruit (4)  
25 Duct (4)  
26 Icon or picture (5)  
28 Phase of marine withdrawal (3,4)  
33 This reptile's colour may change to help it blend in (9)  
34 Furze or whin (5)  
35 The older of the Gallagher brothers of Oasis fame (4)  
36 Punctuation mark showing possession, etc. (10)
- Down**  
1 Cowboy slang for townsman (4)  
2 Satisfactory at one's job (9)  
3 Pavarotti was such a singer (5)



- 4 Sign of the zodiac - the Scales (5)  
5 Variety of hardwood (4)  
7 Throw out (5)  
8 Where drugs may be distributed (10)  
9 Scandinavian country (7)  
13 Club used in jousting (4)  
14 Accolade (7)  
16 Order of friars (10)  
20 Where motorists may be caught if thravelling too fast (5,4)  
21 Cut (7)  
22 With which to tidy your hair (4)  
27 No longer asleep (5)  
29 Wedding notices (5)  
30 Striped cat (5)  
31 Jump (4)  
32 Brazilian soccer legend, believed by many to be the game's greatest (4)

SOLUTIONS, APRIL 3

GORDIUS No. 709

Across

- 1 Microscope 6 Boss 10 Volga 11 Criterion 12 Titanic 15 Ounce 17 Afar 18 Apse 19 Music 21 Carcass 23 Adage 24 Anon 25 Real 26 Vault 28 Sceptic 33 Sacrifice 34 Suede 35 Turn 36 Protractor

Down

- 1 Move 2 Celtic Sea 3 Omaha 4 Cacti 5 Pail 7 Orion 8 Sentencing 9 Reforms 13 NASA 14 Cancels 16. Papal visit 20 Sentiment 21 Certain 22 Sole 27 Ulcer 29 Crest 30 Pasta 31 Pier 32 Weir

Sudoku Corner 578

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 577

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

Last week's Hard 577

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



## Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



# Pilgrims of Hope: Living the Jubilee in our parish

**We are now a quarter of the way into the Jubilee Year of Hope.** Our church banners remind us that we are in a special time. Some parishioners have already made the pilgrimage to Rome, and others may go in the months ahead.

But I sometimes wonder: if I asked the average Catholic—perhaps even a regular Mass-goer—what awareness they have of this Jubilee Year, would they know what it's really about?

That's why, in our parish, we're trying to do something concrete during Lent to bring the spirit of the Jubilee to life.

## The roots of Jubilee

The idea of Jubilee comes from the Bible. In Leviticus 25, God commands a sacred year every fifty years. It was a time when:

Debts were cancelled  
The land was allowed to rest  
Slaves were set free

It wasn't just economic policy—it was a sign of God's mercy and justice. It reminded people that everything belongs to God, and that no one should remain trapped in poverty or bondage forever.

That message still speaks today. Many people are burdened—not just

by financial debt, but by emotional and spiritual ones. Some are imprisoned by resentment or weighed down by guilt. The Jubilee calls us to break these chains.

This Jubilee Year of Hope is a time to focus on forgiveness, compassion, and mercy. If we are Pilgrims of Hope, we must walk the path of reconciliation. That's not always easy. Some wounds go deep. Yet Jesus teaches us:

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (Matt 6:12)

Forgiveness doesn't mean pretending the hurt never happened. It means choosing not to let it control us. It's an act of trust in God's justice and mercy.

Think of the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son—he doesn't demand repayment. He runs to

embrace his child, restoring him fully. Could we dare to do the same? Could we release someone from the 'debt' we feel they owe us? Could we experience the freedom that comes with reconciliation?

## A parish initiative for the Jubilee

With all this in mind, we're offering something a little different in our parish this Lent. I suspect the Liturgical or Theological Police might not be entirely comfortable—but it's a risk I'm willing to take!

There are three key movements:

## Invitation and reflection

A homily at all Masses focused on reconciliation, inviting parishioners to prepare to celebrate the Sacrament the following week,

circumstances warranting its use did not exist in the United States. The Bishop of Anchorage in Alaska was not impressed. He said that his diocese was so big that a person would have to take a plane to go to confession. For a mortal sin that is too dangerous and for a venial sin it is too expensive.

during the 4th Sunday of Lent. An Examination of Conscience was made available via the newsletter and website to guide people in reflecting on their relationship with God, with others, and with themselves.

## Celebration of the Sacrament

After each Mass, four priests were available on the 5th Sunday of Lent. This was not a time for long conversations or lists. Having prepared during the week, the act of coming forward to seek forgiveness was itself a powerful gesture. Each priest simply prays the words of absolution with the penitent.

## Living the grace

After receiving absolution, parishioners were invited to do something concrete—a random act of kindness, an effort to heal a relationship, or forgiving a debt of any kind. It's a way to live out the grace received.

By Easter, I'm hoping we'll have a few more Pilgrims of Hope walking among us—freer, lighter, and renewed in heart.

And if you don't hear from me again, well... the Liturgical Police may have caught up with me!

## Palm Sunday evening

This time there will be no flight into Egypt. This donkey has too much to carry, too far.

The shadows wait for me: around the table at Passover, among those in high places, in the condemned cell, on the hill outside.

Fear haunts my waking moments, and I cannot sleep. Why has God forsaken me.

The crowd today is with me, but not for long. They are the powerless ones, the ones who matter, the ones who count are counting.

Time is running out. This time there will be no flight into Egypt.  
Josie Smith



## Sister Hellen appeals for urgent Little Way help for the hungry and sick in East Pokot, Kenya

We have received an urgent request for help from Sr Hellen Chepkirui, Servants of the Sacred Heart in Tangelbei, Kenya, whom we have helped in the past to provide vital aid for school children and groups of people living in poverty and disease. Sister writes to The Little Way Association: "Without your kindness, we would never have been able to save lives and protect families. The East Pokot region is still facing a severe crisis. Terrible drought combined with extreme poverty make it harder for families to afford food and healthcare. Our dispensary is the only source of affordable healthcare services for the local people. Among the most affected groups we target are the children, HIV-positive mothers, TB, diabetes and cancer patients, and those with chronic illnesses. We also target the neglected vulnerable elderly and those who live with various forms of disabilities.

## THE SITUATION IS DIRE AND WE HAVE RUN OUT OF FUNDS

"I have been praying to God to take care of this situation because we have run out of funds. We urgently need medicines in order to help many suffering from water-borne illnesses and also TB and malaria.

## PLEASE WILL YOU HELP SR HELLEN?

"Our founder Father Yermo left us with the motto: God Will Provide. We believe that He will inspire you and your kind benefactors to enable us to help the increased numbers of children, women and men relying on us for relief food and healthcare."

**If you can, please send a donation to The Little Way Association, in order that we can continue to help Sr Hellen and the many other Sisters in Kenya who turn to us for help.**



## LENT WITH ST THERESE

In 1893, St Therese of Lisieux wrote to her sister Celine:

"Jesus wills that we give alms to him as to one poor and needy. He puts Himself as it were at our mercy; He will take nothing but what we give to Him from our heart, and the very least trifle is precious in His sight."

**The three pillars of Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. The Catechism says: "Giving alms to the poor is a witness to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God."**

**In Lent, we can serve Christ and help the destitute with our almsgiving**

The Little Way Association uses the world's network of missionaries to help those in direst need. Priests, Sisters and Brothers work in some of the world's poorest areas and in political trouble-spots. Our policy is never to deduct anything from donations earmarked for the relief of poverty or for missionary work.

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLEWAY ASSOCIATION**  
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR  
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

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We ask for a minimum of €7 or more for each Mass  
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To donate online go to  
[www.littlewaysassociation.com](http://www.littlewaysassociation.com)

**DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.**

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