

In 2024, Misean Cara celebrates 20 years of support to Irish missionary organisations.



Be a part of the legacy,

By leaving a gift in your will to help ensure that we can support their life-transforming work overseas for years to come.

Visit us at www.miseancara.ie/Legacy to learn more.



Dr Lorna Gold: Women of faith and the climate justice battle — Pages 8-9

The Irish Catholic

WAITING WITH PURPOSE

Fr Barry White
Page 29



THE WAR ON THE WEAK

Martina Purdy
Page 13



GETTING ADULT CHILDREN TO CHRISTMAS MASS

Greg Erlandson
Page 34



Thursday, December 5, 2024

€3.00 (Stg £2.70)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

@IrishCathNews

www.irishcatholic.com

Bishops Concerned Over Derry/Raphoe Merger Plan

Exclusive

Garry O'Sullivan

Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry flew to Rome in recent weeks to meet the head of the Dicastery for Bishops Bishop Robert Francis Prevost O.S.A. (Augustinian) to petition for a change in Vatican policy towards plans to merge the dioceses of Derry and Raphoe, *The Irish Catholic* understands. It is believed that Bishop McKeown went to press his case that the Diocese of Derry should not be amalgamated with the Diocese of Raphoe (mostly Donegal) at this point in time. It is also believed he spoke with Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Vatican's Secretary for Relations with States.

The Irish Catholic understands that the current Nuncio, Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor wants the Diocese of Derry to merge with the Diocese of Raphoe as part of the Vatican's policy to reduce the number of dioceses in Ireland to make a leaner more streamlined Irish Church.

The Diocese of Derry will fall vacant next April on the retirement of Bishop McKeown, and with no Bishop currently in Raphoe, the Vatican sees this as an opportunity to unite the two dioceses.

However some members of the hierarchy don't agree with the move. With only three bishops in the North of Ireland, it is believed that Bishop Alan McGuckian who is newly appointed to Down and Connor following the untimely passing of Bishop Noel Treanor, has a huge workload and a relatively short number of years to do it before he too is due to retire.

» Continued on Page 2



KNOCK

www.knockshrine.ie

ALL-NIGHT VIGIL 7th/8th December 2024

Vigil from 12 Midnight to 4.30am in Knock Basilica | Confessions from 10pm to Midnight

Bishops Concerned Over Derry/Raphoe Merger Plan

» Continued from Page 1

With no Derry bishop, Archbishop Eamon Martin would be left alone to administer the amalgamation of the two dioceses while also looking after the Dioceses of Armagh and Dromore, with only one auxiliary, Bishop Michael Router. It is believed that Archbishop Martin feels that there is a huge

amount of work to be done on Catholic Education issues in the North and Legacy issues regarding the Troubles and his time to attend to these issues will be heavily restricted. It is believed that the bishops are not ultimately opposed to the merger, but not at this juncture.

The Church of Ireland has a diocese of Derry and Raphoe.

Dublin to get diocesan pastoral council

Garry O'Sullivan

A deanery meeting is to be held in Dublin diocese this week to set up a diocesan pastoral council and another special deanery meeting is planned later in the month to nominate people to the council. This comes as the diocese implements its pastoral strategic planning resource for 2025 to 2027. The structure being put in place is 197 parishes will fit into 53 parish partnerships, with the term 'clusters' being dropped. If a parish is no longer viable it will at least be part of bigger partnership and find resources there.

The plan is very much being guided by Fr Gareth Byrne, VG and Moderator of the Diocesan Curia and Chairperson of the strategies implementation group. In the plan's introduction he writes: "We will pray together, reflect together, plan together for its implementation in parish and partnerships of parishes across the Archdiocese. We will need to take co-ordinated action together, encouraging and supporting each other, continually opening our hearts to renewal and new beginnings."

Some of the objectives of the plan include a review of priestly ministry and how to be more co-responsible and how the parish would function with one priest, promotion of parish pastoral councils, grow team-based ministries in parishes and establish a funeral ministry and prepare parishes to conduct funeral liturgies in the absence of a priest.

Another Strategic Planning Resource meeting is due to take place in January.

'Irish people donate generously' says Trócaire representative

Renata Steffens

Recently, representatives of Trócaire went on a trip to Ethiopia accompanied by six Irish bishops. The delegation went to the north part of the country, to the region of Tigray where a conflict has been taking place for a few years.

Jane Mellett, Trócaire's Church Outreach Manager, spoke to *The Irish Catholic* about the trip and how Ireland has impacted the people in Ethiopia. She said this was a visit of solidarity, to listen to the Tigray community, but also to witness the good work Trócaire and the Irish Church have done there.

Ms Mellett said there is "a great humanitarian need" in north Ethiopia, the area where the bishops visited. Bringing them to see the area has two sides: "On one hand, witnessing the suffering and destruction that's taking place in Tigray, but also to seeing the very hopeful work that out partners are engaged with and meeting the people affected by the conflict."

The work the bishops witnessed is a result of the great sense of solidarity Irish people have. "Particularly in relation to

conflicts or in relation to food shortage. That's part of our history too, and I think it really resonates with [Irish] people... Our experience is that the Irish continues to be extremely generous in donating to Trócaire. Our Lenten campaign is still the largest fundraising in the country."

Ms Mellett said there is "still a very strong link between the Irish public and missionaries overseas... People continue to give generously." With Christmas approaching, she said, people get more conscious of the need to help, and people like to give to causes they are passionate about.

New Catechumens in Clare



At the vigil Mass for the start of Advent, at the Cathedral of SS. Peter & Paul, Ennis, Fr Tom Ryan accepted the candidacy of Umit from Turkey, Basant from Ireland and Sidharth from Kerala, India, to be received into the Church as Catechumens. Left to right, Andy Tierney who is accompanying the candidates, Umit, Sidharth and Basant with Fr Tom Ryan.

Irish Dominicans in Rome



Recently the Irish Dominican community at San Clemente, Rome, celebrated their annual feast day with a procession of the relics of St Clement followed by the celebration of Mass. Hundreds gathered inside the historic Basilica of San Clemente, which has been in the care of the Irish Dominicans since 1677, for the procession of relics of the 1st Century Pope and martyr. Photo: Eoin McCormack

'Church should be bridge between prisoners and society', Bishop Hayes

Staff reporter

"The Church should be a bridge between marginalised people and the community", Bishop of Kilmore Martin Hayes, who is also the Bishops' Conference Liaison Bishop to the Irish Prison Service has said. Some of these marginalised people "often forgotten" by society are prisoners.

"Of course, we have to acknowledge the fact that they would have committed serious

crimes and have caused hurt to people," the bishop said. But when they are in isolation, paying for their crimes, "key personnel" like the prison staff and the prison chaplains, get involved to work as a link.

The prison chaplains "represent us, they represent the wider community, and they represent our desire to reach out to the prisoners. When prisoners are reached out to, under the cause of mission, it can help them to identify

their own spirituality and find a source within themselves to sustain them in their isolation."

Conversely, Bishop Hayes also believes the Church should be a voice for the prisoners, a representative of the marginalised to the community. When visiting prisons, the bishop takes "the opportunity to meet with the staff, with the chaplains, and when I can and when it's appropriate, to meet and sit with prisoners to chat with them and listen".

A busy routine usually prevents the community from 'seeing' marginalised people, and these people often get forgotten, "but it's our obligation as the Church, we have the opportunities to highlight those causes," the bishop said. As a community, "we need to be urging our politicians and services to do better... So people can rehabilitate without being overly preoccupied with the conditions that they're living in."

Deputy Editor: Chai Brady, chai@irishcatholic.ie

Multimedia Journalists:

Renata Steffens, renata@irishcatholic.ie

Brandon Scott, brandon@irishcatholic.ie

Renata Milan, renatamilan@irishcatholic.ie

Newsroom: news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026

Books Editor: Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie

Advertising: advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874027

Accounts: accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874095

Magnificat: magnificat@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874024

General inquiries: info@irishcatholic.ie

Annual Subscription Rates: Ireland €199. Airmail €320. Six months €105. ISSN 1393 - 6832 - Published by The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandford, Dublin 18, D18 K277. Printed by Webprint, Dublin.

Place an Advert

Phone 01 687 4027 or advertising@irishcatholic.ie

**Capuchin Day Centre
for the Homeless People**
29 Bow Street, Dublin 7

Every day The Capuchin Day Care Centre provides
1000 hot meals for people who are homeless and each
week 1400 Food Parcels for those on the poverty threshold.

Help Fr. Kevin Kiernan to continue
providing this caring service.

Fr. Kevin or Monica 01 8720770
www.capuchindaycentre.ie

Support our Catholic Journalism and help us evangelise

For less than a cup of coffee a week, you could support our journalism and faith development campaign while strengthening one of the last independent Catholic newspapers in Ireland and the UK.

When you become a 'Friend' of *The Irish Catholic* we give you exclusive access to our premium newsletters and podcasts interviewing a wide range of interesting Catholic leaders plus discounts on books and on upcoming events.

Email garry@irishcatholic.ie to sign up today, or call 01-6874028. We greatly appreciate your support. Thank you.

Hundreds volunteer for charity Christmas Day Dinner

Renata Milán Morales

The Knights of St Columbanus have recently held a volunteer training in Ely House, Dublin 2, for the centenary of the biggest and oldest charity meal on Christmas Day in Ireland, which has taken place since 1975 in RDS.

"We open the volunteering registration on October 1 every year online and always within a couple of days, we reach our quota for the number of volunteers we need. We could easily have 1000 volunteers, but

we're very careful. It's an important day of the year for everybody and you don't want to give up your Christmas Day to stand around and watch everybody else being busy," said Trevor McNamara, Chairman of the Christmas Day Dinner Committee.

The Chairman expects to have up to 500 people attending the dinner on Christmas Day and up to 5000 meals sent out with the various agencies. "We'll deliver 1400 meals around Dublin. The agencies would have also individual volunteers," explained Mr McNamara.

In 1924 the dinner was solely hosted

by the Knights of St Columbanus. "It would have been mainly men attending, all of whom would be sleeping rough on the streets. A hundred years after we also provide as warm a welcome as we possibly can to the needy, lonely and to refugee families," said Mr McNamara.

The Christmas Day Dinner Committee members instructed almost 300 volunteers during the training sessions on different topics including task assignments, health and safety protocols, and logistical arrangements, ensuring that all volunteers are well-equipped.

Lighting the hope



Bishop Michael Router, auxiliary bishop of Armagh, lights up the first Advent candle – Candle of Hope – in the presence of young faithful on the First Sunday of the Advent vigil Mass.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Archdiocese of Armagh 'disappointed' after Mass disruption

The Archdiocese of Armagh has described the pro-Palestine protest at St Patrick's Cathedral in Armagh on Sunday as "very disappointing" and "inappropriate."

A spokesperson for the Archdiocese of Armagh said that the protest during Sunday Mass happened just after parishioners received Holy Communion. The protest was organised by the Christians4Palestine organisation and around 30 people were seen walking through the aisles of the Cathedral holding placards depicting different slogans like: 'Jesus was a Palestinian' and 'Don't make Jesus complicit in genocide'.

The spokesperson said

that Archbishop Eamon Martin, along with other Irish bishops, have "spoken out strongly and frequently on the issue of the horrific devastation and loss of life in Gaza" and have "encouraged humanitarian help for Gaza and the Middle East through local charities and Trócaire's ongoing special appeal".

Young Catholics in Galway assemble for Advent

Last Sunday young adults who had travelled on pilgrimages with the Dioceses of Galway and Clonfert during the year had their Advent Gathering 2024. Bishop Michael Duignan celebrated the evening Mass in the Cathedral and afterwards joined the group for a meal and a moment of reflection on the significance of the Crib led by Fr Jacopo

Pozzerle from the Franciscan Abbey.

Speaking to the young adults during the homily, Bishop Duignan said that "this Advent can present us with a grace filled opportunity

to reconnect with the God whose desire is to reach out and come close to us. In coming close to us, he enlightens us and transforms us for the best, not just for today, but for all eternity as well."

Rosary Procession
in honour of
The Immaculate Conception
December 8th

Start: 14:00 Main Entrance to Garden of Remembrance, Parnell Square, Dublin 1

End: 16:00 Benediction at St Teresa Carmelite Church, Clarendon Street (Off Grafton Street), Dublin 2

Further information: 086 265 4122

Blue flags with traditional image of Our lady/Plain Blue flags ONLY please

Bl. Carlo Acutis finds new home in Killarney



Friars Pat Lynch ofm (left) and Antony Jukes ofm pictured with a banner of Bl. Carlo Acutis in the Franciscan Friary, Killarney, Co Kerry.

Renata Steffens

A relic of Bl. Carlo Acutis has found a new home in the Franciscan Friary, Killarney. The permanent display was unveiled by Bishop Ray Browne on Sunday, December 1 and is open for visits each day from 7am to 7pm.

Bro. Pat Lynch ofm, the Friary Guardian told *The Irish Catholic* that acquiring the relic was not previously advertised, "because I didn't want to interfere with the Dominicans' celebration", who received the relic's visit in November.

Bro. Lynch said he "applied for the relic well over a year ago. I applied for a first-class relic for the Friary and it is a fairly long procedure." The Brother had the approval "for about two months now and I just held it until after the Dominican function."

"I think the fact that [it is] at a Franciscan church and he [Bl. Acutis] had great devotion to St Francis and he's buried in Assisi about ... eight minutes' walk from the tomb of St Francis ... in many ways [Bl. Acutis] was comparable to Francis because he had a great love for creation and for animals, and he was very good to the poor."

The Guardian said Bl. Acutis' family has a holiday home in Assisi, "so they spent a lot of time during his holidays in Assisi and I think he requested to be buried in Assisi." This connection between Bl. Carlo Acutis and St Francis was what sparked in Bro. Lynch the idea to request for the relic.

Now that Bl. Acutis is about to become a saint, the Franciscans in Killarney are "delighted" and "there's great excitement around."



LEAVE A GIFT IN YOUR WILL
AND LET'S WORK FOR A BETTER
SOCIETY FOR OUR CHILDREN
AND GRANDCHILDREN.

The Pro Life Campaign promotes pro-life education and defends human life at all stages.

By leaving a gift in your Will you will be helping us to continue our work to educate the public on right to life issues, campaign for positive support for women in unplanned pregnancy and ultimately to restore a culture of protecting unborn children in Ireland.

Any gift, large or small, makes a real difference. Contact us today to order a copy of our Wills leaflet or to find out more.

prolife
campaign



Tel: (01) 662 9275 or visit www.prolifecampaign.ie

Bring 'conversations' to parishes, says bishop

Renata Steffens

Bishop of Kilmore Martin Hayes has said that now that the Synod is finished, it is time to bring synodality to the parishes, to ordinary people.

"I prefer to use the term 'conversations about the faith' rather than the term 'synodality' because the

language sometimes interferes", Bishop Hayes said. He believes that language could have an influence on people's ability to understand.

"What I'd like to see [for 2025] is that people will be given opportunities in parishes to talk to each other quite simply about their faith. Not about Church,

but about their faith and their journey. And I would hope that in doing that, they would encourage each other and become pilgrims together. Walking along and knowing that our faith is something that can sustain us in the difficulties of life and help us to rejoice in thanksgiving when there is something to give thanks

for."

These conversations will change a lot locally in the parishes, making 2025 a busy year. "One thing that is going to have to happen before these conversations happen is that there are people who will need to receive training in facilitation, so they can convene such conversations.

This needs to happen with priests as well. It is not a case of doing it with priests on their own and then people on their own. I think they must do it together, so that you have a greater teamwork between priests and people.

"Often, in the past, people have looked to the priest to speak for them, now is the

time when priests speak, and the people speak and they listen to each other. Because each person has a particular mission in life and each has a particular role," the bishop said. "The priest has a particular role, he's trained and ordained. Equally people have, by baptism, a role and have a calling to answer."

'More action needed from new government to help the homeless,' says activist

Staff reporter

The promoter of the Christmas Day Dinner for those in need, Sharon Smurfit, in a recent conversation with *The Irish Catholic* has highlighted the need for support during winter for those on the streets.

"A lot of the homeless unfortunately have drug addictions and we need to have more rehab centres in Ireland. We need more from the new government to help because believe it or

not, a lot of them want to be helped. Sometimes they're so bad they can't understand anything. There are plenty of volunteers who are very happy to bring them to these centres. We need more of that in Ireland," explained Ms Smurfit.

"We are going to need somebody to do something very fast. For the moment, we need to get people who are sleeping on the streets off the streets," said Ms Smurfit. "In the UK and a lot of other European countries

churches are opening their halls. All they would have to do is provide an area with plenty of volunteers - which there are because Irish people are very generous when it comes to help."

"It is important to get the information [about the Christmas Day Dinner] to the people that need to know, if they're lonely," said Ms Smurfit. "It doesn't matter whether we're 100 years or 120 years or 150 years. We'll be there on Christmas Day to help."

'The voice of God must be heard' in our education system, Primary Diocesan Advisor says

Renata Milán Morales

In an address to the first plenary assembly of the Dicastery for Culture and Education, Pope Francis described desire, fearlessness, and Christian hope as remedies to confront the "shadow of nihilism."

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Sr Anne Neylon DC, Primary Diocesan Advisor, commented on the Pope's call, describing the address as "a moment of grace, a moment of renewal." She emphasised that "hope" comes from "prayer for possibilities unseen."

Sr Anne pointed out the

challenge of cultivating hope among young people, "That sense of nihilism in our world is erasing hope," she said. Encouraging children to believe in their Catholic faith, she noted that even those in difficult circumstances can find strength in God. "To think that there are 250 million children globally without access to education is a terrible statistic," she said, pointing out the Pope's words, "Some 250 million children and adolescents do not attend school." She called on school leaders to remain "thirsty and have dreams."

Ireland, Sr Anne said, has "a very good education sys-

tem," but faith must also be nurtured personally. "Taking personal responsibility for faith, taking time to reflect, and believing that God loves me as I am - it's that simple."

She also praised the example of saints, particularly Carlo Acutis, who she believes will inspire the young. "We need to avoid pessimism - it comes from secularism," she said.

While acknowledging challenges in Ireland, including school closures, Sr Anne pointed the importance of collaboration between culture and education. "It takes each one of us to be responsible in our faith... The voice of God must be heard."

Ni Hao, Mr President



Bishop Paul Dempsey, whom *The Irish Catholic* believes will be appointed as the new president of Trócaire, joined the parishioners in St Andrew's Church, Westland Row on December 1 to celebrate Mass. Among those present were members of the Chinese and Lithuanian communities. "Great to see a faith community so alive and active!" the bishop said on his X (Twitter).

Bishops' Conference to downsize

Garry O'Sullivan

Downsizing seems to be the order of the day in Maynooth recently, and it's not just for the bishops as the Nuncio tries to amalgamate dioceses that become vacant.

New House in St Joseph's Square in front of the main St Patrick's College building

has been sold to Maynooth University and it is understood the tenants have been asked to vacate the premises.

With the Winter Meeting of the Bishops' Conference taking place in Maynooth this week it is believed that the Commissions and Agencies of the Bishops' Conference are being downsized from five to three. The Irish

Council for Prisoners Overseas is being separated out.

There is also a paring back in Communications as Veritas completes the wind down of its operations but also a streamlining of the communications section of the Bishops' Conference, with less emphasis on external PR and a pivot to more communications with the dioceses.

The shrine of a saint



A new statue honouring Bl. Carlo Acutis was unveiled at Holy Family Church, Ardfinnan, Co. Tipperary. It was installed the same week as Pope Francis declared that Blessed Carlo will be canonised. Photo: Fr Michael Toomey.

Dynastic links for politicians? That's fine!

Family values? Oh, yes, the dynastic principle of following in a family political tradition is thriving.

Among first-time TDs just elected are Aisling Dempsey in Meath, daughter of the former Fianna Fail minister Noel Dempsey; Marie Sherlock for Labour, niece of Labour Party TD Joe Sherlock and cousin to former TD Seán Sherlock; Grace Boland in Fingal West, daughter of late TD John Boland and niece of Fingal councillor Cathal Boland; Emer Currie, FG daughter of Austin Currie the co-founder of the North's SDLP; Seamus McGrath, Cork FF, and younger brother of TD Michael McGrath; Shay Brennan in Dublin – son of FF minister Seamus Brennan.

Lineage

Politics being in the family is well-established in Ireland (and elsewhere too). Enda Kenny was the son of a Mayo TD Henry, and Seán Haughey also followed in his father's footsteps; while



Mary Kenny

Éamon Ó Cuív is the grandson of Éamon de Valera.

The Andrews clan have been politically ubiquitous, including David and Niall, son of the legendary Tod, Barry (son of David) and Chris (son of Niall), who incidentally just lost his Sinn Féin seat. And then there are the wondrous Healy-Raes siblings.

“Dynasties can bring stability and continuity”

And isn't Senator Alice Higgins the daughter of Michael D, a veteran politician even before he was raised to the presidency?

Those opposed to the dynastic principle may say it is “nepotistic” but I consider it useful, even laudable.

It's especially helpful, when electing a new govern-

ment, to have people around who have honed their political skills by learning from their family members. They will also have a sense of political history.

Dynasties can bring stability and continuity: it's common for farmers to be the sons and daughters of farmers, and for doctors to come from medical families. In the performing arts, actors are not unusually the offspring of thespians (the Cusack family, the Redgraves). Even in the humble trade of journalism, one generation may follow another in the inky tradition. If my grandchildren go into the scribbling career, they will be the fourth generation in the family line to do so. (Although I beg of them to become scientists and engineers – where the money is!)

Ireland doesn't really have a conservative party, but at least it has a conservative tradition of upholding family vocational trends!

I had a somewhat unpleasant (though mercifully swift) medical procedure last week called an endoscopy. That's when they shove a small camera down your throat to see what's going on in the upper digestive system.

The examination required a long period of fasting beforehand: no food from midnight the night before (the appointment was at 11 a.m.), and no liquids six hours in advance. In fact, I fasted from 9pm at night until 2pm the next day.

My mind went back to the days when Catholics routinely did a fast from midnight in preparation for holy Communion

the next morning. Oftentimes, country Irish people would walk miles to Mass on an empty stomach.

I was very sorry for myself not being able to have even a morning cup of tea – but then I reflected how stoical people used to be. What discipline and self-control they exercised in adhering to such strict fasting rules.

And indeed, I discovered that once you get used to it, your body adjusts.

By the way, the result of the endoscopy was benign: I seem to have a hiatus hernia, which was deemed to be harmless. A Te Deum for that.

I got to know Gemma Hussey – who has died, aged 86 – through her sister, Anne Moran, a clever and witty woman who was a Spanish language specialist. Gemma was perhaps the more ambitious of the two sisters, and achieved a lot as the first Fine Gael woman ever to be a cabinet minister (appointed by Garrett FitzGerald.)

She was also the first Irish politician to have published a diary – “At the Cutting Edge” about her time in cabinet, (whilst those involved were still alive).

It was forthright about the inner workings of government, but she was also criticised for her disclosures about the various breakdowns in cabinet unity and communication.

She charted her part in the 1986 divorce referendum candidly, critical of the inadequate tactics of the pro-divorce lobby – and rather patronisingly dismissing anti-divorce women as frightened and intimidated by the likes of Alice Glenn. A complication arose when, on one campaign occasion, Gemma

was scheduled to give a speech for divorce, while her brother Paddy was to make a speech against it!

Gemma supported women's rights and co-founded the Women's Political Association, which some feminists regarded as the more affluent wing of the movement.

She chose to have a secular funeral at the RDS. Yet, not long ago, she told me how pleased she was that some of her grandchildren were receiving such a fine education at Gonzaga Jesuit school.

irish jesuits international

Make a Difference this Christmas

Gifts That Change Lives

This Christmas give a gift that tells your friends and family what you are passionate about. **Our Christmas Gift Shop offers 18 meaningful gifts** that not only bring joy to your loved ones but also will help us to continue to protect the most marginalised of this world.

When you choose a gift from our Christmas Shop, you're directly changing lives in one of the 12 developing countries where we work. When you purchase the gift of a chicken, for example, you're empowering a woman in Maban, South Sudan, with an investment that can sustain her through difficult times. **This chicken isn't just livestock—it's a lifeline, offering security and resilience** in a place where traditional safety nets don't exist.

Your thoughtful gift provides much more than an item; it offers hope, stability, and a future for those facing unimaginable challenges.

Explore our Christmas Shop to find incredible gifts that make a lasting impact. From **nourishing meals for children in Syria and Lebanon** to training opportunities for dedicated teachers, **your generosity will touch countless lives in the most meaningful ways.**

Thank you for making a difference



irish jesuits international
iji



Visit us online at www.iji.ie/gifts



Call us on 01 836 6509



Scan QR Code →



Lanigan's Ball politics with the illusion of choice



Maria Steen

Last week, we held another national election. It was a case of nothing changed, utterly no change, and yet something terrible was born – and boy, it was not beautiful: Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Sinn Féin – a three-headed Cerberus guarding the gates of Dáil Éireann. For all the concerned talk on the national airwaves over the last year or two about the “rise of the far-right”, we saw no evidence of it in the elections. Newer parties like Aontú struggled to gain ground in a political environment that favours those already established – and in receipt of state funding on which they themselves vote – and makes it next to impossible for new faces and new parties to make an impact.

It is hard to know what is worse: the same old faces and same old parties being voted back in, or the apathy and complete lack of hope amongst voters that something new could happen. As elections go, I don't think I can remember one being more of a damp squib than this. I rarely hear talk

among voters that sounds enthusiastic about political candidates. Instead, the talk more often approximates to: “Who is the least bad option?” or, “How should I vote to keep X or Y out?” I have long thought that it is a tenuous claim for politicians to insist they have a mandate, when few of them crack 20% in their own constituency, and many who voted for them did so holding their nose, in an effort to keep someone else out.

Flaws

The truth is that our political system is flawed on many levels.

First, the Dáil is in session too often and for too long. The expectation that politicians will almost constantly be in attendance makes it very difficult for anyone who has a family (and likes spending time with them) to make the commitment and meet the demands and long hours of the job.

It could be different: the Swiss Parliament sits only 12 weeks out of the year; the lower house of the Austrian Parliament met in plenary session for just 27 days in the year, whilst its upper chamber sat for just 13 days. The Texas legislature sits only every second year, and was last in session in 2023! This means that politicians in these countries have more time to do other things, whether that is pursuing another career, or spending time with family. By contrast, the Oireachtas generally sits Tuesday to Thursday every week from September to July, more or less following the school year

and making it very difficult for those with young children.

“One of its costs is that it makes it much more difficult to effect any real governmental change”

Another problem with keeping a legislature constantly in session is that it has to find something to do to justify its existence. In Ireland, this consists of a great deal of redundant commentary by politicians on whatever journalists decide is “news”, combined with the occasional passage of a new law – which usually makes things worse rather than better – see, for instance, the recent so-called “Hate Speech” Bill. To me, this all smacks of “busy work” by politicians looking to tell their voters back home that they did something, or got something “through” the Dáil. The truth is that we have far too many laws already. If the Oireachtas did nothing for the next five years other than repeal and consolidate our legislation, its members would be doing our country a service.

Second, our political culture, and our expectations of what our politicians will do for us personally, tend to favour candidates who have no convictions about anything – who

will say or do anything to get votes. The Irish approach is to avoid conflict, express as few opinions as possible in order to avoid alienating any section of the electorate, and fudge any issue that it is possible to fudge. What Irish politics is badly missing are politicians who reflect on the influence of politics on the culture, who understand what the end of man is, and who consider what the common good requires – or even acknowledge that there is a common good – and consequently how politics should be ordered.

Third, you may think that our model of having 3-, 4-, and 5-seater constituencies is preferable to the British or US model. But one of its costs is that it makes it much more difficult to effect any real governmental change. UK parliamentary constituencies are designed on a system by which one MP represents one constituency – constituents unhappy with their MP can vote them out in the knowledge that voting for a different MP (and party) can mean a real change. The American binary system of Democrat and Republican may have its drawbacks, but it means that if voters really want a change of direction in government (as seems to have been the case this year in the US), the electorate can make it happen.

Differences

The last time there was a single-party majority government in Ireland was the 25th Dáil in 1987, under Charles

Haughey. Since then, it has been a case of Lanigan's Ball with the main parties stepping in and stepping out again in a long succession of coalition governments, and little to no change in political trajectory. As the years have passed, there is less and less to distinguish the parties one from another; they may quibble over tax rates, but there is little difference in terms of their values. Even Sinn Féin, once marked out as the party *non grata*, with its ties to the IRA, has little to differentiate it from any of the other parties. As one radio commentator said last week, the truth is that Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael are more like a single party on almost 43% than two parties on 22% and 21% respectively – a true “uni-party” with no real convictions about anything other than “progress” and a horror of being seen as regressive, old-fashioned, or intolerant – much like Sinn Féin. The genius of the two larger parties is that they have left behind the civil war politics for a bargain that gives their boys jobs for life. If they were to amalgamate into a single party, the chances are that, every few years, they might find themselves out of power. But keeping up the old appearances of two separate parties, while their leaders practically wink at each other across the RTE television studio, allows them to maintain the illusion of “choice” for voters. Welcome to the new government, same as the old government.

Senator Rónán Mullen

A view from the Seanad



The election that was and the Government to come

“The people of Mayo,” Michael Ring once said, “have voted for a Taoiseach, a Tánaiste – and a Minister!” That was in 2007 when FG and Labour fought the General Election on the back of a 2004 electoral pact which they had agreed and gravely termed the ‘Mullingar Accord’.

The party leaders, Mayomen Enda Kenny and Pat Rabbitte, had hopes of going into Government and, if every constituency had been like Mayo where FG got three out of the five seats in 2007, they would have done. Michael Ring presumably had himself in mind as the ‘Minister’ that the Mayo electorate had voted for. But it was not to be. Bertie Ahern got 78 seats and a third term for FF, with help from the Green Party and what remained of the PDs.

Ring bowed out of the national political scene on Sunday, ending a lively and colourful Dáil career but not before helping his protégée, Keira Keogh, to take one of two seats for FG out of Mayo's five. There was another newcomer also, teacher Paul Lawless from Knock, who ends Peadar Tóibín's isolation as Aontú's sole representative in Dáil Éireann.

Aontú's progress seems hard won sometimes but Tóibín had reason to

celebrate on Friday night when RTE's exit poll showed his party doubling its overall share of first preferences from 1.9% to 3.9%. The supply of money, Cicero said, is the ‘sinews of war’.

By reaching 2% of the national vote, Aontú will now get its share of State funding for political parties, which it can spend on research, policy formation, media preparation etc. There is another pre-requisite for success – hard work locally.

Among his many activities, Lawless runs a ‘cataract’ bus which has helped hundreds of patients to get much-needed surgeries in the North. So Knock now has a Basilica, an Airport – and a ‘worker bee’ TD. Congratulations to Paul Lawless and to others like him elected at the weekend.

Change

The performance of the two Government parties was almost the same as 5 years ago, only slightly down: FF from 22.2% to 21.9% and FG from 20.9% to 20.8%. SF suffered a drop from 24.5% to 19%. “Cling to nurse, for fear of getting something worse,” seems to be the message from the electorate.

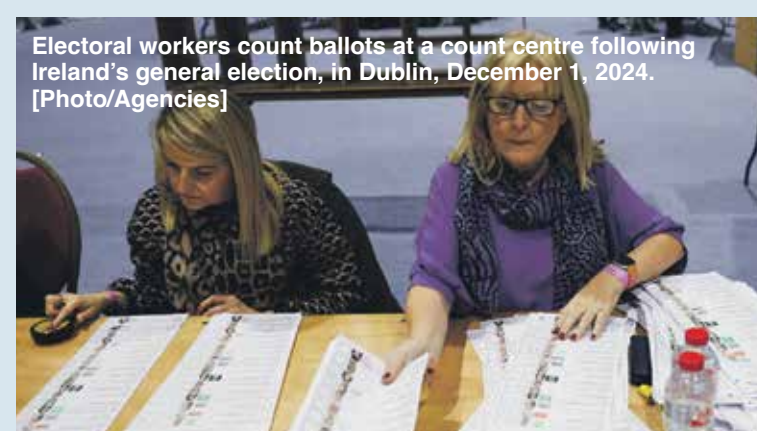
Despite a record budget surplus, there was no feelgood factor during this campaign. There is concern about

the future impact of war abroad, health and housing policy at home, and President Trump's economic agenda and what it might mean for Ireland.

“We are still remarkably close to the situation in Britain that has drawn much commentary over the years”

But when a FF friend of mine opines that the electorate didn't want change at this uncertain time, he's not quite right. When you add up the FF/FG vote to that of well-established independents, it's probably fairer to say that about half of the electorate doesn't want change.

Ironically, for all the talk about the virtues of our PR electoral system (and I am a fan) we are still remarkably close to the situation in Britain that has drawn much commentary over



the years, which is that a party with considerably less than 50% of the vote can potentially govern for a long time. It's a winner-take-all situation.

Formation

As for Government formation, the numbers suggest that FF and FG could go it alone with support from Independents. With 86 seats between them, and moderates such as Noel Grealish and Sean Canney keeping their phones on, a deal like that could happen.

Alternatively, FF and FG may be tempted to bring a small party into coalition as a ‘mudguard’ to absorb the ire of the electorate in five years' time, especially if the coun-

try enters choppy waters economically. An alliance with the ‘woke’ left would have its perils too though.

The public is more alert now to social engineering in high places, and gave its answer to some of this in the Spring referendums. Historically, the smaller ideological parties in Government have been the ones to get scapegoated at election time. But like so many things in politics, that may just be a rule waiting to be broken.

Having received at best a half-hearted mandate to return to office, Taoiseach Martin and Tánaiste Harris shouldn't trifle too much with the public's affections in the coming years.

Please support The Iona Institute

The Iona Institute was founded in 2007 and ever since then has promoted the place of marriage and religion in society. It has featured very prominently in debates about the definition of marriage, abortion, the future of faith-based schools, freedom of religion, and now euthanasia.



David Quinn, CEO,
The Iona Institute

Stand with us and support our valuable work, so we can continue to uphold these values and make Ireland a better place for future generations.

Donate today by sending a cheque to The Iona Institute, 23 Merrion Square North, Dublin 2. You can make an online donation by going to www.ionainstitute.ie/donate
The Iona Institute is a registered charity.



www.ionainstitute.ie

Tel 01 6619 204

info@ionainstitute.ie

Women of faith and the climate justice battle



Renata Steffens

Climate change and climate justice have been in the front of people's minds for decades now. This battle to reverse damages and save the planet has many advocates, one of them is Lorna Gold, chair of the *Laudato Si'* Movement.

Originally from Scotland, Ms Gold is passionate about the faith based environmental movement. She published a few books and articles on the movement in the face of climate emergency and biodiversity loss. Recently, she went to a women-led, multi-faith climate action event in Frascati, Italy.

Ms Gold talked to *The Irish Catholic* about the role of women of faith in the climate justice battle.

Q: What is climate justice?

A: Climate justice is the recognition that the causes and effects of climate change are not felt equally. Those who have largely caused the problem – those who have benefited from burning fossil fuels and high consumption – are not the ones paying the biggest price. The biggest price are those living in poverty, who have done least to cause the problem and are least able to cope with extreme weather. Women and children are disproportionately affected. Climate justice is therefore about putting their needs and rights front and centre.

Q: Tell me about your background and when you felt the calling to fight for climate justice.

A: I am originally from Scotland and grew up in the shadow of Scotland's largest oil refinery, Grangemouth. My 'calling' to fight for a just and sustainable world I think came when I was very young. In the mid-80s I did

a school project on the impact of the oil industry and Grangemouth refinery. It is when I first came across the idea of 'global warming'. I was horrified that this was happening and the impact it would have on my generation. I started back then to campaign for sustainable development. That desire to work for justice brought me eventually to Ireland to work for Trócaire, and then now to work for the *Laudato Si'* Movement. Having my own children was a great motivator too and led me to write my book *Climate Generation – Awakening to our Children's Future*. I love my work – it is truly a calling to integrate my deep faith values with my vision for a better world.

Q: How important it is to have people of faith battling for climate justice?

A: I would say that now more than ever it is essential if we are to keep hope alive. Climate justice is a moral issue and without a belief framework rooted in deep values, whether faith or otherwise, is really important. In my work over several decades now I have discovered that different faith traditions all have significant contributions to make to climate justice. If you just think about the reach of faith communities. Over 80% of the world's population adhere to a faith. Faith communities control around 12% of the land on the Earth. They have countless houses of worship, schools, universities, hospitals, development projects.

“What faiths can bring is a deep motivation to care – which sees the earth as sacred, as something to cherish. They also bring the structures to make that motivation translate into action”

Already there is a huge amount happening to 'green' all of these facilities and educate



Lorna Gold at the 'Women Faith and Climate Network' event in Frascati, Italy. Photo: Wilton Park.

the faithful. Here in Ireland the bishops have collectively called for a 'Return to Nature'. In the Catholic Church globally we have the wonderful *Laudato Si'* Movement which has trained over 40,000 animators, supported the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform and produced a great movie with the Pope called *The Letter*, which I was lucky to be in. In the Muslim world there is now Al Mizan, a similar teaching to *Laudato Si'* which could have an impact on many millions of Muslims. Other faiths such as Sikhism have sacred forests. What faiths can bring is a deep motivation to care – which sees the earth as sacred, as something to cherish. They also bring the structures to make that motivation translate into action.

Q: Does having female people of faith in this battle make a difference in the results?

A: From experience we know that many religious organisations can be quite patriarchal in structure and women are often excluded or curtailed from engaging in the highest



The women who attended the 'Women Faith and Climate Network' event in Frascati, Italy. Photo: Wilton Park.

“What we are seeing now is the direct results of our failure to act on the knowledge that we had back in the 1980s”

echelons of decision-making. The Catholic Church is no exception though some steps have been taken! Women of faith across the world play a critical role in so many aspects of faith communities – from administration of organisations to financial decision making or setting curriculums for catechesis. Religious sisters in particular are often in the frontlines of dealing with poverty and injustice across the world – holding communities together when everyone else has left. We know that lifting up the voices of women on

the frontlines and in decision-making, and bringing those women together, can significantly accelerate action. That is why a group of women of faith from many traditions have decided to come together to form a new alliance called 'Women Faith and Climate Network'. Our aim is to use our collective power to foster radical collaboration for climate justice.

Q: Is there still time to action and try to reverse or stop more climate change disasters from happening?

A: I have been working on

this all my life – so possibly the 1980s was the time to act. What we are seeing now is the direct results of our failure to act on the knowledge that we had back in the 1980s. The science is much more compelling now but there is still strong resistance to tackling the root causes of climate injustice. It is deeply uncomfortable as it means potentially changing our lifestyles – reducing and changing consumption for those who are high consumers.

The good news is that we now have all the technology

“It is uncomfortable. It would be far easier for us all if it was not true. Yet I can’t deny what I have seen with my own eyes – and what I have read and studied over the span of 30 years”

we need to make most of these changes rapidly! However, we cannot change our lifestyles without robust regulation which addresses the vested interests of key sectors – fossil fuel industry, financial industry, agricultural sector etc. Without those large-scale changes, particularly in the energy sector, happening very quickly our emissions will continue to go up and things will continue to deteriorate.

That does not mean that we can just throw our hands in the air and give up. There are clear choices now. I believe that so long as we are on this earth there is always a possibility that things can improve, that people can change – that a conversion of heart can happen. Rather than giving up now is a time to lean into the problem and take action!

Q: Can you tell me a little about the Frascati event and the importance of having such gatherings?

A: As mentioned above, women of faith have an important role in accelerating the awareness and action on

climate change in our communities and more broadly. That is why a group of women leaders in different faith communities decided to come together to discuss how we can collaborate more on joint actions. The event brought together around 50 women representing 8 different faith traditions and explored the different ways in which we could collaborate to accelerate and deepen climate justice. We agreed at the meeting to set up a new network called the ‘Women Faith and Climate Network’ which will aim to continue to build networks of friendship between women of faith working on climate; tell the stories of women who are on the frontlines of climate action; work together to accelerate the greening of our places of worship and raise our voices together with others for climate justice. This new network was launched at COP29 in the Faith Pavilion by former Irish President Mary Robinson and we are really excited to see how it will develop in the coming months and years. We have every hope that women

in faith communities have the power to make things happen!

Q: Is there anything you want to say to those who still deny climate change?

A: All I would say is that none of us want to believe climate change is happening. We are ALL in an element of denial – or complicit with keeping things as they are. It is uncomfortable. It would be far easier for us all if it was not true. Yet I can’t deny what I have seen with my own eyes – and what I have read and studied over the span of 30 years. I’ve no hidden agenda. I just want to try and protect the earth for future generations and unfortunately that means facing the hard truth about how we are heating up the climate. We also need to focus on the other positive outcomes of tackling climate change. The future we want is not bleak. In fighting climate change we would also rid the planet of plastic pollution, eliminate deadly fumes, protect our biodiversity and have clean rivers to swim in. These are all good things even if climate change were not true.



‘Women Faith and Climate Network’ attendees with Pope Francis. Photo: Vatican Media.



Dr Lorna Gold.
Photo: Liam McArdle

December
19, 2024



The Irish Catholic

Winter Legacy

The Irish Catholic's first-time Winter Legacy Edition will set out the importance of making a Will and the significant difference that can be made through making a legacy donation. The Irish Catholic provides a direct channel to 90,000 readers who are ideally placed to consider planned contributions through bequests. The Irish Catholic's legacy editions provide a respected platform through which your organisation can highlight the good work that can be carried out as a result of receiving a legacy donation.

If you would like to feature in this special edition and let our readers know how a legacy bequest could help benefit your organisation, please contact Hannah by phone or email.

ADVERTISING@IRISHCATHOLIC.IE | 01 687 4027



FULL PAGE
€900 + VAT

HALF PAGE
€450 + VAT



This Christmas, Give the gift of Hope for 2025

For over 130 years, *The Irish Catholic* has been highlighting parish communities and defending the Faith in Ireland.

Share this award-winning paper with your loved ones and give them the tools they need to strengthen their faith and defend their beliefs in today's society.

**Knowledge is power.
Empower them today.**

**3 MONTH
SPECIAL
OFFER €55**
was €65

*Valid for new subscribers only, until December 31st

Phone 01 6874095 to order your gift subscription today.

What is true in the Conclave film and what is nonsense? A fact check for the cinema release

Benedikt Heider and
Felix Neumann (KNA)

The Church lives from its traditions, rules and rites. The makers of *Conclave* are well aware of this. But do the new cinema film and its final punchline stand up to a fact check?

The new conclave film by Oscar-winning director Edward Berger (*Nothing New in the West*) is visually stunning. Cardinals in velvet robes, machinations between polished marble floors and magnificent murals and brash nuns who stand up to dodgy Church leaders. Some things seem clichéd, others familiar and close to reality. But what really happens in the Vatican when the Pope dies and a conclave begins? Time for a fact check.

The Pope is dead. Right at the start of the film, priests, nuns, cardinals and bishops crowd into the Santa Marta guest house. The official Vatican director's book for the Pope's death, the '*Ordo Exsequiarum Romani Pontificis*', is trying to avoid such a crowd.

What happens if the Pope does not die in the palace?

Unlike in the film, only the camerlengo, the cardinal dean and a few people from the Pope's inner circle gather at his deathbed after his death. A larger gathering of cardinals or even nuns and priests as in the film is not planned.

However... The current regulations apply to a papal death in the Apostolic Palace, where the heads of the Church used to live. What happens if the Pope dies in the Vatican guest house Santa Marta, where the current Pope Francis also lives, is not actually regulated. The Camerlengo then takes the fisherman's ring from the deceased. Unlike in the film, however, it is not broken immediately, but later at a meeting of the cardinals.

The filmmakers do not take the further protocol too seriously either: the Pope is laid out in his pyjamas. However, after comparable photos of the dead Pius XII were released



In this file photo, before entering the conclave, cardinals concelebrate Mass for the election of the Roman pontiff in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican March 12, 2013. Photo: OSV News/Paul Haring, CNS

to the public, it was strictly forbidden to show the dead Pope without his liturgical vestments. So, before another circle of people gets to see the dead man, he is first changed.

Even the covering of the Pope's face with a silk scarf shown in the film does not take place in the death chamber, but only after four to seven days immediately before the funeral. Shortly before the big funeral service, a few high-ranking churchmen gather for a final service. A cloth is placed over the face of the deceased.

Jammers against spies? They really do exist!

While the processes following the Pope's death are interpreted more freely by the filmmakers, the preparations for the election are depicted quite precisely. For example, the scene involving jammers around the Sistine may seem exaggerated to some - and

yet this is exactly what the regulations stipulate. Since 1996, they have stated: "In particular, with the help of the experience of two trusted technicians, they will ensure that secrecy is maintained in the aforementioned rooms, especially in the Sistine Chapel, where the electoral acts take place, by making sure that no recording or audiovisual transmission equipment is introduced into the aforementioned rooms by anyone."

While the cardinals in the film have to go through security checks and hand over their mobile phones and computers, the regulations only stipulate that they must "abstain" from all communication. To reinforce this obligation, John Paul II forbade "under all circumstances" that technical devices used for the "recording, reproduction or transmission of sound, images or writing" be brought into the Sistine Chapel.



Newly elected Pope Francis I, second from left, appears on the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica after being elected by the conclave of cardinals at the Vatican March 13. The world's cardinals elected Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, Argentina, a 76-year-old Jesuit, as pope. Photo: CNS/Alessandro Bianchi, Reuters

“Since Pope Benedict XVI, rule-breakers have been subject to excommunication as a criminal offence - i.e. exclusion from the Church immediately upon committing the offence. Previously, the new Pope had to decide on the punishment for this offence”

External contacts strictly forbidden

However, while in the film the President of the College of Cardinals repeatedly makes contact with the outside world, this is strictly forbidden in a real conclave. Just by talking to his secretary, the fictional Cardinal Lawrence is treading on thin ice, because: Anyone who "happens to meet one of the cardinal electors" is "absolutely forbidden [...] to enter into conversation with him under any form, by any means or for

any reason whatsoever".

Since Pope Benedict XVI, rule-breakers have been subject to excommunication as a criminal offence - i.e. exclusion from the Church immediately upon committing the offence. Previously, the new Pope had to decide on the punishment for this offence.

Cardinal dean on the wrong track

In general, Cardinal Lawrence repeatedly acts on the edge of what is legal. For example, he makes some decisions that

can only be made by the Pope or, during the *sede vacante*, by all cardinals together. Probably the worst is the breach of the seal of confession.

Lawrence uses knowledge from confession to uncover the misdemeanour of a cardinal. Breaking the seal of confession is also punished in the worst case with excommunication at the moment of the offence. However, as Lawrence did not directly reveal the person making the confession, there is probably no excommunication involved in this case.

One of Lawrence's sole deci-

sions was to admit a previously unknown cardinal to the conclave – a cardinal in *pectore* ('in the chest, in the heart'). He was appointed cardinal by the Pope, but his appointment was not made public for security reasons. According to canon law, secret cardinals only have the rights and duties of a cardinal if they are appointed by the Pope, at least to the College of Cardinals. If the pope dies without having made the name public, the secret cardinal title also lapses. Even a certificate of appointment, as presented in the film after the Pope's death, does not help.

“The cardinals then enter the Sistine Chapel, where they swear an oath one by one in public view. Only then are they locked in and shielded from the public”

The filmmakers are also not too precise about the actual start of the conclave ('conclave', Latin for 'room locked with a key'). On the day before the conclave, Lawrence says in a meeting that he and the other cardinals will be locked in from 6 pm. This also does not correspond to the protocol. It stipu-

lates that the conclave begins with the '*Pro eligendo Papa*' Mass in St Peter's Basilica. In the afternoon, the cardinals then enter the Sistine Chapel, where they swear an oath one by one in public view. Only then are they locked in and shielded from the public.

Minor inaccuracies in the election process

The election process shown in the film, including the request to change the handwriting on the ballot paper, corresponds to reality. However, a small error has crept in during the vote count. While in the film the second of the three counting cardinals reads out the name of the person elected, the guidelines stipulate that the first election worker takes a piece of paper from the ballot box, reads the name silently, then hands it to the second cardinal, who also reads the name silently and then passes the piece of paper to the third. Only the third cardinal then reads the name out loud. The threading of the ballot papers again corresponds to the prescribed practice.

The film continues correctly: at the end of the count, the votes are counted, checked and then burnt. In the past, wet straw or tar was added to colour the smoke. This often only worked reasonably well. Today, chemicals are used to help.



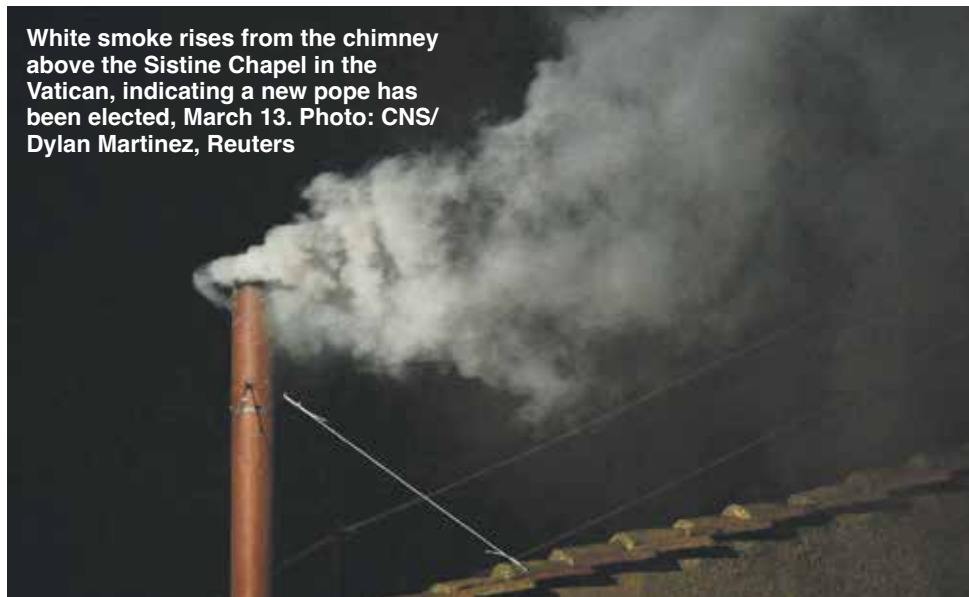
Ralph Fiennes as Cardinal Lawrence and Stanley Tucci star in a scene from the movie "Conclave." Photo: OSV News/Focus Features

Two ovens are available for this purpose: The ballot papers are burnt in one and the cartridges for colouring are also burnt in the second. Potassium chlorate, lactose and the tree resin rosin provide white smoke. The smoke is coloured black with a mixture of potassium perchlorate, anthracene and sulphur.

And what about the finishing touch?

Overall, the filmmakers show great attention to detail – and even if it may come as a surprise, the film's final punchline is nowhere near as far-fetched as it may seem to some. However, we won't reveal what it's actually about at this point.

White smoke rises from the chimney above the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, indicating a new pope has been elected, March 13. Photo: CNS/Dylan Martinez, Reuters



St. Francis Hospice *A Time to Remember*

Please Sponsor a Light €6
on the Hospice Christmas Tree
by contacting 01-8327535
or online www.sfh.ie



use phone
camera to
scan



Wishing you peace at Christmas time



CHY Number: 10568
Charity Regulator Number: 20027193



YOUR LAST GIFT
MEANS WE ARE
ALWAYS FIRST THERE

GOAL



A GIFT IN YOUR WILL TO GOAL
MEANS WE CAN BE FIRST THERE
WHEN CONFLICT AND CRISIS HAPPEN

goal.ie/GiftInWill

email: cpollard@goal.ie or Phone: 01-2809779

FF and FG will hopefully go back into Government with Independents



David Quinn

How did you feel about the election result? How happy did it make you feel? I think a lot of people went into the election with a slight feeling of resignation. There wasn't much enthusiasm for the Government but not enough anger either to kick them out, and for many there was no viable, realistic alternative.

The turn-out fell to below 60%. Once upon a time, it was taken as a given that three-quarters of us would cast our votes. Apathy towards politics is growing.

Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael both won about a fifth of the vote, but given that 40% of people didn't turn-out at all, it means that each won only about 12% of all available votes. At its peak, Fianna Fáil would regularly win about 45%-plus of the vote based on a 75% turn-out.

Fianna Fáil had a good election, but mainly because they won lots of transfer. Their 21.86% of the vote was less than five points higher than their all-time low of 17.4% in the 2011 election when voters were extremely angry with them after the collapse of the Celtic Tiger.

Fine Gael won about the same as last time out in 2020.

However, overall, the result bucks what is happening in other Western countries where people are turning on their governments.

Different

Why are things different here? Why wasn't there more of a backlash against the Government? We saw what happened in Britain with the Conservatives being swept from power after 13 years in Downing Street, and Donald Trump has regained the White House in America. In France, President Emmanuel Macron is tottering on the brink. In Germany, an election



Ballots being counted at the RDS in Dublin during the 2024 Irish general election. Photo: Patrick Hugh Lynch

is taking place next month and the governing parties are expected to do badly.

So why did we buck the trend, albeit with a lack of any real enthusiasm? After all, we still have a big housing crisis, among other Government failures.

“They might also be scared of upsetting the applecart. A Sinn Féin-led Government would be very likely to annoy Donald Trump”

I think the main reason is that the economy is doing well, and the Government has lots of corporate tax money to fling at the electorate.

Yes, it's true that the cost

of living has soared since the last election in 2020, but either voters don't really blame the Government for this, or else they believe the opposition parties wouldn't do much better.

They might also be scared of upsetting the applecart. A Sinn Féin-led Government would be very likely to annoy Donald Trump, and he is already annoyed that so many big American companies put so much of their profits through Ireland and have such a big presence here. It wouldn't take much to motivate him to try and do something about that. A Sinn Féin in power attacking him might be just that motivator. As it is, our multi-national sector is looking decidedly vulnerable.

Factor

Another factor is that Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil voters tend to be more comfortably-off than the average.

They usually are living in their own homes with their mortgages either paid off or down to manageable levels. Fine Gael in particular is a party of the 'haves' and Fianna Fáil is too to a growing extent. Why would such voters want to upset the applecart?

If the apathetic or demoralised had come out to vote it might have been a different story.

“RTÉ and other parts of the media never stop covering climate change and yet the Greens were nearly destroyed anyway”

Two issues didn't really feature. One was immigration and the other was climate change. On the first, immigration has been off the front pages since they managed to remove the tents from around the Grand Canal in Dublin and since the protests outside the asylum-centres petered out. That is months ago. It doesn't mean the problem has gone away – it hasn't by any means. And it doesn't

mean we shouldn't have a serious debate about the issue – we should, and badly – but it dropped way down the news agenda.

On the other hand, RTÉ and other parts of the media never stop covering climate change and yet the Greens were nearly destroyed anyway. People might tell pollsters they are concerned about the matter if asked, but clearly it is way down their list of priorities. The Green vote wandered off to Labour and the Social Democrats.

Aontú

Aontú had a pretty good election. They doubled their vote and Peadar Kirby will no longer be the solitary Aontú TD in the Dail. Maybe they can continue to build from here.

Where did social issues fit into the picture? The answer is that they were barely to be seen. For example, abortion did not feature either way. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael didn't mention it and the left-wing parties had little if anything to say about it in public. Aontú was content to let its record on the issue do the talking.

Mind you, buried away in the manifesto for the likes of the Labour party and the Social Democrats were

promises to further liberalise our already very-liberal abortion law if they get into power. So, watch that space.

They also want to allow euthanasia and assisted suicide and now that the House of Commons has voted in favour of assisted suicide legislation (although the bill still has to go through other stages), that could easily grease the wheels of our pro-assisted suicide lobby. So watch that space as well.

But overall, I think that the two very heavy defeats the Government suffered in the referendums in March have spiked the 'woke' guns for now. That is not to say liberal NGOs and lobbyists will not be working away in the background to advance their agenda, on trans-issues for example, but the days of the Government being eager for referendums on social issues seem to be over for now. If they had won the March referendums it would be a whole different story.

Given the near inevitability of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael being returned to power even before the election began, the only thing really in doubt was who they might have as their coalition partner.

“Most of the Independents have no agenda against the Church nor will they be seeking to advance a 'woke' agenda”

Two possibilities are Labour or the Social Democrats, with Labour being the strong favourite among those two. But either one would be very bad news from the viewpoint of the social issues and the future of faith-based schools.

I hope the Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael instead turn to some of the Independents. Most of the Independents have no agenda against the Church nor will they be seeking to advance a 'woke' agenda. It doesn't mean this won't happen anyway, but the Independents won't be pushing for it.

Given that Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael were almost certainly going to be returned to power, then the best that could be realistically hoped for is that they came back with a decent new coalition partner. This might yet happen. We await coalition negotiations.

“Given the near inevitability of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael being returned to power even before the election began, the only thing really in doubt was who they might have as their coalition partner”

The war on the weak and the good fight



Martina Purdy

When Andrew Black was a boy, his mother would often say: "As long as you have your health, son..."

And he would nod in agreement.

But years later, when he became a chaplain in a Belfast hospital, having been ordained a priest, he was meeting people, who no longer had their health, people in pain, people who were dying.

So Fr Black learned to say something else: "As long as you have your faith..."

Yes, health is wealth, but Fr Black came to know at a deep level that true treasure is found through faith in God's loving plan for our lives.

His homily came back to me as I listened to the debate in Parliament last week on the 'assisted dying' bill - and the so-called 'right to die'.

This was a battle royale. And those who sought to kill the bill at its second reading lost 330 votes to 275.

The fight is not over, but the National Health Service, once the pride of Britain, is in danger of sinking into a National Death Service.

A devout Christian who lost her job for wearing a "Trust in Jesus" badge has been offered her job back by store chain Target in Fargo, North Dakota, according to US media outlets. Denise Kendrick claimed she was dismissed from her cashier's job for wearing the Christian badge, even though others were wearing rainbows on theirs - a well-known symbol of the LGBTQ+ movement.

When Northern Ireland tops UK polls, it is too often for the wrong reason. Newly published research shows that NI adults are more likely to look at pornography online than any other part of the UK. Ofcom's Nation report for 2024 indicates that more than 430,000 adults in the north visited "pornographic content services" online in May 2024 - more than one third of the adult population. That was higher than the proportion of adults viewing similar content in Wales, Scotland and England.

We all need to wake up to this 'war on the weak'.

As the post-election Dail comes to life, let us remember that one of the final acts of the last legislature was to note a report on assisted dying by a Special Oireachtas Joint Committee.

Those in favour of 'assisted dying' speak of choice and compassion (the same language used in the abortion industry).

"I am far from reassured that 'assisted death' will not usurp palliative care. Let's face it: 'assisted dying' is a lot cheaper than valuing life"

In a world where abuse of the vulnerable is rife, British MPs promised safeguards in the bill (yes, dying 'safely' is now a thing): two doctors will have to sign off before the patient is killed off. This drew howls from a retired friend: "I can hardly get seeing one doctor and I want to live!"

One of the great ironies of this 'end of life' debate is

that some of the same people who supported the costly Covid lock-down, apparently to protect the weakest in our society, are the same people pushing 'assisted death'. It is the same for those who wring their hands over the suicide rate.

I am far from reassured that 'assisted death' will not usurp palliative care. Let's face it: 'assisted dying' is a lot cheaper than valuing life.

Opposed

Florence Esholomi, MP for Brixton, passionately opposed the Westminster bill. "We should be helping people to live comfortable pain-free lives on their own terms before we think about making it easier for them to die," she said.

The MP also argued that it would be the poorest patients - the ones who already suffer the most healthwise - who would be most adversely affected: "True compassion should have equality at its heart."

Of course, it is all too human to try to avoid suffering, what Christ calls the cross. But early death is no solution.

Consider Deborah Binner, whose husband was diag-

nosed with Motor Neurone Disease. His story is told in the documentary *Simon's Choice*. After Simon's two failed suicide attempts, she very reluctantly accompanied him to a clinic in Switzerland.

Binner said it left her traumatised in a way that her young daughter's "gentle" death from bone cancer a few years before had not. "People would say, 'Isn't it brilliant that he knows what he wants and can have it. But it was never that simple. I didn't care what state he was in, or might be in, he was my husband - as valuable in a wheelchair as anyone out of it.'"

"In my experience those who run from the cross meet a heavier one"

In Canada (where assisted dying is legal for the terminally ill) I know of one woman who is agonising over her father's choice. She feels cheated out of love and precious time - and is struggling to forgive him.

In my experience those who run from the cross meet a heavier one.

The late RTÉ journalist, Charlie Bird, faced his Motor Neurone Disease head on before his death. Though he no longer practised his Catholic faith, he declared faith in goodness. "Some days I wish I was dead," he said, "but I have a lot to live for."

Charlie's choice inspired many with his charity climb up Croagh Patrick - and he ended his days at home in love and care.

'Dying with Dignity' cannot simply mean a 'pain-free' death.

Of course, one of the arguments in the British Parliament was that a majority of citizens favoured the right to die.

"Never underestimate the stupidity of the people," a Troubles-weary journalist used to say to me.

Blindness

It is not so much stupidity as blindness. The further we wonder from the light of Christ, the darker our lives become. Without faith, our lives - and our deaths - do not make sense.

And, once the door is opened to 'assisted dying', it just gets wider. In Belgium,

voluntary child euthanasia followed a change in the law.

Suffering is part of life's journey, whether we have faith or not.

In fact it is in suffering that faith, and indeed hope and love, are magnified, and it is in suffering that we meet Christ, who is light in the shadow of death.

In Florida five years ago, I encountered a priest called Fr Tom who spoke of his own faith experience, when his beloved mother began to suffer dementia. He had always vowed to keep her at home, but it became impossible as her illness developed. And, in the last 18 months of her life, he visited her every day in the nursing home, even though she had lost her faculties and had ceased to know who he was.

Yet, in the last few days of her life, her gift of speech returned and he received a great gift too.

"Do you know who I am?" he asked.

She thought about it for a long time before answering. "No," she said. "I don't know who you are... but I know that I love you."

MEDJUGORJE

"Come with us and experience Medjugorje's abundant spiritual fruits" as approved by Pope Francis

OUR LADY'S MISSION IS ONE OF PEACE & LOVE

Led by Spiritual Director MICHAEL KELLY
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
AID TO THE CHURCH IN NEED IRELAND

JULY 16, 2025 | PRICE €825*

Early Booking Offer *€50 off all bookings received before 31st January, 2025 (Only deposit required)

Travel Dublin to Mostar (20 min from Medjugorje)
Duration 7 nights

INCLUDES

- Direct flight from Dublin to Mostar, including airport taxis
- 20 kg check-in luggage plus one carry-on per person
- Return transfers to Medjugorje accompanied by a guide
- 7-nights accommodation in 4-star Hotel Quercus (close to St. James' Church)
- Daily breakfast and evening meal
- Free Wi-Fi in all guest rooms
- Full religious programme operated by Marian Pilgrimages as per itinerary
- Sightseeing and admission fees as per itinerary
- Daily mass and spiritual activities (in English at 10:00am and Croatian at 6:00pm)
- Full assistance of Marian Pilgrimages guides and representatives for the duration of the pilgrimage

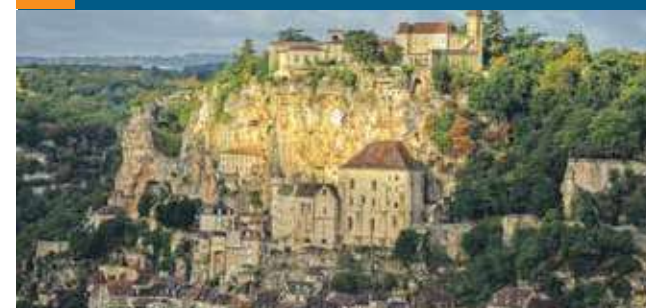
NOT INCLUDED

- Travel Insurance
- Lunches
- Optional Excursions

Limited spaces available

To reserve your place:
Call Dublin (01) 878 8159 or Belfast (028) 95680005 or email info@marian.ie

SHRINES OF EUROPE 2025



SHRINES OF FRANCE

PARAY-LE-MONIAL, NEVERS, TOURS, LISIEUX & PARIS

21 MAY 2025 | 7 NIGHTS | FROM DUBLIN | €1339pps

SHRINES OF FRANCE

PARAY-LE-MONIAL, NEVERS, TOURS & LISIEUX

3 JUNE 2025 | 7 NIGHTS | FROM DUBLIN | €1295pps

SHRINES OF EUROPE

LOURDES, BURGOS, AVILA & FATIMA

29 SEPT 2025 | 9 NIGHTS | FROM DUBLIN | €1375pps

SHRINES OF FRANCE

LOURDES, ROCAMADOUR, NEVER, PARIS & LISIEUX

29 SEPT 2025 | 7 NIGHTS | FROM DUBLIN | €1245pps

TO BOOK VISIT JOEWALSHTOURS.IE

info@joewalshstours.ie | 01 241 0800 | 89 Harcourt St, D02 WY88



Tours are operated by Petriwa Limited t/a Joe Walsh Tours who are licensed by the Irish Aviation Authority TA 0804 TO 273.



MARIAN PILGRIMAGES
RENEW OUR SPIRIT OF LOVE, FORGIVENESS AND PEACE

The Irish Catholic

Marian Pilgrimages is a fully licensed and bonded tour operator TD02 - ATOL 10000 Group: Irish Catholic: GG-1061-1

Out&About

A Columbanus welcome



ANTRIM: On November 23, 22 laymen and three priests were received into the Knights of St Columbanus at St Peter's Cathedral in Belfast by Fr Henry McCann, Provincial Chaplain Area 2. Bro PJ Finn, Deputy Supreme Knight attended the Mass and welcomed the new Knights. Pictured, all men from Area 2 who attended the reception Mass.



DONEGAL: Angela O'Malley, Sr Susan, Bridie Boyle and Isobel McConnell during Sr Susan's Diamond Jubilee celebration in the Church of Mary Immaculate, Stranorlar on November 24.



ANTRIM: Recently, St Malachy's College's A Level Religious Studies students received Archbishop Linus Neli, Harry Casey, and Michael Kelly on a ACN visit to the school. The pupils heard about the archbishop's experience of the persecution of Christians in Imphal, India. Pictured with the students are Harry Casey, Michael Kelly, Fr Timothy Bartlett and Archbishop Linus Neli.

IN SHORT

Waterford youth ministry gather in Mt Melleray

The Diocese of Waterford and Lismore's Ascend, Youth and Young Adult ministry gathered in Mount Melleray Abbey on November 9.

Close to 50 people from all around the diocese, in a mixture of clergy, religious, young adults, prayer groups, movements, parish faith representatives and persons invested in youth ministry in any way gathered to pray and discern intentional youth ministry in the diocese.

"It was an uplifting day for all present, with lots of networking and a time of prayer for the intentions of all

present and for the needs of our diocese," Nodlaig Lillis, Youth and Adult Ministry Office in the diocese, told *The Irish Catholic*.

"We had a very fruitful afternoon session using the Conversation in the Spirit model encouraged by the Synodal Process and it led to some encouraging and hope-filled sharings," she added. The event is hoped to run annually.

Diamond jubilee of a Sister of Mercy

A Sister of Mercy celebrated her Diamond Jubilee in Donegal on November 24. Sr Susan Evangelist, RSM gathered with faithful laity and clergy in the Church of Mary Immaculate, Stranorlar to celebrate sixty years of religious life.

ulate, Stranorlar to celebrate sixty years of religious life.

Rev Kieran McAteer, PP, Stranorlar thanked the Sister during his homily, "for your well over 40 years as a very important member of Cursillo. What continues to amaze me is your enthusiasm, your perseverance and your energy."

President of Cursillo, Raphoe, Maura O'Reilly said "Sr Susan has filled the hearts of so many people with her love and enthusiasm for God and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and we believe that's something worth celebrating."

Following the ceremony, a get-together took place in the Parish Centre, when the present shared refreshments and a cake. Sr Susan received numerous gifts and a photographic slideshow was displayed.

Edited by Renata Steffens
Renata@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



DONEGAL: On November 24, the Sister of Mercy and Raphoe Diocese gathered to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Sr Susan Evangelist, RSM in the Church of Mary Immaculate, Stranorlar. Following the ceremony, a get-together in the Parish Centre. Pictured are Fr Kieran McAteer, PP Stranorlar and Sr Susan.



DONEGAL: Mgr Kevin Gillespie, Adm., Sr Susan Evangelist, RSM, Maura O'Reilly, President of Cursillo and Pat Slattery, Chairperson for Cursillo during Sr Susan's Diamond Jubilee celebration in the Church of Mary Immaculate, Stranorlar on November 24.



ANTRIM: Fr Eugene O'Neill PP St Patrick's Parish, Belfast blessed the couple Harry and Elizabeth McCusker at Mass on November 17 to mark their 60th Anniversary.



DOWN: Recently, the Tobar Mhuire community in Downpatrick celebrated the 90th birthday of Fr Ephem Blake. For this milestone celebration, the priest prayed at Mass and shared meals with some other priests in the community.



WATERFORD: Almost 50 people from the around the Waterford and Lismore Diocese participated in the Youth Ministry event in Mount Melleray Abbey on November 9.



VATICAN: Archbishop Charles Brown Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines and former Nuncio to Ireland with David Collins and Mark Collins, pupils of Burnfort National School, Co. Cork in the Clementine Chapel. This is the chapel at the tomb of St Peter, Rome.

CAVAN

Killinkere CLG Christmas Concert takes place on December 15 at 4pm. It will be an evening of festive carols, traditional tunes, drama and recitations. Light refreshments will be served. For more details contact Killinkere Parish.

CLARE

Ballina, Killaloe and surroundings area Senior Citizens Christmas Party takes place on December 8 in the Lakeside Hotel. Mass at 3pm, followed by dinner, music and dance until 8pm. Tickets are €10, book in advance. For tickets call 0877734072.

CORK

Adoration of Blessed Sacrament continues every Mondays and Fridays from 10am to 6pm both days in St Patrick's Cathedral, Skibbereen.

The Parish of Cloyne Christmas Carol Service takes place on December 15 at 7pm in St Colman's Church. All welcome.

DERRY

St Eugene's Cathedral's Carol Service takes place on December 22 at 4.00pm, St Eugene's Cathedral Choir will lead the singing. This will be a moment of song, prayer and readings.

DOWN

Induction of the new Parish Priest of the Magheralin Parish, Fr Maciej Zacharek, will happen on December 7 in St Patrick's and Ronan's Church, Magheralin at 6pm. The celebration will be presided over by Archbishop Eamon Martin and it will be refreshments after Mass. All welcome.

DONEGAL

Carols by Candlelight takes place on December 15 in St Patrick's Church, Crossroads, Killygordon, followed by live crib and hot chocolate. The event is run by Derry Home and the Mothers Sisters.

DUBLIN

Children interested in being part of St Anne's Parish nativity play on the December 24 Mass must attend rehearsals in the church on December 6 from 4pm to 5pm and December 21 from 3pm to 4pm. For more information contact Rob at 0894123158.

GALWAY

Renmore Parish's annual Carol Service, when children from Scoil Chaitriona Senior share the story of Christmas through candlelight, music and prayer takes place on December 10 at 7.30pm.

KERRY

Youth 2000 Prayer Group for 18- to 35-year-olds takes place on Thursdays at 8pm in St John's Church, Tralee (Side Chapel). Entry through side door. For more info contact Denver on 0894061597.

ROSCOMMON

Penitential Service and Confession in Cloverhill Church, Oran Parish takes place on December 13 from 7pm to 8pm. Service will be led by PP Fr Victor Samugana.

A One-night Advent Mission Retreat with Eddie Stones (Ballinameen-Breedogue Parish), takes place at St Attracta Ballinameen Church, on December 13 with rosary at 6.30pm and Adoration at 7pm. It will be an evening of healing prayers, praise and worship, confessions and more. All welcome! For more information contact 071-9668104 or 0863530076.

LIMERICK

Lessons and Carols are being held at St Saviour's Dominican Church on December 13 at 7.30pm. Tickets are €10 and available at the parish office (Mon-Fri 10am-2pm) or on 085 726 2262. Primary school children go FREE. It is a fundraiser for St Saviour's new heating system.

TYRONE

Contemplative Prayer Group meets on Mondays at 8pm in the Meditation Room at the Leckpatrick Parochial House, Barrack St, Strabane. Newcomers welcome.

TIPPERARY

Birdhill Folk Group free concert takes place on Thursday, December 12 at Birdhill Church at 8pm. There is a collection on the night for Newport Day Centre.

WEXFORD

'Silent Night: The story of the Christmas Peace Truce' will be presented by The Peace Choir with musical director Dr Phil Brennan on December 21 from 8pm to 9.30pm in St Michael's Church, Gorey. Donations on the night to The Peace Choir.

Making Christmas magic for everyone

Elaine Noonan

As we prepare our hearts for the coming of the Christ-child this Christmas, we are reminded so keenly of the incredible challenge that the Holy Family endured all those years ago.

Mary and Joseph, far from home due to the census, faced uncertainty and rejection as they searched for a place to stay. They found refuge in a humble stable, surrounded by animals – a far cry from the modern comforts that we are all so used to.

Mary gave birth to Jesus in these humble conditions, laying Him not in a cot, but a manger – a feeding trough for animals. They lacked the basic comforts of a proper shelter, proper supplies and so many things that we all take for granted.

Vulnerable

This humble beginning reminds us of the depth of their sacrifice and the profound message of Christ's

birth—that greatness is found in humility, and love can shine even in the most challenging circumstances. Their story inspires us to find hope and faith, even in moments of struggle, and to trust in God's plan for each of us.

“This is a reality that many pregnant mothers in Ireland face every day”

The story of the vulnerable mother and her newborn baby also reminds us of families in our own time, our own country and indeed

our own local area, who are struggling to access essential supplies and resources when expecting a baby of their own.

Imagine the stress and worry of expecting a baby without the means to provide basic necessities such as nappies, clothing, a cot, and other essentials. Sadly, this is a reality that many pregnant mothers in Ireland face every day.

Lifeline

Community Connect is Ireland's national Baby Bank charity – a registered charity dedicated to providing practical support to pregnant mothers and vulnerable families with small

babies, who are struggling to provide for their children. The charity exists to alleviate the burden on these expecting mothers, and new parents, by providing them with the baby equipment, clothing and essential baby supplies they need to welcome their little ones into the world with love and dignity.

“Bringing hope and comfort at a time which should be full of joy”

Baby Banks can be a lifeline for families who need help: providing parents

“This humble beginning reminds us of the depth of their sacrifice and the profound message of Christ's birth—that greatness is found in humility, and love can shine even in the most challenging circumstances”

with support, and children with the items they need to thrive. This significantly reduces the financial burden of a new baby, but also can mean so much more to the families, bringing hope and comfort at a time which should be full of joy.

Essentials

Community Connect currently has five larger hubs across the country, in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Kilkenny and Athlone, where they are valued partners of many maternity hospitals; domestic violence shelters; IPAS centres and family hubs; social work teams and poverty relief organisations; who refer mother

and babies in need to them for help. There are also volunteers in other parts of the country, who can reach families in need in their local communities.

Every family supported is proudly provided with a beautiful gift package of essential items. These include a BabyBox 'starter pack' of new items for newborn babies, and a MamaBag of essentials for the post-partum mother. A fully equipped Hospital Bag can also be provided to pregnant mothers who need one, containing the essentials she needs to bring into hospital when having her baby.



The Perfect Christmas Gift

COMMUNITY CONNECT
helping mothers and babies

Give the gift of practical help this Christmas

Sponsor a Gift Package of essential items, and help a mother and baby in need. Or give your family and friends the gift of giving, and sponsor on their behalf!

- Visit communityconnect.ie
- or Scan the QR code
- or Call Us on 085 8758366



Community Connect is a Registered Charity in Ireland
Charity No. 20206555 CHY 23052

Can you give the gift of practical help this Christmas?

This Christmas, we are asking people to make a big difference to a mother and baby in need, by sponsoring one of these gift packages. Or give your family and friends the gift of giving, and sponsor on their behalf. Every package sponsored by December 20 comes with a beautiful Christmas card!

To sponsor a gift, please go to www.communityconnect.ie and click the Christmas banner, or scan the QR code printed below.

Just as the Holy Family relied on the generosity of others – the innkeeper, the shepherds and Magi – we are reminded of the power of giving during the Advent season. Let this season be a time to give generously, embodying the spirit of hope and love that Christmas brings.

With your help, and inspired by the Advent message of compassion and care, Community Connect will support many more families in need this Christmas and beyond.

i Community Connect is a registered charity in Ireland no. 20206555. www.communityconnect.ie, info@communityconnect.ie, 085 875 8366



Volunteers in Cork help out for Community Connect.



Volunteers in Cork help out for Community Connect.



Christmas

GIFT GUIDE

— 2024 —

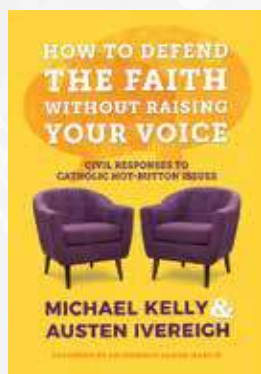
The Irish Catholic

This Christmas, readers of *The Irish Catholic* can enjoy half price title from *Columba Books* and *Currach Books*!

– Special Prices –



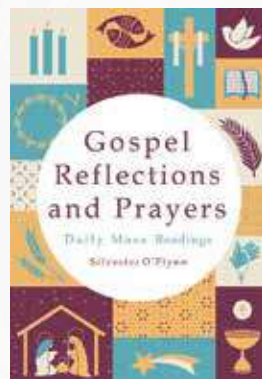
How to Defend the Faith Without Raising Your Voice *Michael Kelly & Austen Ivereigh*



Answering some of the most common criticisms of the church, this book aims to help people understand why the Church teaches what it does and defend it in a calm and rational way.

€14.99 €7.49

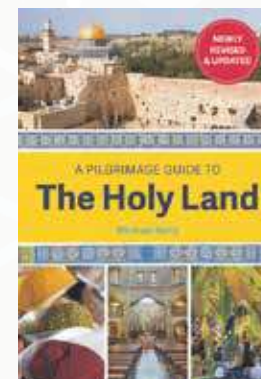
Gospel Reflections and Prayers *Silvester O'Flynn*



This book offers two short reflections on the daily gospels. These simple and clear reflections would take two minutes at most and a preacher might use either one or both.

€19.99 €9.99

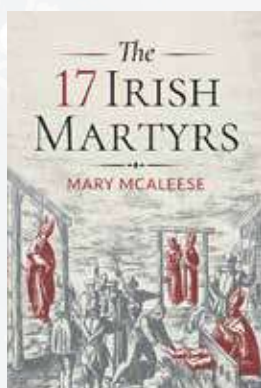
A Pilgrimage Guide to the Holy Land *Michael Kelly*



In this unique guidebook, Michael Kelly takes readers to the sites associated with the earthly life of Christ from Bethlehem to Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee to Jerusalem.

€19.99 €9.99

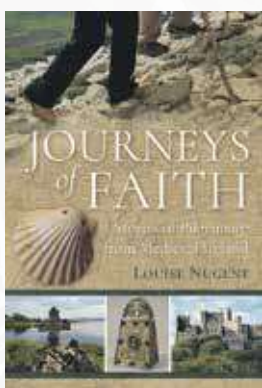
The 17 Irish Martyrs *Mary McAleese*



An historical account detailing the inspiring stories of the 17 Irish martyrs beatified by Pope John Paul II and what made their causes for martyrdom stand apart from others.

€16.99 €8.49

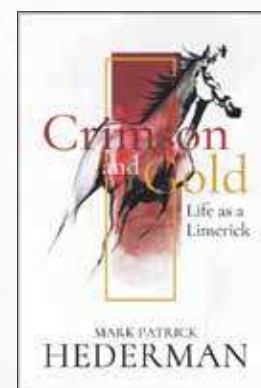
Journeys of Faith *Louise Nugent*



A complete guide to the world of pilgrimage in medieval Ireland, this book brings the reader on a tour of how Christianity was celebrated in medieval times.

€26.99 €13.49

Crimson & Gold *Mark Patrick Hederman*



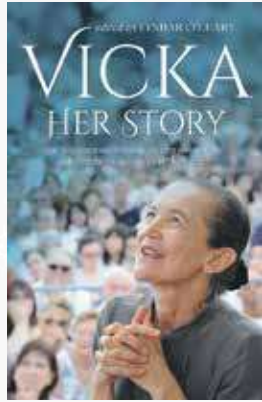
A Benedictine Monk of Glenstal Abbey, Fr Hederman continues to explore how we as Irish Roman Catholics can hone in on the most precious aspects of our faith and cancel the surrounding noise.

€19.99 €9.99

You will find the order form on the last page of the Christmas Gift Guide

Please remember to add €5 P&P

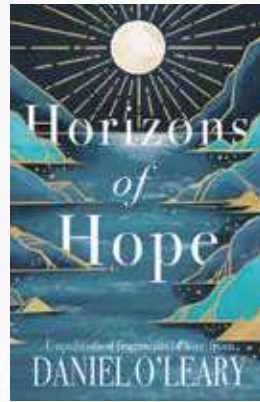
Vicka Her Story
Finbar O'Leary



This is the fullest account given by the eldest visionary Vicka of her story and experiences with Our Lady. Here, Vicka relays many of the Messages which the 'Queen of Peace' has given to her.

~~€9.99~~ €4.99

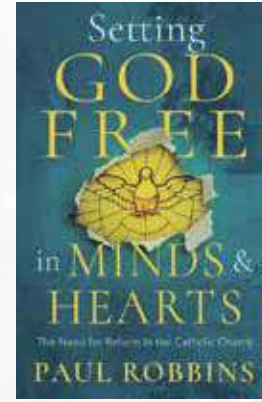
Horizons of Hope
Daniel O'Leary



This book is an invitation from the author to open our hearts and minds to a loving God. A celebration of Daniel O'Leary's unrelenting conviction that life itself is God's love eternally unfolding before us.

~~€19.99~~ €9.99

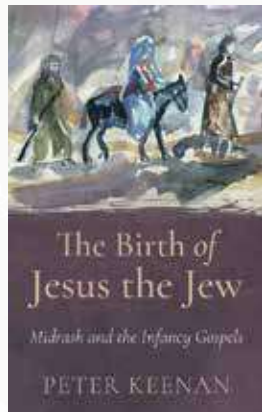
Setting God Free in Minds and Hearts
Paul Robbins



An eye-opening read, the call for reform and a conversion to the true mandate of God will ring true as Paul Robbins takes us on a journey of clarity and understanding.

~~€14.99~~ €7.49

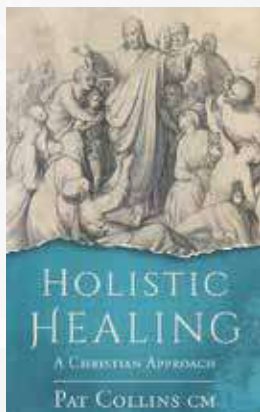
The Birth of Jesus the Jew
Peter Keenan



The Birth of Jesus the Jew is a short introduction to how the Jewish literary genre of 'Midrash' has shaped the infancy stories in the two canonical Gospels and some apocryphal works.

~~€14.99~~ €7.49

Holistic Healing
Fr Pat Collins



Healing is one of the most beautiful gifts in God's treasure chest of blessing. This timely book describes how the gift of healing has been rediscovered in recent years and sheds light on the therapeutic power of the Eucharist.

~~€16.99~~ €8.49

Sending Positive Vibes
Fr Bryan Shortall



Fr Bryan's memories and reflections are interspersed with prayers, stories of Saints, and gives a rare insight into the lives of the priests and religious who work so tirelessly about us.

~~€12.99~~ €6.49

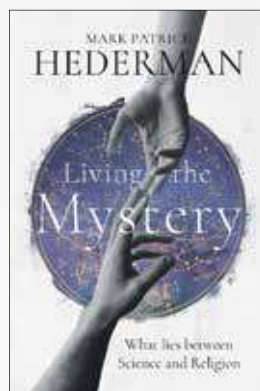
The Way We Were
Mary Kenny



Mary Kenny's approach is a balanced and measured recollection of the Ireland of our times – and of times past, since the foundation of the Irish state a hundred years ago.

~~€19.99~~ €9.99

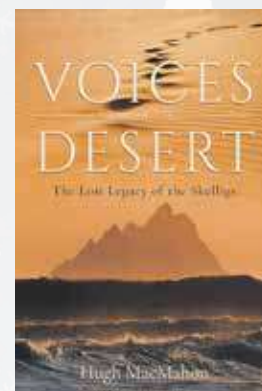
Living the Mystery
Mark Patrick Hederman



Life is a mystery beyond the comprehension of our normal understanding. A Benedictine monk explains how to engage with this mystery and bring a new sense of the sacred into it.

~~€19.99~~ €9.99

Voices From the Desert
Hugh MacMahon



Whats the Desert Fathers had to say about Christianity in 384 AD is as relevant now as it has been over the ages. Readers looking for a fresh understanding of the Skelligs' legacy will appreciate this book.

~~€14.99~~ €7.49

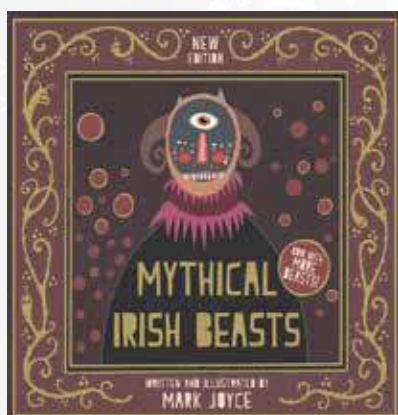
You will find the order form on the last page of the Christmas Gift Guide

Please remember to add €5 P&P

Mythical Irish trilogy Bundle Offer

Delve into this beautiful trilogy by Connemara-native Mark Joyce and set sail on an adventure across magical Ireland!

Bundle Price €69.97 €34.99



Mythical Irish Beasts

If leprechauns are all you can think of when it comes to Ireland's mythical creatures, think again! In this new edition of his bestselling Mythical Irish Beasts, Mark introduces us to eight new beasts, including Grogan and the Gruagach, the magical bird of Assaroe, and more!



Mythical Irish Places

Join Mark on a magical journey around the country visiting some of the most mythical places in Ireland. From Newgrange to the Hill of Tara to the Giant's Causeway, brimming with beautiful illustrations, this is a book that children and adults will enjoy for years to come.



Mythical Irish Wonders

Ireland is well-known as the land of storytellers but many of the strange and magical tales have been lost over time. Until now! Join Mark on a journey through an ancient Ireland nearly forgotten, with beautiful, full-colour illustrations accompanying each entry.

The Enchanted Lake €22.99

Sinéad de Valera



Sinéad de Valera's *The Enchanted Lake* weaves a world of magic like no other. This book will transport the reader to a world of wonder and enchantment that will invite them back again and again.

€22.99 €11.49

A Robin's Tale

Noelle Rock



"Robins appear when loved ones are near" *A Robin's Tale* is a thoughtful children's story addressing death which offers a safe way for adults and children to explore loss and grief.

€14.99 €7.49

Wild Stories from the Irish Uplands

John G. O'Dwyer

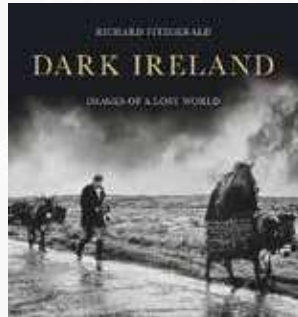


The author seamlessly merges expert historical sources with his own fact-finding walks through the uplands and the vivid accounts of events gleaned from local people.

€14.99 €7.49

Dark Ireland

Richard Fitzgerald

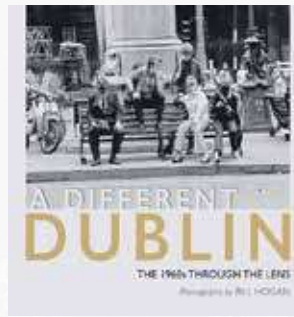


A unique album of photos that is both compelling and graceful; a fond tribute to an earthier time and place.

€24.99 €12.49

A Different Dublin: The 1960s Through The Lens

Bill Hogan



A Different Dublin is a nostalgic collection that show a Dublin that is familiar, despite the five decades that separate these photos from today.

€19.99 €9.99

The Liberties

Maurice Curtis

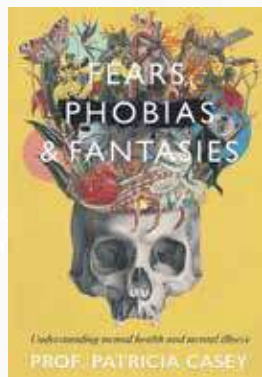


Tour the district of Dublin 8 located in the heart of city, learning the history of the places and people that have contributed to the neighbourhood's lasting legacy.

€19.99 €9.99

Fears, Phobias & Fantasies

Prof. Patricia Casey

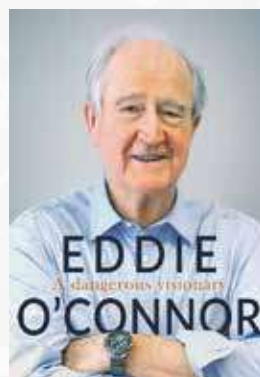


Written by well-known psychiatrist Patricia Casey, this book will clarify the various symptoms and therapies and explore some of the common myths surrounding mental illness.

€22.99 €11.49

A Dangerous Visionary

Eddie O'Connor



Eddie's invaluable experience combined with a confident vision and unshakeable faith has created a legacy to inspire the next generation of environmentally conscious business leaders.

€19.99 €9.99

The Bee's Knees

James Morrissey



A fascinating insight into the life of bees and beekeeping in Ireland, including what happens inside the hive, how bees communicate, and the dramatic decline in global bee population.

€19.99 €9.99

Once Upon A Reader

Lorraine Levis

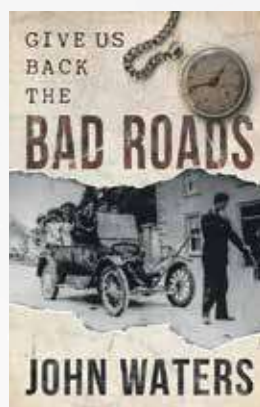


Lorraine Levis is one of Ireland's top children's book experts. With this book, she provides a roadmap for anyone who wants to help the next generation – from pre-natal babies to young adults – become avid readers.

€19.99 €9.99

Give Us Back the Bad Roads

John Waters



Waters begins seeking to outline the facts of his departure from Irish journalism, and finds himself writing to his father as he looks back over the arc of his life and at the hopes and expectations of his youth.

€19.99 €9.99

A Saucer Full of Secrets

Pam Henry



Join Alban the cat and 12 year old Sedu on a whirlwind of magic and adventure. With references to Ireland's mystical places and magical folklore, Pam Henry has crafted a wonderful take on the legends for children.

€12.99 €6.49

MAGNIFICAT

YOUR DAILY MASS AND PRAYER COMPANION



ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Six Months €35

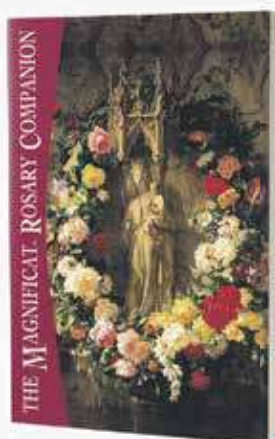
3 Months €20

ROSARY COMPANION

Bring your heart closer to Jesus through Mary

€6.50

€2.85 for P&P



ADORATION COMPANION

Stay close to the Lord in adoration and love

€11.99

€2.85 for P&P



ADVENT COMPANION

Journey to Easter and the Resurrection

€6.00

€2.85 for P&P



ADDITIONAL PRODUCTS

Black Leather cover €25

Brown Semi-leather cover €15

Plastic cover €8.50

€5.00 for P&P



You will find the order form on the last page of the Christmas Gift Guide

The Irish Catholic

Digital and Print Subscriptions



DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

1 Month €7

3 Months €20

1 Year €60

Digital subscriptions available to order on irishcatholic.com

PRINT SUBSCRIPTIONS

3 Months €65

6 Months €105

1 Year €199



Beautifully treated and hand carved by Christians in the Holy Land, these olive wood pieces are perfect additions to any home for the holiday season. Whether decorating your own mantle or giving a gift, they are unique items sure to bring joy and wonder to your Christmas celebrations.



HOLY LAND ORNAMENTS

Bring the wonder of Bethlehem home this Christmas



Ornaments
Set of 12

€24.99



Modern Crib
5.5"(H) x 6"(W) x 3.5"(L)

€49.99



Ladder Crib
6"(H) x 6"(W) x 3.5"(L)

€49.99

You will find the order form on the last page of the Christmas Gift Guide

Please remember to add €5 P&P

How to order your gifts

CHOOSE YOUR ITEMS
don't forget to select
the quantity of them.

1

FILL IN THE FORM
with your personal details
and method of payment.

2

CUT THE FORM
insert it into an envelope
and post it to us.

3

MY DETAILS

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

PAYMENT METHOD

☐ Pay by cheque/postal order

Total amount € _____

Payable to *The Irish Catholic*

☐ Pay by card:

☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Debit

Card number _____

Expiry date ____/____ CVV _____

☐ Include my free gift copy of *Pope Francis in Ireland* with my order

Gift copy is only available for orders of 2 books or more

MAGNIFICAT PRODUCTS

Subscriptions

- ___ 1 year subscription • €62
- ___ 6 month subscription • €35

Companions *Include €2.85 for P+P*

- ___ Advent Companion • €6.00
- ___ Rosary Companion • €6.50
- ___ Adoration Companion • €11.99

Covers *Include €5 for P+P*

- ___ Black leather • €25
- ___ Brown semi-leather • €15
- ___ Plastic • €8.50

THE IRISH CATHOLIC PRODUCTS

Print Subscriptions

- ___ 1 year print subscription • €199
- ___ 6 month print subscription • €105
- ___ 3 month print subscription • €65

Digital Subscriptions

- ___ 1 year digital subscription • €60
- ___ 3 month digital subscription • €20
- ___ 1 month digital subscription • €7.00

Ornaments

- ___ Ladder Crib • €49.99
- ___ Modern Crib • €49.99
- ___ 12 Set Ornaments • €24.99

COLUMBA BOOKS

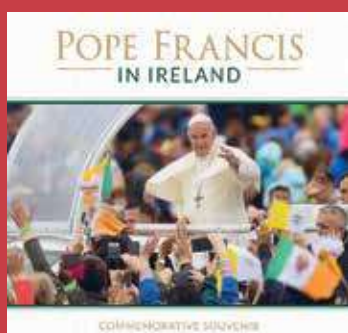
- ___ Vicka Her Story • €4.99
- ___ How to Defend the Faith Without Raising Your Voice • €7.49
- ___ Journeys of Faith • €13.49
- ___ Living the Mystery • €9.99
- ___ Horizons of Hope • €9.99
- ___ Holistic Healing • €8.49
- ___ Setting God Free in Minds and Hearts • €7.49
- ___ Crimson & Gold • €9.99
- ___ The 17 Irish Martyrs • €8.49
- ___ Voices From the Desert • €7.49
- ___ Sending Positive Vibes • €6.49
- ___ The Birth of Jesus the Jew • €7.49
- ___ A Pilgrimage Guide to the Holy Land • €9.99
- ___ The Way We Were • €9.99
- ___ Gospel Reflections and Prayers • €4.99

CURRACH BOOKS

- ___ Dark Ireland • €12.49
- ___ The Liberties • €9.99
- ___ The Bee's Knees • €9.99
- ___ A Different Dublin: The 1960s Through The Lens • €9.99
- ___ Fears, Phobias & Fantasies • €11.49
- ___ Once Upon A Reader • €9.99
- ___ A Dangerous Visionary • €9.99
- ___ The Enchanted Lake • €11.49
- ___ A Saucer Full of Secrets • €6.49
- ___ Wild Stories from the Irish Uplands • €7.49
- ___ A Robin's Tale • €7.49
- ___ Give Us Back the Bad Roads • €9.99
- ___ Mythical Irish Bundle • €34.99

Pope Francis in Ireland

A beautiful commemorative souvenir book following Pope Francis' 2018 visit to Ireland.



CONTACT US

Phone +353 (01) 687 4024

Email sales@columba.ie

Address Block 3B, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277

Website www.irishcatholic.com/shop



“Synodality is what the Lord expects from the Church of the third millennium” – Pope Francis

Outgoing Australian ambassador notes growing momentum of women leadership in the Vatican



Kristina Millare

Headling home after serving four and a half years in the Vatican as Australia's ambassador to the Holy See, Chiara Porro says she has seen a rise in the participation and promotion of women's leadership in the Catholic Church under Pope Francis.

Officially completing her term at the Vatican post on November 29, Porro says the Pope has made significant changes to ensure both religious sisters and laywomen have a “seat at the table” alongside men in the Vatican.

“When I arrived it was a time when the Pope started to put women into leadership positions,” Porro told CNA. “What I've noticed over these years is that the momentum has really increased.”

Collaboration

Within the Vatican, Pope Francis has appointed a number of women in high-ranking positions since his 2013 election, including economist Sister Alessandra Smirelli as secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in 2022; Sister Nathalie Becquart as undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops in 2021; and art historian Barbara Jatta as Vatican Museums director in 2016.

“The process of synodality that the Pope has started has given



Chiara Porro, Australian Ambassador to the Holy See, introduces panelists at an event she sponsored at Vatican Radio March 8, 2023, International Women's Day. Photo: CNS/Carol Glatz.

women — but not only women — the opportunity to be heard,” Porro said. “The synod [in October] has been really important to just show the diversity of views among women and the importance of listening to them all and having that dialogue.”

“Together we've tried to give support to women working in the Catholic Church”

As one of 51 women ambassadors out of a total of 130 country ambassadors accredited to the Holy See, Porro shared with CNA that ambassadors

regularly meet and collaborate with several women associated with the Vatican and other Catholic organisations.

“Together we've tried to give support to women working in the Catholic Church, or religious women, or other groups — working in collaboration with men — to try and advance women and ensure everyone has a seat at the table,” she said.

Promotion

Speaking on human rights issues — including human trafficking, protection of minors, and religious freedom — the Australian ambassador said both the

“I hope I've grown the relationship and been able to identify areas where we have been able to work more together and influence change for the betterment of the world and society as a whole”

Empowerment and Inclusion, told CNA both political and faith leaders have “significant influence on social, political and cultural norms.”

“It's really been an immense privilege and honour to serve here as Australia's ambassador”

“By working with state and faith leaders, we can ensure that women's experiences, needs and expertise are brought to the tables where decisions are made that will affect their lives,” she said.

Although “women's leadership, protection and respect for the human rights of women within religion is sometimes contested,” MacGillivray told CNA the collaborative work of Church leaders, faith-based organisations, and government actors is key in effectively addressing and overcoming issues that undermine the rights and dignity of women and girls in different parts of the world.

Reflecting on her work in the Vatican since first presenting her credential letters to Pope Francis in 2020, Porro expressed her “hope that the work that we've done over these years continues to progress.”

“It's really been an immense privilege and honour to serve here as Australia's ambassador and I hope I've grown the relationship and been able to identify areas where we have been able to work more together and influence change for the betterment of the world and society as a whole,” she said.

“Reflecting on her work in the Vatican since first presenting her credential letters to Pope Francis in 2020, Porro expressed her ‘hope that the work that we've done over these years continues to progress’”

state and the Church have important roles to play to promote peace and social cohesion in society.

“The Vatican's influence is something that I think is very critical and that states recognise”

“As institutions we can work together to address some of these issues,” Porro said. “There are lots of areas that we've worked with the Vatican and I think that there's much more that can be done — lots of partnerships.”

The Vatican's influence is something that I think is very critical and that states recognise,” she added.

Influence

Having collaborated with various Vatican bodies including the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, Porro has also worked closely with the Holy See's charitable arm Caritas Internationalis “to raise the voices of the most vulnerable.”

Stephanie MacGillivray, Caritas Internationalis Senior Officer for Identity and Mission, Women's



Edited by Brandon Scott
brandon@irishcatholic.ie

Hurry up, Holy Father!



Pope Francis speaks with children in St Peter's Square during his weekly general audience at the Vatican on November 27, 2024. Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez.

Christians subjected to 'relentless persecution' in North Korea

North Koreans who are repatriated from China and who have had contact with Christians are sent to North Korean political prisoner camps, according to the latest report on religious freedom by the pontifical foundation Aid to the Church in Need (ACN).

Persecuted and Forgotten? A Report on Christians oppressed for their Faith 2022-24 was published this month during Red Week and is an initiative by ACN to draw attention to religious persecution around the world. The 2024 edition addresses the situation in 18 key countries, including North Korea.

North Korea is a communist nation ruled since 1948 by the Kim dynasty, and although "gauging the true number of Christians or the extent of their faith in North Korea is exceedingly difficult," says

ACN, "they are estimated to comprise around 0.38% of the population, which equates to just over 98,000 people."

However, despite the small number of believers, Christianity is considered a threat to the state, which is why Christians are forced to go underground.

According to the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS), the entire population is forced to follow Juche, "an ideology of Marxist 'self-reliance' created by the country's founder, Kim Il-Sung".

To escape the country, North Koreans often use the extensive 880 mile border with China. If they manage to get past the tightly controlled border, the fugitives must reach a third border undetected, mostly Thailand, and seek asylum in the South Korean embassy, which will send them to South Korea.

However, those who are apprehended by the Chinese authorities are repatriated to North Korea. According to Human Rights Watch, in April the Beijing government deported some 60 North Koreans.

In its report, ACN refers to the defectors who were repatriated in October 2023 and said there is cause for concern for those "who had interacted with Christians while they were outside the country. They were all sent to political prisoner camps, known for the harsh treatment of inmates there."

The report notes that while many served reduced sentences, "those who came into contact with Christianity" were interned "in political prisoner camps, which is in fact a life sentence without parole".

Citing a source in North

Korea who spoke anonymously for security reasons to Daily NK, the ACN report said that "North Korean state security departments base their interrogations of repatriated defectors on files provided by the Chinese police."

"If anything related to religion is mentioned in the files, the defectors will be inexorably interned in camps" no matter what they say concerning what happened, the report notes.

The pontifical foundation states that in North Korea, "considered the worst country in the world to be a Christian," people are classified according to their loyalty to the state and "believers are automatically considered a 'hostile class' and subjected to relentless persecution".

Mexican bishops clarify: there is no 'Mayan rite'

Mexico's bishops have issued a statement clarifying that there is no such thing as an approved "Mayan rite" of the Mass and that the Vatican has only authorised specific liturgical adaptations for indigenous communities in Chiapas state in southern Mexico.

In a statement the Mexican Bishops' Conference (CEM, by its Spanish acronym) provided several details about the recent adaptations to the Ordinary of

the Mass approved by the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

On November 8, the Vatican granted the *recognitio*, endorsing the "adaptations to the Ordinary of the Mass in Spanish" for the Tzeltal, Tsotsil, Ch'ol, Tojolabal, and Zoque ethnic groups of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas, located in the Mexican state of Chiapas.

According to the CEM statement, "no

'Mayan rite', "Mayan altar", "prayers to cardinal points" or "transfer of the liturgical presidency to lay persons" have been approved.

The bishops further clarified that "ritual dances during the celebration" were not approved by the dicastery but rather "rhythmic swaying of the body" performed by indigenous communities as a legitimate cultural expression.

Vatican roundup

Vatican may add 'spiritual abuse' to crimes in Church law

● The Vatican may make "spiritual abuse" a formalised crime in Church law, rather than merely an aggravating circumstance of other crimes.

The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) is forming a working group with the Dicastery for Legislative Texts with "the task of analysing this possibility and presenting concrete proposals" on the matter, according to a paper from the doctrine office dated November 22 and posted online this week.

According to the note, which was signed by DDF Prefect Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández and approved by Pope Francis, the term "false mysticism" is an "overly broad and ambiguous expression" in need of refining in certain contexts in the Church.

Pope Francis confirms plans to visit Turkey

● Pope Francis told a group of theologians on Thursday he plans to visit Turkey for the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea in 2025.

Bartholomew I, the Eastern Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople, anticipated that Francis would be making the trip in comments to reporters in May. In September,

he confirmed that the joint trip is expected to happen at the end of May 2025.

The Council of Nicaea took place in the ancient city of Nicaea in 325 AD in the former Roman Empire, which is now the present-day city of İznik, in northwestern Turkey, about 70 miles from Istanbul.

Scientists and CEOs share big ideas at Vatican ethical innovation summit

● Against the dramatic backdrop of a massive mosaic of Christ enthroned, entrepreneurs, researchers, and civil society leaders spoke at the Vatican's Pontifical Lateran University this week about their big ideas for ethical innovation.

Dubbed the "World Changers Ethical & Innovation Summit," the November 25-26 event showcased groundbreaking ideas spanning artificial intelligence, regenerative medicine, ethical technology, and environmental sustainability.

Among the featured speakers was Dr Todd Ovokaitys, a Johns Hopkins-trained medical doctor and researcher, who presented his pioneering work in regenerative medicine.

Pontifical universities in Rome host conference on legacy of St John Paul II

● The Vatican Dicastery for Culture and Education sponsored a four-day event in Rome to honour the spiritual and intellectual legacy of St Pope John Paul II while marking the 25th anniversary of his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*.

Twenty years into his pontificate, John Paul II released *Fides et Ratio* — "Faith and Reason" — on the September 14 feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in 1998.

Describing faith and reason as "two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of the truth", the Pope emphasised that the human heart ultimately seeks to know and love God.

Pope announces Chinese translations for weekly audiences

● Starting next week, Chinese will be added as the ninth official language at papal general audiences, Pope Francis announced Wednesday.

"Next week, with Advent, the Chinese translation will also begin here publicly," the Pope said on November 27 during his general audience in St Peter's Square.

The addition marks a significant expansion of the languages used at the weekly papal events, where key portions — including Scripture readings, summaries of the Pope's address, and greetings — are delivered in eight languages: Italian, English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, and Arabic.

Assisted Suicide: A Clash of Absolutes?

Tina Beattie

On Friday, 29th November, a majority of Westminster MPs voted in favour of a bill titled “Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill”, proposed by Labour MP Kim Leadbeater. If passed into law, it will allow terminally ill people in England and Wales with six months or less to live to be supplied with lethal drugs to kill themselves under medical supervision. The bill stipulates that the person must be of sound mind and free from coercion, and have the approval of two doctors and a judge. Leadbeater claims that it has the most stringent criteria in the world, but it’s a woolly document with many vague areas. Some opponents pointed out that, wherever assisted dying has been legalised, the criteria have been liberalised, sometimes far beyond what was originally envisaged. This is particularly true of Canada and the Netherlands.

The arguments used by the bill’s supporters and opponents revealed fundamental differences in the ethical principles being applied. Those in favour tended to emphasise liberal values of autonomy and choice as if these were ethical absolutes. The idea of dependence and helplessness at the end of life motivated many to argue that they would not want to inflict such indignity and humiliation on themselves or their loved ones. Whether intended or not, this risks suggesting to disabled and dependent people, as well as to those who refuse assisted dying, that they lack dignity and are unworthy of respect.

Opponents tended to have a more communal and social ethos, emphasising not autonomy and choice but care and responsibility for the ill, the disabled, and the dying. This included those whose arguments were informed by their religious faith, as well as many from ethnic minorities and disabled people. The disabled actor and rights activist Liz Carr made a BBC documentary, “Better Off Dead?”, which expresses the worry shared by many disabled people that their lives will come to be seen as worthless and disposable if the new legislation passes.

Perspective

Religious leaders from different faiths signed an open letter appealing to MPs to reject the bill, and Catholic bishops urged parishioners to write to their MPs. The debate did not, however,



A nurse helps an elderly patient.
Credit: Inside Creative House.

divide along clear religious/secular lines. Opinion was divided among doctors and other medical practitioners. Many working in palliative care were opposed, as were disability organisations.

“The ethical justification derives from the intention of the act”

From a Catholic perspective, assisted suicide finds no justification in church

teaching. From its natural beginning to its natural end, every individual life is sacred and endowed with intrinsic dignity, and must be respected as such. However, while there are doctrinal arguments about the sanctity of human life, the Catholic tradition teaches that principles about law, morality and social justice should be defended by way of reason, without relying on faith-based claims. Many non-believers agree that killing a person in order to alleviate suffering crosses an ethical red line that should never be crossed.

Another relevant church teaching that does not rely on confessionalism is the doctrine of double effect, which concerns the intention of an act. Nobody is obliged to accept treatment that prolongs the process of dying when death is imminent. It is ethically acceptable to administer sufficient pain relief to a dying person, even if that might shorten his or her life, if the intention is to relieve pain. However, if the intention is to kill the person, as it is in assisted suicide, then the dosage must be sufficient to ensure death. The ethical

justification derives from the intention of the act. Pain relief is justifiable, but killing is not.

Implications

We might also bear in mind that church teaching distinguishes between morality and legality. The law should only prohibit behaviour that threatens the common good. It should not be used to police people’s individual morality. Given that assisted suicide has profound social significance, including its impact on medical ethics and law, it cannot be reduced to a personal moral

decision. We must consider the wider social implications.

Health Secretary Wes Streeting opposed the bill because, he argued, the NHS is in a parlous state, and access to palliative care is woefully inadequate. It is dangerous to introduce assisted dying at a time when many people are suffering unnecessarily because of a lack of good end-of-life care. The resources should be put into improving palliative care.

“When fundamental principles of life and death are at stake, we need not anecdotes but robust philosophical debate, rooted in the most basic values of western society”

The question of coercion also raises concerns. It can be difficult to prove that a person is not being coerced. The option of assisted suicide might put undue pressure on suffering people who feel that they are a burden to their loved ones, even without external coercion.

There are distressing situations when palliative care does not relieve a person’s dying agonies, and there were highly emotive stories told by those who support assisted suicide. Yet when fundamental principles of life and death are at stake, we need not anecdotes but robust philosophical debate, rooted in the most basic values of western society which are, at heart, formed by Christianity. As historian Tom Holland argues, Christianity overturned ancient Greek and Roman cultures that celebrated masculine power, exploitation and domination, by privileging the vulnerable, the weak and the poor. Last week’s vote suggests that secularisation may be hastening a return to those pre-Christian values, when status, power and privilege take priority over care, compassion and the sanctity of life.

i Tina Beattie, Professor Emerita of Catholic Studies, University of Roehampton, London. tina@tinabeattie.com

Houses of Westminster London.
Credit Brian A Jackson.



Smartphones get Aussie rules



Breda O'Brien

Sometimes, political spouses change history. Annabel Malinauskas, wife of the premier of the small state of South Australia, Peter Malinauskas, finished reading Jonathan Haidt's book, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*. She then turned to her husband and said, 'You had better effing do something about this.'

Many parents feel like that but Peter Malinauskas was in a position to introduce legislation in his own state, which rapidly became a proposition for the federal Australian Parliament.

By the end of November, a mere six months later, the Australian parliament voted to ban social media for children under 16.

The legislation will not commence for a year but trials of enforcement methods will begin early in the New Year.

Malinauskas' maternal grandparents were middle-class Irish, despite the name, and he attended Mercedes College, founded by the Irish Sisters of Mercy in 1954.

While describing himself as a poor Catholic who does not attend Mass every week, he has also spoken about how the Mercy Keys - mutual respect, compassion, integrity, justice, responsibility and loyalty - influenced his life.

Those keys are signally absent from social media, particularly for young people.

Protections

77 per cent of Australians back the under-16 social media ban, according to an Australian government YouGov poll. The Australian Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, summed it up: "Parents want their kids off their phones and on the footy field. So do I."

Jonathan Haidt, author of the book read by Peter Malinauskas' wife, has been to the forefront of the battle to undo the harms of what he calls a



“Without legislation, the weight both of social pressure and algorithms designed to hook our children into hours of passive surfing that injure their mental health is difficult if not impossible for parents to resist”

phone-based childhood. He believes that children need a play-based childhood. Instead, they are over-protected in the real world and under-protected online.

“It's entirely likely the ban could see young people pushed to darker corners of the internet where no community guidelines, safety tools, or protections exist”

He states that anxious parenting combined with being glued to phones from younger and younger ages has led to four foundational harms. The first is social deprivation because so many interactions are now online. The second

is sleep deprivation, which leads to "depression, anxiety, irritability, cognitive deficits, poor learning, and lower grades." The third is attention fragmentation because our dopamine-driven attention spans get shorter and shorter. The final is addictive behaviour, where people are completely dependent on their phones.

If we adults were honest, we could quite easily recognise ourselves, too, in that quartet. But those of us born before the year 2000 grew up with phones as mostly fixed objects in the hall, not portals to the entire world, including its darkest aspects.

Haidt believes that no one under the age of 14 should have anything except a brick phone, that schools should be entirely phone-free, and that people should be aged 16 before they have a social media account.

At the same time, children should be encouraged to go outside, play sports and take risks.

Filtering

Haidt addressed by video call an Australian social media summit hosted by two states which was designed to build momentum for support of a ban.

Predictably, the ban has its critics. The social media

platforms are unhappy. A TikTok spokesperson claimed that "It's entirely likely the ban could see young people pushed to darker corners of the internet where no community guidelines, safety tools, or protections exist."

Yes, there are controls on TikTok such as family pairing, where parents can set time limits and to an extent, filter what their child is viewing. Nonetheless, these controls are flawed and partial.

Research by DCU's Anti-Bullying Centre, which set up fake accounts to track what boys would experience on TikTok and YouTube found that the accounts were fed toxic male stereotypes from the so-called manosphere, irrespective of whether they sought them out or not. Frighteningly, they all received this content within the first 23 minutes of the experiment.

Some see the Australian ban as unenforceable without significant privacy concerns, which is ironic given how privacy is being invaded now.

“It marks an end to shoulder-shrugging learned helplessness. It will be an imperfect solution, no doubt, but it is so much better than doing nothing”

Also, while young people may be ingenious about getting around parental controls, there is a growing awareness among young people of how much of their lives are being sucked up by social media.

When Haidt asked young people about self-regulating their social media usage, they were all sceptical about achieving anything. However, they felt that a blanket ban could help. Even though some will circumvent it, it will give others permission to cut back on what they know are addictive behaviours.

Other countries, like France, have tried less sweeping bans but Australia's experiment is important. It marks an end to shoulder-shrugging learned helplessness. It will be an imperfect solution, no doubt, but it is so much better than doing nothing.

Without legislation, the weight both of social pressure and algorithms designed to hook our children into hours of passive surfing that injure their mental health is difficult if not impossible for parents to resist.

Ireland will follow its former colonial masters

EDITORIAL

Now that the United Kingdom has voted to introduce assisted suicide into law, there can be no doubt that where the UK has gone, Ireland will follow. Across the Irish Sea there was at least a serious, public debate with strong voices on both sides arguing the issues. In Ireland, we could only wish for such a public space.

Once the principle that the state should not take the life of its citizens is broken, the dyke has been breached. There will be no turning back no matter what anyone argues about safeguards or tightly constructed legislation.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on assisted dying in Ireland heard all the arguments. It heard from the different constituencies - Belgium, the Netherlands, Canada, Oregon and others - where safeguards proved - and continue to prove - to be useless as activists, legislators and courts, strip away at inherent dignity of life of more and more people.

Ironically, progressives who argue in every other walk of life that individuals need the protection of the law from social pressures that impinge their agency, turn into the purest of libertarians when it comes to life issues - at both ends of the cycle.

They argue the right to choose and care not a fig - and actively deny the possibility - that vulnerable people will be pressured into considering ending their own lives once the law allows, and thereby encourages.

In Canada, the Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) law does not directly allow poverty as a reason to seek death but a recent coroner's report from Ontario revealed that roughly half of the people euthanised are from socially or economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with homelessness, housing insecurity, inability to get the right medical care, trouble managing a disability, being significant contributors to people seeking a premature death.

Once the principle is breached that the State - and doctors - can be deployed to take human life, rather than the previously conceived natural roles, respectively, to enhance citizens lives and

to protect health, there is no longer any clear ethical line that can be drawn.

Arbitrary lines in the sand may be drawn - six months to live, unmanageable suffering, incurable illnesses - all of these are subjective but arbitrary. What is so special about six months? We are learning from the abortion debate in Ireland that there are no real safeguards. 12 weeks or 24 weeks are arbitrary. The only partially objective line is either conception or viability but these do not come into discussions as the unborn child is not considered a life with rights unless it is wanted.

Assisted dying, assisted suicide, euthanasia - they are all the same once the window dressing is removed - offers the same promise to the vulnerable. You may have rights on paper but the law indicates that there is a hierarchy of lives worth living. The boundaries will be pushed and there will be little to hold back the sea.

Once the dam is breached, what has happened in other jurisdictions, has shown that resistance is futile. The net is cast further and further. The lines blur. Hard cases are used to justify bad law. We have seen it before, and we will see it again.

Even if Assisted Suicide was rejected in the UK, the Joint Oireachtas Committee recommendations show that little Ireland deludes itself that we are exceptional. It won't happen here even though it happened everywhere else. But with the UK gone, rather than seeking to differentiate ourselves from our former colonial masters, we will look across the water and gain inspiration.

A consistent life ethic from conception to natural death, the seamless garment that Catholic writer Eileen Egan referred to, is either all or nothing. Once life is devalued at one stage, it is devalued in itself.

The increasing secularisation removes the reality that we are created beings from the ethics of life. Once we consider ourselves masters of our own destiny, and the masters of the destiny of other lives, there is no metaphysical or supernatural obstacle to the ever-increasing demand for acquiring the power of life over death.

“He believes that children need a play-based childhood. Instead, they are over-protected in the real world and under-protected online”

Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, December 5, 2024

**Make
straight his
paths**

Deacon Greg
Kandra

Page 33



The Visitation,
Gerónimo Ezquerro
(1660–1733)

Waiting for purpose

Advent is my favourite liturgical season of the year - a brief yet deeply meaningful time. I treasure its rich traditions: crafting the Jesse Tree, designing the Advent wreath, lighting candles that pierce the winter darkness, and enjoying the sacred melodies of Handel's Messiah alongside familiar carols. The glow of Christmas lights against the countryside's dark nights and the warmth of a fire roaring in the sitting room create a magical contrast to the wintry weather outside. Yet, as Christmas Day gives way to St Stephen's Day, a familiar feeling often sets in - December fatigue. For some, it's a cosy calm of pyjamas, Christmas movies, and lingering Quality Street chocolates. For others, it brings dread of January blues, looming exams, or the grind of returning to work. Amid this busyness, Advent stands as a gentle call to pause and reflect - a season of waiting, preparation, and spiritual renewal. St John Chrysostom warns us about this, "[you] deck yourself out in your very finest, all the while paying not the slightest attention to your soul..." (Homily 6).

Waiting

Waiting often feels like an unwelcome pause. Whether awaiting medical test results, waiting for an exam outcome or preparing for a wedding, the emotions that accompany waiting are varied: anxiety, excitement, or even boredom - like waiting for a late bus. In Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953), Vladimir and Estragon endure a seemingly endless wait for the elusive Godot in a barren landscape. The play carries a nihilistic tone, with Godot symbolising either God or the Irish phrase *go deo* (meaning 'forever'). It reflects the idea of waiting endlessly - whether for God or for eternity - without hope or pur-



Advent teaches us that waiting is not passive but an active preparation for transformation Fr Barry White

pose. While their waiting feels futile, they persevere, finding moments of humour amid the absurdity. The play challenges us to consider, what is the purpose behind waiting?

“A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse”

Unlike Beckett's existential waiting, Advent invites us into a purposeful kind of waiting - one filled with hope and anticipation. The prophets, especially, the great prophet of Advent, Isaiah, call us to wait actively. Isaiah 40:31 reminds us, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength". This waiting is not fruitless but transformative, deepening our relationship with God. Even in times of silence or desolation, God is at work, preparing us for the fulfilment of his promises.

Beckett's imagery offers an echo of Advent's hope. In the play, the barren tree on set stands as a symbol of desolation, yet later, it bears a single leaf - a fragile sign of renewal. Similarly, Isaiah's vision in 11:1 proclaims, "A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse", a promise of life springing from apparent ruin. Both point to the perseverance and hope found in waiting.

The newly released *Gladiator II* also explores themes of waiting, sacrifice, and redemption. Picking up the legacy of the original *Gladiator*

(2000), starring Russell Crowe as Maximus, the film follows Lucius, the son of Maximus, as he strives to honour his father's spirit in a world fraught with loss and tyranny. Portrayed by Paul Mescal, Lucius embodies the anticipation of justice and renewal, themes that resonate deeply with Advent's longing for Christ's ultimate return - a moment of perfect peace and restoration.

Aeneid

In the film, Lucius repeatedly quotes Virgil's *Aeneid* (Book 6): "The gates of hell are open night and day; smooth the descent, and easy is the way; but to return, and view the cheerful skies, in this the task and mighty labour lies". These lines reflect Lucius' arduous journey to restore justice to a fractured empire - a struggle paralleling humanity's universal longing for redemption. Just as Virgil's lines describe the difficulty of ascending from darkness to light, Advent anticipates the Redeemer's arrival to heal a broken world.

Virgil's works carry further theological connotations. In his Fourth Eclogue, written during Caesar Augustus' reign, he speaks of a divine child ushering in a new golden age, the *Pax Romana*: "The virgin and the reign of Saturn come again, now a new child is sent from Heaven above". Though pagan, Christians later saw this as a prophetic foreshadowing of Christ's birth during the *Pax Romana*. *Gladiator*

II taps into a similar hope, portraying Lucius as a symbol of renewal for Rome and its people.

Returning to Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, the barren tree's eventual leaf mirrors Isaiah's prophecy of the sprouting shoot. Both remind us that even in waiting, there is hope. Advent teaches us that waiting is not passive but an active preparation for transformation - where what seems futile, like a single leaf or shoot, becomes the first sign of renewal. This is the hope Advent nurtures - the promise of renewal and divine intervention. Isaiah, the prophetic voice of Advent, presents vivid imagery to convey the transformative power of the Messiah in unexpected ways. He speaks of a child born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), a shoot emerging from the stump of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1), a barren wilderness blossoming with flowers (Isaiah 35:1-10), and swords being forged into ploughshares (Isaiah 2:4). In Isaiah 35, the desert is transformed into a flourishing garden, symbolising the life-giving renewal brought by the Messiah's arrival. These prophetic visions not only recall God's promises fulfilled in the past but also point to their ultimate realisation in the future, calling us to prepare our hearts for their fulfilment.

Here are a few ways to celebrate Advent:

- Create a Jesse Tree: Trace Jesus' lineage through Bible stories, reflecting on God's promises to his people.
- Design an Advent Wreath: Light candles symbolising hope, peace, joy, and love as the weeks unfold.
- Go to Confession: Experience spiritual renewal by seeking God's mercy.
- Donate to Charity: Advent calls us to active waiting. Helping those in need embodies the hope Advent inspires.
- Spend time in Prayer: Daily prayer

helps attune our hearts to God's voice, cultivating a spirit of expectation.

Advent calls us to reflect on the three comings of Christ: his birth in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago, his future coming in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his daily presence in our hearts through prayer and the sacraments.

First coming

"Our Lord's first coming is in the flesh and in weakness; another coming is hidden as souls see within themselves, receive rest and consolation, and are saved. His last coming will be in glory and majesty, and all flesh shall see the salvation of our God" (St Bernard of Clairvaux *Sermo 5, In Adventu Domini*, 1-3). Unlike the futile waiting in *Waiting for Godot* or the vengeance-fuelled journey of *Gladiator II*, Advent calls us to wait with purpose and hope, preparing for and anticipating the fulfilment of God's promises in our lives. This sacred season offers a countercultural rhythm amidst the commercial rush of 'Christmas'. It challenges us to cultivate patience and perseverance, embracing the deep longing for peace, justice, and renewal that humanity has expressed for generations. As we light the candles on the Advent wreath and prepare our hearts to welcome Christ, may we embrace the theme of the Jubilee Year 2025 and walk into a new year as 'pilgrims of hope'. The shoot from Jesse's stump will flourish; the barren tree will bear leaves. Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, will come to bring life, healing, and restoration to our hearts and to our world.

Fr Barry White, based in Mullingar Parish, studied Philosophy, History and Theology at the Pontifical University, St Patrick's College, Maynooth and holds a Licentiate in Canon Law.

The trip of a lifetime

Fr Robert McNamara PP

A group of 40 pilgrims set out from Dublin airport to the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico, via Amsterdam, under the good shepherding of Marian Pilgrimages guide, Michael Murphy, last October.

Few of us knew each other, and each of us had our own reason for going. This was a very different and longer journey compared to our well-worn paths to Medjugorje, Fatima, Lourdes, San Giovanni or the Holy Land – please God peace will reign there soon. Somewhat like Abraham and Sarah, we set out for Mexico with some trepidation. While it was a journey into the unknown, we were confident that the Lord was with us and was leading us, as was His blessed Mother.

After a long flight, we arrived at Mexico City in the evening, to be greeted by our charming and erudite guide, Raul, his colleague Cherie, and bus driver Daniel. These three were our first taste of the warmth and joy of the Mexican people.

Visionary

The following day began with a walk to the baptismal church of St Juan Diego, the visionary to whom Our Lady of Guadalupe first appeared in 1531. Let me say from the outset that I will not even attempt to name and describe the many individual churches we experienced. Suffice it to say that, in my opinion, whether they were of the traditional Spanish style or of the indigenous culture and people, they were simply stunning and surpassed even their counterparts in Italy and Spain.

We continued through the bustling and busy city to see the actual shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which makes even Medjugorje look quiet! It's not actually a shrine per se, but a whole complex situated in what is now Mexico City. You have the lovely new basilica, where you can see up close the 'tilma', Juan Diego's cloak, upon which Our Blessed Lady left her image in thanksgiving to him. She had

appeared to him at a time of social and political turmoil, when the Spanish had newly arrived and were introducing the native peoples to Christianity. As Raul explained to us, Our Lady in her gentle way wanted to reassure the people that many of their traditional beliefs had within them the seeds of Christianity, a notion proposed centuries later in Vatican II *Lumen Gentium*, and that she was present as a loving mother to help and guide them. Her key line to Juan Diego could be translated as: "don't you know that I'm always here for you as your loving mother." To convince a disbelieving Bishop who was originally from the Castile region of Spain, Our Lady caused Castilian roses to grow in Mexico in December, and asked Juan Diego to fill his cloak with them. When he untied the cloak, and the roses tumbled out, there was Our Lady's miraculous image, and it's still there today, defying all science!

Also in the complex is the beautiful old basilica, where there's 24-hour adoration, and which is sinking, like many old buildings in Mexico City, which was originally built on a series of lakes. There are other churches there too, which are associated with other chapters in Juan Diego's story. It was an honour to celebrate Holy Mass there and in so many other lovely locations, along with Fr Des, the other priest on the pilgrimage, a true fount of wisdom.

“The pilgrimage for me as a priest was our visit and Mass at the shrine of Blessed Fr Miguel Pro, SJ. Fr Miguel was just one of many martyrs who fell victim to President Calles' vicious persecution of the Church”

As the visit was also intended to give us a glimpse of the history and culture of Mexico, during



Fr Robert McNamara PP

the week we visited the largest indigenous pyramids in the Americas, where ritual human sacrifice was practiced in ancient times. Quite frankly, the place gave me the spiritual 'hee-bie-jeebies!' It was one of the most eerie places I have ever been! With the help of Irene who had holy water, we claimed the place for Christ, covered it with His precious blood, prayed for the souls who died there unhappily, and left as fast as we could!

Christeros

The pilgrimage for me as a priest was our visit and Mass at the shrine of Blessed Fr Miguel Pro, SJ. Fr Miguel was just one of many martyrs who fell victim to President Calles' vicious persecution of the Church from 1926-28. They took to the hills and became known as the *Christeros*. When they were captured, and put up against a wall to be shot, they would spread their arms wide and shout: "Viva Christo Rey!" long live Christ the King! Their remarkable story is depicted in the film

For Greater Glory. We also visited the shrine of a very young Christero, the recently canonised St Jose Sanchez del Rio, the Mexican Carlo Acutis, who was also only 14. My reason for travelling was to give thanks for my 30th anniversary of priesthood, and I pray that, through Fr Pro and St Jose's intercession, we priests will grow in number and continue to serve in the army of Christ the King. I also prayed there for my Bishop, Most Reverend Michael Duignan, who also shepherds Clonfert diocese.

“Carmen, one of the head waiters in the hotel, told me that he ministers as a catechist, a ministry formally instituted by Pope Francis and badly needed in Ireland”

This little reflection doesn't do justice to all we did and saw. There were also wonderful friendships formed, and wisdom shared within the group. Michael Murphy revealed that he's also a psychotherapist and, at our healing Mass, shared with us about addiction. Michael McCabe is the national director of the Padre Pio Apostolate in Ireland and shared his personal faith story which



Our Lady of Guadalupe



began in Lourdes. The visit was also a great window onto the Latin-American side of life, with all its warmth and beauty, hunger and poverty too, but most of all, deep faith. It was so different and so humbling as a priest to be asked by so many people to bless them! Carmen, one of the head waiters in the hotel, told me that he ministers as a catechist, a ministry formally instituted by Pope Francis and badly needed in

Ireland. Let me finish with what touched me the most. When we were loading our cases onto the bus to leave for home, one of the hotel porters, also called Raul, said he wanted to give me a gift. Gently he pinned a little image of Our Lady of Guadalupe onto my shirt. "Don't forget us in Mexico," he said, "she will always be with you." God bless and reward all at Marian Pilgrimages for organising the trip of a lifetime.

“The visit was also a great window onto the Latin-American side of life, with all its warmth and beauty, hunger and poverty too, but most of all, deep faith. It was so different and so humbling as a priest to be asked by so many people to bless them!”

Meditations on the interior life

AC

Lord, I am sorry. My connection with You is not so good this morning. I got up late and my morning prayer was poor. I'm sub-standard as often before. Yet, somehow, You always help and redeem the day. You assist, You make the difference between good and bad days, between win and loss. What to do Lord when I'm like this? I surrender myself entirely to You. My day, my poor self, all I must do. I abandon all to Your care. There is hope.

When I am thoughtless of You, dear Lord, remind me. Tug my sleeve. Touch my heart. Question me – 'Have you forgotten Me?' He has carved me on the palm of His hand.

Lord, Your memory is perfect, You have perfect recall of all who ever lived. You know us all through and through. You keep such an amount of knowledge. No computer could ever hold so much. You remember us especially when we are 'down' and discouraged. When we are suffering. You not only sympathise but You actively help.

I surrender the rest of the day, the remaining hours to You. I'll



do my best, put my heart into it. What have I to do? I will pray, I will call on You. A rosary, the psalms...

I would never like to lose my friendship with You. The best thing of all is to love You. But how can we?

To love You, Lord, is my purpose. Not to love You less, or to serve You less cheerfully or to with less enthusiasm. Don't let

me lose my enthusiasm, for Your vineyard, or as the song says, 'lose that loving feeling.'

I am reminded, every day, that the purpose of the day is love for You. Reminded of love for You, I think You remind us of what is right to do, and the correct purpose of our days. I surrender again to Your love, kind Lord, and I trust, I abandon my failings, my mistakes, my late morning. Yes, I turn to this. I agree with this. I delight in this. The meaning of my life is love for You.

Revive us O Lord, if this our poor love for You goes to nothing, goes to ashes, if we get burnt out, revive us, like the phoenix, bring us to life gain, as You do, we make little fires of straws and rags and twigs and old papers, so help us by little but real prayers and small sacrifices, efforts, sincere efforts to revive the fire as the song says 'shine Jesus shine, blaze Spirit blaze, flood the nations with grace and mercy.'

Flow out Holy Spirit, today, begin to work with us, help us. Often Lord, I think You said the words 'begin again' as St Francis said to his brothers "let us begin again for up to now we have done nothing."

Pope urges Christians to joyfully cultivate fruits of the Spirit



Justin McLellan

Not every Christian is called to be an apostle, prophet or evangelist, Pope Francis said, but all Christians can cultivate the fruits of the Holy Spirit by becoming "charitable, patient, humble, peacemakers."

Continuing his series of audience talks on the Holy Spirit, the pope explained that the fruits of the Spirit are different from charisms, which are given spontaneously by the Spirit for the good of the Church. Instead, the fruits of the Spirit represent a "collaboration between grace and freedom," Pope Francis said.

Creativity

"These fruits always express the creativity of the person, in whom faith works through charity, sometimes in surprising and joyful ways," he told visitors gathered for his general audience on November 27 in St Peter's Square.

In his main talk on the fruits of the Spirit, the pope singled out joy as central to the Christian life.

Spiritual joy, like other forms

of joy, includes "a certain feeling of fullness and fulfilment, which makes one wish it would last forever," he said.

"We know from experience, however, that this does happen, because everything down here passes quickly: youth, health, strength, wealth, friendship, loves," Pope Francis said, and "even if these things did not pass, soon, after a while they are no longer enough or even become boring" since the heart can only find fulfilment in God.

"This is the twofold characteristic of the joy that is the fruit of the Spirit: not only does it not go subject to the inevitable wear and tear of time, but it is multiplied by sharing it with others"

The joy of the Gospel, on the other hand, "can be renewed each day and become contagious," he said. Quoting his 2013 exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* ('The Joy of the Gospel'), the pope said that it is an encounter with God that saves people from isolation, and which is the "source of evangelising action."

"This is the twofold characteristic of the joy that is the fruit of the Spirit: not only does it not go subject to the inevitable wear and tear of time, but it is multi-



St Philip Neri

plied by sharing it with others," the pope said.

St Philip Neri

As an example of living the joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis highlighted the life of St Philip Neri, the 16th-century founder of the Oratorian order, who the pope said, "had such a love for God that at times it seemed as if his heart would burst in his chest." The Italian saint is known for his work with poor children and marginalised communities as well as initiating a walking pilgrimage to seven of Rome's most significant basilicas.

Recalling that the Gospel means 'good news' in Greek, the pope said that its contents cannot be communicated "with long and dark faces, but only with the joy of one who has found a hidden treasure and a precious pearl."

Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper



Q: I have a question about the vocation of marriage. I'm very moved by the examples of widowed family and friends who continue to be very devoted to their deceased spouse, praying for them daily and visiting their graves. Often, they speak of looking forward to seeing their spouse again in Heaven. Does the Church teach that marriage can transcend death in this way? How can you give your whole heart to someone and then have that just end?

A: Practically speaking, praying daily for the repose of a deceased spouse's soul is an act of Christian charity and a very Catholic thing to do. And it is beautiful to keep our departed loved ones' memories alive.

But the real core of your question is a little bit more complicated. Although the Church teaches that we will be united with our loved ones in Heaven (including spouses who have died before us) the Church does not teach that marriage lasts into eternity.

That is, we as Catholics believe that marriage ends with death, full stop, which is why remarriage after the death of one's spouse is a non-issue in the eyes of the Church.

One major scriptural point of reference for the Church's teaching on the nature of marriage can be found in Chapter 22 of the Gospel of Matthew. In this passage, the Sadducees asked Jesus whom a woman, married and widowed seven times, would be married to in the afterlife. Jesus responds:

"You are misled because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels in Heaven" (Mt 22:29-30).

Here, Jesus is making clear that marriage is something specifically tied to earthly life, and not something that was intended to endure into eternity. In Heaven, we will all be unmarried "like the angels," that is, totally and completely fulfilled by the love of God alone.

Incidentally, this is one reason why priests and men and women in consecrated life embrace a call to celibacy. By renouncing earthly marriage, they strive to live now, here on Earth, the kind of life that all the faithful will eventually have in Heaven. As Pope St John Paul II wrote in the 1996 document *Vita Consecrata*: "The Second Vatican Council proposes this teaching anew when it states that consecration better 'foretells the resurrection state and the glory of the heavenly Kingdom.' It does this above all by means of the vow of virginity, which tradition has always understood as an anticipation of the world to come, already at work for the total transformation of [mankind]" (*Vita Consecrata* 26).

Theologically, the purpose of married love - even sacramental married love where the spouses reflect God's love toward each other - is to be temporary and ordered to an even higher end. The goal for every human being is to love God with a singular purpose, and to let this undividedly focused love of God overflow into a radical, disinterested love of neighbour. Most people are called to love a mortal spouse as a sort of 'training ground' for the angelic, heavenly love we will experience in Heaven.

Even with this in mind, it may still be emotionally difficult to think of a happy marriage ending with death. But as our Catholic funeral liturgy reminds us, for God's faithful "life is changed, not ended" with bodily death; and by analogy we can also conclude that although the love of spouses may be changed into something different from specifically married love, this does not mean that this love no longer exists. Indeed, once subsumed into the love of God, it may become something even stronger in the life of the world to come.

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.

Heaven isn't the same for everyone



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

did before because previously we protected ourselves against it through insensitivity and self-focus.

“The opposite of someone who opens herself to pain, who opens herself to the pain of the cross, is a person who is callous and insensitive”

Happily, this has a flip side: Just as pain will now flow into our lives more freely and more deeply, so too will meaning and happiness. Once we stop protecting ourselves through self-absorption, both pain and happiness can now flow more freely and more deeply into

our hearts and we can begin to breathe out of a deeper part of ourselves.

Freud once commented that sometimes things can be best understood by examining their opposites. That's partially the case here. The opposite of someone who opens herself to pain, who opens herself to the pain of the cross, is a person who is callous and insensitive (in slang, someone “who is thick as a plank!”). Such a person won't feel a lot of pain – but won't feel much of anything else either.

Implications

A number of implications flow from this.

First, God doesn't lay pain on us when we become followers of Jesus and immerse ourselves more deeply in the mystery of Christ and the cross. The pain that ensues is intrinsic to the

cross and is felt simply because we have now ceased protecting ourselves and are letting life, all of it, flow into us more freely and more deeply. Happily, the pain is more than offset by the new meaning and happiness that are now also felt.

Second, experiencing the pain that flows intrinsically from discipleship and the cross is, as John of the Cross wisely puts it, one of the major criteria that separates the real Gospel from the ‘Prosperity Gospel’. When the pain of the cross flows into our lives, we know that we are not feather-bedding our own self-interest in the name of the Gospel.

Third, it's worth it to be sensitive! Freud once said that neurosis (unhealthy anxiety) is the disease of the normal person. What he didn't say, but might have, is that the antithesis of anxiety (healthy and unhealthy)

is brute insensitivity, to be thick as a plank and thus protected from pain – but also protected from deeper meaning, love, intimacy, and community.

If you are a sensitive person (perhaps even an over-sensitive one, prone to depression and anxiety of all sorts) take consolation in that your very struggle indicates that you are not a calloused insensitive person, not a moral boor.

Heaven

Finally, one of the implications of this is that Heaven isn't the same for everyone. Just as pain can be shallow or deep, so too can meaning and happiness. To the degree that we open our hearts to depth, to that same degree deep meaning and happiness can flow into us. A closed heart makes for shallow meaning. A heart partially open makes for some deep meaning, but not full meaning. Whereas the heart that is fully open makes for the deepest meaning.

There are different depths to meaning and happiness here on Earth and, I suspect, that will be true too in the next life. So, the invitation from Jesus is to accept the pain that comes from the wood of the cross rather than being thick as a plank!

Daniel Berrigan once said: “Before you get serious about Jesus, think carefully about how good you are going to look on wood!”

That's a needed caution because Jesus warned us that if we follow him, pain will flow into our lives and we will join him on the cross.

What exactly does that mean? Is pain laid on a disciple as some kind of test? Does Jesus need his followers to feel the pains he experienced? Does God want the followers of Jesus to undergo pain to help pay the price of sin? Why does accepting to carry the cross with Jesus bring pain into our lives?

It's interesting to note that the great mystic John of the Cross uses this, the inflow of pain into our lives, as a major criterion for discerning whether or not we are authentically following Jesus. For John, you know you are following Jesus when pain begins to flow into

your life. Why? Does God lay special pain on those who take Christ seriously?

Pain

No. God doesn't apportion special pain on those who take Christ seriously. The pain that flows into our lives if we take Christ seriously doesn't come from God. It flows into us because of a deeper openness, a deeper sensitivity, and a new depth on our part. The algebra works this way: By authentically opening ourselves up to Christ we cease being overly self-protective, become more vulnerable and more sensitive, so that life, all of it, can flow into us more freely and more deeply.

And part of what now flows into us is pain: the pain of others, the pain of mother Earth, the pain of our own inadequacy and lack of altruism, and the pain caused by the effect of sin everywhere. This pain will now enter us more deeply and we will feel it in a way we never

“A closed heart makes for shallow meaning. A heart partially open makes for some deep meaning, but not full meaning. Whereas the heart that is fully open makes for the deepest meaning”

Catechism of the Catholic Church



By Renata Milan Morales

Sacred Scripture

Christ is the Word of God in Scripture. God speaks to us in words to reveal Himself to us.

Through all the words of Sacred Scripture, God speaks only one single Word, one speech. God inspired the human authors of the sacred books, but He is the author of them. The Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body. In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, “but as what it really is, the word of God”.

Inspiration and Truth

The Sacred Scripture has been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The inspired books teach the truth. Christianity is the

religion of the Word of God, not a written and mute word, but incarnate and living.

The reader must consider the conditions of the author's time and culture. Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written.

Scripture is a unity by reason of the unity of God's plan, of which Christ Jesus is the centre and heart, open since his Passover. Read the Scripture within the living Tradition of the whole Church and be attentive to the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation.

All that has been said about the manner of interpreting Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgement of the Church which watches over the interpretation of the Word of God.

Canon of Scripture

It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books. This complete list is called the canon of Scripture. It includes 46 books for the Old Testament (45 if we count Jeremiah and Lamentations as one) and 27 for the New.

The Old Testament is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture. Its books are divinely inspired and hold a permanent value and teachings on God and of wisdom on human life and prayers. In them the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way. The Church has always opposed the idea of rejecting the Old.

The Gospels are the heart of all the Scriptures because they are our principal source for the life and teaching of the Incarnate Word, Jesus.

Life of the Church

The Church has always illuminated the unity of the divine plan in the two Testaments through typology, which discerns in God's works of the Old Covenant prefigurations of what He accomplished in the fullness of time in the person of his incarnate Son.

Christians therefore read the Old Testament in the light of Christ crucified and risen. Besides, the New Testament must be read in the light of the Old. The New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New.

Access to Sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful. The study of it should be the soul of theology. The Church exhorts all the Christian faithful to learn the knowledge of Jesus Christ, by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.

Next week we will be exploring paragraphs 142 to 184 ‘Man's response: Faith’

Make straight his paths

Bar 5:1-9
Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6
Phil 1:4-6, 8-11
Lk 3:1-6

On an Advent morning 12 years ago, the jazz great Dave Brubeck died, just before his 92nd birthday.

Besides being a man of music, he was also a man of faith, who joined the Catholic Church as an adult. In many ways, it was fitting that he entered eternal life during Advent - in part, because (as we discover with this Sunday's readings) so much of his life was about hearing, listening and responding.

Brubeck's journey into the Church began when he was commissioned to write a Mass made up entirely of jazz music. He thought it would be an interesting challenge, and when it finally premiered it was widely praised.

A priest told Brubeck how much he liked the music, but he said he was puzzled by something: why hadn't he included in the music 'The Lord's Prayer'?

Oversight

Brubeck didn't even realise the oversight. He thought about revising the score but decided against it. He thought that anything he wrote would disrupt the musical structure. He decided to just let it go. But a few days later, something happened that made him change his mind.

While on vacation with his family, Brubeck awoke in the middle of the night, astonished: the entire Our Father had come to him in a dream, complete with orchestra and chorus. He climbed out of bed, wrote it all out, and later added it to the score.

The Sunday Gospel

Deacon Greg Kandra



"Because of this event," he said, "I decided that I might as well join the Catholic Church. Someone somewhere was pulling me toward that end."

“John went throughout the whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”

Advent reminds us: we are all being “pulled toward that end,” all of us are being drawn to God. We are being called - called to prepare, to get ready, to follow. We're being called, like Dave Brubeck, to hear something unexpected, something that will add new music to our lives. In today's Gospel, something like that happens to John the Baptist.

"The word of God came to John in the desert," Luke wrote. "John went throughout the whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."

John the Baptist listened - and what he heard was so overwhelming, he couldn't keep it to himself. Like Dave Brubeck, John heard a new music. And he had to transmit it to the world.

This second Sunday of Advent, we might ask ourselves: what are we hearing? Are we letting God's message

reach us? There's so much battling for our attention. Just turn on the computer, click on the TV or visit the shopping mall.

But some of it may not be out there, but within, within ourselves. We're distracted by the noise of our own worries, of deadlines, of obligations and expectations, of ambitions and frustrations and the daily grind of living.

To all of this, Advent says: hush. Listen. The word of God is coming - the word that is his Gospel, and the Word that is his Son.

This is why this season is so important: we need to make ourselves ready to receive what God is offering. John cries out, "Prepare the way of the Lord!" Are we doing that? Or is John the Baptist's voice another one being lost in the din of the season?

Conversion

In a sense, the call of Advent is a call to conversion. It proclaims a new path, pointing us toward a star and a manger and beyond that, to the cross.

It points, ultimately, to our salvation, and to a life beyond death.

After he finally finished it, Dave Brubeck gave his jazz Mass a title. He called it: *To Hope*. It's a title that has a beautiful ambiguity. 'To Hope' can be a dedication, a toast, or even a verb. Ultimately, 'To hope' is the Christian way of living.

In the vocabulary of this season, maybe that title is something more. Maybe it is showing us a direction.

Advent is pointing the way - to life, to salvation and, as Dave Brubeck knew, to hope.

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



St John the Baptist bearing witness, Annibale Carracci

Saint — of the — week

By Renata Milan Morales



St Ambrose of Milan

St Ambrose of Milan: Doctor of the Church

St Ambrose of Milan, born in the 4th century into a prominent Roman family, is revered as one of the Church's greatest saints and was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Boniface VIII in 1298. His life exemplifies faith, humility, and an extraordinary legacy of leadership and scholarship.

Raised in a household devoted to learning and faith, Ambrose's upbringing prepared him for greatness. His father, a Roman governor, and his devout Christian mother ensured he received an excellent education in rhetoric, law, and literature in Rome, equipping him for a political career. A famous legend recounts that a swarm of bees settled on the infant Ambrose's face, leaving behind a drop of honey - a sign, it was thought, of his future eloquence and distinction. Although raised as a catechumen, as was

customary at the time, he was not baptised until adulthood.

By the age of thirty, Ambrose had become the Governor of Emilia-Liguria, overseeing an important region that included Milan. In 374, when the Arian bishop of Milan died, conflict erupted between Catholics and Arians. Ambrose, attempting to mediate, was unexpectedly acclaimed as the new bishop by both factions. Unbaptised and untrained in theology, he initially fled but was compelled to accept the role following Emperor Gratian's approval. He was baptised, ordained, and consecrated in quick succession.

Embracing his episcopal office wholeheartedly, Ambrose devoted himself to theological study, mastering Catholic doctrine and Scripture. He popularised the practice of silently reading and meditating on the Bible, later known as *lectio divina*.

Renowned for his eloquence in preaching, Ambrose attracted large crowds, living the faith he proclaimed by giving away most of his wealth to the poor and retaining only what was necessary to support his family.

Ambrose was a defender of orthodoxy, combating Arianism and uniting his diocese in the Nicene faith. His influence reached far beyond Milan, profoundly shaping the Church and inspiring individuals such as St Augustine of Hippo. Initially a follower of Manichaeism, Augustine was captivated by Ambrose's wisdom and humility, leading to his eventual conversion. Augustine later praised Ambrose for guiding him to God, describing him with profound admiration.

Ambrose's moral authority extended even to the Roman emperors. He persuaded Emperor Gratian to remove the

pagan Altar of Victory from the Senate House and resisted Empress Justina's demands to surrender a church to the Arians. His most famous confrontation occurred with Emperor Theodosius, whom he excommunicated for ordering a massacre in Thessalonica. The emperor, recognising his sin, submitted to public penance, a testament to Ambrose's unwavering commitment to justice.

A prolific writer, Ambrose authored theological works, hymns, and letters on topics such as Christ's divinity, ethics, and the Sacraments. He also made significant contributions to liturgy and was deeply devoted to the Virgin Mary.

St Ambrose's life is a model of faith and leadership. The saint embraced God's will with humility and courage, even when it diverges from our own plans.

Social Media for the younger generation



Rohith Kinattukara

Recently, Australia passed a bill that bans social media for people the ages of 16 and below. This is a huge step when it comes to social media laws and a first step for social media companies to realise that maybe they are going overboard. It implies to all tech giants from Facebook to TikTok. If this law has been breached, companies would have to pay fines that are up to A\$49.5 million (€30.5m). We should ask this question to ourselves: Should we also control social media for the younger generation here in Ireland?

Spotlight

Social media has always been under the spotlight. What started as a way of simply connecting with your friends and family worldwide, has turned into this evil place where everything that can go wrong, will go wrong. Let's start with age. When a per-

son signs up with these platforms, there is no such strict measure to verify the age, and even if they do, anyone can lie on the internet. This is extremely dangerous because it allows any child or teen to start an account, and since the content isn't tailored for any specific age group, it assumes that you are mature enough to use the platform.

“When a person sees a content that they like, the natural response would be to see more, and the scrolling begins”

Viscous content has started to surface more on these platforms, promoting hate, racism, inappropriate content, spreading misinformation, dividing culture, causing body dysmorphia, and should I go on? Imagine a teenager who hasn't fully matured, grabbing hands on such content. They would believe this is what the world looks, and talks like, and automatically would want to join in with the conversation to fit in. This is fearfully destructive for society.

Social media gives a dopamine effect while scrolling

endlessly. When a person sees a content that they like, the natural response would be to see more, and the scrolling begins. The younger generation that uses social media are more likely to fall into depression, and this is due to the factors of reaching some sort of fake achievement that they feel when receiving dopamine. What children and teenagers see online would become their new identity, hiding under a mask that isn't them. See influencers and even their friends showing off the little fun they are having, which everyone knows isn't true happiness.

The question would be asked, “why can't I be like them?” And to explain to a child who hasn't fully understood the world that not everything you see online is true will be a difficult conversation to have. Eating disorder are the new plague that is ruining the lives of younger people. Comparing themselves to celebrities or social media influencers – some of these influencers take some sort of medication and have professional camera and lighting work to look that certain way.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is another dangerous problem that is increasing by the day. It has reached a point where peo-



ple's images and other personal information is being used as a form of blackmail.

“The act of scrolling is inspired by slot machines in casinos”

The spread of misinformation is also causing lots of headlines, creating and promoting hate, and children don't need much of talking to be influenced by. As seen recently in many countries, the target audience for such information to be spread are children and teenagers, as they can be easily manipulated.

The act of scrolling is inspired by slot machines in casinos. Similar to how a person wants to get more

out of these machines after winning one round, a person scrolling feels the same way. Once the algorithm gives the person one good content, the dopamine hits and the next content wouldn't be the same, which hooks the user and keeps them engaged, scrolling to find the next dopamine hit.

Vatican

The Vatican has clearly stated the usage of social media is harmful in all aspects for the younger generation. Pope Francis stated in 2022, that as Catholics, we should counter lie, toxicity, and misinformation with educating and engaging with this content and spreading a positive message. The Church can use these platforms to promote different activities, and youth groups can come together

and promote positive content that aligns with healthy and mindfulness for younger people. Many priests have started using social media to educate the younger generation on questions of faith and even funny content that showcases that the Church is a fun and inclusive place, where everyone is welcome.

“Governments should start having stricter rules for younger generation social media usage”

Parents will need to start monitoring what Apps can be installed on phones until they are mature. Many smartphones have a ‘parent mode’ setting, and this allows the phone to only show child-friendly content, passcodes to download apps, and control screen time. And as highlighted at the start of the article, governments should start having stricter rules for younger generation social media usage. Each move a person makes on the internet, they watch you, feeding the algorithm with more and more. There is a famous saying which is related to this issue, ‘If the product is free, that means you are the product’.

Rohith Kinattukara is a Catholic student from Griffith College Dublin studying MSc in Procurement and Supply Chain Management who loves to write and breathes tech.

“The Church can use these platforms to promote different activities, and youth groups can come together and promote positive content that aligns with healthy and mindfulness for younger people”

Getting adult children to Christmas Mass

Greg Erlandson

There are two kinds of families that I notice at Christmas Mass. The first are those with young children dressed up in their best Christmas finery, excited about the whole day. The kids sing the songs they know with enthusiasm. They admire the array of Christmas trees and poinsettias in the sanctuary. They rush to visit the creche after Mass to see the baby Jesus.

The second kind are with the older children who may not have darkened a church doorway since the previous Christmas. They are often dressed casually, as if to signal

they aren't planning to go overboard. They might like the songs, but they stare off vacantly during the homily. They exude an air of ‘when will this be over?’

I've been father to both types of families. I know what it is like to have adult children continue to practice the faith they were raised with, and I know what it's like to have children who feel distant from the Church and religion in general.

Christmas, more than any other time of the year, is when these two types of families come together. Awkward, and sometimes even as argumentative as such moments are, we must not underestimate the importance of inviting them to join us at Mass.

God has no grandchildren, the saying goes. Each generation must come to the faith themselves. We parents can try our best to get them on what we believe is the right path, but there are no guarantees.

It's a tough time to be a Catholic parent these days. While there are some young adults who are embracing their Catholicism, often even its most traditional manifestations, the much larger number of Catholic younger adults have at best a tenuous connection with the faith of their father and mother.

Lest we think this is just a Catholic problem, religious practice in this country is in decline overall. Among millennials and Zoomers (Gen Z), more than one-third now identify

themselves as nones, having no religious affiliation.

This is the riptide that our Catholic families are swimming in. The culture seems to be heading one way, while we struggle to head in another. This is not news to Church leaders.

The Church know something's not working. It's less clear if they know what will work, but lots of dads and moms are hoping they do.

There are lots of ideological arguments offered up as to why many young people are dissatisfied with the Church. But often the issues aren't ideological. Just like many adults, apparently, they have too many distractions, too many weekend chores, too much social media.

Sleeping in beats getting up for Mass.

What can we as parents do? Keep quietly inviting our kids to join us for Mass on Christmas or Easter or even when they are in town and visiting. It doesn't have to be a pitched battle. Just an invitation. None of us knows when the Mass they say is boring becomes a consolation, when the spark will blow into a flame.

Faith is a gift. God is the giver. Mom and Dad are just the helpers sometimes. Yet our faithfulness still matters.

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

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



A richness that is missing

Judging by exit polls from our own General Election and the US Presidential Election, immigration wasn't as much of a concern to the voters as we might have thought from watching the aggro on the streets and in the tweets.

Heart and Soul (BBC World Service, Friday) took a personal and spiritual approach to the topic. Putting aside the 'political rhetoric', James Naughtie headed for the Mexican border, US side, to meet with people helping the migrants, people motivated by their Christian faith. Sarah, from a Presbyterian church in Tucson Arizona quoted Matthew 25 – "Whatever you do to one the least..." – to explain her concern and her humanitarian actions. We also heard from Gail of the Tuscon Sarmatians group who made sure there were water supplies for the migrants in the border desert areas. Their interest was in facilitating the asylum application process. They were present when Border Patrol officers arrived to collect migrants for 'processing'. The latter were kinder and more efficient than heavy handed. Gail used a word that was new to me – bondoogle – which means a waste of money or time on something that doesn't work. That, she said, described the



incremental building of a border wall that was so easily breached. She said the 400 billion dollars spent on that could have contributed to a more effective solution to the problem.

Many recent presidents had contributed to the construction, so this was no anti-Trump diatribe. Andy was from the north-east of the USA but felt it was a duty to come south to help the migrants, many of whom were fleeing for their lives from drug cartels and death squads. Of course, the

migration issue isn't simple, but these helpers were just concerned with helping fellow human beings in trouble, practising the hospitality required by their faith.

On the fiction front I've been watching two excellent British series. **Shetland** (BBC One, Wednesday) is a quirky crime drama driven by plot and more importantly character. The scenery is marvellous but the depth in the minor and major characters gives it a richness that is missing in so many crime dramas. The local vicar is

presented positively. He is young, modest, socially committed and is the brother of the cynical detective returned from London.

Featuring another rural UK community, Cornwall, **Doc Martin** (ITV 3, Friday) is on repeat, and I've started watching since a recent visit to Port Isaac where it was filmed. Again, it has depth of character across major and minor roles and a good balance between serious and comic moments. It reminds me of **Ballykissangel**. Unlikely for such a rural community, religious life barely figures.

Meanwhile, our General Election dominated the media last weekend. I'll leave the detailed analysis to the political commentators, but I'll offer a few observations. On the plus side it's great to see our democratic process in action – compared to many other countries we have a relatively healthy system. At my own polling station, I was impressed to see voters arriving on walking sticks, crutches, rollators and wheelchairs – and it was raining! I was glad to see Aontú doubling their vote and their number of seats (albeit 1 seat becoming 2, but passing out the Green Party). There were lots of irritations – candidates speaking of themselves in the third person, politicians tell-

PICK OF THE WEEK

THE SIDEWALK CHRONICLES

EWTN Sunday December 8, 9pm

Documentary about women in crisis pregnancies, and the pro-life movement heroes who reach out to them with love and support.

A VERY COUNTRY CHRISTMAS

BBC 2 Tuesday December 10, 4.15pm

Ellie Harrison and Angellica Bell meet a turkey farmer, visit the town that inspired *A Christmas Carol* and talk to raucous carollers preparing for Advent in the north of England.

UNREPORTED WORLD

Channel 4 Friday December 13, 7.30pm

Reporter Jordan Jarret-Bryan visits the bright lights of Las Vegas, a city at the forefront of America's homelessness crisis.

ing us how clear they have been, even if they haven't and over-the-top coverage of the Hutch candidacy, especially the media circus on the **Nine O' Clock News** (RTE One, Sunday).

The turnout was disappointing – at 59.71% "the lowest in over a century," according to RTE. Apart from inaccuracies in the electoral register I'd say many felt it was going to be more of the same regardless. I thought the Electoral Commission did well in encouraging people to register and to vote. In their future work, especially on misinformation and disinformation, it is crucial that

they be scrupulously neutral to maintain the confidence of all shades of political opinion.

I enjoyed Ivan Yates political commentary. Last Monday morning on the **Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk) he pointed out how accurate most of his predictions were, but did mention a few results he didn't see coming. As for those exit polls, Pat Kenny suggested that they existed mainly to give media folks something to talk about while they waited for the counting to start.

Patience is a poorly practised virtue these days.

Film

Aubrey Malone



Emotionless universes captured enticingly on screen

The absence – or removal – of love is the theme of several films available from Amazon and other online outlets. *Still Water* is a beautifully made work about a prayerful blue-collar man played by Matt Damon. He travels from Oklahoma to Marseilles to try and free his daughter from prison. She's been there for years, having been convicted of murder, but he thinks she's innocent.

He becomes friendly with a social rights activist and her daughter. His closeness with them runs in tandem with the 'whodunit' aspect of the plot. It's all handled very delicately by director Tom McCarthy. Damon underplays effectively in a sad but uplifting film that

avoids any sense of melodrama.

The Face of Love is another melancholy movie with a lot of heart. Annette Bening's husband drowns at the beginning. Afterwards she meets a man (Ed Harris) who looks so like him it's uncanny. A romance develops between them.

She's unable to tell him why she's attracted to him. The question is: Does she love him for himself or because he reminds her of her husband?

It's very movingly directed. You have to feel for Harris, who gets a raw deal in the relationship. It's as if Bening is using him to exorcise her grief. The tone of the film highlights her recovery but there's little sympathy shown



Woman in a Dressing Gown (1957)

for Harris.

Next to Her is an Israeli work about a woman (Liron Ben-Shlush) who's taking care of her severely handicapped

sister when a man enters her life. The difficulty of keeping both relationships running in tandem is the main business of the film. It's handled with

great sensitivity by the director, Asaf Korman (Liron's husband in real life) and makes no concessions to commercialism.

Part of it is upsetting to watch – there's an element of sexual abuse – but it's admirable in its honesty. The theme will affect anyone dealing with disability in their lives.

Another fantastic film you should see is *Woman in a Dressing Gown* which delivers a strong pro-marriage message after a harassed husband (Anthony Quayle) is tempted to divorce his wife and go off with his mistress (Sylvia Syms).

I was also very impressed by the Russian film *Loveless* which was made in 2017 but seems prescient about the

Ukrainian conflict. Its focus is a selfish couple whose 12-year-old son goes missing. A muted movie that will hit you at the core of your being, it's hugely effective in its depiction of two people who bring a child into the world without any concern about his well-being.

The direction is as unflinching as the desolate landscape, which acts as a pathetic fallacy to the action. I've mentioned writer/director Andrey Zvyagintsev in this page before. I urge you to watch this film and two of his others, *Elena* and *The Banishment*. They're equally coruscating in their rawness, their bleak sense of a world of consumerism hemorrhaging any sense of decency or care.



BookReviews

Peter Costello



Poems from the scrum of life

The rugby scrum as a metaphor for life



Crash Centre,
by David McLoughlin
(Salmon Poetry, €12.00 / £10.00;
contact info@salmonpoetry.com)

Thomas McCarthy

Poet and Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh fellow, David McLoughlin returned to Ireland in 2020 after ten years in Brooklyn. He had taught at NYU and at the Hunts Point Alliance for Children in the south Bronx. Now in his early fifties, he is probably one of the last of that crew of literary exiles that were so much part of the Irish literary scene in the Eighties and Nineties.

He had a good reason for wanting to get away: the trauma of his adolescence needed a very great distance to settle. That trauma is subtly and brilliantly captured in this very sophisticated new collection, his third after the impressive *Waiting for Saint Brendan* and *Santiago Sketches*.

As the Cork poet Jennifer Horgan has observed, he is a male poet: "brave enough to write the truth of his body and what has been done to it." What had been done, at an exclusive boarding-school, was a catalogue of sexual grooming and abuse.

This theme is now a bitterly familiar one in the Irish published world, but here in his new collection, McLoughlin, with his complex education, emotional maturity and worldliness, creates a powerful and sublimely effective construct in art:

'...your surplice rushing behind me,
we stood in the Reception area –
you directly beneath the arch
that marked enclosure,
your feet just behind the line.
I stood in profane space, coy,
Thinking myself Rimbaud.'
(«After the Room»)

This is not merely passive suffering; this is suffering mediated through the near divine grace of rigorous thought. The sheer force of McLoughlin's language, his imagination's radically steep incline in the face of awful experience, is what makes his poetry exceptional and redemptive.

This boy-poet was a sentient innocent, if

such a creature can exist outside of the *terza rima* of Dante Alighieri. The quality of the writing in these poems is marvellous: the density of *Hostage Walk* and *Brucellosis*, the severe descriptive discipline of "Three Person Sword" or *Bones' Evidence*; and the use of irony, its sinister power:

'But no one mentioned the one who
was *contra naturum*,
or compared him to any of our own.
He was quiet and obese,
Shrieked at mice in the scriptorium –
White as beluga, or narwhal, he died
From licking poison: a page turner.'
(«The Senior Film»)

Switches of key, quick changes of emotional register, is a huge part of McLoughlin's aesthetic. The title poem, the Pushcart Prize-nominated *Crash Centre*, is a complex beauty, raising both schools rugby and literary effort to the level of JPR Williams crashing through all resistance in a Lions' shirt.

The poem refers back to the cover picture from the Lions tour of South Africa in 1974 and dovetails physical experiences of greatness with the physical efforts of the poet before he left the school team in fifth year:

'My job was; even if you are tackled, taken out –

if you can't break through, create space
for someone else, for the winger
or pass it back inside to Jan,
never give a hospital pass
but be the continuity, the place
where a negative inheritance
stops..'

The poem is a brilliant and rare sports poem, but, more crucially, it is a sustained and brilliant metaphor for all kinds of efforts at survival. It is a poem about going on, about the power of poetry to "Straighten the line" of remembrance: 'You're what they call a crash centre,' my father said.'

This is a poetry powering forward without a gum shield, vulnerable and alert, and almost all-knowing. 'An army of little men will spring out of the ground,' he writes in the poem 'Helpers'; and in this new collection McLoughlin has created a work unquestionably triumphant with poetic victories.

A New Caravaggio goes on show - its great historic interest

Peter Costello

Since the recovery of a lost Caravaggio of the very greatest importance in the dining room of a Jesuit residence in Dublin, a work of art now safely enshrined in the National Gallery, there has been a continuing interest in Caravaggio across Ireland.

A portrait of created by Caravaggio has just gone on show in a gallery in Rome. It has been in a private collection unseen, for some sixty years; but was only authenticated as a Caravaggio in 1963, making it an important addition to the limited number of the artist's paintings that have survived the centuries.

The picture is a portrait of Mons. Maffeo Barberini, who would in time be elected

to the papacy as Urban VIII. Never seen in a museum, the portrait, never exhibited before, will be on show February 23 2025. It is going on show in the palazzo Barberini, itself built during the reign of Pope Urban.

“The author had “no intention of attributing any other than a purely human authority to the miracles, revelations, favours, and particular cases”

Though the interest of the picture as a Caravaggio is very great, it should not detract from the importance

of its subject. Urban VIII is being spoken about in the context of this show as a patron of the arts who overspent on the refurbishment of Rome and the Vatican.

Yet in a wider historical context, the authoritative figure portrayed by Caravaggio, was of singular importance.

Imposed

It was an edict of Urban VII (in the papal bull *Sanctissimus Dominus Noster* of March 13 1625) that imposed on Catholic publications which touched on religion, that the author had “no intention of attributing any other than a purely human authority to the miracles, revelations, favours, and particular cases” which were referred to.

And moreover “the same as regards the titles of saint

The new Caravaggio



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

“The painting by Caravaggio is in quite a contrast to the more familiar portrait by Bernini created about 1632. Caravaggio shows a young man of 1598 about age of 35, when he was governor of the diocese of Fano”

and blessed applied to servants of God not yet canonised, except in those cases which have been confirmed by the Holy Catholic Apostolic Roman See” of which authors had to declare themselves the obedient sons, submitting himself and all he had written to her judgement.”

“It was also under Urban the VIII that Galileo faced two trials, in a case which remains controversial to this day”

The Vatican was, by this edict, imposing a continuing control over what could

or could not be published; a control now largely vanished for all intents and purposes. It aimed at precluding all those kinds of wild claims about “saints” and “miracles” which are still with us.

But it was also under Urban the VIII that Galileo faced two trials, in a case which remains controversial to this day, suggesting as it did that the Vatican clung to outmoded Greek and medieval ideas of cosmography which could not really be said to have a theological foundation.

Focused

(It is worth noting though that the affair may not have been entirely focused on an argument over whether sun or the earth was the centre of the universe; but may have also been influenced

by Galileo's views on atomic theory, which seemed to some theologians to challenge the doctrine of transubstantiation.)

The painting by Caravaggio is in quite a contrast to the more familiar portrait by Bernini created about 1632. Caravaggio shows a young man of 1598 about age of 35, when he was governor of the diocese of Fano.

He is portrayed seated on an ordinary chair, a manuscript in his left hand, and his right outstretched in an authoritative, even papal manner, as if giving an order to an associate.

While it lacks the bravura of so many of Caravaggio's surviving paintings, such as the one in the NGI, it illustrates the striking authority of the man himself rather than the calm dignity of the Bernini portrait.

John Henry Newman: a saint in context

Newman and His Critics, by Edward Short (Gracewing, £35.00 pb / £65.00 hb)

Peter Costello

This large and very detailed book, running to some 600 pages, is one of three which the author has written on John Henry Newman.

He has already published *Newman and His Contemporaries* and *Newman and His Family*. Those earlier volumes are now again available to make a matching set with this new, but delayed book.

This way of treating his subject is a wise one. Speaking from experience, one of the difficulties a biographer has in writing about the subject's life is how to deal with intellectual developments, conflicts and controversies. These topics require space to develop properly, but they hold up the ever forward drive of the biographical narrative, and can in the opinion of some readers, clog the narrative.

Short's method in this book is to take a set of six critics spread over the course of Newman's life, from his Anglican days down to Wilfrid Ward and the notable Ian Kerr, to whose biography the admirers of Newman owe so much.

(All writers on Newman owe an even greater debt to the gentle but unrelenting Fr Charles Dessain, who laboured so long and so thoroughly over the many volumes of the *Letters and Diaries*.)

Discourse

By critics he means those who entered into intellectual discourse with Newman in an attempt to understand his ideas, and perhaps to help him to by debate, to refine them. But it has to be admitted that Newman had his enemies, as the Achilli case of 1851, which so deeply affected him, revealed.

One of the most penetrating chapters in this book is Short's account of the passage of arms between Newman and Charles Kingsley. This had one great outcome: it influenced Newman to set down in writing his religious life in the pages of his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*.

Short gives a measured and detailed treatment of this unhappy episode from which Newman emerged triumphant. Kingsley's attitude is difficult to appraise; but Short surely misses one angle at least, in giving no



The younger John Henry Newman

consideration to Kingsley novel *Westward-Ho* (1855), which gives a clear picture of just what Kingsley thought about the cruelties of the Spanish and the beliefs of the Catholic Church.

“All too often admirers of Newman seem content to see him in the more confined world of Catholic life, rather than as the major figure of his era that he really was”

This would have provided an opportunity for Short to take Newman beyond the world of Catholic opinion into a wider field. When it appeared *Apologia pro Vita Sua* took its place at once among the great works of English Victorian literature, a book to be discussed and appreciated in the context of Ruskin, and Matthew Arnold, and others. All too often admirers of Newman seem content to see him in the more confined world of Catholic life, rather than as the major figure of his era that he really was.

There is much to enjoy in these pages, especially what is said about Wilfrid Ward say, or about Ian Kerr.

It is, however, a disappointment to an Irish reader to find that Edward Short has not managed to build a chapter around Newman's time in Ireland, a period when indeed he faced many critics, especially in the Irish

hierarchy, about what he was attempting to do in Dublin.

He seems to have envisaged a “medieval university” for a liberal education on the model of Oxford, where the laity would be taught. The Irish bishops had in mind something more like a seminary which would educate candidates for the priesthood, modelled on Louvain, but not the children of the Catholic middle classes.

There are references in the text, of course, to Dublin and to Irish people, but no organised treatment of the whole episode. This is in keeping with what seems to be the current attitude among Newman admirers both in England and North America, to see Newman's time in Ireland as an unfortunate aberration.

Curious

This is certainly curious, seeing as he left behind him a secondary school which still flourishes in the hands of the Marists, a university college which also continues, and also fine example of Romanesque architecture in the University Church on St Stephen's Green, that is one of the great masterpieces of our built heritage.

This book and its associated volumes will rightly find a place in even the smallest serious library of Newman books. They will be read for the light they shed, not only on Newman himself, but on those he was associated with, and many will be indebted to the author for his industrious and long sustained research and always readable understanding of Newman.



Classifieds

The deadline for advertising in the classifieds is 10.30am, the Friday before publication. Contact the Classified Team on 01 687 4028 or email advertising@irishcatholic.ie

Remembering

MEMORIAM CARDS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

CARDS & NOTELETS

BOOKMARKS

Samples / Information

KENNEDY PRINTERS

BANTRY, CO. CORK, IRELAND

Tel. 027 50102

www.kennedyprinters.ie

email: info@kennedyprinters.ie

Listen to

The Confession Box



Available now

on all major

podcast

streaming

services!

Please pray for the beatification of

Little Nellie

of Holy God

“May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls proposing Nellie as their model”

– Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

Will the MSC Missions

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart bring hope to the poorest people living in over 48 countries worldwide.

Please help us with a gift in your Will

Contact:

MSC Missions Office, PO Box 23 Western Road, Cork.

Tel: 021-4545704 Email: info@mscmissions.ie

www.mscmissions.ie

The Gift Of A Lifetime

Be there for others after you're gone.

A gift in your will to Irish Hospice Foundation is a meaningful way to help ensure no-one faces death or bereavement without the care and support they need.

Email Anna Sadlier at anna.sadlier@hospicefoundation.ie or call 01 679 3188

 Irish Hospice Foundation

www.hospicefoundation.ie

Challenging homelessness. Changing lives.

 Focus Ireland

Your Lasting Legacy

Many people are choosing to include a loving gift in their Will to support families, children and young people experiencing homelessness. You can make a real difference by helping future generations find a place called home.

For more information, please contact Assia: 086 103 3130 assia.buono@focusireland.ie

Focus Ireland, 9 – 12 High Street, Christchurch, D08 E1W0 Focusireland.ie

 Merchants Quay Ireland Homeless & Drugs Services



A gift in your Will to Merchants Quay Ireland can be lifesaving.

Hundreds of men and women at their darkest hour, come to Merchants Quay Ireland for food, showers and support when there's nowhere else to turn.

A gift in your Will in any amount, will change lives. And we'll always remember your kindness.


You can decide a specific amount or give a percentage after taking care of your loved ones. Even 1% is enough to help.

All your solicitor will need is this:

- Merchants Quay Ireland of 24 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8
- Revenue CHY Number: 10311
- Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20026240

Just ring 01 5240139 if you'd like more information, or to let us know about your legacy. Thank you for the good you leave behind.

When you remember Trócaire in your Will, you bring hope to people living in the world's poorest places

 Trócaire

It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call Grace Kelly on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

Celebrate the Word of God daily with the

MAGNIFICAT

prayer companion

Six months €35 One year €62

Subscribe now to get Magnificat delivered to your door.

+353 (01) 687 4024 - magnificat@irishcatholic.ie www.irishcatholic.com

40-BED UNIT OUTSIDE KILDARE

PIC PERSON IN CHARGE WANTED TO TAKE OVER as the present PIC of 30 years is retiring. It's a 40 bedded unit and is just outside Kildare Town. Accommodation can be sorted if needed. Phone 045-521496 or 0872522612 ask for Breda or Seamus. Email lour@iol.ie

SERVICES

ALL UNWANTED home waste removed. Cookers, fridges, beds, suites, wardrobes, carpets etc. Removed and disposed of in a proper manner. No job too small or big. Contact Tommy, 087 6406015.

SEEKING LONGTERM FRIENDSHIP

DUBLIN 18 LADY SINGLE 54, seeks loving caring sincere professional 51-64 preferably Dublin for long term friendship. I am a caring kind loyal person. Hope to get council place soon as I am on priority list and likes to have a meet with someone before gets it. Tel: 0892210929

FEMALE FRIEND

LADY EARLY 50S DUBLIN - genuine, caring, friendly for long term friendship. Age 45-60. Likes walking, socializing, eating out meeting, new people and travelling. PO no. 159

The Irish Catholic

The Irish Catholic, Unit 3B, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277 Phone: 01 687 4095

PREPAID CLASSIFIED AD COUPON

Please provide us with the heading you would like the ad to appear under: (For eg. Looking to buy, Pilgrimage to..., etc)

Please print your advertisement in the space below, placing one word in each box, Minimum charge of €24.60 (including VAT) for 5 lines/25 words. Additional lines cost €4.92 each.

1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					

Name:

Address :

City/County:

Eircode:


Phone:

☐ Pay by: Cheque/Postal order:
For € _____ payable to: The Irish Catholic

☐ Pay by: Credit Card
Card number: _____
Expiration date: ____/____ CVV number: _____

Leisure time

Let Your
Compassion
Live On



CHY: 9768 | RCN: 20024505

A gift in your Will to the Mater Hospital Foundation is the promise of help, hope and healing for the next 100 years...

For more information, please contact James at jsullivan@materfoundation.ie or phone 01 830 3482.

THE
Mater
Hospital
FOUNDATION

We will pass on the
flame of faith.



For more information about leaving a legacy to *The Irish Catholic*, phone 01 687 4028 or email info@irishcatholic.ie

CHRISTMAS MASS BOUQUETS
WHITEFRIAR STREET CHURCH
56 AUNGIER STREET, DUBLIN 2

Mass office open daily
Mon - Sat 8 30am to 4pm
Sun 10am to 2pm
Online 24/7

www.whitefriarstreetchurch.ie
Enrolments for Christmas Mass
Bouquets now available.
Selection of Christmas Cards,
Calendars and gifts
Telephone 01 475 8821 / 01 472 0927

 Whitefriar Street
Church

Crossword

Gordius 692

Across
1 Officer rank in the army (10)
6 Fragrant powder (4)
10 Cook a particular cereal in this utensil (5)
11 Sport played with a shuttlecock (9)
12 Garments (7)
15 Bid, tender (5)
17 Rip, lacerate (4)
18 The 'A' of a BA degree (4)
19 Shoreline (5)
21 Bring forth, manufacture (7)
23 Consent, concur (5)
24 Paul Hewson of U2 (4)
25 In grammar, a naming word (4)
26 Felt poorly (5)
28 You aim at at these (7)
33 Plant genus of the daisy family, often referred to as marigold (9)
34 Shade of blue (5)
35 Potential danger (4)
36 State or quality of remaining unchanged over time (10)

Down
1 Bird which traditionally rises very early (4)
2 Moving staircase (9)
3 Cards used to tell someone's fortune (5)
4 Aristocratic (5)
5 Signals assent with the head (4)
7 & 8 Prayer of penitence (3,2,10)
9 The end of a civil marriage (7)
13 One who inherits (4)
14 Scholar (7)
16 Island off the east coast of Africa (10)
20 Military command to face the opposite direction (5,4)
21 Piece of hanging jewellery (7)
22 Historic Russian title (4)
27 Soothes (5)
29 Warning device (5)
30 Wood pattern (5)
31 Aristocratic nickname for John Wayne (4)
32 Unit of heredity (4)

1		2		3		4		5			6	7		8
										9				
10						11								
	12				13		14			15				
16						17								
18										19		20		
				21					22					
23											24			
				25										
26		27					28	29		30				
						31								32
33										34				
35						36								

SOLUTIONS, NOVEMBER 28

GORDIUS No. 691

Across

1 Percolator 6 Iced 10 Solid 11 Vicarious 12 Emerald 15 Feral 17 Asia 18 Odds 19 Corgi 21 Cyanide 23 False 24 Acme 25 Neon 26 Unlit 28 Germane 33 Demeanour 34 Maine 35 Duty 36 Watercress

Down

1 Posy 2 Role model 3 Order 4 Anvil 5 Ouch 7 Choir 8 Disclaimer 9 Preface 13 Awry 14 Darning 16. Confounded 20 Reconcile 21 Central 22 Door 27 Limit 29 Eyrie 30 Mimic 31 Toga 32 Lens

Sudoku Corner 562

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 561

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

Last week's Hard 561

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

Notebook

Fr Billy Swan



Heart warming

There is an old Irish toast that goes like this: 'May you have warm words on a cool evening'. It makes the point that words are spoken with a certain temperature. They can be warm and loving or cold and cruel. Very often, it is not the words themselves that make the difference but the warmth and love with which they are spoken. What matters is not just what we say but the way we say it.

Dilexit Nos

I have just finished reading Pope Francis' latest encyclical '*Dilexit Nos...He Loved Us*' which is about the human and diving love of the heart of Jesus Christ. It is a profound meditation on the love of God, expressed through the symbol of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Beautifully written, the encyclical draws from the ancient wisdom of the heart, the symbol of the heart in Scripture, the Fathers of the Church and the saints. With the warm love of Christ it re-frames the whole Christian life as a love affair where God's heart united to ours



is the foundation of everything we believe and burn to share.

“It is this raging fire of God's passionate love that Pope Francis wants everyone to experience in the heart”

Apart from the rich content, one feature of the document that stood out for me was the warmth with which Pope Francis reflects on God's love that pours forth from the wounded heart of Christ. The words he uses are warm, affectionate and engaging. He reflects on the Sacred Heart

being on fire, whose heat and light burn away our coldness and indifference. He draws from St Ignatius of Loyola whose theology of the Spiritual Exercises is based on what he calls '*affectus*' or affection. He also points to the insight of St Bonaventure who insisted that the knowledge of Christ's love for us must translate into an affection that changes the heart until it becomes a 'raging fire'. It is this raging fire of God's passionate love that Pope Francis wants everyone to experience in the heart.

Celtic

In our Celtic tradition, many prayers and spiritual writings capture this warmth of divine love and have retained the truth that our faith is a love affair of the heart. Speaking of the conception of Jesus, the poet Tadhg Gaelach Ó Súilleabháin wrote that: 'For nine months the master of angels was humbly, dutifully within her, as a furnace of love within her burning'. This is just one example of many writings and insights in agreement with Pope Francis' call to return to the heart for 'if the heart is not alive, humankind remains a

Politics and religion

John Adams, one of the founding fathers of the United States, once said that: 'Our Constitution was made only for moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other'. In the aftermath of the General Election, it is worth remembering this wisdom of Adams. While politics, policies and laws are the bricks that make up our society, the mortar that holds it all together is the faith and moral fiber of the people of the nation. For if moral integrity goes missing, civilisation begins to unravel, no matter who is in power.

stranger to himself' (*Dilexit Nos*, 12).

St Bernard of Clairvaux once said that the lack of affection in people's lives is one of the biggest crises of our time. To all of us in the Church right now who have influence on others as parents, grand-parents, priests, catechists, teachers, writers and guides; let us remember that it is not just what we communicate that counts but the warmth and love towards others with which we do so. May our words and our witness be heart-warming – not just on cool evenings but always.

A pastoral area jubilee pilgrimage?

Many parishes around the country are now part of a wider pastoral area or family of neighbouring parishes. We are all discerning our way through this change and discovering the blessings and benefits of working together. The success of these parish partnerships is predicated on the people of the parishes coming to know each other. To facilitate this, one idea worth considering is to organise a Pastoral Area pilgrimage for the Jubilee Year. If we are to be a synodal Church, a pilgrimage is a visible expression of just that.



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

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

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

- €..... **COMBONI SISTERS ADVENT APPEAL**
- €..... **NEEDY CHILDREN**
- €..... **WELLS AND SANITATION PROJECTS**
- €..... **MASS OFFERINGS** (please state no.)
We ask for a minimum of €7 or more for each Mass
- €..... **LITTLEWAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

To donate online go to
www.littlewaysassociation.com

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

☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

IC/12/05

Advent Appeal from Comboni Sisters in Jordan: medicines and medical aid are very urgently needed for thousands of people

Sr Alessandra has contacted *The Little Way Association* from the Comboni Missionary Sisters' hospital at Karak in the south of Jordan. She is counting upon you, and other donors, to assist with the cost of providing the hospital with urgent medical supplies. In this part of Jordan are hundreds of thousands of Syrians, Palestinians, Bedouins and many others. Sister writes: "Our hospital is the only Christian institution doing medical work in southern Jordan and it has a capacity of 50 beds. The people receive no government or UN help at all and turn to us for medical treatment.

Mothers, babies, infants are in the greatest need of help

"We aim to care for as many refugees, and poor Jordanians as possible, especially mothers, children and adults in emergency situations. We provide milk and nappies for newborns, many of whose mothers came across the border to give birth. Some need emergency treatment. We wish to witness to the Gospel and also to be a bridge of trust and understanding with the local 97% Muslim population. We need, to name but a few, antibiotics, anti-haemorrhagic pills, painkillers, anti-allergic medicines, surgical materials and milk for newborns."

We implore you to give what you can this Advent. Every euro you send to the little way association for this project will be forwarded to the Sisters without deduction. The Sisters and hundreds of ordinary people will be very thankful to God and to you. May God bless you all.



"A word or a smile is often enough to put fresh life in a despondent soul."
- St Therese

AWAITING CHRISTMAS

With St Therese at our side, let us patiently await the birth of Christ in all its simplicity. She tells us, "Our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, nor even at their difficulty, but at the love at which we do them." May we then perform small acts of kindness throughout this Advent season.

SANITATION AND WATER

Water is a precious commodity that we sometimes take for granted, but in areas of the world where water is scarce or contaminated, a borehole or well can transform the lives of the people for generations to come.

The Little Way Association receives many requests for grants for sanitation and water projects and we always welcome donations for this purpose.