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Easter converts 'fabulous' for Ireland's parishes

Ruadhán Jones and Chai Brady

Dozens of adults and young people were welcomed into the Church in Ireland over Easter weekend, with parishes praising the "great signs" of hope these conversions bring for local communities.

Many of the new converts are young people who have come to Ireland to make their home and through the "personal witness" from the Faithful have come to love of Christ, *The Irish Catholic* heard.

In Dublin, Ireland's largest diocese, almost 50 people entered the Church during Easter Vigil Masses on Holy Saturday, while 40 converts joined the fold in Down and Connor diocese, with a handful being received in Cork and in Kilalloe.

The witness of the converts is "fabulous" for parishes, Fr Gareth Byrne, moderator for Dublin diocesan curia, told this paper.

"It's fabulous for our local communities, the fact that people – young adults mostly – are not only happy to be in Church, but want to make a lifelong commitment to Church," he said. "For the ordinary person in the pews, it is a great witness."

The new members of the Christian family come from a wide array of backgrounds, with many coming to Ireland knowing nothing of the Christian Faith, Fr Byrne added.

But "they see people for whom the love of God is important and that attracts them," he said, saying it shows the power of personal witness.

"They probably never thought they'd be the kind of people talking about their faith in this way, but suddenly

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He is risen!



Zofia Trzeciak (9) and Isabella Murphy (2) admire the Easter Garden before Easter Sunday family Mass in St Therese Church Mt Merrion, Dublin. Photo: John McElroy. See pages 18-22

EUTHANASIA COMMITTEE'S DREADFUL RECOMMENDATIONS

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Yemen's spiraling food crisis



A child on his father's back returns to their home after receiving cholera/hygiene kit from a distribution point in Al-Salam IDP camp, Dar Saad district, Aden Governorate. Concern Worldwide has commenced working in Yemen in response to spiralling food insecurity and emergency levels of malnutrition among children. Over 18 million people – 55% of the country's population – are in need of humanitarian assistance, with one analysis showing a 12% rise in the numbers experiencing acute food insecurity in parts of the country. Photo: Ammar Khalaf/Concern Worldwide

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Irish missionary priest says clergy must do more in tackling scourge of child sexual abuse

Brandon Scott

Fr Shay Cullen, a Columban missionary priest in the Philippines for the last 55 years, has revealed that according to Unicef reports, seven million Filipino children are abused every year and get no help.

Additionally, one child in every three are victims of sexual abuse. Fr Cullen has been a longstanding advocate for children's rights in the coun-

try and has said clergy must place themselves in the shoes of the child instead of sometimes siding with the alleged abuser.

"Many people are aware of child abuse and many suffer in silence," he said. "They should help other victims and become advocates of child rights. That will be healing for them, too."

"The clergy is wrong for defending the abuser and silencing the victim. That

abuser will abuse many more children in his lifetime for sure. They ignore the words of Jesus who said about child abusers that a large millstone should be tied around their necks and they be thrown into the deep sea. They that deny, cover up child abuse and leave abusers to continue in a diocese."

Fr Cullen went on to say that bishops need to prioritise the alleged victims before the reputation of the Church

as it's what the gift of faith compels us to do. "Bishops have misplaced fear of the imagined shame and disgrace clerical child abuse brings on them, on the priesthood, on their dioceses and on the Church and the loss of donations," he said.

"They ought to be ashamed that they covered up for an abuser and failed to protect the child-victims. They need to have true faith, believe that acting justly will undo evil."

Bishop Doran: Faith is not dependent on public policy but trust in Christ alone

Staff reporter

Making an appeal in a culture that is "changing rapidly", Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran, urged Catholics to not be dismayed at a growing societal attitude that openly disregards faith and the Church but to instead centre our focus on the fundamentals of what we believe in and the Church's provisions if we want to be truly nourished.

Speaking at the Easter Vigil in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Sligo last Saturday, Bishop of Elphin

Kevin Doran conceded that there may be some truth to the feeling that our faith is being undermined in the current culture, but according to him this is only a partial truth.

"Many of us, in recent years, have come to feel that our culture is changing rapidly and that our faith is being undermined," he said. "There may be an element of truth in that, but I don't think it is the most helpful way to look at things. It is, at most, only a part of the truth."

"Another way of looking at it is that, perhaps our faith is not as strongly

rooted as we thought it was, now that some of the institutional supports have been taken away.

"Our faith does not, in the final analysis, depend on public policy, nor is it determined by social media. It depends on Jesus Christ who has risen from the dead and who lives forever. It also finds essential nourishment in the community of the Church because it is together that we are the Body of Christ. It is through our prayers, our sacramental life and through the witness of our Christian living, that we encourage and strengthen one another."

Easter converts 'fabulous' for Ireland's parishes

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it becomes important to talk about Jesus and Church and the impact on their lives – they become missionaries," said Fr Byrne.

Despite negative news around the Church and increasing secularisation, people of "great commitment and sincerity" are making the choice to join the Church, Deacon Martin Whyte, attached to St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast, told *The Irish Catholic*.

"It shows the Holy Spirit is

alive in the Church and in the world. We get so swamped with negative news but you don't hear this sort of thing happening," he said.

Almost 40 people entered the Church in the diocese of Down and Connor this year, with 20 already signed up to cross the Tiber next year, Deacon Whyte said.

"They are people of great commitment and sincerity, who as adults – nobody is forcing them to do this – are making a choice to make

a commitment to journey towards God, journeying towards the Church," the deacon continued.

Following Christian tradition, adults catechumens and candidates to be received into full communion are received into the Church during the Easter Vigil Mass.

Four young men and women, all members of the Brazilian community in Dublin, were baptised by Fr Severino Pinheiro OFM Cap. during Mass in St Mary of the Angels, Church Street.

"It gives people hope," Fr Pinheiro said, "it is always a great sign. They are young

people, they are interested in the Faith."

The Brazilian community saw a "great crowd" for the Easter celebrations, Fr Pinheiro added, saying "always the number is increasing".

In Ennis Cathedral, Co. Clare, an Anglican family were received into the Church, receiving Confirmation and First Communion during the Easter Vigil, Fr Tom Ryan told this paper.

The Boulle family are a "little sign in terms of hope that faith is still attractive to people", Fr Ryan said.

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Sad scenes at Derry parade show children 'groomed' for violence – peace priest

Ruadhán Jones

The scenes of young people carrying petrol bombs during a parade in Derry on Easter Monday were "sad and shocking", highlighting how the young are "groomed" for violence, a prominent peace priest has warned.

Police said they saw evidence of youths preparing petrol bombs before an illegal dissident republican parade in Creggan, Co. Derry, on March 31.

A van was set on fire and petrol bombs were reportedly thrown at journalists as several hundred people marched, led by masked men in paramilitary-style uniforms.

Fr Martin Magill, a priest who has played a prominent role in peace-building efforts in the North, told *The Irish Catholic* the events at the parade shows "we can't rest on our laurels" while young people in the North are being "groomed" for violence by their elders.

"People are still being shocked by these scenes, seeing children and young people involved yesterday afternoon, throwing petrol bombs – it's shocking, it's really sad and it left me thinking, 'oh no'," said Fr Magill.

Fr Magill, a member of Stop Attacks, a grassroots organisation dedicated to eradicating paramilitary style violence, said that young people are being

actively coerced into criminal behaviour.

Referencing a Stop Attacks statement describing the activity as "grooming" and "child abuse", the Belfast cleric said he believes the words accurately describes what is taking place.

"It recognises the coercive control by adults who will play some part in facilitating young people to get access to petrol [for bombs] and assist with that," Fr Magill said.

"There's serious issues around that," he said, adding that it is difficult to prove there was some sort of grooming going on.

The events at Monday's march came after a study from the North's Depart-

ment of Justice suggested the influence of paramilitary activity is waning.

The proportion of respondents to the North's Safe Community Telephone Survey who felt paramilitary activity was widespread in their area fell from 15% in 2020/21 to 11% in 2022/23.

Fr Magill praised the work of youth clubs and youth leaders, politicians and police to tackle the scourge of paramilitary activity in the North's communities.

However, he also noted that the number of paramilitary style attacks rose between 2022 and 2023, saying that in addition to the scenes in Creggan, this shows "there is a lot of work still to do".

Asylum seekers in tents will happen again warns Catholic charity

Staff reporter

Unaccommodated asylum seekers living in "unacceptable and shocking living conditions" will be repeated if the Government doesn't begin an emergency response, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Ireland have warned.

"The time for action is now" if Ireland wants to avoid a repeat of the "shocking, squalid and unsafe" living conditions 150 asylum seekers were living in outside the International Protection Office (IPO) in Dublin, JRS Ireland's national director Eugene Quinn warned.

"Immediate action and a whole of Government response is required to prevent potentially an ever-greater humanitarian crisis from developing on the streets of Dublin and in other cities in Ireland," said Ms Quinn.

"The Government must take control and create the conditions that allow people seeking protection to live with dignity."

At the end of January 2024, JRS Ireland was contacted for assistance by a group of eight asylum seekers who were homeless and were living in tents near the IPO, the charity said in a statement.

"From that time JRS has supported a rapidly growing settlement of asylum seekers living in tents in the alleys behind the IPO through weekly outreach, accompaniment, and the provision of vouchers to help meet their basic material needs," a spokesperson said.

Welcome to the family!



Fr Severino Pinheiro welcomes Gabriel da Silva Vieira to the Catholic Church during Easter Vigil Mass in Our Lady of the Angels, Church Street, Dublin, on Holy Saturday, March 30.

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Faith of foreign nationals an example to Irish – Limerick priest

Chai Brady

A priest based in Co. Limerick cathedral has praised the Faith of foreign nationals who he says can “be an example to people in Ireland”.

Fr Leo McDonnell of St John's Cathedral, Limerick warned against anti-immigrant sentiment in the country following large numbers

of Ukrainians fleeing war and other asylum seekers from across the world.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* Fr McDonnell said that while numbers of parishioners in attendance this Easter have recovered since Covid it's still “nothing compared to years ago”. However, he said: “You have an awful lot of foreign nationals coming in and if you go to any church now

on a Sunday you'll find people from African countries, the Philippines and more in the pews and years ago you wouldn't see them at all. A lot of people from other countries, they could be working as nurses, doctors, any walk of life, you find them now coming to churches.

“People might give out about too many foreign nationals coming into the

country but without them you wouldn't have any construction, the hospitals couldn't operate, the nursing homes couldn't operate. It's all very fine people giving out but by God there is such a need, we have full employment – there is plenty of work for all the foreign nationals.”

Fr McDonnell added: “There's a fair amount of con-

struction going on in Limerick now and none of that would be taking place if we were just depending on the Irish population alone.

“The hospitals would not operate if all the foreign nurses just walked out of the hospital, you wouldn't have a hospital, it's a simple as that, and that's not just here in Limerick but all over the country”.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Peterson joins the Church

Tammy Peterson, wife of the well-known social commentator Jordan Peterson, was received into the Catholic Church this Easter at Holy Rosary Church in Toronto.

Ms Peterson's faith was formed through praying the rosary while she struggled against a rare form of cancer, she told CNA.

Her husband Jordan Peterson spoke about Easter as the “core story of humanity” hours before his wife entered the Church.

“It's the core story of humanity in some fundamental sense – that in the darkest places, what's of most value can be found,” he told Irish journalist Colm Flynn on *EWTN News In Depth*.

Mr Peterson noted that he was “not going to delve into theological matters” but that “speaking strictly psychologically,” the Easter story describes “the worst that life and death can throw at us,” but then offers a “promise.”

Archbishop Farrell: We must think more clearly about role of priesthood

Speaking about the vocations crisis and the “changing vision of priesthood” in Dublin's Pro Cathedral on Holy Thursday, Archbishop Dermot Farrell said many of the pastoral approaches and strategies that worked for the “Church in this land over the last two centuries no longer work in the 21st Century”.

Addressing the congregation, the leader of the country's largest diocese said: “None of us needs to be told how our Church is going through a wilderness time.

“In life, crises bring people to a sense of reality – in church life it is no different,” Dr Farrell said, adding that the constraint of numbers was “bringing us to see more clearly what lies at the heart of priesthood in our tradition”.

African witchcraft used to enslave people in Ireland, expert warns

Ruadhán Jones

African witchcraft is being used to “manipulate and control” women and men who are trafficked for Ireland, an expert told a webinar hosted by religious orders.

Juju, a belief system deeply rooted in parts of Africa, is used to facilitate the “terrible crime”

of human trafficking to Ireland, according to David Lohan an expert in modern slavery.

“What I'm talking about may seem on the extraordinary front, but in some ways it's not really extraordinary to the issue of human trafficking at all, it's just another characteristic of what happens,” said Mr Lohan during a webinar organised by the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles (OLA) and the

Society of African Missionaries (SMA).

“What we are talking about here is no obscurity, it's a major organised crime, a major criminal enterprise, it involves a series of people working in tandem,” he added.

The webinar revealed a “chillingly efficient system of exploitation”, a spokesperson for the OLAs said, “a network of recruiters, Juju priests, intermediaries, and racketeers oper-

ating with chilling efficiency and ruthlessness”.

“We were introduced to the dark underbelly of human trafficking, and how the exploitation of cultural practices, specifically Juju – a belief system deeply rooted in some West African countries – was highlighted as a tool for manipulation and control,” the spokesperson said.

See pages 14-15.

‘We live in a very fragile and troubled world’ – Primate

Staff reporter

The Primate of All Ireland has called on the faithful not to forget the Good News of the risen Christ despite “the seemingly intractable problems at home surrounding addiction, housing and migration”.

In his Easter message

Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh hailed the late sculptor Imongen Stuart, who died last week, and made a bronze crucifix for the sanctuary of St Patrick's Cathedral in Armagh which she called the ‘Tree of Life’.

Archbishop Martin said: “Unlike the traditional crucifix it shows Christ exalted – his suffering is over; he is the now

risen saviour of all; his body surges upwards; his arms not only embrace all of humanity but they are raised up to heaven, pointing us to God.

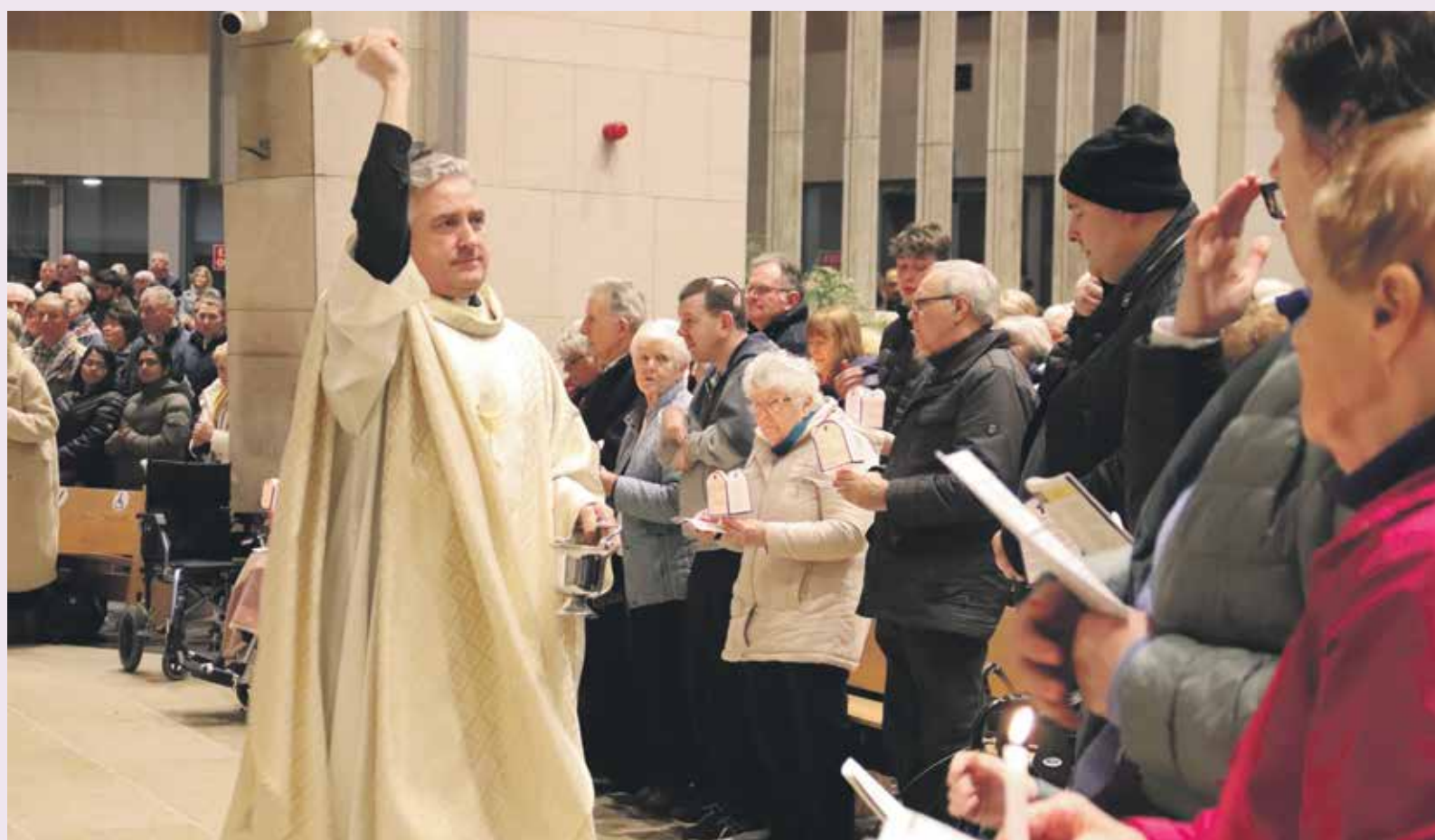
“The Tree of Life crucifix in St Patrick's Cathedral unites the suffering of Good Friday with the new life of Easter Sunday. It is a vision of hope. The tree of death is the tree of victory.

“We are especially conscious this Easter that we live in a very fragile and troubled world. From Gaza to Ukraine, to the seemingly intractable problems at home surrounding addiction, housing and migration, at times we can be so overwhelmed by the suffering and negativity that we feel stuck in the sorrow of Good

Friday, unable to experience the joy and hope of Easter Sunday,” he said.

“In these moments, it is worth remembering that the cross of Christ is the Tree of Life. Christ's suffering and resurrection is our hope and our inspiration to keep on binding up hearts that are broken, and bringing Good News to a wounded humanity.”

An Easter blessing...



Fr Richard Gibbons, rector of Knock Shrine, Co. Mayo, blesses the gathered Faithful with Easter Holy Water on Holy Saturday Night. Photo: Sinead Mallee.

Lessons in patience on a Jordan journey

Two things especially struck me on my recent visit to Jordan: one was the respect, even reverence, accorded to Christian holy places. And the other was the way in which the Muslim people in Jordan observed their own Ramadan traditions.

Fasting

Most people my son Ed and I encountered when travelling in this peaceful, stable and welcoming Middle East country were fasting from dawn until dusk (and will continue to do so until April 10, which marks Eid). This means no food or water all day long, despite the increasing length of the bright spring days, and sometimes the increasing warmth of the temperature. On Fridays, too, time is made during a working day for prayer.

"Do you find the fasting difficult?" I asked our guide, taking us around the Roman ruins of Amman's Citadel. He was a middle-aged man of genial temperament and Palestinian background. "Firstly, you get used to it," he said. "And the practice makes you patient."

We had an allocated driver, Sayeed, who uncomplainingly kept at the wheel



Mary Kenny

“He never showed any signs of being cross or frustrated by pangs of hunger he must have had”

all day, without any nourishment. On Friday, he was given time to pray. He never showed any signs of being cross or frustrated by pangs of hunger he must have had. We felt somewhat embarrassed when halting at a delicious Lebanese restaurant to scoff our lunch, but we did it anyway.

“Let’s practice patience ourselves. And let’s not give the impression that Christians are insensitive or disrespectful”

Later, faced with an evening meal, we sat at table, and Ed insisted we wait until sundown when the Muslims people could eat (as the res-

taurant staff were given time to pray before mealtime.) "Let's practise patience ourselves. And let's not give the impression that Christians are insensitive or disrespectful to others." So we awaited until 7.41pm before slaking thirst or reaching for the delicious serving of creamy hummus and stuffed vine leaves.

Lessons

During this lesson in patience, I thought of some of the folks back home who complain if they can't readily have a pint of stout on Good Friday (or indeed my own petty annoyance if I don't get what I want just when I want it).

Incidentally, alcohol is not illegal in Jordan, but even international hotel restaurants often choose not to serve it during Ramadan. Another lesson in acceptance, and patience.



People visit a Christmas market in the city of Fuheis near Amman, Jordan. Photo: OSV News/Muath Freij, Reuters

Hope that peace prevails

The very spot on the Jordan river where Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist, is both deeply moving, and strikingly simple. It's known and signposted just as "The Baptism Site" of Bethany beyond the Jordan (not too far from the town of Madaba, which has the largest population of Christians.)

It is extraordinary to reflect that from this low-earth spot by a modest river surrounded by delicate tamarisk trees, the entire mission of Christianity began. On one side of this now diminished river – lessened today for want of rain – is

the Kingdom of Jordan; just a few metres across, the Israeli flag flutters.

Authenticity

An Italian Franciscan and archaeologist, Michele Piccarillo (1944-2008) is credited with establishing the authenticity of the Baptism site's location. He uncovered precious mosaics dating from the early Christian period which provide evidence of the site's history. Prof Piccarillo's work drew the admiration of Jordan's King Abdullah, who has made the Baptism site a centre of royal protection.

The Director-General in

charge, Rustom Mkhjian – a Jordanian of Armenian Christian heritage – told us how much the royal family reveres this holy place. He would like to see it as a world centre for peace, and ecumenical relations between the Abrahamic faiths.

The nearby Gaza-Israeli war has been devastating for Jordan, which has accepted many refugees, while its tourism is greatly damaged. Yet, in contrast to some of the more vehement demonstrations on our streets, I heard no direct expressions of hatred against Israel; just ardent hopes that peace would soon prevail.

There is so much to see in Jordan – great antiquities, magical deserts (where movies like *Dune*, *The Martian* and *Lawrence of Arabia* have been filmed), the eerily fascinating Dead Sea and the stunning phenomenon of Petra, the archaeological site dating back to 300 BC. Our Bedouin guide invoked romantic tales of great caravans of 2,000 camels

travelling from Yemen to Petra, trading in spices, and yes, gold, frankincense and myrrh.

The welcoming and warm-hearted Bedouin we met reminded me of the way Irish country people used to be – unspoilt, with a strong ethos of hospitality.

Indeed, some years ago, my cousin Brendan's life was saved by the Bedouin. He had gone motoring in the desert, but his vehicle

ground to a halt as he realised he was out of petrol. He was completely stranded, without food, extra water or shelter.

He surely would have perished but for a group of Bedouin who rescued him, towed him to safety, purchased petrol and liquids for him and refused to take any money for their endeavours. It was a point of honour to help the stranger.

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Gender and children: why is the Government trying to suppress questions?



Young people confused about their identity should not be weaponised in an ideological war, writes **Michael Kelly**

When ideas that people who think of themselves as socially progressive are challenged or questioned, those with a more moderate view are often accused of engaging in so-called 'culture wars'. Even

asking a question can now lead the questioner to being accused of 'weaponising' an issue. As if asking questions about huge issues in our society could be a bad thing.

That's how 'group think' works – it succeeds in 'othering' people with different views, making sure the herd knows that they are outsiders and ensuring that the outsiders themselves are never entertained, or 'platformed' as the modern parlance puts it.

Boycott

Media organisations who think it might be a good idea to hear different perspectives on controversial issues, will soon find themselves victims of well-organised campaigns of harassment and boycott.

That's what happened in 2021 when the students' union in Trinity College Dublin – once thought of as a place of rigorous inquiry and fierce debate – decided to boycott *The Irish Times* because that newspaper, whose progressive credentials no-one would question, published an article from a therapist raising some concerns about prescribing puberty

blockers to children.

You see, while those who ask questions are accused of weaponising issues, it is, in fact, the radical progressives who weaponise everything by shutting down questions and debates and insisting that there are some things that cannot even be discussed.

“The French Academy of Medicine recently said that the growing cases of transgender identity in young people are often socially mediated”

Gender was one such issue, up until very recently. Radical trans activists insisted that the only approach to gender-questioning children was to 'affirm' that questioning. So, a little boy who has a gender identity crisis and thinks he is a little girl should be almost unquestionably facilitated in this, including prescribing puberty blockers



that will stop him developing as a male.

It's interesting to note that liberally minded campaigners in Ireland often point to the Nordic countries as societies worth following. Frequently, you'll hear them speaking at conferences or in the media citing examples from Denmark, Norway and Sweden as models that Ireland should follow.

When it comes to puberty blockers, they are oddly silent on the fact that Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark have recently moved away from a gender-affirming approach to young people.

Most recently, the National Health Service (NHS) in England and Wales banned puberty blockers for children following an independent review.

The French Academy of Medicine recently said that the growing cases of transgender identity in young people are often socially mediated and it's not possible to distinguish a durable trans identity from a passing phase of adolescent development.

Controversial

In Britain, the controversial Tavistock Clinic was also closed after an independent review found that it had adopted an "uncritical" and "affirmative" approach to fast-tracking what are in many cases vulnerable children down a route of irreversible medical intervention.

In 2021/22, there were over 5,000 referrals, compared to just under 250 a decade earlier.

Up to 240 Irish children had been referred to Tavistock by the Health Service Executive (HSE) before it was ordered to close. Of the Irish referrals, 58 were over the age of 16 while 182 were 15 years or younger. Twice as many girls as boys were referred.

One person who has been sounding the alarm bell on

this is former Justice Minister Charlie Flanagan.

Mr Flanagan is no conservative reactionary. He enthusiastically supported both same-sex marriage and the legalisation of abortion. Radical progressives will find it hard to dismiss him.

He has asked Health Minister Stephen Donnelly to set up an independent inquiry into the treatment of Irish children.

Mr Flanagan is the first senior Irish politician to raise concerns about the treatment of children in gender services. He has consistently written to both the HSE and Minister Donnelly, but on Easter Monday took to social media to say that despite 18 months of trying to get answers on the issue from the executive and the minister "they don't want to listen".

“I'm concerned at what has been an ideological response or an attempt to suppress a debate on a matter of public interest”

"Turning a blind eye and silence is just not sufficient in these circumstances," he earlier said on X, formerly twitter.

Mr Flanagan believes there has been an attempt to "suppress" discussion about the care of children with gender dysphoria.

"I recognise the serious and delicate nature of the issue and I'm concerned at what has been an ideological response or an attempt to suppress a debate on a matter of public interest," said Mr Flanagan.

Just last week, consultant endocrinologist at St Vincent's University Hospital in Dublin, Prof. Donal O'Shea, said the widespread prescribing of

puberty blockers for children with gender questions should stop.

Evidence increasingly shows that the effects of puberty blockers are irreversible and if someone changes their mind later, they will not be able to fully function in their own gender as an adult.

It is a shocking idea that young and impressionable people who are coming to terms with who they are and dealing with racing hormones, are regularly prescribed medications that will affect their whole lives.

Going on the evidence, it would appear that a lot of gender questioning young people are, in fact, gays or lesbians struggling with their sexual orientation. Another large cohort are autistic or have mental health issues.

Reliable

The most reliable estimate that I can find indicate that approximately 0.005% of men and 0.002% of women will be diagnosed with gender dysphoria. Clinicians characterise this as "the distress a person experiences due to a mismatch between their gender identity – their personal sense of their own gender – and their sex assigned at birth".

That means that somewhere between 140-350 adults on the island of Ireland are living with gender dysphoria. That is not a negligible number of people, and they deserve care and support.

However, Stephen Donnelly's silence on the treatment of Irish children in controversial circumstances in Britain should not be allowed to go unchallenged. The minister and HSE should also not be allowed to ignore the science. Young people experiencing doubts about who they are, deserve more than being pawns in an ideological battle where trans activists want to weaponise their confusion.

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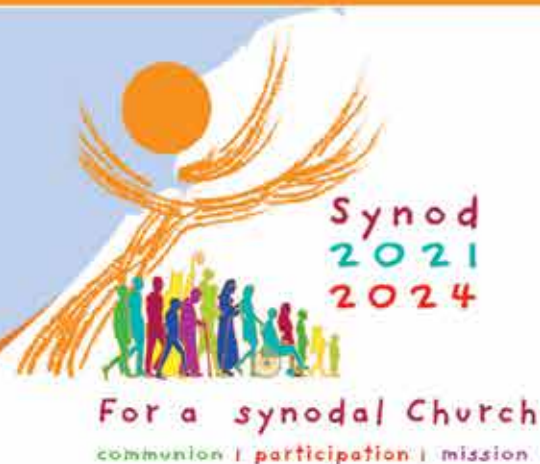


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Scotland's hate crime laws stem from self-loathing



Police Scotland's 'hate monster' is coming to gobble up Christians, writes **Ian Dunn**

The key difference between Scotland and Ireland can be expressed as a number: 270. That is how many more hours of sunshine you get annually in the Irish capital compared to Scotland's largest city.

While the Irish bask in being 200 miles closer to the Equator, us Scots squat in the dark. And the dark breeds self-loathing. A quarter of Scots are on antidepressants. This is the context in which you need to understand our controversial hate crime laws, which just came into force.

Irish politicians are currently debating whether to adopt similar legislation. The Scottish version makes it a crime, punishable by up to seven years in prison, to behave in an "abusive" manner "intended to stir up hatred" against certain protected groups.

Dwelling defence

It also abolishes the old 'dwelling defence' that in the past would have stopped the police from investigating private conversations in the home.

It is no coincidence that this drive to eradicate the undesirable elements of the human heart comes in one of the most secular countries in Europe.

Deprived of the metaphysical, the great and good of Scotland have decided a

legal approach is the best way to solve a spiritual problem.

The Catholic bishops of Scotland are naturally wary and have argued the bill could lead to censorship of Catholic teaching if documents such as the Bible or the Catechism of the Catholic Church are deemed "inflammatory material".

The bishops also noted that pronouncements of Catholic teaching on sex and gender "might be perceived by others as an abuse of their own, personal worldview and likely to stir up hatred".

The Catholic Parliamentary Office said that it remained "deeply concerned" by proposed drafts of the section of the bill relating to freedom of expression, especially a lack of protections for the expression of the Christian view of sexual orientation and transgender identity.

“Almost 1,000 reports of anti-Catholic abuse have been recorded by police between 2019-2021”

Granted, there is a provision meant to protect religious freedom of expression, stating that "behaviour or material is not to be taken to be threatening or abusive solely on the basis that it involves or includes ... discussion or criticism relating to, or expressions of antipathy, dislike, ridicule, or insult towards ... religious beliefs or practices."

It is a small irony that this is likely there, as a sop to Scotland's history of virulent anti-Catholicism. Even now, almost 1,000 reports of anti-Catholic abuse have been recorded by police between 2019-2021.

Yet even the religious criticism fails to see the spiritual emptiness behind these laws. It's the actions



of Police Scotland that show this more clearly.

They've pledged to investigate every hate crime complaint they receive, even though last week the force said a lack of resources means it would have to ignore some low-level crimes, including theft.

Campaign

To accompany this, Police Scotland launched its 'Hate Monster' campaign, in which a bright, red cartoon monster "represents that feeling some people get when they are frustrated and angry and take it out on others," the campaign webpage reads.

"The Hate Monster loves it when you get angry. He

weighs you down until you end up targeting someone, just because they look or act different to you."

The campaign claims that young men aged 18-30 "are most likely to commit hate crimes," who may have "deep-rooted feelings of being socially and economically disadvantaged, combined with ideas about white-male entitlement".

“Go on, be good to yourself. Don't feed the Hate Monster”

The Hate Monster campaign website reads: "Committing hate crime is strongly linked to a range of risk factors including economic deprivation, adverse childhood experiences, substance abuse and under-employment. Those who grow up in abusive environments can become addicted to conflict."

The campaign warns the Scottish public that committing a hate crime "doesn't make you feel better", and that it "can really mess up your life in other ways too,

like when it comes to things like finding a job".

"Go on, be good to yourself. Don't feed the Hate Monster," it ends.

In the new Scotland, the idea that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven is firmly in the history books.

Instead, it is the poor, God help them, who are liable to give in to temptation and 'do a hate'. And they even have their own bogeyman to lead them into temptation.

Self-loathing

Ultimately, the Hate Monster is a child of Scots' own self-loathing. The deep-rooted Calvinist suspicion that somewhere, somehow we are up to no good and need punishment for it.

Stripped of any of Protestantism's more uplifting features, of course. In the northern dark, our instinct is still to punish others for our self-loathing.

This wide-ranging legislation seems intended to convince us that silence is the always the best policy. That difficult, challenging conversations are not worth

having and it's best to bite the tongue and keep your head down.

“There is, after all, something faintly Calvinist about Cancel culture, and the modern suspicion of forgiveness”

The thing is the world is more Scottish than Irish these days. Calvinism may have few adherents, but some of its worst aspects, the embrace of shame, the fear of the self, survive in more modern forms.

There is, after all, something faintly Calvinist about Cancel culture, and the modern suspicion of forgiveness.

In contrast, the unofficial Irish motto 'better to ask forgiveness than permission' speaks to a people who understand on a fundamental level the nature of sin and the possibility of redemption.

When considering your own hate crime legislation, hopefully, those instincts will triumph over more Scottish ones.

“This wide-ranging legislation seems intended to convince us that silence is the always the best policy. That difficult, challenging conversations are not worth having and it's best to bite the tongue and keep your head down”

Simon Harris, the ghost of Leo Varadkar and a party in its death throes



Dr Eoin Lenihan

It is now a familiar story. A young media darling in a rush to the top is installed as the leader of Fine Gael and the country – without the electorate having a say in the matter.

Mirroring Leo Varadkar's meteoric rise to Taoiseach, Simon Harris is set to become Ireland's youngest ever leader at the age of 37. Media portrayals burst with youthful virility, energy and potential. However, energy aside, the public has no idea what the new man foisted upon them stands for.

In July 2017, then new Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, graced the cover of *Time Magazine*. In an accompanying interview he separated himself from Fine Gael's past and the traditional European Christian Democrat model by laying out a new vision for Ireland.

"We... side with the right on economic issues, in that we are for balanced budgets and free trade and open market economies. Perhaps we are slightly to the left on other issues, such as the role the government has on redistributing wealth, in personal freedoms... [we] believe migration on balance is a good thing if it is managed properly, and believe that multilateralism is the best way to solve problems."

Vision

While the electorate had no say in this new direction for Ireland, at least he had a vision. In the years that followed, Varadkar dragged the party and nation hard-left socially, courting taxpayer funded NGOs and a compliant national media to cultivate consensus for his social agenda.

Varadkar publicly came out as a gay man in support of the 2015 same sex marriage referendum, stating that he wanted to "be an equal citizen in my own country".

The backslaps he received nationally and internationally for coming out, and the wall of NGOs he surrounded himself with while in power, emboldened him to overturn Ireland's abortion ban, allow same-sex parents put both of their names on the birth certificate of a child born via surrogacy and provide amnesty for some 17,000 illegal immigrants resident in Ireland.

With Fine Gael's economic policy largely on auto-pilot by



Ireland's new Taoiseach Simon Harris dons a virtual reality headset. Photo: Leon Farrell/Photocall Ireland

simply continuing Fianna Fail's Celtic Tiger 12.5% corporation tax model, Varadkar's reign was defined by his radical social policy.

The post bailout economic boom allowed Varadkar to import massive numbers of low-skilled foreign workers from both the EU and further afield while word also got out that Ireland was a soft touch for immigration control and deportation.

By 2022 almost one million – or one in five – people in Ireland were foreign-born. But not all migrants are equal.

“23.8% of unemployed individuals on social welfare were non-Irish. An astonishing 83.3% of Roma were unemployed”

Varadkar was adept at blurring the line between legal, gainfully employed economic migrants, legal EU migrants travelling without the intention of taking up gainful employment, and illegal economic migrants posing as refugees to claim state benefits.

Official numbers from the Central Statistics Office for the first quarter of 2023 showed that 23.8% of unemployed individuals on social welfare were non-Irish. An astonishing 83.3% of Roma were unemployed.

Those members of the public who tried to distinguish between legal economic migrant and illegal were labelled racist by politicians, NGOs and the media even though a FOI request from the Dept of Justice showed that in 2023, 85% of all asylum claims coming through Dublin airport were made by individuals who had no or forged identification.

To cap off his reckless migration policy, Varadkar's government took over 100k Ukrainian refugees into the country despite not having the facilities to house them.

Varadkar's last years saw a spate of attacks, inner-city violence in Dublin and brutal murders by poorly integrated and long-term unemployed non-Irish men.

Riot

A spontaneous riot alongside a string of fires at proposed migrant settlement centres around the country in late 2023 and early 2024 laid bare the cost of Varadkar's soft touch on open borders and crime.

Ireland was literally burning. However, Varadkar doubled down on silencing dissent. In the immediate aftermath of the Dublin riot he promised to rush through the Orwellian Hate Speech Bill that would clamp down on freedom of speech on social media. He never got that far.

On Friday, March 8, with the devastating electoral rejection of two of the most nakedly activist-driven referenda in modern Ireland, Varadkar's social agenda was crushed, and off he shuffled.

In stepped the new and improved media wunderkind. "The 'young pup' set to become Ireland's new 'TikTok Taoiseach'," *The Daily Mail* drooled. "Simon Harris was only a teenager but we had already dubbed him the Future Taoiseach," *The Irish Independent* squealed. Yes, he's young and he knows how to use TikTok but what does he stand for? This time, the country is going in blind.

Harris joined the party at 16 and became the youngest ever member of the Dáil at 24. He has been cocooned inside of the halls of government his entire adulthood and has limited life experience outside of politics.

More than any leader before him, Simon Harris will be a product of the political class. And during his apprenticeship in government, he did not break from Varadkar on any of his hard-left social policies.

As Minister for Health he supported abortion and

introduced the legislation to the Dáil after the referendum victory. Again, he introduced the legislation to allow same-sex parents put both of their names on the birth certificate of a child born via surrogacy.

“So who is Simon Harris? The evidence points at best to a weak acquiescing yes man who fell in line with Varadkar's most radical social policies”

Harris was an enthusiastic supporter of Varadkar's LGBTQ+ agenda, attending a Dublin Pride parade in 2018. He labelled demonstrations against the Government's poor handling of mass migration "thuggish, mobbish and intimidatory behaviour".

After the Dublin riots, he forcefully advocated for the implementation of the Hate Speech Bill.

So who is Simon Harris? The evidence points at best to a weak acquiescing yes man who fell in line with Varadkar's most radical social policies; or at worst, a Varadkar protégé incubated, nursed and weaned on the party teat inside the chambers of government with precious little life experience to draw from.

It's a hell of a gamble to take on the leader of the nation.

There is of course a path forward for Harris. During his leadership acceptance speech he told the party faithful that "Fine Gael stands for law and order".

Lawlessness

After the lawlessness of the Varadkar years, this statement seems ludicrous but it may well be his best way to cut with the past and present himself as a leader more in line with the party's grassroots expectations.

When, as expected, Simon Harris takes on the role of Taoiseach after the Dáil Easter break he will soon thereafter be given one of his few chances to stake his longterm claim to party leadership and to rally

the base ahead of Local, European and General elections – a cabinet reshuffle.

The strongest statement that Harris can make is to remove the deeply unpopular Helen McEntee from her role of Justice Minister. She is the principal advocate for the internationally derided Hate Speech bill and domestically divisive EU Asylum Pact.

McEntee, a generous NGO benefactor, is the most contentious hangover from the Varadkar years and by firing her, Harris could, in one fell swoop, banish the ghost of Varadkar's hard-left social agenda and NGO overreach.

In an exceedingly narrow set of options open to him, this one move would buy him time and some favour with the party base. It will not win him the next General Election but it would provide him a foundation on which to rebuild.

i Dr Eoin Lenihan is an independent journalist and researcher. His work has been featured on *Al Jazeera* and *Fox News*.

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The dreadful recommendations of the euthanasia committee



David Quinn

You might imagine that if Ireland ever introduces a law permitting euthanasia, we need to have a referendum first, like we did with divorce, same-sex marriage and abortion. The issue is of such importance that maybe it should be put to the people, but in fact there is no legal obligation to do so.

The Supreme Court confirmed this in a case involving Marie Fleming, an MS sufferer, who wanted the 'right to die'. The court said no such right exists in the Constitution but there is nothing to prevent the Oireachtas permitting such a law either.

One legal scholar, Conor Casey, believes we do need to hold a referendum, but be that as it may, the current understanding is that we do not.

Committee

This is one reason why the Dail decided to set up a Joint Oireachtas Committee on Assisted Dying. Far-left TD, Gino Kenny, had published a private member's bill that would permit euthanasia and assisted suicide for the terminally ill. It was an incredibly badly drafted piece of work but the Dail took it seriously enough to set up the committee to examine the matter.

The committee met for months, hearing from a range of experts on both sides of the debate. The expert testimony was often of a very high quality.

Last month, the committee published its report, the members having voted nine to three in favour of allowing euthanasia under certain circumstances. The dissenters were Michael Healy Rae,



Robert Troy and Ronan Mullen. That three to one ratio in favour of euthanasia is all too typical of our Oireachtas. If euthanasia ever was put to the people, it might pass by a big margin as with abortion (who knows?), but it would not pass by three to one.

The report of the committee does not do justice to the expert evidence. For example,

the section on what is taking place in Canada is extremely inadequate. It does not tell us that since its introduction the numbers availing of it have expanded from around 1,000 in 2016 to over 13,000 in 2022.

We are told that the grounds for euthanasia have expanded in Canada but not in such a way that we should have any real concerns in Ireland that something of the same sort should happen here.

In fact, despite the fact that the committee did hear from experts discussing the rapid expansion in the grounds for euthanasia in countries like Canada, the Netherlands and Belgium, a three-to-one majority of committee members have managed to convince themselves this could not happen here.

They point to other examples like Australia and New Zealand, but it is still very early days since the introduction of euthanasia in those countries, so it is too soon to judge.

“Oregon only permits assisted suicide. This means you must administer the poison to yourself”

They can also point to examples like the US states of Washington and Oregon which have had euthanasia for quite a long time and numbers availing of the procedure are in the hundreds, not thousands. But there is pressure in both states to make it easier to die by euthanasia, so we will see where that goes.

Incidentally, Oregon only permits assisted suicide. This means you must administer the poison to yourself. This seems to frighten people and keep down the numbers

dying this way. Euthanasia is when a doctor administers the poison on your behalf, and when a doctor does it, the numbers climb rapidly.

The committee makes a number of recommendations. For example, you must be within six months or 12 months of death depending on your condition.

They envisage doctors being intimately involved in the whole process. Doctors will determine if you are dying, are within six to 12 months of death, and they will approve you for euthanasia or assisted suicide if you ask to die this way.

Recommendations

The recommendations also envisage doctors being present when you die, whether they administer the poison or you do.

All of this deeply compromises medicine, because doctors should never be actively involved in killing patients. Recall that the Irish Medical Council in its latest set of ethical guidelines removed the ban on doctors killing patients should the law permit it. This was one of the most terrible developments in the history of Irish medicine and did not attract anything like enough attention.

The recommendations do not prevent doctors mentioning euthanasia to a patient as a possible option if they receive a diagnosis of a terminal illness. Was this an oversight, or is it what the committee wants?

One key recommendation is that a person seeking euthanasia must put in two requests, separated by a period of time. We are not told how long the period should be, or whether the two requests should be made to two separate doctors or just one. In fact, we are not told the requests

should be made to doctors at all. We must assume they meant this, but it shows how sloppily the recommendations have been worded.

On the issue of conscience, a doctor need not take part in euthanasia, but must refer their patient to a doctor who will. This is what happens with abortion and is a clear violation of conscience rights.

There is no protection offered to hospitals which do not want to carry out euthanasia on their premises. We can therefore envisage a Catholic hospital being forced to facilitate euthanasia, a truly terrible prospect. Whatever else it is, this report is not a liberal document. There is an authoritarian streak in it.

“States like Washington and Oregon produce annual assisted suicide reports and many of those who die in this way report feeling a burden. That feeling did not arise in a vacuum”

It also completely exaggerates the odds of people making 'autonomous' choices to die. It does admit that coercion might take place and recommends safeguards to avoid this, but the naivety is stark. States like Washington and Oregon produce annual assisted suicide reports and many of those who die in this way report feeling a burden. That feeling did not arise in a vacuum. Who made them feel this way? Was their decision to die by assisted suicide really 'autonomous'?

This is why one of the experts who appeared before the committee, a Danish psychiatrist, said: "The only thing that will be able to protect the lives and respect of those who are most vulnerable in society will be a ban without exceptions."

Bar the three dissenters, the committee totally ignored what she said. They want to press ahead. They know the dangers, but they want to press the 'go' button anyway. It's appalling. Hopefully enough doctors will now come forward to stop the whole thing in its tracks.

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Tug of war between Catholicism and politics



Catholicism and republicanism have long been uncomfortably intertwined, writes **Martina Purdy**

For the Irish, the great Christian feast of Easter is somehow fused with the great rebellion of 1916. Patrick Pearse, who wrote the Proclamation, placed the Irish Republic under the protection of “the most High God.”

How many Irish politicians would use such language today? Indeed how many would write: “I am standing on the threshold of another world. May God have mercy on my soul.” The words of the late Hunger Striker Bobby Sands.

Looking back, the two great contradicting ‘isms’ in Ireland – Catholicism and Republicanism – were bound together in great tension, very poorly at times, especially during the years of bloodshed.

Indeed, some time after republican icon Michael Collins was shot dead in 1922, Con Ahern, told his son, Bertie – who would go on to be Taoiseach – how the news was received in the prison where he and the other anti-treaty rebels were being held. “First thing they all did was to kneel down to say the rosary!”

And, in its infancy, the Provisional IRA was known as The 303 and Rosary Bead Crusaders, the 303 being a rifle.

Reconciled

Many reconciled the tension over the violence by separating personal faith from the Catholic hierarchy – with whom generations of republicans came into conflict, defying even a plea for peace from Pope John Paul II in 1979.

But somehow, this century-old tug of war has ceased.

The strain was eased when the IRA declared a ceasefire in 1994. And then the Church scandals erupted, causing many to stop struggling with



Police dressed in riot gear remove nationalists blocking Crumlin Road in the Ardoyne area of North Belfast, Northern Ireland, July 12, 2010. Photo: CNS/Cathal McNaughton, Reuters

Catholicism, republican or not. Some Catholics hung on to republicanism only.

While a section remain believers or practising Catholics, others are only nominally so or hostile.

When the Clonard Novena was at its height, in the 80s and 90s, tens of thousands would pour into West Belfast's peace line Redemptorist monastery for daily Masses. One year, a priest predicted this northern faith would decline like it had in the south, once the Troubles ended and Catholicism was no longer so entwined with national identity. I was annoyed at the time but that priest was right.

“They are not Catholic nationalists.’ I looked at him, a little surprised. ‘They aren’t Catholics,’ he insisted, noting that only a fraction now attended Sunday mass”

As a political correspondent in Northern Ireland for almost 20 years (1996-2014), I saw the changes firsthand post-Good Friday Agreement.

I remember starkly Easter in republican Ardoyne in North Belfast. I was to cover the speeches, and a priest was on the podium to pray a decade of the rosary. As he began the Our Father, he was met with folded arms and a silence so cold it burned.

About a decade ago, I asked a Sinn Féin councillor in Bel-

fast about the voting patterns of Catholic nationalists in the west of the city. “No,” he said sharply. “They are not Catholic nationalists.” I looked at him, a little surprised. “They aren’t Catholics,” he insisted, noting that only a fraction now attended Sunday mass. I didn’t argue. I felt something had shifted.

That councillor later left City Hall and penned a novel on the Mother and Baby Home scandal, and I quit the BBC to become a Sister of Adoration on the Falls Road, two doors down from Sinn Féin headquarters. I’m not sure how his book fared but my time in the convent was cut short after five years.

The congregation, faced with falling numbers, was no longer deemed viable under Vatican rules.

Casualty

So I’m a casualty of the poverty of the Church in Ireland. But I’m not alone in that. And I can’t help thinking that politics has grown all the poorer too.

The new secular religion marked by diversity, inclusion and equity is an intolerant creed that strangles freedom and excludes many.

Politics seems rather hollowed out these days.

What fundamental principles do Fianna Fáil, or Fine Gael or Sinn Féin stand for? A Cork councillor quit Fianna Fáil last week saying his party had an ‘identity’ problem.

Children are no longer protected in the womb. And, there are real fears that the ‘assisted dying bill’ will kill off the most vulnerable, if passed. The Hate Crime Bill is a mess – the main opposition party Sinn Féin is flip-flopping over it.

revolution.

There is always a balance to be struck – who wants a country where Oscar Wilde is jailed over gay relations? Equally, the Christie Brown’s should be safe between conception and natural death.

“Hume did not impose his views. He merely proposed and gently persuaded, as Christians are entitled to do”

Faith and politics is a good thing. The Catholic Church gave former SDLP leader John Hume a solid formation which served him and others well. Hume had a profound set of values, a vision of truth and social justice and an unwavering opposition to violence. It was Hume’s radical Catholic vision that

ultimately brought an end to the politics of domination, not republican threats.

Hume did not impose his views. He merely proposed and gently persuaded, as Christians are entitled to do.

I was in my brown habit on the Falls Road, outside the convent gate, on the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising. As the republican parade passed, I wished familiar faces a “Happy Easter” but suggested the “real rising” was in our Adoration chapel and they should “come on in!”

One republican came back a few days later and met my superior as he was leaving the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. “Sister,” he said. “I would rather rob a bank than go into a chapel, but there is great peace in there.”

To misquote the former Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams, the Church hasn’t gone away, you know.

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The Irish Catholic

People with disabilities ‘bottom of food chain’ for Irish budgets



Ireland has regressed when it comes to disability rights, writes **Dualta Roughneen**

The right to health is a fundamental part of human rights and of an understanding of a life with dignity. It is not new.

Internationally, it was first articulated in the 1946 Constitution of the World Health Organisation (WHO), whose preamble defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights also mentioned health as part of the right to an adequate standard of living (art. 25).

The right to health was again recognised as a human right in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Since then, other international human rights treaties have recognised or referred to the right to health or to elements of it, such as the right to medical care. Every state has ratified at least one international human rights treaty recognising the right to health.

States have committed themselves to protecting this right through international declarations, domestic legislation and policies, and at international conferences.

Interestingly, *Bunreacht na hEireann* does not include health as an explicit fundamental right. Its inclusion was debated in the Oireachtas most recently in 2019 when a draft Bill to amend the Constitution was submitted for debate and ultimately rejected as usually occurs when the opposition table a Bill, however constructed.

Rights

World Health Day falls on April 7 ‘My Health, My Right’ was chosen as the theme, it is said, “to champion the right of everyone, everywhere to have access to quality health services, education, and information, as well as safe drinking water, clean air, good nutrition, quality housing, decent working and environmental conditions, and freedom from discrimination”.

Notwithstanding the unfortu-



Pope Francis greets a woman as he meets with people who have disabilities following Mass in St Peter's Square at the Vatican in 2013. Photo: CNS

nate paraphrasing of a contested and controversial pro-abortion slogan, the 2024 theme adds little to an understanding of what is at stake when it comes to the practical applicability of such a wide-ranging and ambiguous right.

No doubt such a right is aspirational. It is impossible to guarantee a right to health for everyone.

As sure as night is day, death – the ultimate in ill-health – comes to us all, and as Benjamin Franklin famously said, nothing is certain in life except death and taxes.

“In Ireland, 6.7% of GDP is spent on health says the Central Statistics Office”

Those shared certainties are apt when it comes to considering what constitutes the content of a right to health and especially when it comes to the responsibilities of the state as the primary duty bearer in facilitating, if not delivering, that right.

Obviously, this has cost implications, and therefore, taxes. In Ireland, 6.7% of GDP is spent on health says the Central Statistics Office.

According to the EU it is just under 5% and the EU average is 7.7%. However, as is well known, Ireland's GDP is artificially inflated by the presence of multinational headquarters, so it is argued, we are actually above EU average when this is adjusted for.

As a total of General Government Expenditure (GGE), health makes up 20%, not an unhealthy amount.

Frequently, the NHS is lauded as being the exemplar of universal health care and the United States approach favouring privatisation derided in ‘respectable’ circles, yet according to the WHO, the percentage of GGE is higher in the US (22% versus 19%).

Expectations

Often, the reference made to the ‘highest attainable standard of health’ is as equally indeterminate as the right itself.

Under what conditions is this highest attainable standard expected? How high a standard can a person expect to attain? What about contingencies such as genetics, accidents, and indeed the misfortune of contracting illness?

Equally, the right to health is interpreted by UN ‘experts’, academics and advocates as requiring states to make every possible effort, within available resources, to realise the right to health.

But there are competing resources. Increasing health spend is considered progressive, but so is education, as is social welfare and social protection, as is more recent acquired responsibilities of the welfare state – such as housing, climate adaptation – with spend on transport and agriculture is increasingly cited as regressive. Which of the rights should get most investment?

Countries in the global south where the tax base is lower, where incomes are lower, and thus the absolute government spending is lower.

“Debates at the margins of the lifecycle see the erosion of rights of some as they compete with an expanding interpretation of the rights of others”

And within that smaller pot of money, the percentage GGE falls typically into single digits, and often lower single digits. In Kenya and Zimbabwe where we work with support from the Irish government, it is 8.2% and 5.2% respectively.

Does this all mean that the right to health is less in Kenya and Zimbabwe, where resources are less, and the ‘highest attainable standard’ would typically be considered lower? Where human rights are considered universal and equal for everyone this surely makes no sense.

Of course, health also correlates to many other individual factors – individual wealth, predilections towards exercise, smoking, or healthy eating.

What is the expectation on governments to intervene to promote

what is good and discourage what is bad – and does a right to health then infringe and compete with other inalienable rights and the extent to which freedom maybe be impinged in promotion of the right to health?

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted with great clarity the lengths that the state may go to in protecting health at the expense of freedoms. In hindsight, protecting health in the short-term has a trade-off that has been devastating for many in the medium- and longer-term.

There is also the question of whose health and what type of health comprises an agreed understanding of health. Debates at the margins of the lifecycle see the erosion of rights of some as they compete with an expanding interpretation of the rights of others.

‘Reproductive health rights’ compete with, and are, in rights lexicon, considered to trump the right to life of the unborn child in the modern narrative.

The right to ‘dying well’ competes with the resources that could be invested in living well and palliative care. These competing rights are not mutually inclusive. One person's right get trumped by another's.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters highlighted that since Ireland ratified the UN Disability Convention, we have regressed in terms of the right to health of people with disabilities.

Resources

It is often forgotten that there is not an infinite pot of money and that tough decisions have to be made in terms of the public purse, but people with disabilities seem to be at the bottom of the food chain, as the government and activists champion causes and rhetorical slogans.

With employment of people with disabilities in Ireland the lowest across Europe, inevitably, they pay less taxes. Does this mean that they are not entitled to an equal right to health?

Disability inclusive health provision inherently costs more, requiring a greater investment by the State, and by the taxpayer. This is a cost of the social contract and the common good. But are we really committed beyond the rhetoric of rights, to what this means in practice?

When language is reduced to abstractions, which inevitably seems to be where a rights discourse ends up, a conversation about realities, about concessions and compromises, about a shared society, seems to be lost in the ether.

For all, death and taxes, are certainties. What is contested is how much taxes one needs to pay in order to forestall death. Or how much taxes one may be expected to pay to put death on the long finger for others in our shared society.

i Dualta Roughneen is the CEO of CBM Ireland, an international disability rights organisation.

Arbitrary rules erase children's existence



Ireland's policy for registering stillborn babies is regressive, writes **Wendy Grace**

Hearing of any family who have had a stillborn baby would lead most people, I am sure, to empathise with the unbearable pain of losing a child.

Of course, we want to do all we can to support any family in a time of such unimaginable grief, and yet a current arbitrary rule about which children can be included on the stillbirth register is adding to that grief for many families.

Only stillborn babies born at 24 weeks, or more and weighing 500 grams, or more, are included on Ireland's still born register. We are currently awaiting changes that were promised last May, as part of a host of changes to the Civil Registration Bill, brought forward by the Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys, detailing the expansion of access to the official register of stillbirths, and how the criteria for the register is due to change.

The proposals would reduce the criteria to 23 weeks and/or 400 grams weight. Perhaps, when the minister was looking at these changes, she didn't consult with families who have been impacted by such tragedy, i.e., the many families in this situation who will still be left without any acknowledgment of their babies' existence if they fall outside of the parameters.

Cruel

It seems unnecessarily cruel that if someone happens to give birth to a stillborn child after 23 weeks, six days and 23 hours, their child never existed in the eyes of the State, that child is just seen as a miscarriage. But if that child had been born a couple of hours later, stillborn at 24 weeks, that child would exist in the eyes of the State.

Aontú is submitting a Bill, for a second time, which would see all stillborn babies included on a national register, irrespec-



Martin Smith and his two daughters with baby Stephen, who was stillborn at 20 weeks old.

tive of the length of their gestation or their weight.

Aontú Councillor Sarah O'Reilly feels passionately about this: "I submitted a motion to Cavan County Council, as far back as 2020, requesting that a birth and death certificate be issued for all babies who are stillborn.

"It was passed unanimously and now I find myself coming back to this issue once again. This issue has been dragging on and on with little progress and it is simply not fair."

"I was in the middle of giving birth to my little boy and yet I was being told it was like he didn't exist"

I spoke to Caroline Smith who told me a little bit about her experience of her baby boy, Stephen, who was still born in 2015 at 20 weeks old.

Caroline and her husband Martin are passionate about highlighting the impact that the current parameters in the stillborn register have on families like theirs.

She explained to me how the narrow definition of stillbirth causes so much pain. It was while Caroline was in the middle of labour that she and her husband were shocked to learn that baby Stephen wasn't 'big enough' to be given a stillborn certificate.

"I didn't understand, I kept

asking the question, I was in the middle of giving birth to my little boy and yet I was being told it was like he didn't exist," Ms Smith said.

"Steven was born at 20 weeks and two days – he was 20 weeks and two days of perfection, a tiny little baby who was the image of his daddy, and we call him our eternal butterfly.

"But, because he was born outside of the criteria he is not officially registered. I was devastated, because I wasn't going to have anything to say my baby was here."

Asking Caroline about the proposed changes to the bill she said they don't go far enough.

"While the changes will recognise Stephen, based on his weight, there are still going to be families who will have a baby that is at the cusp of either an age or weight limit and won't be recognised."

Grief

Caroline explained that this situation only added to the grief that she and her husband, Martin, were experiencing.

"The grief after losing Stephen was horrific, but trying to make sense of it when I didn't have the acknowledgement and recognition of my son just made things worse."

Caroline believes there should be a certificate that recognises the baby's life, that the baby can be seen and traced.

"Stephen can't be seen in our family tree, even though he is very much a part of it,"

she said. "My two elder daughters know they have a younger brother because they held him, as did aunties and uncles".

But some positive changes are happening; the Census in 2022 included a section where parents who have lost a baby through stillbirth or miscarriage could acknowledge their life as part of their family in the time capsule section. Perhaps we can look to other countries that are making changes in this regard.

"It's not a big ask, just a simple acknowledgement of our babies, a unit of our family"

Recently the British Parliament conducted a review looking at the issue of pregnancy loss. During this review one case in the UK showed how

cruel the guidelines can be.

Twins had been stillborn either side of their threshold and were treated differently. Following this debate, the UK Government, just last month, began offering a voluntary scheme which gives families a 'baby loss certificate' which provides formal recognition of the baby.

Certificates

The certificates, which are not compulsory, are official but not legal documents. The certificates are available for either parent to access following a loss under 24 weeks since September 2018, and this eligibility is due to be expanded in the near future.

No clinical confirmation is needed, and any parent can apply for a certificate no matter what type of loss they experienced, meaning stillbirths, miscarriages, and ectopic pregnancies are all

included.

Caroline said she would love to see a similar certificate in Ireland: "It's not a big ask, just a simple acknowledgement of our babies, a unit of our family."

A change like this in Ireland would represent a public recognition that the babies were loved and lost, that they will not be forgotten, and they want future generations to know they were here.

This also forms part of a wider conversation about pregnancy loss – for too long some of the circumstances surrounding pregnancy loss were kept hidden, these families deserve to have their babies celebrated and remembered.

They are seeking recognition of their children's existence, that they mattered; surely the State can afford them that.

The Irish Catholic

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Juju 'weaponised' to enslave women in Ireland



African witchcraft is being used to traffic women, girls and men, hears **Ruadhán Jones**

It may seem far-fetched in our rationalistic age to think that Juju, a form of African witchcraft, is being used to trap women, girls and some men in modern slavery in Ireland.

But a webinar hosted by Irish religious orders examined just this intersection of cultural belief and the "heinous crime" of human trafficking.

"We were introduced to the dark underbelly of human trafficking, and how the exploitation of cultural practices, specifically Juju – a belief system deeply rooted in some West African countries – was highlighted as a tool for manipulation and control," said Michelle Robertson, communications officer for the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles (OLA), who along with the Society of African Missionaries (SMA) co-hosted the event.

Guest speaker David Lohan, author of *Freedom's Crossroads: Making Sense of Modern Slavery*, shared the journey of Joy, representing a victim whose experience mirrors the "harrowing stories" of so many, Ms Robertson added.

"Her ordeal, marked by ritualistic oaths and the terror of 'the switch,' gave a face to the abstract horror of this crime, providing a humanising glimpse behind the veil.

"His detailed exploration into the mechanics of trafficking networks further revealed a chillingly efficient system of exploitation: a network of recruiters, Juju priests, intermediaries, and racketeers operating with chilling efficiency and ruthlessness," she finished.

Cultural Beliefs

Speaking during the webinar, Mr Lohan said that all of this may seem unbelievable, until you consider the reality of cultural beliefs in Ireland.

"Bear in mind that we have some spiritual beliefs as well that come from our culture, particularly in the fairies," the expert on human trafficking began his talk.

"In Ireland, the fairies were no laughing matter. People would not interfere with ring forts, farmers



David Lohan speaks during the 'Weaponisation of Cultural Beliefs in Human Trafficking' webinar. Photo: OLA Communications

would stay away from them out of fear.

"We have the tradition as well of not going near the hawthorn bush, not cutting that down. So sometimes you will see a single hawthorn bush standing in a field for the very same reason that people were afraid. All of that comes from cultural belief."

“Belief in juju is not necessarily negated by religious belief”

While belief in the fairies is no longer widespread in Ireland, in some west African countries, belief in juju is still common: "By no means is juju an oddity in these countries," Mr Lohan stresses. "Juju is a daily reality of life, juju is life."

Just as belief in the fairies lived on despite the increasing influence of Christianity in Ireland, so too does juju despite the spread of both Islam and Christianity – belief in juju is not necessarily negated by religious belief.

Juju belongs to a much bigger family of practices known as African witchcraft, he explains. Sometimes it is called voodoo, but that's not a word used much on the African continent, says Mr Lohan.

Unfortunately, this widespread cultural belief is being used to facilitate the "terrible crime" of human trafficking, with its tendrils even stretching as far as the Emerald Isle, he continues.

"In cases of human trafficking – not always, but often – the victims tend to be women and girls," Mr



An information board with a warning about human trafficking is displayed at the central railway station in Berlin. Photo: OSV News/Annegret Hilde, Reuters

Lohan says. "They come from both the Christian the Muslim faiths. What we are talking about here is no obscurity, it's a major organised crime, a major criminal enterprise, it involves a series of people working in tandem."

Modern Slavery

He identifies four stages in what might benignly described as the process of human trafficking. At the initial stage, you have the recruiters, often women; then you have juju priests who deliver the rites; next are intermediaries who exist in countries between the source and destination, who are sometimes called 'trolleys'; finally you have the pimps and the madams who coerce victims into prostitution and other forms of modern slavery.

Mr Lohan uses an imaginary

“I personally have seen some stuff around that nobody would notice, that this is something that has been used for a ritual”

story to illustrate the experience of 90% of women and girls trafficked from Nigeria, parts of which still practice juju.

“Nigeria's authorities tasked with ending human trafficking are actively trying to stop the oaths being taken”

"Joy lives in Edo, a state in southern Nigeria," he begins. "And Joy dreams of a life abroad and Joy

like all her neighbours knows how people in the west have great lives. They don't have any problems, life in the west is so easy... but Joy doesn't have that life. One day Joy is approached by a friend of her cousin's called Promise... Promise tells Joy about a place called Ireland."

Promise tells Joy about a job as a hairdresser, which she says will pay €60,000. But it costs €30,000 just to get to Ireland, a cost that Joy certainly can't meet. Promise agrees to foot the bill – so long as Joy swears an oath before a juju priest that she



Witches are pictured in a file photo performing a witchcraft ritual on the outskirts of Bucharest, Romania. Photo: OSV News/Bogdan Cristel, Reuters



People are pictured displaying signs in Los Angeles during the 'Walk 4 Freedom' in advance of National Human Trafficking Awareness Day. Photo: OSV News

will pay her benefactor back in full. "Joy is a bit reticent about this, she knows the seriousness of oaths and particularly juju oaths... she proceeds then to a shrine," Mr Lohan says, before describing in graphic detail some of what Joy is likely to experience.

"At the shrine she encounters the juju priest. The juju priest starts the process of making the oath. One of the things Joy is made to do is disrobe, so she's naked. A chicken is killed and she probably has to consume some part of that raw chicken.

"Hair will be cut from parts of her body, her nails may be cut... blades are taken and her body is nicked by razor blades. A concoction may be made that she is required to consume. She is compelled to lie down in a coffin or sleep in a coffin. Incantations are

recited by the priest as well."

The experience leaves Joy traumatised physically, mentally and spiritually. It also leaves her indebted for €30,000 and, worst of all, subject to a juju oath, "the worst of all oaths", as Mr Lohan describes it.

Prostitution

When she arrives in Ireland, the job never materialises but Joy still has her oath and her debt. To pay it back, she is forced into prostitution. And to keep her in it, her oath is held over her as a threat.

"There are serious consequences to violating one's oath," Mr Lohan explains. "So much so that most won't even contemplate it. What's believed is that the swearer, if she violates her oath, may well die.

"She believes that a relative could well die too. She might go

insane. She might have perpetual bad luck. Some people mentioned the word calamity. I think it's this perpetual thing, everything in your life turns into a series of events that are bad luck. She might experience infertility. And horrifically that she might die while delivering a child," he adds.

“How do you catch people? It is not against the law to practice your beliefs”

Mr Lohan acknowledges that it is natural to ask if all he has described is real, and also if these acts can really be taking place in or affecting Ireland. The evidence is, how-

“There is no specific reference to how cultural beliefs are used as a means of coercion, intimidation and manipulation”

ever, that juju is a cultural belief with some potency in west Africa. For instance, Nigeria's authorities tasked with ending human trafficking are actively trying to stop the oaths being taken.

And in Ireland, a 2023 conviction for human trafficking in Mullingar put in the public arena that juju rites had been used, Mr Lohan states.

"What I'm talking about may seem on the extraordinary front, but in some ways it's not really extraordinary to the issue of human trafficking at all, it's just another characteristic of what happens," he says.

Signs

Ejiro Ogbevoen, founder of Black Therapists Ireland, backed up Mr Lohan's point. Dr Ogbevoen says she has seen signs of juju rituals in Dublin's city centre, which she only recognises because she as a Nigerian woman is familiar with the signs.

"I personally have seen some stuff around that nobody would notice, that this is something that has been used for a ritual," she tells the webinar audience.

"I have seen it in the city centre, I have seen it in parks. An average person would not notice that this... thing has been used for a ritual. But it is around, it's just how do you know, how do you catch people? It is not against the law to practice your beliefs, but how it is being used to promote the crime that is going on. It is happening."

When it comes to signs, she says an example could be as simple as a

piece of red cloth. To most people, it's just a red cloth, "but back home it is so significant especially in the Endo area where if you see a piece of red cloth, you know something is amiss. The fear that goes through you is real".

If you put yourself in an oath, "it binds you, it is real... there's a grip on you that you have to fulfil".

Dr Ogbevoen says it is "sad and shocking" that these things happen, with traffickers profiting on the desperation some people feel.

"The helplessness and hopelessness in the country and the economy is making people susceptible to such happenings. The idea that you know a better life is outside Nigeria is so potent that people will do almost anything to leave," she laments.

“You know something is amiss. The fear that goes through you is real”

Concluding the event, Brian O'Toole of the Presentation Sisters Justice Desk said there was a need for the Government to specifically include cultural beliefs in their action plan to prevent human trafficking. While the plan the Government launched in November mentions threats being used in the crime of Human Trafficking, there is no specific reference to how cultural beliefs are used as a means of coercion, intimidation and manipulation, he said.

Out&About

Enriching our Faith



DUBLIN: Members of the Brazilian Catholic chaplaincy process through the streets of Ireland's capital on Palm Sunday, led by Fr Frei Severino OFM Cap.



KILKENNY: Pupils from Doon CBS Primary School, Co. Limerick, visit the home of Blessed Edmund Rice, founder of the Christian Brothers, at Westcourt, Callan, pictured with Joanne O'Connell, school principal, and Bro. James Dormer, BoM.



WATERFORD: Pupils from Doon CBS Primary School, Co. Limerick visit the tomb of Blessed Edmund Rice, founder of the Christian Brothers, at Mount Sion, pictured with Bro. Peadar Gleeson and Bro. Christy Carroll who gave the boys a guided tour of Mount Sion, the first Christian Brothers School.

IN SHORT

Easter message hope for us all – Bishop Leahy

Bishop Brendan Leahy has urged people to revisit the true meaning of Easter so that they can, in a difficult world, see the message of eternal hope.

In a short video celebrating the most sacred week in the liturgical calendar and its meaning, the Bishop of Limerick said it's worth reminding ourselves what this momentous week for the world over is about.

It is, Dr Leahy said, a time when we go through a full gamut of emotions from the ultimate sacrifice of Christ being killed to the joy of his resurrection, the great message of hope to us all.

He concludes, "So what does this week tell us? It tells us that life is a journey. That there will

be hardships. There will be crosses to bear. It tells us that there are people who will always be with us, to help us, to carry any cross we are given; our family, our friends.

"It tells us that there is always hope. Hope of new beginnings. Hope given to us by the great Risen Lord. Above all, it tells us that God is always with us."

Focolare Spring gathering takes place in Waterford

The Focolare Movement in Ireland is holding its annual Spring gathering on the theme of 'Called to Love, Called to live as One' from April 4 to 7.

The event, open to all, takes place at The Gold Coast Golf Resort, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford X35 EA40, with arrival from 4pm

on Thursday, April 4. The programme begins on Friday at 1pm.

For more information and costs, Gerard Mulligan (ROI) +353-(0)86-2243631 or Manuel McGivern (NI) +44-779-5567784 or email: focolare.ireland@focolare.org

A pilgrim walk on the Way of St Declan takes place on the Friday, followed by Mass celebrated by Bishop Brendan Leahy.

On Saturday, Focolare will welcome Eddie Mullins, CEO of Merchants Quay Ireland, as guest speaker.

Hodder press launches Bible commentary

Hodder and Stoughton is set to publish a 50 volume series covering all the books of the Bible, the publisher has announced.

The Hodder Bible Commentary, edited by Lee Gatiss, will include over 50 expert contributors from around the world, representing a wide range of Church and cultural traditions.

The commentary includes the full text of the NIV Bible interspersed with the commentary for easy reference.

The series aims to encourage a deepened knowledge and understanding of Scripture, a spokesperson said.

"The series explores the timeless message of the Bible while also applying it to the challenges of today's world."

Series editor Lee Gatiss is the Director of Church Society and a lecturer at Union School of Theology in Wales. He has written or edited more than 30 books on the Bible, theology, church history and Anglicanism.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



BELFAST: Young members of St John's Parish Falls Road hold up their palm crucifixes after participating in Palm Sunday Mass. Photo: Catherine McCoy.



DUBLIN: Fr William O'Shaughnessy, KHS, Moderator of the Grouping of Springfield, Jobstown and Brookfield with parishioners of St Mark's Church Springfield, Tallaght getting ready to participate in this year's Pontifical Good Friday collection.



ENGLAND: Maynooth professors Joshua Furnel, Gaven Kerr and Philip Gonzales are pictured on tour at Oxford University, where they were presenting papers at different symposia.



ARMAGH: Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin rededicates the Oratory of St Patrick's Grammar School on the Feast of St Joseph, in the presence of students and staff.



WEXFORD: Fr Tom Dalton and Deacon Dermot Davis, Diocese of Ferns, are joined by the Dames and Knights of the Equestrian Order of Jerusalem for Palm Sunday celebrations in Enniscorthy at St Aidan's Cathedral.



WEXFORD: Fr Tom Dalton (Enniscorthy), Fr Pat Mangan (Dun Laoighaire, Dublin), Anne Fitzpatrick (Loughlinstown, Co. Down) and Chevalier Peter Moylan (Ennis, Co. Clare)

ANTRIM

Antrim parish rosary and night prayer takes place on Tuesday's at 8pm in St Joseph's Church.

ARMAGH

The Chrism Mass will be celebrated on April 5 at 7pm in St Patrick's Cathedral.

CARLOW

Parish Biblical studies group with Dr Amelia Fleming, takes place each Friday 10.30am-12pm in Carlow Cathedral Centre.

CORK

Frankfield/Grange children's rosary group meets the second Saturday of every month at 6pm in front of Our Lady's Shrine at the Church of the Incarnation, Frankfield.

DERRY

'The Demons and the reality of spiritual combat' a talk by Fr Cajetak Apeh OCD takes place in the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, April 18.

DONEGAL

A guided holy hour of adoration in honour of the Holy Face of Jesus takes place on Sundays, 6-7pm in St Mary's Oratory.

A retreat for Young Adults at Lough Derg, Pettigo County Donegal takes place on Saturday, April 27, from 10am-4pm. Refreshments and Lunch provided. This retreat is organised by The Knights of St Columbanus Omagh and is free of charge. To register, please visit tiny.cc/loughderg or email info@knightsfst-columbanusomagh.co.uk

DUBLIN

The feast of Divine Mercy will be celebrated on Sunday, April 7, in St Vincent De Paul church in Marino. Holy hour from 3-4pm followed by Mass at 4pm. Confessions will be available from 3-4pm.

Collection to Capuchin Day Centre. Rosary of reparation and conversion takes place first Saturday every month at 2pm on North Earl Street

GALWAY

Day of Reflection including first Saturday Fatima Devotions led by, Eddie Stone and team takes place Saturday, April 6 at 11am in Emmanuel House Clonfert, Ballinasloe, including

healing service, adoration, talks, music, Confession and Mass.

Divine Mercy Sunday Celebrations take place April 7 starting at 11am, a day for reconciliation of the soul.

LAOIS

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Tuesdays after the 10am Mass in Portarlinton Parish. Rosary recited at 7pm.

LOUTH

Fr Willie Doyle SJ prayer group takes place in Holy Family Church, Drogheda every Thursday at 7pm. Includes Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and a prayer for vocations.

MAYO

The next Latin Mass will take place at 6pm in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel Knock Shrine on Sunday, April 14.

SLIGO

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in St Colmcille's Church takes place every Sunday from 4-5pm.

TIPPERARY

Holy Face hour takes place Tuesdays 7-8pm in Our Lady and St Kevin's Church, Littleton, E41 HD90, including rosary, Holy Face prayers, Divine Mercy chaplet and Eucharistic Adoration.

TYRONE

The men's rosary takes place on the first Saturday of every month in Market Street, Omagh (opposite Primark) at 1pm. Next rosary April 6.

WATERFORD

Youth 2000 Munster Retreat takes place in De La Salle College from April 5-7 for ages 16-35. Donation only, to book visit youth2000.ie

The Focolare Spring Gathering will take place from April 4-7 in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford. For more information contact Gerard at 086 2243631 or focolare@focolare.org

WESTMEATH

The Youth Group will be taking place in Fatima Hall, Delvin every Thursday and Friday from 7pm-8.30pm. 1st to 6th years are welcome.

Easter joy all



Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell celebrates the Chrism Mass where holy oils which are to be used in the sacraments for the coming year were blessed. Priests from around the Dublin diocese attended the Mass and renewed their priestly promises. Photo: John McElroy



Some of the congregation at the Chrism Mass in the Pro Cathedral, Dublin. Photo: John McElroy.



Children prepare to process to the altar waving flags and streamers on Easter Sunday morning in St Therese Church, Mount Merrion in Dublin. Photo: John McElroy



Children process to the altar on Easter Sunday morning in St Therese Church Mount Merrion in Dublin. Photo: John McElroy



Zofia Trzeciak (9) and Isabella Murphy (2) admiring the Easter Garden before the Easter Sunday morning family Mass in St Therese Church, Mount Merrion in Dublin. Photo: John McElroy.



Easter Sunday morning Mass was celebrated in St Therese Church, Mount Merrion in Dublin. The family Mass began with a procession of children waving flags and streamers who processed to the altar. Photo: John McElroy



Bishop Alan McGuckian is greeted by the priests of the Diocese of Down and Connor after celebrating the Mass of Chrism. Photo: Fr Brian Watters

across Ireland



On Good Friday the annual ecumenical 'Walk of Witness' took place with the two Archbishops of Dublin walking from St Mary's Pro Cathedral to Christ Church Cathedral. Leading the procession are Archbishop Dermot Farrell and Archbishop Michael Jackson. A prayer service then took place on arrival at Christ Church Cathedral. Photo: John McElroy



Archbishop Dermot Farrell and Archbishop Michael Jackson arriving at Christ Church Cathedral on Good Friday in Dublin after the Ecumenical 'Walk of Witness' between St Mary's Pro Cathedral and Christ Church Cathedral. Photo: John McElroy



Tom McNamara (chaplain at Knock Shrine), Una Nolan (Director of Sacred Music) and Claire Salmon (choir) at the Easter Vigil in Knock. Photo: Sinead Mallee



Mary Forde and grandchildren attending the Easter Vigil at Knock Shrine, Co. Mayo. Photo: Sinead Mallee



Sr Maud Murphy (right), in Knock with friends from the religious community attending the Easter Vigil Mass at Knock Shrine on Holy Saturday night. Photo: Sinead Mallee



The Knock Youth Choir sing at the Easter Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday night. Photo: Sinead Mallee



Concelebrants with lighted candles at the Easter Vigil Mass in Knock. Photo: Sinead Mallee.



Knock parishoners, Mary, Brian and Yvonne Duffy with Josie Conboy at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night in Knock Basilica. Photo: Sinead Mallee



Gerardine Forde and Anne Burke, Knock parishoners at the Easter Vigil. Photo: Sinead Mallee



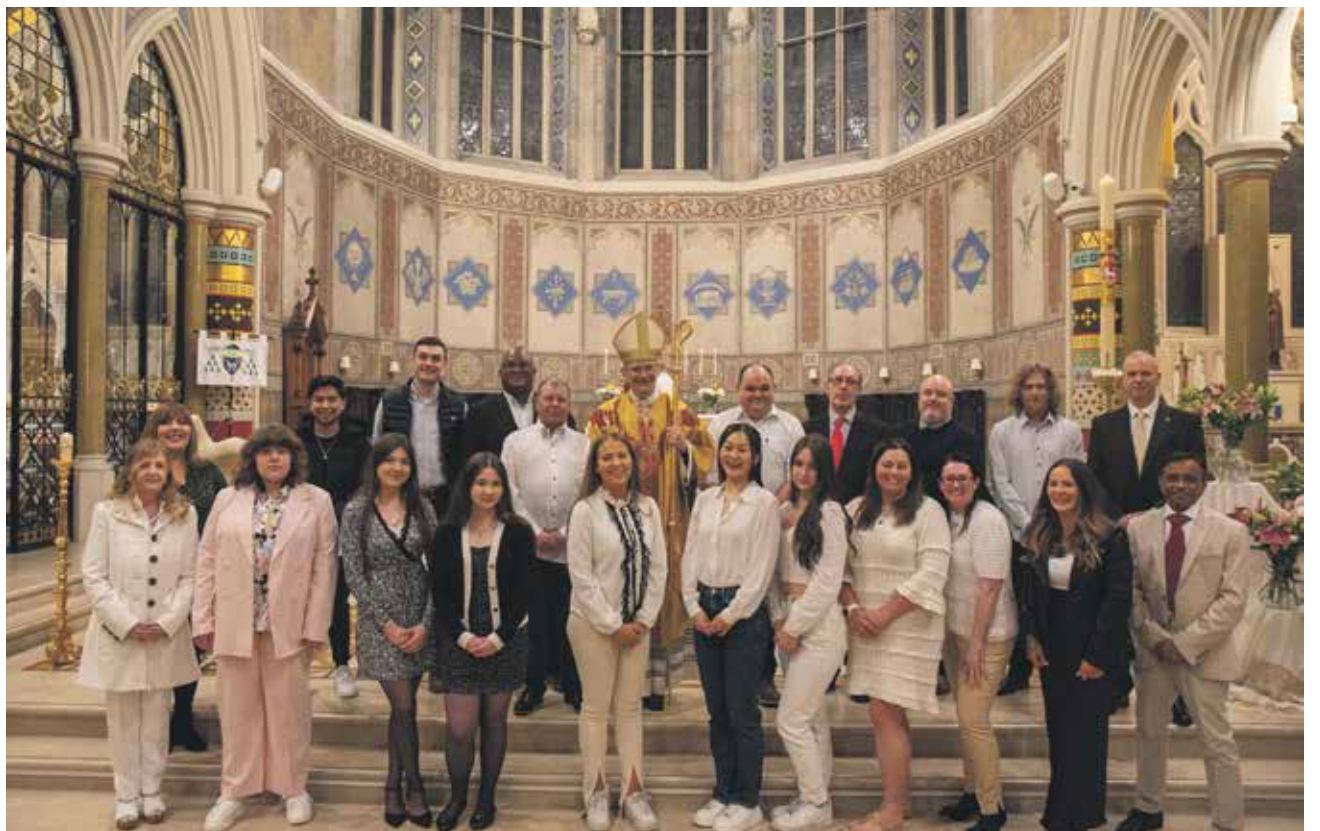
Sacristan Aaron Cunnane fills Easter Holy Water for Winnie McDonagh from Tuam at the Knock Easter Vigil. Photo: Sinead Mallee



Robu Cezar Narcus and Magdici Cornel from Romania, living in Tullamore, at the Easter Vigil in Knock. Photo: Sinead Mallee



Bishop Alan McGuckian of Down and Connor diocese baptises one of the people who were baptised on Easter vigil in St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast, as part of the RCIA programme. Photo: Fr Brian Watters



Bishop Alan McGuckian is pictured with some of the 31 people who were received into the Church at the Easter vigil in St Peter's Cathedral after completing RCIA. There were 40 people received into the Church throughout the Diocese. Photo: Fr Brian Watters



Bishop of Kilalloe Fintan Monahan celebrates Dawn Mass on Easter Sunday, March 31, in the Franciscan Abbey, Quin, Co. Clare, for the Abbey Pastoral Area parishes of Quin, Ennis, Clarecastle/Ballea and Doorabarefield.



Bishop of Kilalloe Fintan Monahan lights the Paschal Candle from the Easter Fire at the Easter Vigil in Ennis Cathedral, Co. Clare, on Holy Saturday, March 30, assisted by Fr Ger Jones and Fr Tom Ryan.



The Boule Family from Ennis, Co. Clare, who were received into the Church at the Easter Vigil in Ennis Cathedral on Holy Saturday, are pictured with by Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan on March 30.



The Ennis Cathedral choir beam at the camera after providing music for the Easter ceremonies in Ennis Cathedral, Co. Clare, on March 30.



Brazilians, Edina Teopoldo de Campos and Danilo Fraga Peixoto were baptised and confirmed by Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin during the Easter Vigil Mass held at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, Cork, March 30. Also pictured are Lorraine Buckley, Cork and Ross Faith Development Officer, and sponsors Adriana Teixeira and Andreta Carvalho. Photo: Mike English.



Edina Teopoldo de Campos from Brazil is baptised by Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin during the Easter Vigil Mass at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, Cork, March 30. Photo: Mike English.



The Oil of Catechumens is brought up by Edina Campos and Esther Sinnott during the Chrism Mass, March 29, in the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, Cork, to be presented to Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin. Photo: Brian Loughheed.



Bishop Fintan Gavin Cork and Ross, Edina Teopoldo de Campos (centre left) and Danilo Fraga Peixoto (centre right), are pictured with family and friends of the Brazilian natives now living in Cork following their Baptism and Confirmation ceremonies during the Easter Vigil Mass at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne Cork, March 30. Also included are Fr Bernard Morawski, Chaplain to the Brazilian congregation and Lorraine Buckley, Faith Development Officer, Cork and Ross. Photo: Mike English.



The Easter Vigil ceremony begins at the entrance to St Mary's Cathedral, Killarney, Co. Kerry on Holy Saturday, March 30, with the lighting of the Paschal candle by Bishop of Kerry Ray Browne. Also pictured are Sacristan Tadghie Fleming, Fr Nicholas Flynn, Fr Sean Jones, Fr Kieran O'Brien, Adm., and Rian Gleason. Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan.



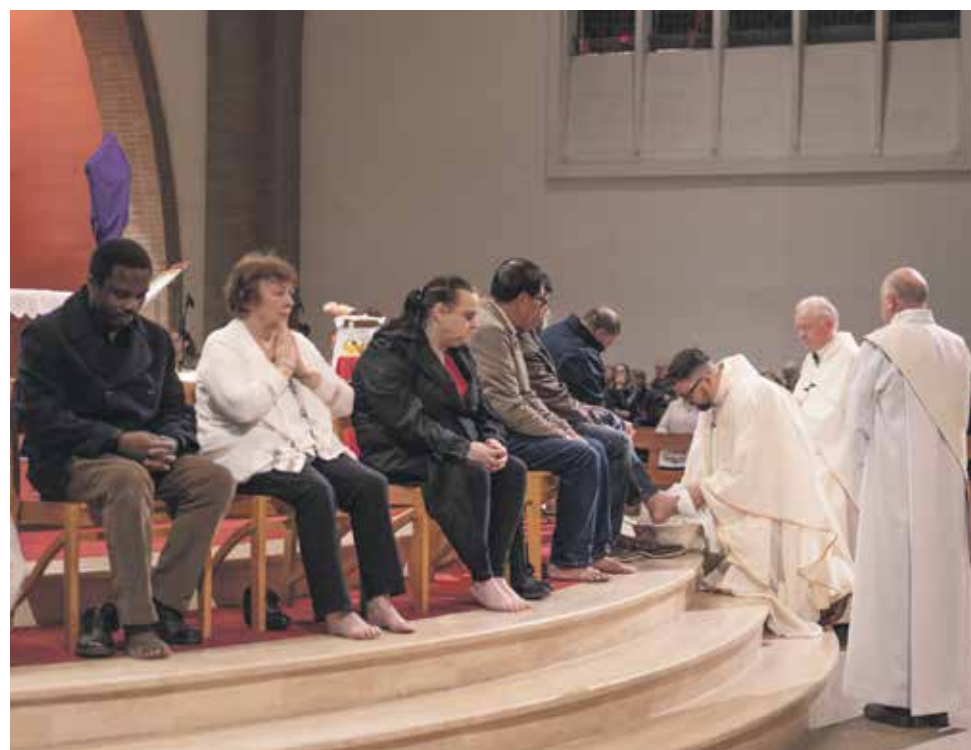
Rev. Martin O'Kelly and Fr Gerry MacCormack are pictured in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Kingscourt, Co. Cavan, following the annual Ecumenical Walk of Witness in support of the suffering peoples of Gaza during Holy Week, March 29.



Msgr John Byrne prepares to receive catechumens into the Church during the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday, March 30, in the Church of Sts Peter and Paul, Portlaoise Parish, Co. Laois. Photo: Agnieszka Kaczmarek.



The Paschal candle is raised before a packed Church of Sts Peter and Paul in Portlaoise Parish, Co. Laois, during Easter Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday, March 30. Photo: Agnieszka Kaczmarek.



The washing of feet takes place in the Church of Sts Peter and Paul, Portlaoise Parish, Co. Laois, March 28. Photo: Agnieszka Kaczmarek.



Priests and parishioners gather outside the Church of Sts Peter and Paul, Portlaoise Parish, Co. Laois, to light the Paschal candle during the Easter Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday, March 30. Photo: Agnieszka Kaczmarek.



Michael Moynagh, Fr Jerry White SS.CC, Rosella Culleton and Damien Hughes stand by the empty tomb after Easter Sunday Mass in St Patrick's Church, Bawn, Co. Monaghan, March 31.



Ceremonies for the Easter Triduum commence in Barntown, Co. Wexford, with 'the washing of the feet' of this year's First Communion children by their parents at the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, March 28.

Incidents of violence and persecution at epidemic levels in India, group says

A man holds a candle during a prayer service for Jesuit Fr Stan Swamy in Mumbai, India, July 6, 2021, a day after he died at a hospital while in custody.



Anto Akkara

A watchdog group that monitors violence committed against Christians in India has released a study documenting 161 such crimes in the first 75 days of 2024.

These numbers may underestimate the number of crimes and acts of persecution committed against Christians in India, according to AC Michael, a Catholic and coordinator of the United Christian Forum (UCF), which released the report.

"These figures are based only on the complaints registered on our toll-free helpline number (1-800-208-4545) to report incidents of anti-Christian violence. The actual numbers will be certainly much more," Mr Michael told CNA.

"We feel frustrated that despite documenting and making public the shocking data regularly, there has been no response from the government nor any effort has been made to curb the steadily rising number of violent incidents," he said.

Categorising the 161 incidents, Mr Michael listed 71 cases of detainment/arrest by the police, 18 incidents of social ostracisation, 72 cases of physical violence, 15

cases of forced 'reconversion', one incident of a church being sealed, and another in which a church was torched, with mob violence being part of most of these incidents.

“Christians are being denied access to water from the community borewells of the village”

Violence and persecution against minority Christians, who account for only 2.3% of India's 1.41 billion people (nearly 80% of whom are Hindu), have been on a steady rise since the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rose to power under the stewardship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi after winning the 2014 national election. In May 2019, the BJP was re-elected with an increased majority.

UCF had recorded only 147 incidents of violence against Christians in 2014, Mr Michael said. The number of incidents went up to 177 in 2015, 208 in 2016, 240 in 2017, 292 in 2018, 328 in 2019, 279 in 2020, 505 in 2021, 599 in 2022, and 731 in 2023.

The UCF statement also highlighted the victimisation of Christians in BJP-ruled Chhattisgarh state in central India, which reported

"incidents with dignity of burial rights denied to Christian families".

"Chhattisgarh, a state notoriously known for social ostracisation of Christians, is the number 1 leading state in assaults against Christians with 47 incidents of reported violence," the UCF pointed out.

"Christians are being denied access to water from the community borewells of the village. Sadly, even dead Christians are not spared, as many were denied burial as per Christian rituals. Local [Hindu fundamentalist] villagers have been threatening to cremate the bodies as a final act of reconversion," UCF decried.

Leaders

Such blatant attacks on the Christians, Mr Michael said, are rooted in BJP leaders' anti-Christian rhetoric. He noted that Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai accused "Christian missionaries of carrying out religious conversion under the guise of providing education and health care facilities while warning to stop the practice".

But, Mr Michael pointed out, Christians in Chhattisgarh account for just 2% of the state's 25 million people.

The UCF statement also highlighted the persecution of Christians in BJP-ruled northern Uttar Pradesh, which has a population

of 231 million and "ranks second [among] states where Indian citizens are being persecuted for practicing Christianity".

“There are 122 Christians who have either been detained or arrested on the false allegation of conversions”

There is clear evidence of state-sponsored harassment of Christians in this state as the police file false allegations of conversion against the pastors even for praying in birthday parties and other social gatherings. UCF helpline has recorded over 30 incidents of arrests and detentions of pastors under the UP Freedom of Religion Act," the Christian Forum noted.

CNA has reported in detail how Fr Babu Francis, social service director of Allahabad Diocese in Uttar Pradesh state, was jailed for over 80 days after being arrested on charges of false conversion in early October.

Similarly, CNA also reported about how Fr Dominic Pinto, director of the Pastoral Centre of Lucknow Diocese, was arrested in February on a false conversion

charge. Pinto was released on bail on March 13.

Of the 161 incidents recorded in the first 75 days of 2024, UCF pointed out: "There are 122 Christians who have either been detained or arrested on the false allegation of conversions".

The UCF data was released on the eve of the March 22 National Day of Prayer that the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) called for in the wake of increasing atrocities against Christians and religious polarisation in the country.

Anguish

Thousands of churches across the country held special prayers on the day with special holy hours, rosaries, and Stations of Cross in response to the CBCI appeal for "peace and harmony".

Meanwhile, the 2023 year report of the Religious Liberty Commission of Evangelical Fellowship of India expressed anguish over "the alarmingly steep rise in the number of violent incidents against the Christian community".

"The Indian political apparatus, its law enforcement agencies, and its justice system, specially at the level of villages and small towns, have been found wanting and slow in its responses despite urgent pleas for help from victims, church leaders, and civil society," the report lamented.

“The Indian political apparatus, its law enforcement agencies, and its justice system, specially at the level of villages and small towns, have been found wanting and slow in its responses despite urgent pleas for help from victims, church leaders, and civil society”

i Anto Akkara writes for CNA from Bangalore, India.



World Report

IN BRIEF

Brazilian priest becomes first Latin bishop in Cyprus in 340 years

● After 340 years, Cyprus has once again a Latin bishop. On March 16, Brazilian-born Franciscan priest Bruno Varriano received in Nicosia his episcopal ordination from Cardinal Pierluigi Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, and officially became the Patriarchal vicar of Cyprus.

Fr Varriano, who also holds Italian citizenship, will lead a group of 16 priests and will keep accompanying a number of Latin Catholic communities, something that he has been doing since he arrived in the Mediterranean island in December of 2022. He will also work on the reorganisation of the ecclesial structure in the country.

Cyprus is part of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, where Fr Varriano spent 26 years, in cities like Bethlehem and Nazareth. The history of Catholicism in the Holy Land and in Cyprus has been deeply interconnected since the 13th Century, when the Franciscan order received from the Vatican the custody of that region.

Group says Biden must help persecuted Nigerian Christians or be voted out

● A leading Nigerian criminologist and board chair of the Catholic inspired NGO, International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law (Intersociety) says the group could launch an international campaign urging American voters to vote out the Biden administration if it continues to turn a blind eye to the persecution of Christians in Nigeria. "The US government must be compelled to take action, if not it should be voted out," Emeka Umeagbalassi told *Crux*.

"It is likely that we might launch an international campaign urging American

voters to vote out the Democratic Party if the Democratic Party continues to ignore, to aid, to abet the killings in Nigeria, because if Nigeria eventually explodes, the American government cannot contain the aftermath effects of the implosion and explosion in Nigeria," he said.

His comments came in reaction to the continued push by some international non-state actors and some lawmakers in the United States for the government to take action and save Christians from being systematically exterminated in Nigeria.

Australian religious schools oppose changes on choosing staff, students by faith

● Australian churches have sent a letter to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese appealing against any efforts to remove protections for faith-based schools. The Australian government recently released the Australian Law Reform Commission's (ALRC) final report which recommended the removal of current exemptions in the Sex Discrimination Act (1984) that enable faith-based schools to determine the employment and enrolment of staff and students according to their faith.

The ALRC recommended repealing the section of the Sex Discrimination Act which allows religious schools to discriminate against people on the basis of their sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status, marital or relationship status. It proposed that religious institutions should only be allowed to preference staff based on their religious beliefs if it is "reasonably necessary" and "proportionate" to the aim of maintaining a community of faith and does not breach sex discrimination laws.

US priest prepares for 'crazy' 1,500 mile Eucharistic pilgrimage

● Fr Roger Landry, who presently serves as chaplain at Columbia University in New York City will walk 1,500 miles across the eastern US this summer. Fr Landry is currently the only priest committed to walking the entirety of one of the four routes of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, an unprecedented effort to coordinate four simultaneous Eucharistic pilgrimages starting at the edges of the country and converging, thousands of miles later, in Indianapolis.

The pilgrimages are part of the multiyear Eucharistic Revival, kicked off by the US Catholic bishops and dedicated to celebrating and spreading devotion to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. As announced earlier this month, a group of 24 young "Perpetual Pilgrims" have committed to walking the entirety of each of the four routes, 10-15 miles each day, accompanied by a rotating cadre of priests from the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal. The pilgrimages begin Pentecost weekend, May 17-19.

White House creates Easter furore with annual transgender message, contest rules

A proclamation from the nation's second Catholic president on a transgender-themed occasion is causing consternation among some faithful, as the date coincides this year with Easter - and as the annual White House Easter egg art contest bans, among other things, religious symbolism.

On March 29, President Joe Biden issued his annual message for the March 31 "International Transgender Day of Visibility," which he said "honour(s) the extraordinary courage and contributions of transgender Americans and reaffirm(s) our Nation's commitment to forming a more perfect Union."

The observance was created in 2009 by psychotherapist Rachel Crandall-Crocker, executive director of the advocacy group Transgender Michigan and its Transgender Michigan help line.

At the same time, the White House instructed youth participating in its traditional Easter egg art contest to refrain from designs with "religious symbols" and "overtly religious themes", as well as "partisan political statements"; hateful and discriminatory material, and "any questionable content".

Biden's proclamation, the simultaneous dates of Easter and the transgender observance, and the White House contest rules combined to spark outrage on



US President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden attend the White House Easter Egg Roll in Washington, April 10, 2023. The White House issued a proclamation March 29, 2024, for the Transgender Day of Visibility, which is observed annually March 31 and coincides this year with Easter. Photos: OSV News photo/Evelyn Hockstein, Reuters

social media.

Among those weighing in was Catholic pro-life advocate Lila Rose, who wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter, March 30 that the White House "will proudly celebrate the religion of the trans cult, but ban Christian 'symbols or themes' on the biggest Christian holiday - Easter."

"Our 'Catholic' President cynically uses the faith when convenient as a sell-

ing point, and then mocks and denigrates it," she wrote.

However, regarding the White House's egg contest rules, Politico reports those rules have been in place for every administration since 1976 - including under Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump.

The Trump campaign attempted to castigate Biden for the Easter egg restrictions, but then

caused its stir by saying an apology was owed "to the millions of Catholics and Christians".

The Biden campaign shot back that "Catholics *are* Christians. You don't say 'Catholics and Christians'". Politico pointed out the unnecessary distinction has a thorny history as some US Protestant churches have argued that Catholics are not actually Christians.

Gaza ceasefire protestors arrested disrupting Easter Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral

Three protesters were taken into custody late Saturday for disrupting Easter Vigil Mass at Manhattan's St Patrick's Cathedral, police said.

The 8pm service, conducted by Cardinal Timothy Dolan, was interrupted roughly 45 minutes after its start when the three protestors approached the altar with a large white banner that read "Silence = Death".

Videos shared by Extinction Rebellion NYC showed the trio quickly escorted from the church seconds after unfurling the banner. "Free Palestine" chants could also be heard.

The three men, two in their 30s and one in his 60s, were arrested by police on charges of disrupting a religious service, the NYPD confirmed Sunday.

"War, occupation, and industrial pollution are poisoning the soil, air and water in Gaza and all over the planet, destroying the earth's capacity to sustain life," said Gregory Schwedock, one of the XR NYC Palestine Solidarity activists arrested Saturday.

The group of activists released a statement following the protest action calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.

Holy Land may turn into a museum or an architectural remembrance, archbishop warns

The archbishop of Toledo and primate of Spain, Francisco Cerro Chávez, stressed in a recent letter the need to support the Christians in the Holy Land, even more so during this time of war, given the danger that "it may become a

museum, just an archaeological remembrance".

In his letter, titled "The Holy Land Urgently Needs Us in Time of War", the prelate made a strong appeal for support for the Christian witness in the region.

Specifically referencing the Pontifical Good Friday Collection to support the work of the Franciscans of the Custody of the Holy Land, Archbishop Cerro said that "at this time it would be a sin of omission not to do it".

The archbishop recounted his recent phone calls to Franciscans in charge of the holy places, who have informed him of the difficulties they and the people they serve are facing.



Edited by Brandon Scott
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Overcome by compassion



Pope Francis reaches out to comfort an inmate as she sheds tears after the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper on March 28 at the Rebibbia women's prison on the outskirts of Rome. Photo: CNS photo/Vatican Media

Canadian judge grants 27-year-old autistic woman's request for assisted suicide

A judge in Canada has ruled that a woman with autism can be granted her request to die by assisted suicide, overruling efforts by the woman's father to halt the deadly procedure. In a decision last week, Justice Colin Feasby of the Court of King's Bench of Alberta said the 27-year-old woman, identified in documents as 'MV', would be allowed to access the country's medical assistance in dying (MAID) even as her father argued that she was "vulnerable" and "not competent to make the decision to take her own life". Mr Feasby's decision set aside an earlier injunction against the woman's request for assisted suicide. Canadian law stipulates that anyone seeking assisted suicide be suffering from "a serious illness, disease, or disability", be experiencing "unbearable physical or mental suffering", and be unable to reverse either the disease or the attendant suffering.

More Holy Week processions prohibited in Cuba

The regime of President Miguel Díaz-Canel in Cuba has prohibited several Holy Week processions in different cities of the country, including the El Vedado area of Havana as well as in Bayamo, a town that was the scene of major protests earlier this month. Last week, *ACI Prensa*, CNA's Spanish-language news partner, reported on the prohibition of processions in the Diocese of the Most Holy Savior located in the Bayamo-Manzanillo area in the province of Granma, due to the regime's fear that new protests would break out. The prohibition has been extended to the capital, Havana, according to a Catholic priest.



Pope washes the feet of inmates at women's prison in Rome

● Pope Francis washed the feet of 12 prisoners at a prison facility in Rome, with the pontiff continuing a regular tradition of holding the Mass of the Lord's Supper at local penitentiaries. The Holy Father told female inmates at the Rebibbia correctional facility, located about six miles from Vatican City, that Jesus "never tires of forgiving" but rather "we are the ones who get tired of asking for forgiveness". "We all have our small or big failures — everyone has their own story. But the Lord always awaits us, with his arms open, and never tires of forgiving," the Holy Father said, according to *Vatican News*.

Thousands of young people gathered in Rome to delve deeper into meaning of Holy Week

● In 1968, St. Josemaría Escrivá inspired and promoted UNIV, an international meeting of young university students seeking to deepen their faith. Since then, thousands of students travel to Rome every Holy Week. This year, approximately 3,000 young people gathered in the Eternal City from March 24–31 to participate in liturgical ceremonies with Pope Francis and in several meetings with the prelate of Opus Dei, Msgr Fernando Ocáriz. In addition, participants will have the possibility of attending university events for further study and debate on the topic 'The Human Factor', concerning artificial intelligence.

Pope to write meditations for Good Friday Way of the Cross for the first time

● Pope Francis for the first time in his 11-year pontificate will pen his own spiritual meditations for Friday's Via Crucis (Way of the Cross) against the dramatic backdrop of Rome's historic Colosseum. The reflection will be based on the theme "In Prayer with Jesus on the Way of the Cross". The Pope will write a unique treatment for each station, "centred on what Jesus experiences in that moment", the Holy See Press Office announced. *Vatican News* observed that the Pope's decision to write his own meditations this year dovetails with the spiritual dimension of the Year of Prayer, a period of reflection the Pope has called in anticipation of the 2025 Jubilee Year.

Pope to offer Mass in Venice's St Mark's Square

● Pope Francis will travel by motorboat along Venice's canals and offer Mass in St Mark's Square during his visit to the "floating city", the Vatican announced last week. The Holy See Press Office has released the schedule for the Pope's upcoming day trip to Venice - the Pope's only scheduled trip so far in 2024. Pope Francis will preside over a public Mass in St Mark's Square at 11am on Sunday, April 28, as he visits the Vatican pavilion at the Venice Biennale art exhibition.



Letter from Jerusalem

Holy Week in the Holy city



Members of the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará, attend the Saturday morning sunrise prayer from the Psalms on the Sea of Galilee during the Annual Women's Encounter in Magdala in the Galilee, March 31, 2023. Photo: OSV News/Debbie Hill



Justin Robinson OSB

It's one of my life's greatest privileges to be in the Holy Land and to live the Christian calendar in the very places where the story of our faith unfolded. Holy Week began on Palm Sunday at Bethpage, where I joined a few thousand pilgrims winding their way down the Mount of Olives singing and waving palm branches on approach to the Old City.

Our celebration coincided this year with the Jewish feast of Purim, the commemoration of the Jewish people's rescue from destruction told in the Book of Esther. On my way across town, a Jewish boy's jaw dropped dramatically as he looked me up and down and exclaimed excitedly *Magniv! Purim sameach!* As amazing as he found it, my black robes were not my party piece but rather my same old Benedictine habit. I appreciated his wish of a happy Purim nevertheless!

We're fortunate to be custodians of a monastery at Tabgha on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, the

place where Jesus is believed to have multiplied loaves and fishes for the hungry crowd. It's paradise there, so I headed north to spend a few days on retreat before the Triduum.

Nowadays, the silence of the monastery is disturbed by the soundscape of war: the constant roar of fighter jets running sorties to Lebanon and Syria, the occasional boom of artillery fire from tanks positioned around the Galilee. Despite this present-day reality, it was a precious time of rest from my dissertation waiting back in Jerusalem.

“Tension is in the air these days, but we’ve thankfully been spared too much trouble during this fraught period”

Returning to the holy city, a liturgical connoisseur will find a range of options for worship in various languages. I went to the Upper Room on Mount Zion to be close to the place where the Last Supper was

celebrated on Holy Thursday. Afterwards, I wandered down to the Garden of Gethsemane and sat myself between the olive trees which I imagined listened to the anguished prayers of Jesus on the night he was betrayed.

Where else could I have been but the *Via Dolorosa* on Good Friday? There is nowhere better to be than the narrow and cobbled streets of the Old City, following Jesus' route to Calvary. An early start was necessary to beat the crowds heading to Al Aqsa Mosque for Friday prayers and the accompanying security operation which locks the place down. Tension is in the air these days, but we've thankfully been spared too much trouble during this fraught period.

In the afternoon I celebrated the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion at the *École Biblique*, the prestigious Dominican school of Biblical exegesis and archaeology. You could hear a pin drop on my walk home afterwards, as sunset meant it was time for the Muslims to break their Ramadan fast.

“There is nowhere better to be than the narrow and cobbled streets of the Old City, following Jesus' route to Calvary”

The streets were empty, save for the market traders sitting around dishes of rice before the crowds arrived and old men savouring their first cigarette in more than twelve hours. I wished them *saha ftourk-oum* – a good break of the fast – as I headed home.

Calendar

It is a peculiarity of the Church in Jerusalem that the Latin liturgical calendar is slightly different to that which is celebrated in the rest of the world. The status quo agreement – an Ottoman setting-in-stone of relations between the Christian denominations of Jerusalem – means that the times of prayer in 1852 must be observed today too.

When Pope Pius XII moved the celebration of the Easter Vigil from Saturday morning to the evening time, the status quo agreement made this an impossible change to be observed in Jerusalem. As such, the Latin Patriarch celebrated the Easter Vigil on Saturday morning at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, watched closely by the other denominations to make sure no breach of protocol is made in the centuries-old ruling.

Thus, Easter came early for the Latins of Jerusalem and the streets of the Christian Quarter buzzed in the Saturday morning sun as neighbours exchanged greetings and shared *ma'moul*, a date-filled butter

cookie eaten during religious festivals in the Arab world. Hundreds of hands were shaken, dozens of small cups of coffee were sipped, and we wished one another *kull sane wa intum salmiin*, literally a wish that “every year you're safe”.

“The world will have turned its attention to Jesus in Jerusalem, and we will have been privileged to have been here”

A few weeks from now Jerusalem will be alive again with the celebration of Easter for the Eastern Christians, with the Jewish Passover and the end of Ramadan on Eid al-Fitr. Life in Jerusalem will then return to normal – or, as normal as life can be in such a hotly contested city – and we will begin again our pilgrim journey through the Christian calendar. The world will have turned its attention to Jesus in Jerusalem, and we will have been privileged to have been here.

Justin Robinson OSB is a monk of Glenstal Abbey in County Limerick currently residing in Jerusalem.

Letters

Letter of the week

The miracle at St Mel's and the meaning of its message

Dear Editor, As I followed Holy Mass from St Mel's Cathedral in Longford recently, I thought of the fire that destroyed so much there a few years ago and of the tapestry of the holy family that was intact in spite of all the surrounding flames and destruction of all else.

I ask myself, what message was being given to us by that miraculous happening? Many people have gone to see that beautiful image of Jesus, Mary and Joseph and have been overcome with joy and thanksgiving that such an obvious miracle should have happened.

I believe that miracle is a clear message to all of us in that we are all part of a family, to value the family structure given to us by God and to call on the holy family to help us live after the example of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

There is much talk today regarding diversity, which is well and good provided we have the underlying unity. When the Holy Spirit is the foundation of our unity, we can share much diversity with calmness and respect.

We have learned in our Faith lessons that the Holy Spirit unites and that the

unholy spirit divides. Yes, "diobolo", the Greek word for devil means division. The Church is our mother and we need her guidance, protection and wise teaching.

The family is considered the domestic Church and it needs a mother's love care and guidance too. I ask God to reward and bless all mothers in this very important role of motherhood.

I thank God for all good fathers who share this important responsibility of making the home a house where the holy family is imitated and appreciated and where Faith

is treasured and shared. This is no easy task in today's world so I carry in my heart as I go to Mass this evening so many broken families and hearts who are doing their best in some very difficult situations.

I ask God, a God of mercy and compassion, to help us all to remember we are pilgrims on a journey and have to help one another as we follow his way of the cross during these last days of Lent.

*Yours etc.,
Sr Susan Evangelist,
Ballyshannon, Donegal*

Promoting temperance on Good Friday

Dear Editor, It has been about five years since it was made legal for shops and pubs to sell alcohol on Good Friday. Regardless of religious affiliation, the decision was deeply troubling and at odds with the values that our community should uphold.

Good Friday is a day of great significance in the Catholic faith, marking the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and symbolising sacrifice, repentance, and solemn reflection. It is a day when Catholics observe fasting and abstain from meat and alcohol as a sign of reverence and devotion. Allowing the sale of alcohol on such a sacred day not only diminishes its religious importance but also sends a message that commercial interests take precedence over spiritual observance and moral values.

Moreover, it is particularly troubling given the widespread issue of alcohol addiction in Irish society. Alcohol abuse has long plagued our communities, leading to broken families, impaired health, and countless tragedies. By making alcohol more readily available on a day when people should be contemplating matters of faith and spirituality, we risk exacerbating the already alarming rates of addiction



and its associated harms.

I urge our legislators to reconsider this decision and to prioritise the welfare of our society over commercial interests. Rather than facilitating access to alcohol on a day of religious observance, we should be promoting policies that support responsible consumption and address the root causes of addiction.

Furthermore, as a community, we must continue to work towards creating a cul-

ture of moderation and temperance, where individuals are supported in making healthy choices and where the dignity of every person is respected. I implore our leaders to reflect on the broader implications of allowing alcohol sales on Good Friday and to take action that aligns with the values of our Catholic faith and the well-being of our society as a whole.

*Yours etc.,
Aine O'Sullivan
Crumlin, Dublin 12*

Money, land, and inheritance the bane of Irish families

Dear Editor, That Dr Cranfield would press this Government to invest in palliative care, is quite frankly wishful thinking [The Irish Catholic – March 28, 2024]. Why would a Government invest in a system of care that nullifies their pet project, which is assisted suicide. It's just nonsensical! They have wished to prove that their proselytising secular agenda will somehow finally exor-

cise the last vestiges of Catholic morality and we will all be happy.

Their push for abortion and marriage redefinition has proven that it will be only a matter of time before they get rid of granny and grandad. But of course, families wish this to happen, given that the elderly are an inconvenience whose hospice care will only eat up their inheritance which would

make the wishes of the Prodigal Son look amateurish, to say the least. Money, land, and inheritance have always been the bane of Irish family life, both in literature and in lived reality; the present government only gives them what they want.

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

In praise of priests

After much promotion by bishops and priests the Irish Church's Year of Vocations comes to a close at the end of this month. Over the course of the initiative, announced by Bishop of Waterford and Lismore Alphonsus Cullinan, immersive events have popped up around the country with the intention of assisting and encouraging young men who feel that they may be equipped to, as the promotional slogan evocatively says, "take the risk for Christ".

Every business needs to sustain itself and the Church's recruitment drive in the country is no different to a slowly depleting multinational reaching out to the masses on LinkedIn, or other recruitment sites. The challenge is immense.

The only problem with the Church's version of recruitment when compared with, let's say, our booming multinational sector, is the simple commitment to perpetual celibacy, no fixed hours, overtime that's not accounted for, constant and often unrealistic demands, and being expected to stabilise an institution that is creaking and teetering into the unknown, is a tall order for any young person. Yes priesthood requires sacrifice but many parents are hesitant to encourage their sons towards the priesthood because there seems to be a lot of unnecessary sacrifice in terms of workload and burnout.

With Easter comes one of the most hectic and restless periods in the life of a priest. For many this period forms part of the novelty where a family attends the local church twice a year, the second time being Christmas. Attendance goes up substantially. Even the most remote parishes struggle to accommodate the large volume of people; we have a vision of what the parish dynamic in our churches could look like every week but at the same time in this climate, seems so hopelessly beyond our reach. Is it unrealistic to try and win these people back? Or should we downsize and cater to the people who are committed all year round? If we are to remain with an ordained male-only clergy, it would seem that despite the rumblings of lay involvement and synodality, the latter

is the only realistic option, which in itself, needs huge planning and resources, and courage by leadership in the Church.

As our world changes, so too must our approach to spiritual leadership and community support. Our priests stand ready to navigate these changes, but they need the support, understanding, and active involvement of their congregations and their bishops. Encouraging vocations to the priesthood is another aspect of this reflection. In a world where secularism and materialism increasingly overshadow spiritual callings, encouraging young men in our community to consider the priesthood is paramount. Yet it also must be modern. Seminaries, and training need to be modernised, priesthood needs to attract young men who can ably go onto further education. The lived life of a young priest needs to respect his work/life balance and his need for financial security.

This endeavour begins with us—through our respect, support, and vocal appreciation for our priests, we can try to inspire a new generation to embrace this sacred calling. Let us also acknowledge the diversity within our Church and the unique perspectives and talents that each priest brings to his ministry. By celebrating this diversity, we enrich our community and foster a more inclusive and understanding Church. Our priests, with their varied backgrounds and experiences, are a testament to the universal call of Christ, transcending cultural and ethnic boundaries. In conclusion, as we move forward, let us do so with a renewed reverence for the priesthood and a commitment to deeper engagement with our spiritual shepherds. Let us pray for our priests, support them in their ministry, and consider how we, as a Church, can better serve alongside them in the mission of spreading the Gospel. In doing so, we not only elevate our priests but also strengthen the very foundation of our faith community. Together, as one body in Christ, we can face the challenges ahead, grounded in love, faith, and mutual respect.

Letters to the Editor

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

We regret that we cannot give prior notice of a letter's publication

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

Laity 'crying out' for good faith formation



The big philosophical questions about faith can't be ignored, writes **Eoin McCormack**

Almost two years on from the local synodal gatherings held in parishes across the country it seems appropriate as we celebrate season of Easter – the fundamental basis for our Christian identity – to assess our efforts in responding to one of the distinct priorities identified during the synod consultations: the call for enhanced adult faith formation.

With almost 90% of our schools still under Catholic patronage (as we are regularly reminded by the secular media), it may appear rather peculiar from an external point of view that one of the main priorities emerging from a consultation predominantly made up of laity, that there is such a request for better intellectual formation in the faith.

Yet, upon delving deeper into our own cultural context, this request doesn't seem that surprising in the least.

The latest census of 2022 gave us a glimpse into some of the intellectual barriers present in our evangelisation (and retention) efforts in recent times.

Decline

How so? If one were to examine where Catholic disaffiliated members are going upon leaving the Church, almost to a person, they are all fleeing to the same existential place namely the 'no-religion' grouping.

“People do not understand; therefore, they do not believe. Faith is placed in the category of superstition and fairytales and therefore is deemed irrelevant and ridiculous”

This now makes up the second largest 'religious group' in Irish society.

It is true to say that some of the decline in Catholic numbers by percentage are in relation to inward migration of other denominations and faiths, but here I am dealing with a different and specific question – where are disaffiliated Catholics going when they leave the Church, and more importantly, why.

Of course, Ireland is not unique in this instance, the Western world in general bares the same hallmarks of disaffiliation.

Those who leave the Church do not do so in order to go to other religions, but by-in-large are becoming 'religious nones'.

Why is this significant? Because at the very least, if they were opting for other religions, you could speculate as to the multitude of variations between religions and what is attracting/repelling people between them.

This finding however tells us that it is the very idea of religion which people find preposterous.

“For catechists and teachers of the Faith, this should provide us with a clear sense of direction”

Fundamentally from a faith formation perspective, it tells us exactly what kind of intellectual space our own people find themselves in the secular world of today.

Essentially, this is a space of overt intellectual rationalism whereby all religion is regarded with the same contempt – irrational and irrelevant.

The greatest blockage to religion of any kind is not necessarily opposition over a certain political issue or scandal but rather it is an intellectual issue.

People do not understand; therefore, they do not believe. Faith is placed in the category of superstition and fairytales and therefore is deemed irrelevant and ridiculous.

In this context it therefore seems evident why the laity are calling for better faith formation.

At the very least, for catechists and teachers of the Faith, this should provide us with a clear sense of direction.

The big philosophical questions –



Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh, Northern Ireland, blesses delegates during a prayer walk at a pre-synodal assembly in Clonmacnoise Monastery in Ireland June 18, 2022. Photo: CNS/Clodagh Kilcoyne, Reuters



Eoin McCormack gives a talk on the Faith to Rathmines parishioners.

is there a God, how do we interpret the Bible, who was Jesus Christ, is there an afterlife, is there ultimate meaning and purpose to life – can no longer be viewed as the remit of specialists in theology departments, but rather these are the very questions that people want addressed in their local parishes.

Like Christ's interaction with the disciples on the Road to Emmaus, the relevance of the salvation story "since the time of Moses and the prophets" (Luke 24:27) needs to be explained before we can begin to

break bread together.

The intellectual concerns of our people must be taken seriously, and the time is opportune to draw upon our 2000-year-old philosophical and theological tradition and begin to provide people with better answers to the deepest questions of life.

Action

As St Peter encourages: "be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15).

On a local level in the parish of

Rathmines, we began to address this issue on a number of fronts over the past few years including the development of an interactive faith-development webpage on the parish website which has proved popular in our local schools.

Additionally, the creation of an active young adult group has seen the regular participation of 35 young adults in the life of the parish and continues to host faith development activities.

This Lent, however, we opted to organise a four-week seminar series



Members of Rathmines parish's young adult group on pilgrimage.



Anna Sheehan, Ireland Johnson, PJ Cronin, Eva Conroy, and Alex O'Doherty, all students at University College Cork, enjoy the SEEK conference, one of the major young adult conferences in the US. Photo: OSV News

on the theology of the Mass. Initially unsure as to how well of an attendance such a course could draw, we were pleasantly surprised to host over 30 people for each session.

In alignment with the synod's call for better intellectual formation, there was a clear hunger from parishioners to better understand what we do and why we do it.

From a facilitator's perspective, it has been enriching to hear feedback from life-long parishioners expressing their new appreciation for the liturgy and how they can now better

enter the spirit of the Mass and not just 'go through the motions' as so many have become accustomed to.

“In order for our people to be fully and consciously present, they need to be informed”

If this experience has taught me anything as a catechist, considering Vatican II's call for a fully conscious and active laity, we need to reassess what this actually means in light of

the laity's call for further formation and how we can seriously begin to address it.

For a long time, this summons of Vatican II was understood, perhaps superficially, to mean the introduction of extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist or ministers of the Word to 'assist' the priest in the celebration of Mass.

While these ministries are noble and necessary, without a comprehensive formation or catechesis they remain a surface level form of participation.

In order for our people to be fully and consciously present, they need to be informed about what exactly they're being present at.

Whilst local courses on a practical level might seem like a miniscule exercise in the grander picture, faith formation for the most part is no longer taking place in the school or the home or in the culture, the question needs to be asked therefore, where else is there?

Action

We need to begin asking where and how we can start giving the people what they asked for – enhanced adult faith formation.

The popular social-media evangelist, Bishop Robert Barron, consistently says that we as a Church have dumbed down our intellectual teaching of the faith right at the time when individualism and relativism were becoming the dominant narrative.

And now, as apparent in our synodal process, the laity are crying out for a more rigorous intellectual formation enabling them not just to withstand the relativist secular attacks on religion, but to enhance their own relationship with Christ.

This surely is a worthwhile endeavour and something we cannot but support.

Ultimately, it is not possible to be fully, consciously present at the Mass if you do not know that you are participating in the source and summit of the Christian life, that when you pray the Lamb of God you are participating in the offering of the unblemished sacrifice, that when you utter the words before Communion – 'Lord I am not worthy' – you are repeating the centurion's cry of faith and humility, that when you pray the 'Holy, Holy' you are entering into a foretaste of the heavenly

liturgy (Revelation 4) or that participation in the Eucharist is ultimately an act of thanksgiving.

For the first time in history, the Church now finds herself in a time where literacy and educational levels are at their highest.

“The Mass does not end at and the conclusion of the liturgy, in fact it only begins”

It will no longer suffice therefore for parishes to be solely centres of local devotion. They must also become centres of learning.

The very word Mass, for example, comes from the Latin *Missio* meaning mission.

The Mass does not end at and the conclusion of the liturgy, in fact it only begins.

Having feasted on the Lord's Supper, the Faithful are then sent on mission to live out the Christian life in their day-to-day lives.

For this to materialise in any real sense, however, the faithful need access to adequate faith formation.

Just as the monks in monastic Ireland centred local life around their catechetical tools of High Crosses, parishes must also educate and explain the Faith in order to truly evangelise and provide a pathway to God in the modern age.

1 Eoin McCormack is a Catechist and Pastoral Worker in the parish of Rathmines, Dublin. He holds a Licence in the Catechetical Sciences, an MA in Chaplaincy, and a Bachelor's in Theology from Maynooth.

“It is not possible to be fully, consciously present at the Mass if you do not know that you are participating in the source and summit of the Christian life”

Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, April 4, 2024

Let's
celebrate
Easter for
a while

Greg Erlandson

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How to be 'distinctly Catholic' in a polarised political world

Republican presidential candidate and former US President Donald Trump speaks during a campaign rally at Winthrop Coliseum in Rock Hill ahead of the South Carolina Republican presidential primary February 23, 2024. Photo: OSV News/Shannon Stapleton, Reuters



The current political world can be dispiriting but there are ways in which you can affirm both faith and political beliefs, writes Charlie Camosy

Kenneth Craycraft, associate professor of moral theology at Mount St Mary's Seminary and School of Theology in Cincinnati, Ohio, has a new book, *Citizens Yet Strangers: Living Authentically Catholic in a Divided America*, which looks at how faithful Catholics can engage in today's polarised political climate. He recently spoke with OSV News' Charlie Camosy about the book and the current political landscape.

Charlie Camosy As the 2024 US general election cycle kicks into a new gear, politics and partisanship take centre stage on our culture. I wonder what's primarily on your mind right now. Anything faithful Catholics should be avoiding in our current moment?

Kenneth Craycraft My primary concern can be summarised by two closely related problems.

First, I am troubled by the difficulty that we Catholics

have in thinking about the moral life in terms that are distinctly Catholic, without being necessarily concerned with how that might play out in the American political arena.

This is not to suggest that I advocate withdrawal from public life. Nor am I suggesting that we Catholics cannot have civic conversations about important moral issues that divide America. But if our moral deliberation starts from a presumption that our positions should be translatable into the idiom of contemporary American political discourse, we tend to shape our thinking accordingly.

Put another way, if we presume that our moral commitments have no real purpose if they do not speak the language of the political culture, we tend to shape that language by that culture. In the process, of course, we tend to compromise the richness of our Catholic moral theological heritage.

For the purpose of recovering a distinctly Catholic moral vocabulary, we should be less

concerned than we often are about whether it 'translates' into American liberalism. Otherwise, we are compromised from the start, and have difficulty even knowing what our own moral foundations are.

This leads to the second, related, concern. If we succumb to the first temptation, it often leads to defining our moral positions not by the teaching of the Church, but rather by the political platforms of the two major political parties. This can take either of two forms.

“In an effort to be relevant to American public life, we actually become completely irrelevant”

In the first, we find ourselves adapting our Catholic witness for the purpose of justifying the policy platform of the partisan commitments to which we primarily identify. So, we might try to round out the edges of the Church's teaching on important issues related to the dignity of the human person, more as an apology for one of the parties' platforms than a careful articulation of the Catholic

moral position.

The second, more insidious form, is that we actually collapse the Church's teaching into the partisan position. In this case, we do not attempt merely to justify partisan policies in terms of Catholic theology. Rather, we start with the partisan position, form our moral commitments by them, and then call it Catholic.

These maladies are not confined to one end of the political spectrum. From the left to the right, we Catholics succumb to the same temptations. Thus, in an effort to be relevant to American public life, we actually become completely irrelevant, saying nothing different from the regnant partisan ideologies.

Charlie Camosy Every 'no' the Church offers us is part of a broader and more foundational 'yes'. Can you frame opportunities for faithful Catholics during this election cycle as positive opportunities?

Kenneth Craycraft I believe that the most positive contribution we Catholics can make is to begin to speak Catholic to one another in a public way, such that we can begin to demonstrate a better moral language.

In the book, I am very critical of 'rights' language as divisive and therefore corrosive of authentic community.

Indeed, I suggest that, as used in American political discourse, 'rights language' is not compatible with the Catholic social doctrines of solidarity and common good. Reforming our language around dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity and common good will be a positive contribution to our own moral development and, in turn, to public discourse.

We also should take this election cycle as the opportunity to show that our responsibility to engage in public life, for the sake of the common good, might call us publicly and forcefully to say that neither party's candidate is morally fit to be president. I believe this would be a very positive position.

Charlie Camosy Especially once we leave Lent and Easter seasons, it might be less easy for Catholics to develop a spiritual set of practices that resist political idolatry. Can you recommend any spiritual practices that can help inculcate the ideas in your book?

Kenneth Craycraft My son is a first-year seminarian in what is now called the 'pro-paedeutic' stage according to the new Programme of Priestly Formation. One of the things I have learned from his experience is the importance of substantive praying and thinking with the Church as spiritual discipline.

I am referring specifically

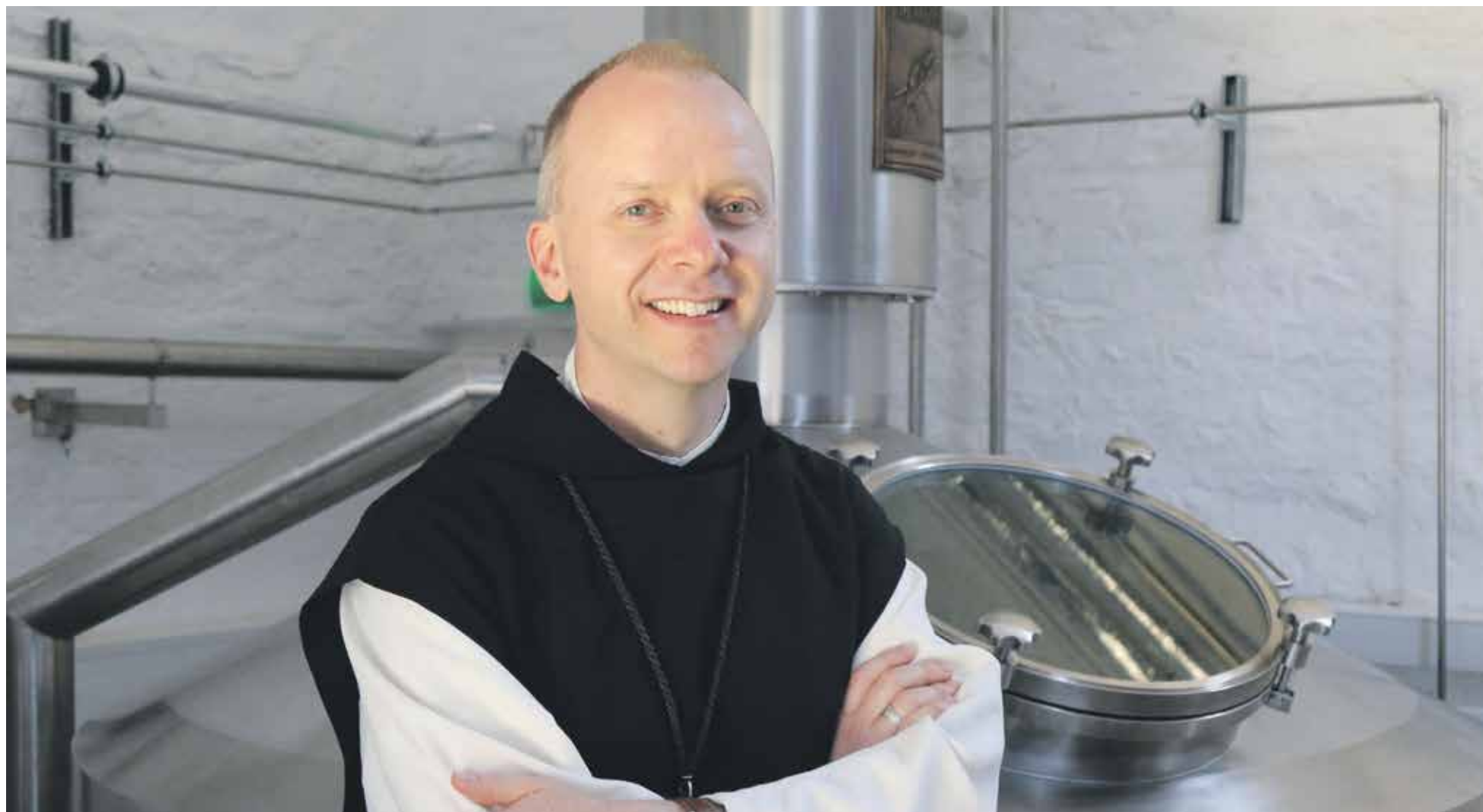
to the Office of Readings and daily prayer. If we are going to re-learn to speak Catholic, as I suggest in the book we must do, there's no better place to start than the readings and prayers that the universal Church says every day through her priests and religious.

“The supernatural society of the Church has primary purchase on our lives”

In addition to teaching us the language of the Church, it is a daily reminder that political life is ordered toward the spiritual life, not vice versa. Indeed, it is a reminder that the supernatural society of the Church has primary purchase on our lives. This does not mean we withdraw from public life. But it might be a way to speak Catholic in public in a way that is more consistent with the witness of the Gospel.

Charlie Camosy is professor of medical humanities at the Creighton School of Medicine in Omaha, Nebraska, and moral theology fellow at St. Joseph Seminary in New York.

An invitation to order, love and beatitude



Then-Fr Erik Varden, abbot of Mount St Bernard Abbey, poses in the brewery July 11, 2018, in Leicestershire, England. Photo: OSV News/Simon Caldwell



Carl E. Olson

The Norwegian bishop and Trappist monk Erik Varden, still shy of 50, has established himself as a spiritual writer, retreat leader and prelate of the highest order. Raised in a non-practicing Lutheran home in a village in Norway, he was a teenage “agnostic” who was “hostile” to Christianity. His conversion to the Catholic faith at age 19 was slow but sure.

He studied at Cambridge and Rome and then, in 2002, he entered Mount St Bernard Abbey, a Trappist monastery near Leicestershire, England. Ordained a priest in 2011, he was named Bishop of Trondheim by Pope Francis in 2020.

Having read Bishop Varden’s three most recent books - *The Shattering of Loneliness: On Christian Remembrance* (2018), *Entering the Twofold Mystery: On Christian Conversion*

(2022), and *Chastity: Reconciliation of the Senses* (2023) - I am deeply impressed by the scholarship, clarity and beauty of his thought and writing.

His knowledge and love of Scripture and the Fathers of the Church are obvious. He apparently is a polyglot, and he draws upon a remarkable array of examples from literature, music and art.

Most impressive, however, is the deep serenity and the love of Christ that permeates his books. He asks hard questions and engages with difficulties with a winsome honesty and humility, always grounded in a contemplative perspective rooted in prayer and liturgy.

Chastity

“Chastity,” he writes early on, “is a virtue for all. ... Unless chastity has a degree of full-bloodedness, it is not the real thing, but counterfeit”. Chastity is misunderstood badly, and so Bishop Varden spends time delving into the etymology, showing that the “purity” of chastity is not merely a matter of morals, but of a robust and self-aware anthropology. It “is a marker of integrity, of a personality whose parts are assembled in harmonious completeness.”

But chastity is also, and ultimately, eschatological: “To be chaste in this

life is to attune oneself to celestial life...” and “the Christian life is life oriented towards beatitude.” This essential theme continues throughout, including in an excellent section on ‘Order and Disorder’.

“Chastity ‘is not a denial of sex’ but ‘an orientation of sexuality, of the whole vital instinct, towards a desired finality’”

Prior to the Fall, in the beginning, “man was invited to choose beatitude” but had the freedom to reject it. Man was created with a priestly character, invited to offer himself in love to the Lover of mankind. “His sacerdotal sacrifice,” writes Bishop Varden, “lay in the ordering of his free will according to God’s call”.

This ordering, then, is relational and covenantal; it helps situate sexuality within the drama of salvation in this life. Bishop Varden observes that chastity “is not a denial of sex” but “an orientation of sexuality, of the whole vital instinct, towards a desired finality”.

The book includes sections on what it means to be male and female, Genesis and creation, eros

and death and observations on the close relationship between monasticism and marriage (a relationship emphasised more overtly in Eastern Christian spirituality).

Love

One of numerous strengths of this book is its insight into sexuality and love. A point made several times in various ways is that love is only true when it is properly ordered; it won’t do to simply appeal, with sentimental glibness, to “love is love” while ignoring the source and fulfilment of our deepest needs and desires.

Bishop Varden offers much specific wisdom here. “The way to order, for most of us,” he writes, “goes through disorder”. To pretend that such disorder does not exist “is to entertain illusion. ... How can I ever be healed if I am determined to give the impression that I am not sick?” In order to grow in chastity, we must be willing to “own and name that which is in my heart”.

Reflecting on the grave sins of

Kings David and Solomon, Bishop Varden flatly states: “To enthrone lust as the heart’s governor is to surrender to idolatry”. And while, in “a Christian optic, eros is an impulse towards the divine” it is “not itself divine” and “must not be mistaken for the goal”.

The key, of course, is found in Jesus Christ, the new Adam, who alone can restore man to his original image: “Only in the light of our human substance’s longing for union with the divine do our lesser yearnings make sense. Only the eternal Logos will order these yearnings well and draw them out of chaos into kosmos”.

Rich with wisdom and deeply challenging, *Chastity* is a book for everyone, a relatively short but robust reflection on essential truths, rendered with serenity and hope.

Carl E. Olson is editor of Catholic World Report and the author of several books.

“Only in the light of our human substance’s longing for union with the divine do our lesser yearnings make sense”

Let's celebrate Easter for a while



Greg Erlandson

This year, I'm glad to see Lent come to an end, and not just because of Easter Alleluias and Cadbury dark chocolate eggs.

It was a tough Lent. Part of it, of course, had nothing explicitly to do with Lent. The news has generally been dreadful, a reminder, I suppose of why we need saving. This broken, battered, cruel world needs a saviour. I need a saviour.

Perhaps this was not true for you, but my Lent was especially difficult because I had trouble keeping my Lenten resolves. None of them were all that hard, by the way. But each of them demanded a certain amount of diligence in the sacrifice, and diligence was a struggle this year.

I won't go into all the bloody details, except to say that when "Son of a ..." flew from my lips, only to remember that I had resolved to refrain from saying "Son of a ...", well, it was that kind of Lent.

Resolutions

One of my favourite Easter reflections is from St John Chrysostom. He is a saint revered by both the Eastern and Western churches, and for many good reasons. But this quote from his Easter homily proclaiming the time to celebrate reveals his Christ-like love of our poor humanity.

"First and last alike receive

your reward; rich and poor, rejoice together! Sober and slothful, celebrate the day! You that have kept the fast, and you that have not, rejoice today for the Table is richly laden! Feast royally on it, the calf is a fattened one. Let no one go away hungry. Partake, all, of the cup of faith. Enjoy all the riches of His goodness! Let no one grieve at his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again; for forgiveness has risen from the grave."

“St Chrysostom reminds us that all of us are invited to the feast: The lazy and the good, the sober and the slothful, rich and poor”

"Forgiveness has risen from the grave," so "you that have kept the fast, and you that have not", come and celebrate all the same. All of us: Those of us who didn't do so well this Lent. Those of us who kept our resolutions with gritted teeth and quiet grumbling. Those of us who sacrificed with a prayerful soul and a smile.

St Chrysostom reminds us that all of us are invited to the feast: The lazy and the good, the sober and the slothful, rich and poor.

“There will be other Lents. There is just one Easter event. Let's remind this tormented old world that there is a happy ending”

In another part of the same homily, he invokes that great parable that so frustrates Americans. It is the one about the workers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1-16) who show up at different times of the day, yet all get the same payment at day's end. Boy, does that frost our puritan cupcake.

Discipline

Easter, St Chrysostom says, is the same reward for all of us. Lent is a good discipline, a way of reminding us of the Lord's own suffering and sacrifice on our behalf. But that sacrifice has been already made for us, and now in this glorious Easter season, we can celebrate that he truly is risen and death defeated.

And if I may suggest an Easter resolution: Let's not let Easter be forgotten in a flash. We spent 40 days in the desert of Lent. Let us now, as they did in St Chrysostom's day, spend 40 days rejoicing.

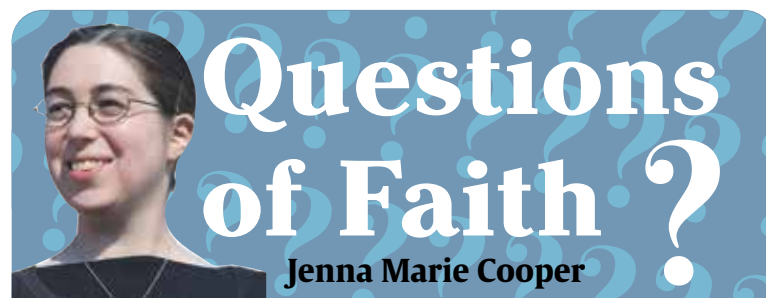
Break out the Cadbury eggs! Celebrate with special foods! Express gratitude for the blessing that this, the greatest feast in the Church calendar, truly is.

There will be other Lents. There is just one Easter event. Let's remind this tormented old world that there is a happy ending.

Greg Erlandson is an award-winning Catholic publisher, editor and journalist whose column appears monthly at OSV News.

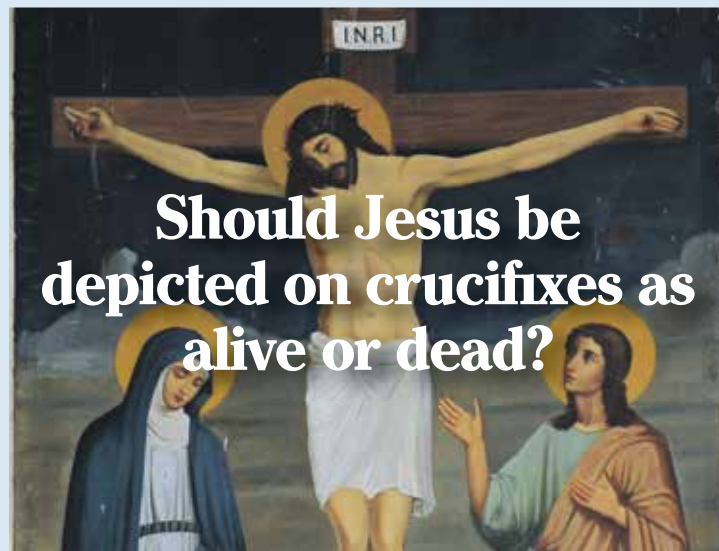


Payton Englebert (4) adds Easter eggs to her basket during an Easter egg hunt at Holy Name of Mary Church in Maplewood, Wisconsin. Photo: CNS/Sam Lucero, The Compass



Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper



Should Jesus be depicted on crucifixes as alive or dead?

Q: I have a friend who observed that some crucifixes depict the Saviour with his eyes open and some depict him with his eyes closed. He wants to know which is correct - alive or dead?

A: With respect to the second part of your question, I think it's equally correct for a crucifix to portray Jesus either as still alive on the cross or as just having died. The crucifixion was a progressive event in time, not one static snapshot, so it would be reasonable for an artist to choose to portray any number of given points of this part of Jesus' passion.

As a parallel, we might think of artistic depictions of the Stations of the Cross: The second station, where Jesus is just taking up his cross, is not any more 'correct' than the 14th station, when he is laid in the tomb, despite Jesus being alive in one and already dead in the other.

Considering the broader question of why Jesus' eyes are open on some crucifixes and closed in others, it occurs to me that a crucifix with Jesus' eyes closed might not necessarily be intended to show him as having already died. That is, it could be that an eyes-closed crucifix is meant rather to show the intensity of Jesus' agony.

As far as I can tell, closed eyes on a crucifix does not indicate any specific symbolism on its own, unlike other symbols in Western Christian art that do have a specific meaning. For example, when Our Lady is shown with a white lily, this is understood as a reference to her purity and sinlessness. But the eyes of a crucifix might tell us something about the period in which the artist was working, or the style a modern artist was trying to emulate.

In the Church's first few centuries, crucifixes were not a common symbol at all. It seems that for the early Christians, crucifixion imagery was a bit too jarring - which makes sense when you consider that the early Christians would have known crucifixion as a grisly contemporary method

of execution. In early Christian art, it is much more common to see Christ portrayed as the Good Shepherd, or for Christianity to be referenced via other more abstract symbols, such as a fish.

We start seeing more crucifixes around the time of the early Middle Ages, when Christianity became the dominant religion in Europe and parts of the Middle East, and when Christians likely had more of a sense of distance from the brutality of the Roman Empire. But even in this period, crucifixes tended to show Christ as a victorious king. Often in these crucifixes, Jesus' expression is serene and untroubled, with his eyes wide open and staring ahead.

While this early medieval style of crucifix does express some real truths of our faith - Jesus was indeed victorious on the cross, and he never ceased to trust God his Father - these depictions can tend to engage the intellect more than the emotions.

This is not the case for later crucifixes, especially from what we call the 'Counter-Reformation' period in the late 1500s. Alongside trends in Western art in general, these crucifixes often show Jesus in a very lifelike, naturalistic way, where his suffering is depicted in realistic and often graphic detail.

The goal of this style was to touch the heart of its viewers, to help move their souls to greater love of the suffering Christ and to greater sorrow for their sins. This makes sense for this period in Church history, as this was a time when the Church - often through saints such as Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and Ignatius of Loyola - was calling the faithful to a greater spirit of penance and a more personal engagement in prayer after some of the abuses that occurred in the medieval period.

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

A South Sudanese Catholic devotee performs the re-enactment of the crucifixion of Christ during a Good Friday procession from the St Theresa's Cathedral in Juba, April 7, 2023. Photo: OSV News/Samir Bol, Reuters



God's silence in the face of evil

Theologians sometimes try to express the meaning of Jesus' resurrection in one sentence: In the resurrection, God vindicated Jesus, his life, his message, and his fidelity. What does that mean?

Jesus entered our world preaching faith, love, and forgiveness, but the world didn't accept that. Instead, it crucified him and by that seemingly shamed his message.

We see this most clearly on the cross when Jesus is taunted, mocked, and challenged: If you are the son of God, come down from there!

If your message is true, let God verify that right now! If your fidelity is more than plain stubbornness and human ignorance, then why are you dying in shame?

What was God's response to those taunts? Seemingly nothing, no commentary, no defence, no apologia, no counter challenge, just silence. Jesus dies in silence.

Neither he nor the God he believed in tried to fill that excruciating void with any consoling words or explanations challenging people to look at the bigger picture or to look at the brighter side of things. None of that. Just silence.

Silence

Jesus died in silence, inside God's silence and inside the world's incomprehension. And we can let ourselves be scandalised by that silence, just as we can let ourselves be scandalised by the seeming triumph of evil, pain, and suffering in our world.

God's seeming silence in the



Fr Rolheiser

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face of evil and death can forever scandalise us: in the Jewish holocaust, in ethnic genocides, in brutal and senseless wars, in the earthquakes and tsunamis which kill thousands of people and devastate whole countries, in the deaths of countless people taken out of this life by cancer and by violence, in how unfair life can be sometimes, and in the casual manner that those without conscience can rape whole areas of life seemingly without consequence. Where is God in all of this? What's God's answer?

God's answer is the resurrection, the resurrection of Jesus and the perennial resurrection of goodness within life itself. But resurrection is not necessarily rescue.

God doesn't necessarily rescue us

from the effects of evil, nor even from death. Evil does what it does, natural disasters are what they are, and those without conscience can rape even as they are feeding off life's sacred fire.

Normally, God doesn't intervene. The parting of the Red Sea isn't a weekly occurrence. God lets his loved ones suffer and die, just as Jesus let his dear friend Lazarus die, and God let Jesus die.

Redeems

God redeems, raises us up afterwards, in a deeper, more lasting vindication. Moreover, the truth of that statement can even be tested empirically.

Despite every appearance to the contrary at times, in the end, love does triumph over hatred. Peace does triumph over chaos. Forgiveness does

triumph over bitterness.

Hope does triumph over cynicism. Fidelity does triumph over despair. Virtue does triumph over sin.

Conscience does triumph over callousness. Life does triumph over death, and good does triumph over evil, always.

Mohandas K Gandhi once wrote: "When I despair, I remember that all through history, the way of truth and love has always won. There have been murderers and tyrants, and for a time they seem invincible. But in the end they always fall. Think of it, always."

The resurrection, most forcibly, makes that point. In the end, God has the last word.

The resurrection of Jesus is that last word. From the ashes of shame, of seeming defeat, failure, and death, a new, deeper, and eternal life perennially bursts forth.

Our faith begins at the very point where it seems it should end, in God's seeming silence in the face of evil.

And what does this ask of us?

First, simply that we trust in the truth of the resurrection. The

resurrection asks us to believe what Gandhi affirmed, namely, that in the end evil will not have the last word. It will fail. Good will eventually triumph.

More concretely, it asks us to roll the dice on trust and truth, namely, trusting that what Jesus taught is true.

Virtue

Virtue is not naive, even when it is shamed. Sin and cynicism are naive, even when they appear to triumph.

Those who genuflect before God and others in conscience will find meaning and joy, even when they are deprived of some of the world's pleasures.

Those who drink in and manipulate sacred energy without conscience will not find meaning in life, even when they taste pleasure. Those who live in honesty, no matter the cost, will find freedom.

Those who lie and rationalise will find themselves imprisoned in self-hate. Those who live in trust will find love. God's silence can be trusted, even when we die inside of it.

We need to remain faithful in love, forgiveness, and conscience, despite everything that suggests they are naive. They will bring us to what is deepest inside of life.

Ultimately, God vindicates virtue. God vindicates love. God vindicates conscience. God vindicates forgiveness. God vindicates fidelity. Ultimately, God vindicated Jesus and will vindicate us too if we remain faithful.

“We need to remain faithful in love, forgiveness, and conscience, despite everything that suggests they are naive. They will bring us to what is deepest inside of life”

Be not afraid for Christ



St John Paul II smiles during a 1980 visit to Paris in this file photo. Photo: OSV News/Giancarlo Giuliani, CPP

Acts 4:32-35
Ps 118:2-4, 13-15,
22-24
1 Jn 5:1-6
Jn 20:19-31

The Sunday Gospel

Jem Sullivan



Fear is a powerful human emotion that shapes our actions and words.

A young man named Karol Wojtyla personally experienced the gripping fear that his country of Poland endured during the Nazi terrors of World War II. Karol belonged to a small theatre group who was forced to go underground as the Nazis occupied their city.

He recounted one clandestine theatre performance as the young actors gathered, in secret, in a dark room lit only by a single candle, with no stage props and

curtains drawn tight to muffle the sound of their voices. In the street below, Nazi soldier patrols blasted propaganda over crackling loudspeakers to instil fear in the hearts and minds of the people.

“Be not afraid! Open wide the doors for Christ”

The young actors continued reciting Polish poetry in the conviction that their secret performance was a form of cultural resistance that kept alive the religious and cultural history

of Poland. The young man, Karol, went on to respond to the Lord’s call to the priesthood and would, in time, be called to serve as bishop of Krakow, Poland.

Decades later, Karol was elected to the papacy, taking the name John Paul II. His first words in his inaugural homily as Pope, spoken on a world stage, were, “Be not afraid! Open wide the doors for Christ”.

Fear

On this Sunday of Divine Mercy, the Gospel recounts that the disciples remained in deep fear after Jesus’ death on the cross. They

stayed behind locked doors for fear of religious authorities, expecting the same fate as their master. It was at this moment of utter fear and isolation that Jesus appears to the disciples, saying to them, “Peace be with you”. Then Jesus shows them his hands and his side, the unmistakable signs of his self-giving love in his death on the cross.

The disciples’ fear turns to hope-filled rejoicing in the presence of the Lord. And when Jesus breathes on them, bestowing on them the gift of the Holy Spirit, they leave behind

the chains of fear. The same fearful disciples become bold missionary witnesses to faith. They encountered divine mercy in the person of Jesus and became instruments of divine mercy to the world.

“The entire Church receives the Holy Spirit that Jesus first promised to his disciples”

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Blessed Trinity, the love of the Father and the Son whose presence sanctifies and vivifies the Church in every age. At Pentecost the entire Church receives the Holy Spirit that Jesus first promised to his disciples.

Today, that same Holy Spirit is offered as gift to

every disciple of Jesus so we might face and overcome the fears, anxieties and worries of life. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we are strengthened to replace fear with faith and exchange the anxieties and worries of daily life with confident trust in God.

The Holy Spirit invites us today and every day to leave behind our fears and live in the freedom of friendship with Jesus, as we pray in faith, “Speak to me, Lord”.

Question: How do Jesus’ words speak to the fears of today?

i Jem Sullivan holds a doctorate in religious education and is an associate professor of Catholic Theology and Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.

“The Holy Spirit invites us today and every day to leave behind our fears and live in the freedom of friendship with Jesus”

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Opening our hearts to the message of Christ

Easter is a great time for religious programming in the media, whether special shows for the season or special editions of the regular shows.

On the seasonal edition of **Witness** (RTÉ Radio 1, Good Friday), Fr Tod Nolan gave presenter Siobhán Garrigan a guide to the Stations of the Cross at Ballintubber Abbey, Co. Mayo – both outside and inside the abbey.

Fr Nolan believed the outdoor Stations offered a different kind of experience, especially on a beautiful Spring day with the birds singing – there was movement, air, nature.

He thought the stations spoke to us all in individual ways – opening our hearts to a message that could be different for each of us. For example, Jesus being condemned to death would have a particular meaning for someone with a terminal diagnosis.

He pointed out that not all of the stations were Biblical, but perhaps grew from popular devotion. The story of Jesus falling three times echoed how we all fall in our own ways, spoke to our broken human nature.

The Stations inside the abbey were by Imogen Stuart who died recently at the age of 96. They were commissioned in 1972, but the artist created them in 13th Century style, to match the abbey



Participants in the BBC's pilgrimage series set in North Wales

itself. For Fr Nolan the inside of the abbey was peaceful and serene. He found that a lot of people favoured doing the stations on an individual basis.

Pilgrimage: The Road Through North Wales (BBC Two, Good Friday) is the latest in a series of such programmes, and while they can become somewhat formulaic there's always something new and interesting.

The pilgrim path through North Wales was created in 2011 to link a series of churches and sites from early Celtic Christianity, going all the way back to the 6th Century. The scenery, unfamiliar to me at least, was amazing and wonderful, the views enhanced by the ubiquitous but effective drone footage – see it in high definition if you

can!

As usual we join a mixed group of celebrities (must it always be so?) of varying religious persuasions and none. There's one practising Catholic, Amanda Lovett who was in the reality TV show 'Traitors', taking time off for herself.

Spencer Matthews, another reality TV celeb, was baptised in the Church of England, is now non-practising but thinks faith is good for humanity and would love to find God on this pilgrimage.

Michaela Strachan is a TV presenter and her faith is in nature. Eshaan Akhbar is a Muslim comedian who does not follow the practices of his religion anymore.

Actor Tom Rosenthal is the messer of the group – in fact he's very much like

his persona in his comedy series *Friday Night Dinner*. He has Jewish heritage on his father's side and Christian on his mother's side.

Christine McGuinness is a former model, isn't quite sure what she believes in but would like to think there was 'something out there'. Having been diagnosed with autism she now is an ambassador for those with that condition.

Journalist Sonali Shah had done pilgrimages previously in India and adheres to Janism – an old Eastern religion. It remains to be seen how the pilgrimage will affect them, but expect silliness, blandness, deeply emotional moments and spiritual insights!

It was particularly apt in Holy Week to watch **Lords – Persecuted Christians** (BBC

PICK OF THE WEEK

THE US AND THE HOLOCAUST: A FILM BY KEN BURNS
RTÉ 2 Sunday (night) April 7, 12:10am

Antisemitism in Germany continues to escalate, causing many Jews to flee to neighbouring countries and the US. The public is horrified by the events of Kristallnacht.

THE SHED THAT FED A MILLION CHILDREN
EWTN Tuesday April 9, 7pm and Wednesday April 8, 9am

Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow interviews pilot Gay Russell on the efforts of Mary's Meals in Malawi and what the charity means to her, personally, from a faith perspective.

PILGRIMAGE: THE ROAD THROUGH NORTH WALES
BBC 2 Friday April 5, 9pm

The pilgrims' final destination is Bardsey Island, the fabled 'Island of 20,000 Saints'. Along the way, they see spectacular landscapes, visit holy sites and engage in fasting, ritual and meditation.

Parliament, Wednesday). This was a debate in the House of Lords, based on a motion tabled by Baroness Arlene Foster, the like of which I've never seen happening over here.

It packed quite a punch, despite reservations I'd have about how that House is constituted. I was particularly impressed by the impassioned speech of Lord David Alton on the matter.

He referenced the thousands killed around the world for their Christian faith. He recalled a former Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sachs, criticising these "crimes against humanity" and being "appalled by the lack of protest".

Lord Alton described the persecution of Christians as "one of the most shocking untold stories of our time", and focussed particularly on these human rights abuses in China and in Nigeria, where the killing of Christians was worst of all, crimes committed with "devastating impunity".

On **Sunday Morning** (Times Radio) UK PM Rishi Sunak was reported as thanking Christians for their contribution to society in the UK – not something you'd hear much from our politicians, some of whom seem hell bent on erasing our Christian values and heritage.



Aubrey Malone

Film

'The Godfather' would have been 100

Marlon Brando would have been 100 yesterday. Born on April 3, 1924 he was, by fairly common consensus, the greatest actor of his generation. Was he a 'Method' actor? This is the school of acting he's always identified with, focusing as it did on reaching into one's inner self for inspiration.

He claimed not to be one, but then Jean-Paul Sartre denied being an existentialist too. There are people who will tell you Brando wasn't just a Method actor but that he was the Method.

When Burt Reynolds visited The Actors Studio in New York one day he said he saw "37 Brandos and 24 James Deans". Brando thought Dean aped his style. He said of him shortly before he died in 1955: "He's wearing my last year's talent and my last

year's wardrobe."

Career

Brando didn't attend the Actors Studio much. Many people think he was influenced by Lee Strasberg, its main alumnus, but Brando had little respect for Strasberg or what he represented. "Stella Adler was always my main mentor," he maintained.

He was electrifying in a raft of Oscar-nominated performances in the 50s, and an Oscar-winning one (*On the Waterfront*). In the 60s he lost his way, drifting from one aimless project to another. By the end of the decade, after a string of flops, he was labelled 'box office poison'.

He had a renaissance in the 70s with the double whammy of *The Godfather* and *Last Tango in Paris* but afterwards he lost his way again, appearing in high-priced cameo

roles for exorbitant sums while denouncing the profession of acting in interviews.

1994 was his *annus horribilis*. That was the year his son Christian was arrested for allegedly murdering the fiancé of his half-sister Cheyenne. Brando was instrumental in getting the charge reduced to manslaughter. In some quarters this was seen as his greatest performance in years.

It was delivered from a witness box. Tears filled his eyes as he made an impassioned plea for leniency for his dysfunctional son.

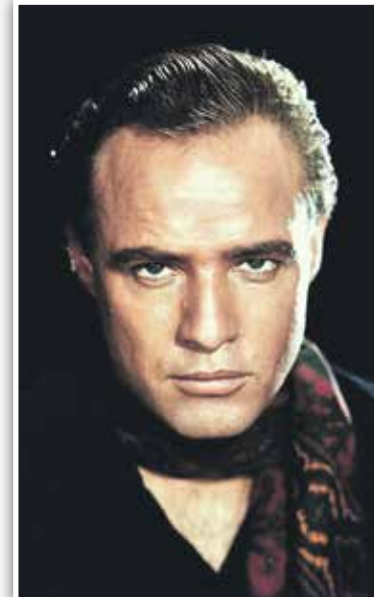
He came to Ballycotton in Cork the following year. He was about to play a priest in a film with the working title of *Divine Rapture*. I made an application to interview him. It would have been the fulfilment of a lifetime dream for me.

Things were looking good but then disaster struck. Money for the film dried up. Brando went back to America without me seeing him. *Divine Rapture* morphed into a not-so-divine 'rupture'.

Book

I recently wrote a book about him to commemorate his centenary. Entitled *Brando – The Funny Side*, it will shortly be published by Bear Manor Media, a prolific company owned by cinephile Ben Ohmart. When people talk about 'Moody Marlon' they don't realise he was a prankster and practical joker all his life.

It's often been said that the main part that escaped him during his storied career was that of Hamlet. I make the point that Falstaff would have been equally applicable to the chameleon star.



Marlon Brando



BookReviews

Peter Costello



The long line of Europe's classical heritage in architecture

Ancient Rome in Fifty Monuments,
by Paul Roberts
(Thames and Hudson, £30.00 / €35.00)

The Language of Architectural Classicism: From Looking to Seeing,
by Edward McParland
(Lund Humphries, £35.00 / €40.00)

Peter Costello

These two very different books explore aspects of the same centuries long tradition in European architecture, which by extension into the colonies abroad, means worldwide. It is a tradition which has left its mark in many places in the form of classical style churches, which with many public buildings and private mansions, form an important part of Europe's heritage.

Dr Roberts is the Research Keeper in the Department of Antiquities in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and has long been involved in excavations of classical sites in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Here, however, he concentrates on the capital of the Roman Empire, and on its great monumental, religious, and memorial buildings.

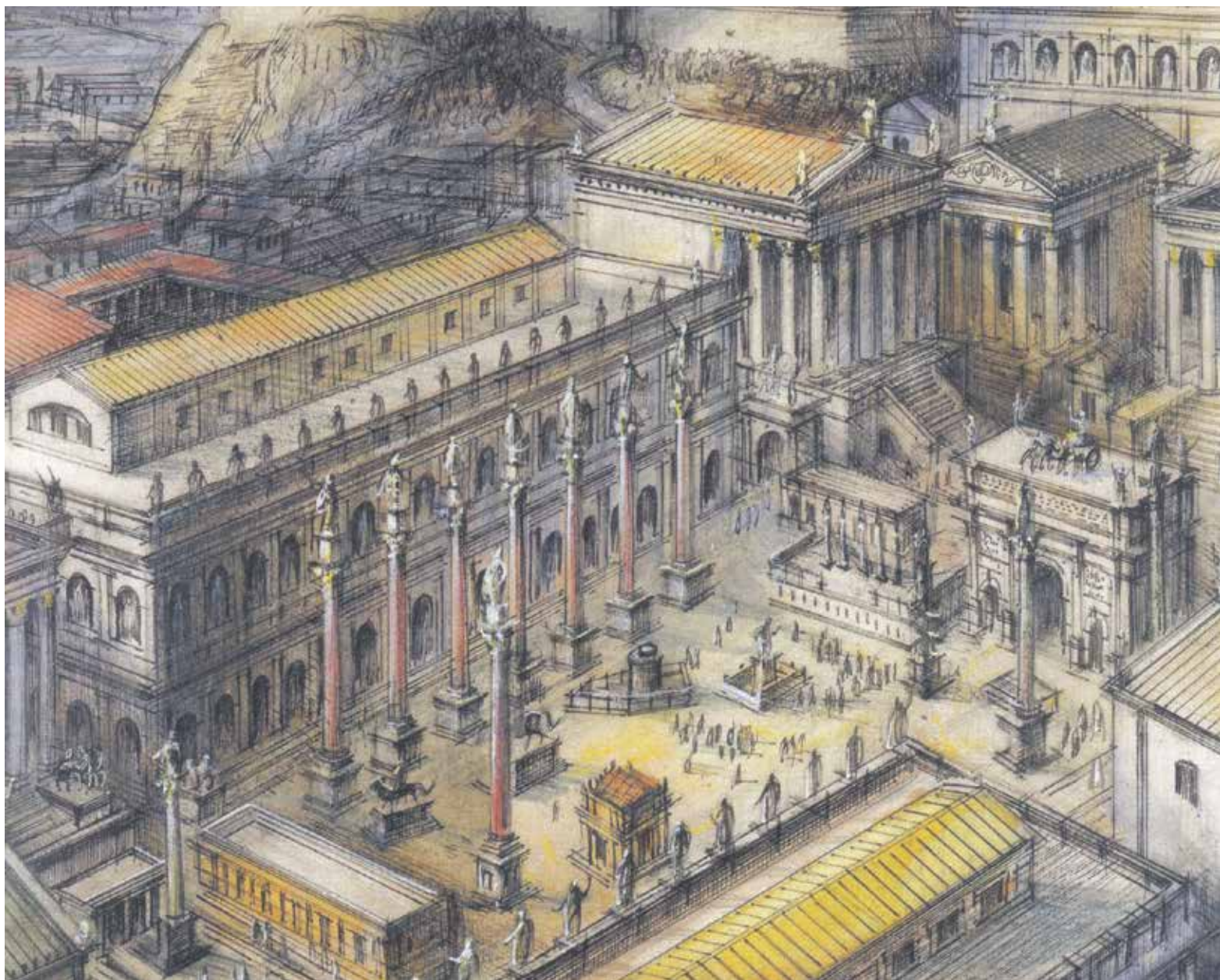
In the days when the schools still did Latin and Greek many people would have had some recollection of what had been taught about the architecture of Greece and Rome which served to inform their later visits to places across Europe.

Some years ago I had the pleasure of spending a time studying an album of early photographs made by an Irish landed gentleman who was one of our pioneering photographers. This was largely devoted to images of ancient imperial ruins as they were then, just before the collapse of the Papal Estates. He revealed a very sad and semi-ruinous city – but then this was only the classical ruins. A new Rome, eventually the capital of the united Kingdom of Italy was arising around them.

Rome

In this book Dr Roberts avoids this disappointment felt by many on seeing the ruins of Rome as they now are by using not only images from paintings over the centuries, but a series of brilliant restorations of what the now barely standing edifices looked like in their heyday. These really bring ancient and Imperial Rome alive.

What a joy it is for this reviewer at least to see again the wonderful paintings by the remarkably talented Alan Sorrell, who brought such pleasure to my first readings in archaeology. But many other fine



The Roman Forum in Imperial days, as reconstructed by Alan Sorrell

photographers and artists have also been assembled by the design team at the publishers.

“These great public buildings for worship and public life as well as business”

It is important to emphasise the book is aimed at the general reader, but there is no writing down. Those who enjoy the notable works of Mary Beard will find this book an invaluable and illuminating companion to her texts.

“This church remains ‘a glimpse of late antique Rome made a key to the original appearance of older, and incredibly even grander monuments’”

The commentary is informative and enlightening. Here, for instance, is an image of the great drain in Rome, the cloaca maxima, which was illustrated in my Latin reader at school. The image is no mere commonplace photo from Alinari, but an engraving by Piranesi. It is like meeting an old, slightly shabby friend of one's youth decked out in her Sunday best. But as a symbol of Roman civilization it was not inappropriate, seeing how important fresh water, baths, hygiene, and even central heating, were to the Romans.

The Rome displayed in these pages was raised on such foundations. It was an observation of the

historian Suetonius (born circa 69AD) that the emperor Augustus found Rome a city of stone, but left it a city of marble.

These great public buildings for worship and public life as well as business, were not only those in which the great days of the Roman Empire were played out, but where the Church thanks to the martyrdom there of Sts Peter and Paul, was settled on as the chief city of Christendom.

Religion

But the author observes pagans, wealthy and devout, still existed in Rome and for a while under the Emperor Julian, the old Gods might have been revived. He alludes to the caution of even the all powerful Constantine about building churches within the walls of pagan Rome.

However the grandest and best preserved of the 5th Century churches is the Santa Maria Mag-

giore, dating from 432AD. This church remains “a glimpse of late antique Rome made a key to the original appearance of older, and incredibly even grander monuments”.

“This continuity of an architectural form through many centuries is only a part of the theme pursued by Dr McParland”

But a century later the future lay with the popes. “The most famous of these Gregory the First, known as the ‘the Great’, reigned over a city transformed beyond all recognition from the Rome of only 50 years before.”

On page 58 there is a summary of what a basilica was to the Romans. The form was that which Dr McQuaid, when Archbishop of Dub-

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.



The neo-classical Church in Rathmines with its magnificent dome

lin, thought was the only right and proper form for a Christian church. He has left the region a number of very imposing creations, such the church at Stillorgan, which parishes these days find difficult to fill at times.

But his taste opens up the theme of Dr Edward McParland's book, the continuity of a taste for classicism which was ever changing and evolving. The decline of Imperial Rome is part of that story, yet the continuity of a style evolved by the Greeks, adopted and transformed by the Romans, and again transformed by the Renaissance and the 18th and more recent centuries, is a remarkable story.

This continuity of an architectural form through many centuries is only a part of the theme pursued by Dr McParland of Trinity College Dublin. For he is keen not merely to inform readers of the results of his research, but to suggest to them a more vital approach to their visiting, not merely to look at sites to 'see' them. Teaching people to really use their eyes to appreciate what is there, and so to derive even great enjoyment from it, will be a life enhancing experience for his readers.

His survey takes a very different form from Dr Roberts, as he is concerned not so much with individual buildings as with the vocabulary of a certain architectural language, which like all languages as its dialects, its slang, its moments of evocative quotation, and a sense of continuous change. As I say, having led many tours in Europe exploring the classical building of the continent, he constantly urged his students to go beyond mere looking to engage in actually 'seeing'. This is a precept that applies elsewhere in life generally.

A comment or two on our own heritage of classical inspired churches is called for here.

“Admirers of churches are left dismayed at the possible fate of them all in the future. But if the two books under review here show anything it is that no change seems to be fatal”

Dublin

While a suburban church such as St Mary Immaculate, Rathmines, with its magnificent copper dome, flourishes in an increasingly lively area, others do not.

The classical style St Audeon's is closed up, while beside it the original medieval church is in the care of the OPW, attracting visitors in season. St Paul's Aran Quay is used the St Gregorios Jacobite Syrian Christian Church, but has to be barred up most of the time. Both were designed by Patrick Byrne, who also designed the church at Merchant's Quay for the Franciscans.

The mixed fates of some of these architecturally important churches are dismaying. It was recently reported that consideration was being given by the Catholic Diocese of Dublin to moving the function of the Pro-Cathedral from the church in Marlborough Street to St Andrew's Westland Row, which shows signs of wear and tear, despite the parish clergy and a group of loyal lay people.

The extraordinary decline of central Dublin as a place of general living rather than growing commercial exploitation has been the cause of these closures and changes.

The admirers of churches are left dismayed at the possible fate of them all in the future. But if the two books under review here show anything it is that no change seems to be fatal.

A admired style will somehow or other survive the changes, remaking itself in new social conditions, just as the architecture of pagan Rome that Dr Roberts celebrates clearly has a vital life even to-day largely under Christian aegis as Dr McParland reveals so elegantly in his book. It is a lesson to us all to see and admire the interconnectivity of all things under heaven.

Going for Glory, Irish Style

Chasing Sam Maguire; The All-Ireland Football Championship 1928-1977, by Dermot Reilly and Colm Keys, foreword by Larry McCarthy (The O'Brien Press, €34.99 / £32.99)

J. Anthony Gaughan

This is a comprehensive account of the All-Ireland Senior Football finals from 1928 to 1977. On each occasion the teams competed for the Sam Maguire Cup.

Sam Maguire, to whom the cup was dedicated, was born in Dunmanway, Co Cork, on March 1 1877. He migrated to London where he found employment in the Post Office. He joined the GAA and was an active member both as an administrator and a player. Soon after arriving in London, he became a member of the Nationalist secret society Irish Republican Brotherhood, and later swore Michael Collins into the organisation in 1909. It was the IRB that before 1916 worked to move the Irish Volunteers in the direction of a revolutionary act at Easter Week.

During the War of Independence, he was in charge of IRA intelligence in London. He was also Collins' principal contact in London for purchasing arms and smuggling them to Ireland. Influenced by Collins, Maguire supported the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

After the establishment of the Irish free State Maguire returned to Ireland and secured employment in the Department of Posts and Telegraphs.

Remaining close to his old comrades in the IRA, some of whom were also members of the secret oath-bound Irish Republican Brotherhood, he conspired with a few of

them when they initiated a ham-fisted mutiny in the Irish Free State army. This arose out of the new government's wish to downscale the number of men under arms, and to initiate a smaller, more suitable, less costly army. The time had come to replace the amateur revolutionaries with professional soldiers.

Following the quick bloodless suppression of the mutiny, he was dismissed from his post in the civil service in 1926 and, despite subsequent appeals that he be re-installed, he remained unemployed. He returned to Dunmanway destitute and died on February 6 1927.

Maguire's former comrades were determined that his sterling contribution to the struggle for independence should not be forgotten. They donated the Sam Maguire Perpetual Memorial Cup to be awarded to the winners of the All-Ireland football final to replace the previous cup which had been lost.

The trophy, based on the design of the Ardagh Chalice, was first presented in 1928 to the captain of the Kildare team. It was retired in 1988, and for award purposes was replaced by a replica in 1988. The original is now on display in the GAA museum at Croke Park.

In their 464-page chronicle of the All-Irelands, Dermot Reilly and Colm Keys provide a treasure trove of information, which will delight the hearts and souls of all GAA fans, here and abroad.

There are accounts of the various victories by the finalists before they reached All-Ireland final day. There is a detailed account of each final. The two teams are listed together with their substitutes. The referee's name and the attendance figures and gate receipts are given.

Under the heading 'The Year

that Was' the authors paint in a picture of the background against which each final was played. For instance, they note that in 1928 Irish coinage was circulated for the first time. In sharp contrast they recall that on September 1 1939 Germany invaded Poland and thus began World War II which over the following six years would claim over 56 million lives.

The 1947 All Ireland Football final was played in the Polo grounds in New York. Canon Michael Hamilton was chiefly responsible for this arrangement. Fr Hamilton was chairman of the Clare County Board and while serving on the Munster and Central Councils, he successfully proposed that as part of commemorations of the Great Famine the All-Ireland Football final be moved to New York.

The match was between teams from Cavan and Kerry, with Cavan emerging victorious. The playing conditions were challenging. There was the sweltering heat and the condensed dimensions of a rock-hard pitch in the centre of which was an elevated pitcher's mound.

During the match Eddie Dowling, one of the Kerry players, fell and struck his head on the baseball mound. This left him lying unconscious for seven days and seven nights in a New York hospital and delayed his return home. The attendance at that match was 34,941 and the gate receipts some £38,000 (€48,250). The event provided priceless publicity for the GAA and its games on the other side of the Atlantic.

This admirable publication, replete with information and practical statistical information, will be warmly welcomed by supporters and non-supporters of the GAA alike.



Dublin fans reach out to touch the Sam Maguire Cup

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Gordius 657

Across

- 1 Breed of dog with a famously enhanced sense of smell (10)
6 Rotate on an axle (4)
10 Town in Louth (5)
11 Puzzle at the end of the TV show 'Count-down' (9)
12 Type of duck (7)
15 A poet usually uses this (5)
17 Tiny amount (4)
18 Chooses (4)
19 Catch fish with a bag-net (5)
21 Use a light-pen to scan this (3-4)
23 Stanza (5)
24 The first man, according to the Bible (4)
25 Pleasant (4)
26 Line of high ground or of high pressure (5)
28 Bird with a forked tail (7)
33 Not inclined to wait (9)
34 One who acts on your behalf (5)
35 Signals agreement (4)
36 Ready money (4,2,4)

Down

- 1 Male pig (4)
2 Great painter from before the nineteenth century (3,6)
3 Reside (5)
4 Happen (5)
5 Not any (4)
7 Shindig (5)
8 Pen-name (3,2,5)
9 Thankless person (7)
13 Acreage (4)
14 Jettisons (7)
16 Successful rugby kick after a try (10)
20 Constellation named for a princess from Greek mythology who was chained to a rock (9)
21 Below (7)
22 Prima Donna (4)
27 Hoodwinked (5)
29 Timepiece (5)
30 Acquire knowledge or skills (5)
31 The second letter of the Greek alphabet (4)
32 Farm where horses are bred (4)

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--|----|
| 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | | 5 | | | 6 | 7 | | 8 |
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| 10 | | | | | | 11 | | | | | | | | |
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| 35 | | | | | 36 | | | | | | | | | |

Classifieds: 01 687 4028

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SOLUTIONS, MARCH 28

GORDIUS No. 656

Across

- 1 Pick and mix 6 Claw 10 Renal 11 Amendment 12 Big head 15 Ideal 17 Igor 18 Axes 19 Argon 21 Oatmeal 23 Keeps 24 Fete 25 Toss 26 Altar 28 Scrawny 33 High cross 34 Alert 35 Rare 36 Carelessly

Down

- 1 Pork 2 Centipede 3 Allah 4 Drama 5 Ibex 7 Liege 8 Wet blanket 9 Admiral 13 Etna 14 Dismiss 16 Back rasher 20 Green fees 21 Ostrich 22 Aver 27 Tiger 29 Caste 30 Aware 31 Yoga 32 Stay

Sudoku Corner

527

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 526

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

Last week's Hard 526

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

Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter



Buried without compassion

I received an anonymous letter a few weeks ago.

I don't normally read such correspondence but was about halfway through the screed when I realised it was unsigned.

The letter was sent to inform me of the death of a priest-colleague, in another part of Ireland. The deceased was a paedophile. He had served time in prison for his crimes, reckoned to be at the severe end of the spectrum. His death hadn't featured on rip.ie

To this day, I do not know where his funeral was held, nor where final resting place is. My correspondent railed at what he perceived as the mistreatment of this man, his being shunned by the clerical establishment and how his life ended in a nursing facility far from his home county. *Sacerdos in aeternum* was how he described the deceased, but there was no sympathy for those young people whose lives were ruined by this man's actions: "Blighted in *aeternum*", you could say. The letter-writer was haunted by Isaiah's words in a Lenten Mass reading: "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though red as crimson, they shall be like wool."



He wondered if the crimes of this priest made his an exceptional case. Are some sins unforgivable? For the anonymous letter writer, the treatment of deceased priest made a mockery of what the writer called "the glib teaching about forgiveness, compassion, fraternity and reconciliation" of clergy.

Balanced

The sadness and bleakness of this loss has, however, to be balanced with an admission of the dreadfully harmful effects of the deceased, which went entirely unacknowledged in the letter. The children abused have the right to compassion also, as do their parents and families. Those deprived of childhoods, those whose innocence and faith have been ripped away

— those who will live their whole life long in the shadow of what this man did; they also deserve fraternity and reconciliation. And yet: one unique aspect of our Catholic faith is our willingness to pray for the dead, no matter who, "that they be loosed from their sins", as Maccabees puts it. No one stays outside these prayers — except those whose death we do not acknowledge. We cannot pray for the dead if we do not know they have died.

The reason I received this letter was that a few months ago I wrote on this page about "leaving judgement to God". I spoke about funerals of clergy removed from ministry, which cause distress to those of us still in ministry. I recalled that priests in pastoral

ministry who preside at the funerals of others who leave victims behind them. It seemed to me that only abusive priests were unforgivable.

Judgement

Yet here in the letter was another side to the story: the funeral of a man who never showed remorse for his crimes, who himself was buried without compassion. For all these sins, judgement can only be left to God, who spares all. May this man, and his victims, find peace.

A tool of evangelisation

I agree with my colleague Fr Billy Swan's comments on the usefulness of the parish newsletter [*The Irish Catholic* – March 7, 2024]. However, I would take issue with the idea of printing the Mass readings on the other side of the newsletter. Where this happens, in my experience, both sides are read in the church (often during the homily or some other part of the Mass) and that's where the newsletter stays. When the newsletter is on a sheet separate from the readings, distributed as people leave after Mass, it can travel far beyond the church and be a real tool of evangelisation.

Clingfilm and clear nail varnish!

Some years ago, LTP published a sacristy manual, listing items which churches ought to stock.

Might I add a couple of practical suggestions for Irish parishes? My sacristy essentials would be: clingfilm and clear nail varnish!

The clingfilm is for those moments when Communion has to be taken in a car, either in a ciborium for which no lid can be found, or as precious blood, maybe for Communion as viaticum — two possible rural scenarios.

Clear nail varnish is perfect for ribbons in your lectionary or missal which are inclined to ravel. Apply nail varnish and they ravel no more!



YOUR EASTER GIFT TO OUR RISEN SAVIOUR

HELP TRAIN A YOUNG MAN FOR THE LITTLE WAY MISSIONARY PRIESTHOOD IN MYANMAR

The Little Way Missionary Priests of St Therese were founded in Myanmar by Archbishop Mang Thang with the assistance of the late Miss Mary Dooan, founder of The Little Way Association. There are now 27 LWM priests, six major seminarians and 77 minor seminarians in various dioceses in Myanmar. Two LWM priests are now serving in Cambodia and four in Papua New Guinea, in tribal areas. Our Association has funded the Little Way Priests since their inception, especially with the costs involved in training and maintaining them as seminarians, paying for food, medical aid, clothing, housing and other needs.

It costs approximately €84 a month (€1,000 per year) to feed and educate a student for the priesthood.

The great majority of young men who come forward to offer their lives to God, and His people, come from poor families. Their parents do not have the means to support them financially.

These young men are Myanmar's future priests, carrying the Gospel and message of Christ's love to people who would otherwise have little or no opportunity of hearing it.

His Grace asks you urgently, our faithful supporters, for any donation you can send this Easter to help with the heavy costs involved in training and supporting a seminarian for the priesthood.

Archbishop Nicholas and our Little Way Missionary Priests of St Therese remember all Little Way friends and benefactors every day in their prayers and Masses. On their behalf, we appeal to you wholeheartedly this Easter for ANY gift, large or small, you can send us. They will be forever grateful to you. Please pray for them, for Myanmar and for all its people, in the ongoing conflict.



We wish all our friends and benefactors a very happy and blessed Easter.

A NOVENA OF MASSES FOR YOUR INTENTIONS

We are arranging for a Novena of Masses to be offered for your intentions during Eastertide as a mark of gratitude for your kindness and support.

May Our Risen Saviour bring you His richest blessings, peace and joy.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER AT OUR THERESIAN HOUSE IN KNOCK?

The work involves general house-keeping duties, providing guests with a light breakfast, prayer and welcoming pilgrims. If this work appeals to you, and you could offer one month of your time, please write to Maria Grcar at the address in the coupon, giving details, experience and a contact telephone number.

Email: contact@littlwayassociation.com

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.w.littlewayassociation.com

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

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€..... **HUNGRY, SICK, AND DEPRIVED**

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€..... **MASSSES** (please state no.)

We ask for a minimum of €6.50 or more for each Mass

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☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

To donate online go to
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DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.