

# The Irish Catholic

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# Cork hurling legend priest saving children from abuse

Renata Steffens

While Tanaiste Micheal Martin was delighted to meet a Cork hurling legend recently in Nairobi and put pictures out on his twitter (X) account, he was also talking to a hero priest who helps prevent abuse of children in Kenya.

Fr Sean Barry, of the St Patrick's Missionary Society (Kiltegan Fathers), is part of important children safeguarding projects today in Kenya. Working in a project funded by the overseas aid charity Misesan Cara, he helps to prevent abuse of children. "We deal with all sorts of abuse. Sexual, physical, emotional," Fr Sean explained to *The Irish Catholic*.

"Pope Francis said the Church needs to be active on behalf of the children", so that is what the Kiltegan Fathers are doing in Kenya. The program is volunteer based, with three full-time staff, "one in Nairobi and two other parts of Kenya."

Fr Barry said the project

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## Ain't no mountain high enough...



Early morning pilgrims making their way up Croagh Patrick Ireland's 'Holy Mountain' for the annual Reek Sunday pilgrimage which traditionally takes place every year on the last Sunday in July. Photo: Conor McKeown

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The Irish Catholic





## Cork hurling legend priest saving children from abuse

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has “95% of all allegations coming from the wider society”, then they investigate each case and “respond to the issues appropriately.” They “work to educate the elders on early age marriage and girls schooling.”

They “talk to the elders, to bring awareness” and explain that “young girls should not be getting married, but the opposite, should be allowed to study and build a future for themselves.”

According to the organi-

sation Girls Not Brides, 23% of Kenyan girls get married before the age of 18 and 4% before 15. While only 3% of Kenyan boys get married before completing 18 years of age. These rates vary across regions and ethnic groups.

A 2017 UNICEF study shows that 64% of Pokot origin girls got married before reaching 18 years of age. Followed by 54% of Rendille girls, 38% Somali girls and 28% of Maasai girls.

*Read more about Irish missionaries in Kenya on page 9.*

## Belfast-raised martyr honoured by South Korea diocese

Renata Milán Morales

The Diocese of Wonju, South Korea, held a ceremony last July, blessing the martyrdom site and unveiling a life-size statue of ‘Servant of God’ Fr James Maginn SSCME (1911-1950), who was martyred while guarding the church during the Korean War.

Fr Maginn, whose beatification is being promoted by the Korean Church, was raised in Belfast and arrived in Korea in 1936 as a missionary and in October 1949 was appointed as the first pastor of Samcheok Parish (now Seongnae-dong Parish).

After the outbreak of the Korean War, Fr James refused his parishioners’ pleas to flee, stating, “We must stand firm in our faith and protect the Church until the end to bear witness to God’s truth before the communists.” He was martyred in 1950, by the North Korean army.

In his homily, Bishop Kyu-man Cho stated, “Fr Maginn demonstrated through his death what a priest should do for God and for others.” He continued, “We often say we think about the suffering of others, but it is difficult to accept and sacrifice that suffering when it comes to us unless we are disciplined in our daily lives. Let us pray more for the beatification of Fr Maginn.”

## 800 years thanksgiving Mass in Knock highlights lasting mission of the Order of Preachers, says OP provincial

Renata Milán Morales

The Irish Dominicans commemorated 800 years since the first Dominicans arrived in Ireland with a special Mass broadcasted by RTÉ from Knock on July 28th. The basilica was filled with Dominican nuns, sisters, lay Dominicans, the choir from St Mary’s, Co. Cork, friars, members of Dominican youth groups, and communities linked with the Order of Preachers.

During his homily, Fr John Harris OP, Provincial of the Irish province of the Dominicans, emphasised the lasting mission of the Dominican family. “Our mission, brothers and sisters, has not changed over the last 800 years. We are to be creatures of grace, all of us, as part of the great Dominican family. In our different ways, we are being asked to enter into our faith and invite others to share in the same truth of our Christian faith. The scene here at Knock summons us as Dominicans to be faithful to our vocation.”

In 1224, three years after

the death of St Dominic, twelve members travelled from Oxford to Dublin, setting up a priory on the north bank of the Liffey, where the Four Courts now stand. Other friars followed, and such was the energy of the newly founded Order that it expanded rapidly once it had come to Ireland.

Fr Harris highlighted the importance of prayer and the liturgical life of the Church in deepening their knowledge and love of God. He said, “For it is from our prayer and our sharing in the liturgical life of the Church that we go deeper in our knowledge and love of God, and from there go forth to preach as St John the evangelist, the beloved disciple. It is through prayer, receiving the blessings from the liturgy and our study at the desk, that we can discover that we are the beloved. And from that experience of being loved we go forth as preachers.”

The ceremony at Knock Basilica marked a significant milestone for the Irish Dominicans, reaffirming their commitment to their vocation and mission.



## Rosary app brings a chance to take part in the Olympics

Staff reporter

The Hozana Association has launched a new app called ‘Rosary’ with the aim of supporting Olympic athletes through prayer. Cassandre Verhelst, a spokesperson for Hozana, spoke with this paper, encouraging the Irish Church to participate in the Olympics spiritually.

“We thought the initiative was great and wanted to allow people to participate in the Olympics through

prayer, to pray for the athletes,” Cassandre explained.

Launched on July 26, the Rosary app has already attracted 15,000 anglophone users, 121,000 francophone users, and 35,000 Spanish users. The app provides a platform for Catholics worldwide to unite in prayer for Olympic participants.

Cassandre highlighted the opportunity to connect with the dedication and devotion of athletes and apply it

to prayer life.

Cassandre highlighted the importance of entrusting control to the Lord, “I think it will give us the peace and the discernment that we need in this world where sometimes we’re overwhelmed by what is happening because we don’t have control. If we know that it’s the Lord that is in control and that we pray to him to help. I think that’s the best thing that we can do as Catholics.”

Deputy Editor: Chai Brady, chai@irishcatholic.ie

Multimedia Journalists:

Renata Steffens, renata@irishcatholic.ie

Brandon Scott, brandon@irishcatholic.ie

Renata Milan, renatamilan@irishcatholic.ie

Newsroom: news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026

Books Editor: Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie

Advertising: advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874027

Accounts: accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874095

Magnificat: magnificat@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874024

General inquiries: info@irishcatholic.ie

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# Historic All-Ireland win is a 'massive boost' to parish community says priest

**Brandon Scott**

A parish priest in Armagh who gave an online blessing to those attending the All-Ireland final and specifically rearranged Masses to facilitate those travelling to the big match, has said that Armagh's victory is a "great boost" to the parish community, many of whom have links to their local GAA club.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr Malachy Murphy of Loughgilly Parish said that "although Jesus would've sat on the fence", he gave a blessing to those attending the match from Armagh in the hope of safe travels and an Armagh victory.

"There's a great link between the parish and the GAA club – the oldest GAA club in the parish is 130 years old," Fr Murphy said. "We particularly have great links with kids because many in the local schools are playing for their local clubs and attending Mass. It's all very community-based and the GAA helps link the parish with the local club and work together on behalf of the community – which is so important in a rural village".

Fr Murphy said that the win is even having an impact on the parish's own schedule as

recent changes were made to an upcoming wedding because of the commitments of one of the players. "One of the players on the team was due to have a wedding but it had to be rescheduled because of the successes of the county – it wasn't expected when the date was originally arranged".

A blessing for all of those travelling down to the game and for the success of the county was issued by Fr Murphy on the parish's Facebook account before the game, a step parishioners responded very favourably to as Fr Murphy bestowed his blessing "upon all those travelling to the All-Ireland final tomorrow and to those who are preparing to bring the Sam home to Armagh".

"I did a virtual blessing on the parish's Facebook page for those who travelled and many told me that it was a great idea just before the game. There's still a brilliant festive atmosphere in the village and we're hoping it will continue for our parish fun day. We're going to link it in with the great win and who knows .... Sam Maguire might make an appearance too!", he said.



Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin pictured with his Anglican counterpart Bishop John McDowell before Armagh's win in Croke Park. Photo: Archbishop Eamon Martin.

## Dublin-born monsignor appointed archbishop-elect

**Staff reporter**

Pope Francis has appointed a Dublin diocesan priest as an Archbishop-elect. Monsignor John Kennedy is currently Secretary of the Disciplinary Section of the Dicastery for the Congregation of the Faith at the Vatican.

The body has a Doctrinal and Disciplinary section each coordinated by a Secretary who assists the Prefect in the specific area of his competence.

Archbishop-elect Kennedy was appointed to his current role in April 2022.

Dublin Archbishop Dermot Farrell said the latest appoint-

ment by Pope Francis was a sign of the "personal appreciation" of the Pontiff for the work of Monsignor Kennedy. Archbishop Farrell wished him "every blessing in his ministry which is directed to the life of the Church universal and as well as the local".

Archbishop-elect Kennedy was ordained as a priest in 1993. In 1998, he was invited by Cardinal Desmond Connell to study Canon Law at the Gregorian University in Rome. He began working at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in January 2003 and was made a Chaplain of Honour to the Pope, with the title of Monsignor in 2008.

## GAA President a proud Pioneer and a St Mary's man

**Staff reporter**

Jarlath Burns, President of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) and a proud Armagh man, whose son played in Sunday's All Ireland final, stands also for his personal commitments. As a symbol of dedication, Burns wears two medals. On one lapel, he displays the medal of his office as GAA President. On the other, he proudly wears a Pioneer pin, representing his devotion to the Sacred

Heart of Jesus and his lifelong commitment to abstinence from alcohol as both a sacrifice and a testament to temperance.

Both Jarlath Burns and the Armagh captain share a common educational background as former students of St Mary's University College in Belfast.

St Mary's University College has a significant presence in Armagh sports, with ten members of the Armagh panel being either graduates or current students.

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# ‘How dare you!’ Exorcist priest tackles controversial Olympic opening ceremony



Mona McSharry with her Olympic bronze medal. Photo: Stephen McCarthy/Sportsfile

## Brandon Scott

Fr Pat Collins, a Vincentian priest, psychotherapist and expert in deliverance ministry, has described the controversial opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, which has been condemned by a variety of Church leaders around the globe for its depiction of *The Last Supper*, as not reminiscent of “the spirit of Christ of God” and being more in-line with “the spirit of the world, the evil spirit”. Fr Collins also appealed to Christians to give leadership and protest.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr Collins reminded Christians that they’re constantly involved in a spiritual warfare with sinister forces and that the prevailing spirit in Europe has become one that openly mocks what was once considered “sacred, holy and essential”.

“From a Christian point of view, we believe that we’re always involved in a spiritual warfare. [The opening ceremony] was not surprising as the weeds and wheat are always growing together.

“What I’ve noticed in European culture is that there is an apostasy going on and it was something that the late St John Paul II alluded to in his letter *Ecclesia in Europa*. He said people who had former Christian allegiances have now walked away and then the spirit

of the world became one that mocked what was considered sacred, holy and essential. There are all kinds of hints of that in modern culture.”

Fr Collins admitted that the opening ceremony did not surprise him but that didn’t mean that Christians should remain passive when their beliefs are being blatantly ridiculed.

“The spirit behind it of course is not the spirit of Christ of God – it’s the spirit of the world which is ultimately the evil spirit. We shouldn’t be too surprised but we should resist it.

“We Christians should give leadership and protest, particularly when it comes to the Eucharist and say ‘How dare you? Would you do this with Islam or Judaism? Why do you feel free to do it with Christianity?’”

Fr Collins believes that the secular world sees Christians as being targets because of their unwillingness to freely accept the attitudes of the secular world and that it’s vital Christians not stop praying against it.

“They see us Christians as an admonishment because we’re questioning the ethical assumptions of secular culture,” he said. “They make a mockery of the central tenets of our Faith. We should speak the truth in love and pray against it because there are forces at work behind the scenes manipulating people and we’re in a spiritual war.”

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### New clerical appointments for Cashel and Emly

Archbishop Kieran O’Reilly SMA, of Cashel and Emly announced new clerical appointments for the diocese to take effect on the September 7-8 weekend. Revd Killian Heney is appointed to the Parish of Tipperary Town to serve as Deacon. See more appointments below.

- Fr Joe Egan AP, Boherlahan & Dualla to retire and to offer pastoral assistance to Fr Celsus Tierney, Moderator of the Pobal na Coise Parish Pastoral Combination of Upperchurch & Drombane; Clonoulty & Rossmore; Holycross & Ballycahill; Boherlahan & Dualla.
- Fr Celsus Tierney PP, Holycross & Ballycahill, to be administration of Boherlahan & Dualla parish.
- Fr Bernie Moloney PP of Emly to become an AP and to offer pastoral assistance in the Saint Ailbe’s Parish Pastoral Combination of Emly; Lattin & Cullen; Pallasgreen & Templebraden; Killeely & Dromkeen.
- Fr Michael Kennedy PP, Lattin & Cullen to be administrator of the parish of Emly.
- Fr Anthony Lambe PP, Drangan & Cloonen to become an AP and to offer pastoral assistance to Fr Jimmy O’Donnell, Moderator of the Slievenamon Parish Pastoral Combination of Killenaule & Moyglass; Fethard & Killusty; Drangan & Cloneen; Mullinahone; Ballingarry.
- Fr Danny O’Gorman PP Mullinahone, to be the administrator of the parish of Drangan & Cloneen.
- Fr James Kennedy PP, Annacarty & Donohill to become an AP and to offer pastoral assistance to Venerable Archdeacon Eugene Everard, Moderator of the Parish Pastoral Combination of Tipperary; Bansha & Kilmoyler; Solohead & Oola; Annacarty & Donohill.
- Fr Joseph Walsh, CC Thurles Parish to be PP, Annacarty & Donohill and to offer pastoral assistance to Venerable Archdeacon Eugene Everard, Moderator of the Parish Pastoral Combination of Tipperary Town; Bansha & Kilmoyler; Solohead & Oola; Annacarty & Donohill.
- Fr Tom Lanigan Ryan PP, Ballina & Boher to be Moderator of the Pastoral Parish Combination of Ballina & Boher; Newport, Birdhill & Toor; Murroe & Boher; Ballinahinch & Killoscully.
- Fr James Donoghue PP, Ballinahinch & Killoscully to be PP Cappawhite and to offer pastoral assistance to Fr Jimmy Donnelly, Moderator of the Parish Pastoral Combination of Cappawhite; Doon; Kilcommon, Hollyford & Rearcross; Cappamore.
- Fr John O’Keeffe PP, Newport, Birdhill & Toor to be administrator of the parish of Ballinahinch & Killoscully.

## Over 1,500 faithful expected at Emmanuel House of Providence

### Renata Milán Morales

On Wednesday, August 7, Emmanuel House of Providence, located in Clonfert, Co. Galway, will host a large crowd of pilgrims on a day of prayer centered around the veneration of a first-class relic of St Philomena. Last year, this event gathered over 1,500 faithful to

Clonfert.

Eddie Stones, healer at Emmanuel House, explained that the event includes a healing service featuring a talk, rosary, Holy Mass, and confessions. Attendees will also have the opportunity for individual prayers through the laying on of hands and can receive blessings from the relic of St Philomena. Stones described Emmanuel

House as a “spiritual hospital” dedicated to evangelisation and the public celebration of sacraments, offering a sanctuary where individuals experience God’s love and healing power.

St Philomena’s relics were discovered in Rome in 1802, and numerous miracles have since been attributed to her intercession. Despite historical doubts

about her story, devotion to her remains strong, supported by figures like St John Vianney and Padre Pio.

In a conversation with this paper, Mr Stones added, “In a world that tells us to depend only on ourselves, God invites us to rely on Him for everything”.

[See more on page 8](#)

## Relics of St Bernadette coming to every diocese

The relics of St Bernadette are coming to Ireland from September 4 – November 5. They will visit every diocese in the country. This very special, once-in-a-lifetime event will provide an opportunity for people of all ages and backgrounds to experience the special gifts and charisms of Lourdes in their diocese.

## Parishes combined in both Derry and Dublin due to priest shortages

### Staff reporter

The Bishops of Derry and Dublin have both announced that parishes in their respective dioceses are to be merged in recent days in order to better manage the prevailing challenges impacting parishes, namely the falling numbers of priests in active ministry.

The Bishop of Derry, Donal McKeown has announced that three Catholic parishes in coun-

ties Tyrone and Donegal are being combined to deal with the decline in priest numbers and Mass attendances.

Diocesan spokesman Fr Michael Canny said the Camus (Strabane), Clonleigh (Lifford) and Leckpatrick (Strabane and rural) parishes were being brought together in a new cross border “administrative” unit.

In Dublin, St Francis Xavier parish church and the Pro-Cathedral

parish merged on Wednesday. Outlining the reasoning behind the mergers, Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell cited a number of factors which prompted his action, including “changing demographics in the area; the steep decline in the Catholic population; concerns regarding individual pastoral vitality; financial situations and limited resources, and the declining numbers of available clergy to provide pastoral care”.



# Don't mess with cat ladies!

**S**port is one of those activities that I greatly approve of in theory, but, alas, in practice, find mostly rather boring.

I applaud the wonderful principles behind that motto so often advanced in times gone by – notably by the religious orders in education – *mens sana in corpore sano*: a healthy mind in a healthy body. Feeling glum about yourself? Go out and kick a football, or play a round of golf – do you all the good in the world.

Sport is full of character-building attributes



**Mary Kenny**

and noble aims. When you lose – in a game, as in life – be a 'good sport' and take it with grace. The French even absorbed into their own language an English sporting phrase to symbolise general decency and justice: 'le fair-play'.

Decency and equality of opportunity are also expressed through another sporting phrase: 'a level

playing-field', meaning no one should avail of special privileges.

**“I can see the drama of aiming for a goal. I can appreciate the pride in county teams”**

Sport teaches us teamwork: and even though I still haven't figured out the 'off-side' rule in football, I can appreciate the beauty of the way a group of players co-operate by passing the ball to one another through the choreographed movement of skill. Grand to see these lads so exuberantly embrace when a goal is scored!

I can see the drama of aiming for a goal. I can appreciate the pride in county teams, be it Galway or Armagh, and the breathtaking speed of a fine hurling match. Great moments in sport linger in many a fan's memory for a lifetime.

I'm delighted when Ireland wins an Olympic medal. Hooray!

I'll praise many aspects of



Resident cat sits in Downing Street outside number 10 - the official office and residence of the British Prime Minister in London, UK. Photo: iStock/oversnap

sport – but don't ask me to get involved in it, or watch more than fifteen minutes of almost any game.

## Metaphor

Perhaps approving of something in principle, but being less fervent about its practice is another metaphor of life. Maybe a symbol of virtue itself: something to extol, rather than commit to?

And perhaps sport, like human nature, is also imperfect. There are cheats, egotists, avaricious and ill-tempered performers, just as there are sporting heroes. The tackier aspects of the

opening French Olympics prompted some viewers to consider sport as outright decadence.

It's a summer of sport, indeed. Fuel for thought, for me, rather than enthusiasm!

**J.** D. Vance – Trump's potential Vice-President – has been much criticised for his allusions to “childless cat ladies” who have “no direct stake” in the future of America. He suggested they were “miserable with their own lives because of the choices they've made” – in an evident reference to the likes of Kamala Harris.

Cat ladies of all stripes are cross, and I include myself in this category. And while many cat ladies are mothers and grandmothers, we also cherish our cats, whose every whim we indulge.

Cats have featured richly in literature: from T.S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (from which the *Cats* musical is derived) to Saki's famous tale of 'Tobermory' (a cat who was taught to talk, and told unvarnished truths). Kipling wrote a story

'The Cat That Walked by Himself' – and Maeve Brennan wrote about a lonely man whose only companion was a cat ('I See You, Bianca'). The science-fiction writer Ursula le Guin delved into quantum mechanics with 'Schrodinger's Cat'.

James Joyce brings a cat's meaningful presence into the opening chapter of *Ulysses*.

The philosopher John Gray wrote a short but engaging book called *Feline Philosophy: Cats and the Meaning of Life*, in which he suggested that the cat is a kind of Taoist – serene, aloof, rising above the undignified fusses of the everyday.

Granted, Mr Vance made his remark in 2021, and has tried to explain the context. But let lessons be learned: the most popular member of the British Prime Minister's household at 10 Downing Street is Larry the cat!

**P**redictably, every British tabloid, and even the London Times, has repeated the urban myth that Edna O'Brien's early books were “ceremonially” burned by a priest in Ireland. But no witness has ever come forward to provide evidence of this book-burning.

In 2015, the late Fr Tom Stack – a priest I knew well, a cultured man interested in literature – carried out an exhaustive search to locate anyone, anywhere, who had any information about this “ceremonial” book-burning. Prof John Horgan, of Dublin City

University, also engaged in this search for the elusive book-burner(s). None was ever found.

Perhaps someone did throw one of Edna's books onto a turf fire, for all we know, although the cost of doing so should be considered: a hardback book in the 1960s was usually seven shillings and sixpence, which was the equivalent of a week's rent, and could be a third of a week's pay.

Of course, it's not too late for evidence of this “ceremonial” book-burning to emerge, if evidence – or witnesses – there are. But Tom Stack's enquiries came to naught.



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# Ireland needs to learn how to 'see' again, Bill Donaghy

**Renata Milán Morales**

Two Catholic young-adult groups based in Dublin, 'Youth Rathmines' and 'Pure in Heart', have joined forces to bring 'The Way of Wonder' to Ireland from the USA. The event, which took place on July 26 at Mary Immaculate Church in Rathmines, Co. Dublin, attracted over 200 attendees eager to experience a unique three-hour immersive journey of beauty, art, music, and theological reflections.

In attendance was Bishop Paul Dempsey, clergy, religious and laity from all around Ireland. More than 20 volunteers were involved. The evening was designed to inspire participants to rediscover the sacramental vision inherent in the Catholic faith.

Bill Donaghy, author and international speaker with over 25 years of experience in mission, evangelisation and education, was the keynote speaker. Donaghy, who holds a background in visual arts, philosophy, and a Mas-

ters in systematic theology, emphasised Ireland's rich spiritual heritage. "Do you see the sacramental vision? I think this is Ireland's gift in many ways. You can call this the land of saints and scholars. I know Ireland's been through crucifixion the last decade or more. I've been feeling it," he said, acknowledging the country's recent challenges. "The snakes have returned to Ireland, but we can drive them back."

Mr Donaghy led the audience on a reflective journey exploring the beauty of the natural world and its deep connection to the Creator. He urged participants to embrace this beauty as a path back to spiritual fullness, saying, "We need this poetry again. We need to learn how to 'see' again. Let's find our way home again to the beauty of being human!"

'The Way of Wonder' was a powerful reminder of the transformative potential of beauty, asking attendees to revive their faith and connection to God's creation.



On the right corner, from left to right, Eoin McCormack (Youth Rathmines), Bishop Paul Dempsey, Bill Donaghy, Helen Vysotska (Pure in Heart) and Fr Andrew O'Sullivan, Parish Priest

## Lough Derg, the isle of smiles and hope



**Renata Steffens**

Located in Co. Donegal, almost at the border with Tyrone and Fermanagh, St Patrick's Purgatory, most commonly known as Lough Derg, is the "most hidden Irish Catholic church treasure," according to James McLoughlin, a member of the Lough Derg team. Last Saturday, *The Irish Catholic* sent two reporters to discover the wonders of the island's popular three day pilgrimage.

We were aware of the difficulties, and understood it is not a regular pilgrimage, but a type of penitence. What was surprising

was the number of joyful faces we saw at our arrival on the second of the three days.

The pilgrims were in the middle of 'The Vigil' by the time our boat arrived at the island's shore. At that point, they had spent a whole night praying, awake and fasting. They were completing the stations, a way of praying that requires physical effort by walking around on what they named 'penitential beds', which are rocky outdoor paths.

During our first hour on the island, Mr McLoughlin gave us a tour and explained a little about the island's history. After the pilgrims' 'renewal of baptismal

promises' we had a chance to converse with Fr La Flynn, Prior of Lough Derg, and talk with some of the pilgrims in between their prayers.

They were lacking sleep, food, and walking barefoot on rocks. We were expecting to see suffering faces, however, everywhere we looked we could see someone smiling. The feeling of life appreciation and spiritual cleansing was nearly unanimous. "It gives me a boost" said one pilgrim, while another believes Lough Derg is "Heaven on Earth."

**i** Full story will be available in next week's issue.

## Interment of Bishop Casey being reviewed by Diocese of Galway

**Renata Steffens**

In a statement made last week, July 23, relating to the life and legacy of Bishop Eamonn Casey, Bishop Michael Duignan clearly expressed his commitment to "working with anybody affected, to help bring truth, healing and peace to such terribly painful situations."

The interment of the remains of Bishop Casey in the crypt beneath Galway Cathedral is a very sensitive issue that deeply affects people in different ways, and which has different

facets. According to a statement from the Diocese of Galway over the weekend, the interment of Bishop Casey in the Cathedral crypt now requires a period of careful consideration and consultation, which has already begun.

The Diocese of Galway said that "time and space are required to adequately and appropriately bring this undertaking to completion." The diocese also said they will not make any further public comment until they have an update on the decision.

## Knock gets ready for National Novena's pilgrims

The National Novena to Our Lady of Knock takes place at Knock Shrine from August 14-22. For nine days, Ireland's International Marian and Eucharistic Shrine will host guest speakers offering insights on how to connect with God, as this year's theme for the novena is 'Whispering with God - How do you pray?'

The guest speakers are Dr Austen Ivereigh, Fr Richard Leon-

ard SJ, Toni Pyke, Msgr Kevin Gillespie, Donna Taggart, Bishop Kevin Doran, Judith King, Sr Orla Treacy, Fr. Michael McCullagh CM, Dr Gráinne Doherty, Fr Richard Gibbons PP and Rector of Knock Shrine and Fr Jos Moons SJ.

2024 is The Year of Prayer, which according to Pope Francis is dedicated "to rediscovering the great value and absolute need for

prayer, prayer in personal life, in the life of the Church, prayer in the world."

The Novena ceremonies will take place during those nine days at 3pm and 8pm daily, with Anointing of the Sick at 2.30pm. In addition, daily workshops with guest speakers will offer the opportunity to explore the topics discussed more deeply.





# KNOCK

Ireland's International Eucharistic  
and Marian Shrine



DAILY  
CEREMONIES  
AT 3.00pm  
AND 8.00pm

Anointing of the Sick  
at 2.30pm

Candlelight Procession  
each evening

## GUEST SPEAKERS

Dr Austen Ivereigh,  
Fr Richard Leonard SJ, Toni Pyke,  
Msgr Kevin Gillespie,  
Donna Taggart, Judith King,  
Bishop Kevin Doran, Sr Orla Treacy,  
Fr Michael McCullagh CM,  
Dr Gráinne Doherty,  
Fr Richard Gibbons, Fr Jos Moons SJ.

***‘Whispering with God’  
How Do You Pray?***

**NATIONAL NOVENA**  
*to Our Lady of Knock*  
14–22 August 2024

- Daily Workshops
- Guided Prayer Sessions
- Family Day, Sunday 18 August
- Witness Walk on the evening of the Apparition 21 August
- Daily Historical Tours



# Thousands of pilgrims expected for return of St Philomena's relics to Clonfert



Renata Milán Morales

**E**mmanuel House of Providence, located in Clonfert, Co. Galway, is expecting a large crowd of pilgrims when it hosts a day of Prayer centered around the veneration of a first-class relic of St Philomena on August 7. This event, which last year drew over 1,500 faithful to Clonfert, is expected to be a day of deep spiritual renewal and healing.

## Mission

"A healing service involves a talk based on the scriptures or the Catechism of the Catholic Church, rosary, Holy Mass and confessions are available. Each person who wishes is prayed with individually by laying on of hands – exercising the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit. We will have the opportunity for people to be blessed by the relic of St Philomena on August 7," Eddie Stones, Healer in

Emmanuel House of Providence, told *The Irish Catholic*.

"Emmanuel House of Providence offers a sanctuary where individuals can experience God's love, mercy, and healing power. The centre's mission is to advance and promote the Catholic faith, helping people lead fuller lives in Jesus Christ. Described as a 'spiritual hospital', it provides a space for prayer, evangelisation, and the public celebration of sacraments," added the healer.

**“People report that they experience peace, they feel hope and many people have received healing; physical, spiritual, and emotional”**

The Day of Prayer will begin at 11am, featuring Holy Mass, confessions, the rosary, and a healing service conducted by Eddie Stones. Attendees will also have the

opportunity to venerate the statue of St Philomena and receive blessings from her first-class relic. The Emmanuel House of Providence, a Catholic centre under the ecclesiastical authority of the Bishop of Clonfert Diocese, is dedicated to foster a more Christian life through prayer, evangelisation, and the public celebration of religious ceremonies.

Talking about the experience of previous years, Eddie Stones told this paper, "People report that they experience peace, they feel hope and many people have received healing; physical, spiritual, and emotional. They develop and grow in their relationship with God and learn about their faith. Many people share with us that they had a very limited knowledge of their faith until they started to come to Emmanuel House. We encourage and teach people about the use of sacra-

**“Many people share with us that they had a very limited knowledge of their faith until they started to come to Emmanuel House”**

mentals such as Holy water, blessed oil and blessed salt. They come seeking direction and learn to ask God to intervene in their lives, growing in unity and in trust in His divine will in their lives. Ultimately, growing in the practice of surrendering to God."

## Philomena

St Philomena's story began in 1802 when her remains were discovered in the Catacombs of Priscilla, Rome. The bones of a young girl were found with a flask believed to contain her blood, and tiles inscribed with *LUMENA / PAX TE / CUM FI*, interpreted as 'Peace be with you, Philomena'. The symbols, including a palm branch and a lance, suggested she was a martyr.

The relics were later brought to Mugnano del Cardinale in Avellino, where numerous miracles were attributed to her interces-

**“We live in a world that tells us to depend only on ourselves, but the message of God is that we should depend on Him for everything we need and to look to Him for guidance”**

sion. Pope Leo XII even sent the original terracotta tiles to her shrine in Mugnano. The account of her life, as revealed to Sr Maria Luisa di Gesù, describes her as a Greek princess who dedicated herself to God and suffered martyrdom for refusing the advances of Roman Emperor Diocletian.

**“It seeks to teach, equip, and activate disciples to demonstrate the love of God through the power of the Holy Spirit in our spheres of influence”**

Despite historical doubts regarding her martyrdom and the authenticity of her relics, devotion to St

Philomena remains strong. Devotees such as St John Vianney and Padre Pio have testified to her miraculous intercessions.

Reflecting on the contrast between the current world events and the Catholic heritage, Eddie Stones concluded, "This school draws from the richness of our Catholic heritage as it seeks to teach, equip, and activate disciples to demonstrate the love of God through the power of the Holy Spirit in our spheres of influence... We live in a world that tells us to depend only on ourselves, but the message of God is that we should depend on Him for everything we need and to look to Him for guidance. Jesus said, 'Apart from me you can do nothing,' John 15:5. We are called to surrender everything entirely to God."

St Philomena



Eddie Stones



# Tánaiste meets sport legends who are legends for justice too



Renata Steffens

When he was in Kenya recently, the Tánaiste Micheál Martin stepped into a Nairobi hotel lift and instantly recognised the man who happened to step into the lift at the same time. Fr Sean Barry, an outstanding hurler from Cork and member of the 1966 All Ireland winning team.

Mr Martin also met with another Cork legend, Br Colm O'Connell, an Irish missionary and athletics coach, known as "The Godfather of Kenyan running".

While both men were sporting legends, they are legends as priests which the Tánaiste forgot to mention.

Br O'Connell has changed many children's lives with his coaching talent, while Fr Barry has been working to help young girls forced into child marriage and children with disability.

For both missionaries, the meeting with the Tánaiste was a fun moment to reconnect with their Irish roots. Br O'Connell said "It's always special to meet somebody from home. It gives us Irish living in the diaspora a sense of belonging."

Fr Barry said he met Mr Martin in the lift on their way to the reception, and the Tánaiste recognised the priest for his hurling achievements. "Micheál Martin used to play GAA, so we had a lot in common". Br O'Connell said meeting Mr Martin was a unique moment for him, and "his ability to listen and chat to everybody impressed me."

Br O'Connell, a Patrician Brother, is known as the 'The Godfather of Kenyan running'. That "may be a bit of an exaggeration in my books", the brother told *The Irish Catholic*. He also mentioned athletics "might be considered by some as a strange vocation for a missionary brother. But to me, it provided an opportunity to work among the youth in an area that they were passionate about and in which I felt I could make a valuable contribution."

## Calling

The Patrician Brothers were among the founders and administrators of the St Pat-

rick's High School in Iten, a town located roughly 350km northwest of Nairobi. In 1976, two brothers were requested to move to that country to volunteer their services and teach in the school.

At that time, Br O'Connell was teaching in Newbridge, after completing his studies in NUIG. "The idea of working outside my own culture and country appealed to me, also the challenges and adventure it offered to a young man", he said.

The brother moved to Kenya as a regular missionary teacher, which gave him the opportunity to work among the youth, and "not only in the classrooms". He was sent to a school with a strong sports tradition, but he "had practically no knowledge of coaching athletics before coming to Kenya. I had to learn the sport from scratch here."

**“The Godfather of Kenyan running’s goal was never to just produce Olympic or World Champions, but to enable and empower young people”**

Even though he had no experience coaching, his interest in sports was nothing new. When working with those kids he realised "that sport can be a tremendous connecting point with youth, it opened doors for me to have a positive impact on their lives."



Tánaiste Micheál Martin and Fr Sean Barry during their meeting in Nairobi on July 17. Photo posted on the Tánaiste's Twitter.

Over time, Br O'Connell's coaching program grew beyond the school, to include the wider community and the neighbouring schools. "This enabled me to broaden my catchment area and also extend the program to the coaching of girl-athletes, a feature that was still in its infancy in Kenya at the time."

The Godfather of Kenyan running's goal was never to just produce Olympic or World Champions, but to enable and empower young people to reach their full potential in whatever area, through sports.

After his retirement from regular classroom work, Br O'Connell was appointed by the Kenyan Ministry of Education to serve on the Board of Management of St. Patrick's High School in Iten. He also plays a role in the four other schools the Patrician brothers have in Kenya, two primary and two secondary schools.

Working closely with the Kenyan community, some 38 years ago, the Patrician Brothers seeing "the need to incorporate Kenyan members into our congregation," created a Formation Program whereby young Kenyan men would endeavour to discern the possibility of nurturing a religious vocation to the brotherhood.

## Youth

While Br O'Connell started his sports career in Kenya and used that to help improve children's lives, Fr Barry, of the St Patrick's Missionary Society (Kiltegan Fathers), arrived in Kenya with an established hurling career. He was a member of the 1966 All Ireland winning team.

The priest moved to Nigeria in 1971 after being ordained.



Tánaiste Micheál Martin and Br Colm O'Connell during their meeting in Nairobi on July 17. Photo posted on the Tánaiste's Twitter.

There, he was part of church leadership from 1996 to 2002, before he moved to Kenya in 2003.

Fr Barry is part of important children safeguarding projects today. Working in a project funded by Misesan Cara, he helps to prevent child abuse. "All sorts of abuse. Sexual, physical, emotional," Fr Barry explained.

"Pope Francis said the Church needs to be active on behalf of the children", so that is what the Kiltegan Fathers are doing in Kenya. The program is volunteer based, with three full-time staff, "one in Nairobi and two other parts of Kenya."

Fr Barry said the project has "95% of all allegations coming from the wider society", then they investigate each case and "respond to the issues appropriately." They "work to educate the elders on early age marriage and girls' schooling."

They "talk to the elders, to bring awareness" and explain that young girls should not be getting married, but the opposite, should be allowed to study and build a future for themselves.

According to the organisation Girls Not Brides, 23% of Kenyan girls get married before the age of 18 and 4% before 15. While only 3% of Kenyan boys get married before completing 18 years of age. These rates vary across regions and ethnic groups.

A 2017 UNICEF study shows that 64% of Pokot origin girls got married before reaching 18 years of age. Followed by 54% of Rendille girls, 38% Somali girls and 28% of Maasai girls.

Another issue Fr Barry works with relates to children with disabilities. "People have a lot of stigma around children with disability", he said. The project looks to improve their personal safety and promote inclusivity into society."

Fr Barry and his team work on parish based programs in Kenya and South Sudan. They are present in six Kenyan dioceses and one in South Sudan. They also have church based workshops, to outreach the community, spread awareness and make a difference in the children's lives.

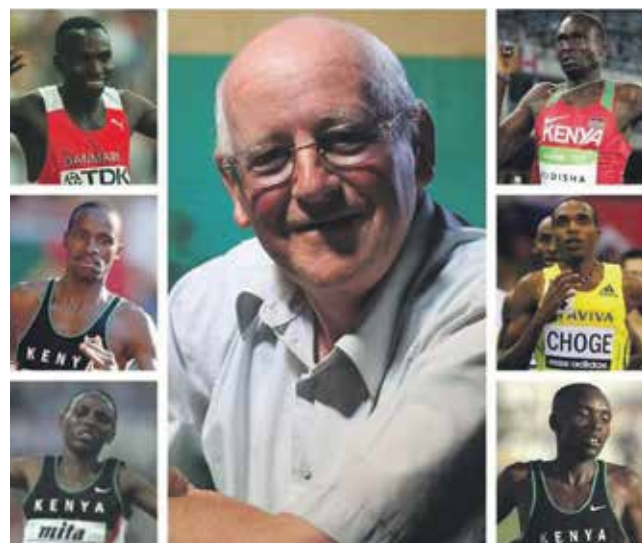
The work these two Irish missionaries are doing in Kenya are not similar in action, but they are the same in meaning. Both Br O'Connell and Fr Barry have been following the Word. "I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." (MT 25:40)



A group photo from 2018, athletes and coaching staff. Photo: Br Colm O'Connell.



Parish group holding a banner with the theme of the programme feast day. The Day of the African Child, 16th June has become a Feast Day of the Programme. This year's theme was 'Climate Education, the time is now', following the devastating floods in Kenya. Photo: Fr Sean Barry



Athletes who graduated from the Patrician Brothers Youth Program to elite status. Top L to R: Wilson Kipketer, David Rudisha, Japhet Kimutai, Augustine Choge, Sally Barsosio, Bernard Barmasai. Photo: Br Colm O'Connell.



Athletes training in rhythm. Photo: Br Colm O'Connell.



# Catholics in shock at Southport attack

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic leaders in Liverpool and beyond have responded with shock and horror to a knife attack in Southport where two children died and nine have suffered critical injuries, six of whom are in a critical condition.

Archbishop of Liverpool Malcolm McMahon led the tributes to those affected by the 'major incident' in Southport on Monday.

"For those who have been injured, for those who are parents, family and friends of the injured, and for all involved in the emergency services, we pray for God's blessing, God's peace and God's presence today," he said. "My prayers are with you tonight."

Police believe a group of children were taking part in a Taylor Swift-themed dance event on Hart Street when a person who was armed with

a knife entered the building and began attacking them.

A 17-year-old boy was detained by armed police officers, who seized a knife. A 17-year-old boy from Cardiff was later arrested on suspicion of murder and attempted murder.

Catholic peer Lord Alton of Liverpool, a former MP of Liverpool, shared his shock. He said: "Impossible for any parent who has ever taken their child to an innocent and happy dance club to come to terms with something so shocking as yesterday's tragedy and carnage."

"To their broken hearted loved ones and the people of Southport-a great town I know well- my condolences and prayers."

Several witnesses said they saw several young children bleeding on the street, whilst a local Southport journalist said he had "never seen anything like it",

Local priest Fr John Heneghan shared how he was, like everyone else who heard about the incident, 'very shocked and horrified by what has happened.'

"People around the country and around the world are horrified," said Fr John, from St Marie and St Patrick Catholic Churches in Southport.

"I'm hurting-but I'm hurting even more for those who are suffering and if the churches can help in any way, that's what we want to do."

Fr John confirmed that the churches would be open to help people process the shocking news.

"People react in different ways," he said. "It's just trying to be there for people for whatever they may need, to give people that space if they want to come to church and sit down. It doesn't matter what religion they are or if they are of no religion at all-just to be able to come to a special place

where they can be still if they want to or talk to someone if they want to."

Fr John suggested that people can light candles which, he said, 'means different things to different people. Somehow you feel you're contributing to people in their need.'

He shared his love and pain for the local community

"Our sadness is grief and it's love as well. People expressing love and caring and a desire to reach out to the families who are so desperately hurt," Fr John said.

"The community means so much. I love the people, the families, the children. Each family is so precious and if I can help, then I try to help as best I can.

"Our love, our grief, our concern will be making a huge difference."

Tributes have also poured in from further afield. Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Stephen Wright shared 'prayers and tears' from his pilgrim-

age in Lourdes 'for those who have lost their lives in the horrendous violence at Southport.'

"We pray that those who have been injured make a full recovery. We pray for the families and all directly affected by this tragedy," Bishop Stephen said.

Catholic Children's Commissioner Dame Rachel de Souza responded to the 'horrifying news coming out of Southport.' She sent a message of support to the emergency services. She said: "Sending prayers and love to the families involved, and to the brilliant staff at Alderhey hospital. I've seen for myself how hard they work for the children in their care - please spare a thought for them as they handle this tragedy."

King Charles III said that he and the Queen were "profoundly shocked" by the stabbings and Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer described the incident as "truly awful".

## Legalising assisted suicide in UK places 'extra burden' on elderly

A leading Catholic research institute has warned that legalising assisted suicide in England would put an "extra burden" on sick and disabled people.

Lord Falconer has attempted to introduce legislation to change the law on assisted suicide for the seventh time through a new Bill, which has been introduced in the House of Lords. The Bill would enable terminally ill adults with six months or fewer to end their lives.

However, Professor David Albert Jones, Director of Oxford-based Catholic institute Anscombe Bioethics Centre, pointed to the experiences of Oregon and Canada, where assisted suicide is legal, as a warning sign. He stated that the proposed Bill would cause terminally ill to believe they are a burden.

"Legalising assisted sui-

cide would place an extra burden on sick and disabled people by forcing them to ask if they are a burden to others," Professor Jones said. "In Oregon, the number seeking death in part because they feel a burden to others has increased significantly over time (up to 54.2% in 2021). In Canada in 2022, 4,625 people (35.3%) had their lives ended because they felt they were a burden to others."

The issue has come to the fore after former journalist and television presenter Dame Esther Rantzen, who has terminal cancer, called for a vote on assisted dying earlier this year.

New Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, who personally supports a change in the law, promised to provide parliamentary time for a vote on legalising assisted suicide.

In Scotland, Liam McAr-

thur's Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill is currently making its way through the Scottish Parliament. Like Lord Falconer, Liam McArthur has said that his Bill will only apply to people with terminal illnesses, but Professor Jones rejected these claims. He said: "The Scottish and English Bills begin with terminal illness, but there is every reason to believe that it would later expand further as has happened in other countries."

"In 2016, of seven countries with assisted suicide or euthanasia, three limited eligibility to terminal illness (Canada, Colombia, and the United States). In 2021, two out of three expanded their laws to cover people who did not have a terminal illness (Canada and Colombia)."

## Director of Catholic charity given prestigious university award

CAFOD Director Christine Allen has been awarded an honorary degree from Liverpool Hope University-the University's highest honour.

The degree was given in recognition of Christine's distinguished career in international development and for dedicating her career to tackling poverty in the UK and abroad.

CAFOD is the official international aid agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales and part of Caritas International.

Christine has led the Catholic international development charity since 2019 and is the first female director in CAFOD's history. She received the award of Doctor of Humane Letters at a ceremony at Liverpool Cathedral on July 24. She was praised for her work in tackling poverty and social exclusion both at home and overseas.



CAFOD Director Christine Allen after receiving her award.

# English and Scottish bishops object to opening ceremony of Olympics

Andy Drozdziak

English and Scottish bishops have joined the outrage against the Paris Olympics opening ceremony, in which a controversial parody of the Last Supper, featuring drag queens, took place.

Bishop of Paisley John Keenan dismissed the event as embodying a "secular Europe" which is currently "disfiguring its Christian roots".

"I was shocked by footage from the Paris Olympic Games

Opening Ceremony in which a mockery of the Last Supper was enacted," Bishop Keenan said. "These central mysteries of our Christian faith were ridiculed by an ideology that thinks it can become the new religion of a secular Europe on the back of disfiguring its Christian roots."

The section in question closely resembled the biblical scene of Jesus Christ and his apostles at the last supper. It included drag queens,

a transgender model and a naked singer who played the role of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine.

Anne Deschamps, a spokesman for the Paris 2024 Olympics, said there was "never any intention to show disrespect to any religious group", whilst artistic director Thomas Jolly told reporters that he wished to represent "diversity". "We wanted to include everyone, as simple as that," he said.

However, Bishop Keenan

dismissed the organiser's explanations, and outlined the problems with the controversial content.

"The Sacred Meal the Lord shared with His disciples on the eve of His Passion and Death was the pivotal moment of human history," he said, urging Catholics to participate in "fasting and prayer...for the conversion of those who participated".

Bishop Keenan also pointed out how the Mass remains a

key element in the secular cultural story-despite its rejection of faith.

"In choosing the Holy Mass as the heart of its global ceremony, this new ideology paradoxically manifested how the Eucharist is always the reference point of every human endeavour, whether to build up or tear down, to create or overthrow," he said.

Responding to the ceremony, Archbishop of Southwark John Wilson, like many

Catholics, changed his social media profile picture to the classic image of Leonardo Da Vinci's Last Supper. He called the image "a precious portrayal of the Lord Jesus giving himself to us in the Holy Eucharist".

UK Christian groups Voice for Justice UK and She leads UK blasted the parody as "a deliberate attack on the person of Jesus Christ and a direct challenge to the faith that underpins, and lies at the heart of, Western society".



# Catholic prison charity welcomes new govt. commitment

Andy Drozdziak

UK Catholic prison charity Pact has welcomed the new Labour Government's commitment to supporting children with a parent in prison.

Ministry of Justice data

showed that the estimated number of children with a parent in prison in England and Wales is near to 193,000. New prisons minister James Timpson, who is chair of the Prison Reform Trust, emphasises rehabilitation over punishment,

which could see less people in prison and a focus on helping children of prisoners.

Pact CEO Andy Keen-Downs, who welcomed the appointment of Mr Timpson as "an excellent move", said: "We welcome the government's focus on children with a parent in prison. We will...work with the Ministry of Justice, the Department for Education, and other voluntary sector organisations, including Children Heard and Seen, to develop solutions that take a child's rights-based approach to minimising harm."

Pact is the UK's Catholic prison charity which seeks to support prisoners and their families. Pact has a special focus on supporting children of prisoners. Last year, Pact supported 97,000 prison visits across England and Wales for children and young people. The charity supports children to stay in touch with their parents in prison, as well as making visits child-friendly and supporting families. Pact also delivers training and resources for schools



Prisons Minister James Timpson

to help tackle the stigma of parental imprisonment and encourage children and young people to access support.

Mr Keen-Downs outlined the 'unique challenges' faced by such children. "We know that children affected by parental imprisonment face unique challenges that can be damaging to their development and wellbe-

ing, including emotional distress, stigma and judgement in their community, and social isolation," he said.

The Ministry of Justice numbers were an estimate, and calls have now come for more exact numbers through a national system which identifies and supports children with a parent in prison.

## UK high court upholds puberty blockers ban

Kate Quiñones

A United Kingdom high court judge upheld the British government's emergency ban on puberty blockers for minors on Monday, finding the blockers carry "very substantial risks and very narrow benefit".

Advocacy group TransActual challenged the UK's ban along with a 15-year-old who remains unnamed due to a court order.

Justice Beverly Lang cited England's National Health Service (NHS) study that preceded the restrictions, calling it "powerful scientific evidence in support of restrictions on the supply of puberty blockers on the grounds that they were

potentially harmful" in her decision.

The 2022 restrictions, based on a study known as the Cass Review, prevent the prescription and supply of gonadotropin-releasing hormone analogues known as "puberty blockers" for minors except when used in clinical trials.

While the emergency ban on prescribing puberty blockers is set to expire in September, the UK government has set "indefinite restrictions" on puberty blocker prescriptions within England, in line with NHS guidelines.

TransActual condemned the court decision in a July 29 statement, saying that the study was led by "anti-trans" academics.

## Priest warns of rising numbers of gamblers post Euro-24 tournament

UK Christian groups are worried about escalating numbers of problem gamblers following the Euro 24 football tournament.

GamCare, which runs the National Gambling Helpline, recorded a 10 per cent rise in calls after this year's tournament compared to 2021.

London Catholic priest and sports chaplain Fr Vlad Felzmann warned of the destructive power of gambling from his own experience and called on the Government to take action.

"Over the fifty plus years (of being) a priest, I have met so many families destroyed by those addicted to gambling," he said.

"If the government is trying to lower national obesity levels by controlling food content and has done its best to start eliminating smoking, it ought to do its best to reduce gambling."

Former gambling addict Matt Burgess, who now works at GamCare, outlined the dangers of gambling. "With more people likely having increased their gambling over the Euros, there

is a real risk people might now turn to other forms of gambling, such as online casino games, now that the football has finished." Mr Burgess urged those who are struggling to reach out to the National Gambling Helpline, whose advisors are 'here 24/7 to listen and support you.'

UK Christian social justice charity Christian Action Research and Education (CARE) which campaigns to bring Christian insight to policies and laws, urged new Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy to introduce 'robust gambling reforms.'

"Lisa Nandy will have many competing priorities in her inbox, but we'd urge her to ensure that robust gambling reforms is one of them," said Tim Cairns, CARE's gambling policy lead.

"The Government needs to curb gambling advertising, especially in sport. Vulnerable people deserve better protection."

The National Gambling Helpline provides confidential advice and support for anyone affected by gambling problems. Call on 0808 8020 133.

## SVP calls for urgent action to tackle poverty

The St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) in England and Wales is calling on the new Labour Government to take urgent action to tackle poverty.

The call comes as new statistics show that, at St Vincent's centre in Newcastle, the need for their services has almost doubled, from supporting 4,968 people last year to a significant 8,808 people this year.

Worrying statistics from the Health Foundation have shown that in-work poverty has increased over the last two decades. The study showed that 63% of children and working-age adults in poverty in 2022/23 lived in families where at least one adult was working part-time or more, a 19% increase on the 44% recorded in 1996/97.

Head of Policy, Communications and Public Affairs at the SVP, Alessandra Sciarra, said: "We hope to work closely with the new Government to address the growing rates of poverty in the country."

"We continue to call for measures to tackle in-work poverty, changes to the welfare system. And continue to call for a compassionate asylum sys-

tem."

St Vincent's centre helps those in need by offering a range of services, including a food and clothing bank, low-cost shopping experience and support through free wellbeing groups.

Last month, the St Vincent's centre, which is part of the wider SVP Society in England and Wales, saw one of its busiest months on record. 3,535 adults and children were supported, with 897 free hot 3-course meals being served, 140 free food parcels delivered and around 700 people attending free wellbeing activity groups.

Deputy Centre Manager Amanda Haddon called for practical help and support.

"The amount of people who need to turn to us for help is just phenomenal. We are struggling to keep up with demand for our services so help from the community is always greatly appreciated," Amanda said.

She added that food items and unwanted household goods would be welcome, as well as volunteers to help run SVP services.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Mass marks 60th anniversary in nuns' service

On Sunday July 21, a special Mass was held to celebrate 60 years of service by Sr Angela Moroney and Sr Margarita Cunningham to St Mary's Catholic Primary School and Our Lady of the Holy Souls Parish, Kensal New Town, London.

The concelebrated Mass was led by Bishop Jim Curry, who paid tribute to Sr Angela and Sr Margarita, as former head teachers at St Mary's, for their work educating generations of families since they arrived in the Parish in 1964.

A letter of congratulations was read out from Cardinal Vincent Nichols, as well as messages from His Majesty the King and the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins. Over 40 of the Sisters' families had travelled from Ireland to surprise them at the celebrations. Good wishes were also sent by video from well-known Irish singer Daniel O'Donnell and Bishop Fintón Monahan of Killaloe, the Diocese in which they were born.

Sr Margarita and Sr Angela both said they were humbled by such appreciation from so many.

#### School meals chef wins

Richard Hardy, a Chef Manager at Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust (BWCET), has won a prestigious award and come second in a national competition. Richard won the North East and Scotland regional final for School Chef of the Year (SCOTY) 2024 and, in his first year of entering the competition, achieved 2nd place in the national final, following a 45-minute intensive discussion by the judging panel including Michelin-starred chef Mark Sargeant.

Celebrating its 30th anniversary, the competition aims to demonstrate the importance of high-quality cooking in school meals. Nick Hurn OBE, CEO of Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust, said: "School meals continue to improve and we congratulate Richard on this amazing achievement at his first national final."

Richard, who is part of a team of 150 dedicated and skilled catering professionals at Bishop Wilkinson, said: "I'm not sure what to say; I cannot believe that I've got 2nd place at the national final and I am completely blown away by the whole experience."



# The Olympics opening ceremony that divided the world



David Quinn

**W**hat were we supposed to make of the Olympics opening ceremony last weekend? It very strongly divided opinion, for reasons to be explained.

An Olympics is still an exciting event, even if it has lost some of its allure and romance because of drug scandals and probably because it has got so big and commercialised as well. It would be hard to make a 'Chariots of Fire' style of film about the Olympics today.

The opening ceremonies have also become vastly bigger. A long time ago they consisted of the athletes from the various countries walking out into the stadium and gathering in the centre while a few offi-

cials made the necessary and predictable remarks to kick the whole thing off.

Once upon a time, this didn't take too long because there weren't that many athletes. But at the games currently taking place in Paris, 10,000 athletes are competing in everything from the 100m to surfing and skateboarding.

The opening ceremony is now a form of entertainment, and generally speaking, the host country takes the opportunity to showcase to the world its culture and history mainly through music.

**“A lot of the acts were lost in the vastness of the city, the sound was often terrible and that is aside from the fact that it poured rain”**

Can you remember the opening ceremony for the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles when dozens of pianists dressed in blue played Gershwin's



Part of the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games – which drew comparisons with the imagery of the 'Last Supper'. Photo courtesy of Paris 2024 Olympics/theartchi.com.

'Rhapsody in Blue', or when thousands of drummers filled the middle of the stadium in Beijing in 2008 and beat the drums in unison as they lit up in different colours?

Paris did things completely differently. For a start, the opening ceremony was not held in the main Olympic stadium at all, but on the streets of the city. This might have seemed like a good idea at the time, but for me, a lot of the acts were lost in the vastness

of the city, the sound was often terrible and that is aside from the fact that it poured rain.

## Dragged

It also dragged on and on. Even the best spectacle of the evening, namely the 'horse' galloping down the middle of the Seine went on too long. The torch ceremony went on too long. Everything did.

But the worst thing of all about it is that the organisers chose to insert the opening ceremony headlong into the so-called 'culture war' above all by recreating Leonardo Da Vinci's *Last Supper*, but with the figures of Christ and his Apostles taken over by drag queens. Yes, you read that correctly. What in the world possessed them?

A word about that term 'culture war' before proceeding. It basically describes the battle of values and ideas currently raging in the Western world between what can loosely be called 'traditionalism' on the one hand and what are commonly called 'woke' values on the other.

Traditional values emphasise the family, the right to life, religion and so on. 'Woke' values emphasise certain minorities, especially ethnic and sexual. Huge emphasis is placed on sexual freedom and choice, hence the promotion of abortion and even gender ideology which says your biological sex and the 'gender' you say you are, are not necessarily the same.

The Olympics opening ceremony chose to come right down on the side of 'woke' values with an extremely strong emphasis on forms of LGBT identity. The director of

the ceremony, Thomas Jolly, is himself gay.

France is currently a bitterly divided country in political chaos. The National Rally, a right-wing party led by Marine Le Pen, along with a small ally, won 37% of the vote in recent elections to the national parliament. This was the biggest vote for any of the political blocs running.

But it did not translate into the biggest number of seats because of a voter pact between a left-wing bloc of parties and President Macron's party. There is a huge determination to keep Le Pen out of power, but her support keeps growing.

**“At one point it lauded a French politician who was well known as an abortion campaigner before she died in 2020”**

The Olympics opening ceremony took place in this atmosphere and Jolly appears to have decided to use the ceremony as an excuse to poke the eye of Le Pen and anyone like her. But what he did was so overt and so aggressive that he annoyed many ordinary Catholics, which is why the French bishops attacked the way he parodied the *Last Supper*.

The ceremony had good aspects, they said, but also “included scenes of derision and mockery of Christianity, which we deeply deplore.”

Similarly, Italian Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the Vatican's Pontifical Acad-

emy for Life, attacked “the derision and the mockery of the *Last Supper*”.

The archbishop of Malta, Charles Scicluna said: “I would like to express my distress and great disappointment at the insult to us Christians during the opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympics when a group of drag artists parodied the *Last Supper* of Jesus.”

But the opening ceremony did not restrict itself to mocking Christian. At one point it lauded a French politician who was well known as an abortion campaigner before she died in 2020. This was another overt political and moral statement by the organisers.

As others have pointed out, the organisers would never have mocked Islam the way they did Christianity. There is not the smallest chance that they would have dressed up someone pretending to be the Prophet Mohammed in drag. There are two reasons for this.

The first is that as a 'minority' religion, 'woke' ideology protects Islam from criticism, and secondly because Islamists might react with violence. Remember what happened at the offices of the satirical magazine. Charlie Hebdo, a few years ago?

Also, what did people from the non-Western world think of the opening ceremony, that is, people in the likes of India, or the Philippines or various parts of Africa, never mind the Muslim world? Many of those would hold deeply traditional values and may have been sorely offended by what they saw.

## All-inclusive

The ceremony organisers claimed what they put on display was all-inclusive, but that is rubbish. What we really saw were the ideological obsessions of a particular section of Western society pushed right in our faces whether we liked it or not.

When the ceremony was taking place, and afterwards, those who share the ideology of the organisers were delighted with themselves. Those with more traditional values had the opposite reaction.

But this alone revealed how the opening ceremony had utterly and deliberately failed in its main purpose, which is to unite the world for the sake of a fortnight of sports and leave the politics and the battle over values to one side. The organisers could not do this. Instead, they hijacked the opening ceremony and rather than maintaining it as a neutral space, they totally politicised it, and that was a disgraceful thing to do.

**“When the ceremony was taking place, and afterwards, those who share the ideology of the organisers were delighted with themselves. Those with more traditional values had the opposite reaction”**

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# Sex, the PSNI and the 'woke' mind virus



Martina Purdy

**A**s a student at the University of Toronto decades ago, I used to ride the subway downtown and, occasionally, would find myself sitting next to a man in full make-up, dressed in a mini-skirt and high heels.

Raised in the sheltered suburbs, it was a bit of a shock but, having been taught to treat everyone with respect, I minded my own business, and continued reading my book. Though I must confess my internal emotional reaction was pity for this poor person. In our 'modern' culture, I now fear that this response was in fact a 'transgression'.

## Training

These days, training is being offered for this kind of thing.

It's just been revealed that 'Cara-Friend', an LGBTQIA+ advocacy group, whose activities include youth support, and awareness training, has been helping out the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

The Belfast Newsletter reported last week that around 100 PSNI employees had received training from Cara-Friend which:

- claimed male and female was a "social construct" based on an historical view

- showed a slide claiming biological sex was assigned at birth by a doctor

- highlighted "new" gender identities such as bi-gender and pan-gender

- claimed children can be transgender from age three

- began with participants writing down all the sexual orientations and gender identities they knew

- described a litany of sexual orientations including omni-sexual, greysexual, allosexual and demisexual

- detailed "new" gender identities such as bi-gender and new pronouns such as Xe and Xem.

Journalist Adam Kula wrote that the newspaper first learned of this training in a tweet by Cara-Friend but that it took a further nine months to get the details, as neither the PSNI nor the advocacy group would disclose the information.

**“Cara-Friend trained more than 100 officers and staff from the police public protection branch who attended the course as part of continuing staff personal development”**

According to the Newsletter, Cara-Friend said it would harm the commercial interests of this non-profit charity (which receives £400,000 in funding, mostly from public bodies). This is odd since the Newsletter reported that Cara-Friend effectively provided the training for free after receiving a £500 donation from PSNI (which had no qualms about

handing over training material from Transgender NI which was paid more than £1,000)

The Newsletter reported that it initially sought help from the Information Commissioner's Office, which promotes openness in public bodies. The newspaper stated this office sided with the police and the charity, and that it only got the information from PSNI after a threat to go to tribunal.

According to the Newsletter, Cara-Friend trained more than 100 officers and staff from the police public protection branch who attended the course as part of continuing staff personal development.

'Utter madness. What the hell is going on in Ireland?' was one of the reactions to this news which was largely ignored by other media. This remark was tweeted by Sharon Davies, the Olympic medalist and self-professed "biology believer". Davies has authored "Unfair Play", arguing against transgender men in women's sport.

## Nonsensical

Sorry, but the notion that male and female is a social construct is nonsensical, and so is the claim that a three-year-old can be transgender. Kids have vivid imaginations. A young relative, at aged three, used to crawl around on all fours, insisting she was a puppy. That didn't last though. She grew into a seven-year-old who when swimming identified as a dolphin, chasing a ball for hours. She grew out of that too.

It's no surprise that a new 15-year study from the Netherlands has concluded that the vast majority of "gender-confused" young people grow out of it by adulthood. No wonder that curriculum guidance to

NI primary schools (that children can be aware "that they are transgender between ages three and five") was removed a few months ago. The reason? It referenced LGBTQIA+ research that was more than ten years old.

**“Details were leaked of D'Angelo telling employees how they could be 'less white': by being 'less oppressive', 'less arrogant' and less 'ignorant'”**

Of course, diversity training is now de rigeur.

But how much of it is rooted in reality and common sense? How much of it is rooted in woke ideology that is contrary to objective reality?

Remember when Coca-

Cola received training from Robin D'Angelo, author of *White Fragility*. Details were leaked of D'Angelo telling employees how they could be "less white": by being "less oppressive" "less arrogant" and less "ignorant".

## Evidence

While evidence points to 'gender-confusion' as a phase, how long will it take for society to grow out of it? If it is only a fad, it is a well-funded and widespread one with powerful allies and some very tragic implications.

I'm still digesting last week's podcast interview that Elon Musk gave to author Jordan Peterson.

Musk claimed he was "tricked" into allowing his son to take puberty-blockers, after being warned that the youth might commit suicide if he did not agree. "Incredibly evil," said Musk. "It wasn't explained to me that puberty

blockers are just sterilisation drugs. And so, anyway I lost my son essentially. They call it dead naming for a reason because your son is dead. My son Xavier is dead. Killed by the woke mind virus."

**“Musk thinks those who promote this transgender medical procedure surgery for youths should go to prison”**

He added, "I vowed to destroy the woke mind virus after that."

Xavier is now Vivian and claimed to be perfectly content.

But Musk thinks those who promote this transgender medical procedure surgery for youths should go to prison.

One wonders who Musk and other parents might call? The cops?

## Who will pass on the flame of faith?

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Jordan Peterson  
interviews Elon Musk



# Catholic grandparents gather in Knock

**Brandon Scott**

Over 500 grandparents and elderly from across Ireland, along with multi-generational families, gathered at the Shrine of Our Lady of Knock to celebrate the Catholic Grandparents Association National Grandparents Pil-

grimage and World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.

The pilgrimage, which takes place on the fourth Sunday of July every year, was attended by Chief Celebrant Papal Nuncio for Ireland Archbishop Luis Montemayor, Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Loughlin and Rector Fr

Richard Gibbons.

Hundreds of children's beautifully decorated prayers in honour of their grandparents adorned the altar. Standing beside Pope Benedict's prayer for grandparents, Bishop Nulty, with a young boy and girl, Callum and Jenna, lit a candle for the

intercession and prayers of all grandparents and elderly in communities across the country. This year, the pilgrimage reflected on the theme of Pope Francis: "Do not cast me off in old age".

Catherine Wiley, founder of the Catholic Grandparents Association, in her address,

praised the grandparents of Ireland for their prayers, perseverance, and dedication to their faith. She highlighted that their efforts had led to the establishment of the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, declared by Pope Francis four years ago.

This declaration ensures

that the legacy of faith and the seeds sown will endure long after we are gone. Ms Wiley likened this accomplishment to a jewel in Our Lady's crown placed there by grandparents.

It was described as "a day filled with grace and blessings for all attendees".



Thomas Grady (Charlestown, Co. Mayo) celebrating his 87th birthday with his sister Noreen French (New York) age 91, her daughters Tricia & Beth; Tom's daughter Miriam and sons Arthur and Ciaran, grand-daughters Rebecca & Emma. Photo Sinead Mallee.



Anil Thomas, Grace and Ruth at the National Grandparents Pilgrimage, Knock Shrine.



Catherine Wiley and Dana Rosemary Scallan.



Dana sings 'Lady of Knock' at the National Grandparents Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine, July 28 2024



Josephine Murphy with her grand-daughter Kayla at the National Grandparents Day at Knock Shrine.



Sisters Maura and Annette from Co. Clare meeting Dana at Grandparents Day, Knock Shrine





Children hold banners during the entrance procession at the National Grandparents Pilgrimage.



Entrance procession at the National Grandparents Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine 2024.



Bishop Denis Nulty with Catherine Wiley and two children lighting the candle on the sanctuary for Grandparents Day at Knock. Also pictured His Excellency Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor.



Congregation at National Grandparents Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine



Fr Richard Gibbons, Catherine Wiley, His Excellency Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor, Archbishop Francis Duffy at the National Grandparents Day Pilgrimage, Knock Shrine.



Large congregation at the National Grandparents Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine.



The Hamilton and Hughes family from Armagh and Tyrone at the Grandparents Day, Knock Shrine.

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# Joy in Clare as local priest appointed first Papal Nuncio to South Sudan



Brandon Scott

**T**here was immense joy last Saturday in Ennis Cathedral as Clare-native Monsignor Seamus Horgan was appointed bishop and the first ever Papal Nuncio to South Sudan. The ceremony was attended by a number of fellow priests, parishioners, cardinals, bishops and deacons. Three cardinals concelebrate on the day. Principal Consecrator of the Mass was Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, alongside Co-Consecrators, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle and Bishop of Killaloe, Fintan Monahan. Cardinal Christophe Louis Pierre also presided as one of 11 concelebrants. Thirty years ago, in the same cathedral, Bishop Seamus Horgan was called by the late Bishop Michael Harty to priesthood. For the last three decades, Bishop Horgan has served in Bodyke, Roscrea, Rome, Uganda, Switzerland, the Philippines and most recently in the United States.

Speaking before his episcopal ordination, Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan said that he extends "Monsignor Horgan every good wish and blessing in his important role and assure him of the prayers of the faithful of Killaloe Diocese. At this time there are three Apostolic Nuncios, originally from Ireland, in active diplomatic service for the Universal Church, and here in Killaloe we are very proud of the fact that two of them are natives of our diocese".



Newly-ordained bishop Seamus Horgan in prayer with Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin and Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan at Ennis Cathedral. Photos: John O'Neill







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# Out&About

## Crowds for St Conal



**DONEGAL:** The annual pilgrimage to St Conal's Well, Inishkeel Island, Narin happened on July 21. This year's celebration was led by Fr Philip Daly, CC Kilclooney and assisted by Fr Aodhan Cannon PP Ardara/Kilclooney.



**CARLOW:** The quinquennial Mass at Tinnecarrig Cross happened on July 14. Around 170 people attended the celebration.



**CARLOW:** Fr Shem Furlong (CC Bagenalstown), Fr Sean Kelly (PE CC Stradbally), Bishop Denis Nulty and Fr Rory Nolan (PP Borris) during the quinquennial Mass at Tinnecarrig Cross on July 14.

### IN SHORT

#### Quinquennial Mass celebrated at Tinnecarrig Cross

The Mass celebrated at Tinnecarrig Cross on July 14 only happens every five years. This year, 170 people joined to pray together by the cross located on an elevated site in the Parish of Borris, Co. Carlow.

The chief celebrant, Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin Denis Nulty was joined by Fr Rory Nolan, PP Borris, Fr Shem Furlong CC Bagenalstown and Fr Sean Kelly, PE CC Stradbally. Both Fr Shem and Fr Sean are natives of Borris Parish.

Bishop Nulty said in his homily "it's critical we don't lose these local customs and traditions." The Cross was first erected in 1951 for the Marian Year, and was re-erected on July 21, 1976 by the local community.

Tommy Doyle, a local man, used his horse

and cart to convey Bishop Nulty to and from the Cross. Betty Lennon presented the bishop with a wooden bowl carved by Darragh Sinnott on behalf of the local community, to mark the 2024 Mass.

After the Mass, the attendees enjoyed tea and sandwiches in the nearby Michael Moloney's clubhouse.

#### Pilgrims joined on walk to St Conal's Well in Co. Donegal

Many pilgrims joined to walk to St Conal's Well in Inishkeel Island, Narin, Co. Donegal on July 21. The 'Annual Turas' of St Conal's Church, Downstrands was led by Fr Philip Daly, CC Kilclooney and assisted by Fr Aodhan Cannon PP Ardara/Kilclooney.

Opening for just a brief window between tides, a sandy crossway allows people to walk

from the shore to the island, so the procession needs to be well planned and timed.

St Conal's Well, also known as the Holy Well, is named after St Conall who founded a monastery in Inishkeel in the 6th Century.

The feast of St Conal falls on May 20 and the 'Turas' can be done on any day from that date until September 12. It is believed that if the Turas is done properly it will cure all illness. People had great faith in St Conal and it is said that one could find walking sticks in centuries past, left by people who were miraculously healed.

#### Kerry priest escaped car accident by miracle

A retired parish priest in Co. Kerry said it was a miracle he escaped alive from a serious crash when driving on the main Sneem to Kenmare road on his way back from saying a funeral Mass on July 19.

Fr Martin Sheehan was travelling back from the funeral Mass for Commandant Traolach Sweeney in Caherdaniel, who died in a car accident, when the crash happened. The priest, who now lives in Castletownbere, worked in a number of parishes across Kerry, including Caherdaniel.

About the accident, Fr Sheehan told *The Irish Independent* he does not "know what happened. I went across the road and down through the bushes and I was upside down hanging by the safety belt."

The priest used a plastic hammer to break the passenger seat window and shout for help. Eventually, a mother and daughter heard and called the emergency services.

Ireland is seeing a continuous growth in road fatalities since 2019 according to a Road Safety Authority (RSA) report. From January 1 to June 30, 93 fatalities were registered on Irish roads, which represents ten more deaths compared to the same period in 2023.



Edited by Renata Steffens  
Renata@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**CARLOW:** Bishop Denis Nulty was conveyed on the final part of the trek to and from the Tinnecarrig Cross by local man Tommy Doyle and his Horse and Cart during the quinquennial Mass on July 14.



**DUBLIN:** Bishop Paul Dempsey and Rev. Ciarán Egan on his ordination as deacon on July 21 in St Kevin's Church, Harrington Street.



**CLARE:** Columban priest Fr Gerry Neylon (celebrant) Carmel and John Leonard, Corbally at the 95th anniversary Mass for the Limerick Diocese 20th century martyr Fr Timothy Leonard at the Poor Clare monastery, Ennis.



**DONEGAL:** Fr Daly leading Benediction in St Conal's Church during the annual pilgrimage to St Conal's Well, Inishkeel Island, Narin on July 21.



**MAYO:** Irish Dominicans celebrated a Mass in Knock on July 28 commemorating 800 years since their arrival to Ireland. The Mass was broadcasted on RTÉ.

ARMAGH

Legion of Mary welcomes new members to join their Junior (aged 7-11) and Intermediate (aged 12-17) groups on Mondays at 3pm in SVP Centre, 1-5 Chapel Lane. During the meeting they pray the rosary, learn more about faith, make friends and become more involved in Church life.

CARLOW

The Community Café in An Gairdin Beo happens every Wednesday during August from 10.30am to 12.30pm. The usual garden vegetables will also be available. There is no parking available.

CORK

Rosary is recited every first Saturday of the month at 9.30am in St Joseph's Church SMA, Wilton. There also is a 15 minute meditation on the mysteries of the rosary after 10am Mass.

DERRY

Mary's Meals are organising a 'Two Bridges Walk' on August 11 over the Foyle Bridge and Peace Bridge. Meet in Sainsbury's car park at 11.45am to begin the walk. You can register at [Bit.ly/stepbystepwalk](https://bit.ly/stepbystepwalk). For more info contact Helen Quinn on 078 1444 1701. To find out more about Mary's Meals please visit <https://www.marysmeals.org.uk/>

DUBLIN

The conference 'Fan the Spark' for young adults aged 18-40 will happen on August 24 at De Montford House, Morning Star avenue, Brunswick from 9.30am to 5.30pm. The event will include a tour of Frank Duff's house, talks, food and social and Mass. The ticket costs €15. For more information contact [deusetpatria@gmail.com](mailto:deusetpatria@gmail.com).

FERMANAGH

Blessed Sacrament (Adoration) takes place every Wednesday in St Ninnidh's Church. It begins after 10.00am Mass and will end at 11.30am.

GALWAY

The Relics of St Philomena are returning to Emmanuel House, Clonfert on August 7th Commencing at 11.00am. Led by Eddie and Lucy Stones, it will be a day of prayer, healing, rosary and Mass. Bring

your lunch, tea is provided. For more info contact Sarah 086 885 6254.

KERRY

'Irish Men's Rosary' will take place on Saturday, August 3 at The Square, Tralee at 1pm. For more information contact John on 087 695 1298.

KILDARE

Youth 2000's 'Summer Festival' happens from August 15-18 in Clongowes Wood College. The festival will have some great talks and offers an opportunity to meet other young Catholics and explore your faith. It will have free buses and the payment is donation only. Everyone aged 16-35 is welcome.

LIMERICK

The Legion of Mary meets on Fridays at 7:30pm in the Millennium Centre, Raheen. Tea, coffee and biscuits are provided afterwards. All are welcome.

LOUTH

Divine Mercy Prayer Chaplet in Church of St James, Grange every Sunday evening from 7.30pm 8.00pm. Everyone welcome.

MEATH

Adoration of the Eucharist happens every Friday in Athboy Church, after the 9.30 Mass. New adorers are always welcome.

ROSCOMMON

'Elphin Diocese's Morning Pilgrim Walk' from Castlerea to Knock will take place on Sunday, August 18. Gathering will start at 6.30am at St Patrick's Church and register at Church porch. For more information see [elphindiocese.ie/walk-2knock](https://elphindiocese.ie/walk-2knock)

SLIGO

There is Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in St Colmcille's Church, Rathcormack, every Sunday from 4-5pm. Everyone is welcome.

TYRONE

Omagh Charismatic Prayer Group meetings take place in The Pastoral Centre on Thursday evenings with Rosary at 7.30pm and prayer meeting at 8pm. All welcome to come and pray.



# Thousands climb Croagh Patrick on Reek Sunday

Renata Steffens

**T**housands of pilgrims from throughout the country climbed to the top of Croagh Patrick, Ireland's 'Holy Mountain' in Co. Mayo last Sunday for the annual pilgrimage 'Reek Sunday'. The event saw people from all

ages ascending the rocky paths on the 765 metres mountain.

Traditionally, Reek Sunday is celebrated on the last Sunday of July. Pilgrims scale the mountain to pray and participate on the summit in the sacraments of reconciliation (confession) and the Eucharist.

Pope Francis designated 2024 as the Year of Prayer, and the theme for

this year's pilgrimage was 'to pray for and honour grandparents and the elderly'.

This year, the pilgrims enjoyed great weather during their walk. Fr John Kenny, speaking at the 8am Mass at the St Patrick's Oratory, drew laughter from the attendance by saying "thank you very much to the person who put out the Child of

Prague statue."

The Mayo Mountain Rescue Team (MMRT) was present on Croagh Park since Saturday evening, prepared to aid any injured climbers. The MMRT had at least eight mountain rescue teams prepared to assist the thousands of pilgrims who scaled the mountain on Sunday.

Reek Sunday is a physically

demanding pilgrimage, and some pilgrims do it barefoot, which can lead to some injuries during the journey. Because of that, the pilgrims had an air ambulance helicopter waiting at the base of the mountain, in case someone needed emergency care throughout the day, but no medics were required.



Eamon Kelly with his grandson Zack Ryan from Tipperary making their way up Croagh Patrick. Photos: Conor McKeown



John Corrigan with family from Achill and Westport Climbing Croagh Patrick on Reek Sunday.



Climbers making their way to the summit of Croagh Patrick, Ireland's 'Holy Mountain', for the annual pilgrimage which traditionally takes place every year on the last Sunday in July.



Pilgrims Climbing Croagh Patrick on Reek Sunday.



Newly Ordained Fr Mark Quinn celebrating mass on the summit of Croagh Patrick Ireland's 'Holy Mountain' for the annual pilgrimage.



Paddy and Ann Kneafsey from Ballina Climbing Croagh Patrick on Reek Sunday.



A piper Thomas Mee from Monaghan plays music before Mass on the summit of Croagh Patrick Ireland's 'Holy Mountain' during the annual pilgrimage.

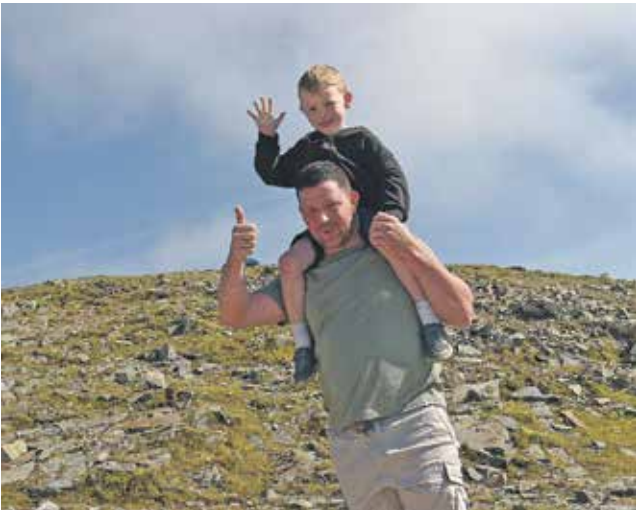




A kneeling Pilgrim in prayer on the summit of Croagh Patrick.



Padraig and Kitty Needham with extended family and relations on Croagh Patrick on Reek Sunday. For over 50 years, the Needham family would have provided refreshments from their tented stall on the summit.



A father carries his son on his shoulders while climbing Croagh Patrick on Reek Sunday.



Fr John Kenny and Fr Stephen Farragher with the late Fr Owen McGreal's chalice before celebrating mass on the summit of Croagh Patrick during the annual pilgrimage.



Colm Towey from Castlebar climbing Croagh Patrick Ireland's 'Holy Mountain' barefoot.



A Troop of Sea Scouts from Brittany France on Croagh Patrick Ireland's 'Holy Mountain'.



Desmond Barry from Carlow, a barefoot pilgrim making his way up Croagh Patrick.



# Hate Speech Bill could have dire consequences for Irish democracy



Minister for Children and Integration Roderic O'Gorman, new leader of the Green Party



## Dean Céitinn

Following his election as Green Party leader, Roderic O'Gorman has signalled his intention to bring the Hate Speech Bill back into the legislative agenda. This was after months of speculation that the Hate Speech Bill would not proceed and die when this Dáil completed its term. However, renewed calls to proceed with the legislation could have serious impacts on freedom of expression in Ireland.

## Conflicts

The Hate Speech Bill seeks to criminalise, among other things, "communicating material to the public or a section of the public" and the possession of material that is deemed hateful. Section 9 stipulates that the conviction applies, regardless of whether the material itself actually even incites hate.

**“It would be illegal to say the Armenian Genocide didn't happen in Ireland and illegal to say it did happen in Turkey”**

While the legislation gives protection for communication that is “reasonable” or a “genuine contribution” – these criteria for conviction is dependent on subjective and unclear qualifications.

**“This will create a work culture where corporate entities would be forced to become intrusive in the private lives of their employees”**

Section 8 of the bill criminalises denial of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. While on the face of things, this section appears well intentioned, the provision would have a seriously chilling effect on public discourse. For example, not all countries

are aligned on what they accept as fact on the historical record. Turkey denies the Armenian Genocide. China denies allegations of human rights abuses against Uyghur Muslims. Myanmar denies abuses against the Rohingya population. The legislation as it stands, would prohibit possession of material from these countries related to these issues. Moreover, it will create a bizarre situation where it would be illegal to say the Armenian Genocide didn't happen in Ireland and illegal to say it did happen in Turkey.

## Implications

Section 13 of the legislation stands as one of the more bizarre provisions of the legislation, where a company will be liable if an offence benefits it and is due to a director, manager, secretary, or officer failing to supervise or control the offender. This would mean a business would be held to account for the communications of its employees. This will create a work culture where corporate entities would be forced to become intrusive in the private lives of their employees.

Section 11 of the Bill is supposed to provide a

**“There is no evidence that this legislation will prevent the rise of hate in our society. However, there is evidence that this legislation is the start of democratic backsliding”**

defence for freedom of speech. However, the language used in this defence is subjective and ill-defined. In particular because the bill itself does not define what ‘Hate’ actually is. A decision Minister McEntee, by her own admission, took to ensure easier convictions. Perhaps most concerning, the Government actually voted down a proposal to include the UN Convention on Human Rights protections on free speech in the Hate Speech Bill.

While the Minister has claimed that this bill is not meant to stifle freedom of speech, it is noteworthy that we already have legislation dealing with hate crimes and harassment. Which begs the question, why introduce legislation with qualifications for conviction and wording that is purpose-

fully broad, ill-defined and unspecific.

**“In France and the Netherlands, it has been used to target opposition politicians. In Britain, it has been used to drag comedians through the courts”**

Moreover, we know how similar legislation has been used in other countries. In France and the Netherlands, it has been used to target opposition politicians. In Britain, it has been used to drag comedians through the courts. This is particularly concerning because Irish politicians have already

signalled their intention to use this legislation for less than noble ends. In one contribution, Cathal Crowe TD rejoiced in the fact that hate speech legislation would give political opponents “less right to make their statements”.

## Prevention

There is no evidence that hate speech legislation has ever prevented the rise of radicals or the spread of hate. France and Germany both have hate crime legislation, and yet hate groups are far more active in those countries than they are in Ireland. Perhaps most damningly, laws in the Weimar Republic were introduced to stop hateful expression towards Jews. This did not prevent the Nazi's rise to power.

There is no evidence that this legislation will prevent the rise of hate in our society. However, there is evidence that this legislation is the start of democratic backsliding. Without the power to express opposition to such backsliding, this legislation could set Ireland down a very dark path.



# Church battling powerful drug gangs in Mexico



Migrant children taking part in a journey toward Mexico's northern border rest at a school in Los Corazones, Oaxaca state, Mexico. Photo: OSV News/Jacob Garcia, Reuters



Eduardo Campos Lima

An unprecedented wave of violence in Sierra Madre de Chiapas, the mountain region in the southern border of Mexico, has been causing deaths and famine among several communities. Earlier last week, hundreds of people fled to Guatemala.

The Diocese of Tapachula, which includes parishes in the mountain communities caught in the middle of the war between two major drug cartels – the Sinaloa cartel and Nueva Generación from Jalisco – has released a letter on July 24 to denounce such a situation to the authorities.

## Forced

The document describes how small growers of Indigenous origin have been forced to work for the cartels. They don't receive anything in

exchange for their labour, but they have to pay a fine if they don't appear to work. They are mostly deployed to take care of the so-called filters, illegal road blockades implanted in areas they know will be visited by the rival group. The community members must inspect the cars passing by in order to identify members of the other gang.

**“Brothers of the civil authority of the distinct levels of government, we keep waiting for you to intervene to do what you have to do: to reestablish the rule of law in our communities”**

When skirmishes between the cartels break out, such peasants are rapidly deployed to the battle, but they never receive weapons, something that makes them easy targets in the field. The number of dead and injured people has been continuously growing.

The diocese's document questions the role of the army and of the national guard, whose cars are often visible and even near a region where a filter is happening, but they don't move to intervene. “Brothers of the civil authority of the distinct levels of government, we keep waiting for you to intervene to do what you have to do: to reestablish the rule of law in our communities,” the letter reads.

## Victims

The document also demands the community members not to accept joining the cartels in exchange for money and call on all victims of the war between drug traffickers to denounce what they have been facing. “God help us all to be artisans of peace and to build with our honourable work a more just world, less indifferent and more solidary, a world with a human community of true brothers,” the letter concludes.

According to Fr Martin Moreno, the general vicar of the Diocese of Tapachula, Sierra Madre de Chiapas has

always been a poor area of Indigenous communities, but it had always enjoyed peace. One of the historical social problems in the region has been migration from South and Central America. People coming from those regions have always necessarily passed by Chiapas, so the Church implemented two shelters in the diocese, besides a few houses on the way northwards. It all changed when Nueva Generación decided to conquer part of the Sinaloa cartel's territory, about a year and a half ago.

**“Videos of the shooting went viral on social media and showed drones firing at streets and houses”**

“Nueva Generación is a notoriously violent cartel. Sinaloa was more interested in keeping drugs coming from the south. The war broke out and everything changed,” he said. Last week, Fr Moreno said, two bands of criminals opened

fire against each other, injuring several Indigenous people. On July 24, another major battle happened in the region of Amatenango de la Frontera.

Videos of the shooting went viral on social media and showed drones firing at streets and houses. Many people had to hide at home. Others left the city and looked for shelter with relatives in other areas. Earlier this week, another clip showed the so-called Cartel de Chiapas y Guatemala arriving in Nueva Morelia, Chiapas.

That would be a third criminal gang joining the conflict. In the video, members of such a cartel appear wearing military uniform and holding guns, while they make fun of the Sinaloa group. “All those gangs force the community members to join them. Either they die from hunger or they die due to that war,” Fr Moreno said.

## Refuge

Since last week, at least 500 people from Sierra Madre de Chiapas left their lands and crossed the border with Guatemala, seeking ref-

uge in the municipality of Cuilco, in Huehuetenango. Guatemala's President Bernardo Arévalo told the press that most of such refugees came from cities like Motozintla de Mendoza, Nueva Providencia and Comapala.

**“All the government does is to pretend nothing of it is happening”**

The Guatemalan authorities explained that they structured shelters for the newly arrived. “It's a shame that another president has the necessary sense of humanity and agreed to help the immigrants, while Mexico's government tries to downplay the problem,” Moreno said.

The priest said that the diocese has been campaigning to collect food in the region in order to take it to the most impacted communities. “All the government does is to pretend nothing of it is happening,” Fr Moreno said.



# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Mexican bishop assaulted and robbed on highway

● The Diocese of Tehuacán, located in the Mexican state of Puebla, reported that Bishop Gonzalo Alonso Calzada Guerrero was driving on a highway when he was “assaulted and his vehicle and personal belongings were stolen”.

In a July 24 statement, the Diocese of Tehuacán reported that the incident occurred on the morning of July 23, while the prelate was heading to a community in the state to celebrate its patron saint's feast day.

The news outlet *N+* reported that after the robbery, the armed men tied the bishop's hands and feet and abandoned him on a hill. According to the report, Bishop Calzada managed to free himself and ask for help; however, the diocese has not commented on this detail.

In the statement, the diocese said that the prelate “was unharmed and has filed the related complaint” with the authorities. In addition, the diocese expressed its gratitude to “God and our Blessed Mother, who always accompanies him, for caring for him and protecting him.”

### US parish hit by multiple vandalism incidents

● Police are investigating after a parish in Arkansas was struck by three vandalism incidents in recent months, including the destruction of a statue of Mary on the parish grounds.

Fr Joseph Chan, the pastor at St Leo Church in Hartford, Arkansas, told *CNA* that the incidents of vandalism began early last year. The parish is part of the Diocese of Little Rock.

“The first was on February 26, 2023,” he said. “Our St Leo sign and notification board had words/letters removed/

jumbled to reflect body parts; for example, the letter ‘M’ was removed from the word ‘Mass’”.

“The second was on March 10, 2024, which involved graffiti to our sacristy door,” the pastor said. “Sprayed was a racial slur commonly directed towards African Americans.”

The most recent incident occurred on July 13. “Toppled to the ground were an angel and Mary statues,” Fr Chan said. “Mary’s neck was broken. The statue of Jesus was seemingly untouched.”

### Serving US archbishop denies sexual abuse accusations

● Omaha Archbishop George Lucas has categorically denied accusations that he sexually abused two minors several decades ago while he was dean of education at St Louis Preparatory Seminary in Missouri.

Archbishop Lucas is one of several dozen priests, nuns, lay men and women accused of sexual abuse of minors in a series of five separate lawsuits filed by 27 anonymous plaintiffs on last Wednesday.

The abuse is alleged to have occurred over the span of several decades, with some of the purported crimes allegedly having occurred as recently as 2015.

The lawsuit naming Lucas was filed in the St Louis County District Court. It alleges that, as a priest, Archbishop Lucas coerced a 16-year-old boy identified as ‘DS’ and another student into performing sexual acts with him at the St Louis school.

Archbishop Lucas strongly denied the accusations in a statement to *CNA* on last Friday.

### Christian pastor attacked in India after being accused of ‘illegal conversion’

● A Pentecostal pastor in India has been accused of “illegal conversion” and then attacked in the central state of Chhattisgarh. Pastor Varghese Chacko was in the town of Dhamtari on 21 July, attending a house-warming prayer meeting at the home of one of his church members.

According to a local source, the house is next door to a Hindu temple, from which a group of approximately 20 villagers, mostly young adults, had been watching the Christians gather.

After they saw Pastor Chacko arrive in his car, the right-wing group barged into the house, making conversion allegations and demanding that they stop the prayer meeting, and proceeding to call the police and accuse the Christians of “illegal conversion”. The police arrived at the house and asked the pastor to leave.

## Catholic leaders worldwide condemn Last Supper Olympic scene

Bishops and prominent prelates from around the world have joined the French Bishops' Conference and US bishops in criticising the Paris Olympics opening ceremony held on July 26 for its depiction of the Last Supper, calling it a deeply deplorable derision of Christianity.

The controversial scene, part of the €1.5 billion spectacle to kick off the 2024 Summer Olympics in a rain-soaked French capital on Friday, featured drag queens portraying the apostles and an overweight DJ as Jesus in what appeared to be a part of a fashion show — apparently mocking Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting.

The official Olympics Twitter account described part of the scene as depicting “the Greek God Dionysus” making people “aware of the absurdity of violence between human beings”.

In a statement released Saturday, the French bishops expressed deep regret over “scenes of derision and mockery of Christianity, which we deeply deplore”.

“We thank the members of other religious denominations who have expressed their solidarity,” the statement on July 27 continued.

“This morning, we think of all Christians on all continents who have been hurt by the outrage and provocation of certain scenes.”

The bishops added: “We hope they understand that the Olympic celebration extends far beyond the ideological preferences of some artists”.



People attend the opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games July 26 with the Notre Dame Cathedral in the background. Photo: OSV News/Anne-Christine Poujoulat, Reuters

Archbishop Charles Scicluna of Malta said on X he had sent messages to the French Ambassador to Malta, expressing his “distress and great disappointment at the insult to us Christians during the opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympics when a group of drag artists parodied the Last Supper of Jesus”.

The prelate, who also is a Vatican official, said he encouraged others to write the ambassador.

Bishop Andrew Cozzens, chair of the US Bishops' Committee on Evangelisation and Catechesis, issued a statement calling on Catholics to respond to the Paris incident with prayer and fasting.

Referencing the recent National Eucharistic Congress, Bishop Cozzens

wrote, “Jesus experienced his Passion anew Friday night in Paris when his Last Supper was publicly defamed”.

“France and the entire world are saved by the love poured out through the Mass, which came to us through the Last Supper. Inspired by the many martyrs who shed their blood to witness to the truth of the Mass, we will not stand aside and quietly abide as the world mocks our greatest gift from the Lord Jesus,” the bishop wrote.

“Rather, through our prayer and fasting, we will ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen us with the virtue of fortitude so that we may preach Christ — our Lord and Savior, truly present in the Eucharist — for the Glory of God and the Salvation of Souls.”

Bishop Robert Barron of

Winona-Rochester called on Catholics to “make their voices heard” in response to what he termed “the gross mockery of the Last Supper”.

The Archbishop of Santiago de Chile, Archbishop Fernando Chomali, expressed disappointment with “the grotesque parody of the most sacred thing we Catholics have, the Eucharist”, *ACI Prensa*, *CNA*'s Spanish-language news partner, reported.

“The intolerance of the ‘tolerant’ has no limit. This is not the way to build a fraternal society. We witnessed nihilism at its maximum expression,” he added.

German Bishop Stefan Oster called the “queer Last Supper” scene “a low point and completely superfluous in the staging,” in a post by the German Bishops' Conference.

## Belgian bishop quits post, said work ‘is destroying him’

Bishop Johan Bonny confirmed on July 25 that he was withdrawing from the high-profile role of key man on abuse, citing an excessive workload that he said was taking a toll on his health.

His departure leaves the Belgian Church scrambling to find a successor before Pope Francis' September 26-29 visit, which is expected to include a private meeting with abuse survivors.

The 69-year-old bishop decided to step back from the role after he appealed

unsuccessfully to Rome for an auxiliary bishop to help him oversee his Diocese of Antwerp, which serves around 1.2 million Catholics.

In a letter published July 1, Bishop Bonny said the Vatican had denied his request partly because it would upset the balance between French-speaking and Flemish-speaking bishops within Belgium's bishops' conference.

Bishop Bonny said: “The policy, the media, the negotiations... It's a very big

task and I have to combine that with caring for a large diocese like that of Antwerp”. I no longer have the strength for that total sum. I have to reduce that.”

He told *Het Nieuwsblad* that the work had taken an emotional toll.

“It's not just about working hours, but it has an immediate personal impact. It's of a different order than all the other work you do as a bishop,” he explained. “Even my doctor says, ‘Stop it, it's destroying you.’”

## US priest sues gay hookup app Grindr over data leak

A priest is suing the gay dating and “hookup” app Grindr after the company reportedly failed to protect his data, leading to his resignation from a top position at the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

In July 2021, Monsignor Jeffrey Burrill resigned from his post as the general secre-

tary of the USCCB ahead of a report by *The Pillar* alleging that he had engaged in inappropriate behaviour and frequent use of Grindr.

The app advertises itself as “the largest social networking app for gay, bi, trans, and queer people”. Its geolocation feature is popularly known to facilitate sex hookups

between gay men.

*The Pillar* said its report on Burrill was based on “commercially available records” correlated to the priest's mobile device. But a lawsuit filed this week claims that Grindr hadn't taken steps to protect the data from third-party acquisition.

In 2022 Monsignor Bur-

rill returned to active ministry as a priest in his home diocese of La Crosse, Wisconsin, with then-Bishop William Callahan stating that the priest had “engaged in a sincere and prayerful effort to strengthen his priestly vows” and had “favourably responded to every request” made by the bishop and the diocese.





Edited by Brandon Scott  
brandon@irishcatholic.ie

## Modern methods of evangelisation



A clergyman gives children a high-five during the final Eucharistic procession of the National Eucharistic Congress in downtown Indianapolis, Indiana, US on July 20, 2024. Photo: OSV News/Bob Roller

## Chaldean bishops 'firmly reject' blessing of same-sex unions

The bishops of the Chaldean Synod on July 16 issued a statement declaring their position on the blessing of same-sex unions as well as the necessity of protecting children from sexual abuse.

The synod emphasised "the necessity of protecting children from sexual harassment and raising awareness among priests about its dangers", stressing the importance of priests participating in child protection programmes and obtaining certification from the local ecclesiastical authority.

The statement also clari-

fied the position of the Chaldean Church - both in Iraq and worldwide - "regarding the union of two people of the same sex". The synod asserted that the Chaldean Church does not recognise same-sex unions as marriage, as the legitimate and correct form of marriage for them is one that unites one man and one woman to form a family.

The statement concluded by firmly rejecting the blessing of same-sex unions in order "to preserve the sanctity of marriage" as one of the seven sacraments of the Church.

The Vatican previously issued directives allowing Catholic priests to bless same-sex couples. These directives were framed as an expression of pastoral closeness without condoning sexual relations between people of the same sex.

These directives sparked controversy, prompting the Vatican to issue a subsequent clarification, especially after the misunderstanding led the Coptic Church to suspend dialogue with the Latin Church.

The clarification stated that the non-liturgical form of the blessing is not a mar-

riage, nor is it an endorsement or approval of same-sex relationships, but "merely a response from the pastor to two people seeking God's help".

The Catholic Church's move to allow blessings of same-sex individuals surprised other churches, like the Coptic Orthodox. Pope Francis even sent the Vatican doctrinal head to Egypt in an attempt to iron out differences with the Copts who had suspended long-standing dialogue with the Church as a result of the document.

## Philippines archdiocese hold prayer rally to oppose legalising divorce

Catholics in one city of the Philippines held a prayer rally to oppose the legalisation of divorce in the country. The Archdiocese of Cebu organised the event on July 27.

"Deep in our hearts is the sincerity of our intentions. It's a thanksgiving to the Lord for the gift of family, the gift of the sacrament, and the gift of the many

who have become witnesses to the marriage that has contributed to the welfare of many families," said Archbishop Jose Palma.

"To us, that's not hypocrisy at all. To us, it's the sincerity of our hearts saying 'thank you' to many couples, who, despite many difficulties, believe in God's grace that 'we can go on,'" he said.

The prayer rally started with a procession from Fuente Osmeña Circle to the Basilica Minore del Santo Niño de Cebu, where a Mass was presided over by the archbishop. The Philippines is the world's only country without a divorce law - excluding the Vatican - since Malta legalised the dissolution of marriage in 2011.

## Vatican roundup

### Vatican approves 'spiritual experience' connected to Trinity shrine of Maccio in Italy

● The Vatican on July 24 approved the "spiritual experience" connected to the Sanctuary of Maccio located in Italy, making it the fifth public announcement of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) since the office published its norms for the discernment of "alleged supernatural phenomena" on May 17.

The DDF recognised the "action of the Holy Spirit" in the mystical experiences and spiritual writings of Italian father and music teacher Gioacchino Genovese, which highlight the centrality of the Holy Trinity as the "source of mercy".

In 2000, Mr Genovese reportedly had mystical experiences during times of prayer in which he perceived the love of the Holy Trinity through the merciful gaze of Jesus Christ. Initially keeping his intellectual visions to himself, he later began to open up about his prayer life with others. Devotion among Catholics around his "intellectual visions" began to spread throughout the Diocese of Como.

### Vatican athletes urge call for 'Olympic Truce' as Paris games start

● As this year's summer Olympic games open in Paris, the Vatican's athletic department is calling for a cessation of all global conflicts and wars for the duration of the event and is urging participants to promote inclusion and fraternity.

In an open letter to Olympic athletes dated and published July 24, Athletica Vaticana, the Vatican's official athletic association, noted that this year's games are opening in the shadow of "wars, tensions and injustices

— even with the lights off — on a global scale".

"The proposal of the Olympic truce...and the participation in the race of the Refugee Team are two proposals of peace that all of us, a great sporting family, reiterate in a dark time of humanity," they said. In ancient times, the "Olympic Truce" originated as a means of allowing all athletes and spectators from Greek city-states to participate in the games safely, as they were continually engaged in conflict with one another.

### Top Vatican diplomat meets Ukrainian president in Kyiv

● Last week, Vatican Secretary of State Italian Cardinal Pietro Parolin met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as part of a 6-day visit to the country, stressing his closeness to the people and the need to work for peace.

In a brief video published on the social media accounts of President Zelenskyy's office, the president, speaking in broken English, thanked Parolin for finding time to visit not just Kyiv, "but you've been to some of our cities, saw people, and I think it's a good signal from the Vatican. Thank you for this support".

He also thanked Pope Francis for his words at the G7 summit in Puglia last month, where the pontiff became the first Pope to ever address a G7 summit, speaking on the risks and opportunities of artificial intelligence.

"Please (give) best regards to His Holiness from us, and thank you for your own participation in the peace summit," President Zelenskyy said, referring to the June 15-16 Summit on Peace in Ukraine that took place in Switzerland.

### Pope mourns former communist President of Vietnam

● The Pope has expressed his condolences for the death of Nguyễn Phú Trọng, and the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the country's former President.

In a telegram sent on his behalf by the Holy See's Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, to the country's current President, General Tô Lâm, the Holy Father expressed his closeness to all who mourn the long-serving leader of the Asian country, who died at age 80 last week, after battling an illness.

"Having learned of the death of His Excellency Nguyễn Phú Trọng, General Secretary of the Communist Party and former President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam," the telegram began, "His Holiness Pope Francis sends condolences to all who mourn his loss, especially his family, together with the assurance of his prayers for their consolation and peace".

In the text, the Pope expressed "particular appreciation" for the late President's role "in fostering and promoting the positive development of the relations between Vietnam and the Holy See".





# Letter from Rome

## Vatican deletes online poll on 'synodality' after negative response



Elise Ann Allen

After a strongly negative response from several thousand users, the Vatican quickly took down an online poll last week on the concept of "synodality", which is at the heart of Pope Francis's high-profile consultation process set to conclude in October with a Synod of Bishops in Rome.

Published the morning of July 25, the poll asked the question, "Do you believe that synodality as a path of conversion and reform can enhance the mission and participation of all the baptised?" It offered either 'yes' or 'no' as a response.

The poll was published by the official accounts for the Vatican's Synod of Bishops office on both X, formerly known as Twitter, and Facebook. These type of social media polls generally last for 24 hours, and as time went by, the answer 'no' quickly began to rack up far more votes than the answer 'yes'.

A screenshot taken by Spanish-language news site *Info Vaticana*, which followed participation in the online poll for the 24 hours it was up, at one point showed that 88% of participants in the poll on X had selected 'no', while just 12% had selected 'yes' as their response.

### Results

According to *Info Vaticana*, the 'no' option on X sat steadily between 85-90% for the entire 24 hours the poll was up. However, with around 10 minutes left to go, the poll had been removed from both X and Facebook, with comments and responses to it on both platforms largely negative. With seven minutes left for the poll, 6,938 people had voted on X, while on Facebook less than 800 had cast a vote.

The Vatican's office for the Synod of Bishops did not respond to a Crux request for



Pope Francis joins leaders of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops for prayer before a working session in the Vatican's Paul VI Audience Hall October 20, 2023. Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez

comment on why the poll was taken down. The potentially embarrassing response for the Vatican comes as the Church is gearing up for the final session of Pope Francis's controversial Synod of Bishops on Synodality, a global multi-year process involving consultation at the local level which many believe is a legacy-defining event for Pope Francis.

**“The ‘Synod on Synodality’ was a difficult sell for many faithful, as the concept of ‘synodality’ was abstract and difficult to define”**

Formally opened by Pope Francis in October 2021, the Synod of Bishops on Synodality is titled, 'For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission', and is a multi-stage process that has included consultations at the local, continental, and universal levels, with the first of two Rome-based month-long meetings occurring in October 2023. A second Rome-based discussion will be held from October

**“‘Synodality’ is generally understood to refer to a collaborative and consultative style of management in which all members, clerical and lay, participate in making decisions about the Church’s life and mission”**

2-27, bringing the process to a close.

From the beginning, the 'Synod on Synodality' was a difficult sell for many faithful, as the concept of 'synodality' was abstract and difficult to define. Still a difficult concept to define for many, 'synodality' is generally understood to refer to a collaborative and consultative style of management in which all members, clerical and lay, participate in making decisions about the Church's life and mission.

### Aim

Organisers have repeatedly insisted that the exercise is aimed at making the Church a more open and welcoming place, driven less by a clerical power-structure and more on collaborative lead-

ership.

However, the process became controversial when reports based on local consultation appeared touching on issues such as married priests, women's ordination and the welcome of LGBTQ+ individuals.

**“The Pope opted to form various working groups in the Roman Curia dedicated to studying these and other topics”**

These topics were included in the official working document, called

*Instrumentum Laboris*, for last year's October synod discussion, and they were among the most emotional and contested points of discussion.

When the final summarising document of last year's discussion was published, the references to these topics were vague, and there was no consensus. When *Instrumentum Laboris* for this year's October discussion was published earlier this summer, these issues were practically absent.

Instead, the Pope opted to form various working groups in the Roman Curia dedicated to studying these and other topics, allowing, organisers have said, the discussion to focus on the implementation of synodality, rather than getting bogged down or sidetracked with single issues.

### Criticism

After pulling the online poll, the Vatican has received blowback from some who bemoan a lack of transparency and accuse officials of acting against the very process they are trying so hard to sell.

One Catholic television and streaming site, Catholic Sat, responded to the deci-

sion to take the poll down in an ironic public post on X, saying, "In the name of true Synodality, why delete the tweet? This goes against everything Pope Francis has been trying to do on this Synodal Journey of Synodality to the Synod in October on Synodality"

**“It is unclear who participated in the social media poll, and precisely what motivated the strongly negative response”**

"If 7,001 people voted and the result was the other way round this tweet would not have been deleted. Have some credibility and stand by your convictions, you either want to hear people's opinions or you don't," the post said.

It is unclear who participated in the social media poll, and precisely what motivated the strongly negative response.



# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Opening ceremony shows ruling agenda conquers all

**Dear Editor,** The opening ceremony of the Olympics prompted feelings of revulsion at the wilful impulse by France to traduce Christian culture in its opening ceremony.

The Olympics are not the property of Ideologies to project their politics or to suborn the athletes of participating countries, still less their

culture and faith values.

Compared with other Olympic openings which celebrate the heroic, and the moral values towards which Olympians strive, the Paris debacle demonstrated how far France, under Macron, has descended into amoral rejection of the good and the truth and, in particular, of Christianity.

The Paris pastiche of the surpassing beauty of the Last Supper - celebrated in the daily life of Christians in Ireland, Europe and globally, as well as in European Art - is unacceptable. It highlights the distortions of woke culture and its impulse to appropriate, and corrupt all that is good and authentic - be it language or art or sport.

It prompts the question of whether soldiers are dying for this particular vision of "Europe" in a war that the French, in particular, continue to urge and promote rather than one based on dialogue as Ireland might once have done.

*Yours etc.,  
Ray Kinsella,  
Ashford, Co. Wicklow*

## Sense in a contentious area

**Dear Editor,** In *The Irish Catholic* of July 11, Breda O'Brien wrote an article: 'Beware of political Christianity'. The question of political Christianity can cut both ways.

On a few occasions we have heard politicians criticised or ridiculed from the pulpit during Mass.

Have we lost faith in the radical difference there should be between our attitudes and those of the secular media?

*Yours etc.,  
Mrs Judith Leonard  
Raheny, Dublin*



## Praise for Fr Burke

**Dear Editor,** Your paper's editorial of July 18 states a Communion war in Cork. As in any war, there are commitments to victory and for a stance to be taken, especially in not counting the cost.

The TD will speak about his rights, but what about the consciences of priests, whose love for their

Eucharistic Master is not considered because it may upset or cause offence?

Would it not be more respectful to understand their perspective?

How lovely it would be to hear those in authority when such incidents are brought to them by means of pious busybodies or local Fourth Estate hacks state: "Good, he has done his job, Good day!"

Thank you, Fr Burke!  
*Yours etc.,  
Fr John McCallion CC  
Coalisland, Co. Tyrone*

## Judge not lest ye be judged

**Dear Editor,** As reported in *The Irish Catholic* on July 18, Fr Gabriel Burke's refusal to give Communion to Minister of State Colm Burke TD, because of a Government decision to enact greater access to abortion, has undermined all of us in ministry who want to create a more inclusive Church that

welcomes all.

Politicians have a difficult job, particularly those who are practicing Catholics. Do they legislate for the few who share their values or the many they serve?

*Yours etc.,  
Deacon Frank Browne,  
Rathfarnham, Dublin*

## Where's the Olympic spirit?

**Dear Editor,** As a Francophile I enjoyed overall the opening ceremony of the Olympics in Paris which was broadcast live on TV on Friday evening last. Congratulations to those involved.

Apart from the heavy rain, what really put a dam-

per on the proceedings for me, though, was the gratuitous mock portrayal of the Last Supper, on which the Eucharistic ceremony is based. This is a Church sacrament which is held so dear by Christians all over the world.

The overall message of the Opening Ceremony was the promotion of peace, harmony and inclusion. How does the mocking of a sacred sacrament in the Christian church tie in with that theme?

Shame on the organisers

of the Opening Ceremony for approving such an insult to people of a particular faith. It is certainly not in keeping with the Olympic spirit.

*Yours etc.,  
PJ Mathews,  
Drogheda, Louth*

## Pilgrimage will open the hardest of hearts

**R**eek Sunday took place on Sunday last, the final Sunday of July as usual. The crowds were big. As usual. Mass was said every hour from dawn until dusk at the top of the mountain. Those climbing the iconic mountain do so on the back of a 1,500 year history of pilgrimage.

Many that climb it these days no longer do so as a pilgrimage. Fewer and fewer stop to observe the Mass and the Sacrament of the Eucharist. It is a sign of the times. So much of Ireland's Christian heritage has been assumed by a post-secular society, with the religious element discarded, sometimes denied and often derided. But we also forget to allow God the space to do his thing in the hearts of those who climb, because climbing the Reek is a search, whether it's for forgiveness, for peace or just for fun.

Why do so many people climb Croagh Patrick, Ireland's holiest mountain, on this day of pilgrimage? They aren't observing the original meaning but hanging on to the established traditions of Ireland's Christian origins. Just as St Patrick is celebrated in increasingly profane ways on March 17, His original forty days' of fasting is overlooked for some form of physiological collective day-out as a national holiday. And yet, the more the profane enters, the more the human heart longs for something else. Why else are the pilgrimage sites packed, why else are the Spanish complaining that too many are walking the Camino way?

Almost as well known is the pilgrimage to Lough Derg, which takes place between May and August where pilgrims (and others) take a one- or three-day retreat on Station Island, also known as St. Patrick's Purgatory.

The place is so named because St Patrick, growing discouraged by the lack of faith of his converts in Ireland, asked God for reassurance, whereby God showed him a pit, called Purgatory, that St Patrick could show to his followers, so that they would know the reality of the joys of heaven and horrors of hell.

The Lough Derg pilgrimage, like that of Reek Sunday, has been encroached by people not seeking a Christian cleansing of the soul through penance, but a form of bodily detox and mindfulness through a spartan spa retreat. But again, God finds his ways through the cracks and spaces into the human heart.

In the same manner, the Camino de Santiago, probably the world's most famous Christian pilgrimage route, has a modern-day appeal for hikers and people seeking a sense of achievement undertaking a long walk, benefitting from the structures - paths and hostels - that have been built on Christian history. At the culmination of the trek, many enjoy the 'spectacle' of the 'Botafumeiro', the giant incense burner being swung through the nave of the Cathedral, while having no interest in the Mass itself, without which it would not be taking place.

Pilgrimage has been part of the Catholic faith, it is thought, since 328AD when Saint Helena travelled to the Holy Land. During the Middle Ages, pilgrimage to the Holy Land became very popular. Most pilgrims travelled by foot, meaning these pilgrimages took years and were seen as a way to show true commitment to God and a way to be forgiven of sins.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church recognises the value of pilgrimage as a chance for Catholics to work on their faith. The Catechism states: Pilgrimages evoke our earthly journey towards heaven and are traditionally very special occasions for renewal in prayer (Catholic Catechism 2691).

Pope Benedict XVI said that "To go on pilgrimage really means to step out of ourselves in order to encounter God where he has revealed himself, where his grace has shone with particular splendour and produced rich fruits of conversion and holiness among those who believe."

While it isn't possible to resist the dilution of our pilgrimage heritage, there is also a deep desire especially among young people for experiential faith, climbing mountains, walking barefoot, holy water, incense, companionship in these tasks, all ingredients used by the Spirit to speak to the human heart. All we have to do is get young people to these places, and God will do the rest.

## 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

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# Listening from the mountaintop: how God calls to Ireland's declining monastic community



Matt Letourneau

**“L**isten carefully, my son, to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart,” the first line of *St Benedict's Rule* commands. Listening can be virtuous, but how can you hear God's soft melody over modern life's constant clamour? For Cistercian monks, the answer is straightforward: build a colossal church in the middle of nowhere. Although this may seem like an oversimplified solution, these monasteries provide a sense of seclusion and tranquility, where monks can devote all their energy to seeking God. However, even though solitude in a monastery is important to monastic life, a monk undertakes many more initiatives than isolation and silence to ‘hear’ the Lord.

**“When I joined the order in 1997, there were 150 monks in Ireland. There were 50 monks here. But over the last 25 years, a lot of the guys have died. Fewer guys have joined. 27 years later, I'm still the youngest monk”**

When I came to Ireland from the US a couple of months ago, I didn't know of this country's extant monasteries or the countless ruins of abbeys lying dormant in the countryside. I knew the caricature of a monk, wearing a brown habit and tonsure, but I had no clue what real, modern Benedictine monks were like — their lifestyle, culture and spiritual beliefs. Therefore, when I learned of their presence around the country, I realised I had to investigate how the monks' religious

practices differed from everyday spirituality.

My ignorance may have been justified, as their community has suffered a steep decline, dwindling in both number and influence. From the 12th to 16th centuries, there were 550 separate monasteries and abbeys in Ireland. Today, there are only five. Furthermore, as Fr Richard Purcell, former abbot and current prior of the Cistercian community at Mt Melleray Abbey, explained, “When I joined the order in 1997, there were 150 monks in Ireland. There were 50 monks here. [...] But over the last 25 years, a lot of the guys have died. Fewer guys have joined. 27 years later, I'm still the youngest monk.” Today, only seven monks reside at Mount Melleray, and only around 30 Cistercian monks live in Ireland.

However, this is not wholly an affliction for the Cistercian Order, as decline can also be viewed as a natural stage in monastic history. A decline in monks may also bring original monastic values back to the forefront of the community. Therefore, I decided to adventure to Cappoquin, Co. Waterford and visit Mount Melleray Abbey to explore monastic culture and discover how the Irish Cistercian Order stays devoted while losing its monks.

## History

To know how Irish Cistercian monks serve God amid this current ‘monastic recession,’ one must first understand the basic history and beliefs of the Irish Cistercian Order. According to Fr Richard, “Monastic life was always for people who wanted to step away from their life.” Christian monasticism began in Egypt in about 270 AD. It was pioneered by the hermit St Anthony, who spent his life in solitude in the Nitrian Desert, focusing all his attention on God. In the sixth century, the Catholic St Benedict expanded this concept. With his experiences in solitude and living with other monks, St Benedict founded 12 monasteries and wrote *St Benedict's Rule*, a 73-chapter book that outlines the rules of monastic life. Since then, Benedictine monks have used *St Benedict's Rule* to dictate

The Public Church's mosaic wall, stained-glass window and altar



their lives, from how they sleep to how they eat.

**“After a few prosperous centuries, Cistercian monasteries were suppressed under King Henry VIII during the reformation in 1539, leaving abbeys in ruin”**

Centuries after St Benedict passed away, the Cistercian Order was born, and it spread across Europe rapidly. In 1098, Benedictine monks from the Molesme Abbey, France lived under a relaxed observance of *The Rule*. However, they wanted to live by the strictest possible interpretation, so they moved to the remote marshlands of Cîteaux and founded the first Cistercian community. In 1142, St Malachy, the Archbishop of Armagh, requested for mon-



Fr Richard poses in the garden with the ‘Summer House’ and countryside in the background

asteries to be built in Ireland, so a group of monks founded the first Cistercian monastery in Mellifont.

After a few prosperous centuries, Cistercian monasteries were suppressed under King Henry VIII during the reformation in 1539, leaving abbeys in ruin. However, after Catholic Emancipation in 1829, Fr Vincent Ryan (Dom Vincent), the first abbot of Mt Melleray, laid his eyes on Scrahan, a barren area in the Knockmealdown Mountains, known by locals as ‘the coarse land’. With 200 monks seeking to escape France before the French Revolution of 1830, Fr Ryan brought 64 Irish and English monks from

France to Scrahan. Together, they founded the first post-Reformation monastery in Ireland: Mt Melleray Abbey.

However, the hardships of these monk refugees don't stop there. Just like the Nitrian Desert and Cîteaux, the Scrahan was a squalid wasteland, littered with stones on infertile soil. Therefore, the monks took on the task of reclaiming the land. They tore up thousands of rocks, loosened and dug into the soil with spades, ploughed manure over 470 acres of land and planted 17,000 trees. Many villagers and religious communities from the surrounding area came to help with this monumental task, walking dozens

of miles every day to assist at the site. Using the stones they dug up, they constructed a church, opening in 1838 for services. Then, on the abbey's centenary, the ‘new abbey church’ started construction in 1933, finishing in 1940. Since then, the abbey has added a guesthouse, accommodations for the monks, a boarding school, a dairy farm, a cemetery, a museum, a cafe and many other amenities.

## Mount Melleray

As the bus weaved deeper into Co. Waterford's green countryside, through quaint villages and past beautiful farmland, I found myself in the small town of Cappoquin.

**“As I stood at the base of the Church, its immense stone tower and nave, blackened by centuries of weather, watched over the farmland and village beneath it like a benevolent guardian”**



Mt Melleray Church's tower and nave



Fr Richard inside the nave

The old church and main street were enveloped in silence, with only a few cars on the road, an occasional pedestrian walking by and the wind rustling nearby leaves. Eventually, the sound of a car broke the town's quiet, and a man in a black and white habit, Fr Richard, sat in the driver's seat. I hopped in, and we embarked up the mountain until we arrived at Mt Melleray.

**“St Benedict's Rule states, ‘All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me’”**

As I stood at the base of the Church, its immense stone tower and nave, blackened by centuries of weather, watched over the farmland and village beneath it like a benevolent guardian. “There is so much happening in the outside world. It's busy, busy, busy,” Lizzie Connor, a guest who has frequented the abbey for the past 15 years, told me, “This is the place you can rest awhile. There's nothing but stillness. It's a piece of heaven.” Walking through the garden towards the guesthouse, I heard nothing but birds chirping, a fountain's gentle splashing and the grass crunching quietly beneath my shoes. I saw resting cows, chewing fresh pasture, and I inhaled the crisp morning air. All I felt was tranquillity.

St Benedict's Rule states, “All guests who present them-

selves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Matthew 25:35).” Hospitality is an important part of monastic life, and Mt Melleray has a dedicated staff and guesthouse for meeting the demands of visitors. According to Fr Richard, “Monasteries exist to serve those seeking God.” This sentiment was carried out the moment I arrived, as I was immediately led to the dining room. There, the staff brought me a bowl of soup and a steaming plate of potatoes, pork chops, cabbage and bread. I sat with guests from all around the world, chatting about our lives as we dug into the delicious food. The abbey is equipped with about 21 rooms for overnight guests, but anywhere from hundreds to thousands of people can visit on any given day. These guests are free to walk the grounds, hike the mountain, explore the church, visit the museum, eat at the cafe, go to prayer services and ‘switch off’ from the hustle and bustle of the world.

Touring the grounds, Fr Richard showed me the abbey's two churches, living quarters, library and chapter room. A colourful stained-glass window presided over the circular altar of the main church, depicting saints and the Holy Spirit. I sat silently on the pews before the ‘None’ prayer service started. Eventually, seven monks appeared, their footsteps echoing in the vast nave. Each bowed at the altar before standing in the choir pit. Their voices picked up at a low baritone, singing a passage from Psalms in front of them. The walls carried their voices throughout the

space, permeating every inch of the church. Starting at 4 am, the monks undergo seven services each day — Vigils, Lauds, Mass, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline. Once the service concluded, another type of music broke Mt Melleray's stillness, as the organ exploded with melody when Fr Richard moved his fingers along its keys.

**“Like a beehive, every part of the building has a purpose, and history and tradition flow from one room to another like nectar pouring from a honeycomb”**

Although the grandiose church was beautiful, I admired the ‘public church,’ a much smaller prayer space within the abbey, even more. The walls were lined with ornate stained-glass windows created by Harry Clarke, Ireland's most famous glass artist. The stars of the show, however, were the walls themselves. From the pillars to the altar, the entire space was encapsulated in mosaics, each tiny tile painstakingly placed to create colourful depictions of saints and decorative patterns. Above everything, light poured in from a centuries-old stained-glass window above the altar — a remnant from the original, 19th-century church.

From the guesthouse to the public church to the gardens outside, the abbey grounds reflect the mission of the

Guests Dean Quinn and Lizzie Connors eat lunch in the guesthouse



Cistercian monks that “work together like bees,” as Fr Richard illustrated. Like a beehive, every part of the building has a purpose, and history and tradition flow from one room to another like nectar pouring from a honeycomb.

### Finding God in silence

Walking through the abbey's halls, signs remind those inside to practice ‘silence’. In many areas, speaking is prohibited. “We talk about silence because it cultivates a culture of listening,” Fr Richard explained, “God speaks to us in these different ways. The birds, the breeze, the fountains are only heard in silence.” St Benedict believed that silence was always necessary unless guests were present, but now, the monks are a little less strict, as it is now only compulsory at meals or in certain areas. Regardless, the silence adds to the peaceful

atmosphere and lets one listen to God's call.

The decline in the number of monks cannot be attributed to any specific reason. When asked why, Fr Richard responded, “I suppose it's just a change in society, a change in values, a change in approach to things.” Abbeys promote vocation and spread awareness in hopes that some may be called to the monastic life, but they don't actively recruit new monks. The decline in monks in Ireland has led to discussions about possible mergers, where monastic communities would become one and leave the other monasteries behind.

However, according to Fr Richard, this is natural and has happened throughout history. “All over Ireland,” he stated, “there are ruins of places that were once monasteries and abbeys and convents. I'm talking about going back hundreds

and thousands of years. So, it would be nothing new.” Moreover, the decline may just reflect a fulfilment of the original mission of a monastery's purpose. As Fr Richard said, “Monasteries exist because people are called. If God isn't calling people, then the monastery shouldn't be kept alive for the sake of anything else. [...] If some say, ‘we have a monastery building here, so we must keep it alive,’ I understand exactly why people say that, but it's not the purpose of the monastery.”

We may be in the midst of a monastic recession in Ireland, but this doesn't mean monasteries like Mt Melleray Abbey are worse off. Monks and guests alike go there for the peace and silence, to listen to God without distraction. As long as one can seek God on those beautiful grounds, the space serves its intended purpose. All you have to do is listen with “the ear of your heart.”



# Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, August 1, 2024

What a lucky  
kid I am

Effie Caldarola

Page 32



## Our call to continue writing Sacred history

I was recently attending a formation course for catechists aimed at working with children between 6-9 years old. One theme that we focused on was the child's growing capacity for understanding time and history. In the same way that they can remember events from their own past, we begin to explain that we also have a much older, shared history, one that we read about in the Bible. A history for all people, of all times and places.

### A blank page

This history is the story of our Salvation, of God's presence so intimately woven into the fabric of time, and our individual lives. It has been unfolding since the very first moments of creation, of God's first covenant with man, through the birth of Jesus Christ, our greatest Gift, to his death and resurrection, the very moment of our redemption, and even now, to the present time. Much of this history has already come to be, but there is also a page that hasn't been written yet, a blank page. This blank page is both a time to come, when God will be all in all, and the time that we are living in right now. The story still unfolding, still being written. Our time.

This concept of 'a blank page' struck me. It was amazing to me that we can somehow collaborate with God in writing this blank page, and even more amazing still that God even seeks our collaboration. This history is now being handed on



We each have a  
purpose given to us,  
writes Katie Fillion

to us. How incredible it is to think that we each have a part to play in the writing of the history of the Kingdom of God. We each have a purpose given to us by God himself, a unique call etched into our hearts. A mission to live out. This mission, this call, has been given to each and every one of us in the same way that it was given to those who have come before us in faith.

**“He encountered them in an immensely personal way before calling them on to do their own particular work for his Kingdom”**

Our God is not a distant God but rather a God who desires relationship with His people. A God who seeks our active collaboration in bringing about his plan for our Salvation. All throughout the Bible, throughout our very own Salvation history, we see examples of people encountering God, experiencing

the power of his transforming love, the power of His grace and mercy alive in their lives, both individually and as a people. We see how God raised up people like Abraham and Moses in the Old Testament to Peter and Paul, and most especially our Blessed Mother, Mary, in the New Testament. From Mount Sinai to the road to Damascus to Mary's fiat in the tiny town of Nazareth, he encountered them in an immensely personal way before calling them on to do their own particular work for his Kingdom.

### Encounter

This is what He wants for you and me. He wants us to have a deeply personal encounter, an experience of his transforming love in our lives as he begins to guide us in how we, too, are to help write this Sacred history, help the Kingdom of God to grow by allowing others to see this lived experience in our own lives.

What an incredible gift it is to be able to work out with God what our role is to be, what our part in writing

this blank page is to look like. Admittedly, this can also seem like quite the challenge. I know that, for me at least, it can be a struggle, even frustrating at times. I wish God would just tell me outright what my part is to be, or what his will in my life looks like. That would be easier, right? But He doesn't. Maybe in some ways, in certain situations, He does, but certainly not in all. I don't get to see the whole picture of his divine plan or how He intends to work in me and through me in writing this blank page of our time. But I suppose that this is something that we can learn from all those who have come before us in this Sacred history. God doesn't give us the whole plan upfront, He reveals Himself slowly, over time. His presence gently guiding us as he unfolds his plan in our lives, just as He has all throughout time before.

**“He gives us little glimpses of what His Kingdom is to look like, opportunities for encountering his love in our lives”**

Allowing the journey of discovery to make us more fully into the people He created us to be. This divinely inspired gift of our lives, of our work for the Kingdom of Heaven, and the process of working out what that is to be with His help, isn't something that can be rushed. It is the work of

a lifetime.

He does sometimes give us hints and nudges along the way, though, to remind us who we are. That we are His people, and He is our God. He gives us little glimpses of what His Kingdom is to look like, opportunities for encountering His love in our lives.

One profound experience of personally encountering that love in my own life was at my very first Youth 2000 Summer Festival when I was a teenager. I remember being completely overwhelmed by the great love that I experienced coming face-to-face with in the Eucharistic healing service that was held one night. An encounter so deep, so personal, I still remember it seven years later.

### Festival

This year's Youth 2000 Summer Festival is coming up on 15-18 August in Clongowes Wood College, Co. Kildare. It's for those aged 16-35, and it promises to be a blessed weekend full of encounters with Our Lord. The very same God who has been orchestrating this Sacred history all throughout time. The same God who wants to reveal Himself to you, now, in this very moment. He seeks to encounter you, and me, so that we can each work with Him, collaborate with Him, in writing this Sacred history. What an incredible journey it is that we are called to in helping to write this blank page.



# I have tasted revival



Fr Patrick Briscoe

**I** saw it. The Church in the United States has witnessed the defining moment of a generation. There's no other way to describe it. I had high hopes for the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis, but, to put it simply, Our Lord brought me to my knees in Indianapolis.

In the months leading up to the congress, I joined hundreds of other volunteers in planning meetings, beginning to do my part to make this gathering possible.

It was important for me personally. I've spent the last year and a half traveling across the country, supporting the National Eucharistic Revival as a Eucharistic Preacher. I believed in the call for revival from the start. I knew we had to do something. And I fervently hoped this initiative would help.

Like many who served the congress, I had my frustrations. I'm not proud to admit it. I was cross and exasperated with various organisational decisions. It wasn't a perfect event (no one is claiming that). But I have a bolder, more important observation to share.

The moment the first revival session began in Lucas Oil Stadium, the Lord began to work in my heart in a new way.

## Triumphant

I shouted and cheered with joy at the triumphant entry of the perpetual pilgrims. These were the young people who, for 60 days, travelled to testify to the Real Presence and bring revival to towns and cities across the country. They had done something marvellous for Jesus. I had the pleasure of getting to know many of them throughout their pilgrimage, catching up with them in unlikely and marvellous situations. I admire them (and the priests who accompanied them). And I'm deeply grateful for their witness.

But this moment - which I had eagerly awaited - wasn't the moment that rent my heart.

In a dark stadium, a spotlight shone bright,

illuminating the immense monstrosity that bore a dinner-plate-sized host. The same God who created Heaven and Earth, the God who declared "Let there be light," was present. It was when the Blessed Sacrament entered Lucas Oil Stadium. That was the moment the Lord began a transformation, a moment he began something within me. He was at work among us. Drawing us near. And - to my delight - he did something for me.

**“He was there. Present body, blood, soul and divinity. I heard him speak to me. And finally, I could surrender all of this work to him”**

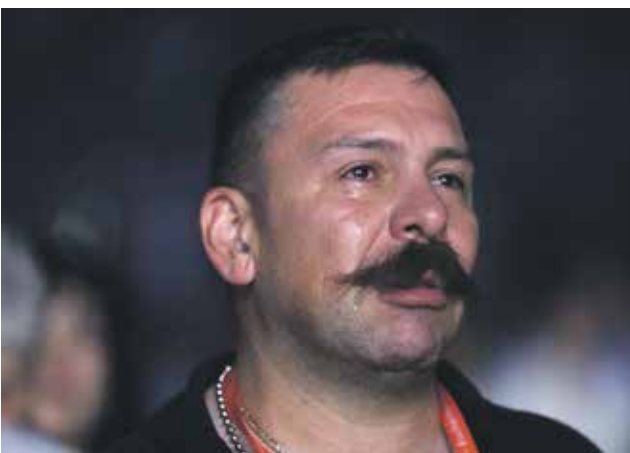
It wasn't that I doubted what Jesus taught about the Eucharist. But I had hedged my interior bets about how he would be at work at the congress. I was withholding, not fully surrendering. I had been worried, anxious and critical. I had been under the impression that everything I had been working for was for someone else, for the experience of all the congress attendees. But Jesus took all that from me when he arrived. And he showed up for me.

He was there. Present body, blood, soul and divinity. I heard him speak to me. And finally, I could surrender all of this work to him.

My experience at the congress was electrifying. And I wasn't alone. Tens of thousands joined me in silent prayer on our knees in an NFL stadium. Tens of thousands will go forth from Indianapolis, sharing what God has done for us. Each of us. Personally.

The 10th National Eucharistic Congress wasn't an event. It wasn't a celebration or festival. It was the defining encounter of a generation. It was the decisive moment when Jesus began to do something transformational for his Church. It was a work fashioned in the hearts of everyone present who was open to him. In a word, it was a revival.

**i** Fr Patrick Briscoe OP is editor of Our Sunday Visitor. Follow him on X @Patrick-MaryOP





# What a lucky kid I am



Effie Caldarola

**M**y 3-year-old granddaughter was on a beach weekend. When the ice cream wagon made its trek across the sand, her parents allowed her a treat. Later in the day, the family shared dinner with friends and the other mom brought - yep, more ice cream treats.

When Alice saw the box being offered, she couldn't contain her glee.

"Another ice cream?" she laughed, "What a lucky kid I am!" Sometimes 3-year-olds can

teach you much. Alice seems to have been blessed - lucky, to use her word - with a gracious sense of joy and gratitude. That day, she reminded me that gratitude is the essential spiritual attitude, the vital prayer. Thanks, Alice.

Some days, it's hard to think about how blessed I am. There's been sickness in my family, and a dear friend has moved out of her home to be cared for in what appears to be a final illness. Another good friend lost her husband days ago after a hard struggle. I've gone from the years of saying goodbye to parents, aunts and uncles, to the sobering time of seeing contemporaries leave.

## Spirit

I know I'm not alone in letting the relentless heat in many parts of our country affect my spirit as well. And the onset of what is forecast to be a catastrophic hurricane season makes me wonder why so few are listening to Pope Francis'

pleas for a new attitude toward our environment. Where are the climate voters?

And speaking of politics, no one can escape the chaos of our present moment.

But a litany of our woes does nothing to solve them or address them in a positive way. It helps my perspective to pick up a history book and see how our forebears faced seemingly insurmountable problems. We live in perilous times, perhaps, but every time has its perils.

Recently, I watched a documentary about Nicholas Winton, who helped organise eight "Kinder-transports," which eventually brought 669 Czech Jewish children to safety in Britain in 1938. When everyone in Prague was bracing for the Nazi invasion, Winton and other brave people found homes in Britain willing to accept these children, fought the immigration authorities and managed to get children onto trains bound for Holland and then on ships to Britain as their grief-stricken parents said goodbye.

**“Realising there are always good people working to help our world inspires gratitude and always lifts my spirit. But more than that, it inspires me to ask, how can I help?”**

It was literally life and death for these children, whose parents nearly all died in the Holocaust. Those saved children represent a tiny percentage of those ultimately killed, but to each of them, and their thousands of descendants, it meant the world. Winton's story made me think of something Fred Rogers, the great children's television personality, said. When he was little and saw scary things, his mom told him, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."

Realising there are always good people working to help our world inspires gratitude and always lifts my spirit. But more than that, it inspires me to ask, how can I help? How can I be part of the solution?

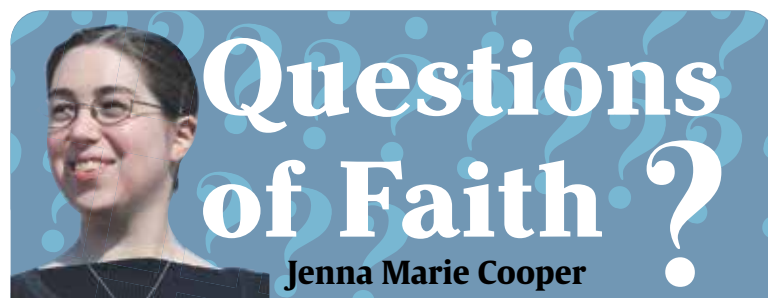
If we find ourselves burdened by the worries of the world or the fears of tomorrow, we need to remember that our spirituality calls us to gratitude in the present moment. We are asked to find, as St Ignatius taught, God in all things. God, I know, is with the helpers, and I want to be with them.

And gratitude is the first and essential prayer.

If we focus on the beauty given us in one more precious day of life and know that we can be a helper to someone, we might find ourselves proclaiming joyfully, "What a lucky kid I am!"

**i** Effie Caldarola is a wife, mom and grandmother who received her master's degree in pastoral studies from Seattle University.

**“If we find ourselves burdened by the worries of the world or the fears of tomorrow, we need to remember that our spirituality calls us to gratitude in the present moment”**



## Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper



## Why is confirmation a requirement to be a godparent?

**Q: I wanted my aunt and uncle to be godparents for my new baby. Both my aunt and uncle went through 12 years of Catholic school. But the priest told us my uncle couldn't be godfather to my baby because he never received Confirmation. This doesn't make sense to me because I'm sure my uncle knows the faith well. Couldn't he at least be part of the Baptism as a Christian witness?**

**A:** Even while it might be disappointing for you in this instance, canon law does require that godparents be baptised and confirmed Catholics.

For reference, canon 872 of the Code of Canon Law describes the role of a baptismal sponsor: "Insofar as possible, a person to be baptised is to be given a sponsor who assists an adult in Christian initiation or together with the parents presents an infant for baptism. A sponsor also helps the baptised person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it."

We often call baptismal sponsors for infants 'godparents', as their role is to assist the parents in raising their children in the Faith. And although this is not explicitly stated in our current canon law, a traditional understanding was that godparents would take over responsibility for their godchild's religious education if something happened to the parents that left them unable to attend to this themselves. Perhaps due to the custom of godparents serving as sort of 'back-up parents' as far as Faith formation is concerned, canon 873 allows for the possibility of two godparents, one female godmother and one male godfather, even though one godparent alone is sufficient.

Canon 874, Paragraph 1 lists the necessary qualifications of a godparent, including among other things that they be at least 16 years old (unless the local bishop has decided otherwise) and that they be someone other than the child's parents.

This same section also indicates that a prospective godparent must be someone who can reasonably serve as a good Catholic role model, noting that they cannot be "bound by any canonical penalty"

such as excommunication and that they must "have the aptitude" for fulfilling the role of a godparent. But more significantly to your question here, canon 874 directly states that a godparent must "be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of Faith in keeping with the function to be taken on."

Logically, this does make sense. It would be difficult to guide anyone through the process of Catholic initiation if you are not fully initiated yourself; and similarly, a godparent needs to love and actively practice the Faith if they are going to hand it on effectively. While intellectual knowledge of Catholic teaching (such as the kind imparted by religion classes in Catholic schools) is important, ultimately it cannot be a substitute for the lived experience and expression of the Faith.

Canon 874, Paragraph 2 does mention the possibility of a non-Catholic Christian serving as a formal 'witness' to the Baptism in conjunction with a Catholic godparent. But this is not an option for a baptised Catholic, even if the Catholic has not yet been confirmed.

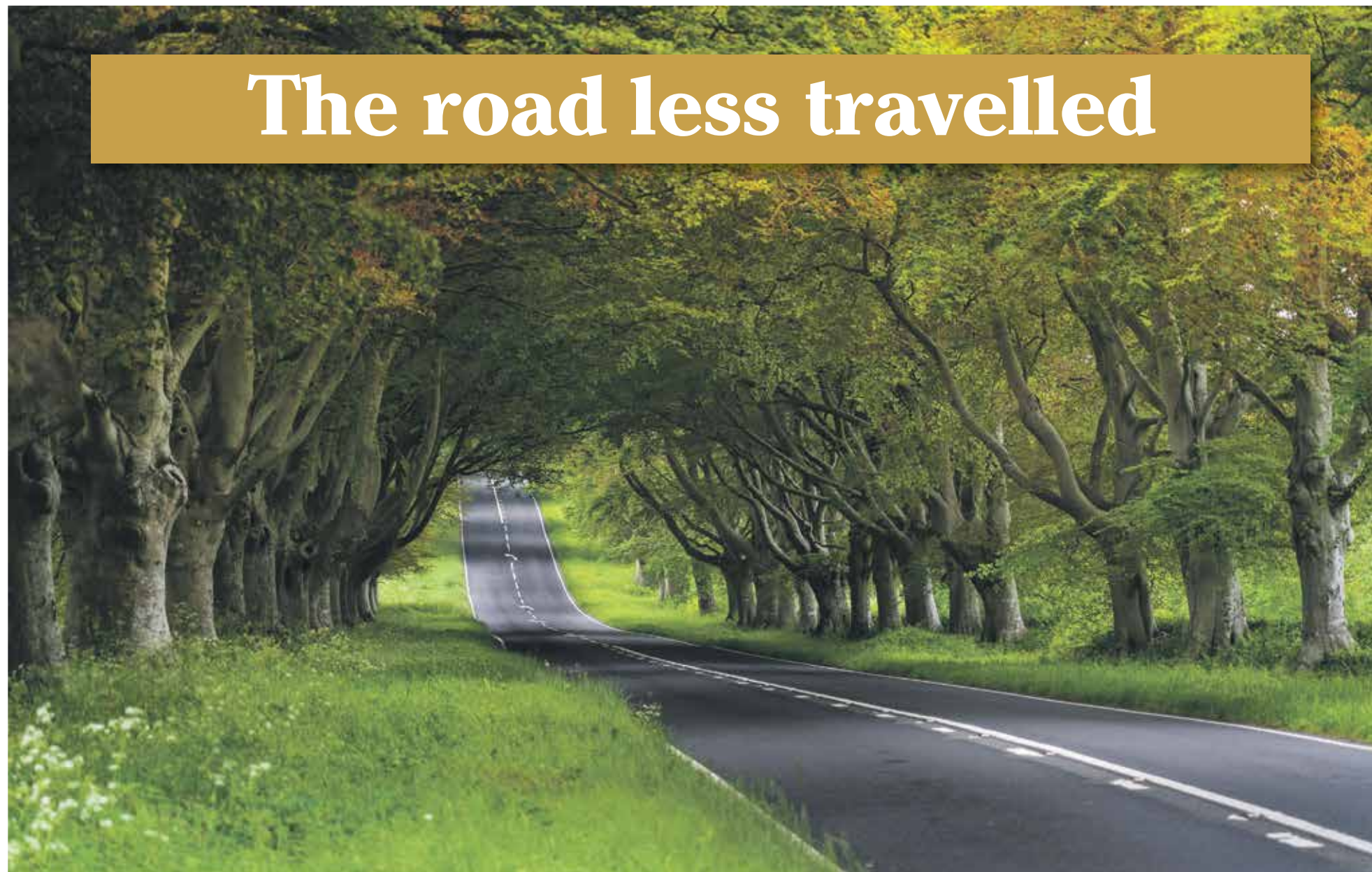
Of course, it is not possible to give specific advice based on limited second-hand information. But, depending on how soon the baptism of your child is set to occur, it could be that the easiest way to resolve this situation is simply for your uncle to receive the sacrament of Confirmation as soon as possible.

Many dioceses have sacramental preparation programs specifically designed for Catholic adults who 'missed' Confirmation in their youth and are now seeking the sacrament. And, depending on the circumstances, it is also possible for your parish priest to request the faculty (i.e., the 'power') from the local diocesan bishop to confer the sacrament of Confirmation himself.

**i** Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osv.com.



# The road less travelled



**T**wo roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

Most of us are familiar with these words from Robert Frost which have been used countless times in graduation and commencement addresses and other inspirational talks as a challenge to not just follow the crowd, but rather to risk carrying yourself and your solitude at a higher level. Well, Jesus offers us that same invitation daily as we stand looking at two very different roads.

## Summarises

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus summarises many of his key teachings. However, they are easy to misunderstand and rationalise. Mostly though we don't pick up on what lies front and center in those teachings, that is, how our virtue must go deeper than that of the Scribes and the Pharisees. What's at issue here?

Most of the Scribes and Pharisees were good, sincere, committed, religious people with a high virtue. They kept the Commandments and were women and men who practiced a strict justice. They were fair to everyone and indeed were extra gracious and generous to strangers. So, what's lacking in this? Well, good as this is, it doesn't go far enough. Why not?

Because you can be a person of moral integrity, fully just and generous, and still be hateful, vengeful, and violent because these can still be done in justice. In strict justice, you



**Fr Rolheiser**

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

may hate someone who hates you, you may exact revenge when you are wronged, and you may practice capital punishment. An eye for an eye!

**“What's our spontaneous reaction when we are wronged? We feel vengeful”**

But in doing that, you are still doing what comes naturally. It is natural to love those who love you, just as it is natural to hate those who hate you. Real virtue asks more than this. Jesus invites us to something higher. He invites us to love those who hate us, to bless those who curse us, to never seek revenge and to forgive those who kill us – even mass murderers.

Admittedly, that isn't an easy road to take. Almost every natural instinct inside us resists this.

What's our spontaneous reaction when we are wronged? We feel vengeful. What's our natural reaction when we hear that the gunman at a mass killing was killed? We feel relieved. What's our natural reaction when an unrepentant murderer is executed? We feel happy he died; and we cannot help ourselves in that reaction. There's the sense that justice has been served. Something has been righted in the universe. Our moral indignation has been assuaged. There's closure.

## Catharsis

Or is there? Not really. What we feel rather is emotional release, catharsis; but there's a huge difference between catharsis and real closure. While the emotional release may even be healthy psychologically, we are invited (by Jesus and by all that's highest inside us) to something else,

to a road beyond feeling emotional release, namely, the less travelled road towards wide compassion, understanding and forgiveness.

In assessing this, it can be helpful to look at how Pope John Paul II addressed the question of capital punishment. He was the first pope in the Church's two-thousand-year history to speak out against capital punishment. Interestingly, he didn't say it was wrong. Indeed, in strict justice, it may be done. What he said was simply that we shouldn't do it because Jesus invites us to something else, namely, to forgive murderers.

**“That is the road of our emotions, the road more taken. Understandable. Who wants to feel sympathy for a killer, an abuser, a bully?”**

Easier said than done! When I hear of a mass shooting, my thoughts and feelings don't naturally turn toward understanding and empathy for the shooter. I don't agonise about how he must have suffered to bring himself

to do something like this. I don't naturally feel sympathy for those who, because of fragile or broken mental health, might do something like that. Rather, my emotions naturally put me on the road more travelled, telling me that this is a terrible human being who deserves to die! Empathy and forgiveness aren't the first things that find me in these situations. Hateful and vengeful feelings do.

However, that is the road of our emotions, the road more taken. Understandable. Who wants to feel sympathy for a killer, an abuser, a bully?

## Venting

But that's only our emotions venting. Something else inside us is forever calling us to what's higher, namely, to the empathy and understanding to which Jesus invites us in the Sermon on the Mount. “Love those who hate you.” Bless those who curse you. Forgive those who murder you.

Moreover, such virtue is not something we ever achieve once and for all. No. Faith works this way: some days we walk on water, and some days we sink like a stone.

So, like Robert Frost, on any given day, I find myself standing where two roads diverge. One, the road more travelled, invites me to walk the road of hate, vengeance, and feeling I am a victim; the other, the road less taken, invites me to walk the road of wider compassion, empathy and forgiveness.

Which one do I take? Sometimes one, sometimes the other; though always, I know the one to which Jesus is inviting me.

**“Something else inside us is forever calling us to what's higher, namely, to the empathy and understanding to which Jesus invites us in the Sermon on the Mount. ‘Love those who hate you.’ Bless those who curse you. Forgive those who murder you”**



# The bread of life

Ex 16:2-4, 12-15  
Ps 78:3-4, 23-24, 25, 54  
Eph 4:17, 20-24  
Jn 6:24-35

## The Sunday Gospel

Deacon Greg Kandra



**W**hen you think about it, we got our first clue at Christmas.

It was there, in the very name of the town where Jesus was born: Bethlehem, a word which means in both Aramaic and Hebrew, 'House of Bread'. His followers shouldn't really have been puzzled or surprised when he told them, as we hear this Sunday in John's Gospel, "I am the bread of life."

It couldn't be any other way.

But the now-famous words that Jesus utters in this passage are obviously about more than just food or sustenance. Jesus is telling us something we urgently need to hear. It's about craving, desire, yearning - and the gnawing emptiness and holy longing that only he can fill.

### Hunger

It's no accident that this passage in John's Gospel begins with people looking for Jesus - seeking for him to feed their particular hunger. When they finally find him, he tells them that he does more than provide bread for the multitudes. He turns their expectations upside down and states something bold and new. Searching for bread to feed you? The search is over. Look no further. Here is the bread of life.

Bread, of course, is a staple in every diet around the world. Google tells us that the earliest bread was made around 8,000 years before Christ in the Middle East, most notably in Egypt. Various forms of it eventually materialised in parts of Europe, India, Mexico and virtually every part of the globe, made not only from wheat but also from corn, barley and rice. It is truly the universal food.

So, it makes perfect sense that the Saviour who came for all would describe himself in a way that can be understood and consumed by all. Here he presents himself as a food that is not only ordinary, but humble and easily accessible.

Which makes his presence for us under the appearance of bread in the Eucharist even more understandable -- and, in fact, even poignant.

It's been said that part of the power of the Incarnation is that through this astound-

ing act the Creator became part of creation. In a similar way, the One who is the source of everything shows a desire to share himself as almost nothing - a mere crumb of bread, a sliver of baked wheat, something that can be held in the palm of your hand and, even, broken and then shared.

Here is a generous love that almost defies human understanding.

**“This passage should spur all of us to wonder anew: Just what are we hungering for? What do we search for in Christ Jesus? What do we want him to give us?”**

I don't know that any of that mattered to the crowd that travelled by boat to Capernaum, looking for the rabbi who fed them. They were searching for the miracle worker who had done something astounding. Whether they realised it or not, they found someone even more remarkable.

"I am the bread of life," he told them, "Whoever comes to me will never hunger and whoever believes in me will never thirst."

This passage should spur all of us to wonder anew: Just what are we hungering for? What do we search for in Christ Jesus? What do we want him to give us?

The one who fed a multitude continues to feed multitudes today through the Eucharist, through his Word, through his boundless generosity that has redefined for all time mercy, sacrifice and love.

He's more than a wonder worker, more than a rabbi, more than a baker who knows how to fill empty stomachs. As a familiar hymn puts it, he satisfies the hungry heart, with gift of finest wheat.

Here is the bread of life.

Who could crave anything more than that?

**i** Deacon Greg Kandra is an award-winning author and journalist, and creator of the blog *The Deacon's Bench*.





# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## The misrepresentation of our beliefs

Sometimes the secular media takes an interest in religious faith only when it involves some sort of distorted version of religion.

Having reviewed it a few episodes in, last Monday I finally got to the end of **Under the Banner of Heaven** (RTÉ One) – the true crime drama about murder in a Mormon community. I was happy enough with how it ended, and it was a bonus that it concluded (no spoilers here) with a family prayer. I wasn't too happy with some 'adult content' and with how religion fared. As with many thriller series, religious extremism was the order of the day. The show's viewpoint seemed to be that religion and extremism are almost inseparable. As detective Pyre (Andrew Garfield) became disillusioned with his religion, it didn't seem to occur to him that one could live a life of genuine faith, in a deep relationship with God and your church community without being extremist, even though, effectively, this was the good way he was living his life before the murder – a crime that brought out the worst in some church leaders. His Native-American sidekick Bill (Gil Birmingham), sympathetically portrayed, reinforced the jaundiced attitude to organised religion. Mind you, the murder victim



Brenda (Daisy Edgar Jones) was a strong and devotional woman, faithful to her religion but taking no nonsense from the arrogant men with their sense of entitlement.

Religion didn't fare too well in last week's documentary, **Bishop Casey's Buried Secrets** (RTÉ One, Monday) which provided ample fodder for the week that followed, especially on **Liveline** (RTÉ Radio 1, Mon-Fri). The programme itself was sad and depressing viewing, primarily because of the suffering of innocent victims, but also because of the likely effect on their families, the perpetrators' families, good priests in general and the wider Church community, on whom I'd say

it had a demoralising effect. Some would be happy with that effect. I was also conscious that the stories of child abuse, as distinct from the affair, were allegations, not anything proven, though the payout from Limerick Diocese was concerning. It was also noteworthy as being another collaboration between RTE and a newspaper – the *Irish Mail on Sunday* in this case. The other was the recent exposé on the treatment of young women in Irish soccer.

I dipped in and out of **Liveline** all week and it was hard to get enthused. A lot of it focussed on whether Bishop Casey should remain buried in Galway Cathedral. Opinions went from people

wanting him 'turfed out' to the more sedate 'disinterred'. One man couldn't bring himself to enter the cathedral any more knowing the Bishop was under it – in the crypt. One lady said she was a practising Catholic until she saw the programme, and now says she's 'done' with the Church (the community of Jesus' followers) but still has her relationship with Jesus. The discussion veered all over the place, to take in historical abuse in the Spiritans, the burial of unbaptised infants and more. Sure, many aspects of the past were thoughtless, harsh, even cruel. Top priority now should be to get justice for any survivors, but also to ensure nothing similar hap-

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### LIBERATING A CONTINENT-JOHN PAUL II AND THE FALL OF COMMUNISM

EWTN Sunday August 4, 9pm

A documentary on St John Paul II's role in the collapse of communism and the liberation of Central and Eastern Europe.

#### LIFE AND SOUL

RTE One Monday August 5, 11.55pm

Businessman, Aubrey McCarthy and his team reveal how their personal faith led to the foundation of the Tiglin Residential Drug and Alcohol treatment programme. (Repeat)

#### THE MORAL MAZE

BBC Radio 4 Wednesday August 7, 8pm

In-depth discussion of a topical moral issue.

pens again. However, modern society has its own cruelties that we'll be wringing our hands about in years to come. How about the media concentrating on rooting out current abuses, or doing more exposés on aspects of allegedly liberal culture for a change?

The **Paris 2024 Olympics: Opening Ceremony** (RTÉ 2, Friday) wasn't without its share of religious controversy, which was a pity. The worst of it was what many took to be a blasphemous depiction of da Vinci's Last Supper featuring drag artists. Who thought this was a good idea or even remotely appropriate for the occasion? Insulting Christian participants in the interest of inclusion? There was a storm

of protest, including from the Catholic Church in France and indeed from non-Christian people of faith. The footage was removed from official channels and a limp apology followed from the organisers, along the lines of 'sorry if you took offence' (your fault in other words!). Otherwise, the spectacle was impressive and even dignified at times – the beautiful classical choir (albeit drenched by the torrential rain), the moving and triumphant return to public performance of Céline Dion, singing her heart out on the Eiffel Tower and the flaming Olympic cauldron drawn into the air by a moon-like hot air balloon.

The uplift was very welcome.

# Music

Pat O'Kelly



## Ten days of timeless masterpieces

While this may be a time of relaxation when holidays are in full sway, for those involved with the Kilkenny Arts Festival that runs from August 8 to 18, it means a particularly busy period.

The principal feature of the 2024 festival will be a short opera and monodrama by Emma O'Halloran, *Trade* and *Mary Motorhead*, which Irish National Opera presents at the Watergate Theatre at 7pm on Thursday August 8, Friday 9 and Saturday 10 and at 3pm on Sunday 11.

The pieces have already been staged in New York and Los Angeles with the *LA Times* commenting "rarely, if ever, does every element – score,

text, singers, instrumentalists, conductor, director, sets, costumes, lighting, sound design – all come together. This is a rarity".

The libretti come from plays by Mark O'Halloran, Emma's uncle, and deal with damaged yet compelling characters and finding the woman in *Mary Motorhead* (mezzo Naomi Louisa O'Connell) serving a life sentence for murder and exploring the disappointments and betrayal that shaped her life. In *Trade*, two men meet in a Dublin hotel and find themselves drawn into the most unexpected encounter of their lives.

The resident Carducci String Quartet makes two lunchtime appearances in St John's Priory.



The first on August 9 has Beethoven's Op 95 and Shostakovich's 8th separated by Philip Glass's 2nd Quartet, *Company*. The programme for lunchtime, August 10, is devoted to Mozart's *Hunt* Quartet K 458 and Fanny Mendelssohn's E flat major Quartet.

St Canice's Cathedral is the late evening setting for

Icelandic composer Jóhann Jóhannsson's *Drone Mass*, which brings Chamber Choir Ireland and Crash Ensemble together on August 10. Despite its title, the work has nothing to do with a setting of the Mass but is 'a mysterious and richly textured work inspired by an ancient Egyptian Coptic hymn that weaves voices, strings and

electronics into a mesmerising soundscape'.

There is also an unusual element in Bassekou Kouyate's programme in the Set Theatre on Saturday evening August 10. He plays the *ngoni* – a four-stringed kind of lute – and will be joined by his wife, singer Amy Sacko, and accompanied by his band Ngoni Ba. Kilkenny organisers tell us "The band exemplifies Kouyate's fresh approach to tradition, effortlessly blending Malian sounds with Cuban rhythms, rock and blues".

The Carducci Quartet's late evening concert on Sunday August 11 in the Set has a contemporary stamp with music by Philip Glass, Osvaldo Golijov and Steve Reich – his *Different*

*Trains*. Inspired by the pleasant trips he undertook across the US as a boy, they contrast with very different journeys being undertaken at the same time by some European locomotives. *Different Trains* weaves together live performance with recorded voices from Holocaust survivors into a deeply moving work.

Finghin Collins returns to the festival for a lunchtime recital of Chopin and Schumann on August 13. He is being joined by Máire Carroll on Wednesday 14 afternoon, also at St John's Priory, for something of a piano marathon – the fifteen pieces commissioned by the New Ross Piano Festival over the years to celebrate the Ros Tapestry that now lodges in Kilkenny.



# BookReviews

Peter Costello



# The troubled politics of the United States

**Democracy and solidarity: On the cultural roots of America's political crisis,**

James Davison Hunter  
(Yale University Press, £30.00 / €36.00 / US\$40.00)

Frank Litton

Some years ago, three married couples from Texas, USA, contacted us. They were touring Ireland in pursuit of their ancestors. They thought that we might be a branch of one of their family's tree. It turned out that this was not the case. Nonetheless, we enjoyed an evening in their company.

As they talked about their families and their engagements with their community, it was clear that they were decent folk, generous in their giving, considerate in their dealings and up-right in their morals.

When they discussed politics, a less attractive picture emerged. They were 'Tea Party' Republicans. It was not so much the policies they championed, as the paranoia and hostility that infused their discussion that dismayed. They were embattled warriors in a melodrama where good fought evil with no compromise possible.

## Disjunction

This disjunction between the local and national stages is not surprising. The local with its face-to-face engagements, its clear interdependencies, where contributions to the common good are visible, allows the virtues of our visitors to flourish.

When we move beyond the local to the national,

The United States Congress in the gathering gloom of a divided nation



matters become more complicated as we must engage with more abstract realities. We rely on the culture that scripts our politics as we navigate to protect our interests and pay our dues to the commonwealth.

**“The solidarity that contains conflicts and is essential to democracy, evaporates, denying decent people, decent politics”**

Even from a distance, it is obvious that the USA's political culture is disordered; how else to explain a presidential contest between a felonious Trump and a befuddled Biden?

The antagonism, the contempt for rivals that we

observed in our visitors has deepened and spread. The solidarity that contains conflicts and is essential to democracy, evaporates, denying decent people, decent politics. This important study tells the story of how this has come to be.

Dr. Hunter, Professor of Religion, Culture, and Social Theory, tells us that the picture that frames US politics is a hybrid that joins the aspirations of the Enlightenment with the inspiration of a Calvinist Christianity.

## Progress

The former gave the founders the promise of progress directed by reason that escaped the trammels of superstition to win freedom from the dogmas imposed by a tyrannical authority. The latter gave meaning and motivation.

The resources found in this picture shaped the politics that directed US

history.

This was not the realisation of a blueprint. It was a dynamic process in which the elements were modified and the balance among them changed as problems emerged.

Consider the more serious problems. Slavery was embedded into the fabric of the economy of the southern states, important then for the whole nation's economic well-being. How could this abomination be reconciled with the Declaration of Independence's claim that 'all men were created equal'.

**“Who should be welcomed as immigrants? Surely not Catholics. They were dangerous aliens thanks to their attachment to a pre-enlightenment, authoritarian church with global ambitions”**

All nations need boundaries as well as borders. Who belongs 'inside', who belongs 'outside'? By what right were Native Americans shunted into reserva-

tions, their land stolen.

Who should be welcomed as immigrants? Surely not Catholics. They were dangerous aliens thanks to their attachment to a pre-enlightenment, authoritarian church with global ambitions. Yet they arrived in their millions; their contribution to economic development enormous.

## Difficulties

Hunter traces how the picture changed and evolved in the face of these difficulties. It is an enthralling story, told with nuance, drawing on a wide range of sources. As with all human stories it has its dark episodes. Nonetheless, it provided a narrative pointing towards a better nation, more secure, more just, closer to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence.

I write 'provided' not 'provide', for Hunter grimly concludes that the picture has dissolved and the narrative is undone.

The belief in reason has been shaken and the possibility that disputes could be settled in arguments disappears. This is most clearly seen in disputes about morals, as Alasdair McIntyre pointed out in *After Virtue* (1981). The

accuracy of his analysis becomes, Hunter reports, increasingly clear.

More generally, the idea that foundations could be found for the authority of reason is challenged. When argument is pointless, the constraints on *libido dominandi*, or a lust for power, so acutely analysed by Augustine, weaken, and politics reduces to the play of power. Hunter identifies authoritarian tendencies on both left and right.

The belief in God that united citizens in a mission that was both political and providential has been displaced by secularism, even if it persists, albeit with diminishing presence, at the local level.

**“It is hard not to conclude that the Enlightenment together with its partner, the Protestant Reformation, has run out of road”**

Eisenhower recognised the binding power of religion when he, famously, observed 'our form of government has no sense unless it is founded on a deeply felt religious faith, and I don't care what it is.' As the binding loosens, citizens retreat to find an identity in groups whose boundaries are drawn in hostility to other groups. The result is not pleasant.

It is hard not to conclude that the Enlightenment together with its partner, the Protestant Reformation, has run out of road. The partnership that gave us both democracy and capitalism whose benefits are considerable, no longer pays dividends.

We might console ourselves with the thought that there are other traditions of thought and other more ancient, still vibrant, forms of Christianity. It is time to explore their resources to find a way to maintain the benefits while reducing the costs.

**“Eisenhower recognised the binding power of religion when he, famously, observed 'our form of government has no sense unless it is founded on a deeply felt religious faith, and I don't care what it is'”**



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.

## From poisoned pen to corrosive keyboard in the “Global Village”

**“You Will Dye at Midnight”: Threatening Letters in Victorian Ireland,**  
by Donal P. McCracken  
(Eastwood, €20.00)

Peter Costello

**T**he news media these days are filled with reports of threats of death and violence being made, not just against celebrities, politicians, media stars, bishops, and such like, but against even internet users careless enough to expose themselves to comment and abuse. These activities give a special interest to this account of poisoned pen letters in the Land War of the 1880s.

Donal P. McCracken is a South African who has written historical studies relating to Ireland in the course of his long academic career. The research for this present book was, he says, based on research carried under a grant from the National Research Foundation of South Africa and the University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal – an instance of the third word critically exploring the sins of the first world.

### Threatening

He claims chillingly enough that “Victorian Ireland was a global champion of the threatening letters.” The book, however, sees the letters discussed in these pages, which survive in government and police files in our National Archives, as flourishing in the days of the land war, and fading away afterwards with occasional outbreak as in the house burnings of the civil war.

But this is surely not the case. The letters which can be seen as part of the national struggle certainly, but these are also an aspect of the ever present poisoned pen letters syndrome, those anonymous and vicious screeds with which all police services are familiar. Far from being an unusual activity, they were in fact part of a



A threatening letter written in 1869, typical of the angry missives sent during troubled times in Victorian Ireland. (National Archives of Ireland)

commonplace of life, that is still with us.

**“He was a recognised authority with a world-wide reputation. But then he had a lot of material to learn from, culled from ordinary Irish life”**

I was surprised to see that he does not refer to that classic work *Forged, Anonymous and Suspected Documents* (London, 1931) by Captain Arthur J. Quirke, an Irish Army intelligence officer who was handwriting analyst to the Department of Justice, to the Attorney-General and the new police, and a witness in many Free State trials about poisoned pen letters. He was a recognised authority with a world-wide reputation. But then he had a lot of material to learn from, culled from ordinary Irish life.

Nor does the author

allude to the passing references in novels and memoirs (I am thinking here of T. H. White, who lived in Ireland during the Emergency) to how ubiquitous such letters were in rural Ireland.

### Corbeau

Certainly in rural France the activities of the local “Corbeau”, as poisoned pen letter writers are known there. Such threatening letters are an aspect of all troubled rural societies: warning letters of the KKK in the defeated Southern States after the Civil War for another instance.

But even more important surely is the fact that the present day internet which connects McLuhan’s “Global Village” is rife with threats, abuse and splenic diatribes very similar to the historical village communities of Europe.

Victorian Ireland then was not unique. We are dealing here with a long existing aspect of human nature. The pasquinades of Renaissance Rome, laid at the foot of a “talking statue” attacked

freely but anonymously anyone in the public eye.

The common factor is human nature, for psychology of all of this goes back a much longer way. Such a universal habit is a human characteristic. It is perhaps, a Christian might feel, a matter for the moral theologian as much as the police.

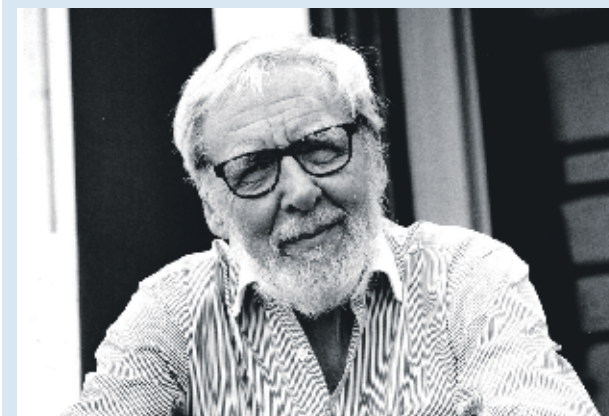
**“Dr McCracken’s book says more than he realises, and casts a flood of light on the present, and the present re-illuminates the past”**

It is a question raised in McCracken’s book as to whether the threats were carried out. Some in the 1880s and later were in fact carried through. But the sense of fear engendered for political or social purposes was real. The Irish public figures who are outspoken about threats online today are in a very long tradition.

Dr McCracken’s book says more than he realises, and casts a flood of light on the present, and the present re-illuminates the past. The samples of the letters he illustrates have their echoes today.

In time someone will find the answer. Or rather, accept the theological answer we have already, but chose to ignore.

## A doctor casts a clinical eye over modern Ireland



Dr Eoin O’Brien, taking stock of the past.

**A Life in Medicine, from Asclepius to Beckett, by Eoin O’Brien,**  
foreword by John Banville  
(Lilliput Press, €25.00 / £21.00)

Peter Costello

**I**rish literature is filled with examples of leading medical men, who were also creative and bold litterateurs. One thinks of Sir William Wilde, Oliver St John Gogarty, J. B. Lyons and many others.

As a medical man the author is a specialist in cardiology, so one might almost say that for most of his life the Irish heart and its dramas, as reflected in clinical research, literature and painting, have been close to his own inner self.

He is already the author and editor of some nineteen books, so this makes the 20th. It provides the background in which those other books were written, which tell us not only about writers and painters, but also the more shadowy world of medicine in Dublin, which he has done too much to improve, amending and enhancing the lives of so many people. I suspect without the medical experiences he would not be the biographer that he is.

He has cast his own account of his life into three parts. The first deals with his own origins and early years; the second with the world of medicine which has been (quite literally) at the heart of his own life; and part three with encounters in literary Dublin especially with such talents as Con Leventhal, Neville Johnson, and Niall Sheridan.

These are not name bandied about much by the canonists who rule the highlands of Irish writing, but all three were men of mark, of exceptional and varied talents, and insights that would otherwise be lost.

But, of course, the crown of his life was his encounters with Samuel Beckett, and the experiences that went into the creation of what is perhaps his most widely read book *The Beckett Country: Samuel Beckett’s Ireland*, a book which he created from inception to design himself. It is a book which one still takes down and reads a little of for the sheer excellence of it visually and verbally.

But as the design of the present books suggests, through those difficult; early years, to his own achievements, medicine is at the heart of it all. Interesting and revealing.

Indeed I got great amusement out of the account of his childhood for various reasons, the least of which is sympathy with his troubles about his Tables and learning the alphabet. This is filled with a glimpse of Dublin 4 in the old days: Miss Meredith’s, St Conleth’s, and even St Bartholomew’s.

(Though like most Conleth’s boys he was unaware of the glorious trove of Jack Yeats paintings which filled Mr Sheppard’s own quarters.)

This heredity and these years were the making of the man. He was not so happy at Castleknock. These Catholic years he sums up succinctly; he feels that to inculcate the developing mind with doctrine and dogmas can only cause detriment to maturation and expression, “that such manipulation of susceptible immaturity can lead to attitudes and actions that are detrimental to the individuals and society.”

This was true then, but the recognition of the need for a sense of true Christian maturity at the time of Vatican II led to a more open minded situation.

This book is all the better for its austere and dryly amused style. Eoin O’Brien can diagnose creativity as well as he can many another illnesses.

**“The sense of fear engendered for political or social purposes was real. The Irish public figures who are outspoken about threats online today are in a very long tradition”**



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– Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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### ST PHILOMENA’S RELICS

**ST PHILOMENA’S RELICS** return to Emmanuel House, Clonfert (one day only) Wednesday August 7 at 11.00am Mass, confessions, rosary healing service (Eddie Stones). Venerate statue, St Philomena, Wonder Worker. Blessing with 1st class relic, St Philomena. Bring packed lunch, tea provided. 087 922 4271

### HOUSEKEEPER SEEKING

**MALE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY LOCATED IN DUBLIN 6, SEEKS A HOUSEKEEPER** Monday to Friday. The work involves preparing a midday meal for 4/6 people as well as cleaning, preparing rooms for guests/colleagues. A flexible fulltime job, with good salary. For details contact: [nthuksscc@gmail.com](mailto:nthuksscc@gmail.com)



**MQI**  
Merchants Quay Ireland  
Homeless & Drugs Services



### A gift in your Will to Merchants Quay Ireland can be lifesaving.

Hundreds of men and women at their darkest hour, come to Merchants Quay Ireland for food, showers and support when there’s nowhere else to turn.

**A gift in your Will in any amount, will change lives. And we’ll always remember your kindness.**

You can decide a specific amount or give a percentage after taking care of your loved ones. Even 1% is enough to help.

All your solicitor will need is this:

- Merchants Quay Ireland of 24 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8
- Revenue CHY Number: 10311
- Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20026240

**Just ring 01 5240139 if you’d like more information, or to let us know about your legacy. Thank you for the good you leave behind.**

### Will the MSC Missions

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart bring hope to the poorest people living in over 48 countries worldwide.

**Please help us with a gift in your Will**

Contact:  
MSC Missions Office, PO Box 23 Western Road, Cork.  
Tel: 021-4545704 Email: [info@mscmissions.ie](mailto:info@mscmissions.ie)

**[www.mscmissions.ie](http://www.mscmissions.ie)**

### SERVICES

**ALL UNWANTED** home waste removed. Cookers, fridges, beds, suites, wardrobes, carpets etc. Removed and disposed of in a proper manner. No job too small or big. Contact Tommy, 087 6406015.

## The Gift Of A Lifetime

Be there for others after you're gone.

A gift in your will to Irish Hospice Foundation is a meaningful way to help ensure no-one faces death or bereavement without the care and support they need.

Email Anna Sadlier at [anna.sadlier@hospicefoundation.ie](mailto:anna.sadlier@hospicefoundation.ie) or call **01 679 3188**



**[www.hospicefoundation.ie](http://www.hospicefoundation.ie)**

Challenging homelessness. Changing lives.



**Your Lasting Legacy**

Many people are choosing to include a loving gift in their Will to support families, children and young people experiencing homelessness. You can make a real difference by helping future generations find a place called home.

For more information, please contact Assia:  
086 103 3130 [assia.buono@focusireland.ie](mailto:assia.buono@focusireland.ie)  
Focus Ireland, 9 - 12 High Street, Christchurch, D08 E1W0  
[Focusireland.ie](http://Focusireland.ie)

Remembering

### MEMORIAM CARDS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT  
CARDS & NOTELETS  
BOOKMARKS

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# The Irish Catholic

## PREPAID CLASSIFIED AD COUPON

The Irish Catholic, Unit 3B, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277  
Phone: 01 687 4028

Number of insertions: \_\_\_\_\_ weeks

Do you require a Box number? (€6 extra charge) ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please provide us with the heading you would like the ad to appear under:  
(For eg. Looking to buy, Pilgrimage to..., etc)

**Please print your advertisement in the space below, placing one word in each box**  
Minimum charge of €24.60 (including VAT) for 5 lines/25 words. Additional lines cost €4.92 each.

1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				

### PERSONAL DETAILS AND PAYMENT OPTIONS

☐ Miracle Prayer €50 | Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Address

\_\_\_\_\_

City/County

\_\_\_\_\_

Eircode

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☐ Pay by: Cheque/Postal order

For € \_\_\_\_\_ payable to: The Irish Catholic

☐ Pay by: Credit Card

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Signature

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Leisure time

PARISH MEDIA GROUP

Incorporating  
Parish Trader. Com  
Parish Memories.org  
Parish Exhibitions

These are Websites to raise funding to provide better communications and presentations for Parishes across all Dioceses.

We will be launching theses websites in August 2024

We are looking to appoint representatives in all dioceses in Ireland and the UK

This will be a commission-based income. Earning up to £1000 per week.

Please Email your details to parishtrader@outlook.com with your contact details

We will pass on the flame of faith.

For over 130 years, The Irish Catholic has been a voice of hope and inspiration for Catholics in Ireland.



For more information about leaving a legacy to The Irish Catholic, phone 01 687 4028 or email info@irishcatholic.ie

The Irish Catholic

Crossword

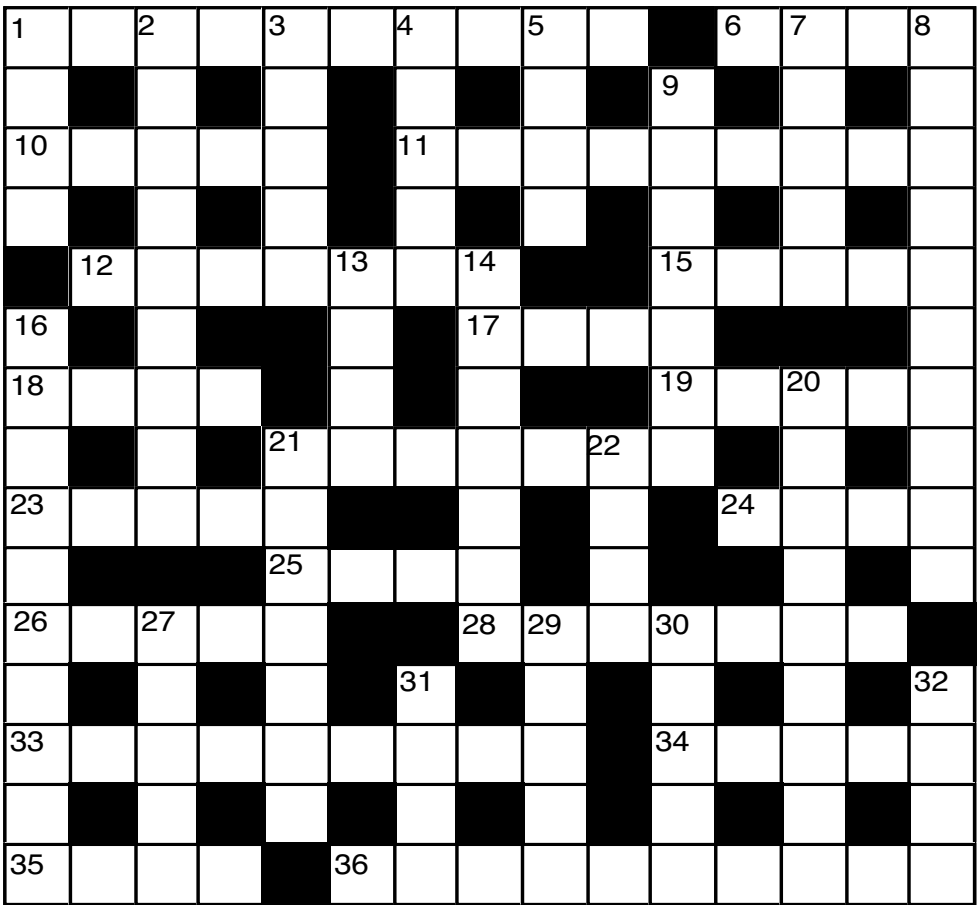
Gordius 674

Across

- 1 Protective packaging that 'pops' (6-4)
- 6 Chamber (4)
- 10 Red-breasted 1 down (5)
- 11 Arrest, take into custody (9)
- 12 Young hare (7)
- 15 Fight off (5)
- 17 Virtue symbolised by the anchor (4)
- 18 Availed of (4)
- 19 Christian symbol (5)
- 21 The nearest planet to the sun (7)
- 23 Clean up or go for a swim (5)
- 24 Confidence trick, swindle (4)
- 25 Pain (4)
- 26 Presley or Costello (5)
- 28 Excitement, kicks (7)
- 33 Quintessential example (9)
- 34 An aid to controlling a dog when walking (5)
- 35 A member of the aristocracy (4)
- 36 Wealthy globetrotters (3-7)

Down

- 1 Feathered creature (4)
- 2 Area in the Southern USA associated with religious fundamentalism (5,4)



- 3 Jousting weapon (5)
- 4 Huge marine mammal (5)
- 5 Units of electrical current, in short (4)
- 7 A goal ahead (3,2)
- 8 Of an interfering nature (10)
- 9 Covertiness, lack of openness (7)
- 13 Ploy (4)
- 14 Clump of bushes (7)
- 16 Fund-raising event in which items are sold (6,4)
- 20 Swing to and fro (9)
- 21 Ailment characterised by spots (7)
- 22 Bellow (4)
- 27 Clergyman (5)
- 29 Pays attention to (5)
- 30 Cove, bay (5)
- 31 River beloved of Georgians (4)
- 32 Therefore, in that way (4)

SOLUTIONS, JULY 25

GORDIUS No. 673

Across

- 1 Pitch and putt 7 Rib 9 Glum 10 Sticks 11 Adit 14 Short 15 Tooth 16 Vase 18 Larva 21 Cable 22 Chief 23 Steam 24 Link 25 Tarry 26 Scuba 29 Tags 33 Coarse 34 Chat 36 Sea 37 Wedding march

Down

- 1 Pal 2 Tomb 3 Hose 4 Neigh 5 Poker 6 Trod 8 Butterfly nut 9 Gesticulates 12 Bonbon 13 Shoes 14 Solve 17 Apiary 19 Rumba 20 Acute 27 Cloud 28 Boron 30 Gnaw 31 Teem 32 Scar 35 Ash

Sudoku Corner

544

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 543

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

Last week's Hard 543

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



## Notebook

Fr John Harris



# The stream is still flowing

I was recently in Lourdes on pilgrimage with a number of my Dominican brethren and 86 fellow pilgrims. As readers of my column, you are well aware that this year we are marking the 800th anniversary of our Dominican presence on this island. Given the year that is in it I have been thinking a lot about our history and our position in the ongoing history of the Church in Ireland. Maybe because this was my frame of mind as I visited the grotto I was struck by the flowing stream like never before.

As you know from the story of the apparitions, on Thursday 25 February, 1858 "the lady" told Bernadette to go and wash at the stream and drink from it. Initially Bernadette thought the lady was telling her to go to the River Gave, but the lady stopped her and pointed into the grotto.

The young girl started to dig with her bare hands until there appeared a new stream and from that day to this that stream has never stopped. On that day the people laughed at Bernadette and thought she had gone mad, digging in the grotto, and washing herself with muddy water.



Fr John Harris OP, Provincial of the Irish province of the Dominican pictured with Fr Raúl Gomez OP, Fr Atanasio Florez OP and Fr Fabio Sanchez OP after the 800 years anniversary of the arrival of Dominican friars in Ireland Mass from Knock Basilica.

But she was undeterred.

We know that the apparitions stopped at the end of the fortnight, "the lady" had not revealed her name, there was no great miracle like that of the sun at Fatima. Bernadette was attacked on all sides, her family were confused at best if not totally disbelieving her story, the church and civil authorities were united in

their opposition, both agreed to the closing of access to the grotto.

The bishop began an ecclesiastical investigation, the mayor threatened her with prison if she didn't come clean and admit that she had invented the whole story to get notice. Bernadette remained resolute and the stream kept flowing. The authorities put up a barricade

to keep people out of the grotto but they never attempted to stop the water flowing.

The miraculous water kept flowing from under the barricade and the people washed and drank from it and the miracles of healing continued. Eventually the barricade was removed.

Like the story of St Patrick and the early centuries of the Church in Ireland our Dominican story was initially of success and building. But then came the centuries of persecution and opposition. In 1500 we had almost 40 convents all over the island, by 1600 we had three, one in Rome, one in Lisbon and one in Leuven, none in Ireland.

Our preaching was no longer in well-constructed convents with full choral and liturgical life, but in the little huts hidden in the bogs of the West and dark alleys of Dublin and other cities. But the brothers kept ministering, facing persecution, hunger, rejection and indeed the gallows.

The preaching never stopped; the ministering to the people never stopped. For almost half of our history in Ireland it has been a story of

persecution and opposition, not of great priories but small houses and back alleys. But like in Lourdes the stream continued to flow.

Nothing could stop the water flowing from the grotto neither can any opposition stop the graces flowing from the Gospel. No, in all things we are victorious in Christ. The waters of Massabielle continue to flow. That flowing stream can be a great encouragement to us in Ireland as we face the challenges of witnessing to Christ today.

There are many reasons to be downcast, there are plenty of barricades in our faces but look at Lourdes, the stream is still flowing. All the opposition in the world can't stop the flowing waters of God's grace.



## Funds are urgently needed for Metahara Clinic in Ethiopia

Sr Fikrte Motto of the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady has contacted The Little Way Association for Metahara Health Clinic which is run by the Sisters with many lay helpers. She tells us that the Catholic Mission in Metahara began providing health care to the community in 1981. Despite difficulties, a clinic was established to help the sick. Now, 60 to 80 new patients visit the clinic daily for various conditions which include malaria, eye diseases, typhoid and typhus, as well as skin infections.

Sister writes: "We urgently need financial help, and that is why I am turning to The Little Way Association. Prices of medicine and our running costs have risen unexpectedly. We lack funds to reach needy communities in the district, we have no ambulance, we need to tackle the malnutrition and chronic diseases of many of those who come to our clinic. These, and other, reasons make me turn to you and your friends and supporters with confidence. Please help us. Many needy people, as well as our Sisters, will be eternally grateful."

**Can you spare a donation for the Sisters?  
Even the smallest donation will help them.**

**Every euro that we receive in response to this Appeal will be sent, without deduction, to the Sisters for this project or a similar Health Clinic project in Ethiopia, run by Sisters, in need of help.**



*"Without love, deeds, even the most brilliant, count as nothing." - St Therese*

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**KNOCK (Ireland)**

Tel: (0) 94 938 8406

**MISSION CHAPELS**

St. Therese, our patroness, wished to spread the Gospel throughout the world "until the end of time". We receive many requests for help from bishops and priests to build, renovate or complete their mission chapels. We are often asked for funds to provide a permanent roof for a chapel. In many places the only roofing chapels have is made of straw or other flimsy material which, as you may imagine, is easily damaged or destroyed in bad weather.

**Your donation will help a priest in a mission country to provide a decent chapel for his congregation, a fitting place for the celebration of Holy Mass.**

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  
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[www.w.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.w.littlewayassociation.com)

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

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€..... **NEEDY CHILDREN**

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We ask for a minimum of €7 or more for each Mass

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☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

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