

# The Irish Catholic

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# Ireland urged to 'dream big' to host World Youth Day

Chai Brady and Jason Osborne

Ireland hosting a major international Catholic event like World Youth Day could be a key moment in renewing and reforming the Church here, bishops have told *The Irish Catholic*.

A dozen Irish bishops have just returned from the global youth event in Lisbon where more than 1.5 million young Catholics gathered with Pope Francis in the Portuguese capital. It was the largest delegation of Irish prelates at the event in many years.

Bishop of Raphoe Alan McGuckian SJ said that it would be a daunting challenge for the Church in Ireland to host such a large event, but that "hypothetically it would be absolutely wonderful seeing all those young Catholics from all over the world going around and also being welcomed and supported".

Speaking about World Youth Day in Lisbon he said: "I would say the Portuguese Church will be hugely enriched that a good few thousand young Portuguese committed themselves [as volunteers], some for a few weeks, others in their part-time for a year or two years – that will be a huge shot in the arm for the Portuguese Church".

However, he admitted that: "I think that at this moment that would be a huge

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## A Medjugorje match-up



Young Irish pilgrims are pictured in Medjugorje during an August pilgrimage on a pitch where a football tournament was held. Spiritual director Fr Jim Linehan led 100 pilgrims to Bosnia and Herzegovina and was accompanied by Fr Mark Moriarty, who was a deacon at the time and was ordained on Sunday August 13 in St Mary's Cathedral, Killarney, Co. Kerry. Photo: Peter Scanlan Photography

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Michael Kelly's Editor's Comment will return in the autumn

# Prayer plea for west Africa following Niger coup

Jason Osborne

A Nigerian priest based in Athlone has begged the Irish Faithful for prayers for peace in West Africa as tension mounts in the

region following the Niger coup which took place last month.

The coup that ousted Niger's president Mohamed Bazoum in late July comes in the wake of

a series of similar military takeovers in west African nations, including Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali.

West African military chiefs are due to meet this week to discuss their response to the developments in Niger, with many fearing a military intervention.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Fr Innocent Sunu from the diocese of Maiduguri in northeastern Nigeria said that he is "seriously and honestly, with tears flowing from my eyes, begging and asking the people of Ireland, let us go on our knees, pray for this world, world peace, pray for Africa, particularly west Africa and pray for these leaders".

"That God will touch their hearts and inspire good decisions in dialogue and in good communication," Fr Innocent said.

A concern of Fr Innocent's is that the rise of instability between the western African nations will allow Islamic fundamentalists to take advan-

tage of the unrest and target Christian communities in the region.

"This is the beginning of tension," Fr Innocent said.

"People are agitated, people are crying, people are hungry. People are already feeling the impact of an impending war. Don't forget, that region where I come from is one of the poorest regions in Nigeria, if not the poorest. It is highly Islamic dominated".

A potential war between west African nations "will lead to probably religious crisis, because at every little provocation, the people will descend on anything that is associated with the west and one of the things associated with the west is Christianity," Fr Innocent warned.

"So now they will use this opportunity to begin to burn churches and invade Christians' houses and kidnap Christian girls and destroy Christian businesses to show dominance."

## Murdered Irish LA bishop paid tribute to by successor

Staff reporter

Pope Francis appointed to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles four new auxiliary bishops July 18, one of whom is assigned to the San Gabriel region filling the role following the murder of Irish-born Auxiliary Bishop David O'Connell in February of this year.

Bishop-elect Brian Nunes said he could never "replace" Bishop O'Connell but that he wants to do everything possible to bring Christ to the region's diverse population.

Bishop O'Connell's murder shocked his pastoral region and the Church globally, with tributes pouring in that remembered him as a man committed to the poor.

The man who was charged with the murder of Bishop O'Connell is

61-year-old Carlos Medina, the husband of the woman who was Bishop O'Connell's housekeeper.

Bishop-elect Nunes spoke recently about his awareness of moving into the role filled by the late Irish bishop.

"I'm moving into the region of the late Bishop O'Connell, who was so well loved. Given his own experiences, his personality, and his tenure in ministry, there is no way I'm going to 'replace' him," Bishop-elect Nunes said.

"I do, however, want to continue, as best as I can, his efforts to constantly make Jesus present to individuals, parishes, and schools. I want to be there with them in their celebrations and their challenges, to listen to them and to walk with them as our Holy Father is asking us to do," he added.

about that, so we could attract a very large crowd.

"We would need to put an awful lot of thought into it before putting in a bid to host it," he said.

"I think it would definitely be a major source of renewal. I think there is much that we can learn from World Youth Day [in Portugal] ourselves... I came back from that renewed myself by what I have seen and what I have experienced and I feel that we really need to put a strong focus on young people over the next four years, in the lead up to the next World Youth Day," Bishop Router said.

Bishop Phonsie Cullinan of Waterford and Lismore said that it would be massive logistical operation, but Church leaders would have to focus on the benefits.

"We spoke about that [hosting a WYD], and we saw that Lisbon was stretched, I

would say, but you know, we have to dream too, and we have to dream big.

"Would it be possible? Quite frankly, I think it would," he said.

Bishop Cullinan said that the Church would have to work in partnership with civil authorities to host such a gathering.

"In order for there to be a World Youth Day in Ireland, there would have to be considerable official and Governmental help. For example, to see the security over there, the co-operation of the transport services, the political welcome and the genuine welcome.

"These things would all have to be taken into consideration if Ireland were to host a World Youth Day. Personally, I would love to see it," Bishop Cullinan said.

# Ireland urged to 'dream big' to host World Youth Day

» Continued from Page 1

challenge for us in Ireland" while insisting that: "the impact would be fantastic there is no doubt about it".

Bishop of Cork and Ross Finntan Gavin said that he believes that the Lisbon event has already had a great effect on young Irish Catholics.

"I think there was a huge boost for the Irish Church at World Youth Day...we brought 40 pilgrims from Cork and Ross, they had a wonderful experience - it wasn't a holiday, it was a pilgrimage.

"It wasn't easy, but they didn't complain. They connected with young people, they deepened their own faith... That's where we need to start," he said.

Bishop Gavin said he felt that hosting World Youth Day could be an aspiration for the future, but "in the short term, I think given where we are, we have to try to build up young people of faith in Ireland, with all of the challenges we've had."

Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh Michael Router insisted that hosting WYD "couldn't but bring a rejuvenation of Faith". However, he also cautioned that "it might be beyond our scope at present, it's a huge operation".

He also said that he thought Ireland would be a good destination for pilgrims. "I think Ireland would be a popular venue for people, I think people would like come to Ireland to celebrate World Youth Day I've no doubt

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# Ukrainian chaplain: 'Every Sunday I hear of war deaths'

**Jason Osborne**

Chaplain to the Ukrainian community in Ireland Fr Vasyl Kornitsky has said that "every single Sunday" he hears from members of his congregation about

family members who've died in Ukraine, and that the ongoing war is "affecting everyone".

This comes following the news that the community of Carrick-on-Shannon in Co. Leitrim are

rallying around 18-year-old Ukrainian Kateryna whose family were killed by Russian shelling over the weekend.

The bombs killed her mother Olesya, 39, her stepfather Dmitro, her

11-year-old brother Artem, and her newborn sister Sophia who was just 23 days old. Only her 16-year-old sister escaped as she was at their grandmother's house at the time.

Speaking to *The Irish*

Catholic newspaper, Fr Kornitsky said that "it doesn't matter whether you live in Ukraine or outside of Ukraine because in one way or another we all have family members back home," and so everyone in the Ukrainian community in Ireland continues to be affected.

"Some family members are fighting at the moment, we have people who get killed. We have people who lose someone in Ukraine. We have people who can't leave the country because they're living in occupied territory," he said.

"Every single Sunday after Mass I have people come up to me after Mass to tell me, 'This person has died,' 'This person was killed but there is no one to bury the body in Ukraine'.

"That has such a huge effect on the people here, who can't go back home, and there is no one to bury the body. Every single Sunday we have people, soldiers who are killed and their mum is here. The war in Ukraine effects everyone in different ways," Fr Kornitsky said.

The importance of the Catholic community has become clear to the Ukrainians of Ireland, Fr Kornitsky said, because "if you're in pain or traumatised by the war, you need a community".

"That's why after each Sunday Mass we organise coffee and tea. That social aspect is very important, for people to get together and talk and share. It's so important, especially in these times, for us to stick together, to be together, to pray together."

## Catholic church appears to survive devastating Maui fire



Maria Lanakila church in Lahaina, Maui. Photo: Wikimedia

**Staff reporter**

The vicar forane of Maui and Lanai has hailed as "miraculous" the survival of Maria Lanakila Catholic Church in Lahaina, Hawaii in the wake of the devastating wildfires that have swept the region.

At least 99 deaths had been reported as of the time this paper went to print, making the disaster the deadliest wildfire event in the US

since 1918.

Authorities expect the death toll to rise. Maria Lanakila Catholic Church, named for Our Lady of Victory, appears to have escaped destruction, with Msgr Terrence Watanabe telling the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, "for us, it's like a miracle".

"When we saw the news and saw the church steeple rise above the town, it was a great sight to see."

## 'Challenging' year ahead due to teacher shortage

**Staff reporter**

A senior figure in Catholic education in Ireland has warned of a "challenging" academic year ahead due especially to the lack of substitute teachers in Ireland.

This comes as the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland warned that schools are under "enormous strain" with hundreds of teaching posts still unfilled ahead of the new term.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, CPSMA secretary general Seamus Mulconry said that the situation has been "ongoing" and that it's getting more challenging.

"We've been engaged heavily with the department on it and we've been arguing that it's time to rapidly increase the number of entrants to the profession," Mr Mulconry said.

"We believe the department has a concern that that could lead to an over supply of teachers, but at this stage, we're not sure that you can actually match supply and demand – you're just going to have to increase the supply."

The lack of accommodation in Dublin is of particular concern, Mr Mulconry said, with the majority of teachers coming from outside the greater Dublin region.

"It's still very challenging, and of course in Dublin, there is the problem of rental accommodation, that it's extremely expensive. What isn't generally understood is that the majority of teachers are not from Dublin. Most of the people that go into the profession do so from areas other than the greater Dublin region. It's been the west coast that's provided us with teachers," he said.

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# Concerns for Catholic PSNI after 'tornado' data breach

## Chai Brady

Following the PSNI's colossal data breach which revealed personal and employment details of staff, the Catholic Police Guild raised concerns about future recruitment of Catholic officers.

Supt Gerry Murray,

chairman of the Catholic Police Guild, called on the PSNI's Chief Constable Simon Byrne to "reassure" Catholic officers.

He told the *Irish Times*: "What we need to do is build confidence, bridges to the Catholic, nationalist, republican areas so we have a good spread

of young people coming forward."

This comes after the PSNI last week released the surnames and first initials of police officers working for the force, including where they work and their department. The details of more than 10,000 people, which also included civilian members of staff, are said to have been mistakenly given as part of a response to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request.

Supt Murray described

the breach as a "huge tornado". Speaking of Catholic staff, he said: "They're vulnerable and they're anxious and they're trying to comprehend all that has happened over this short period of time."

Speaking of one officer who left his GAA club because he now feels unsafe, Supt Gerry said: "People may now know he's a police officer, and once people know you are a police officer and there are discussions, nobody knows where that will end

up, and he has to think primarily for his family, his child and himself."

The number of Catholic police officers in the North has fallen since the end of the policy of 50:50 recruitment of Catholic and Protestant officers which lasted from 2001 to 2011.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* in September last year, the Catholic Police Guild warned the PSNI is not doing enough to recruit Catholic police officers, with outreach to

some communities being "non-existent".

Following a meeting of Church leaders with Chief Constable Simon Byrne of the PSNI in 2019 before a recruitment drive, Archbishop Eamon Martin said he had "concerns" about the future balance of community representation and called for Catholics to consider the "noble vocation" and for communities to encourage and support them.

## Changing face of Clogher's clerics

### Staff reporter

The fact that Ireland is mission territory is underlined by the latest clerical changes in the Diocese of Clogher which includes the appointment of five African priests.

The late Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich of Armagh's prediction that African missionaries would eventually bring the Faith back to Ireland, a proposition that was met with mirth and even ridicule at the time, is certainly proving true.

Bishop Larry Duffy of Clogher announced the diocesan appointments of five African priests this week:

-Fr Humphrey Ude from the Diocese of Enuga, Nigeria, to be CC of Monaghan and Rackwallace as well as in Tyholland and Kilmore and Drumsnat.

-Fr Jeremiah Munyoki, Diocese of Kitui, Kenya, to be CC of Bundoran/Ballyshannon (Magh Ene).

-Fr Peter Edson Tambula, Diocese of Chikwawa, Malawi, to be CC in the Carrickmacross pastoral area and resident in Inniskillen pro-tem.

-Fr Jonathan Malusi, Diocese of Kitui, Kenya, to be CC in the Clones pastoral area and resident in Aghadrumsee.

-Fr Shadreck Malata, Diocese of Chikwawa, Malawi, to be CC Enniskillen pro-tem.

Bishop Duffy welcomed the priests from Nigeria, Kenya and Malawi and wished them every blessing during their ministry.

Also announced in the appointments, Canon Ramon Munster PP Bundoran/Ballyshannon (Magh Ene) will retire as PP and take a one-year sabbatical leave and Fr Michael Jordan CC of Killanny is to be PP Magheraclone.

Bishop Duffy thanked all the clergy of the Diocese of Clogher for their "continued ministry and generous service to all of God's people".

"In these challenging times such service is appreciated all the more. Thank you for your continuing prayers for me. May the Good Shepherd continue to know us and lead us to fullness of life, each and every day," he said.

The diocesan appointments take effect on September 1.

## Youth 2000 sees success as it welcomes record newcomers



A group of young men at the Youth 2000 summer festival which took place at Clongowes Wood College, Co. Kildare last weekend.

### Jason Osborne

Over half of the attendees at the recent Youth 2000 summer festival were newcomers to one of the biggest events on the calendar for young Irish Catholics.

Organisers expected a smaller turnout to the annual retreat, which took place at Clongowes Wood College in Co. Kildare, as a result of its

close proximity to the World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, which drew thousands of young pilgrims from Ireland.

However, while numbers were lower, National Leader for Youth 2000 in Ireland Helena O'Shea said they were "blessed" with a higher-than-ever turnout from newcomers.

Over 30% of attendees had never been to a Youth 2000 event before,

while over 50% had never attended the popular summer festival previously.

"It's just grace and the Lord sending us the people he wants. We've been trying to keep up with them and provide what they need," Ms O'Shea told *The Irish Catholic* newspaper.

"The grace was very evident over the weekend, it was very blessed."

**Were you involved in pro-life campaigning, activism or counselling in the 1980s or early 1990s?**

I would love to speak to you about your memories.

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

If you are interested in taking part in an oral history interview with me or would like more information, please email

**L.e.kelly@strath.ac.uk**, or write to: **Dr Laura Kelly**, School of Humanities, University of Strathclyde, Level 4, Lord Hope Building, 141 St James Road, Glasgow G4 0LT, Scotland.

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



# An unsung hero of Irish life

**A**fter the success of Alan Gilsenan's documentary on the late Noel Browne, I'd like to suggest another person whose life would make a very fine subject for a screen documentary. Someone who deserves to be remembered in the annals of Irish life, although not now well known among younger generations.

I'm thinking of Dr Cyril Daly, the leading campaigner for the abolition of corporal punishment in Irish schools. For fifteen years, between 1967 and 1982, Dr Daly spearheaded his campaign almost alone. He was opposed by the teachers' union, the INTO, by most



**Mary Kenny**

influential politicians, even including the relatively liberal Garret Fitzgerald, and by the institutional Church.

## Deterrent

In all honesty, most people genuinely thought that the cane had to be retained as a deterrent. That was the position in my own sons' school in West London. It was seldom used, but it was normal to have it in a cupboard. (Former British Prime Minister David

Cameron was thrashed even at Eton during the 1980s.)

But Dr Daly, a Corkman of strong character, was appalled to hear his own sons' accounts of boys being "strapped" at their local school, St Paul's, in Killester, north Dublin. When the GP rang the school to object to the use of the leather strap, he was told he could take his children elsewhere if he didn't like it. He promptly did. He even kept two of his sons at home as a protest.

He had a successful practice but found time to write heartfelt articles in the mainstream media against corporal punishment. At one point he described a 13-stone teacher using a leather on a five-stone boy, telling the lad to "take it like a man".

Daly presented a petition

to the Minister for Education Brian Lenihan, who rather lamely replied that there was nothing he could do about the situation. He fired off a letter to the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr McQuaid, telling him it was not the way of Christ for "violent men to use violence in the Catholic classroom". He also denounced the industrial schools' regimes.

Eventually, Cyril Daly was victorious, and the cane and the strap were abolished in 1982.

## Reforming

He was supported by other reforming campaigners, but Cyril Daly's name has been sidelined, even erased, from the movement because he was a devout Catholic, opposed to abortion and divorce. He stated that "the Irish child is a human being with human rights" and for this GP, such rights started in the womb.

Cyril Daly deserves a retrospective tribute, but with his pro-life and pro-family views I suspect he is unlikely to get it – despite his admirable campaign against corporal punishment.

● Canada's wokest leader Justin Trudeau and his wife Sophie Grégoire have announced that their marriage is at an end after 18 years. Their arrangements for the care of their three children – Xavier, 15, Ella-Grace, 14 and Hadrien, 9 – is right on trend. It's called "nesting".

The idea is that the children remain in the family home, while the mother and father visit the homeplace in turn. Divorce therapists say it's best for the kids not to have their home life disrupted: it's up to the parents to arrange to live elsewhere.

"Nesting" is commendable in one sense: it is child-centred and focuses on the children's welfare.

However, it may only be available to parents of means. Very wealthy couples even have a deluxe form of "nesting": they purchase one house for her, one house for

him, and one house for the offspring.

Such arrangements have occurred before. My late London colleague Sir Peregrine Worsthorne's mother remarried Sir Montagu Norman, governor of the Bank of England, in the 1930s. However, Sir Montagu had no interest in raising his wife's sons, so an adjacent house was purchased for Perry and his brother, where they were brought up by the family butler, James.

James proved to be a conscientious surrogate parent and Perry Worsthorne remained devoted to his memory. The butler was a pious Methodist, but respected the children's Catholic Faith – although he also taught them Methodist hymns which Perry could sing all his life.

Whatever arrangements are made post-divorce, these will always be formative for the children.

**“He described a 13-stone teacher using a leather on a five-stone boy, telling the lad to ‘take it like a man’”**

## Considering the consequences



Cillian Murphy stars in the movie *Oppenheimer*. Photo: OSV News/Melinda Sue Gordon, Universal

**T**he film *Oppenheimer* – being a biopic about the scientist Robert Oppenheimer, who became known as “the father of the atom bomb” – contains a lot of theoretical physics, and much discourse about plutonian,

uranium and hydrogen. Cillian Murphy's sculpted face registers the anguish the scientist felt after his great responsibility for Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But perhaps the movie didn't give enough time or focus to the appalling consequences of these nuclear

weapons, which echoed down the generations in damaged DNA of Japanese victims.

Some Catholic churches hold memorial services each August to mark the doleful event: Nagasaki was a centre of Catholic faith in Japan.

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# Migrants are a 'resource' for Church in Ireland's future

Chai Brady

Catholic migrant communities have higher levels of religiosity than 'indigenous Irish' and should be seen as a "resource for the future" of the Church, a University College Dublin (UCD) academic has said.

Professor of Migration and Social Policy Bryan Fanning of UCD told *The Irish Catholic* that religion in Irish society should not be viewed as "the enemy", particularly in a society striving to accommodate diversity.

Prof. Fanning said: "Certainly

churches should be looking to immigrants as a resource for the future, and it's an argument against a version of conservatism that is narrowly anti-immigrant on the basis that it is supposedly fighting unwelcome social change.

"But if your idea of the good society includes one where religion is taken seriously and belief is taken seriously surely solidarity with migrants in some way, shape, or form should be part of that, at least in community worship and so on," he insisted.

Regarding the idea of an increasingly diverse society, which is

reflected in the CSO's last census, Prof. Fanning underlines the fact 'diversity' does not just include ethnicity, but diversity in belief and viewpoint.

He said: "So just because somebody is a Muslim or a Christian, they may hold very different beliefs that are perhaps not necessarily captured or understood within secular debates about diversity: how you respond to immigration, liberalism, all of that.

"Religion can be very beneficial in life and for migrants in particular, in new places, it creates a sort of staging post from where people can integrate more broadly into the

economy, contribute more broadly into society. Religion isn't the enemy nor should it be regarded as such. If you have an overtly narrow, secular mood in the country then sometimes you get articles and points of view being expressed that are very, very intolerant, monocultural, xenophobic in a different kind of way. I would be one of the people who would be concerned that if we're supposed to be treating Muslims with respect, why not treat Catholics with respect also? We need to be able to make diversity work but diversity includes not just diversity of language, or culture, what

people eat, it also includes diversity of belief and diversity of Faith."

Prof. Fanning continued saying that Catholic religious iconography should not be taken down from some public spaces – which has occurred in hospitals and schools – saying that efforts to "blot out the past" are "insensitive", adding: "Pluralism requires us to treat religious minorities and others with respect and there are good models in Irish history for doing that."

See pages 14-15

## Porsche apologises after backlash and brings back Jesus

Jason Osborne

Porsche has apologised after it received significant backlash following its decision to air-brush a famous statue of Jesus Christ out of a promotional video.

The iconic car brand was criticised after releasing an

advertisement celebrating 60 years of the Porsche 911 that edited out Lisbon's famous 'Cristo Rei' – a statue of Jesus Christ that overlooks the Portuguese capital.

The German car manufacturer has now apologised, calling it a 'mistake', and has reuploaded a version of the video to YouTube that includes

the full statue.

In a statement to *MailOnline*, a spokeswoman for Porsche said: "In a previously-uploaded version of the 911 S/T launch film, a landmark was removed. This was a mistake, and we apologise for any offence caused. The original film is online now."

## Knock prays for an increase in diocesan vocations



Pilgrims at Knock Shrine for its 2023 novena.

### Staff reporter

Representatives from Ireland's 26 dioceses will come together with pieces of a cross, each with a separate diocesan name, to build a dedicated 'Cross for Vocations' in Knock shrine today.

A prayer ceremony on August 17 marks both the current 'Year for Vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood', as well as the

centrality of the Marian Shrine as a holy place of pilgrimage and prayer for generations of Catholics in Ireland and from abroad.

The National Novena to Our Lady of Knock runs from August 14-22. Bishop Phonsie Cullinan of the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore is to bless the new cross and lead prayers for an increase in vocations to the diocesan

priesthood.

Ahead of Thursday's ceremony Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan said, "This year's Knock Novena involves daily guest speakers offering insights on a variety of topics, from personal faith stories to responding to a changing world. The theme for the 2023 Novena is 'Caring for Creation'."

See pages 12-13

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## Niamh Uí Bhriain

### The View



# Good news: abortion pill reversal may work 81% of time

It's always been a bit of a conundrum to me that those who shout loudest about women having a 'right to choose' also often seem most adamantly opposed to actually giving women real choices.

This is very evident in the debate around abortion pill reversal – a process by which doctors can prescribe progesterone to help a woman who has taken the first of the two abortion pills required to end the baby's life. Abortion supporters remain implacably and virulently opposed to abortion pill reversal, and seek to undermine it at every turn.

This stance, the average punter might think, is a strange one to take. If providing abortion is all about choices, then surely women should have the right, and the choice, to change their mind.

Most abortions are now chemical or medical abortions. That involves a woman being prescribed two pills, the first is Mifepristone which blocks the receptor for progesterone, a hormone vital to maintaining a pregnancy. A follow up pill, Misoprostol, then induces labour to expel the baby.

### Fear

However, some women – and anecdotally this seems more likely to occur if women sought abortion in fear and panic – change their mind after taking the first pill. Doctors who provide abortion pill reversal say they began to offer the treatment in response to demand from women who had taken a first abortion pill and then regretted their decision.

The good news is that help is available, and that a new study indicates that the treatment which seeks to reverse an abortion seems



largely reliable.

The new study, published in the peer-reviewed journal *Scientific Reports* by doctors Christina Camilleri and Stephen Sammut, indicated that administering progesterone following the initiation of mifepristone-induced abortion reversed the process 81% of the time in the group.

Thus, just as blocking progesterone works to make the interior of the uterus unsupportive of the growing baby, taking progesterone reverses that process and helps to maintain the pregnancy. One doctor described it to me in layman's terms as turning down the progesterone dial and then turning it back up again – hopefully in time to

save the baby.

Progesterone has long been regarded as safe, and has been given as a treatment against miscarriage in many countries for decades without controversy.

In a published executive summary, the authors of the new study explained that the study was conducted using rats. "While there are clear differences between animals and humans, there are many similarities, at many levels. This allows scientists to utilise animal models to investigate various questions keeping the limitations of the differences in mind," they said. The rats were divided into three different groups. A control group of pregnant rats was given neither mifepristone nor progesterone. Another was given mifepristone and no progesterone, while a third was given both mifepristone and progesterone.

### Effects

"The administration of progesterone following mifepristone reverses the effects of mifepristone,

resulting in living offspring at the end of gestation in a majority of rats (81.3%)," the researchers reported. They also found that the foetal heart rates in the reversal group were no different from those in the normal pregnancy group. This is also an important finding since doctors have argued that an observational study of more than 700 women who sought abortion pill reversal showed that "there was no apparent increased risk of birth defects" for the baby when the process was successful. The researchers said that "a substantial proportion of pregnancies end in induced abortion globally. Increasingly, medication abortions have become more prevalent over time". "Data also indicates a percentage of women who seek assistance in potentially reversing the medication abortion process," they wrote. "Progesterone reverses the effects of mifepristone (i.e., reverses the abortion)," they concluded. "Living off-

spring were present at the end of gestation in a majority of rats in the reversal group."

### Confirms

They said that: "In conclusion, this study confirms the potential for progesterone to reverse an abortion during the early stages of the abortion process." "The findings of the study also indicate the necessity for additional research in order to ensure the best clinical practices and patient care," they added. Dr Dermot Kearney, an Irish consultant cardiologist who currently offers the treatment in the UK, has described the abortion pill reversal process as "very safe and often effective". Dr Kearney pointed out that 4,000 babies have already been born – mostly in the USA – since 2012 because of what he described as an "essential rescue treatment".

We already know that women in Ireland have looked for abortion pill reversal services – and that

they have been denied the same by the HSE who seem to be following the instructions of abortion campaigners in all matters related to this issue. The claim most often proffered in support of refusing to provide reversal of the abortion pill is that it may be unsafe, even though there is no substantial evidence to back that claim.

It seems more likely that those who are determined to see abortion expand – while inexplicably ignoring both the destruction of human life and harm caused to women and men – simply oppose any treatment which might change the narrative that every abortion is a good decision.

For those of us who seek to actually provide women with the support they need to love and cherish their children, this important study, and others currently coming to conclusion, will provide evidence that abortion pill reversal is not just safe and reliable, it offers women real choices.

**“Progesterone has long been regarded as safe, and has been given as a treatment against miscarriage in many countries for decades without controversy”**



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# The movie version of exorcisms versus the real thing



The Church understands that demonic possession is very rare, writes **David Quinn**

**T**he most famous horror movie ever made is probably *The Exorcist*, which was released in 1973 causing a worldwide sensation and drawing huge crowds to watch it. The director of the movie, William Friedkin, died last week aged 87.

Mr Friedkin himself was not sure whether demonic possession was a real thing or not and seems to have been broadly religiously agnostic in his views, but not hostile. He was open-minded about religious phenomena.

## The Exorcist

To this day, *The Exorcist* is regarded as a terrifying movie, even though it has been imitated countless times since in various ways. But its shock value when it first came out 50 years ago cannot be underestimated.

Up to that time, most horror movies were very tame by comparison. Audiences were accustomed to Dracula and Frankenstein movies starring actors such as Christopher Lee and Boris Karloff. We wanted to be mildly scared but not terrified out of our wits. We look back on those movies now and wonder how anyone found them in the least creepy.

Movies about the devil were rare. There was one called *The Devil Rides Out* from the Hammer Horror studio released in 1968 and starring Christopher Lee. But it was a tame if entertaining enough fare.

That same year, the famous movie director, Roman Polanski, released *Rosemary's Baby* which was far creepier and unnerving.

But then, five years later, *The Exorcist* hit movie screens and turned up the level of horror enormously.

The film is based on a book of the same name written two years previously by William Blatty and which



A scene from *The Exorcist* (1973)

centres on an 11-year-old girl named Regan MacNeill.

Mr Blatty apparently drew on a real-life case from 1949 involving a boy roughly the same age as the fictional Regan.

## Possession

Both the book, and especially the movie, massively dramatised what is involved in an exorcism and what the symptoms of demonic possession are. We see Regan levitate, her head spins, her face becomes demonic, she walks spider-like downstairs, she speaks in a demonic voice, objects are hurled across rooms by supernatural forces.

**“Often the exorcist will have to return again and again to perform the ceremony and pray over the person”**

All of this was horrifying to audiences, and *The Exorcist* still holds its own against modern horror movies as a genuinely unsettling experience.

But how does the movie version of demonic possession and exorcism

compare with how the Church sees them?

The first place to go looking for a comparison is the Bible itself, and the gospels in particular.

The most striking description of demonic possession is found in Mark, chapter five which speaks of how a man with an “impure spirit” came to speak to Jesus.

Mark tells us: “This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.”

When the man approaches Jesus, Jesus asks him for his name, and he replies “Legion, for we are many”.

Jesus orders the legion of demons out of him and into a nearby herd of pigs that go to their deaths by dashing down a steep bank and into a lake where they drowned.

But notice what is missing from this account, and all other descriptions of demonic possession in the gospels compared with the movie. There is no head

spinning, no levitation, no spider-walks, no objects being hurled across rooms by supernatural forces.

## Demons speaking

Demons do speak out of the possessed person, this is the only thing that the movie version of possession, and what we see in the gospels, have in common.

**“Fortunately, possession is exceptionally rare, and many dioceses therefore don’t have official exorcists at all”**

Therefore, when you think about this issue have the gospels in mind, not the movies.

Mr Friedkin himself would remind people in interviews not to take his movie overly literally.

One of those interviews took place after he made a documentary featuring the famed Italian exorcist, Fr Gabriele Amorth, who died in 2016 aged 91.

Fr Amorth allowed Mr Friedkin to accompany him to an attempted exorcism ceremony involving an Italian woman who was

seemingly possessed for years. None of the supernatural events depicted in the movies take place, apart from one, namely an utterly inhuman voice emerges from her.

This is more in keeping with demonic possession as it is described in the gospels.

People are also inclined because of the movies to believe there is one dramatic moment when a person is freed from demonic possession, but this does not appear to be the case. Often the exorcist will have to return again and again to perform the ceremony and pray over the person.

Why is this, especially when we consider that Jesus could instantly expel a demon and ordered his disciples to do the same in his name?

I think there are a couple of reasons. One is that an exorcist should be a priest of exceptional holiness and how many such priests exist in the real world? There are plenty of good priests, but how many are truly holy?

William Friedkin says in an interview that Fr Amorth was, in his view, “profoundly spiritual”.

A second reason is that an exorcism is not a Sacrament. It is in a different category. A Sacrament involves a

change in our state of being, for example, a couple who marry in the eyes of the Church are now married forever. A priest is a priest forever, even if he can be released from his vows.

## Praying

An exorcism is more like praying for someone. It might work, or it might not. One reason we ask particularly prayerful people to pray for us is because we imagine (rightly) that such people are closer to God than the rest of us.

This is also why particularly prayerful priests are the ones appointed by bishops to officially perform exorcisms in their dioceses.

Fortunately, possession is exceptionally rare, and many dioceses therefore don’t have official exorcists at all. I once spoke to a priest (he died a number of years ago), who investigated possible cases of possession in Dublin archdiocese, and he said he never came across a genuine one.

And if they are extremely rare, they are never as depicted in the movies. *The Exorcist*, effective though it might be as a horror movie, is ultimately very Hollywood and highly fictionalised and sensationalised. Take it with a big grain of salt.



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# Vocations in focus at faith-filled Youth 2000 summer festival



Photos: Gareth Quigley/Denver Faldanha

## Jason Osborne

**T**he Youth 2000 summer festival saw hundreds of young faithful flock to Clongowes Wood College in Co. Kildare to enjoy a weekend of faith and fellowship.

Those in attendance were encouraged at the Sunday Mass by Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty to be open to vocations and to foster them, in a culture that “is not near as conducive or receptive to religious vocations as in the past”.

“My message today if you are a parent or grandparent, a youth leader, a friend or a sibling and a young man confides in you, encourage them. If you think someone would make a good priest one day, hold them in your prayers and gently invite them to consider priesthood,” Bishop Nulty said.

“My message to the Leaving Certs as you await exam results on 25 August next, I am inviting you to seriously consider is God calling you to serve him in a special way? Don’t be frightened, but speak with your local priest or drop by the Bishops Vocation Office stand during this Youth 2000 Summer Festival. I hope and pray that some of you may be open to hearing God’s call to priesthood. I’m also conscious that this is a journey you may take later in life, so always leave the door open.”

The importance of the vocation of marriage was also highlighted, as the Church needs priests but it “also needs faith-filled sacramentally married parents to give birth to the next generation of Youth 2000”.

“Preparation for the sacrament of marriage doesn’t begin just a few months before it is celebrated but now, in the respect you show one another, in the love you show one another and the healthy relationship you enjoy with one another,” Bishop Nulty said.



The Sacrament of Confession plays a large part at Youth 2000 retreats.



Attendees enjoyed football alongside faith at the weekend.





Dominican Br Chris Gault, Tanya Donnelly and Kathleen Ward



Sarah Marley, Hannah Montgomery and Dearcán Ó Donnghaile enjoy some downtime.



Helena As and Dominican Br Joseph McGinty smile for the camera.

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# A battle of ideas: Free speech and the culture wars



Narrow secular definitions of diversity railroad debates about immigration, liberalism and more, Chai Brady hears

**A** rapid societal shift in Ireland has led to what is often called the 'culture wars', a phenomenon occurring in many democratic societies which at best has led to healthy debate and discus-

sion, at worst, distress and rage.

Prof. Bryan Fanning of University College Dublin tackles some of the most divisive issues spurring heated debate in Ireland in his new book *Public Morality And The Culture Wars: The Triple Divide*. His aim is to bring a non-polemical analysis regarding debates on human nature, sexuality, gender identity, abortion, censorship, and free speech.

## Academic

Asked why he decided to write the book, the professor of Migration and Social Policy told *The Irish Catholic* that his bread and butter as an academic is the history of ideas, debates, and ways of thinking about social problems – taking into account history, law and philosophy. Secondly it was his interest in migration and social change in Ireland over the last number of centuries.

Changes in Irish society

have been “percolating for a very long time” and now “seem to be changing quite rapidly”, Prof. Fanning says, citing recent referenda which legalised gay marriage in 2015 and abortion in 2018.

“I’m aware that what’s happening in Ireland is perhaps something that’s playing out in other English-speaking, prosperous, well-educated democracies,” he said.

**“You would see a certain impetus to basically enforce or include certain ideas now as laws in ways that weren’t done before”**

“You don’t get culture wars in societies that aren’t democracies. It’s because they’re not allowed. It’s when people have free speech that there’s a battle of ideas that takes place and there are debates – and every generation has

its frenzied debates, its moral panics, and so on and so forth. It takes time perhaps to make sense of all of these.”

Prof. Fanning became interested in how the law is used to influence social policy – the idea of public morality – where values are built into the legal system, whether it’s into the Constitution or into certain laws to promote an idea of a good society: something the majority decides.

He asks: “So where do minorities fit within this? And this is where the idea of pluralism comes in.

## Battle

“It’s not as if we’ve got a full-on battle between say conservatives in Ireland – who are relatively powerless – and progressives. What we have basically is perhaps a shift of the centre at both ends, the people who are perhaps very vehement in how they express things who take up quite a lot of the oxygen in the room in terms of debate

whereas many people are in the middle ground. At the same time you would see a certain impetus to basically enforce or include certain ideas now as laws in ways that weren’t done before.

**“If you look at the Irish case, you see some alignment between liberals and conservatives who are concerned about progressive overreach in lawmaking”**

So while there are strongly held beliefs on both sides, Prof. Fanning says, there are efforts by people who are in majorities – or who feel they can lever a majority – to enforce those beliefs as law adding: “This is something that people have always done.”

He also speaks about the

idea of ‘cancel culture’ which is described as the mass withdrawal of support from public figures or celebrities who have done things that are not considered socially accepted today, normally by a majority. The practice of ‘canceling’ or mass shaming often occurs on social media platforms.

## Controversy

One of the more famous attempted ‘cancellations’ was after writer of *Harry Potter* J.K. Rowling expressed her views on transgender issues, which caused huge controversy and heated responses, leading to calls for her works to be boycotted and even death threats.

While ‘cancel culture’ is a relatively new concept, Prof Fanning argues that all cultures are cancel cultures, saying: “For example if you profess beliefs within your Church you might be excommunicated or shunned in some shape or form, the Reformation is a case and point, and since the Reformation



## “Religion isn’t the enemy nor should it be regarded as such”

we see many, many different Churches and Protestantisms. We see the same thing happen with communist parties, where the Leninists are trying to murder the Trotskyites and those things have continued.

“We often find there are battles between close neighbours. Close neighbours are people who hold strong ideological views, they might be political parties, they might even be Churches, they might be in NGO organisations. Within them then you’ll see very intense conflicts at times over ideas and doctrine,” he says. “And then you get orthodoxies and then those become things that people try to implement as political programmes. This is how human beings do their politics. There’s nothing absolutely new about this. But I wanted to get away from is this idea that there’s just a simple battle between conservatives and liberals, because liberalism is not one thing, liberals include people who are very, very keen on free speech and historically those people would be in an alliance with progressives, people who wanted radical social transformation against conservatives.

“But we are now seeing the situation in which, if you look at the Irish case, you see some alignment between liberals and conservatives who are concerned about progressive overreach in lawmaking, and the hate crime bill recently is an example of that,” he adds.

This is the basic idea of the ‘Triple Divide’ which Prof. Fanning discusses in his book – which of course is part of the title – and is a divide between conservative, liberal and progressive viewpoints.

### Migration

Regarding migration and religiosity, Prof. Manning says that many migrants arriving in Ireland are more religious than the population in terms of practice, and Christian communities are “nurtured” due to new arrivals.

Catholic Church congregations in Ireland now contain a large number of immigrants and some of those migrant communities, Prof. Fanning notes, have higher levels of religiosity than “so-called indigenous Irish”. This is an argument against religious conservatism that is anti-immigration he contends, saying: “Certainly churches should be looking to immigrants as a resource for the future, and it’s an argument against a version of conservatism that is narrowly anti-immigrant on the basis that it is supposedly fighting unwelcome social change. But if

your idea of the good society includes one where religion is taken seriously and belief is taken seriously surely solidarity with migrants in some way, shape, or form should be part of that, at least in community worship and so on.”

Regarding the idea of an increasing diverse society, which is reflected in the CSO’s last census, Prof. Fanning underlines the fact ‘diversity’ does not just include ethnicity, but diversity in belief and viewpoint.

He said: “So just because somebody is a Muslim or a Christian, they may hold very different beliefs that are perhaps not necessarily captured or understood within secular debates about diversity: how you respond to immigration, liberalism, all of that.

**“Pluralism requires us to treat religious minorities and others with respect and there are good models in Irish history for doing that”**

“Religion can be very beneficial in life and for migrants in particular, in new places, it creates a sort of staging post from where people can integrate more broadly into the economy, contribute more broadly into society. Religion isn’t the enemy nor should it be regarded as such. If you have an overtly narrow, secular mood in the country then sometimes you get articles and points of view being expressed that are very, very intolerant, monocultural, xenophobic in a different kind of way. I would be one of the people who would be concerned that if we’re supposed to be treating Muslims with respect, why not treat Catholics with respect also? We need to be able to make diversity work but diversity includes not just diversity of language, or culture, what people eat, it also includes diversity of belief and diversity of Faith.”

Prof. Fanning continued saying that Catholic religious iconography should not be taken down from some public spaces – this has occurred in

hospitals and schools – saying that efforts to “blot out the past” are “insensitive”, adding: “Pluralism requires us to treat religious minorities and others with respect and there are good models in Irish history for doing that.”

This led to discussion about proposed hate speech legislation, the *Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022*, which is currently progressing through the Oireachtas – but it is understood there will be no more movement until autumn. The controversial legislation has caused concerns about how it could be used to curtail free speech, even potentially making some biblical teachings subject to the law.

Prof. Fanning was involved in research regarding hate crimes more than 10 years ago, looking at racism, harassment and anti-social behaviour – the report came out in 2011 and looked at how gardaí were dealing with these issues reported by migrants. “What was happening was people were saying ‘I’ve been racially assaulted’ and the guards say, ‘We can record it as a racist assault but it won’t mean anything under law’, so there was an argument for some kind of legal reform that might address these things,” he said.

Based on his previous research and recent developments, Prof. Fanning stated: “The idea of hate crime legislation, not hate speech, is that if I assault you that’s common assault, but if I assault you for clearly racist motives, then should we not send some signal, a longer sentence for a crime we find especially heinous? That’s imposing a value but it’s saying we really do not like racist assaults and if you’re guilty of a racist assault then you get an aggravated sentence.”

### Protections

The legislation aims to extend protections to other minority groups such as those with disabilities or based on sexuality, but things may become “quite elastic”, according to the professor.

“We’ve moved to a situation where people tend to think of speech, which can be often harmful, as if it is violence. Under Irish law at the moment, there is a sort of incitement to hatred legislation, it’s quite weak, but if I basically stand up and incite people to beat a person up, I’ve incited hatred towards you: cause and effect,” he said.

“But if I say something that

hurts your feelings... you’re entering into a zone of subjectivity. So the question is, how do you strike a balance within that? Unless the law is very tightly defined, there is a risk that you’ll have a lot of mischievous claims of harm.”

Prof. Fanning added that if there is significant disquiet about a proposed bill among the public, the best thing to do is to go back to the drawing board.

### SPHE

The proposed Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum has caused concern among parents, particularly regarding sex education. In late July almost 1,000 people attended a meeting in the National Stadium in Dublin to hear concerns about the new curriculum which attracted an array of people from many different ethnicities and faiths. Speakers included Aontú leader Peadar Tóibín, John McGuirk, Editor of *Gript*, Barrister Grace Sullivan, Pastor Tunde Oke of The Redeemed Church of God Ireland and Pastor John Ahern of All Nations Church, Dublin.

Speaking about the event, Prof. Fanning said it shows there is concern about the SPHE curriculum changes that are being proposed and that there must be consideration given to the fact people from

a number religious traditions were in attendance.

He warned that people who are identified with conservative causes should acknowledge they have a lot in common with some immigrants around some social issues.

**“If we have to have a diverse republic and a diverse society we have to make a common cause in meeting the future together”**

Prof. Fanning said: “Lots of immigrants are natural conservatives. There are some people who are conservative commentators who are also very anti-immigrant, and I would disagree with them very much on that personally.

“At the same time there are ideas of diversity, tolerance and inclusion that are emphasised, that can at times seem insensitive to the diversity of beliefs and values of minorities, including religious minorities. If we have to have a diverse republic and a diverse society we have to make a common cause in meeting the future together, then we do need to respect one another,

respect diversity of belief and values and that somehow needs to be accommodatable within the education system as well, so I think it needs to be thrashed out more respectfully and more cautiously.”

### Cautioned

Prof. Fanning cautioned that these issues are complicated, saying “less is more” and there is a conversation to be had that “needs to happen at a slower pace about some aspects of curriculum, especially when it comes to younger children”.

Bringing up Aldous Huxley’s famous book *Brave New World*, he says it is the greatest predictor of the 21st Century he has ever seen. Pointing to a character who is religious in the book, he says the person’s “ideas are treated as aberrations as a minority living in a society that is very eugenicised”.

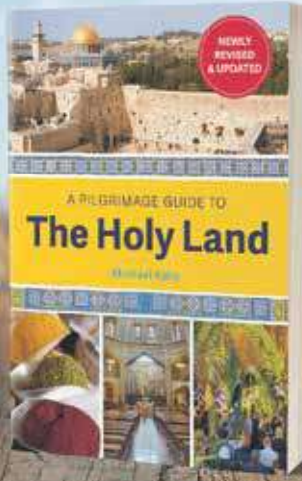
“To a certain extent he is a predictor of the kind of therapeutic individualism that I describe in the book as a way of thinking about some of the drivers of the things we’re seeing,” Prof. Fanning says.

“If you have the idea that people are perfectible – with a bit of tweaking, a bit of law here, a supplement there, and so on – you’re working with a very different premise than one that is grounded in Christian religiosity.”

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**“So just because somebody is a Muslim or a Christian, they may hold very different beliefs that are perhaps not necessarily captured or understood within secular debates about diversity”**



# Graiguecullen-Killeshin youth embrace Mary's words

Áine Shiels

**A**t Jesus' first miracle in Cana Mary told the servants to "do whatever he tells you". This was the pastoral theme in Lourdes a few years ago and was echoed recently at a meeting in Graiguecullen/Killeshin parish in the diocese of Kildare and Leighlin, where 11 young adult parishioners prepared to set off to Lourdes to work as volunteers for the first time.

The 11 young adults aged 18-24 travelled to Lourdes in June for a week of volunteering in and around the sanctuaries.

All 11 have been involved in various ministries in their parish since they began secondary school and decided as a group to dedicate the week of service to Our Lady.

For many of them it was their first time to visit the Marian Shrine. The idea to go as a group to volunteer

was inspired and encouraged by Isobel Brooker, another devoted parishioner and member of the youth ministry team, who has spent 38 years volunteering at the holy sanctuaries.

Isobel helped the youth group to prepare for their time as volunteers and accompanied them on their week, reminding them that they are there because Our Lady has called them to Lourdes and that they were to remember her advice to be servants and do whatever Jesus tells them to do.

While in Lourdes they were accompanied by Fr John Dunphy PP of Graiguecullen/Killeshin parish along with youth ministry leaders.

He journeyed with them for two days and introduced them to the sanctuaries of Lourdes, walked to Bartres and celebrated there Mass with them with the group.

Following this the group began their stage by working at the baths, assisting at the

processions and at the international Mass and working at the train station helping the sick on and off the trains.

As it was their first year (stage), they also received an orientation training to introduce them to the history of the apparitions and to get a sense of the spiritual blessings that pilgrims receive when they visit the holy grotto.

Before they left, they got the unique opportunity to sing at the medal Mass, where volunteers who have been returning to Lourdes for many years received their medals as a mark of gratitude for their commitment.

They were commended on their beautiful singing and on the effort they put into their week of volunteering by the president of the hospitality, high praise indeed.

Their formation leader and team leaders also spoke very highly of the group and their enthusiasm and work ethic.

Upon their return, they

attended Sunday Mass celebrated by Fr John Dunphy and they shared testimonies with the congregation, saying that it is such a special experience being able to give assistance to the many pilgrims whom they encountered.

All agreed that they would love to return to Lourdes to participate in their second year of volunteering to work towards their medal after five years of service to the hospitality in Lourdes.

Their experience of this time spent helping others has opened their eyes to the service Jesus asks us to provide and has instilled in them a deep appreciation for the holy shrine of Lourdes and a deeper understanding of and love for Our Lady.

And her advice at Cana is her daily advice to each of us, "do whatever he tells you."

**i** Áine Shiels is a member of the youth ministry team for Graiguecullen-Killeshin parish in Co. Carlow.



Ruth Phiri pictured with her candle before the procession.



The young volunteers pictured with their group leaders.



Lighting candles for parishioners.



Ellen Redmond at the Grotto.



Training ahead of the trip.



Volunteering in the baths at Lourdes shrine.



A quick group selfie.





Graiguercullen-Killeslin youth ministry team are pictured at Bartres Church.



The young parishioners engage in formation training before heading to Lourdes.



The group on the steps of the rosary basilica.



Pictured with the international Mass volunteers.



Mass in Bartres.



The young group are pictured on their arrival in Lourdes.



St Bernadette's Sheepfold.



# 60 years working in the vineyard of the Lord

**Ruadhán Jones**

Friends and family gathered in Sacred Heart Church, Borris, to celebrate Fr Phil O'Shea's diamond jubilee on Thursday, July 27, marking 60 years since he was ordained to the priesthood.

Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty celebrated Mass to mark the anniversary, thanking Fr O'Shea for his many years of service to the Church.



Johnny and Peg Kane with Fr Phil after Mass.



Pat and Brigid Gallahue with Fr Phil.



John and Brigid Cushen with Fr Phil.



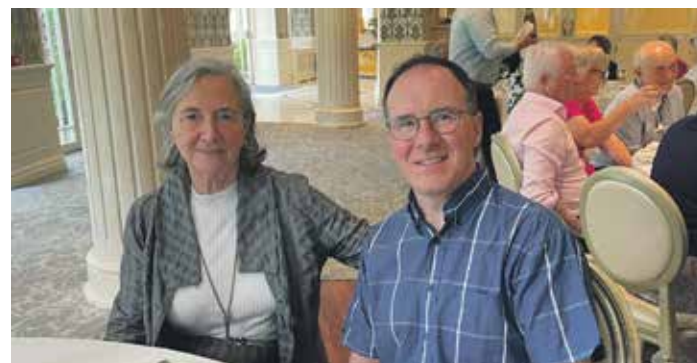
Fr Paddy Cushen, Fr Phil's first cousin; Fr Seamus Whelan, native of Borris but ministering in Argentina; Fr Joe Fleming retired PP Clonegal; Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty; Fr Phil O'Shea, ordained in 1963 and celebrating his diamond jubilee; Fr Bernard Cushen, Fr Phil's first cousin; Fr Shem Furlong, Bagenalstown Parish; and Fr Rory Nolan, PP Borris. Photos: John Dowling.



John and Breda Dowling with Fr Phil O'Shea.



Fr Bernard Cushen and Fr Paddy Cushen with Bishop Denis Nulty at celebrations in the Step House Hotel, Borris, following the Mass.



Siobhan Walsh, Fr Phil's sister, and Michael O'Shea, Fr Phil's nephew, are pictured at the afters.



Michael O'Shea, John Custen, Fr Bernard Cushen, Fr Phil O'Shea, Siobhan Walsh, Mary Cushen, Carmel O'Shea, Philip Cushen, Norah Tallon, Olivia O'Shea.



# Out&About

## Celebrating a staunch Wicklow volunteer



**WICKLOW:** Friends and family gather to celebrate Sadie O'Connell who was awarded a Benemerenti medal in St Mary's church in Enniskerry on August 6.



**PORTUGAL:** Archdiocese of Armagh and Dromore diocese pilgrims are pictured on the second day of World Youth Day 2023 in Lisbon.



**PORTUGAL:** Archbishop Francis Duffy of Tuam pictured with a group of pilgrims attending World Youth Day 2023 in Lisbon.

### IN SHORT

#### Improve mental health and join choir – charity

A national mental health charity is encouraging people to join a choir, saying it has mental health benefits.

Turn2Me said it strengthens a feeling of community, a reduction in stress levels and an improved feeling of social well-being.

The charity referenced a study titled 'It's better together: The psychological

benefits of singing in a choir' by Nick Stewart and Adam Lonsdale, which compared "choral singing to two other relevant leisure activities, solo singing and playing a team sport, using measures of self-reported well-being, entitlement, need fulfilment and motivation. Questionnaire data from 375 participants indicated that choral singers and team sport players reported significantly higher psychological well-being than solo singers. Choral singers also reported that they considered their choirs to be a more coherent or

'meaningful' social group than team sport players considered their teams".

"Joining a choir can bring a feeling of inclusiveness, collegiality and pride after performing," said Fiona O'Malley, CEO of Turn2Me.

"It is also a great opportunity to meet new people and make new friends. Many people struggle making new friends when they finish secondary school or college, because these are environments where we're forced to spend time with people in our classes, and friendships grow organi-

cally. When these social structures are taken away, people can struggle to make new friends," she said.

A concert in aid of Turn2Me with the Belle Harmonics Pop Rock Choir will take place on September 29 in the Pepper Canister Church. Doors open at 7pm and the concert starts at 7.30pm.

Belle Harmonics Pop Rock Choir is a 30-member group that performs songs by artists including Sia, Kate Bush, Beyonce, and Fleetwood Mac.



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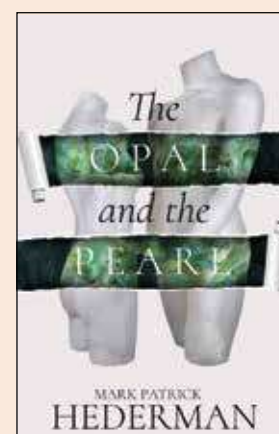
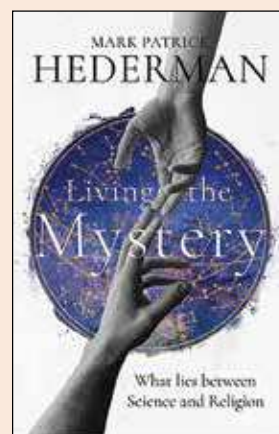
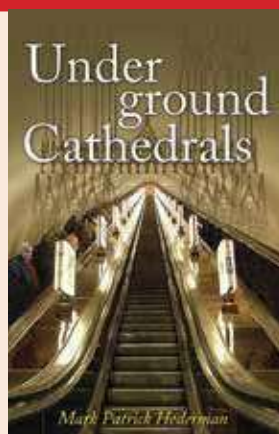
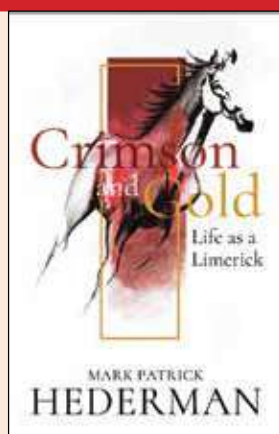
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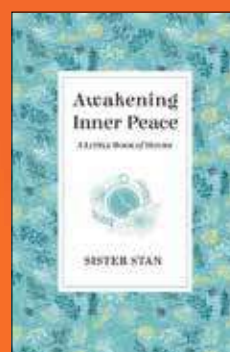
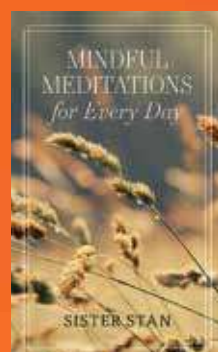
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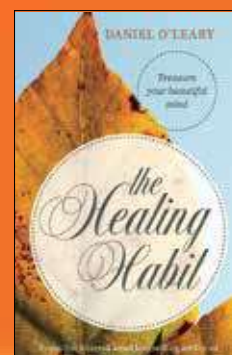
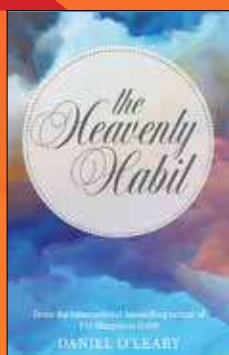
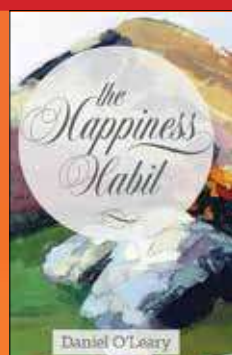
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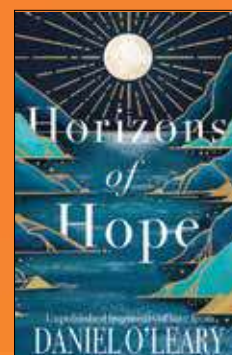
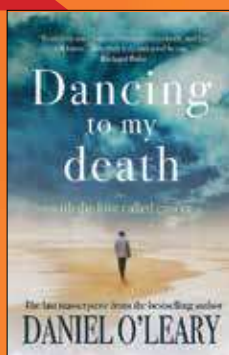
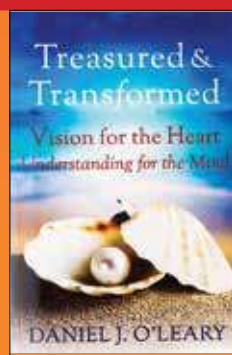
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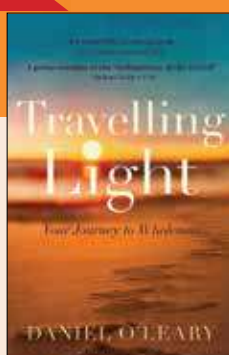
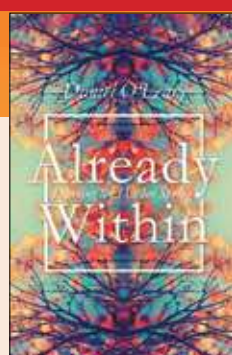
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**ANTRIM:** Parishioners of Ballymena Kirkinriola parish enjoy the parish's first coffee morning, organised by their recently formed parish hospitality team.



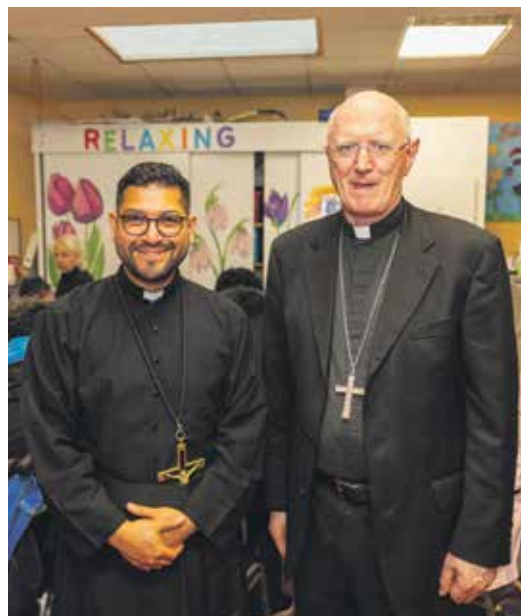
**GALWAY:** Bishop John Kirby's 60th Ordination Celebrations diamond jubilee Mass on June 23 in Cappataggle. Photo: Gerry Strone.



**MAYO:** 'Healing Voice' concert in the intimate setting of the Chapel of Reconciliation, Knock Shrine on Friday 28 July. Directed by Una Nolan (Director of Sacred Music at Knock Shrine), Schola Cantorum Basilicae gave a spectacular performance, from sacred pieces spanning the centuries, from the early music of Thomas Tallis right the way through to the contemporary composers of today, both Irish and international. Photos: Sinead Mallee



**DUBLIN:** Clergy, parishioners and friends gather in Darndale parish to celebrate the Oblate of Mary Immaculate parish's 50th anniversary on July 23. Photos: Fintan Clarke.



**DUBLIN:** Fr Eduardo Nunez Yopez and Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell are pictured after Mass celebrated by the archbishop to mark the occasion.



**DUBLIN:** Isabelle and Marie Salmon with Gardaí Brian and Rory.



Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in  
advance of publication



**CARLOW:** Kiltegan priest Fr Richard Filima, Society Leader, Africa Magazine, with Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin at bishop's house before his return to Nairobi, Kenya. Bishop Nulty thanked the Kiltegan fathers for their support.



**CLARE:** Eimear Conway and Kieran Clancy who celebrated the Sacrament of Marriage at the Church of Our Lady Star of the Sea, Quilty on Saturday, July 29.



**CARLOW:** The golden jubilee of priesthood of Fr Owen Lambert CSSp was celebrated in Hacketstown, by Bishop Denis Nulty, friends, family and members of the Ethiopian Orthodox community.



**WEXFORD:** Bishop Ger Nash greeting attendees at the Diocesan Stand at the Bannow-Rathangan Show July 28



**TYRONE:** Fr Roland Colhoun with Jacqueline Flanagan (Assistant Sacristan) in St Mary's Church, Rouskey, Gortin, County Tyrone, after the blessing of the new ciborium veils, on Sunday, July 30, 2023. The elegant veils were made by Kate Ward of Plumbridge.

## ANTRIM

Eucharistic adoration takes place 10am-7pm every Tuesday and Thursday in St Peter's Cathedral's adoration chapel.

## ARMAGH

On Sunday August 27 at 11am, Cardinal Timothy Dolan (Archbishop of New York) will celebrate a Mass of thanksgiving in Armagh Cathedral to mark the cathedral's 150th anniversary.

An outdoor festival for families is to take place in the Shambles Yard on Thursday, August 24, from 5-7pm. It will include music and a wide range of entertainment for families throughout the diocese and beyond.

## CAVAN

Eucharistic adoration takes place in St Clare's Chapel, Cavan Town parish, from 11am-7pm daily.

## CLARE

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place daily 3-7pm, with Benediction and evening prayer at 5.30pm on Sundays in the Poor Clare's oratory.

## CORK

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in Skibbereen every Monday and Friday from 10am-6pm each day.

Rosary followed by Divine Mercy devotions take place at 8pm every night year-round at the Grotto in 'Carraig an Aifreann' Mass rock, Glenville.

## DERRY

The Sr Clare Crockett rosary takes place every Monday night, at 8.30pm, in St Joseph's Room, at the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca.

Coleraine parish will host a parish family picnic on Sunday, August 20, from 2pm in the grounds of Chapelfield House. Families are asked to bring their own rug and picnic.

## DONEGAL

Bishop Donal McKeown is to celebrate Mass to mark the 100th anniversary of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Inch on Sunday, August 20.

Buncrana parish is to host a family fun day on the grounds of Scoil Mhuire on Sunday, August 27, from 3-6pm.

## DOWN

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed in Newry Cathedral every Thursday from 5-9pm, on Saturday after 10.30am Mass until 5.30pm and Sunday from after the 12 noon Mass until 5.30pm.

## DUBLIN

Beginning Experience, a support group for those coping with the pain of loss of their life partner, through death, separation or divorce, to host 'Coping with Life Alone Programme' on Saturday September 16, in Carmelite Community Centre, 56 Aungier St, Dublin 2, D02 T258.

Mass for the anointing of the sick will be held on Sunday, September 3, at 3pm in St Patrick's Church in Ringsend.

## FERMANAGH

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place after 10am Mass until 1pm each Tuesday in St Michael's Church, Enniskillen during July and August.

## GALWAY

Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Saturday evenings from 7-8pm and on Monday evenings from 6-9pm in Galway Cathedral.

## KILDARE

Mass for the African Community is celebrated in St Brigid's Parish Church on the third Sunday of each month.

## KILKENNY

St John's Parish Scripture group meets in the presbytery at 7.30pm each Thursday to reflect on Scripture texts for the following Sunday's Mass.

## LAOIS

Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Michael's Church, Portllington after 10 o'clock Mass each Tuesday, with rosary at 7pm followed by prayers to the Holy Face. The rosary is prayed each night at 7pm live on the webcam.

## LEITRIM

Daily rosary at 6pm in St Joseph's Church, Leitrim Village.

## LOUTH

St Peter's parish youth group for young people between the ages of 13-17, meet in the family room at Our

Lady of Lourdes Church, Hardmans Gardens, Drogheda for fun, faith and friendship every first and third Friday of each month from 5-6.30pm. Contact Sr Jacinta MMM on 089 987 7046 or Clare 086 850 8955.

## MEATH

Navan parish novena in honour of the Sacred Heart takes place Fridays in St Oliver's Church with 7.30pm Mass and devotions.

## MONAGHAN

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place every Tuesday from 2-4pm in Muckno parish, St Mary's Church.

## OFFALY

Clonminch cemetery Sunday in Tullamore Parish takes place on Sunday, August 20, at 1pm.

## ROSCOMMON

Eucharistic adoration takes place the first Friday of each Month in Drumboylan Church (Ardcarne Parish) from 9am-10pm.

## TIPPERARY

A Medjugorje prayer night takes place the second Thursday of every month in Glencomeragh house, beginning with the rosary at 8pm during which confessions will be available, followed by Mass, adoration and prayers for healing.

## TYRONE

A service of blessing with rosary will take place in Killiclogher graveyard on Sunday, September 3, at 1pm. Graves will be blessed at Knockmoyle Sunday, September 10, directly after 10am Mass, and at Mountfield on Sunday, September 3, directly after 10am Mass.

## WATERFORD

A Divine Mercy prayer group meets in the Church of the Sacred Heart, the Folly, Waterford City, every Friday from 3-3.45pm. Mass is celebrated every first Friday at 3pm.

## WESTMEATH

A Divine Mercy prayer group takes place in at 3pm in Our Lady Queen of Peace Church, Coosan.





# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Pope Francis offers condolences after Hawaii wildfire deaths

● Pope Francis offered his condolences after at least 96 people died in wildfires on the Hawaiian island of Maui.

The Pope sent a condolence telegram on Friday expressing his sadness and solidarity with all who are suffering due to the destruction caused by the wildfires, which have destroyed hundreds of buildings and left scores missing or homeless.

The fires started August 8 during a dry summer, with strong winds from nearby Hurricane Dora strengthening the inferno, the Associated Press reported. Many residents were surprised by the fast-moving flames and had to flee on foot, while thousands of tourists were evacuated.

### Hindu nationalists demand arrest of Catholic priest

● A Catholic priest in the Indian state of Goa was granted “anticipatory bail” August 8 after police registered a criminal case against him for allegedly “hurting Hindu sentiments” in remarks he made about a Hindu king during a Sunday Mass in July.

Hindu groups had staged demonstrations in front of the police station

calling for criminal charges to be brought against Fr Bolmax Pereira, parish priest of St Francis Xavier Church in Chicalim in the Archdiocese of Goa.

Fr Pereira was quoted in the Mass posted on YouTube saying that 17th Century Hindu king Chatrapati Shivaji “was a national hero but not a god”.

### Church prays for release of kidnapped priest and seminarian in Nigeria

● Bishop Martin Igwemezie Uzoukwu of Minna, Nigeria, called for prayers for the release of a priest and a seminarian who were kidnapped by armed men on August 3 in the north-central part of the country.

“I ask for your prayers for Fr Paul Sanogo and the seminarian Melchior who were kidnapped by bandits in the early morning of August 3 at the priest’s residence in Gyedna, Niger state,” the prelate said in a statement released on the day of the kidnapping.

“We pray the Lord hears our prayers and brings them back in peace,” he added.

Fr Sanogo, originally from Burkina Faso, is a missionary with the congregation of the Missionaries of Africa, known as the White Fathers, and Melchior Dominick Mahinini is a seminarian from the town of Kigoma in Tanzania who does missionary work with the congregation.

### Mexican politician found guilty of ‘gender-based political violence’ over tweet

● A Mexican high court upheld the conviction of a former national congressman over what it called “gender-based political violence” after he called a transgender-identifying fellow politician a “man who self-ascribes as a woman”.

Former congressman Rodrigo Iván Cortés will be forced to publish a daily court-authored apology online for 30 days in punishment for having referred to congressional representative Salma Luévano as a man, according to a press release from ADF International, which has provided legal support to Mr Cortés during the fight.

Mr Cortés had originally referred to Luévano as a man as part of a series of tweets in September 2022. The tweets were in response to a bill Luévano had introduced that would designate certain Christian teachings on sexuality as “hate speech”. Adding to the controversy, Luévano proposed the bill while dressing up in a caricature of a Catholic bishop.

## Israeli president denounces attacks on Christians as ‘unacceptable’

Israeli President Isaac Herzog denounced the increasing violence against Christians in Israel during a visit August 9 to the Stella Maris Carmelite Monastery in Haifa.

President Herzog was accompanied by Israel Police Inspector General Yaakov Shabtai and emphasised Israel’s commitment to the full protection of freedom of religion and worship. He met with patriarchs and Church leaders including Cardinal-designate Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, and Fr Jean Joseph Bergara, the monastery superior of Stella Maris.

The visit comes against the background of recent attacks against the monastery in particular by a few fringe members of the Breslov ultra-orthodox sect who began arriving at the monastery in May, claiming it was a Jewish holy site, and increasing attacks against churches and Christian clergy in general.

“In recent months we have seen very serious phenomena towards the Christian denominations in the Holy Land,” said President Herzog. “Our brothers and sisters, Christian citizens, who feel attacked in their places of prayer, in their cemeteries, on the streets. I view this phenomenon as extreme and unacceptable in any shape or form. This phenomenon needs to be uprooted.”

The president called for greater understanding of the histories of the religious communities in the Holy Land, noting that it was the birthplace



Holy Land Christians protest outside the Stella Maris Carmelite monastery in Haifa, Israel, against what they say are insufficient actions by the Israeli police in blocking some members of the Breslov ultra-orthodox sect who began arriving at the monastery in early May, claiming it is a Jewish holy site. Photo: OSV News/Debbie Hill

of the three monotheistic religions.

“We must do everything so that the common life continues together,” he said.

Fr Bergara thanked those who had come out with unequivocal expressions of support both in word and in deed for the monastery and the Christian community.

“We need to work together to encourage our dialogue, our solidarity and our brotherhood, because we belong to the same country and live in the same places,” he said. “We want to live together in peace and harmony. Thank you for your coop-

eration and support. We are all children of the same God.”

The Stella Maris Carmelite monastery has seen destruction and banishment over its centuries-old history, dating back to mid-13th Century. The recent attempts by a group of Jewish religious extremists to declare the monastery a Jewish holy site has however, for the first time, led to the monks installing metal fencing around its entrance.

In early May, a few fringe members of the Breslov ultra-orthodox sect began arriving at the monastery, claiming it was a Jewish holy site and the burial

site of the prophet Elisha, the successor of the prophet Elijah – both of whom are venerated by Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

No archaeological remains have been found to substantiate their claims, noted Wadie Abunassar, coordinator of the Holy Land Christian Forum.

According to Christian tradition, the cave where the Old Testament says Elijah lived for a period is located under the church’s raised altar. Another site, also on Mount Carmel, is also associated with Elijah, and revered by Christians, Jews, Muslims and Druze.

## Father of girl reportedly cured of blindness: ‘A gift of the Virgin to WYD’

The father of Jimena, the 16-year-old Spanish World Youth Day pilgrim who reported she recovered her sight during a Mass in Fátima, provided *ACI Prensa* the details of what he described as “a leap in faith” and a “gift from the Virgin Mary for WYD”.

On Saturday, August 5, in Fátima, Portugal, Jimena said she was cured of a serious eye problem – which the doctors called incurable – after completing a novena to Our Lady of the Snows and

receiving holy Communion at a Mass.

Her father, who says he was always “holding on to the conviction that she was going to be cured,” described what Jimena’s first call home was after what had happened.

“We practically didn’t speak, she was crying; she just told us, ‘I see, I see’. Then the priest called us who had celebrated the Mass to give us a few more details. It’s an incredible joy,” he said.

“She went to Confession before going

to Mass. She was very excited, she felt something special. She then went to receive Communion,” he said.

“Afterward she was afraid to open her eyes because she thought, ‘If I don’t get cured, it’s because I don’t have faith.’ And she opened them up and began to see everything. Then she ... started crying and realised that her friends were two and a half years older [than when she saw them last],” her father recounted, still quite emotional.

## Jesuit university’s accounts frozen in Nicaragua

Nicaragua appears to have frozen the bank accounts of the country’s Jesuit university – marking yet another attack on the Catholic Church and its educational and charitable projects.

The Central American University sent an email to students August 9, stating, “By means beyond our control we are not receiving payments cor-

responding to fees or services from any of the instances of the university,” according to the independent Nicaragua news organisation Divergentes.

Divergentes cited a government source, saying the university’s accounts had been frozen. It later reported August 10 that the Nicaraguan government had frozen the university’s

assets two months ago, acting on orders from the prosecutor’s office, but had not advised the Central American University.

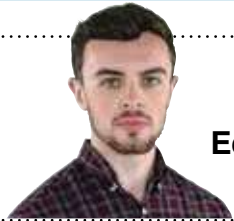
The university has not offered an explanation for its problems in receiving payments.

“As a former student of the Central American University, I repudiate the dictatorship’s

aggression against this education centre,” Auxiliary Bishop Silvio José Báez, who is exiled in Miami, wrote on X, the site formerly known as Twitter.

“The freezing of its accounts is an outrage against higher education, intellectual freedom, culture and the whole society,” he added.





Edited by Jason Osborne  
jason@irishcatholic.ie

## A restless world



Members of a military council that staged a coup in Niger attend a rally August 6, at a stadium in Niamey, Niger. Photo: OSV News/Mahamadou Hamidou, Reuters

## ‘Multiple FBI field offices’ collaborated over anti-Catholic memo in US

The US House Judiciary Committee August 9 claimed to have uncovered evidence of “multiple” field offices of the Federal Bureau of Investigation coordinating an investigation into traditionalist Catholics earlier this year.

A leaked memo from the FBI’s Richmond, Virginia, field office, published on the internet in February of this year, discussed investigating “radical traditionalist” Catholics who the bureau alleged may have been part of a “far-right white nationalist movement”.

The memo generated blowback from US bishops, attorneys general,

and elected officials on Capitol Hill. Senators and US representatives over the past several months have grilled both Attorney General Merrick Garland and FBI Director Chris Wray over the controversy.

The GOP-controlled House Judiciary Committee has been leading an investigation into the FBI’s actions in Richmond. Last month Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan, the chairman of the committee, threatened to hold Mr Wray in contempt if he did not produce unredacted copies of subpoenaed materials related to the inquiry.

In a press release, the Judiciary Committee

revealed that “information recently produced to the committee” showed that the FBI “relied on information from around the country ... to develop its assessment” that some traditionalist Catholics could potentially be domestic terrorists.

The information in question, according to the press release, came from FBI officials in the bureau’s Portland field office as well as intelligence from the agency’s Los Angeles office.

Mr Jordan in a letter to Mr Wray August 9 said the new information indicates the FBI’s Catholic investigation was “more widespread than initially

suspected”. The new details also revealed what Mr Jordan claimed were “inconsistencies” in Mr Wray’s earlier testimony before Congress.

Mr Wray had previously claimed that the Catholic memo was “a single product by a single field office”.

Mr Jordan in the letter issued a fresh round of subpoenas related to the investigation, including communications between the Richmond, Portland, and Los Angeles field offices as well as any “intelligence products” related to those collaborations.

Mr Jordan gave Mr Wray until August 23 to respond to the demands.

## Ecuadorian bishops condemn growing violence after assassination

While the murder of presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio shocked Ecuador August 9, the bishops’ conference in the South American country expressed its solidarity with Villavicencio’s family and condemned growing rates of violence.

In a statement posted on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, the bishops said that they will “join initiatives to recover security” in Ecuador, where violence waged by

drug cartels has pushed up murder rates, forced thousands of people to migrate and has now jeopardised the credibility of a presidential election that will be held August 20.

“We also ratify our commitment to pray and work for peace based on liberty, justice and truth,” the statement read.

Villavicencio was murdered as he left a campaign rally at a school in the capital city of Quito, and entered a

vehicle that was not bulletproof. Police said the car was shot at 40 times by men on motorcycles.

On the campaign trail, the candidate had spoken out about the growing influence of drug cartels in the South American country, whose ports on the Pacific Ocean have become an important transit point for cocaine shipments headed to Asia and the United States. He also campaigned against corruption.

## Vatican roundup

### Vatican confirms Pope sent envoy to India to resolve liturgical dispute

● As controversy and deep division continued in an Indian archdiocese over the direction the priest faces during the celebration of the liturgy, the Vatican confirmed that Pope Francis named Slovak Archbishop Cyril Vasil of Košice as his pontifical delegate to help resolve the dispute.

The archbishop arrived August 4 in Kochi, the base of the Syro-Malabar Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly, the Vatican said August 10.

But, according to a report August 8 by UCA News, the legitimacy of the archbishop’s appointment was questioned by a large group of priests and laypeople opposed to implementing the uniform liturgical rubrics adopted by the synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in 1999.

The bishops’ decision was to have the priest face the altar during the eucharistic prayer but face the congregation during the Liturgy of the Word and again after Communion.

### Pope Francis changes canon law on personal prelatures

● Pope Francis changed canon law August 8 regarding the governance of Opus Dei and any future personal prelatures.

In a motu proprio issued August 8, the Pope assimilated the personal prelature to “public clerical associations of pontifical right with the faculty of incardinating clerics”. It also further defined the role of the prelate as a “moderator endowed with the faculties of an ordinary”.

The motu proprio modifies canons 295 and 296 of the Code of Canon Law on personal prelatures and immediately entered into force on the day of its publication.

The updated canons now

state that the statutes that govern a personal prelature can be “approved or issued by the Apostolic See”.

To date, the international Catholic organisation Opus Dei is the only personal prelature in the Catholic Church. The group’s statutes have yet to be approved by the Holy See following its extraordinary congress in April.

Opus Dei is a personal prelature made up of laymen and laywomen and priests founded by St Josemaría Escrivá in 1928. Escrivá called the organisation Opus Dei to emphasise his belief that its foundation was a “work of God” — or, in Latin, *opus Dei*.

### AI to be theme of next World Day of Peace

● The Vatican announced that Pope Francis’ annual peace message for 2024 will focus on artificial intelligence (AI).

A statement from the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development on August 8 described an “urgent need” to guide the development and use of artificial intelligence in a responsible way, requiring that “ethical reflection be extended to the sphere of education and law”.

“Pope Francis calls for an open dialogue on the meaning of these new technologies, endowed with disruptive possibilities and ambivalent effects,” it said.

The Vatican office noted that artificial intelligence technologies are having “a rapidly increasing impact on human activity, personal and social life, politics and the economy” and called for vigilance to ensure that technological development contributes to “the promotion of justice and peace in the world”.

Years before the widely-popular release of the GPT-4 chatbot system, developed by the San Francisco start-up OpenAI, the Vatican was already heavily involved in the conversation of artificial intelligence ethics, hosting high-level discussions with scientists and tech executives on the ethics of artificial intelligence in 2016 and 2020.

Pope Francis has repeatedly called for making “the intrinsic dignity of every man and every woman the key criterion in evaluating emerging technologies”.





# Letter from Rome



Cindy Wooden

## WYD pilgrims know about the synod, share its concerns

**W**ith the approach of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops, a major event in the pontificate of Pope Francis, it was surprising that the Pope did not use the word 'synod' or 'synodality' in any of his talks to the 1.5 million young people gathered in Portugal for World Youth Day.

If he thought young Catholics were not aware of the synod, of its vision and of some of the controversy surrounding it, he was wrong.

The staff of the synod secretariat went to World Youth Day in Lisbon prepared to explain synodality to young Catholics, but they found the pilgrims from around the world already knew about the synod assembly planned for October and about many of the issues proposed for discussion.

"Being in contact with the young people was amazing, really amazing," said Thierry Bonaventura, the synod communication manager. "Most of them knew about the synod, were ready to listen to more about it" and were eager to share their hopes and concerns.

### City of joy

The synod had a booth at the 'City of Joy,' a venue in a Lisbon park where religious orders and Catholic service and mission organisations interacted with young people throughout World Youth Day from August 1-6.

The young people who visited the synod booth left thousands of prayers for the synod and for the Church written on post-it notes and hundreds of letters to Pope Francis and synod members on full-sized sheets of paper pre-printed with 'Say something to the synod'.

While Mr Bonaventura and the synod staff were still sorting through the notes and letters back at the Vatican on August 9, he told *Catholic News Service* that the young Catholics' chief concerns were clear, and first on their lists was the unity of the Church.

One unsigned post-it prayer read, "That together we may grow both in unity & diversity. All are welcome."

And a message to the synod written in English signed by a German pilgrim said, "I hope that the synod will strengthen and renew the unity in the Church and not lead to division. Please find a way to find all together in Christ."

Young Catholics in Lisbon told synod staff they want more time and space in the Church dedicated to them, Mr Bonaventura said, but not simply as recipients of ministry. They want the Church to welcome their gifts and talents, for instance by using their skills in technology and social media.



A young woman writes her prayer on a post-it note at the Synod of Bishops' booth in a park in Lisbon, Portugal, during World Youth Day. Photo: CNS

**“In the boat of the Church, there has to be room for everyone: all the baptised are called on board to lower the nets, becoming personally involved in the preaching of the Gospel”**

Recognising and expanding the leadership of women in the Church and ensuring LGBT Catholics feel welcome also were top concerns, he said.

### Unity in diversity

Another frequently repeated concern, "always repeated with this idea of unity in diversity," he said, was greater access to the pre-Vatican II Latin Mass.

On a 'Say something to the synod' form, a young man from the United States wrote that the traditional Latin Masses he has attended are "the most beautiful Masses that I have ever been to," and he asked Pope Francis to end the restrictions on its celebration because they "exclude and ostracise a large group of faithful Catholics".

For Mr Bonaventura, World Youth Day was a clear demonstration of synodality in action: Young Catholics from around the world literally walked together, joining "to praise the Lord, to deepen their knowledge of Jesus, to gather around the Pope and listen to his teaching".

"And what astonished me a little bit, because I didn't know it was so strong, was their awareness of mission, of really helping others who don't know Jesus to know him," he said.

While Pope Francis did not talk about the synod to the young people, his *todos, todos, todos* refrain - his insistence that all are welcome in the Church -- and his encouragement to share the Gospel with joy resonated with the pilgrims and echoed the key points of the synod's



Dozens of post-it notes with prayers from young people are seen on a wall at the Synod of Bishops' booth at World Youth Day. Photo: Synod Secretariat

theme: 'For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.'

Cardinal Robert McElroy of San Diego, who was appointed by the Pope to be a member of the synod, said, "His constant refrain that all are welcome in the life of the Church - that strikes young people very profoundly and beautifully."

"This is how God relates to us: first, wanting us to know we are loved; second, wanting us to know that God stands with us as we face the problems which weigh us down; and thirdly that God is helping us to change in our lives," the cardinal said.

### Welcoming everyone

Speaking to reporters on his return flight to Rome on August 6, Pope Francis said he knows some people don't like his insistence on welcoming everyone. A common objection, he said, is: "But young people don't always live life in accordance with morality."

"Who among us has not made a moral mistake in our lives? Everyone has," he continued. "Each of us has had downfalls in our own history. Life is like that. But the Lord is always waiting for us because he is merciful and is Father, and mercy

goes beyond everything."

In welcoming and ministering to all, he told the reporters, "One of the important things is patience: accompanying people step by step on their way to maturity."

Although Pope Francis did not speak to the WYD pilgrims about the synod, it was a significant part of his homily on August 2 at a prayer service with bishops, priests and pastoral workers in Portugal.

"The Church is synodal," he said. "She is communion, mutual assistance and shared journey."

"In the boat of the Church, there has to be room for everyone: all the baptised are called on board to lower the nets, becoming personally involved in the preaching of the Gospel," the Pope continued.

The model, he said, is "that passage of the Gospel in which the wedding feast of the son is all prepared, and people do not come to it. So, what does the Lord, the master of the feast, say? 'Go out to the highways and byways and bring everyone, everyone: the sick, the healthy, young and old, the righteous and sinners. Everyone!'"

**i** Cindy Wooden is Rome Bureau Chief with Catholic News Service





Visitors to the Synod of Bishops' booth in Lisbon. Photo: CNS

# Youth's question not 'is there space?' but 'why bother?'



The bigger job of synod organisers is to engage young people in the first place, writes **Chris Altieri**

**F**or an entire generation of young people – some of them misfits and some cool kids, some convinced Catholics but also plenty of folks on the fence and free-spirited seekers – Pope Francis at the recent World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, had a clear answer: “Yes, there is room for all of you in the Catholic Church.”

There's room for everyone – space for everyone – Pope Francis said, time and again, over the five days of occasionally choreographed and frequently exuberant celebrations in

and around the Portuguese capital.

It's reasonable to wonder, however, if that was really the question today's youth are asking about the Catholic Church.

## Indifference

There's a great deal of evidence – much of it gathered by Vatican outfits – to suggest the true question young people today have isn't so much, “Is there space for me in the Church?” as it is, “Why bother?”

A careful parsing of recent documents purporting to be the distillation of opinion-gauging efforts at various levels throughout the global Church may show that, behind real anthropological uncertainties – the questions and doubts regarding human nature in a contemporary world characterised by technological disruption and displacement – there is lurking a sense of indifference, driven more by apathy than genuine distrust.

A working document for the 2018 synod assembly on young people in the Church, for example, cited disillusionment spurred by “political system[s] dominated by corruption, that undermines confidence in our institutions and legitimises fatalism and disengagement,” as well as fears that “a culture inspired by individualism, consumerism, materialism and hedonism will prevail in the end, where appearances hold sway”.

The phenomenon is nothing new. The great playwright, Robert Bolt, saw signs of the crisis in the socio-political and economic messaging of the early 1960s.

“[S]ociety can only have as much idea as we have [of] what we are about,” he noted in the 1960 preface to *A Man for All Seasons*, “for it has only our brains to think with”.

“The individual who tries to plot his position by reference to our society finds no fixed points, but only the vaunted absence of them, ‘freedom’ and ‘opportunity’; freedom for what, opportunity to do what, is nowhere indicated,” Bolt went on to write. “The only positive he is given is ‘get and spend’ (‘get and spend – if you can’ from the Right, ‘get and spend – you deserve it’ from the Left) and he did not need society to tell him that.”

The great insight of Pope St John Paul II in instituting and boosting World Youth Day was twofold.

## Cultural force

In an age that insisted with increasing volume and consistency on the idea that Christianity's time had come and gone, that the power of Christianity as a cultural force was on the wane and that the civilisation Christianity had helped build and sustain for well over a thousand years finally was ready to shed the baggage of ancient faith, John Paul II called young people to bet it all on

Christ in the Church.

“Enthusiasm is brief,” John Paul II told the roughly 1 million young people gathered in Buenos Aires on Palm Sunday of 1987, the first really big World Youth Day. “Let yourselves be embraced by the mystery of the Son of Man, by the mystery of Christ who died and rose from the dead. Let yourselves be embraced by the paschal mystery!”

## Victory

In an age for which the clash of great systems was the order of the day, and disorder in the soul was everywhere palpable, John Paul II called on young people to seek the victory beyond history, won before the foundation of the world: “In him,” said Pope St John Paul II, “is the victory that triumphs in the world, the definitive victory of man.”

That was powerful, heady stuff.

Since then, World Youth Day has taken on a life of its own. It has developed a culture of its own, tending sometimes and in some ways toward attempts to baptise the cult of youth that is a hallmark of civilisational malaise, but at the same time, and in other ways, standing in stalwart opposition to the cultural dismissal of Christianity as a force for good.

Francis may have been answering the wrong question – or fighting the last war – with his insistence on

there being space for everyone in the Church, but he certainly keyed into a subtle cultural undertone in his closing homily for World Youth Day, which happened to be the Solemnity of the Transfiguration.

“Listen to Jesus,” he said. “Otherwise, even if we set out with good intentions along paths that seem to be of love, in the end those paths will be seen as selfishness disguised as love.”

That's what taking people seriously sounds like. Paradoxically, it is of a piece with Francis' core message to young people at his first World Youth Day in Rio, when he called on them to “make a mess” or “stir up a ruckus” – *Hagan lío!* – in Rio and beyond.

## Numbers

The spectacle, the sound and the stir of a million-odd young people, will speak for itself to a world that understands little besides numbers, but the sound of those young people listening to the divine teacher could break through the technological din of daily humdrum.

“Be careful of selfishness disguised as love!” Francis warned. “Listen to Jesus, for he will show you which paths are those of love.”

“Listen to him,” Francis said.

There's an answer to the question, “Why bother?”



# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Priest who protected all children in need must be canonised

**Dear Editor,** I write to express my heartfelt agreement with the sentiment that Fr Edward J. Flanagan should indeed be put on the path to sainthood [*The Irish Catholic* – August 3, 2023]. His remarkable life and selfless dedication to the welfare of vulnerable children, regardless of their skin colour, resonate as a beacon of virtue and compassion that deserves recognition by the wider Catholic Church.

In a world marked by prejudice and division, Fr Flanagan's saint-like actions stand as a testament to the transformative power of love and inclusivity.

His establishment of the Boys Town educa-

tional facility, where he defied white supremacists and segregation laws, showcased his unwavering commitment to fostering a community that transcended racial boundaries. By offering a safe haven to children from challenging backgrounds, he demonstrated true Christian values, teaching us to value the inherent dignity of every individual, irrespective of their social or ethnic origin.

Fr Flanagan's heroic efforts went beyond mere philanthropy; they were a profound embodiment of Christ's teachings. His unyielding dedication to child protection and his conviction that no child was inherently bad were

nothing short of inspiring. His courage in the face of threats from hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan exemplifies his fearless pursuit of justice and equality.

As we grapple with contemporary issues of abuse and neglect, Fr Flanagan's life offers a shining example of the positive impact a faithful and compassionate servant can have on society. His legacy serves as a reminder that, in times of polarisation and division, the Church can play a vital role in uniting people under the banner of love and care for one another.

I join Ms Valentina Culurgioni in her optimism that the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints

will recognise Fr Flanagan's heroic virtue and move his cause for canonisation forward – this must happen. By acknowledging his sanctity, the Church not only honours his memory but also provides a guiding light for priests and believers alike. Fr Flanagan's life story should be celebrated as an enduring source of inspiration, guiding us toward a future characterised by compassion, unity, and the protection of all children in need.

*Yours etc.,  
Christopher McDermott  
Cobh, Co. Cork*

### Fore-warned is fore-armed on SPHE

**Dear Editor,** I wish to thank you for the many clear and helpful articles which you make available to us in *The Irish Catholic*. I will just give two examples on a particular topic.

David Quinn, a few weeks ago, alerted parents to the radical changes that are being incorporated into the new Social Personal Health and Education (SPHE) courses for secondary schools.

Chai Brady reported on a gathering at the National Stadium of parents from different faiths, where grave concerns were expressed about the proposed new SPHE and Relationships and Sex Education courses. You do us a great service by keeping us informed of what is happening on such important topics. "Fore-warned is fore-armed!"

*Yours etc.,  
Eamon Fitzpatrick  
Strandhill Road, Co. Sligo.*



### Using the same lectionary in English-speaking countries

**Dear Editor,** Cardinal Arthur Roche, dicastery prefect [*The Irish Catholic* – July 27, 2023] is quoted as having commended the bishops of England and Wales and the bishops of Scotland for their close collaboration in relation to the new lectionary. He stated that this highlights the importance of different episcopal conferences within a small geographical area working together for the overall good of the Catholic population of the British Isles.

The Irish bishops are taking an alternative approach in using their association with New Zealand and Australia for our new lectionary in Ireland.

Would it not be more appropriate for all the English-speaking countries on the western seaboard of Europe, Ireland, England, Wales and Scotland, to use the same lectionary? Perhaps, the Irish bishops should seriously consider this option.

*Yours etc.,  
Daithi O'Muirneachain,  
Drumcondra, Dublin 9.*

### Looking forward to factual reports in TV and Radio section

**Dear Editor,** I would like to thank Brendan O'Regan for his reports on TV and radio programmes. As I feel unable to watch RTÉ or listen to radio programmes, because of the bias involved, his reports enable me to keep up to date on media coverage. To do so I do get two newspapers. While I may not always agree with Mr O'Regan I do appreciate his articles. Unless we are informed we are unable to speak out in defence of factual and balanced reporting on matters of vital importance. Our media really does us a

disservice in failing to provide such a service. Therefore, we do need to show appreciation for Mr O'Regan's efforts to seek proper debate (which is sadly lacking here) on important matters which affect all of us. Otherwise, we indicate that we unquestionably accept what is offered to us as unbiased news when it is no such thing. Hopefully we can look forward to many more interesting and factual reports from Mr O'Regan.

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

### Youth seeing value of parish community

**Dear Editor,** While it is wonderful to see so many young people excited at attending the World Youth Day in Lisbon, the reality is that many parishes in Ireland have fewer young people attending Mass regularly. As a permanent deacon, I do know that young families do want

to have their children baptised and make the other sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation, but the routine of attending Mass is lost for many, particularly post Covid-19. As a father of three teenagers, I see the reluctance in my children's eyes when I suggest we go to

Mass. They are willing to go for an anniversary Mass for a much-loved grandfather, or at special times of the year, but like their friends, they don't want to go every week. It seems to me that if we can involve and make the liturgy meaningful for young people, then we can build on the faith that many

young people have. I remain hopeful for my children too, because I know they have a relationship with God and they do pray. Perhaps with time they may see the value of being part of a parish community too.

*Yours etc.,  
Deacon Frank Browne  
Rathfarnham, Dublin 14*

### New cardinals with 'problematic' theological and moral teachings

**Dear Editor,** Pope Francis announced Bishop Fernández, a friend of his, as the new head of the Doctrine of the Faith. Unlike previous appointments he is a lightweight theologian having written nothing of significance. However Bishop Fernández's previous doctrinal statements, his record on disciplining priests accused of sexual abuse, and a book he published in 1995 called *Heal Me With Your Mouth: The Art of Kissing* that contains erotic passages

meant his appointment was greeted with some surprise. In fact, the Doctrine for the Faith has a 'red-flag file' on its new head over concerns for his orthodoxy! In addition to this rather strange appointment, 21 men will be added to the College of Cardinals, including Fernández and Stephen Chow SJ, Bishop of Hong Kong, a bishop approved by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Eighteen of the new cardinals will be of voting age in the next conclave.

Bishop Chow's appointment to the College of Cardinals marks the first time a cardinal will have been approved by the CCP. With the upcoming consistory, Francis will have appointed three-quarters of the voting cardinals for the next papal conclave, many of whom are problematic in their theological and moral teachings.

*Yours etc.,  
B. McKenna  
Dumbarton, Scotland*

### Letters to the Editor

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

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

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





## 'Veritatis Splendor' at 30: Essential truths taught by St John Paul II

**A**ugust 6 marked the 30th anniversary of St John Paul II's encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* ("The Splendour of Truth"). It is the first and only papal encyclical focused on moral theology. Its continued importance cannot be underestimated, even while its teachings are often overlooked or even ignored.

It is a rather dense document, making for difficult reading at times. But it is also very direct in addressing post-conciliar confusion about foundational truths regarding morality, freedom and conscience. Here are four essential truths the pope taught through the encyclical.

**1. Man can know the truth. Truth makes man what he is.** We are



**St Pope John Paul II's insightful encyclical has yet to be studied and implemented as it should be, writes Carl Olson**

called to know truth; it is truth that sets us free.

The opening lines of the encyclical state: "The splendour of truth shines forth in all the works of the Creator and, in a special way, in man, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gn 1:26). Truth enlightens man's intelligence and shapes his freedom, leading him to know and love the Lord" (VS, 1).

This is a summary of what we call "natural law". As St John Paul

states a bit later in the document, "Only God can answer the question about the good, because he is the Good. But God has already given an answer to this question: He did so by creating man and ordering him with wisdom and love to his final end, through the law which is inscribed in his heart (cf. Rom 2:15), the 'natural law'" (VS, 12).

Truth is what is real. To grasp truth is to see things and relation-

ships as they are, through use of reason and correct judgment. Contrary to the relativistic and even fatalistic views popular today, we are created in truth and for truth.

**2. Christ is the true light: St John Paul begins by reflecting on original sin.** We are tempted to turn away from God and toward idols. "Man's capacity to know the truth is also darkened, and his will to submit to it is weakened" (VS, 1).

The solution to that darkness is "Jesus Christ, the true light that enlightens everyone," he writes. "The 'decisive answer' to all of our questions 'is given by Jesus Christ, or rather is Jesus Christ himself'.

St John Paul then focuses on Christ's statement: "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free," words that contain "both a fundamental requirement and a warning". We must avoid false and superficial "freedoms"; we need, as St John Paul wrote earlier in *Redemptor Hominis* ("Redeemer of Man"), to "see Christ as the one who brings man freedom based on truth, frees man from what curtains, diminishes and, as it were, breaks off this freedom at its root, in man's soul, his heart and his conscience" (RH, 35).





The first major section of *Veritatis Splendor* is focused on the dialogue of Jesus with the rich young man (Mt 19). Which brings us to the third truth.

**3. True freedom is freedom for the good.** St John Paul notes that for the rich young man, “the question is not so much about rules to be followed, but about the full meaning of life”. Which is why Jesus responded: “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good” (VS, 6).

If we are honest, we recognise our desire for something or someone beyond ourselves. The transitory things of this world cannot satisfy us. We long for what is good: “Only God can answer the question about what is good, because he is the Good itself. To ask about the good, in fact, ultimately means to turn towards God, the fullness of goodness” (VS, 9).

But if God alone is the Good, our natural human efforts, including keeping the commandments, cannot fulfil the Law. The essence of legalism is the conviction that doing the right things will suffice. What must be done? We must participate in the very life of God, by his grace and mercy, in order to attain the beatitude and happiness we desire (cf. VS, 12 and 41).

Many people mistake “freedom” with individual autonomy. But true freedom is not given so man can do whatever he pleases, but so he can choose the good. “Genuine freedom is an outstanding manifestation of the divine image in man” (VS, 34).

In sum, true freedom is freedom for the good. In this true freedom we find our real dignity. “Freedom then,” writes St John Paul, “is rooted in the truth about man, and it is ultimately directed towards communion” (VS, 86).

**4. One’s conscience judges an act. It does not determine moral truth.** “Conscience” is a key word in *Veri-*

*tatis Splendor*, appearing 108 times. St John Paul knew that many people erroneously think their conscience is the final guide to what is truth and good. “The individual conscience is accorded the status of a supreme tribunal of moral judgment,” he writes, “which hands down categorical and infallible decisions about good and evil” (VS, 32).

He notes that some people set aside truth and replace it with “a criterion of sincerity, authenticity and ‘being at peace with oneself,’” which can lead to “a radically subjectivistic conception of moral judgment”.

Ironically, those claiming they have attained “truth” by appealing

to their conscience actually deny the existence of a universal, objective truth. The problem worsens when they construct a morality based on whims divorced from universal truth. The conscience is given “the prerogative of independently determining the criteria of good and evil and then acting accordingly”. This reflects “an individualist ethic, wherein each individual is faced with his own truth, different from the truth of others” (VS, 32).

Ultimately, this leads to a denial of “the very idea of human nature”. There are two ways of approaching reality: trying to create our own reality, which is destructive, or con-

forming ourselves to reality – to what really is.

And, importantly, one’s conscience can be wrong! “Conscience, as the judgment of an act, is not exempt from the possibility of error” (VS, 62). The conscience cannot create moral truth; rather, it makes an informed judgment about actions, based on what is true and morally right, because conscience “is a moral judgment about man and his actions, a judgment either of acquittal or of condemnation, according as human acts are in conformity or not with the law of God written on the heart” (VS, 59).

In 1998, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger described *Veritatis Splendor* as “a milestone in the elaboration of the moral message of Christianity” while noting that it had “more positive receptions among thinkers outside the Church than among some exponents of Catholic theology”.

The situation remains much the same today. Truths about man, Christ, freedom and conscience still require clear explanations and consistent applications. This great encyclical has yet to be studied, assimilated and applied as deeply as it should be.

**i** Carl E. Olson is editor of *Catholic World Report* and *Ignatius Insight* and the author of several books.

**“If we are honest, we recognise our desire for something or someone beyond ourselves. The transitory things of this world cannot satisfy us”**



# St Maximilian Kolbe's dark cell at Auschwitz gave me a lesson in light



Fr Patrick Briscoe OP

**A**s I stood at the bars of the chilling confines of St Maximilian Kolbe's cell within the walls of Auschwitz, I couldn't help but be overwhelmed by an inexplicable mix of emotions. The gravity of the place and the memory it held were inescapable. And yet, at the same time, a profound sense of mission awakened in my soul as a newly ordained priest. As I knelt down to pray, the weight of history and the unmistakable presence of God converged in a way that words can scarcely describe.

Auschwitz, a name that carries the burden of suffering, genocide and unimaginable cruelty, stands as a stark reminder of the darkest moments in human history. In this sea of despair, St Maximilian Kolbe's heroic sacrifice shines like a beacon of light amidst the shadows of evil. A Franciscan friar who offered his life to save another prisoner during World War II, his legacy still combats the horrors of this infamous place.

Praying in St Maximilian Kolbe's cell brought forth a powerful realisation of the endurance of faith in the face of adversity. His unwavering commitment to the Gospel, even amid the brutalities of Auschwitz, served as a profound inspiration for me, a newly ordained priest just entering into ministry. I wondered: "Would I be able to imitate his courage were I to ever face such evil?"

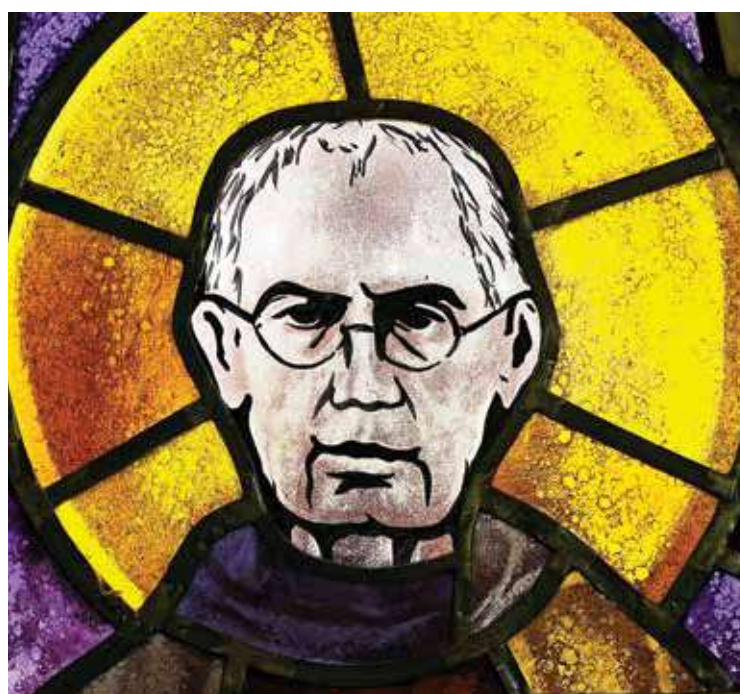
## The light of Christ

In the darkness of Auschwitz, I realised in a profound way that prayer is not merely an individual experience but a connection to the communion of saints. As I prayed in Kolbe's cell, I felt solidarity with all those who had suffered within those walls. Surrounded by their memory, I was able to sense their current intercession, urging me to remember their stories, to honor their legacy, and to draw strength from their resilience.

When he first joined the Francis-

can novitiate, St Maximilian received his habit and the name by which he is now known. He was also handed a lighted candle. During the ceremony, the provincial who vested him said, "Receive my dear brother, the light of Christ as a token of your immortality, so that dead to the world you may live henceforth for God". Years prior, at his Baptism, a candle had been lit, signifying the light of Christ which had come into his heart. And there, in that cell, he himself had become a light of Christ, with the gifts of faith, hope and charity shining brightly from his heart for all to see.

How fitting then, that Pope St John Paul II brought a paschal candle to the cell during his visit in 1979. The pope kissed the cell's concrete floor, and placed the candle, which remains there to this day. That Easter candle – the sign of Christ's victory – stands in the very place where the Virgin Mary's beloved servant, St Maximilian, faced the shadow of



death. The words of the Gospel echoed in my ears, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (Jn 1:5). Pope Benedict too, left a paschal candle in the cell when he visited.

## Making the shadows flee

In a letter before his arrest, St Maximilian wrote, "Faced with suffering and humiliation, human nature is frightened, but in the light of faith, they should be welcomed with gratitude for the purification of our soul!" Confident that the light of faith would transform whatever he faced, the saint's heart was being prepared for his coming deeds of heroism.

I left Auschwitz having learned an unforgettable lesson. Those walls are an enduring testament that the world is still marred by suffering and cruelty, but it is our sacred duty to combat these evils with love and mercy illuminated by the light of faith.

In the darkest chapters of history, we find the brightest examples of men and women who have been transformed by the light of faith. That light doesn't explain suffering. It doesn't demonstrate how human beings could inflict such cruelty on one another.

But it makes the shadows flee. And for me, that is enough.

**“His unwavering commitment to the Gospel, even amid the brutalities of Auschwitz, served as a profound inspiration for me, a newly ordained priest just entering into ministry”**

—Fr Patrick Briscoe, OP, is editor of *Our Sunday Visitor*.



# Liturgy of the Hours 101



**Daria Sockey**

**D**uring his pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI said that there was one prayer that he wished all Catholics would learn to use. Can you guess what it is?

Guess again – not the rosary. Nope. Not the Divine Mercy Chaplet either.

Here are some hints. This prayer is nearly as old as the Church itself. Most laity have no idea what it is, but your pastor says it every day.

Give up?

It's the Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Divine Office.

## Ancient roots

The Liturgy of the Hours is a repeating four-week cycle of psalms, biblical canticles, prayers and Scripture readings that has been part of the Church's public prayer – in one form or another – almost from the beginning. The prayers vary in accordance with the liturgical season and also – like the Mass – commemorate the feasts of the Church calendar.

The complete Liturgy of the Hours is contained in four books, and is also commonly known as the breviary. It is prayed at morning, midday, evening, night, plus a “floating hour” that can be done at any time.

Normally, laypeople who pray the hours only use one or two of these. Praying the two principal hours of Morning Prayer and

Evening Prayer, either individually or in common, is especially encouraged by the Church. The single volume Christian Prayer: the Liturgy of the Hours contains both Morning and Evening Prayer, as well as Night Prayer, and is well-suited for the busy layperson.

The Liturgy of the Hours is also available on a number of websites and mobile applications.

The term “hours,” by the way, does not refer to the length of the prayers, which take perhaps 10 minutes to say. These short sets of psalms, readings and petitions are spaced throughout the day in order to sanctify the various parts of our day, hence the name “hours.”

The Acts of the Apostles refers several times to St Peter or other apostles going to the temple to pray at morning, afternoon or evening. Early Christians developed this Jewish custom, adding New Testament elements to the Old when they gathered for daily prayers. Desert hermits and monastics expanded the daily hours of prayer. St Benedict, with his vision of liturgical prayer as the “work of God,” laid the foundation for the hours as they exist today, although there have been many revisions since his time.

## Not just for monks

For many years before the Second Vatican Council, the Liturgy of the Hours was seen as the spiritual territory of clergy and religious. The breviary was completely in Latin. Each of the hours took longer to say, since the entire 150 psalms were recited or chanted over the course of each week. Cloistered orders, such as the Carthusians, Carmelites and Benedictines, saw (and still see) the Liturgy of the Hours as their primary spiritual work, assembling in chapel every few hours around the clock to pray,

even rising in the middle of the night to do so. Active religious and parish priests also had to devote considerable parts of their day to the hours, although they were dispensed from chanting it, and from having to say the prayers at rigidly fixed times of day.

Vatican II called for the revision of the Liturgy of the Hours in the 1960s. It was simplified in several ways in order to make it easier both for busy priests and for the laity. The hours were shortened, so that the cycle of psalms (known as the Psalter) is now recited over the course of a month rather than a week. The Scripture readings became more varied, and the liturgical hours were arranged to more fully coordinate with the seasons of the liturgical year. Vernacular editions were developed.

Pope St Paul VI expressed the wish that the revised Liturgy of the Hours would become “the prayer of the whole people of God,” recommending that it be prayed in parishes and by individuals at home.

Pope St John Paul II also promoted the Liturgy of the Hours. Not only do the psalms express “every sentiment of the human heart,” he said, but also, quoting *Sacrosanctum Concilium* from Vatican II, he reminded Catholics at an April 2001 general audience that when we pray the hours, “Jesus attaches to himself the entire community of mankind and has them join him in singing his divine song of praise”. Pope St John Paul II devoted Wednesday general audiences for several years to catechesis on each psalm and canticle of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours. Pope Benedict XVI continued this series after Pope John Paul's death, and called for greater lay participation on several occasions.

## Digital revolution

Finally, more than 40 years after its revision, the Liturgy of the Hours is starting to gain ground among the laity. Its growing popularity has happily intersected with the digital revolution. Although today's version of the Liturgy of the Hours is simpler than its older form, it still takes patience to learn to navigate a printed breviary, with its many sections and ribbon markers. The advent of online breviaries and mobile breviary applications now makes the Liturgy of the Hours accessible to everyone. Some of these even include audio versions of the hours so that beginners can hear how the prayers are meant to be done, and have a “virtual community” to pray with.

Try it. You might like it.

**i** Daria Sockey is the author of *The Everyday Catholic's Guide to the Liturgy of the Hours*. She is also director of faith formation at St Joseph Church in Oil City, Pennsylvania.

## Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper

## Did Jesus become man so that I could become God?

**Q: I'm reading the Catechism of the Catholic Church and have a question about CCC 460. Can you please fully explain the lines: “For the son of God became man so that we might become God” and “... might make men gods.” I am to become God? That doesn't seem right.**

**A:** No, Catholics do not believe we literally “become” God in the sense of becoming beings with the capacity to create universes out of nothing, by means of pure will; or that we become radically all-powerful or all-knowing; or that we ourselves become worthy of the worship due to God alone. There is and can only ever be one God. And even in the heavenly life of the world to come, we retain our human nature. We can't even change our nature to become angels, as is sometimes popularly supposed.

So, how should we understand this line in the Catechism? There is helpful clarity by looking at the opening of the very paragraph you cite. CCC 460 begins by telling us that “The Word became flesh to make us ‘partakers of the divine nature’”. That is, because we are united to Jesus and become like him through Baptism, we “partake” – i.e., share in – Jesus' own life as the son of God. Sharing in this divine nature means, among other things, that we are able to enjoy eternal life and that we become God's children by adoption.

It might also be helpful to note some overall context. Paragraph 460 is situated in the middle of a discussion on the mystery of Jesus' Incarnation – that is, how the “Word became flesh” (Jn 1:14), or how Jesus remained fully God while being born in our human nature. The specific passage in question here was not actually written by the drafters of the Catechism, but is rather a quote from a Church Father, St Athanasius, from his book *On the Incarnation of the Word*.

This idea that Jesus, the Word of God, took on our human nature

in order that humanity might be enabled to have some share in his divine nature is a theme that actually runs throughout our faith tradition. Even during the Mass, when the priest mixes a drop of water into the wine which is soon to be consecrated, he prays quietly to himself: “By the mystery of this water in wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.”

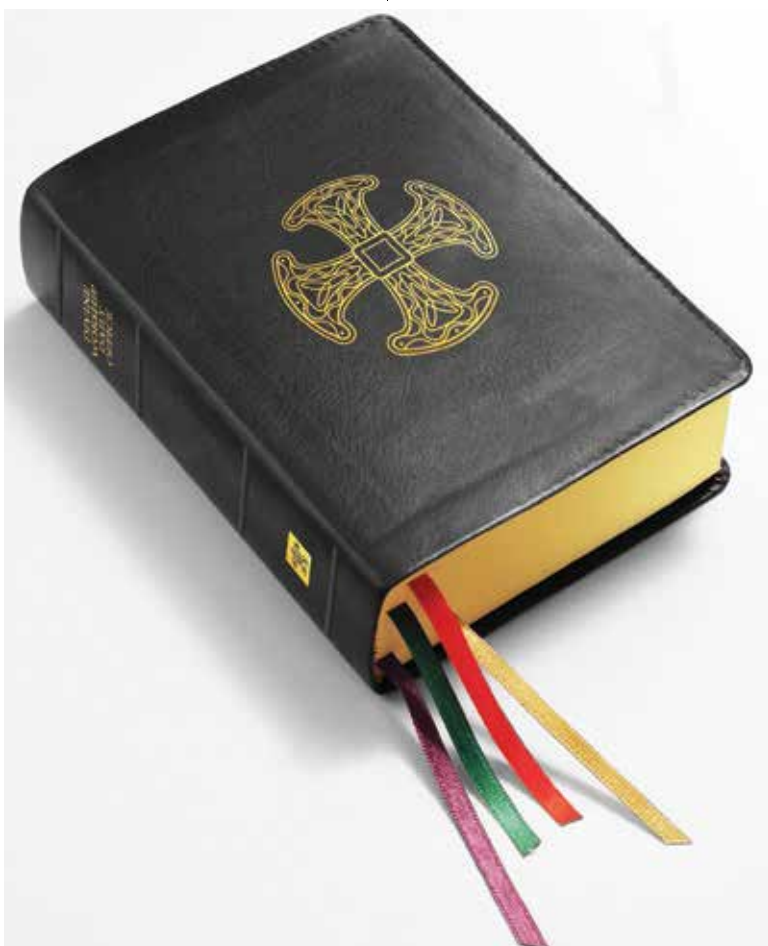
**Q: The priest who helped with my conversion said that when we arrive before Mass we should be respectful to the people around us – to pray and sit quietly until Mass begins. Has the process changed or are we still asked to be quiet? In my church people speak very loud before Mass and the priest is the biggest offender.**

**A:** Courtesy and common sense strongly suggest keeping a reverent, silent atmosphere in church.

Our church buildings are meant to be sacred spaces where people can come to be in the presence of God in an especially focused way. Before Mass the Faithful are encouraged to recollect themselves in preparation for Mass. After the dismissal people often stay, to extend their time of thanksgiving after receiving the Eucharist.

If we find ourselves occasionally bothered or distracted by other people's talking in church, sometimes the best thing to do is to recall the “little way” of St Therese of Lisieux and use the noise as an opportunity to grow in patience and charity. For instance, we might try to assume that the “offending” priest was aiming to cheer up a lonely parishioner who is going through a challenging time.

**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.





# What will heaven be like?



Andrew Greeley once suggested that we might profitably meditate on the following vision of heaven: The condition of physical ecstasy and emotional satisfaction which results from sexual intercourse between two people who are deeply in love is the best anticipation currently available to us of our permanent condition in the resurrected state.

"The powerful inspirational value of sexual electricity and the awesome splendours of the human body will not be inhibited in the resurrected state as they are by the weaknesses of this world. The resurrection joys, then, will be interpersonal, physical, sexual, and corporate because we will enjoy them with each other."

More than a few people are shocked by this kind of imagery when applied to heaven. However, it is precisely this kind of image which is prominent in the way a number of great Christian mystics, including John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, describe heaven. For them, death is your wedding night.

## Ecstasy

Moreover, when one looks at how some of the prophets, notably Isaiah, fantasise about "the end times," one sees a remarkable similarity between their vision of what constitutes salvation and the sexual imagery of the mystics. In both cases, in the end, the vision is one of wholeness, of consummation, of love without



Fr Rolheiser

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

limit, of normal life turned upside-down, of a final peace that is ecstatic.

For example, when Isaiah suggests that in the last times the wolf will lie down with the lamb, the panther with the kid, and the cow and the bear will make friends, even as the lion eats straw like the ox, and when he fantasises the end times as a great banquet of all the best foods and the choicest wines, his fantasy is different only in image, not in substance, from what Greeley suggests. In both cases, a delicious and deeply sensual image is used to describe what things can be like, and will be like, if we are open to the gift of salvation.

I highlight these fantasies because too seldom are we ever taught that our fantasies, indeed

even our sexual ones, can be the place where we intuit salvation. We are the privileged exception if we have been taught that our earthly fantasies can, potentially at least, be a rich source for spiritual insight and growth. How so?

## Daydreams

In our favourite daydreams, we often picture some of the essential components of salvation, that is, our best fantasies are inevitably images of consummation and wholeness. In them, we are consummated and consummating, made whole and making whole, knowing fully even as we are known fully, face-to-face (as Paul describes this in 1 Corinthians 13: 12-13). In our daydreams, we never lack a life-giving embrace. In our

dreams, we can unreservedly and truly make love.

Our best fantasies turn reality delightfully upside-down, wherein, as in Isaiah, lions eat straw like the oxen. In our daydreams, the normal rules of the world are suspended and we are able to perform great and noble things, irrespective of our own athletic, artistic, educational, or practical limitations. In our fantasies we are never limited by our body, race, education, background, situation, or intelligence. Nothing is impossible in our daydreams. In our fantasies we can fly—and be that one-in-a-million artist, novelist, athlete, movie star – and saint.

Moreover, in our fantasies there is justice and vindication. Just as the prophets imagined a great day of reckoning, when the arrogant will be brought down, the cruel will have to answer for their meanness, and the hidden virtue of those suffering silently will be revealed, so too in our daydreams. A good fantasy, in its own delicious way, always brings about justice.

In our fantasies, we intuit a new heaven and a new earth.

Finally, in our healthy fantasies we are also always at our best and noblest. We are never petty, narrow, or small in our daydreams. There we are always paragons of virtue and nobility—generous, kind, deeply loving, and gracious.

## Union

Thomas Aquinas distinguished between two kinds of union. For him, you can be in union with something either through possession or through desire. In our fantasies, indeed even in those that are so sensual and private as to make us ashamed of them, we are given the privileged opportunity to intuit what salvation looks and feels like.

Sadly, the concept of heaven that comes to us through Church preaching, catechesis, and Sunday school is often so bland, antiseptic, dualistic, asexual, and platonic that we do not want to trade this earthly life for it. Life here, for all its pains and frustrations, still appears richer and more exciting than the heaven that's promised us after death. Fellowship with angels, perfect light, and the prospect of sitting in silence for all eternity worshipping God, while wonderfully correct and pregnant with meaning if understood, is too abstract to tempt us beyond the pleasures of this life.

Thus, we have something to learn from the biblical prophets, the mystics – and from the seemingly irreverent imagination of Andrew Greeley.

**“In our fantasies we are never limited by our body, race, education, background, situation, or intelligence. Nothing is impossible in our daydreams”**



# A divine shock to the system

August 20  
20th Sunday in Ordinary  
Time

Is 56:1, 6-7

Ps 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

Rom 11:13-15, 29-32

Mt 15:21-28

## The Sunday Gospel

Deacon  
Greg  
Kandra



**A**t first blush, you can't help but wonder: what kind of Jesus is this?

The Jesus in this Gospel isn't the comforting figure preaching love and mercy, with a light yoke and an easy burden and a kind word for the sick or the blind.

Instead, he seems to be a figure with a hard heart and a cold attitude. He sounds, in fact, like a bigot. He lectures a Canaanite woman, telling her that his mission was not meant for her. When she begs a miracle for her tormented daughter, he snaps back: "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs."

### Is he serious?

Undoubtedly – but not in the way we may think. What follows carries a powerful lesson for the apostles and for all of us.

Here, Jesus doesn't respond to the Canaanite woman right away. He waits to see what the apostles will do. Finally, they speak up. "Send her away," they complain, "for she keeps calling after us".

That's exactly what he needed. They hand the rabbi an opening and he seizes it.

**“The Gospel dares us to act and think differently; to consider those who are not like us”**

At first, Jesus takes their side. He shows indifference, even disdain, for the other. He doesn't want to be bothered by a woman who is not a Jew. He refers to her and her kind as an animal – which may be what some of his followers are thinking. But she responds: "Even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters."

"O woman," Jesus replies, "Great is your faith!" With that, her daughter is healed.

### Shocked?

The apostles may have been shocked at this turn of events. But we shouldn't be. Jesus surely knew well the words from Isaiah that we hear in this Sunday's first reading:

"The foreigners who join

themselves to the Lord... them I will bring to my holy mountain. My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

And he certainly whispered in prayer countless times these words of the psalmist:

"May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you!"

He understood (in a way the apostles evidently did not) that his mission was for all who sought God with a sincere heart. The author of this Gospel (composed at a time when Gentile Christians were growing in number) seized on this episode to make a powerful point about inclusion and welcome.

### Challenge

The Jesus we meet in this passage uses a kind of reverse psychology to pose a challenge to his followers and by extension to every one of us. He shows that prejudice and exclusion have no place in the Christian heart.

He leaves us with pressing questions.

- Who are the Canaanite women in our world today?
- Who are the ones in our lives who "keep calling after us"?
- Who are the others we would prefer to dismiss or disregard?
- Who are the "foreigners" we'd prefer to ignore?

The wisdom from Isaiah should haunt us all. "My house shall be a house of prayer for all peoples." Foreigners are not to be shunned, cast out or excluded.

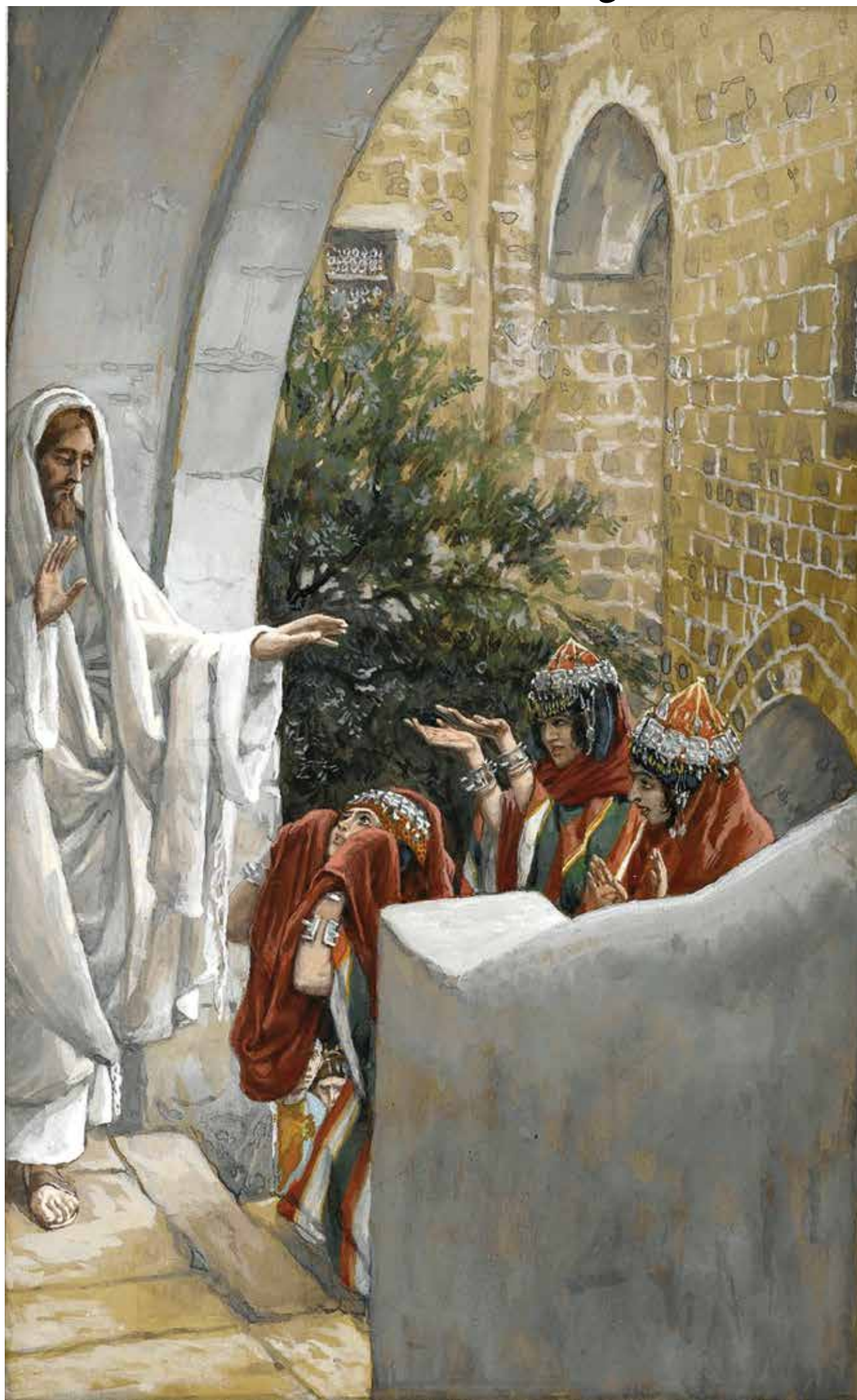
Put another way: all are welcome.

### Biases

The Sunday's Scripture readings ask us to set aside our biases, to break down walls, to consider people not by their origins or their backgrounds and to see them as Jesus did: as people seeking God in good faith.

At a moment when so much of the world is divided and polarised – even, regrettably, within the walls of our churches – the readings this Sunday call us to consider others with the sympathetic heart of Christ.

The Gospel dares us to



*The Canaanite's Daughter* (c. 1900) watercolour by James Tissot (1836-1902). Photo: OSV News/courtesy Brooklyn Museum

act and think differently: to consider those who are not like us; to listen to those we'd rather ignore; to give people who are mistreated

a measure of dignity.

What kind of Jesus do we meet in this Gospel?

He is the one we know so well – the one who sees

what really matters, who teaches us what we need to learn and who manages to turn even the most unlikely encounter into a miracle.

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



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## All veneer hiding an empty shell

I'm not a great fan of sumptuous costume dramas – sometimes there is too much costume and not enough drama.

I was inveigled, not entirely against my will, to watch several episodes of **Downton Abbey** (Netflix). I found it very contrived, predictable and clichéd. And yet because some characters and plot lines were interesting, I gritted my remaining teeth and stuck with it. **Downton Abbey** (RTÉ One, Wednesday), the first of the spin-off movies, just felt like a double episode of the television show. There were a few cinematic flourishes, but they didn't push the boat out for the big screen. We got a few lavish set pieces (e.g. a parade for the king's visit), but the touching human moments were few. There was a promising sub-plot about a princess in an unhappy marriage who resolves to make a go of it, but her husband was a cardboard cad and we got little insight. The poncey poshness and privilege is off-putting. I did however like the sharp one-liners given to Maggie Smith as the dowager countess – she asks another character "Will you have enough clichés to get you through the visit?"

I thought religion would have a more of a central role in the community surrounding Downton Abbey, but in the series the minister was dragged out only for weddings and funerals, and he didn't make any appearance in the film. At one stage a character wants prayer for



Elizabeth McGovern, centre, and Laura Carmichael, right, star in a scene from the movie *Downton Abbey*.

good weather for the king's visit, and, when she gets it, concludes that "God is a monarchist!" And of course, there was the obligatory gay sub-plot, handled less discreetly than in the TV show. The film outdid itself in Mills and Boon vibes in the great ball at the end, but for me it was all veneer hiding an empty shell.

In contrast, **Just Mercy** (RTÉ One, Friday) was a more intense, more humane film. It told the true story of a case of racism and injustice involving the death penalty in Alabama. It was by turns moving and disturbing as young lawyer Bryan Stevenson (Michael B.

Jordan) represented prisoners on death row, many of whom had poor legal representation at trial, and at least one of whom, Walter McMillian (Jamie Foxx), was innocent. One execution scene was particularly upsetting – the man was guilty this time but there were mitigating circumstances that were ignored. The young lawyer was distraught after it, describing it as "the most horrific thing".

Religion figured strongly in the background, as you'd expect in a black community in the Deep South. We got a lively church scene, Bible reading, plenty of incidental

gospel singing and prayer before the execution. But it wasn't simplistic or preachy at least not in relation to religion. You could say it was rather preachy against the injustice and the death penalty, but I suppose preachiness is a little easier to take when you share the values being promoted. Maybe there can be inherent values without preachiness, but then too much neutrality can be passionless. Can you hunger and thirst for righteousness and still be detached? Perhaps it's all about subtlety, especially when it comes to the arts, but then the emotional manipula-

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### SUNDAY SEQUENCE

**BBC Radio Ulster Sunday August 20, 8.30am**

Audrey Carville and guests debate the week's religious and ethical news and explore the world of culture and ideas.

#### SAINT ROSE OF LIMA

**EWTN Sunday August 20, 9pm**

Movie on the life of St Rose of Lima, whose great love of God and neighbour drove her to become a champion of the poor and afflicted in her native Peru, and the first saint of the Americas.

#### THE PRICE OF TRUTH

**Channel 4 Monday August 21, 10pm**

The extraordinary story of Dmitry Muratov, who risks everything, even his life, to preserve freedom of speech in Russia.

tion can sneak in unnoticed. As you can guess I haven't got this figured out fully yet! This film was sentimental at times but was a worthy story full of heart.

As Bryan Stevenson is an African-American you'd rightly expect a black actor to play the role – the days of blackface are over! And yet I don't remember any furore when Denzel Washington played Macbeth in director Joel Coen's film version of the play. This is another issue I'm conflicted about, and it was an issue discussed on **The Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk, Friday), with Dorothy Laity, actress and member of the Irish equity actors' union. It was about representation and inclusion in general, but with specific reference to

disabled characters. Should they always be played by disabled actors? Ms Laity was concerned for minorities – "we're all actors – and did find discrimination in the business – sometimes disabled characters are 'edited out', and disability was recently categorised by social media giants as 'potentially distressing content'".

They discussed whether, in the recent movie, it was right to have Robert Oppenheimer played by a non-Jewish actor, Cillian Murphy. I think that's taking it too far – after all it is acting – people pretending (artistically!) to be what they are not.



Aubrey Malone

# Film

## Octogenarian De Niro in religious roles

Robert De Niro is 80 this week. The most acclaimed actor of his generation has been appearing in films with religious subtexts almost since he started out, most notably in the films he made with his Catholic friend from Little Italy, Martin Scorsese. Scorsese was a former altar boy who once studied to be a priest.

De Niro and Scorsese have collaborated on no less than ten films to date. The first was *Mean Streets* in 1973. De Niro's co star was Harvey Keitel, playing a character who goes to Mass and all the

sacraments but whose life is ruled by guns.

In Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* in 1976, De Niro played Travis Bickle, a mentally-disturbed Vietnam veteran who has deluded himself into thinking he can clean up the streets of New York by murdering its corrupt elements and thus giving it redemption. He writes in his diary at one point, "I am God's lonely man".

Bickle is a false saint, a fallen angel in a post-Edenic world. There's pestilence on the streets and he sees himself as being delegated to exorcise it. Part redeemer and



part executioner, Scorsese described him as "somewhere between Charles Manson and St Paul".

De Niro played middle-weight boxer Jake La Motta in Scorsese's *Raging Bull* in 1980. Opening with a quotation from John's Gospel, we can see it as the third part of the De Niro/Scorsese spiritual trilogy also comprising *Mean Streets* and *Taxi Driver*. These three films all feature secular characters trying to reconcile perverse lives with a search for God.

De Niro played an Irish Msgr to perfection in Ulu Grosbard's *True Confessions* in 1981. He learned the Latin Mass to play the role and also immersed himself in Church dogma. Such research was a

measure of the dedication that would come to characterise him in most of the parts he played around this time.

The way he walked, talked, kissed the surplice, how he raised his hands on the altar, even the way he sat down – all these movements were intricately worked out by him to be faithful to his character.

He was a Spanish Jesuit in *The Mission* in 1986. Scorsese wanted him to play Jesus in *The Last Temptation of Christ* two years later but he cried off. The film provoked outrage from many quarters for its various heresies but Scorsese insisted, "I made it as a prayer,

an act of worship".

De Niro dressed up as a priest in Neil Jordan's comedy *We're No Angels* the following year. In 1995 he played a thinly-disguised Lucifer in Alan Parker's *Angel Heart*. In 1996 he was a priest again in *Sleepers*.

I explored the religious overtones of the De Niro/Scorsese partnership in my book about spirituality on the screen, *Sacred Profanity*. Other books on this theme that you might like to read are *Gangster Priest* and *The Word Made Flesh: Catholicism and Conflict in the Films of Martin Scorsese*.





# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## Desire, violence and the Bible

**All Desire is a Desire for Being,**  
Essential writings  
of René Girard selected  
by Cynthia L. Haven  
(Penguin Classics,  
£12.99pb/€15.50pb)

Frank Litton

**W**e cannot get away from the ubiquity of violence in human affairs. The wars in Ukraine, Yemen, Sudan - the list goes on and on. The slaughter of Jews during the Second World War stands out in this dire history. It displays two modes of violence.

On the one hand we find the state-sponsored, logistically complicated, well planned, methodical murder of Jews in concentration camps: civil servants deploying their administrative skills supported by the latest technology. The functionaries who staffed the apparatus were 'obeying orders'.

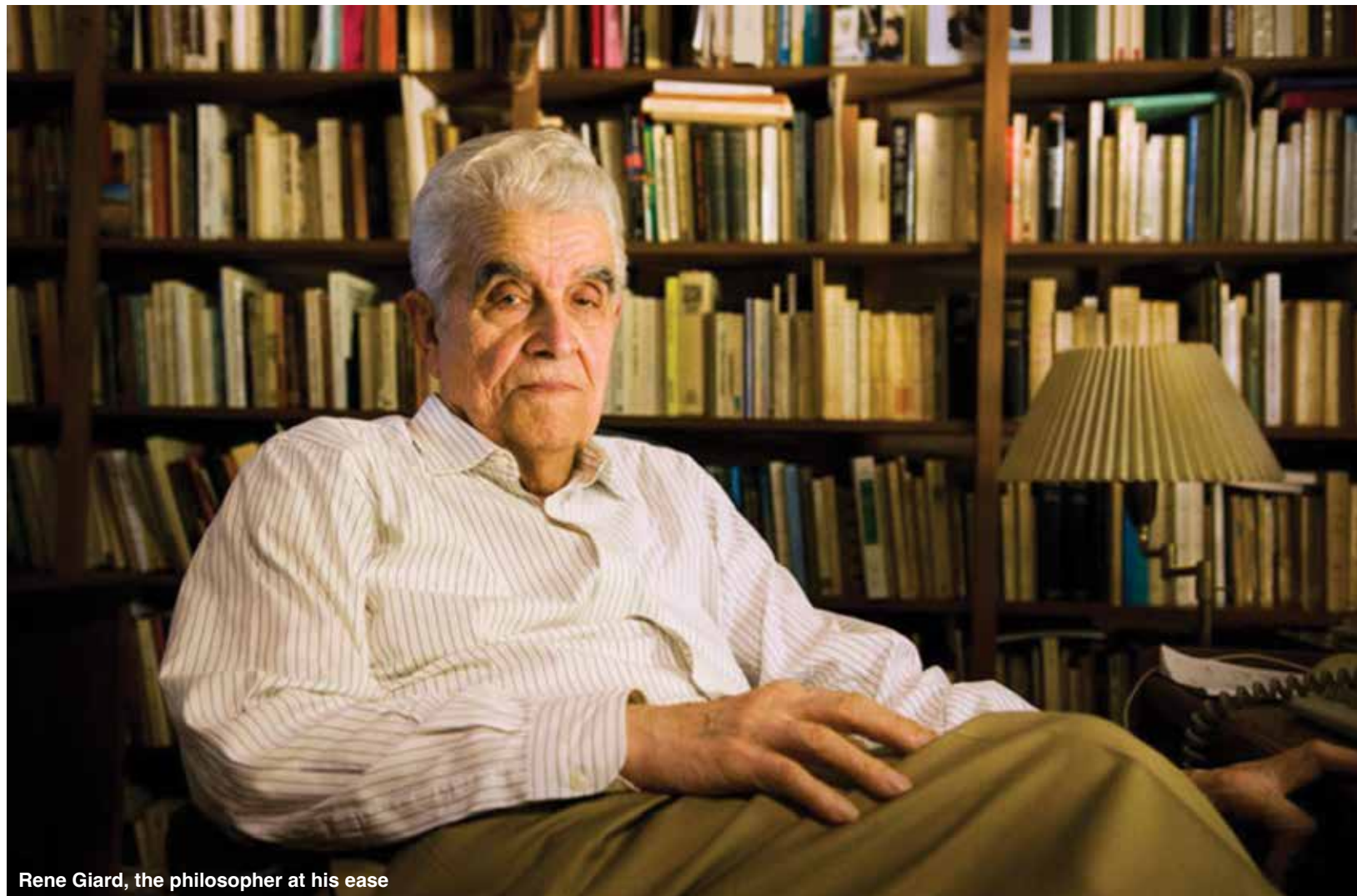
Think of the train drivers who delivered the victims in cattle trucks to the doors of the gas chambers. They knew what they were doing; being small cogs in a large machine, they distanced themselves from responsibility, closing their eyes as they collected their wages, thoughtlessly inhabiting a culture where the unity of 'the good' was based on hatred of 'the evil'.

On the other hand, the historian reminds us, "in most of Eastern Europe, the Holocaust was a matter of direct violence, face to face murder, in the presence of scores of witnesses and neighbours." (Jacob Mikanowski *Goodbye Eastern Europe* p.220)

### Violence

Closer to home, we had the 'troubles'. Nor should we forget the violence, apparently increasing, in homes. In Ireland 244 women have been murdered since 1996, the majority killed by their husbands or partners.

We might expect then that the study of violence would be high on the list of priorities in studies of the human condition. Not so, when we turn to the obvious disciplines - sociology,



Rene Girard, the philosopher at his ease

psychology, history - we find little illumination.

René Girard (1923-2015) who has made by far the largest contribution to our understanding of violence is difficult to pigeon hole.

He graduated as archivist/librarian from the École Nationale de Chartes in Paris, travelled to the United States, completed a PhD in history, got a job lecturing in French, ending up as a professor in Stanford University.

The foundations of his understanding of violence were laid in his literary studies. He examined the play of desire among the protagonists in the novels of Cervantes, Stendhal, Flaubert, Proust, and Dostoevsky. Their fictions, he showed, revealed the truth behind the dynamics of human desire.

The desires that shape our behaviour are 'mimetic'. We desire objects, individuals, not

because of a direct connection between them and our needs but because of their relationship to another. Look at children playing: one picks up a neglected toy, the others drop what they have been playing with and converge on it.

Remember that advertisement for that mediocre soft drink. The scene is in black and white, the youngsters stand in isolation. Someone opens a can of the stuff; the scene is transformed into bright colours and couples whirl around in delighted dance. The drink does not offer to quench your thirst. It promises to transport you into a world where others enjoy a happiness denied to you. Recall how often you have heard of old friends breaking up as one goes off with the other's girlfriend. That relationship does not last.

### Complicated

These are simple examples. The novelists studied by Girard account for more complicated examples where more is at stake. The contexts of the novels differ, but the same dynamic is at work. While Girard illuminates the psychology of desire, his analysis of how it plays out in the different social and politi-

cal circumstances of the novels, adds a sociological dimension.

**“The peace and common purpose they find in their shared animosity is evidence enough that it is justified”**

Violence is inherent in mimetic desire. I desire this object, individual, because you have it. Because you have it; I cannot. The source of my desire is an obstacle to its attainment. Thanks to mimetic desire, envy, jealousy and hatred are abiding components of human motivation. It is no surprise that violence tears societies apart. What is surprising is that violence can be contained and peace prevail.

Girard's second great contribution explains why this is so. He draws our attention to scapegoating. A group is torn apart by violence. Suddenly the crowd turn on one individual. They unite in his pursuit. The peace and common purpose they find in their shared animosity is evidence enough that it is justified: 'the proof of the pudding is in its eating'.

From the dramas of the

school playground, to the world of organising and onto the level of society, evidence of the malign logic of scapegoating is plentiful. It lurks in the background shaping the boundaries that define belonging. We find it at its most awful in the persecution of Jews.

We find sacrifice embedded in the sacred again and again in societies. Girard surveys the anthropological evidence to conclude that sacrificial rituals, in all their diversity, have one thing in common: they are all re-enactments of scapegoating. We think of politics as the solution to violence, replacing 'war, war, with jaw, jaw'.

### Scapegoating

Not so says Girard politics is rooted in the violence of scapegoating. Girard supplements his enquiries with an examination of the myths that embody communities' self-understandings. These, he finds, rehearse scapegoating.

There is one important exception. He reports examples of resistance to scapegoating logic in the Old Testament. And the New Testament ends in its most complete repudiation in its account of a scapegoating from the perspective

of the victim.

Girard enters the territory of theology. The imitation of Christ delivers us from the worst consequences of mimetic desire. His crucifixion, death and resurrection grounds a communion in which scapegoating plays no role.

I hope that this brief survey is sufficient to indicate that Girard is one of the most important thinkers of our time. We owe a depth of gratitude to Cynthia L. Haven who has done so much 'to spread the word'. In 2018 she gave us a widely-acclaimed biography *Evolution of desire*. A biography of René Girard, and in 2020 *Conversations with René Girard* a collection of interviews. Now we have a selection of his writings, some of which have not been published or available in English, that she has assembled for Penguin Classics.

It is a valuable resource and a useful introduction: self-recommending. Of particular interest is 'A method, a life, a man'. In this interview with Michel Treguer, Girard discusses the path he has followed in his discoveries and its interweaving with his life. He gives an account of his conversion to Catholicism.

**“While Girard illuminates the psychology of desire, his analysis of how it plays out in the different social and political circumstances of the novels, adds a sociological dimension”**



Readers should note that *The Irish Catholic* circulates throughout the island of Ireland and the book prices listed are the retail price recommended by the Irish or British publishers, in either euros or sterling, as a general indication of what purchasers may expect to pay.

# The Synod and the Sacraments



Confirmation, the moment of anointing

**Sacraments in a Synodal Church,**  
by Noel O'Sullivan  
(Veritas, €19.99)

**Peter Costello**

**T**his is a book intended to be very much of the moment.

With many years of work in both primary and secondary education, Dr Noel O'Sullivan lectures in systematic theology at St Patrick's College, Maynooth. So, he knows how things are meant to work and also how in 'real life' they do, or indeed, don't work.

In seeking to energise the Church today Dr O'Sullivan accepts that a sacrament, like say Confirmation, has become a mere rite of passage in today's world.

At one time the sacraments were accepted as an important part of the annual round of the life of many people, an essential factor in how they lived. This is no longer so true.

## Nominal

For though large numbers tell the census that they are 'Catholic', this is sometimes only in a nominal way. What the Church teaches, what Catholics believe, and what Catholics do are becoming more incoherent these days.

In this difficulty, the seven chapters and the general conclusion of this book, which is

intended for a wide readership, rather than just students, will meet a widely felt need.

**“Many have come to think that it is not the essence of the sacraments that needs to change but the presentation of them”**

Dr O'Sullivan wishes, so he says, to explore the history and nature of the sacraments of the Church, and (what is important in the present context) the role of a synodal laity in their development and continued celebration over the centuries.

It will be of immense help to those who may feel they would like to join in the present discussions, but feel that all too often they are taken over by those with stronger voices than they, but less charity.

Many have come to think that it is not the essence of the sacraments that needs to change but the presentation of them.

Many will be all too aware of controversies over the Mass, the Eucharist, and Baptism. But look rather at Confirmation, which is one of the rites of passage the author refers to. It is a matter of importance to many families.

All societies have their young people, men and women, pass through those 'rites of passage' between childhood and adult maturity, as he notes. In classical times in Rome society a male was presented by his father with an all-white toga (the *toga virilis*) on reaching puberty, say about 14.

When one is unlikely to see 50, an early date for these religious and civil rituals had relevance. But does it today, or did it ever?

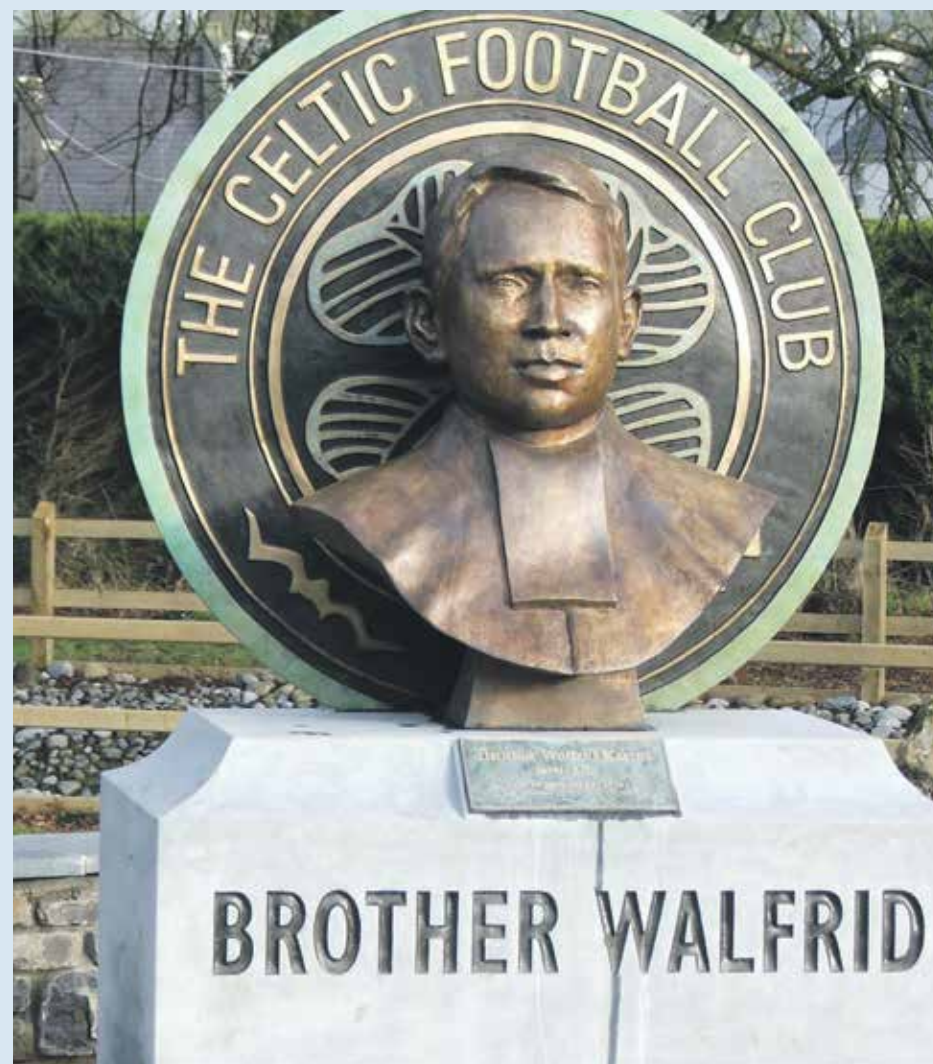
It has seemed to many that the age at which confirmation is offered is too young. *Physical* maturity is reached earlier in western societies, but not *social* maturity. Would it not be better if it were offered later, say about 16, rather than at the move from primary to secondary school as is now the case?

## Development

To fulfil the historical development of the sacraments that Dr O'Sullivan so clearly outlines in these pages, this would certainly be better. And so, some other Christian traditions (who still maintain the traditional sacraments) have thought.

One would hope to see mature discussion of this among parishioners soon. It would be a great social change, but one more in keeping with a full adult profession of faith, which was what Confirmation was once intended to be. The theology needs rethinking.

# Celtic's hero: a strong player for Ireland in Scotland



Brother Walfrid Memorial in Ballymote his birthplace

**Walfrid: A Life of Faith, Community and Football,**  
by Michael Connolly  
(Argyll Publishing, £20.00 / €24.00)

**J. Anthony Gaughan**

**T**his is an exciting account of the life of a man from the west of Ireland who has left a permanent mark on the history of modern Scotland. Dr Connolly dexterously explores the story which should fascinate everyone interested in the Irish Diaspora, even if they do not care for football.

The tale begins with the birth of Andrew Kerins in a family home near Ballymote, Co. Sligo, on May 18, 1840. His father farmed 19 acres. However, his father's potato crop and the potato crops across Ireland failed in the great Famine of 'Black '45'. That famine caused the death of a million Irish people and another two million to seek refuge from it in England, Scotland, Canada, the US and beyond. Andrew was among those who were displaced by the Great Famine.

Aged 15, he sold a calf and paid for a passage on a coalboat from Sligo to Glasgow. He was more fortunate than most of the Irish arriving in Glasgow at that time as he secured employment on the railway.

He began to attend classes after work in a school administered by the Marist Brothers in the East End of Glasgow. Then he became an assistant teacher in the school and eventually he decided to join the congregation.

Andrew received his formation in the congregation's head-house near Lille in Northern France and was given the religious name Walfrid after a saint who had been recently canonised.

After his training had been completed Bro. Walfrid was assigned to teach in the congregation's school in the East End of Glas-

gow. The East End was the most deprived part of the city and tens of thousands of the 'Famine Irish' had settled there. A large proportion of the boys attending the Marist school were on the edge of starvation.

Bro. Walfrid was a skilled organiser, as well as an excellent teacher. In conjunction with local St Vincent de Paul conferences he established a network of 'penny dinners' to ensure that the poorest children were never allowed to go hungry.

At that time football was becoming popular and he used it to attract the boys to school and to his various undertakings. Then he also discovered that the football teams and the football leagues he organised could be a useful source of revenue.

Eventually, with soccer becoming more and more central and important in the sporting life of Scotland, Bro. Walfrid with a number of friends formally established Celtic FC in 1888. The others were protégés of his and thus Bro. Walfrid is regarded as the founder of Glasgow Celtic.

The club that Bro. Walfrid founded goes from strength to strength. Its stellar record in 2023 reads: First British club to win the European Cup 1967 (Alex Gordon provides a glorious account of that successful campaign in *The Lisbon Lions* by Billy MacNeill and Jim Craig (Black and White Publishing), Scottish League Championship 53, Scottish Cup 41, Scottish League Cup 21.

Bro. Walfrid's achievements have not been forgotten. The Celtic fans honoured him appropriately with a statue at the entrance to their stadium, as have his own people with a memorial at Ballymote.

And the Celtic FC are loyal to Bro. Walfrid's insistence that it should always remain committed to its original charities. And Celtic in its matches with Rangers has come to stand for a certain kind of strong will Irish identity.



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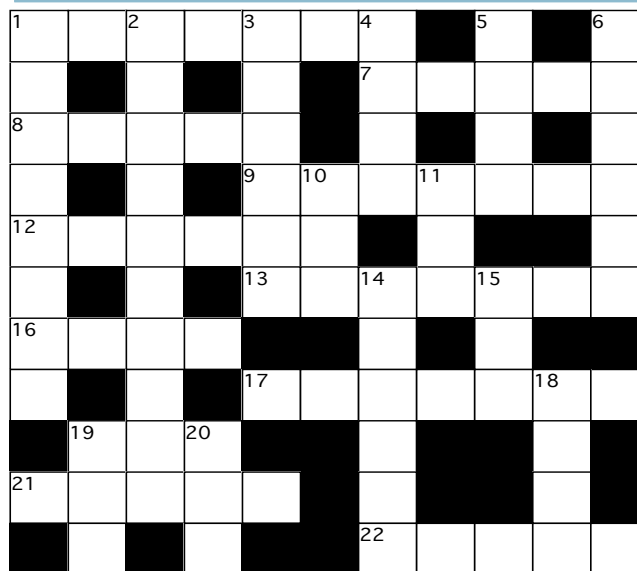
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## Crossword Junior

Gordius 496



### Across

- 1 Coach with seats for a small number of passengers (7)
- 7 A grown-up (5)
- 8 Aladdin's helper, who lived in a lamp (5)
- 9 Go here to see a play on stage (7)
- 12 Cows (6)
- 13 You use them to rub things out (6)
- 16 Girl's name; the name of the mother of Our Lady (4)
- 17 Try (7)
- 19 Also (3)
- 21 Smash (5)
- 22 This fish hunts in the sea (5)

### Down

- 1 This person might say "Abracadabra" (8)
- 2 Take one from one hundred to get this number (6-4)
- 3 Type of insect (6)
- 4 Out of danger (4)
- 5 A song to be sung by two people together (4)
- 6 The capital city of Greece (6)
- 10 Him for a boy, \_\_\_ for a girl (3)
- 11 Donkey (3)
- 14 Movie stars (6)
- 15 Large type of tree (3)
- 18 Two of a kind (4)
- 19 Noah's ship (3)
- 20 Twenty-four hours (3)

## SOLUTIONS, AUGUST 09

GORDIUS NO. 623

**Across** - 1 Cot 3 Glastonbury Tor 8 Nickel 9 Thumbs up 10 Tried 11 Shell 13 Theft 15 Calorie 16 Soothed 20 Lions 21 Drove 23 Horse 24 God-given talent 26 Shops around

**Down** - 1 Constructed 2 Tactical 3 Greed 4 Satchel 5 Names 6 Ulster 7 Yap 12 Lie-detector 13 Twirl 14 Tools 17 Hairiest 18 Toronto 19 Voodoo 22 Emits 23 Heard 24 Gas

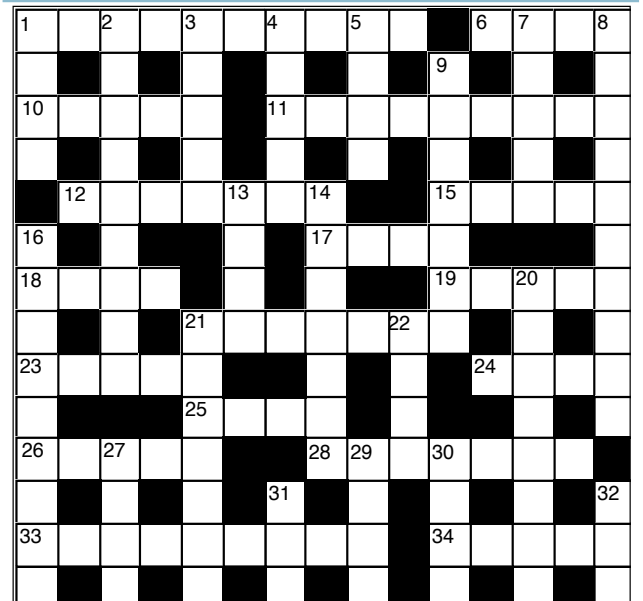
CHILDREN'S No. 495

**Across** - 1 Cocktail 6 She 7 Organ 8 Tastier 12 Oars 14 Imprison 15 Aims 16 Train 17 Edge 18 Good 19 Crusoe

**Down** - 1 Chocolate 2 Cigar 3 Tent 4 Inns 5 Dear 6 Ski 9 Applause 10 Triangle 11 Enormous 13 Sisters

## Crossword

Gordius 624



### Across

- 1 The world's highest uninterrupted waterfall, located in Venezuela (5,5)
- 6 A send-up (4)
- 10 Equip once more with weapons (5)
- 11 Mexican dish of mashed avocado (9)
- 12 Plume (7)
- 15 Use social media in an inflammatory way (5)
- 17 In the Bible, Jacob's brother (4)
- 18 Teheran is the capital of this country (4)
- 19 Potential dangers (5)
- 21 Tropical cutting tool (7)
- 23 Young Malfoy is Harry Potter's chief rival at school (5)
- 24 Pain (4)
- 25 Ms Barnacle married James Joyce (4)
- 26 Destroy (5)
- 28 Harbour vessel (7)
- 33 Wax structure created by bees (9)
- 34 In what place? (5)
- 35 Shove (4)
- 36 Absolved of blame (10)

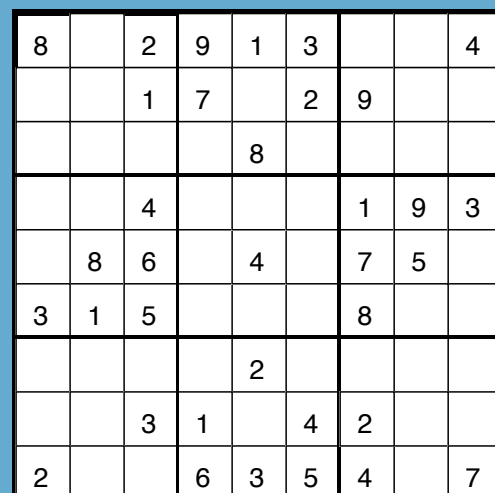
### Down

- 1 The site of the Taj Mahal (4)
- 2 How to maul a gate in a Central American country (9)
- 3 Restriction (5)
- 4 Viewpoint; measure of turn (5)
- 5 Go in front (4)
- 7 Japanese city associated with a climate crisis protocol (5)
- 8 & 20d Consecrated host (3,7,9)
- 9 Grazing land (7)
- 13 The All Blacks 'greeting' to an opposing team (4)
- 14 At such high temperature, iron turns to a primary colour (3,4)
- 16 Have a look at what's on offer without intending to buy (6-4)
- 20 See 8 down
- 21 Macaques or tamarins, perhaps (7)
- 22 Hooligan (4)
- 27 The county town of Clare (5)
- 29 A name for eight popes, but definitely not rural! (5)
- 30 Shady nook (5)
- 31 Fraudulent stunt (4)
- 32 Provide a loan (4)

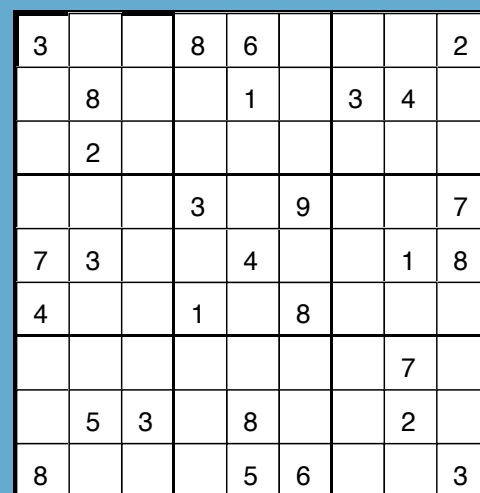
## Sudoku Corner

496

Easy



Hard



Last week's Easy 495

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

Last week's Hard 495

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



## Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



# God in the midst of chaos, fear and natural disasters

**M**y apologies if the tone of my contribution this month is a little depressing, but I hope there might be a more positive ending!

In recent weeks I have been very conscious of people being filled with fear. Our TV news bulletins have been filled with images of terrified people caught up in natural disasters. The wildfires in Portugal and the island of Maui in Hawaii where so many have died, and many others have seen their homes and their livelihoods wiped away. The flooding in China, Slovenia and Norway and the devastation these disasters have caused, but worst of all the fear in the faces of those affected.

Then there was another tragedy in the Mediterranean as people fleeing from poverty and persecution in Africa died at sea in flimsy little boats. Imagine the fear in the faces and the hearts of those people as they saw their lives being wiped away by the waves and the storms. The disciples in last weekend's Gospel felt the same fear in their little boat on the sea of Galilee.

Closer to home one of our parishioners approached a woman on the street as she looked very



distressed. The woman, from another country, was pulling a little trolley filled with all her worldly belongings and even though these two people could not really communicate very well the woman was able to say that she had no home. That look of fear on her face transcended all language barriers.

In recent days I met a friend who has been told that his cancer has returned and has spread throughout his body. He has a limited time to live and sitting across from him all I can see is his face full of fear. He spoke of how he is frightened of dying and leaving his family behind.

What brought me into this rather depressing reflection was the Scripture at Mass last weekend. Elijah in the first reading was on the run fearing for his life.

He was frightened and depressed and ready to give up. The Apostles in the boat and particularly Peter were also frightened because the storm on the lake was threatening to overpower them.

For both Elijah and Peter, God

seemed to be absent and that only exacerbated their sense of fear. Then for Elijah, God comes in the gentle breeze and when Peter reaches out his hand as he was sinking, Jesus catches it and saves him.

I honestly don't know how God will reach out to those caught up in all the natural disasters which seem to be coming with greater frequency, but my Faith compels me to believe that he will be there in the midst of all the chaos. He will be there too for my friend trying to come to terms with the reality of his cancer. Somewhere in the midst of all the storms there is that voice of God which says:

## The greater power

An elderly woman named Maude had a window seat on a flight that had just taken off for Rome. A devout Catholic, Maude had been saving for years to fulfil her dream of visiting the eternal city. But it was her first flight, and she was terrified. Even the stately presence of the four bishops sitting behind her didn't help. With fear and trembling she finally opened her eyes and peeped out the window, just in time to see one of the plane's four engines break loose from the wing and disappear into the clouds. "We're going to die," she cried out. The flight attendant consulted with the pilot who announced to the passengers that everything was under control and that they could fly back to New York and land safely with three engines. But Maude continued to cry out: "We're going to die."

The stewardess went to her and said, "Don't worry my dear, God is with us. We have only three engines, but look we have four bishops", to which Maude replied "I'd rather have four engines and three bishops".

"Courage it is I, do not be afraid."

While writing these reflections I became aware of the radio on in the background. It was a programme remembering the great Irish poet Seamus Heaney who died ten years ago this month. Among the things they talked about were the last words spoken by this gifted wordsmith. As Seamus was dying, he whispered to his wife Marie in Latin *Noli Timere* – Do not be afraid.

## Deepest fear

● Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?" Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God – Marianne Williamson



## Impoverished Catholic community in D.R. Congo badly needs our help to build a solid and dignified chapel

Fr Cesar Balayulu, a Consolata priest working on the outskirts of Kinshasa, has told us about his Catholic faithful at serie Dix, about ten miles from his parish church. "The people live in small houses often made from metal sheets or straw. Because of their poverty our people cannot help us financially with the cost of building the chapel dedicated to Our Lady Consolata which we wish to construct. At present Mass is offered under a large metal sheet on poles, this becoming impossible in bad weather.

"The new chapel, when completed, will help our Christians to participate with dignity in the Holy Eucharist, no longer having to carry chairs from their homes every Sunday. It will enable them to focus more on prayer and not to be distracted by noise from outside. It will promote the social life of the Christian community. We turn to you, Little Way, with great confidence that you will support us with your aid."

**Will you please help these Christian brothers and sisters of ours to turn their dream of a chapel into reality?**

(If we receive more funds than are required for this project they will be used for similar chapel projects).

**Every euro you send will be sent direct to help build a mission chapel.**



## PLEASE HELP FEED HUNGRY CHILDREN

Fr Eamonn Gowing is a Redemptorist priest working in a favela/shanty town in the Brazilian city of Fortaleza. He reports of the great poverty there and how more than 200 children benefit from a feeding programme he has started which provides a nutritious meal each day. For many of the children it is the only regular meal they receive. Fr Eamonn is one of the many missionaries The Little Way Association supports with funds to feed hungry children.

**Can you spare a donation, large or small, to feed a hungry child?**

Every euro you send to our fund for Needy Children will be used, without deduction, to provide food, health-supplies and basic necessities for deprived children.

## MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS

In these difficult times missionary priests overseas rely more than ever on Mass stipends for their daily subsistence and in order that they may continue to minister to their poor communities.

**We like to send a minimum stipend of €6.50 or more for each Mass.**

## WALSINGHAM THERESIAN CENTRE

Praying for the Missions and offering accommodation to pilgrims. For reservations please contact Maggie on 0044 1328 820 222.

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

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

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

€..... **MISSION CHAPELS**

€..... **HUNGRY NEEDY CHILDREN**

€..... **WELLS AND WATER**

€..... **MASSES** (please state no. )  
(We ask for a minimum of €6.50 or more for each Mass)

€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

To donate online go to  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

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