

The Irish Catholic

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'A national disgrace'

Tribunal of Inquiry needed to investigate state and ministerial neglect of kids

Chai Brady

100,000 children or almost twice the number of children who will do the Leaving Cert this year will be referred to Tusla, the State-run Child and Family Agency, amid chronic underfunding, missing children, lack of beds, in the ongoing crisis of State care of children in Ireland. Barrister and commentator Maria Steen has called it "a national disgrace".

"The State care system for children in this country is a contradiction in terms. The most vulnerable children, oftentimes neglected by families in the grip of drugs, crime, unemployment and relationship dysfunction, are farmed out to State agencies in the false belief that they will be better off. The reality is that the State makes for a cold mother. Children need full-time love and care. They need parents, a role that care workers working to a schedule (even if their working conditions were to improve), simply cannot fulfil with the best will in the world. Periodic checking-in is not parenting. A temporary hostel is not a home. Children need a loving, stable environment in which they can flourish - especially children who have already experienced trauma in their lives. Instead, many live in completely unsuitable environments where their wellbeing and education is neglected, where they are easily exploited and prostituted, with many becoming addicted to drugs. Most feel alone and brokenhearted. This is a national disgrace."

The leader of Aontú Peadar Tóibín told this paper that he blames the Minister for Children Roderic O'Gorman for the crisis. "I think the minister has been

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Fun is ripe for the picking in the Orchard County



Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh Michael Router with young parishioner Lilyrose Doran and Fr Malachy Murphy PP of Loughgilly Parish, Co. Armagh at Loughgilly Family Fun Day last Sunday. Photo: Nicki Kennedy.

OSTRICH-LIKE RESPONSE TO ATTACK ON PRIEST

David Quinn

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KNOCK NOVENA INSPIRES THOUSANDS

Brandon Scott

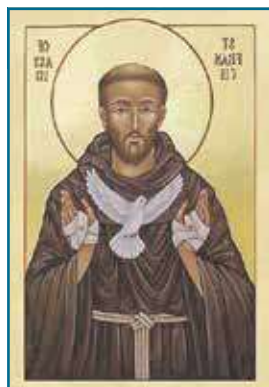
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PEACE, IF NOT PERFECT, IS PRECIOUS

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'A national disgrace' - Tribunal of Inquiry needed to investigate state and ministerial neglect of kids

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asleep at the wheel. Everybody involved in the sector has been screaming for change for the last number of years. We have even seen judges lift their heads above the parapets to send the minister documents in relation to the crisis that is unfolding in these special emergency accommodation units and the minister has been stonewalling all of these efforts to try achieve change."

He added: "Children are going missing. Some of these children are being preyed upon by gangs involved in sexual exploitation. I think a tribunal investigation is going to happen in 5-10 years and yet it is unfolding in real time, in the minister's time and he is statuesque in terms of action."

Mr Tóibín said the Minister would be the very one calling for a Tribunal were he not the Minister responsible. "I have no doubt if this happened in the past, people like Roderic O'Gorman would be jumping up and down looking for a tribunal of investigation and looking for redress and yet Roderic O'Gorman is himself the reason why there is no movement in this horrendous situation. It is so frustrating, we've been raising this week in week out for three years and 201 children have died in the last 10 years, many of them murdered, many them by suicide, overdoses and car

accidents or other accidents while either in the care of State services or known to the State services."

Mr Tóibín said that because the children are from disadvantaged backgrounds they get ignored. "I think if these children were from the leafy suburbs where many of these ministers represent there would be reform and action on this years ago, but because many of these children are from the most disadvantaged areas from very broken families and have no voices to represent them, the Government is ignoring them."

Bishop Niall Coll of Ossory echoed this sentiment and added his voice to the concern. "Revelations over many years about horrendous shortcomings in the existing system of State special care for children (who are often highly traumatised) are normally bracketed and soon ignored by Irish society. Indeed, most Irish people seem blissfully unaware of the tremendous pressure under which the people who work in this sector labour. I very much welcome the focus that is now being brought to this matter and hope that government, policy makers and wider society will be stirred to make the wider reforms - not least in terms of budgets and the provision of properly trained personnel - that are urgently required in the area of special care."

Youth 2000 reveals youth's deep desire for Faith formation

Renata Milán Morales

"Young people, they're searching for more," said Keith Kelly, Youth Minister in the Diocese of Raphoe, at the Youth 2000 Event, pointing to the eagerness for catechesis to and Faith formation among the younger generations.

Youth 2000 hosted a weekend event that gathered a large crowd of young people seeking to deepen their spiritual lives. The event, which featured a range of workshops and talks, provided practical tools for spiritual growth and emphasised the vital role of catechesis in understanding

and living out the faith.

One of the standout moments was a workshop led by Fr Chris Gault OP, where the participants learnt about how to deepen their spiritual life and understand their Faith through the teachings of the Doctors of the Church. It was so popular that the room overflowed. Attendees sat on the floor and even stood outside to be able to listen. The enthusiasm and the flood of questions from the crowd highlighted a strong desire for a deeper understanding of their Faith.

Bishop Gavin, the main celebrant at the Saturday Mass, emphasised that catechesis is essential for young people to

grasp the significance of the sacraments and to live out their faith with conviction, "I suppose what we have to do is to equip young people to be evangelisers talking to other young people. You can see how challenging it is to have the confidence to talk about Faith."

The event also featured stands from initiatives like ALPHA, Catechism studies for adults, and Holy Family Mission, all of which engaged attendees. These initiatives align perfectly with the core mission of Youth 2000, which is to "equip young people with the knowledge and confidence to be strong witnesses in their local parishes and

workplaces," as Linda Russell shared.

"Faith formation is the very mission of Youth 2000," said Lisa Russell, a member of the festival's organising team. "Our goal is to equip young people with the knowledge of their Faith so they can be strong witnesses to those around them."

This weekend event by Youth 2000 has shown the crucial role of catechesis in faith formation, igniting a renewed passion for faith among young people and providing them with the tools and confidence to be, as Bishop Gavin noted, our contemporary evangelisers.

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Youth choose Catholic festival over Electric Picnic

Staff reporter

Thousands of young people gathered in Co. Laois for Electric Picnic. At the same time, another significant youth event was quietly taking place in Co. Kildare. The Youth 2000 festival.

"Electric Picnic is not the most important youth event this weekend. This one is. This is the future of Ireland," said Fr John Harris OP during his Sunday talk at the festival. His words resonated with the nearly 1,000 attendees at Clongowes Wood College, many of whom found the festival to be a place of prayer, community and spiritual renewal, far removed from the commercialised atmosphere of popular festivals.

While Electric Picnic is known for its music and entertainment, Youth 2000 offers an experience centred around faith, and community. This contrast points to a deeper reality: the future of the Church in Ireland rests with

the young people who choose faith over entertainment.

In the days following the festival, Youth 2000's Instagram reshared posts from attendees, many of whom said the weekend was "better than EP (Electric Picnic)." This

growing movement highlights the search for meaning, purpose, and a community rooted in Faith amongst the youth.

Fr John Harris OP closed his talk with a powerful metaphor, comparing the Church to a ship. "The ship is not sinking because

He is alive," he reassured the audience. "We are called to be Sunday people." His words captured the essence of the weekend: a call to action for the next generation to guide the Church through the challenges of a fast-changing world.

New priest for the Kingdom



Fr Sean Murphy with Bishop Ray Browne and Bishop Bill Murphy during his ordination for the Kerry Diocese on August 18. The ceremony took place at St James's Church, Glenbeigh at 3.00pm.

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"Hoseanna" says Fire Brigade



Dublin Fire Brigade joked about the efficacy of the Child of Prague on X after heavy rain helped to control wildfire destroying Mullins Hill in Killiney, Dublin.

Faith grounded me in my darkest days, singer Donna Taggart

Brandon Scott

Omagh singer Donna Taggart, who is best known for her cover of the song 'Jealous of the Angels', which amassed millions of views in 2016, spoke movingly about how her resolute Faith has been the "anchor" that's navigated her throughout all of the storms in her life and something she particularly relied on during the tragic loss of her second child Mícheál, who was born sleeping in 2014.

Speaking at the Knock Novena, Ms Taggart admitted that in spite of all of her duties and roles expected of her in her life, there was "no greater service than sharing the gifts God has given" to her. "I've come to realise



Singer Donna Taggart. Photo: Knock Shrine.

that there's no greater service than sharing the

gifts God has given to you," she said. "Behind all the

roles that I had as a mother, wife, daughter, a colleague, a homemaker, an artist – I had a deep yearning and knowing that God wanted me to use my voice and so I prayed that he make a way and make it possible should it be his will."

Ms Taggart recalled the moment her singing entered the public sphere and how she believes that the viral attention her song 'Jealous of the Angels' received was not down to a powerful record label guiding her, but "the work of God" when she reflects on how it all materialised.

"It was during 2016, the week of Mícheál's second anniversary that out of the blue the song 'Jealous of the Angels', which I had recorded a few years previous went viral on

social media and to date has streamed 100 millions of times across the world – reaching and comforting people in every corner of the globe.

"This happened organically with no record label, deal, big marketing plan or music manager. It was and is a miracle It was the work of God. God used the gift he gave me to share his message of love.

"Through every storm I have had the anchor of my Faith which has steadied the ship and grounded me during some of my darkest days."

IC story attracts 82k views

Renata Steffens

The equivalent of a full Croke Park of people viewed *The Irish Catholic's* last front page story, entitled *More religion please say school children*. The article discussed figures from a survey by the Children's Ombudsman that revealed children want more religion in the classrooms.

With over 82,000 views throughout the paper's social media and website, the reception to the news was much more positive on the Facebook page compared to the post on X.

Facebook readers were welcoming of the stats and shared comments about personal and family members' good experiences in Catholic schools.

Killarney hears Franciscans' first professions

Renata Steffens

Five Franciscan Brothers professed their First Vows on August 15 during the Eucharistic Celebration on the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, at Killarney Franciscan Friary. The five young members of the Order came from different countries, but spent the last year in Killarney Town completing their novitiate year.

Bro Christophe Samois is from Belgium, Bro Vianney Berlozot from France, Bro Giovanni Haddas (Dutch Province) originally from Iraq, Bro Vincent McConnell from Canada and Bro Thomas-Maria Kessler from Switzerland. After the Vows Profession last week, the Brothers went back to their respective countries.

Before joining the Franciscans, Christophe was in the Belgian Army for five years, Vianney was an engineer, Giovanni was a nurse, Vincent was a social worker and Thomas was a mechanic.

While in Ireland, the novices were active in the community, volunteering in multiple organisations during their stay.

The friary guardian, Bro Pat Lynch said the novices



Brothers Giovanni, Vincent, Vianney, Thomas-Marie and Christophe after their Profession.

appear to be "natural evangelisers", and had been a "strong impact" in the fraternity, on people who are regulars in the friary and on the Killarney and outlying areas' com-

munity.

Bro McConnell who has Irish ancestry, said those who are considering the religious life should "Be patient—don't rush your vocation. Let the

Holy Spirit guide you over time, and trust in God."

Read the full interview with Bro Vincent McConnell in the next issue.

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Call for 'very important' Church dialogue with Islam in Ireland

Chai Brady

A Church expert in inter-religious dialogue has said as the "phenomenon of Islam" is relatively new to Ireland compared to other countries there must be more education on Muslim theology and mindset.

Fr Michael P. O'Sullivan MAfr who spent decades in the Middle East said the Church's commitment to dialogue with Muslims has been ongoing for almost 70 years and is non-reversible. However he added that "there are elements in Islam that are not really open to dialogue... as we know of ISIS" many of whom have been pushed from former

strongholds in Middle East – such as Syria and Iraq – to the Sahel region of Mali and Burkino Faso.

Fr O'Sullivan said: "The commitment to dialogue with Muslims generally speaking is written in stone in the Catholic Church, but at the same time there has to be an awareness of the radical elements of Islam who are not open to dialogue and who are open to destruction and of course terrorist attacks that we have seen in Europe over the last 20 years, whether it be in France or in Spain or in Britain or wherever are evidence to this.

"The question of inter-religious dialogue and the

question of getting to know the other is very important because we in Ireland in the last 20-30 years are dealing with the phenomenon of Islam, which we never really knew before, as part of the mission of the Church."

His comments come following a potential terror attack involving a 16-year-old boy being charged in relation to the stabbing of a Defence Forces chaplain Fr Paul Murphy at Renmore barracks in Galway last week. He was remanded in custody on Tuesday until next month.

Currently he is charged with assault causing harm. However on Saturday Judge Gerard Furlong said that

more serious charges may follow and that it is believed "the accused holds a radical Islamist mindset".

While strongly condemning the attack Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan of Waterford and Lismore also called for forgiveness, and encouraged prayer both for Fr Murphy and his attacker.

Bishop Cullinan said: "We must come together not only to support our injured priest but also to foster an environment where such acts do not occur again. Let us engage in dialogue about how we can promote peace, understanding, and respect among all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds or beliefs."

Parishioners 'petrified' after disturbance in Donegal church

Brandon Scott

Parishioners attending the 11.30 Mass in the Church of the Irish Martyrs in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal on Sunday were left "shocked" and "petrified" after an altercation took place in the porch of the church just before the Gospel was about to be pronounced.

The Mass was interrupted and parishioners were asked to remain inside the church building after an argument broke out in the porch of the church building. The argument spilled outside into the car park of the church where there was a strong Garda presence.

A local parishioner, Evelyn, who witnessed what she described as the "commotion", said that parishioners were petrified because they were unsure whether the disturbances would spill into the church.

"Fr Dominic came to start the Gospel and I heard commotion and some shouting

from behind me," she said. "Everybody was petrified because we didn't know if it was going to spread into the church or not but it was contained and they moved to the outside.

"Everybody was shocked. Luckily the Guards came very quicky and the Mass was held up for 10 minutes afterwards. The priest announced that we were to stay in the Church after the Mass was over to ensure everything was safe.

"There was Garda presence around when we did eventually get out. Everyone did get a fright and it was a shame that it happened in a holy place."

Five men have since been released on bail after they appeared in court last Monday charged in connection with the disturbance at the church.

The five, all members of the Travelling Community, appeared at a special sitting of Letterkenny District Court before Judge Ciaran Liddy.

Redemptoristines welcome new member



Sr Maire Bríd after the Solemn Profession. Sr Maire Bríd is from Gortaleen in Cork and was a primary school teacher before entering the Redemptoristine convent in Drumcondra, Co. Dublin. Photo: Diocese of Cork and Ross.

New home of Kylemore Abbey nuns opened last weekend

Renata Steffens

The Benedictine nuns of the Kylemore Abbey located in Connemara, Co. Galway celebrated the opening of a new monastery on August 17. The official blessing ceremony of the new purpose-built home for the fifteen nuns, was led by Archbishop of Tuam Francis Duffy.

The building was originally planned to be completed by December 2020, as part of the centenary of the Benedictine community at Kylemore Abbey. However, due to Covid-19 restrictions the celebration and the monastery were put on hold.

During the opening ceremony, Archbishop Duffy said it was an unusual event, as people are used to news of convents and monasteries closing.

"Don't let the significance of this most historic moment pass you by," the Archbishop said.

"We wanted a purpose-built monastery that is conducive to the kind of spiritual life we wanted to live and would be open to guests so that we could share our life with other people", former Abbess, Sr Máire Hickey told the *Irish Independent*.

Thousands awarded to woman arrested for praying outside abortion clinic

Staff reporter

A Christian woman in Britain who was arrested after silently praying outside an abortion clinic has been awarded a £13,000 (€15,254) payout and an apology from the police.

Isabel Vaughan-Spruce issued a claim against West Midlands Police for wrongful arrests and false imprisonments, assault and battery in relation to an intrusive search of her person, and for a breach of her human rights in 2022 and 2023.

Responding to the award, the Pro Life Campaign said: "This is a significant victory for Isabel Vaughan Spruce, the pro-life movement, and freedom of expression. The manner in which she was treated by the police in England was deeply regrettable.

"The idea that it could

be a crime to engage in silent prayer is obscene. It certainly breached Article 9.1 of the ECHR, focused on freedom of thought. Since this is an absolute right, it cannot ever be 'balanced' against other rights. We are glad to see this outcome in England and hope it will generate some debate in Ireland about the extreme nature of 'safe access zones', which are set to commence in Ireland soon," the statement concluded.

In Ireland the Safe Access Zones Bill was signed into law by Michael D. Higgins in May, but the law requires that an operational order be signed by Minister Stephen Donnelly. To date, he has not yet signed this operational order. In July Minister Donnelly said his department "is currently engaging with relevant stakeholders in relation to the commencement of the legislation".

Why did the English riot?

When Maud Gonne MacBride – our national icon, and forever muse to Yeats – attended a socialist political meeting in London in her youth, she was dismayed by the outcome. After being addressed by Scots socialist leader Keir Hardie, the crowd of trade unionists and fiery socialists assembled in Trafalgar Square affirmed their commitment to the cause – and then quietly dispersed, as directed by the constabulary.

From this experience, Maud concluded – in disgust – that the English working class would never be street revolutionaries: they were far too steeped in law and order. Ireland, like France, had more of the rebel reflex.

Overtuned

The notion that the British do not riot in the streets has been somewhat overturned this century, with street mayhem occurring in 2011, and now, more recently, riots after the dreadful killing of three young girls in the northern town of Stockport.

Word got around that the offender was a Muslim – untrue – and vio-

“Britain (like Ireland) needs migrants. But integration hasn’t always worked, and there is indeed a “left-behind” and disgruntled white working class”

History and Summer readings

My escapist summertime reading includes the 1938-43 diaries of Henry “Chips” Channon, the American-born British parliamentarian and writer. He was a tremendous snob, and his diaries are malicious, amoral, prejudiced, indiscreet and egotistical. They are also a peerless insight into political and high society life in Britain in that period – he knew everyone in the ruling circle. (He was married to the brewing heiress Lady Honor Guinness, although he was also gay.)

One evening, in July 1939, Chips sat next to the American Ambassador’s wife at a formal dinner. “I am always at the top table...and tonight I have the American Ambassadors on my left. Mrs Kennedy is an uninteresting little body, pleasant and



Mary Kenny

lent eruptions broke out all over the north of England, involving more than 4,000 people. Over a thousand were quickly arrested – including a 69-year-old man accused of vandalism, and a 13-year-old girl for kicking the door of a mosque. Some were also arrested for posting aggressive messages on social media, seemingly to incite violence.

“My own analysis concurs with Maud Gonne’s: the English are not, fundamentally, a revolutionary people”

Law and order? It was the authorities which quickly put the forces of law into gear and dealt with miscreants robustly. There has

even been some concern that the Labour government has over-reached its powers, and been discriminatory: regular criminals seem to get milder treatment than the rioters or malign Tweeters.

My own analysis concurs with Maud Gonne’s: the English are not, fundamentally, a revolutionary people. Elon Musk’s claim that Britain is on the brink of civil war is off the mark. But it is obvious, as the sociologist David Goodhart has commented, that a swathe of the white working class is demoralised, left behind, neglected and devalued. Meanwhile, in Yorkshire, the East Midlands, and Greater Manchester, towns have been dramatically altered by mass immigration. 60% of the British public now say that immigration is the key issue behind the riots.

Roots

The situation has calmed, but the root causes haven’t gone away. The dilemma is stark: Britain (like Ireland) needs migrants. But integration hasn’t always worked, and there is indeed a “left-behind” and disgruntled white working class.

This has occurred before – in the Victorian age, when industrialisation produced terrible conditions, and a working class often degraded by drink and squalor, moral and material. And then, an energetic Methodist church took up the challenge of social reform, and armed with missionary zeal (and some jolly good hymns) set



Elon Musk

about infusing the working-class with faith, self-belief, uplift, and respectable family values.

Perhaps it would require another such energetic movement to change depressing conditions today. Whence that cometh?



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You learn something from everything that happens to you. I learned three things when my little old Renault got a flat tyre recently.

(1) Strangers are helpful to women

in these circumstances. (2) The motor mechanic who came to rescue me by the roadside was delighted that the banger was so old it still had a spare wheel – modern cars don’t have spares, and a damaged tyre has to be tempo-

rarily repaired using a spraying solution, “which often doesn’t work as well”. And (3) the guy loved his job. “Motorists are always so thankful and pleased to see me.” Rescuing damsels in distress brings great career satisfaction, apparently!

Church must emphasise men's role in passing on Faith – Professor

Chai Brady

Recent data from the US which found that for the first time young women are more likely to become disaffiliated from religion should be seen as an opportunity not a threat, according to a Professor in the Sociology of Religion.

The Survey Center on American Life found that over the last two decades men have consistently demonstrated lower levels of religious engagement. However, their most recent survey found that 54% of young women in 'Generation Z' have become disaffiliated from religion compared to 46% of young men.

The centre highlighted that women tend to contribute much more time and energy to community building and volunteer efforts in places of worship, and in particular play an instrumental role in

passing on faith.

Asked about these findings Prof. Gladys Ganiel of Queen's University Belfast said "it is certainly the case cross-nationally that women have been the main agents of childhood socialisation in the faith. Sociologist Tom Inglis would have written about an alliance between priests and mothers that produced Catholic Ireland. Without a doubt, this socialisation process has been breaking down in Ireland, as it has been elsewhere".

Prof. Ganiel said that young women in Ireland are now achieving more educationally than men, and this is translating into more time spent on careers and greater expectations of a joint mother-father approach to childrearing.

Asked about her opinion in addressing this change, she said: "If the Churches are concerned about this, I think there has to be a greater emphasis on both men and women volunteering

and passing on the faith in the home.

"It could be argued that these tasks should never have fallen disproportionately on women. Any data showing that women are becoming more likely than men to leave the faith could be seen not as a threat but as an opportunity to create more gender-balanced parishes, congregations and family homes – which would ultimately benefit faith practice."

The US survey found that young women in particular have more liberal views on abortion and same-sex relationships – not aligning with official Church teaching, and that this was one of the factors for the religious disaffiliation. However, the survey added that generally for young women there is not just one reason for leaving.

Asked about this in an Irish context Prof. Ganiel said: "My research on the chaplaincy at Queen's University cer-

tainly indicates that highly-educated young Catholic women have more liberal views on these issues than highly-educated young Catholic men. Some of these women stay in the Church and are able to balance tensions between their own faith and the Church teachings they disagree with. "However, the problem with the island of Ireland is that we have hardly any data on the reasons why young women may be more likely to leave the Church than men. We also know that leaving faith practice is a complex process and there is almost never any one single reason why. So it's likely that these more liberal views are part of the mix, but I suspect that especially in the Republic of Ireland the Catholic Church's historic abuse of women and children – such as the Magdalene laundries – is another important factor."

Down and Connor's last farewell to Archbishop Noël

Staff Reporter

Archbishops, bishops, nuncios, priests and laypeople filled St Peter's Cathedral in Belfast to join Archbishop Noël's family in saying a last farewell to the Monaghan man who was Bishop Emeritus of Down and Connor and Nuncio to the European Union.

In his homily Bishop Alan McGuckian recalled working with Bishop Noël. "His dream for the diocese was of all the baptised, clergy, laity and religious working together for the mission of the Church and for the common good. He admired equally the priest who ministered with joy, the business person who worked and provided jobs that sustained many people in work, the religious who were to be found on the front lines of poverty and injustice, the teachers who strove to make a better society through Catholic education and to bring Christ to young people."

Bishop Alan recalled his commitment to the European project. "That was born out of a desire to forge a shared, life-giving culture in a situation of terrible division manifested at its worst in the horrible excesses of the Second World War. Noël saw that the great leaders of the recently warring nations had striven to create something

in common that was authentically secular and inclusive. They were convinced, as was Noël, that the most reliable source for the values that could carry such a bold project was the Gospel of Jesus."

Bishop Alan said that above all Noël was passionate about the Church's Social Teaching. "Archbishop Noël dearly wanted to share his passion for Catholic Social Teaching with all of us and especially young Catholics. In 2018, inspired by the World Peace Messages of Pope Francis, Archbishop Noël wrote a Pastoral Letter aimed at students and young adults. When I read over it now I have a sense of his frustration that the glorious patrimony of Catholic Social Teaching is not constantly before our eyes and on our lips; our faith tells us that 'every human life, every human person is a mystery' and must be treated as such."

He said Archbishop Noël wanted our young people to be schooled in the social teaching of the Church because the "role of committed Catholics in the formation of a new world order will not be to 'impose' our vision, as Pope Benedict XVI put it so well. It will be our duty, rather, to invite and 'propose' a wholesome culture worthy of human beings created in the Image of God, a culture inspired by the truth, justice and mercy taught to us by the Lord Jesus."



Cardinal Sean Brady and Cardinal Arthur Roche, Prefect of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments process with the remains of Archbishop Noël Treanor with his family, friends and other clergy in Belfast.

Tributes pour in for Fr Derek Smyth

Staff Reporter

The parishioners of Foxrock in Dublin have been paying tribute in their hundreds to their priest Fr Derek Smyth who died recently.

Paul Markey Chair of Foxrock Parish Pastoral Coun-

cil described him on rip.ie as "An inspirational priest full of humility and kindness. His homilies were truly mind provoking and many times were received with rapturous and well deserved applause. He will be greatly missed by the parishioners of Foxrock."

Another parishioner wrote:

As parishioners of Foxrock we are sad to learn of Fr Derek's passing. He was a very gifted preacher who challenged us with his homilies. One always left a Mass at which he preached with a deep sense of the true meaning of Christ's message. He railed against hypocrisy and false values

even where he saw this in the 'Official' church or among the Establishment in secular society. May he rest in peace."

Fr Dan O'Connor also left condolences on his behalf and that of the Dublin Diocesan Education Secretariat. Another Dublin priest, Fr Damian Far-non wrote: "I first met Derek

through the Men in Black vocations campaign many years ago. He was always prepared to take a risk for Christ. Our paths crossed again when we both worked in the USA. He sense of justice and good humour challenged and cheered me at the same time."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Like Taylor Swift, Pope has tickets sold out in minutes

As if it was a pop concert, tickets for a Papal Mass at the King Baudouin Stadium in Brussels on September 29 sold out in 90 minutes, communications manager for the Pope's visit to Belgium, Geert De Kerpel said to news portal *CathoBel*.

The venue can accommodate 35,000 visitors, and tickets were sold via Ticketmaster, similarly to big popstars like Taylor Swift and Ed Sheeran, who usually have their concerts sold out.

Mary I gets new president

Mary Immaculate College in Limerick has announced the appointment of a new president. Professor Dermot Nestor, will take over in November.

He is currently based in Sydney where he is professor of Hebrew bible at the Australian Catholic University (ACU)

Nun becomes second oldest person in the world (116)

After the recent death of the oldest living person in the world, Spain's Maria Branyas Morera who died at 117 years of age, Brazilian Sr Inah Canabarro Lucas has become the second oldest living person in the world and the second oldest ever living nun as verified by gerontology records.

Sr Canabarro was born on 8 June 1908 in Brazil. She became the oldest living person in Brazil following the death of Antonia da Santa Cruz (1905–2022) on 23 January 2022.

In October 2022, Sr Canabarro Lucas contracted COVID while she was hospitalised, but was later able to recover from the disease in November, making her one of the oldest known survivors of the disease.

She is the second-oldest nun in history, behind Sr Lucile Randon, who died last year.

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A Church by any other name...



Martina Purdy

A Dubliner, who liked a jar, was courting a Belfast woman in the eighties and was delighted when she invited him and his friends to Clonard. It was Sunday, and having enjoyed themselves the night before, they rushed to get ready - only to find that Clonard was not a local pub, but a monastery.

I was reminded of the tale after reading about a new Church of England study, which suggests that the term "church" is increasingly being dropped.

The report from the Centre for Church Planting Theology and Research examined the language in 11 dioceses, where 900 new churches had started in the past ten years. The study found that none had used the traditional phrase "church plant" as the primary way to describe the start-up. Words such as "community" or "congregation" were preferred.

"Daft revision," was the conclusion of Dr Giles Fraser, the Anglican vicar of St Anne's,

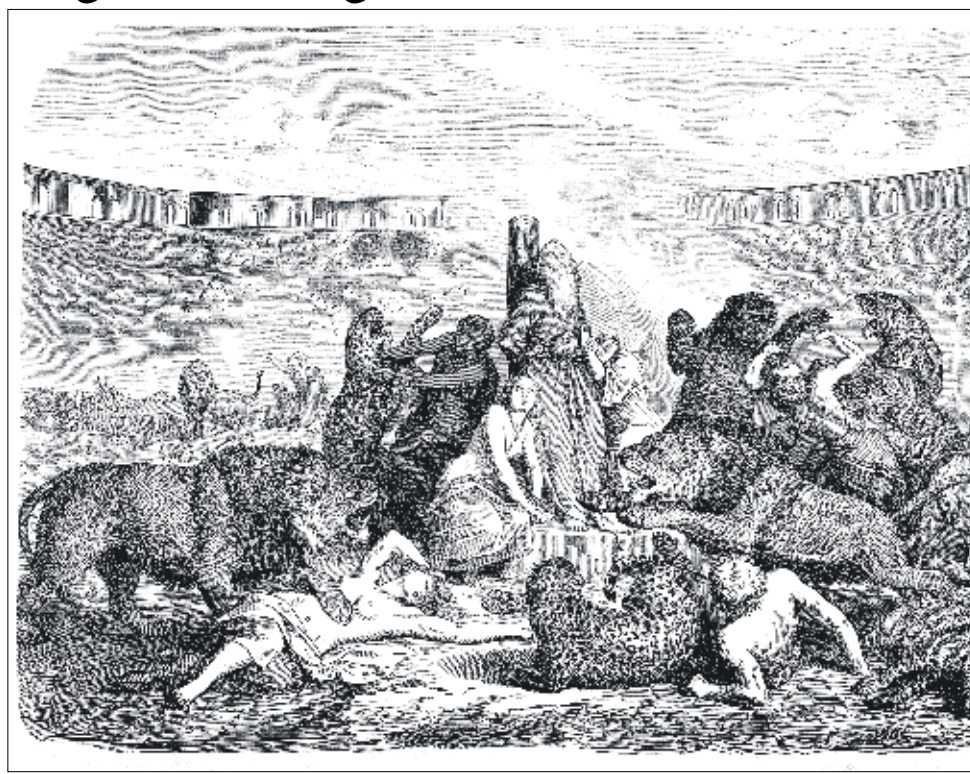
Kew. But a C of E spokesman told the *Daily Telegraph* that the word "church" did not comprehensively describe all the "new things" being done that were beyond traditional bricks and mortar. This included the controversial "silent disco worship" at All Hallows in east London, aimed at attracting young adults (Critics call this new trend in CofE Cathedrals "the rave in the nave").

Frankly, this bid to be modern smacks of desperation. But this is the least of the CoE's problems these days.

Last week it was reported that college chaplain, the Rev. Dr Bernard Randall, has launched fresh legal action against his former employer, Trent College. He is accusing the school of discrimination, harassment, victimisation and unfair dismissal. This is a long-running legal saga from 2019.

The Rev. Randall's troubles began, it seems, when the school began working with an organisation called Educate and Celebrate, an approved CoE resource, to develop a LGBT+ curriculum for the school.

In a sermon, the Rev Randall told pupils they did not have to accept ideas and ideologies from LGBT activists. And he encouraged discussion and reasoned debate. "You should be no more told to accept LGBT ideology," he said, "than you should be



told you must be in favour of Brexit or must be a Muslim."

Sounds reasonable but some pupils were offended and complaints were made. During subsequent investigations by the school and at diocesan level, the chaplain repeatedly maintained that Christian marriage was between a man and a woman.

He was dismissed from the school, and at one point he was even referred to counter-terror police on the grounds

he was risking "radicalisation".

The Rev Randall lost his initial claim for "unfair dismissal" in the Employment Tribunal. Among its findings? His reaction to the LGBT course was extreme.

His claim of victimisation, harassment and discrimination was also rejected but he is now appealing that, with help from the Christian Legal Centre. This time the focus is on his right of religious belief.

Following a series of com-

plex legal and ecclesiastical processes, the Rev Randall claims he has been blacklisted in the Church of England. He has not been able to secure a post and says he just wants "his life back".

He is not the only one who feels rejected after standing up for traditional Christian views on marriage and sex.

The Rev. Brett Murphy (who quit the Free Church of England when it allowed same-sex blessings) endured a formal procedure last year for calling the Cof E's first transgender Archdeacon a "bloke". Another complaint against him, which was not upheld, was that he had criticised prayers put forward for the King's coronation which described Jesus as "our sis-

ter".

The Bishop of Derby and the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby have been criticised by groups such as Christian Concern over their handling of Randall's case. Indeed, one of the key criticisms is the failure to support a clergyman standing up for Christian teaching.

However well-intentioned, the Archbishop of Canterbury - who made the *Mail on Sunday's* Most Woke List in 2023 - does seem to be leading the Church in a rather odd direction. In a subsequent interview with the New Statesman, he said: "Better to be woke than asleep."

Yes, he admits to struggling with issues - don't we all?

There is a reason Christians were thrown to the lions - our belief system challenges a world that wants to do its own thing.

Christianity comes with a cross - and has never been easy, especially when it comes to marriage and sexuality. Christ himself shocked his apostles for his "hard teaching".

Frankly, we all need to wake up, and make sure that we Christians don't throw each other to lions.

Lord knows the Roman Catholic Church (community if you prefer) is far from perfect.

But, as we struggle with our own issues, and continue on the Synodal path, let us be wary of woke.

Let us be awake to the Holy Spirit, not the spirit of the age.

And let us stay close to Jesus, the Living Bread, who points us not just to his body and blood in the Eucharist, but his own bread: the will of the Father.

It was great to see the crowds at Knock on my annual August pilgrimage, after the lean lockdown years. Fr Richard Gibbons, Rector of Knock Shrine, who graciously thanked the people for turning out in great numbers on the Feast of the Assumption, reminded us of an old Irish saying: God's help is nearer than the door.

As I made a treacherous dissent down Croagh Patrick the other day, I was amused to hear a little girl tell her sister, who wanted a bit of craic, that she was "focussed on not falling right now". I laughed audibly - pondering later how this particular pilgrimage is a metaphor for life in general. The challenge is always to have good fun - without falling.

No conflict between faith and science – bishop Doran

Staff Reporter

Speaking at the Knock novena, Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin said that there is no real conflict between science and religion.

"There is really no conflict between faith and science. Both faith and science seek the truth. Science approaches the truth by examining physical evidence. Faith goes beyond the physical evidence to seek answers to questions that science doesn't address, questions about the meaning and purpose of human existence. But the truth is still the truth, whether it comes

through science or through prayerful contemplation", he said.

He went on to add: "These days, of course, people talk more about evolution than about creation. They point to scientific research and tell us that the universe has been taking shape for millions of years. It is mind-boggling but, of course, it is true. I think we can certainly agree that God's Creation may not have happened exactly as it is described in the Book of Genesis. That doesn't mean that Genesis isn't true. It simply reminds us that Genesis was never meant to be a history book. It is the fruit of a prayerful contemplation on the experience of living

in the universe and, the heart of it is our faith that the universe is the fruit of the Creative action of God. That essential truth remains and Science, properly understood, does nothing to undermine it.

Science itself would suggest, indeed that there is some great power at work in the universe, a power far greater and more intelligent than we are. Pope Francis often speaks about our "throwaway culture" which, in recent centuries, has damaged the earth, which is our common home. He has called on us to respect the laws of nature, and science is now telling us the same."

Bishop Doran outlined how sci-

ence has shown us the development of a child in the womb and how it fits with our faith's understanding of the process.

"The pace of scientific research in recent centuries, and especially in our own life-time, has been truly amazing. We don't have all the answers yet. At times, unfortunately, we have used the fruits of our research in ways which are destructive rather than life giving. But science has shown us, in a way that we never understood before, just how wonderful and how complex is the universe that has been given to us. One example of that is the way in which biology and photography

together have allowed us to see the development of the child in the womb and to understand in a new way, what previously we only knew by faith: "*you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb*" (Psalm 139)."

Bishop Doran concluded: "We don't all need to be scientists or theologians; we don't need to have it all clearly worked out. It is still a work in progress. What is important, as we reflect on what is put before us, is that we would invite God to speak to our hearts about our own place in the universe and our own mission in the world that He has given us."

Kids hungry for meaning and feel existentially lost



Eoin McCormack

It has been reported that religion was the most popular choice by secondary school students as the subject they would “like to see more of” in school. In a survey carried out by Amárach Research, religion came out top at 34% with psychology and drama “also mentioned frequently.” This is a very welcome statistic, particularly coming from secondary schools which for a long time have been one of the least welcoming places for catechetical input in the culture.

On one level we shouldn't be too surprised by students asking for either more religious education or classes on psychology for that matter. It is well reported that younger generations are experiencing a ‘meaning crisis’ in contemporary society which insists on promoting secular relativism in almost every facet of modern life. As religion becomes more and more sidelined, people are feeling existentially lost.

Growth

A number of months ago I went to a public discussion on the existence of God which crammed 60 people into a small rented-out café in Dublin and had to turn people away because there wasn't enough space. People are hungry for meaning, and hungry for God and now that students are actually asking for more religious education, we should be jumping on their request.

This search for truth and meaning amongst younger generations is particularly evident in the online world as people like Bishop Robert Barron, Matt Fradd (Pints with Aquinas), and Fr Mike Schmitz, provide faith formation for Catholics who are

not receiving it elsewhere. Bishop Barron alone boasts almost 1.5million subscribers on YouTube. Additionally, Canadian psychologist Jordan Peterson is also attracting millions of views on his YouTube lectures in which he is encouraging a philosophical approach to life and the importance of personal responsibility for young men in particular. One video on the “Introduction to the Idea of God” carries over 13million views alone and in 2022, Peterson sold out the 3Arena in Dublin for a lecture which attracted over 13,000 people.

“We have an opportunity to create a much more engaging, mature and intellectual programme”

With a treasure chest of 2,000 years of philosophy and theology, the Church should be tapping into this new rising interest in matters of faith and respond with the full force of our intellectual tradition. As students now ask for more religion in Irish schools, it is time to take a serious look at our current catechetical programmes and ask are they fit for purpose.

Consistently, Bishop Barron references his niece's Catholic education which involved high-end study of almost every other subject bar religion. While her English curriculum for example included classics like Shakespeare, the religious curriculum was something akin to a ‘children's colouring book’. This has certainly been a common experience of second level religious education in Ireland also and has done significant damage to generations of Irish people who perceive religion as an irrelevant childish fantasy. Now that students are requesting something better, we have an opportunity to create a much more engaging, mature and intellectual programme. While one of the problems in this regard might be the lack of sufficiently theologically

trained or compelled teachers, modern technology can provide the means to develop catechetical programmes on our own terms.

Education

It is important however not to conflate religious education with catechetical faith formation. The Religious Education programme offered at a post primary level is akin to a world religions introductory course taught with a phenomenological pedagogy. In other words, world religions are explained from a distance, laying out a series of facts regarding each one. This is not theological or catechetical formation in any traditional Catholic sense. Not that there's anything necessarily wrong with studying religions in that matter as a subject provided by the state curriculum, as a Church however we should be careful not to think that the ‘catechesis box’ is being ticked by this approach. The phenomenological pedagogy to religious education which has been the case in Irish secondary schools for at least 30 years is very different to Vatican II's vision of catholic education which called on its institutions to “order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith.” In practice for example, how can a Catholic teacher present Jesus as Savior and simultaneously teach that this is a merely faith-based claim that only some people hold? A truly ‘Catholic approach’ as per the General Directory for Catechesis, aims for a “pedagogy of transformation” and not merely the transmission of information. A lesson can be learned in this regard from the Belgian Bishops who in an ‘Ad limina’ visit to the Holy See in 2010 expressed their regret for dumbing down their catechetical programmes to a phenomenological pedagogy which they claimed: resulted in “too little introduction to the Christian faith and places too much emphasis upon religious plurality.”

This latest statistic from Amárach should highly encourage anyone involved in the area of catechetics that new generations are asking for guidance. In a world saturated by secular relativism, we are now being invited by our younger population to give them something meaningful.



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Impossible not to feel hopeful after this retreat, says Youth 2000 organiser



Renata Milán Morales

Nearly 1,000 young people gathered at Clongowes Wood College in Co. Kildare from August 15 to 18 for the 35th annual Youth 2000 retreat, marking an important milestone in the organisation's history. The event brought together participants aged 16 to 35 from across Ireland, offering them an opportunity to deepen their relationship with God while connecting with others.

Growth

The retreat was a celebration of faith, engaging participants in prayer,

formation, worship, and community. The focus on devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and the healing services provided a deeply spiritual experience. Kathryn Freney, a leader from Connacht, highlighted the transformative impact of such an environment, saying, "If people in parishes around Ireland were to come here this weekend, they'd be filled with a lot of hope for the future of the Church in Ireland."

“The greatest evangelisers of young people are other young people”

The event featured the presence of several parish priests, along with Bishop Cullinan of Waterford and Lismore, and Bishop Gavin of Cork and Ross, and the

participation and support of numerous religious orders. Participants came from all corners of Ireland. Lisa Russell, Youth 2000 Ulster leader, expressed her optimism, saying, "One can only come away from this with a renewed sense of hope."

Youth 2000's distinctive charism resonates strongly with today's young Catholics. The emphasis on personal spiritual growth and formation, coupled with a strong sense of community, makes Youth 2000 events particularly appealing to a generation that is both "open and curious about their faith," as Keith Kelly, Youth Minister in the Diocese of Raphoe noted. The organisation encourages participants to carry their experiences back to their local communities. Freney explained, "A big part of Youth 2000 is sending people back into their own parishes, through their own dioceses. It's about creating prayer groups and commu-

nities in your own area."

This missionary spirit was evident in the testimonies shared at the retreat. Freney recounted the story of a young woman who, after experiencing a profound conversion at a previous retreat, began inviting her friends to join the youth group. "The greatest evangelisers of young people are other young people," Freney said, echoing Bishop Gavin's words in his homily at the festival.

Despite Youth 2000's influence, Freney acknowledged that many have yet to hear of it, even those who regularly practice their Faith.

Future

Looking to the future, Youth 2000 plans to continue its mission with upcoming events, including a provincial retreat at Lough Derg from September 27 to 29. The movement shares more information on Youth2000.ie and on their social media

platforms.

Both Russell and Freney expressed a strong sense of hope for the future of the Church in Ireland. "There's a strong emphasis on outreach, but also on maintaining and building up the ones you have," Russell observed. Keith Kelly, Youth Minister for the Diocese of Raphoe, added, "Each generation has its strengths and weaknesses. This generation is very open, and we should capitalise on that."

“We do it out of love for the youth and to bring them to the heart of the Church”

Youth 2000 operates at a provincial level across Ireland, with volunteers in every county. Entirely volunteer-driven, the organi-

sation runs its events on a donation-only basis, ensuring there are no barriers to attendance. "We do it out of love for the youth and to bring them to the heart of the Church," Russell explained.

The Clongowes Wood College retreat, one of Youth 2000's largest events, required significant resources, including venue rental, insurance, and logistical support. With a total cost of over €80,000, the organisation relied on Providence and donations to cover expenses, providing all accommodation, food, and activities free of charge.

In a time when the Church faces numerous challenges, the Youth 2000 retreat at Clongowes Wood College is a reminder of the potential within the younger generations. As Harry, a young male who attended the retreat pointed, "It is a very exciting time to be a Catholic in Ireland."



Bishop Fintan Gavin hearing confessions. Photos: Nodlaig Lillis.





Workshop on Spiritual Growth imparted by Fr Gault OP.



Youth 2000 Festival



Attendees in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

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Ardagh and Clonmacnois deals with low number of priests



Renata Steffens

It is not a surprise the number of active priests has been dropping drastically in the past decades. This issue can be seen in every diocese throughout the country, and a five-minute talk with any bishop or priest about the matter would leave you astonished.

The August 15 issue of *The Irish Catholic* mentioned the worrying situation of the Kilmore diocese, that sparked the necessity to understand if a similar problem is happening in other dioceses. *The Irish Catholic* talked with Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois Paul Connell.

Currently, Ardagh and Clonmacnois Diocese has 45 active priests working in its 41 parishes, of those four are foreign: “41 priests are Irish, three Nigerian and one is Indian”, Fr Tom Healy, secretary of the diocese said. He also explained the diocese had 18 retirements in the past ten years and only one ordination in the same period.

About those stats, Bishop Connell said he issued a pastoral letter explaining to the community the diocese's situation in which he “reiterated what they were told in the last pastoral letter by his predecessor, Archbishop Francis Duffy of Tuam, “that there would be difficulties going forward.”

Clustered

“The parishes would have to be clustered because there is no longer an ability by the diocese to have a priest in every parish because of retirements and because we don't have any younger priests coming on at the moment,” he said.

The bishop does not believe the solution is to bring more international priests to minister in Ireland. “We have a number of international priests assisting in Ireland and that's very helpful but it's

not a solution to the problems of the Irish Church”, he said.

Many of these international priests came from Africa to Ireland to study in Maynooth. Bishop Connell explained that “while they're doing that, they're helping out in parishes and assisting us, which we very much appreciate.”

He said that “in some cases, some [Irish] dioceses have made an arrangement with some dioceses in Africa to get some priests on loan for a certain amount of time.” But “we always have to be conscious of the fact, as Cardinal Tagle mentioned when he was asked about this, that as tight as things are in Europe, there still is a very much larger ratio of people without a priest in Africa.

“There's no intention of any of us to go down the road of abolishing parishes or anything like that, but we're going to have more cooperation between parishes”

“We can't be taking priests from other parts of the world where there is a greater need.” For the bishop, it is fine to have some priests coming seeking further education and assisting parishes while they are here.

Seeing the numbers of active priests going down every year and not enough ordinations and incardinations to balance those numbers, one might think the solution is to close or merge parishes. However, Bishop Connell was very incisive saying that “is not an option.”

“There's no intention of any of us to go down the road of abolishing parishes or anything like that, but we're going to have more cooperation between parishes”, he explained.

The diocese's plan to counter the dropping number of priests is to involve laity workers. The bishop said the diocese, from now on, will



Bishop Paul Connell

“have much more involvement of lay people as catechists, as pastoral workers, as secretaries, to do a lot of the administrative work. We're going to have much more of that going forward because there will be a smaller number of priests in this crisis.”

The diocesan changes to counter the challenges of such a drop in new priests numbers have already started in that diocese. In the last year, two parishes in the Carrick-on-Shannon area were clustered with Carrick-on-Shannon.

“The four priests in that area now are looking after three parishes. Carrick-on-Shannon is a large town, so that's a big ask for the four priests to, between them, do all of that,” the bishop said.

This summer, Bishop Connell has clustered two further parishes. “There was already a clustering arrangement happening down in Lanesborough,” he explained.

Retire

If all priests in Ardagh and Clonmacnois Diocese were to retire at 75, “if they all were to simply stop and do not go further, the number of priests left would be such that things would be very stretched. I mean, in this

diocese by 2030, if that were to happen, I would probably be looking at running a diocese with only 15 priests”, Bishop Connell said.

Bishop Duffy flagged a number of years ago this crisis would happen, and Bishop Connell has been talking to his community about what has and has not changed in the diocese since the first prediction.

The crisis is still here, and the difficulties will not disappear tomorrow, but not everything is bad, and the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois is seeing small but positive progress.

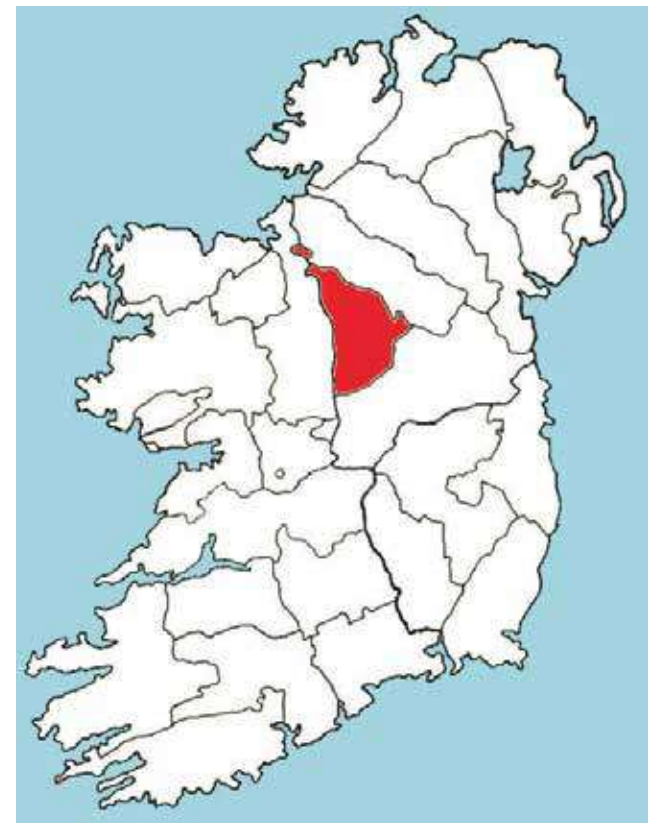
“There are opportunities, and perhaps if we discern what's happening, maybe the Lord is saying something to us, [that] we need to propose change the way we do things”

“We had no seminarians, and this year we hope to have two. But that will take time to come through the system. It takes a long while to train seminarians, but it's great. It's a very positive development.”

Fortunately, the diocese counts on the generosity of its priests. The bishop said “they're superb” as some agreed to continue to work for the moment. “And even when they do retire, they do help out, they assist their former colleagues in lots of ways, which is extremely



Archbishop Francis Duffy



Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois coloured in red.

appreciated and very helpful.”

It is a challenging situation for the Irish Church, the dioceses and the bishops. Bishop Connell said every diocese is trying to deal with this crisis as best as they can, and that the dioceses are unique and are finding their own particular solutions.

Crisis

Oftentimes an opportunity can be found in the middle of a crisis. The bishop believes in this challenge “there are opportunities, and perhaps if we dis-

cern what's happening, maybe the Lord is saying something to us, [that] we need to propose change the way we do things.”

Even though the changes, the clustering and the participation of lay people in administration are necessary to manage the lack of priests, that should not be the solution. “We need to continue always to pray and to encourage vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Because without priests, there can be no Eucharist and the Eucharist is where the centre of the Church is.”

“We need to continue always to pray and to encourage vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Because without priests, there can be no Eucharist and the Eucharist is where the centre of the Church is”

The ostrich-like response to the ISIS attack on Fr Murphy



David Quinn

Fr Paul Murphy, the army chaplain stabbed multiple times on his way into Renmore army barracks in Galway last Thursday night, was very fortunate to escape with his life, and it seems, without any long-term, life-altering incidents.

The alleged assailant was a 16-year-old who cannot be named because of his age. Gardai have established that he had been reposting material from Islamist terrorist organisations such as ISIS, and his online activity had been noticed by Gardai and therefore he was on a watchlist.

Gardai raided the family home of the boy to take away evidence that will enable them to discover what else he was looking at online.

A Garda source told *The Irish Independent*: "The expectation is that more incriminating evidence will be found on these devices, but gardaí are aware that this individual had been reposting fairly disturbing material from organisations affiliated with terror groups such as Isis (IS) and Al-Qa'ida in recent months."

Agitated

It appears the boy, who has since been charged and refused bail, was particularly agitated about the presence of Irish soldiers in the African nation of Mali, where they acted as peace-keepers for 10 years up to last September. Mali has a strong ISIS presence.

Catholics will have found it particularly disturbing that the victim was a priest, although he was probably not attacked for that reason.

Fr Murphy is originally from Waterford, and reacting to the attack, the bishop of Waterford and Lismore, Phonsie Cullinan, said that the attack had "left us all in shock and mourning".

He said that the Church "stands firmly behind him" and he urged "members of our congregation to keep him in their thoughts and prayers as he navigates through this painful experience."

There was political reaction too. Taoiseach Simon Harris, Tanaiste Micheal Martin and Justice Minister Helen McEntee



Lt Ross Flanagan and Capt Mike Fitzpatrick and chaplain Fr Michael Hinds with a patrol group on Mount Hermon in the Holy Land

all condemned the attack and wished Fr Paul Murphy well.

But what was very noticeable about the political reaction is less what was said, and more what was not said.

“There is no doubt that some ISIS fighters came from Ireland. This revelation caused few political ripples at the time. It’s like we didn’t want to know”

Most importantly, there was no attempt on the part of our political leaders to link the attack to any wider pattern in Irish society. While the assault on Fr Murphy seems to have been an isolated one in the sense that the alleged attacker was acting alone and appears to have no connection with a wider network, our politicians have shown a singular lack of curiosity as to whether other lone individuals are being radicalised, and radicalised specifically by the sort of Islamist ide-

ologies that have produced the likes of ISIS.

When ISIS was at its peak a few years ago, individual Muslim men were flocking to join it in places like Syria and Iraq from all over Europe, including Ireland. According to one ISIS operative who was interviewed by *Newstalk* in 2015, around 40 ISIS fighters had been recruited in Ireland.

Maybe he was exaggerating, but there is no doubt that some ISIS fighters came from Ireland. This revelation caused few political ripples at the time. It's like we didn't want to know.

And who can forget Lisa Smith, the former Irish soldier who converted to Islam, was radicalised and then travelled to Syria to join ISIS? That was an extraordinary story.

But the big question which should have been debated at the time was this: how did something like that happen?

In 2018, a man was imprisoned for raising money for ISIS in Ireland. Who was he raising money from? How many ISIS sympathisers were (are) living here?

Do you remember wide-

spread media or political analysis of any of this at the time? When Lisa Smith was discovered in a camp in Syria after ISIS was defeated in that country, some politicians expressed sympathy towards her, almost as if she was an innocent tourist trapped abroad in a conflict zone, rather than someone who had gone out there willingly.

Raging

If there was currently a civil war raging in some country overseas between an obviously fascist side and some other faction (as in the Spanish Civil War), what would we think if dozens of Irish people went out to join the fascist side?

There would undoubtedly be a national hue and cry and a demand to find out how this was happening, who exactly was being radicalised, who was doing the recruiting, and how extensive this tendency was in Irish society.

The incredible thing is that in the days following the attack on Fr Murphy, most of the analysis in the media concerned the Irish far-right, and not Islamism at all. The attack was used as an excuse to dis-

cuss the process of radicalisation generally speaking, but then with a particular focus on the far-right, and how the far-right is radicalised via the internet.

This is despite the fact the Fr Murphy's alleged attacker appears to have been radicalised online and inspired by Islamist ideology.

“Is the attack on Fr Murphy a totally isolated case, or are other young people being radicalised in this country by Islamist material online?”

In other words, the attack on Fr Murphy is not being properly analysed. Why is that? The number one reason is almost certainly that the political and media establishment do not want to feed any ill-will towards the Muslim community here and is worried that the far-right in Ireland might use the attack on Fr Murphy as an opportunity to recruit new members and turn more people against Irish Muslims.

This is an understandable concern. But it cannot allow us to turn a blind eye to what might be happening here, and what has undoubtedly always happened. Several dozen people do not leave Ireland to join ISIS for no reason. Money was not raised for ISIS here for no reason. There were obviously networks of some kind in existence.

Is the attack on Fr Murphy a totally isolated case, or are other young people being radicalised in this country by Islamist material online?

Have we radicalisers living and operating in Ireland?

Refusal

The refusal to allow issues like the above to be aired will end up having the opposite from the intended effect. Instead of being filled with facts, and sane voices, the void will be filled by rumour and extreme voices.

The ostrich-like response to the attack on Fr Murphy, the refusal to contemplate whether it might be linked to something wider, represents a colossal failure on the part of our politicians in particular, but also much of the media, to serve the public properly and honestly.

Peace, even if not perfect, is precious



Three decades on from the IRA ceasefire, it's right to recall the role played by prominent priests writes **Michael Kelly**

It would become an iconic image of the terrible civil conflict on our island we euphemistically call 'the Troubles'. Redemptorist Fr Alec Reid kneeling reciting the last rites for two British soldiers who had just been executed by the Provisional IRA.

It was March 1988. Earlier that month three IRA members – Seán Savage, Daniel McCann and Mairéad Farrell – were killed by SAS forces in Gibraltar. A further three people were killed at their funeral in a gun and grenade attack by UDA member Michael Stone.

Amidst a tense atmosphere, the victims of the Milltown Cemetery attack were being taken to the cemetery following funeral Masses. The two British soldiers – Corporals Derek Wood and David Howes – drove into the funeral procession wearing civilian clothes in an unmarked car, seemingly by mistake.

Believing the soldiers were loyalists intent on repeating the UDA attack, dozens of people surrounded and attacked their car. During this, Corporal Wood drew his pistol and fired a shot into the air. The soldiers were then dragged from the car and taken to a nearby sports ground where they were beaten, stripped and shot dead.

That evening, the image of Fr Reid beamed around the world: an icon of the madness of violence and division. What the world didn't know was that Fr Reid was clutching under his arm a letter that he had just collected from the then Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams to leader of the SDLP John Hume.

When Fr Reid delivered the



The then Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams, Taoiseach Albert Reynolds and SDLP leader John Hume.

envelope to Mr Hume in his Derry home, it was stained with the blood of one of the soldiers – a powerful symbol of the need for peace.

Discrimination

Next week marks 30 years since the IRA army council declared what they described as a "cessation of military operations".

"We believe that an opportunity to secure a just and lasting settlement has been created. We are therefore entering into a new situation in a spirit of determination and confidence, determined that the injustices which created this conflict will be removed and confident in the strength and justice of our struggle to achieve this," the IRA said in their statement.

It was by no means a peace settlement, but it was the beginning of a new dawn and the culmination of decades of work by courageous Church people like Fr Reid.

The Irish Commission for Justice and Peace had been established by the hierarchy in the wake of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), to put flesh on the bones of the Church's concern that worldly justice would be done. At the same time, a whole generation of young Catholics – the fruits of the huge investment parishes put into Catholic schools – were coming of age in the north. Inspired by civil rights struggles in the United States, they agitated against the discrimina-

tion of the Stormont administration against Catholics.

From the foundation of Northern Ireland in 1921, the system was built to exclude the Catholic minority. Discrimination in housing and employment was widespread, with the long-serving prime minister of the northern state Basil Brooke chiding his co-religionists as "traitors to Ulster" for employing Catholics.

“Young Catholic leaders like John Hume (a former seminarian), Austin Currie and Bernadette Devlin refused to accept the status quo”

Unemployment amongst Protestant men was 6.6%, the equivalent for the Catholic community was 17.3%. Catholics were over-represented in unskilled jobs and Protestants in skilled employment. Catholics made up 31% of the economically active population but accounted for only 6% of mechanical engineers, 7% of 'company secretaries and registrars' and 'personnel managers', 8% of university teachers, 9% of local authority senior officers, 19% of medical practitioners, and 23% of lawyers.

Young Catholic leaders like John Hume (a former seminarian), Austin Currie and Bernadette Devlin refused to accept the status quo. They saw what was happening in the US and how peaceful mass protests had drawn attention to the plight of Black Americans living under segregation and Jim Crow.

On October 5, 1968, a protest march was planned along Duke Street in Derry. The nationalist activists wanted to draw attention to discriminatory housing policies that resulted in de facto segregation along sectarian and religious lines. The march was banned by the Northern Ireland government, but protestors defied the order and gathered with signs reading 'One man, one vote!' and 'Smash sectarianism!'

The crowd started to move but was barricaded by a line of police from the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) brandishing batons. The police charged the protestors and simultaneously cut off their retreat. TV cameras captured disturbing footage of RUC officers beating marchers with batons and chaos in the streets.

"October 5, 1968, was when the Troubles began," argues Dr James Smyth, an emeritus history professor at the University of Notre Dame, "and those TV images are etched in the people's memory."

Priests, religious sisters and even bishops were early supporters of the civil rights

movement. They too had benefited from free education and attended university at a time when it was increasingly clear that the status quo could not hold.

Division

The partition of the island in 1921 effectively split the Church in two. On the face of it, the hierarchy remained a single unit – but southern bishops soon immersed themselves in the affairs of the new Free State and northern Catholics and their leaders effectively found themselves marooned. The Archdiocese of Armagh, Derry, Clogher and Kilmore dioceses found themselves split by the border with some parishes in the south and others in the north.

Inspired by the teaching of the Second Vatican Council

which saw justice as an integral part of the Gospel, many priests had stepped up and understood their role not just as spiritual leaders but as giving voice to the frustrations and aspirations of their congregations.

Operation Demetrius in 1971 – which saw the British army round up hundreds of young Catholics and imprison them without trial – was a tipping point for many. More than 300 priests in the North signed a petition demanding that the policy of internment be withdrawn. Some priests were even taken to court for boycotting the British census for the region that year. They were only saved from imprisonment for not paying the fine when an 'angel investor' stepped forward and paid the court.

“Church leaders initially thought that the conflict would be short-lived and worked towards ending the violence”

As the IRA's campaign of violence intensified, Church leaders such as Down and Connor's Bishop William Philbin became increasingly vocal in their criticism of violence.

Understanding personalities within the hierarchy at the time is key to understanding the approach from Church leaders. Dr Neil Farren, for example, was Bishop of Derry from 1939-1973 and preferred to work behind the scenes rather than via public statements. He was replaced by Edward Daly who was only 41 when appointed. Dr Daly became an outspoken



Fr Alec Reid gives the last rites to two British Army corporals killed after they drove into a republican funeral.



Pictured on the Falls Road in Belfast are celebrations after the ceasefire in August, 1994. Photo: Pacemaker.

critic both of paramilitary violence and violence perpetrated by the security forces.

Another change in leadership in Armagh shifted the focus in the primatial see as well. Cardinal William Conway died in 1977 and was replaced by Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich. A native of South Armagh, he was an unashamed Irish nationalist and the British authorities had reportedly lobbied against his elevation. Dr Ó Fiaich's tenure marked a more robust approach from the Church to the British authorities and the cardinal famously had a tense relationship with the then British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Church leaders initially

thought that the conflict would be short-lived and worked towards ending the violence. A 1972 IRA ceasefire ultimately broke down, and this led the Church to see the conflict as a longer-term thing that needed a longer-term strategy.

Collapse

Almost from the beginning of the Provisional's campaign of violence, they complained – unfairly – that priests and bishops were quick to denounce republican violence while having little to say about violence carried out by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) or British army.

The collapse of the 1972 ceasefire also saw Church lead-

ers in the US take a more arms-length approach to Ireland. Many had been content to be involved in fundraisers for the North, but now there were real concerns about the destination of some of these funds.

In the mid-1970s, Fr Reid had helped broker a truce between warring factions from the Official IRA and the Provisional IRA. He and other clerics had also ministered to republican prisoners and their families, particularly during the hunger strikes.

Fr Reid believed that the key to ending violence was to convince the IRA that there could be a nationalist consensus that involved both the Irish government and the SDLP. He had

the support of Cardinal Ó Fiaich, but the Church wanted to maintain a plausible deniability if things went wrong and Fr Reid would've been cut loose as a 'lone ranger'.

“The post-hunger strikes electoral success makes it clear that Sinn Féin is here to stay, and would have to be part of the solution”

A major challenge for the Church emerged following the hunger strikes of 1981 when ten republican prisoners starved themselves to death. The intransigence of the British government in allowing the men to die handed a major propaganda victory to the IRA and Sinn Féin who began translating this into electoral success. Before that, the bishops were able to argue convincingly that there is no real support in the Catholic community for the IRA. The post-hunger strikes electoral success makes it clear that Sinn Féin is here to stay, and would have to be part of the solution.

In 1986, Fr Reid opened channels between Gerry

Adams and the British government and between Mr Adams and the Fianna Fáil leader Charles Haughey. Soon after Mr Haughey became taoiseach in early 1987, Fr Reid arranged low level discussions between envoys of Mr Adams and Mr Haughey at the Dundalk Redemptorist monastery. Mr Haughey refused to meet Mr Adams face-to-face, so the SDLP leader John Hume was approached instead. After further meetings between Fr Reid and Mr Hume, secret talks between Mr Hume and Mr Adams took place at intervals over January–September 1988, at Clonard Monastery.

Dialogue

What became known as the Hume-Adams dialogue intensified when Albert Reynolds became taoiseach in 1992. Fr Reid and Mr Reynolds spent long evenings speaking on the telephone and were convinced that a ceasefire was within reaching distance. Late that year, direct talks were facilitated by Fr Reid with representatives of the Irish government and former IRA leading figure Martin McGuinness.

Much of Fr Reid's genius lay in convincing the IRA that many other people also supported the goal of Irish reunification but pursuing it by purely peaceful means offered the best chance of making it a reality.

He died in 2013 not realising

that dream, but he did see an island at peace and Belfast – a city he loved – benefiting from the so-called peace dividend.

“A political backlog at Stormont is infinitely better than what went before”

He is one of the known peacemakers whose role came to light, there are many other men of the cloth who had the courage to take risks and step across lines in ways that politicians couldn't. Many of them had no hesitation in putting themselves in risky situations to try to bring together republicans and members of the British government to create conversations. Many will probably take their role to the grave with them, but 30 years after that momentous ceasefire – we are grateful for their ministry and witness. We can all grumble about what sometimes seems like slow progress, but a political backlog at Stormont is infinitely better than what went before.

Michael Kelly is Director of Public Affairs with Aid to the Church in Need, Ireland and a former editor of The Irish Catholic.

THE SYNODAL TIMES

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Knock Novena continues to nourish



Brandon Scott

The annual Knock Novena concluded today (August 22), featuring its typical array of intriguing speakers giving witness to the Faith and imparting perspectives and insights to imbue pilgrims from far and wide in an increasingly challenging climate. This year's Novena saw bishops, priests, nuns, singers, authors and academics make appearances and attest to why their Faith matters to them and why they feel compelled to speak with such zeal about it.

Eclectic names such as Bishop Kevin Doran, Dr Austen Ivereigh, Fr Richard Leonard SJ, Monsignor Kevin Gillespie, Donna Taggart, Sr Orla Treacy, Dr Gráinne Doherty and Fr Richard Gibbons respectively touched on topics such as 'Hope for a Changing Church', 'Keeping Mary Close', 'To Sing is to Pray Twice', and 'Everything Starts with a Prayer', in front of the sizeable crowds in the Basilica.

Collaboration

Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran, who spoke on the Sunday on the topic of 'Praying the Mysteries of Creation', illuminated the long-standing perceived conflict between science and religion, dispelling this notion while affirming that both have a commonality underpinning them and that's the quest for truth.

"These days, of course, people talk more about evolution than about creation," he said. "They point to scientific research and tell us that the universe has been taking shape for millions of years. It is mind-boggling but, of course, it is true. I think we can certainly agree that God's Creation may not have happened exactly as it is described in the Book of Genesis."

"That doesn't mean that Genesis isn't true. It simply reminds us that Genesis was never meant to be a history book. It is the fruit of a prayerful contemplation on the experience of living in the universe and, the heart of it is our faith that the universe is the fruit of the Creative action of God. That essential truth remains and science, properly understood, does nothing to undermine it."

"Science itself would suggest, indeed that there is some great power at work in the

universe, a power far greater and more intelligent than we are. Pope Francis often speaks about our 'throwaway culture' which, in recent centuries, has damaged the earth, which is our common home. He has called on us to respect the laws of nature, and science is now telling us the same.

“We don't all need to be scientists or theologians; we don't need to have it all clearly worked out”

"There is really no conflict between faith and science. Both faith and science seek the truth. Science approaches the truth by examining physical evidence. Faith goes beyond the physical evidence to seek answers to questions that science doesn't address, questions about the meaning and purpose of human existence. But the truth is still the truth, whether it comes through science or through prayerful contemplation."

"We don't all need to be scientists or theologians; we don't need to have it all clearly worked out. It is still a work in progress."

Fr Richard Gibbons, parish priest and Rector at Knock Shrine, said Family Day, which took place last Sunday, drew a huge crowd to the Marian Shrine.

"We were very happy with the Family Day, we were blessed with the weather," he said. "The numbers attending have been great, and it's going well for us. We had family blessings on Sunday in the Apparition Chapel and it was jam-packed. We will have to move it into the Basilica next year which is a great complaint to have."

"The Novena has seen several guest speakers from near and far as well as attendees from the United States, Italy and Asia."

"There is something for everybody during the nine-day event. We welcomed a group from East Timor last Sunday, as well as many from our country and beyond. Some have travelled from America - they came for the Novena last year and came back for this year's event so it has been very encouraging. There was another couple I met from Messina (Sicily, Italy). People not only come to Knock but they also join in online which builds a connection with us."



Terry and Miriam Maughan and family at the National Novena at Knock Shrine. Photo: The Commercial Photographer.



Anoop Kudilil Jose and family from Dublin attending the National Novena at Knock Shrine. Photo: The Commercial Photographer.



Tajmon Bernard and family from Dublin at the National Novena at Knock Shrine. Photo: The Commercial Photographer.



Freddie and Natalie attend the National Novena at Knock Shrine on August 15. Photo: The Commercial Photographer.



The Rosary Procession at the National Novena on August 15. Photo: The Commercial Photographer.



Archbishop Francis Duffy, Archbishop of Tuam with Fr Richard Gibbons PP, Rector of Knock Shrine and guest speaker Dr Austen Ivereigh at the National Novena.



Una Nolan, Alanna Burke, Chloe Hughes and Grace McLoughlin of Schola Cantorum Basilicae sing at Knock Novena. Photo: The Commercial Photographer.



Members of Cairde Mhuire lead the Rosary Procession at the National Novena at Knock Shrine. Photo: The Commercial Photographer.



James Wall from Skreen, Co. Sligo, who attended the Novena with his mother and grandmother. Photo: The Commercial Photographer.



The Mc Partland family from Arigna, Co. Roscommon at the National Novena at Knock Shrine.

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Out&About

Former Sacristan awarded medal



CAVAN: Mary Ann McGovern, who was awarded a Papal Medal, with her children and Fr Eamon Lynch, Bishop Hayes and PP Fr Séan Maguire in St Patrick's Church, Corlough on August 11.



DUBLIN: Capuchin Franciscan celebrated a Brazilian festival 'Arraiá', organised by the Brazilian community led by Fr Severino and Fr Ademir on August 10. The event with music and games received over 600 people from multiple nationalities.



DUBLIN: A farewell evening celebration for Fr Eamon McCarthy, who is leaving Radio Maria Ireland happened on August 13. The farewell started with a Mass and had a reception afterwards at The Green Isle Hotel.

IN SHORT

Cavan woman awarded Papal Medal

Mary Ann McGovern, who was sacristan at St Patrick's Church, Corlough for over 40 years was awarded the Benemerenti Medal on August 11 for all her years of service to the Church.

Ms McGovern retired on the eve of St Patrick's Day and received the special medal from Bishop Martin Hayes on behalf of Pope Francis. The Benemerenti Medal is awarded by the Pope to members of the clergy and laity for "long and exceptional service" to the Catholic Church.

Fr Séan Maguire PP said Ms McGovern was "a very reliable and efficient sacristan, who carried out her duties discreetly and without any fuss or fanfare".

Honoured, Ms McGovern said: "I was very

proud and happy to hear that I was going to get a medal from the Pope." "I really loved being a Sacristan. It never felt like a job. I loved looking after the church and keeping it warm and clean. I was sad to give it up but I knew the time had come."

Co. Down Brother professed first vows

Br Martin Dominic McGeehan professed his first vows as a member of The Congregation of the Passion (The Passionists) on August 10 on a ceremony held at the Passionist Retreat Centre, Tobar Mhuire, Crossgar, Co. Down.

The Brother has spent two years living in Tobar Mhuire as a postulant and the past year as a novice. Talking about his interest in the Passionists, he said: "My first encounter to the Passionist Congregation was through

my interest in history, which is where I first began to look into them.

"My first real connection to it however was after watching *The Priest in the Jeans* documentary which featured Passionist Fr Gary Donegan about his time as a priest and his ministry in Ardoyne."

Another reason for him to join the congregation was "the spiritual aspect, especially the charism of the founder of the congregation, St Paul of the Cross."

The Brother will now move to Dublin to begin his formal studies for the priesthood.

St Francis of Assisi Parish celebrates 50th anniversary

The St Francis of Assisi Parish in Priorswood

celebrated 50 years on August 15, and Mass in commemoration was said by Archbishop Dermot Farrell on August 11. The Mass marked the start of a week of events to celebrate the Irish Capuchins taking over the pastoral care of that parish in 1974.

Friars from around Ireland attended the Mass, which had Music provided by the parish choir and folk group under the direction of Mary O'Donnell with Morgan Crowley as cantor.

Fr Martin Bennett OFM Cap. PP said that "In his homily during the celebration Mass, Archbishop Farrell talked about the importance of the Eucharist within a Parish community and how we are all called to the table of the Lord".

According to Fr Bennett, at the time the current church was built in 1980, "Priorswood was a fledgling community and the Parish grew alongside the local families."

Edited by Renata Steffens
Renata@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



DOWN: Passionists gathered from various houses to celebrate the first profession of Bro Martin Dominic CP at Tobar Mhuire Crossgar on August 10.



DOWN: Bro Martin Dominic CP receiving the Passionist Sign which he will now wear on his habit in the Monastery Tobar Mhuire Crossgar, on August 10. Pictured are Fr Jim Sweeney CP Provincial, Fr Paul Francis and Br Martin Dominic CP.



CAVAN: Benemerenti Medal recipient, Ms Mary Ann McGovern being presented with the Benemerenti Scroll by Bishop Martin Hayes in St Patrick's Church, Corlough on August 11.



KERRY: Funeral of Fr John P O'Rourke OP of the Dominican Holy Cross Church, Tralee, who died on August 8 in the care of Our Lady of Fatima Home. Photo: John Cleary.



DOWN: Newly professed Bro Martin Dominic CP with his parents. Br Martin professed his first vows on August 10 in the Monastery Tobar Mhuire Crossgar.



CAVAN: Mary Ann McGovern receiving the awarded Benemerenti Medal from her daughter Denise Maguire August 11.

ARMAGH

Catholic Mothers Ireland's Family Day will happen on Saturday September 7 at the Church of Immaculate Conception, Tullysaran. This is the first National Mass celebrated by Archbishop Eamon Martin at 12pm. Refreshments and light lunch provided. Donations on the day. For more information contact WhatsApp 085 147 1516.

CARLOW

The Diocesan Adoration Committee invite for a day of prayer, adoration and revival in Mt. St Anne's Conference and Retreat Centre, Killenard, Portarlinton on Saturday, August 24 from 9.30am – 4.00pm. Lunch (€10) 12.30pm – 1.00pm. Present will be Bishop Denis Nulty, Fr Ruairi O'Domhnaill, Fr Chiriyankandath Prince and Ms Margaret Brennan. Confessions available, Mass at 3.00pm. Come along and bring a friend!

CAVAN

Eucharistic adoration takes place daily in St Clare's Chapel from 11am to 7pm. New people are welcome to a moment of prayer and devotion. To arrange your time, contact Liam on 087 235 8440.

CLARE

The Corofin & Belclare Parish main centenary celebration will now take place at the 10am Mass on Sunday, September 1. All are welcome to a cup of tea in the School Hall after Mass. The priests and religious are also invited to lunch in the Parochial House, Corofin at 2pm on September 1.

DONEGAL

The Franciscan Friars of the Renewal will be leading the St Columba's Church, Kilmacrenan Parish Mission on September 2-5. The event will start with Mass at 9.30am and mission talk and adoration at 7pm. All welcome.

DOWN

Confession at St Patrick's Church happens on Mondays from 6.45pm to 7.30pm, on Fridays from 3pm to 4pm, and on Saturdays from 12noon to 1pm.

DUBLIN

Visit the relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis in St Patrick's Catholic Church, Blackcourt

Road, Blanchardstown, D15 WC90 on September 10-11. On September 10, the reception of the relic starts at 10am. That day will have talks, Mass and adoration. On the following day, Mass at 9.05am and farewell at 1pm.

Blessing of the Sick followed by candlelit procession at 9pm with Fr John Littleton in Tallaght to celebrate the 37th anniversary of Melleray Grotto. Music by Mairead Cullinane.

FERMANAGH

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

LAOIS

Alanon Family Group for family, friends and anyone affected by someone struggling with alcoholism meets every Thursday night at 8pm in Portlaoise. More information contact 086 870 6017.

MAYO

The Latin Mass Pilgrimage to Knock takes place on Saturday September 7 commencing with a sung Latin Mass at 2pm, followed by Stations of the Cross and Benediction. The Mass will be in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

The next monthly Mass takes place on Sunday September 8 in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel Knock at 6pm.

Croagh Patrick Men's Climb of Reparation and Conference will happen on August 24 at 10am and August 25. All men welcome for a day of camaraderie, prayer, challenges and laughs. More information and for booking contact Human Life International on 094 937 5993.

SLIGO

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

WATERFORD

Charismatic Day of Prayer happens on Sunday, September 29 in the Edmund Rice Chapel. from 10.30am to 5.30pm. The speaker is Fr Pat Collins and Mass celebrated by Bishop Phonsie Cullinan. Contact Word of God Outreach at 086 859 0394.

Sun-kissed fun in Loughgilly Parish

Brandon Scott

Loughgilly Parish in Armagh, with its parishioners still beaming after the county's famous All-Ireland victory last month, hosted its annual Family Fun Day last Sunday, with young and old coming together to take part in a variety of games and celebrate the strong faith-community that exists in the village.

This year's Fun Day coincided with the 1500th anniversary of St Brigid's ministry and Fr Malachy Murphy PP, was delighted that the parish was able to commemorate her legacy with young and old in this vibrant village.

"By all accounts, Loughgilly Par-

ish Fun Day, which was to celebrate and honour the faith and example of St Brigid on her 1500th Anniversary, was blessed with a beautiful sunny day," he said.

"The grounds of the Parochial House in Whitecross were buzzing with activity from the early hours, with vans and lorries arriving to set up many stalls, a bouncy castle, stage and sound, barbecue and so much more. With the arrival of the Sam Maguire Cup, parishioners came flooding in to get a family picture with the Cup and activities were then on their way.

"The day was crowned a large number of people gathering on the main lawn in the shape of a St Brigid's Cross, which was captured by a

drone high in the sky.

"As the many activities continued and families continued to gather and enjoy the day and events, it was concluded with a time of prayer, to remind us of who we were honouring and it was led by the Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh, Michael Router. He began with a prayer and then blessed an oak tree, representing St Brigid, and four apple trees, representing the four areas of our parish.

"Bishop Router and myself then planted the oak tree in the lawn at the front of the parochial house, a reminder of our faith in St Brigid and the day we came together to celebrate families in our parish."

Drawing inspiration from the energy and enthusiasm St Brigid

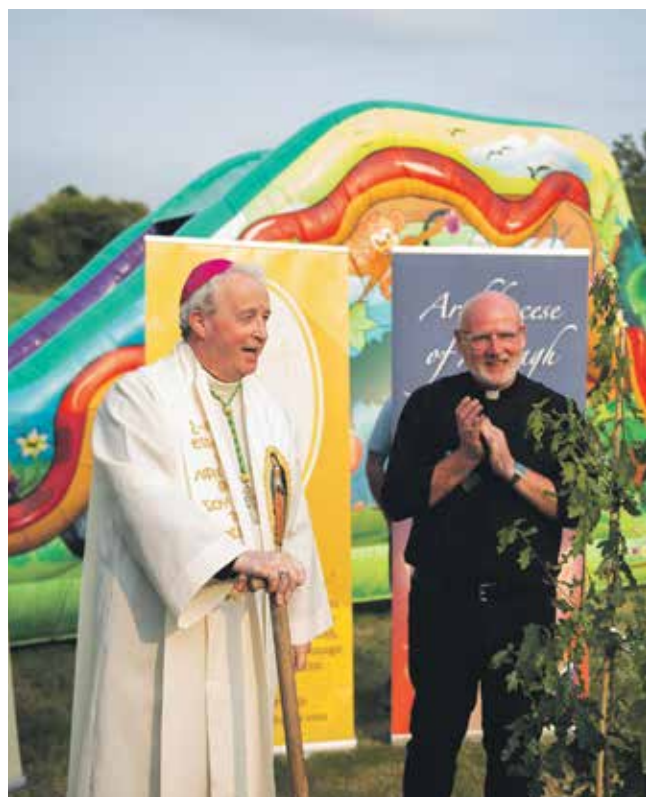
radiated throughout her ministry, Bishop Router urged young people to emulate her attributes and forge a personal relationship with Jesus.

"The Family Fun Day was great to attend and participate in what was a wonderful occasion," he said. "It was a day for families and young people, in particular, and it was great that they attended in their hundreds.

"In my homily at the prayer service I emphasised that St Brigid was a very young woman when she chose to give her life to God and with great faith, energy and enthusiasm she helped to establish the gospel of Jesus Christ in this land. Jesus, himself, picked young people to be his disciples because they were idealistic, energetic, physically strong,

courageous, open to learning and open to new ideas. These were the qualities that St Brigid possessed in abundance. The strength and courage that Brigid exemplified was represented by the oak tree we planted on the day.

"I also outlined that a Church that stays young lets herself be challenged and spurred on by the sensitivities of young people and the challenges they face in a radically changed and changing world. We must together work to bring young people into a personal relationship with Jesus, who Himself is forever young, and then offer them an encounter with the radical and life changing message He offered."



Dollymount delight as Our Lady statue is restored

Chai Brady

Parishioners of St Gabriel's parish, Dollymount in Dublin flocked to the newly restored statue of Our Lady at the official opening after Mass on Sunday.

Several years ago the parish's maintenance team were clearing out almost 60 years of abandoned items from the bell tower when they came across the very dilapidated statue.

Fr Pat McManus said that local artist Brendan Burke took on the restoration saying, "He took a model of the hands of our crib statue of

St Joseph and worked from there, eventually being able to make and attach a perfect pair of hands. He then proceeded to research what needed to be done and what materials and paint etc. to use.

"Eventually the statue was moved down to our working sacristy and Brendan came to work on it, as time allowed, and with the help of his colleague here, Tom Kane, we all watched in awe as it took shape. Finally, it was so beautiful that everyone agreed it had to have a special place where everyone could see it and perhaps stop for a short prayer."



Fr Pat McManus PP of St Gabriel's Parish is pictured with parishioners on Sunday in the parish of St Gabriel's, Dollymount in Dublin celebrating the blessing of their new grotto with a restored statue of Our Lady at the side of St Gabriel's Church. Photos: John McElroy



Fr Pat McManus PP of St Gabriel's Parish with Svitlana Bazilo, Ganna Bazilo and Patrick Maguire at the blessing of the new grotto on Sunday.



The parish choir singing at the blessing of the new grotto at St Gabriel's Parish on Sunday.



Brendan Walsh and Tom Byrne.



Choir members Jean Humphries, Mary Quigley, Anne Nolan, Loretta Orme and Maura Devine.



Fr Pat McManus with Mary Collins, Audrey Kilgallon and Tony Garvey.



Choir members Jean Humphries, Mary Quigley, Anne Nolan, Loretta Orme and Maura Devine.



Hannah Carney, Chris Dunne and Loretta Mocanu.

Pope Francis pens preface to US death row chaplain's book on death penalty



Courtney Mares

Pope Francis commended an American chaplain's work with death row inmates as a ministry that reflects the "deepest reality of the Gospel" in a new book preface on the death penalty.

The Pope personally penned the introduction to "A Christian on Death Row: My Commitment to Those Condemned" by Dale Recinella, a lawyer who has ministered to death row inmates in Florida as a lay Catholic chaplain for more than 25 years.

Pope Francis calls Mr Recinella's work as a chaplain on death row a "passionate adherence to the deepest reality of the Gospel of Jesus, which is the mercy of God".

"Dale Racinella has truly understood and testifies with his life, every time he crosses the threshold of a prison, especially the one he calls 'the house of death,' that God's love is boundless and immeasurable," Pope Francis wrote in the preface of the book to be published August 27.

Heinous

"And that even the most heinous of our sins does not mar our identity in God's eyes: We remain his children, loved by him, cared for by him, and considered precious by him."

Mr Recinella had been working as a high-powered lawyer in the 1980s when he began reassessing how he had been using his gifts and his skills up to that point, identifying a strong desire to give back.

Together with his wife, Susan, Mr Recinella got involved in a ministry helping the homeless and AIDS patients, where the organizer of the ministry approached Mr Recinella to see if he'd be willing to go even deeper.

"He asked if I would be willing to come to his prison and start seeing men that were terminal with cancer and AIDS," Mr Recinella recalled, speaking to CNA in an interview in 2020.

"And what I didn't have the courage to tell him was



Pope Francis greets visitors gathered in St Peter's Square at the Vatican to pray the Angelus August 18, 2024. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

I'd never been in a prison; I had financed prisons on Wall Street all over the country, huge prisons, but I'd never been in one and had no desire to go in one."

Mr Recinella's family helped to convince him that he should take the plunge in the early 1990s.

"It was Susan and the kids quoting Jesus from the Gospel in Matthew 25 that convinced me that if my faith was really guiding my life, that Jesus had said when we visited the least in prison, we visited him, but when we didn't, we had refused to visit him. And so I figured I'd give it a shot," he said.

"I can't believe we're still doing this in the 20th century," he recalled, noting that despite the Florida heat, the inmates were not given air conditioning"

It would be a couple of years before the idea of death row specifically really crossed Mr Recinella's

mind, when he and his family ended up moving to the small town of Macclenny, Florida. That town just happened to be the home of the state's death row prison.

Mr Recinella was shocked at the harsh conditions he encountered when he first set foot in a death row prison.

"The very first thing that struck me, my first experience was, 'I can't believe we're still doing this in the 20th century,'" he recalled, noting that despite the Florida heat, the inmates were not given air conditioning.

Mr Recinella eventually decided to give up the practice of the law so that he could minister to the death row inmates.

Condemned

Ministering to condemned criminals has not proven easy. Mr Recinella recalls being assigned to a serial killer who had killed young women of a similar age to Mr Recinella's daughter.

"I was not ready to handle the spiritual challenges of dealing with the level of human suffering that we've experienced in street ministry, AIDS ministry, prison, ministry, and death row ministry," he said.

Mr Recinella found the

strength to do it through conversations with a trusted priest and through the sacraments, he said.

In addition to spending several days a week visiting inmates himself, he has also trained other people to do prison ministry and has acted as a witness for nearly two dozen executions.

"Capital executions, far from bringing justice, fuel a sense of revenge that becomes a dangerous poison for the body of our civil societies," the pope said"

Mr Recinella told "EWTN News In Depth" in 2021 that among the people he has ministered to when they are dying — whether they are homeless, lawyers, politicians, or inmates — everyone has asked for mercy in their dying moments.

"I've never had anyone ask me to pray for God to give them justice," he said. "Everyone, even if they didn't think they had faith, when they're facing the end

of the tunnel, everyone has asked me to pray with them for God's mercy."

Pope Francis revised the Catechism of the Catholic Church in 2018 to state that the death penalty is "inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person" (CCC, 2267).

In the preface to Mr Recinella's book, Pope Francis underlined his strong opposition to capital punishment, saying that "the death penalty is in no way a solution to the violence that can strike innocent people". "Capital executions, far from bringing justice, fuel a sense of revenge that becomes a dangerous poison for the body of our civil societies," the Pope said.

Abolition

Pope Francis emphasised how he wants the Catholic Church's 2025 Jubilee Year to be a time for "all believers to collectively call for the abolition of the death penalty".

The death penalty has been abolished within the European Union and more than 140 countries.

Iran, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and the United States were the countries with the most confirmed executions in 2023, according to

Amnesty International.

"The Vatican's Pontifical Academy for Life bestowed on Mr Recinella its first Guardian of Life Award in 2021 in honour of his decades of service"

"States should focus on allowing prisoners the opportunity to truly change their lives rather than investing money and resources in their execution, as if they were human beings no longer worthy of living and to be disposed of," Francis wrote.

Pope Francis met Mr Recinella and his wife in a private audience at the Vatican in 2019. The Vatican's Pontifical Academy for Life bestowed on Mr Recinella its first Guardian of Life Award in 2021 in honour of his decades of service and ministry to death row inmates.

Mr Recinella's new book will be published by the Vatican Publishing House on August 27. He is also the author of *When We Visit Jesus in Prison: A Guide for Catholic Ministry*.

CNA staff writer Jonah McKown contributed to this article.

New film immortalises legacy of Irish-born activist priest



Francesca Pollio Fenton

Many are familiar with the story of Fr Edward J. Flanagan from the 1938 Oscar-winning film 'Boys Town' starring Spencer Tracy. Now a new documentary on the famous priest promises a deeper look into Flanagan's life when it hits cinemas for one night only on October 8.

'Heart of a Servant: The Father Flanagan Story' documents Flanagan's unwavering commitment to caring for abandoned and orphaned youth starting from the Great Depression to after World War II, all while defying racist laws in order to serve the most vulnerable and give them hope for a future. The film covers a range of topics, from Flanagan's health issues to his immigrating to the United States to his founding of *Boys Town*, Nebraska.

Documenting

The feature-length documentary was produced by *Spirit Juice Studios* in partnership with the *Father Flanagan League* and filmed on location in Ireland, Germany, Austria, Japan, and throughout the United States. It also includes expert commentary from Steve Wolf, vice postulator for the cause of Flanagan's beatification and canonisation, as well as Deacon Omar FA Gutierrez, Fr Ryan Lewis, and Ed Flanagan, the great-nephew of Fr Flanagan, among others. The film is narrated by popular Catholic actor Jonathan Roumie, known for his role as Jesus Christ in *'The Chosen'*.

Rob Kaczmark, co-director and executive producer of the film, and producer Victoria McEachern spoke to CNA about their experience working on the project as well as how Flanagan has impacted them personally and what they hope viewers will take away from his inspiring story.

McEachern pointed out that while a lot of the bigger topics of Fr Flanagan's life are very well known, it was the "smaller moments" that she learned while making the film that really stood out to her and gives the documentary more depth.

"For me it was those little,



Fr Edward Flanagan, the Irish-born priest who founded *Boys Town* in Nebraska, talks with a group of boys in this undated photo. Photo: OSV News/courtesy Boys Town.

quiet moments," she shared. "Fr Flanagan was this big personality who was incredibly well known and he was also a very quiet, holy, giving, generous man."

"To recognise how he stood on situations like that in the past really informs even now how we deal with injustices of our days"

She added that there's also a lot we can continue to learn from Fr Flanagan - especially when it comes to injustices we face in society today.

"He was really ahead of his time in speaking out against issues of segregation and racial justice," McEachern said. "To recognise how he stood on situations like that in the past really informs even now how we deal with injustices of our days."

Kaczmark added that Fr Flanagan serves as a "strong example of calling people to be a saint" and hopes that viewers will be inspired to "recognise the problems in the things in their own life and where God's calling them to serve and to lead people".

Inspiration

McEachern hopes viewers will be inspired "by the example of one man".

"There's so much going on in the world and in our small communities as well. And so to see the difference - and he did, he made like really tangible impacts in a lot of different areas - to see the difference that he made and that he was so selfless in it and that ultimately it started in the chapel every morning

and with the person right in front of him," McEachern said.

"We're not the saviour of it, we're Christ's hands and feet on the earth ultimately pointing people back to heaven"

When asked what they believe Fr Flanagan would do today when facing the inequalities prevalent in our society, McEachern said she believes he would "continue to push for the person right in front of him. He would continue to see the need in front of him and encourage all of us, and he would say to do

something about it even if it was risky".

Kaczmark added: "I think he would gently invite them to sainthood, to Christ, at the same time still serving them. And I think that's what we're called to do as Christians, as Catholics - is to serve those in front of us and to point people back to Christ. We're not the saviour of it, we're Christ's hands and feet on the earth ultimately pointing people back to heaven".

Reformer

Born in Roscommon in 1886, Fr Flanagan arrived in the United States in 1904. Eight years later, he was ordained a priest and assigned to the Diocese of Omaha. Fr Flanagan became a social reformer and a true visionary for changing how America cared for its children and families, passionately speaking out and taking action on social issues that few dared to address.

He believed that children had the right to be valued, to have the basic necessities of

life and to be protected. He sought to close reformatories and other juvenile facilities where children were abused and literally held as prisoners. In 1917, after years of working with Omaha's homeless men, he opened *Father Flanagan's Boys Home*, which later became *Boys Town*, and championed the causes of children across the country.

Father Flanagan's Boys Home accepted all boys, regardless of their race, creed or cultural background. The priest offered every child a new start in life, and he went to great lengths to seek out and bring in the neediest and most helpless - even boys who were in prison for serious crimes.

Fr Flanagan died in 1948, but his successors have faithfully carried on his legacy and the mission he started at *Boys Town*. Today, at 100 years strong, *Boys Town* still follows many of the same principles and practices that originated with Fr Flanagan's vision.

"His successors have faithfully carried on his legacy and the mission he started at Boys Town. Today, at 100 years strong, Boys Town still follows many of the same principles and practices"



World Report

IN BRIEF

Number of Catholic priests for Nigerian diocese surpasses 400

● The number of Catholic priests serving Nigeria's Diocese of Nsukka has surpassed 400 following the ordination of 23 new priests on August 10.

In remarks at the end of the ordination, Bishop Godfrey Igwebuike Onah expressed gratitude and joy for the growing number of priests serving in his diocese.

"I must render one apology to all the Nsukka priests who are not in the sanctuary. With the ordination today we are now 417 priests in this diocese," Bishop Onah said during the Mass at St Theresa Cathedral.

"Now you understand why some of you for the past 10 years have not been able to impose hands on your newly ordained brothers, because if all of us were to impose hands, we would still be [doing it]."

Rupnik art appears on Vatican website ... again

● Despite calls from abuse victims and their advocates to stop displaying artwork by the disgraced former Jesuit priest Fr Marko Ivan Rupnik, the Vatican has again used one of the artist's images to illustrate an online article.

In addition, last week, a video was published by Argentine public TV channel Canal de la Cuidad that shows a Fr Rupnik image hanging in Pope Francis' personal apartment inside the Vatican's Santa

Marta residence.

On the Vatican website, the Holy See's communications department used a picture of a Fr Rupnik mosaic of the dormition of Mary at the top of an article for the solemnity of the Assumption of Mary on August 15.

Vatican News articles about Catholic feast days have continued to regularly feature Fr Rupnik's art after public abuse accusations were made against the Slovenian priest at the end of 2022.

Haitian priest: conditions in country are 'unacceptable'

● The ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Haiti that has seen gangs take over most of the country includes "an organised campaign against the Church", with many Catholics suffering from kidnappings, theft, and aggression, according to a Haitian priest.

Fr Baudelaire Martial, CSC, a priest from the Congregation of Holy Cross, spoke recently to the papal charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) on a visit to the group's Königstein, Germany, headquarters. The Holy Cross fathers run eight parishes and several schools in Haiti, according to their website.

"The situation in Port-au-Prince [the capital city] is unacceptable, intolerable, and inconceivable. We live in very precarious conditions," the priest told ACN.

Attacks against the Catholic Church rampant in Nicaragua

● Two new reports are out detailing human rights violations in Nicaragua, one focusing on religious freedom and the other citing 870 attacks specifically targeting the Catholic Church since 2018.

On August 13, the human rights watchdog group "Nicaragua nunca más" ("Nicaragua Never Again") presented its fourth bulletin on religious freedom covering the period of April through July 2024 in which they charge that "the Ortega-Murillo regime has increased harassment against laypeople and religious leaders".

"It is evident that these attacks are against priests, bishops, nuns, and parishioners, but not only against the Catholic Church but also against the evangelical church," explained a member of the group, Wendy Quintero, during the presentation of the report.

Pakistan archbishop on 'sabbatical' after allegations of abuse, fraud

● Archbishop Sebastian Shaw, OFM, has been replaced as administrator of the Archdiocese of Lahore, Pakistan, the diocese's vicar general announced last Thursday.

According to reports, Shaw has faced allegations of sexual abuse and financial fraud, but his future remains unclear amid a lack of official information about his removal and the reasons behind it.

Fr Asif Sardar announced at Mass in the Cathedral of Lahore on August 15 that Archbishop Benny Mario Trivas of Karachi will take over as apostolic administrator of the archdiocese in northeast Pakistan while Shaw goes "on a sabbatical", *UCA News* reported.

Unusually, the Vatican has also yet to publicise the archbishop's removal from archdiocesan administration.

Cardinal calls Chinese official in hope of 'lasting peace'

Vatican peace envoy Cardinal Matteo Zuppi spoke last week with a Chinese government official about the Russia-Ukraine war.

The phone conversation was the most recent step in the Vatican's continued diplomatic efforts to promote lasting peace in the region.

Cardinal Zuppi's August 14 phone call with Li Hui, China's special representative for Eurasian affairs, followed a meeting between the two in Beijing in September 2023, one of several diplomatic visits the papal delegate has taken to advance peace between Russia and Ukraine.

The cardinal has also travelled to Kyiv, Ukraine; Moscow; and Washington DC, as part of his remit as peace envoy.

According to a brief statement from the Vatican on Thursday, Cardinal Zuppi's conversation with Hui included a discussion of "the need to foster dialogue" and "adequate international guarantees for a just and lasting peace".

Hui began his role as the Chinese government's special representative for Eurasian affairs in August 2019 after 10 years as the Chinese ambassador to Russia following a stint as vice minister of foreign affairs.

The special representative is highly regarded in Russia, where he was awarded an Order of Friendship by



A visitor waves China's flag as Pope Francis leads his general audience in St Peter's Square at the Vatican. Photo: CNS/Paul Haring

Russian President Vladimir Putin in May 2019. The career diplomat also worked in the Chinese Embassy in the USSR in the 1980s, later serving as first secretary of the Chinese Embassy during the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

On other diplomatic fronts, the Catholic Church is also in dialogue with China as it continues to work for improvements to the application of the provisional agreement on the appointment of Catholic

bishops in China. The Vatican-China deal, the contents of which are not public, was first signed in 2018 and will be up for its third renewal in October.

A joint commission between the Chinese government and the Holy See, presided over by Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, meets twice per year to discuss bishop appointments in the communist country, where there is both a government-sanctioned Catholic association and an underground Catholic Church.

Pope Francis has also recently expressed a desire to visit China in order to meet with bishops and Catholics in the country.

In an interview at the Vatican conducted in May and published August 9, the Pope said he would really like to one day visit the Basilica of Holy Mary, the Help of Christians, in Shanghai, China.

Scottish bishops: assisted suicide makes it 'cheaper to end life than to provide care'

In Scotland, the bishops' conference has submitted evidence to the Scottish Parliament Health, Social Care and Sport Committee on a proposal to legalise assisted suicide. Liam McArthur, a member of the Scottish Parliament, introduced the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill earlier this year. It would allow terminally ill adults in Scotland to lawfully request assistance of health professionals to end their own life.

To be eligible to be provided with assistance to end their life, the proposed law says a person must be terminally ill and

have an advanced and progressive disease, illness or condition which they cannot recover from, and which is expected to cause their premature death; be aged 16 or over; have been resident in Scotland for at least 12 months; be registered with a General Practitioner's office in Scotland, and have sufficient capacity to make and understand the decision.

The Bill also says two doctors are required to assess a person as being eligible to be provided with assistance to end their own life, and the doctors must be satisfied that a person is acting voluntar-

ily, without being coerced or pressured.

Responding to requests for opinions on the proposed legislation, the bishops said that "assisted suicide attacks human dignity and results in human life being increasingly valued on the basis of its efficiency and utility", adding implicit in legal assisted suicide is the idea that "an individual can lose their value and worth".

The bishops said it was "significant" that the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Association of Palliative Medicine in the UK are both opposed to assisted suicide and euthanasia.

Sr Agnes Sasagawa, Our Lady of Akita visionary, dies at 93

Sr Agnes Sasagawa, a Japanese nun whose purported visions of the Virgin Mary under the title of Our Lady of Akita included stark warnings for humanity and instructions to pray the rosary and repent of sin, died August 15 at age 93. Sr Sasagawa was a convert from Buddhism.

A parish priest in Akita, Japan, confirmed to *CNA* by phone that Sr Sasagawa had died on August 15.

The order to which Sr Sasagawa belonged, the Institute of the Handmaids of the Holy Eucharist, announced that Sr Sasagawa, who had been "undergoing

medical treatment for some time", died on the feast of the Assumption of Mary. She famously received a purported series of messages from Mary and witnessed other supernatural phenomena beginning 50 years ago.

The local bishop, John Shojiro Ito of Niigata, who

founded Sr Sasagawa's order and died in 1993, gave the faithful in his diocese permission to venerate Our Lady of Akita in April 1984 after eight years of investigation, finding that her messages contain "nothing contrary to Catholic doctrine or morals".



Edited by Brandon Scott
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Courageously carrying the cross



Religious men carry a processional crucifix up the levee in Convent, Louisiana, followed by young women, at the start of the Fête-Dieu du Mississippi August 14, 2024. Photo: OSV News photo/Jaymie Stuart Wolf

French government warned of 'very high' terrorist threat against Catholics

The French government urged "extreme vigilance" in the face of a "very high" terrorist threat to religious demonstrations and places of worship on the solemnity of the Assumption, one of the most holy days in the Catholic calendar.

Gérald Darmanin, the French minister of the interior, warned regional officials in a Tuesday message through the messenger app Telegram that the country is in a "very high level of terrorist threat". He specified that "services, gatherings, processions, and pilgrimages" at sites traditionally associated with Marian devotion face particular danger, according to French news outlet *BFMTV*.

Mr Darmanin informed regional prefects that

"extreme vigilance must be maintained, particularly with regard to demonstrations and places of a religious nature". He advised government officials to be in constant contact with religious sites and to deploy extra security forces to "more sensitive" locations.

According to *BFMTV*, the French minister of the interior instructed local officials to advise Christian leaders on preventative security measures to detect suspicious individuals or vehicles in front of places of worship.

The French government also deployed its anti-terrorist *Opération Sentinelle* forces at key pilgrimage sites, such as the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes, where more than

30,000 faithful are expected to gather on the feast of the Assumption.

The solemnity of the Assumption celebrates the Blessed Virgin Mary being assumed, body and soul, into heaven. In France, one of the oldest Catholic countries in the world, the feast of the Assumption is a public holiday. It is usually marked by Masses and public processions.

Mr Darmanin said that the high alert is partially due to France's ongoing international exposure as host of the 2024 Olympics and the upcoming Paralympic Games and to "strong tensions on the international level, in particular in the Middle East".

Due to continued terrorist threats, France has been

under its highest threat security posture since March 24.

According to the humanitarian group Human Rights Without Frontiers International, there were nearly 1,000 acts of terror and intimidation against Christians in France in 2023. This past Easter the French government deployed 13,500 police officers and anti-terrorism forces to thousands of Catholic and Protestant places of worship across the country, according to *Radio France Internationale*.

In July, a series of coordinated arson attacks temporarily crippled train travel into Paris, impacting approximately 800,000 travellers right before the start of the Olympics. No one was hurt in the attacks.

Brazilian parish offers Mass for souls of Eucharistic ministers who died in plane crash

"We are hurting, traumatised, dejected, but not defeated, not destroyed, because whoever eats this Bread will live forever," said Fr Aloísio Motta, pastor of St Peter the Apostle Parish in the town of Guaratinguetá, São Paulo state, in Brazil at an August 11 Mass celebrated for the souls of two extraordinary ministers of holy Communion at the parish who died in a

plane crash in the town of Vinhedo on Friday, August 9.

"This disaster took away people very dear to us and to Brazil," Fr Motta told the hundreds of faithful who filled the church to remember Maria Auxiliadora Vaz de Arruda, 74, and her husband, José Cloves Arruda, 76. "It tore away a piece of our beloved parish of St Peter in the

small town of Guaratinguetá."

The Voepass Airlines plane crashed into the garden of a house inside a gated community in Vinhedo, Brazil, killing all 62 people on board. The plane took off August 9 from the town of Cascavel in Paraná state at 11:46 am bound for Guarulhos International Airport in São Paulo state, about 450 miles away.

Vatican roundup

Pope to make voyage to the peripheries in visit to Papua New Guinea

● As Pope Francis's sprawling 12-day journey to Asia and Oceania approaches, the local bishop of the remote Diocese of Vanimo in Papua New Guinea says people are overjoyed that the pontiff is once again making the "periphery" a priority.

Speaking to *Crux*, Bishop Francis Meli, originally from the town of Rabaul but who has led the Diocese of Vanimo since 2018, called Pope Francis's upcoming visit "historic" since "no pope has ever visited the diocese and there may not be any more in history".

"It is a great jubilation for people in Papua New Guinea as a whole," he said, noting that Vanimo "is small and very remote, it's a very remote diocese in Papua New Guinea which is right at the border with Indonesia, so people are so excited about the visit of the pope here".

"The Pope always speaks about the periphery, and the periphery is the most remote, but also, people who are less privileged," he said, noting that many services in Vanimo are lacking that are present in larger provinces.

Vatican expels founder from scandal-plagued movement

● Capping a decade-long cycle of accusations and investigations, Peru's bishops announced Wednesday that layman Luis Fernando Figari, founder of a scandal-plagued movement called the *Sodalitium Christianae Vitae*, has been expelled from the group over charges of abuse.

In their August 14 announcement, the Peruvian bishops said, "Through a press release, the Peruvian Episcopal Conference makes public the decree issued by the Dicastery for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life of the Holy

See, with which it informs, in accordance with canon 746 of the Code of Canon Law, the expulsion of Mr Luis Fernando Figari Rodrigo, from the society of apostolic life *Sodalitio de Vida Cristiana*".

Mr Figari had been sanctioned by the Vatican in 2017, including being barred from having any contact with the group, from making public statements, and from returning to Peru. Accusations against the now 77-year-old included various forms of sexual, physical and psychological abuse against boys, some of whom were minors.

Papal Nuncio in Cameroon urges peace in troubled African nation

● Archbishop José Avelino Bettencourt, the pope's representative to Cameroon, is urging Christians to remove the obstacles to peace as the central African country reels from a separatist crisis to the west and Boko Haram incursions to the north. The Apostolic Nuncio was speaking August 14 during the annual Diocesan Peace Pilgrimage held at St Joseph Cathedral of Bafoussam Diocese.

He emphasised the divine origin of peace and condemned all forms of violence. "Peace is the creation of God. It is also a gift from God. Violence is the creation of evil. Violence is never justified. Let us stop any obstacles to peace," the archbishop said.

He urged Christians to "carry our branches of peace with conviction, with humility, and raise them up to the Lord".

Pope decries grave humanitarian crisis in Gaza

● During the Angelus on the Solemnity of the Assumption, Pope Francis entrusts the worry and sorrow of people suffering due to conflict and war to Mary Queen of Peace. He recalls the grave humanitarian crisis in Gaza and remembers all the peoples of the Middle East, Ukraine, Sudan and Myanmar.

Following the recitation of the Angelus prayer on the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Pope Francis turned his thoughts to the suffering in so many parts of the world due to conflicts and wars. He recalled the peoples of Ukraine, the Middle East, Palestine, Israel, Sudan, and Myanmar. And he prayed that "Mary Queen of Peace, whom we contemplate today in the glory of Paradise," may "obtain for all consolation and a future of serenity and harmony".



Letter from Rome

Is the Church's new guidance on life a departure from teaching?



Jonah McKeown

After the Pontifical Academy for Life (PAFL) last month issued a booklet summarising the Church's teaching on a number of bioethical issues, the section on "artificial nutrition and hydration" (ANH) has some observers concerned about what they see as a departure from previous Church teaching.

The Pontifical Academy for Life was founded in 1994 by St John Paul II to study and provide formation on bioethical issues for the promotion and defence of life. Published only in Italian on July 2, the PAFL's new booklet says it has "the aim of clearing up confusion" about the Church's teaching on a number of bioethical issues.

In the English-speaking world, however, the booklet has garnered scrutiny for appearing to soften the Church's stance on the importance of providing food and water to patients in a vegetative state.

The Church's teaching on this issue was recently in the news in the United States because of the ongoing case of Margo Naranjo, a disabled Texas woman whose parents, who are Catholic, announced last month that they had decided to allow Ms Margo to die by starvation in hospice. They were prevented from doing so after a judge intervened.

What has the Church taught about withdrawing food and water?

Over the years, Church leaders at the Vatican and in the US have specifically addressed the question of denying food and water to a patient who is in a vegetative state.

In a 2004 address, St John Paul II clarified the Church's teaching that "the administration of water and food, even when provided by artificial means, always represents a natural means of preserving life, not a medical act".

"Even our brothers and sisters who find themselves in the clinical condition of a 'vegetative state' retain their human dignity in all its fullness. The loving gaze of God the Father continues to fall upon them, acknowledging them as his sons and daughters especially in need of help," the saint noted.

The Pope explained that "waning hopes" that a person in a vegetative state will recover "cannot ethically justify the cessation or interruption of minimal care for the patient, including nutrition and hydration".

"Death by starvation or dehydration is, in fact, the only possible outcome as a result of their withdrawal.



Nurses are pictured in a file photo providing care to a patient in the palliative care section of a hospital. Photo: OSV News/Philippe Wojazer, Reuters

In this sense it ends up becoming, if done knowingly and willingly, true and proper euthanasia by omission," John Paul II said.

A 2007 set of responses from the Vatican's Congregation (now Dicastery) for the Doctrine of the Faith addressed two questions from the US bishops about whether a patient in a "vegetative state" can ever be denied food and water.

“Medically assisted nutrition and hydration become morally optional when they cannot reasonably be expected to prolong life or when they would be ‘excessively burdensome for the patient’”

The congregation, under Pope Benedict XVI, clearly affirmed that a person in a vegetative state must be supplied with food and water even if he or she seems to have no chance of recovery. The dicastery left open the possibility that the only exceptions would be instances where food and water "cannot be assimilated by the patient's body or cannot be administered to the patient without causing significant physical discomfort".

Those responses helped the US bishops craft a 2009 revision to their

'Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services,' which states in Directive 58 that "there is an obligation to provide patients with food and water" at Catholic hospitals, an obligation that "extends to patients in chronic and presumably irreversible conditions".

The directives leave room for the patient to choose to reject extraordinary means, however.

"Medically assisted nutrition and hydration become morally optional when they cannot reasonably be expected to prolong life or when they would be 'excessively burdensome for the patient or [would] cause significant physical discomfort, for example resulting from complications in the use of the means employed,'" Directive 58 continues.

"For instance, as a patient draws close to inevitable death from an underlying progressive and fatal condition, certain measures to provide nutrition and hydration may become excessively burdensome and therefore not obligatory in light of their very limited ability to prolong life or provide comfort."

What does the Pontifical Academy's new document say?

While reiterating the Church's longstanding teaching against euthanasia and assisted suicide in several sections, the July booklet has garnered the most attention for its section on 'Artificial

Nutrition and Hydration', Section 13. (An official English translation of the booklet is not yet available, so excerpts here come from an unofficial translation generated by Google.)

Catholic teaching allows for the possibility of stopping "burdensome, dangerous, extraordinary, or disproportionate" medical care — such as removing ventilators from patients who are unable to breathe on their own and allowing them to die naturally — and this is not the same as euthanasia.

“This topic is the victim of a reductive conception of the disease, which is understood as an alteration of a particular function of the organism, losing sight of the totality of the person”

In Section 13, the PAFL affirmed that for those in a permanent vegetative state — ie., not actively dying — suspending food and water is different from removing a ventilator because "death is not caused by the disease that continues its course but rather by the action of those who suspend them".

"Upon closer inspection, however, this topic is the victim of a reductive conception of the disease, which is

understood as an alteration of a particular function of the organism, losing sight of the totality of the person," the document continues.

"This reductive way of interpreting the disease then leads to an equally reductive conception of treatment, which ends up focusing on individual functions of the organism rather than on the overall good of the person. The individual functions of the organism, including nutrition — especially if affected in a stable and irreversible way — must be considered in the overall picture of the person."

The PAFL continued by saying that because a person in a vegetative state has to consume food that is "prepared in the laboratory and administered through technical devices," such interventions are "not simple health care procedures".

"[T]he doctor is required to respect the will of the patient who refuses them with a conscious and informed decision, also expressed in advance in anticipation of the possible loss of the ability to express himself and choose," the PAFL wrote.

The PAFL noted that Pope Francis has emphasised the importance of considering the whole person, not just individual bodily functions, when making medical decisions.

A departure from previous teachings?

Catholic ethicist Charlie Camosy warned that the PAFL's statements could be misunderstood in the context of what Pope Francis calls a "throwaway culture" — a culture in which numerous jurisdictions around the world allow, and even promote, euthanasia and assisted suicide and which "tries to hide the value of disabled people with consciousness disorders, making it easier to aim at their deaths".

"[T]he pontifical academy's new text appears to suggest that, because the food and hydration given to disabled, so-called 'vegetative' patients is prepared in a laboratory and administered through technology, offering them to such patients does not amount to 'simple care procedures.' It could therefore be thought of as a medical treatment which could, in principle, be withdrawn, rather than the kind of basic care which can never be withheld," Mr Camosy wrote.

"From a bioethical perspective, this would strike many ethicists as an odd framing of the issue, to say the least," he continued.

"The nutrition given to such disabled human beings is no more made in a laboratory than a protein shake powder. And feeding tubes are extremely simple devices that don't require any machine or other special technology. Many Catholic bioethicists would see feeding a disabled person through a tube as little different from feeding them with a spoon."

Letters

Letter of the week

Young priests giving hope

Dear Editor, I've just returned from some time spent in Knock where I met several people who had forgotten the value of this newspaper – there are so many good articles.

I find Fr John Harris' articles so very good. Today many great blessings are bestowed on the Dominican order – wonderful vocations, great teaching and excellent education in the Catholic Faith.

I know three young men who

were also ordained to the diocesan priesthood recently: Fr Anthony from Donegal; Fr Jordan from Cavan and Fr Mark from Kerry. The stream still flows regarding priesthood even if the numbers are less than before and the call: "Come follow me", is still being heard and responded to in a very secular world.

So I praise God for those generous souls who say "yes" in spite of all of the bad news we've been hear-

ing regarding faults and failings of priests – some that are dead and buried. I pray that we can leave God to take care of the departed and that we can do our best to help the many good priests who serve God's people the best they can.

Yours etc.,

Sr Susan Evangelist,
Ballyshannon,
Co. Donegal

Champions of the spiritual race

Dear Editor, In *The Irish Catholic* of August 8, there is an article by Brandon Scott about a veteran broadcaster who described as "desperate" the retreats he experienced as a boy, in the beautiful location of Manresa House.

We have come from two weeks of watching the intense activity of Olympic athletes from around the world, who for the past four years subjected themselves and their bodies to the severest of training regimes, in the hope of winning a medal for their countries. Not one of them questioned the process that brought them qualification and not one would have called the process "desperate".

The words of 1Corinthians 9:25 came to my mind: "Everyone who enters an athletic contest practices self-control in everything. They do it to win a wreath that withers away, but we run to win a prize that never fades".

Our priests, spiritual directors and spiritual writers are our coaches in this latter contest; we should expect them to make demands of us, commensurate with the pursuit of a "prize that never fades".

Yours etc.,

Mrs Judith Leonard
Woodbine Road,
Dublin



Don't dismiss dialogue

Dear Editor, Fr Patrick Moore (August 8) writes about what he perceives as the need for faith formation, but talks in dismissive terms about education of other religions and about mindfulness.

When we have just celebrated the giant saint Dominic of Guzmán (founder of the Order of Preachers, OP, the Dominicans), who took people as they were in his relationship with them, acknowledging the truth they had within and engaging with them with listening and conversation, maybe there is something here that Fr Moore needs to learn.

I wish his anger checked and channelled.

Yours etc.,

Conchita Legorburo
Dalkey,
Co. Dublin.

Do teachers in Catholic schools practise the Faith?

Dear Editor, Apropos references in *The Irish Catholic* to the Amarach survey of 1000 school students (August 15) David Quinn identifies the lack of clarity in the outcome regarding student desire for more religious content in the curriculum. As David says a more thorough research is necessary.

Catholic institutions are by definition places where one is facilitated in seeking out the truth in religious matters. When individuals and institutions come to believe they have found it, an obligation imposes itself on them to follow through on this search and to conduct themselves in light of the truth as they understand it.

The cultural diversity inherent in most Catholic schools together with the extent of state control of the

curriculum make the pursuit of Catholic truth problematic in these schools. The genuine and indeed successful efforts by schools designated as Catholic to avoid religious polarisation within them makes the promotion of the Catholic way of life more difficult.

Schools designated as Catholic excel in developing student skills in the secular curricula. The extent to which staffs are interested in or support the faith formation of students is unclear. It is necessary that a thorough survey of the latter issue be conducted to ascertain if there is a problem and the nature of it. A thorough survey is a first step in addressing such a problem.

Yours etc.,

Neil Bray,
Cappamore,
Co Limerick.

Suffer Little Children as Irish ignore your plight

It is 2024. Ireland is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, one of the most educated populations, running a budget surplus with a stable democracy and solid tax-base, yet repeatedly we are hearing that Ireland's state care system for children is in a state of crisis.

Most recently, we learned that Department of Children officials privately warned the Government may need to consider a "complete overhaul" of the care system for the State's most vulnerable children due to its current failings. These are children the State is supposed to protect.

Last year, Former Dublin metropolitan District Court judge Dermot Simms wrote to four Government Ministers, Tusla, the State Claims Agency and the Ombudsman for Children warning that up to 130 highly vulnerable children are in "unsuitable" and "unapproved" placements, such as holiday centres, hotels and B&Bs because there is nowhere else to put them. He said "systemic failures" across Tusla, the Garda, the Department of Education, the HSE and the Prison Service are undoing, undermining and frustrating the best efforts of frontline social workers to comply with regulations and protocols.

In some instances, Irish children have had to be provided with special care placements in the UK due to lack of capacity here in Ireland. Mr Justice Mark Heslin recently permitted the transfer of a teenage girl to the UK after hearing the teenager, who is under the State's care, was regularly absconding from her residential placement, misusing substances and the victim of coercion and suspected exploitation and that An Garda Síochána were investigating men who were, it appears, exploiting her in "the most appalling manner". He said it was "disgraceful" that the girl had to be sent abroad because there was no appropriate place for her here.

As of July this year, Tusla reported that 40 children in State care were missing and unaccounted for, with 22 of these minors who had arrived seeking international protection. Responding to questions from Meath TD Peadar Kirby, Tusla stated that once a child is reported missing, it becomes the responsibility of the Gardai, and that Tusla

'remains concerned' about those who go missing and do not get back in touch.

In 2012, the Government of the time put forward the 31st Amendment to the Constitution, the 'Children's Rights' amendment, strengthening the power of the State and state agencies to intervene in 'the best interests of the child'. The argument was that the State needed Constitutional authority to intervene when parents were failing their children and that the previous threshold was too high – resulting in too many cases of parental neglect not being addressed by the relevant authorities.

The promised panacea of State power has failed to deliver for children. The assumption, as is often the case, of a utopian and perfect solution to be offered by the State has resulted in dystopian outcomes for children who continue to be let down by authorities.

In Ireland, we remain fixated on the past. The Church is vilified for its actions in a time where there was no all-powerful state; when there was no bottomless pit of financial resources; when there was no one else stepping forward to offer something in the midst of social failure.

Yet today, the majority of people are not horrified by the same failings taking place in front of their eyes, in the present. We, as a people, are eerily quiet as the State – our democratically elected, representative State – fails children, today. We are not outraged. We do not expend the same energy addressing problems that are within our control today as we do shaking our fists at the past.

The Church may have failed – and failed badly in many cases – but so did society, as did the State. Yet, in the here and now, the State continues to fail despite having arrogated power to itself over the lives of children and families in the name of 'children's rights'. We appear passively resigned as a people to the continued failures. Is it because we voted for this? We were told the State was the solution and we believed it. Now, there is no one to blame but ourselves. There is no bogey-man Church to project upon. There are no nuns to lambast for their failings. We cannot separate ourselves from a distant past. It is on us, now.

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.

Talking about faith in a sometimes hostile modern Ireland



Eoin McCormack

Have you ever found yourself in the often-awkward position at work or in other social settings where you are elected as the spokesperson for all things Catholic? As society continues to diverge from the Church, if you're a practicing Catholic in modern Ireland, chances are that you have been in this position - and if not, now might be the time to prepare, because sooner or later you might be asked to justify your faith in some form or another. Over the next several weeks, this column will address many themes underlying the most commonly discussed topics regarding faith in modern Ireland and offer some tips and insights on how to engage with those challenging conversations.

Hostility

Situations like these which so many Catholics find themselves in, very often begin with the bewildered challenge - *Are you religious?* - As if you have some kind of embarrassing secret that you were hiding! Consistently, I am informed by people of faith about the increasing hostility they encounter in the secular workplace when they are 'found out' to be associated with the Catholic Church. Casual remarks have become commonplace in staff rooms and canteens that would be considered offensive and ignorant if spouted about other religions. Catholicism, however, seems fair game for throw-away comments which leave the contemporary faithful Catholic somewhat embarrassed or uncomfortable. It seems fair to say in modern Ireland, that familiarity with Catholicism has certainly bred contempt, or at least whatever misconceived version of Catholicism has done so.

Over the past several years working in parish ministry in Dublin City and listening to the unease that many young Catholics in particular encounter in the contemporary workplace, the question "How do I talk about my faith in public?" is becoming increasingly important. Whether it has become widely known amongst their friends or colleagues that they're the 'odd

St Paul Preaching at Athens, Raphael (1483-1520)



ball' who continues to go to Church despite it all, or they've been labelled as the 'Catholic one' in the office, many Catholics in Ireland today very often find themselves ill-equipped to respond to the challenges posed to them about religion and faith. It is of no surprise therefore, that one of the top priorities that came from the laity in the recent Irish synodal process was the need for better adult faith formation.

“The cultural situation demands equipping ourselves with confident apologetics to defend the hope within as St Peter instructs in the scriptures”

For Catholics in modern Ireland, devotional religion alone is no longer sufficient. The demands of the modern

world require a much more rigorous intellectual formation that can edify people's faith to become as Vatican II aspired - *fully conscious and active participants*. The cultural situation demands equipping ourselves with confident apologetics to *defend the hope within* as St Peter instructs in the scriptures.

Apologetics

So, what exactly is 'apologetics' and how should we engage with it? Although the word sounds like it's related to 'apologise', apologetics more accurately translates from the Greek *apologia* as 'defence'. Defence, or *apologia* in this sense, has nothing to do with an angry confrontation, but rather a confident witness to a faith that gives you joy.

While St Peter gives us the instruction to be ready to make this defence, St Paul offers us a practical template in the Acts of the Apostles.

While on mission in Athens, Paul uses an evangeli-

cal technique known as the *Semina Verbi*, or the *Seeds of the Word* in which he preaches to the culture in a non-confrontational dialogue. Firstly, Paul is invited by the pagans to defend his faith, which alone demonstrates that we must be compelling enough in our joyful witness to make people want to know more. Secondly, when defending the faith, Paul points to something positive in the culture, and then explains how it points to their desire for God.

“How can we use this example in conversations we might have over a coffee or a pint when we're placed in the hot seat over matters of religion?”

Acknowledging that the pagan culture is very 'religious', Paul commends their

willingness to accept that there is a mystery behind the universe to which they are unfamiliar with by erecting a statue to an 'unknown God'. Paul then uses this impulse to point them to the very grounding and source of all things - the one true God revealed through Jesus Christ.

So how can we use this example in conversations we might have over a coffee or a pint when we're placed in the hot seat over matters of religion?

Study

There are two important elements in St Paul's example evangelising the pagans that we can apply in our own 'religious conversations'. Firstly, we need to know what we're talking about.

While many of the questions people have about the relevance of religion today might seem like new questions, the good news is the Church has been tackling these issues for over 2,000 years and has an abundance of eloquent philosophical, theological and spiritual reasons and resources in its arsenal. It is up to us however to study them.

In the late 19th century, St John Henry Newman sought for an educated laity who did not just know the

creed, but could "give an account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it." Newman would have longed for an age where sophisticated theological knowledge could be freely available to anyone by the click of a button. In the world of mass media today, it is possible to receive a free education online from so many resources which Newman would have only dreamed of. We just have to make use of them. It is essential to study the faith so we can speak the truth in a tangible manner.

The *second* essential element to St Paul's technique in Athens is to know the culture. If we're going to be effective in our responses, we need to know where people are philosophically. What is going on in the culture? What are people's underlying perceptions regarding God and the spiritual life? Once we know where people are in this sense, only then we can offer something meaningful to them.

iIn next week's column, we will therefore take a philosophical look at today's culture and assess the most common assumptions regarding faith in contemporary Ireland.

“If we're going to be effective in our responses, we need to know where people are philosophically. What is going on in the culture? What are people's underlying perceptions regarding God and the spiritual life? Once we know where people are in this sense, only then we can offer something meaningful to them”

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- Plaza of three cultures in Tlatelolco to see the Church of St James where St. Juan Diego presented the 'tilma' of Our Lady to the Bishop as proof of her apparitions.
- Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe built in response to Our Lady's request to the visionary, St Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin.
- At Tepeyac Hill, kneel before the miraculous image of Our Lady.
- Explore Mexico City.
- Ruins of the Aztec city.
- Palacio National
- Paseo de la Reforma, Teotihuacan
- a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the pyramid of the Sun and the Moon.
- Church of the Holy Family, where the remains of the martyred Miguel Pro are venerated.
- Floating Gardens of Mexico, Xochimilco.
- City of Angels.
- Old City of Puebla.
- Shrine of San Miguel del Milagro.
- See the image of Our Lady of Ocotlan burnt into a tree trunk after she appeared to Diego Bernardino in 1531.

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- Return flights from Dublin to Mexico City via Amsterdam with 23kg checked bag.
- 5 nights in the Hotel Casa Blanca, Mexico City with breakfast.
- 2 nights in the NH Hotel Puebla, Puebla with breakfast.
- 1 night in the Hotel Fontan, Mexico City with breakfast.
- 5 lunches in local restaurants and 2 dinners in hotel.
- Modern coach with professional guide throughout.
- Mass at the Basilica of our Lady of Guadalupe
- Tour of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
- Entrance fees to Teotihuacan (pre-Aztec Pyramids).
- Gondola boat trip of Xochimilco.
- Entrance to Anthropology Museum.
- Tour earpiece system "whispers"
- All taxes and surcharges
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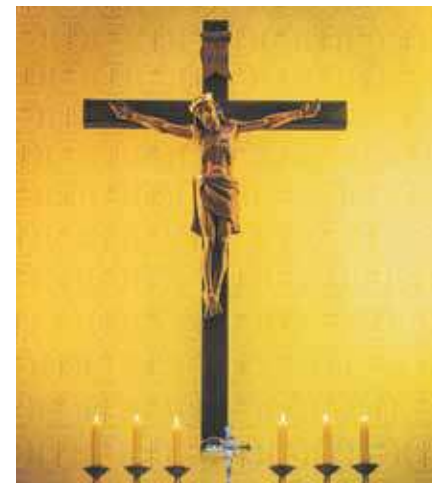
Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, August 22, 2024

What is the Church's position on cremation?

Jenna Marie Cooper

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With Christ in the centre, Dominicans can preach

There are certain similarities between the world in which St Dominic de Guzman lived and our own world. St Dominic founded the Order of Preachers in response to the Albigensian/Cathar heresy, a heresy that flourished not least because of the absence of informed preaching and lived example.

This heresy was essentially dualistic. Thus, for example, it taught that human beings were spirits trapped in material bodies. This view of the human person bears great similarity to the understanding that, to a large extent, characterises contemporary Western culture.

Dominic was hugely successful in converting heretics by means of persuasion and example and quickly drew a band of followers to join him in his mission of preaching the truth of the faith.

Early on Dominic established a group of women into a monastic community. Throughout the last eight hundred years, therefore, the genius of the Order has been cultivated by the prayer and activity of both men and women under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Privilege

What a great privilege to have been chosen as one of St Dominic's band of followers in order to preach the Gospel in the fullness of its integrity! I came late, by a circuitous route, to the Order. Through all that searching. However, Divine Providence finally led me to my true spiritual home.

It is telling that the early Dominicans were slow to get Dominic canonised. Like Dominic, they clearly placed faith in Christ above and before all other things. Thankfully, however,



The activity of preaching flows from an intimate encounter with the living Word, says Fr Kevin O'Reilly OP

they eventually saw the importance of having Dominic's sanctity officially recognised by the Church.

There is a lesson for us here. Dominic's focus was on preaching Christ. He was not interested in forming a cult that would worship him as a hero.

Dominic saw, moreover, the importance of intellectual formation for the task of preaching the Gospel. He understood the role that rational knowledge about God's revelation can play in persuading non-believers and those who have lapsed in their practice of the faith.

“One of the keys to reconquering our age for Christ has to be a recovery of the thought of the jewel in the theological crown of the Dominican Order, namely St Thomas Aquinas”

The Catholic faith has a specific content. It is a well-known fact that catechesis in this content has been severely lacking in recent decades. Meanwhile, many of those who have walked away from the faith have in effect not rejected the faith itself but rather a false understanding of it.

One of the keys to reconquering our age for Christ has to be a recovery of the thought of the jewel in the theological crown of the Dominican Order, namely St Thomas Aquinas. St Thomas has been my own intellectual mentor for many years.

Furnishes

While he is rigorously rational, it is nevertheless the Word of God in Scripture that furnishes the well-springs of his thought. He does not cherry-pick verses of Scripture to support conclusions that he wishes to argue for; rather, he begins with Scripture and illumines the significance of revelation in dialogue with a plethora of sources, Christian and pagan.

Things don't end there, however. For Thomas's thought is animated by a deep-flowing mystical current. It is no accident that the great Spanish mystic, St John of the Cross, was formed in Thomistic thought when he studied in Salamanca and that his mystical work is in various important respects grounded in the thought of St Thomas.

Dominic spent his nights in prayer. Thomas had a famous mystical experience while celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at Naples, the culmination, one might say, of his life of contemplation. One ought not to forget St Catherine of Siena. Others have contributed to the great flow of

the Western mystical tradition, among whom John Tauler and Bl. Henry Suso stand out. A neglected classic in mystical literature is *The Cross of Jesus* by Louis Chardon.

In his *magnum opus*, St Thomas has a question on the contemplative life. While he insists in the first article of this question on the fact that contemplation pertains essentially to the intellect, most of the focus is on the need for rightly ordered appetites for the contemplative life.

Infused contemplation, in other words, cannot be divorced from the life of virtue: the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity; and the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. This point seems to have been forgotten.

“The theological and other infused virtues are perfected by the Gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord”

One must say something similar with regard to discernment, although Thomas does not use this word – he speaks instead of prudence, that virtue that perfects practical reason. Lack of temperance in matters sexual in particular undermines one's ability to discern the Lord's will properly – a point of no small importance at a time when some in the Church fail to communicate clearly the Church's Scripturally based teaching in this regard.

The theological and other infused virtues are perfected by the Gifts of

the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord. Interestingly, the great Dominican theologian of the last century, Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, delineates the mystical ascent in terms of the Gifts in his masterpiece, *Christian Perfection and Contemplation*.

This contemplation – which entails serious study – is not for its own sake, however. Hence the famous phrase: *contemplata aliis tradere* – to give unto others the fruits of one's contemplation. The activity of preaching flows from an intimate encounter with the living Word of God in Scripture, an encounter that engages the whole person – intellect, will, and emotions (passions). Indeed, it involves both body and soul in their dynamic unity.

Centrality

The absolute centrality of Christ and adherence to the fullness of the one true faith; contemplation of the Word of God in Scripture, nourished by intellectual enquiry that draws on a variety of disciplines, principally philosophy; a life of virtue, without which this contemplation is not possible in any meaningful way; and, a burning desire to convert the whole world for Christ – these are some traits that render the Dominican Order pre-eminently suited to the task of delivering the world and, indeed, the Church, from the heresies that assail our times. What an amazing gift it is to be called to serve the Church as a Dominican!

Fr Kevin O'Reilly, OP is Head of Moral Theology in the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome

The world says 'jump!' Jesus says otherwise



Elizabeth Scalia

The world is hyperventilating like I've never seen it before. Particularly for anyone who watches broadcast news (I don't) or participates in social media platforms (sadly, I do), the world has been coming at us like one of those egregious music videos where images and scenes are fast-cut and flashing by so quickly you can barely make them out. Rather than a coherent narrative, what one takes away from it is an overall sense of things - a feeling, a vibe. It is empty, slightly disorienting and probably more subliminally persuasive than we want to admit.

Dizzying

It's happened before in my lifetime - 1968 felt as dizzying - but I'm going to tag the start of this eye-crossing noise to the June 27 debate between President Joe Biden and former president Donald Trump. Biden's performance unveiled his diminished capacities to the nation, and the world, and his party jumped into a panic-mode. Political operatives and journalists (am I redundant?) went into machine mode to find a replacement candidate.

Since that date, all of this has happened, in no particular order:

- An assassination attempt on former president Donald Trump.

- Eucharistic adoration jumped into headlines thanks to the 10th National Eucharistic Congress, only to be met with the XXXIII Olympiad opening with a mockery of the Last Supper. The show's producers admitted that the Last Supper was purposely



Paris celebrates Mass to launch the Olympic truce in the presence of over a hundred diplomatic delegations. Photo: OSV News/courtesy IOC

implied, before walking it back. Eventually, they pulled the video.

“These ongoing stories either directly or indirectly demonstrate a worldwide cultural, religious and political confusion”

- Two contestants in Olympic women's boxing appeared to be testosterone-y men. Then we learned they are hormonally intersexual, raised as women. The world reacts, jumping to learn more about Swyer syndrome and dual chromosome bodies.

- Reactions to a horrific knife attack in Northern England jumped into anti-immigration riots. It was discovered that the attacker is Wales-born and not a migrant. The nation is still roiling.

- Asian markets collapse. Wall Street plunges into 'blood-bath' headlines. Until suddenly the markets were rebounding.

Detailing

Why am I detailing so much of this? Partly to illustrate just how dramatic the warp-speed headlines of the past weeks have been, and partly to show how these ongoing stories either directly or indirectly demonstrate a worldwide cultural, religious and political confusion and sense of outsized panic. Countries, communities, politicians, pundits, creatives

and controllers - all of us, really - are barely digesting what is happening before jumping to conclusions. We're opining, condemning and denigrating before we have the full story, a bad habit that wounds charity, hardens the heart and can lead to dubious actions with far-reaching consequences, not always toward the good.

“Jumping to conclude that women's boxing had been infiltrated by men taught many of us all that we didn't yet know about human biology”

Christians correctly jumped to the conclusion that the Last Supper was being mocked at the Olympic's opening ceremonies. Despite all the protests that we were simply too ignorant to know about Bacchus or Dionysus, we understood what was being mocked - not a great painting but the Gospel-related, real event the painting represented - Christ Jesus' institution of the Holy Eucharist.

On the other hand, jumping to conclude that women's boxing had been infiltrated by men taught many of us all that we didn't yet know about human biology and the mystery of being loved into being by God.

Discouraging

The situation reminds me of Mt 19:12, wherein Jesus, discouraging on marriage, says, "Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so, some because they were made so by others ..." We have been grappling with issues touching on the sexually-different for a long time, but these are new questions: Should intersex people whose bodies default to female be competing with other, non-testosterone-infused women, or should there be another avenue for competition? My gut says the latter, but I truly don't know.

I only know three things: First, that Jesus wants us to love each other - to recognise the God-borne humanity in each person that comes before us and - before reacting, deciding or judging - loving them for it. It can be challenging, and even Jesus acknowledged the reality

of having "enemies" (Mt 5:44), but he insists on the love of respect, always.

“Whisper up a prayer to the One who is All-Wisdom, and refuse to just jump, jump, jump to the cacophony of confusion”

Second, that jumping to conclusions about some things can be justified, but - if that list above demonstrates anything - most of the time doing so simply adds to confusion, anger, hatred and distrust.

Third, when the world seems to be turning too fast, the stories coming at us too quickly, it is good, nay imperative, that we step back, slow down the breath, whisper up a prayer to the One who is All-Wisdom, and refuse to just jump, jump, jump to the cacophony of confusion. Amen.

Elizabeth Scalia is editor-at-large for OSV. Follow her on X (formerly known as Twitter) @the anchoress.

“Jesus wants us to love each other - to recognise the God-borne humanity in each person that comes before us and - before reacting, deciding or judging - loving them for it”

Those who sing pray twice



Cardinal Timothy Dolan

You've seen those 'bulletin bloopers.' I enjoy them. Here's one: "The topic for next week's sermon will be 'What will hell be like? Come early and listen to the choir.'"

Thank God that can't be said about most of the choirs I'm grateful to hear at Sunday Masses here in the archdiocese. Ours at St Patrick's Cathedral is acclaimed.

Blessings

One of the multiple blessings of the last six decades since the close of the providential Second Vatican Council has been an emphasis on congregational singing and the development of excellent parish choirs. I, for one, highly admire and appreciate the devotion and skill of our musicians, choir members, directors and leaders in song.

Of course, we hear criticism. Yet,

our choirs, musicians and cantors are the first to acknowledge that much still needs to improve, and that we Catholics are, sadly, not too well known for our singing, as are, for instance, the Evangelical churches.

“We of course sing to praise God, not ourselves, as our musicians will remind us. We thank God for the talents he has given us, not the voices who use them beautifully to glorify him”

One complaint I do hear is that, at times, the choir can dominate, or “put on a show.” Choirs are at their best, these critics observe, when they enhance, not replace, congregational music. I would agree.

Some also cringe at a choir that seems to draw too much attention to themselves, and even expect applause at times. We of course sing to praise God, not ourselves, as our musicians will remind us. We thank God for the talents he has given us, not the voices who use them beauti-

fully to glorify him.

At times the choir is so good that the Mass seems to take second place. It's almost like the Mass occurs to fill in the pauses as the choir prepares for its next 'number'.

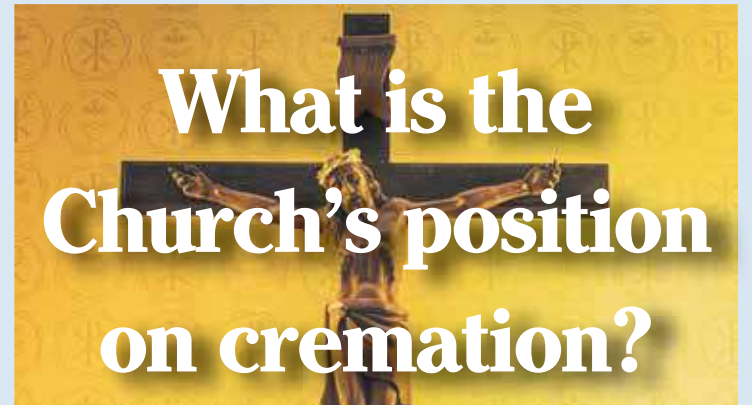
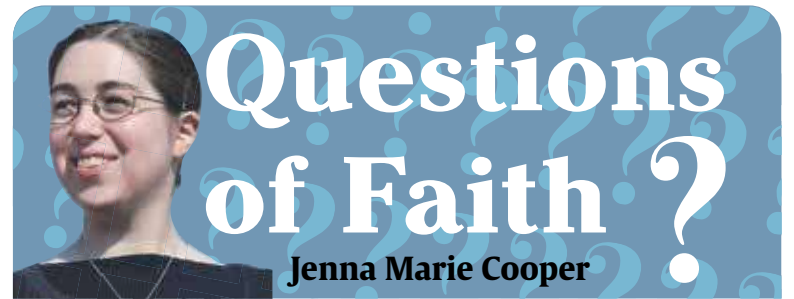
Well, do I remember the first time I entered a Baptist church, as our parish youth group was invited to a youth revival. What struck me was that the centre of attention was, not the altar, the tabernacle, or the crucifix, but the choir! That, of course, was not my experience as a Catholic. The choir, we believed, sang with the people, not at them.

Worship

We, of course, do not go to Mass for the music, although we sure love it when the music helps our worship. Nor do we even attend Mass for the sermon, as important as that is. No, we go to unite ourselves with Jesus in his sublimely infinite and eternal sacrifice of praise, supplication, a contrition on the Cross. Music, singing, the choir, the sermon are all very significant means to that but never the end in themselves.

This all comes to mind with the feast of St Augustine, August 28, who taught, “Those who sing pray twice!”

Thanks to all who help us do that!



Q: What is the position or rule of the Church concerning cremation?

A: There is a short answer to your question in Paragraph 2301 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which tells us that, “The Church permits cremation, provided that it does not demonstrate a denial of faith in the resurrection of the body.”

But we can gain a fuller understanding of the Church's teaching if we dig a little deeper into the relevant documents. In particular, in the Order of Christian Funerals (that is, the book governing the ceremonies for Catholic funeral liturgies) there is an appendix approved for use in the United States which states, “Although cremation is now permitted by the Church, it does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body. The Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in those rites” (413).

In other words, cremation is technically - though not enthusiastically - allowed by the Church, as long as it is not done for reasons or motivations contrary to the Catholic teaching on the dignity of the human body. For example, choosing to cremate the body of a loved one who died of a highly infectious disease in order to avoid spreading contagion would be an acceptable motive; but opting for cremation because of a belief that ‘the body is just an empty shell’ would not be.

The appendix in the Order of Christian Funerals goes on to give some practical directives. Specifically, “the cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the human body from which they come. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport, and the final disposition. The cremated remains should be

buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires” (417).

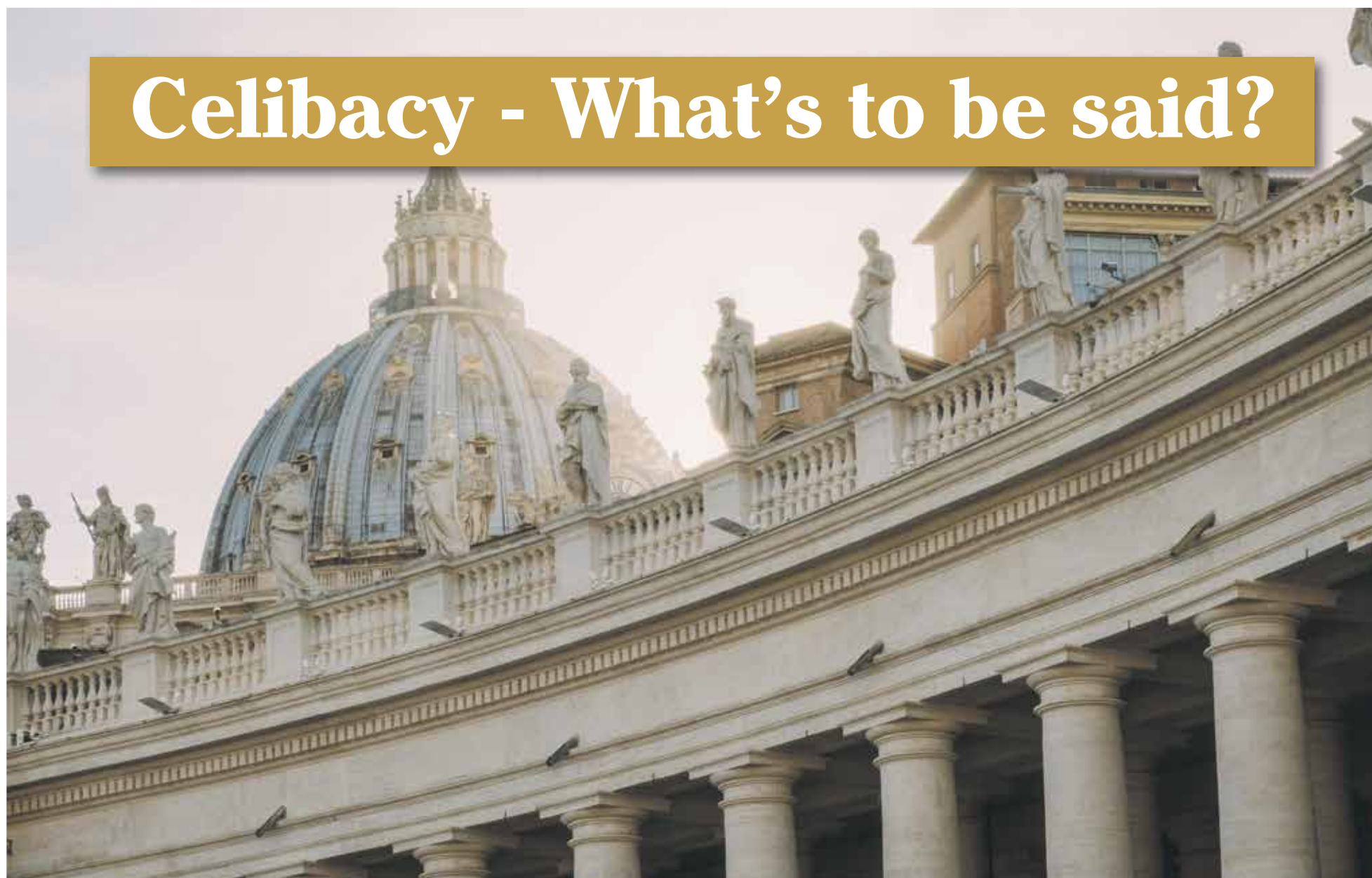
The same document further indicates that if a body is to be cremated, ideally this would happen after the funeral so that the integral body could be present at the Mass (418).

It may seem odd to some of our modern sensibilities to attach so much importance to a dead body, when the soul of our loved one is no longer present within it. But it is always good to recall how ‘incarnational’ our Catholic faith is. That is, we believe that God's coming to Earth as man has rendered many aspects of our humble, tangible material reality as sacred. As the Order of Christian Funerals urges us to recall, “The body of a deceased Catholic Christian is also the body once washed in Baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation, and fed with the Bread of Life. ... The body of the deceased brings forcefully to mind the Church's conviction that the human body is in Christ a temple of the Holy Spirit and is destined for future glory at the resurrection of the dead” (412).

This reverence for the bodies of the dead is a logical consequence of what we profess in the Creed we recite at Mass every Sunday. That we believe in the “resurrection of the body.” Just as Jesus' body was resurrected, and as Mary's immaculately conceived body was assumed into Heaven, so too will “God, in his almighty power, definitively grant incorruptible life to our bodies by reuniting them with our souls, through the power of Jesus' Resurrection” (997).

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

Celibacy - What's to be said?



Some years ago, an op-ed piece appeared in the *New York Times* by Frank Bruni, entitled *The Wages of Celibacy*. The column, while provocative, was fair. Mostly he asked a lot of hard, necessary questions. Looking at the various sexual scandals that have plagued the Roman Catholic priesthood in the past years, Bruni suggested that it was time to re-examine celibacy with an honest and courageous eye and ask whether its downside outweighs its potential benefits. Bruni, himself, didn't weigh-in definitively on the question. He only pointed out that celibacy, as a vowed lifestyle, runs more risks than are normally admitted. Near the end of his column he wrote, "Celibate culture runs the risk of stunting [sexual] development and turning sexual impulses into furtive, tortured gestures. It downplays a fundamental and maybe irresistible human connection. Is it any wonder that some priests try to make that connection nonetheless, in surreptitious, imprudent and occasionally destructive ways?"

Necessary

That's not an irreverent question. It's a necessary one. We need the courage to face the question, Is celibacy, in fact, abnormal to the human condition? Does it run the risk of stunting sexual development?

Thomas Merton was once asked by a journalist what celibacy was like. I suspect his answer will come as a surprise to pious ears because



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

he virtually endorses Bruni's position. His response, "Celibacy is hell! You live in a loneliness that God himself condemned when he said: 'It is not good to be alone!'" However, that being admitted, Merton immediately went on to say that just because celibacy is not the normal human condition doesn't mean it cannot be wonderfully generative and fruitful, and that perhaps its unique fruitfulness is tied to how extraordinary and abnormal it is.

"I have been deeply nurtured, as a Christian and as a human being, by the lives of vowed celibates"

What Merton is saying, in essence, is that celibacy is abnormal and dooms you to live in a state not willed by the Creator.

But, despite and perhaps because of that abnormality, it can be particularly generative, both for the one living it and for those around him or her.

I know this to be true, as do countless others, because I have been deeply nurtured, as a Christian and as a human being, by the lives of vowed celibates, by numerous priests, sisters, and brothers whose lives have touched my own and whose 'abnormality' served precisely to make them wonderfully fruitful.

Attraction

Moreover, this particular abnormality can have its own attraction. I once served as a spiritual director to a young man who was discerning whether to join our order, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate or to propose marriage to a young woman. It was an agonising decision for him. He wanted both. And his discernment, while perhaps

somewhat overly romantic in terms of his fantasy of both options, was at the same time uncommonly mature. Here (in words to this effect) is how he described his dilemma:

"My dad died before we reached the hospital. As tragic as this was, there was an element of beauty in it. My dad died in my mother's arms"

"I grew up in a rural area and was the oldest in my family. When I was fifteen years old, one evening just before supper, my dad, still a young man, had a heart attack. There were no ambulances to call. We bundled him up in the car and my mother sat in the back seat with him and held him, while I, a scared teenager, drove the car on route to the hospital some 15 miles away. My dad died before we reached the hospital. As tragic as this was, there was an element of beauty in it. My dad died in my mother's arms. That tragic beauty branded my soul. In my mind, in my fantasy, that's how I

want to die – in the arms of my wife. Given the grip of that fantasy, my major hesitation about entering the Oblates and moving towards priesthood is celibacy. If I become a priest, I won't die in human arms. I'll die as celibates do – held in faith but not held in human arms."

But one day in trying to discern all of this, I saw another picture: Jesus didn't die in the arms of a spouse; he died lonely and alone. I've always had a thing about the loneliness of celibates and have always been drawn to people like Soren Kierkegaard, Mother Teresa, Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, and Daniel Berrigan, who didn't die in the arms of a spouse. There's a real beauty in their way of dying too!

Dangers

Bruni is right in warning that celibacy is abnormal and fraught with dangers. It does run the risk of stunting sexual development and especially of downplaying a biblically mandated fundamental human connection, namely, the fundamental anthropological dogma contained in the story of God creating our first parents and his pronouncement that it is not good (and dangerous) to be alone!

Celibacy does consign one to live in a loneliness that God himself condemned, but it is also the loneliness within which Jesus gave himself over to us in a death that is perhaps the most generative expression of love in human history.

"Jesus didn't die in the arms of a spouse; he died lonely and alone. I've always had a thing about the loneliness of celibates and have always been drawn to people like Soren Kierkegaard, Mother Teresa, Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, and Daniel Berrigan, who didn't die in the arms of a spouse. There's a real beauty in their way of dying too!"

Faith is a gift of God

Jos 24: 1-2a, 15-17, 18b
Ps 34: 2-3, 16-21
Eph 5:21-32 or 5:2a,
25-32
Jn 6: 60-69

The Sunday Gospel

Jem Sullivan



When was the last time you had the opportunity to give public witness to Christian faith? Perhaps it was in the presence of co-workers or neighbours, or maybe among friends and family. Whenever we witness to faith, we realise the task is not easy. Yet through baptism Christians are given the strength and wisdom of the Holy Spirit to offer witness to faith in small or profound ways. And we are grateful for those Christians who are called to the ultimate witness of martyrdom.

We live in an age of Christian martyrdom. It is claimed that more Christians have been martyred in the 20th century than in the first four centuries of Christianity. Christians around the world face violent persecution today as they are forced to choose between renouncing their faith in Jesus Christ or violence and death. The threat of martyrdom calls forth a decisive test of courage and witness to Christ who walks with the martyrs in their suffering.

"Decide today whom you will serve," Joshua says to the tribes of Israel at Shechem in today's first reading. Throughout the Old Testament, the Israelites were faced with a choice - to live in covenant relationship with Yahweh or to fall into idolatry of pagan gods.

Wrestled

Whenever the Israelites wrestled with this choice, they recalled the good works of God. "For it was the Lord, our God, who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt... He performed those great miracles before our very eyes," prayed the Israelites. This gratitude to God is echoed by the psalmist who sings with confident trust, "Many are the troubles of the just one, but out of them all the LORD delivers him."

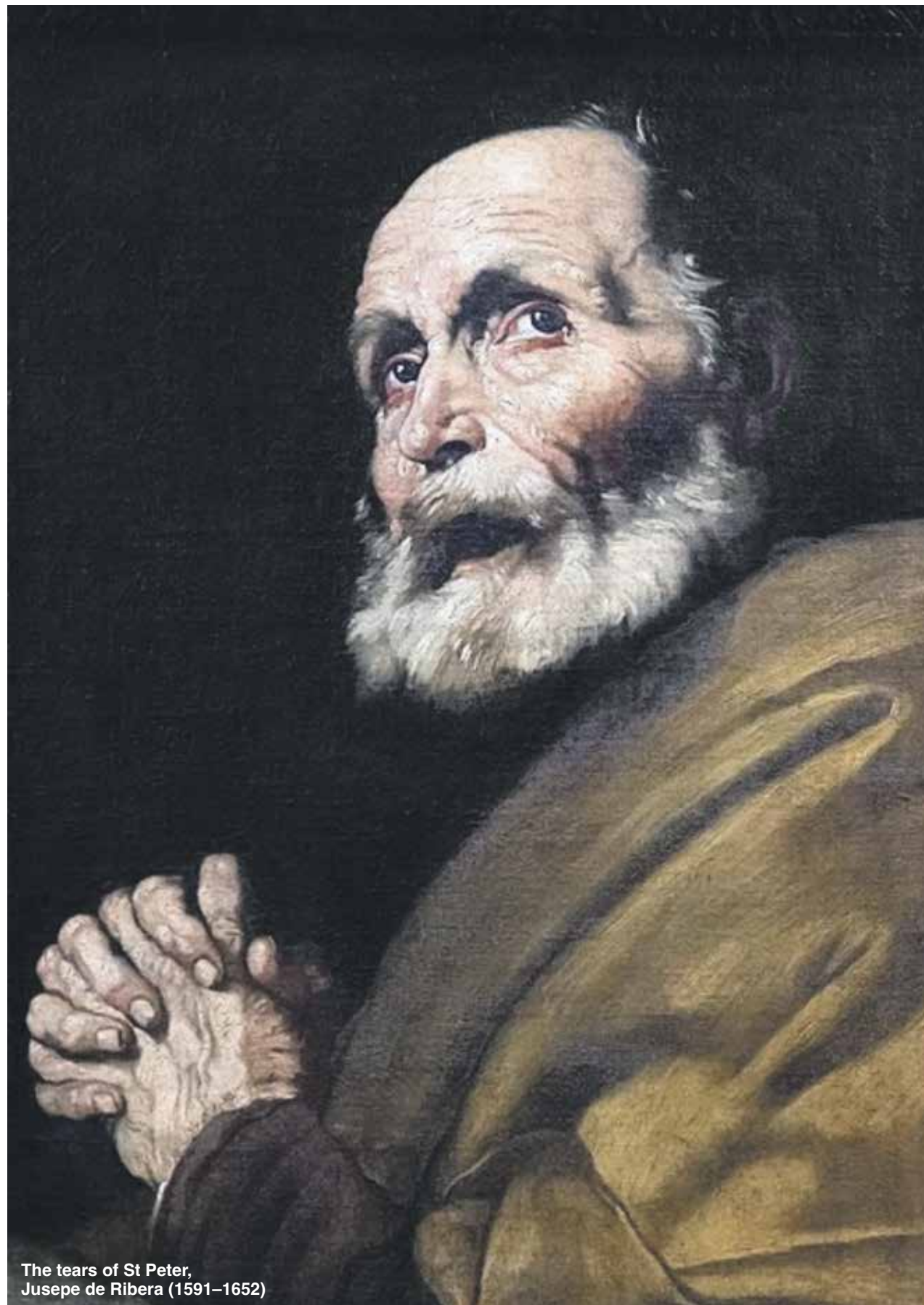
In the Gospel, the

disciples of Jesus face the same life changing decision. They can respond to Jesus' invitation and follow the Lord or choose a life apart from God. Jesus reminds his disciples, and us, that following him will not be easy. Yet when we persevere in friendship with Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, our life opens to the love, joy and peace of God that surpasses understanding.

“Faith is a human act in response to God who reveals his loving mercy. As a gift of God, faith is freely and generously poured out on those who believe that Jesus has the words of eternal life”

When we hear God's word, we face a similar decision. We can choose to hear God's voice and live in the wisdom of the divine word. On this path we choose life, love and genuine happiness. For only God who created us in love can meet the deepest desires of our heart beyond our expectations. God alone satisfies our longing for unconditional forgiving love. It is this knowledge that strengthens the martyrs who choose courageously to persevere in faith as disciples of Jesus. Their witness strengthens us to persevere in faith each day.

Jesus shows his disciples that faith is a gift of God. "... No one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father." Faith is a human act in response to God who reveals his loving mercy. As a gift of God, faith is freely and generously poured out on those who believe that Jesus has the words of eternal life.



The tears of St Peter,
Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652)

We can be confident in Jesus' assurance that "It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life."

Returned

We are told that some who heard Jesus' words turned away and returned to their former way of life.

And then the disciples had to decide whether or not they would continue to follow Jesus. In the face of this fundamental choice, Peter answers Jesus with his confession of faith saying, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One

of God."

God's word invites us today to choose discipleship and to renew our faith in Jesus with the courage of the martyrs. May our faith, like that of Peter, be strengthened in the face of trials and difficulties both within and outside the Church, as we pray in faith, "speak to me, Lord."

Question: Who do I choose to serve today - God or self?

Jem Sullivan holds a doctorate in religious education and is an associate professor of catechetics in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington.

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



The confirmation of what we already believed

Regular readers will know I'm a big fan of TV drama, especially drama series. I don't watch too many comedies, but I have a few favourites.

One of these is *Young Sheldon* (RTE One, Fridays). Comedy or not, of late it has been tackling some serious matters, like the mother, Mary (Zoe Perry), being alienated from her Church, pregnancy out of wedlock, gambling and more. There's always been a jaundiced attitude to religion, with young Sheldon (Iain Armitage) still being the child-scientist who is dismissive of religion (perpetuating the alleged conflict between science and religion), though he insists he believes in his mother, who is quite a devout Baptist, suspicious of the Catholic family her other son Georgie (Montana Jordan) marries into – there are some sneak Baptisms! However, things have taken a very serious turn in the last three episodes with a shocking family trauma that I didn't see coming. My first reaction was 'Oh why did they do that?' The key apparently is in Sheldon's back story from the original series *Big Bang Theory* – *Young Sheldon* is a prequel.

I won't give away the details (I'm paranoid about spoilers), but these episodes have been among the best I've seen in any drama this year. There's a huge emotional punch, the characters'



Barry Wilmore, Astronaut

reactions are totally credible and above all the acting by young and old is outstanding. Last Friday's episode was one of the best series finales I've ever seen and religion figures strongly, though again not too constructively. The mother is accused of spending too much time with Jesus and not enough with her children. The grandmother, Connie (Annie Potts), says Mary is

hitting the Bible rather than hitting the bottle! She wants her teenagers baptised to save their souls, but they resist. The resulting family conflict is believable but unsettling. The writers are really good at understanding human nature, and loving it, but not so hot at understanding religion.

A bonus in this episode was the guest appearance by Jim Parsons, who played adult

Sheldon in *Big Bang Theory* and, fittingly, did the narration in *Young Sheldon* where we get the adult reflecting on the childhood experiences – an approach used to great effect in the *Wonder Years* currently being re-shown every weekday on TG4.

Young Sheldon is set in Texas, where religion and the Baptists in particular have a strong footing. While the show perpetuates the science vs religion trope, an item from *Sunday* (BBC Radio 4) showed another perspective. Much decorated astronaut Barry 'Butch' Wilmore is a Texas Baptist and is currently stranded on the International Space Station. Presenter Emily Buchanan spoke to his pastor who told us that Wilmore found no conflict between his religion and his science. In fact, his experience of space has 'confirmed what he already believed'.

Back on Earth there's way too much aggro. Often this is heightened by social media, and sometimes by mainstream media even as they rail against social media for doing the same thing! Last Thursday the *Pat Kenny Show* (Newstalk) opened with reference to 'the pitiless Israelis' (note - not the Israeli Defence Forces), and Trump's 'lies' in his interview with Elon Musk. This is not neutral, impartial broadcasting. It's pretty hard to get impartial coverage of US politics – Irish media are heavily anti-Trump

PICK OF THE WEEK

EVERYBODY LOVES RAYMOND

CHANNEL 4 Sunday 25 August, 7.30am

The Sister. Debra's hippy sister shows up unexpectedly and announces that she's decided to become a nun. Funny and moving. (S4 Ep6)

KEYS TO MY LIFE

RTÉ ONE Sunday 25 August, 8.30pm

Fr Peter McVerry. The social justice campaigner retraces his steps from his one-bed council flat in Ballymun, unveiling an unexpected past life that resonates with profound meaning. (Repeat)

SAINT ROSE OF LIMA

EWTN Sunday 25 August, 9pm

An EWTN original 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.

and pro-Democrat. Mind you it's better than the much more polarised media landscape in the US itself.

Therefore, it's worth noting when you get reasonably balanced and moderate coverage – I enjoyed *The Last Word* (Today FM, Tuesday) when moderate journalist Larry Donnelly discussed the US political scene with conservative Cal Thomas. Thomas said Larry and himself try to be 'more balanced and reasonable'. Stand-in presenter Mario Rosenstock said he loves this regular slot. Me too!

Last week ex UK PM Liz Truss was pranked with a lettuce banner at a public speaking event. On *Henry Bonsu* (Times Radio, Wednesday)

the presenter, not a Truss fan, didn't like it – the more you humiliate and alienate a public figure the more they are driven to the extremes, where they are welcomed with open arms. I found myself in agreement. I've noticed this phenomenon over here – prominent journalists or commentators for example who have had interesting things to say in challenging the consensus, but, after hounding by folks who imagine themselves to be liberal, drift rightward to the extremes and lose their ability to effectively reach those in the middle ground.

Film

Aubrey Malone



Probing portrait of previous president

When Mary Robinson was young, she used to look out the window of her home in Victoria Terrace, Ballina, and wonder if she could change the world. Her opportunity to do so came in 1990 when she was elected president of Ireland.

Aoife Kelleher's documentary, *Mrs Robinson* (12A), is a timely tribute to her as she recently turned eighty. It's a comprehensive paean to someone who expanded the office and its former cosmetic status to one where, in her own words, she could go "toe to toe" with the Taoiseach of the day in a paradigm shift.

When I was doing cou-

rier work in the late 1980s I was summoned to Mary's house on the Sandford Road in Ranelagh to run an errand for her. At that time, as a constitutional lawyer, she had her hair straight and was dressed in a trouser suit. She later softened her image.

Mary had a successful presidency but didn't seek a second term, leaving the office a few weeks early to become a UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Kelleher's documentary pays homage to her as a lightning rod for seismic change.

She's now a member of Project Dandelion, a women-led Climate Change campaign, and leader of Chair of

the Elders, a society founded by Nelson Mandela which advocates for justice on the world's stage.

Mr Mandela gives her a ringing endorsement in the film. So do people like her friend Richard Branson, Volodymyr Zelensky and even Barack Obama, who credits her as "illuminating a better future for our world."

We also hear Mary uttering her familiar mantra about women rocking the system instead of the cradle after she assumed the presidential reins.

Her father, Aubrey, was our family doctor. In fact he delivered me. I'm said to be named after him. I didn't know Mary

personally but of course I was aware of her family. They were affluent – not everyone could afford to be sent to a finishing school in France as she did – but unshowy about it.

Like Mary, my father had to get a dispensation from the Church to study Law in TCD. This ban wasn't lifted until 1970, three years after she graduated. My father was one of the few Catholics in Trinity in the 1920s. He didn't experience any religious bigotry while living in there. He told me once that his Protestant friends even used to call him for Mass.

When Mary married a Protestant, her parents

objected. Another wobble was her misguided meeting with the abducted Dubai Princess Latifa in 2018. During her presidential campaign, an adversarial caption went, 'Left is Not Right for the Park'.

She's clashed with the Church on issues like homosexuality, contraception, abortion and divorce. Perhaps ironically, her family home is across the road from St Muredach's Cathedral, one of the most iconic structures in the town – if not the country.

The house will soon be transformed into a museum-cum-presidential archive – another precedent in her eventful life.



Mary Robinson

BookReviews

Peter Costello



The date when the world became connected

The Year 1000: When Explorers Connected the World - and Globalisation Began, by Valerie Hansen (Viking / Penguin, £20.00 / €23.50)

Peter Costello

Having been reared on the idea, common enough in the 19th century and later, that the year 1000 was rife with fears of an imminent Day of Judgement, I was a little surprised to read in Dr Hansen's book that "Few Christians believed that Christ would return to Earth in the year 1000. Various itinerant preachers and Church reformers claimed to be the messiah and led uprisings, but their movements occurred in different centuries, none near the year 1000."

One has to wonder then how the new Norman sovereigns of Britain came to call the great survey of the newly seized kingdom the Domesday book? Readers of Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millennium* may also be surprised by Hansen's mild account of a Europe already filled with social and religious turmoil.

But then that is what may happen when you look too closely at just one region such as Europe. Dr Hansen creates a happier view by going global. But was 1000 a crucial date?

The other week I was reading Thor Heyerdahl's *The Maldive Mystery*, which suggests that globalisation had been active half a millennium earlier, and even before that.

Maldives

He relates that an important export of the Maldives in ancient times were cowrie shells, found only in the islands and used there as money. These shells have been unearthed in pre-Viking tombs (AD 550-800) in Sweden, and also in Finland.

They had been passed hand to hand across many thousands of miles from their source. Certainly there was a connection between Finland and the Maldives; but mere connection of this hand to hand kind does not imply real communication.

Note that the book claims

to speak about "explorers", but in fact the real heroes of this book are not explorers in the ordinary sense, but traders, those innumerable unnamed persons that pass almost unnoticed by historians.

Dr Hansen's basic idea is that the year 1000, far from being a year of fear, was a year of active achievement. For the first time, she claims, it was possible to pass commercial items around the globe.

This, however, is an exaggeration. There were, for instance trading connections between Mexico and Peru, but these did not connect with the Vikings in Greenland and Canada, as she implies. The Vikings traded in furs, salted cod, and marine ivory from walrus and narwhals. They did not connect with the Aztecs or the Incas or know of their realms of gold.

"Though there is much to disagree with in this book, there is also much that is of great interest, which makes it well worth reading to extend one's ideas of the medieval world"

Indeed, the Viking did not see themselves as being in "a new world" (as Columbus later did), but as settlers in a little known extension of northern Europe. In this sense they did not "discover America" at all. Their little colony was known to the Vatican as a part of Christian Europe: all very unglobal.

But though there is much to disagree with in this book, there is also much that is of great interest, which makes it well worth reading to extend one's ideas of the medieval world.

In her chapter on Russia, for instance, we learn that the word 'slave' in English and ancient Greek comes from the word Slav, an inhabitant of what we now generally call 'Russia'.

She describes how at this time Vladimir Prince of Kiev made a cost / benefit decision about what religion he



The "richest man in the world", King Mansa Musa of Mali

and his people would follow, rejecting Catholicism for an unstated reason in favour of Orthodoxy because it was the more powerful. Dr Hansen sees religion not as a matter of spiritual integrity at all, but purely as a transactional affair.

Africa

The most interesting chapter deals with Africa, which introduces the reader to the Mansa Musa, King of Mali, "the world richest man", who brought so much gold with him on a visit to Cairo - several tons of it - that he upset the local economy.

Like many American writ-

ers she wishes to give a positive version of African history, even when this means playing down the matter of African participation in the slave trade from the earliest days, and accepting the Arab penetration of Africa as natural and proper compared with later European colonisation. Non-Islamic Africa has little presence for her. She is fascinated by King Mansa's gold, rather than the knowledge of Africa as the earliest home of humanity, from which the whole global community emerged.

When she speaks of globalisation in 1000 she fails to

mention that it was a matter of luxuries, gold, silver, gems, and spices, for the high status classes of Europe and China.

Globalisation

It did not involve what globalisation does today, the using of Africa, where millions starve, to raise vegetables for your kitchen. Her final chapter deals with "the most Globalised place on earth", that is to say China - neatly fitting in with American's present day perceptions.

Having berated the Vikings for killing the first Native Americans they came upon, Hansen notes that on other continents, those who

encountered strangers took their time, greeted them patiently, and traded their belongings for whatever goods their new acquaintances offered (though this often meant diamonds for glass beads). Some of the most successful learned languages and forged trading relationship across huge distances.

"True globalisation didn't benefit everyone who experienced it," Hansen concludes. "But those who remained open to the unfamiliar did much better than those who rejected anything new. That was true in the year 1000, and it's just as true today".

"Nor does she allow much for the sheer greed and cruelty of the powerful in relation to the weak. Commerce is not everything; communication is"

These charmingly optimistic words read strangely when there are riots in these islands to reject aliens, and in her native United States candidate Trump is proposing to deport millions from the country.

The Year 1000 in an enjoyable, if at times, irritating read. The author seems to little understand the social and mental role that religion plays in making the world. Nor does she allow much for the sheer greed and cruelty of the powerful in relation to the weak. Commerce is not everything; communication is.

I think anyone reading her book would benefit also from reading John Man's *Atlas of the Year 1000* (Penguin Books), which gives in a form which tries less to be a popular read, in which the nature of the cultures and civilisations, especially in Asia and Africa involved in the period are described in a set of finely crafted and explicated maps. Indeed he gives an equally informative account of world connections over the long course of history.

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.

Irish heroes of the fight against Fascism

The Irish in the Resistance: The untold stories of the ordinary heroes who resisted Hitler, by Clodagh Finn and John Morgan (Gill Books, €15.99 / £13.99)

Joe Carroll

Ireland was neutral in World War II but as a concession to embattled Britain, Taoiseach Eamon de Valera did not prevent Irish citizens from enlisting in the British forces. But there were other Irish who risked their lives. This book records the heroism of the estimated 50 or more Irish women and men who resisted Nazi occupation in France, Italy, Belgium and Denmark.

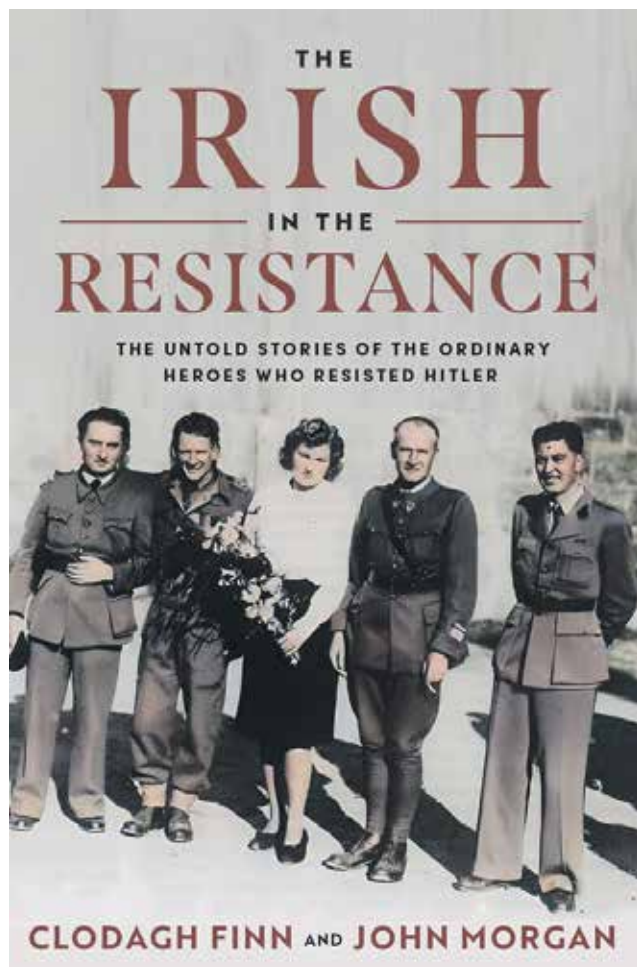
The Irish in British uniform became prisoners of war if captured, but these Resistance volunteers, most of them women, risked torture, execution or appalling conditions in concentration camps. The authors have done extensive research in wartime records and interviews with relatives to tell their story.

Exploits

Some of these exploits have already been recorded such as those of Samuel Beckett and his wife, Suzanne, in occupied France and of Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty and singer Delia Murphy in Rome where they used Vatican cover to help hundreds if not thousands of Jews and escaped Allied prisoners. Isadore Ryan blazed a trail here with his 2017 book *No Way Out* which recorded the deeds of Irish nationals in wartime France.

The present book casts its net widely and includes Irish women and men helping Allied servicemen and Jews to escape their Nazi hunters in Belgium, Netherlands and even Denmark. Some of these were sisters of religious orders and priests. They did not use arms but usually worked for the escape lines, like Comet, which guided airmen who had

“The book is full of similar stories of heroism and sacrifice in the Allied cause by Irish women and men who risked death rather than stay neutral. They deserve to be remembered”



Cover of *The Irish in the Resistance*

been shot down to safe houses and then along the dangerous routes down to the Pyrenees and into neutral Spain on their way to Gibraltar and freedom.

“She was sent to the notorious Ravensbruck concentration camp for women north of Berlin where conditions were appalling and many ended up in the crematorium”

They are all inspiring stories. Take Catherine Crean who was born in 1879

and grew up at 8 Moore St before going to work as a governess in Brussels. When World War II broke out she was in her sixties but was soon working for the Comet Line which hid Allied airmen until they were passed on to France on their way to the Pyrenees. The network was betrayed and Catherine was first sent to St Gilles prison where she was interrogated and most likely tortured to give information. She was sent to the notorious Ravensbruck concentration camp for women north of Berlin where conditions were appalling and many ended up in the crematorium. A fellow prisoner and resistance worker who survived recalled that one night Catherine called to her from her bunk. “She had no strength left and all she wanted was for me to comb her hair.” Catherine died of dysentery on April 3 1945, aged 66, just weeks before the camp was liberated by Russian soldiers.

Mary Cummins

Mary Cummins was another Irish woman who helped British airmen while she worked as a translator in

The special vocation of the White Canons



Norbertines in India, tasting fresh cardamoms for the first time.

The Return of the White Canons: The Modern Norbertines in Britain, by Aidan Nichols (Gracewing, £12.99 / €14.99)

Peter Costello

Aidan Nichols is a Dominican friar, with a special interest in ecumenism, who has an established reputation as a writer on Catholic theology and culture. His latest book concerns the revival of the White Canons, the Canons Regular of Prémonstré or Norbertines, in England during the Victorian “second spring”.

The order, founded in 1120, had been one of the most important orders in medieval times, but times change, and Victorian England was a very different place for the Catholic Church.

Their medieval order's success has been described by two historians: H. M. Colgin in 1950 and by Joseph A. Gribbin in 2012. The Norbertines were one of the principal monastic institutions in the country, with offshoots elsewhere. Those were their days of glory.

The focus of this new book is to describe the “valiant efforts” to restore the order in Britain in modern times, with some success. Here in Ireland, as Nichols has to admit, the order had a more shadowed reputation.

They had come to Ireland in 1924, establishing themselves at the Abbey of the Holy Trinity in Co. Cavan. This did not end in glory at all. Nichols writes that in the closing decade of the twentieth century the reputation of Kilnacott was

destroyed by the activities of the serial abuser Brendan Smyth. This brought down a government in the Republic and tainted the standing of two Archbishops of Armagh.

Nichols says that though this was “a disaster for the fortunes of Prémonstré in Ireland, both north and south, the shadow of ill repute did not thankfully, extend beyond the Irish sea.”

That is not exact. There was evidence that Smyth had offended in Rhode Island, North Dakota, Boston, Wales and Italy. The offences in Providence, Rhode Island, were the subject of a later investigation and diocesan report.

This was certainly a dark shadow over the order whose long history are described in these pages. The crimes of a single man and the errors of a few administrators meant that all the good work done by the order in England since its return in 1872 had been affected. This is sad: the good they did and do over the centuries still needs to be celebrated.

Certainly they flourish elsewhere. Today the order, with about 1300 members, exists around the world, though it has faded in Britain, the British province has offshoots active elsewhere, not just in America, but perhaps more importantly in troubled India.

The White Canons work in many parishes helping to sustain the essential substructure of the Church. What they have done and continue to do on a global basis should be remembered and kept in mind rather than the shadowed last days at Kilnacott.

Brussels. She was born in Dublin and lived on Richmond Road and went to the Dominican school on Eccles St. When her network was betrayed in 1941, she was arrested. She was moved from prison to prison and eventually sentenced to death in Berlin but sent to Ravensbruck. “The whole stay in Germany was torture from beginning to end,” she said later. “The torture of hunger, thirst and humiliation. I was beaten. I

had my hands in a vice. I had very often a revolver on my back.”

“She was later decorated by King Leopold of the Belgians and General Eisenhower”

In January 1945, she was released to the Irish dip-

lomatic representative in Berlin, Con Cremin, who brought her to Switzerland when the war ended. She was later decorated by King Leopold of the Belgians and General Eisenhower.

Heroism

The book is full of similar stories of heroism and sacrifice in the Allied cause by Irish women and men who risked death rather than stay neutral. They deserve to be remembered.

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Crossword

Gordius 677

Across
1 Central character in 'Great Expectations' (3)
3 Pertaining to the Book of Revelation (11)
8 Frozen appendage (6)
9 Famous heavy metal musician (4,4)
10 Group of eight (5)
11 Sensational in a melodramatic way (5)
13 Faint smell (5)
15 Branch of Mathematics (7)
16 One who regularly eats to excess (7)
20 Vacant (5)
21 Grin (5)
23 Knickknack (5)
24 Creature flying over the cliffs of Dover in a Vera Lynn song (8)
25 Worshipped (6)
26 Cocktail named for a tool (11)
27 A play on words (3)

Down
1 Poker hand (4,2,5)
2 A water-colour, perhaps (8)
3 Apportion (5)
4 Cut short (7)
5 Bumpkin (5)
6 Teachers, mentors (6)
7 Automobile (3)
12 Oppressed (11)
13 Not as good (5)
14 Foolishness (5)
17 Physical symptom of sorrow (8)
18 Religious organiza-
tion whose name means 'work of God' (4,3)
19 Alcohol (6)
22 Joint in the arm (5)
23 Tree associated with the Lebanon (5)
24 Public transport vehicle (3)

1		2		3			4			5		6		7
8							9							
10										11				12
					13				14					
15									16				17	
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		19			20									
21				22						23				
24										25				
26													27	

SOLUTIONS, AUGUST 15

GORDIUS No. 676

Across
1 Transports 6 Fang 10 Charm offensive 12 Eclairs 15 Epsom 17 Coin 18 Hail 19 Start 21 Invoice 23 Latin 24 True 25 Fire 26 Equal 28 Readmit 33 Hearthrug 34 After 35 Meek 36 Angel Falls

Down
1 Tact 2 Anarchist 3 Samba 4 Odour 5 Tiff 7 Amiss 8 Grey matter 9 Incense 13 Icon 14 Scooter 16 Cheltenham 20 Air pistol 21 Inflate 22 Cuba 27 Usage 29 Eagle 30 Dwarf 31 Cran 32 Eros

Sudoku Corner547

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy546

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

Last week's Hard546

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

Notebook

Fr Billy Swan



Is evolution compatible with faith in God?

"I believe in evolution. I'm an atheist" was the declaration of one man on meeting him recently. But is it a case of 'either/or' or 'both/and'? Is it possible to accept the theory of evolution and still believe in a Creator God?

'Both/And', Not 'Either /Or'

The 'either/or' choice of evolution or Biblical faith is based on two fundamentalist and irreconcilable positions that are pitted one against the other. The first is the theory of creationism that holds that God created human beings in their present form, less than 10,000 years ago. The timeframe of ten millennia approximately corresponds to the number of biblical generations, making the theory of creationism compatible with Scripture. The opposing theory is that of pure evolution where natural processes take place where one life form changes slowly into a higher life form over time, without any divine intervention. The Catholic Church holds a third position – namely that while theories of evolution are complex, evolutionary processes are unfolding in creation under divine providence. This position is based on two distinct and clear principles.



Pope Pius XII

The first of these principles concern the understanding of the Bible not as a scientific document but a theological one. This was pointed out by Pope Leo XIII as far back as 1893 in his encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* and by Pope Pius XII in 1943 with his encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. The authors of Genesis were expressing their faith in how creation relates to the Creator – how it originates from its Creator, is independent of the Creator and yet is radically dependent on the Creator. These central truths are stated in the creation accounts in

a literary and not a scientific way.

The second principle that allows Christians to accept both the theory of evolution and faith in a Creator God, is stated clearly in another encyclical by Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, published in 1950. This magisterial document accepts the evidence of evolution as seen in matter but since the human soul is immaterial, it could not have arisen from a merely material process. As the giver of life, God infuses a soul directly into every human being, thus safe-guarding the uniqueness of every person on Earth – a truth also borne out scientifically with no two people having an identical DNA profile.

Having clarified these two principles, I would like to outline a difficulty with the argument of people like Richard Dawkins, Stephen Hawking and others who are so enthusiastic about evolution as a replacement for God that they suggest that processes themselves give rise to things in the first place. Hawking writes, "Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the Universe exists, why we exist" (*The Grand Design*). He continues, "Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will cre-

ate itself from nothing" (*The Grand Design*). He concludes, "I think the universe was spontaneously created out of nothing, according to the laws of science".

“It is like explaining the Big Bang with the laws of physics only to discover that the laws of physics were created with the Big Bang”

These philosophical conclusions from an otherwise brilliant scientist appear weak at best because they suggest that processes themselves are responsible for the objective realities and things that precede them. When he speaks about 'self-creation' and 'spontaneous creation', he moves beyond the domain of biology and physics to make broad claims that apparently don't need to appeal to a source of exist-

ence of things. But this position is impossible to accept. It is like explaining the Big Bang with the laws of physics only to discover that the laws of physics were created with the Big Bang, or trying to explain the existence of gravity without the interaction of objects (such as planets) that gives rise to gravity in the first place.

The young man I spoke to is one of many, I suspect, who have rejected faith in a Creator God because of their acceptance of evolution. This is indeed tragic but understandable. Nor are the churches themselves absolved of blame for this. We need to do a far better job to educate our children and communities that the question of evolution and faith in a Creator God is not a choice of 'either/or' but 'both/and'.



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